Chapter 2
Isabelle de France, Child Bride[1]

Deanne Williams

"J'étais une pucelle."
— Jacqueline Kennedy to André Malraux, about life before her marriage to John F. Kennedy

For most readers, the queen in *Richard II* is an adult. As Jean Howard and Phyllis Rackin put it, Shakespeare "transforms the child [of historical record] into a mature woman," in a manner that is, like so much of Shakespearean history, "unhistorical."[2] In his Cambridge edition of the play, Andew Gurr states that Shakespeare's queen is actually a conflation of the historical Isabelle de France and her predecessor, Richard's first wife, Anne of Bohemia, a tradition that appears to stem from Horace Walpole.[3] Theatrical productions of the play thus tend to cast the queen as a grown woman: Kathryn Pogson, Anna Carteret, and Michael Brown, in an all-male production of the play, played the role in their thirties, and Sian Thomas and Ellen Tree (Mrs. Charles Kean) played it in their forties.[4]

[1] The author thanks the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Huntington Library, the Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies at the University of Toronto, Terry Goldie, David Goldstein, Hassan Melehy, and Stephen Orgel.

[2] Jean E. Howard and Phyllis Rackin, *Gendering a Nation. A Feminist Account of Shakespeare's English Histories* (London: Routledge, 1997), 157. Peter Ure refers to the "the unhistorical conception of Isabel as a mature woman" in his Arden edition of *King Richard II* (London: Methuen, 1956), xliii. Charles Kean writes, "Shakespeare has deviated from historical truth in the introduction of Richard's queen as a woman in the present piece." *Shakespeare's Play of Richard II Arranged for Representation at the Princess's Theatre With Historical and Explanatory Notes by Charles Kean* (London: John K. Chapman, 1857), 43.

[3] *King Richard II*, ed. Andrew Gurr. The New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984 updated 2003), 65. Edmund Malone credits Horace Walpole's suggestion in his 1821 edition of Shakespeare's *Plays and Poems*: *The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare* vol. XVI (London, 1821), 53.

[4] The youngest queen I can find is Janet Maw, who was 24 when she appeared in Ian McKellen's 1978 TV production. Lily Brayton (b. 1876) also played the part in her twenties, from 1900–1909. In the 2007 RSC production of Shakespeare's histories, the youth of Hannah Barrie's twenty-something queen was highlighted by the much-older Jonathan Slinger. Interestingly, it was Fiona Shaw's performance of King Richard in Deborah Warner's 1995 production that was described as "girlish." Carol Chillington Rutter, "Fiona Shaw's Richard II: The Girl as Player-King as Comic" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 48 (1997): 314–24. On his 1988 National Theatre production, starring Derek Jacobi, Clifford

The theatrical tradition of the adult Isabelle is illustrated by G.H. Broughton's painting, *Queen Isabella and Her Ladies*.[5]

The historical Isabelle de France, however, was famous for being a child bride. Isabelle de France (1389–1409) married Richard II (1367–1400) in 1396, when she was just 7 and Richard was 29. Isabelle was the daughter of the French King Charles VI, a member of the house of Valois, and his wife, Isabeau de Bavière. Devastated by the death of his first wife, Anne of Bohemia, in 1394, Richard II rapidly entered into marriage negotiations.[6] Charles VI had initially offered his daughter to Richard II when she was just five, in an effort to prevent the English king from marrying Yolande, the daughter of the King of Aragon.[7] Cheered by the prospect of marrying Isabelle, for whom he received a very large dowry, and eager to bring the long war with France to a conclusion, Richard dismissed all other prospects of a more suitable age. Agnes Strickland, who devotes a lengthy chapter to the girl queen in her *Lives of the Queens of England* (1851), conjectures that Richard expected his grief to have diminished by the time Isabelle was old enough to consummate their marriage (2).[8]

As Helen Ostovich observes, "historically, Queen Isabel's claim to fame was her age."[9] Jean Froissart's *Chroniques*, one of Shakespeare's major sources for the play, reveals a fascination with Isabelle's age that borders on obsession.[10]

Williams writes: "Clearly, it would be disastrous to invite a child of ten to play queen Isabel. The content of the poetic form of her speeches precludes such a notion." <http://www.sparrowsp.addr.com/theatre%20pages/richard_ii_1.htm>.

[5] <http://www.english.emory.edu/classes/Shakespeare_Illustrated/Broughton.Isabella.html>. See, for comparison's sake, the contemporary image by Jean Fouquet: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Isabelle_de_France.jpg>.

[6] J.J.N. Palmer, *England, France, and Christendom* 1377–1399 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), 169–79 and his "The Background to Richard II's Marriage to Isabel of France (1396)" *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* XLIV no. 109 (May 1971): 1–17.

[7] Yolande, who had been engaged to the Duke of Anjou, was championed by the English. But the French were threatened by an English alliance with Aragon, and demanded that Yolande honor this previous engagement.

[8] Agnes Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England, from the Norman Conquest* vol. 2 (London: Henry Colburn, 1851), 2.

[9] Helen Ostovich, "'Here in this Garden': The Iconography of the Virgin Queen in Richard II," *Marian Moments in British Drama*, ed. Regina Buccola and Lisa Hopkins (London: Ashgate, 2007), 21–34 at 21. Ostovich's argument, one of very few serious treatments of this character, links Shakespeare's treatment of the queen to medieval iconography of the Virgin Mary.

[10] My edition is the Lord Berners translation, which was most likely Shakespeare's source: *Here beginneth the third and fourthe boke of Syr John Froissart of the cronycles of Englande, France, Spaygne, Portyngale, Scotland, Bretayne, Flaunders, and other places adioynyng, translated out of french into englishe by Johan Bourchier knight lorde Berners …* (London, 1525). The most relevant chapters are CXCIX, CC, CCIII, CCX, CCXIII. On the subject of Froissart, Charles Forker writes, "It is therefore hard to disagree with Tillyard, who thought it 'scarcely conceivable that Shakespeare should not have read so famous a

Consistently referring to her youth, Froissart offers a series of anecdotes that reveal the little girl to be charmingly self-possessed and quite precocious. Strickland imagines it as quite the *cause célèbre*: "They [the people of England] saw with astonishment an infant, not nine summers old, sharing the throne as the chosen queen-consort of a monarch who had reached his thirtieth year" (1). Shakespeare had just created the imaginative, insightful, and intrepid Juliet, who was "not yet fourteen," and it is possible to imagine him turning, then, to a historical figure with intelligence and *sang froid* who just happened to be ten.

What happens to the queen in *Richard II* when we imagine her, not as a composite, but instead as a dramatic representation of her historical counterpart, Isabelle de France? Turning to Shakespeare's French sources, especially Froissart's *Chroniques*, which places heavy emphasis upon Isabelle's status as a child bride, this chapter recovers the historical and biographical information that shaped Shakespeare's conception of Richard's queen. It seeks to detach this character from the notion that she could only be an "unhistorical" adult, which appears to have its roots in Enlightenment and Victorian notions of childhood and girlhood as a distinct and protected space, and to return her to a medieval and early modern historical context in which it is possible—albeit highly unusual—for a little girl to be both a wife and a queen.[11] I am not, in the spirit of Philippe Ariès, seeking to deny Isabelle's childhood as an anachronism.[12] Rather, I am seeking to recover the girlhood of a historical figure and a dramatic character that has been lost as a result of theatrical tradition and habits of reading Shakespearean history that focus upon English nationhood.

