

## What's in a Name? The "G" Prophecy and the Voice of God in Shakespeare's *Richard III*

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Dans cet article, il s'agit d'examiner l'exploitation des noms dans quelques prophéties shakespeariennes afin de comprendre dans quelle mesure ces noms expriment « la voix de Dieu ». On a choisi de se pencher sur les noms secrets en germe dans la prophétie dans *Richard III* selon laquelle un certain « G » sera l'assassin des héritiers d'Édouard. En trahissant, avec cette prophétie, son frère George, Richard prophétisera sa propre chute. Ce n'est pas George qui viendra se venger de son frère trompeur, cependant, mais le patron de l'Angleterre, *saint* George, par le biais de son héraut, Richmond/Rougemont, c'est-à-dire Henry Tudor. On montrera comment, à travers une utilisation métonymique des noms, Shakespeare attire notre attention sur la parabole dynastique au fondement de la légitimité et de l'autorité des Tudor.

This paper analyses the manner in which Shakespeare uses names in prophecies to see to what extent these names express "the voice of God." It examines more specifically the secret names contained in the "G" prophecy in *Richard III*. When he crafted his prophecy to condemn his brother George, Richard prophesied his own ruin. However, it is not George, the first victim in the play, who will come to exact revenge on his duplicitous brother, but the patron saint of England, *Saint* George, in the guise of Richmond/Rougemont, also known as Henry Tudor, his standard-bearer. With this analysis, I will show how Shakespeare's metonymic use of names calls our attention to the dynastic parable which lays the foundations of Tudor legitimacy and authority.

The liminary prophetic construct in *Richard III* flouts its ambivalent nature by suggesting *at least* two conflicting interpretations. Initially, we are told that Richard's "prophecy which says that "G" / Of Edward's heirs the murderer shall be" (1.1.39-40) designates Edward's brother Clarence, "for [his] name of George begins with G" (58).<sup>1</sup> And yet, an Elizabethan audience, used to such

▼ 1. W. Shakespeare, 1981, [1597], *Richard III*, A. Hammond (ed.), Walton-on-Thames, Thomas Nelson and Sons, Arden Second Series. All quotes from this edition.

puns and aware of many details of the history of the Wars of the Roses, would have fairly quickly divined that “G” *also* referred to Richard, Duke of Gloucester – Edward Hall says as much in his *Chronicle*.<sup>2</sup> This said, nowhere in *Richard III* are we given a hint that Richard is conscious of the fact that his fake prophecy *could* have been interpreted as designating *himself*: this linguistic l(i)ability might strike one as odd, given Richard’s usually artful manipulation of public discourse. Nor have *we*, the audience, much time to entertain the thought that “G” could designate *someone else* other than these two sons of York – perhaps even God himself, or the Holy Ghost, or some other Ghost, punishing Edward and his heirs for their sins. It would no doubt be blasphemous to call God a “murderer,” but then, he who penned the prophecy *is* blasphemous and “[pre?] determined to prove a villain” (30). Furthermore, as Howard Dobin recalls, the “G” prophecy also figures prominently in the *Mirror for Magistrates* in which Clarence *begins* by proposing God as one of the possible names with a “G”:

For God, a gleve, a gibet, grate or gate,  
A Grave, a Griffeth, or a Gregory,  
As well as George are written with a G. (quoted in Dobin, 1990: 64)

What the audience remembers, in the end, is that though Richard’s prophecy was an artefact or tactical ploy designed to incriminate his brother and rival, Clarence, rather than a prophecy produced by a trustworthy prophetic method or divinely inspired practice, the prophecy ultimately and ironically proved true. We are faced with the liar’s paradox: sometimes, one *can* believe a liar’s lie.

Shakespeare made great use of names with a prophetic intent, taking advantage of their linguistic and symbolic attributes which underpin a conception of the self and of predestination which are the stuff that prophecies, and not just dreams, are made of. *Nomen erat omen*. Names are omens: *because* I was given a particular name, I am doomed (or destined) to fulfill the fate traditionally associated with it. Names are not just signs, or omens, they can be agents, or prophets, *προφητῆς*, that is, they can “speak before,” as well as “speak forth,” as if to say: “my name speaks forth my destiny,” or “my name speaks for me before I do.” This does not mean to say, of course, that all names are *successfully* prophetic, that every “Caesar” will necessarily become *a* Caesar, only that names *can* be prophetic – indeed, they are *intended* to be so.

