

Dreams of Bloody Deeds Adapting *Richard III*

Joan Herrington

In the dark twentieth century, bloody with genocide, Shakespeare's *Richard III* resonates deeply. Its villain, an archetype of evil ambition propelled by his extraordinary gifts, is Shakespeare's most vicious character, one of his most seductive, and one most relevant to our time. For all these reasons, I chose to direct a college production of this play. But it is a cumbersome play, a lengthy puzzle of confusing historical and personal references. How then to emphasize its relationship to our lives, to drive home its message, and to clarify its theme for both my students and a contemporary audience without sacrificing its integrity?

The path I chose was most heavily influenced by the attitudes of the young population I was serving. Thus, I aimed to deemphasize the motivations of the individual central character and concentrate instead on those larger themes which reflected my students' political perspective: obsession with personal power, evasion of personal responsibility, a lack of effort toward vision and understanding, and an inability to recognize how all these tendencies give rise to evil genius against whom we profess ourselves to be powerless.

As I headed into production, I revised the script in an effort to explore the responsibility for Richard's ruthless reign and to show how those around him allow, and even abet, his rise to power through apathy or greed. Inherent in the play are many questions of personal conviction and responsibility which were important for my students to consider: Why are we so responsive to Richard's uncanny capacity to sweep us along in his vision? Why do we admire his ensuing ability to silence the conflict between his supporters and opponents? And how is it that he overcomes the existence of the moral force which we all believe is ever present in our world?

My multi-faceted task began with streamlining the play's plot and dialogue to clarify the most relevant relationships and events. I also needed to establish the role and responsibility of each character while retaining the counterpoint to Shakespeare's consideration of

the power of fate and prophecy and their ability to generate the popular laissez-faire attitude; and, I chose to replace the play through extensive cutting and radical reconfiguration of scenes to create an atmosphere of urgency—one which reflected my students' contemporary world.

Aside from the extensive cutting, the most radical script work I undertook entailed the rearranging and repetition of text. This was done first to emphasize how the power and clarity of Richard's vision is central to his ability to overcome opposition; indeed, it is because he, like many in our lives, can form the future in his mind that others follow him. In my adaptation, the future which Richard envisions is made palpable to the audience, presaging scenes which appear later. Text and action recur, appearing first as Richard foretells an event and again as it actually occurs; for example, as Richard orders the death of the princes, we hear Elizabeth's lament over their death.

Text was moved again in an effort to directly juxtapose the arguments for and against Richard's rule. This debate, presented at different moments in the original text, is brought together in clamorous counterpoint in the adaptation. The result is that we witness, aurally, how important words are lost in the din of many voices, important warnings are drowned out.

[Lights up on several places on the stage revealing FOUR CITIZENS. The following CITIZEN dialogue is repeated twice. First alone and then simultaneously with the CHORUS and RICHARD.]

Cit 1. Hear you the news abroad?

Cit 2. Yes, that the King is dead.

Cit 1. By God's good grace, his son shall reign.

Cit 2. His son shall reign.

Cit 3. Hear you the news abroad?

Cit 2. Yes, that the King is dead.

Cit 4. By God's good grace, his son shall reign.

Cit 2. His son shall reign.

Cit 3. Woe to that land that's govern'd by a child.

Cit 4. But he is counceled by his uncle.

Cit 3. He is governed by his uncle.

Cit 2. He is protected by his uncle.

[The CITIZENS exit and the CHORUS and RICHARD repeat their dialogue, simultaneously.]

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Chor. Oh how the awful glory wraps his soul!
Oh full of danger is the Duke of Gloucester,
Darkness be hung; more lives must yet be drain'd.
Crowns sought with blood, must be with blood maintained.
Woe to that land that's govern'd by a child.

Rich. Oh how the awful glory wraps my soul!
Nor can the means that got thee dim thy lustre;
For not men's love, fear, pays thee adoration,
Darkness be hung; more lives must yet be drain'd.
Crowns sought with blood, must be with blood maintained.

As evidenced here, to further illustrate the complex choice characters made to follow Richard, I also added a Chorus to personify the moral presence that exists in all of the characters in the play but which has no voice in the original text. This involved the most potentially controversial script work and it was the aspect which most intrigued my students. The Chorus' text, pulled from this and other Shakespeare plays, raised for all of us questions of our own moral fortitude and our willingness to see the truth and speak the truth.

Creating a play in which the action moves quickly was crucial to my purpose. Like ours, Richard's is a world in which it is difficult to keep up. In a barrage of mis- and disinformation, events speed forward, turning participants into bystanders. Thus, the editing, and the subsequent reorganization of the text, were central to my process and that is where I began.

Richard III is a long play and I aimed to cut one-third of the text. In preparation, I turned to versions of the play which had been performed by Edmund Kean, David Garrick, John Gielgud, Ian McKellan, and others. I read their texts, considered the editorial cuts they and their writers had made, and discovered an interesting phenomenon: every one of these great actors had eliminated the deposed Queen Margaret in the play. Why?

Strictly from a production point of view, Margaret is inherently threatening to the actor playing Richard. No other character in the play has the potential to challenge Richard for center stage. So certainly for the nineteenth- and twentieth-century star, she was expendable. But the elimination of Margaret negates the consideration of many complex issues which relate directly to explorations of power and to man's responsibility for his actions, both crucial elements in my examination of man's behavior.