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book' (253), or with Bullough, 'It would be strange if Shakespeare did not look into' a work that conveys a 'sense … of being in the situations described' (3.3.67)." *King Richard II*, ed. Charles R. Forker. *The Arden Shakespeare Third Series* (London: Thomson Learning, 2002), 153.

[11] In this way my chapter participates in recent attempts to recover early modern conceptualizations of girlhood. Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England* 1550–1720 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). Discussions of girlhood in later periods include: Carolyn Steedman, *Strange Dislocations: Childhood and the Idea of Interiority* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); Catherine Robson, *Men in Wonderland: The Lost Girlhood of the Victorian Gentleman* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); and *Secret Gardens, Satanic Mills: Placing Girls in European History, 1750–1960*, ed. Mary Jo Maynes, Birgitte Søland, and Christina Benninghaus (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005). See also the chapter on "Theatres of Girlhood" in Seth Lerer, *Children's Literature: A Reader's History from Aesop to Harry Potter* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 228–51.

[12] Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood. A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldrick (New York: Vintage, 1960). More recent studies of medieval and early modern English childhood, such as Linda A. Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent Child Relations from 1500–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) and Barbara Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London: the Experience of Childhood in History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) contest Ariès, claiming that childhood was conceptualized, and that children even enjoyed a special status.

To read Shakespeare's queen through the child bride of historical record is, therefore, to return attention to *Richard II*'s investment in French sources and representation of England's longstanding history with France and the French.[13] Following his deposition, Richard tells his queen, "Hie thee to France, / And cloister thee in some religious house (5.1.22–3).[14] Richard's almost obsessively repeated references to France ("Prepare thee hence for France" 37; "you must away to France" 54; "Weep thou for me in France" 87) reinforce Isabel's French origins and Richard's French affiliations, as well as England's pre-Reformation Catholic religion. France here serves not only as a refuge, but also as a site of nostalgia for both royal pomp, "… from whence, set forth in pomp, / She came adorned hither like sweet May" (78–9), and religious practice. The play's final reference to its dead king is Exton's: "Herein all breathless lies / The mightiest of thy greatest enemies, / Richard of Bourdeaux" (5.6.31–3). Returning him to his French birthplace, these lines also recast the play's depiction of civil strife in terms of England's ongoing military and territorial rivalry with the French.[15]

Elizabeth I famously quipped, "I am Richard II, know ye not that?" but the Virgin Queen in *Richard II*, whose very name, Isabel, is a French version of "Elizabeth," offers other opportunities for political allegory.[16] As confirmation, perhaps, of Elizabeth's wisdom in avoiding a French match, and as a figure identified with Catholicism as opposed to Elizabeth's Protestant faith, the queen functions as a symbol of England's open, fluid, and constant relations with France that Shakespeare's history plays seek, at least on the surface, to overcome.[17] She symbolizes, in particular, the hotly contested Anglo-French peace treaty, which ended one phrase of the Hundred Years War, and which Richard's critics felt illustrated the king's susceptibility to French influence. Given the play's careful emphasis upon the historical details that underpin the queen's French identity, it seems perverse to deny her the most salient aspect of her historicity, namely her girlhood. To imagine Richard's queen, neither as a redoubtable Victorian matron, nor as an anachronistic Bohemian hybrid, but as a little girl, as a pawn

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[13] I discuss *Richard II* as part of the history plays' ongoing engagement with France in chapter 5 of my *The French Fetish from Chaucer to Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 181–226.

[14] Here Shakespeare anticipates the cloistered Isabella in *Measure for Measure*: a character who, like Isabelle of France, was good at rejecting the offers of her admirers. My edition is *King Richard II*, *The Arden Shakespeare*.

[15] This detail is also mentioned in Froissart (fol. CC. xlvii r). Exton's words here also invoke, ironically, the hero of a famous French romance, *Huon of Burdeaux*, who manages to elude death by performing a series of Herculean tasks.

[16] Stephen Orgel, "I am Richard II," *Spectacular Performances* (Manchester: Manchester University Press,): 7–35 offers a full discussion of this event, the details of which can also be found in the Arden Two edition of *Richard II*, ed. Peter Ure (London: Methuen, 1956 rpt 1964), lvii–lix.

[17] For a discussion of Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage* in a similar context see my "Dido Queen of England" *ELH* 71 (Spring, 2006): 31–59.

in international politics, and as the undeserving victim of the play's political machinations, is to intensify our sympathy for her plight at a dramatic level, and, at an interpretive level, to recognize her status as a compelling French counterpoint to the play's overarching English nationalist teleology.

A French Princess

Nigel Saul writes:

> the predominance in the English royal line of French wives was a natural reflection of the longstanding Angevin or Plantagenet interests in France. For over two centuries … it was through marital alliances between the English and French lines that differences between the two competing dynasties were accommodated.[18]

A list of French queens of England would include Eleanor d'Aquitaine (1122–1204), Eleanor de Provence (1223–1291), and another Isabelle de France (1292–1358), the wife of Edward II, who had been promised to Edward while still an infant. Shakespeare's history plays represent some of these French queens: there is Isabelle de France's little sister, Catherine de Valois (1401–1437), who married Henry V, and Margaret d'Anjou (1430–1482), the wife of Henry VI. Isabelle d'Angoulême (1188–1246), who, at 12, married King John, is strangely absent from Shakespeare's *King John* (although her mother-in-law, Eleanor d'Aquitaine, plays a prominent role).

According to Froissart's *Chroniques*, Isabelle's age was a major issue in the marriage negotiations with Richard II. There were even jokes made about it at the wedding.[19] Canon law allowed a girl lawfully to consent at seven, but marriages typically took place no earlier than the age of 12 (14 for boys).[20] Of course, medieval and early modern aristocratic and royal babes were often involved in marriage negotiations, virtually from birth: The young Elizabeth I of England, for example, had been offered to the French Dauphin when she was little more than an infant. Seven was, nevertheless, an unusually young age to become a wife. Froissart describes how Isabelle's mother Isabeau demurred, expressing her discomfort with the idea in the oblique terms of courtly politesse: "it was shewed them that they must be content how so euer they found her for they sayd she was but a yonge chylde of eyght yere of age wherfore they sayd there coulde not be in her no grete wysdome nor prudence how be it" (fol. CC lix.r).[21] Froissart also

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[18] *The Three Richards: Richard I, Richard II, and Richard III* (London and Hambledon: Continuum, 2005), 136.

[19] Her young age is compared favorably to that of the cousin of St. Paul (Froissart, fol. CC lxxvi.v).

[20] Barbara J. Harris, *English Aristocratic Women, 1450–1550. Marriage and Family, Property and Careers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 43–61.

[21] Note the difference in contemporary and medieval calculations of age: when Isabelle was, for us, almost seven, her mother considered her to be in her eighth year.

relates Richard's rebuttal: "she shal yet growe ryght wel in age, and though he fast a season he shal take it wel in worth, and shal ordre her in the meane season at hys pleasur and after the maner of Englande, saying also howe he is yet yonge ynough to abyd tyll the lady be of age" (fol. CC liii.r). It was much more typical for a girl to marry as a teenager, as Anne of Bohemia did when she married the teenaged Richard II, at the age of 16 and 15, respectively. However, the older Richard imagined an alternative paradigm with Isabelle: a little girl that he could raise in his own image.

