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King Charles III

by Mike Bartlett

A commentary with annotations

Edited by Karen Hewitt

Perm 2019

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Пьеса Майка Бартлетта
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King *Charles III* by Mike Bartlett»: A commentary on the play

Edited by Karen Hewitt with contributions from Tatiana Klimenko, Tamara Timoshilova, Svetlana Makarova, Natalia Solovyeva, Alexander Murzich, Elena Dotsenko, Elena Polyakova, Alexandra Beloserova, Svetlana Filon, Olga Matvienko, Tatiana Zhakova, Liliya Karimova, Sergey Savielev, Darima Erdyneeva, Marina Rassokha, Yulia Khokhlova, Elena Bayartueva, Oksana Poldoskaya and Natalia Yusefovich, and students from Transbaikal State University (Chita), Belgorod National Research University, Siberian Federal University (Krasnoyarsk), Magnitogorsk State Technical University, Urals State Pedagogical University, Ivanovo State University, Petrozavodsk State University, Donetsk National University, Smolensk State University, Bashkir State Pedagogical University (Ufa), State University of the Humanities (Kolomna), Buryat State University (Ulan-Ude), Far Eastern Federal University (Vladivostok), Northern Artic Federal University (Arkhangelsk), Technical Institute (Branch) of the North-Eastern Federal University, (Neryungri), Pacific National University (Khabarovsk) and Oleg Ivchenko from Kurgan State University.

This booklet has been prepared for Russian readers of Mike Bartlett's play, *King Charles III*. It provides an introduction to the issues explored in the play, constitutional, historical and political information and some discussion of the Shakespearian parallels, followed by a detailed annotation of the text. It is intended to help teachers, students and general readers to enjoy reading and understanding an award-winning important contemporary play.

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Cover photos: Buckingham Palace with the Royal Standard flying above the Palace as seen from The Mall during a Guards ceremony. The Houses of Parliament seen across the Thames.

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INTRODUCTION

About the Author

Mike Bartlett is an English playwright who was born in Abingdon, Oxfordshire, in 1980. He was writing plays from his early twenties, and has been prolific in his output since then. Some of his plays were first performed in the theatre, others on radio or as TV dramas. In 2010 his play *Earthquakes in London* was staged at the National Theatre. Since then he has written regularly for the National Theatre and many of his plays have been performed in London theatres.

In 2014 *King Charles III* was first performed at the Almeida Theatre, a small theatre in London which is dedicated to introducing controversial new work that explores the 'big questions' of the world. Then *King Charles III* transferred to the Wyndham Theatre in London's West End. In 2017 the play was adapted for television by Bartlett, and therefore viewed by a much bigger audience. It was voted Best Play of the Year by drama critics, and has continued to be performed by both professional and amateur theatre groups.

Mike Bartlett has written several more powerful award-winning plays for the stage, after the success of *King Charles III.* He has also recently adapted the film, *Chariots of Fire*, for the theatre, and writes specially commissioned plays for the BBC.

About the Play

King Charles III (2014) is a play examining the role of the British monarchy within the British constitution. It is about power and politics, and about who ultimately decides what laws are made in this country. However, it is not a book of political theory, but a dramatic story in which the characters are involved in situations that affect them both as private individuals with private loves and griefs, and as public figures with public responsibilities.

This is perfectly normal: the theatre is an institution which does and *should* investigate such matters as the Media, the Environment, the Law, our decisions to go to war (*Stuff Happens* by David Hare) or our attitudes to immigrants and British citizenship (*Testing the Echo* by David Edgar). In each case we see characters, sometimes based upon real people, sometimes typical representatives ('The Prime Minister') and sometimes

fictional individuals who express different ideas and emotions as they find themselves in problematical situations. The theatre is a medium for thoughtful public debate about these matters; a good play should provoke controversy by showing the many layers of belief, commitment, responsibility, ambition, love and sheer bewilderment that go into making human decisions, and by allowing us, the audience or the readers, to judge.

CONTEXTS

The Constitutional Problem at the Heart of the Play

In order to understand this play, we need to know a few basic facts. Although the British people have a constitution, it is not written down as most constitutions are. Instead the British government takes action by following 'precedent' – i.e. that which has been done on previous occasions. If a controversial situation arises, it will be debated by senior constitutional judges. The judges will examine earlier examples of apparently similar situations and may decide that they provide a precedent which allows the Government to take a particular route. If no precedent can be found, Parliament (not the Government) must decide what to do.

Political power in Britain lies in **Parliament** in general, and specifically in the biggest party in Parliament who form the **Government**. The Government has real power; the leader of that party becomes the Prime Minister until there is a general election, held every five years or less, when everything may change and another party with its leader may become the Government. Constitutionally, the Government holds its power for a defined period from Parliament which is sovereign (the most powerful body). 'Parliament' means all the elected Members of Parliament, of whatever political party, and the House of Lords which has an advisory role in making laws.

Since 1688 the monarch has had little power and that power has steadily decreased. Today, the Monarch has purely ceremonial duties and a role as Head of State. Your President, the American President and the French President all combine political power with being Head of State whereas political power in Britain is centred in Parliament. The Monarch is Head of State, a ceremonial position, representing the country in a non-controversial role.

However, the Monarch still has some *duties*, of which the most significant is that he or she must sign ‘acts’ or ‘bills’ which have been debated and agreed in Parliament. They do not become actual laws until the Monarch writes his or her signature. For the last three hundred years or so, the Monarch has dutifully signed these laws without protest, whatever he or she might personally think. Occasionally the Monarch has privately queried the wisdom of the new law, but has never refused to sign it. Queen Elizabeth has signed all the laws put in front of her by the Prime Minister of the day.

Everyone in the political world knows this is so. The Prince of Wales has been brought up since his early childhood to understand his duties. But there is no written constitutional rule which defines this duty, so King Charles III can argue that he has a greater responsibility to the people than the duty to sign the Act into law.

The Play, the Royal Family and Censorship

Many Russian readers are surprised to learn that *King Charles III* was not censored before it was publicly acted on the London stage in 2014. In fact, there were no efforts to ban the play although some newspaper commentators and potential audiences felt that it was distasteful and should not have been shown for reasons of propriety. People are entitled to dislike a subject and disapprove of its treatment, and they are also entitled to publish their opinions; but the law in the case of theatrical performances is clear.

Stage performances had to undergo censorship in Shakespeare’s day (the late sixteenth century) and the practice continued, sometimes more, sometimes less, harshly, until 1968 when censorship in the theatre was abolished. This Bill was passed by the House of Commons, accepted by the House of Lords and signed into law by Queen Elizabeth II. The arguments were challenged but for a majority in Parliament they made sense.

In a Democracy, Who Is to Decide What Should Be Censored?

The officials who did the censoring presumably believed that they were reflecting the 'views of the people' but how did they know what the views of the people were? Even if they were hard-working, conscientious men (almost all were men), they were by age and profession and cultural background likely to be out of date in their attitudes. Many personal and cultural freedoms were enacted at this time: it was no longer a crime to have an abortion, to have same-sex relations, to use contraception as a teenager without informing your parents, to write explicitly about sex and critically about religious belief. Abolishing censorship of stage plays fitted well into the cultural climate.

Existing and more recent laws have caused some constraints: laws of libel mean that a play, like the media, cannot accuse a living person of acts which would damage him or her unless they can be shown to (a) be true and (b) in the public interest. (Libel laws are now out of date because they are broken thousands of times every day on social media.) Laws about public decency mean that the sexual act cannot be performed on the public stage; the criminal offence of inciting racial or religious hatred has sometimes been used to try to prevent a play being performed, though usually the judges have decided in favour of the playwright and director.

In our culture it is perfectly normal for plays, TV programmes and cartoons to criticise and mock our *political* leaders. You could argue that there is too much mockery for effective political leadership; if someone has been democratically elected, is it not better to let him or her get on with the job? However, in Britain all would-be politicians know that they will be criticised, sometimes fairly, sometimes unfairly, – and the more successful they are, the greater the criticism. This is one way in which the people hold their rulers to account. To keep them in some isolated box of approval is now regarded as very undemocratic, although fifty years ago there was much more deference to those in power.

The treatment of the Royal Family raises different issues. The Queen has no political power, but she does have many duties, even in her nineties. Most importantly, she cannot answer back if stories about her appear in the press. As Head of State she cannot be controversial. Consequently, she attracts much praise as a hard-working conscientious woman who has attended to her duties for more than 65 years and she rarely receives criticism or mockery; it would seem unfair and pointless. Occasionally her private and public roles come in to conflict, producing

some hostile public reaction. There is a sympathetic but critical treatment of her in an excellent film, *The Queen* (2006), about her response to the death of Princess Diana. The writer of the film, Peter Morgan, has recently written a series of dramatic episodes about the Queen, entitled *The Crown* which looks at the role of the Monarch throughout the reign of Elizabeth II. It has been widely acclaimed both for its fine acting and production, and for the thoughtful treatment of the issues and controversies which have affected our attitude towards the Monarchy.

Queen Elizabeth was 88 when *King Charles III* was written; speculation about what would happen when she died was a common topic among those who were interested in the role of the monarchy. It does not feel shocking to begin a play about the future with her death – especially when her funeral is shown, very briefly, as seemly and dignified. She would be followed by 'the next in line to the throne' who is Prince Charles. But what would happen then?

'The Royals' (apart from the Queen) regularly receive much praise and adulation from some newspapers and magazines; they are subjects of fascination and admiration simply because they are members of the Royal Family and therefore celebrities. On the other hand, they can be treated very critically or satirically in other newspapers and magazines. We have a free press anyway, but underlying such comic and critical attacks on the Royals is the thought that they are very well-paid for their public role, so they should justify that expense. Against that argument is the one that they are still very constrained in what they can say in public, especially Prince Charles. They are always in the public eye, but cannot protest at the publicity. (The young children do have some privacy, and efforts are constantly made by people like James Reiss in the play to protect the Royal Family from the excesses of social media and from staff who tell tales.)

