Farewell, king! staging the Middle Ages in nineteenth-century London performances of Shakespeare's "Richard II"

Korovsky Moura, F.

Citation

Introduction

Richard II was absent from the London stages for nearly eighty years before Edmund Kean's production at Drury Lane in 1815. In the aftermath of Napoléon Bonaparte's deposition and exile, Kean revived the Shakespearean play that stages the overthrow of a king. Thirty-five years after that, William Charles Macready selected the same play to be part of his farewell season's repertoire at Haymarket Theatre in a one-night-only representation. Shakespeare was a key name in Macready's efforts to increase the respectability of the theatrical business in the mid-nineteenth century. And, seven years later, Charles Kean revived the same play in a sumptuous production at the Princess's Theatre, offering the public a mixture of spectacle and historical authenticity. This dissertation explores these three productions of Shakespeare's *Richard II* on the London stage in the first half of the nineteenth century, analysing them in relation to their different contexts of production within their historical and cultural moments.

Richard II is an intriguing play in the Shakespearean canon, because it explicitly stages the deposition of a king.[1] In a daunting scene in Act IV, the protagonist performs a reversed coronation ritual, unkinging himself and yielding the crown to his cousin Bolingbroke, the future Henry IV. The possibility of drawing political associations with the context of production of the play is the reason why *Richard II* takes centre stage in this dissertation. Furthermore, when investigating the per-

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[1]   Royal deposition is also present in *Henry VI, Part 3*, however it does not happen explicitly *on* stage as it happens in *Richard II*. The third part of *Henry VI* has rarely been performed in its entirety. J. H. Marivale included scenes of parts 1 and 2 for his *Richard, Duke of York*, acted by Edmund Kean in 1817. The goal was to increase Kean's part. According to the editor Randall Martin in *The Oxford Shakespeare*, "Marivale cut out more or less everything not directly involving York, and rewrote his story as a determined but increasingly isolated and doomed hero" (12).

formance history of the play in the London theatrical scene, I have noticed that, despite being a popular play at the time of its conception (it was published in 6 quartos), its popularity decreased after the Restoration. Following a production at Covent Garden in 1738, *Richard II* was not performed at all on London stages until 1815. The question that naturally follows is *why* the play remained absent from the theatres and whether the reason was connected with the political potential of the play.

The guiding research question in this dissertation regards what prompted a revival of interest in the Middle Ages and in Shakespeare's *Richard II* during the period between 1815 and 1857, when Edmund Kean's, Macready's and Charles Kean's productions premiered on the London stages. How did these theatre managers adapt Shakespeare's political play for their contemporary audiences? And what can the analysis of these productions tell us about nineteenth-century understandings of the medieval past? Although the core of this research lies in the first half of the nineteenth century, I return to Shakespeare's creation of *Richard II* in c. 1595 as a window for understanding Early Modern conceptions of the Middle Ages. The reconstruction of a past age is never objective but includes echoes of previous interpretations of that past. For example, modern reconstructions of the medieval past are inevitably affected by nineteenth-century impressions of the Middle Ages. In their time, Edmund Kean, Macready and Charles Kean looked at the medieval past through Shakespeare's Early Modern lens, and adapted the sixteenth-century text according to their needs and beliefs. This study, therefore, investigates the connections between three layers of time: the Middle Ages, the Early Modern period and the first half of the nineteenth century.

Every time a play is staged, it creates new connections with the public and within the historical, political and cultural contexts of the time. When analysing theatrical productions from the past, it is therefore essential to explore these connections, as performance should be understood as part of a cultural moment. A play is not a stable product. Its potential meanings change according to its time of representation. In the case of a history play such as *Richard II*, that instability increases. That is because understandings of what the Middle Ages represented and looked like have also altered through time. When Shakespeare first created the play, there was not yet a clear definition of the medieval past. The Italian humanist Petrarch (1304-1374) had made a distinction between the 'lightness' of Classical Antiquity and the 'darkness' of ignorance that followed the fall of Rome. With a supposed rebirth of enlightenment during the Italian Renaissance, Petrarch's hu-

manist view referred to this 'middle' period before modernity as the Dark Ages. The consolidation of that moment in the past as the Middle Ages took place in England in the course of the eighteenth century, although the first occurrence of the word *medieval* in English language occurs only in 1817. Therefore, in England, a clear understanding of the medieval past as culturally and politically distinct from other periods of time postdates Shakespeare's lifetime. By means of theatrical, visual and textual adaptations of Shakespeare's *Richard II*, it is possible to trace an overview of this change in perceptions of the medieval past, recognising it as a broader cultural process that transcends the stage. By means of the analysis of the Shakespearean dramatic text, illustrated editions of the play and the three productions that make up the corpus of this research, this dissertation investigates and explains this change in cultural perceptions of the Middle Ages in the English tradition from the turn of the nineteenth century until 1857.