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Be Margaret merely prophetess, peering into the future and predicting the downfall of her enemies, or one who not only predicts but actually helps to determine the fate of those enemies, she introduces into the play the existence of dark forces beyond the human plane—forces whose power mankind may either tap into for strength and support or to whom mankind may fall prey.

Marg. Should curses pierce the clouds and enter heaven?
Why then give way, dull clouds, to my quick curses!

The question of man's relationship with these forces, his ability to control them or not, deeply affects the play's examination of issues of personal responsibility.

But the forces invoked in the play are not all dark. In ironic juxtaposition, Margaret also introduces the presence of a God whose avenging of immoral behavior is invoked by many characters throughout the play:

Marg. And so wast thou, Lord Hastings, when my son
Was stabb'd with bloody daggers: God, I pray him,
That none of you may live his natural age,
But by some unlook'd accident cut off!

These inclusions were central to my vision as I focused on those parts of the text that addressed such questions as: Are we responsible for our own actions? Are we responsible for intervening in the actions of others? Or is everything in God's, or fate's, hands?

Throughout the play, Shakespeare indicates which characters decline to take responsibility for trying to deter Richard from his actions by invoking fate or God. The Citizens, in Act II, Scene III (also eliminated from most edited versions) are some of the clearest examples, as their text consistently refers to a God who determines the course of all events: "Neighbors, God Speed!...God help the while!... By God's good grace his son shall reign....if God prevent it not...but, if God sort it so...leave it all to God."

Thus, if my production was to focus on considerations of human responsibility, the inclusion of Margaret and the Citizens was imperative. In fact, the Citizens would come to hold an even more prominent place in my production than in the original play.

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However, before I delved too deeply into structuring my text thematically, I needed to address a potential deterrent to the audience's ability to consider the play's central questions. The inclusion of Margaret is inherently problematic. Of all the characters, Margaret comes most clearly out of the cycle of Henry plays which precede *Richard III*. Her history with the characters of this play and her relationship with Richard have all been determined before the start of *Richard III*. If she were to be included, an audience unfamiliar with the Henry plays needed background information. So I lifted text from the third part of *King Henry VI* which clarifies Margaret's responsibility in the death of Richard's youngest brother, Rutland, and her subsequent banishment. I adapted this text, and interpolated it into Act I, Scene III, in which she curses her enemies and foretells the future.

At the same time I was interpolating this and additional text from *Henry VI*, I was also editing out characters and historical references which complicated the story by leading the audience into a complex web of family and political relationships. To this end, for example, Elizabeth's brothers and her sons by her first marriage, Woodville, Rivers, Dorset and Grey, were combined into one character, and only her brother Rivers appears in my text. Together Rivers and Elizabeth represent a significant enough threat to Richard.

Other characters were also melded together or eliminated, some in order to streamline the production, some to clarify and heighten its themes. For example, the two opposing forces of religion—the true Archbishop of Act II, Scene IV, and the hypocritical Cardinal of Act III, Scene I—through whom Shakespeare commented on Renaissance clergy, were cut. I chose consistently in the adaptation to cut characters for whom modern audiences would lack important contexts for understanding their relevance. Thus cut also were references and plot dependent on Mistress Shore, a character known to Shakespeare's groundlings but not to ours.

References to past battles, both military and political, were almost all eliminated. Discussion of past events were cut to keep the focus only on the present. Following my streamlining of the history, I did a general shortening of the text, pulling dialogue, for example, from many of the lengthier scenes, Anne/Richard (1.1), the entreatment of Richard (3.7), Elizabeth and Richard (4.2). All of these cuts served to significantly quicken the pace of the show. But still they were insufficient; large sections needed to be deleted which required not only cutting but restructuring.

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As I proceeded, I strove to create an atmosphere of urgency and intensity, to communicate the idea that evil rises quickly; its success is often determined by its lightning speed. Act III, which opens with the arrival of the young prince with his potential challenge to Richard, marks the point in the play where Richard chooses to pursue such speed in an effort to blind those who might oppose him.

To relay this most effectively to the audience, I focused on an extensive editing and reorganization of Act III, cutting or modifying every scene to create an unimpeded movement toward the murder of Hastings. The first scene, the welcoming of Young Prince Edward, was shortened with the removal of Lord Hastings, the Cardinal, and the subsequent editing of the two Princes' dialogue. Thus, the scene moved quickly into Buckingham's instructions to Catesby for testing Hastings' allegiance. My goal was to provide Hastings' assassination a rapid, seemingly unstoppable progression illustrating how Richard is able to move forward, seemingly without opposition.

At the conclusion of the first scene in Act III, I changed the timing of Buckingham's final lines. The scene originally ended with Richard sending Catesby off to define Hastings' allegiance. Following his departure, Buckingham asks what will happen if Hastings does not join with Richard. Then Hastings' execution is arranged later in the fifth scene, during the Council meeting.

In the adaptation, Catesby's departure is delayed and Buckingham's query is delivered in his presence. Thus, Richard's reply—"Chop off his head"—becomes an instruction, as opposed to a provisional plan, as it was in the original.

