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"Policy sits above conscience": A study of Shakespeare's political characters.

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"POLICY SITS ABOVE CONSCIENCE": A STUDY OF SHAKESPEARE'S POLITICAL CHARACTERS

BY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes an aspect of the recurrent Shakespearean concern with competent national leadership; in particular, a conflict over leadership between two antithetical types of men. On the one hand, there are the men whom I have called men of imagination, or inner-directed men, and, on the other hand, there are the worldly, or outer-directed men. These two types of characters continue to oppose each other throughout Shakespeare's dramatic career, and always with the result that the worldly men succeed in their political ambitions. My thesis traces this conflict and its results through eight of Shakespeare's plays.

Chapter I is a brief discussion of the historical and political conditions in England which might have affected Shakespeare's political convictions, a survey of critical opinion concerning Shakespeare's "politics," and an explanation of the basis for my analysis of a selected group of his plays.

Chapter II begins the analysis with a demonstration of the leadership conflict as it develops in a group of Shakespeare's early history plays. Chapter III continues the analysis in the two Roman plays, Julius Caesar and Antony and Cleopatra; Chapter IV extends the examination to Hamlet, a tragedy from Shakespeare's middle period, and Chapter V concludes the analysis of character conflict in one of

Shakespeare's last plays, The Tempest.

Chapter VI, the conclusion, submits that the consistent success of Shakespeare's realistic, worldly politicians and his tolerant attitude towards their success is evidence against critical readings of Shakespeare as a spokesman for orthodox Tudor political theories of order and degree, and for a judgment of Shakespeare as a political realist.

PREFACE

The plan and scope of this thesis are explained in my introductory chapter; I would like to note, however, that the edition of Shakespeare's plays used is Charles Jasper Sisson's William Shakespeare: The Complete Works (London, 1953).

The interest in Shakespeare which led to the thesis was inspired by Dr. John F. Sullivan, and to him go my thanks for the intellectual stimulation he provided and for his patience and help in the direction of this thesis.

I also extend my appreciation to Dr. G. B. Harrison and Rev. Robert Fehr, C.S.B. for their critical reading of the thesis and helpful comments.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Shakespeare's England was a place of tension and transition. When Elizabeth came to the English throne she became the ruler of a heavily indebted nation whose ruined fortresses and lack of arms had left its defenses weak. Even Elizabeth's title to the throne was uncertain, and many expected her reign to be short-lived. But Elizabeth was a clever woman "wise with this world's wisdom--resourceful, self reliant, cautious . . . ."[1] She knew she must stabilize her throne and her country by being a strong, competent ruler. She showed discrimination in her choice of counsellors, was not above wooing the people to show them she had their best interests at heart, and created a court which was at least outwardly "dignified, impressive and sober."[2] While many fortunate circumstances undoubtedly combined to make Elizabeth's reign a great era, she is generally acknowledged to have been a remarkable ruler, whose astuteness created the opportunity for England's great development.

Under Elizabeth England broadened its horizons--astronomical, geographical, scientific, and artistic. Yet

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1 J. B. Black, The Reign of Elizabeth, Vol. VIII of The Oxford History of England, 2d ed. (Oxford, 1959), p. 2.

2 Godfrey Davis, The Early Stuarts, 1603-1660, Vol. IX of The Oxford History of England, 2d ed. (Oxford, 1959), p. 263.

while there must have been great excitement at the discovery of new worlds and new concepts, there was apparently also great doubt and sometimes disillusionment. Theodore Spencer has devoted several chapters in Shakespeare and the Nature of Man (New York, 1945) to discussion of man's concern about his changing position in the universe. And the enormous amount of writing in the period concerned with order, in the universe and in the state, as well as the violent reactions to all theories which might foster disorder, are further indications of man's desire for stability and security in a fast changing world.

Certainly Elizabeth's comparatively stable reign gave a measure of security to England, but even this was relative. Her reign did not proceed completely undisturbed. There were rumblings beneath the surface; plots against the Queen (particularly by persecuted religious zealots) were often suspected, with the possibility always present that an actual plot might emerge and be carried out. The unsuccessful Essex uprising represents such a plot. That the possibility of rebellion must have been always present seems proved by the Homilies read regularly in the churches, forbidding any action against the ruler.[3] And, of course, the fear of rebellion against Elizabeth was heightened by the awareness that there was no clear-cut solution to the question of succession which would

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3 "An Homily Against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion" in Certain Sermons or Homilies Appointed to be Read in Churches in the Time of Queen Elizabeth of Famous Memory (London, 1914), is a good example. This Homily was first printed in 1571 and was especially appointed to be read following a northern uprising in 1569.

be opened.

Throughout Elizabeth's reign the question of succession was a matter of great concern. If Elizabeth died without an heir, who would succeed to the throne? The Lancaster-York strife was not so far behind that Englishmen had forgotten the cost of a succession war, and there was, further, the Elizabethan conviction that history repeated itself unless past errors could be avoided.[4] Concern over succession was sufficiently great that a privy council delegation presented a petition to Elizabeth on the subject of her marrying and providing a successor, and subsequently other marriage arrangements were attempted, but Elizabeth was never to be forced from her role as the Virgin Queen. And so with no direct line of heredity to point unquestionably to the next English monarch, widespread speculation continued about who would and should succeed Elizabeth: "In the years following 1595 the whole kingdom was on tenterhooks. Who was to succeed Elizabeth Tudor?"[5]

Elizabeth was a great queen who had successfully "interpreted the national aspirations and gave them articulation."[6] All of her policies aimed to create a secure and unassailable England.

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4 E.M.W. Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays (London, 1948), p. 55.

5 John Palmer, Political and Comic Characters of Shakespeare (London, 1962), p. 119.

6 The Reign of Elizabeth, p. 3.

> To attain this end she was prepared to use every instrument that gave promise of being serviceable . . . Both a realist and an opportunist, she made "interest" the determining factor in all her political manoeuvres and combinations, and reason of state a sufficient justification for every act.[7]

She nurtured the "Tudor Myth" (which emphasized the divine right of the Tudor line on the grounds that it not only joined the houses of Lancaster and York, but that through its Welsh ancestors its origins could be linked to King Arthur),[8] a myth deliberately created by her grandfather and continued by Elizabeth in order to stabilize the dynasty and to prevent renewed civil strife. And Elizabeth had been able to keep an aura of majesty about her person, of respectability about her court, and of well-being about her nation.

But in 1603 Elizabeth died. Fear about succession which had deeply troubled people, particularly for the last years of her reign, gave way to relief at the peaceful succession of James. But it soon became evident that James was not all that one might desire in a king. Ernest William Talbert[9] has found much evidence that the pessimism which had begun to develop in the last years of the 16th century, during Elizabeth's declining years, now reached even greater proportions. A particularly severe epidemic of plague scourged England in 1603, the year James ascended the throne, which

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7 The Reign of Elizabeth, p. 333.

8 This "Myth" is discussed by E. M.W. Tillyard in Shakespeare's History Plays, p. 29.

9 The Problem of Order (Chapel Hill, 1962), p. 34.

people interpreted as a sign of God's vengeance on sinners.[10] And James I's court provided quite an example for sinners:

> The court of James I . . . was extravagant and disorderly, frivolous and indecorous, with hard drinking common and immorality winked at.[11]

Pedantic, indolent and lacking in kingly dignity, James I surrounded himself with flattering favourites, created knighthoods and peerages wholesale (thus cheapening knighthood and alienating the nobility), was contemptuous of the opinion of the man in the street, and showed disdain for the art of being popular with his people.

