THE FIGURE OF THE USURPER IN SELECTED PLAYS OF

SHAKESPEARE:

SOURCE AND SYNTHESIS

by

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INTRODUCTION

In the complexity of Shakespeare's created world usurpers occupy a place of intense appeal and interest. They inhabit not only the early English histories but also some of the playwright's late tragedies. The chief aim behind the writing of this thesis is to analyse the characters of some of the prominent Shakespearean usurpers. In order to make the appraisal of these characters both informed and comprehensive, a significant portion of this study is dedicated towards the assessment of the major factors that played a part in forming the writer's imagination. Therefore, the first chapter presents a brief study of some of the less-studied medieval influences. From the medieval cycle plays, Lucifer and the Antichrist are analyzed as probable ancestors of later Elizabethan rebels. Chapter II reflects upon the widely accepted Elizabethan notions of order and degree and shows how usurpation served as a challenge and a threat to these traditional beliefs. The third chapter deals with the Tudor reasoning behind the support of the monarchy, its defence and its necessary protection. The contributions of early historians and the Tudor homilists are evaluated with this background in mind.

Finally, in the last chapter, all these threads of thought are tied together to show how the genius of Shakespeare assimilated and made effective use of his sources to create such memorable stage characters as Henry Bolingbroke, Richard III, Claudius, and Macbeth.

As each of the following chapters took shape, my debt to eminent critics like Professor E.M.W. Tillyard, Theodore Spencer, M.M. Reese, Maynard Mack, Henry Kelly and Alfred Hart grew steadily. But despite my borrowings of ideas from them (and many more), this thesis does not cater to the views of anyone in particular. It makes use of only the relevant material that is necessary to emphasize the primary qualities of the Shakespearean usurpers. Under these circumstances I had to utilize not only the long-established traditional views regarding English histories promulgated about four decades ago by E.M.W. Tillyard in his now famous book Shakespeare's History Plays, but also the ideas of the opponents of his views like Robert Ornstein, H.A. Kelly, and the more recent John Wilders. Furthermore, by deciding to include usurpers from not only Shakespeare's histories but also his tragedies, I have aimed at removing the artificial barrier that Tillyard had inadvertantly created while trying to present the English histories as reflecting

the Tudor myth and thereby separating them from the rest of the playwright's work. Since Shakespeare's view of human nature is profound and all-encompassing, it appears just as prominently in the histories as in the tragedies and comedies. The following study will attest to that significant point pertaining to the canon of Shakespearean drama.

CHAPTER I

A MEDIEVAL BEGINNING: Morality and Mystery Plays

...at Pentecost
When all our pageants of delight were played,
(Two Gentlemen of Verona, IV, iv, 156-157)

It is indeed unfortunate that, as Emrys Jones points out, "the mystery plays, though attracting extremely sympathetic and expert attention for themselves, continue for the most part to be treated in such a way as to imply that they had little to offer to the Elizabethan dramatic imagination"[1]. We have been treated to some remarkable studies conducted by various Shakespearean scholars who have stressed the impact of humanism and the Renaissance spirit on the native Elizabethan culture[2]. But what these studies neglect is to clarify the fact that the Elizabethan achievement is a product of a remarkable synthesis. It is a fruitful concordance of two distinct spheres of influence—one, the "alien" wind of European humanism; the other, an already rich native influence that we generally refer to as "medieval"[3].

The mid-Tudor period in England was a time of rapid social change. Protestantism was waging a war against a country that was, in its deepest memories and traditions, still Catholic. It was also a time when an invading force

of humanism was slowly uprooting the rigorous vernacular culture. So final and one-sided was the result of these struggles, that today we are left with only a small portion of the vast body of sacred drama that had flourished for centuries in England. Under such circumstances, tracing a continuity between the medieval religious plays, and Shakespeare's history plays, for example, has become a very difficult job indeed. Also, it is not an altogether easy task to identify vestiges of the medieval tradition imbedded among Shakespeare's plays in general. And yet, the truth is that Shakespeare was not only a product of humanism but also an unrecognized heir to that late medieval achievement called the mystery play.

Ignoring the finer distinctions, medieval drama can be classified into three distinctive genres: mystery plays--those based on scripture; miracle plays--based on the lives of the saints; and morality plays--based on the struggle between vices and virtues.[4] From the origins of the liturgical plays in the tenth century to the birth of "modern" drama in the sixteenth, these groups of plays represented the only serious dramatic art of the western world. In England, this drama had a strong cultural and social influence. This was not an unnatural development

because in the Middle Ages the religious stage had bestowed its messages upon an earnest and enthusiastic audience. A close emotional tie was established between the stage and the people who were occupied, for a considerable portion of the year, in the preparation and production of the cycles[5] Despite the people's involvement (perhaps because of it), medieval religious drama did not exist as a free artistic enterprise. Unlike the later Elizabethan drama or the earlier French classical drama, this early drama functioned primarily as a means of giving religious instructions, establishing faith, and encouraging piety[6]

For the sake of convenience and relevance, the forthcoming discussion will centre first on the morality plays and then will turn its focus, more significantly, on the mystery plays, a closer study of which can offer a clearer insight into the characters of Shakespeare's usurpers. Also, discussion on the miracle plays will not be carried out since they do not so directly relate to the topic at hand.

i. MORALITY PLAYS

The morality play tradition and its influence on the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century dramatists have been well studied and researched. Critics have pointed out for us the fresh use of morality elements by such Elizabethan giants as Jonson, Marlowe, and Shakespeare. Shakespearean characters and various other Elizabethan stage figures have come to inherit the functions of conventional morality characters. Robert Potter, in his in-depth study of the English morality play, groups them into "the central and mutual hero, the agent of sin and temptation, and the agent of repentance and good counsel"[7]. Potter also explains that stock situations and common episodes of the morality plays are reflected in bits and pieces of Elizabethan plays[8]. As a result of studies like Potter's, matters like Iago's dramatic ancestry has been traced back to the Vice and Devil derivatives of the morality plays. Morality tradition becomes apparent too in the moralizing epilogues delivered by Feste in The Twelfth Night and Prospero in The Tempest; similarly, a moral prologue outlines the whole of the action in advance in Romeo and Juliet and Pericles. There are many more examples that have been identified which together

emphasize the fact that the morality play helps supply a type of "stage mythology" upon which the origins of much of Elizabethan drama rests[9]. One such example would be the position of the morality hero who was plagued by fear and a lack of understanding until the very final moments of the play when the revelation of a divine order became evident[10]. In comparison to the world of the morality (and Elizabethan) plays, the older world of the mystery cycles was a more fundamental and secure one. Anne Righter, in characterizing the world of the mystery plays, says that whereas the "poor morality hero was surrounded by the falsifications and disorders of a contemporary, secular society", a glorious "world of the Old and New Testaments" was inhabited by the actors in the mystery drama[11].

ii. MYSTERY PLAYS

The Corpus Christi cycles of the English mystery plays are one of the chief glories of Medieval English literature. Into them went, as Hardin Craig has stated, the finest things that the English Middle Ages knew and felt. The plays were written as part of a theological message which combined in themselves the acts of teaching and worship[12]. In

the year 1311, a great impetus was given to the activity of the "performing guilds by a decree of the Council of Vienne ordaining the strict observance of the feast of Corpus Christi on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday"[13]. This day was adopted by many of the trade guilds as their annual festival for which they produced elaborate cycles of plays that were to be acted for the people. The cycles, which covered most of the chief events in the Bible narrative, began with the Creation and ended with the Day of Judgement. Unfortunately, the surviving four cycles that were at one time acted at York, Wakefield, Chester, and Coventery are the only relics of a drama that was acted throughout medieval England with the greatest possible success[14].

iii. PATTERN AND DESIGN

Above all, the cycles expressed the great pattern of man's creation, fall, and redemption. This design was originally furnished by the services of the liturgical year with which the religious drama of the Middle Ages began. The central theme of all the cycles is Christ's sacrifice and the resulting redemption of man. As such, Abel's death and Isaac's sacrifices foreshadow the Crucifixion.

Similarly, the Fall of the Angels anticipates the Fall of Man, and the latter in turn echoes the Temptation of Christ.[15] Also, the reality of the Flood presupposes the horrors of Doomsday. There are many such correspondences that run through the cycles. Another thread that runs through all the existing cycles, and which has also been pointed out by Peter Happe, concerns God's promises that relate to Noah, Moses, the Baptism and the Harrowing of Hell. There is therefore a definite aim behind a strong pattern that lends the cycles their unified forms. The structures of the cycles depended upon their capacity to "suggest a totally organised universe in which the individual man might know his own salvation".[16] Since the human drama is also a representation of a life cycle, the medieval audiences were made to see that life and history constituted a definite process. Beginning in innocence, "foolish man" falls by exercise of free will and appetite into a dilemma of his own creation. It is divine grace and true repentance that free him and allows him to achieve salvation and eternal life.[17] The message, passed by all medieval religious dramas in their different ways, is simple enough: the end of human life is not oblivion but regeneration, it is not death but rebirth.[18] In this manner the cycles revealed a divine order in the

midst of chaos and confusion.[19] It was with such a goal in mind that the authors of the cycles selected only certain events of the Christian narrative. The intention was to present the essential truths of Christianity and it was done with a view to being faithful to the original principles that lay behind their creation.[20] As a result, very little deviation or change had affected the cycles during the long years that they were performed.[21] The primary aim was to reveal the divine through a drama that was also a kind of worship. In their entirety, they celebrated truths, and projected for all "how divine promises were made and kept".[22]

iv. ORDER AND DEGREE

Wedded to the idea of a divine pattern or design was one other aspect of didactic religious drama that was going to influence the mind and work of the greatest Elizabethan playwright: it was the subject of order in the universe. The whole spirit of the Middle Ages was one of synthesis and order.[23] It permeated the religious drama of the time. For one must remember that though the cycles bear much evidence of theological learning, they were the product not only of

the ecclesiastical but also of the social milieu. The plays seem to be written on the assumption that society was unified and hierarchical and that their message was meant for all men irrespective of rank or degree.[24]

The idea of a divine pattern was closely related to the medieval philosophical belief that heaven had its order of precedence as did earth. In fact, there was a coherent scheme outlined in "degrees of being" wherein each degree had its function and its virtue.[25] A perfect design necessitated the proper functioning of each degree and in the discharge of its duty each degree had its superiority.[26] Furthermore, not only objects, ideas, animals, and angels but also men were defined in terms of the class to which they belonged. Each, by divine plan, was believed to operate in its own sphere and thereby contribute to the pattern.

II

THE ARCHETYPAL REBELLION AND THE LUCIFERIAN SIN

I will go sit in God's seat!

Fall of Lucifer, 1.57.

(Ludus Coventriae)[27]

> Though God come here, I will not hence,
> But sit right here before his face.
> <u>Fall</u> <u>of</u> <u>Lucifer</u>,11.212-213.[28]
> (Chester)

All the mystery cycles begin and end in the heavens. The opening play of the surviving cycles is that of <u>The</u> <u>Fall</u> <u>of</u> <u>the</u> <u>Angels</u> and perhaps the best presentation of the subject is to be found in the Ludus Coventriae cycle. Unlike the Chester cycle, which presents ample narrative content in a grim unsmiling tone, the Coventry cycle is economic and lively.[29] Right after God's opening monologue, the Angels begin singing in praise of His glory:

> Tibi omnes angeli, tibi celi et universe potestates,
> Tibi cherubyn et seraphyn incessabili voce proclamant:
> Sanctus! Sanctus! Sanctus! Dominus Deus Sabaoth.[30]
> <u>The</u> <u>Fall</u> <u>of</u> <u>Lucifer</u>,40ff.
> (Ludus Coventriae)

As soon as God departs, presumably during the singing of the Sanctus, Lucifer suddenly speaks up with impudence:

> To whos wurchipe synge ye this songe?
> To wurchip God, or reverens me?
> <u>The</u> <u>Fall</u> <u>of</u> <u>Lucifer</u>,11.41-42.
> (Ludus Coventriae)

In this manner, at the very beginning of his play, the anonymous medieval dramatist shows us the insolence of Lucifer. When his appeal for recognition from the good angels meets with a general rejection, Lucifer completes his blasphemy visually by sitting upon God's throne. Lucifer's tone of truculent self-assertiveness is also recorded by the Wakefield master who, at a corresponding point in his play, writes:

> Say, fellows, how fits it me
> To sit in seat of Trinity?
> I am so bright in every limb
> I trust I seem as well as him.
>   The Fall of Lucifer, 11.104-107.
>   (Wakefield)[31]

Evidently the authors of The Fall of Lucifer, both in the Ludus Coventriae and the Wakefield cycles, do not seem to be totally successful in exhibiting the quality of angelic pride that Lucifer's act embodies. Instead, according to Rosemary Woolf, they give us an already fallen angel who makes a "crude imposter".[32] The lack of decorum that is inherent in his action is clearly expressed through the language that the anonymous author allows his Lucifer to use. It is a flamboyant treatment of Satan and it reflects, to a great extent, the image of the later Vice.

But the York play has a more subtle approach to the subject. There we see Lucifer in full pride rejecting his angelic status and reaching out for a higher place that he believes rightly belongs to him. In that play, immediately after the angels have sung the Sanctus, the first good angel begins his speech in praise of God and in gratitude for Creation:

> A ! mercyful maker, full mekill es his mighte,
> Thet all his warke at a worde worthely has wroghte,
> Ay loved be that lufly lorde of his lighte,
> That us thus mighty has made, that now was righte noghte.
>   The Fall of Lucifer, ll.41-44.
>   (York)[33]

Here too, Lucifer speaks out in God's absence, but as if the previous speech is in his honour and not in God's. He speaks in full praise of himself:

> All the myrth that es made es markide in me,
> The bemes of my brighthode ar byrnande so bryghte,
> And I so semely in syghte my selfe now I se,
> For lyke a lorde am I lefte to lende in this lighte,
> More fayrear be far than my feres,
> In me is no poynte that may payre,
> I fele my fetys and fayre,
> My powar es passande my peres.
>   The Fall of Lucifer, ll.49-56.
>   (York)

By virtue of his mien of "brighthode" and "powar", Lucifer

subconsciously seeks to justify his ambition. To reach the level of God is not what worries him anymore, because he really thinks that he is "lyke unto hym that es hyeste on heghte".[34] The next four stanzas show, on the one hand, the Good Angels adoring God as the source of their being, while Lucifer, on the other, with increasing confidence and passion praises his own beauty and excellence. His self-glorification blinds him to his mutability, for he says,

> On heghte in the hyeste of hewuen.
> There sall I set myselfe, full semely to seyghte,
> To ressayne my reverence throwe righte of renowne.
> > The Fall of Lucifer, 11.88-90.
> > > (York)

His pride and boasting reach a climax when he utters the words that epitomize his rebellion:

> I sall be lyke unto hym that es hyeste on heghte.
> > The Fall of Lucifer, 1.91.
> > > (York)

At this point a ubiquitous and omniscient God, who is not physically present on stage, banishes him. So, Lucifer falls:

> Owe ! what I am derworth and defte, --

> Owe ╎ dewes ╎ all goes downe ╎
> The Fall of Lucifer,1.92.
> (York)

In the other play cycles, Satan falls at the express command of God. But, whereas the other authors used a theological tradition which provided them with a viable plot, showing Satan usurping God's throne and later demanding adoration from the other angels, the York author deliberately excludes a narrative of the Fall and thereby achieves a greater artistic success.[35]

No matter how the plot is worked out in the different cycles, the one thing that is explicit in all of them is the vile nature of the sin that Lucifer commits. We are also shown the ungrateful character of an ambitious being. His ambition was "to be like to the most high" (Isaiah XIV,14) and in his desire to realize his dream he commits the archetypal sin; namely, Lucifer's "attack on the throne"--his actual attempt to usurp the seat of God:

> I will go sit in God's seat
> Above sun and moon and stars in the sky.
> Fall of Lucifer,11.57-58.[36]
> (Ludus Coventriae)

God's throne serves as a vivid symbol of strength and superiority.   It constitutes the highest point of degree imaginable in the cosmos.   In the Chester cycle, the throne symbolism is stronger than in the Ludus Coventriae cycle. There, before Lucifer commits his sin, God speaks thus:

> And here I sett you next my Chayre,
> My love to you is so fervent,
> Look ye fall not in dispayre,
> Touch not my throne by non assents!
> Fall of Lucifer, 11.88-91.
> (Chester)

The warning God gives to the Angels is disregarded by the ambitious Lucifer who, not unlike Eve, is drawn to the very object that he had been asked not to "touch".   Filled with bursting pride, he says to the assembled angels:

> I am pereless and prince of pryde,
> for God himself shynes not so sheene,
> Here will I sit now in this stid ....
> Fall of Lucifer, 11.184-186
> (Chester)

In a way, the medieval plays involve an idealized order of kingship.   The picture of the "false king" is abhorrent not only in medieval literature, but it is also the subject of the Greeks and the Romans who, living as they did in a

hierarchical society, condemned the act of hubris.[37] For
Shakespeare, the ideal order seems to be embodied in kings
like Duncan and Hamlet's father. Therefore it is not
strange for him to show that Hamlet is filled with loathing
when he sees the usurper Claudius smiling and drinking in
his father's throne. For the usurper the throne is the real
seat of power and achievement. He kills and is willing to
even die for it. Ironically, Macbeth's wish "to be safely
thus" is prompted by his longing for that (illusive?)
security which a throne provides for all lawful monarchs.

