Proper Names as Indicators of Social Identity in Shakespeare's Richard II: A Typological Critique

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The term 'proper name' belongs to the terminological apparatus of traditional grammar. Grammarians used to draw a twofold distinction between 'proper' and 'common' names, defining the former as those nouns that denote a person or a thing, in contrast to the latter that denotes a thing. Proper nouns, thus, have a unique reference, while common nouns have a general reference.[i] Many categories are listed under the larger set of proper names: personal names; geographical names, such as the names of countries, continents, states, cities, lakes, mountains; calendar names (festivals, months, and days of the week), and noun +common noun, such as: the river Thames, London University, etc. Syntactically speaking, determiners and number contrasts are not applicable to proper names as they are to common nouns.[ii] On the graphological level, the initial letter of a proper noun is always capitalized no matter where they occur in a sentence.

Recently, proper names have attracted the interest of scholars in varied field: psychology, anthropology, law, etc.[iii] In cognitive psychology, for example, researchers are trying to account for the fact

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that the retrieval of proper nouns is more difficult than that of common nouns. Anthropologists have studied the different traditions of naming in different cultures and the significance attached to these differences. In law, legislators are concerned of what it means to say that a name is an unalienable human right, to criminalize summing names that belong to other people.

More importantly, the ways proper nouns are used in literature have long been the concern of literary critics. But however long may be that preoccupation with the proper nouns in literature, it has been subject to many limitations. First, most of the treatments of the topic, with few exceptions, focus on fiction, not drama. Second, most of these treatments concentrate on the semantic value with which the literary name may be endowed, overlooking the other, no less significant roles a literary name may assume. Third, no unified and systematic theory, as far as we are aware, has been worked out to account for the complex ways in which proper names are manipulated in literature. What is there, instead, are scattered attempts that focus exclusively on one dimension of this complex phenomenon.

This paper seeks to investigate three things.. First, it presents a new typology for the roles of literary names in four dimensions: sound symbolism, contingent description, pragmatic association, and social status indicating, Second, it'll be shown, throughout that typology, that the linguistic and critical treatments of the literary names in general, and Shakespeare in particular, are notoriously inadequate. Third, we'll give a thorough application of the fourth dimension of our typology to Shakespeare's *Richard II.*

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A Typology for Proper Names in Drama

To account for the richness and complexity of the uses of proper names in drama, below is suggested a typology for these names that consists in four dimensions: sound symbolism, contingent description, pragmatic association, and social status indicating, with examples cited from various Shakespearean plays.

This typology can serve as a theoretical framework applicable to many a Shakespearean play, for in no sense can a theory be exhausted with a single application. But the discussion of names in *Richard II* will be carried out according to the fourth dimension for, as it will be argued below, it is more viable to unravel the significance attached to proper nouns in the play.

1- Sound Symbolism

It means the effect a names exercises by its direct phonetic and indirect graphological structure. Social psychologists, Valintine to name one, have noted the so-called 'name letter effect': letters occurring in ones name are found more attractive than letters that are not part of his/her name.[iv] Moreover, names' attractiveness proved influential in social judgment: personal and performative. More interestingly, however, names attractiveness is found to play a role in acts of voting, where candidates' surnames are found to affect their electibility.[v]

This feature of the proper name is best exemplified in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, where Cassius and Brutus converse, both envious of the honours being bestowed on Caesar. Cassius urges Brutus against Caesar, using this aspect of their names:

> Brutus and Caesar, what should be in that 'Caesar'?
>
> Why should that name be sounded more than yours?
>
> Write them together, yours is as fair a name;
>
> Sound them, it doth become the mouth as well;
>
> Weigh them, it is as heavy. [vi]
>
>   (I, ii, 142-6)

According to Cassius, all other yardsticks being the same, there is no reason why Caesar is preferred to Brutus, by commons and senators alike, while their names have an equal attractiveness, which prescribes that they be judged alike.

2- Contingent Description

The most controversial issue literary names have so far triggered is whether, in addition to their referential function, they have a sense or not. To eschew the terminological pitfalls, these terms, sense, reference, etc. are used the way Lyons (1977) does. Linguists tend to use terms like 'sense', 'connotation', intension' in a relatively similar way, and so do they with terms like 'reference', 'denotation', 'extension'. Though sometimes employed synonymously with sense[7], the term 'meaning', used non-technically and pre-theoretically, is viable to cover almost all the categories listed above. 'Sense', however is identified with the descriptive meaning of lexemes, as distinct from social and expressive meanings.[8] Thus, writes Lyons, "Our criterion for sameness and difference in sense will be made more directly dependent upon the

descriptive meaning of utterances."[9] So, two expressions will have the same sense iff they are substitutable without changing the descriptive meaning of the utterance.

The positions regarding the semantic value of proper names are varied, but can be classified under two categories: descriptivist theories and Millian theories. According to descriptive theories, espoused by Frege, Russell, and Carnap among others, a proper name does have a sense, and its reference is determined by this sense. For Frege, a proper noun has sense in the same way a common noun does.[10] For later descriptivists, however, the sense of a proper noun consists in a single description or set of descriptions attributable to the name's bearer. The sense of a name, thus, undertakes two jobs: it indicates the attributes associated with the bearer, and mediates the reference to the thing being denoted by the name.

Cited under the term 'Millianism' are many theories that take their origin from John Stuart Mill. Mill holds that proper names have denotation, but not connotation[11]:

> A proper name is but an unmeaning mark which we connect in our mind with the idea of an object, so that whenever the mark meets our eyes or occurs to our thoughts, we may think of that individual object.[12]

The proponents of this theory claim that the sense of a proper name is what it refers to, and the reference of the name needn't be mediated by the semantic content of that name. Lyons points out that the most widely

accepted view about proper names is that "they may have reference, but not sense, and that they cannot be used predicatively purely as names."[13]

In the real life, however, selecting a name for a newly born child is determined by many criteria: family name, sound fame and, above all, meaning. Parents always give names that denote some positive feature they wish their child will be endowed with. Though this is a constant tradition, it was especially prevalent in the seventeenth century, with the so-called 'Puritan' names, which were more denotative than the majority of names, such as: "Charity, Mercy, Honour, Worship, and Patience"[14]. This tendency stems from the fact that parents want their desires be accomplished in their offspring. However, it can be argued that the child is "powerful enough to resist the name."[15]

In literature, however, this deviation from the original desire doesn't hold. For the authorial relation of the writer to his characters is in no sense like that between the parents and their child. In the latter, parents are only authorized to give the name. In the former, the writer gives the name and determines what feature the character will have. Consequently, readers and critics alike expect a match between the meaning of the name and its bearer. "An artist's naming of his or her characters frequently involves a calculated and conscious choices in order to deliver a message through the onomastic medium" and, thus, "a name is selected that summarizes a character's personality or physiology or some other unique property."[16] Stump succinctly points out that "We know how bovine Charles Bovery must be long before we see him through the contemptuous eyes of his wife, or just what kind of school master Dickens' McChoakenchild must be long before he steps into the

classroom."[17] Thus, names are being used as interpretative apparatuses whereby to analyze the characters of their bearers.