Certain practices protected children, especially girls, from being bound unwillingly to an early match, as well as from the premature loss of sexual innocence. Early marriages were not consummated at the time that they were solemnized: although Isabelle was married at seven, it would have been expected that she remain a virgin until 16, and records of her subsequent marriage negotiations to Charles d'Orléans express little concern for the state of her virginity.[22] It was also possible for girls who had been married before the age of 12, and boys before 14, to renounce their marriages. And there were provisions for the return of the dowry if either the bride or the groom died before the age of 16: provisions that the English sought to overlook in Isabelle's case. Of course, according to the historical record, Isabelle was most enthusiastic about her marriage to King Richard.[23] At 12, she could have refused her marriage, although she would have had to forfeit her dowry.[24] But she lost Richard before she could renounce him, even if she had wanted to.

By all accounts, the relationship between Richard and Isabelle was deeply affectionate: Anne of Bohemia had died childless, and the young Isabelle, paradoxically, fulfilled Richard's desire to have a child. For her part, Isabelle, whom Richard treated kindly, remained fiercely loyal to her husband throughout his troubles. When Richard left for Ireland, never to see his young queen again, their parting at Windsor was tearful. Isabelle was just ten. The historical record does not, given its obvious bias, mention whatever aspects of coercion were involved, but Froissart reinforces the idea that Isabelle was an entirely willing participant from the beginning. When asked her opinion about marrying Richard, Isabelle—in what is probably the most famous statement by her—was enthusiastic about what it meant for her: "than answered the yong lady well aduysedly without counsayle of

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[22] This practice lies behind the controversy concerning the consummation of Catherine of Aragon's first marriage, to Prince Arthur. Married by proxy at the ages of three and two, and then again at the ages of 16 and 15, they may or may not have consummated their marriage before Arthur died, five months later, of the sweating sickness.

[23] Léon Mirot, "Isabelle de France reine d'Angleterre, comtesse d'Angoulême, duchesse d'Orléans (1389–1409). Épisode des relations entre la France et l'Angleterre pendant la guerre de cent ans," *Revue d'histoire diplomatique* 18 (1904): 546–73 and 19 (1905): 60–95, 161–91, and 481–522. For historical references to Isabelle's life see *Chronicles of the Revolution, 1397–1400: The Reign of Richard II*, ed. Chris Given-Wilson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

[24] Palmer, *England France and Christendom*, 174.

any other person. Syr quod she and it please god and my lord my father that I shalbe quene of England I shall be glad therof for it is shewed me that I shal be than a great lady" (fol. CC lix. r.).[25] Taking pains to advertise Isabelle's appeal to older people, Froissart sounds like a parent relating a well-rehearsed anecdote about his or her precocious child, and recalls, as well, depictions of the Presentation of the Virgin Mary, at the age of three, to the elders of the Temple: "The maner countenaunce and behavoure of this yonge lady plesed greatly the ambassadors and they sayd amonge them that she was lyke to be a lady of hyghe honoure and great goodnesse" (fol. CC lix. r). Strickland's account of the story imagines the young princess rehearsing her future position like an actress, complete with rapt audience: "She was, from that time, styled the queen of England. And I was at the time told it was pretty to see her, young as she was, practicing how to act the queen" (5).

At a very young age, Isabelle de France was both queen and child, carrying the symbolic weight of the rapprochement between France and England at the end of this particular phase of the Hundred Years War: a peace that was hotly contested in England. Isabelle not only symbolized a new peace treaty, but also England's longstanding relationship with France that was the legacy of the Norman Conquest.[26] Richard himself had spent his childhood in Aquitaine, a duchy that had been in English hands for centuries before it was returned to France at the end of the Hundred Years War. He read, fluently, from a book of French poems Froissart presented to him upon his engagement to Isabelle.[27] He maintained his childhood ties to France and preserved his status as a francophile by taking many cultural cues from France, embracing French language, French fashions, and French artistic and musical tastes in a manner that, as Nigel Saul puts it, "turned first into emulation and then into competition" (353). Indeed, the courtly excesses for which Richard received such sharp criticism constituted the king's attempt to impress his French in-laws in the feudal and aristocratic economies of gift exchange and magnificent hosting, as well as in the obsession with *bella figura*. The famous Smithfield tournament, held to celebrate the arrival of Queen Isabelle, sought to replicate the girl's spectacular entry, or "joyeuse entrée," into Paris, some months before.[28]

Richard's marriage to Isabelle also took place at a time when it was necessary to reassert his authority as king. There had been other destabilizing events, such as the Rising of 1381 and the Merciless Parliament, but the most important in this context was the perceived capitulation to France that ended this phase of the Hundred Years War. The symbolic value of France as a girl child—John Stow called her "the little queen"—reinforced both Richard's patriarchal authority,

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[25] We may compare the medieval campaign to present Isabelle as a precocious child with the public investment in Princess Diana's innocence, expressed by her legendary response to Prince Charles's proposal of marriage: "yes please!"

[26] Williams, *The French Fetish from Chaucer to Shakespeare*.

[27] Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England*, 5.

[28] Richard Saul, *Richard II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 531.

and, following decades of punishing warfare, the supremacy of England.[29] In this context, France is diminished by its symbolic status as a girl child. The grandeur and sumptuousness of the English wedding celebrations, from Isabelle's entry into London, to the tournament at Smithfield held in her honor, to her coronation, would have underscored the diminutive size and great youth of the French guest of honor. However, as Stephen Orgel reminds us, early modern symbolism is characterized by its "notorious profligacy."[30] On the one hand, as a French girl queen, Isabelle flatters English notions of power. On the other, the idea of a ten-year-old girl styling herself the queen of England would have gratified the French by turning England and the English crown into child's play.

Isabelle symbolizes the culture of childhood that defined the Ricardian court.[31] Richard himself had become king at the age of ten: yet another reason why Richard did not consider Isabelle's age to be an impediment to becoming queen. When Richard's father, Edward the Black Prince, died in 1377, his mother, Joan, the Fair Maid of Kent, hurried to invest her son with Edward's titles, including Prince of Wales, so that he could be crowned king after the death of his grandfather, Edward III, which occurred later the same year. The Ricardian court embraced and celebrated its sovereign's youth as a strategy for justifying and valorizing the symbolic weakness and vulnerability of the boy king. Froissart capitalizes on this aspect of royal iconography when he reminds Richard II that that they first met when the king was a child: "in his youthe he hadde sene me, in the courte of the noble king Edwarde his father and with the quene his mother" (fol. CC xlxii.r). The Wilton Diptych, completed while King Richard was in his late twenties or possibly even 30, depicts King Richard as a beardless youth, paying homage to the Virgin and Child.[32] The 11 girlish angels it depicts, which are believed to represent the 11 years he had lived before he was crowned, also highlight the idea of the king as a child. The painting was produced in the context of Richard's marriage negotiations with Isabelle—the negotiations during which Richard asserted that he was "yonge enough to abyde"—and in this sense we may see it as an idealized, celestial image of the courtship, the court, and the eventual heir Richard envisioned for himself

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[29] John Stow, *A Survey of London*, ed. William J. Thoms, Esq. (London: Whittaker and Co., 1842), 10.