So is the play libellous or offensive? Regardless of the views of some people who think it is in bad taste, it cannot be libellous. It happens in a future which must be hypothetical. Its political characters are fictional. The portrayal of fictional versions of real people who have their own characters is acceptable because the play is about serious matters which are 'in the public interest'. This is a legal phrase meaning that we have a right to know about the public behaviour of the members of the royal family since they have a part in symbolising our country and are paid very well to do so. Moreover, there is nothing in this play which ridicules the characters; in fact, they are treated very seriously, in a completely different

way from their treatment in the tabloids. They are not made trivial. Prince Charles is known to have strong opinions on subjects which have a political complexion so it is of public interest to know how a future King might react to a very difficult political issue.

I have no idea whether Prince Charles or other members of the royal family have seen this play or what they think about it. It is clearly a fictional play and they are entitled to their private opinions just like anyone else.

Fiction and Reality in the Characters of the Royal Family

We cannot know what these public figures are like, but some information trickles out, and is rapidly developed by 'biographers' who seek to tell a royal story. Mike Bartlett has to rely, on our shared (and very limited) impressions of the actual people, and then to create fictional characters for his dramatic situation. He cannot say, 'This is what X is *really* like, but he can suggest that this is how X might have behaved and spoken and thought – just as Shakespeare tried to do. In the following account of what we think we know about 'the Royals', the word 'seems' is therefore used quite frequently. We cannot *know*.

Charles was, from boyhood, someone who was observed to be uncertain, worried, not heroic. Knowing that he could not take up any political activities, he has devoted his energies to charities, especially for young people, to gardening, to homeopathic medicines, to architecture (hating modern architecture) and to the environment. He is very conscientious but not good at being spontaneously friendly with the public as his first wife, Diana, was. It is known that he would have liked to marry Camilla, but hesitated and dithered, so that she gave up and married someone else. They both regretted that decision but it was felt by advisors (like James Reiss, the Royal Press Officer, in this play) that the Prince of Wales could not marry a divorced person. Instead Lady Diana Spencer, who was much younger, was found for him. They were married with great pomp in 1981, but had little in common and the marriage began to fail. Charles turned to his old love, Camilla, and Diana had an affair with James Hewitt from about 1986 onwards. (Besides rumours and biographies of both Charles and Diana, all this was admitted by Princess Diana in a television interview in 1995.) The couple divorced in 1996. After Diana's death in a catastrophic car accident in September 1997, the monarchy and especially Charles underwent a period of unpopularity. However, by 2005,

advisors to the Royal Family believed that the time had at last come for Charles to marry his mistress, Camilla Parker-Bowles.

Camilla is the Duchess of Cornwall. Prince Charles is Prince of Wales, the traditional title taken by the monarch's oldest son, but he also has the title, Duke of Cornwall. In 2005 it was felt to be wiser for Camilla to take that title, since Diana was still strongly in people's memories as Princess of Wales. Camilla became Duchess in later middle age. It seems that she has managed to be a quiet and loyal wife and an uncontroversial stepmother to Diana's sons.

Prince William was born in 1982 and Prince Harry in 1984. Prince William was therefore 15 when his mother died. He seems to have been conscientious, brought up to learn to be a future king, but at the same time with much more freedom than his father. He went to St Andrew's University, where he met Catherine Middleton, a girl from a comfortable middle-class family, well-off but in no way connected with royalty. William had full support from his family when he and Catherine (Kate) decided to marry. (This would not have been quite the response when his father was a young man since senior members of the royal family were expected to marry within the aristocracy. Diana came from a titled family.) William and Kate married in 2011 and have so far had three children. The first, George, was born in 2013 before this play was written. The reference to 'the children' in the first scene suggests that the play was slightly updated in 2015 when their daughter, Charlotte, was born.

Kate Middleton and Prince William have now been married for eight years, and theirs seems to be a happy marriage, the kind of ordinary, loving marriage which most people hope for. Kate seems to have survived media attention and to be strong enough to ignore it when necessary.

Prince Harry was 12, nearly 13 when his mother died. He has spoken of the pain of her death and the fact that he and his brother had to walk beside her coffin in a funeral procession watched by a million in the London crowds and millions on TV. He believes it was cruel. At the time, advisors to the Royal Family probably thought it was necessary, given the public grief at Diana's death.

Whereas William tended to be well-behaved and earnest, Harry was always livelier and less respectful, as was possible for the second son. In his early twenties, he was known for wild parties and dubious behaviour. Then he went out to Afghanistan, insisting on being treated as far as possible as an ordinary soldier, Harry Windsor. The portrayal of him as temperamentally more democratic than the rest of the family fits what

we know about him. He and William have always been very close. Diana made them promise to be absolute and loyal supporters of each other, and in 2011 William asked Harry to be his best man at his wedding although heirs to the throne do not traditionally have a 'best man'. (Nobody knows why!) Harry has been particularly concerned with charities helping children and young people in Africa.

Since Harry has been a child there have been speculations about his biological father. This is because, while William looks very like other members of the royal family, Harry has distinctive red (or ginger) hair and a very different cast of features. Such unlikeness fuelled rumours that his mother was already having an affair with James Hewitt, another redhead. Both Diana and Mr Hewitt denied this; Harry was already a toddler before their affair started. Besides, there is red hair on Diana's side of the family so probably this rumour is no more than a rumour. Prince Charles has always recognised Harry as his rightful son, just like his older brother. Mike Bartlett must have decided to introduce the story into his play because of these popular media speculations; he then makes his fictional Harry's best friend deny the rumour, so that this particular matter is cleared out of the way right at the beginning of the play.

Any play set in the near future will become outdated as the years go by. In real life Harry is no longer single; he married in 2018 Megan Markle, an American, a former actress who had been previously married. It is worth pointing out that times change. It would have been impossible for his father to marry someone with a similar background when he was Harry's age. For the vast majority of the British public none of this seemed to matter; nor was the fact that Megan has a black American mother a big problem. (It is true that British people are mostly more relaxed about black-white marriages than the Americans.) The real point seemed to be that the couple were in love.

We have to take the play as it stands: in this hypothetical future-from-2014, Harry is single, attracted to a different kind of life of which he knows almost nothing, but also part of the Family.

NB In the cast list, Harry is described as Prince of Wales. This is a printing error. In Act IV scene 4, William correctly describes himself as Prince of Wales, the eldest son of the King.

The Politicians

This is a political play; it is about a constitutional crisis and the political ways in which it can be solved. In domestic politics the aim is always to avoid chaos, anarchy, violence and, at the worst, war. That was true in Shakespeare's day and is true now. We therefore have to understand something about the British political system.

It developed as a two-party system and works very well when there are only two significant Parliamentary parties. (It works far less well when there are several political parties, and even less well when a Referendum result is imposed on Parliament. Mike Bartlett in 2014 did not have to consider the political chaos of Brexit.) So we have two leaders: Mr Evans (a fictional character), leader of the Labour Party which has most members of Parliament (MPs) so that he is Prime Minister; Mr Stevens, leader of the Conservative Party which has the second-largest number of MPs so he has the official title of Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. For Russians, it is important to note that each parliamentary party can be in bitter conflict with other parties but they are all 'loyal to the monarch'. Disagreeing with the government of the day in no way suggests that a politician is unpatriotic. By contrast, Americans who do not support their President politically nonetheless have to acknowledge him as their Head of State and symbol of their patriotism. This can cause anguish! In the British system, the Monarch is a kind of embodied flag; a symbol; a focus for patriotic feeling which is then removed from the daily and difficult business of politics. Charles finds it painfully difficult to accept this non-political concept of the Monarch.

Mr Evans and Mr Stevens are *political* enemies. It is, indeed, their job to oppose each other and stimulate debate by arguing different points of view. However, both politicians agree about the basics of the constitution. They know that the Monarch or Sovereign must stand aside from any political decisions. They are therefore brought together (as happens in times of constitutional crisis). Since we have no written constitution they must rely on what was decided in 1688, on precedent (what has happened on previous occasions), on general understanding of the day-to-day adjustments to what can be done by whom, and on common-sense (a kind of intelligent pragmatism).

A good minor example of day-to-day decisions occurs in Scene 1 when we learn that 'it was decided' the King and the Prime Minister should leave after the funeral side by side, as 'the Crown and State'. There

is no rule here, but the symbolism might have been effective. However, Charles decides that he should 'remain aloft from politics'. That adjustment is quickly made.

Mr Evans, as leader of the Labour Party, supports left-wing policies and is suspicious of the public money paid to the Monarch and Royal family. Personally, he is a Republican, as are a small minority of the British, but he knows that as Prime Minister he must have weekly meetings with the King and explain the Government's position (which is not Republican). He proposes to discuss a bill on the environment and airport runways (a very topical issue then and now) but Charles turns instead to a discussion of the bill to restrict the freedom of the press. All of this is perfectly normal and what could be expected. Mr Evans is behaving correctly. The weekly meetings are part of precedent, not law, and it is up to the Monarch and the Prime Minister to decide what is said.

Mr Stevens, as Leader of the Opposition, is not entitled to weekly meetings, but Charles decides to hear opposing views and give them equal time. Mr Stevens, as a Conservative, expects to be in a more comfortable relationship with the King, since his is the party associated with privilege and wealth. However, Charles challenges him very effectively and makes him very uncomfortable.

Postwar British History

On p.51 Mr Evans mentions some of the major events which occurred during the reign of Queen Elizabeth II.

> I do agree for in her time
> She faced far greater revolution when
> She lost an Empire, granted that the law
> On homosexuality be changed,
> She oversaw the alteration from
> The unions, mines and factories that stood
> For generations to a world
> That, Thatcherised, Reaganised, did place
> The profit higher value than the pride
> Belonging to the man who travels day
> By day upon the Clapham omnibus.

This is a very useful speech for students of English culture. It points to much more significant changes than those which are often studied. It is also the speech of a Labour Prime Minister to a King, reflecting upon what they both know and have seen.