Buck. . . . Go, gentle Catesby,
And as it were afar off, sound thou Lord Hastings
How he doth stand affected to our purpose.
If thou dost find him tractable to us,
Encourage him, and tell him all our reasons;
If he be leaden, icy, cold, unwilling,
Be thou so too, and so break off the talk,
And give us notice of his inclination:
For we tomorrow hold divided Councils,
Wherein thyself shalt highly be employ'd.
Rich. Tell him, his dangerous adversary
Rivers we had hung today at Pomfret.

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Buck Now, my lord, what shall we do if we perceive

Lord Hastings will not yield to our complots?

Rich. Chop off his head;

Cat. Indeed, I go, my lord.

[*Exit CATESBY.*]

Thus Catesby is sent off with a clear and deadly directive, a change which is necessary to justify altering the timing of Hastings' death.

In the original text of the next scene, Act III, Scene II, Stanley's messenger enters to warn Hastings of Richard's intent. Then, Catesby enters and, in conversation with Hastings, concludes that he is unwilling to support Richard's rise to power. Catesby leaves and Stanley enters to continue his appeal to his friend. His words unheeded, Stanley exits. The series of duets create a slow pace for this sequence and Hastings' condemnation does not come until later.

I eliminated the messenger, and Stanley himself comes first to warn Hastings. The combination of Stanley's extended personal appeal and our witnessing of Richard's instruction to Catesby provide the scene greater weight as he pleads with Hastings to flee. Hastings is alone when Catesby arrives, and when Catesby finds Hastings reluctant to support Richard, he immediately fulfills Richard's bloody directive. There is no hesitation, no further discussion, no time for reconsideration or opposition; the adaptation is a rarification of the feeling Shakespeare described in the scene wherein the Scribes note the ironic timing of Hastings' indictment *following* his hasty death.

The speed of this entire progression was enhanced by cutting two full scenes in Act III—Scene IV, the preparation for the execution of Rivers, Grey, and Vaughn, and the council meeting, and Scene V, in which Richard traps Hastings. Later in the play, the scene of Buckingham's execution was also cut to facilitate faster pacing.

Ultimately, this was problematic as the impact of the deaths of Buckingham and Rivers was important to establish Richard's continuing destructiveness. So I chose to emphasize the bloodshed in other ways. In Act IV, Scene IV of my adaptation, instead of merely asking for Buckingham to be brought to him, Richard now asks for Buckingham's head. And to dramatically emphasize Rivers' death, my text calls for his hooding, in preparation for execution, at the conclusion of Act II. This was presented in dumb show as his sister the Queen learns

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of his imprisonment. Then, his hanging body is revealed in Act III, Scene I, just as Richard speaks to young Prince Edward of his "dangerous uncles."

I used the dumb show to create the effect not only of events happening quickly but also happening simultaneously. I also chose to intercut other scenes to afford the audience a vivid sense of the simultaneity of events occurring in different places. The most dramatic example of this was the insertion of the murder of Clarence (1.4) into the scene where King Edward makes peace among the nobles (2.1). This was achieved by dividing Clarence's murder into two parts. Following Richard's employment of the Murderers, we move, as in the original text, to Clarence's retelling of his nightmare. As the Keeper bids Clarence to rest, lights rise on the King in his court. King Edward admonishes the nobles' quarrels and Richard enters in a proud show of feigned humility.

Rich. A blessed labour, my most sovereign lord.

Among this princely heap—if any here
By false intelligence or wrong surmise
Hold me a foe—
If I unwittingly, or in my rage,
Have aught committed that is hardly borne
By any in this presence, I desire
To reconcile me to his friendly peace:
'Tis death to me to be at enmity;

In the adaptation, as Richard denies his guilt, we return to the tower to witness the murder of Clarence:

[Lights fade as RICHARD is talking. Lights up on the Tower. Enter the two MURDERERS.]

IM. Ho, who's here?

Brak. What would'st thou, fellow?

And how cam'st thou hither?

IM. Show him our commission, and talk no more....

As soon as the murder is completed, we return to Richard, mid-speech, proclaiming his innocence. As the transition occurs, the repetition of a line of his text reinforces the simultaneity of the action.

Herrington

Clar. [to 2M] My friend, I spy some pity in thy looks:

O, if thine eye be not a flatterer.

Come thou on my side, and entreat for me;

As you would beg were you in my distress.

A begging prince, what beggar pities not?

2 M. Look behind you, my lord!

1 M. (*Stabs him.*)

[*Blackout on Tower. Lights up on KING EDWARD, QUEEN ELIZABETH, RIVERS, HASTINGS, and BUCKINGHAM, and RICHARD.*]

Rich. If any here hold me a foe—

If I unwittingly, or in my rage,

Have aught committed that is hardly borne

By any in this presence, I desire

To reconcile me to his friendly peace:

'Tis death to me to be at enmity;

I hate it, and desire all good men's love.

I thank my God for my humility.

This juxtaposition also adds dramatic effect to the conclusion of this scene when Queen Elizabeth asks King Edward to pardon Clarence. With the simultaneity of action, the court learns of Clarence's death only moments after it has occurred, and Edward's lament at the conclusion of the scene, bemoaning his own rashness, more pointedly reveals how the speed of events facilitates destruction.

