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HENRY VIII AND HENRY IX: UNLIVED LIVES AND RE-WRITTEN HISTORIES.

In 1612, with the sudden death of Henry Frederick, King James I and VI's oldest son and heir, a potential future was cut short. Henry Frederick had been an icon of futurity, a 'champion of Protestant and national interests, promoted in the context of a neo-chivalric revival'.¹ As J.W. Williamson shows in his study of the prince's mythology, 'the quality of Protestant symbology as it applied to Prince Henry was unusually relentless'.² He was, to the Scots poets who eulogized his birth, a 'Hercules' who offered a future free from vice.³ With his death, these hopes were ended. Henry Frederick, who fashioned himself as a far more militant figure than his father, could be mourned only for the battles he might have won.⁴ In a letter to Lady Carleton, dated 19 Dec. 1612, Isaac Wake describes Henry's armour being paraded before his mourners, 'every parcel whereof, to his very gauntlet & spurs was carried by men of quality'.⁵ His funeral was punctuated by military music: 'Henry's obsequies, which buried him with the trappings of a Protestant warrior-king, were more reflective of what might have been than of what was'.⁶ His death created a vacuum which could be filled by imagination, a space for speculative, alternative histories.

In Shakespeare and Fletcher's *Henry VIII, or All is True*, revived in the June of 1613, only six months after Henry Frederick's death, the death of heirs also represents not simply a lack of life, but an unlived potential life.⁷ Reading *All is True* in the context of Henry Frederick's death

1 Jennifer Woodward, *The Theatre of Death: The Ritual Management of Royal Funerals in Renaissance England, 1570-1625* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1997), 154.

2 J.W. Williamson, *The Myth of the Conqueror: Prince Henry Stuart, a Study of 17th Century Personation* (New York: AMS Press, 1978), 1. See also James M. Sutton, 'Henry Frederick, Prince of Wales (1594-1612)', ODNB, January 03, 2008. Oxford University Press. Date of access 24 Sep. 2020, <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2362/view/10.1093/refodnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-12961>.

3 Williamson, *Myth of the Conqueror*, 2-8.

4 See James I, *The Peace-Maker, or Great Brittaines Blessing* (London, 1618), in which James shows 'the Idlenesse of a Quarrelling Reputation' (A2r). For further discussion, see David R. Lawrence, *The Complete Solider; Military Books and Military Culture in Early Stuart England, 1603-1645* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 105-126.

5 Isaac Wake to Lady Carleton, 19 Dec. 1612, The National Archives, SP 14/71, fol. 130r.

6 Elizabeth Goldring, "'So iust a sorrowe so well expressed': Henry, Prince of Wales and the Art of Commemoration" in *Prince Henry Revived: Image and Exemplarity in Early Modern England*, ed. Timothy Wilks (Southampton Solent University, 2007), 285. See also, K. Dawn Grapes, *With Mornefull Musique: Funeral Elegies in Early Modern England* (Suffolk, 2018), for a discussion of martial imagery in musical elegies for the Prince, 121-22.

7 Martin Wiggins proposes that the play was written in 1612 and revived in the summer of 1613: 'All is True is more likely to date from earlier in 1612 rather than later. One possible counter-argument arises from the play's absence from the list of titles performed at court during the 1612-13 Revels season. However, this is not in

serves to underscore the play's tense negotiation of history as at once repetitive and speculative. In this article, I consider the ways in which both *All is True* and the many elegiac responses to the death of Henry Frederick reveal that the process of imagining the future is ultimately caught in the past. Neurologists have shown that when we imagine what might happen next, we do so by looking backwards: 'the simulation of future episodes is thought to require a system that can flexibly recombine details from past events.'⁸ Our lives become exemplars on which we model likely outcomes. This cognitive process is known as FMTT, Future-Oriented Mental Time Travel.⁹ In this article, I show that a consciousness of FMTT's insistence on memory is integral to understanding constructions of the future in *All is True* and in responses to the loss of Henry Frederick. In FMTT, the neurotypical brain uses the past in a way that is, at once, conservative and permissive. It is permissive in that we choose, even unconsciously, memories from which to fashion an imagined future (a selective and episodic approach shared by *All is True*). It is conservative in that, whichever moments we invest with significance, our conception of the future remains indebted to what has come before. Thoughts of tomorrow are, to borrow a line from Fitzgerald, 'boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past'.¹⁰

All is True ends with a prophecy, but the play resists the idea that any prediction of the future can be given weight unless it pays close attention to the evidence of the past. Cranmer's prophecy, which ends *All is True* imagines Elizabeth's future reign (and the reign of her heir, James I) without mention of her sister, the future Mary I, who has already been born.¹¹ This is, as

itself evidence that it had not yet been written: it would have been tactless to offer a play about a royal Henry, with a climax showing the establishment of a Protestant succession, immediately after the death of Prince Henry. The play may even have been temporarily withdrawn from the repertory for that reason.' *British Drama, 1609-1616*, eds. Martin Wiggins and Catherine Richardson, (Oxford, 2016), vol. 6, 231.

⁸ Daniel L. Schacter, Donna Rose Addis and Randy L. Buckner, 'Remembering the Past to Imagine the Future: The Prospective Brain', *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* (2007), 8.9, 659.

⁹ For more on this terminology, see *Seeing the Future: Theoretical Perspectives on Future-Oriented Mental Time Travel*, eds. Kourken Michaelian, Stanley B. Klein, and Karl K. Szpunar (Oxford: OUP, 2016).

¹⁰ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli (Cambridge: CUP, 1991), 141.

¹¹ For an alternative reading of this line and of prophecy in *All is True*, see Daniel L. Keegan, 'Performing Prophecy: More Life on the Shakespearean Scene', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 62.3 (2011), 420-443.

Brian Walsh has put it, ‘wishful thinking’.¹² In selecting from the past episodically, Cranmer slips, problematically, into FMTT – into mental time travel rather than into divine or oracular prophecy. The two should be distinct: unlike FMTT, which offers evidence-based speculation, prophecy offers a seemingly fixed account of the future, based on divine or supernatural information and not on the evidence of the past. Yet, Shakespeare rarely allows prophecy such undisputed authority over the future, especially when historical figures predict the future only with the vatic accuracy of hindsight. An oracle is often simply a man whose conception of the future most closely aligns with the king’s, as exposed in Richard III’s description of Buckingham as ‘my counsel’s consistory/My oracle, my prophet!’ (2.2.121-22). In *Richard II* (1595), when the Bishop of Carlisle imagines Bolingbroke’s reign, he offers, ‘let me prophesy’ (4.2.128). Carlisle projects the damage done onto ‘future ages’ (130), onto every ‘child, child's children’ (141). Cranmer too invokes ‘Our children’s children’ (5.4.54), but where Carlisle offers to ‘prophesy’, Cranmer does not. Although he begins with a claim of divine favour – ‘for heaven now bids me’ (5.4.15) - Cranmer goes on to insist, ‘the words I utter/ Let none think flattery’ (5.4.15-16). To raise the possibility of flattery at all is to sweep aside any thought of inspired prophecy.

