

2005—2006 SEASON

WU?[@]therep

PIRANDELLO'S HENRY IV

In a new version by Tom Stoppard
Directed by Steven Woolf

CONTENTS

- 2 The 411
- 3 A/S/L & RMAI
- 4 F2F
- 6 FYI
- 7 RBTL
- 9 IRL1
- 10 IRL2
- 11 IRL3
- 12 SWDYT?



STUDY GUIDES ARE
SUPPORTED BY A
GENEROUS GRANT
FROM CITIGROUP



the 11

At The Rep, we know that life moves fast—okay, really fast.

But we also know that some things

are worth slowing down for. We believe that live theatre is one of those pit stops worth making and are excited that you are going to stop by for a show. To help you get the most bang for your buck, we have put together **WU? @ THE REP**—an IM guide that will give you everything you need to know to get at the top of your theatergoing game—fast. You'll find character descriptions (**A/S/L**), a plot summary (**FYI**), background information on the playwright (**F2F**) and other NTK information. Most importantly, we'll have some ideas about what this all means **IRL**, anyway.

CU@therep!

The Teacher's Lounge



In an effort to make our educational materials more accessible to students and easier for educators to incorporate into the classroom, we have adopted a new, more student-oriented format. We hope that you will circulate this guide among your students in the weeks preceding your visit to The Rep, encouraging them to browse it before and after class and as time allows, using it as a launch point for both pre- and post-performance discussions. You may also want to visit our website, www.repstl.org for additional information regarding the production elements, such as scenery, costumes, and lighting. Any materials, either from this guide, or from our website may be reproduced for use in the classroom. As always, we appreciate your making live theatre a part of your classroom experience and welcome your feedback and questions.

NEATO!

Show Me Standards: CA 1, 2, 5, 6, 7; FA 1, 2, 3, 4, 5; SS 2, 6 and Illinois Learning Standards: 1, 2, 4, 5, 18, 25, 26, 27, SEL 1.

MIHYAP: TOP TEN WAYS TO STAY CONNECTED AT THE REP

10. **TBA** Ushers will seat your school or class as a group, so even if you are dying to mingle with the group from the all girls school that just walked in the door, stick with your friends until you have been shown your section in the theatre.

9. **SITD** The house lights will dim immediately before the performance begins and then go dark. Fight off that oh-so-immature urge to whisper, giggle like a grade schooler, or yell at this time and during any other blackouts in the show.

8. **SED** Before the performance begins, turn off all cell phones, pagers, beepers and watch alarms. If you need to text, talk, or dial back during intermission, please make sure to click off before the show resumes.

7. **TMI** Not to sound like your mom, but "if you need to go now, you needed to go then." Leaving the theatre during the performance is disruptive, so take care of any personal needs before the show starts.

6. **RIM** When you arrive at the theatre, read the production program. It's like a deluxe version of liner notes and a free souvenir, all in one.

5. **P-ZA? NW!** Though your ability to eat ten slices at one sitting may impress your friends, no one wants to listen to you chew, slurp, or smack, so please leave all food, drink, and gum outside the theatre.

4. **TLK-2-U-L-8-R** We know that you will be dying to discuss what you see onstage with your friends, but please wait until intermission. Any talking—even whispering—is very distracting for both the actors onstage and the audience seated around you.

3. **LOL** Without you, we really wouldn't have a show. It's your job to laugh when a scene is funny or maybe even shed a tear or two in a tender moment. However, since you are not the audience at *The Jerry Springer Show* please refrain from inappropriate responses such as talking, whistling, making catcalls or singing along with the performers.

2. **SOP** While it's great that you want a celeb picture of your day at The Rep, the theatre is off-limits to the paparazzi. Flash photography interrupts the performance and along with videorecording is prohibited by Actors Equity rules. You can sneak a peek at production photos on our website, www.repstl.org.

1. **LLTA** Let the actors know that you respect their work by remaining for the curtain call at the end of the performance. Show your appreciation through applause.

A/S/L

HENRY is an Italian nobleman who, due to a head injury sustained twenty years ago, believes that he is the German Emperor Henry IV.

HAROLD, LANDOLF, ORDULF, BERTOLD and **GIOVANNI** serve as Henry's primary caregivers, ensuring that the walls of his fabricated world are not breached.

MARQUIS CARLO DI NOLLI is, as Henry's nephew, eager to see his uncle restored.

BARON TITO BELCREDI, Matilda's lover, disliked Henry before his accident and distrusts him still.

MARCHESSE MATILDA alternately pities and loathes the man who she could not commit to love two decades ago.

FRIDA, Matilda's daughter and Di Nolli's fiancée, is skittish about her role in Henry's restoration.