> A king who wishes to be strong cannot afford to be unaware of his subjects. He must choose good counsellors, respect their advice, and give his people justice.[12]

James was the antithesis of this description. In such a milieu it is not surprising to find a belief prevalent among the people that the world was in a state of decay and that men were living in an unvirtuous present where flux and mutability were a constant threat to order.[13] It is to be expected, therefore, that the problem of how to restore and maintain order would continue to play a large part in the thinking and writing of the age.

The political theory of the Elizabethan age dwelt

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10 Charles F. Mullett discusses the plague from a medical viewpoint, but points out "the universal conviction that the plague stemmed from God's wrath" (The Bubonic Plague and England [Lexington, 1956], p. 123).

11 The Early Stuarts, p. 263.

12 M. M. Reese, The Cease of Majesty (London, 1961), p. 85.

13 The Problem of Order, p. 34.

heavily on the necessity of order exemplified and imposed by the monarch. The demand for perfect obedience on the part of the subjects, even often to bad rulers, was basic to most political and historical writings. It was also the official doctrine of the government and was, as I have mentioned earlier, amplified by the Homilies of the English Church. The great concern of the theorists was the best way to achieve stability in times of stress and change. As M. M. Reese points out:

> Only a century so persistently troubled by fears of rebellion and a disputed succession would have needed to evolve such a rigid theory of obedience and to proclaim it so frequently.[14]

The theory, then, was a theory demanding perfection. The ruler was to be God's earthly steward and, therefore, a wise and just ruler who deserved in return perfect obedience from his subjects. And even if he were a bad king, still theory demanded obedience--the ruler was still the primary means of order, albeit imperfect, and his treatment was to be left to God. But practice was apparently somewhat different from theory. And as I have mentioned earlier, the quantity and intensity of writing insisting on obedience, as well as the government policy of censoring literature, suggests that official dogma was not unquestioningly accepted. Discerning people could not fail to be aware of the gap between policy and practice. Although lip service was paid to moral platitudes, the fact was that Tudor statesmen

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14 The Cease of Majesty, p. 33.

were frequently "stark, ruthless, and amoral."[15] Widespread interest in, and violent reaction to, Machiavelli and his concept of politics may be explainable in light of the inherent contradiction between Elizabethan political fact and theory.

> Many of the political complexities of Shakespeare's age are mirrored in the Elizabethan strange love hate relationship with the teachings of Machiavelli.[16]

Hysterical reaction against Machiavelli indicates that:

> . . . below the surface men realized . . . with a fascinated conviction they were afraid to admit--that the ideas of Machiavelli might after all be true.[17]

Success might in itself be a moral criterion. Lewis Einstein insists that the best title to the throne lay in the ability to seize it and to rule effectively:

> Frank admiration for success irrespective of means to attain it is characteristic of every period in rapid transition where former standards unable to meet the strain imposed upon them bend and break . . . . The dignity of the crown arose not from its origin but from its exercise.[18]

And Einstein points to Elizabeth as an example of a monarch who (like the earlier Tudors) was obeyed, not because of blood right to the throne, but because she represented the strong rule that was wanted. She was successful. Einstein's statement is reinforced by M. M. Reese's conviction

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15 Christopher Morris, Political Thought in England Tyndale to Hooker (London, 1953), p. 6.

16 The Cease of Majesty, p. 92.

17 Shakespeare and the Nature of Man, p. 45.

18 Tudor Ideals, 2d ed. (New York, 1962), pp. 9-10.

that in the practice of public life, as opposed to theory about it, "the only morality was success."[19]

The point upon which agreement was reached in theory and practice was the need for strong rule:

> The particular need of the century was strong government, its corresponding fear any factor that might lead to weakness and disunity . . .[20]

The conflict arose over the question of how to achieve this strong government, and ultimately over the necessary qualities of the monarch. "The discussion of power becomes finally a discussion of individual worth."[21] Since succession was the burning issue of the entire period--first in the confusion between Mary and Elizabeth, then in finding a successor to Elizabeth--the role of the monarch would have been an even greater focus of speculation and conflict. What qualifies a person to rule? What constitutes a successful monarch? Who should succeed to the throne?

These were the questions and conflicts which found their way into the drama. There were a wide variety of issues discussed and answers given.[22] Gertrude Reese has found these qualifications for succession reflected in the plays of the period: established succession, hereditary right, marriage, the notion of fitness, and possession.

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19 The Cease of Majesty, p. 101.

20 Ibid., p. 45.

21 Ibid., p. 135.

22 "The Question of Succession in Elizabethan Drama," Studies in English University of Texas Publication, No.4226 (July 8, 1942), 59-85.

And William Shakespeare was among the dramatists who concerned himself with the qualifications for succession and responsibilities of a monarch.

Critical opinion in the last two decades has generally agreed that Shakespeare was interested in the political issues of his day. Few would contend that he was a political theorist[23] or that his plays were intended as political handbooks; they were dramas written to entertain his contemporaries. But as a successful dramatist Shakespeare had to be aware of the issues which would inspire his own imagination and captivate the imaginations of his audience. Politics apparently served both ends. There is not the same comparative unanimity of opinion, however, as to what stand Shakespeare took in the political conflicts which were part of his age and which are reflected in his plays. Some critics feel Shakespeare had no position--he was simply detached.[24] Others see Shakespeare as what they call "orthodox", a spokesman for the Tudor party line--Order

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23 John Draper does suggest, however, that Shakespeare parroted the political theories of James I in his later plays ("Political Themes in Shakespeare's Later Plays," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, XXXV [1936], 61-93). He is joined by Lily B. Campbell, who agrees that Macbeth expounds James I's pet political theories ("Political Ideas in Macbeth IV.iii," Shakespeare Quarterly, II [1951], 281-86).

24 John Palmer is perhaps the best known critic to take this view; see Political and Comic Characters of Shakespeare, p. 334. Wyndham Lewis also argues that Shakespeare was detached in The Lion and the Fox (London, 1927), as does Allan Bloom in Shakespeare's Politics (New York, 1964).

and Degree achieved through perfect obedience to any ruler.[25] He seems to be considered by these critics a spokesman for his age, and by this they obviously mean the orthodox theorists of his age. There are, however, a growing number of critics who see the danger in attributing to Shakespeare only certain political beliefs of his time and then interpreting his plays as restatements of those beliefs.[26]

In a discussion of the approach of historical criticism in interpreting Shakespeare's plays, Robert

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25 E. M. W. Tillyard, in Shakespeare's History Plays, argues for Shakespeare as the exponent of Tudor orthodoxy, as do Theodore Spencer in Shakespeare and the Nature of Man, Virgil Whitaker (who further argues that Shakespeare followed Hooker and Elyot quite substantially) in Shakespeare's Use of Learning (San Marino, 1953), Arthur Sewell in Character and Society in Shakespeare (Oxford, 1961), James Emerson Phillips, Jr. in The State in Shakespeare's Greek and Roman Plays (New York, 1940), Sir Mark Hunter (who also insists that Shakespeare was a Tory) in "Politics and Character in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar," in Essays by Divers Hands, X (1931), 109-40, and Lily B. Campbell in Shakespeare's "Histories": Mirrors of Elizabethan Policy (San Marino, 1947), although Miss Campbell also sees Shakespeare as showing contemporary events in his plays as well as orthodox theories.