This is the most salient feature of literary names with which scholars are intensely preoccupied. And it is the view that Roger Fowler adopts in his linguistic analysis of fictional characters:

> A character is then (a) an actant-s/he performs a role or roles in the structure of the plot; (b) an assemblage of semes; (c) a proper name- which is a sort of peg on which (a) and (b) are hung…Dickens' naming practice is spectacularly efficient in this way, inventing names that are grotesquely distinctive yet often encapsulate some typical actational or semantic aspect of the character.[18]

It is clear that, with regard to the theories of sense and reference discussed above, this view holds that literary names do have sense in the way common nouns do, not mere characteristics and attributes ascribed to the bearer of the name. It is an extreme version of descriptivist theories and is in a sharp contrast to Millianism.

True, some literary names are intended to carry meanings suggestive of some features of their bearers. But many points of caution need to be mentioned here. First, it proves problematic to generalize this principle the way Fowler does. One may accumulate more examples of the non-intentionality of naming than for its intentionality, which is associated with some, not all authors. On the other hand, in historical literature, the writer is restricted with the historical names, and is only narrowly allowed

to change. Second, to adopt such a view would lead to what can be called 'onomastic determinism', nowhere better expressed than by Stump's words quoted above that Charles Bovery 'must be' bovine, and that McChaokunchild 'must be' the kind of schoolmaster indicated by his name. Third, to focus exclusively on the descriptive content of the name, as these scholars do, leads to deprive it from its other, no less important dimensions, to be explicated below.

Fourth, overlooked by the exponents of this approach is the fact that the descriptions are not always directly given. Rather, as far as one can observe, it may have one of four forms: direct description, ironical description, etymological implication, and compound description. The first can be exemplified by the names of 'Pistol' and 'Quickly' in Shakespeare's *Henry IV*. The etymological origin can be seen in the name of Desdemona in Shakespeare's *Othello*, which is said to originally mean 'ill-starred'. The compound description can be found in the name of Falstaff in Shakespeare's *Henry IV,* which is said to mean either ' false staff' or 'falling companion', both of which are applicable to the bearer of the name, with regard to his relation with Prince Hal. The indirect description, not accounted for in Fowler's treatment, stems from the fact that the semantic value may be used ironically, in relation to the features of their bearers. The name of Mistress Quickly in Shakespeare's *Henry IV* is undoubtedly used this way, for she is the most slow-witted character in the play. To account for such examples, it can be said that the trait denoted by the description is not necessarily the identical one, but another that belongs to the same semantic field, and with which it is related in one

sense-relation, mostly antonymy. Thus, one can aver that Fowler's approach to literary names is neither necessary not sufficient.

However, throughout Shakespeare's plays, many instances can be observed where a match is sketched by characters or readers alike, between the semantic content of a name and some attributes of its bearer. In *Richard II*, this can best be manipulated by John of Gaunt in his last conversation with King Richard II:

> *K. Rich.* What comfort, man? How is't with aged Gaunt?
>
> *Gaunt.* O, how that name befit my composition!
>
> Old Gaunt indeed, and gaunt in being old!
>
> .
>
> .
>
> Gaunt am I for the grave, gaunt as a grave,
>
> (II, i, 72-4, 82)

The word 'gaunt', used predicatively, means 'weak' or 'feeble'. John of Gaunt exploits the match between the descriptive value of his name and his declining health in such a way as to chide the king as being the reason behind all of this, having banished his son.

In *Henry V*, the king disguised, condescend to observe in what spirits his soldiers are before his war with France, meets a soldier names Pistol:

> *K. Henry V*. I thank thee, God be with you.
>
> *Pistol*. My name is Pistol called.   (*Exit*)
>
> *K. Henry*. It sorts well with your fierceness.
>
> (IV, i, 63-4)

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The king seizes the name to apply it to a feature of its bearer, which unfolds during their speech.

In *2 Henry IV*, the two characters Justice Shallow and Justice Silence live up to their names, the former always speaking in trivial matters, and the latter always keeping quiet, not speaking unless forced to.

In the instances cited above under ' contingent description', it the semantic content of the word that really matters, and it is contingent, so labeled to eschew the deterministic view denounced above.

3-Pragmatic Association

The descriptivist theories sketched so far grant that proper names, in addition to their referential function, do have sense, but they differ about the nature of that sense. Some, such as Frege, aver that it is of the same kind of sense like common nouns. Others, Searle to name one, hold that in no sense are they the same. The view widely held by later descriptivists is that the sense of a proper noun consists in a unique description or a set of descriptions that define the specific individual. The meaning of 'Michael Gorbatshov' would be "' the one who introduced Perestroika to the URRS', 'the man with a birthmark on his forehead', ' the one who received the Nobel prize for peace in 1990'"[19] The cluster of these descriptions constitutes the meaning of the name. Others would consider the meaning of the name is the nominal or minimal description. Thus, the meaning of Gorbatshov would be 'the person named Gorbatshov'. The

total of these descriptions is what is called, after John Searle, the 'descriptive backing'.[20]

Though it is true that the name, when mentioned, induces a set of associations related to its bearer, yet one refrains from using the term 'descriptive' which, so used, may indicate that the name has a descriptive meaning, which is identical with 'sense' in the same way a common noun does. The 'contingent description' discussed above is evoked by the semantic content of the name, if it has any, while the sets of characteristics adopted by the descriptivists are not a result of the semantic content of the name under consideration. They would rather be called 'pragmatic associations' for they are the result of our practical knowledge of the person bearing the name (e.g. Gorbatshov), not of the conventional use of the word itself as part of the language system. Moreover, some linguists deny that proper names, save the most famous ones, are part of the language system in which they are used. (Perhaps, it is for this reason that they are not given separate entries in dictionaries.)[21]