In what follows, then, I will try to analyse the manner in which Shakespeare uses names in prophecies to see to what extent these names express “the voice of

▼ 2. Hammond quotes fol. ccxxxix: “The effect of [a folysh Prophesey] was, after king Edward should reigne, one whose first letter of hys name shoulde be a G. and because the devel is wont with sych wytchraftes, to wrappe and illaueat the myndes of men, which delyte in such develysh fantasyes, they sayd afterward that that Propheisie lost not hys effect, when after Kyng Edward, Glocester usurped hys kyngdome” (*ibid.*: 341).

God." Like *onomantes* of old,<sup>3</sup> I chose to examine the other, secret "G" names contained in *Richard III*. It is my contention that Shakespeare's metonymic use of names calls our attention to a dynastic parable which lays the foundations of Tudor legitimacy and authority.

### A gallimaufry of names

Though names were typically thought of as signs through which members of a household were individuated, many in the Renaissance had a number of misgivings with traditional naming conventions. Since names are mostly *inherited*, naming conventions make names *inherently* unstable markers of what we would now call "identity." Certain names can become so common as to become useless. Early on in his essay "Of Names," Montaigne tells the story of too many Williams at a banquet held by Henry the Young King, Henry II's ill-fated son:

It is an idle matter, yet nevertheless, by reason of the strangenesse, worthy the memorie, and recorded by an ocular witness, that *Henrie* Duke of *Normandie*, sonne to *Henrie* the second King of *England*, making a great feast in *France*, the assembly of the Nobilitie was so great, that for pastimes sake, being, by the resemblance of their names, divided into severall companies: in the first were found a hundred and ten Knights sitting at one table and all called *Williams*; besides private gentlemen and servants. (Montaigne, 1603: book I, chap. XLVI, "Of Names," 149)<sup>4</sup>

Montaigne goes on to criticize the naming fashion of the day, with its innumerable and tasteless processions of Peters, Williams, or Michaels. Instead, he favors a more imaginative and poetic onomastic system, inspired by Greek, Roman, or Christian history:

Item, shall not succeeding posteritie say that our moderne reformation hath been exact and delicate, to have not only oppugned and resisted errors and vices, and filled the world with devotion, humilitie, obedience, peace, and every other kinde of vertue, but even to have combated their ancient names of baptisme, *Charles*, *Lewis*, *Francis*, to people the world with *Methusalem*, *Ezechiel*, *Malachie*, much better feeling of a lively faith? (*ibid.*)

Names such as these, Montaigne argues, are bulwarks against impiety and vice-inspiring names for dissolute times. Some names should be avoided altogether,

▼ 3. "Onomante: a deuiner by names" (J. Florio, 1611, *Queen Anna's New World of Words, or Dictionarie of the Italian and English tongues*, London, Printed by Melch. Bradwood, for Edw. Blount and William Barret).

4. I wish to thank Ann Lecercle who attracted my attention to this chapter.

not because they are too common, but because they are “sometimes taken in ill part” or “fatally affected,” such as “*Iacke, Hodge, Tom, Will, Bat, Benet*, and so forth” and “*Henries in England, Charles in France, Baldwins in Flanders, and Williams in our ancient Aquitanie*” (*ibid.*: 148-149). Shakespeare seemed to agree with this: the histories, which contain a great number of prophecies of doom and civil strife, illustrate the fatal destiny of the Henries in England.

Montaigne also rails against vanity, the subject of another essay and a *topos* to which he often turns in order to decry contemporary fads. Vanity is when one’s “name” is not the token of individuality but a by-word for one’s fame or reputation in the world, a narrative of one’s accomplishments worthy to be recorded by chroniclers to the delight of future generations, but actually a presumably inflated account of deeds of no real, lasting merit. It would seem that the French moralist frowns upon any attempts by men to make a name for themselves, though he congratulates parents who try to shape their children’s character by giving them “fierce and magnificent” names of old. In so doing, he testifies to the ambivalent nature of names, which can be meaningless, or meaningful: children are named either according to the custom of the land, in which case their all too common names do not serve their individuating purpose, or with more “ancient” names, more virtuous, memorable and inspiring.