THE DOCTOR is confident in his analysis and treatment of his patient.

EMPEROR HENRY IV came to the throne as a child and his mother, Agnes, acted as regent. She came under suspicion of adultery with the Bishop of Augsburg and had to be removed. To this piece of factual history, Pirandello adds the fiction that the accusation of adultery was brought by Peter Damien.

POPE GREGORY VII, Henry's arch enemy, brought him to his knees, literally, as he knelt in the snow at Canossa.

BERTHA OF SUSAN was Henry's first wife and accompanied him at Canossa.

ADELAIDE MARGRAVINE of Turin, is Bertha's mother and is the character Matilda chooses to present herself as when received by Henry.

MATILDA OF TUSCANY inherited her title after her father's murder in 1052, and the subsequent death of her older brother and sister. It was at Matilda's ancestral castle of Canossa that Henry was forced to humble himself before Pope Gregory VII in 1077. It is Matilda of Tuscany whom the Marchesse Matilda dressed up as during the fateful pageant where Henry was knocked from his horse, and who is represented in the portrait that hangs in the throne room.

HUGO OF CLUNY was Abbot from 1049 to 1109 and was godson to Henry IV. He was advisor to nine different Popes; he and his Cluniac monk, Gregory (later Pope Gregory VII) were instrumental in promoting the powerful revival of spiritual life throughout Western Europe which characterizes the eleventh century. The Doctor presents himself as Abbot Hugo of Cluny at his meeting with Henry.

PETER DAMIEN had a long association with Henry IV, including lecturing the young king on his obligations towards the Roman Church and persuading him not to divorce Bertha in later life.



READ MORE ABOUT IT

We encourage you to explore the following books for more information.

Bassnett, Susan. *Luigi Pirandello*. Macmillan, 1983.

Bloom, Harold, ed. *Bloom's Major Dramatists: Luigi Pirandello*. Chelsea House Publishers, 2003.

Brustein, Robert. *The Theatre of Revolt*. Methuen, 1970.

Kelly, Katherine E., ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Tom Stoppard*. Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Oliver, Roger. *Dreams of Passion: The Theatre of Luigi Pirandello*. New York University Press, 1979.



face 2 face

"For someone like me who enjoys writing dialogue but has a terrible time writing plays, adaptation is joy time. It's a craftsman's job...You go around with a bag of tools doing jobs between personal plays." —Tom Stoppard

PLAYWRIGHT TOM STOPPARD was born Tomas Straussler in Zlin, Czechoslovakia, on July 3, 1937. However, he lived in Czechoslovakia only until 1939, when his family moved to Singapore. Stoppard, his mother and his older brother were evacuated to India shortly before the Japanese invasion of Singapore in 1941; his father, Eugene Straussler, remained behind and was killed. In 1946 Stoppard's mother, Martha, married British army officer Kenneth Stoppard and the family moved to England, eventually settling in Bristol.

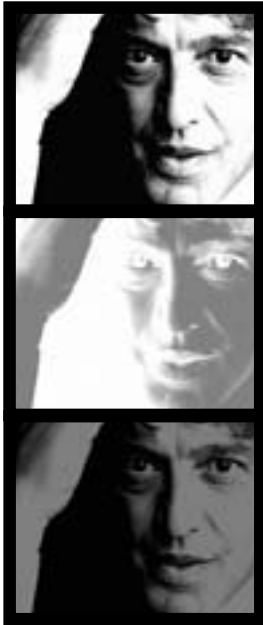
STOPPARD LEFT school at the age of 17 and began working as a journalist, first with the *Western Daily Press* (1954–58) and then with the *Bristol Evening World* (1958–60). Having developed a specialization in film and theatre criticism, in 1960 Stoppard became a freelance journalist, writing critical articles and, for the *Daily Press*, two pseudonymous weekly columns. By the end of the year, he had completed his first full-length play, *A Walk on the Water* (later produced on stage in 1968 as *Enter a Free Man*), and acquired an agent, Kenneth Ewing of Fraser and Dunlop Scripts. He also wrote a one-act piece, *The Gamblers*, which was eventually performed by the University of Bristol drama department in 1965. Stoppard has referred to this as his "first" play in that he claims *A Walk on the Water* was an unoriginal composite of several plays he admired. Over the next few years, Stoppard wrote various works for radio, television and the theatre. Among these were "*M*" *Is for Moon Among Other Things* (1964), *A Separate Peace* (1966) and *If You're Glad I'll Be Frank* (1966). *A Walk on the Water* had been broadcast on ITV Television in 1963 and on BBC-TV in 1964, and Stoppard wrote many episodes of the radio serial *A Student's Diary*:

An Arab in London (1966–67). In addition, three short stories were published by Faber and Faber in the anthology, *Introduction 2: Stories by New Writers* (1964).