Though the king on his throne is the most vivid symbol
of degree possible in simple theatrical terms,[38] yet it serves
no such purpose when the king has ascended the throne by
unlawful means. Shakespeare's histories echo this message
time and again from Henry IV to Richard III. Some of his
great tragedies like Hamlet and Macbeth embody the same
truth. Since, in the final chapter, we will discuss
Shakespeare's treatment of the matter of the usurper's
character and fate, let us now turn our attention to another
subject of medieval interest--that of the Antichrist.

III

THE ANTICHRIST

The Antichrist is the clearest type of the usurper presented in the final section of the Christian story. The story of the Antichrist was a widely distributed legend and belief of the medieval church. Of the many Antichrist plays in the Middle Ages, the majority originated in Germany and Italy.[39] Apart from the Chester cycles, most of the Antichrist plays are independent works of great popular interest. The tale of the Antichrist is one of the three plays that the Chester cycle devotes to the last part of the Christian saga. It opens dramatically with the false preachings of a fake messiah:

>Your saviour nowe in your sight
>here may you safely see.
>Messias, Christ, and most of might,
>that in the lawe was you beheight,
>All mankind to joy to dight
>ys commen, for I am hee.
>Of me was spoken in prophecye
>of Moyses, Davyd, and Esaye.
>   The Antichrist, ll.11-18.
>   (Chester)

Initially, he is successful in converting four
representative kings who are incapable of looking beyond the
mask of the imposter. He fools them with his imitations of
Christ's miracles. But the enumeration of the "miracles"
themselves show two groups of Signs that are antagonistic:
they not only include the blasphemous copies of Christ's
miracles, such as the raising of the dead, but also a sign
of the Last Judgement, like trees growing upside down.[40] The
first part of the play ends after the complete submission of
the kings at seeing the Antichrist resurrect himself from
the dead. What the dramatist takes pain at showing is the
extent to which a powerful usurper can imitate the "real
king". The play reaches a climax when St. Michael appears
to slay the Antichrist and to resurrect both Enoch and
Elijah. Undoubtedly, the best moments of the play are those
where the author assiduously exploits the theme of the
Antichrist as "simia Christi" or "the ape of Christ".[41] His
success lies in the brilliant and shocking parallelisms
between the achievements of Christ and their blasphemous
parody.[42] When compared to the independent works, the story
is all the more successful in the cycle form because there
the Antichrist could visibly mimic Christ of the earlier
plays. The potentialities are consciously exploited by the

author of the Chester cycle who skilfully presents apparently parallel situations which remind the audience of similar scenes in the Christ story. For example, when the Kings attend the Antichrist's burial, the third king quite lovingly says: "Take we the bodye of this sweet" (The Antichrist, 1.142, Chester). Again, later on in the play, when the Antichrist says to Elijah: "Am I not most in majestie?" (The Antichrist, 1.350, Chester), he quite unknowingly projects the image of the archetypal rebel Lucifer.

In this chapter then, were discussed some aspects of the native, medieval, religious drama that must have influenced Shakespeare's genius; particularly the archetypal rebellion of Lucifer (who wants to usurp the seat of God) and the case of the Antichrist (who is also a usurper of sorts). At this stage of the study, except for a few passing remarks, major comparisons with Shakespeare's plays were not made. This dimension is to be considered in detail in the last chapter. While dealing with morality and miracle plays, the notion of man's degree in the universe is especially significant, for what we see here are the basic elements of an idea that would be greatly developed by homilists and historians in the Elizabethan age.

NOTES

Note on References

References to Shakespeare's text are to The Complete Signet Classic Shakespeare (New York, Chicago: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1972).

[1] Emrys Jones, The Origins of Shakespeare (London: Oxford University Press, 1977),p.31.

[2] See for example M.M. Phillips, Erasmus and the Northern   Renaissance(London: English   University Press,1961).

[3] See Jones,p.30.

[4] See S.W. Clarke, The Miracle Play in England(London: William Andrews and Company,1945),p.4.

[5] H.C. Gardiner, Mysteries' End(New Haven: Yale University Press,1946),p.X.

[6] See Hardin Craig, English Religious Drama of the Middle Ages(London: Oxford   University   Press,1960),p.15.   Also, V.A. Kolve, The Play Called Corpus Christi (California: Stanford University Press,1966), p.270.   Kolve modifies Craig's views on the subject of the functions of medieval

English drama.

[7]Robert Potter, The English Morality Play (London and
Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul,1975),p.124.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid., p.124.
Potter gives a list of others, some of which can be
added with minor amendments; e.g.:

i) The conspiring Vice, disguised as Virtue: Richard
III, Claudius.

ii) Virtue unjustly cast out: Adam in As You Like It,
the Soothsayer in Julius Caesar, Kent in King Lear.

iii) The final unmasking and punishment of disguised
Vice: Malvolio in Twelfth Night, Iago's unmasking by
Emilia, Claudius' by Hamlet.

[10]So too the Elizabethan hero time and again suffers
from a grave lack of awareness and, as a result, is troubled
by an endless search for meaning.

[11]Anne Righter, Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play.
(London: Chatto and Windus, 1962), p.26.

[12]Craig, pp.10-11. Also, Peter Happe, ed., English
Mystery Plays (London: Cox and Wyman Ltd., 1975), p.11.

[13]Clarke, p.15.

[14]See Clarke, p.15; Kolve, p.1.

[15]Happe, p.25.

[16]Ibid.

[17]See Kolve, p.268.

[18]See Potter, p.10.

[19]Righter, p.26.

[20]Happe, p.30.

[21]Ibid., p.26.

[22]Ibid., p.31.

[23]Gardiner, p.XII.

[24]This is an idea that Peter Happe in his Introduction to English Mystery Plays reinforces. See Ibid.,p.31. See also Rosemary Woolf, The English Mystery Plays (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973).

[25]Craig, pp.16-17.

[26]The next chapter has a more detailed discussion on the aspect of "degree".

[27]This and all later references to the Ludus Coventriae Cycle are from Joseph Quincy Adams, ed., Chief Pre-Shakespearean Dramas(Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Riverside Press, 1952).

[28]This and all later references to the Chester Cycle are from R.M. Luminiasky and David Mills, ed., The Chester Mystery Cycle(London: Oxford University Press, 1974).

[29]I am indebted to Rosemary Woolf for these observations. See Woolf, p.108.

[30]

      To thee all the angels,
      to thee the powers of heaven and the universe,
      to thee the cherubim and seraphim
      with unceasing voice cry out: Holy!
      Holy! Holy! Lord God of Sabaoth.

-- translated by Joseph Quincy Adams in Pre-Shakespearean Dramas(Cambridge: The Riverside Club, 1952), p.86.

[31]This and all later references to the Wakefield Cycle are from Martial Rose, ed., The Wakefield Mystery Plays(New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1969).

[32]Woolf, p.108.

[33]This and all later references to the York Cycle are from Lucy T. Smith, ed., York Plays(New York: Russell and Russell, 1963).

[34]The Fall of Lucifer, York Cycle,1.91.

[35]This has been pointed out by Woolf, p.109.

[36]See also Kolve, p.9, where the author refers to the medieval audience's belief that " Lucifer...fell because he imitated God. By sitting on God's throne and demanding the forms of adoration due to God alone, he sinned in pride and was condemned to Hell".

[37]Here I am indebted to Honor Matthews. See his

Character _and_ _Symbol_ _in_ _Shakespeare's_ _Plays_(London: Chatto and Windus, 1969), p.1Ø.

[38]_Ibid._

[39]A fact that Rosemary Woolf points out. See p.291.

[40]See _Ibid._, p.293.

[41]_Ibid._, p.294.

[42]_Ibid._

CHAPTER II

THE MATTER OF ORDER AND DEGREE

> Take but degree away, untune that string,
> and hark what discord follows.
> (<u>Troilus</u> <u>and</u> <u>Cressida</u>,I,iii,109-110)

In obvious contrast to the modern world, the Elizabethans held certain firm social and political beliefs like the ideas of natural order, the chain of being, "degree", priority and place and that great Tudor conception of history as the realm of providential judgements[1]. In their main outlines these "beliefs" were about the same as those of the Middle Ages. They crystallized and formed out of the combined elements of Aristotelianism, Platonism, Neo-Platonism, Stoicism, and, last but not the least, Christianity[2]. The strong winds of the Renaissance brought knowledge that did not immediately uproot traditional beliefs--they were refreshing and were therefore welcomed either as additions to the accepted medieval picture or received as merely fresh ways of interpreting the "universal truth". And yet, the Elizabethan conception of a "world order" was conceived after discarding much medieval detail[3]. In its modified form, it spoke of an eternal law, a world order that governed the entire universe. Also, it was

evident not only in the ranks of created beings and elements, but also in the institution of government. At the helm of the ordered universe, perfect in its coherence and unity, the average Elizabethan perceived the hands of a beneficent Ruler. It was a duty for wise men to discover and then describe the great Architect[4] who, throughout Nature, had left an imprint of order where, according to their degree or place, everything occupied designated positions. Nature displayed a huge and complex pattern of hierarchies in which everything, from the tiniest insect to the largest mammal, encompassing the world of animals, plants, men, and elements, was all inter-connected. Man, blessed with his ability to reason and comprehend, could attain greater nobility of soul and spirit if he could achieve "the end" for which he was created.[5] This end, according to Thomas Hooker, was to know and love God. Hooker believed that the "soul was made for an end, and good, and therefore for a better than itself, therefore for God, therefore to enjoy union with Him".[6] The only way man could achieve such a union was by trying, through the use of his limited power, to know God. Furthermore, to help him in his noble venture, God had supplied man with not one but two valuable books: one was the Bible and the other, the book

"of the universal order of things or nature"[7]. Despite the corruption that had invaded postlapsarian Nature[8], the marks of God's perfection had not been completely effaced from its bosom. Therefore, through his contemplation and study of Nature or the created things, man could still achieve salvation[9].

I. ORDER IN THE WORLD

There were three different though sometimes related appearances by which the idea of order in the created world presented itself to the Elizabethans[10]. First, it was viewed as a chain, secondly, as a series of corresponding planes, and thirdly, as a dance to music. The ideas of coherence and unity were projected through these three metaphors.

i. The Chain of Being.

Until Arthur Oncken Lovejoy explored the concept in his seminal work in 1936, the doctrine of the chain of being was little known to readers of Elizabethan texts[11]. This idea served a useful purpose for both the Middle Ages and the later age of Queen Elizabeth. The appearance of creation as

a chain, or "a series of beings stretching from the lowest
of inanimate objects up to the archangel nearest to the
throne of God"[12] stressed the principles of unity and concord.
Sir John Fortescue, a fifteenth century jurist, gives the
following account of the chain of being:

> In this order hot things are in harmony with cold; dry
> with moist; heavy with light; great with little; high
> with low. In this order angel is set over angel, rank
> upon rank in the Kingdom of Heaven; man is set over man,
> beast over beast, bird over bird, and fish over fish, on
> the earth, in the air, and in the sea;...so that there
> is no creature which does not differ in some respect
> from all other creatures, and by which it is in some
> respect superior or inferior to the rest. So that from
> the highest angel down to the lowest of his kind there
> is absolutely not found an angel that has not a superior
> and inferior; nor from man down to the meanest worm is
> there any creature which is not in some respect superior
> to one creature and inferior to another. So that there
> is nothing which the bond of order does not embrace. And
> since God has thus regulated all creatures, it is
> impious to think that he left unregulated the human race,
> which he made the highest of all earthly creatures.[13]

Fortescue's words contain the ideas of unity and
correspondences which are identifiable as vestiges of the
Medieval Age. Only through a correspondingly "regulated"
human race could man achieve a unity with the other
regulated creatures of the world. Fortescue justifies man's
efforts to realize a coherent and desirable connection with

Nature's beings. Only in this manner can man hope to discover the mystery of the universe. Consequently, a natural justification for political order within the state became a necessity.[14]

Man occupied a key position in the chain of being since,

> ...the human soul is called the horizon or meeting ground of corporeal and incorporeal; for in it begins the ascent from the lowest to the highest spiritual power. At times even, when it has been cleansed of earthly passions, it attains to the state of incorporeal beings.[15]

He was strategically placed between the two extremes represented by the angels and the beasts. Shakespeare's contemporary, Sir John Hayward, cautions man accordingly:

> Thou art a man, endued with reason and understanding, wherein God hath engraven His lively image.... Be not like the brute beasts which want understanding: either wild or unruly or else heavy and dull.... Certainly of all the creatures under heaven, which have received being from God, none degenerate, none forsake their natural dignity and being, but only man. Only man, abandoning the dignity of his proper nature, is changed like Proteus into divers forms. And this is occasioned by reason of the liberty of his will.[16]

A man who is wary of the sensuality of the lower level of

beasts can align himself with the higher status of God and the Angels by the use of his reason and understanding. But the proper place for ordinary man is to remain confined within his class; thus, he can be most himself when he is a part of society, because,

> ...as the philosopher saith very well, that man which cannot live in civil company either he is a god or a beast, seeing only God is sufficient of himself, and a solitary life best agreeth with a beast.[17]

Such a doctrine was universally accepted by educated Elizabethans and found frequent expression in the literature of the time. Ulysses, in Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida has similar thoughts in mind when he asks:[18]

> How could communities,
> Degrees in schools and brotherhoods in cities,
> Peaceful commerce from dividable shores,
> The primogenity and due of birth,
> Prerogative of age, crowns, scepters, laurels,
> But by degree, stand in authentic place?
> (Troilus and Cressida,I,iii,103-108)

ii. A Series of Corresponding Planes

An elaborate expansion to the medieval idea of the chain of being was made when the Elizabethans argued that sets of correspondences existed between the various planes of creation. Though the animals and plants were included to

a small degree in the scheme, the major planes were those of
God and the Angels; the macrocosm or physical universe;
the body or the state; and the microcosm, or man.

A universal principle of order and hierarchy was
conceived when a sequence of leadership was established. It
included,

> God among the angels or all the works of creation,
> the sun among the stars, fire among the elements, the
> king in the state, the head in the body, justice
> among the virtues, the lion among the beasts, the
> eagle among the birds, and dolphin among the fishes.[19]

The macrocosm or physical universe itself expressed a
general notion of correspondences. Among the various
correspondences between planes, the cosmic and the human was
the most common and interesting.[20] Furthermore, man was
representing not merely a single plane, he was also a
microcosm, being a minute image of the large macrocosm. In
him could be observed in tiny detail a sum of the great
world itself. Since he was believed to be composed of the
four basic elements which were also present in the natural
world and, because the constitution of his body duplicated
the structure of the world, correspondences were easily

enough discernible: his veins resembled the rivers; his sighs the winds; and his anger and passion the perturbations of the earth.[21] So significant were the alliances that a larger plane could affect the smaller. So, for example, storms or any other disorder in the firmament were accepted as signs of impending chaos and commotion in the state. Shakespeare's King Lear and Julius Caesar have scenes where the disorder in the heavens reflect and are even followed by disaster in the kingdom. This same message is clearly pronounced by Ulysses who says:

> But when the planets
> In evil mixture to disorder wander,
> What plagues and what portents, what mutiny,
> What raging of the sea, shaking of earth,
> Commotion in the winds, frights changes horrors,
> Divert and crack rend and deracinate
> The unity and married calm of states
> Quite from their fixture?
> (Troilus and Cressida,I,iii,ll.94-101)

Evidently, the doctrine of order applied to all planes of correspondences.

The correspondences between microcosm and body politic were also of importance. The analogy that Menenius in Coriolanus draws between the state and the human body is a clear example of the dramatic use of such parallels on the

popular Elizabethan stage. It was a more elaborate and common comparison than that of Brutus in <u>Julius Caesar</u>, who compares the state of his own doubt-infested mind to a city in insurrection:

>Between the acting of a dreadful thing
>And the first motion, all the interim is
>Like a phantasma or a hideous dream:
>The genius and the mortal instruments
>Are then in the council; and the state of man,
>Like to a little kingdom, suffers then
>The nature of an insurrection.
>>(Julius Caesar,II,i,63-69)

iii. <u>A Dance to Music</u>

The idea that the universe represented a harmonious order or resembled a dance to music is not as frequent in Elizabethan society and literature as those of the chain of being and corresponding planes. Moreover, when it is in evidence, it is not "the music of the spheres"[22]--the musical note produced when celestial spheres supposedly rubbed against each other. It is a different kind of music, which, incidentally, became the theme of one of the best loved of Elizabethan poems. In John Davies's <u>Orchestra</u>, Antinous, while trying to persuade his beloved Penelope into dancing,

explains to her that the universe is itself a great dance-pattern and she must not resist that cosmic-order by failing to use her terpsichorean skills?[23] What the poem shows is how success is dependent upon the proper application of order in the actual world in such a manner that it duplicates the order inherent in the cosmos.