26 Among the more explicit of these cautions are those of E. Davis, "Shakespeare's Conception of Honour," English Studies in Africa, III (March, 1960), 31-34; Robert Ornstein, "Historical Criticism and the Interpretation of Shakespeare," Shakespeare Quarterly, X (Winter, 1959), 3-9; Irving Ribner, "Political Doctrine in Macbeth," Shakespeare Quarterly, IV (April, 1953), 202-5; and the much earlier work of George Brandes, who points out that actual events of the time had caused Shakespeare to have a profound political bitterness, in William Shakespeare: A Critical Study (New York, 1896).

Ornstein has pointed out[27] that it is as naive to interpret Shakespeare's work according to political, moral, and religious commonplaces of the day as it would be today to interpret Tennessee Williams in terms of Norman Vincent Peale. As early as 1944 Leonard Dean cautioned against the modern error of denying Shakespeare Socratic insights, when he refuted Theodore Spencer's idea (expressed in Shakespeare and the Nature of Man) that Shakespeare's thoughts must have been the common orthodoxy of the day.[28] And he was echoed almost ten years later by Clifford Leach's refutation of Tillyard's concept of Shakespeare as typically an orthodox Elizabethan in political attitudes.[29] Dean believes that Shakespeare's history plays (particularly Henry IV), in showing that rebels are not necessarily bad, and that proper conduct of kings is often little more than clever acting, questions and exposes the absolute claim of the conventional social order which the theorists predicated. Leech makes a similar statement that Shakespeare's history plays raise doubts about the validity of the assumptions concerning order as the prime good of the commonwealth. This theory is picked up and carried further in an article

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27 See "Historical Criticism and the Interpretation of Shakespeare," Shakespeare Quarterly, X (Winter, 1959), 3-9.

28 "Shakespeare's Treatment of Conventional Ideas," Sewanee Review, LII (1944), 414-23.

29 "The Unity of 2 Henry IV," Shakespeare Survey, No. 6 (1953), 16-24.

by Johannes Kleinstuck[30] who states more explicitly what was implied earlier by Dean and Leech. That is, that Shakespeare's hero kings (and these critics are referring particularly to the history plays and including Ulysses speech in Troilus and Cressida) advocate care of Order only when and if it pays--when it is good policy. They are aware that order and strong government is achieved, not by law alone, but by sheer force and cunning. As Alfred Harbage points out (in As They Liked It [New York, 1947], p. 113), the most quoted speeches in all Shakespeare supporting the view of Shakespeare as an orthodox believer in Tudor political conventions are each

> advanced by an unscrupulous politician meeting an immediate problem--advocating a practical program of somewhat debatable merit.

Criticism of this sort has led to what G. K. Hunter calls the "divided mind" school of critics,[31] who say Shakespeare presented Tudor ideas but saw behind the facade.

In a paper read to the British Academy in 1957, L. C. Knights called Shakespeare a political realist, with a realism "based on a clear perception of the actualities of

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30 "The Problem of Order in Shakespeare's Histories," Neophilologus, XXXVIII (1954), 268-77.

31 See "Shakespeare's Politics and the Rejection of Falstaff," The Critical Quarterly, I (Autumn, 1959), 229-36. Among the "divided mind" critics Hunter lists Bradley, Charlton, Granville-Barker, and Una Ellis-Fermor. He explains that they see Shakespeare as protected by irony from identifying with the ethic of political success. These critics are, of course, contrasted with what Hunter calls the "rigid formalist approach" of Tillyard, Dover-Wilson, Spencer, and L. B. Campbell.

political situations."[32] In his book, Some Shakespearean Themes (Stanford, 1960) (which argues for a traditional and conventional Shakespeare), Knights observes that Shakespeare's English and Roman history plays show a "shrewd understanding of men in their political and public aspects and relations" (p. 44), and believes that Shakespeare's understanding is quite free from illusion. Shakespeare apparently knew that to acquire such an understanding:

> It is more salutary to look at the living and imperfect ruler who actually confronts us than at the inanimate, theoretically perfect state which philosophers may be able to conceive.[33]

I am not suggesting that Shakespeare's dramatic kings are modelled specifically after Elizabeth and James, or that the events in the plays are mirrors of current events, or correctives to the monarch.[34] I am suggesting that Shakespeare's understanding of politics and of the characters of both successful and unsuccessful rulers was not acquired by reading and accepting current theories of government, official tracts, treatises, or homilies. Shakespeare's plays themselves are the evidence of his political thinking, and I believe they reflect a knowledge based on observation of Tudor practice and an understanding

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32 "Shakespeare's Politics: With Some Reflections on the Nature of Tradition," in British Academy Proceedings, XLIII (1957), 115-32.

33 Political Thought in England, p. 3.

34 Brian W. Rose has interpreted The Tempest as a warning to James I not to neglect his public duties as Prospero did; see "The Tempest: A Reconsideration of Its Meaning," English Studies in Africa, I (September, 1958), 205-16.

of political realities, and that they attempt (among other things) to see how and under what sort of ruler strong government is actually achieved.

Some comparatively recent work (in a less orthodox vein than the earlier work by Tillyard and others) has been done on Shakespeare's examination of the responsibilities of and qualifications for kingship. But this work has been largely confined to the English history plays, with a smaller amount of attention paid to the Roman and Greek plays (primarily Julius Caesar and Troilus and Cressida). I believe that this interest in the figure of the ruler--how he meets the problems confronting him and what qualities he must possess and display to be a successful public figure--continued throughout Shakespeare's entire career, and should be examined, not only in the history plays, but in plays of the middle and later periods as well. It is an aspect of Shakespeare's examination of kingship which I propose to discuss in a group of plays spanning his career.

In a large number of Shakespeare's plays his examination of kingship and the persons best suited to the position takes dramatic form in conflict between two distinctly different types of men, both shown vying for authority and power. John Palmer observes that these two types of men are juxtaposed in the history plays, and describes the conflict as being between "the man of imagination who lives unto himself versus men of the world

adapting themselves to events."[35] To re-phrase Palmer's observation, Shakespeare has shown the idealistic, self-conscious, "inner-directed" man and, vying for the same authoritative position, he has shown the "outer-directed" realist.[36] I use the terms inner and outer directed only as convenient "labels" for certain characteristics which I will describe. By the term inner-directed, I mean a man whose motivation is completely internal, who thinks often in terms of abstract concepts, and always establishes his goals and directs his actions in accordance with his personal standards and ideals. On the other hand, by an outer-directed man I mean a person attuned to the standards of others rather than personal inner standards. What is expected and desired by others is of great importance for this type of man because his goals are external, tangible, and must be realized in concrete terms in a world outside of himself. Conflicts between these contrasting types of men recur throughout Shakespeare's plays and could be shown in many of his plays, including some I will not discuss (for example, Macbeth, Coriolanus and King Lear) because of time and space limitations in a work of this scope. I have

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35 Political and Comic Characters of Shakespeare, p. 121.