All is True does not allow the safety of a determined future promised by prophecy: the play’s only explicit mention of prophecy is to deride the predictions of the monk Nicholas Hopkins.¹³ Henry VIII deems Cranmer an ‘oracle of comfort’ (5.4.66), but we have heard this description once before. Wolsey describes Cranmer as a heretic who ‘Hath crawl’d into the favour of the king,/ And is his oracle’ (3.2.104-5). These are not oracular words: these are Cranmer’s best guesses, easily (dis)proved by an audience of witnesses for whom Elizabeth’s

¹² Brian Walsh, *Unsettled Toleration: Religious Difference on the Shakespearean Stage* (Oxford: OUP, 2016), 156.

¹³ Nicholas Hopkins, a supporter and confidant of Buckingham, is said to have predicted that Buckingham would succeed Henry VIII and ‘fed him every minute/With words of sovereignty’ (1.3.150-51). See Raphael Holinshed, *The firste volume of the Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande* (London: Henry Bynnenman for John Harrison, 1577), 1514.

reign is now history. Those hearing that prophecy at the Globe in 1613, as Hester Lees-Jeffries puts it, ‘hea[r] their own memories foretold, and perhaps rewritten in the process’.¹⁴

Although Lees-Jeffries uses “rewritten” in the sense of revising, I want to consider a secondary meaning: that of “re-writing”. In this article, I will propose that allusion itself serves to replicate the cognitive process of FMTT. The insistent repetition and re-writing in *All is True* and in Henry Frederick’s elegies mirrors FMTT’s need to look backwards in order to look forwards.¹⁵ Even the play’s most obviously future-oriented moment of prophecy are dependent on allusion (just as Cranmer’s speech seems a recycling of Carlisle’s). In reading *All is True*, I therefore consider repeated imagery (such as the phoenix), as well as the influence of Rowley, Spenser, and Virgil. I also propose that, in *All is True*, Shakespeare recycles motifs from *The Winter’s Tale*, creating an echo chamber of grief between the plays. Finally, I will suggest that this desire to re-write lingers in contemporary responses to Henry Frederick and to Shakespeare. The past provides raw materials with to construct what might happen next. Yet to fashion new material out of old is to make history an unescapable cycle, one which bears us backwards ceaselessly.

The phoenix: recycling emblems.

The death of Henry Frederick was met with widespread displays of mourning, not only of his loss but of his lost potential. The prince had lived under a cloud of promise and prophecy. In *A briefe view of the state of the Church of England* (pr. 1653), written for the education of Henry Frederick, John Harington claimed to have been inspired by the proverb, ‘Henry the eighth pull’d down Monks and their Cells./Henry the ninth should pull down Bishops, and their Bells’ (A1r).¹⁶ Henry Frederick is at once fashioned by memories of the past – here Henry VIII and the Reformation –

14 Hester Lees-Jeffries, *Shakespeare and Memory* (Oxford: OUP, 2013), 89. See also McMullan, who argues that, in *All is True* ‘the political prophecy is carefully updated, and is both legitimized and problematized by its incorporation into a history play, enabling the audience to verify the events which have already taken place and thus presume the accuracy of those which have not’. William Shakespeare, *King Henry VIII* (*All is True*), ed. Gordon McMullan (London, 2000), 5.4.14–62, LN, 438.

15 Helen Cooper has compared romance’s tropes or motifs with memes: ‘a unit within literature that proves so useful, so infectious, that it begins to take on a life of its own.’ *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), 3.

16 John Harington, *A briefe view of the state of the Church of England* (London: Jos. Kirton, 1653). See also Marcus K. Harmes, *Bishops and Power in Early Modern England* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 30.

and by an imagined future, a life as Henry IX that he did not in fact live. The sermon written by Henry Frederick's personal chaplain, Daniel Price, on the anniversary of his death, reveals a similar tension between these retrospective and predictive gazes: 'for in HIM, a *glimmering light* of the *Golden* times appeared, all *lines* of expectation met in this *Center*, all *spirits* of vertue, *scattered* into others were *extracted* into him [...]' (A2v).¹⁷ Henry is the lens through which the beams of a former golden age are refracted into light-lines of future expectations. Henry is also a lens through which literary allusions and commonplaces are refracted, in the fashioning of both his life and his death.

This repetitive fashioning is typical of literary responses to the death of the prince. We see as much in Joshua Sylvester's collection of elegies, *Lachrimae Lachrimarum* (1612), printed with an ink-stained black frontispiece, and skeletons in its margin. That ink, the text's own mourning clothes, is transferred to the fingertips, offering an insistent and material trace of grief.¹⁸ Yet, despite its lingering ink, the primary loss depicted is a loss of futurity. In *Lachrimae Lachrimarum*, Walter Quinn writes epitaphs in four languages which are certain of what would have been Henry's success. In English, he is the 'hope of many Kingdoms' (C1r); in Latin, 'Patriae spes', the hope of the nation (C2r); in French, 'la fleur de son age,/Et de nostre esperance' (the flower of our age and of our hope, D1r); in Italian, 'Prencipi [...] delle nostre speranze' (the Prince of our hopes, D3r). For Sylvester, the death of the individual and the loss of a universal imagined future are elided in a poem which slips parenthetically between present mourning and future hope.

[...] Prince's losse (our Expectations wrack)
 Our Places, Graces, Profits, Pensions lost,
 Our present Fortunes cast, our future crost) [sic]. (B4r).¹⁹

This sense of future, even like the stray bracket printed here, is muddled by a retrospective use of the past. The 'present' fortune fails; the future falls into the past tense, suddenly 'crost'.

¹⁷ Daniel Price, *Prince Henry his First Anniversary* (Oxford: Joseph Barnes, 1613).

¹⁸ Kim F. Hall has written of a binary between skin (presumed to be white) and black ink in the period: 'For example, Cleveland's "A Fair Nymph Scorning a Black Boy courting her" takes up, in order: smoke, night, eclipse, visors, checkers, ink, and mourning. [...] all are evoked either to surmount or reinforce the difference of black and white'. *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (London, 1995), 119, my emphasis.

¹⁹ Joshua Sylvester, *Lachrimae Lachrimarum, or The Distillation of Tears Shede for the Untimely Death of the Incomparable Prince Panaretus* (London, 1612).