Elizabeth II became Queen in 1952 when her father, George VI, died of cancer. She was 26 years old, but had known for 15 years that she would become Queen in her turn. The British Empire was the largest Empire in the world in 1939 but there was considerable and increasing unrest among the colonized peoples. After the Second World War (1939 – 1945) it became clear that India, the biggest 'possession' must become independent; the country was becoming impossible to rule. India gained its independence in 1947. During the years from the mid-1950 to the late 1960s Britain withdrew from its many African possessions, from Malaysia, from its West Indian possessions and from other smaller places (like Cyprus) around the world. This was done reluctantly by successive governments, but Britain was no longer a great power and could not afford to rule an Empire. The Queen attended many of the ceremonies in which Independence was granted to these colonies. Most of the former colonies agreed to join a 'Commonwealth' along with the 'white' territories of Canada, Australia, New Zealand. They were independent but in a loose and friendly alliance, a kind of network. (The British Commonwealth was the inspiration for the Commonwealth of Independent States, formed when the Soviet Union was dissolved.) South Africa was thrown out of the Commonwealth when its apartheid policies became too oppressive, but rejoined when Mandela became President. Political power disappeared with the Empire, but the Queen remains the Head of the Commonwealth and is known to value this connection.

In the later 1960s Britain was at the forefront of big cultural changes in the western world. Many personally liberating policies were passed in Parliament: censorship in the theatre was abolished; abortion became legal and medically regulated; divorce was no longer dependent on getting 'proof' of adultery but could be granted when both parties agreed that the marriage had irretrievably broken down; the contraception pill became widely available and doctors were allowed to prescribe it to unmarried teenagers; and sexual activities between consenting adult males became legal. (Sex between consenting adult females had never been illegal.) In Britain there was much dancing, singing, cannabis-taking, startling clothes (and lack of clothes), anti-war movements, youth protests, a sense of the young taking over from the old. We do not know what the

Queen, then in her forties, thought about it all, but she signed the acts into law.

In the 1970s it was clear that Britain, the first industrial nation, was losing much of her industry, especially her heavy industry (iron and steel, coal mines, ship-building.) Other countries were taking over our traditional kinds of employment. British working men belonged to powerful Trade Unions which fought the government to protect the interests of their workers. Nonetheless, the unemployment rate went up, and sympathy for the workers in the big industries began to decline. In 1979 Margaret Thatcher, Leader of the Conservative Party became Prime Minister. She remained Prime Minister until 1990, and in this decade British politics changed completely. She was a powerful leader and will always be controversial. She destroyed the power of the Trade Unions, she deregulated many of the financial institutions, she privatised huge parts of state-owned industries such as electricity, steel, gas, water; and above all she insisted that individuals were responsible for their own situation and except in extreme cases, the state should not to interfere. In other words, value should be judged by profit not by work as such. If someone lost their job, they should 'get on their bike' and go off to find another job. (Significantly she did not try to touch the National Health Service, the NHS, our one 'socialist' institution which is still loved by the people.) At the time Ronald Reagan was President of the United States, and he shared many of her right-wing, libertarian, economic beliefs which were taken up by many other countries, though less by the countries of the European Union. (The Thatcher-Reagan partnership was an immense influence on the early reformers of Russia in the 1990s. Russians have widely differing views about Mr Gaidar, Mr Chubais and the others who looked to Thatcher.) All Thatcher's legislation was signed into law by the Queen. We do not know what she thought about it.

For the 'Clapham omnibus' see the note on p.51.

On p 73 Paul the owner of the kebab van ruminates on the state of Britain in the 'near future'. For the first audience that meant 'now', 2014. Everything that Paul says is even more true since the Brexit Referendum in 2016.

Since the financial crisis of 2008-9, and even more since the Government of 2010 when 'Austerity' became the official policy, Britain has suffered huge economic cuts to public services, to state industries, to local government. And that has affected small businesses. The government

pays less and less to the army and police, the NHS is deprived of essential funds, post offices and pubs close. Giving more power to Scotland and to Wales to run their own affairs has made the countries of the United Kingdom more, not less, contentious. Local governments can no longer carry out many of their legal functions because they are not allowed to raise local taxes and they receive less money from the centre. All this is factually true. Meanwhile rich people and their wealth which is invested in deregulated financial services continue to get richer and there seems to be no way of controlling them. Paul may be right that our sense of ourselves now as *British* has very little to hold on to. The long-reigning Queen may be a significant part of what we have left, especially given the very divisive Brexit problem which Bartlett did not have to deal with.

Coming to the End of Popular Knowledge

Up to this point you can assume that most British people watching this play – educated people with an interest in politics – will know most of what you have just read. What follows will not be known to most of the audience, which is exactly why this play of arguments can be so exciting.

In the play Charles sometimes thinks of himself as a kind of Judge, listening to both sides. It sounds fair. But constitutionally Charles is *not* a Judge. The policies have been argued out in Parliament, and a decision has been made by the elected representatives of the people. Now he must give the Royal Assent and sign the Bill. In his mother's reign the argument stopped there.

If (like King Charles) we investigate further, matters are not quite so simple. Consider the **Royal Prerogative**. This is what constitutional judges say:

The monarch could force the dissolution of Parliament through a refusal of royal assent*; this would inevitably lead to a government resigning. By convention, the monarch always assents to bills; the last time the royal assent was not given was in 1708 during the reign of* Queen Anne *when she withheld royal assent from the* Scottish Militia Bill. So we might assume that it all was decided a long time ago! Or was it? The judges go on to say *This does not mean that the right to refuse has died:* George V *believed he could veto the Third Irish Home Rule Bill.* All this means that the right of the monarch to refuse assent to a bill was still under consideration in 1914, just a hundred years before King Charles III

is struggling with the same problem. And if the monarch always signs by convention, not law, cannot he challenge the convention?

Another power is the right to prorogue (close down) Parliament, even against the wishes of the majority of the House of Commons. This is what William IV did in 1831 in an attempt to stop rioting and violent protests on both sides of the House of Commons and the House of Lords. It did in fact calm things down; that session of Parliament was ended, and in the next session members of Parliament were able to develop their ideas about the controversial Reform Bill. King Charles believes (correctly) that he has that traditional right – see Act 3, Scene 6. However, closing Parliament does not help if the country is descending into anarchy. The play asks what happens when ancient traditional rights of the monarch come into conflict with present-day democratic assumptions about *Parliament* expressing the will of the people.

Many people would say that these conflicts arise because we do not have a written constitution, and that written constitutions provide all the answers. However, written constitutions present their own contradictions. Life changes so much that many contemporary problems were unforeseen by those who drew up constitutions two hundred or one hundred or even (like the Russian constitution) thirty years ago. For example, how can any written constitution deal with all the new issues that arise because of the invention of the internet?

THE NEW LAW

Regulating the Press and Phone Hacking – the issues at the time of the first performance of *King Charles III*

Mike Bartlett needed a controversial issue in order to explore questions about the power and influence of the monarchy in contemporary Britain. He chose a topic which had been discussed for twenty years and which had recently become a matter of serious controversy: the unlawful behaviour of the press. The background to this case, as mentioned in the play, is as follows.

In 2002 Millie Dowler aged 13 was abducted, assaulted and killed while walking home alone in the afternoon. Her body was found 150

kilometres away 6 months later. (Her murderer was eventually found and sentenced in 2011.) When her disappearance was announced and the public was asked to help find her, two reporters from the Sunday tabloid, the *News of the World*, managed to hack into Milly's phone. They listened to messages and removed some of them in order to leave space for others. Her parents, also desperately phoning her, believed she must be alive because they could monitor these changes. When the case became known years later, this deception of the parents deeply shocked the public.

Although the police worked out that the phone had been hacked, they did nothing about it, apparently because they knew that journalists often hacked into mobile phones belonging to celebrities and people in scandals and disasters, although it was completely illegal to do so.

When the scandal came to light in 2011, public outrage at what had been done to Milly and her parents led to the arrest of the two journalists, and soon to the editor of *News of the World*. The newspaper, which had been involved in other phone-hacking scandals, closed within 10 days. Anger at what was happening in the press (not just in the *News of the W*orld) led to Prime Minister David Cameron setting up a public inquiry into the 'culture, practice and ethics of the British press' under the chairmanship of Lord Leveson. His report became known as the Leveson Inquiry. You can read everything about it in https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140122144906/http://www.levesoninquiry.org.uk/

The inquiry examined not just illegal practices among journalists, but also the relationship between the press and politicians, and the press and the police. The emphasis was upon the press because the BBC has a duty of impartiality that is in its charter and which already imposes restrictions which do not apply to newsprint media.

Public outrage at the Milly Dowler case expanded to include other intrusions into the private life of individuals. *Privacy* became a key word; how could ordinary people who by chance were caught up in painful events escape the intrusions, the relentless pursuit of them for comments, photos, distorted stories?

When the Leveson Report was published in November 2012, Lord Leveson recommended abolishing the Press Complaints Commission which was essentially self-regulation by the Press – which did very little to self-regulate – and to set up a legal body to ensure that basic rules on Press ethical behaviour were followed. This new body should be appointed, said

Leveson in a ‘genuinely open, transparent and independent way’. There was no suggestion that the Government should oversee the Press. The new Board must be independent and much thought should be given to how it could be independent.

David Cameron rejected the Leveson proposals. (This prompt rejection surprised many people, but others pointed to his close friendship with several newspaper editors. See the discussion between King Charles and Mr Stevens on p.30.) Most newspaper editors also objected to the proposed reforms, citing the principle that the Freedom of the Press was sacred in a democracy. Supporters of Lord Leveson argued that this new Board would not limit the freedom of the press but would ensure that journalism was conducted in a legal and ethical way. Parliament debated the question over several months. The Conservatives were against Leveson, the Labour party supported Leveson and the LibDems mostly supported Leveson. The issue was very central to public discussion in 2013 and 2014 when Mike Bartlett was writing this play.

The major difference *in the play* is that a Labour government is in power, and a bill on the regulation of the Press has actually been passed in Parliament. In fact, a Coalition Government with the Conservatives as the largest party had voted against the proposals. (Instead, another self-regulating scheme was put into place.)