36 The terms "inner-directed" and "other-directed" (which I have varied to "outer-directed") are borrowed from The Lonely Crowd by David Riesman with Nathan Glazer and Reuel Denney (New York, 1953). I am not using their exact definitions of the terms. But there is, of course, a similarity in our meanings. The term inner-directed, as used in The Lonely Crowd, does mean an individual directed from within himself, while other or outer directed refers to individuals motivated by reasons outside of themselves--exterior, not interiorized reasons.

chosen to discuss eight of Shakespeare's plays which effectively illustrate my point and also represent Shakespeare's work in different genres and in different periods of his artistic development. I shall examine Richard II, 1 Henry IV, 2 Henry IV, and Henry V, representing a unit of the English histories; Julius Caesar and Antony and Cleopatra, representing a Roman unit, as well as a wide time span in Shakespeare's development; Hamlet, a great tragedy of Shakespeare's middle period; and finally The Tempest, a play from Shakespeare's final period, in order to see the repetition of the same basic personality conflict and to see the character type which consistently emerges as Shakespeare's portrayal of the successful ruler.

CHAPTER II

THE ENGLISH HISTORIES

Shakespeare's history plays have as their central theme the rise and fall of the house of Lancaster. This political history of England in drama is the most obvious beginning point for an investigation of Shakespeare's attitude towards politics and problems of leadership. Insofar as Shakespeare has followed actual historical events, the history plays are a record of what happened politically in England. Shakespeare has not only recorded actual events, however, he has in many cases altered the historical facts or expanded them, and the characterizations, although based on real people, are Shakespeare's own creation.[1] To the extent that the history plays are original creation on Shakespeare's part, they are his interpretation of history and may be expected to reveal not only that certain events took place, but also Shakespeare's explanation of why they took place and of their significance.

The dramatic description of a century of struggle for

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1 Shakespeare's alteration of historical facts to create his dramatic characterizations is discussed by George Brandes in William Shakespeare: A Critical Study (New York, 1896), p. 220, Lily B. Campbell in Shakespeare's "Histories": Mirrors of Elizabethan Policy (San Marino, 1947), M. D. H. Parker in The Slave of Life (London, 1955), p. 44, and Robert Alger Law in "Deviations from Holinshed in Richard II," The University of Texas Studies in English, XXIX (1950), 91-101.

the English throne contained in Richard II, 1 Henry IV, 2 Henry IV, and Henry V raises the issue crucial to the interpretation of history and the explanation of political cause and effect--what constitutes an effective leader. What qualifies a man for leadership? Do the men who are theoretically entitled to rule actually become and remain rulers? As the leadership theme develops in each of the four plays, the two distinct and antithetical personalities previously described are revealed in opposition to each other; the imaginative inner-directed man pitted against the realistic outer-directed man.

Richard II

Richard II contains what might be considered the classic example of an imaginative man competing with a worldly man. Richard and Bolingbroke are rather obviously portrayed as complete opposites. Early in the play the stage is set by Shakespeare for the conflict between the two men and its outcome. In the first act we learn that Richard is having difficulties in the affairs of his kingdom. Dissension over the death of Gloucester has created an insecure climate in which Richard must rule. The opening scene of the play acquaints us with some of the intrigue already at work in Richard's realm. A few scenes later Richard's financial difficulties are exposed; the royal coffers have been depleted by the Irish Wars and Richard's "too great a Court/ And liberal largess" (I.iv.43). Thus, before any

contenders for the throne have been introduced, we are already aware that Richard is not an extremely successful king. In II.i.92-138 Gaunt makes an explicit and dramatic statement of the way in which Richard has failed England. Gaunt condemns Richard for leasing out his land and surrounding himself with flatterers. Unfortunately for Richard, he is not impressed by his uncle's arguments. When Gaunt dies Richard sees an opportunity to recoup his financial losses and seizes Gaunt's assets. This is the first unsound political action Richard has actually committed within the play, and the folly of the act is pointed out to him by his uncle, York. York advises Richard not to seize Gaunt's land; he tells Richard, "You pluck a thousand dangers on your head/You lose a thousand well-disposed hearts" (II.i.205). He warns that if Richard carries out his plan to claim Gaunt's estate he will give Bolingbroke a reason to return to England (from the exile which Richard imposed upon him) to claim what is his rightful inheritance from Gaunt. Further, if Richard overrules the law of inheritance in the case of Hereford and Gaunt, York argues that Richard's own hereditary claim to the crown will be open to challenge. But Richard ignores all counsel and persists in an action he should now realize is politically unwise. He is determined to act according to his own wishes and desires rather than to gear his actions to external circumstances. This impression of Richard is confirmed by his subsequent act of leaving for Ireland immediately after seizing Gaunt's property, thus leaving England unattended

and insuring Bolingbroke an unchallenged return. Richard will pay for his poor judgment. His fate is prophesized in Salisbury's speech in II.iv.19-20, in which the heavenly image is appropriate to non-worldly Richard: "I see thy glory like a shooting star/Fall to the base earth from the firmament."

Bolingbroke does return from exile. And when Richard returns to England from his wars, his friends try to encourage him to act swiftly in order to check Bolingbroke. Immediate action could still save the kingdom. Richard chooses not to act, however, but to indulge in creating phantasies. He weeps "for joy to stand upon my kingdom once again" (III.ii. 4-5), when a short time before the same Richard was casually farming out his kingdom. He constructs elaborate metaphors of himself as a sun-king, insists on his divine authority, and declines to act, on the theory that "God for His Richard hath in heavenly pay/A glorious angel." Richard has been revealed as a pathetic, passive figure who cannot act realistically. He can think only of a world of his own creation, a world of words where there are "sad stories of the death of kings" and "talk of graves, of worms and epitaphs."[2]

The Bishop of Carlisle is right when he tells Richard that ". . . wise men ne'er sit and wail their woes,/But presently prevent the ways to wail" (III.ii.178-79). This

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2 Richard D. Altick has discussed Richard II's fatal weakness for verbalizing which calls attention to the illusory nature of Richard's reality, created because he cannot bring himself to live in "a world of hard actuality" ("Symphonic Imagery in Richard II," PMLA, LXII [1947], 339-65).

would be the behaviour of a shrewd man, a realistic, outer-directed man. But Richard is none of these. He is a dreamer, a man involved in his own inner world of thoughts and feelings. He is not a politician, able to do anything necessary to achieve success. He is a defeated idealist ready to trade his kingdom "for a little grave,/A little little grave, an obscure grave" (III.iii.153-54). At the end of the deposition scene Richard requests a mirror to discover whether his sorrow shows on his face--the supreme symbol of narcissism and self-consciousness. In V.i.18 Richard suggests to his wife that she think of their "former state[as] a happy dream." And for Richard perhaps that was all it ever was. It was never a responsibility to be realistically accepted.

I do not suggest that the impression given of Richard is totally bad or inadequate. In V.ii.24-37 York tells how patiently Richard bore his grief. The scene between Richard and his queen shows an attractive aspect to Richard's personality also. And his death gives Richard an opportunity to rise to heights he never achieved when alive. By the end his "Patience is stale, and I am weary of it." But it is too late then for action; he can only cry out exultantly at his death and cause his murderer to recognize that Richard was "As full of valor as of royal blood." In other circumstances Richard might have achieved a great deal. But the point is, that within the circumstances in which he found himself, Richard was unable to act effectively. He was a man of imagination. He was not equipped to handle an actual worldly

political situation.

But Bolingbroke was a man of the world. G. B. Harrison describes him as "the strong silent man of action."[3] The language Shakespeare created for Bolingbroke is far less heightened and dramatic than Richard's language. Bolingbroke is more plain spoken and, at the same time, has less charm than Richard; but charm is not an essential quality in a ruler. Realistic appraisal of circumstances and decisiveness in action are much more to the point. Bolingbroke possesses these capabilities.