This is not the only moment at which Sylvester looks backwards as well as forwards. Sylvester draws associations between Henry Stuart and Edward VI, another Protestant royal who died young and here called ‘Henry’s Pre-cedent’ (B2r). Edward’s death led – if his sister Mary I’s reign is tactfully forgotten – to the ascension of Elizabeth I. Henry’s death might therefore be refashioned as a necessary evil to allow for the rise of his siblings. Sylvester transplants Elizabeth Stuart into Henry’s role: ‘Loue shall render HER her Brother,/And make Her soon a happie Princes mother’ (B3r). Elizabeth is both rendered her brother – made the new hope of the nation – and can render new “brothers”, new ‘happie Princes’, through childbirth. Her marriage offers fecundity and promise to neutralize the despair of Henry’s death.²⁰

Shakespeare and Fletcher’s conclusion of the Henrician myth with Elizabeth I (and not Edward VI, as Rowley’s *When You See Me, You Know Me* did) can be read alongside the widespread attempt to repurpose Elizabeth Stuart as the hope of the nation. Elizabeth I is also described as both heir and progenitor. Cranmer speaks of her regeneration in the manner of a phoenix: ‘Her ashes new create another heir’ (5.4.41). Fletcher, who is thought to have written this scene, uses a commonplace image, employed, for instance, by Samuel Rowley in *When You See Me, You Know Me* (1605). When Jane Seymour gives birth to her son, Edward VI, it is as ‘One Phenix dying, giues another life’ (B3v).²¹ Emblematically, the phoenix stood for personal futurity but Elizabeth’s own fame is not the purpose of the phoenix’s regeneration.²² In Cranmer’s speech, the Book of Common Prayer (which the historical Cranmer revised) is inverted. Ash is a

20 Foakes proposed the performance of *All is True* might have been prepared by early 1613, in time for the marriage of Princess Elizabeth on February 14th. *King Henry VIII*, ed. R.A. Foakes (London, 1957), xxix

21 Samuel Rowley, *When You See Me, You Know Me* (London, for Nathaniell Butter, 1605). See, amongst many others, a political connection between resurrection and phoenixes in: Henry Raymonde, *The Maiden Queene* (1607), STC2 20778; James Maxwell, *The Laudable Life and Deplorable Death, of our Late Peerlesse Prince Henry* (1612), STC2 17701; Robert Allyne, *Funerall Ellegies Upon the Most Lamentable and Untimely Death of the Thrice Illustrious Prince Henry* (1613), STC2 384; and Robert Naile, *A Relation of the Royall Magnificent, and Sumptuous Entertainment, given to the High, and Mighty Princessse, Queen Anne* (1613), STC2 18347. Though such a connection could never have been intended, we also see the image in connection with the rebuilding of the Globe following the fire caused during a performance of *All is True*: ‘And I have seene the Globe burnt, and quickly made a Phoenix’, Henry Farley, *The complaint of Paules* (London, 1616), A3r.

22 The phoenix is used as an emblem in Henry Peacham’s *Minerva Britanna* (1612). Here, the phoenix is associated with the ‘coelebs’ or bachelor, Robert Cecil, whose phoenix-life will burn to produce not a child, but immortal fame. *Minerva Britanna or A garden of heroical denises furnished, and adorned with emblemes and impresa’s of sundry natures, newly devised, moralized, and published*, E1r.

marker of death and of rebirth; the body is committed, 'ashes to ashes [...] in sure and certain hope of resurrection to eternall lyfe'.²³ Yet, for Cranmer, ash promises a political, not spiritual, regeneration. The Virgin Queen must turn to dust in order to give due space to a Stuart king.

The potentiality of the phoenix as symbol of succession is also played out in Jacobean mourning verse. Just as FMTT requires the need to look backwards to look ahead, mourning literature for royal children must weight its expression of grief against a need to look to the living heir. In his *Obsequies*, elegies written in 1612, George Wither gives both Prince Henry and his father King James a shared pair of metaphors: 'Thy Father both a Sunne, and Phoenix is,/Prince Henry was a Sunne and Phoenix too'.²⁴ The cycle of history continues: each heir is both son and phoenix, taking their place in history. The sonnet itself is addressed to Henry's younger brother, Charles, who 'now dost thou to be a Phoenix trye' (B2r). Charles is not given the final words of praise: Wither's *Obsequies* stage a dialogue between the ghost of Prince Henry and the figure of Great Britain, keeping Henry's memory alive, even while ceding space to Charles. In his anniversary sermon, Price also looks forwards and backwards, establishing Charles as the new Prince of Wales even while wishing 'the doubling of the spirit, of his blessed brother upon him' (A1v). In 'doubling', Price both suggests that Charles will be twice the prince his brother was and hints at the double-vision of history: Charles's reign runs parallel to Henry's imagined life.

Lee Bliss has argued that the final scene of *All is True* serves to 'explode the play's framework to create a world where humanity's endless, profitless cycle of rise and fall can be translated into the more miraculous image of the death and rebirth of "the maiden phoenix"'.²⁵ This is to give too much hope to the phoenix, which does not offer any miraculous regeneration, but rather a repetition or re-writing of the same 'profitless cycle' which has come before. The continual "re-writing" of this literary topos not only by Shakespeare and Fletcher but across verse

²³ *The booke of the common prayer and administracion of the sacramentes, and other rites and ceremonies of the church* (London, 1549), S2r.

²⁴ George Wither, *Prince Henries Obsequies or Mournefull Elgies Vpon His Death: Vvith a Supposed Inter-location Betweene the Ghost of Prince Henrie and Great Brittain* (London: Edward Allde for Arthur Johnson, 1612), B2r.

²⁵ Lee Bliss, 'The Wheel of Fortune and the Maiden Phoenix of Shakespeare's "King Henry the Eighth"', *ELH: A Journal of English Literary History* 42 (1975), 23.

written for both Elizabeth I and Prince Henry Stuart creates an uncanny echo from one royal death to another, until each seems not distinct loss, but merely an inevitable link in a long chain. We too are caught in a cycle of constant allusion, of playwrights remembering phrases and images from their own reading and employing those ideas in their creation of something new.

Allusive history.

The phoenix emblem is just one “re-written” image through which the process of reading looks insistently backwards. There is something inherently paradoxical about imagining the future by turning backwards to older texts, yet the future-oriented mental time travel in both the elegies for the death of Prince Henry and the christening of Elizabeth I in *All is True* take their place in a classical tradition of predictions. Although it has not yet been acknowledged, the representation of Prince Henry’s imagined future owes much to propaganda in both the *Eclogues* and *Aeneid*, which was deeply familiar to political writers of the seventeenth century.²⁶ Here, Virgil writes of the broken promise of the Augustan age, an age marred, as James I/VI’s was, by the sudden loss of Augustus’s supposed heir, Marcellus. The epic’s great patriarch, Anchises, predicts the death of Marcellus uncountable generations before it occurred, offering a model of “present-prophecy” which promises the death of the teenager that was, in 23 BC, a present reality.

O son, thy peoples huge lamented losse séeke not to knowe.
 The destnies shall this child, onto the world, no more but showe,
 [...] What wailings loude of men in stretes, in féeldes, what mourning cries
 In mighty campe of *Mars*, at this mans death in *Rome* shall rise?
 (trans. Thomas Phaer and Thomas Tyne, 1573).²⁷

Marcellus and Prince Henry, heirs apparent, were both praised for martial acts not yet performed, both mourned in the subjunctive for futures not achieved. Henry’s association with

26 John H. Betts proposed at least an indirect use of Virgil’s *Georgics* in *Henry V*, ‘Classical Allusions in Shakespeare’s *Henry V* with Special Reference to Virgil’, *Greece and Rome*, 15 (1968), 147-163.

27 *The whole xii. booke of the Aeneidos of Virgill* (STC (2nd ed.) / 24801), trans. Thomas Phaer and Thomas Tyne (London, Wyllyam How, for Abraham Veale, 1573), S2r. Sheldon Brammall makes the case that ‘The complete translation of the *Aeneid* by Thomas Phaer and Thomas Tyne has every reason to be considered the central English Renaissance *Aeneid*’. Other translations in the period include Stanyhurst’s (1582) Harington’s (1604) and Wroth’s (1620). *The English Aeneid: Translations of Virgil, 1555-1646* (Edinburgh, 2015), 19.