Many ethical issues were examined in this Leveson Inquiry into the responsibilities of the Press. People on both sides of the argument took up very principled positions: they defended ‘the individual’s right to privacy’ on the one hand and ‘the sacred principle of Press freedom’ on the other hand. We can ask, as audiences in 2014 did ask, that surely it was right for King Charles III to be as concerned as any other British citizen about the Leveson Report. Some thoughtful people (but by no means all) would agree with Charles that, however offensive, intrusive and ignorant journalists are, the Freedom of the Press is an essential cornerstone of democracy.

This debate provides another level to the play. *King Charles III* is not just about the Royal Family or about the power of the Monarch versus the power of Parliament. It is about the nature of freedom and the nature of democracy.

SHAKESPEARE AND OTHER MATTERS

King Charles III and the Shakespearean connection

Many Russian readers have speculated about the Shakespearean connection, but they have concentrated almost exclusively on *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* which are *not* the plays that Bartlett primarily has in mind. Shakespeare wrote at least 36 plays, not two or three! One of his major innovations was to write extensively about English history in ten plays. *King Henry VI* (three parts) and *King Richard III* are set in the fifteenth century during the Wars of the Roses. *King John* is set in the early thirteenth century. Shakespeare's major achievement is the study of Kingship in *King Richard II, King Henry IV Part 1, King Henry IV Part 2* and *King Henry V* which run consecutively from the late fourteenth century to the early fifteenth. His final history play is *King Henry VIII*, written with another playwright, at the very end of his career in 1613.

He also wrote three plays set in classical Roman times, each of them a political play: *Julius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus.*

Bartlett expects his readers to be familiar with at least one or two of these plays; he uses many of Shakespeare's devices and conventions in his exploration of power and of constitutional dilemmas. None of Shakespeare's plays is concerned with exactly the same themes as Bartlett's, but studies of power struggles, of conscience versus expediency and of the conflict between the private and the public life are dramatized in all these plays. The major difference is that Shakespeare is going back into earlier periods for his plots whereas Bartlett is imagining the 'near future'.

Bartlett deliberately imitates the construction of a Shakespeare history play. *King Charles III* is divided into five Acts with several scenes within each Act. Like Shakespeare's history plays, it has a large cast of historical 'real people' and a number of fictional characters, particularly those who are of less high rank than the King and the politicians. The action moves briskly from one place to another, with minimal stage scenery: we are at Westminster Abbey, at Buckingham Palace, at a private club, outside among commoners, inside the Houses of Parliament, back to the Palace, and from there once again to a room where two politicians can talk in private. Public speeches, private discussions and soliloquies provide the material in all Shakespeare's history plays and in *King Charles III.*

Ghosts appear in four of Shakespeare's plays: *Hamlet, Macbeth*, *Richard III* (several ghosts) and *Julius Caesar*. Almost always they can be seen only by one person. Hamlet's father's ghost is an exception. The ghost of Julius Caesar in *Julius Caesar* looks to the future and so is perhaps closer than the others to the Ghost of Diana. He also speaks. Hamlet's father's ghost speaks at length about the past and then urges Hamlet to avenge him, whereas the ghosts in *Richard III* appear to remind him of his evil deeds and Banquo's ghost is a silent terrible reminder to Macbeth. None of these ghosts plays a part similar to Diana's but we all know that the appearance of a ghost *means* something. Diana gives a prophesy in almost identical terms to her husband and her son. How can this be? It is a mystery that, with William's help, you should be able to decipher by the end of the play.

In a typical Shakespearian history play, there are plots, counter-plots, secret meetings, lengthy efforts to persuade the King of one course of action or another. People commune with their conscience (especially in *King Henry V* and *Julius Caesar*) or speculate about the meaning of Kingship (especially in *King Richard II*). Sons struggle with fathers, fathers with sons. What is feared above all is a country in chaos and anarchy; many plots are developed to avoid this disaster. Above all, in these struggles nobody is a simple hero or villain with the possible exception of King Richard III (in a very early play). Shakespeare involves us in one point of view and then another; all the arguments have something to be said for them.

Bartlett works in a Shakespearian mode: he explores a constitutional crisis which his characters struggle to resolve. They all have their own purposes, their own plans and dreams. In Shakespeare's history plays much is made of loyalty and of failures of loyalty where there is a personal bond. Characters can feel hurt and betrayed, although politics inevitably involves conflicts of loyalty; in acting or reading the play this should be recognised. Mr Evans is loyal to his party in parliament; Mr Stevens is loyal to his party (with some wavering); Charles is loyal to his concept of the Monarchy and finds that his family cannot follow him. Bartlett contrasts loyalty with *realpolitik* – the political art of actually getting things done, however uncomfortable the idealists may feel. For example, Kate is not a version of Lady Macbeth; she is not a murderer riven with guilt; she is a political player with clearer sight than the rest of

the Royal Family, even if some of her speeches may seem to you to be too ambitious or egotistical.

Blank Verse – How to read *King Charles III*

Most of the play is written in blank verse. Blank verse is technically described as unrhymed iambic pentameter, or five feet of iambic stresses ‘dee-Dum, dee-Dum, dee-Dum, dee-Dum, dee-Dum’ in one line. For example, the third line of the play is a regular iambic pentameter line:

You nev/er showed/ your pain/, but stood/ instead

where the stress is, in each case, on the second syllable.

Camilla’s speech does not rhyme; ‘blank’ in this context means ‘unrhymed’, although in English the term ‘blank verse’ is reserved for iambic pentameter without rhymes. English poets love this metre. Itl is used in the greatest poetry of Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth and in much writing by Keats, Shelley, Tennyson, Browning and others. The blank verse line imitates quite closely the normal rhythms of English speech, so it is possible to use it in drama and manage to make the characters sound almost natural, with just a little heightening to give seriousness and weight to what is being said.

In verse plays, if the lines were strictly regular, each one with five iambic stresses, our ears would hear the monotony, and the speeches would become boring. It is therefore normal to vary the stresses while keeping the underlying rhythm. Look at Charles’ first speech:

Please don’t. It’s simply what I had to do.
We’ll find no dignity in cov’ring up
The way we feel. What son should, standing
Waiting at his mother’s grave, stop his tears?

The first line is regular except that in English a person will say ‘it’s simply what I had to do’ as one phrase in which the stresses on ‘simp’, ‘what’, ‘had’, ‘do’ are almost lost in the string of monosyllables stating a simple truth.

The second line in prose would be ‘We’ll find no dignity in covering up’ but that would mean an extra unstressed syllable; the beat is restored by contracting ‘covering’ to ‘cov’ring’. Such contractions are common in Shakespeare, and Bartlett makes frequent use of them, too.

The third line is much more complicated. The first two 'feet' – the word for each of the five sections of the line – are regular. Then we have three stresses in a row 'son should, stand…' and end on an unstressed syllable, as though something is missing. This is confusing to speak – until we turn to the fourth line which is completely irregular. The stresses are on Wait, moth, grave, stop, tears (five stresses) and the unstressed syllables are 'ing' 'at' 'his' 'ers' 'his' (five stresses) but we have almost lost the sense of 'feet' since three of the unstressed syllables come together, and the strong words pile up at the end 'grave, stop his tears'. And then, suddenly, we can hear this as a forceful ending.

So what is the advantage of this somewhat irregular blank verse? It gives immense and moving significance to what Charles is saying. His first line is polite and simple and shows his problem – he has no choice in how to behave. In the next line he can employ the royal 'we' without sounding pompous for he might be saying 'We all, human beings'. It becomes a general truth: that there is nothing *dignified* in concealing your emotions. Then, by putting together the stressed words he emphasises his grief and his resentment at being forced to hide what he feels. Look at the question: *What son should stop his tears?* The answer is, *'No son should stop his tears'* yet that is what he has to do. The point is made so much stronger by putting together the last word in line three and the first word in line four - *Standing Waiting* which are not iambic but 'trochaic' (Dum-dee). Spoken with a pause or two pauses they slow down the speech, imitating Charles' painful waiting.

Such irregularities are a necessary part of skilful blank verse writing. (Try analysing Hamlet's 'To be or not to be' speech!) Much can be conveyed in these tight verse constructions which can suddenly, movingly, be loosened.

<u>Contractions</u> These should be easily deciphered. On p.16 we have

> My life has been a ling'ring for the throne.
> Sometimes I do confess I 'magined if
> My mother hap'd to die before her time,

Instead of 'lingering', 'imagined', 'happened'. All such contractions are used to improve the scansion of the verse.

Punctuation in Dramatic Verse

There are many debates about how verse speeches should be punctuated: according to standard rules, according to the way the actor must speak the lines; according to the choice of the actor. In general, Bartlett punctuates lightly, and often leaves out commas that we might expect, such as a comma at the end of the third line of Charles' first speech. The actor can choose how long a pause there should be between 'standing' and 'waiting'. Try yourself, to see how you would speak these lines to make the most effect of Charles' distress.

(However, there do seem to be several cases where necessary punctuation is missing. Not all the lines which have no comma or full stop can be justified.)

Arranging the lines

Sometimes one line of iambic pentameter is shared between different speakers. It is arranged on the page to show how the line should be read.

On p.12 we have

CAMILLA Not soon.
WILLIAM Three months –
CAMILLA Your father rules today.

The three speeches make one verse line, and we should feel how the two characters share the argument between them.

'Ungrammatical' usage in verse

It worries some readers that the characters seem to be speaking ungrammatically, but in blank verse such usages are both common and acceptable.

The need to make a line scan means that writers are ready to leave out definite articles as on p 16

Expect I'll have opinion there, all good
To go

In prose we would expect 'an opinion'.

On p.14 Charles says, ‘But where’s/The children’ instead of ‘Where are the children’

to help the scansion. There are several places where the singular tense is used in this way, especially when the meaning remains clear.

Rhyming couplets

In Shakespeare’s plays it is common practice in a scene where the characters are speaking in blank verse to end with a rhyming couplet. The rhyme tells the audience that this scene has finished, so that we can swiftly turn our attention to the next without the need for elaborate scene-changing. So, at the end of the first scene Charles says:

> But now I’ll rise to how things have to be
> The Queen is dead, long live the King. That’s me.

And at the end of Scene 3 he says:

> I’m certain all she was, was nerves and ills.
> I’ll call my doctor now for sleeping pills.