The dance paradigm was a notion that the Elizabethans generally understood and respected, for before them lay the political reality of a Golden Age, established by the Tudors, but seen as a part and not divorced from the general cosmic order of which it was a reflection. Shakespeare was well aware of the principles of order and harmony. The terrible manifestations of disorder that most of his histories and tragedies reveal are a tribute to his recognition of the necessity for "harmony". Ulysses's famous speech on order, quoted in part above, also contains the following remark:

> Take but degree away, untune that string;
> And hark what discord follows.
> (Troilus and Cressida,I,iii,109-110)

Ulysses's musical metaphor expresses the Platonic doctrine of a harmony being present behind the creation of the

universe; a music which, when it will "untune the sky",
will finally destroy it.[24] Furthermore, to the educated
Elizabethans, the words "chaos" or "discord" carried a
definite meaning. It reminded them of a primitive and
warring state of the elements from which, they believed, the
universe had been created. The danger that the cosmos might
fall back to that state was an everpresent threat, and this,
to the thinking mind, could result if "the constant pressure
of God's ordering and sustaining will were relaxed".[25] Chaos,
as M.M. Reese puts it, was indeed a contemporary symbol of
a very real dread of anarchy.[26] Since the state was seen as
part of a larger cosmic order, any dislocation within it,
however temporary, was seen as an undesirable departure from
a divinely established norm of behaviour. It was therefore
not a propitious state of affairs because it bred disharmony
that could easily affect all levels of the commonwealth.
Thus order became the perfect condition which humanity could
and should achieve through the observance of degree,
priority and place.

The need for a healthy social order necessitated the
observance of customs and laws and it was customs and
traditions that had made kingship the only proper form of
government for England. Within the kingdom, or state, the

crown was accepted as the symbol of unified and inviolable authority. The king-subject relationship, like the father-child relationship within the family, was plainly conformable to nature and was conceived of as universally acceptable. The concept of "divine right"[27] which asserted the heavenly origins of government came as a valuable reinforcement to the establishment of the rule of law in a country that was shaken by repeated rebellions. Sanctioned by the strong and effective support of religion, the belief in divine right supplied a strong moral basis for government.

Order for the Elizabethans was also an ethical conviction. It was used to tell right from wrong. In a similar manner degree too served the important function of not only curbing ambition, but also protecting men and their property. The social values that were established during the Tudor reign respected the rule of justice and law. The function of the state had not only been to fight the Queen's enemies[28] but to inculcate the ethical and moral values of the time--virtues that were inherent in the observance of order and degree.

II. ORDER IN CONTEMPORARY ELIZABETHAN LITERATURE

As we have seen, the conception of order was a part of the Elizabethan way of thinking.[29] So deeply rooted was it in the minds of the people that, except for explicitly didactic passages, the subject was rarely mentioned in clear terms. In the sphere of didactic prose, order is referred to in such works as Elyot's Governor, the first book of Hooker's Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, the preface to Raleigh's History of the World, and the well-known Church Homily Against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion. Among non-didactic writings it is present in Spenser's Hymn of Love and Ulysses's famous speech in Troilus and Cressida.[30] Of these, the best known and the most widely read is Shakespeare's version. Ulysses's speech sums up most of the pertinent points the Elizabethans knew in relation to the subject of order. In the context of the play, the primary aim behind the speech is to explain why the Greeks have so far not been successful in their prolonged war against Troy. The speech also reveals Ulysses's awareness of the strong bond of unity that an elaborate design of inter-related hierarchies can form. In addition, he speaks of the possibility of chaos, of how the collapse of one hierarchy can be influenced by another. The chief source of the

trouble, says Ulysses, is because "the speciality of rule hath been neglected"[31] According to him, the reason for the failure of the Greeks is the lack of order within the administrative set-up of the army. To stress his point he draws parallels between different hierarchies. He begins with heaven, then goes to civil law, then to the four elements, then to natural and moral law, and finally to psychological law[32] The combined effect of the long passage is straight and simple: everything is inter-related and belongs to the same grand scheme, obeying the same heavenly rules:

> The heavens themselves, the planets, and this centre
> Observe degree, priority, and place....
>   (Troilus and Cressida, I, iii, 85-86)

However, not far behind the outward show of optimism and faith in the inter-related orders of cosmology, nature and politics, strong doubts existed in the Elizabethan mind. This was more and more evident during the late sixteenth century when the idealistic picture of the nobility and dignity of man was challenged by more realistic attitudes. By breaking away from the influence of the Roman Church, England had chosen to follow a new path. As a result, in

spite of the doctrine of pre-destination, a greater emphasis was being given to individual choice. Protestantism was a harder and tougher kind of moral life, as the soul was no longer protected from the wrath of God by a string of papal intermediaries.[33] Also,

> the religious changes of the age made many
> sensitive minds doubtful about their religious
> allegiance, and skepticism went hand in hand
> with uncertainty.[34]

Similarly, the political situation also seemed quite insecure. By the 1590's the sun was finally setting on the long reign of Queen Elizabeth. Without a definite successor the future of the state seemed insecure and uncertain.

Apart from the miseries of the human condition that were so frequently emphasized in medieval literature, and generally avoided by writers of the early Renaissance, there had always been, according to traditional Christian views, a hope for human redemption. Now, on the intellectual level, towards the late sixteenth-century a strong attack was being launched on the pattern of inter-related designs. Copernicus questioned the long established structure of the Ptolemaic system, and while Montaigne criticised the natural

order, Machiavelli challenged the accepted political order.[35]

III. COPERNICUS, MONTAIGNE, AND MACHIAVELLI:

THE THREE-PRONGED ATTACK.

The Ptolemaic structure of the cosmos had always placed the earth in the center of the universe. Upon this base was later built a complex set of beliefs like the order of the universe, and the parallels between the cosmos and the state. The Copernican system, by putting the sun in the centre and relegating the earth to a position of lesser degree and importance, destroyed the whole medieval cosmological structure. Even if Shakespeare was spared the shock from the effect of the Copernican theory,[36] yet we can be sure that the later part of the sixteenth-century was a period when truly revolutionary ideas were beginning to surface.

Though, in the long run, the Copernican theory was successful in destroying the Ptolemaic beliefs and the cosmological hierarchy, in the short term, a more powerful attack was launched by Montaigne against the proponents of natural order. Raymond Sabunde's Natural Theology, a

typically optimistic work praising man as the most important creature in the orderly ranks of creation, became the target of Montaigne's attack. Montaigne's pretended defence of it was in fact an elaborate criticism of the arrogance and vanity of man. His declared aim in writing his essay titled "Apology for Raymond Sabunde" was to make people

> sensible of the inanity, the vanity and insignificance of man; to wrest out of their fists the miserable weapons of their reason; to make them bow the head and bite the dust under the authority and reverence of the divine majesty.[37]

He obviously took great delight in undermining Sabunde's vision of man as a noble creature, while revealing the darker side of an ignoble creature:

> The frailest and most vulnerable of all creatures is man, and at the same time the most arrogant. He sees and feels himself lodged here in the mud and filth of the world, nailed and riveted to the worst, the deadest and most stagnant part of the universe, at the lowest story of the house and the most remote from the vault of heaven, with the animals of the worst condition of the three; and he goes and sets himself in imagination above the circle of the moon, and brings heaven under his feet.[38]

Instead of raising man to the level of angels, Montaigne drags him down to the level of filthy animals. He stresses

that the animal and physical qualities of man predominate over the spiritual and psychological. Furthermore, on a larger scale, by attempting to destroy psychological order he was shaking the whole structure of an ordered universe. If man could not be distinguished from the animals, then the concept of degree and the idea of man's central place in the universe could not be upheld. Also, being closer to the animals, man must therefore lack the power of comprehension that would allow him to appreciate the other orders of the cosmos and the Laws of Nature.

Neither Copernicus nor Montaigne had as perceptible an influence on sixteenth-century Elizabethan thinking as did the famous author of Discourses of Livy and The Prince, for Machiavelli's ideas were more practical, and his attack on the facade of political order was more immediate and stunning. Initially, his writings shocked the reading public who were used to such benign and outdated doctrines as Cicero's De Officiis. Cicero, in his work concerning the behaviour of man as a governor, while stressing the need for proper rule had upheld justice as the essential virtue and moral right as the firm basis for action.[39] But in his doctrine, the pragmatic Machiavelli, had no place for such things as justice, fair play and morality. He denied men's

compulsion to such noble things as love and virtue. Like the later essayist and politician Bacon, he looked and pictured man not as he should be, but as he was. He found human nature to be tainted with evil and animal desires. And, like animals, the best way to govern man, thought Machiavelli, was by the use of fear and force. He never envisioned human government as a reflection of the divine. In his frank view, the state was totally a man-made contrivance. Since human life was brutish and morally evil, it was necessary that a state must be ruled through politically expedient and even brutal means. Hence, in Bk.i, ch.3, of The Discourses, he writes:

> All those who have written upon civil institutions demonstrate (and history is full of examples to support them) that whoever desires to found a state and give it laws, must start with assuming that all men are bad and ever ready to display their vicious nature, whenever they may find occasion for it.[40]

Such views naturally enraged the sixteenth-century sensibility and, in the eyes of most Elizabethans, Machiavelli became a devil incarnate. Ignoring the fact that he was aiming at the unification of Italy when he wrote his political treatise, Machiavelli's ideas and works were

bitterly abused and criticised. On the popular Elizabethan stage the name of Machiavelli became synonymous with unpardonable human villainy.[41] Of course there were a few important reasons for the disgust and horror with which the sixteenth-century viewed the Italian. What was most painful to accept was the effect the deadly practicality of his unscrupulous precepts was having on the minds of the people. For the first time the real nature of politics was revealed to a people who had always cherished the old ideals of order, justice, and fair-play. By saying that in politics "the end justifies the means",[42] Machiavelli was presenting an idea which had no perceptible connection with any divine design of inter-related hierarchies and correspondences. Neither did it recognize that man had any responsibility towards the universe. In Machiavelli's scheme man had his world to run and he must do it by whatever means he had available to him.

> Let a prince therefore aim at conquering and
> maintaining the state, and the means will always be
> judged honourable and praised by every one, for the
> vulgar is always taken by appearances and the issue
> of the event; and the world consists only of the
> vulgar, and the few who are not vulgar are isolated
> when the many have a rallying point in the prince.[43]

For him practical matters and particular necessities outweighed the concepts of morals and ideals.

Under such circumstances it should not be too difficult to come to the understanding that the sixteenth-century attacks on Machiavelli from both the church and the state were perhaps a result of fears that what the Italian was saying was not all heresy.[44]

In defense of the dogmas of order and degree and due to the necessity for establishing the rule of law, Tudor England had devised its own weapons. In the churches the homilies were written and used to deter rebellion and teach the doctrine of divine right. To emphasize similar points, and more particularly to create what we now know as the "Tudor Myth", historians and chroniclers were ransacking history, looking for examples that would serve them as evidence that God had indeed a noble design when He created Kings and gave them obedient subjects. These ideas, and their relation to the plays of Shakespeare shall be explored in the following chapter.

NOTES

[1]See Helen Gardner, The Noble Moor(London: Oxford University Press, 1955), p.2.

[2]See E.M.W. Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture (London: Chatto and Windus, 1960), p.2.   Also Theodore Spencer, Shakespeare and the Nature of Man(New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961), p.1.

[3]See Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays(London: Chatto and Windus, 1961), p.11.

[4]The image of God as an architect was a common symbol of the time. See for example: Spencer, p.3.

[5]Ibid., p.1.

[6]Thomas Hooker, quoted from Spencer, p.2.

[7]Montaigne, Preface to his translation (1569) of Roman Sabunde's Natural Theology (c. 1425), quoted from Spencer, p.2.

[8]It was believed that the Fall of Man had affected Nature. See John Wilders, The Lost Garden(Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1978), pp.10,138-139.

[9]See Tillyard, History Plays, p.11.

[10]I am indebted to Professor Tillyard's The Elizabethan World Picture and Shakespeare's History Plays for the

Elizabethan picture of order in the created world.

[11]Arthur Oncken Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1936).

[12]Tillyard, History Plays, p.11.

[13]Sir John Fortescue, quoted from Works, by Tillyard, History Plays, pp.11-12.

[14]So, as Tillyard has observed, in most of Shakespeare's history plays a justification for political order is of cardinal importance. See Tillyard, History Plays, p.12.

[15]Higden, Polychronicon, quoted by Tillyard, History Plays, pp.12-13.

[16]Sir John Hayward, David's Tears (1623), quoted by Tillyard, History Plays, p.13.

[17]Hannibal Romei, Courtier's Academy, quoted by Tillyard, History Plays, p.14.

[18]Something that Tillyard has so aptly pointed out in his History Plays, p.14.

[19]Ibid., p.15.

[20]Tillyard's opinion, Ibid., p.16.

[21]Also Tillyard, Ibid.

[22]See Spencer, p.8.

[23]See Tillyard, History Plays, p.17.

[24]See Ibid., p.11.

[25]Ibid.

[26]M.M. Reese, The Cease of Majesty(London: Edward Arnold [Publishers] Ltd., 1961), p.111.

[27]The implications of "divine right" will be discussed in Chapter III.

[28]Reese, p. 113.

[29]See Tillyard, History Plays, p.8. Also Spencer, p.44.

[30]See Tillyard, World Picture, p.7.

[31]Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida, I,iii,78.

[32]See Spencer, p.21.

[33]Ibid., p.46.

[34]Ibid.

[35]I am deeply indebted to Spencer for most of the information contained here.

[36]The Copernican theory was finally proved with the help of Galileo's telescope. In 1616 the Roman Catholic Church took action against it by putting it in its Index Librorum Prohibitorum. See Spencer, p.30.

[37]Montaigne, Essays, quoted by Spencer, p. 34.

[38]Ibid., p. 35.

[39]See Spencer, p.41.

[40]Niccolo Machiavelli, The Discourses, trans. C.E.

Detmold (New York: The Modern Library, 1940), p.117.

[41]According to Spencer, Machiavelli "was referred to no fewer than 395 times in Elizabethan drama as the embodiment of human villainy". See Shakespeare and the Nature of Man, p.44.

[42]Machiavelli, The Prince, trans. Luigi Ricci (New York: The Modern Library, 1940), p.66.

[43]Ibid.

[44]Spencer voices a similar belief. See Nature of Man, p,45.

CHAPTER III

DIVINE PROVIDENCE AND THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF HISTORIANS

AND HOMILISTS

In the preceding chapter we have tried to explain the significance of order and degree in Shakespeare's world. Keeping that outline in mind, as we move closer to analysing Shakespeare's historical treatment of fifteenth century England, we are made aware of the undeniable presence of disorder in the world of man. The picture we get from his double tetralogy is not one of peace and harmony but of war and discord. Richard II, for example, is plagued first by the Irish wars and then by the rebellious forces of Bolingbroke who finally usurps the throne and overthrows "God's anointed". Not merely at home, but in the battlefields of France, the British rulers are repeatedly faced with challenge and rebellion. Henry VI, the son of the illustrious Henry V, has the misfortune of being besieged at both fronts of home and abroad. As a result, he loses not only his kingship and his own life, but also the life of Prince Edward, his unfortunate heir apparent. The rule of Richard III is all too well remembered as a nightmarish period of English history. Not till the rule of Henry VII, the first Tudor monarch[1], are peace and prosperity restored to the land. Before his time the threat of

disorder had too often turned into reality and brought misery for the inhabitants of the commonwealth. Nevertheless, it would not be wise to view disorder as the common theme emanating from Shakespeare's history plays. For the final message we receive from all the apparent signs of the breach of order, in not only the histories but from most of his works, is one of order and the rule of law being restored to the land. And, as Professor Tillyard has pointed out[2], this assertion had very little to do with Shakespeare's personal piety. Being the great artist that he was, he was merely using the "thought-idiom"[3] of his time; a thought-idiom which was prominently reflected in the works of the leading Elizabethan chroniclers. As the medieval chroniclers had done before them, and much unlike modern historians, they kept within the confines of the established religious setting. Also, the historiographers made abundant use of supernatural elements in their accounts of the events of the past and the present. The supernatural was predominantly used when interpretations were sought for the unfolding of divine providence involving the lives of the English kings. The providential and the supernatural manifested themselves through such things as prodigies, prophecies, miracles, and in relation to the questions of

fate and fortune, through reward and punishment. Reminiscent of the medieval mystery plays that were discussed earlier, at times the chroniclers began their works with the creation of the world and of paradise and then proceeded to narrate the chronicle events of the world--mostly the story of kings and rulers. For example, when we look at Grafton's Chronicle at Large (1569), we shall find that though the author aims to present British history alone, he nevertheless delves in much medieval religious matter relating to belief and faith. For these compilers of medieval and fifteenth-century English history, such theological concepts as the Trinity, the fall of Lucifer, the fall of man, and the question of divine providence helped colour their personal outlooks with respect to their particular subject matter. Professor Tillyard corroborates this view when he writes: "History in fact grows quite naturally out of theology...."[4]

When we take into account the subject of divine providence, we discover that though all the chroniclers of medieval and Renaissance England were heir to a common tradition of Christianity, they sometimes held different opinions regarding particular subjects. The fault lay not only with them, but also in the disparate elements of the

material they had been handling which, in times gone by, were rather forcefully assimilated into the theological reconciliation of Christianity. As an example, let us consider the subject of divine justice. It is an idea closely related to the general design of God's government on earth and is seen especially in terms of rewards and punishment visited upon humanity. According to one relevant statement in the Book of Deuteronomy[5] blessings and curses are inherited. Yet, according to another view punishment or reward is meted out to the persons themselves[6] Above all else, an important concept is the notion of original sin the punishment for which is conceived as being carried by the children of Adam till the very end of time.