Marcellus was itself in turn recycled, even well into the next century. In *The Life of Henry, Prince of Wales* (1760), the historian Thomas Birch compares Henry with Marcellus and then, in turn, offers Henry as a model for the future George III, who must live through ‘the revival of his example’ (A3v). Birch’s work offers three perspectives on the life of Henry Frederick:

The character of the illustrious Prince, who is the subject of these memoirs; the vast expectations conceived of him in his own time, equal to those formed of Marcellus and Germanicus by the Roman people; and the universal admiration of him transmitted to the present age by the concurrent testimony of all the writers of the last . . . (A5r).

In an insistence that we should shape our future on the evidence of the past, Birch urges Prince George in turn to model his own actions on Henry’s. This reflexive use of the past maps with ease onto FMTT, which sees memory as ‘a tool used by the prospective brain to generate simulations of possible future events’.²⁸ There is a cycle of self-fashioning: each ruler attempts to follow the precedent of past rulers. As Birch would put it, the present age is dependent on the ‘testimony’ of past writers, both early modern and classical: to look ahead is to look backwards.

Beyond Anchises’s “present-prophecy”, there is another Virgilian echo in Cranmer’s speech. Virgil’s fourth Eclogue, commonly known as the Messianic Ode, is written in praise of a child. Virgil left the child unnamed, ‘spur[ring the curiosity of his readers and commentators’, including Constantine and Augustine, who both read the child as Christ.²⁹ Virgil’s prophecy was a familiar allusion in the political poetry of early modern England, having been adapted by Spenser in *The Shepheardes Calender* (1579), in his own fourth eclogue, ‘Aprill’, written in praise of Queen Elizabeth. Like Cranmer, Spenser imagines the life of the queen and projects his mind forward into the future, and, ultimately, to her inevitable death:

She shalbe a grace,
To fyll the fourth place,
And reigne with the rest in heaven. (‘Aprill’, D1v)³⁰

Would I had known no more! but she must die,
She must, the saints must have her; yet a virgin,

²⁸ Daniel L. Schacter et. al, ‘Remembering the Past to Imagine the Future: The Prospective Brain’, *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, 2007, 8.9, 660.

²⁹ Sabine MacCormack, *The Shadows of Poetry: Vergil in the Mind of Augustine* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1998), 23.

³⁰ Edmund Spenser, *The Shepheardes Calender* (London, 1579).

A most unspotted lily shall she pass
To the ground, and all the world shall mourn her.

(*All is True*, 5.4.59-62).

In Spenser, as in *All is True*, the pagan Messianic Ode must be adapted: classical graces become saints, and the praise is not for a boy, but a woman who will precede a boy. Spenser transforms the impossibly fertile land of Virgil's eclogue, where oak trees pour with honey, into the red and white roses of Lancaster and York (D3r). In *All is True*, the golden age offers new crops again: corn and vines.³¹ Cranmer promises that 'In her days, every man shall eat in safety/Under his own vine what he plants' (5.4.33-34). McMullan notes that this Old Testament verse (Micah 4:4) is used in Daniel Price's *Lamentations for the Death of the Late Illustrious Prince Henry* and argues that such verses were also 'repeatedly associated with James I'.³² Even the imagery used to describe Elizabeth in *All is True* is prescient of a Stuart future. The verses associated with James I are pulled backwards, onto Elizabeth. No monarch is unique in the imagery applied to them.

Cranmer's prophecy is not the only moment at which *All is True* proves slippery in its appropriation of both classical and Elizabethan tropes. The ritual Spenser imagines for Elizabeth finds an uncanny echo in the lengthy stage direction which accompanies the angelic visitation of Katherine of Aragon. In 'Aprill', the Muses bring 'Bay braunches, which they doe beare,/All for Elisa in her hand to weare?', the Graces 'dauncen deffly' around her, and the Nymph Cloris crowns Elizabeth with olive garlands (D1r-v). In *All is True*, Katherine dreams of

six personages clad in white robes, wearing on their heads garlands of bays, and golden vizards on their faces. They carry branches of bays or palm in their hands. They first conge unto Katherine, then dance; and, at certain changes, the first two hold a spare garland over her head
(4.2.82, s.d.).

Katherine, the Catholic queen, not Elizabeth the Protestant princess, is given this divine blessing. The vision, with its resonance of Spenser, himself an ardently Protestant poet, offers divine

31 *molli panlatim flavescent campis arista/incultisque rubens pendebit sentibus uva/et durae quercus sudabunt rosida mella* (IV.28-30). 'slowly will the plains yellow with the waving corn, on wild brambles the purple grape will hang, and the stubborn oak distil dewy honey'.

32 McMullan notes that 'These texts were repeatedly associated with James I', William Shakespeare, *King Henry VIII* (*All is True*), ed. Gordon McMullan (London, 2000), 5.4, n 33-5. McMullan examples include: Thomas Adams, in *The Gallant's Burden*, who suggests that '[o]ur feare of warre is lesse then theirs [because] Wee sitte vnder our owne Figge-trees, and eate the fruites of our owne Vineyards' (D2r) and Daniel Price, who in *Lamentations*, addresses Prince Henry's courtiers, who 'liued vnder the Branches of our Princely Cedar ...: you onely returne to your owne Families to drinke of your owne Vines, and to eate vnder your owne Figge-trees' (E3r). McMullan also notes that Fletcher parodies the lines in *Beggars' Bush*.

support, even if only in Katherine's wishful thinking, 'whilst I sit meditating/ On that celestial harmony I go to' (4.2.79-80). This lengthy dance of golden-masked spirits precedes Cranmer's prophecy. His certainty that Elizabeth will rest amongst the saints sounds hollow in its wake.

Formally, this repetition of images has its own cyclical effect. The phoenix, the political-messianic prophecy, the pastoral and agrarian bliss, the garlands of bay, used for Henry Stuart, and used for Elizabeth, and used for the dying Katherine of Aragon, have the effect of semantic satiation.³³ This collection of images, from the phoenix and its ashes to a Virgilian "hope of the nation" topos articulate hopes for the role of future heirs, if not its reality. Cumulatively, unbroken ranks of Elizabethan and Stuart writers, all turning to the same commonplaces, create a sense of similitude: this is 'the concurrent testimony of all the writers of the last [age]', as Birch would put it. Recycling these images creates a sense of inevitability. Princes are simply sequels waiting to be written, children who serve as understudies for their fathers.

'Remember mine'

The repetitive imagery of *All is True* is further complicated by the theatrical legacy that Shakespeare and Fletcher inherited. Rowley's *When You See Me, You Know Me*, a play about the life of Henry VII, had been performed in 1606, and had foregrounded Edward VI as the heir to the Tudor throne. Its performance by the Prince of Wales's Company strengthened the text's already evident connections between the Protestant princes, Edward Tudor and Henry Stuart (Rowley's Henry VIII imagines the child of Jane Seymour will be 'a ninth Henrie to the English Crowne', B1r).³⁴ Yet, *When You See Me* is not the only play about princehood and prophecy which *All is True* recalls. *All is True*'s repetition is further compounded by its echoing of the death of

33 To this list, we might also add the image of the 'ruined city', as discussed in Adrian Streete, 'Elegy, prophecy, and politics: literary responses to the death of Prince Henry Stuart, 1612-1614', *Renaissance Studies* 31.1 (2017), 87-106.