The notion of 'pragmatic associations' is further supported by the fact that some proper names may be transformed to common names, resulting in what is called: eponyms. "An eponym is a product of the linguistic process by which the name of a real or imaginary person becomes equivalent to an object, event, or period of time."[22] The 'watt' is a unit of power named after James Watt; the ampere is named after Andre Ampere. Similar cases can be found as in 'atlas', 'panic', 'braille', etc. This can also be extended to fictional characters as well. "The characters that populate world literature have had their names attached to various behavioral or character traits associated with these fictional

personages."[23] For example, the word 'malprop' means any misuse of vocabulary, and is derived from the name of Mrs. Malprop in Sheridan's *The Rival*. 'Macabre' means an optimistic view of life despite of calamities, and is taken from Macabre, a character in Dickens' *David Copperfield*. Moreover, people tend to use the word 'romeo' and 'juliet' for any two romantically infatuated lovers, similar to Shakespeare's hero and heroine.

What all this indicates is that there are certain 'behavioral or character traits' associated with almost every name; once that name be mentioned, these traits are retrieved. But it is to be mentioned that this retrieval holds due to pragmatic, not semantic connections. It is not our knowledge of the name itself, but rather our practical knowledge of the bearer him/herself and his/her traits that results in this retrieval. Hence, the term 'pragmatic association'.

If this be agreed, it should be pointed out that these pragmatic associations differ from one person to another due to many factors, the most crucial among which being the degree of relevance or interaction between the speaker or hearer and the bearer of the name.

The traits usually associated with a name can be classified into three categories: (i) bodily or behavioral traits, (ii) distinctive actions and occupations, and (iii) subjective connotations. The first category is characterized as being constant and permanent traits (e.g. being tall, being dark-skinned, being courageous, etc.) which differ slightly, if ever, throughout the person's or character's career. The second group is characterized as being temporary, though with a lasting effect (e.g. 'being the president of the US for a definite period', 'being the father of

relativity theory, being the conqueror of France, etc.). 'Being the president of the US' is a temporary, but lasting trait of, for example, G. W. Bush. 'Being the conqueror of France' is a temporary, but distinctive trait of Henry V. These traits didn't exist before the action is done; but once it is done, it will have an everlasting effect on the person or character to which it is attributed. Subjective connotations are these attributes which one speaker or hearer associates with a name, though other speakers don't. It issues from the private relation that holds between the bearer of the name and the speaker. One and the same name may connote love for some hearer but hatred to another. The first and second categories are conventional connotations, publically associated with a name by most, if not all, speakers, while the third is subjective, in the sense that it is only associated by some speakers, rather than others; they have a relative value for different users.[24]

4- Social Identity Indication

We have been analyzing the different dimensions of the proper name, moving from the micro- to the macrolinguistic levels, from the phonetically symbolic significance, through the semantic, to the pragmatic domains, and ending with the wider scope, as indicators of social identity.

It has been pointed out that a name has attached to it certain attributes of its bearer, and that these associations are of a social nature. Given these two facts, one can recognize how relevant the name is to its bearer, to the extent that the name is considered as not merely referring to,

but is really identical with its referent. "Most often…namelessness entails a lack of identity, and anomymity or the use of numerical identification for people (prisoners, slaves)" is attributed to "the fact that this act is a negation of their humanity and their existence."[25]

This aspect of the proper name, often overlooked by linguists, can further be buttressed by many social practices relevant to proper names. Many declarations of the Human Rights refer that "Every child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have a name."[26] This entails, in some legal systems at least, that the name, as a right, should be protected. Consequently, if one's name is usurped, s/he can initiate a judicial prosecution.

The act of naming can be seen as an attempt to fix identity. Thus, in addition to the two functions linguists attribute to proper names- the referential and the vocative- some scholars point to two other, socially oriented functions- categorization and differentiation.[27] As the surname serves to categorize the person as belonging to some family or origin, the first name helps differentiate the person being named from other people, assigning him a separate identity, otherwise unfixable.

The equation set between name and identity can also be supported by the fact that one's decision of identity change mostly entails a similar decision in name change. "To give up one's name is in a certain sense to surrender a part of one's identity."[28] And many reasons have been suggested for the use of pseudonyms- false names- such as to conceal an identity, to deceive, to protect, and to transform one's identity. Changing one's name is not only, as this exposition may imply, done illegally. It can happen legally, when the previous name is not hidden, but is simply

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changed to match the new identity. This happens with the movie male and female stars, whose names differ before and after their being stars. The same takes place with politician, religious figures, Popes included, and with those who undergo operations of sex change.[29]

This close connection between the name and social identity will have its consequences on the social interactivity between people. "More generally, we might say that the status of a relationship between two people is defined largely by the manner in which they refer to each other."[30] To further examine this function of proper names as indicators of social identity, the linguistically-based but socially-oriented functions of proper names will be briefly sketched.

Lyons divides the functions of proper names into two: the referential (including the vocative) and nomination. The latter is further classified into two: didactic and performative functions. By the didactic naming is meant teaching someone a name of a person according to an already existing convention. Performative naming means giving a name to someone in baptism or elsewhere.[31]

It is to be mentioned that these functions are socially engendered. They issue from and are manifestations of the social relation that hold between the named and the namer. The vocative mode, for example, is not used by someone of a lower position to another of higher position. The didactic mode, asking about somebody's name is also not expected from a lower to a higher position individual. Above all, the performative mode, bestowing others with names, also needs a certain social position assumed by the namer:

Those who give the name are usually in a position of power and authority. Consequently, the act of naming implies that the naming group has a measure of control. In the case of people, this authority may imply a master-slave relationship…the power that comes from names and naming is related directly to the power to define others.[32]

Throughout Shakespeare's plays, this social aspect of names holds consistently. It is only because Pistol, in Shakespeare's *Henry V*, doesn't know the disguised king's true identity that he asks him of his name. Otherwise, no character of a lower position can ask the name of another character of a higher position. Performative naming can be exercised by a character in a higher position to another in a lower position, as can be seen in *King John*:

> K. John. And if his name be George, I'll call him Peter;
> For new made honours doth forget men's names.
>
> (I, i, 183-4)

The king, as holding the highest authority, assumes the role of changing the name of his subject.