The second significant intercutting in my adaptation occurs in Act V, as Richard and Richmond prepare for battle. The goal was to streamline the dramatic arc toward the play's conclusion and to present the current and future kings in direct opposition. Since Buckingham's execution scene was cut from my text, Act V begins with Richmond's first address to his men. Then I eliminated both the dialogue between Richmond and his men which concludes Act V, Scene II, and the dialogue between Richard and his men which begins Act V, Scene III. Thus Richmond's first address directly abuts Richard's first address:

SCENE I

[*Lights up on RICHMOND, alone.*]

Richmond. Fellows in arms and my most loving friends,

Bruis'd underneath the yoke of tyranny;

Herrington

Thus far into the bowels of the land
Have we march'd on without impediment;
And here we receive from our ally Stanley
Lines of fair comfort and encouragement
Gloucester, the bloody and devouring boar,
That spoil'd your summer fields and fruitful vines,
Swills your warm blood like wash, and makes his trough
In your embowell'd bosoms—this foul swine
Is now even in the centre of this isle,
Near to the town of Leicester, as we learn.
From Tamworth thither is but one day's march:
In God's name, cheerly on, courageous friends,
To reap the harvest of perpetual peace
By this one bloody trial of sharp war.

SCENE II

[Lights on KING RICHARD, alone.]

K. Rich. Up with my tent! Here will I lie tonight—
But where tomorrow? Well, no matter where.
Why, our battalia treble that account!
Besides, the King's name is a tower of strength
Which they upon the adverse faction want.
Up with the tent! Come, noble gentlemen,
Let us survey the vantage of the ground.
Call for some men of sound direction;
Let's lack no discipline, make no delay:
For, lords, tomorrow is a busy day!

[With poles and streamers of two different colors, the symbolic tents of Richard and Richmond are set up on opposite sides of the stage.]

The juxtaposition of the two scenes rarifies the conflicting nature of the two men. Richmond's invocation of God's name stands in direct opposition to Richard's invocation of his own name. Richard's tone is one of command; Richmond encourages. Even Shakespeare's brilliant use of sound contrasts the souls of these men. Richard's excessive use of the letter "T" emphasizes his staccato impatient nature while Richmond's "F's" and long vowels comfort his listeners.

Continuing this conflicting alignment, this effort, in mid-scene III, I assigned some of Richard's dialogue to Richmond so as the scene switches between their camps, the words reprise and even in

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my production, overlap, ironically emphasizing the contrast between the men.

Richmond. Good night, good captain Blunt.

[Exit Blunt.]

Let us consult upon tomorrow's business;

Into my tent: the dew is raw and cold.

I'll draw the form and model of our battle;

Give me some ink and paper. I will not sup tonight;

[Richmond and Oxford withdraw into the tent. RICHMOND'S GUARDS remain by the door.]

[Lights up on KING RICHARD, RATCLIFFE, LOVELL, and CATESBY]

K. Rich. Give me some ink and paper. I will not sup tonight.

Is all my armour laid into my tent?

Cat. It is, my liege, and all things are in readiness.

Additionally, I cut Richmond's meeting with Stanley so that Richmond and Richard prepare for bed simultaneously. The seeming similarity serves to emphasize the differences: Richard retires curtly with pomp and circumstance, reconfirming his own importance; Richmond falls to his knees, entreating God to welcome his honorable service.

K. Rich. Bid my guard watch; leave me.

Ratcliffe, about the mid of night come to my tent

And help to arm me. Leave me, I say.

[Exit RATCLIFFE. RICHARD withdraws into his tent; RICHARD'S GUARDS remain by the door. Low light on RICHARD. Low light on RICHMOND as he kneels.]

Richmond. O Thou, whose captain I account myself,

Look on my forces with a gracious eye;

Put in their hands Thy bruising irons of wrath

That they may crush down, with a heavy fall,

Th'usurping helmets of our adversaries;

Make us Thy ministers of chastisement,

That we may praise Thee in the victory.

To Thee I do commend my watchful soul

Ere I let fall the windows of mine eyes:

Sleeping and waking, O defend me still!

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[Simultaneously each man lies on his bed to sleep. Lights low on each. Enter the ghost of Prince Edward of Wales.]

To keep the action moving forward, the Ghosts in my text address only Richard, their voices overlapping, each one heightening Richard's sense of damnation. The elimination of the ghosts' address of Richmond created a much more effective nightmare for Richard, an uninterrupted barrage of curses. Their manifestation to Richmond is revealed to the audience only after he awakens:

[Enter OXFORD to RICHMOND sitting in his tent, in armor.]

Oxford. Good moor, Richmond.

Richmond. Cry mercy, my good and watchful Oxford,
How far into the morning is it, lords?

Oxford. Upon the stroke of four.

Richmond. Why then 'tis time to arm and give direction.

If dreams should animate a soul resolv'd,

I'm more than pleased with those I've had tonight.

Methought the souls whose bodies Richard murdered,

Came to my tent and cried on to victory.

Oxford. A good omen sir. Hark the trumpet of
The enemy. It speaks them on the march.

The change in the ghosts' text also reinforces the contrasting consciences of the two men. Since Richmond's dream has no direct presence for the audience, it becomes more a product of his personal mind set. Thus, Richard's nightmare becomes more a revelation of his growing guilt.

Finally, the parallel action of Act V was established by the intercutting of Richard and Richmond's addresses to their troops. The result is a dramatic quickening of the pace as the men head into battle.