In I.iv.24-36 Richard himself gives us the first account of Bolingbroke's ability as a politician by describing his "courtship of the common people." Bolingbroke wooed the people "As were our England in reversion his,/And he our subjects' next degree in hope!" (I.iv.35). So even before Richard gave him some cause for counter-action, Bolingbroke was wisely preparing the way for his acceptance by the people as their ruler. (In 1 Henry IV, III.ii.68-75, further information is given which contrasts Richard's behaviour before his people with that of Bolingbroke. Richard was "the skipping king" who allowed himself to be seen too often and with "capering fools", which destroyed his subjects' respect.) Of course, when Richard does later give Bolingbroke an opportunity to return to England from banishment by expropriating Bolingbroke's inheritance and then leaving for Ireland,

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3 See his "Introduction" to Richard II, in Shakespeare: The Complete Works (New York, 1948), p. 434.

Bolingbroke seizes it, and he and his forces return to England immediately.

Bolingbroke's method of dealing with traitors (III.i.1-35) is sharply contrasted with Richard's treatment of suspected traitors (I.iii). While there may have been planned purpose in Richard's method of treatment, it is significant that he chose to handle the scene in a dramatic manner where he had the opportunity to make lengthy (but, in the light of his past behaviour, insincere) speeches about not soiling his kingdom with dear blood. And Richard only banished Mowbray and Bolingbroke. Bolingbroke condemns the traitors, Bushy and Green, to death. Had Richard been as direct and final in his condemnation, his kingship might not have been usurped.

Another parallel situation within the play allows further emphasis on the differences between Richard's and Bolingbroke's methods. Act IV, Scene i is a challenge scene very similar to the challenge which Richard dealt with earlier in the play (I.i and I.iii). And the contrast in tone between the two situations is striking. Bolingbroke makes a simple five line speech which determines his future handling of this issue. Richard rose to his "challenge" by making long metaphorical speeches which conveyed none of Bolingbroke's decisiveness. Bolingbroke, however, is not a self-conscious man enamoured of his own voice. He is conscious of the men and problems around him and of the results he wants from their actions as well as his own.

Throughout the scenes which lead finally to Richard's

deposition in IV.i, Bolingbroke acts quietly but firmly to achieve his ends. At the actual deposition Bolingbroke says almost nothing; he has only single line speeches inserted among lengthy poetic passages on Richard's part. But Bolingbroke is the victor: he emerges with the crown. Once in control, Bolingbroke is too shrewd to repeat Richard's mistakes. A banished or imprisoned Richard is not the sort of insurance to his kingship that Bolingbroke has in mind. Here again he shows himself the astute politician, cold enough to take any action necessary to secure his own position, and realistic enough to see accurately what is, in fact, necessary: Richard's death. So, in spite of his own statement of affection for Richard, Bolingbroke has Richard killed by Exton. And to leave no loose ends, Bolingbroke banishes Exton after the murder has been committed. He has exhibited all the qualities of a successful usurper and ruler: "cunning and insight, power of dissimulation, ingratiating manners and promptitude in action."[4]

Richard is dead. Bolingbroke is victorious. The throne could not be held by a man who lived in his own world of mirrors and metaphors. It was there for the taking by a man attuned to this world's realities of politics and power.

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4 These are the qualities attributed to Bolingbroke, the successful ruler, by George Brandes in William Shakespeare: A Critical Study, p. 149. And basically the same qualities are examined by Irving Ribner in an attempt to discover whether Shakespeare used Machiavelli's The Prince to form this characterization; see "Bolingbroke, A True Machiavellian," Modern Language Quarterly, IX (1948), 177-84.

1 Henry IV

1 Henry IV is the historical sequel to Richard II. It is also Richard II's sequel in terms of the thesis that when imaginative and worldly personalities are in opposition, the worldly personalities win. The historical fact of Henry IV's suppression of the Percy uprising is the situation within which these personality types (Hotspur versus Henry IV and Prince Hal) have been juxtaposed by Shakespeare.

Hotspur is shown from the first to be an impassioned young man, anxious to gain honour and recognition for his bravery. Northumberland says of his son: "Imagination of some great exploit/Drives him beyond the bounds of patience" (I.iii.199). Hotspur's excited talk a few lines later about plucking "bright honor from the pale-faced moon", prompts his uncle, Worcester, to comment that "He apprehends a world of figures here,/But not the form of what he should attend" (I.iii.209). And again, in the same scene, Northumberland refers to Hotspur as a "wasp-stung and impatient fool . . . Tying thine ear to no tongue but thine own" (I.iii.236).

Our initial introduction to Hotspur has clearly established his character. Hotspur has an unreasonable, impulsive nature; he is carried away by his own imagination and uninterested in advice from others which would force him to be more temperate and attend to "the form" or reality of things. And our first impression of Hotspur is not altered by his subsequent behaviour. In III.i Hotspur is annoyed,

both by Glendower's superstitions and by the division of England among the rebels, and becomes involved in an argument with Glendower. Even as he is trying to raise forces to aid his uprising, Hotspur is unable to avoid arguing, thus risking the continued cooperation of one of his conspirators. Hotspur does not realistically assess what sort of behaviour is required by the circumstances of the moment. Instead, he defies the cautions of his friends, ignores the possible outcome, and acts on his own whims and desires.

When Hotspur is unable to raise the forces he had hoped for, he does not re-evaluate the chances of success or failure in the proposed rebellion (IV.i), but rather regards this as "A larger dare to our great enterprise." Hotspur sees Northumberland's absence as an opportunity to prove that he can succeed with very little help; it is a chance to "show-off." It is apparent that to Hotspur the rebellion is a kind of game, a vehicle for his own glorification, rather than a well-planned attempt to overthrow the present king and successfully enthrone a new king. Hotspur's death confirms this impression. His greatest regret in dying is not his loss of life or of victory *per se*, but personal loss of honour.[5] To the end Hotspur's thoughts are of a personal nature. Prince Hal called him a victim of "Ill-weaved ambition", but the ambition was not that of a pragmatic man;

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5 It is this treatment of honour by Shakespeare which leads E. Davis to the conclusion that Shakespeare did not accept the standard Elizabethan concept of honour, since he portrayed Hotspur as "immaculate in honour, and almost perfect in his folly" ("Shakespeare's Conception of Honour," *English Studies in Africa*, III [March, 1960], 31-34).

its motivation was completely internal and directed towards abstractions. Hotspur wanted to be the victor in order to be a hero, living up to standards of bravery and heroic ideals which he had set for himself. He was not an externally motivated realist, planning and watching for the right time and circumstances to rebel so that more tangible results than honour could be gained.

King Henry, of course, is still the shrewd political realist he was in Richard II. Now that he has gained the throne, he has no intention of losing it through foolish behaviour. He shows a constant awareness of the necessity for gauging the moods of others and charting his actions in those terms. For instance, he lectures Prince Hal on how to keep the allegiance of the people by keeping the king's "person fresh and new" (III.ii). Hotspur himself had mentioned that when Henry was originally trying to gain Richard II's throne, he had known "at what time to promise, when to pay" (IV.iii.50-52). When the Percy's rebel against him, Henry's thoughts are not of retaliation in defense of his honour, as Hotspur's probably would have been. Henry wants to maintain his kingdom as efficiently as possible, and offers to forgive the rebels and grant their desires if they will drop the rebellion.[6] King Henry clearly is not a man to fight because of personal provocation or without attempting to effect a settlement which will preserve his

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6 Perhaps Hotspur is right in distrusting Henry's offer, considering the results of a similar offer by Henry's son, John, in 2 Henry IV, IV.ii.

leadership.