Among the four dimensions for the ways proper names are manipulated in drama in general and Shakespeare's in particular, exposed above, it will be argued that the last one, the name as a indicator for social identity, is the most fruitful. And it is this dimension that will be emphasized in our analysis of *Richard II*. It proves viable to account for

the complexity and variety of the uses of names in drama, where the character cannot be reduced to match the semantic content of the names s/he bears. Rather, the character's name, and the changes brought about to it throughout the plot, can, and do chronicle for a life story. Names in drama are variables, always rewritten and recharged with various meanings. As the identities with which the name is equated are varied, so is the significance of the names. If the character is implied just by the meaning of the name, names, then, are static, revealing the character from the onset, leaving no room for development, suspense and other literary methods. But names are dynamic, behaving always as the pivot around which entire plots are organized.

Names, according to this view, are not just tags pasted to their bearers, but they form the very site in which those bearers get indulged in conflict. It will be shown, throughout the analysis below, that, just as characters are inseparable from the plot, so are their names. The status of the character's name reveals, and is revealed by the ebb and flow of these characters' status.

Names, and their oscillation throughout the plot, moreover, can be employed in such a way as to present one or more of the basic themes recognized in the play in which they are used. This oscillation and, consequently, the destabilizing of the social identities with which they are identified, may pinpoint some of the most intricate philosophical debates under discussion in the time the play was written.

Dialectic of Names: *Richard II*

Regardless of the different, sometimes contradictory readings of Shakespeare's *Richard II*[33]*,* two facts seem to be generally agreed upon.

The play depicts a world where order no longer exists, no matter how divergent the characters' interpretation are, the Duchess believing that the universe is originally ordered but is violated by the king (I, ii), and the gardener believing that the world is originally disordered and it is the king who must impose order on it. This is echoed by the king in his last soliloquy:

> And here have I the dainties of an ear
>
> To check time broke in a disordered string;

                                        (V, v, 45-6)

Second, the movement of the plot is marked by the reversing fortunes of the characters. "Fortunes wheel, indeed, seems to have suggested the very shape and structure of the drama, which gives us a complete inversion."[34] Throughout the play, the audience witnesses the rise of Bolingbroke and the fall of Richard II, culminating in the words of York in the deposition scene: " Ascend his throne, descending now from him," (IV, i, 111)

Given these two facts, one can argue that they are manifested in instability in names as indicators of social identity, instability as dangerous as the world it manifests.

The dialectic begins as soon as the play gets started. Shakespeare opens his play, as Hall does[35], with the conflict between Bolingbroke and Mowbray, regarding 'the boisterous late appeal' the former makes against the latter. But as the appeal begins to assume a nationally loyal sense of 'some apparent danger' seen in Mowbray against the king, a danger based on certain accusations laid by Bolingbroke; with Mowbray's defense and refutations of these charges, the conflict turns very soon elsewhere. It will

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be a ground upon which each is trying to prove that he is, where the honour of both is threatened, and consequently the social power of their names is called into question. This gets clear when both neglect the acclamation to stop, made by the very person for whose throne they claim to be defending, namely King Richard II, an acclamation to which Mowbray responds:

> Myself I throw, dread sovereign, at thy feet,
>
> My life thou shalt command, but not my shame,
>
> The one my duty owes, but my fair name,
>
> Despite of death that lives upon my grave
>
> To dark dishonour's use thou shalt not have.
>
> (I, i, 165-9)

So, no longer is Mowbray challenging for his 'dread sovereign', but rather for his 'fair name', a name threatened to be fair no more if Bolingbroke's arraignments are proved true. When the 'fair name 'becomes tantamount with 'spotless reputation', the social power of the name proves capable of surmounting the directives of the dread sovereignty, threatening, thus, the authority of the king himself. The king, it gets clear, is quite aware of this threat, which he is trying to recover very rapidly:

> We were not born to sue, but to command,
>
> Which since we cannot do, to make you friends,
>
> Be ready, as your lives shall answer it
>
> At Coventry in Saint Lambert's day.
>
> (I, i, 196-9)

Against these threats, the king embraces the ceremonial shows in (I,iii) to prove that his authority, manifested by the power of his name, is still dominant.[36]As the heaven-elected deputy the king thinks himself to be, it is worth no less than with God's name that his is uttered. Thus, the lord Marshal hails to the combatants: "In God's name and the king's say who thou art."(I, iii, 11) The stability with which the king's name is invested in this scene to the detriment of the two combatants' names is utterly palpable, culminating in the exercise he makes of his authority by stopping the fight and then banishing them both.

But while the alleged justification they make to fight each other is that each one wants to prove the other "A traitor to my God, my king and me"(24), it is Bolingbroke who unearths, addressing his father John of Gaunt, the real reasons behind the fight: it is to:

> ….furbish new the name of John Gaunt,
> Even in the lust havior of his son.
>
> (I, iii, 76-7)

Thus, at the end of Act 1, with the banishment of the two fighters, Mowbray's name and Bolingbroke's and consequently his father's name are destabilized on behalf of the king's name. This goes in line with the belief that, despite the temporal challenge at the outset, the wheel of fortune is with the king throughout the first Act and the first scene of the second Act.[37]

In (II, i), the upsurge of the king's dominance culminates and his name is high on Fortune's wheel, a name on behalf of which Gaunt's

name curtails. The characters' obsession with their names is fairly elaborate in the conversation between Gaunt and Richard who pays his uncle a visit while on his deathbed. The attitude each of them has about the other is made clear by the king's invocation at the end of (I, iv) having heard that his uncle is dying:

> Now put it God, in the physician's mind
>
> To help him to his grave immediately!

> (I, iv, 59-60)

and by Gaunt's declaration of the reasons why he has sent for the king:

> Will the king come that I may breathe my last
>
> In wholesome council to his unstaid youth?

> (II, i, 1-2)

Once meeting the king, and setting no introductions, Gaunt gives expression to his nagging obsession:

K. Rich. What comfort, man? how is't with aged Gaunt?

Gaunt.O, how that name befit my composition!