Theoretical Framework and Method

This dissertation combines cultural and theoretical approaches to investigate Shakespeare's *Richard II* in performance in London in the first half of the nineteenth century specifically regarding engagements with the medieval past through art. The cultural analysis in this dissertation is inserted within the areas of theatre historiography and medievalism. It is based on a close reading of the dramatic text in relation to its contexts of production and adaptation. According to Thomas Postlewait, "because of our temporal consciousness, our historical understanding has become as crucial to the study of the natural world as to the study of the human world" (5). A comprehensive understanding of history and humans' role within the historiographical processes allow for a deeper comprehension of society.

The theatre historian reconstructs the past by perusing historical records of the theatrical event within its contexts of production. This relationship between theatre and contexts is not one of opposition, but is, in fact, a web of interrelationships, as Postlewait explains. The problem in failing to understand the interrelationship of theatre with its contexts is placing an overall focus on external factors, which leaves little or no agency to the energies within the theatrical space. As Postlewait puts it, "this idea of a [single] determining context makes the [theatrical] event a mere effect of whatever external factors the historian identifies. Human motives, intentions, and acts become negligible" (11). Conversely, accepting the interdependence

of theatre and contexts, and acknowledging that the forces in play in this cultural process are not one-directional but multiple, complicating the reductive binary of text-context, paves the way for a more comprehensive analysis of the whole.

Postlewait proposes a model which combines four factors that affect the theatrical event: agents, possible worlds, reception, and artistic heritage. The first explores the exchanges between the production and its agents, "specifically the relationship that operates between the event and those who created it: the playwright, the director, the performer, the designers. These people who plan, organize, and realize the event are all agents" (Postlewait 12). The second refers to the relationship between the production and the world(s) in which it is situated, "so part of what we find in the event is the artist's personal relation to the world: biographical factors, linguistic codes, sociopolitical conditions, values, beliefs, and views, national experiences and identities, ideologies, and possible understanding" (Postlewait 13). The third factor investigates the reception of the play. According to Postlewait, "spectators, in the process of viewing a production, draw upon not only their experiences with and ideas about the world but also their experiences with and ideas about the artistic heritage", therefore, "the reception network completes the event – sometimes in accord with the motives and aims of the agents, but sometimes in accord with the quite different agendas of the spectators" (18). And, finally, the fourth factor analyses the interaction between the present theatrical work and previous artistic productions: "each artist, when creating any artistic work, operate[s] within and against the artistic heritage – the aesthetic traditions, influences, canons, stylistic codes, mentors, institutions, and cultural semiotics" (Postlewait 18). All these four factors affect the theatrical event to different degrees, just as the event affects the world, agents, reception and artistic heritage. Furthermore, the four factors may also influence one another (See figure 1). My analysis of the three productions of Shakespeare's *Richard II* in this dissertation follows Postlewait's understanding of the practice of theatre historiography, indicating the interconnections between the theatrical events with the four aspects of contexts.
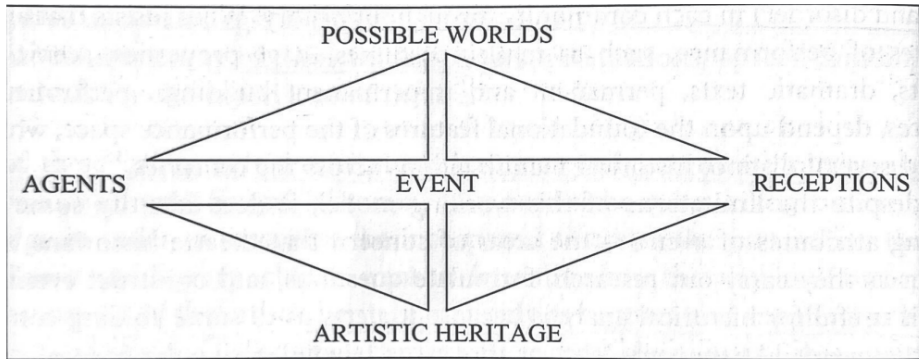
Figure 1 - Thomas Postlewait's model for theatrical analysis (Postlewait 18)

Baz Kershaw and Helen Nicholson place creativity and reflexivity as the core aspects of research methods in theatre and performance. They invoke three triads of disciplinary terms that offer the theoretical basis for any performance analysis. The first 'drama / theatre / performance' dates back to Raymond Williams' *Drama in Performance* (1954), and is related to the places and conditions of performance. In other words, the physical space of the stage and playhouse, but also the contextual variants that affect the theatrical production. The second triad 'cultural / organisational / technological' is based on John McKenzie's ideas on paradigms of performance in *Perform or Else* (2001). As McKenzie explains, "these performance paradigms are themselves composed of movements of generalization, by which diverse activities are gathered together and conceptualized *as* performance" (29). McKenzie understands not only stage entertainment, tragedies, comedies, dances, operas, etc., as cultural performance, but also bodily cultural expressions, such as rituals, social interactions, nonverbal communication, and the workings of gender, race and sexual politics (8). McKenzie thus comprehends performance in a broader sense of the word, taking into account not only the rehearsed action for the stage, but what he sees as the theatricality and performativity of human relations. Finally, the third triumvirate put forward by Kershaw and Nicholson is 'multi- / inter- / trans- (disciplinary)'. Kershaw and Nicholson affirm that the cultural practices in performance analysis involve a myriad of skill-sets and knowledge domains that transition between drama and theatre. Therefore they consist of a *multi*disciplinary approach. These practices are also *inter*disciplinary, combining knowledge from other disciplines "to create the in-between (or liminal) qualities of performance";