WHILE PARTICIPATING in a colloquium sponsored by the Ford Foundation in Berlin in 1964, Stoppard wrote a one-act play that later became *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. The play, which focuses on two minor characters from *Hamlet*, examines the ideas of fate and free will. In August 1966, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* was performed by Oxford University students and, at the same time, Stoppard's only novel was published; to Stoppard's surprise, it was the play that succeeded, establishing his reputation as a playwright. When the play, having caught the attention of Kenneth Tynan, was performed by the prestigious National Theatre Company at the Old Vic in London in 1967, it received immediate and widespread acclaim. Stoppard, at age 29, was a major success.

BY 1977, Stoppard had become concerned with human rights issues, in particular with the situation of political dissidents in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. In February 1977, he visited Russia with a member of Amnesty International. In June, Stoppard met Vladimir Bukovsky in London and travelled to Czechoslovakia, where he met Václav Havel. Stoppard became involved with Index on Censorship, Amnesty International, and the Committee against Psychiatric Abuse. He also wrote various newspaper articles and letters about human rights.

STOPPARD'S POLITICAL CONCERNS surfaced in his work. *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* was written at the request of André Previn and was inspired by a





meeting with Russian exile Viktor Fainberg. The play, about a political dissident confined to a Soviet mental hospital, is accompanied by an orchestra using a musical score composed by Previn. *Professional Foul* is a television play that Stoppard wrote over a period of three weeks as a contribution to Amnesty International's declaration of 1977 as Prisoner of Conscience Year.

SUBSEQUENT MAJOR STAGE PLAYS by Stoppard include *Night and Day*, *The Real Thing*, which was first performed in 1982 and is one of his most highly acclaimed

plays, *Hapgood*, *Arcadia*, *Indian Ink* and *The Coast of Utopia*. With such works he cemented an international reputation as a writer of "serious comedy"; his plays are plays of ideas that deal with philosophical issues, yet he combines the philosophical ideas he presents with verbal wit and visual humor. His linguistic complexity, with its puns, jokes, innuendos, and other wordplay, is a chief characteristic of his work.

Source: *The University of Texas at Austin*



LUIGI PIRANDELLO (1867–1936) was born into a middle-class family in a village with the curious name of Chaos (Xaos), a poor suburb of Girgenti (Agrigento, a town in southern Sicily). While he was young, the sulfur mine belonging to his family was ruined by a flood, leading to serious financial difficulties.

HE IS KNOWN mainly for his writing for the theatre, but his short stories and novels took up most of his career. He also wrote several short novels (novelle), some of which he based on Italian and Sicilian legends. Pirandello composed over 350 short stories, generally on Sicilian themes and showing the influence of realist writers such as Giovanni Verga. His poetry is rather less well-known.

SHORTLY AFTER his marriage, his wife Antonietta was found to be suffering from a serious mental illness; this gave Pirandello a profound awareness of the workings of the mind, as can be seen in several of his works (notably in *Enrico IV* [*Henry IV*]). In *Il berretto a sonagli* (*Cap and Bells*), he described in detail how to "go mad":

telling everyone the truth, the unadorned and cruel truth regardless of manners or social conventions, would soon lead to isolation and, in the eyes of others, madness.

PIRANDELLO'S best-known work is probably *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* (*Six Characters in Search of an Author*). Equally notable, if not as often performed, are the plays *Così è (se vi pare)* (*Right You Are (If You Think You Are)*) and *Ciascuno a suo modo* (*Each in His Own Way*). Another play, *Come tu mi vuoi* (*As You Desire Me*), was adapted for a 1932 Hollywood film starring Greta Garbo.

PIRANDELLO'S WORK was constantly devoted to the investigation of truth and the relationship between rational truth (reality) and socially accepted "truth" (manners), social mentality and individual personality. He delighted in paradox and a sense of the absurd. Pirandello is a relentless observer of the petty conventions of a limited society, and his essay about humour (*Saggio sull'umorismo*) shows the depth of his understanding of human behaviour.