Richmond. If you do fight against your country's foes,
Your country's fat shall pay your pains the hire;
If you do fight in safeguard of your wives,
Your wives shall welcome home the conquerors;
If you do free your children from the sword,
Your children's children quits in it your age.

Herrington

Then, in the name of God and all these rights,
Advance your standards, draw your willing swords!

[The lights dim before RICHMOND finishes and rise on RICHARD. For a few lines, the two speak simultaneously. Then the lights fade on RICHMOND.]

K. Rich. If we be conquer'd, let men conquer us!
And not these bastard Bretons, whom our fathers
Have in their own land beaten, bobb'd, and thump'd,
And in record left them the heirs of shame.
Shall these enjoy our lands? Lie with our wives?
Ravish our daughters?

Thus the delivery continues and to conclude the battling oration, I chose to have Richard repeat a section of his text so that he and Richmond are actually speaking simultaneously for an extended period. Their verbal battle, delivered in isolated spaces, foreshadows their oncoming physical encounter; Richard is already losing ground, falling into his pattern of rallying his men with fear and harsh words ("Bastard Bretons, beaten, bobb'd") as Richmond re-establishes his place in God's light.

[RICHARD and RICHMOND speak simultaneously.]

Richmond. If you do sweat to put a tyrant down,
You sleep in peace, the tyrant being slain.
If you fight again'st God's enemy,
God will, in justice, ward you as his soldier,
Sound, drums, and trumpets, boldly and cheerfully!
God, and Saint George! Richmond and victory!

K. Rich. If we be conquer'd, let men conquer us!
And not these bastard Bretons, whom our fathers
Have in their own land beaten, bobb'd, and thump'd,
And in record left them the heirs of shame.
Shall these enjoy our lands? Lie with our wives?
If we be conquered, let men conquer us.

[Drums are heard afar. KING RICHARD continues alone and the lights go out on RICHMOND.]

K. Rich. Hark, I hear their drum.
Fight, gentlemen of England! Fight, bold yeomen
Draw, archers, draw your arrows to the head!

Herrington

Spur your proud horses hard, and ride in blood!
Amaze the welkin with your broken staves!

Richard foresees victory. It is the only time his prescience plays him false. Heretofore, Richard has always been a visionary, and it is the power of his vision which overtakes those in his presence and sweeps them along in his wake. Thus, it was important, in the context of my adaptation, to establish his tremendous power of prophecy, which I did by consistently splicing in text to suggest that he can see—quite literally—into the future.

Early in the play, for example, as Richard sets his plan in motion, he sees clearly in his mind the gratifying moment when Elizabeth will mourn her husband, the King.

Rich. Go you before, and I will follow you.

[Exit HASTINGS]

He cannot live, I hope, and must not die
Till George be pack'd with post-horse up to Heaven.
I'll in to urge his hatred more to Clarence,
With lies well-steel'd with weighty arguments;
And if I fail not in my deep intent,
Clarence hath not another day to live:
Which done, God take King Edward to his mercy,
And leave the world for me to bustle in.

[In Richard's pause, he hears ELIZABETH'S voice as she is lit in isolation, upstage]

Eliz. O that my eyes could weep away my soul:

Edward, my lord, thy son, our King, is dead.

[Lights fade on Elizabeth and are up only on Richard.]

Rich. For then I'll marry Warwick's youngest daughter.

What though I kill'd her husband and her father?

The readiest way to make the wench amends

Is to become her husband, and her father:

But yet I run before my horse to market:

At the conclusion of Act I, Scene II, as Anne exits, text was inserted to indicate that Richard envisions the manner in which he will orchestrate her death:

Herrington

Rich. Sirs, take up the corpse.

Bear. Towards Chertsey, noble lord?

Rich. No, to Whitefriars; there attend my coming.

[*Exit the CORPSE BEARERS*]

Rich Was ever woman in this humour woo'd?

Was ever woman in this humour won?

I'll have her, but I will not keep her long.

[*In Richard's pause, he hears Catesby's voice, as he is lit, upstage, speaking the words that Richard later orders him to speak.*]

Cat. Give word that Anne his wife is grievous sick.

Give out his queen is sick and like to die.

Rich. I'll have her, but I will not keep her long.

What, I that kill'd her husband and his father:

To take her in her heart's extremest hate,

With curses in her mouth, tears in her eyes,

The bleeding witness of her hatred by,

Having God, her conscience, and these bars against me

Again, the presence of Catesby in this scene reinforces Richard's powers to simultaneously foretell and shape the future; it reveals both his extraordinary strength and cunning—a deadly pair.

In Act II, when Richard and Buckingham plan for Rivers' death, Richard hears (and the audience sees) the Prince's disappointment when his uncle does not greet him in London. In Act III, as Richard sends the young princes to the tower, he hears Elizabeth lament her separation from her children. And later in this act, as Richard goads the Mayor into assisting in his plan, I inserted the skeptical words uttered by young Prince Edward in another context, so that they ring in Richard's ears and encourage him to send Buckingham off to ensure the success of his plan.

Rich. And to that end we wish'd your lordship here,

T'avoid the censures of the carping world.

Buck. Which, since you come too late of our intent,

Yet witness what you hear we did intend:

And so, my good Lord Mayor, we bid farewell.