### “The king’s name is a tower”

The inspired, “ancient” roots which gave rise to the ambivalent nature of names are to be found in two early and contrasting Biblical episodes. In the first, Adam bestows a name “unto every living creature,” in the course of a God-willed nomination ceremony which posits a stable (if not rational) taxonomy meant to be used throughout the ages (Genesis 2.19-20).<sup>5</sup> This system is upset not long after the Fall, after men’s rambunctious attempt to “make [themselves] a name” by building a huge tower that would reach “unto heaven.” The second episode, then, in which men wish to bestow a name *unto themselves*, is when God decides to “confound their language” and “scatter them upon the face of the earth” – a fate which was *precisely* what men had wanted to avert by building their tower in the first place (Genesis 11.4-9). The result is a gallimaufry of tongues.<sup>6</sup> It seems men could name *other* living creatures, but could not give *themselves* a name, as if to say that men are not masters of their *own* destiny, though they can be masters of *other* people’s destinies. Likewise, Montaigne castigated the vain who *make*

▼ 5. I am quoting from the Authorised Version of the Bible (1611).

6. Montaigne begins his chapter “Of Names” with a culinary comparison: “What diversitie soever there be in herbs, all are shuffled up together under the name of a sallade. Even so upon the consideration of names I will here huddle up a gallymaufry of diverse articles” (Montaigne, 1603: 148).

much of their name and fame, instead of being content of trying to live up to the name that was *given* to them at birth.

I would like to argue that the Biblical story of Babel serves as a backdrop to the story of the *other* tower which plays such a prominent role in *Richard III* as the *locus* of the full realization of Richard's prophecy, where George and his nephews, Edward's heirs, are murdered. I am, of course, alluding to the Tower of *London*. The Tower embodies not so much the king's *authority* as it does the king's *name*: "the King's name is a tower of strength," Richard says (5.3.12) in another allusion to the Old Testament and its proverb,<sup>7</sup> "The name of the LORD is a strong tower" (Proverbs 18.10). Paradoxically, it is the King's name which lends the Tower its authority, not the other way around.

It would be tempting to conclude that, since God is replaced by the King in Richard's version of the Biblical proverb, Richard's "G" prophecy can be read as meaning that the King himself is the murderer of Edward's heirs, as indeed he is. However, I would like to argue that the "name [who] is a tower of strength" is not Richard's – too many will abandon him on the battlefield for his name to be as strong as a tower – but that of him who first built the Tower, one who had *two* names in "G," one with G, one with /dʒ/: Gaius Julius Caesar. Caesar is insistently mentioned in the course of a dialogue conspicuously absent from Shakespeare's sources.<sup>8</sup> In Act 3, scene 1, Edward's heir, Prince Edward, muses on the Tower's origin:

PRINCE. I do not like the Tower, of any place.  
 Did Julius Caesar build that place, my lord?  
 BUCKINGHAM. He did, my gracious lord, begin that place,  
 Which since, succeeding ages have re-edified.  
 PRINCE. Is it upon record, or else reported  
 Successively from age to age, he built it?  
 BUCKINGHAM. Upon record, my gracious lord.  
 PRINCE. But say, my lord, it were not register'd,  
 Methinks the truth should live from age to age,  
 As 'twere retail'd to all posterity,  
 Even to the general all-ending day. (3.1.68-78)

This strange passage dwells on the need to re-examine the past, as evidenced by the accumulation of synonyms prefixed with *re-*: *re-edified*, *record* (twice), *reported*, *register'd*, *retail'd*. One might add to these repetitions the alliterative use of /dʒ/, such as with the doubly echoic iambic dimeter "from age to age" (73, 76) – a double "G" to balance Caesar's double "G" name.

From age to age, the Tower must serve as a reminder – but of what? Of Caesar, that "famous man"? Of Brutus' treason, akin to Richard's? Of Britain's

▼ 7. As pointed out by editors. See Shakespeare, 1981, [1597]: 308.

8. Hammond: "There is no precedent in the sources" (*ibid.*: 214).

defeat against Rome, to urge the Prince to reconquer England's French possessions? Of Babel and the folly of men, the Tower being the symbol of Gloucester's *hubris*, built, as it were, with the corpses of his victims? The Prince stresses the need to remember the truth as to who built the Tower. He expresses himself in an apocalyptic and exalted tone: "Even to the general all-ending day [...] the truth should live from age to age," perhaps to denote his romantic patriotism, more clearly expressed later on in the scene.