EYE

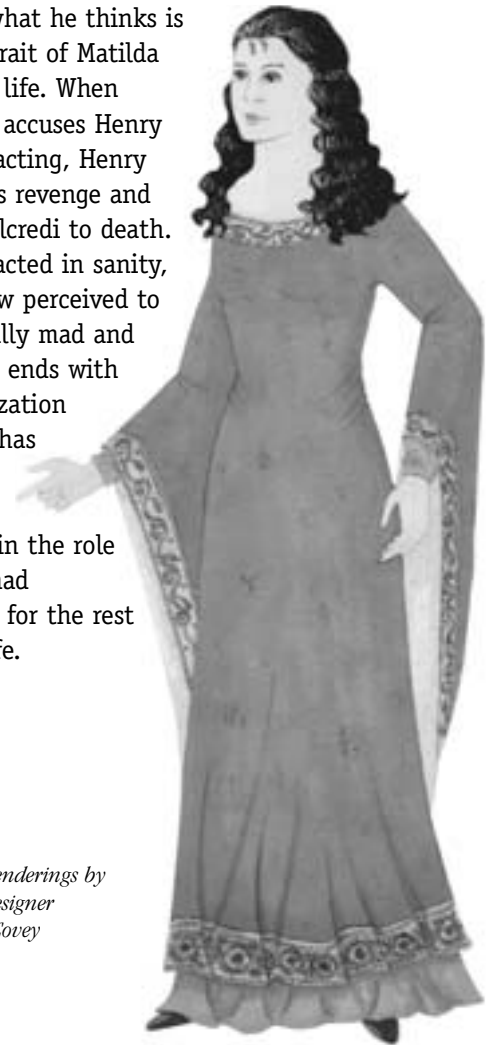
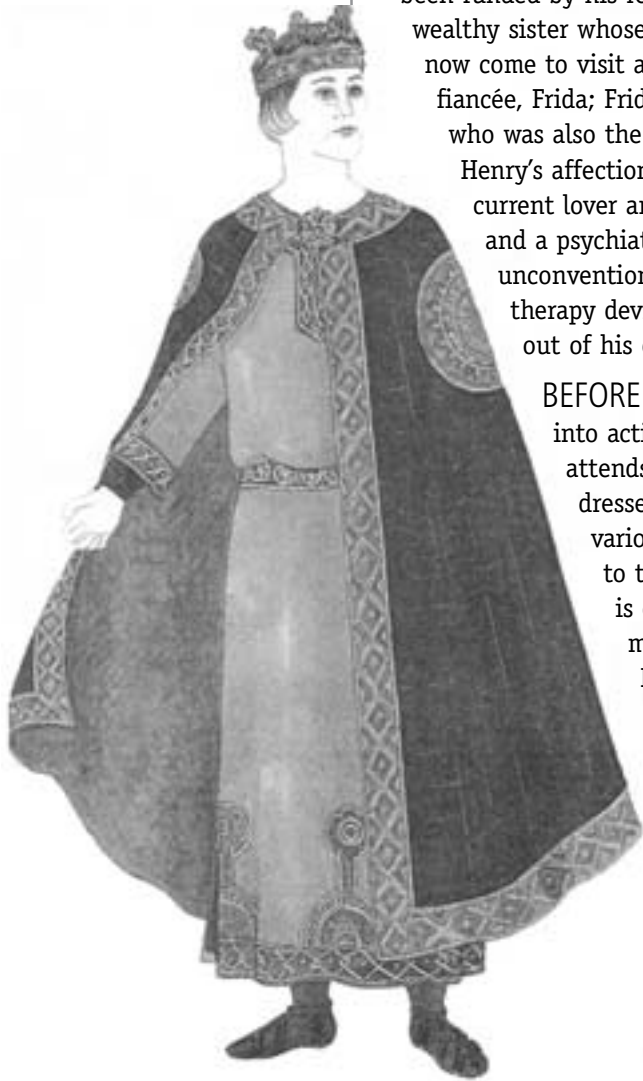
THE OPENING MOMENTS of *Pirandello's Henry IV* are unsettling and rightfully so; the play is after all a work about madness. For a time, however, it is unclear exactly who is mad. Young men dressed in 11th century garb scurry about a throne room alternately shouting orders and discussing in hushed tones an unseen "himself."

Mercifully, adaptor Tom Stoppard quickly plays his hand and reveals that these German courtiers are actually contemporary Italians paid to pretend to be the Privy Counsellors of "himself," a mad nobleman who has lived as the Holy Roman Emperor, Henry IV since he fell off a horse costumed as the regent in a pageant twenty years earlier. His rather unusual "treatment" has been funded by his recently deceased wealthy sister whose son, Di Nolti has now come to visit along with his fiancée, Frida; Frida's mother, Matilda, who was also the former object of Henry's affections; Belcredi, Matilda's current lover and Henry's old rival; and a psychiatrist supervising an unconventional new method of therapy devised to shock Henry out of his delusion.