[30] Stephen Orgel "Gendering the Crown" in *The Authentic Shakepeare and Other Problems of the Early Modern Stage* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 107–28 at 115. In "I am Richard II" 2011), Orgel writes: "But of course one can't control the implications of imagery, or close it off to interpretation" (19).

[31] James Simpson, "Contemporary English Writers," in *A Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Peter Brown (London: Blackwell, 2002), 114–33. Simpson writes, "the very means at its disposal to assert the king's power also expose his vulnerability" (115).

[32] Ostovich, "Here in this Garden," 21; Dillian Gordon, *The Wilton Diptych* (London, 1993), and "The Wilton Diptych: an Introduction" in *The Regal Image of Richard II and the Wilton Diptych*, eds Dillian Gordon, Lisa Monnas, and Caroline Elam (London: Harvey Miller, 1997), 19–26. <http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/english-or-french-the-wilton-diptych.

and his bride.[33] Another portrait of Richard II, now in Westminster Abbey, and the earliest known portrait of an English monarch, depicts the king without a beard. Orgel writes, "[T]he image is so stylized that, though he is clearly in coronation robes, it could represent him at any point in his twenty-year reign." He also makes the point that "[a]ll the other representations of the king done during his lifetime, such as that in the Wilton Diptych, are similarly beardless."[34]

Some scholars have seen the representation of the Arthurian court as "berdles childer" (280) in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* as a reference to the Ricardian cult of childhood, while others have found Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and Geoffrey Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* (among other works) to offer implicit criticisms of the limitations and even danger posed by a young king.[35] "Woe to thee, O land, when the King is a child," laments Ecclesiastes 10.16: a text quoted frequently by Richard's detractors. It appears in the Prologue of Langland's *Piers Plowman* (195a) and in the related text, *Richard the Redeless*: "Ye come to youre kyngdom er ye youreself knewe" (I. 32).[36] Gower's *Vox Clamantis*, an account of the Rising of 1381, calls Richard an "undisciplined boy." Adam of Usk's chronicle explains, "Many great things were hoped for in the time of this Richard's reign; but, because he was tender of age, other persons who had charge of him and of the kingdom did not cease to inflict wanton evils, extortions, and other intolerable injustices upon the realm."[37] Although Christopher Fletcher has recently made a detailed argument in support of Richard II's manliness, the fall of Richard and rise of Bolingbroke was imagined as a grown man taking over from a mere youth, even though Richard II and Henry IV were only eight months apart in age, and ages 32–33 in 1399: "wherefore then a boy rules, will alone rules, and reason is in exile."[38] Archbishop Arundel's sermon on the deposition refers to Richard as "puer" and to Henry of Lancaster as "vir." The accession of Henry IV thus constituted a wholesale rejection of the Ricardian culture of youth: after 1400, Ricardian magnificence and theatricality appeared as a childish game of dress-up. Most importantly for our purposes, however, the Ricardian culture of youth was

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[33] The 11 angels may also represent the 11,000 Virgins in the story of the virgin martyr, St. Ursula, a story that concerns the story of a virgin, like Isabelle, crossing the sea to join her future husband.

[34] Orgel, "I Am Richard II," 1–2.

[35] Simpson, "Contemporary English Writers," and R. Voaden, "Out of the Mouths of Babes: Authority in *Pearl* and in Narratives of the Child King Richard," in *Youth in the Middle Ages*, eds P.J.P. Goldberg and Felicity Riddy (York: AMS, 2004), 61–72.

[36] William Langland, *The Vision of Piers Plowman*, The B-Text ed. A.V.C. Schmidt (London: Everyman, 1987) and *Richard the Redeless*, ed. James M. Dean (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000).

[37] Simpson, "Contemporary English Writers" and *The Chronicle of Adam Usk*, ed. and trans. C. Given-Wilson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3.

[38] Christopher Fletcher, *Manhood, Youth and Politics 1377–1399* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). *Record and Process* in *Chronicles of the Revolution, 1397–1400*, ed. Chris Given-Wilson, 168–9 and Simpson, 116–17.

not *sui generis*, but a copy of the "milieu jeune" of the French court, of which Isabelle's father, the young Charles VI, was the centre.[39] As a girl queen, therefore, Isabelle reflected back upon her husband the French-inflected *mythos* of Richard II as boy king, *enfant terrible*.

Suiting Her Passions to Her Years

Agnes Strickland found Isabelle's history exciting enough to narrate in her *Lives of the Queens of England*, and she clearly found her story enchanting. While Strickland's admiration of the historical Isabelle can easily be explained by the Victorian cult of girlhood, other Victorian responses to Shakespeare's Queen are quite dismissive, regarding her as a pale contrast to the expressions of womanly power in more celebrated Shakespearean heroines.[40] Mary Cowden Clarke, for example, does not find her important enough to fictionalize in *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines* (1850), although she may have been confused by the fact that, in this case, the heroine was a girl. Anna Jameson's *Characteristics of Shakespeare's Women* (1832) asserts, "there is no female character of any interest" in *Richard II*, and claims that Isabel takes "the same passive part in the drama that she does in history."[41] Augustine Skottowe finds the whole part "feebly written," and John A. Heraud observes, "I do not perceive that he [Shakespeare] felt sufficient interest in the character to bestow any of his own touches upon it."[42] Beverley E. Warner importantly explains the perceived weaknesses of the character: "the scenes in which Isabel appears are the weakest in the tragedy" as a result of Shakespeare's transformation of Isabelle into an adult, an act which she calls "the gravest anachronism."[43]

The negative appraisal of the queen in these Victorian discussions of *Richard II* reinforces the idea that something is lost in the character when we

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[39] Mirot writes: "Dans ce milieu jeune, où les soverains étaient quasiment des enfants, ce n'etaient que fêtes et plaisirs, que n'interrompaient pas de graves preoccupations politiques." I. 547.

[40] This Victorian image of Isabelle and Richard II illustrates a short story by Cecilia Cleveland called "A Child Queen," in the *St. Nicholas Magazine for Boys and Girls* (5, Nov 1877–Nov 1878): 1–3. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/17513/17513-h/images/0136-1.jpg>.

[41] See Jameson, *Characteristics of Women, Moral, Poetical, and Historical* vol. II (London: Saunders and Otely, 1832), 238.

[42] Augustine Skottowe, *Richard II and the Truth of History*, vol. I. (London, 1824), 141, and John A. Heraud, *Shakespeare: His Inner Life as Intimated in his Works* (London: John Maxwell, 1865), 118–26. See *Richard II. Shakespeare: The Critical Tradition*, ed. Charles Forker (London: The Athlone Press, 1998).