And when the leadership of the country was in the balance, Prince Hal proved to be his father's son. His early irresponsibility was belied by his own famous speech (I.ii. 218-40), suggesting that when the time came he would be equal to the demands of his position as heir to the throne. Prince Hal's reasoning in his Act I soliloquy is much like his father's theory that the king could retain his aura of majesty by avoiding too much public exposure. So Hal plans to be "more wondered at" for having been wanted. This calculated plan leaves little doubt that Hal will fulfil his later promise to his father that he will "Be bold to tell you that I am your son" (III.ii.134). Hal, like his father, is far different from the passionate Hotspur.

The tone of Hal's speech over the dead body of Hotspur emphasizes the vast difference between the two men. Hotspur, the dreamer, had wanted to "pluck bright honor" from the moon. Hal makes a very realistic appraisal of the results of Hotspur's efforts:

> Ill-weaved ambition, how much art thou shrunk!
> When that this body did contain a spirit,
> A kingdom for it was too small a bound,
> But now two paces of the vilest earth
> Is room enough. (V.iv.89-93)

So much for dreams of honour.

2 Henry IV

The complete fulfillment of Hal's promise to be "his father's son" and the full revelation of Prince Hal as a

realistic man of the world is effected in 2 Henry IV.

Even though Hotspur is dead, comments on his past behaviour and judgment regarding the rebellion continue the contrast between Hotspur and Prince Hal. In counselling the Archbishop to be certain of aid before commencing military action, Bardolph points out that Hotspur ". . . with great imagination/Proper to madmen, led his powers to death,/And winking leaped into destruction" (I.iii.31-33). Alongside of this continuing image of an erratic, unreasonable Hotspur, we have an expanding image of Hal as a cold, shrewd reasonable man. Falstaff, the Prince's companion of old, is under the impression that the natural coldness of personality which Hal inherited from his father has been heated by his experiences with Falstaff and friends (IV.iii.126-32). But King Henry and Warwick know of a strain in Hal's character which Falstaff, too, will discover. King Henry says of Hal:

> For he is gracious if he be observed
> . . .
> Yet notwithstanding, being incensed, he's flint,
> As humorous as winter, and as sudden
> As flaws congealed in the spring of day. (IV.iv.30-35)

And Warwick explains Prince Hal's motives for friendship with Falstaff as being completely planned and practical:

> The Prince but studies his companions
> Like a strange tongue, wherein to gain the language,
> 'Tis needful that the most immodest word
> Be looked upon and learned, which once attained,
> Your Highness knows, comes to no further use
> But to be known and hated. So, like gross terms,
> The Prince will in the performance of time
> Cast off his followers, and their memory
> Shall as a pattern or a measure live,
> By which His Grace must mete the lives of others,
> Turning past evils to advantage. (IV.iv.68-79)

When King Henry IV is dying and Hal realizes that he will soon be the next King, there is no doubt about his determination to retain the kingship at any cost:

> . . . And put the world's whole strength
> Into one giant arm, it shall not force
> This lineal honor from me. This from thee
> Will I to mine leave, as 'tis left to me. (IV.v.44-47)

The final scene for Henry is a striking proof of the extent to which both he and Hal are politicians who put personal wishes and fears aside when large political issues are involved. Henry IV is no Richard II worrying about graves and epitaphs. Henry's last speech to his son is advice on how to conduct the affairs of state, to keep peace at home by busying "giddy minds/With foreign quarrels" (IV.v.214). And Hal's last words to his father are a promise to maintain the crown against all the world. As outer-directed men of the world, their private affairs will always take second place to matters which affect their public positions.

Hal's denial of Falstaff (V.v.50-75) is the act which completes Hal's commitment to leadership and its attendant responsibilities. As was foreshadowed from our earliest knowledge of Hal, he was always aware that his relationship with Falstaff would one day be past history. There was no question of his jeopardizing his leadership and authority by such an association. Once he becomes King Henry V, "Hal's" past is nothing but a dream, "But, being awaked, I do despise my dream" (V.v.55). Dreamers do not become kings

so Hal threw aside dreams to become King Henry V.[7]

Henry V

Henry V is the full and final presentation of "Hal" as the competent king, completely in touch with political reality. Canterbury says of Henry V's ideas, "that the art and practic part of life/Must be the mistress to this theoric" (I.i.51), suggesting that his theories have been based on practical experience. Act III gives an indication of just how "practic" and shrewd Henry V is. He is planning a French war (which his father, Henry IV, advised him to do as a means of keeping peace at home). Henry V is protecting himself, however, insofar as the decision to make war is concerned, by insisting that the Archbishop of Canterbury make the final interpretation of Salic law which will justify

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7 Counterpointing the contrast between the imaginative Hotspur and the realist Hal, is the paradoxical Falstaff-Hal relationship. Falstaff seemed the realist par excellence who looked out for his own welfare, and saw through such worthless values as truth and honour. In the early stages of their relationship, Falstaff regarded Hal as the dreamer. Hal was the irresponsible youth, having fun and believing in abstract concepts which were, therefore, unreal and empty to Falstaff (as his famous speech on honour indicates). But at the end the situation is reversed. The old "realist" loses sight of reality and becomes the victim of his own dreams of prestige in his role as friend to the King. This dream prompts Falstaff to call out publicly to Henry V and his train, forcing the completely "awakened" Hal to reject Falstaff severely (even more severely than a private discussion would have necessitated). Falstaff has not awakened to the new reality that "Hal" is no longer, he has become King Henry V. When you lose touch with reality, your sense of perspective and ability to correctly plan your actions are lost too. Falstaff brought about his own destruction through the same failing which destroyed Richard II and Hotspur--being attuned only to inner feelings and needs, and not to external circumstances.

Henry's claim to the French throne. Henry is very careful to force Canterbury into a positive statement. He first cautions Canterbury as to "what your Reverence shall incite us to" (II.ii.20), and then presses for a decision: "May I with right and conscience make this claim?" (I.ii.95). The impression Henry manages to create is that the responsibility for war rests on Canterbury.

Henry V's ability to act, controlling all personal passion and considering only the external goals and circumstances, is made explicit in II.ii. A subject who "insulted" King Henry is freed, against the advice of Cambridge, Scroop, and Grey, because Henry feels he should distinguish degrees of crime by the punishment he metes. Henry is too shrewd to turn people against him by severe treatment of his people for minor offenses. He follows their own merciless counsel, however, in judging Cambridge, Scroop, and Grey for treason, and condemns the three to death. But even in this act, Henry does not behave in an impassioned, revengeful manner (as Hotspur or Richard II would probably have behaved). Henry's thoughts and actions are not for private satisfaction. In dealing with the traitors as in dealing with the minor offender, Henry thinks of his actions as precedent for judgment of future lawbreakers. Henry makes the decision, therefore, which will best preserve, not personal ego, but the kingship:

> Touching our person seek we no revenge,
> But we our kingdom's safety must so tender,
> Whose ruin you have sought that to her laws
> We do deliver you. (II.ii.174-77)

In another sense, too, Henry has kept the personal aspect out of his judgment of Cambridge, Scroop, and Grey. By asking the three men to pass judgment on a minor offender and then using their judgment of him against the three men themselves, Henry has managed to give to them a large share of the responsibility for their own deaths. (This technique, of getting others to believe they are making the unpleasant decisions, is a variation on Henry's forcing Canterbury to "incite" England to war in Act I).