For the medieval and Renaissance chroniclers of England, the temptation to interpret God's providence was always present. The historical Books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles in the Old Testament supplied concrete examples regarding God's justice, where kings were either rewarded or punished through visible, palpable and exemplary means. There was nothing vague or metaphysical in those dealings of God. And yet, in reality, the operation of divine providence and its application to actual events did remain a matter of conjecture and personal opinion. Though everyone

believed that whatever happened was caused by providence, which meant events were in accord with justice, mercy, and wisdom, yet God's ways still remained mysterious and undecipherable.[7] Each chronicler had his individual criterion of God's justice, mercy and wisdom through which he could justify the grand design. But in cases where the subject matter was political, there was a natural bias on the author's part. As is evident from the various records of the period that Shakespeare covers in his tetralogies (A.D. 1398-1485), the views may differ from those chroniclers who sided either with the Lancastrians, the Yorks, or the Tudors. Apart from the political bias there was another major factor that affected their interpretations of past historical events. The conception of the primary function of history as an exemplary discipline was a very old belief. It had contributed to the spread of providential judgements in the pages of medieval chronicles. During the fifteenth-century chroniclers were highly susceptible to drawing parallels from the past in order to provide lessons for the present and the future. Such an inclination made it possible to look at divine sanctions on good and evil as exemplary material whereby morals were drawn, lessons were learned, and policies were worked out.

Another relevant aspect of our study here is to consider how many of the judgements and opinions of the later writers were shaped by those of the earlier chroniclers; especially how Vergil's opinions came to be accepted and modified by Hall and Holinshed.

It was Professor Tillyard who first propounded the term "Tudor Myth" to signify a theory or bias created by the chief historiographers of the Tudor period of rule in England. The myth constitutes an elaborate defense of the Tudor dynasty's claim to the throne of England. But what the eminent critic did not explore was that even as the Tudor myth was created by supporters of the Tudor regime, other myths could well have come into being. Thus, from a political point of view, the contemporary historiographers can be divided into not one but four different camps[8]; namely, the respective supporters of Richard II, the Lancastrians, the Yorkists, and the Tudors. Hence, the Lancastrian myth was perpetuated by those historiographers who supported the rule of Henry IV, Henry V, and Henry VI. In the same manner, the York myth was created and many of the anti-Lancastrian elements appeared in defense of the new rulers. Though there was strong opposition to Henry Bolingbroke's manner of ascendence to the throne, this particular development will not be investigated here, since the sentiments of the anti-Lancastrian elements were used

later on by the Yorkists to support their cause and to challenge the Lancastrian's right to imperial power. So, for our purposes we shall consider the three most prominent myths of the period. Furthermore, since we are most concerned with the Tudor conception of history, as such it shall receive a greater amount of attention. Also, since the topic of this discussion is usurpation, we shall further limit our discussion only to those aspects of the myths that give it prominence.

i. The Lancaster Myth

According to the upholders of this myth, the corrupt reign of Richard II was providentially overthrown by his cousin Bolingbroke. Henry was considered by these historiographers as the rightful heir to the crown. They felt that, despite his problems, God had blessed him to remain a king till the end of his life. But the generosity of the Munificent was more evident in the case of Henry V, who underwent a divine transformation when it was time for him to assume the reigns of regal power. It was because of such heavenly aid that the second Lancastrian monarch proved himself one of the best kings that England ever had. During

his period of rule sovereignty was maintained both in England and in France.

For us the most important aspect of the Lancaster myth is the question of Henry Bolingbroke's usurpation of Richard II's throne. Many of the chroniclers sought justification for Richard's overthrow by alluding to the "official view" that was expressed in the Rolls of Parliament.[9] According to that document, Richard II was supposed to have recognized his faults and cheerfully resigned his throne in favour of Bolingbroke. Though the proceeding was purportedly legal and of great benefit to the commonwealth, yet no mention was made of the Earl of March's claim to the crown.

The two strongest supporters of Henry IV's cause were the monastic chronicler Thomas Walsingham and the writer of Confessio Amantis, John Gower. Walsingham, whose work extends over a period of almost fifty years (1376-1422), had revised his once critical attitude towards the House of Lancaster. Citing providential reasons for the decline of Richard's rule, he points out that it began in 1397 after the murder of his uncle Thomas of Woodstock and the later execution of the Earl of Arundel. He also refers to the various omens and prodigies that occurred a couple of years

or so later and were thought to reveal Richard's falling away from the people and his steady loss of power. The King's failure in paying attention and giving importance to these supernatural warnings of impending doom inevitably cost him his crown. His end came after his Irish campaign, during which time, according to Walsingham, God decidedly inspired Bolingbroke to return and claim his hereditary right.[10] The people received Henry as a saviour sent by God in order to free them from slavery. Furthermore, says the chronicler, it was God's will that Richard was delayed a week in returning to England, by which time Henry Bolingbroke was able to consolidate his position.

There were other chroniclers like Adam of Usk, the Monk of Evesham, Thomas Otterbourne, and the authors of the Kinkstall Chronicle who supported and supplemented Walsingham's favourable view of Henry IV's ascent to the throne of England. But among the supporters of Henry IV no one is better known to students of British literature than John Gower. Chronica Tripertita, which is an appendix to the poet's Vox Clamantis, is completely devoted to the subject of Henry's providential rise to power. His views expressed here are diametrically opposed to those he presented at the beginning of his work. Earlier on, he had

excused Richard for the troubles that England was facing, but in his conclusion he completely reverses his position and accuses him of being entirely responsible and as such the chief cause of God's wrath[11] He indicts his former patron and says that in 1387 God, as a providential warning to the evil king, had devised the insurrection of Thomas Woodstock and the nobles. Since he ignored His warning, it was natural that God finally decided to destroy the tyrant and install in his place the noble Henry Bolingbroke[12]

As a final note on the Lancaster myth we can add that the general verdict among the chroniclers of this period of English history was that Henry IV was the rightful king and Prince Hal, being his son, was the true successor to the crown. Even if shadows of divine retribution over the fate of Henry IV is discerned by some, especially his being afflicted by the "incurable disease"[13] leprosy, the rule of his son Henry V was seen as free from any stains of divine disfavour.

ii. The York Myth

Despite the recognition and grudging acceptance of the occasional instances of divine providence blessed upon the Lancastrian kings, especially on the person of Henry V, the supporters of the York myth completely reversed the previous myth of the Lancasters. They viewed the Henrys as usurpers who were providentially punished for overthrowing King Richard II. Furthermore, divine support, this time round, was believed to be on the side of the Yorkists. Henry VI's tender age and a resulting dearth of valuable experience in matters of politics and the military, had already alienated him from the people who saw him as being forsaken by God. His kingdom was soon engulfed in the flames of rebellion and war. He added to his own troubles by marrying Margaret of Anjou and breaking his oath of marrying the sister of the Earl of Armagnac.[14] He made further blunders by handing over to his father-in-law the French dukedoms of Anjou and Maine. Under such conditions Edward's victory against Henry VI and the House of Lancaster was seen by his supporters as a symbol of God's desire to bring back peace and harmony to England.

Of the proponents of the York myth no one contributed more than John Hardyng. He is one of the chief spokesmen of a doctrine which envisages Henry VI's troubles in terms of a providential punishment meted out to the House of Lancaster for its unjust possession of the crown. Even though he fought under Henry V in Agincourt and had written a Lancastrian version of history for Henry VI, he changes sides and begins narrating history in a manner suitable to his new patron Richard, the Duke of York. He presents York as heir to Edward III through the female line and then attempts to show that Henry IV became king by wrongfully deposing Richard II, the Lord's anointed.[15] After describing Henry V's martial qualities and military successes, he writes of Henry VI who, according to Hardyng, was by God's will blessed with small discretion and great simple-mindedness. One of the prominent discrepancies in this historian's account of providential justice is that later on in his text he gives providential justification for Richard II's overthrow. He blames Richard for Woodstock's death, exactly as the Lancastrian supporters did, and thereafter comments that the king was therefore punished by God through the agent of Bolingbroke.[16]

In the person of John Capgrave we have another example of a historiographer who moves from the Lancastrian to the Yorkist faction. His position is all the more dubious because he had earlier lauded all three of the Henrys in Liber de Illustribus Henricis. But later, in Chronicle of England, which was addressed to the "providentially restored" Yorkist monarch Edward IV, the chronicler calls Henry IV a usurper. This, then, was the general trend with all Yorkist or quasi-Yorkist chronicles. They also supplied Richard of York and his sons Edward, Clarence, and Richard III (and their associates) with many signs of providential aid that supposedly came in the form of prodigies and miracles.[17] In his dedicatory note to Edward IV Capgrave makes it clear as to which house he felt was favoured by destiny:

> He that entered by intrusion was Harry the Fourth. He that entered by God's provision is Edward the Fourth.[18]

iii. The Tudor Myth

Like the houses of Lancaster and York that had ruled England before them, the Tudors also encouraged the mass of their people to look at history in a special way. A common method of suitably interpreting history had been, and was going to be, to accomodate providential elements to match the various alignments of the historiographers. Also, the chroniclers belonging to the three different houses that ruled England during the fifteenth century had a tendency to neglect the earlier portions of the history unless they could utilize them in a manner beneficial to their monarchs. So they altered, retained, added or omitted whatever they thought fit or suitable for propagating their own providential interpretations.

Among the three master chroniclers[19] who supported and helped create the Tudor myth, only the foreigner Polydore Vergil is blessed with a certain amount of non-partisanship. "Certain" because though he was unblemished by family ties or excessive patriotism, we must remember that he was after all living under the patronage of the Tudor monarchs.[20] This, of course, necessitated some bias on his part when he looked

at English history. It is with him then that we shall begin

our present assessment of the different aspects of the Tudor

myth.

a) Polydore Vergil

Polydorus Vergilius of Urbino was   an   Italian   scholar

and   a   priest   who   came   to   England in 1502.[21] A few years

later, at the request of Henry VII, he began   to   compile   a

complete   history   of   England and, after massive revisions,

finally published it in the   year   1534.[22] Vergil's   Anglica

Historica   was a work that exerted considerable influence on

all later Elizabethan historiographers.

A particularly interesting aspect of Vergil's chronicle

is   his   stress   upon the exemplary aspect of history. With

such a bent of mind he repeatedly cites events from   English

history that help form morals of universal application. His

providential reflections become more and more common in   the

second   edition   of   his   work.[23] In   one   regard,   we   must

acknowledge a unique quality of Vergil's   work,   for   unlike

the   many   who   had   gone before and even those who followed

him,   he   does   not   blindly   copy   out   the   providential

interpretations of the previous chroniclers. His views with regard to providence are remarkable both in style and content.[24] The later chroniclers, especially Hall, owed much to the formative opinions of Polydore Vergil.

Being the successful synthesizer he was, Vergil's contribution to the Tudor myth was made after delineating aspects of the Lancastrian, Yorkist, and Tudor points of view.[25] Concerning the Lancastrian usurpation, the chronicler's treatment of both Richard II and Henry Bolingbroke is on the natural and ethical level. For example, he criticises Richard for his negligence and his inherent weakness in choosing and taking the advice of bad advisors. But then he does not believe that the king really deserved the fate by which he lost his kingdom and his life. In his opinion the fickle nature of the people who abandoned their king and ran to the usurper was responsible for the downfall of Richard. This is especially true since, in his eyes, Bolingbroke's return to England from banishment was not born out of a desire to rule the land. According to H.A. Kelly, Vergil opines that

> This consideration is offered as a great lesson to
> rulers, to be aware of and take precautions against
> the tendency of all mortals to oppose present

conditions in the hope of better ones to come.[26]

When we come to Vergil's treatment of Henry IV's crime of deposing Richard and taking over the royal throne by force, we find no words of reprimand from him. In truth he does not allude to providential punishment as being the cause of the troubles that plagued Henry's rule. He thinks that it was natural that the nobles who rebelled did so because they were either stung by pity and remorse for Richard's problems or had harboured great envy for Bolingbroke's sudden rise to the throne of England. Vergil makes no mention of any repentance on the king's part for usurping the throne or being wrongfully in possession of stolen property.[27]

It is evident that by the time Vergil had published his second edition of _Anglica Historica_, he had probably come to the conclusion that Edward IV's success against Henry VI was probably due to the working of divine justice in punishing the Lancastrian rulers for having wrongfully acquired the crown.[28] On the other hand, never really sympathizing with the Yorkist claimants to the throne, Vergil shows how Edward IV seals his own doom by executing Clarence, thereby committing the terrible crime of fratricide. The chief crime with which the three sons of the Duke of York had been

involved with was that of killing King Henry VI. Apparently the seizure of the crown was less significant a cause than the regicide for which they "clearly paid the penalty...for when they no longer had enemies to lash out against, they turned their cruelty upon themselves...and polluted their hands with their own blood".[29] According to Vergil, Edward received his punishment when his sons were killed by Richard III. It is somewhat difficult to comprehend the justice of such "exemplary" punishment, especially since the York king died before his sons.

With regard to Richard III, the last of the Plantagenet monarchs, Vergil accepts the overwhelmingly villainous picture that had been presented by historians before him. Subsequently, he portrays him in a similar fashion and says that he was providentially punished for all his crimes perpetrated not just against the House of Lancaster but also against his own kinsmen. As opposed to Richard's providential fall, the author pictures the providential rise of Henry Tudor. The important message we get from Vergil is that there is a moral and providential continuity relating to the fate of the families of Lancaster, York, and Tudor. He also believes that all sins are eventually paid for and all virtue and righteousness vindicated.

b) <u>Edward</u> <u>Hall</u>

Unlike most of his contemporary historians, Hall begins his chronicle with the usurpation of Henry IV.[30] He focusses his attention and draws our own to the division among the royal families that Bolingbroke's action had caused. Moving on from this violation of order, he comes to the reign of the Tudors. Here he presents his notion of a final unbreachable union achieved through the policies of Henry VII and embodied in the person of Henry VIII, his son.

Without ever really acknowledging his debt to him,[31] Hall works out the design of his chronicle by using Vergil's history. Though he also made extensive use of other chronicles and sometime presents his own interpretations, yet it is difficult to think of Hall without regarding Vergil as his silent guide. However, for the sake of fairness, it must be pointed out that there are some rare occasions when Hall disagrees with the elder chronicler. Hall's greatest point of difference with his mentor is with respect to the religious reforms of Henry VIII. Being a strong supporter of the King's reforms, he vehemently opposes the interference of Rome in the affairs of England.

On one other level Hall differs from Vergil's views. He is far more patriotic with regard to England's differences with France than Vergil could ever claim to be.

Hall sees the usurpation of Henry IV as the main cause of division among the descendants of Edward III. To a man who began his work with a strong stress on the need for union, the element of division, like disorder, was believed to play a significant role in the history of men. So, right at the beginning of The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancaster and York he says that since a union cannot be understood except with respect to a division, it will be his declared aim at first to describe the division that existed in England resulting from Henry's deposition of Richard II.[32] Like Vergil, he believes in the exemplary aspect of history and so, on a purely ethical level, he emphasizes the benefits of union and the evils of discord. The providential references are made mostly when he comes under the direct influence of Polydore Vergil.

Concerning Richard II's fate, Hall repeats the words of Vergil and argues that the offences that he might have committed were more due to the follies of youth than to any personal malice towards anyone. The fickleness of man in

being perpetually dissatisfied with the present is categorized as the true reason for Richard's fall.[33] He refrains from commenting on whether Henry IV was justified in seizing the crown. He also avoids implying that providence was in any way involved in the new king's accession. In fact, he repeatedly tries to project his own personal belief that God's providential plan cannot be fathomed. He further tones down the theme of usurpation when he comes to treating Henry V because he does not want to tarnish the image of the ideal king.