[43] She goes on, "That knowledge and appreciation of womanhood which is one of the noblest components of his later works, is lamentably deficient here." *English History in Shakespeare's Plays* (New York: Longman's 1894), 60–61, 79–88.

read her as an adult.[44] The longstanding theatrical tradition of what Howard and Rackin call "the mature queen" may be traced to Nahum Tate's 1681 adaptation of *Richard II*, which offers an older reading of the character. Reflecting, perhaps, the recent appearance of professional actresses on the English stage, Tate's queen makes references to the king as her "lover" (33) and compares herself, as a traditional, faithful wife, to "Calpurnia" (37).[45] However, Samuel Daniel's *Civil War*, an important Shakespearean source, is usually cited as Shakespeare's source for the adult queen. Here is Daniel's account of Isabelle's story:[46]

> Now Isabell, the young afflicted Queene,
> Whose yeares had neuer shew'd her but delights,
> Nor lovely eies before had euer seen
> Other then smiling ioies and ioyfull sights:
> Borne great, matched great, liu'd great and euer beene
> Partaker of the worlds best benefits. (71)

Juxtaposing the delights of her youth and the depth of her sorrows, Daniel set off Isabelle's great status against her high tragedy.[47] By highlighting Isabelle's chronological age, and then contrasting it to the very adult situation in which she finds herself, Daniel was following his source, Froissart: "for all that she was but yonge, right plesauntly she bare the porte of a quene" (fol. CC lxvi.v). Curiously, however, Daniel's lines have been interpreted by scholars who read Shakespeare's queen as a mature woman, and who find in them evidence that Daniel raised her age.[48]

Yet Daniel makes it clear that he was seeking to express both Isabelle's young age and the complexity of her predicament, a challenge that he did not feel he met. In the "Epistle Dedicatorie" to the 1609 edition of the *Civil Wars*, addressed to Mary Herbert Sidney, "The Right Noble Lady, the Lady Marie,

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[44] The Victorians pay more attention to the queen than current scholars, for whom the queen is simply "marginalized." Jeremy Lopez, *The Shakespeare Handbooks: Richard II* (New York: Palgrave, 2009), 29. Lopez makes the interesting suggestion that Shakespeare downplays the relationship between the queen and Richard in order to avoid tainting it with Richard's performative inauthenticity.

[45] *The History of King Richard the Second Acted at the Theatre Royal under the Name of the Sicilian Usurper* (London: Richard Tonson, 1681).

[46] Samuel Daniel, *The First Four Books of the Civil Wars Between the Two Houses of Lancaster and York* (London, 1595), book II, stanzas 66–98.

[47] Daniel is also very clear about the distinction between the public role and the private self. Isabel tells Richard: "I love thee for thy selfe not for thy state" (stanza 90).

[48] George M. Logan, "Lucan – Daniel – Shakespeare: New Light on the Relations Between *The Civil Wars* and *Richard II*," *Shakespeare Studies* 9 (1976): 121–40. See also Gurr: "Daniel gave a precedent for Shakespeare's queen" (65) and "Like Daniel, Shakespeare unhistorically makes Isabel a grown woman" (2.2.0n). Forker concurs, "By making the Queen an adult (as did Daniel), Shakespeare can use her to draw sympathy to the King as well as to sound an effective voice of tragic foreboding." *King Richard II*, 274.

Countesse Dowager of Pembroke," Daniel makes the following apology: "if I have erred somewhat in the draught of the young Q. Isabel (wife to Ric. 2) in not suting her passions to her yeares: I must … hope the young Ladies of England (who will think themselves sufficient, at 14 years, to have a feeling of their own estates) will excuse me in that point."[49] Here Daniel expresses the difficulty he found, as a poet, matching the complexity of her predicament as a queen to her very young age. Nodding to his readers, the "young Ladies of England" whom he imagines taking a particular interest in the story of this young queen, Daniel may be thinking in particular of Lady Anne Clifford: he was her tutor when he wrote *The Civil Wars*, and in 1599, when it was first published, she was only nine.

Daniel's depiction of Isabelle's final encounter with Richard, an unhistorical event that Shakespeare uses in *Richard II*, confirm his conceptualization of the character as a youth:

> But he whom longer time had learn'd the art,
> T'indure affliction as a usuall touch:
> Straines forth his words, and throws dismay apart,
> To raise up her, whose passions now were such,
> As quite opprest her ouerchardged hart,
> *Too small a vessel to containe so much*
> And cheeres and mones, and fained hopes doth frame,
> As if himselfe belieu'd, or hop'd the same. (98)

Daniel here highlights the difference in age between Richard and Isabelle, and describes the queen's young heart overwhelmed by adult tragedy. It is not, therefore, the idea of an adult queen that Shakespeare gets from Daniel, who presents her unwaveringly as a girl (albeit a girl with grown-up problems). Instead, what Shakespeare takes from Daniel is a challenge: to create a character that is both a young girl and a tragic queen. This is precisely the problem Daniel expresses in his preface, in which he also imagines his girl readers' willingness, however premature, to meet adult challenges: "who will think themselves sufficient, at 14 years, to have a feeling of their own estates." Daniel's words here, along with his representation of Isabelle in the *Civil Wars*, allow us to think about girlhood, not as a distinct and protected space, incommensurate with marriage or other forms of adult responsibility, but instead as occupying a more fluid position on a temporal continuum between infancy and adulthood, in which little girls imaginatively project themselves, like Froissart's little princess, into adult positions of power and prominence. The idea that young girls may have a "feeling of their own estates" before they reach adulthood allows us to consider medieval and early modern child marriage less as a coercive institution and more

[49] *The First Four Books of the Civil Wars Between the Two Houses of Lancaster and York* (London, 1609), A3.

as a form of sanctioned projection into a future condition.[50] This may also allow us, moreover, to stop conceptualizing girlhood and womanhood as separate and distinct conditions, alienated from each other.

Taking up Daniel's challenge, Shakespeare endows his queen with lines that convey her experience and sophistication. Inspired both by Daniel's fascination with Isabelle's tragic pathos, and by Froissart's tales of the precocious princess, Shakespeare's queen speaks lines of such maturity that they, paradoxically, enable later readers to cast her as an adult. But her lines possess greater meaning, irony, and pathos when we imagine them delivered by a child actor. She thus dramatizes an ongoing and self-conscious tension, even dialectic, between her status as a girl and her status as a queen. For example, Bushy's description of the queen at Windsor Castle as "sad" (2.2.1) is the first adjective that describes her in the play. The *Promptorium Parvulorum* gives "sad" as the Latin equivalent of "maturus," and *A Short Dictionary for Beginners* by John Withals defines it "as he that is of gravitie," using another Latin root, *gravitas*, for seriousness, duty, dignity.[51] The implications of Bushy's adjective are developed in the queen's own description of herself as "heavy sad" (31).[52] Here, like Froissart and Daniel, Shakespeare highlights the contrast between Isabelle's chronological age and the maturity demanded by her status as queen.

In her line, "so sweet a guest / As my sweet Richard" (2.2.8–9), the queen attaches to her much-older husband the diminutive term, *sweet*, that conveys daintiness and delicacy, as well as a certain effeminacy, and recalls Richard's reputation as a boy king. Casting Richard as the child bride, and Isabel as host to her husband's guest, even though she is, of course, a guest in his country, her words undermine the categories of youth and age, bride and groom, calling into question binary between England and France that controls the play's dramatization of English nationhood. Shakespeare goes on to dramatize her plight by upsetting, reversing, and rewriting a series of categories, images, and narratives concerning maternity and motherhood, which highlight the extent to which her fate denies her her much-anticipated future as a wife and mother. Depriving this precocious princess, praised for acting like a little grown-up, of the very adult future that was promised her as a little child bride already wise beyond her years, Shakespeare also presents an alternate history of Anglo-French relations that will be denied by the fall of Richard.

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[50] We may also use the idea of a temporal continuum to allow adult women access to the girlhood they may feel is lost to various forms of adult responsibility.