But why must we reflect on the *possibility* that the truth be *not* "register'd"? What is the hermeneutic use of *that* hypothesis? Perhaps his wish that "truth" about the origins of the Tower should be "upon record," and not simply "reported," is a *prelapsarian* longing for stable *written* "truths," in lieu of a less dependable *oral* transmission – as if scriptural signs were more trustworthy than slippery phonemes. As the adage puts it, *verba volant, scripta manent*. Alas, at this point of the dialogue, and as if to illustrate this point, Richard interrupts the Prince with an aside and an ominous pun, and we are left with a witty, yet hollow-sounding, conclusion:

GLOUCESTER. [*Aside*] So wise so young, they say, do never live long.

PRINCE. What say you, uncle?

GLOUCESTER. I say, without characters, fame lives long.

[*Aside*] Thus, like the formal Vice, Iniquity,

I moralize two meanings in one word.

PRINCE. That Julius Caesar was a famous man:

With what his valour did enrich his wit,

His wit set down to make his valour live.

Death makes no conquest of this conqueror;

For now he lives in fame, though not in life. (3.1.79-88)

When Richard "moralizes two meanings in one word," he plays with the fact that he lives in a *postlapsarian* world – the world of Babel –, in which words have no fixed meaning or, rather, where they have almost nothing in common. If it were not for the antistrophe, it is difficult to see how Richard's two sentences can possibly be mistaken the one for the other: "So wise so young do never live long" and "without characters, fame lives long" sound markedly different. After Richard's incomprehensible pun there follows the Prince's lame moralizing chiasmus and antitheses, and we are given no answers to our questions about the "truth" of the Tower.

### Of ghosts and guilt

Two acts later, Richard discovers that now that he is king he has little time to enjoy himself. After having taken pleasure in living in a fallen world in which he could "moralize two meanings in one word," creatures whose existence

rests on the assumption that man is become mortal come back to haunt their murderer. There are no ghosts in Paradise, but they are legion in the ante-chamber of "hell's black intelligencer" (4.4.71). As if to turn the Prince's moral conclusion of Act 3 on its head, ghosts "now living in *shame*, though not in life," appear in sequence in Richard's tent: thus, the ghosts of Young Prince Edward, son to Henry VI, the ghosts of Henry VI, Clarence, Rivers, Grey, Vaughan, Hastings, of the two princes, of Lady Anne and of Buckingham all appear onstage and cry out "Despair and die" to their murderer, while prophesying rival Richmond's success on the battlefield (5.3.118-177).

A moment before Richard starts up of this dream peopled with "the Soules of all that [he] had murther'd," he cries out "Have mercy, Jesu!" (179), a rare exclamation in the Shakespearean canon – and another "G" name, which we find almost exclusively in the early Histories, no doubt because of increased censorship.

Richard then falls into a lengthy philosophical argument with himself, as if to illustrate the problem I have mentioned earlier on the difficulty for man to define one's "self" by himself. This is evidenced in this passage by a number of epistrophes: Richard ends most clauses with "myself," a self torn in two or more pieces, a word which should be written in two words, "my self," as in the quartos.

What do I fear? Myself? There's none else by;  
 Richard loves Richard, that is, I and I.  
 Is there a murderer here? No. Yes, I am!  
 Then fly. What, from myself? Great reason why,  
 Lest I revenge? What, myself upon myself?  
 Alacke, I love myself. Wherefore? For any good  
 That I myself, have done unto myself?  
 O no, alas, I rather hate myself  
 For hateful deeds committed by myself.  
 I am a villain – yet I lie, I am not! (5.3.183-192)

It is as if Richard were discovering that *he* is his *own* worst enemy, another "G" in the prophecy of his own making – the murderer of Edward's heirs, now become heir himself to Edward's crown, is soon to be hoisted by his own petard, assailed by an army of vengeful Ghosts created by his own "coward conscience" (5.3.180).

We have come full circle, returning to the liar's paradox: "I am a villain – yet I lie, I am not," "I am a murderer, yet I am not," "I love myself, yet I hate myself." The result is a confusing picture with, like a hundred Williams at Henry's banquet, a hundred Richards onstage, each vying for the king's attention and capable, as during the battle, of "more wonders than a man" (5.4.2). The first quarto emphasizes this divided self by italicizing a number of first person pronouns in Richard's "self" speech – *not all* pronouns, as if one

could distinguish one “I” from another. Modern editors tend to eliminate the italicized pronouns, just as they prefer to spell “myself” in one word. Doing so, they obfuscate the strange relationship between self and self, or between “I and I,” to use Richard’s expression, as if “I” was yet *another* “G” name for Richard, no longer just Gloucester or his Ghosts, but *ego*, both “conscience” and “I,” each ready to proclaim him, in “G,” “Guilty, Guilty!”