In the treatment of the rise of the House of York, Hall follows Vergil very closely. But unlike the Italian, he is more inclined towards the Yorkists than the Lancastrians.[34] The speech that Vergil assigns to the Duke of York clearly testifies to his support of that House. The Duke, in his speech delivered at the House of Lords, tells the assembly that the realm of England was sick and that the root of that malady could be traced back to the usurpation of Richard II's throne by Bolingbroke.[35] The would-be Lancaster king had committed an unpardonable sin when, despite the prior allegiance he had sworn to Richard, he attacked, imprisoned, and finally had the King murdered. Hall is naturally full of praise for the Tudors who brought about the desired goal

of blessed union that he himself so admired. Hence the chronicler at times contributes his own views to his adaptation of Vergil's interpretation of the Tudor myth. Through Richmond's speech, delivered before the decisive battle of Bosworth field, Hall lists the crimes of Richard III. The glorified Tudor commander encourages his army to advance forward like

> ...true men against traitors, pitiful persons
> against murderers, true inheritors against
> usurpers, the scourges of God against tyrants.[36]

From the very speeches that Hall assigns to Richard and Richmond, it is no difficult task to guess which side the chronicler supports and favours with divine blessing and providential success.

c) Raphael Holinshed

Holinshed's 1587 Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland is believed to be the edition that Shakespeare used for his English history plays.[37] Published several years after the author's death, the second edition bears marks of editing by a copious moralizer known by the name of Abraham

Fleming. Kelly believes it was "Fleming's tedious and often puerile comments that are the most significant for the theme of divine providence".[38] Other experts have found evidence to suggest that a few more editors have left their marks on the work of Raphael Holinshed.

Even though after the reign of Henry VIII the chroniclers were left with a wider choice of imitation from the works of those who had gone before, they were sometimes presented with problems concerning proper assimilation. As an example we could consider Holinshed's treatment of Richard VI where the source material was collected from such a varied group of historians as Vergil, Caxton, Fabyan, Walsingham, and John Snow.[39] Both Tillyard and Kelly are critical of Holinshed's method of assimilation. Tillyard says,

> Much of the motivation of Polydore and
> Hall are borrowed by Holinshed and only
> parrotwise and with little understanding.
> Holinshed has not indeed the space to be
> as ample as Hall was in his restricted
> area of history, but his abbreviations
> and omissions are unintelligent.[40]

Kelly places a good deal of the blame on the editors of the second edition, especially Fleming, for the sometimes

contradictory and often unresolved conflicts involving characters and destinies. Concerning Henry IV's prosperity at the expense of Richard II's fall, Holinshed opines that it was quite evident to the world that the former had wrongfully usurped the crown, violently removed the lawful king and later cruelly had him murdered. For these reasons, he says, both Henry Bolingbroke and his posterity were afflicted by constant troubles until their direct line was completely eliminated by the opposing House of York. From such statements as these, hints of a kind of providential punishment resulting from sin are given.[41] Continuing on the same theme of divine punishment while treating the reign of Henry V, he presents the notion that God suddenly cut off his successful reign just when he was at his peak. This, he says, was the inevitable result of his father's crime against Richard II. Furthermore, to punish the unruly and usurping people of England God then sent them Henry VI, a ruler who lacked wisdom. During Henry's unlawful reign God duly punished the country with great afflictions until "out of his great pity and mercy he desired to put an end to it all by sending York himself".[42]

For the history of Richard III's overthrow by Richmond, Holinshed follows Hall in general. He says that it was by the appointment of God's justice and the dictates of providence that Richard was fatefully drawn to Bosworth. He adopts the Vergil-Hall theory that divine justice caused a criminal like Richard III to be less careful at the very time when punishment was near. It is not difficult to agree with such critics as Kelly that Holinshed seems more successful than Vergil in presenting a coherent providential view of the century.[43] The concept had remained largely unintegrated in Vergil's account, and when observable, it was added more as an afterthought than anything else. We feel this to be true when we consider Vergil's speculations on the question of providential justice that is meted out on Henry VI, supposedly for the sin of his grandfather Henry Bolingbroke. But when the elder historian was dealing with Henry V's rule, he did not mention that he was guilty in any way of the usurpation of King Richard's throne and therefore deserved to be punished by God. It is only when he narrates the history of Henry VI, the last of the reigning Lancastrian monarchs, that he refers to the belief that his deposition was brought about by divine justice since his grandfather had deposed Richard II and wrongfully acquired

the throne of England. Holinshed is more direct and presents his view on hereditary retribution when he deals in his chapters on Richard II and Henry IV, the original sinners.[44]

CHURCH HOMILIES

Apart from the histories and chronicles, a fundamental method for promoting state propaganda during the Tudor regime was through the use of the church homilies. We cannot overlook the importance of such works as the Book of Homilies which was first published in 1547 during the reign of King Edward VI. We should also be aware that they were indeed significant contributions towards the creation of a collective consciousness for the age. In their use "every Sunday and Holyday in the yeere"[45] they were far more immediate and effective than any work of history could ever claim to be. The homilies were largely written, as occasion arose, to meet immediate religious or political needs. And so, as Tillyard points out, a sermon on the fear of death was published in 1547 when the need was felt to calm those Protestant minds which still retained the Catholic fear of dying without shrift.[46] In its original form (of 1547), there were twelve sermons in the Book of Homilies. In 1563 the number rose to thirty-two and in 1573 the homily Against Disobedience and wilful Rebellion was accommodated with the rest.[47]

To trace the earlier forms of the Elizabethan homilies we must move back in time to the reign of Henry VIII. When he broke away from Rome Henry VIII promulgated, with the help of his obsequious clergy, a new system of despotic theocracy. Through the main tenet of the new creed he was declared God's immediate deputy on earth and as such no longer liable to the censures of the Roman Church. The second tenet of importance was that the obedience of the prince's subjects was passive and without any reservations on any pretext. Thus were born the doctrines of divine right and passive obedience which were to prove such powerful weapons in the hands of Queen Elizabeth. When the nine-year-old Edward took the throne of his dead father, his Council of Regency, in an attempt to achieve greater control over matters of state and church, advocated the prohibition of all sermons except under special licence. The Tudor propaganda machinery, fearing Popish sabotage, sent to every parish in the kingdom a book with a rather long title: Certayne Sermons or Homilies, appoynted by the Kynges Maiestie to be declared, and redde by all Persones, Vicars, or Curates, every Sundaye in their Churches, where they have cure. During the reign of Edward many editions of these official sermons were printed. Of them, the tenth homily

which was termed "an exhortation concerning good order and Obedience to Rulers and Magistrates" became well-known. It briefly treated such important political and religious doctrines as the divine right of kings, passive obedience and the sin of rebellion. Though suppressed during Mary's short reign, it was quickly revived soon after Elizabeth's rise to power. In 1563 appeared The Seconde Tome of Homilies containing XX discourses. But such matters as the Northern Rebellion of 1569, Pope Pius V's issuance of the famous Bull of Deposition against the British Queen, and Ridolfi's planned invasion of England, alarmed Elizabeth and her Council of Regency. On their urgent orders the bishops prepared a new homily on disobedience and wilful rebellion.[48] Printed in 1573, the new sermon which is called "An Homily against Disobedience and wilful Rebellion" was the last addition to the Book of Homilies. In connection with Shakespeare and the homily Alfred Hart conjectures:

> The poet would be in his tenth year when the
> new homily ... was read for the first time
> in Holy Trinity Church. Its downrightness,
> simplicity of language, freedom from dogma
> and direct references to events of three
> years before were calculated to impress the
> memory and mind of an imaginative boy. To forget
> it or its solemn teachings would be impossible,
> for on nine Sundays or holydays in each year the
> congregation would hear a portion of the homily
> On Obedience or a sixth of that on Disobedience

and Wilful Rebellion, and would at the conclusion
of the reading say the prayer for the safety of
the queen and her defence against rebels and
traitors.[49]

Hart continues to dwell upon the importance of such early religious training that was imparted on "almost all the numerous poets, dramatists, annalists, and other prose writers that adorned the Elizabethan age".[50] Shakespeare, in particular, seems to outdo all the major contemporary poets and dramatists in the number of allusions made to divine right, passive obedience and the horrors of civil war and rebellion. Time and again, not only in his histories, but in his comedies, romances and tragedies, references are made to one or the other of these subjects. In fact, what is peculiar to Shakespeare is that such political and theological doctrines are shown to be the accepted and irreversible laws of every country and every age.[51] Of course, one must remember that Shakespeare was neither a theologian, nor a politician; he was a poet and a playwright. As such, he is neither preaching nor proseletizing for any person or group. Though the chief elements of the fictitious political creed that the Tudors had created are to be found in his works, Shakespeare the artist avoids being dogmatic. Neither was the dramatist,

unlike the authors of the homilies On Obedience and Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion, impelled to uphold any particular political philosophy which had to be supported by an elaborate set of texts from the Scriptures.

The Homily on Obedience begins thus:

> Almightye God hath created and appoynted all thinges, in heaven, earth and waters, in a mooste excellente and perfecte order. In heaven, he hath appoynted distincte or severall orders and states of Archaungelies and Aungelles. In earth he hath assigned and appoynted kynges, prynces, with other governoures under them, all in good and necessarye order.[52]

The anonymous author of the homily thus stresses the presence, and later the necessity, of order in the created world. Since we have treated the matter in some detail in the previous chapter, we shall now merely repeat that the homilists argued that if this universal order was in any way destroyed or temporarily subverted, chaos would surely ensue. Furthermore, they suggested that God had ordained kings and rulers to govern communities for the common benefit of all. And, since the king's authority to rule had been derived directly from God and as it could be proved by drawing examples from both the Scriptures and the sayings of the Apostles, the principal duty of the subject was complete

obedience. In case a king turned out to be wicked, the only remedy would be endurance rather than rebellion. Since kings were God's deputies, rebellion against them constituted rebellion against God. They point out that the usual pretext offered for rebellion is to bring about reform, but it is an insufficient reason for committing a crime not only against the king and the country but also against God. Moreover they warned, through the homily on Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion, that the wages for the sin of rebelling against God's anointed are delivered in the form of plagues, famine and civil war. In this manner the homilies On Rebellion and Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion, while upholding the sanctity of monarchy, summarily castigate all acts of rebellion.

All the commonplace Tudor beliefs relating to order, divine right and passive obedience are scattered throughout Shakespeare's plays. Ulysses's speech on the necessity of order in the world has been studied in the last chapter. But apart from Troilus and Cressida there are other plays in which are imbedded some of the common Tudor ideas. That fundamental article of Tudor state-craft that looked at the king as the divine representative of God on earth was expressed thus in the Homily on Obedience:

> We must refer all judgement to God, to Kings and
> Rulers, Judges under them, which be God's officers
> to execute justice, and by plain words of Scripture,
> have their authority, and use of the sword granted
> by God.[53]

The Histories contain repeated references to the special position of kings and of their divine right to rule. Richard II contains perhaps the largest number of such allusions. In the second scene of the third act the Bishop of Carlisle reminds a weak and despondent King that God will come to his help:

> Fear not, my Lord; that Power that made you King
> Hath power to keep you King in spite of all.
> (Richard II,III,ii,27-28)

Soon after, in response to Aumerle's fears of rebel Bolingbroke's steadily growing strength, a revived and defiant Richard says:

> Not all the water in the rough rude sea
> Can wash the balm off from an anointed king;
> The breath of worldly men cannot depose
> The deputy elected by the Lord.
> (Richard II,III,ii,54-57)

Like Richard II, Henry VI also recognizes his semi-divine position and so he declares:

> And therefore, by his majesty I swear,
> Whose far unworthy deputy I am,....
> (2 <u>Henry</u> <u>VI</u>,III,ii,285-286)

When arraigned by the sad Queen Elizabeth and his own unfortunate mother, even the devilish Richard III quite unabashedly cries out:

> Let not the Heavens hear these tell-tale women
> Rail on the Lord's anointed.
> (<u>Richard</u> <u>III</u>,IV,iv,150-151)

Since, as the homilies preach, the monarch's authority is directly derived from God, passive obedience and non-resistance are the doctrines that should be followed.

> So we shall live in true obedience, bothe to our
> most mercifull king in heaven, and to our mooste
> Christian Queene in earth.
> (<u>Homily</u> <u>on</u> <u>Obedience</u>)[54]

And,

> ...let all mark diligently, that it is not lawful for
> inferiours and subjectes, in any case to resist or
> stand against the superior powers....
> (<u>Homily</u> <u>on</u> <u>Obedience</u>)[55]

Shakespeare's King Richard II likewise believes in passive obedience of the people and looks upon revolt as a sin in the sight of God.

> Revolt our Subjects? That we cannot mend:
> They break their faith to God, as well as us.
> (Richard II,III,ii,100-101)

Rebellion was severely criticised by the homilists too.

> How terrible a sin against God, and man Rebellion
> is, cannot possibly be expressed according unto
> the greatness there of. For he that nameth
> Rebellion, nameth not a singular or one only sin,
> as is theft, robbery, murther and such like; but
> he nameth the whole puddle, and sink of all sins
> against God, and man, against his Prince, his
> Country-men, his parents, his children, his
> kinsfolks, his friends, and against all men
> universally; all sins, I say, against God, and all
> men heaped together nameth he, that nameth
> rebellions.[56]

Shakespeare has no sympathy for rebels or rebellions.[57] Throughout his histories, both British and Roman, dislike is expressed for them. In Richard II when banished Bolingbroke returns to England prematurely, the noble Duke of York, his uncle, rebukes his nephew thus:

> In gross rebellion and detested treason.
> Thou art a banished man; and here art come
> Before the expiration of thy time,
> In braving arms against thy sovereign.

(<u>Richard</u> <u>II</u>,II,iii,108-111)

Similarly the ideal king Henry V denounces the conspirators

Cambridge, Grey and Scroop and calls them "English monsters"[58]

when he accuses them of having,

  ...conspired against our royal person
  Joined with an enemy proclaimed, and from his coffers
  Received the golden earnest of our death;
  Wherein you would have sold your king to slaughter,
  His princes and his peers to servitude,
  His subjects to oppression and contempt,
  And his whole kingdom into desolation.
         (<u>Henry</u> <u>V</u>,II,ii,167-173)

His speech clearly echoes the warning of the homilist

against wilful rebellion.

  Furthermore, according to the homilies, the leader or

the "grand captain and father of rebels" is supposed to be

no other than Lucifer. Just as the medieval doctrine of

order was being revived and stressed by the Tudor homilists,

so also was the belief borne out by the medieval cycle plays

that the devil was the archetypal rebel. The author of the

homily on <u>Disobedience</u> <u>and</u> <u>Wilful</u> <u>Rebellion</u> ends his opening

paragraph with the assertion that,

  The first author of...rebellion, the root

of all vices, the mother of all mischiefs,
was Lucifer...who by rebelling against the
Majesty of God, of the brightest and most
glorious Angel, is become the blackest and
most foul fiend, and devil.[59]

Shakespeare's "anointed" kings are invariably described as sacrosant and above ordinary human law. Yet, unlike what the homilists preached, he made his wise princes aware that despite their semi-divinity a firm grip on royal power was essential. On the other hand, the usurpers by their very act of rebellion and grand insubordination may very well draw upon themselves God's wrath:

For though usurpers sway the rule awhile
Yet heavens are just, and time suppreseth wrong.
                    (3 Henry VI,III,iii,76-77)

This could very well be Shakespeare's final word on the question of usurpation. But a wary reader will quickly realize that this is not so; especially since these are the words of the evil, brutal and pitiless Queen Margaret who by her own actions removes herself from the sympathy of the audience.

Above all else Shakespeare is a dramatist of supreme skill and knowledge. He was interested in scenes of deposition as it offered him the rare chance of presenting before his audience through a picture of change, the phenomenon of the breach of order. Yet while diligently evolving such a drama of intense appeal and interest, he chose not to be completely at odds with the major facts of history or of life. Therefore, unlike the explicit message of the homilies, neither all usurpers are portrayed as devils incarnate, nor do all of them receive exemplary punishment in their lives. His gallery of usurpers contain portraits of not only Richard III and Claudius, but also that of Henry Bolingbroke. His lack of didacticism and his great impartiality makes him, unlike the chroniclers and the homilists, an artist who is best suited to present the enigma of life. In the final section of this study we shall try to assimilate the major ideas of the present and the previous two chapters and attempt to reach some conclusions regarding the character of some of the usurpers in Shakespeare's plays.

NOTES

[1]And, for a short time, the rule of Henry V.

[2]See E.M.W. Tillyard, _Shakespeare's History Plays_ (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961), p.8.

[3]Tillyard's phrase, _Ibid._

[4]_Ibid._, p.9.

