Lecture 03:
Mike Bartlett, Charles III (2014): A ‘Future History Play’

(1)
CAMILLA.
My wond’rous Charles you looked composed throughout
You did her proud, for as she would have liked
You never showed your pain, but stood instead
A virtuous man of dignity and grace.
Immovable, inscrutable as stone.
[…]
CHARLES. My whole existence has like most of us
Been built upon the ones who gave me birth.
And now they’re gone. That’s it. First Dad. Now Mum.
The only truth: I am alone. (1.1, 11)

(2)
4.3 Kensington.
Enter KATE, reading the Evening Standard.
KATE.
It is bewildering that even now
These little rooms of power are stocked full
With white, and southern, like Oxbridge men.
Without the Queen, the bias is more stark
The King’s a man, Prime Minister as well
Combine the front benches of both sides
You’ll have a female total of just four.
And so despite emancipation we must look
Towards the harder sex to find the power.
But I know nothing, just a plastic doll
Designed I’m told to stand embodying
A male-created bland and standard wife,
Whose only job is prettying the Prince, and then
If possible, get pregnant with the royal
And noble bump, to there produce some heirs.
And in all this I’m told I don’t have thought
Or brains to comprehend my strange position.
But being underestimated so
Does give me what these men could never have
Since no one asked me what I think, I can
Observe and plan and learn to rule.
For I will be a Queen unlike the ones before
My mother’s dad was in the north a miner born
My father came from Leeds, and both of them
When young and inexperienced did risk
Their house and all they had to try and make
A business of their own. But it’s not just this stock
I bring to these most distant regal realms
But something more important and precise
I have ambition for my husband yes
And hope my son will grow the finest King
But if I must put up with taunts, and make
So public everything I am, then I
Demand things for myself, I ask no less
Than power to achieve my will in fair
Exchange for total service to the State.
Yes this is what, enthroned, that I will do.
Not simply help my husband in his crown
But wear one of my own.

(4.3, 97-98)

(3)
GHOST.
My darling Charles your face it is so pale
You often looked in thought, but not like this
CHARLES.
It said my name.
GHOST.
You think I didn’t love you that’s not true
I always cared I always wanted best
But you rejected me, and so away
I went.
CHARLES.
Diana…?
GHOST.
But in all that time
I never hoped, I never thought that you –
CHARLES.
What do you mean, you never thought –
GHOST.
Never reckoned on the fact that you as Crown
Who worries ’bout the way you look, and stroke
Your hair down into place, and nervously
Do touch above your lip when getting sad.
Will be the greatest King we ever had. (3.4, 68)

GHOST.
Oh William!
WILLIAM.
She cries my name, I know
That voice.
GHOST.
Oh William, you look so old
I never thought I’d see my boy like this
A man become so bald and middle-aged.
WILLIAM.
Mum?
The GHOST touches his face.
He cries.
GHOST.
But still the face remains the same, and there
The eyes hold kindness, and intelligence.
You’ll be the greatest king we ever have.  (3.5, 76-77)

(4)
KATE.
But wait, we haven’t met, always the same
With Harry, must be in his training some
Efficiency of drill or army thought
Means he forgets his manners. Hi. I’m Kate.
And this my husband William –
HARRY.

No wait –
She doesn’t understand, she’s deaf and dumb.
Not dumb, that much, a bit, she speaks sometimes
But chooses when, unfortunately now
Is such a moment she can’t talk. And since
She’s deaf as well, she didn’t hear a word
You said, that’s why she isn’t smiling much,
And looking at me in that funny way.
We really should be though, bye, bye –
JESS.
Yeah okay hi. Of course I know who you are. Fuck. ‘William and Kate.’ Jesus.
WILLIAM.
This is unusual.
HARRY.
I’m just showing her the Palace –
KATE.
Are you from Reading?
JESS.
Er … yeah. Why?
KATE.
Heard the accent. Me too! Well not – like it was a village nearby.
JESS.
I’m from Purley.
KATE.
Purley! We used to go there sometimes and hang out on the weir.
JESS.
We did that too. Smoked a bit of weed. Didn’t know you were from there.
KATE.
Fuck yeah!  (2.2, 47-48)

(5)
KING. Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more,
Or close the wall up with our English dead.
In peace there’s nothing so becomes a man
As modest stillness and humility;
But when the blast of war blows in our ears,
Then imitate the action of the tiger:
[....]  (3.1.1-6)
WILLIAMS. [...] Now if these men do not die well it will be a black matter for the King, that led them to it, who to disobey were against all proportion of subjection. 
KING. So if a son that is by his father sent about merchandise do sinfully miscarry upon the sea, the imputation of his wickedness, by your rule, should be imposed upon his father that sent him; [...] (4.1 143-50)

(6) 
ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY. 
I here present to you King William your undoubted King. Wherefore all you who are come this day to do your homage and service. Are you willing to do the same? 
ALL. 
God Save the King! 
The regalia – crown, sceptre, orb, ring, glove, etc., is placed on the altar. 
[...] 
ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY. 
Is Your Majesty willing to take the Oath? 
WILLIAM. 
I am willing. 
[...] 
All this I promise to do. 
A choir sings. 
The ARCHBISHOP goes and gets the crown. 
He brings it forward to WILLIAM. 
CHARLES suddenly stands – a consternation. This isn’t supposed to happen. 
He goes and looks at the crown. 
The choir stops singing. 
CHARLES reaches for the crown. The ARCHBISHOP is unsure. 
Glances at WILLIAM. Then gives the crown to CHARLES. 
A moment. 
CHARLES. 
It is much heavier than I thought. 
He looks at WILLIAM. 
A moment. 
And from the side, bejewelled, it looks so rich 
But turn it thus, and this is what you see 
Nothing. 
Beat. 
My son. 
CHARLES puts the crown on WILLIAM’s head. 
God save King William, unking’d Charley says, 
And send him many years of sunshine days! 
CHARLES slowly collapses and sits on the step. WILLIAM stands. 
A long pause. 
WILLIAM looks to the ARCHBISHOP. 
ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY. 
God save the King! 
ALL. 
God save the King! 
End. (5.2, 126-28)