This guilt takes on Biblical overtones: not only can he continue to “moralize two meanings in one word” by accumulating antithetical sentences saying he is, and is not, guilty of some thing or other, he literally speaks “a thousand several tongues,” like all men after Babel, while he ascends (or descends from) his tower of “sins,” a tower with which he hoped to bestow the name of king upon himself, going step-by-step, that is, by “degrees,” from “perjury” and “murder” to unequivocal “guilt,” all of these terms being repeated for good measure:

My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,  
 And every tongue brings in a several tale,  
 And every tale condemns me for a villain:  
 Perjury, perjury, in the highest degree;  
 Murder, stern murder, in the direst degree;  
 All several sins, all used in each degree,  
 Throng to the bar, crying all, “Guilty, Guilty!” (5.3.194-200)

When prince Edward, standing before the Tower, spoke of the need to believe a truth “not register’d,” did he mean to say that some truths could not be registered simply because they were yet to become manifest? Was he thus warning Buckingham of the extent of Richard’s villainy? Or must we believe that Richard’s sins are being finally set down in writing, or registered, in a court of law, as the Ghosts “throng to the bar” to proclaim Richard’s guilt?

### **From Richard to Richmond: “The dog is dead”**

According to Howard Dobin:

The Old Testament explicitly provides the criterion by which true prophecy could be distinguished from false: “When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, this is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously” (Deut. 18.22). The only test was whether the prediction indeed materialized. According to the Deuteronomic rule, the *G* prophecy cannot be a dark lie as Clarence contends [in the *Mirror for Magistrates*], but true and divinely inspired foreknowledge. (Dobin, 1990: 66-67)

This does not mean to say, of course, that the “G” in the prophecy is God himself, only that it is God who lends this prophecy its performative power.



In *Richard III*, many characters appeal to God, hoping to endow their words with just such a performative power, but none is so successful in her appeals as Queen Margaret, the only self-avowed prophet in the play. Early on, she says to Richard's future victims, assembled on stage: "And say, poor Margaret was a prophetess" (1.3.301). Subsequently, all will acknowledge the prophetess' prophesying prowess. It is she that calls Richard "hell's black intelligencer," concluding with an apocalyptic *tableau* in which Richard is seen devoured by Hell, in a scene somewhat reminiscent of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (5.2), performed only three years earlier, in 1588 – only Richard, unlike Faustus, is "determined to prove a villain" and will not relent.

QUEEN MARGARET. But at hand, at hand,  
 Ensues his piteous and unpitied end.  
 Earth gapes, hell burns, fiends roar, saints pray,  
 To have him suddenly convey'd from hence.  
 Cancel his bond of life, dear God I pray,  
 That I may live and say "The dog is dead." (4.4.73-78).

In Act 1, Margaret had already called Richard a dog whose bites are venomous. In Act 4, her last words onstage – this is her last appearance – "The dog is dead," will be repeated, almost *verbatim*, by the triumphant Richmond, a few moments before the end of the play: "God, and your arms, be prais'd, victorious friends: / The day is ours; the bloody dog is dead" (5.5.1-2). I would like to argue that this "dog" is not only a by-word for Richard, it is also the anacyclic, or palindromic opposite, of "God." D-o-g is the mirror opposite of g-o-d, thus literally embodying the figure of *antichrist*, the reverse, or opposite of Christ. The "G" prophecy, would seem to indicate, in its fiendish complexity, that any name *containing* the grapheme "G" (/g/ or /dʒ/) is the murderer of Edward's heirs – not just names *beginning* with "G."<sup>9</sup> This said, even if Richard is the one designated by the "G" prophecy, not only as Gloucester but also as the dog of Antichrist, the prophecy's traditional "secret" meaning remains fairly straightforward. I have still not accounted for the truth we are to find in the episode related to the Tower.

The Tower, as we know it, is the symbol of the confusion of tongues, as well as the symbol of royal and divine authority. It is, of course, also an elevated building, reaching (however modestly) "unto heaven." I would like to argue that Prince Edward's talk about the "unregistered" truth as to who founded the Tower is a *dynastic parable*. What we must not forget is the name of the man who founded the tower of strength, Elizabethan England, one Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, founder of the Tudor dynasty, grandfather of Elizabeth I.