[5]See H.A. Kelly, _Divine Providence in the England of Shakespeare's Histories_ (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), p.1.

[6]See _Ibid._, Introduction. pp.1-5.

[7]For most of these ideas I am indebted to Kelly, pp.2-5. Also Lily B. Campbell, _Shakespeare's Histories: Mirrors of Elizabethan Policy_ (San Marino, California: The Huntington Library,1963), Part I: History, Historiography, and Politics.

[8]See Kelly,p.9.

[9]See _Ibid._,p.10.

[10]See _Ibid._,p.12.

[11]_Ibid._,p.14.

[12]Gower, quoted by Kelly,p.14.

[13] See Kelly, pp.27,29.

[14] See for example Ibid., p.39.

[15] Ibid., p.40.

[16] Ibid., pp.42ff.

[17] See Kelly, p.51.

[18] Capgrave, quoted by Kelly, p.51.

[19] Polydore Vergil, Edward Hall and Raphael Holinshed.

[20] See Kelly, p.86.

[21] Tillyard says 1501; we have accepted Kelly's date.

[22] A second edition, published in 1546, contained additions.

[23] See Kelly, p.86.

[24] See Ibid., p.87.

[25] André and his fellow writers at the royal court had already created for Henry VII, the germs of a Tudor myth.

[26] Kelly, p.87.

[27] In a similar fashion Vergil checks himself from criticizing Henry V's possession of the crown even though he mentions those who had prior claims to it. See Kelly, p.89.

[28] Again, a suggestion made by Kelly, p.98.

[29] Vergil, quoted from Kelly, p.99.

[30] Edward Hall's The Union of the Two Noble and

Illustre _Families_ _of_ _Lancaster_ _and_ _York_ was published posthumously in 1548.

[31]See Kelly, p.109.

[32]Hall, quoted from Kelly, p.110.

[33]Hall, quoted from Kelly, p.112.

[34]Kelly, p.121.

[35]For a text of the speech that Hall attributes to York, see Kelly, pp.122ff.

[36]Hall, quoted from Kelly, p.135.

[37]See Kelly, p.138 and Tillyard, _History_ _Plays_, p.50.

[38]Kelly, p.138.

[39]Ibid., p.139.

[40]Tillyard, _History_ _Plays_, p.50.

[41]Kelly, p.143.

[42]Ibid., p.149.

[43]Ibid., p.159.

[44]Ibid., pp.159-160.

[45]Preface, _Certain_ _Sermons_ _and_ _Homilies_, quoted by Arthur F. Kinney, _Elizabethan_ _Background_(Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1975), p.44.

[46]Tillyard, _History_ _Plays_, p.65.

[47]See M.M. Reese, _The_ _Cease_ _of_ _Majesty_(London:

Edward Arnold [Publishers] Ltd., 1961), p.37;   also Alfred
Hart, _Shakespeare_ _and_ _the_ _Homilies_(New York: Octagon
Books, 1970), p.22.

[48]See Hart, p.22.

[49]Ibid., p.23.

[50]Ibid.

[51]Thus they are not limited to 15th century England
alone but show various countries at different times.

[52]_Homily_ _on_ _Obedience_, quoted from Kinney, p.60.

[53]_Certain_ _Sermons_ _and_ _Homilies_, p.71, quoted by
Hart, p.36.

[54]Quoted by Kinney, p.70.

[55]Ibid., p.63.

[56]_Homilies_, p.292, quoted by Hart, p.48.

[57]And, in 2 _Henry_ _VI_ is found one of his earliest
comments on the mob in rebellion when Jack Cade decides to
take the law into his own hands.

[58]Shakespeare, _Henry_ _V_,II,ii,85.

[69]_Homilies_, p.276, quoted from Hart, p.55.

CHAPTER IV

THE SHAKESPEAREAN SYNTHESIS

> Kings are everywhere in Shakespeare: from Scotland
> to Rome to Antioch, from the days of Priam and
> Caesar to those of Henry VIII, in every condition
> in every degree of wisdom and power. Kingship is a
> major thematic element in half of the plays.
> <div align="right">Maynard Mack, Jr.[1]</div>

To any observant reader of Shakespeare's plays the above statement will not come as new knowledge. It will merely reiterate a point made clear by Shakespeare's repeated use of "kings, kingship, and the problem of rulership in general"[2]. So strong is his preoccupation with kings that if ever we were to remove all the kings from the canon of his works, we would be left with very little from which to appreciate his genius. There are numerous reasons as to why Shakespeare so often chooses kings for his characters. Among them, one of the most obvious is because they supply "the splendour of high office"[3] to his plays. With a similar intention the Greek and the Roman playwrights had also used them in their plays as they projected a bigger than life image for the audience to look at. Similarly, the history of English theatre before the time of Shakespeare is adorned with stories of the rise and fall of famous monarchs. Both the morality and the chronicle tradition of

the English stage were peopled by kings and rulers.

Apart from the strong influences of the medieval English drama, as a fledgeling artist, Shakespeare must surely have been affected by the exigencies of Tudor political thought regarding the conception of monarchy. He must have been aware that traditional ideas concerning monarchs and their functions were undergoing rapid social and political revaluation. The Tudor propaganda machine through such effective means as the use of chronicles and homilies was publicising its own concept of kingship. According to it, the royal office was assumed to be divinely instituted.[4] And as such, any rebellion against the "lord's anointed" would in fact entail a rebellion against God. Furthermore, proper order, which only a rightful monarch could ensure, was conceived as a necessary guarantee against chaos. Also, in cases of rebellion and political suppression, analogies to the arch-rebel Lucifer were frequently forthcoming.[5] From all this was born a sacramental notion of monarchy which in fact made kingship more venerable than it was.[6] But Shakespeare was neither a political tool nor a Tudor propagandist. His works display a myriad of images concerning kings and kingship; and what is most prominent and appealing about Shakespeare's monarchs

is that they are not so much venerable as vulnerable. His portraits are not only of such successful kings as Henry V and Henry VIII, but also of such weak and hapless monarchs as Richard II and Henry VI. Indeed, the most pitiful line-up of Shakespearean kings would include those who, despite their apparently regal and "divine" nature, are forcefully removed from their thrones. Kings like Richard II, Henry VI, Old Hamlet, and Duncan have the misfortune of being deposed through the use of naked and brutal force, by deceit and disloyalty or by a combination of the two. Behind such acts that are seemingly blessed by the agents of anarchy and disorder, and deplored by both the sane world and the ordered universe, are a special breed of characters. Henry Bolingbroke, Richard III, Claudius, and Macbeth can be grouped together not simply because they are usurpers but also because being so they share some common traits of character. In them are prominently displayed the compelling power of the Luciferian image, for they aspire to become kings by unlawful and unacceptable means. Like the archetypal-rebel, they all deliberately seek to fill a higher position in life thereby disturbing the balance of order and leaping the bounds of degree. Furthermore, like Lucifer, his representatives on earth "untune...[the]

string"[7], bringing disharmony and disturbances that pervade the realms they rule. This theme of disharmony on a grand scale, much like the evils of Pandora's box, is slightly more prominent in case of the histories than in the tragedies.[8]

The aim in the present section is to analyze some of the prominent usurpers from Shakespeare's works and to study them with respect to their crime, its magnitude and its aftermath. An effort will also be made to note similarities or differences that may exist among these "imposters" and their acts. The study will include usurpers taken from both Shakespeare's histories and tragedies. In all, four characters; namely, Henry Bolingbroke, Richard III, Claudius, and Macbeth will be the main points of focus.

i. HENRY BOLINGBROKE

Just as there is no dearth of monarchs and kings in the history of western drama, so is there no scarcity of men who rebelled and stood up before them in complete defiance. Many years divide the works of Shakespeare and the Greek

dramatist Aeschylus who by his portrayal of Prometheus presented one of the earliest of rebels. But Prometheus won our hearts by his noble cause and his great suffering.[9] On the other hand, this is definitely not so in the case of Clytemnestra of The Oresteian Trilogy . When she, with the help of her lover Aegisthus, kills King Agamemnon, she sets a horrible new precedent in western drama, killing not merely a husband but a king.[10] Thus when we are treated to Shakespeare's double tetralogy we must understand that the dramatist's treatment of regicide was not a unique theme and that, like regicide, usurpation had also been a subject of western drama for some time.

Among Shakespeare's history plays the acts of rebellion and regicide are nowhere more significantly presented than in Richard II where kingship is legitimate and thereby "divinely" sanctioned. As such, when Henry Bolingbroke usurps the throne of Richard, he lets loose all the forces of chaos and disorder that plague not only his own reign, but the reigns of the later kings, both Lancastrian and Yorkist. The internecine quarrels continue till Henry Tudor kills Richard III in the battle of Bosworth Field and becomes the new king of England.

Quite unlike Richard III, in Richard II Shakespeare took obvious pains to draw a usurper who keeps secret both his real character and his true motives. Like a machiavel, he hides his actual self from everyone around him--and this includes the audience--till the very moment of usurpation. As M.M. Reese very aptly points out, Henry Bolingbroke, like Cromwell, had realised the dictum that "he rises the highest who knows not whither he is going"[11]. Reese adds that his actions are allowed a flexibility since he does not declare his ultimate aim and thereafter it makes "him dangerous from the first"[12]. So, soon after his sudden and unwarranted return from exile when York questions Bolingbroke about the reasons why he had returned "in gross rebellion and detested treason...braving arms against thy sovereign"[13] he calmly replies that he had come only to "lay claim/ To...[his] inheritance of free descent"[14]--i.e. to reclaim the dukedom that Richard had wrongfully seized.[15] In this way he neutralizes his uncle who in turn, knowing that his "power is weak and all ill left"[16] against Bolingbroke's, makes the choice not just to "remain a neuter", but even to invite the rebels into his castle to repose for the night.

So successfully does Shakespeare mask Bolingbroke's ambition that there is an actual ambiguity within the play concerning the real intention behind his return to England. In fact Shakespeare's play lends some substance to the traditional view that there was no deliberate calculation involved behind Bolingbroke's seizing of the crown.[17] In his The Civil Wars, Samuel Daniel holds that, even though the usurpation was a crime, Bolingbroke was a mere agent of providence.

> Then fortune, thou art guilty of his deed
> That didst set his state above his hopes erect,
> And then must bear some blame for his great sin
> ....
> That he who had no thought so high to climb,
> ....
> Was with occasion thrust into the crime,
> Seeing others' weakness and his part so strong.
> The Civil Wars[18]

The ambiguity regarding Bolingbroke's true aims is hinted at in the play when, despite his later claim to only his dukedom, on his way to exile he reveals higher aims when he tries to woo the multitude. Richard himself wryly describes Henry's attempts to win the people's hearts:[19]

> Ourself and Bushy, Bagot here and Green,
> Observed his courtship to the common people,
> How he did seem to dive into their hearts
> With humble and familiar courtesy,

> What reverence he did throw away on slaves,
> Wooing poor craftsmen with the craft of smiles.
> (<u>Richard</u> <u>II</u>,I,iv,23-28)

It is probable that only a calculating machiavel who plans to use the support of the people would doff his bonnet to every "oyster-wench" and address the crowds as "countrymen" and "loving friends". Thinking on the same lines, Derek Traversi opines that

> in Bolingbroke, no doubt, the virtues of reverence and humility have been transformed into the 'craft of smiles', popularity has become an instrument of policy, and the bending of the 'supple knee' a means to power.[20]

Even though Bolingbroke's subsequent rise to the throne contradicts his earlier statements of only desiring to recover his lost estates, it, on another level, very clearly shows the ineffectual attempts of the reigning monarch Richard to guard his throne. In fact, when compared, the two characters stand as opposites with regard to politic action. Richard is indeed no match for the cunning usurper who, in the final analysis, ascends to the throne of England more as "a march of necessity towards a throne that Richard has abandoned"[21] than anything else. Yet despite his

weaknesses, despite his apparent involvement in the Duke of Gloucester's death,[22] and despite the act of seizing Hereford's rights,[23] with all of his faults and misconceptions Richard was the rightful king. One of Richard's debilitating characteristic is his exaggerated belief in Divine Right, which leads him into believing, when faced by the reality of Bolingbroke's rebellion, that God and His angels will help him protect his "divine" office:

> ... if angels fight,
> Weak men must fall, for heaven still guards the right.
> (Richard II,III,ii,61-62)

So strong is his faith in the invincibility of his royal office that he says, quite impractically,

> Not all the water in the rough rude sea
> Can wash the balm from off an anointed king.
> (Richard II,III,ii,54-55)

But in the test of action, in the face of reality, Richard's fondest assumptions lie crumbled in the dust. However, despite that, till the very end of his reign, and even his life, Richard clings to a faith in the invincibility and sacredness of an office that he once filled as God's majesty. He believes every word of it when he looks forward

to the future and assures his wife,

> Our holy lives must win a new world's crown,
> Which our profane hours here have stricken down.
> (<u>Richard II</u>,V,i,24-25)

The end of <u>Richard II</u> shows, on the one hand, the new king Henry IV forgiving Aumerle and the Bishop of Carlisle, but, on the other hand, the play also chronicles the murder of the old king Richard II by Exton. Exton's protestations, "from your own mouth, my lord, did I this deed"[24] are of no use; they do not earn him any thanks from the usurper who asks the murderer instead to "never show thy head by day or by night"[25] Such a reward is typical of a machiavel who knows exactly how to "dive into...[men's] hearts/With humble and familiar courtesy"[26] But once brought to power, as John Wilders points out,

> he ceases to ingratiate himself with Northumberland
> and Hotspur, and his former solicitude to please
> them appears false, as it probably was. He is one
> of those rulers described by Machiavelli who cannot
> keep the friendship of those who have helped them
> to power.[27]

Concerning the fate of the usurper Bolingbroke, we have to wait till his very friends turn against him and as Richard prophesied, and Carlisle promised, peace is removed from his commonwealth. We recall that at the close of Richard II a conscience-pricked Henry says,

> I will make a voyage to the Holy Land,
> To wash this blood off from my guilty hand.
> (Richard II,V,vi,49-50)

Henry's guilt lives in him and haunts his memories in the two plays that bear his name. Furthermore, the world of chaos and troubles that the Bishop of Carlisle anticipates in ActIV, Sc.i, of Richard II, becomes a close reality in the Henry IV plays. At the very beginning of 1 Henry IV, an apparently tired Henry confirms this fact himself.

> So shaken as we are, so wan with care,
> Find we a time for frightened peace to pant,
> And breathe short-winded accents of new broils
> To be commenced in stronds afar remote.
> (1 Henry IV,I,i,1-4)

Also, Henry IV does not seem to have succeeded in washing Richard's "blood off from...[his] guilty hand".[28] We get this feeling when Henry's guilt-ridden soul looks for some secret cause for which he has been cursed with an apparently

useless son.

> I know not whether God will have it so
> For some displeasing service I have done,
> That , in his secret doom, out of my blood
> He'll breed revengement and a scourge for me.
> (1 Henry IV,III,ii,4-7)

Then, finally, comes the significant speech whereby he
reveals to his son the chief reason why, he believes, he was
not blessed with a peaceful reign:

> God knows my son,
> By what bypaths and indirect crooked ways
> I met this crown, and I myself know well .
> How troublesome it sat upon my head.
> (2 Henry IV,IV,v,83-86)

Henry hopes that his son can escape a similar fate:

To thee it shall descend with better quiet,
Better opinion, better confirmation,
For all the soil of the achievement goes
With me into the earth.
> (2 Henry IV,IV,v,87-90)

But later on we see his son, the valiant Henry V, recalling
his father's crime on the eve of Agincourt. Apparently he
has not been able to forget it and therefore, fearing the
wrath of an avenging God, cries out for mercy.

O Lord,
O, not today, think not upon the fault
My father made in compassing the crown!
                    (Henry V,IV,i,292-294)

In conclusion, we can add that even though a new order and line of rule were established by Bolingbroke, yet for our purposes here, the significant point is that it was done at the cost of legitimacy and fair play. And, since the Lancastrian dynasty was launched in blood and lacked legitimacy, it was doomed to failure. Considered alone, Richard II as a history play grows in significance as in it is contained the original crime; for as such chroniclers like Hall and Daniel believed, it was the starting point of the misfortunes that were to invade England and trouble its monarchs for many years to come.