and *trans*disciplinary, because they challenge prior disciplinary boundaries, "destabilising the binaries of *existing* as/is and epistemology/ontology configurations" (Kershaw and Nicholson 7). The authors stress that these three sets of words do not follow any specific order or hierarchical organization. What they emphasise is the reflexivity inherent to the practice of cultural analysis. According to the authors, this reflexivity is

> essential to understanding how and why theatre and performance research – alongside other creative practices – can *both* be defined as disciplines that encompass more or less specific subject skill-sets – say, playwriting, scenography, performer training of various kinds – *and* by their cultural, organisational and technological capacities to reach beyond disciplinarity as such. (Kershaw and Nicholson 7)

The cultural approach proposed by Kershaw and Nicholson emphasises a broad understanding of culture and performance. It allows agency not only to the direct performers of the dramatic text (playwrights, actors, designers, adaptors, etc.) but also to the external variants that affect the theatrical production. Additionally, and very importantly, this model highlights the need of combining knowledge and approaches from different disciplines to enrich the theoretical framework available for the scholar, multiplying the interpretative possibilities, and to study the effects of theatre in society beyond the stage.

Postlewait's and Kershaw and Nicholson's approaches to theatrical analysis have laid the foundation for this dissertation. In addition, as set out above, my theatrical analysis is enriched by the investigation of other visual practices of representation of Shakespeare's *Richard II*, including book illustrations, engravings and paintings. In this way, I expand Postlewait's understanding of artistic heritage, agents and reception, including artistic practices beyond the stage, and exploring the possibilities of multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research.

My notion of culture situates people and, consequently, all texts in the broadest sense of the word, as intrinsically connected to and affected by a web of social practices. In this perspective, a text is not an autonomous creation of a single author. Instead, the text is enriched by different voices that add different layers of interpretation and topicality to it. As this study demonstrates, the meanings elicited by the play *Richard II* have been multiplied throughout the centuries with recreations, adaptations, representations and illustrations of the text. It is possible

to find in the text aspects that shed light on our understanding of culture, and simultaneously there are aspects of culture that elucidate our understanding of the text. In similar dynamics, the understanding of the past has also shifted with time, given the unstable nature of history.

History and culture are not static. Quite the contrary, they are in constant change and, at times, contradiction, as the case studies in this dissertation demonstrate. The interconnections of stage, page and picture – the scope of this study – allow for a multifaceted cultural exchange, in which different voices engage and produce new meanings. There is no one stable culture, as there is no one history. This research follows a postmodern understanding of history, which rejects the idea of a unifying or totalising narrative of social history. Instead, I understand history as multi-voiced, multiple and fragmented. In this sense, historiographical writing, as well as historical fiction, is never disinterested or objective, hence the task of the cultural historian to explore the possible correlations between the text and the contexts around it, proposing interpretations regarding *how* and *why* a certain period of time has sparked the interest of another period of time. Historical events are adapted, transformed and reinterpreted for contemporary purposes. According to the theorist Linda Hutcheon, "this [the act of making stories out of history] does not in any way deny the existence of the past real, but it focuses attention on the act of imposing order on that past, of encoding strategies of meaning-making through representation" (66–67). In this sense, representations of the past, although inevitably subjective and imaginative, do not deny the existence of a real past. However, in an attempt to reconstruct the past, historiography or historical fiction do not necessarily *impose* an order on the past, but, rather, offer a contemporary audience possibilities of engaging with that past.

Postmodern theory argues that historical meaning is "unstable, contextual, relational, and provisional," and, "in fact, it has always been so" (Hutcheon 67). In her study of neo-historical fiction, Elodie Rousselot writes about the present's engagement with the past. She suggests that neo-historical fiction either turns nostalgically to the past, "motivated by the reclamation of traditional values – and the rejection of modern ones", or as a way to hide the instability and pessimism of the present time, offering "an apparent safe means of negotiating the sense of loss caused by [...] traumatic events" and "alleviating the anxiety resulting from" such political events (Rousselot 5). In other words, the past is evoked either as a means to change the present, or to escape from it. Although Rousselot's argument concerns

specifically neo-historical fiction, the same applies for earlier reconstructions of the past on the stage, page and picture.