▼ 9. Edward Hall, on the other hand, had clearly said that the "first letter of hys name should be a G." See *supra*, note 2.

Henry VII is never referred to as “Henry” in *Richard III*; instead, he is called “Richmond” or, on occasion, “the Breton.” Revealingly, he is *also* referred to, in a confusion of tongues, as the *castle of Rougemont*, in an episode that is only found in Holinshed’s *Chronicle*.<sup>10</sup> Thus, Richard cries:

Richmond! When last I was at Exeter,  
 The Mayor in courtesy showed me the castle,  
 And call’d it Rougemont, at which name I started,  
 Because a bard of Ireland told me once  
 I should not live long after I saw “Richmond.” (4.2.101-8)

This comes just a moment after Richard says:

I do remember me, Henry the Sixth  
 Did prophesy that Richmond should be King. (4.2.94-95)

To borrow an onomastic pun from *2 Henry VI*, Richmond’s name is, “rightly sounded,” Rougemont.<sup>11</sup> What distinguishes the two names is, phonetically speaking, the difference between the only two affricates used in English: /tʃ/ and /dʒ/, thus making Richmond *another* “G” name by paronomasia. As befits a world after Babel, the confusion between these names, one French, one English, stems from the fact that they were probably undistinguishable to the ear when pronounced by an Irishman, as Richard says it is. Even today, English speakers would no doubt have trouble pronouncing the French “Rougemont” in a manner markedly different from the English “Richmond,” even though both names hark back to Norman toponyms, *Rougemont* and *Richemont*, and were spelled in very similar fashion.

I mentioned earlier the fact that the Tower scene, absent from Shakespeare’s sources, insists on the prefix *re-*. This prefix, I wish to argue, is the *onomastic* link between the Tower and Richmond, a link obscured by a gallimaufry of names.

Richard reminds us that Rougemont castle is in Exeter. The castle was built with volcanic red stone on a hilltop, which is where the “rouge” and the “mont” come from. If Richmond is Rougemont, then Buckingham’s assertion that “succeeding ages have *re-edified*” the Tower should be read as: “succeeding ages have *reddified*” the Tower, since the latest re-edification of the proverbial “tower of strength” of the king’s authority is effected by a “red” Richmond-

▼ 10. The editor of the Arden edition recalls that “The story Richard recounts here appears only in Holinshed (745/2-746/1); the source was John Hooker (alias Vowell) of that city (mentioned by Holinshed in a shoulder-note) and the date of Richard’s visit was November 1483” (Shakespeare, 1981: 270).

11. Suffolk says to his Nemesis, Walter Whitmore, “Thy name is *Gualtier*, being rightly sounded” (*2 Henry VI*, 4.1.37). Likewise, Somerset is told to “shun castles” by the wizard Bolingbroke (1.4.66), a prophecy that will turn out to refer to the sign of a tavern, “underneath an alehouse’ paltry sign, / *The Castle in Saint Albans*” (5.2.66-68) – another prophetic castle.

Rougemont, who puts an end to the Wars of the Roses, adopting what is now known as the Tudor Rose, with its red rose with a white inlay, joining the White Rose of York and the Red Rose of Lancaster.<sup>12</sup> Incidentally, the resulting heraldic emblem looks like the map of a castle as seen from above, with a white inner courtyard surrounded by red battlements, bloodied, as it were, after nearly a century of civil war.

### What's in a name?

*What's in a name? That which we call a rose  
By any other name would smell as sweet.  
(Romeo and Juliet, 2.2.43-4)*

The patriarch of the new dynasty embodies a multitude of names, Richmond, Rougemont, "the Breton," God's providential emissary... as if to illustrate Richard's bitter calculations on his day of reckoning: "I think there be six Richmonds in the field: / Five have I slain today instead of him" (5.4.11-12).<sup>13</sup>

Unlike Juliet to Romeo, Richard cannot say to Richmond "'Tis but thy name that is my enemy" (*Romeo and Juliet*, 2.2.38). Richmond's *name* is much more than Richard's enemy: it is his *fate*. When he crafted his prophecy to condemn his brother George, Richard prophesied his own ruin: after having murdered Edward's heirs and become Edward's heir himself, he is, in turn, condemned to die in the hands of "G." It is not George, the first victim in the play, who will come to exact revenge on his duplicitous brother, but the patron saint of England, *Saint* George, in the guise of Richmond, also known as Henry Tudor, his standard-bearer, who cries to the soldiers before the battle: "God, and Saint George! Richmond and victory!" (5.3.271). Perhaps one could wonder whether the history of this victory, *Richard III*, is not Shakespeare's early attempt at ingratiating himself with the powers that be – as if he were trying to make a name for himself, thus justifying Greene's attack, in 1592, against an "upstart crow", one year after *Richard III* was first staged in London.