[51] Gaulfridus Anglicus, *Promptorium Parvulorum* (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1516), I. ii. verso, and John Withals, *A Shorte Dictionary for Young Beginners* (London: Iohn Kingstvn, 1556), Z. i. verso.

[52] And in her later, feisty, "What, was I born to this, that my sad look / Should grace the triumph of great Bolingbroke?" (3.4.98–9). "Gravitas" is a Latin term, as well, for pregnancy, which fits this later scene's repeated references to pregnancy and childbirth.

Isabel's exchange with Bushy concerning the expected departure of Richard for Ireland develops the idea of her maternity:

> Yet again, methinks,
> Some unborn sorrow, ripe in Fortune's womb
> Is coming towards me, and my inward soul
> With nothing trembles. At something it grieves,
> More than with parting from my lord the King. (2.2.9–13)

Those who would read Isabel as an adult point to these lines, which refer to the womb, as well as to the scene's attachment to the language of pregnancy and childbirth. Of course, at ten, Isabel could be expected to know about wombs, but in this case she is referring not to her own womb but to that of Fortune, popularly personified as the goddess Fortuna. These lines imply a fascinating kind of conception accomplished between women, as the Goddess Fortuna appears like the Archangel in the biblical story of the Annunciation, making the queen's inward soul tremble. Here, her lines make use of the traditional language and iconography of the Annunciation, which highlights the Virgin Mary's youth: prayers to the Virgin recalling the Archangel's address, "Ave Virgo," also praise her as "puella" [girl] and "ancilla dei" [handmaiden of God].[53] In the case of Isabel, however, the conception moves from Fortune's womb to the queen's soul, and thus from the physical to the spiritual, rather than from the spiritual realm to the physical womb of the Virgin. The Marian image of Isabel's "inward soul" trembling, which recalls the Magnificat ("my soul magnifieth the Lord"), transforms a biblical moment of joy and revelation into one of fear and trembling; her physical response is to sad tidings instead of glad. Most importantly, Isabel acknowledges that this "unborn sorrow" is also "nothing." The interplay here, between what is anticipated and what does not yet exist, refers to the bad news of Richard's departure for Ireland, which she expects but that is not confirmed until later in the scene. It also refers, by means of these references to the Annunciation, to the gulf that exists between the queen's status as Richard's wife, with all of the anticipated pleasures of marriage and family, and what she now knows is never to be. For Shakespeare, the particular sadness of the queen concerns, to quote from Wallace Stevens's "The Snowman," "the nothing that is not there and the nothing that is." Emphasizing the nothing that has taken place that makes her still a virgin, and the nothing that is the child that she will never bear, Shakespeare's conceptualization of this character's tragedy thus hinges upon her status as a girl.

Bushy's response to Isabel introduces the conceit of the perspective:[54]

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[53] Ostovich reads the imagery of this passage in terms of the iconography of the *Mater Dolorosa* ("why I should welcome such a guest as Grief" [2.2.7]).

[54] From the Latin *perspicere*: to see through, look closely into, discern, perceive.

> For Sorrow's eyes, glazed with blinding tears,
> Divides one thing entire to many objects,
> Like perspectives, which, rightly gazed upon
> Show nothing but confusion; eyed awry,
> Distinguish form. (16–20)

Bushy compares Isabel's eyes to glass perspectives, which multiply an image, and also to perspective paintings such as Holbein's *The Ambassadors*, which offer an anamorphic image that confuses the observer if looked at head on, and are viewed correctly only at an angle or with a transforming device such as a mirror.[55] Bushy's argument is that human technologies, products of our seething and sorrowful brains, are deceptive, multiplying griefs, or creating confusion, "shadows / Of what it is not" (23–4). Thus, he advocates sticking to the facts: "More than your lord's departure weep not" (25). For Isabel, however, viewing askance prepares her for the truth: "But what it is, that is not yet known what, / I cannot name. 'Tis nameless woe, I wot" (39–40). Whereas the "form" that is distinguished through the perspective is, for Bushy, misleading, for Isabel it is the truth, although it is at the moment only a "nameless woe." Isabel is as prepared for the birth of her sorrow as the Virgin is prepared for the birth of Jesus, although it comes from Fortune, not from the heavenly Father, and heralds an ending, not a beginning.

Like an anamorphic painting, Shakespeare is drawing upon Marian imagery yet presenting it askance, transforming it from joy to sorrow, turning it from divine comedy to human tragedy. The language and iconography of the Annunciation and the Nativity, rendered askance, thus ask the audience to consider viewing the play's English history askance, and to find in the play a sympathetic acknowledgement of Ricardian court culture. Contrary to the investments of the Tudor line in the story of Henry IV's succession, Isabel's words evoke, even as they anamorphically transform, the cult of the Virgin that was violently suppressed during the Reformation. Recalling a religious figure and devotional practice that had been cut off, and that are now seen from a different perspective by a sixteenth-century audience, the anamorphic transformations of Marian imagery in this scene convey how the future of Isabel is, itself, cut off. She will never resemble the Madonna with child envisioned by the Wilton Diptych; she will become pregnant, instead, with grief: "for nothing hath begot my something grief."

Isabel gives birth to her "nameless woe" and "unborn sorrow" when she learns that Bolingbroke has "safe arrived / At Ravenspurgh," (2.2.50–51), where his many supporters have flocked. She calls Greene, the messenger, "midwife to my woe" (62) and refers to herself as "I, a gasping new-delivered mother, / Have woe to woe, sorrow to sorrow joined" (65–6). Along with the messenger as her midwife, and, elsewhere in the scene, Bolingbroke as her "sorrow's dismal heir" (63),

[55] For a detailed discussion of this passage from a different perspective see Scott McMillin, "Shakespeare's *Richard II*: Eyes of Sorrow, Eyes of Desire" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 35.1 (1984): 40–52.

the scene's metaphorics of conception and childbirth are detached from the realities of age as well as gender. Using maternity as a conceit for her tragedy, Isabel expresses her distance from, as well as her deprivation of, a maternal future.

Rather than reinforcing a reading of her character as older (or connecting her to Anne of Bohemia, who had no children), this scene reveals how Richard's fall has deprived Isabel of the future she expected, as her present tragedy serves as a substitute for her future heir.[56] When the queen next appears, in the Duke of York's garden, she distinguishes herself not from a maternal future, but from a girlish present. The garden setting, with its associations with love, youth, and pleasure, represents a world that Isabel is, paradoxically, both not old enough to enjoy and beyond enjoying. Highlighting the tension between her age and her status, the scene hinges upon Isabel repeatedly addressing her lady-in-waiting as a "girl," drawing upon the associations of the term "girl" with female domestic work as well as with female childhood. Here, "girl" is used, somewhat brutally, to emphasize the Lady's status as the queen's servant, but it also reinforces the girlish nature of the diversions that she offers to Isabel, which, as a whole, construct an image of carefree childhood: "Madam, we'll play at bowls" (3.4.3), "dance" (6), "tell tales" (10), and "sing" (18). By detaching herself from the term "girl," Isabel rejects her lady's suggestions as well as her chronological girlhood: "Therefore, no dancing, girl" (9). The images of happy girlhood and youth established by the Lady's proposals highlight the tension between what, as a girl, the queen should be doing at age ten, and the grief and sorrow that take their place. Emphasizing Isabel's distance from these pleasures, the word "girl" here highlights the extent to which she will never enjoy them: after all, the word "girl" would never be used to address a queen.[57]

Isabel's cantankerous responses to her lady explode into rage when she overhears the gardener talk of deposition. News of Richard's captivity provokes her resolution, "to meet at London London's king in woe" (97), and the gardener returns to his work, commenting on the queen:

> Here did she fall a tear. Here in this place
> I'll set a bank of rue, sour herb of grace.
> Rue, e'en for ruth here shortly shall be seen,
> In the remembrance of a weeping queen. (104–7)

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[56] Some would read this passage as suggestion that the sexual relationship between the king and queen has been compromised by minions: "You have in manner, with your sinful hours / Made a divorce betwixt his queen and him / Broke the possession of a royal bed / And stained the beauty of a fair queen's cheeks / With tears" (3.1.11–15). However, Peter Ure points out that breaking the possession of a royal bed draws upon legal metaphors that refer to a "covenant"—the issue, then, is not about adultery but about a more legally inflected notion of a promise of something that will take place in the future (91–2).