Rousselot refers to the cultural process of "exoticizing" the past, of turning it into the "other", different from the present time. Although this cultural practice has different implications in neo-historical fiction, this term is relevant to this study as a way to investigate the changes in artistic representations of Shakespeare's *Richard II*'s medieval past in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Especially after analysing the illustrated editions of Shakespeare's plays during this period (see Chapter 4), I noticed that there was a clear shift in how the medieval past was understood: it became increasingly *different* from the present. I have pinpointed this change in the mid-eighteenth century, when illustrations of Shakespeare's *Richard II* abandoned contemporary eighteenth-century clothing and incorporated a more accurate depiction of the Middle Ages. For example, the illustrated characters no longer wore eighteenth-century wigs and breeches. Instead, there was a growing awareness of a specific setting, clothing and architectural style. This shift was, of course, fuelled by the developments in the historiography of the period, which provided a better understanding of how people lived in the past. Consequently, the past became more interesting, as it was increasingly understood as different from the present. In addition, parallel to an exoticization of the past, there was an increasing desire to connect with it, especially with the people that had lived and died so long ago. Art was a way through which a bridge to the past could be created, offering a temporary illusion of seeing or participating in the past. Despite the difference in habits, beliefs, and ways of living, art demonstrated that people in any given time shared fundamental feelings of love, fear, or sadness. In this sense, the stage, page and picture recreated the past to evoke emotions, connecting past and present. Therefore, in the first half of the nineteenth century, there was a simultaneous feeling of rupture as well as continuity with the past; it became paradoxically distant *and* familiar.

Medievalisms

In the English tradition, a new interest in understanding and connecting with the Middle Ages arose in the 1760s (Alexander x). Since then, people have engaged with the medieval past in different ways, reinterpreting it according to contemporary beliefs. The study of such re-conceptions of the Middle Ages is what constitutes the

field of medievalism. Louise D'Arcens defines it "as the reception, interpretation or recreation of the European Middle Ages in post-medieval cultures", a phenomenon that "embraces a range of cultural practices, discourses, and material artefacts with a daunting breadth of scope, temporally, geographically, and culturally" (1–2). It is, therefore, a cultural process, which is expressed in different areas, such as art, literature, theatre, philosophy, politics, amongst others.

As Michael Alexander explains, "medievalism is the offspring of two impulses: the recovery by antiquarians of materials for the study of the Middle Ages; and the imaginative adoption of medieval ideas and forms" (xx). It is a combination of the scholarly pursuit to understand the past through archival research with the imaginative drive to reinterpret it for modern ideals. D'Arcens makes a distinction between these two types of medievalisms: one "of the 'found' Middle Ages", and one "of the 'made' Middle Ages":

> The first kind has emerged through contact with, and interpretation of, the 'found' or material remains of the medieval past surviving into the post-medieval era, while the second encompasses texts, objects, performances, and practices that are not only post-medieval in their provenance but imaginative in their impulse and founded on ideas of 'the medieval' as a conceptual rather than a historical category. (D'Arcens 2)

While the first is factual, the other is imagined. My interest lies in the points of intersection between these two medievalisms, in which the "real" Middle Ages meets the created past in a double-voiced historicism. This difference, however, is not clear-cut. D'Arcens admits that "looked at more closely, [...] the distinction between 'found' and 'made' medievalism does not hold" (3). And it is so precisely because the element of imaginative reconstruction is at the core of both and all approaches to the past. As D'Arcens puts it, "distinguishing between the medievalism of the 'found' and 'made' Middle Ages is also problematised by the fact that the creative responses to medieval remnants and artefacts have existed abidingly alongside scholarly responses" (3). The Middle Ages were explored and reconstructed not only by historians, but also by artists, intermingling fact and fiction. The result is an intricate combination of the factual with the mythical medieval past, as illustrated by the artistic productions of the period.

The Middle Ages have maintained an appeal ever since the medieval period reached its end, although that interest has fluctuated in intensity. In England, this

fascination with the past brought about renewed attention to Britain's roots and its Middle Ages, an interest that spans from the Early Modern period up to our days, but reached its peak during the nineteenth century. Alice Chandler calls this phenomenon the "Medieval Revival", which found expression in diverse areas, such as art, architecture, literature, economics, politics and religion. The extent of this cultural movement was such that "at the height of the revival scarcely an aspect of life remained untouched by medievalist influence" (Chandler 1). Especially in times of social change and modernisation, looking back at a pastoral medieval past offered an idealised contraposition to the chaotic modern time.

Double-voiced Medievalism

Engagements with the past and the way people feel about looking back at the past change constantly. Ideas of humanity, weakness, power, chivalry, honour, monarchy, emotion, and so on, are invariably dynamic. These conceptions are intrinsically intertwined with the main themes in *Richard II*, as well as with interpretations of the Middle Ages. I argue that reconstructions of the medieval past in art tend to fluctuate within a spectrum of two poles. On the one side, the Middle Ages are recreated as 'gothic', cruel and grotesque; and, on the other, as romantic, heroic and idealised. These two main voices affecting reconstructions of the medieval past constitute what I call a *double-voiced medievalism*. It is a cultural process that inevitably affected Shakespeare's writing of *Richard II*; Edmund Kean's, Macready's and Charles Kean's adaptations of the play; and any other interpretation of the Shakespearean text since then. That is because double-voiced medievalism is connected at its core with the broader cultural contexts of the time in which the artistic event takes place.