34 Mark H. Lawhorn proposes that the play was written with its royal patron in mind. 'Taking Pains for the Prince: Age, Patronage, and Penal Surrogacy in Samuel Rowley's *When You See Me, You Know Me*' in *The Premodern Teenager: Youth in Society 1150-1650*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler (Toronto, Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2002), 132. See also Mark Rankin, 'Henry VIII, Shakespeare, and the Jacobean Royal Court', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 51.2 (2011), 349-66.

Mamillius in *The Winter's Tale* (1611), revived at court for the Christmas season of 1612 and so, like *All is True*, performed amidst national grief for the loss of Henry Stuart.³⁵ In both Rowley's *When You See Me* and in *Winter's Tale*, we see the connection between prophecy and the loss (of risk of loss) of royal lineage that is played out at the end of *All is True*.

When Shakespeare and Fletcher's Henry VIII speaks of his miscarried, stillborn, or dead male children, he speaks not of individual losses – we have no numbers or names here – but of lost potential. For Henry, children either represent the past – a 'a judgement on me' (2.4.191) for his own ill deeds – or the future, as a promise of his legacy.³⁶ In *When You See Me, You Know Me*, Henry VIII is compelled to choose between the life of his wife (Jane Seymour) or the foetus she is carrying (the future Edward VI). Like the Henry represented in *All is True*, Rowley's Henry also considers the loss of a foetus to be divinely ordained, although here he assumes the loss to represent divine favour, not punishment. Rowley's Henry speculates that

Perhaps [God] did mould forth a Sonne for me,
And seeing (that sees all) in his creation,
To be some impotent and coward spirit,
Unlike the figure of his Royall Father:
[...] Ile thanke the Heavens for taking such a Sonne. (B2v).

This is not a Henry wracked with guilt, terrified of divine punishment; this is a king secure in the knowledge that, if he were to father a weak child, God would intervene. However, the child lives, and is a son, and so Henry must, yet again, change tone. History is shifting, moment by moment.

A final prophetic role is given to Jane's father, who, like Cranmer, imagines the life of an heir. Seymour offers hope of a 'gallant Prince' (B3r), and Henry commands, 'Be thou a Prophet Seymer in thy words' (B3v). Like Cranmer, these men predict and shape their legacy, interpreting God's will in self-serving exegeses. Henry VIII was, moments earlier, far less confident in his hopes of a gallant prince. Seymour is no more plausible an oracle than Cranmer, but his words suit Henry's desires. Shakespeare and Fletcher's Henry also accepts Cranmer's oracle with ease –

³⁵ *British Drama, 1609-1616*, eds. Martin Wiggins and Catherine Richardson, (Oxford, 2016), vol. 6, 118.

³⁶ Olga L. Valbuena, *Subjects to the King's Divorce: Equivocation, Infidelity, and Resistance in Early Modern England* (Indiana, 2003), 10-11.

and indeed, he forces the play towards a sharp conclusion before the promised future can be subject to any debate. Henry attempts to end the play with a simple summation:

This day, no man think
He's business at his house, for all shall stay –
This little one shall make it holiday. (5.4.74-76).

Henry tries to bring the play to a close, but he is refused the last word; the epilogue lingers, a post-script which unravels his neat couplet by sowing doubts. This narrative does not cooperate with those who try to shape it from within: history will not be so easily re-written.

This is not the only moment at which Henry's idea of the future does not fit neatly onto what we know of the past. The palpable absence of Anne at the christening serves only to remind us that, within months, another of Henry's wives will die. Henry also writes Mary out of his history play, with the claim that 'Never before/This happy child, [Elizabeth] did I get anything' (5.4.64-65). This linguistic sleight of hand runs through the play. Elizabeth is always a 'child', a term which in its neutrality avoids reference to Henry's desired male heir. Katherine alone describes a child of Henry's as a 'daughter' (4.2.133). Katherine resists her husband's history when she insists she has 'been blessed/With many children by you' (2.4.34-35).³⁷ Although *All is True* turns the historical Katherine of Aragon's speech nearly verbatim into verse, the play's Katherine does not add the qualifier found in records of her trial: 'by me ye have had divers children, although it had pleased God to call them out of this world, which hath been no default in me'.³⁸ This is no phoenix-view of history: there is no easy sense that one heir replaces another.

Katherine resists futurity in order to keep the present memory of her stillborn children alive.

In this trial scene – the trial itself marking a moment in which the evidence of the past is retrospectively analysed – *All is True* echoes *The Winter's Tale*. At Hermione's trial, Leontes ignores the oracular evidence he is given and disowns his daughter. Where Cranmer's oracular

³⁷ I'd like to thank the cast of Creation Theatre's *Henry VIII, or All is True* (2020), and especially Funlola Olufunwa (Queen Katherine) and Rhodri Lewis (King Henry) with whom I had several productive conversations about Katherine and Henry's differing descriptions of their lost children during our rehearsals. Their performances can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BFMh1jzB9w>.

³⁸ George Cavendish, *Two Early Tudor Lives: The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey*, eds. Richard S. Sylvester and Davis P. Harding (New Haven, 1962), 84.

speech offers life, the oracle of *The Winter's Tale* brings death. As soon as it is spoken, Mamillius dies. Henry and Leontes (and Rowley's own Henry VIII) are, however, alike in their reaction to prophecy, using oracles to confirm what they already believed. On hearing the oracle, Leontes breaks up his court. On hearing Cranmer's speech, Henry ends the christening (and with it, the play) at once, allowing no opportunity for debate. Henry becomes a negative image of Leontes, at once an echo and a foil. At the end of *Winter's Tale*, Leontes wishes to look backwards, to have answers as to what has been 'Performed in this wide gap of time since first/We were dissevered' (5.3.155-56). Henry VIII, however, does not look backwards. Slipping into FMTT at the end of the play, Henry thinks of the future, but not by imagining the life of his daughter. Henry can only conceive of a future if he is part of the narrative: he imagines himself in heaven (as so many in *All is True* do) but not at last at peace.³⁹ Henry imagines watching his own legacy play out.

This oracle of comfort has so pleased me
That when I am in heaven I shall desire
To see what this child does, and praise my maker. (5.4.66-68).

Henry fashions himself as the audience of the future, watching history play out, as we do when we watch *All is True*. He will see Elizabeth but he will also (we assume) see the reigns of Mary and Edward, proving Cranmer's oracle tainted by lies of omission. More than this, he will exist beyond the play's conclusion. Henry cannot imagine a future which does not remember him. *All is True* does not allow for a future which is not dependent on and trapped by the past.

Blank pages, ghost images.