You can see from this example that rhyming couplets can easily become unintentionally comic.

Other Dramatic Conventions and Stage Directions

In Shakespeare’s plays there are very few stage directions apart from indications as to who is entering and who is leaving the stage. Bartlett also gives very few directions, leaving that to the director. Stage furniture is kept to a minimum as the scenes follow each other, quickly, without time for elaborate and unnecessary changes of scenery.

Bartlett provides explanations for some of his punctuation marks on the page immediately before the text. He also provides some directions to individual characters, such as those on p. 73 where Harry pays for his kebab and Paul starts cutting the meat. (This is necessary because, as Paul cuts off the slices, he uses his actions as a metaphor for what is happening to Britain.)

On p.97 there is ‘A pause’. This indicates that both characters are thinking of what has been said, and – for the moment – have nothing to express about the complicated situation.

Beat – This word as a stage direction appears first on p.22 when Jess tells Harry that he hates being a Prince. ‘Cos you hate it. Don’t you?’ It is a crucial question and we are all waiting for Harry’s answer. Beat means ‘significant pause’. On p.27 it follows Charles’ bitter ‘To utilise Diana’. Both Charles and Mr Evans are waiting for Mr Evans to absorb all the implications of those words and then answer. The audience should feel the tension between them, the moment of silence, the waiting. A beat, like a musical beat.

Sometimes a character does not speak but is given three dots . . . Bartlett says ‘It indicates a pressure, expectation or desire to speak.’ This is like a beat – the audience must be aware that something is *not* being said. The play requires skilled actors for such information to be conveyed to the other characters and to the audience.

The Use of Vulgar and Obscene Language

Some readers have expressed surprise that some of the characters use obscene language. We should distinguish between what goes on in real life in Britain and what is presented on stage. In real life, all younger Royals like almost all young British people will use obscenities some of the time. ‘Fucking’ for many people is simply a mild term of abuse: ‘I don’t want to go to that fucking pub; it’s half-empty, no life there.’ ‘I had to take this fucking chemistry exam in order to qualify.’ ‘Fuck’ is an expletive which can express real anger or mild irritation. From around the age of fifteen (earlier for many) teenagers will start using ‘fucking’ and ‘fuck’ in private conversations, and sometimes in the street because they have forgotten that they are in public.

As they get older, they will tend to use ‘fucking’ less often because they do not have to show how ‘adult and sophisticated’ they are. Other words like ‘dick’ and ‘dickhead’ and ‘knob’ which are all used in this play are regularly used by the under-thirties. (As a generalisation, older people tend to use obscenities less often, partly because when they become parents they feel uncomfortable at their young children imitating such language. It is very difficult to explain to a small child why he, eagerly learning to use words, must not use *these words*.) While some obscenities are much more common among working-class people, others are more

popular with the likes of Spencer and Cootsy. Do not suppose that upper-class people cannot be very vulgar – they can. Look at Cootsy's expressions on p.20. But they will have a stronger sense of what can be said in public and what can be said in a private club or a private conversation. Kate will also have learnt how to control her language in public. Her 'Fuck yeah!' on p.44 is an unconvincing attempt to show that she could be Best Mates with Jess. Still, she likes Jess' down-to-earth attitude which helps to prepare us for her long soliloquy.

Jess uses vulgar language quite casually, not to impress but because this is part of her vocabulary. Fin does indeed seem to be a dick so she says so.

Shakespeare uses more vulgar and obscene language in many of his plays than anything which we hear or read in this play. He would have been surprised at the demand for polite language *for everyone*. His monarchs and upper-class politicians speak in a high linguistic register, but his younger characters and lower-class characters can be extremely (and often wittily) rude.

The Tone of the Play

This is a serious play. Of course, there are comic moments, especially the sub-pot concerning Harry, which may remind us of the sub-plot of Prince Hal and Falstaff in *King Henry IV*. But overall, it is a serious play, exemplified by the many conversations between Charles and Mr Evans, and between William and Sir Michael. It can also be extremely moving, especially in the first part of Act 3, scene 4 and in the second half of Act V scene 1.

The constant movement of crowds in the background, demonstrators, journalists, congregations in Westminster Abbey can be suggested with a small cast, but the sense of crowds responding to the events on stage should remind us that the play is dealing with issues that affect or will affect all British citizens.

Although it can be difficult for non-native audiences and readers to pick up sudden shifts of emotion, you should be as attentive as you can to the different ways in which the characters address each other and themselves. This should be easier than with many works of English literature because, as Bartlett himself observed, once he had decided that the play must be written in blank verse, the ironic tones disappeared.

Questions You Must Answer Yourself

Russian readers have asked the following questions:

Is Charles supposed to be a sympathetic character?
Why does William decide to betray his father?
Why does Harry change his mind at the end of the play?

These and many others are *good* questions, but they can only be answered by you, the individual who is watching the play or reading the text. The answers are deep within the play itself. This commentary tries to give you the background to the events and the context in which the arguments take place. It cannot tell you what to think about the private struggles and difficult decisions of the characters – that is your responsibility.

However, that does *not* mean that there are no answers, and that any opinion you have is just as good as any other opinion. Careful reading is essential. Within the play, the actual text, the material given to the actors, we have many clues as to how we should answer these questions. But we must realise that the answers cannot be simple and clear-cut, any more than real complicated situations between real people can be resolved in one simple way. Literature deals in complexity, in ambiguity, in people's motives and dreams and contradictory wishes; literature asks us, the readers, to think about complicated characters who are not perfect, who cannot be perfect because other people are not perfect.

For example, in this play everyone starts off with good motives – but their good motives may be irritating or short-sighted or prejudiced when the actions affect another person. Camilla is loving and protective to her husband; that makes her less than kind to Kate. William is loyal to his father and loyal to Kate. He loves them both and wants to be a good Prince, but he has to listen to Sir Michael and Mr Evans. Harry is uncomfortable with the restrictions of life within the Royal Family, but at the same time he loves his father and his brother. All of them are faced with dilemmas which will have to be resolved somehow or another. We are following them on their conflicting journeys to those resolutions.

COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT

Title: *King Charles III* – Plays by Shakespeare about English kings always give the title 'King' as well as the name. Bartlett is following this precedent.

Characters: The first five characters in the list are based on living people. All the rest are fictional, although many of their roles exist – for example, the Royal Press Secretary, the Prime Minister, the Archbishop of Canterbury. Spencer and Cootsy are fictional friends, but typical of the sort of friends Harry would have. Jess is fictional and distinctive.

11 *It's simply what I had to do* – Charles says that he wanted to weep, and had he been anyone else, he would have been allowed to do so, but the monarch must keep his feelings to himself; it is a Royal duty. (There is no law here; Queen Victoria was much given to showing her feelings; Elizabeth II was brought up to be restrained and keep her feelings to herself. As Charles, says, that is the tradition in which he has been brought up.)

12 *Three months* – that is, three months until the coronation. There is no fixed time between the accession of the monarch and the coronation because there are no rules. For organisational reasons it would be difficult to hold it in less than three months.

12 *WILLIAM: Wales* – Wales is a separate country but a small part of the United Kingdom, and the Welsh certainly feel sometimes that they are ignored (although at other times they may have more than their fair share of attention.) William is now or is about to become 'Prince of Wales', the title given to the monarch's eldest son, so he is very attentive to Wales whereas Camilla is thinking only about her husband. This is how dialogue in plays works, and indicates that the play can be humorous as well as serious. [*NB.* In the cast list, Harry is described as Henry, Prince of Wales. This is a mistake, probably a printing error, since nowhere does Bartlett make this mistake.]

13 *Oh sweet my dear we have no constitution* – In fact we do have a constitution, but it is not in a formal document, it is not written down. Much of it is based on precedent, which means 'Decisions which have been made in earlier situations when there was a problem'. In one sense

Camilla is right; our constitution is based on Tradition. But there are many conflicting traditions and many arguments about the correct way to go. This is what this play is about. [For more information read the sections on **The Constitutional Problem at the Heart of the Play** and **Coming to the End of Popular Knowledge**.]

In these exchanges we should also pick up the fact that Kate and Camilla do not get on with each other. Camilla wants to be back in the days when she could talk to her stepchildren about 'Granny'. Kate wants to question whatever Camilla says. This is a quick way of establishing relationships which are *fictional* relationships, part of the dramatic conflicts within the play. We have no idea and are not asked to have any idea whether the real Camilla and the real Kate disagree.

14 *the Palace* – Buckingham Palace.

Kensington – Kensington Palace, the home of Charles when he was Prince of Wales.

15 *kettled up* – this is a recent meaning of the word 'kettle' used as a verb. 'To kettle' means 'to control crowds by encouraging them into a definable space and blocking the exits so that no-one can leave'. It is a recent tactic of the police, used, for example, to control student demonstrations in Whitehall in 2010. It has been strongly criticised both because it contradicts the idea that people have the right to demonstrate peacefully without being intimidated, and because it is frightening to people who discover they are trapped when they want to leave the demonstration. Here it is used almost comically. For once the press are trapped the way that demonstrators are sometimes trapped.

16 *all good / To go, like Findus ready-made meals for one,/Pre-wrapped and frozen* – exactly as described. Findus is a brand that produces pre-cooked meals, ready to eat the moment they are unfrozen. Charles' point has been misunderstood by some readers. He is using 'Findus ready-meals' as a metaphor; people expect him to have prompt, ready-made opinions, whereas he insists that he has to *think* about issues. He hates this modern, pre-prepared world.

16 *if / My mother hap'd to die* – an example of the way that words are often contracted in verse to make them scan. It means ''If my mother

happened to die…' [See the section on blank verse and the use of contractions for more examples.]

16 *Potential holds appeal* – the potential (possibility of becoming King) is more appealing than actually being King.

17 *I am the King default* – I am the King even if I am not yet crowned.

18 *I thought the coronation marked the change* – Kate is pointing to an anomaly in our constitution. We think that the moment a monarch dies the next in succession becomes the monarch. 'The King is dead. Long live the Queen!' However, the new King or Queen is not quite fully the monarch until he or she has taken the coronation oath. It is one of the many areas in which our constitution is vague or vaguely contradictory. Bartlett introduces it to give us warning that there will be much more serious contradictions to come. The uncertainty is not usually a problem, but Charles causes difficulties immediately, so opponents can argue that he is not *fully* the King.