I have derived this concept from Richard Schoch's idea of "double-voiced historicism" in *Shakespeare's Victorian Stage: Performing History in the Theatre of Charles Kean* (1998). Schoch explains it as the historical doubling present in historical representations in the theatre. For instance, in a Victorian production of Shakespeare's *Richard II*, the medieval past of King Richard's reign is reconstructed by a Renaissance playwright at the end of the sixteenth century, which is in turn reconstructed by the Victorian artist on stage. It is, therefore, a reconstruction of the reconstruction, dealing with different layers of historicism, hence double-voiced historicism. As Schoch puts it, "there can be no pure or unsullied recovery of the

past because all historical representations are mediated by yet other representations. A Shakespearean past thus inevitably ghosts or haunts theatrical representations of the medieval past" (*Shakespeare's Victorian Stage* 10). In other words, when looking at the continuum of the past as composed of several layers, a layer of one past has an effect on previous ones, and so forth. In my position as a twenty-first theatre historian looking back at nineteenth-century productions of Shakespeare's *Richard II*, the layers multiply: a medieval past reconstructed by a Renaissance playwright, which in turn is reconstructed by a nineteenth-century artist, which is then reconstructed by me.

Based on Schoch's concept of double-voiced historicism I propose the term *double-voiced medievalism*, which refers specifically to the ways in which the Middle Ages have been reconstructed in art in different periods of time, and how these representations gravitate towards an idealised or a grotesque conception of the medieval past. The tension between a romanticised and a grotesque interpretation of the Middle Ages is thus the core of double-voiced medievalism. I argue that artistic representations of the medieval past inevitably combine these two approaches (although to different degrees), which is reminiscent of the echoes of medievalist imagination since the Early Modern period. In order to understand *why* such oscillations occur, the cultural historian must look at the broader context of production of the artistic text, including the political scenario at the time and contemporaneous interpretations of the Middle Ages in other media. That is why I have incorporated in my research other visual reconfigurations of Richard II's medieval past on stage, page and picture (including book illustrations, paintings and photographs) to better understand how the three theatrical productions of *Richard II* reconstructed the medieval past in the theatre, and how they engaged in dialogue with the broader medievalist tradition. The analysis of book illustrations is an area of pictorial materialisation that has been largely ignored in studies of theatrical historiography, which in my view enriches the inquiry put forth in this dissertation.

Corpus

The heart of this study is the presence of the Middle Ages on the London stage in the first half of the nineteenth century as mediated by Shakespeare's *Richard II*. For this reason, I analyse the following performances in their contexts of production:

Edmund Kean's at Drury Lane in 1815; William Charles Macready's at Haymarket in 1850; and Charles Kean's at the Princess's Theatre in 1857. In order to fully understand those, it is important to look back at Shakespeare's conception of the play in c. 1595, and to investigate how the playwright recreated the medieval world of late-fourteenth-century England in his own time.

In addition, in order to contrast Shakespeare's textual medievalism with a pictorial tradition that would culminate in the nineteenth century, I also explore the interpretations of *Richard II*'s medieval past in illustrations of the play. I start with Nicholas Rowe's (1674-1718) in 1709, the first illustrated edition of Shakespeare's works in England, and trace the way *Richard II* has been visually represented in the most significant illustrated publications prior and concomitant to Edmund Kean's, Macready's and Charles Kean's theatrical productions: Lewis Theobald in 1740; Thomas Hanmer in 1744; John Bell in 1774 and 1788; Edward Harding in 1798-1800; Alexander Chalmer in 1805; Thomas Tegg in 1815-1815; Charles Knight in 1838-1843; Barry Cornwall in 1838-1840; and James Halliwell in 1850. I also look at the two paintings produced for the Boydell Gallery in 1789, one by Mather Brown (1761-1831) and the other by James Northcote (1746-1831). In this manner, I explore the broader context of relationships between different layers of time, and different media in (re)interpretations of Shakespeare's *Richard II*.

As I have explained in the previous section, an important component in Postlewait's model for theatrical analysis is the analysis of the artistic heritage, which includes the stage history of the play. In *The Haunted Stage* (2003), Marvin Carlson writes about the uncanny experience the theatre provides, impressing on the spectator of a sense of repetition, of seeing something already seen before. In this sense, the physical theatre is "among the most haunted of human cultural structures", filled with ghosts of productions past (Carlson 2). Carlson adds that the theatre works as "a simulacrum of the cultural and historical process itself" (2), shedding light on how people have made sense of historical events throughout time. Theatre has become an archive of cultural memory, which is in constant change as new layers of context are added to it. The case is even more significant when referring to history plays, such as *Richard II*. It involves a *re*-construction of representations of the past, which are inevitably linked to the cultural contexts of the time of production, elucidating the concerns and aspirations of that specific moment. Why did Shakespeare look back at Richard II's reign? Why did other producers feel the need to retell this story decades and centuries later? These questions must guide

the theatre historian's task in analysing a past performance; and they have also directed my investigation of the corpus of this research.