Henry VIII's imagined future makes space for his own legacy but leaves none for the pieces of history that do not suit his narrative. The ending of *All is True* is marked by the absence of Mary I and Edward VI. Though the role of Edward VI is left blank, his absence it leaves a mark, not unlike ink stains left behind by *Lachrimae Lachrimarum*. More ghostly still is Mary, an unstaged

³⁹ See Buckingham who prays, 'lift my soul to heaven' (2.1.79); Wolsey, whose 'hopes in heaven do dwell' (3.2.460); and Katherine, who meditates on 'that celestial harmony I go to' (4.2.80).

‘ghost character’ who has no place in Henry VIII’s desired history.⁴⁰ The absence of expected history creates a space for imaginative response. We might follow Chloe Porter in reading ‘incompleteness as a functional part of cultural production in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England’, or Emma Smith in her articulation of the ‘sheer and permissive gapiness’ of Shakespeare’s drama.⁴¹ The play gives space for a split vision of history, for a historical narrative flanked by ‘permissive’ alternative narratives. These alternative narratives are, as I will show, only complicated by the play’s absence of bodies and prevalence of books. Jeffrey Todd Knight has written of ‘ghost images’ in early printed books, an ‘almost imperceptible darkening of the paper’ as ink is transferred from another page to another while both are drying, one on top of another, in the printing house.⁴² We might think back to Price’s description of Prince Charles, living under the ghostly image of Henry Frederick. We might also think of Constance’s imaginative mourning in *King John*: ‘Grief fills the room up of my absent child’ (3.4.93). Shakespeare’s histories are full of ghost images, each page covered with the suggestion of another story.

In both *All is True* and *Winter’s Tale*, the loss of the imagined future of a child is marked not by the staging of death, but by a show of absence, a blank space. Mamillius dies off-stage and Katherine’s children either die before the play’s action, or, like Mary, are never brought onstage. A corpse is a stage property which fractures past and future: between the life that was and the loss that will be made real, once the body itself is gone. It is, Sophie Duncan has argued, a disruptive prop ‘both because the actor-as-corpse is not “dead” and because the man-made corpse was never alive’.⁴³ We see this play out in records of Henry Frederick’s funeral, at which death was made insistently present when an effigy of the prince was paraded along the route.⁴⁴ The effigy offered the public one last look at a body both suspended between past and future,

40 For more on Shakespeare’s ghost characters, see Kristian Smidt, ‘Shakespeare’s Absent Characters’, *English Studies*, 61.5 (1980), 397-407.

41 Chloe Porter, *Making and Unmaking in Early Modern English Drama: Spectators, Aesthetics and Incompletion*, (Manchester, 2013), 99. Emma Smith, *This is Shakespeare* (London, 2019), 2.

42 Jeffrey Todd Knight, ‘Invisible Ink: A Note on Ghost Images in Early Printed Books’, *Textual Cultures: Texts, Contexts, Interpretations* 5.2 (2010), 55.

43 Sophie Duncan, *Shakespeare’s Props: Memory and Cognition* (New York and Oxford: Routledge, 2019), 172.

44 Woodward, *Theatre of Death*, 148-165.

life and death. To stage the death of a child without staging a body is therefore to evade even this disruption of time: there is no definite before and after. By denying his audience a corpse, Shakespeare denies death its presence, and its existence in the present. We are left with a ghost image, an absence which begs us to imagine the alternative reality of the off-stage world.

Instead of bodies, we are offered books as records of what has come before. Mamillius is plausibly Leontes's son because his nose is 'a copy out of mine' (1.2.124); Perdita is called the 'the whole matter/And copy of the father' (2.3.99-100). The heir is a copy, a textual replica of their father's narrative. Prince Henry too was conceptualized as a text almost immediately after his death. We see as much in Drummond's mourning verse for Prince Henry: 'So Heavens faire face to comming worlds which reedes,/A booke had beene of thy illustrious deedes' (K2r).⁴⁵ Wither's *Obsequies* (Elegy 5) similarly describe Henry as a prince 'Who was himself a booke for Kings to pore on:/And might have been thy Basilikon Doron' (B1r). Here, James I's tract, written to model princely behaviour for his son, and published in 1599, is only an idealized text. In time, Henry might have become a *Basilikon Doron*, a model text; but his life did not live out the potential imagined in print.⁴⁶ Princes lived lives that would be treated as lessons. This "living history" is captured in Cranmer's description of Elizabeth: she will be a 'pattern to all princes living' (5.4.22), her descendants 'shall read [her] perfect ways of honour' (5.4.37). This model of a text as demanding constant and renewed engagement is typical of Shakespeare's histories, where epilogues leave narrative threads decidedly untied, or promise another installment, a new 'copy'.⁴⁷

Books are not a metaphor for stability or resolution. In the volume, 'Renaissance Collage: Towards a New History of Reading', Juliet Fleming reminds us that 'early modern readers cut as

⁴⁵ William Drummond, 'Teares on the Death of Moeliades' in *Poems* (London, 1616).

⁴⁶ Michael Ulliot has described the role of *Basilikon Doron* in shaping the popular perception of Prince Henry, and it: 'Henry became an object not only of his father's pedagogical influence but of his subjects' rhetoric and imaginations – of unsolicited advice that drew inspiration from his father's own counsel.' Michael Ulliot, 'James's Reception and Henry's Receptivity: Reading *Basilikon Doron* after 1603' in *Prince Henry Revived: Image and Exemplarity in Early Modern England*, ed. Timothy Wilks (Southampton Solent University, 2007), 66.

⁴⁷ 1 *Henry IV*, for instance, ends with victory over Hotspur, but with a promise of further battles to come: 'And since this business so fair is done,/Let us not leave till all our own be won' (5.5.44-45). 2 *Henry IV* promises a sequel: 'our humble author will continue the story with Sir John in it, and make you merry with fair Catherine of France' (Epilogue, 25-27). The conquests seen in *Henry V* are undone by the final Chorus: 'they lost France and made his England bleed' (Epilogue, 12).

they read, and read by cutting”.⁴⁸ Collage is at once a new creation formed out of fragments of the old: I would repurpose this title to suggest that collage is also a model for a new reading of history. This view of history is not particular to *All is True*. A sixteenth-century painting, previously attributed to Hans Holbein the Younger, offers an impossible collage of history. It shows Henry’s third wife, Jane Seymour, standing beside her young son, Edward, despite the fact that Seymour died shortly after giving birth to him. With Henry’s daughters, Princess Mary (left) and Princess Elizabeth (right) also present, we see pieces of history, cut up and stuck together.



‘The Family of Henry VIII’, c. 1545, RCIN 405796,
Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2020

All is True offers just such an imagined collage of Henry VIII’s life, one not marked as this painting is, by the presence of too many children, but by the absence of them. Its audiences, like viewers of the painting, are encouraged to hold all possibilities to be true at once. At the end of *All is True*, Time’s face is Janus-like, at once looking backwards and forwards, to the past and to the future, as it does so often in Shakespeare’s late plays.⁴⁹ This is Shakespeare thinking, as

48 Juliet Fleming, ‘The Renaissance Collage: Signcutting and Signsewing’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies: The Renaissance Collage: Toward a New History of Reading*, eds. Juliet Fleming, William Sherman, and Adam Smyth (2015), 45.3, 445-56.