In Act IV. scene i, Henry himself states his awareness that there is no time or place for personal indulgence in the life of a king. He must always be concerned with the impression he is making on others--creating a favourable image with the people, keeping up the morale of the men in battle. Succumbing to the dream and ritual surrounding the monarch leads to surrendering leadership.[8] But Henry denies the "proud dream" (IV.i.274), the ceremony of kingship; he is too aware of the realities to be blinded by the rituals.

Shakespeare has shown us a pageant of English history. The dreamy contenders for the throne, with their visions of personal honour and glory, have failed to become successful rulers capable of attaining and keeping their crowns. Only the realistic men of the world have succeeded. This is not

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8 This was Richard II's fate, and to up-date this political truth, Francis Joseph of Austria's Hapsburg monarchy lost his authority because love of ritual blinded him to the reality of a changing time.

to suggest that the men of imagination--Richard and Hotspur--were not interesting, even sympathetic personalities. Richard had his moments of greatness, particularly at the end of his life. Hotspur was a likeable youth with his high-pitched, courageous concept of life. Nor would I suggest that the men of the world were single-faceted figures. While Henry IV and Henry V could both be cold and cruel, they could also be warm and likeable. Henry IV's affection for his sons was an appealing quality. Henry V revealed some sensitivity and warmth, as well as ideals which might be defined as inner-directed. He was the hero of the history plays; there is a suggestion that Henry V represents a compromise character between the imaginative and realistic poles. Henry V was realistic enough to be able to retain his kingship, yet sensitive and fine-principled enough to be considered the "mirrour of Christian kings." Or did Shakespeare use the "mirrour of Christian kings" phrase with tongue-in-cheek?[9] It cannot be overlooked that this Christian king did not hesitate to wage war against France, promising that thousands of widows, mothers and children born and unborn would weep over the war's results. Any feelings of responsibility for his actions which may have disturbed Henry (for example, those shown in IV.i), whether of concern over Falstaff, waging war, or legally condemning people to death, never caused him to act in any way but coldly and

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9 A reading of Henry V as ironically intended was advanced by Andrew James Magill, in "The Divided Mind of Henry V," unpublished thesis for the M.A., University of Windsor, 1961.

realistically. And this, after all, is the test. A leader may be a man like all other men. But when his position of authority is in any way challenged, if he is to remain a leader he must put aside personal feelings and dreams and act only as worldly circumstances dictate. He must be a man of the actual world. Henry V was such a man.

CHAPTER III

TWO ROMAN PLAYS

Julius Caesar and *Antony and Cleopatra* are among Shakespeare's Roman plays, and they also have a common generic characteristic; they are a blending of history and tragedy. Although they are based on history, they are not as clearly "history plays" as the plays of the English history cycle. *Julius Caesar* is, of course, the earlier and less artistically mature play. It may be considered a transitional play, moving from history or semi-history to an increased stress on character and on universal human problems characteristic of Shakespeare's tragedies. *Antony and Cleopatra*, written approximately eight years later, represents a movement further away from pure history and into the realm of tragedy. It is because they have a common Roman historical setting and yet represent Shakespeare's transitional and later tragic periods, respectively, that I have grouped the two plays in one chapter. In spite of the gap in time and artistic development between the plays, however, both *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* present situations in which the two personality types observed in the English history plays are again revealed as vying with each other for power. And the results of the conflict are the same: the worldly men succeed.

Julius Caesar

From the beginning of *Julius Caesar* there is no doubt

that Brutus is a "high-minded idealist."[1] He is not the sort of man one would even expect to become involved in political intrigue. But he is prevailed upon to join a conspiracy against Caesar by men who wish to use Brutus's fine name and reputation as an aid to their cause. Brutus's "honorable mettle" is wrought by Cassius's seductions. Once Cassius has introduced the idea to Brutus, it is to a great extent Brutus's own ideals which convince him that the conspirators are right. In II.i.10-34, Brutus presents his reasons for agreeing to the murder of Caesar. He decides that Caesar's death will remove the threat of injustice and of power without pity, and will, therefore, be in the interests of the general good. The motivation for Brutus's decision to murder Caesar is not an external personal goal, but his own idealism--an internal motivation. It is interesting that Brutus makes his decision in a soliloquy which is almost formally syllogistic, a ritual, really, which both allows him to feel that the decision is ratified by cool, impersonal logic and also interposes a construct of words between him and the reality of the action proposed. In his subsequent meeting with the other conspirators, Brutus continues to reveal his idealistic nature. He refuses to demand that the conspirators take an oath swearing to their resolutions, taking the position that a Roman's honest word is oath enough. Brutus makes the error of judging others by his own standards and not assessing theirs.

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1 G. B. Harrison, "Introduction" to Julius Caesar, in Shakespeare: The Complete Works (New York, 1948), p. 814.

Later in II.i Brutus disagrees with Cassius's wish to kill Antony as well as Caesar. Brutus is operating on a more symbolic and ritualistic level than the other conspirators; he wishes them to "be sacrificers, but not butchers" (II.i. 166), and talks of the "spirit of Caesar" (II.i.167) without considering the physical reality of Antony and his potential for damage to the conspirators.

Immediately after the very violent and real murder of Caesar, Brutus once again reacts in an imaginative way and leads the conspirators in a ritualistic scene of bathing in Caesar's blood. And when Antony appears before the conspirators following the murder of Caesar and requests to speak at Caesar's funeral, Brutus agrees, again revealing his ineptness in judging and controlling men. He still does not see Antony as a threat. Brutus believes that people will accept "the reason of our Caesar's death" (III.i.237) and not be moved by what Antony may say to them. Once more Brutus makes the mistake of judging others by his standards rather than by their own; he is in tune with himself but not with the world of others. When Brutus delivers his funeral oration his arguments are well suited to his own mores--an appeal to reason, honour and patriotism--but they are not appealing to a mob which feeds on violent sentiments and passions.

Again in IV.iii, when the conspirators' fortunes have fallen and they are making a last desperate stand for their cause and their lives, Brutus is no more able to come to terms with practical issues. Brutus needs gold to pay his legions

but he "can raise no money by vile means" (IV.iii.71); instead, he wants Cassius to raise the money for him. Yet he condemns Cassius for raising the necessary gold by questionable means. And as Brutus's financial abilities were limited, so his military judgment was faulty and his cause and his army were defeated because he overruled Cassius's plan and insisted that his own battle tactics be carried out.

The final denial of reality for Brutus is only a moment before his death; in spite of very clear evidence to the contrary, he insists that all men have been true to him. To the end Brutus projected his values and standards onto others instead of discovering theirs. To the end Brutus was unable to adapt himself to events and other men's behaviour, and so he failed politically.[2]

Antony has no predilection for the errors which caused Brutus to fail. From his first to his final appearance in Julius Caesar, Antony behaves shrewdly and with a clear, realistic vision of what each situation requires. In Acts I and II Antony was described at various times as rather wild, an enthusiast of the theatre and sports, and seemed to be a carefree young man, much as Prince Hal was portrayed early in I Henry IV. But like Prince Hal, Antony apparently

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2 George Brandes's concept of Brutus is quite similar to mine. He says Shakespeare "created Brutus under the deeply-imprinted conviction that impractical magnanimity is unfitted to play an effective part in the drama of history and that errors of policy revenge themselves at least as sternly as moral delinquencies" (William Shakespeare: A Critical Study [New York, 1896], p. 281). Yet Brandes argues that Shakespeare had no systematic political convictions.

experienced a "conversion." When the crisis of Caesar's murder arises, Antony appears immediately and handles the conspirators and the populace with great skill. Antony shakes hands with the conspirators and declares his love for them, then cleverly asks permission to deliver a funeral oration for Caesar. And when Brutus grants this favour, Antony does not attempt to appeal to the people's reason as Brutus did. Antony knows that "passion . . . is catching" (III.i.283), and his oration plays with the mob's emotions by using concrete images and actual objects--showing the crowd the rents in Caesar's mantle and holding Caesar's will up for them to see--melodramatic, but effective.