Structure of the Dissertation

When exploring artistic engagements with the medieval past by means of Shakespeare's *Richard II*, this thesis looks at different layers of *pasts*: Richard's fourteenth-century past; Shakespeare's Early Modern period; and the different moments in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in which the theatrical productions, illustrated editions, paintings and textual adaptations that make up the corpus of this research were produced. Instead of understanding this cultural phenomenon as a chronological linear sequence, I look at it as a web of interrelations; all these layers of medievalisms affect how the Middle Ages have been reinterpreted in British culture.

In Chapter 1, I analyse the theatre as a public space of private individuals, which offers a site for political awareness and debate, granting the spectators authority to assess the actions performed on stage – especially if such characters are embodiments of political subjects, for instance, the monarch. I explore how the playhouse stood as a locale for political protest against the elitism of art. Taking Richard Sennett's *The Fall of the Public Man* (1977) as a guide, I examine the increase in public social places in the nineteenth century, especially in the cultural capitals London and Paris, taking the theatre as an expressive example of this bourgeoning. In contrast to the theatrical scene of the patent theatres Drury Lane and Covent Garden, there emerged in London a counter-culture, localised in the minor theatres beyond the fashionable West End. Although their repertoire was restricted by the censure of the Theatre Licensing Act of 1737, the minor theatres adapted Shakespeare, combining tradition with spectacle and sensation in order to avoid suppression. With the rise of History as an academic subject, as well as topic of interest for the enthusiast population, the theatre in nineteenth-century London made use of the illusionistic characteristics of the theatre to create a bridge between past and present, offering the spectator the experience of seeing and hearing history.

In Chapter 2, I explore scholarly definitions of medievalisms. In order to understand post-medieval reconstructions of the Middle Ages in culture, I first investigate the periodisation regarding the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning

of modernity. Furthermore, I explore how Early Modern playwrights, including Shakespeare, recreated the past for dramatic purposes, and how they imagined the period we now call the Middle Ages. Subsequently, I investigate how artists evoked the medieval past in the nineteenth century: in literature, Walter Scott's (1771-1832) works of historical fiction and poems; in architecture, Horace Walpole's (1717-1797) pseudo-medieval mansion Strawberry Hill and Augustus Pugin's (1812-1852) attempt to "construct" medieval buildings in the nineteenth century during the Gothic Revival; and in painting, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood's focus on detail and realism, prioritising imagination and emotion.

Chapter 3 explores Shakespeare's contribution to the circulation of certain representations of the past, especially regarding British history. Christy Desmet uses the term *rhetor-historian* to refer to Shakespeare, an author who combines his perception of the world with scholarly historical knowledge (11). I include Walter Scott in the same category, affirming that both writers dive into the "well of history" to create stories that captivate spectators and readers alike. This chapter interprets literary and theatrical texts as "fields of force" (Greenblatt 6). As such, their interpretation is not fixed, but reshaped along the years and centuries, with new layers of meanings added by readers, adapters, performers, etc. When analysing Shakespeare's *Richard II* and its reconstruction of the Middle Ages in this chapter, I consider three main aspects that are crucial to understanding Shakespeare's 'medievalism': ritual and pageantry; the arbitrary power of kings; and nostalgia. For the first, I analyse the tournament at Coventry, the de-coronation scene, and the (lack of) funeral rites. For the second, I explore the medieval political theology concerning the king's two bodies, and the medieval understanding of history as developing under God's divine control. Finally, for the last, I explore Isabel Karremann's concept of nostalgia as a "historical emotion", a selective retrieval of the past as a way to obliviate the present. For this, I take into account Gaunt's "scepter'd island" speech and the gardeners' scene.

In Chapter 4, I discuss Shakespeare's presence in print in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in order to explore how the medieval world of *Richard II* has been visually represented in illustrated editions of the play, drawing parallels between the page and the stage. A wider variety of editions of Shakespeare's works became available in addition to the voluminous scholarly tomes, such as pocketbooks, facsimile copies of the Folio of 1623, and illustrated editions. I examine how *Richard II* has been illustrated in the most significant editions of the period, from Rowe's in 1709 to Halliwell's in 1850, exploring how these editions affected the

visual representations of the Middle Ages and Shakespeare's characters. I trace how the illustrations change from a contemporary depiction of eighteenth-century clothes, anachronistic to both Shakespeare's lifetime and the time *Richard II* is set, into visual representations concerned with historical accuracy. I notice a change of focus from the victorious Bolingbroke towards the victimised Richard, as well as a rejection of the didacticism of art in favour of a creative fusion with imagination. In this chapter I argue that the Middle Ages are not visually represented merely for the sake of historical reconstruction, but mainly as a means (and place) to evoke emotion. Finally, I also reveal the interconnection of the stage and print, especially in Bell's Acting edition of 1774 and Halliwell's of 1850, which added portraits of actors to illustrate the Shakespearean dramatic text.