49 Writing of *The Tempest*, Bernard Harris describes ‘the dependence of the present upon the past and the posited freedom of future actions’. “‘What’s past is prologue”: “Cymbeline” and “Henry VIII” in John Russell Brown and Bernard Harris, eds., *Later Shakespeare* (London, 1966), 203. Marjorie Garber on the ‘logic of retrospective anticipation’ in “‘What’s past is prologue”: Temporality and Prophecy in the History Plays’, in B. K. Lewalski (ed.), *Renaissance Genres: Essays on Theory, History, and Interpretation* (Cambridge, Mass., 1986), pp. 301-31.

Kiernan Ryan has put it, ‘in the future perfect tense, as the way it will have been.’⁵⁰ The cognitive process of future thought is itself a collage, an impossible collection of past images.

To think in the future perfect tense is to create work that cannot ever be fully resolved. *All is True* demands the imaginative participation of its audience to craft a resolution, depending on their own recollection of history. If we are required to read historical fiction actively, cutting as we read, then audiences and adaptors of *All is True* (and *Winter’s Tale*) have not shirked their responsibilities. The reception of these plays, alongside the history of Henry Frederick, reveal a lingering fascination with alternative histories. In 1628, for instance, George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, funded a revival of *All is True* only to walk out at the execution of his namesake. Villiers’s publicity stunt performatively reinterprets history, offers himself as the ghost image of another Buckingham and allowing the play to progress no further than Buckingham’s death. Yet, Cogswell and Lake cite a contemporary report of the incident which suggests Villiers should have waited until ‘the fall of Cardinal Wolsey, who was a more lively type of himself’.⁵¹ History becomes a material that can be torn and refashioned to suit one’s own perspective.

Historians too create alternate narratives. While Henry VIII’s lost heirs have met with some of these speculations – including in Suzannah Lipscomb’s alt-history essay, ‘What if Henry VIII’s son by Katherine of Aragon survived?’ – few princes have been so frequently subject to imaginative re-writings as Henry Frederick.⁵² In his historical biography, Roy Strong examined the prince he styled Henry IX: even the text’s title, ‘Henry, Prince of Wales, and England’s Lost Renaissance’, presumes an imagined renaissance which was cut short.⁵³ An exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery in 2012, ‘The Lost Prince: The Life & Death of Henry Stuart’ is equally telling in its framing of Henry Frederick’s life. ‘In a historical guessing game,’ Sandy Nairne

50 Kiernan Ryan. “‘Here’s Fine Revolution’: Shakespeare’s Philosophy of the Future”, *Essays In Criticism* 63.2 (2013), 111. See also Harry Berger on the future perfect in Richard II in *Imaginary Audition: Shakespeare on Stage and Page* (Berkeley, 1989), 104-37.

51 Anonymous newsletter, 9 August 1628, BL MS Harl. 383, fol. 65r in Thomas Cogswell and Peter Lake, ‘Buckingham Does the Globe: Henry VIII and the Politics of Popularity in the 1620s’, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 60.3 (2009), 278.

52 <https://unherd.com/2020/09/what-if-henry-viii-son-by-katherine-of-aragon-survived/>, accessed 23.09.2020.

53 Roy Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales and England’s Lost Renaissance* (London, 1986).

notes, ‘if Henry had lived, his younger brother Charles would not have taken to the throne’.⁵⁴

Sarah Fraser’s 2017 biography was titled ‘The Prince Who Would Be King: The Life and Death of Henry Stuart’.⁵⁵ A documentary directed by George Cathro in 2017 similarly followed the life of ‘The Best King We Never Had’.⁵⁶ Novelist Philippa Gregory also adds to this alt-history: ‘Henry’s death is one of the many ‘what ifs’ of history – if he had survived to become Henry IX of England, would the country still have followed the path to civil war?’⁵⁷ Henry Frederick’s death has become a turning point in our understanding of the past. Like his contemporaries, we are still tempted to reflect on Henry’s potential, and not on the realities of his short life.

This selective and speculative view of history is typical of the way a neurotypical brain is programmed to think about the past and future. We see as much in rewritings of *The Winter’s Tale* in novel form (*All is True* has had no such adaption, although Tudor historical fiction abounds). Jeanette Winterson’s *The Gap of Time: The Winter’s Tale Retold* (2015) begins by summarizing Shakespeare’s ‘original’ before offering a ‘cover version’, in acknowledgement that her adaptation both mirrors and changes Shakespeare.⁵⁸ Adaptation itself becomes a kind of mourning, a need to keep the original alive by remembering it. We find this retrospection both within a contemporary use of Shakespeare, and in our contemporary view of Shakespeare.

The popular imagination attributes to Shakespeare an inability to move forward following the death of his own son that seems drawn from the plots of his own late plays. In 2018, the title ‘All is True’ was repurposed by Ben Elton for a film featuring an aging Shakespeare accepting the death of his own son, Hamnet, even as Hamnet’s twin sister Judith must live in her brother’s ghostly shadow.⁵⁹ Elton has called this the “reverse Hamlet” of a son

54 Sandy Nairne, ‘Director’s Foreword’ in Catharine MacLeod, *The Lost Prince: The Life and Death of Henry Stuart* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2012), 6. See also

55 Susan Fraser, *The Prince Who Would Be King: The Life and Death of Henry Stuart* (London: William Collins, 2018).

56 ‘The Best King We Never Had’, dir. George Cathro, BBC 2, 30 November 2017. This proposal was also raised by Steven Brocklehurst in an article published on the day of broadcast: ‘How Henry Stuart became the king who never was’, BBC Scotland News, 30 November 2017, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-42082710>.

57 <https://www.philippagregory.com/news/death-of-prince-henry-frederick>, 6th November 2018

58 Jeanette Winterson, *The Gap of Time: The Winter’s Tale Retold* (London: Hogarth, 2015), xi-xvii.

59 *All is True*, dir. Kenneth Branagh (Sony Pictures, 2018).

haunting his father', but to make this point he need not have looked beyond *All is True*.⁶⁰ While the play does not stage a ghost in physical form, it offers Henry VIII as an endlessly haunted father. This haunted father is the Shakespeare offered in Maggie O'Farrell's *Hamnet*, which casts Shakespeare as Old Hamlet's Ghost in the play written in memory of his son. *Hamlet* becomes an act of mourning Hamnet, who, in this ghostly re-writing remains 'both dead and alive': fiction, like FMTT, allows for all realities to exist at once.⁶¹ Allusion keeps texts both alive and dead, as images and quotations remain caught in stasis between their past and present uses. The more we reanimate the plots and imagery of *Winters's Tale* and *All is True*, the more power we give to their continual haunting, to their repetitions, to their uncanny collage of images we have seen before.

'I feel now/The future in the instant' (*Macbeth*, 1.5.57).

The association of memory and repetition with ideas of haunting plays out across Shakespeare's work. The future becomes an uncanny shadow of the past: even in Macbeth's famous 'Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow', there is a sickening sense that we cannot escape even this articulation of the future. We might think, too, of Queen Margaret's grim insistence on the pointlessness of war, captured in the slow and sickening repetition of her memories:

I had an Edward, till a Richard kill'd him;
 I had a Harry, till a Richard kill'd him.
 Thou hadst an Edward, till a Richard kill'd him;
 Thou hadst a Richard, till a Richard killed him. (*Richard III*, 4.4.40-43).