BEFORE PUTTING their plan into action, the group attends Henry "at court" dressed as and behaving as various characters familiar to the Emperor. Matilda is disturbed by the meeting, fearing that Henry recognizes her, but the psychiatrist assures her that that is not the

case and reviews the scheme to have Frida and Di Nolti dress in costumes and masquerade as the young Henry and Matilda while standing in front of portraits painted of the pair in costume at the pageant twenty years ago. According to the doctor, the dual images will force Henry to confront his own image and acknowledge the passing of time, thus restoring an accurate view of the world.

WHILE THE GROUP prepares for the confrontation, Henry reveals to his counsellors that he is not mad at all; after 12 years of believing he was actually Henry IV, he became conscious of his true identity, although chose to continue to live out his created fiction of madness. When the masqueraded Frida confronts Henry, he is almost driven mad again by seeing what he thinks is the portrait of Matilda come to life. When Belcredi accuses Henry of play-acting, Henry takes his revenge and stabs Belcredi to death. Having acted in sanity, he is now perceived to be actually mad and the play ends with his realization that he has now trapped himself in the role of the mad Emperor for the rest of his life.



*Costume renderings by
costume designer
Elizabeth Covey*



THE FACE AND THE MASK

THE MAIN IDEA behind most of Pirandello's plays is that life is fluid and indefinable and that man uses reason to give life definition. But, because life is indefinable such concepts are illusions. Man is sometimes aware of this illusionary nature of his concepts, but "anything without structure fills him with dread and uncertainty." The drama that Pirandello created from this idea is usually described with reference to the face and the mask. The face represents the complex suffering of the individual; the mask represents the external form and social laws. For Pirandello, all social institutions and systems of thought—from religion and law to philosophy and morality—are ways in which society creates a mask, fixing the face of man by classifying him. As well as the mask being put on the face by the external world, Pirandello believed that it could often be the construct of internal demands. The mask can sometimes be literal, as in his play *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, or take the form of costumes, make-up and props, as in *Henry IV*. It can also be a metaphorical concept.

The Theatre of the Looking Glass

MAN'S ACCEPTANCE by society of a superimposed identity is the concept behind Pirandello's *teatro dello specchio* (theatre of the looking glass). The image of the mirror and reflection occurs in most of his plays. However, the reflecting mirror is the inner eye as well as the eye of the world.

The portraits of the young Henry and Matilda hung in the throne room exemplify this idea:

LANDOLF: they're paintings to the touch. But to Himself, seeing as he never touches them...to him they're more like, whatsits, representations of—yes—what you'd see in a mirror. That one is him just as he is, in this throne room which is right in every detail, no surprises, see? If it was a mirror, you'd see yourself in the eleventh century. So that's what he sees. Himself. So it's like mirrors reflecting back a world which comes to life in them, like it will for you, you'll see, don't worry.

Costruirsi—building yourself up

WHEN PIRANDELLO'S characters put on their masks to hide their shameful faces, they are building themselves up into a role, such as the role of the madman as taken on by the nobleman in *Henry IV*. This is what Pirandello's term *costruirsi* refers to. The term becomes even more complex when considering the way in which Henry builds himself into a role: he is not simply playing Henry IV; he is playing the older Henry IV playing the young, 26-year-old Henry of the portrait, from which he longs to be freed. With his dyed hair and his rouged cheeks, he enacts a masquerade within a masquerade.

HENRY: A woman who wishes she were a man...an old man who wishes he were young...None of us lies or pretends—what happens is, in all sincerity, we inhabit the self we have chosen for ourselves, and don't let go. But while you're holding tight, gripping on to your monk's robe, Monsignor, from out your sleeve something slithers without you noticing: your life!



A play about time

THE PASSING OF TIME is a central theme in *Henry IV*. Henry has a need to live in his youth; yet at the same time he has lost 20 years of his original life, including the 12 years after the accident that have been stolen from him—when he was oblivious to his existence.

Henry IV is a play about the process of time, its relativity, and its constant and unstoppable passing. It is also about a man's most critical experience of time's passing—aging. The process of growing old—of becoming a series of other persons, physically as well as psychologically, of remembering what one once looked like and acted like—is dealt with graphically. The fixity of one's image in the past (as represented concretely by the paintings of Henry and Matilda) is contrasted with the change of image in the present, including the use of makeup in a futile attempt to stop the change of time and make life conform to the image of the past.