In Chapter 5, I look at Edmund Kean's reimagination of Shakespeare's *Richard II* during his second season at Drury Lane in 1815. I refer to William Hazlitt's (1778-1830) critical appraisal both of Shakespeare's play and of Kean's production in order to investigate the period's engagement with the nature of character and the medieval setting. Hazlitt affirms that Shakespeare's Richard is a character of *pathos*, that is, of feeling combined with weakness, but that Kean presents a heroic Richard on stage, combining feeling with energy. I interpret the clash between a heroic and a week representation of Shakespeare's Richard II in relation to the aesthetic and political context of the age. 1815 was a year of political unrest, following the failed idealism of the French Revolution, the establishment of the Regency in England in 1811 due to George III's unfitness to rule, and Napoléon Bonaparte's deposition in 1814. I explore the contradictory representations of Napoléon in the English cultural scene, especially as expressed by Lord Byron (1788-1824). I argue that Byron creates an illusion based on the mythification of Napoléon as an embodiment of radicalism. Given the associations between Bonaparte and Kean circulating at the time, I draw parallels between Richard II's deposition on the Drury Lane stage in 1815 and Napoléon's deposition in 1814 and subsequent escape from exile weeks before the opening of Kean's *Richard II*. Based on evidence found in the theatrical criticism of the time, I argue that Kean embodies a new version of Richard II, one that rejects the *pathos* previously found in this Shakespearean character. Furthermore, I look into Richard Wroughton's (1748-1822) textual adaptation of the play, as well as Kean's annotations and alterations for performance at Drury Lane. Wroughton's text alters the balance of the Shakespearean original, omitting instances of Richard's fickleness, borrowing extracts from other Shakespearean plays that would convey feeling, and making Bolingbroke's plan to usurp the crown

explicit. It ends with a repentant Bolingbroke and the death of the queen on stage. In this context, I analyse how the Middle Ages were reconstructed in this specific production of *Richard II*. My argument is that Kean's *Richard II* was not concerned with reconstructing the medieval past on stage. Rather, the past functions as a mirror of contemporary politics, as well as a source to evoke an emotional reaction in the spectator.

In Chapter 6, I turn my attention to William Charles Macready's one-night staging of *Richard II* as part of his farewell season at Haymarket Theatre in December 1850. I argue that this production provides evidence of a different approach to *Richard II* in the mid-nineteenth century. Rejecting the Romantic admiration of Richard's poetic *pathos*, early-Victorian critics emphasise the flaws of Shakespeare's character and his immoral conduct as a sovereign. I analyse Macready's adaptation of *Richard II* based on Hermann Ulrici's (1806-1884) criticism of the play. Ulrici reads *Richard II* as a moral lesson and a cautionary tale against ambition and corruption. According to the German philosopher, the legal right of kings has validity only as long as it is founded upon morality. In this chapter I also investigate the London theatrical scene on the brink of the Theatre Regulation Act of 1843 that dissolved the 1737 Theatre Licensing Act. Prior to the dissolution, legitimate spoken drama was exclusive to the patent theatres Drury Lane and Covent Garden. Despite being in favour of the monopoly in the beginning of his career, by 1843 Macready had changed his position. He was not satisfied with the state of the theatre at the time, and he recognised the harmful effect of the theatrical monopoly on the quality of Shakespearean performances in London. He became advocate of a National Theatre, which would elevate the theatrical business and the people involved, especially the actors. He leaned on Shakespeare as a legitimising voice for his enterprise, rejecting previous stage adaptations and restoring Shakespeare's original text. In his productions of Shakespeare's history plays, his focus remains on the Shakespearean text and its poetic qualities, incorporating historical setting as an ornament to the text, as a means of instruction and as a way to increase the respectability and seriousness of theatrical activity by associating it with scholarly pursuit.