19 *equal billing* – On posters advertising theatrical performances, the most important actor is at the top of the 'bill' unless two actors are considered equally important.

19 *Spencer and Cootsy* – These are fictional friends of Harry. The real Harry had similar friends, very rich and privileged and not very serious, but with good intentions towards Harry.

19 *Boujis* – a very exclusive Club for privileged people in central London.

19 *boohoo* – colloquialism for 'weeping, crying'.

19 *Spencer produces a black bottle*. _ We don't know what it is, and neither does Spencer. It seems to be some very strong alcohol imported from Eastern Europe which tastes horrible.

19 *wagwan* – pronounced ‘wah-gwan’; an abbreviation of ‘What’s going on?’ which is used as a greeting by the Jamaican community and now widespread in London.

19 *Speak English Coots* – a joke. Spencer and Coots are upper-class friends of Harry who sometimes pretend to be part of the ordinary population of London. Coots is playing at saying ‘wagwan’; he would never normally use such terms.

20 *raped by Primark* – Primark is a very cheap brand of clothing. Coots looks very scruffy in his top. It is another way of playing at being working-class and poor.

20 *Ergo* – Latin for ‘therefore’ *Ergo* is used normally in legal arguments. Coots is going to a student night in a cheap district of London so high-class clothes are not appropriate.

20 *Do a pleb; knob a prole* – colloquial, vulgar, meaning ‘to have sex with someone from the lower classes (pleb, proletarian).

22 *The butler didn’t do it*. – A joke: in Agatha-Christie-type detective stories there is often a ‘butler’ who may be the murderer or other villain.

23 *off you pop* – a common and quite affectionate colloquialism for ‘Off you go!’ ‘Pop’ in this sense and related ones appears to be unknown outside Britain.

23 *Drive-through* – An American invention but now available here: a service which allows drivers to get what they want without leaving their cars. McDonalds provides some ‘drive-through’ meals for example. The driver reaches up for a ready-meal. The implication of the metaphor is plain.

24 *Shall I be mother* – A colloquial phrase meaning ‘Shall I pour out the tea?’ which is mildly humorous, an acknowledgement that the speaker is not quite the obvious person to pour out the tea. In this case there is another, poignant level. Charles is taking the role of his mother which is turning out to be difficult.

24 *Well good, so how shall we begin* – Weekly meetings between the monarch and the Prime Minister have a long tradition, but of course at the first meeting (new King or new Prime Minister) they must work out how to proceed. The meetings are private so we cannot know what really goes on.

26 *We cannot risk another murder case/ Where phones belonging to the dead are hacked* – See the section in the commentary on **Regulating the Press and Phone-Hacking.**

26-27 *They want*
The leaders they elected standing up
And making choices they themselves cannot
Because they have not time, they pay their taxes well
So we, or you, may take the time to study hard
And make the right decision on the day.

This is the central justification for delegated democracy, for a Parliament. (Charles' use of 'we' – the King – is not justified). Everyone who thinks about these questions in Britain knows that this is why we have a Parliament – which is why a referendum on Brexit (direct democracy) has turned out to be such a constitutional disaster.

27 *the great intrusion* – Mr Evans is referring to the fact that a pack of journalists chased Princess Diana across Paris, causing her driver to drive too fast so that the car crashed. Princess Diana died. (See note on the Royal Family.)

27 *What's bold? / To utilise Diana*. – Mr Evans is surprised that Charles does not immediately support him in efforts to regulate the press. He points out that Charles has suffered more than most from intrusive journalists. Charles thinks it is wrong in an argument like this to *make use of* Diana as a piece of evidence. 'Utilise' can be spoken quite bitterly.

29 *presses the buzzer* – a common phrase for any device which alerts someone outside the room.

30 *We felt as writ it was* – this means (a) in the form in which it was written; (b) as a kind of legal document requiring someone to do something.

30 *At Christmas Eve you gifted one of them / A horse* – It is possible to imagine someone giving a horse as a present to a friend for Christmas. But it is a very *big expensive* present, and a politician who is so generous to a newspaper editor could easily be accused of corruption. 'Write nice things about me and my party, and you will have a horse for your daughter…'

30 *come Noel* – when Christmas arrives. 'Noel' is the French for Christmas, and has been adopted into English.

31 *The Blitz* – the name given to the very heavy bombing of Britain in 1940 and 1941, especially in London where the Royal family stayed throughout the war. At this time the USSR was in a pact with Germany; our Blitz only came to an end in June 1941 when Hitler decided to attack the USSR.

31 *They are the check and balance of our land* – the phrase 'checks and balances' is used in discussions of our constitution. It is not just an American term. There are different ways of ensuring that no-one has exclusive power. However, at this point Mr Stevens is trying to flatter Charles.

32 *A Nazi Party making British laws* – Even today, nearly 90 years after the Nazi party came to power in Germany, some people like to debate whether a similar situation could ever have happened in Britain, and argue that our kind of democracy would have made the rise of Hitler impossible. They are probably right, but Mr Stevens is indulging in nostalgia. There are many more urgent problems in present day Britain. He is appealing to Charles' pride in the past.

32 *being Head of State refuse/To sign, refuse to let the country lose/Democracy* – Audiences will probably think that Mr Stevens is trying to present himself as Charles' supporter, unlike Mr Evans. The speech, however, sounds too flattering.

32 *dormant* – sleeping. Charles hoped that he would acquire a decisive mind when he became king, but decisiveness is still dormant in his brain.

32 *Enter Ghost* – The ghost is only there for a moment, and at this point is unidentified. It may be an image in Charles' brain. This allows Bartlett to set up a traditional Shakespearian ghost, who may or may not be 'real'. (See also notes to p.62 and p.70 and discussions about the Ghost in the Section on **King Charles III and the Shakespearian Connection**.)

33 *No 10 Downing Street* – the home of the Prime Minister. Sometimes referred to as 'Number 10' (as on p. 96) or simply as 'Downing Street' when referring to official statements of the Prime Minister.

33 *the underbutler* – Clive is the King's messenger, but he is delivering a letter in an old-fashioned way so they are joking about his status. A butler is responsible for the service at meals but an under-butler is a very unimportant person. Clive, like many messengers in Shakespeare's history plays, is being mocked.

34 *Tristan* – By introducing himself with his first name, Mr Evans is showing that he wants to be very friendly, on an informal basis. What he *really* wants is to get as much information as he can from Clive who is a simple person. He wants to understand the mind of the King.

34 *helmet* – the ordinary British policeman wears a helmet. Look at pictures of them.

35 *Sarah: Is this a fucking dream?* – Many adults do use language like Sarah, but here, in blank verse, it sounds stronger. It suggests someone who is being deliberately, crudely outspoken in order to show that she is not intimidated by important powerful people. Her political position is that she believes in the power of ordinary people.

37 *our newly-minted King* – 'to mint' means 'to make coins'; a new king will have new coins with his face stamped on them. This is a neat, Shakespearian type of metaphor.

38 *quiz machines* - a term used for commercial coin-operated video quiz games that offer cash prizes for winning performances. These machines are usually placed in pubs, bars and other places of entertainment. The point is simply that Harry knows nothing of ordinary popular culture.

39 *Weatherspoon's* – a chain of pubs; *Wagamama* – a chain of British restaurants with a strong Japanese or Chinese food theme. Harry has not been near any of these before, unlike most of the British public.

39 flights to Las Vegas – As a young man Harry did indeed fly to Las Vegas where he took part in a wild party and was caught naked on film. As Jess says, the British people pay for the monarchy. Fair enough if it is the Queen working hard – but should such money go to a spoilt boy?

40 *James Carbury Reiss* – People are not normally introduced by using three names – two given names and a surname. James is responsible for protecting the Royal Family and ensuring correct protocol so he can sound to Harry and his friends very pompous. Harry is mocking him slightly by giving him three names, but he then gets James' middle name slightly wrong, which allows James to correct him – and to sound pedantic. It is a quick way of adding to our picture of both characters.

41 *Sainsbury's* – a major supermarket chain. Harry has never shopped in a supermarket.

41 *a Scotch egg* – A popular kind of snack which everyone but Harry would know about. A Scotch egg consists of a hard-boiled egg wrapped in sausage meat, coated in bread crumbs and baked or deep-fried.

41 *Were your security present to ensure there was no footage taken?* – Were your security men with you at Sainsbury's, to make sure that no-one was taking photos or filming you?

41 *I'm currently exploring Islam's relationship with pornography* – This is very comic. First, it is an example of the bizarre subjects that students are expected to research in contemporary universities as part of 'art'. Secondly, it is funny because James has to react, and can only say, 'Oh dear' which does not express his real exasperation. He knows that this

could become a very sensitive subject if Harry does take Jess as his girlfriend. Thirdly, it is funny because Jess has no idea of the implications.

43 *she doesn't understand, she's deaf and dumb* – This is a bit of comic stage business; nobody believes that Jess is really deaf and dumb, but they (and the audience) are watching Harry make a fool of himself.

43 *Reading* – a town about 40 kilometres to the west of London. Purley is a village outside Reading. Kate is trying to sound as if she is on the same social level as Jess, that is, that they are two local girls of no social significance. She is not convincing.

44 *Fuck yeah!* – This is Kate using foul language to indicate that she is an ordinary girl, like Jess. (See above.)

44 *his normal horsey girls* – In England, girls of rich parents frequently have horse-riding lessons. If you don't come from a working farm or racing stables and you can ride a horse you are stereotypically a rich young woman who isn't interested in much else than horses apart from horsey young men. So 'rich, spoilt and not very intelligent'.

47 *tends to doom and fury* – a Shakespearian-sounding phrase, meaning '(your mood) is changing to anger and worry for the future.

47 *I as people's leader* – Mr Evans is Leader of the Labour Party; he wants to emphasise that he comes from the socialist end of the political spectrum as well as being Prime Minister.