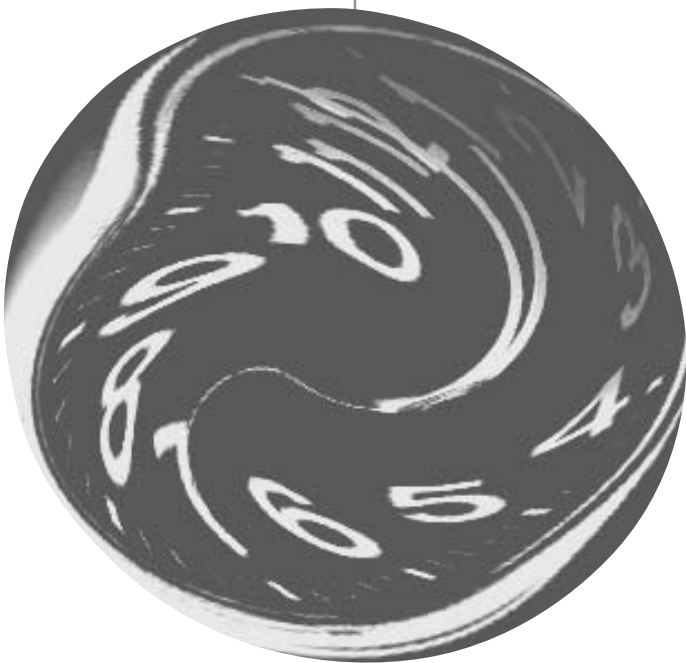
Dreams of Passion: The Theatre of Luigi Pirandello by Roger Oliver, page 131



Themes of Madness, Reality & Illusion

HENRY'S MADNESS is inextricably linked to notions of reality and illusion. There is no doubt that Henry's madness resulted from the knock to his head acquired during the fall from his horse at the pageant. However, we discover that he is 'playing' the madman when he declares himself sane in Scene II; yet he laughs 'insanely' according to the stage directions in Scene III as he takes Frida in his arms prior to his 'mad' act of killing Belcredi. Before killing Belcredi, Henry has the choice of dropping his persona as Henry IV; after it, he will be trapped inside the persona, as he was when his madness was real. The theatrical metaphor has been extended: the mask has become a reality and he must now give his performance as Henry IV forever.

Reprinted from the Donmar Warehouse Theatre's *Pirandello's Henry IV* Education Pack



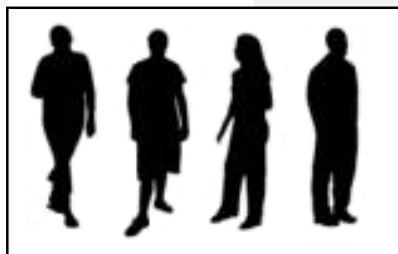
ADAM SANDLER FANS and Drew Barrymore devotees may find elements of Pirandello's *Henry IV* familiar, as this pair's comic romance from last season, *50 First Dates*, relates the story of Lucy, a young woman whose family goes to great lengths to preserve a carefully constructed artificial world of frozen time after a car accident leaves her with an acquired brain injury (ABI) which prevents her from retaining any new information longer than one sleep cycle. Lucy fares better than Henry in that she finds love and happiness in spite of her condition, but like the once and future emperor, many individuals who struggle with such traumas off the stage and screen are not so fortunate, as the following information from the Victoria Protocol for ABI and Mental Health indicates:

Compared with the general population, people with an ABI are more likely to suffer from mental health problems. Adjustment disorders, depression, anxiety and drug and alcohol addiction are common reactions to having experienced an ABI. In addition, the brain injury itself can cause symptoms similar to syndromes such as psychosis and dementia. Most problematically, an ABI can lead to significant problems with impulse control, social skills and self-awareness. These problems may manifest as agitated, difficult, disruptive, inappropriate and/or aggressive behaviour. Such behaviour may or may not be associated with a serious mental illness or disorder. It is these

challenging behaviours and loss of insight that often cause the greatest concern to carers and workers assisting people with an ABI (Fleminger, Greenwood and Olver, 2002).

Other behaviour changes that can emerge as a result of an ABI include inactivity and a lack of motivation. Emotional and behavioural changes may also reflect the grief caused by the trauma and the associated losses...including loss of employment (with subsequent financial hardship), changes in social participation, marital strain or separation, and loss of friends and family support. The impact of an ABI on family members can be profound. Forced role changes among other family members are common. While varying degrees of recovery can occur, there is typically some degree of permanent psychosocial impairment, ranging from mild to severe. Treatment often requires a combination of medical, behavioural and environmental interventions. Common interventions include cognitive/behavioural remediation (including the use of compensatory devices), psychotherapy—particularly with family and carers—and pharmacotherapy. (National Institute of Health, 1999).