> Old Gaunt indeed, and gaunt in being old:
>
> Within my grief hath kept a tedious fast,
>
> And who abstains from meat that is not Gaunt?
>
> For sleeping England long time have I watched,
>
> Watching bread leanness, leanness is all gaunt:
>
> The pleasure that some fathers feed upon

> Is my strict fast; I mean my children's looks
>
> And therein fasting hast thou made me gaunt:
>
> Gaunt am I for the grave, gaunt as a grave,
>
> Whose hollow womb inherits nought but bones.

K. Rich. Can sick men play so nicely with their names?

Gaunt. No, misery makes sport to mock itself-

> Since thou dost seek to kill my name in me,
>
> I mock my name, great king, to flatter thee.

K. Rich. Should dying men flatter with those that live?

Gaunt. No, no, men living flatter those that die.

K. Rich. Thou now a dying sayest thou flatterest me.

Gaunt. Oh, no, thou diest, though I the sicker be.

K.Rich. I am in health, I breathe, and see thee ill.

Gaunt. Now He that made me know I see thee ill.

> Ill in myself to see, and in thee, seeing ill.

(II, i, 72-94)

Haunted by Gaunt's speech before and after this passage, many critics' accounts accentuate the idea that Gaunt is solely obsessed by the ideal image of England to which Richard has brought ruin. "Now that he is dying he can allow himself to express a clear, straightforward judgment on the erring king and we feel the relief as he unburdens himself."[38] Therefore, Gaunt's judgment is always depicted as having a public concern, a concern motivated by his speech about "This royal throne, this sceptered isle/ This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars/ This other Eaden,

demi-paradise" which "is now bound in with stone", and is making "a shameful conquest of itself." (II, i, 40-2, 63, 66)

Minutely examined, however, Gaunt's chiding of the king reveals a personal concern, closely relevant to the public one always emphasized by critics: a concern about his name, terribly devastated by the king's actions. It is not only for the 'sleeping England' that he is chiding the king, but for he can't 'feed upon his children's looks, directly accusing the king: "thou seek to kill my name in me". For Bolingbroke has been banished, and he dying of grief, Gaunt's name, for which Boligbroke was ready to die, will no longer be. More important is the intentionality Gaunt ascribes to the king: he not only kills, but seeks to, which shows how conscious the characters are of the conflict as being one of, or at least manifested in a perennial oscillation of names. Had the characters treated proper names, as linguists do, as merely referring expressions, in no sense could they speak about the names killed, fought for, etc. Names, as we have shown are indicators of social identity and, consequently, form an inseparable aspect of the conflict that percolates the play.

The destabilizing of names should be seen in the broader sense of disorder that pervades the play. The Renaissance was a period, C. L. Barber reminds us, when people held that "names and meanings are fixed and final."[39]Both these senses, personal and public disorder, make a threat to the notion of Order which was "To the Elizabethans the most sensitive spot."[40]That's why, perhaps, these two senses are both expressed by Gaunt in deadly accurate terms.

No less significant "is that the violation has come right from the center. The king, the custodian of order, has himself broken the order of a

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formal occasion."[41] Not surprising, then, is that it is Gaunt who prophecies the collapse of Richard and, consequently, the eclipse of his name:

> Methinks I am a prophet new inspired-
>
> And thus expiring do foretell of him-
>
> His rash fierce blaze of riot cannot last;
>
> For violent fires soon burn out themselves,

<div align="right">(II, i, 31-4)</div>

The king's destabilizing of the nobles' names will lead to his name destabilized by others, for it was the king who played the first move.

And it so happens that Gaunt's prophecy holds true, and down is Richard in Fortune's wheel, for from the beginning of Act 2, the wheel starts turning mysteriously of itself…The will of the king seems paralyzed; he becomes an almost passive agent. Bolingbroke acts and acts forcibly."[42] On the one hand, we are told by Northumberland that, his fortune being confiscated, is back "With eight tall ships, three thousand men of war/ And shortly mean to touch our northern shores."(II, i, 286, 288) On the other hand, the king's Welshmen being dispersed, Salisbury sees "with the eyes of heavy mind", Richard's glory "like a shooting star/ Fall to the base from the firmament." (II, iv, 18-20) Now Richard is completely paralyzed by his dithering ineptitude as a monarch.

This inversion of power, which will run rapidly to the end of the play culminating in the deposition of Richard and his consequent death, is to be manifested, we are reminded once again by the characters, in a paralleled inversion of the power with which the names of the conflicting

characters are invested. John of Gaunt having died, the so far Henry Hereford is to inherit his title, Lancaster. Bolingbroke seems quite aware of the privileges his new name endows on him. The equation we have previously set between the proper name and social identity is so manipulated by Bolingbroke that he considers as no longer applicable the decrees so far pronounced against him. For, his name having been changed, his new social position is no longer susceptible to the previous decrees. This gets clearer in his interview with Berkley, who is sent from York:

> *North*. It is my lord of Berkley, as I guess.
>
> *Berk*. My lord of Hereford, my message is to you.
>
> *Bol.* My lord, my answer is to "Lancaster",
>
>   And I am come to seek that name in England,
>
>   And I must find that title in your tongue,
>
>   Before I Make reply to aught you say.
>
> *Berk*. Mistake me not, my lord, 'tis not meaning
>
>   To raze one title of your honour out.
>
>   (II, iii, 68-75)

Soon later, when accused by York of rebellion and treason for having come before the end of his banishment, Bolingbroke retorts:

> As I was banished, I was banished Hereford,
>
> But as I come, I come for Lancaster…
>
>   (II, iii, 113-4)

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So astute is Bolingbroke that he appeals to an undeniable law, that of heredity, to which York himself commits when chiding the king for his attempt to disinherit Bolingbroke:

> Take Hereford's right away, and take from Time
> His charters and his customary rights;
> Let not tomorrow then ensue today;
>
> (I, ii, 195-7)

Among Bolingbroke's inherited items, his father's name is the most salient, upon which all other items are incepted. His last name goes, and with it go all its discontents. As "new made honours doth forget men's names", now new given names evoke new honours that Berkley is reluctant to raze out. Once again, the name is not the referring expression linguists think it to be, but a indicator of social identity to which it is reciprocally related. Bolingbroke now being endowed with a new name, he is no longer the one he was when he swore to keep the oath administrated by the king. (I, iii, 182) And the name King Richard sought to kill, with the new balance of power at work, is now invincible.