[57] It is interesting that the play never refers to the Queen as Isabel. Perhaps this seeks to affirm the permanence of her royal status in a play in which kingship is fluid, in which the King is, by the end of the play, designated as Richard.

These lines, which develop the play's well-known imagery of England as a garden, also allude to Isabel's historical plight as a child bride. Recapitulating the Marian imagery of pregnancy and birth that defined Isabel's previous scene, the gardener plans to plant rue, a well-known abortifacient mentioned in Ophelia's mad scene ("there's rue for you; and here's some for me"), which is often paired with thyme, which symbolizes virginity. As a verb, however, "rue" means repentance or regret: the ancient ballad refrain, "Rue the Day," expresses regret for an untrustworthy man who has married another. The gardener is planting "rue even for ruth": *ruth* has an archaic meaning that links it to pity, care, and sorrow, remorse, grief, and lamentation.[58]

The gardener's "ruth" here recalls the biblical Book of Ruth, which concerns the death of a husband, who leaves behind a foreign wife. The Book of Ruth was more prominent in medieval France than England, making a regular appearance in religious art and biblical commentaries.[59] Like Isabel, Ruth engages in a cross-cultural marriage. A Moabite who marries the Israelite Mahlon, Ruth lives with Mahlon's family. When Mahlon and his brother Chilion die, their mother Naomi decides to return to her own hometown of Bethlehem. Orpah, the wife of Chilion, returns to her family, but Ruth says:

> Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me. (Ruth 1:16–17, The King James Bible).

The gardener's reference to Ruth here alludes to Isabel's immediate plan to follow her husband to London, as well as, more generally, to her famous loyalty to her husband. Isabel quotes Ruth directly in her final scene of the play, "Then wither he goes, thither let me go" (5.1.85).[60]

The gardener's allusion to the book of Ruth also raises the question that dogged the new king Henry IV: who is going to marry Isabel? When Ruth and Naomi return to Bethlehem, they work in a field that belongs to Naomi's relative Boaz, who is obliged to marry Ruth in order to preserve his family line. Naomi sends Ruth to the threshing floor to uncover the feet of the sleeping Boaz. When Boaz awakens, Ruth reminds him that he has the "right to redeem." Boaz must first clear this, however, with another male relative who has the first right of refusal—with his blessing, and that of the elders, they marry. It is possible here to see parallels with Henry IV's plan to marry Isabel to his own son, the future Henry V, who was her cousin by marriage. Henry IV also considered marrying her himself.

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[58] J.A. Simpson and S.C. Weiner, eds *The Oxford English Dictionary* (2nd ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), s.v. "ruth."

[59] Anne Rudloff Stanton, *The Queen Mary Psalter: a study of affect and audience* (Philadelphia: Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, 2001), 114–16.

[60] Ostovich also discusses Ruth in connection to the queen (30).

Here, the gardener's words reinforce the idea that Isabel and Richard are from different tribes, as different as the Moabites and Israelites, and gesture towards an alternative history in which Isabel remains under English control. On the one hand, the book of Ruth offers a paradigm for Isabel's devotion to Richard; on the other it proposes an image of Isabel as English chattel that she passionately resisted.

Rejecting the attentions of both Henry IV and Prince Henry, Isabel sought to return to France. Her return was delayed by a dowry dispute between France and England that hinged upon the ownership of the jewels and other treasures that had accompanied her from France. Eventually, Isabel was allowed to return to France without her jewels, where she married her cousin, the nine-year-old boy who would become the French poet Charles d'Orléans, and died in childbirth at the tragically young age of 19. Ultimately, the story of Ruth applies better to Isabel's little sister, Catherine, who married Henry V, and, after his death, remained in England to marry Owen Tudor, and found what would eventually become the royal Tudor line.

Isabel's final scene in the play is a fabrication. Historically, the two parted when Richard went off to Ireland. But Shakespeare follows Daniel in making the queen and Richard meet following his fall.[61] This scene contains references both to the Virgin Mary and to medieval poetry, firmly grounding Richard's deposition as a break with France as well as with Catholicism. When Isabel begs her ladies, "But soft, but see, or rather do not see / My fair rose wither" (5.1.6–7), her construction of Richard as the beloved, the rose, recalls her previous reference to "my sweet Richard." At the same time, the popular association of the rose with the Virgin Mary extends the play's pattern of defining Isabel against the Virgin, while also identifying Richard with the medieval tradition of courtly love poetry enshrined by the Old French *Roman de la rose*. Isabel's words here evoke not only Richard's reputation for youth and effeminacy, but also their association, as a couple, with a medieval history of Anglo-French literary and cultural connections. Continuing the scene's saturation with both personal and cultural nostalgia, Richard recalls Isabel's initial arrival in England, "My wife to France, from whence, set forth in pomp, / She came adorned hither like sweet May, / Sent back like Hallowmas of short'st of day" (78–80). Comparing Isabel to May reinforces Shakespeare's conception of the character as a young girl, while also recalling Chaucer's young female character, May, who marries the *senex amans*, January, in *The Merchant's Tale*. Recalling Isabel's arrival in England at the same time that he is telling her to return to France, "Hie thee to France, / And cloister thee in some religious house" (22–3),

[61] Charles Knight observes that it allows for a sense of growth in the character: whereas Knight sees "scarcely more elevation of character than might belong to a precocious girl" in the garden scene, this scene allows the "majesty of the high-minded woman" to shine. *The Pictorial Edition of the Works of William Shakespeare*, ed. Charles Knight, Histories, vol. 1. (London: Charles Knight and Co., 1847), 147. Although he is among the very few to read her—to a certain extent—as a girl, Knight pictures her only once, a tiny figure in a group scene illustrating 5.1. The image appears on p. 137.

Shakespeare is highlighting the play's overarching fidelity to its historical sources, recalling the celebrated marriage of Isabel and Richard, while, at the same time, reminding the audience that Isabel's future will be not as Richard imagines. Presenting France as a refuge to which Isabelle can flee, Richard's words not only recall medieval and Catholic religious practices, but also nod to the contemporary status of France, in the late sixteenth century, as a refuge for English Catholic recusants.