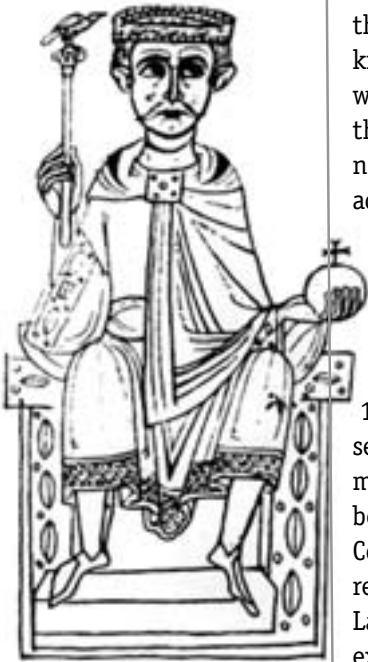
CLEARLY, the recovery process for such injuries is intense, for both the patients and their network of friends and family, and determining the best course of treatment is not always easy.



- HOW DO YOU THINK events might have transpired differently if Henry had received a more conventional form of therapy immediately following his injury?
- DUE TO HIS INABILITY to make decisions regarding his own treatment initially, do you think that Henry alone is responsible for his actions in the final scene, or do you believe that the others are liable as well?

HENRY IV (November 11, 1050—August 7, 1106) was King of Germany from 1056 and Emperor from 1084, until his abdication in 1105. He was the third emperor of the Salian dynasty.

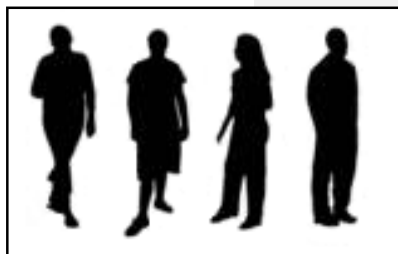
HENRY WAS THE eldest son of the Emperor Henry III, by his second wife Agnes de Poitou, and was probably born at the royal palace at Goslar. His christening was delayed until the following Easter, but even before that, at his Christmas court Henry III induced the attending nobles to promise to be faithful to his son. Three years later Henry III had a larger assembly of nobles elect the young Henry as his successor, and then, on July 17, 1054, had him crowned as king by Archbishop Herman of Cologne. Thus when Henry III unexpectedly died in 1056, the accession of the 6-year-old Henry IV was not opposed. The dowager Empress Agnes acted as regent. Henry's reign was marked by efforts to consolidate Imperial power. In reality, however, it was a careful balancing act between maintaining the loyalty of the nobility and the support of the pope. Henry jeopardized both when, in 1075, his insistence on the right of a secular ruler to invest, or place in office, members of the clergy, especially bishops, began the conflict known as the Investiture Controversy. In the same year he defeated a rebellion of Saxons in the First Battle of Langensalza. Pope Gregory VII excommunicated Henry on February 22, 1076. Gregory, on his way to a diet at



Augsburg, and hearing that Henry was approaching, took refuge in the castle of Canossa (near Reggio Emilia), belonging to Matilda, Countess of Tuscany. Henry's intent, however, was to perform the penance required to lift his excommunication and ensure his continued rule. He stood for three days outside the gate at Canossa, begging the pope to rescind the sentence (though not, as is often stated, in bare shirt with no food or shelter). The Pope lifted the excommunication, imposing a vow to comply with certain conditions, which Henry soon violated.

HENRY'S PERSONAL life was no less compelling, as he was betrothed to Bertha of Maurienne, daughter of Count Otto of Savoy in 1055 and married her in June 1066. In 1068 he attempted to divorce her, but was unable to do so and Bertha was restored as Empress a year later. She died on December 27, 1086, having borne the king five children.

IN 1089 Henry married Eupraxia of Kiev, the only daughter of Vsevolod I, Prince of Kiev, and sister to his son Vladimir Monomakh, prince of Kievan Rus. She assumed the name "Adelaide" upon her coronation. In 1094 she joined a rebellion against Henry, accusing him of among other charges, holding her prisoner. Henry died at Liège in 1106, "like one falling asleep," after nine days of illness. He was interred next to his father at Speyer.



- **CAN YOU IMAGINE** what it must have been like to ascend to the throne at the age of six? How do you think this kind of pressure early in life may have shaped Henry's sense of self and views on power?
- **HENRY WAS ENGAGED**, married and attempted divorce, all before the age of twenty. What do you think of the then common practice of childhood betrothals?