The king's name, on the other hand, undergoes a similar inversion, From (III, ii) on, it will irremediably decline. And this can be ranged in two stages: first, when its power begins to be quarried, by the king himself before anyone else; and, second, when it is threaten to be ruled out. The first is blindingly obvious early in act III, after Salisbury tells the king that:

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> To-day, to-day, unhappy day too late,
>
> O'erthrows thy joy, friends, fortune and thy state,
>
> For all the Welshmen, hearing thou wert dead,
>
> Are gone to Bolingbroke, dispersed and fled.
>
> <div align="right">(III, ii, 71-4)</div>

The king's face turns pale for having lost, in one day, twelve thousand fighting men, the result being that "Time hath set a blot upon my pride." (81) Extremely depressed, the king is advised by Aumerle to remember who he is, to which Richard replies:

> I had forgot myself, am I not king?
>
> Awake thou coward majesty! Thou sleepest.
>
> Is not the king's name twenty thousand names?
>
> Arm, Arm, my name! a puny subject strikes
>
> At thy great glory.
>
> <div align="center">(83-7)</div>

The king's name is as great as the king himself. His soldiers having fled away, the king now appeals to his name which, so thinks he, is liable to restore the power on the behalf of the king. The escape of twelve thousand men is recovered by the king's name which is tantamount to twenty thousand names. But had this been expressed in a statement, it would have meant something quite different from what it really does. It is, rather, expressed in an interrogative form, to call into question, by the king himself, the power his name is said to have. It is, as the king proclaims once again, under the threat of a puny subject to strike at its

<div align="center">(27)</div>

great glory. Down with the king his name is seen falling and the question posed now is whether it is glorious any longer. To the king, at this stage at least, it may still hopefully be, building on the assumption that "my uncle York/ Hath power enough to serve our turn." (89-90) At this stage, Richard seems notoriously fickle. "Because Richard makes poetic speeches when he should be taking action, he seems inadequate to the demands of his royal role."[43]Moreover, it proved, for the audience before the king, futile to depend on the Duke of York whose dereliction and "weakness is to symbolize and intensify Richard's."[44] York himself, helpless to obviate the dilemma he is in, which will reduce him to a member of Bolingbroke's entourage, casts the blame on Richard: "Now comes the sick hour that his surfeit made/ Now shall he try his friends that flattered him." (II, ii, 84-5) And for the king's chagrin, his hope is to fade away very soon, for Scroop is coming to tell the king that "Both old and young rebel" (III, ii, 119) with Bolingbroke against the king, whose calamity culminates when told:

> And your uncle York is joined with Bolingbroke,
> And all your northern castles yielded up,
> And all your southern gentlemen in arms
> Upon his party.
>
> (200-3)

The threat at the king's name proves grave, serious, and, at this stage, irrecoverable. The deterioration of the king runs apace until, in Flint castle, we arrive at the second stage of the decline of the king's name,

where it is threatened of being razed out. There, Bolingbroke threatens, should his name not be accomplished, he will use the advantage of his power, and "to lay the summer's dust with showers of blood."(III, iii, 43), to which Richard asserts that before Bolingbroke can ever have the crown, " Ten thousand bloody crowns of mother's sons/ Shall ill become the flower of England's face,"(96-7) However, Northumberland, Bolingbroke's courier, assures Richard that Bolingbroke has come for   " his linear royalties", and those given him, " His glittering arms he will command to rust." (117) Richard instantly agrees to accomplish his cousin's demands "without contradiction". Told that Northumberland is returning back to Bolingbroke, the king throws up his hands in despair:

> What must the king do now? Must he submit?
> The king shall do it: must he be deposed?
> The king shall be contented: must he lose
> The name of king? A God's name let it go:

(143-6)

It may seem contradictory that the king himself, before anyone else, is speaking about deposition, taking into account the power at work then, his fears are quite understandable. No less significant, however, is the equation he draws between being deposed and losing his name. Now, his name, the least powerful it ever has been in the play, is not a mere word, but it represents the identity of the king, nowhere more desperate in the play than it is here. Once he is no longer king, his name turns inapplicable to him anymore. The name, the title included, is not merely a referring

expression, but a document that chronicles the character's career in all its fluctuations, its ups and downs. The eloquent speech that follows this extract is to intensify the helplessness of the king having lost his name.

This is winded up to a climactic point in the deposition scene (IV, i) when Richard yields his throne to Bolingbroke. There, York enters the Hall to announce that 'plume plucked' Richard, whom he represents, is yielding his high scepter to the possession of Bolingbroke's hand: "Ascend his throne, descending now from him/ And long live Henry, of that name the fourth." (IV, i, 111-2) Richard is sent for to announce this in front of the commons, which he does. Northumberland then insists that Richard read a paper in which are written the accusations against him and his courtiers, for which he remonstrates. Addressed by Northumberland as " My lord", Richard replies:

> No lord of thine, thou hought insulting man;
> Nor no man's lord, I have no name, no title;
> No, not that name was given me at the front,
> But 'tis usurped: alack the heavy day,
> That I have worn so many winters out,
> And now not know what name to call myself!
>
> (IV, i, 254-9)

The whole play can be said to hover around this process of rising and falling: the rise of Bolingbroke and the fall of Richard. York's line "Ascend his throne, descending now from him" forcefully expresses this process, already at work, and that culminates in this scene. This rise and

fall is also indicated, Margaret Healy reminds us succinctly, in the images of water and well:

> The well and water imagery works to reinforce this sense of equipoise- as one king rises, the other king falls. The skillfully weighted lines interspersed throughout the Parliament scene (for example: " On this side my hand, on that side thine" and " Your cares set up do not pluck my cares down" (173, 185) add to this sense of symmetry, and equally matched rights.[45]

As was seen, this process, of rise and fall, is, throughout the play, associated with and represented by a corresponding rise and fall of names, skillfully woven to assert that a character's name doesn't only refer but is the character him/herself.