▼ 12. John of Gaunt, before becoming Duke of Lancaster, was Earl of Richmond. This Lancastrian ascendancy might account for the dominant red in the Tudor Rose.

13. A piece of information that is, according to editors, another of Shakespeare's inventions. See Shakespeare, 1981, [1597]: 328.

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Montaigne, Michel de, 1603, *The essayes or morall, politike and millitarie discourses of Lo: Michaell de Montaigne*, John Florio (trans.), London, Val. Sims for Edward Blount.

Shakespeare, William, 1981, [1597], *Richard III*, Antony Hammond (ed.), Walton-on-Thames, Thomas Nelson and Sons, Arden Second Series.

Type of Work William Shakespeare's Richard III is a stage play that is both a history and a tragedy. It is the last of the four Shakespeare plays that focus in part on the Wars of the Roses. The others were Henry VI Part I, Henry VI Part II, and Henry VI Part III. Although there are many murders in the play, it is not a whodunit but a character study of the remorselessly evil title character. Composition and Publication. Richard III was probably written between 1591 and 1593. Richard III was first performed in the 1590s, although the place of its performance and the exact date of its debut are uncertain. It is likely that the play was performed at the Globe Theatre after it opened in 1599. A record exists that the play was performed at the royal court in November of 1633. Sources. Richard III. William Shakespeare. BUY. BUY. Richard and Clarence then talk disparagingly of the queen and of the king's mistress, Jane Shore, whom they accuse of ruling the kingdom by gossip. Brackenbury intervenes, not wishing to overhear such dangerous talk. Insisting that there is no question of treasonable discourse, Richard then demonstrates his wit and sense of irony as he slyly speaks of the "noble Queen" and catalogues the attractions of Jane Shore. Elizabeth is especially concerned with what her fate will be if her husband should die. As she points out to Lord Grey, her young son, the Prince of Wales, is "put unto the trust of Richard Gloucester," whom she knows to be her enemy and that of all the Woodville faction. But what's the matter, Clarence? May I know? CLARENCE. Yea, Richard, when I know; for I protest As yet I do not; but, as I can learn, He hearkens after prophecies and dreams, And from the cross-row plucks the letter G, And says a wizard told him that by G His issue disinherited should be; And, for my name of George begins with G, It follows in his thought that I. ANNE. Set down, set down your honourable load If honour may be shrouded in a hearse; Whilst I awhile obsequiously lament Th' untimely fall of virtuous Lancaster. Poor key-cold figure of a holy king! Pale ashes of the house of Lancaster! Thou bloodless remnant of that royal blood! Track 2 On. Richard III. View Tracklist. Richard III Act 1 Scene 1. William Shakespeare. The scene opens with Richard (known as Gloucester in the text) addressing the audience directly. Richard mentions a prophecy that has been in the rumor mill, which states that someone beginning with the letter 'G' will murder Edward's heirs; he hopes Edward will think it's George, Duke of Clarence. Sure enough, Clarence arrives, having just been arrested for plotting against Edward's children. He blames Queen Elizabeth (whom he refers to by her first married name, Lady Grey), and also blames her for Hastings' imprisonment, saying she's controlling the King. Clarence's guard Brackenbury asks Richard for help getting him out soon, and Richard agrees. Richard III is a continuation of the story he started in that trilogy, but now he has a central character that can dominate the play in his own right and be a focus for the audience; and for the first time he has a character of real psychological depth, that we can identify with and be repulsed by. The play was published in the First Folio as The Tragedy of Richard the Third and this is indeed history combined with tragedy; this play provides the template for Shakespeare's great tragedies to follow and is a kind of ghostly early vision of Macbeth in particular. The play, which is Shakespeare's second longest after Hamlet, begins with a famous soliloquy by Richard: Now is the winter of our discontent. By drunken prophecies, libels and dreams, To set my brother Clarence and the king.