IN REVEALING himself to his paid companions, a painfully sane and sincere Henry asks them: “Would you be so calm if you knew that there are people out there determined to make the world see you the way they want you to be seen?—to force their view of you and their valuation of you on everyone else?” He admits that he has continued the ruse, at least in part, out of a need to control others’ perceptions of him. Regardless of how complete or miraculous his recovery, his bout with “madness” will always mark him as strange or “other” so, by his logic, if he is to endure the stigma of his illness, he might as well enjoy the limited benefits. While Henry’s choice may be questionable, his motives are justified. Public perception of mental illness has long been a problem, one which according to researcher Otto F. Wahl, is fueled largely by public portrayals of madness. In the first chapter of his 1995 book, *Media Madness: Public Images of Mental Illness*, Wahl discusses the way the majority of Americans view mental illness and the media representations that inspire those views:

Not long ago I attended a zoning board meeting in suburban Northern Virginia, where I live. The issue being considered was the proposed establishment of a group home for six adult females with mental illness. Others from the community were there to oppose the residence, and their arguments against establishment of the home were sometimes quite remarkable. One longtime resident observed that the neighborhood had many elderly citizens and many children and that, therefore, it would be inappropriate to place psychiatric patients there. Her implication was that both young and old residents of the community would be vulnerable to the dangers mentally disabled neighbors would pose. A similar sentiment was expressed by a man who said simply that the home should not come to his neighborhood “because I’m small” (referring, I assume,

to his short stature); being a small person, he suggested, meant that he would not be able to defend himself well. Still another spokesperson argued that the neighborhood was unsuitable for psychiatric patients because it was near a very busy intersection and that the former patients would have difficulty crossing the streets safely.

They appeared to see people with mental illnesses as dangerous and potentially assaultive as well as childlike and incompetent. I could not help but wonder where these images were coming from...

I am quite certain that public knowledge of mental illness does not come from the professional journals through which mental health professionals share their research and ideas with one another.

It is far more likely that the public's knowledge of mental illness comes from sources closer to home, sources to which we all are exposed on a daily basis—namely, the mass media. In 1991 the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, conducted a telephone survey of approximately thirteen hundred adults representative of the population of the United States. Among the questions about mental illness in this survey was one asking about the sources of respondents' information concerning mental illness. Far and away the most-cited sources were mass media ones. Americans themselves identify mass media as the source from which they get most of their knowledge of mental illness.

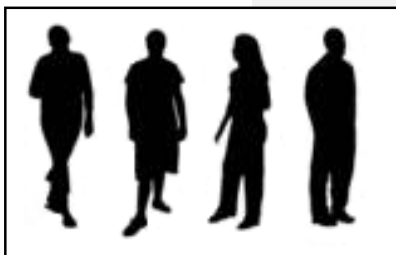
The movies we watch have a long history of treatment of psychiatric topics. Over the years, films about mental illness, mentally ill people, and psychiatry have included many well-crafted and critically acclaimed, as well as financially successful, film ventures. Edmund Gwenn, as a man whose sanity is questioned when he insists that

SWDYT?

he is the real Kris Kringle, won a Best Supporting Actor Award in 1947 for his work in the timeless classic *Miracle on 34th Street*. More recently, *Rain Man*'s 1988 portrayal of an autistic man won awards for Best Picture, Actor, Director and Screenplay, while *The Silence of the Lambs*, featuring a search for a mentally ill killer, garnered most of the major Oscars in 1992. These movies, of course, live on in

video stores and on television and thus provide additional audiences with their portrayals of mental illness.

WITH THIS KIND of widespread but not necessarily accurate exposure of mental illness, it is no wonder that Henry fears and consequently avoids the world's assessment of him.



- What do you think of Henry's decision to control his own destiny by, ironically enough, conforming to the image that others hold of him?
- What are your own perceptions of people who struggle with mental illness?
- Have you seen any of the films referred to in Wahl's research?
- How do you think these movies or other public portrayals of mental illness may have influenced your views?

"This'll cheer you up—we don't know who we are either. He's Harold, he's Ordulf, I'm Landolf, that's what he calls us so that's who we are, you get used to it, but it's a puppet show. Who are we really?"

- Who or what defines you? Are we all merely puppets, acting out someone or something else's will or do we make our own lives?

"For the daughter it's just a picture, a moment caught and complete in itself...while for the mother it brings back a whole life—how she moved, gestured, smiled, spoke, everything which isn't in the painting."

- Have you ever experienced a moment like Matilda's when she sees Frida in her costume—when a single image brought back an entire experience? What was it like to relive that episode?

"We all hug our idea of ourselves to ourselves. As our hair turns greyer, we keep pace with the colouring bottle...I do it to amuse myself. You do it in earnest. But no amount of earnestness stops it being a masquerade...I'm talking about a memory of yourself you want to hold tight, the memory of a day gone by..."

- Though any hair coloring you are doing now is most likely not to cover grey, many people claim that high school and college are the best periods of their lives and continually try to retrieve those by-gone days. Do you think this will be true for you?

"Resemblance, you see, my dear Baron, often resides where you least expect it"

- What does the Doctor mean by this rather cryptic declaration?