Moreover, Richard is not only 'plume plucked' but also 'name plucked', the significance of which stems from the fact that it is York who calls Richard by his mere name. It was York himself, however, who demurred at Northumberland for ruling out the title of the king: "It would beseem the lord Northumberland, / To say King Richard…" (III, iii, 7-8) To rule Richard's name out entails the bestowing of a new name on Bolingbroke, none is ever possible without the other: "And long live Henry, of that name the fourth." At this very stage, the dialectic of names assumes another, deeper, and more serious dimension. So far, we have been examining names rising and names falling, but from now on, we are reminded by York, we must speak about names taken and names given.

York's role in this scene having been accomplished, it is Richard's turn to announce that he knows not name to call himself. But Richard's is more than a declaration, to inform others of what they have already recognized. To fully understand Richard's speech, one must recall what is always pointed out of Richard's verbose style, his " obsession with the compulsive verbalizing, his desire to keep up the stream of dialogue which places himself at the centre of attention" that leads him to " do anything to keep a self-dramatizing role."[46] To Richard, it is all over. True, he is giving his crown, willingly or not, and with it his name. But he reminds others, listeners, audiences and readers alike, that that his name is taken is but a sign of disorder, of the dangers of which he and the Bishop of Carlisle bluntly worn:

> The difficulty about naming is crucial and its ramifications are more than political. C. L. Barber has described the Renaissance as "moment when educated men were modifying a ceremonial conception of human life to create a historical conception", adding that in the ceremonial conception 'names and meaning are fixed and final'. So, when the ceremonial role of kingship is violated, names become unfixed. Richard's paradoxical strategy is to make his kingship seem irremovable, even in the act of removing it; one implication of this is that, if he is no king, he is nothing.[47]

At this stage, two levels of the dialectic of names can be discerned: the material and the legal. Recognizing that, in the material level, he can't remain a king any further, Richard begins, as the Bishop has just done, to quarry the legislative status of this dialectic, appealing to the Divine Right theory which he enthusiastically espouses. And though the material aspect of the conflict of names end where the main conflict in the play does, with the end of Act IV, the legislative aspect remains to trigger controversies throughout Act V and long after. As far as the second level is concerned, "Bolingbroke does indeed get the power; but in a real sense Richard manages to deny him the kingship."[48]This is nowhere better expressed than in his ironic invocation:

> God save the king! Although I be not he;
> And yet, amen, if heaven do think him me….

<div align="right">(IV, i, 175-6)</div>

The legal controversy begins, just where the material one ends. And Richard's dramatizing in this very scene proves advantageous. "For the rest of the play Richard is …a king and no king. And so, by logical inference, is Bolingbroke."[49] This is accentuated even by the stage scenery description, where York returns with King Richard, guarded and stripped of his royal ropes; Officers follow bearing the crown. The two, thus, are bare-headed while the crown is being borne by officers.

That the two are both kings and no kings can further be supported by the mode of address used by them and others. Richard tends to tell Bolingbroke king: "God save the king." (IV, i, 172, 4); "God save King

Henry, unkinged Richard says." (220); "What says King Henry? will his majesty/ Give Richard leave to live till Richard die?"(III, iii, 173-4), and he calls himself merely Richard in the last line. In Act V, this dialectic seems to be settled, but in reality it is not. Telling his wife about the coronation of the new king, York exclaims: "To Bolingbroke are we sworn subjects now, / Whose state and honour I for aye allow." (V, ii, 39-40) To the stable groom, Richard is king and no king: "I was a poor groom of thy stable, king/ When thou wert king…" (V, v, 72-3) And Richard grudges Bolingbroke the title of king: "Then am I kinged again and by and by/ Think I am unkinged by Bolingbroke."(V, v, 36-7) But even Exton, Richard's murderer, doesn't deny Richard this title: "Meaning the kings at Pamfret…come, let's go." V, iv, 10); "This dead king to the living king I bear." V, v, 117)

Given this lacuna of an optimum view, we could reckon the extent to which Richard succeeds in calling into question the legal status of he new king's name, earning, at the end of the play, the sympathies of the audience, as some critics assert.[50] And seen in the light of this chaos of naming, intended or not:

> the lessons of the play are not as easy as the lessons of
> Richard III, when we learn in the end that reconciliation
> is a god thing and that killing people is wrong. Instead
> we hear different voices trying to understand the world
> in different ways, and the overall effect is speculative.[51]

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Conclusion

The linguists' concern with and treatment of the problematic of the sense of proper names proves inadequate when dealing with the complex and protean phenomenon of literary names. However, the rare references, more often implied than stated, to s asocial dimension the name may assume, such as the performative function of the noun, are of considerable significance. It was upon such a ground, undemarcated though it is, that the approach used in this study is based. The noun not only refers to, but it really is the character. And a correspondence has been set between the social position a character may occupy and the ebb and flow to which his/her name is subject.

To reduce a character to the meaning of his/her name would lead to a static view wherein the name is a tag indelibly consecrated and which, once fixed, is hardly removable- a deterministic stance similarly. But names in literature are far from static. They are as dynamic as the dramatic world is, even markedly so. The name, rather, is in the essence of the conflict, a conflict which sometimes appears a conflict of names. However, the approach delineated here is not claimed to account equally for all dramatic works as it does in *Richard II.*

In *Richard II,* it has been shown that the main themes and concerns of the play are manifested in the dialectic (the word being non-technically deployed) of names that purveys throughout the play. The characters' roles and positions indicate and are indicated by the oscillation of these names throughout the play. The power of the king's name , which stems from the pertinacity of his bearer, is at its peak just as the play gets started, a name on the behalf of which other names, esp. Bolingbroke's,

do yield. But as the action goes on, the king's name, once again just as his bearer, begins to be maligned. The rise and fall of the two main characters, best indicated by the 'well' image, is corresponded by a similar ebb and flow of their names. In Act Four, Bolingbroke's names, just as his bearer, is high on Fortune's Wheel, and, no less significantly, the king (if king he can be called) knows not what name to call himself. In the last Act, however, the legal status of Bolingbroke's kingship is called into question and a new chaos of names is to prevail to the end of the play.