[*As the LORD MAYOR exits, lights come up on the young PRINCE.*]

Prince. God keep me from false friends but they are none.

Rich. Go after, after, cousin Buckingham:

Herrington

The Mayor towards Guildhall hies him in all post.
There, at your meet'st advantage of the time,
Infer the bastardy of Edward's children;

What makes Richard so dangerous is his ability to clearly envision the construction of his evil—to calculate potential problems, carefully evaluate his options, and then drive forward with tremendous clarity. It is an ability resulting from the ironic combination of his confidence and paranoia.

But Richard is not the only character who can envision the future. Indeed, everyone in the play knows, to a certain degree, what is coming. The extent to which they are willing to acknowledge the future, and the way their exact vision of the future is shaped, is determined by their personal goals. Thus Buckingham is able to see Richard's potential for the destruction of his own enemies but is unable to tend Margaret's warning to "heed yonder dog."

To further consider this issue of insight, I built on Shakespeare's contrast of the blindness of most of his characters with the extreme awareness of the children in the play, the Princes and Clarence's son and daughter. They are not only more clear-sighted than their elders, but more willing to face up to the grimness of the world in which they live. While the murder of one brother by another is too difficult for many of the older characters to envision, at the conclusion of Clarence's dream (I.IV), I inserted a passage in which his children seem to see into the future:

Clar. Keeper, I prithee sit by me awhile:

My soul is heavy, and I fain would sleep.

Brak. I will, my lord; God give your Grace good rest.

[CLARENCE lies down to sleep. As the lights fade, we see his children.]

Boy. Tell us, Grandam, is our father dead?

Girl. Why do you weep so oft and beat your breast?

Boy. Tell us, Grandam, is our father dead?

Girl. Why do you weep so oft and beat your breast?

[Lights out on CHILDREN.]

Additionally, by cutting text in Act III, Scene I, when the Princes arrive in London, the young boys become more knowingly subdued,

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less instruments of "taunt and scorn," as Richard describes them, as they realize their fate.

To heighten the contrast between the sightless and the prescient, I again used the Citizens to represent those who continually refuse to recognize the oncoming destruction. Though my adaptation gives them no more text than the original, they appear more often, and their dialogue, spread out over several scenes, was adapted to create a jarring rhythm reflective of the discordance in their world. I also edited their lines to emphasize their abdication of responsibility as they reconcile events and find comfort in their own limited perspective:

{Lights up on several places on the stage revealing FOUR CITIZENS.}

- Cit 1.* Hear you the news abroad?
Cit 2. Yes, that the King is dead.
Cit 1. By God's good grace, his son shall reign.
Cit 2. His son shall reign.
Cit 3. Hear you the news abroad?
Cit 2. Yes, that the King is dead.
Cit 4. By God's good grace, his son shall reign.
Cit 3. Woe to that land that's govern'd by a child.
Cit 4. But he is counceled by his uncle.
Cit 3. He is governed by his uncle.
Cit 2. He is protected by his uncle.

In the adaptation, they reappear in Act III, Scene I. As Richard plans the murder of Hastings, they convince themselves that all that has happened is God's will:

- Cit 3.* He is governed by his uncle.
Cit 4. He is counceled by his uncle.
Cit 1. Truly the hearts of men are full of fear.
Cit 2. Before the days of change still it is so.
Cit 3. For by his straight face shall you know his heart.
Cit 2. Come, come, we fear the worst. All will be well.
Cit 4. All will be well if God does sort it so.
Cit 1. Come, come, we fear the worst. All will be well.

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And they return in Act III, Scene II following Hasting's death, continuing to seek the path of least resistance.

- Cit 3.* I think there's never a man in Christendom
Can lesser hide his love or hate than he;
For by his face straight shall you know his heart.
- Cit 4.* Can lesser hide his love or hate than he;
For by his face straight shall you know his heart.
- Cit 1.* And when the Duke spoke to the boy he wept
and pitied him and kindly kissed his cheek.
- Cit 2.* And then he sighed and, with a piece of Scripture,
Told us that God bids us do good for evil.

In this final appearance, all of their dialogue is taken from other characters in the play as they make excuses for, or outrightly deny, Richard's evil deeds.

In direct contrast to this continual denial of evil, as voiced by the Citizens as well as many other characters, I created a Chorus of four women. In a world where almost no one will risk her life to save another, they are a plea for us to look, a cry for us to act. They are the voice in our hearts and on our streets, the voice we ignore.

The dialogue for the Chorus, who sometimes speak in unison, sometimes individually or in groups of two, three, or four, all comes from words spoken by the characters in this and other Shakespeare plays, which I adapted in such a way as to make the Chorus seem omniscient. The inclusion of the Chorus provided a range of creative possibilities within the text but I was particularly interested in having them speak their lines at the same time that other characters were speaking, creating simultaneous dialogue. Richard's world is alternately ominously silent and clatteringly noisy. It is in its noise, its confusion, that individual responsibility is diminished and evil flourishes.

The Chorus first appears at the end of Act I, Scene I as Richard concludes the presentation of his plan to the audience:

- Rich.* For then I'll marry Warwick's youngest daughter.
What though I kill'd her husband and his father?
The readiest way to make the wench amends
Is to become her husband, and her father.
But yet I run before my horse to market.