Finally, in Chapter 7, I analyse arguably the most iconic production of *Richard II* in the nineteenth century, the one staged by Charles Kean at the Princess's Theatre. The Shakespearean revivals during his management at the Princess's Theatre from 1850 to 1859 aimed at bringing history back to life on stage. The original Shakespearean text was given less attention, and the spectacular stage effects, sets and

costumes took the spotlight. I investigate the contexts of productions of Kean's history plays, associating them with Victorian antiquarianism and popular extravagant entertainment. I argue that Kean did not reject the conventions of popular extravaganzas completely, but appropriated them in order to convey historical knowledge to a broader audience and to elevate the theatrical business. For this purpose, I briefly discuss the counter-culture of the minor theatres in the period prior to 1843 (Theatre Regulation Act) and the criticism of the formulaic plots and unnatural acting style of the pantomimes and harlequinades. I also explore the pictorial inclination of mid-century England, which demonstrates a deeper engagement and fascination with material vestiges from the past. There was a turn to realism, also manifested in the art of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Finally, I analyse Kean's production of *Richard II* in 1857 and the available photographs of the actors in costume. In the mid-nineteenth century, photography was still a fairly recent technology, but more readily available. While the Pre-Raphaelites rejected photography's objective realism, Kean's photographical records appropriate the new technology to perform the medieval past in a visual juxtaposition of the Middle Ages and modernity. The photographer Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-1879), working a decade after the end of Kean's management at the Princess's Theatre, further explores the new medium of photography to depict the past, challenging the notion of the lens' impartiality and objectiveness, and offering a creative and artistic approach to photographic practice.

With these chapters I demonstrate that the recreation of the past on stage, page or picture is merely an illusion. As information and new technology became available at the turn to the nineteenth century, such as illustrated and cheaper editions of the plays, a wider availability of historical information, the development of stage effects, and new inventions such as the daguerreotype and photography, the present made use of the possibilities allowed by modernity to enhance the feeling of being transported back to the past, and of *seeing* the Middle Ages. In my analysis of the reception of the history plays, illustrated editions of Shakespeare's works, visual interpretations of Shakespearean characters and sets on canvas, and Edmund Kean's, Macready's and Charles Kean's adaptations of *Richard II*, I have pinpointed a change in how the past was understood. Especially towards the middle of the eighteenth century, the Middle Ages were increasingly understood as *different* from the present. This resulted in at least two direct consequences: the desire to know more about the past in order to understand it and compare it with the present, and, simultaneously, a desire to reconnect with it through art. Although

the representation of the medieval past became increasingly more 'accurate', based on historical research, the artistic reconstructions of the past I have investigated here demonstrate a growing interest in an imaginative engagement with the people from the past by means of emotions. Illustrations of *Richard II* increasingly depicted the meditations of the King in prison and the contrast between Richard's humiliation and Bolingbroke's victory. Acting loses the exaggerated declamatory style in favour of a more naturalistic representation of feeling, and the spectacle of stagecraft appeals to the spectator's senses for a bodily experience of interacting with the past.

Although the illusion of the reincarnation of the past is eventually lost (the reader closes the book, the viewer looks away from the picture, and the theatre spectator goes home), the feelings stirred during these moments of connection with the past remain. When the present becomes hard to endure, human imagination has the power to reignite the memories of engaging with the past by means of page, print or picture, and create a temporary mythical home in the past. The theatrical adaptations of Shakespeare's *Richard II* point to a close relationship between aesthetics and politics, demonstrating how an imaginative engagement with the past also has the capability of prompting political associations and discussions. As the corpus of this research has exemplified, each production of *Richard II* has their own agenda, either knowingly or not, testifying to the multiplicity of representations of the Shakespearean text.

The Possibilities of Studying Interactions with the Past

This dissertation navigates through different areas of study, including cultural history, theatre historiography, medievalisms, and literary studies. It explores the reasons why people return to the medieval past in different periods of time. I demonstrate that creating a "home" in the past, albeit mythical, is especially attractive when the present time proves to be too demanding – disappointment after a failed revolution, anxiety concerning the future of a professional milieu, or intense industrialisation, for example. In such circumstances, the Middle Ages can be evoked as a period of relative simplicity, bravery, belief, honour and heroic adventure. This would mean an idealised/romanticised understanding of the medieval past, which does not – and does not have to – correspond with reality. On the other hand, the medieval past can also be summoned as a vantage point from which to

reflect on the advancements of modernity, science and technology. A grotesque perception of the Middle Ages recreates a wild and uncivilised medieval past, which does not have to be equivalent to reality either. For instance, Shakespeare's history plays also depict violence, war, rebellion, murder and poverty.

Idealised and grotesque are the two opposing poles of artistic reconstructions of the medieval past, which are inevitably linked to the cultural, historical and political contexts of the time of production. As I have explained, all recreations of the Middle Ages combine both approaches to different degrees, resulting in a double-voiced medievalism. The study of Edmund Kean's, Macready's and Charles Kean's adaptations of Shakespeare's medieval past in *Richard II* has allowed me to explore the different ways in which these theatre-managers engaged with Early Modern conceptions of the Middle Ages, and adapted them according to their own time's concerns and aspirations. This field of study – analysing the different layers of historical reconstruction – encourages the analysis of art and its relation to society. My choice of looking at nineteenth-century adaptations of an Early Modern recreation of the medieval past is but one of endless possibilities. It contributes to discussions in medievalisms, Early Modern studies, Romantic and Victorian studies, demonstrating the fruitfulness of interdisciplinary and transhistorical research.