According to a French source, *La Chronicque de la traïson et mort de Richart Deux roy Dengleterre*, Isabelle was a puddle of tears when Richard left her: [62]

> … he [Richard] then took the Queen in his arms, and kissed her more than forty times, saying sorrowfully, 'Adieu, Madame, until we meet again: I commend me to you.' Thus spoke the King to the Queen in the presence of all the people; and the Queen began to weep, saying to the King, 'Alas! My lord, will you leave me here?' Upon which the King's eyes filled with tears on the point of weeping, and he said, 'By no means, Madame; but I will go first, and you, Madame, shall come there afterwards.' Then the King and Queen partook of wine and comfits together at the deanery, and all who chose did the same. Afterwards the King stooped, and took and lifted the Queen from the ground, and held her a long while in his arms, and kissed her at least ten times, saying ever, 'Adieu, Madame, until we meet again,' and then placed her on the ground, and kissed her at least thrice more; and, by our Lady! I never saw so great a lord make so much of, nor show such affection to, a lady, as did King Richard and his Queen. Great pity it was that they separated, for never saw they each other any more. Afterwards the King embraced all the ladies, and then mounted on his horse.

This passage, drawn from an eyewitness account, highlights the emotional and physical closeness between the king and queen and raises questions about sexuality within child marriage. The many, many sad kisses could be those exchanged by

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[62] *The Chronicle of the Betrayal and Death of Richard King of England* [*Chronique de la traïson et mort de Richart Deux roy Dengleterre*], ed. Benjamin Williams (London: Historical Text Society, 1846), 167.

> il … print la Royne entre ses bras tres gracieusement et la baisa plus de xl foiz en disant piteusement Adieu Madame jusques au reueoir Je me recommande a vous [27] ce dist le Roy a la Royne en la presence de toutes les gens et la Royne commenca adonc aplourer disant au Roy, helas monsieur me laissiez vous icy. Adonc le Roy ot les yeulx plains de larmes sur le point de plourer et dist nennil Madame maiz Je iray devant vous Madame y vendrez apres Adonc le Roy et la Royne prindrent vin et espices ensemble droit a luis de leglise et chacun qui en voulloit prendre. Et apres le Roy se baissa et print et leua de entre la Royne et la tint bien longuement entre ses bras et la baisa bien x foiz disant tousdiz Adieu Madame jusques au reveoir. Et puis la mist a entre et la baisa encores iii foiz. Et par notre Dame Je ne vy oncques si grant seigneur faire si grant feste ne monstier si grant amour a ne dame comme fist le Roy Richart a la Royne Cestoit grant pitie de leur departie car oncques puis ne virent l'un lautre Apres le Roy baisa toutes les dames et puis monta a cheual. (27)

lovers, by married people, or a parent and child, shedding light on the complexity of child marriage in the Middle Ages, as well as on the reasons why audiences have worked hard to imagine and to cast Shakespeare's Isabel as an adult. These lines dramatize a true and affectionate love that does not fit easily within the contemporary categories or tastes. Shocking as it is to contemporary sensibilities, the historical Isabel's affection for her husband truly may have been as genuine as it appears in this portrait, and in every other historical reference to their relationship: she may have loved her husband as well as any ten-year-old wife.

If the warm kisses exchanged by Richard and Isabel in their final scene in Richard II are faithfully historical, "We make woe wanton with this fond delay," murmurs Richard, "Once, more, adieu. The rest let Sorrow say" (101–2), so is their French valediction, "adieu." But Shakespeare makes a few important changes. Where the chronicle gives the young queen very little to say, apart from a little protest, and presents her mainly as the recipient of kisses, Shakespeare inserts the strong character revealed by the historical record: not only did Isabel refuse to acknowledge Henry as Richard's successor, and reject his plans for her future, but she also wrangled with him over the return of her dowry and trousseau.[63] Far from providing evidence of Shakespeare's creative license, Queen Isabel's fiery rhetoric in this scene is consistent with the personality of the historical Isabel: "What, is my Richard both in shape and mind / Transformed and weakened? Hath Bolingbroke / Deposed thine intellect? Hath he been in thy heart?" (5.1.26–8). Richard, who knows his wife's character, requests her to be his Horatio-like spokesperson, narrating, and thus preserving for posterity, "the lamentable tale of me" (44).

Their parting exchange is rendered as a series of rhyming couplets, in which the king matches the queen's rhyme:

> QUEEN: And must we be divided? Must we part?
> RICHARD: Ay, hand from hand, my love, and heart from heart.
> … QUEEN: Then wither he goes, thither let me go
> RICHARD: So two together, weeping, make one woe. (81–6)

Recalling the famous rhymed exchange of the lovers Romeo and Juliet ("palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss," 1.4.213), in this exchange Richard, like Romeo, completes Isabel's rhymes.[64] In *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet usually corrects or qualifies

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[63] We may compare her, in this respect, to Catherine of Aragon, a queen famous for her resolve, who accepted Henry VII's plans to marry her to Prince Henry after the death of Prince Arthur.

[64] JULIET: Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.
ROMEO: O, then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do;
They pray, grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.
JULIET: Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.
ROMEO: Then move not, while my prayer's effect I take.
Thus from my lips, by yours, my sin is purged.

Romeo's words. Similarly, in this exchange, which also reflects a marriage of true minds, Isabel speaks for herself. And although she is clearly brokenhearted, Isabel once again bucks convention by not insisting that their kiss produce the proverbial exchange of hearts, but, instead, by insisting that Richard return her heart to her: "Give me mine own again; 'twere no good part / To take on me to keep and kill thy heart" (97–8). Once again defining his queen against traditional images and paradigms, Shakespeare reminds his audience of Isabel's treasures that Henry IV churlishly retained in England and divided up among his children: give me mine own again.[65]

What does it mean, finally, to give Isabel her own? This chapter has sought to give both the historical Isabelle de France and Shakespeare's queen their own, by recovering the historical details of a redoubtable child bride in order to enrich our understanding of a Shakespearean character. Recovering the historical Isabelle is also, therefore, to recover a series of French connections that Shakespeare dramatizes, and to which he alludes, throughout *Richard II*, thus shedding light not only on the character of the queen but also upon the play as a whole. To put it another way, while it is easy to see why readers and audiences may have embraced the unhistorical yet more palatable notion of an adult queen, to continue in this tradition is to deny both the historical Isabelle her due, and Shakespeare's play itself. By reading Shakespeare's queen as a girl, and by charting the complexity of his representations of her against, and in resistance to, a series of paradigms from Ruth to the Virgin to Shakespeare's own Juliet, we acknowledge not only the historicity and contingency of our own notions of marriage and childhood, but also the powerful break with a longstanding English history with France that Richard II's deposition signified within the terms of Shakespearean history. Concluding a long history of countless, inextricable, English connections with France, Shakespeare's queen reveals the old paradigms no longer working, the old hopes and expectations forever refused, and the individual promise of a child forever thwarted. While it may very well be time to see this character played by a child actor, it is certainly time to read and imagine her as a girl.

JULIET: Then have my lips the sin that they have took.
ROMEO: Sin from thy lips? O trespass sweetly urged!
Give me my sin again.
JULIET: You kiss by the book. (215–23).

Romeo and Juliet, ed. Jill Levenson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[65] She divided her remaining jewelry among the Englishwomen who accompanied her back to France. The astonishing volume of this dowry treasure that accompanied her to France is detailed in Mirot, "Isabelle de France reine d'Angleterre."