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[Lights up on the CHORUS who speak simultaneously with RICHARD. Each set of lines is said twice with emphasis first on the CHORUS and then on RICHARD.]

Chor. 'Tis now the dead of night and half the world
Is in a lonely solemn darkness hung.
Beware the dreams of bloody deeds and death;
Fainting, despair, despairing hold thy breath

Rich. Darkness behind; more lives must yet be drain'd
Crowns sought with blood, must be with blood maintained.
But Clarence breathes, Edward lives and reigns;
When they are gone, then must I count my gains.

[Exeunt.]

In Act I, Scene II, as Anne gives herself over to Richard, the Chorus reminds her of her former vehemence:

Rich. But shall I live in hope?

Anne. All men, I hope, live so.

Rich. Vouchsafe to wear this ring.

Anne. To take is not to give.

[The following lines are spoken simultaneously with emphasis on the CHORUS.]

Rich. Look how my ring encompasseth thy finger:
Even so thy breast encloseth my poor heart;
Wear both of them, for both of them are thine.
And do confirm my happiness for ever.

Chor: This deed inhuman and unnatural
Provokes this deluge most unnatural.
O, cursed be the hand that made those holes.
Cursed be the hand that made those holes.

[Richard continues, alone.]

Rich. Look how my ring encompasseth thy finger:
Even so thy breast encloseth my poor heart;
Wear both of them, for both of them are thine.
And if thy poor devoted servant may
But beg one favour at thy gracious hand,
Thou dost confirm his happiness for ever.

In production, the Chorus is also the voice of the audience within the play. We, too, have insight into the future, we see the error of the

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characters' ways and a part of us wants to cry out as the Chorus does. Thus, they present an entrée, an encouragement, an option for action.

In Act I, Scene III, as Richard gloats over the success of his plan and tries to draw the audience to his side, a single voice reminds us of his nature.

Rich. I do the wrong, and first begin to brawl:
The secret mischiefs that I set abroad
I lay unto the grievous charge of others.
Clarence, whom I, indeed, have cast in darkness,
I do beweepe to many simple gulls,
And tell them 'tis the Queen and her allies
That stir the King against the Duke my brother.
Now they believe it, and withal whet me
To be reveng'd on Rivers and her kin.

[Lights up on a single CHORUS member who speaks simultaneously with RICHARD.]

Rich. But then I sigh, and, with a piece of Scripture,
Tell them that God bids us do good for evil:
And thus I clothe my naked villainy
With odd old ends stol'n forth of Holy Writ,
And seem a saint, when most I play the devil.

Chor: From forth the kennel of the earth hath crept
A hell-hound that doth hunt us all to death:
That dog, that had his teeth before his eyes,
To worry lambs, and lap their gentle blood;
That excellent grand tyrant of the earth.

Because the Chorus has no specifically defined character within the play, their voices can be heard in different ways—a warning from within, a reprise of a prophecy, an anonymous cry for salvation. For example, as Richard woos the Young Prince Edward, the Chorus utters a warning spoken earlier by Margaret.

[With lights still dimly revealing the hung RIVERS, lights come up on the Young PRINCE EDWARD on a swing, RICHARD, BUCKINGHAM, STANLEY, and CATESBY.]

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Buck. Welcome, sweet Prince, to London, to your home.

Rich. Welcome, dear cousin, my thoughts' sovereign.

The weary way hath made you melancholy.

Prince No, uncle, but our crosses on the way

Have made it tedious, wearisome, and heavy;

I want more uncles here to welcome me.

Rich. Sweet Prince, the untainted virtue of your years

Hath not yet div'd into the world's deceit,

[Lights brighten on RIVERS as he is hung.]

[The following is spoken simultaneously.]

Rich. Those uncles which you want were dangerous;

Your Grace attended to their sugar'd words,

But look'd not on the poison of their hearts.

God keep you from them, and from such false friends!

Chor: Have not to do with him; beware of him

Sin, death, and hell have set their mark on him.

And all their ministers attend on him.

Have not to do with him; beware of him.

[Lights out on RIVERS and the CHORUS.]

Prince I want more uncles here to welcome me.

Rich. Those uncles which you want were dangerous;

Your Grace attended to their sugar'd words,

But look'd not on the poison of their hearts.

God keep you from them, and from such false friends!

Prince God keep me from false friends—but they were none.

Perhaps they are a voice within the Prince, perhaps Margaret's voice, perhaps a guardian spirit? Regardless of their assignment, and despite the truth they speak, the Chorus is continually unheeded, ignored, or merely lost in the clamor.

To more closely tie the Chorus to the Princes' plight, I also gave them the lines originally spoken by Tyrell in his remorse at having arranged the murder of the Princes—lines proclaiming the hideousness of that deed. The Chorus speaks them at the beginning of Act IV, Scene III:

Chor. The tyrannous and bloody act is done

The most arch deed of piteous massacre

That ever yet this land was guilty of.

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[RICHARD enters and sits. He speaks simultaneously with the CHORUS.]

K. Rich. What heir of York is there alive but we?
And who is England's King but great York's heir?
The sons of Edward sleep in Abraham's bosom.

Chor. The tyrannous and bloody act is done
The most arch deed of piteous massacre
That ever yet this land was guilty of.