In this man's reign began this fatal strife
(The bloody argument whereof we treat)
That dearly cost so many a prince his life,
And spoil'd the weak, and ev'n consumed the great.
                    The Civil Wars[29]

ii. RICHARD III

The importance of Shakespeare's Richard II, as we have seen, lies in the fact that it embodies the sin whereby the Lancastrian king Henry IV usurped power from the legitimate heir of Edward III. The tragic sequence that followed Bolingbroke's usurpation reached an end in Richard III when the flawless Richmond seized power for the Tudors after defeating the last of the Yorkist usurpers at Bosworth Field. So, through Richard III Shakespeare completes his study of the so-called War of the Roses and brings to a close his monumental study of decades of civil war and dissension. In the words of Edward Berry, Richard III

> embodies a providential conception of history precisely because of its position as the apocalyptic conclusion of the social disintegration depicted in the first tetralogy. No other play, before or after Richard III, exhibits so systematic a vision of divine purpose in history.[30]

It is in Richard III that the vision of history as a process reaches an end, lending the tetralogies their distinctive form and meaning. Also, it is here that all the sinners are repaid for their crimes.[31]

Richard's character is drawn from the traditional Tudor orthodoxy which envisioned a monster bred from the bowels of a long and bloody feud. Shakespeare carefully maintains consistency in developing him from the scenes of the second and third part of Henry VI, till finally in Richard III, his creation finds full maturity of growth and expression. As a result, Richard becomes the most savage and brutal of usurpers, putting at times even the bloody Macbeth to shame. In the Henry VI plays, we had seen Richard's anger and vengeance directed against his enemies the Lancasters; but in Richard III his villainy, which has mellowed and become far more dangerous in its cloak of secrecy and deceit, is directed against his own kinsmen. Early in 3 Henry VI Shakespeare reveals Richard's wish to control power and become a king.

> How sweet a thing it is to wear a crown,
> Within whose circuit is Elysium
> And all that poets feign of bliss and joy.
>   (3 Henry VI,I,ii,29-31)

In Richard III he realises that cherished dream.

The play opens with Richard revealing to the audience some of his darkest thoughts, telling us of his "plots" and his aim to remain as "subtle, false and treacherous"[32] as he had been before. In contrast to his other usurpers, especially Bolingbroke and Claudius, Shakespeare creates dramatic interest by allowing Richard III (who is a true machiavel)[33] to take the audience into his confidence. Thus the audience has some forewarning of the heinous nature of the hero-villain and is prepared to let the "determined" Richard "prove a villain".[34] Richard's seductive intimacy with the audience is a unique quality that has influenced critics like Bernard Spivack to associate him with the allegorical conventions of the Vice of popular medieval drama.[35]

Behind Richard's promise to do evil lies his belief that he has been "cheated of feature by dissembling Nature".[36] His anger at being "rudely stamped" parallels Edmund's who is similarly bothered by his stamp of illegitimacy.

> Why bastard? Wherefore base?
> When my dimensions are as well compact,
> My mind as generous, and my shape as true,
> As honest madam's issue? Why brand they thus
> With base? With baseness? Bastardy? Base? Base?
> (King Lear, I, ii, 6-10)

Richard also shares with Edmund the knowledge that strength or weakness lies in ourselves and not in the stars. By virtue of their hatred towards others and their bitterness towards society, these two belong to the dark company of Iago and Cassius.[37]

According to Edward Berry, the play Richard III is of

> especial interest as a complex assimilation of a wide variety of dramatic and literary traditions--among them, Senecan drama, de casibus tragedy, the Vice-figure of the morality plays, and the historical narrative of Thomas More.[38]

But a careful reader can discover certain other figures in the play, especially from medieval drama. For example, in Act III, where he puts on the garb of holiness and reads the Bible, Richard tries hard to put on a show of not being interested in wearing the crown of England:

> For God doth know, and you may partly see,
> How far I am from the desire of this.
> (Richard III,III,vii,234-235)

However, we recall that in ActI, Sc.iii, he has already revealed his plan,

> ...to clothe my naked villainy
> With odd old ends stol'n forth of holy writ,

>   And seem a saint when most I play the devil.
>   (Richard III,I,iii,236-237)

From such accounts the image that forms in our minds is not only of "the devil", what with his casual bravado, but also of the Antichrist. For like the Antichrist, he is an imposter who uses religion to exploit the weaknesses of the simple-minded. In the fashion of the Antichrist he parodies and inverts common Christian values. Like a devil in saint's clothes, he also uses such words as "God", "heaven" and "Saint George".

However, it should be noted that in spite of his incomparable wickedness, if we were to consider Richard as the only villain in the play that bears his name, we would be in error.[39] Since Richard III is the final apocalyptic play in which the blood-letting of fifteenth-century England reaches a peak and then finally ends, more criminals than one are implicated by Shakespeare. Clarence, Stanley, and Buckingham are some of the characters who contribute towards creating the disorder over which Richard at the end reigns supreme. Thus, any reader who focuses upon the question of providential justice will discover that divine retribution catches up not only with Richard but also those

like Clarence, Hastings, Rivers, Vaughan, and Buckingham.
Perhaps Shakespeare was playing on traditional beliefs when
he allowed Margaret's curses to bear fruit since all those
who were cursed by her meet with brutal ends.

As for Richard's end, he dies befittingly at the hands
of the future king--Henry of Richmond. Perhaps because of
his late entry or because of the towering usurper, Richmond
is shown as rather flat and lifeless in comparison to
Richard. But despite this position, the challenger does
stand up against the agent of destruction as the restorer of
order in the commonweal. His appeal to God for help is
solemn and reminscent of all those who fight on the side of
justice.

> O thou whose captain I account myself,
> Look on my forces with a gracious eye!
> Put in their hands thy bruising irons of wrath,
> That they may crush down with a heavy fall
> The usurping helmets of our adversaries!
> Make us thy ministers of chastisement,
> That we may praise thee in victory!
>   (Richard III,V,iii,105-115)

Soon after the "captain" of the "ministers of chastisement"
ends his speech, the ghosts of Prince Edward, Henry VI,
Clarence, Rivers, Grey, and the rest of Richard's victims
enter the stage to condemn the usurper with promises of

defeat and encourage Richmond with promises of success. It is not an uncommon practice on the part of Shakespeare to use the supernatural in such a manner. In Macbeth, for example, Shakespeare uses the ghost of Banquo to fill the usurper's heart with terror. In Hamlet, the ghost of the murdered king secretly appears to inform his son about Claudius's crime. But to return to Richmond, since he is portrayed as the restorer of order in a bleeding land, his rebellion against Richard the king is sanctified even by the supernatural. Here, as completely opposed to the doctrines of the homilies and the other teachings of the Tudor propaganda machine, a rebellion is allowed to prosper and succeed without any words of remonstration from the playwright Shakespeare. Richmond is allowed to argue his own point to the effect that at times subjects are justified in taking arms against a "bloody tyrant and a homicide". Addressing his soldiers, he says:

> Then if you fight against God's enemy,
> God will in justice ward you as his soldiers;
> If you do sweat to put a tyrant down,
> You sleep in peace, the tyrant being slain.
> (Richard III,V,iii,254-257)

Quite unlike Henry IV who, apart from the occasional pricks of conscience, does not undergo exemplary punishment for his most ugly deed of usurpation,[40]Richard III does pay for his crimes with his life, if nothing else. The appearance of his victim's ghosts are able to create only a moment's disillusionment in his crime hardened mind:

> ...shadows tonight
> Have struck more terror to the soul of Richard
> Than can the substance of ten thousand soldiers
> Armed in proof and led by shallow Richmond.
> (Richard III,V,iii,217-220)

The brief interlude of his conscience and the fears associated with his belated recognition of his crimes do little to turn the villain's course. He calmly shrugs off the stings of a conscience which for a moment "hath a thousand several tongues". Like the later Macbeth, he dies defiant and unrepentant. In response to Catesby's offer to help him escape the final outcome of battle, he says rather proudly,

> Slave, I have set my life upon a cast,
> And I will stand the hazard of the die.
> (Richard III,V,iv,9-10)

iii. CLAUDIUS

Unlike Richard II, Richard III, and Macbeth, in Hamlet
the act of usurpation has already occurred when the play
opens. Thus the critic Maynard Mack, while comparing
Richard II to Hamlet says,

> While the history play...leads steadily towards the
> death of the king, the tragedy moves steadily away
> from the death of one king and haltingly towards the
> death of another.[41]

In other words, whereas in Richard II the action, with
respect to regicide, is centripetal, in Hamlet it is
centrifugal at the beginning, but after the protagonist's
discovery of murder and usurpation it takes a definitely
centripetal form. In Richard II we are treated to the
prolonged and bitter conflict that finally ends in the death
of the legitimate king and the establishment of a new but
questionable line of rule. But in the case of Hamlet, the
chief source of action is an act of usurpation that has
taken place in the recent past but whose effects will be
embodied within the confines of the single play.
Shakespeare, with his matured skill, wrote the tragedy with
a far more effective dramatic art and psychological truth

than he did the earlier history play. As a result, the character of the usurper Claudius is like none of the previous villains. When we see him for the first time in Act I, sc.ii, we are impressed by the image of a king who is completely in command of things. Despite the supernatural forebodings of the first scene and Horatio's fears of "some strange eruption to our state", the audience is lulled into accepting the usurper as an able monarch.[42] Within the space of a few lines, he rapidly and efficiently handles all outstanding problems that face the state of Denmark. Beginning with the death of King Hamlet and ending with the threat from "young Fortinbras", Claudius does put on a very "smooth show"[43] indeed. In this manner Shakespeare allows the apparently perfect monarch to effectively conceal his dark deed of murder and usurpation beneath a hypocritical mask of regal perfection. He catches us on the wrong foot and lures us to commit the cardinal error of mistaking appearance for reality. But slowly, as the play progresses, a different figure emerges and begins to take shape. Guided by such prophetic utterances as Marcellus's "something is rotten in the state of Denmark" and the ghost's revelations concerning the "most foul" murder, the audience's previous conceptions of Claudius's character are shaken. But it is not until Act

III, Sc. i, where Polonius is busy moralizing on hypocrisy does Claudius, in a whispered aside, for the very first time reveal the presence of a disturbed conscience.

> O, 'tis too true,
> How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience!
> The harlot's cheek, beautied with plast'ring art,
> Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it
> Than is my deed to my most painted word.
> O heavy burden!
>
> (Hamlet,III,i,49-54)

As a result, we have our first glimpse of a soul in turmoil. Henceforth we begin to revaluate our previous ideas concerning him and start realizing how easily we have been fooled by his mask of deception. A further step towards understanding Claudius is taken in Act III, Sc. iii, when, after being badly jolted by Hamlet's "Mousetrap", he tries to bend his "stubborn knees" and free his "limed soul" through prayer and repentance. But being a realist, he quickly accepts the inefficacy of his prayer.[44]

> That cannot be, since I am still possessed
> Of those effects for which I did the murder,
> My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.
>
> (Hamlet,III,iii,53-55)

The "prayer scene" serves the useful purpose of externalizing the burning awareness in Claudius's mind of,

on the one hand, the necessity for atonement and on the other, the uselessness of such private enterprise when the heart itself rebels.[45] This usurper knows, and even declares (ironically sounding so much like the author of a homily) that,

> In the corrupted currents of this world
> Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice
> And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself
> Buys out the law. But 'tis not so above.
> (Hamlet,III,iii,57-60)

Such awareness is unique. It does not come to such complete villains as Richard III, Iago, or Iachimo. It comes, as we have observed, to a guilt-ridden Henry IV who, despite being able to "shove by justice" with " gilded hand" knew it was "not so above"; so he beseeches: "How I came by the crown. O God forgive".[46] It is the necessary awareness of great men who have nevertheless been wooed by evil. It is present in the would-be-killer of Duncan.

> He's here in double trust:
> First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
> Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,
> Who should against his murderer shut the door,
> Not bear the knife myself.
> (Macbeth,I,vii,12-16)

Not strange then that Claudius's possession of his second

"effect",[47] for which he killed his brother, is no different from Macbeth's "vaulting ambition"[48] for which the latter killed his king. The similarity with Macbeth is further illustrated by Harley Granville-Barker, who states:

> We have inClaudius the making of the central
> figure of a tragedy. Something of him will be
> found very highly developed in Macbeth. There
> again is the man who does murder for his crown,
> cannot repent, and is drawn even further into ill.[49]

With regard to the previously mentioned "prayer scene" the same critic remarks:

> ...here,...the seething mind [is] laid bare. And
> though the mask goes on again, it will hereafter
> be transparent to us.[50]

And indeed, this is exactly what happens. The person who rises after his half-hearted attempt at prayer and repentance is not a transformed Claudius; it is the same villain, only hardened by the futility of achieving personal salvation.

The person responsible for forcing Claudius's hand and flushing him out from behind his mask is of course Hamlet, the son of the murdered king. Within the play we see him as

one of the few characters who does not "serve" the king in any way.[51] Furthermore, unlike the characters of Ophelia, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and especially Laertes, Hamlet remains out of Claudius's manipulative hands. He makes his stand quite clear to his onetime schoolmates Rosencrantz and and Guildenstern who had been induced into spying on the Prince by Claudius.

> ...do you think I am
> easier to be played on than a pipe? Call me what
> instrument you will, though you can fret me, you
> cannot play upon me.
> (Hamlet, III, ii, 377-380)

Thus, to give battle to the machiavel usurper, Hamlet the avenger becomes what Danby calls, "the machiavel of goodness".[52] He arms himself to beat Claudius in his own game.

> For 'tis the sport to have the enginer
> Hoist with his own petar, and't shall go hard
> But I will delve one yard below their mines
> And blow them at the moon.
> (Hamlet, III, iv, 207-210)

Through his persistent attempts at unveiling the masked murderer, the protagonist awakens the wary usurper to a sense of danger, forcing him to look for a quick and "desperate appliance".[53] Claudius's first attempt to rid himself of Hamlet involves the plan to ship him to England.

> Do it, England,
> For like the hectic in my blood he rages
> And thou must cure me. Till I know 'tis done,
> Howe'er my haps, my joys were ne'er begun.
> (Hamlet,IV,iii,66-69)

This epic stand of Hamlet is not one against a tyrannical king, because Claudius's rule has no clearly visible signs of tyranny in it; it is instead against a deceitful usurper who has killed his father and married his mother. When considering Hamlet's struggle against Claudius, we are reminded once more of the Antichrist who was successful in duping everyone but failed to do so when he met Enoch and Elijah. In his capacity as an avenger, Hamlet is similar to St. Michael and Richmond. But, of course, we must understand and accept the hero's closer necessity of avenging the death of a father than a king. Danby, who sees Hamlet more as a private tragedy says,

Prince Hamlet cannot have Brutus's motive. For

> Claudius the murdered man is more significant as
> a brother than as a king, and for Hamlet it is a
> father he has lost rather than a sovereign the
> state has been deprived of. The play to that extent
> is a private tragedy enacted in court dress on a
> public stage.[54]

It is true because we do not see the usurper's act as affecting the order of the state. The disorder is confined within the palace walls, and its reverberations do not affect the lives of the common people as it does in the case of Richard II, Richard III, and Macbeth. Only the ghost, who exercises a pivotal function in this play, exhibits a sign of disturbance in the realm of the supernatural.[55] There are no clashes between armies that represent the twin forces of evil and justice. The duel at the end of the play epitomises a more private struggle wherein the arch deceiver, the "damned Dane", plays his last trick and loses everything including his life. Hamlet also dies, but his is a completely different death. It is the necessary sacrifice that the forces of justice and righteousness must make to root out evil. Thus the words of Fortinbras, the new king of Denmark, have a definite ring of sorrow in them:

> ...he was likely, had he been put on,
> To have proved most royal.
> (Hamlet,V,ii,399-400)

iv. MACBETH

Angels are bright still, though the brightest fell.
                                (Macbeth, IV, iii, 22)

The manner and the process of a good man's entry into the dark world of evil is nowhere better portrayed than in Macbeth. Neither Henry Bolingbroke, nor Richard, nor even Claudius is as assiduously created as to reveal the "de-humanizing process"[56] whereby a man of valour and integrity is transformed into a monster of unparalleled wickedness and vice. He is similar to Claudius, as like him he is blessed with that clarity of vision which allows him to comprehend the magnitude of his crime and yet go ahead with it; he is similar to Richard III, as he shares with him the role of a hero-villain who goes unrepentant to his death; but he is unlike Henry Bolingbroke, as in the final assessment he has neither the capacity to be a masked machiavel, nor remain a successful usurper who knows exactly when to stop and go no further "in blood". But in spite of all the various resemblances or differences that he may be shown to share with the other usurpers, perhaps the main reason behind Macbeth's success as a character is Shakespeare's clear intention not to merely "fix...[him] in

a formulated phrase"[57] but to present him in a comprehensive study of a good man turned to evil. The dramatist therefore records the stage by stage transformation of "a peerless kinsman" of the beginning into a veritable "hell-hound" of the last scene.

Furthermore, all that has been said in the previous chapters that concern a usurper and his action finds a final expression in the play Macbeth. Herein is shown Luciferian ambition,

> I have no spur
> To prick the sides of my intent, but only
> Vaulting ambition....
> (Macbeth, I, vii, 25-27)

that drives "the brightest" into the unpardonable crimes of regicide and usurpation.