49 *whatever come of that / I will accept and sign* – This promise seems to undercut Charles' insistence that he has a principled objection to the Bill, but it probably means that he really believes that if only they think again, the Members of Parliament will change their minds.

49 *what people . . . will be wont to do* – 'wont' is a slightly old-fashioned word meaning 'accustomed'. It is therefore unusual to use it in the future tense. Mr Evans is saying that people will get accustomed to rebelling against the King.

49 *division would result* – In this context division means ‘a divided quarrelsome people, perhaps rioting and other violence’.

50 *Spitting Image puppet* – ‘spitting image’ is an idiom meaning ‘exact likeness’. *Spitting Image* was an immensely popular TV satirical programme of the 1980s and 1990s in which the characters were puppets with enormous caricature heads. (In the 1990s there was a programme on Russian TV which copied the idea.) The characters were notable politicians led by Margaret Thatcher, opposition politicians, other famous people and members of the Royal Family. This was perhaps the first time in which the Queen was seen in a comic, ridiculous role (as was Prince Charles although this was not the first time he had been satirized.) As Russians know, it is possible to use puppets to make all kinds of comment on the world without getting into trouble with the censors. The series was very funny, and several politicians regarded it as an honour to have a *Spitting Image* puppet of themselves. Charles uses the idea as a very effective metaphor for the empty man who has to be animated.

51 *I do agree for in her time / She faced far greater revolution* – For a commentary on this speech see the section on **Postwar British History**.

51 *upon the Clapham omnibus* – This is a legal phrase, first used early in the twentieth century by a Judge to describe ‘the average reasonable man’. A judge may have to decide what a reasonable man would think in a particular case, and the ‘man on the Clapham omnibus’ – a very ordinary man – refers to this concept. Clapham is a district in South London, and ‘omnibus’ is what we now call ‘a bus’. Evans’ speech tells us how Britain has changed over 60 years, and how the ordinary reasonable man who took pride in his work is nowadays less than the man who takes pride in his profit. Thatcher was the British Prime Minister at the time when these changes in values happened. Reagan was the President of the United States at the time. [See an extension of this comment in the section on **Postwar British History.**

53 *make a pledge* – make a promise.

56 *Sloanish fluff* – Sloane Square in London is traditionally the place where very rich and privileged people live and gather together. The concept implies ‘aristocrat, very wealthy and (for girls), rather stupid, not

at all serious. Harry would naturally come into contact with these sorts of people. 'Fluff' means trivial-minded, silly'.

56 *a token of my love* – Jess' story about the intimate photos she sent to her boyfriend is exactly the kind of scandal from which advisors like James try to protect the Royal Family. It is not the first and (though fictional) it won't be the last. However, as James points out, Jess is not yet part of the 'Family' and so she does not have this protection. James' response is entirely correct; he has his responsibilities, and they are not for Jess. Ironically, Jess being blackmailed by her former boyfriend is also the kind of situation that the controversial Bill to Regulate the Press was meant to make impossible.

This is the only case in which social media plays a role in the story, but in fact the development of the Internet and of social media sites like Facebook and Twitter mean that, too often, public figures are judged by trivialities which are repeated over and over again, and reinforced by obscene language that is extraordinarily offensive. The deference shown to those in power sixty years ago gave way to more open and critical debate – a healthy move in a democracy. The use of vicious attacks by anonymous people on social media sites is not and cannot be healthy.

57 *Sun on Sunday* – a tabloid newspaper that specialises in scandals. It took the place of the *News of the World* soon after that paper closed down. For the background to why the *News of the World* closed down, see the section on **Regulating the Press and Phone Hacking.**

57 (*police) leak like carrier bags* – A witty simile. We all know how plastic bags can suddenly leak any liquid that we have put in them. 'To leak' also means to give information secretly to the media that is supposed to be private. James thinks that the police, not much liking royalty because of the increasing anarchy in the country, will pass on private information to the press.

58 *It's only in the last five hundred years / That politicians and democracy / Have led the way in policy* – Charles is taking his argument seriously, but it is absurd and meant to be absurd to the audience. Five hundred years is a very long time, and Charles' efforts to compare Parliamentary democracy to a satnav shows a man losing his grip on reality. (Later he returns to some better arguments for his stance.)

58 *satnav on a car* – the device which tells drivers how to find the place they are driving. It is an 'optional extra', not essential to the car. Charles tries to persuade himself that Parliament is an 'optional extra' whereas the monarchy and the people have a much older bond.

59 *In Somerset the Levels sank beneath / The waters of the flood* – Somerset is a county in south-west England. Part of it is very flat farmland (the Levels). For three months, early in 2014, much of the land was underwater. It was the biggest 'flooding event' in our history, because it covered such a wide area and lasted so long. Prince Charles visited the area in February 2014 but by that time many politicians had come to look at the floods and make ineffective suggestions. Camilla is certainly exaggerating the cheers as an audience watching the early performances of the play in April 2014 would know.

60 *and weasel mouth* – 'weasel words' are words used by politicians and others to cover up weaknesses in their argument, such as 'it is believed' or 'statistics suggest' and similar vague phrases which they can always deny later. A 'weasel mouth' is Charles' variation on this criticism of politicians, and specifically of Mr Stevens who has suddenly become confidential and friendly but perhaps not to be trusted.

60 *This bill is sure to pass* – Mr Stevens may have been speaking weasel words earlier, but now he is absolutely clear about the choices facing Charles. It is a model of a speech.

61 *How William the Fourth resolved / A not entirely different situation* – British audiences will not know about William IV's actions. We must wait to see what is the explanation. We will find out at the end of Act 3, Scene 6. [See also the section **Coming to the End of Public Knowledge**]

62 *Enter Ghost* – The second appearance of the ghost and this time she is identified as Diana. But what she says is, like most prophesies, mysterious. We have to wait to see what the prophesy means. {For more on the Ghost, see the section on **Charles III and the Shakespearian Connection**.}

64 *a ginger joke* – Harry is famously red-headed. A less flattering description of a red-headed person is that he or she has ‘ginger hair’.

65 *crisis black does shadow more* – dark crisis will lead to even darker problems.

65 *the pact our mother made us make* – Both William and Harry in real life have spoken of the promise that they made to their mother when they were boys that they would always support each other.

65 *I’ll go / And find a greasy spoon* – a ‘greasy spoon’ is a colloquial expression for a café offering very cheap food to workmen. Harry has been learning about proletarian delights.

66 *So Gollum-like* – Gollum is a character in the JRR Tolkien *Lord of the Rings* saga. It is a clever reference because Gollum, in possession of the Ring, longs simultaneously to cling on to it and to get rid of it.

66 *Well, right on cue* – An actor listens for the ‘cue’, that is the words just before his own speech. So ‘right on cue’ means ‘coming in immediately that you are needed to speak’.

67 *If Britain was republic* – Mr Evans is a republican – that is, he wishes to get rid of the Monarchy. There is nothing illegal in this opinion which is held by a minority of British citizens. Kate gives him the opportunity to make this comment and neither of them feel shocked. Mr Evans can be a loyal citizen of the United Kingdom, and loyal to its monarch until he manages to abolish the institution. He is not making a *personal* attack.

67 *and changes not* – An example of how verse imposes different usages. ‘He does not change’. It is a slight alteration to word order and sounds perfectly normal in versified English.

69 *might begin to itch* – to get excited and impatient, and even lose some control.

70 *The Ghost appears* – This is its third appearance, but the first to William. Again, the prophesy is mysterious and seems to be what the

ghost has already promised Charles. So how can that be? We must wait to find out. (Ghosts are never introduced unless they have something significant to say or do.)

71 *Doner?* – A doner kebab is a kind of kebab cooked on a vertical rotating roaster. Slices of meat are carved off it as they cook. 'Doner' is the Anglicisation of the Turkish word. When selling kebabs, the cook/salesman will often simply refer to it as a 'doner'. In cities, kebabs are often sold from a roadside van at night-time.

73 *out of date now innit?* – 'It's out of date, now, isn't it?' The five-pound note has the Queen's portrait on it. Now that the Queen is dead, so much will have to be changed, including coinage and paper money, decrees and announcements, the naming of ships, the words of the National Anthem, and all kinds of references to a female Head of State which we have taken for granted for 70 years.

73 *squeeze the NHS* – give less and less government money to the National Health Service. All students of British culture should be familiar with the initials NHS for National Health Service because it is such an important symbol of British life, both in health and politics. {For more on this speech see the section on **Postwar British History**]

75 *We will divide the House to vote, ayes to the* – The Speaker, if he had not been interrupted, would have said, 'The ayes to the right, the noes to the left.' In the House of Commons, Members of Parliament vote by leaving the main room and walking through one of two 'lobbies' like wide corridors, one to the left and one to the right. In this way they can be easily counted, and easily seen to be voting for or against a bill. After all members have passed through one or the other of the lobbies, the two people counting at the entrance to each lobby check their results and bring them back to the House. All four 'counters' approach the Speaker, bow, and one of them announces the result of the vote.

76 *an Albion oak* – Albion is an ancient and traditional name for England. The oak tree is, in English thinking, the sturdiest, hardest, grandest of trees.

79 *It takes up two to twenty five* – In this tabloid newspaper, the front page shows a naked or near-naked young woman. Pages 2-25 are all about the constitutional crisis, but the speaker thinks that most people will look at the front page and ignore the later pages.

82 *Trooping of the Colour* – This is a ceremony that takes places every year in June. About 1500 troops, including Guards regiments mounted on horses, are greeted by the monarch near Whitehall, and are then paraded down the Mall, a wide street used for ceremonies that leads to Buckingham Palace. There the monarch takes the salute again. It is a ceremony of colour, horses, music, uniforms and general celebration – not really a military ceremony. You can see pictures at https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b007r5jm

In 1981 when the Queen was riding down the Mall on horseback, someone fired 6 blank shots at her and startled the horse. Everything happened as Charles describes it.

83 *have them tripled* – have three times as many men (policemen) there.

84 *maybe we should park /... a tank* – Despite the ceremony of the Changing of the Guard, Buckingham Palace is not associated with military activity. The image of a tank in the front courtyard of the Palace, directed at the people, is deeply shocking. Charles is really losing his grip on events. Even Camilla on p.86 is shocked at what her husband has done. Later, on p.106 he says that it is there 'just for show', but the 'show' is a visible denial of peaceful Britain.