The Chorus returns to the horrific act in Act IV, Scene IV, as Margaret gloats and Elizabeth grieves for the death of her children.

[Lights up on the CHORUS. "So far in blood," is repeated by each of three Chorus members, beginning shortly after the one before; the fourth Chorus member speaks simultaneously.]

Chor. So far in blood that
sin will pluck on sin
So far in blood that
sin will pluck on sin
So far in blood that
sin will pluck on sin.

Chor. The tyrannous and
bloody act is done
The most arch deed of
piteous massacre
That ever yet this land
was guilty of.

[Enter old QUEEN MARGARET.]

Marg. So now prosperity begins to mellow,
And drop into the rotten mouth of death.

There is a certain irony in this, the Chorus's last major appearance in the adaptation. In a scene of tremendous despair, their presence reminds us to listen, to think, to watch, and to speak out, as they do against the tyrannous and bloody. Over the course of Act V, their presence decreases as Richmond's presence increases.

The success of the simultaneous speech in the Chorus's scenes inspired me to work with it in scenes without the Chorus, scenes where thoughts are given voice, affording the audience a deeper understanding of key players. In Act I, Scene II, Anne and Richard each speak their thoughts aloud, creating a complex layering of present and future, intellect and emotion, prophecy and doom. The adapted scene reveals that the speed of Richard's mind allows him to contemplate both the wooing and the murder of his intended bride at the same time.

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Anne. Set down, set down your honourable load.
That bloodless remnant of the House of Lancaster.
Be it lawful that I invoke thy ghost
To hear the lamentations of poor Anne.
Lo, in these windows that let forth thy life
I pour the helpless balm of my poor eyes.
O, cursed be the hand that made these holes;
Cursed the heart that had the heart to do it;
Cursed the blood that let this blood from hence.

[ANNE continues with the following lines but her voice is joined by the simultaneous speaking of RICHARD, whom she does not see.]

Anne. If ever he have wife, let her be made
More miserable by the life of him
Than I am now by my dear Edward's death.

Rich. Was ever woman in this humour woo'd?
Was ever woman in this humour won?
I'll have her, but I will not keep her long.

[Anne continues, alone.]

Anne. If ever he have wife, let her be made
More miserable by the life of him
Than I am now by my dear Edward's death.
If ever he have child, abortive be it:

At the beginning of Act II, Scene II, the murdered Clarence and his children speak together in an emotional cacophony preceding the speech in which the Duchess denies that Richard has had his brother killed.

[Enter the old DUCHESS OF YORK; with Clarence's children, BOY and GIRL. Lights up also on CLARENCE who speaks simultaneously with the children.]

Boy. Good grandam tell us,
is our father dead?

Girl. Why do you weep so oft,
and beat your breast?
Good grandam tell us,
is our father dead?

Boy. Why do you weep so oft,
and beat your breast?

Clar. O Lord! me thought
what pain it was to drown;
What dreadful noise of waters
in my ears;
What sights of ugly death
within my eyes!
Methought that Gloucester
stumbled and in falling,

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Girl: Good grandam tell us,
is our father dead?
Boy: Why do you look on us,
and shake your head,
Struck me, that thought to
stay him, overboard.
Seize on him, Furies! Take
him unto torment!
Seize on him, Furies! Take
him unto torment!

[Lights fade on Clarence.]

Boy: Good grandam tell us, is our father dead?

Duch. No, boy.

Girl: Why do you weep so oft, and beat your breast?
And cry 'O Clarence, my unhappy son'?

Boy: Why do you look on us, and shake your head?

Duch. My pretty cousins, you mistake me both:
I do lament the sickness of the King,

The cacophony facilitates the sense of growing confusion that accompanies Richard's first murder. The Duchess' need to reconcile the act defines her response to the children but the barrage of conflicting dialogue reveals her continued inner conflict.

An additional and crucial use of simultaneous dialogue in my adaptation exists at the conclusion of Act III, Scene I. As the Chorus surrounds the Young Princes on stage, they repeat Clarence's challenge to the force of darkness, as the Citizens repeat their excuse for their apathy.

[Lights up on the CITIZENS and the CHORUS who speak simultaneously.]

Chorus. How dark and deadly dost thou speak.
Your eyes do menace me: why look you pale?
Who sent you hither? Wherefore do you come?
Are you drawn forth among a world of men
To slay the innocent? What is my offense?
Where is the evidence that doth accuse me?

Cit 3. He is governed by his uncle

Cit 4. He is counceled by his uncle.

Cit 1. Truly the hearts of men are full of fear.

Cit 2: Before the days of change still it is so.

Cit 3. For by his straight face shall you know his heart.

Rich. For then I'll marry Warwick's youngest daughter.

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Cit 2. Come, come, we fear the worst. All will be well.

Cit 4. All will be well if God does sort it so.

Cit 1. Come, come, we fear the worst. All will be well.

The juxtaposition of those who see and are active against those who are passive and blind is central to understanding how "Richards" come to rule. Truly, the responsibility for evil lies not only with those who perpetrate it, or cause it to be perpetrated, but equally with those who tolerate evil—who encourage, enable and even abet its existence.

Interpretation of a playwright's intent is always a dangerous game. With each line lost or moved, a myriad of questions surface—questions of integration and integrity, of ramification and relevance. But to enable an audience to hear old words anew always offers great reward.

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