On one level, Maynard Mack sees the play as a "morality of crime and punishment".[58] The old established order of ideal kingship which is represented by Duncan, an idealized king in the spirit of Gaunt and Old Hamlet, is destroyed when the over ambitious Macbeth kills the sleeping king in cold blood and usurps his throne. In the wake of this criminal act against legitimate order, Macbeth with his

ill-gotten crown is thrust into an uncontrollable world of chaos.

     As is common in Shakespeare, the disorder of nature presages and reflects the disorder of the body politic. The night the deed is done is filled with ominous signs of disturbance, and as Lennox recalls,

> The night has been unruly. Where we lay,
> Our chimneys were blown down, and, as they say,
> Lamenting heard i' th' air, strange screams of death,
> And prophesying with accents terrible
> Of dire combustion and confused events
> New hatched to th' woeful time: the obscure bird
> Clamored the livelong night. Some say, the earth
> Was feverous and did shake.
>   (Macbeth,II,iii,54-61)

But the "sacrilegious murder" of the "Lord's anointed"[59] has more visible effects as well. Among other things, as the Old Man says, Duncan's horses,

> Turned wild in nature, broke their stalls, flung out,
> Contending against obedience, as they would make
> War with mankind.
>   (Macbeth,II,iv,16-18)

In a similar fashion, the dramatist seems to imply that Macbeth, by killing his "master", "contend[ed]...against obedience".

The dark cloud of disorder engulfs the private as well as the public life of the usurper. Since by killing his king Macbeth had himself broken the ties that unite a man to a private society, he is plagued by the curse of loneliness. This loneliness (contrasting with Duncan's being surrounded by friends) becomes more and more intense as he wilfully eschews friendship out of suspicion and proceeds on a path of murder and bloodshed to protect his crown. His wish "to be safely thus" provokes him to seek Banquo's murder;

> There is none but he
> Whose being I do fear....
> (Macbeth,III,i,54-55)

especially since he remembered the Weird Sisters "hailed him father to a line of kings". But Banquo's death does not buy him his peace of mind. In the beautifully orchestrated banquet scene of III,iv, Shakespeare intensifies his picture of the protagonist's isolation when an apparently hospitable Macbeth is visited by one of the guests who returns from the world of the dead to haunt the murderer's peace. Then, as an alarmed Lady Macbeth desperately attempts to hush her lord, a defiant Macbeth says to the apparition,

> What man dare, I dare.
> Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,
> The armed rhinoceros, or th' Hyrcan tiger;

                    Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves
                    Shall never tremble.
                                        (Macbeth,III,iv,99-103)

The commands to a ghost who is visible to no one except

Macbeth,

                    Avaunt! and quit my sight! Let the earth hide thee.

                                              (Macbeth,III,iv,93)

or,

                    Hence, horrible shadow!
                    Unreal mock'ry, hence!
                                  (Macbeth,III,iv,106-107)

help only to alienate and isolate him further from the

assembled   lords.[60] Unfortunately, the appearance of Banquo's

ghost does not stop Macbeth from following his trail of

blood.   In his twisted logic he sees on the one hand the

futility of repentance,

                    I am in blood
                    Stepped in so far that, shouls I wade no more,
                    Returning were as tedious as go o'er.[61]
                                        (Macbeth,III,iv,136-138)

while on the other hand he has the horrible audacity to say

to his wife,

        We are but young in deed.
            (Macbeth,III,iv,144)

Their "young deed" very quickly reaches maturity when (Herod-like) Macbeth orders the slaughter of the family of Macduff:

        ...give to th' edge o' th' sword
        His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls
        That trace him in his line.
                            (Macbeth,IV,i,151-153)

    For all his crimes the usurper is paid fully and in kind. Like Richard III, Macbeth first and foremost suffers from isolation. Richard, who evidently accepts his isolation with much pride, nevertheless feels the need for company just before he dies.

        I shall despair. There is no creature loves me;
        And if I die, no soul shall pity me.
                            (Richard III,V,iii,201-202)

Macbeth's trek on the fateful road to isolation commences the moment he begins plotting to take the life of his liege. His inability to say "Amen" to the groom worries him (as it should) for the parching of his throat might remind him of his sudden alienation from heaven.

> But wherefore could not I pronounce 'Amen'?
> I had most need of blessing, and 'Amen'
> Stuck in my throat.
>   (Macbeth,II,ii,3Ø-32)

By murdering Duncan, Macbeth also murders his precious sleep, the "chief nourisher in life's feasts".[62] His inability to sleep removes him farther away from the common sphere of mankind, making him a despicable creature of the dark.

Though the immediate stimulus to Duncan's murder is the prophecy of the Weird Sisters, yet we must understand that Macbeth could not have succeeded in it, despite his "vaulting ambition", without the strong and compelling support of his wife.[63] When Macbeth hesitates to repudiate the duties he owes Duncan, she taunts him with such words as:

> Was the hope drunk
> Wherein you dressed yourself? Hath it slept since?
> And wakes it now, to look so green and pale
> At what it did so freely?
>   (Macbeth,I,vii,35-38)

She abjures all sense of pity, and thinks Macbeth to be "too full o'th' milk of human kindness". As a supreme example of the inversion of natural order for which she surely stands,

she says,

> Come, you spirits
> That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
> And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full
> Of direst cruelty.
> <div align="right">(Macbeth,I,iv,40-43)</div>

Quite unlike a woman, but very much like an overambitious wife, Lady Macbeth is interesting to us because she is the only person who shares most, if not all, of the protagonist's darkest thoughts. She is strong and even dominant when Macbeth is wavering in his attempt to commit murder, and is supportive when he qualms under the gaze of Banquo's ghost. But as the play progresses and as Macbeth sheds more and more blood the figure of Lady Macbeth dwindles and recedes into the background. She finally lapses into madness, fearing the dark and keeping "light by her continually". One of her last words concern the death of a king whom she had helped her husband to kill:

> Yet who would have thought the old
> man to have had so much blood in him?
> <div align="right">(Macbeth,V,i,41)</div>

This is the final cast of the die for Macbeth whereby he is completely and irrevocably isolated from the entire world.

On hearing of her death he can only mutter the words,

> She should have died hereafter;
> There would have been a time for such a word.
> (Macbeth,V,v,17-18)

His isolation complete, Macbeth is soon in the grip of despair. Very soon he begins contemplating such subjects as death and the brevity of life.

> Out, out, brief candle!
> Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
> And then is heard no more....
> (Macbeth,V,v,23-26)

In his extreme state of despair Macbeth, like Richard III before him, is unable to seek repentance. Henry Bolingbroke and Claudius had at least tried it--Richard and Macbeth do not go even this far. So in the final scene, when Macbeth is challenged by Macduff, the shreds of conscience that still remain in him forbid him from fighting.

> ...get thee back! My soul is too much charged
> With blood of thine already.
> (Macbeth,V,viii,5-6)

And when asked to surrender, he is suddenly overtaken by Luciferian pride which drives away any thought of surrender.

> I will not yield
> To kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet,
> And be baited with the rabble's curse.
> <div align="right">(Macbeth,V,viii,27-29)</div>

Like Richard III then, he faces the world, desperate, but never thinking of acknowledging defeat. The instinct of self-preservation is much too strong in him to allow him to grovel under "young Malcolm's feet".

By the end of the play the "forces of legitimacy"[64] overthrow the usurper and promise to bring peace to a bleeding Scotland. Like Henry V or Richard III there is a clear movement towards a vision of legitimacy and order. Interestingly, in Malcolm (the true restorer of order), Tillyard finds a representative character of a type that Shakespeare has frequently used before. He astutely points out that Malcolm as a character "provides little interest in himself but a great deal in what he stands for".[65]

In the final analysis, we have to agree with Maynard Mack who finds at the end of the play "an unexplored moralitylike victory of the counterforces, whereby a smug young prince simply supersedes a more interesting villain, as at the end of Richard III".[66] The contrast becomes more poignant when we realize what Macbeth had once been and what

Malcolm never was. That is why, in the nature of the Greek tragedians, Shakespeare has been successful in producing in the minds of his audience the essential emotions of pity and horror; for indeed this is how we feel when we consider how such "a noble mind...[was] here o'erthrown".[67]

NOTES

SHAKESPEAREAN SYNTHESIS

and

HENRY BOLINGBROKE

[1] Maynard Mack,Jr., Killing the King(New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1973), p.1.

[2] Ibid., p.1.

[3] Mack's phrase, Ibid., p.2.

[4] See Chapter III.

[5] See for example the Elizabethan Homily on Obedience.

[6] See Derek Traversi, Shakespeare: From Richard II to Henry V(Hollis and Carter: London, 1965), p.2.

[7] Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida,I,iii,1Ø9.

[8] By the term "Histories" we refer here to Shakespeare's double tetralogy dealing with fifteenth century British history.

[9] Of course his was a different case than Lucifer's, since he was not trying to usurp Zeus's throne.

[10] Here I am indebted to Mack, p.12.

[11] M.M. Reese, The Cease of Majesty(London: Edward Arnold [Publishers] Ltd., 1968), p.251.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Richard II,II,iii,108,111.

[14] Ibid.,134,135.

[15] Which York, we remember, had strongly opposed.

[16] Richard II,II,iii,153.

[17] Reese, p.250.

[18] Samuel Daniel, The Civil Wars, quoted by Reese, p.251.

[19] Contrast it with Richard's mistreatment by the crowds in ActV,sc.ii.

[20] Traversi, p.18.

[21] Reese, p.254.

[22] Consider Bolingbroke's initial accusation of Mowbray's complicity in the affair and the King's evasiveness concerning the subject (I,i). See also the Duchess of Gloucester's appeal to Grant for revenge and the latter's answer. Also, we must remember that both Hall and the authors of A Mirror for Magistrates attributed Richard's fall to the to his involvement in Gloucester's death. See Reese, p.229.

[23] For which the wise Gaunt warns the King for inviting "a thousand dangers on...[his] head" (II,i,205).

[24] Richard II,V,vi,37.

[25] Ibid.,44.

[26]Ibid.,I,iv,26.

[27]John Wilders, The Lost Garden: A View of

Shakespeare's English and Roman History Plays(Totowa, New

Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1978), pp.50-51.

[28]Richard II,V,vi,50.

[29]Daniel, The Civil Wars, quoted by Reese, p.227.

RICHARD III

[30]Edward I. Berry, Patterns of Decay(Charlottesville,

Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1975), p.111.

[31]Everyone except i.e. the Princes whose deaths are

hard to reconcile with our ideas of divine justice. Of

course, for some it is acceptable as punishment visited upon

the descendants of a sinner.

[32]Richard III,I,i,37.

[33]See for example his:

> I can add colours to the chamaleon.
> Change shapes with Proteus for advantages,
> And set the murderous Machiavel to school.
> Can I do this, and cannot get a crown?
>   (3Henry VI,III,ii,191-194)

[34]Richard III,I,i,30.

[35]Bernard Spivack, <u>Shakespeare</u> <u>and</u> <u>the</u> <u>Allegory</u> <u>of</u> <u>Evil</u>
(New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1958), pp.386-407. This
image is reinforced by Richard himself when he says:

Thus like th formal Vice, Iniquity,
I moralise two meanings in one word.
(<u>Richard</u> <u>III</u>,III,i,82-83)

[36]<u>Richard</u> <u>III</u>,I,i,16.

[37]See M.M. Reese, <u>The</u> <u>Cease</u> <u>of</u> <u>Majesty</u>(London:
Edward Arnold [Publishers] Ltd., 1968), p.223.

[38]Berry, p.75.

[39]See for example Reese, p.214.

[40]At least not in Shakespeare's plays.

CLAUDIUS

[41]Maynard Mack, Jr., <u>Killing</u> <u>the</u> <u>King</u>(New Haven and
London: Yale University Press, 1973), p.75.

[42]This is true of Claudius, just as it is true of the
usurpers Bolingbroke and Richard III. Only Macbeth in
Shakespeare's play of that title seems to fail as a ruler.

[43]Maynard Mack's words, p.113.

[44]John F. Danby in <u>Shakespeare's</u> <u>Doctrine</u> <u>of</u> <u>Nature</u>

(London: Faber   and   Faber,mcmlxi),   p.149,   distinguishes

between   Claudius's   apparent   piety   and   Richard's   more

hypocritical Bible reading.

[45] Hamlet,III,iii,70.

[46] 2 Henry IV,IV,v,218.

[47] Hamlet,III,iii,54.

[48] Macbeth,I,vii,27.

[49] Harley Granville-Barker, Prefaces to Shakespeare:

Hamlet(Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton   University   Press,

1965), p.216.

[50] Ibid., p.219.

[51] The others would be Horatio and Fortinbras.   See

Maynard Mack's comments, p.110.

[52] Danby, p.151.

[53] Hamlet,IV,iii,10.

In this respect Hamlet, ironically, acts more like an agent

of disorder in Claudius's well-managed court.

[54] Danby, p.150.

[55] See for example Horatio's long speech concerning the

disruption of nature that followed Julius Caesar's murder

(I,i,113-125).

MACBETH

[56]John F. Danby, _Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature_ (London: Faber and Faber, mcmlxi), p.162.

[57]T.S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock".

[58]Maynard Mack, Jr., _Killing the King_ (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1973), p.149.

[59]_Macbeth_,II,iii,67.

[60]See Maynard Mack's interpretation, p.142.

[61]Notice the often quoted parallel in Richard's:

        ...I am in
        So far in blood that sin will pluck on sin.
                        (_Richard III_,IV,ii,62-63)

[62]_Macbeth_,II,ii,38. For a comparison with Henry IV, Richard III and Edmund's sleeplessness, see Honor Matthews, _Characters and Symbol in Shakespeare's Plays_ (London: Chatto and Windus), 1969. p.46.

[63]A.C.Bradley is among the prominent critics of this century to point this out. See A.C. Bradley, _Shakespearean Tragedy_ (London: Macmillan and Company Ltd., 1964), p.358.

[64]Maynard Mack's phrase, p.149.

[65]E.M.W. Tillyard, _Shakespeare's History Plays_

(London: Chatto and Windus, 1961), p.317.

[66] Maynard Mack, p.153.

[67] <u>Hamlet</u>, III, i, 151.

CONCLUSION

It is hoped that the above discussion has helped to
reveal some of the background to Shakespeare's
characterization of his usurpers. The section on the
influence of medieval religious drama suggests probable
prototypes for the figures of Bolingbroke, Richard III,
Claudius, and Macbeth. Also, without an insight into the
Elizabethans's concept of order and degree and the
contributions of fifteenth-century chroniclers and Tudor
homilists, the true magnitude of the "crimes" of rebellion
and usurpation could never be fully gauged. In addition,
the assessment of the strong Tudor defence of kingship
provides a final preparation for appreciating particular
Shakespearean usurpers.

The final chapter of this dissertation has naturally
been its focal point, for it is here that the usurpers are
considered one by one in relation to their crimes. Of the
four characters discussed, the first was Henry Bolingbroke.
His usurpation is significant because by deposing Richard II
he broke the medieval line of succession. Richard II is one
of Shakespeare's earliest plays, and here we see the

fledgling artist more concerned with plot construction than with characterization. As such the personality of Bolingbroke remains less developed than the usurpers of later plays. But even in Bolingbroke we detect a hint of the later machiavels like Richard III and Claudius. In contrast to Bolingbroke, Richard III is shown to be not merely a more interesting and successfully developed stage figure, but also more daring in blazing a trail of evil. His gradual rise to power is well-documented by Shakespeare, and deals with his career through the second and third parts of _Henry_ _VI_ to _Richard_ _III_. In comparison to the other usurpers, Richard III seems to be the·most calculating and ruthless. The character of Claudius was considered after Richard. Claudius is a superb creation of Shakespeare's matured art, and with his cool and calculating mind employed to do evil, he reminds us of the deceitful Richard. His marriage to Gertrude, the wife of his murdered brother, carries with it some of the panache of Richard's success with Lady Anne. Macbeth is the last usurper discussed in this study and in him the flames of ambition burn strong. Also, he is a truly tragic figure in the classic tradition. His fall evokes both horror and pity because here we see a man of great honour, well-earned faith, and immense

potential, surrender himself to the dark forces of evil and deceit.

It must be stressed that while putting forward our point of view concerning Shakespearean usurpers, even if repeated references were made to such religious tenets as The Fall of Lucifer, the figure of the Antichrist, Divine Providence and Justice, it would be erroneous to conclude that Shakespeare was a consciously theological writer. This is because specific religious doctrines and the numerous beliefs were only a part of the manner in which the artist looked at history. They were merely a segment of the immense backdrop against which Shakespeare had learned to paint his figures and give them life. Finally, it should be noted that there were two barriers to his making any overt religious or theological remarks in his plays. One was the presence of the strong set of licensing laws of 1559 which forbade him and all other contemporary dramatists from presenting controversial religious (or political) matters on stage. The second barrier was the formidable instinct of the artist himself, which prevented him from sacrificing his art for the sake of preaching to his audience.

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