86 *to fuzz* – to blur and make vague, to confuse.

86 *even if I must make / Fair weather friends, that only seek the sun* – Fair weather friends are those who support you only when things are going well. They abandon you when you get into difficulties. Camilla says that Charles wold not normally trust people like Mr Stevens, and he agrees but says he has no choice.

90 *we make no fuss 'cept* – we make no fuss except…

90 *And will no longer take the civil list / I'll have no role official* – The Civil List in this case means the salary paid to members of the Royal Family for carrying out their official duties. Duties include visiting towns and cities (and villages) throughout the country to open new community buildings or museums or sports facilities; publicising and fund-raising for charities (usually chosen by the individual himself or herself); visiting hospitals, schools, military barracks in Britain and overseas; conferring honours on behalf of the Queen now that she is very elderly; taking part in public ceremonies such as Remembrance Day; listening to officials at lots of boring meetings and remaining polite and friendly. Although the Royals have some say in what they will do, their programmes are mostly arranged for them.

90 *normalcy* – an unusual but perfectly acceptable variation of 'normality' used here because it scans better in the line.

91 *Kate's soliloquy*. – It is a convention of plays that when someone is speaking alone, to herself or directly to the audience, that she is speaking the truth as she understands it. So we should listen carefully to Kate's speech and to her argument about her own position. (This speech should change the minds of people who simply identify her with Lady Macbeth. It is worth asking yourself whether Kate is planning anything *evil* or whether she is taking the view of any spirited modern young woman.)

91 *stocked full/With white and southern, likely Oxbridge men* – Kate (like many people) feels that those in power in the United Kingdom are too often white males from southern England who have been educated at Oxford or Cambridge. This makes them a very limited sort of person, though her main complaint is that they are men who do not notice women.

93 *And through the clouds a helicopter comes* – Kate is saying that King Charles is exhausted and yearns for some escape from his difficulties. For him the ideal solution would be for a helicopter to land in the grounds of the Palace and take him away. (This is Kate's opinion. On the evidence, you may or may not agree.)

94 *the Mersey* – the name of the river which runs out to sea at Liverpool.

94 *lifting effigy they'd built / Based on your father, burnt it bright* – There is a long tradition in England of burning effigies, ever since the tradition of burning the effigy of Guy Fawkes, who tried to blow up the Houses of Parliament in 1605, was established with state approval.

94 *We are / Your Highness, too much stretched*. – This is a recent but widespread use of the word 'stretched' to mean 'lacking resources'. The idea is that everything we have has been stretched out to cover our needs and we can't stretch it any further. So, there are not enough police, there are not enough doctors or medical supplies, and so on.

94 *the Members of the Parliament / Do sit, just as four hundred years ago / In Westminster Hall instead.* – Westminster Hall is nearly one thousand years old, by far the oldest part of the House of Parliament. Long before the current House of Commons was built, Westminster Hall was used for Parliamentary sittings (and much else).

98 *autocue* – a device which helps the speaker if he forgets his lines while actually on a TV show.

100 *barge / And jostle for position* – push your way into a good position in the room (full of journalists) and, metaphorically, to struggle with others to get the most powerful position.

101 *gosh* – slang, rather old-fashioned, as an exclamation of surprise. William's speech is carefully shaped to be friendly, joking with the audience, sounding deliberately different from the way his father speaks.

103 *white noise* – continuous sound which has no pattern or rhythm. Some people find such noise soothing; others hate it.

104 *The silver lining when someone defects…* – 'Every cloud has a silver lining' is a saying meaning that even terrible events have some small good consequences.

105 *Botox* – Botox is a noun; but one of the great advantages of English is how often we can turn nouns into verbs, inventing new words

with verbal wit and ingenuity. This is a good example. It is used, of course, metaphorically.

103 *Walter Bagehot* – As Charles explains, Bagehot was a great nineteenth-century commentator on the British constitution. His *The English Constitution* was published in 1867. It is regarded as a classic of political analysis – that is to say, it describes what 'is' in 1867, not what 'ought to be'. Bagehot was not a lawyer but a journalist and historian who studied the constitution and pointed out 150 years ago that it was always changing in response to the times. The fact that it was not written down made it more flexible and responsive to current crises.

Bagehot used the words 'efficient' and 'dignified' to distinguish the different roles of Parliament and Government on the one hand, and the Monarchy which must be 'dignified' and 'impress people' on the other. Charles wants 'dignified' to mean more than just 'ceremonial' but he does not get much help from Bagehot who says that the monarch in 1867 has three 'rights': the right to be consulted (in the weekly meetings), the right to encourage (what has already been decided) and the right to warn his political Ministers. But he has no power to change their minds or alter their legislation. Charles argues to himself that he has not gone beyond those rights.

107 *to engage/All parties* – a standard phrase meaning 'to consult *all* groups who have an interest in this problem'. William is suggesting that the different political parties in Parliament, other representatives of the people, academics who have studied the constitution, as well as the Monarch, should work together.

109 *Would I incite a clash between the troops / Who all held guns and the unarmed police?* – The British police are traditionally unarmed. A few specially-trained police intended for security and anti-terrorist work are trained to use guns, but the vast majority of the police you see on British streets have truncheons (a short but powerful stick) but no firearms. In 2014 the number of armed police was about 5% of the total force.

111 *You offer abdication* – Many readers have asked if this is possible, given the strong traditions of the British monarchy. The answer is 'yes'. In 1937 King Edward VIII abdicated in favour of his brother who became George VI, grandfather to Charles. The reason for the abdication

was that the King wanted to marry an American who had already been divorced twice. Parliament and many advisers told the King that is was impossible for him to marry a divorcee, especially because he was the 'Head of the Church of England' and at that time the Church did not recognise divorce. The King said that he would rather abdicate than abandon the woman he loved. He abdicated and went into exile with his new wife, causing great bitterness to his brother and his family, since George VI was a shy man who had never wanted to be King. The shock was great, and the concept of Monarchy was suddenly unstable, but people learned to like and respect George VI, especially during the war when he and his family stayed in London, even though Buckingham Palace was partially bombed.

113 *No go!* – A colloquialism meaning 'It's not going to work!' However, there could be a missing comma: 'No, go!' is another possible exclamation.

113 *The Civil Service drew it up today* – The Civil Service in Britain is the permanent bureaucracy that helps the government of the day develop and implement its policies as effectively as possible. Civil servants are not political appointments; they continue working for whichever government is in power, and see themselves as serving the country, not politicians.

114 *you and Catherine are the King / And queen of column inches* – You two get written about in the press far more than we do. 'Column inches' refers to the number of inches (or centimetres) in a column in a newspaper, and is used as a metaphor for being 'a celebrity', 'in the public eye'

115 *This is tough love* – Tough love is a modern idiom to describe a parent's decision not to let a child have his own way. ('No, you can't sleep in our bed, you must sleep in your own bed'; 'We know you are afraid to go on this school outing and be away from home for four days but you must learn to be independent'; 'You have spent your pocket money on a foolish toy and now you want to spend it on a visit to the cinema. It was your choice and we are not going to give you more money'.) The implication is that it is painful for the parent who has a natural inclination to be kind and indulgent, but that sometimes it is better to be firm and

unyielding, in the interests of the child. In this case, of course, the son is showing 'tough love' to his father.

116 *the King and Queen do rule / Over a golden age of monarchy,/That bothers no-one, does no good, and is /A pretty plastic picture with no meaning* – The climax of the play is this showdown between William and Charles, each believing deeply that he is right. The audience has to make up its mind.

117 *much too principled / For realpolitik – Realpolitik* is an approach to politics: *realpolitik* says that successful political action is not based on idealistic principles but on pragmatic compromises, secret deals, even breaking laws in the interests of solving actual problems. The term can be used very critically 'politics is a dirty business', or as an acknowledgement that human beings disagree, and yet some decision must be reached. Mr Stevens says that Charles is too principled for realpolitik. What he does not say is that he is himself a notable example of a practitioner of *realpolitik.*

118 *when journalism turns to voyeurs' gawp* – Jess is complaining of the kind of journalism which peers rudely into the private life of individuals who become 'celebrities'. Voyeurs are people who secretly watch (gawp at) scandalous or sexual activities. Jess' protests are precisely about the problem with the media which Parliament tried to deal with at the beginning of the play.

119 *grey and stark* – very pale, as if dead.

119 *clownish and unthreatening* – It is worth thinking about ways in which Jess-with-Harry could *threaten* the institution of the Monarchy.

121 *The Archbishop of Canterbury* – the senior churchman in the Church of England, and therefore the person who crowns the new Monarch in the Coronation ceremony. The first Christian Church to be built in England by Roman missionaries was at Canterbury; hence this is the most important Cathedral.

121 *To govern the Peoples of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand . . .* – The

Archbishop is reciting the words of the Coronation Oath which refers to those countries of the British Commonwealth which acknowledge the British Monarch as their Head of State.

A Note About the Film Version

In 2017 a film was made of the play for showing on British television. It was subsequently released and distributed around the world. Most of the cast who had been acting in the stage play took the same parts in the film. Tim Pigott-Smith, a fine Shakespearean actor, played Charles in both the stage version and the film version. He died, suddenly, just after they had finished filming.

The film follows quite closely the play, but it is shorter, and some of the interesting confrontations between the King and the politicians have been cut. There are also a substantial number of new lines necessary for domestic scenes appropriate for the 'reality' evoked on screen. For instance, Prince George, aged about four, has a short but touching scene with his father. On the other hand, the ghost, unable to rely on stage conventions, has to have her speech reduced to a minimum. So, overall, less serious, less political, more domestic, but still reasonably faithful to Bartlett's original concept. The very experienced cast act brilliantly throughout, allowing us plenty of time to involve ourselves in the inward struggles of Charles, especially in the abdication scene. The pauses, the detail of reactions from each character, the changing expressions on Charles' face, seen in close-up as is only possible on screen, make the film almost as moving as the play itself.

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