It is through this dialectic of names that one of the most important themes of the play is given prominence, namely the stability of the relation between words and what they refer to. The instability of names, as one aspect of disorder condemned in premodern England, is highly at work in this play, which proves the idea that this play presents a transition from a medieval, feudal system to an early modern political one. The play is far from anchoring the old certainties. It, rather, quarries these certainties, a fact further shored up by the open quality of the plot of the play. It is never ended, nor does it provide the reader with ready-made answers. What the reader gets, instead, is a collection of speculations whose results would be suggested by every reader alone.

Notes

[1] See Randolf Quirk and Sidney Greenbaum, A University Grammar of English (London: Longman Group Limited, 1973), p 78.

[2] Ibid, p. 60.

[3] For some of these fields, see Tim Valintine et al, The Cognitive Psychology of Proper Names: On the Importance of Being Earnest (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 5-19.

[4]Ibid., p. 8.

[5] See Valintine et al, pp. 8-10.

[6] Robert Tyas, ed. The Works of Shakespeare (London: Paternoster Row, 2007). This edition will be used throughout the study.

[7] Anna Pilotova, A User's Guide to Proper Names: Their Pragmatics and Semantics, (Prague: AMOS, 2005), p.21.

[8] The Social meaning of an expression is that aspect of the expression whose use is governed by rules of social conduct or rules informing social interaction. It is part of the meaning of the word, just as the descriptive meaning is. The expressive meaning is also part of the meaning of some expressions. It conveys some feeling, sensations and attitudes of the speaker. For a discussion of these types of meaning, see Sebastian Lobner, Understanding Semantics (London: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 17-39, and John Lyons, Semantics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp.50-5.

[9] Lyons, p. 202.

[10]   Jerrald   J.   Katz,   "Names   Without   Bearers", www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/philo/cou   rses/concepts/katznames.html, Accessed at 1/12/2007, p. 4.

[11] It is worth noting that the two terms 'denotation' and 'connotation' have ranging, and even confusing uses. In literary studies, 'denotation' means the exact or literal meaning of a word, while ' connotation' means the implied or suggested meaning of the word, or the emotional attitude to be shared by both speaker and hearer. See Jaccob Korg, *An Introduction to Poetry* (New York: Halt, Pinehort and Winston, 1966), p.36. In the philosophical literature, and the way they are being used by Mill, they have different senses in which they correspond to the terms 'extension' and 'intension'. The collection or class of objects denoted, or referred to by a names is the denotation or extension of that name. The characteristic or attitude that allows the application of the word to the objects of the same class is the connotation or intension of that word. See Irving M. Copi, *Introduction to Logic* (New York: Machmillan Publishing Co. Inc, 1982), pp154-5.

[12] John S. Mill, *System of Logic*, reprint 1949, p.22, quoted in Pilatova, p. 25.

[13] Lyons, p. 219.

[14] Scott Smith-Bannister, *Names and Naming Patterns in England: 1538-1700* (Oxford: The Clarendom Press, 1997), p. 181.

[15] Michael Ragusis, *Acts of Naming: The Family Plot in Fiction* (Oxford: oxford University Press, 1986), p. 7.

[16] Frank Nussel, *The Study of Names: A Guide to the Principles and Topics* (London: Greenwood Press Westport, 1992), p. 39.

[17] Jordon Stump, *Naming and Unnaming: On Raymond Queneu* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), p.1.

[18] Roger Fowler, *Linguistics and the Novel* (London: Methuen & Co.Ltd., 1977), p36.

[19] Valintine, p. 13.

[20] See Lyons, p. 220.

[21] Lyons, p. 222.

[22] Nussel, p. 101.

[23] Ibid., p. 103.

[24] I owe a great deal to Copi in the distinction he draws between these three types of connotation: subjective, objective and conventional. To him, the subjective connotation of a word I the set of attributes that the speaker believes to be the true intension of the word. The objective connotation is the set of all characteristics shared by the extensions of the word, as they are really in nature. The conventional connotation is the set of attributes agreed upon by the speakers to be the criterion to include the extension of the word. But three points of caution need be made here. First, the objective connotation needs an omniscient speaker, and is almost impossible to achieve. That's why it is excluded by Copi and us alike. Second, Copi is discussing the connotation of the common nouns, not the proper nouns, as is being done here. Third, he depends on the semantic content of the word, but we do depend on the pragmatic associations. For the definitions of these terms, see Copi, pp. 155-6.

[25] Nussel, p. 2.

[26] Valintine, et al, p. 6.

[27] Ibid., p. 16.

[28] Nussel, p. 16.

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[29] For more details and examples, see Nussel, pp. 19-24. It is to be mentioned that some writes (Lyons, p. 218), following anthropologists, attach certain ritual and magical significance to the performative re-nomination, regarding it as part of the 'rites of passage'. But, as should have been clear, to explain this phenomenon with relevance to social identity the way we did would demystify it, thus dispensing with the magical interpretation.

[30] Stump, p. 11.

[31] Lyons, pp. 217-8.

[32] Nussel, p. 3.

[33] For the orthodox and radical interpretations of the play, see Margaret Healy, "Richard II', in *Shakespeare: Text and Context*, ed. Kiernan Ryan (London: Machmillan, 2000), pp. 49-81.

[34] John Dover Wilson, "The Political Background of Shakespeare's *Richard II* and *Henry IV*" in *A Shakespeare Reader: Sources and Criticism*, ed. Richard Danson Brown and David Johnson (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 2000), p. 102.

[35] Ibid., p. 98.

[36] See Healy, p. 53.

[37] Wilson, p.102.

[38] Alexander Leggat, *Shakespeare's Political Drama: The History Plays and the Roman Plays* (London: Rutledge, 1988), p. 56.

[39] C. L. Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* (Princeton NT: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 139.

[40] Wilson, p. 96.

[41] Leggat, p. 61.

[42] Wilson, p. 102.

[43] Phyllis Rackin, " The Role of the Audience in Shakespeare's *Richard II*" in *Shakespeare Quarterly*,ed. John F. Andrews. Vol. 36, No.3 (New York: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1985), p. 286.

[44] Ibid., p. 277.

[45] See Healy, p. 63.

[46] Ian Johnston, " The Issue of Language: Introduction to Richard II and Hamlet", agreg-ink.net/litt/2005/shakes4.html. Accessed at 15/11/2006 , p. 3.

[47] Leggat, p. 69.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

[50] See Wilson, pp. 103-4.

[51] Leggat, p. 58.

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