Again, and again, one man is replaced with another. There is a horror of repetition, a fear that what has come before will play out again. In *All is True*, Wolsey captures this relentless cycle in the play's most uncanny image: the living statue. The play's second scene sees Henry VIII and Wolsey in an extended dispute over taxation. Henry looks backwards, insisting on the value of history to shape the present and future: 'Things done without example, in their issue/Are to be feared' (1.2.91-92). But Wolsey thinks only of futurity: the 'chronicles of [his] doing' (1.2.75) will

⁶⁰ Interview with Ben Elton, <https://www.sonyclassics.com/allistrue/> [accessed 16.09.2020].

⁶¹ Maggie O'Farrell, *Hamnet* (London: Headline, 2020), 366.

be ‘ignorant tongues’ (73) and he therefore must act without thought of what the future will fashion as his history. To be concerned with the future is, counter-intuitively, to be held in stasis:

If we shall stand still,
In fear our motion will be mocked or carped at,
We should take root here where we sit,
Or sit state-statues only. (1.2.86-89).

Wolsey’s lines offer a difficult blurring of times: a future ‘if’ and a future ‘fear’ might lead those in the present to ‘take root’, and act as living markers of the past, ‘statues’. In ‘motion’, there is a linguistic hint of puppet shows or motions – to live in the present is to offer cheap entertainment that might easily be mocked.⁶² But a motionless puppet is a lifeless simulacrum – indeed, we might remember the effigy of Henry Frederick, paraded along his funeral route to offer an uncanny semblance of life.⁶³ Like a statue, a puppet or effigy is a mere model of human life, reverting to the wood from which it was fashioned as it takes root. To live as a statue seems impossible (although *The Winter’s Tale* might prove otherwise) but it is the fate of those who fear their future chroniclers. To evade the judgement of history is to remain trapped in the present.

The capacity to shape the narrative of history is particularly associated with Wolsey, who renders his word into law with a God-like speech act: ‘As he cried “Thus let be”, to as much end/As give a crutch to th’ dead’ (1.171-72). Of course, Wolsey himself is a reanimated memory: a history play is, by definition, a crutch given to the dead, with all the inherent impossibility and contradiction implied in that phrase. The audience of *All is True* are explicitly called upon to reanimate the dead through their own wishful thinking.

Think ye see
The very persons of our noble story
As they were living; (Prologue, 25-27).

⁶² Although motions are generally understood to be puppet shows, Scott Cutler Shershow suggests the motions are not quite puppets but ‘flat cutout figures that the heat of the candle moved’ or ‘shadow figures’. *Puppets and Popular Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 107. This reading offers an interesting contrast between the fixed stone statue and the moving shadow suggested by motions.

⁶³ Woodward, *Theatre of Death*, 163.

As Henry Wotton wrote in a letter describing the fire at the Globe in 1613, sparked by a cannon shot during *All is True*, these are simply ‘principle pieces’ of history.⁶⁴ This is history that has been selectively remembered, not history as it was. As such, the debate which *All is True* tempts over Henry’s heirs – unmentioned Edward, idealised Elizabeth, or absent Mary – is rendered pointless. Tudor history is made petty, the machinations of every player serving only to stage-manage the arrival of James I. Katherine or Anne, Wolsey or Cranmer, Elizabeth or Edward: internal logic fails, binaries collapse, and when the epilogue speaks of ‘The merciful construction of good women,/For such a one we showed ‘em’ (10-11), the desire to interpret history in simple terms is exposed as naïve. Between Katherine, who ends her life blessed by angels, or Anne, who gives birth to the future Virgin Queen, who is the one good woman? Or should we, like Cranmer, be thinking ahead, to imagine the good woman that Elizabeth I will become?

The kind of creative response to history found in Shakespeare and Fletcher’s play is justified by Philip Sidney, who claims in his *Defence of Poesie* (1595) that ‘the Historian is bound to recite, that may the Poet if hee list with his imitation make his owne;’.⁶⁵ The possibilities of poetic license, blurring the already frayed edge of history and fiction, is not limited to those who write history: reading the past actively, mining the memory of history for information, offers what Clement Edmondes called in his commentary on Caesar’s *de Bello Gallico* (1600), ‘history and speculative learning’.⁶⁶ History can be selectively re-written: the equivocations of *All is True* are not a lack of coherence but a deliberate negotiation of history’s ambivalence.

Historical drama depends on speculative possibilities. But if history is unstable, our capacity to imagine the future through knowledge of the past is compromised. We are looking into a distorted mirror: the future is a false reflection of the past. The prologue of *All is True*,

⁶⁴ ‘July 2 1613’, *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton*, ed. Logan Pearsall Smith (Oxford, 1907), vol. 2, 32.

⁶⁵ Phillip Sidney, *An Apologie for Poetry* (London, for Henry Olney, 1595), E2v.

⁶⁶ Clement Edmondes, *Observations upon the fine first bookes of Casars commentaries setting fourth the practise of the art military in the time of the Roman Empire* (London: Peter Short, 1600), A1r. See also Sasha Roberts, ‘Reading in Early Modern England: Contexts and Problems Author(s)’ *Critical Survey* (2000), 12.2, 1-16 and Stephen B. Dobranski. *Readers and Authorship in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005).

makes this distortion evident: this will be ‘our chosen truth’ (18), which is no truth at all. *All is True* is a history play determined to keep alive the possibility of other histories. I began this article by demonstrating two distinct ways of thinking about the future: the memory-driven and evidence-based speculation of FMTT and the divine and insistently forwards-looking accounts of prophecy. To this binary I would add two distinct models of writing history. In the first, truth is refracted through a lens, with ‘*all lines of expectation [...] scattered*’ – it suggests possibility, alternative history. In the second, history is borne backwards, working cyclically and recycling past events, like the phoenix which is reborn from its own ash. In its recycling of tropes, in its echoes of Virgil, Spenser, Rowley, and even of Shakespeare’s own *Winter’s Tale*, *All is True* is made up of pieces of past texts. Read in the aftermath of Henry Frederick’s death and the recycled imagery of his own elegies, the play’s insistence on repetition is only underscored.

Between its collage of past texts and its future imaginings, the two conceptions of history offered by *All is True* cannot cohere. Yet, as the play suggests, pieces can be chosen from the historical whole and all interpreters will be happy: those seeking the glorification of Elizabeth, those waiting for Edward, and those desiring redemption for Katherine and her daughter Mary. The epilogue, which laments “Tis ten to one this play shall never please/ All that are here’ (1-2) reminds us that each audience member will offer their own reading. We can even choose the play’s title: *Henry VIII* or *All is True*. The encompassing, concessive ‘All is True’, held against the concretely historical ‘Henry VIII’ allows for both speculation and reality. The hair-line fracture between those titles offers an imaginative space in which, in our own mental time travel at least, all lives can be lived fruitfully, and all futures idealized, although not ever realised.