Later in the play, when Antony has achieved a position of some power so that he may avenge Caesar's death by defeating the conspirators and at the same time gain power over Rome for his triumvirate, he does not duplicate Brutus's concern about being thought a butcher rather than a sacrificer. Antony willingly condemns to death people who may impede his actions, even members of his own family. (This is another resemblance to Prince Hal, who started war with France and jeopardized his own subjects' lives to keep his throne.) And Antony goes on to wage a successful war against the conspirators and put his own triumvirate in power. Brutus misjudged Antony and believed he was only a wild, harmless youth. Antony did not misjudge Brutus. Antony knew Brutus to be honourable, unselfish, and unsuspecting--fine qualities--but they were Brutus's undoing. Brutus's intentions were probably far more pure than Antony's, as Antony himself acknowledged:

> He [Brutus] only, in a general honest thought
> And common good to all, made one of them.
> His life was gentle . . . (V.v.71)

Antony's intentions, on the other hand, look rather impure, particularly in IV.i, when he is preparing proscription lists to control his opposition and belittling Lepidus, one of his own triumvirate. Nevertheless, Antony emerges victor and leader.

Brutus was defeated, not because his cause was morally wrong or his moral nature flawed; he was defeated because of his impracticality and his inability to see and act realistically. Brutus lost because he lived in a private world of rituals and ideals. And Antony won the final battle for power, not because his cause--in avenging the work of assassins--was just. Antony won because he was a realist, able to gauge people and situations accurately and to take action efficiently. He possessed the necessary qualifications for competent leadership.

Antony and Cleopatra

The same conclusions seem warranted by an examination of Antony and Cleopatra. Here Antony (not necessarily the same character as Antony in Julius Caesar), according to reports of people in a position to observe him over a period of time, has been greatly changed by Cleopatra. He was "the triple pillar of the world," but now he is called "a strumpet's fool" (I.i.13). By the end of the first scene Antony has acknowledged his new position. He has renounced power over

the Roman world in favour of Cleopatra. "Here is my space/ Kingdoms are clay . . . The nobleness of life is to do thus" (I.i.34-37), are the words Antony speaks as he embraces Cleopatra. Antony has chosen to place the highest value on his personal needs and desires rather than on his political obligations as a man who, in a sense, belongs to the world. And he is changed by this choice. Philo says:

> Sir, sometimes, when he is not Antony,
> He comes too short of that great property
> Which still should go with Antony. (I.i.59)

Philo is using the name Antony to mean one of the three leaders of the world, but the qualities that Antony once had have been destroyed by his subjection to Cleopatra. Now Antony, like Brutus, has become an "inner-directed" man. The inner motivation is clearly different in kind in the cases of Brutus and Antony, but in both cases it revolves around a personal love. Brutus was blinded to reality by love of ideals and abstract virtues. Antony is blinded by love of Cleopatra. Unlike Brutus, Antony is aware of what is happening to him. In I. ii he wishes he had never seen Cleopatra and realizes that great harm will be done if he does not break with her. At this point Antony seems torn between his personal and political life, but even when he leaves Cleopatra to return to his duties in Rome, it is not to be the complete Antony of old:

> The strong necessity of time commands
> Our services awhile but my full heart
> Remains in use with you. (I.iii.42)

And this proves to be the case. Antony agrees to a marriage of political expediency with Octavia. This is the

kind of action which may re-establish neglected relationships with his fellow-rulers and which may rededicate Antony to his role as a leader prepared to make concessions to retain that leadership. But apparently the action was not made in good faith, and almost immediately Antony negates this "conciliatory" action and plans to return to Egypt and his personal pleasure:

> I will to Egypt.
> And though I make this marriage for my peace,
> I' the East my pleasure lies. (II.iii.39)

In spite of a warning by Caesar, Antony destroys the "piece of virtue which is set betwixt us as the cement of our love" (III.ii.28) and, at the same time, destroys his political career by his impractical action in returning to Cleopatra.[3]

In III.vii Antony behaves the way other Shakespearean idealists have behaved (e.g., Hotspur, Brutus) and agrees to fight a battle in which the odds will be against him, simply because he has been "dared to it" by Caesar and Antony feels he must rise to the challenge. And to complete the negation of his former practical competence, Antony flies from the battle at its height in order to follow Cleopatra. Antony knows that his love for Cleopatra has caused his military, and hence political, ruin (as his speeches of III. xi reveal). He has lost "half the bulk of the world" but feels that one of Cleopatra's tears ". . . rates/All that

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3 Willard Farnham spoke of Antony as one of Shakespeare's tragic individualists "who as they impel themselves toward catastrophe are totally self-absorbed" (Shakespeare's Tragic Frontier [Berkely, Calif., 1950], p. 11). I am, in a way, reversing this statement to say that it is because Antony is totally self-absorbed that he is impelling himself towards political catastrophe.

is won and lost, Give me a kiss,/ Even this repays me" (III. xi.69).

After the battle Antony answers Caesar's request to Cleopatra to give up Antony by challenging Caesar to single swordfight--a completely impractical response which causes Enobarbus to say:

> That he should dream
> Knowing all measure the full Caesar will
> Answer his emptiness! Caesar, thou hadst subdued
> His judgment too. (III.xiii.34)

But it was not Caesar who subdued Antony's judgment. Antony's love for Cleopatra was the original cause of his loss of judgment. And even his attempt to recover his former self is recognized by Enobarbus as being based on a kind of passion--subjective anger--rather than reasoned behaviour: "A diminution in our Captain's brain/Restores his heart" (III.xiii.198). It is not the impersonal war of a Henry V, waged for political reasons only; Antony is fighting for honour:

> Or I will live
> Or bathe my dying honour in the blood
> Shall make it live again. (IV.ii.5)

When Antony dies he is called by Cleopatra "the noblest of men." This is reminiscent of the "noblest of Romans" phrase with which Antony described Brutus in Julius Caesar. And as in the case of Brutus, it is applied to a man who may have been a personal success (since he was paid such a compliment) but who, nevertheless, in terms of world leadership and authority, was a failure.

Antony's failure was not because of his immoral love for

Cleopatra.[4] It is debatable whether their love was sordid in any event. Certainly it was a great love in terms of magnitude, since it caused a third of the known world to hang in the balance. And their love was dignified by Shakespeare in beautifully poetic speeches, containing celestial imagery and apparently honest declarations of real and deep love. The point I wish to make is that even if Cleopatra were a pure heroine whom Antony chose with the most honest and honourable intentions, it still would involve a choice of personal love and desire over political expediency and public service.[5]

Octavius Caesar, on the other hand, chose his country from first to last. At the beginning of the play he is angry with Antony because of Antony's neglect of state business through personal indulgence. Caesar attempts to bring Antony back to Rome and away from Cleopatra permanently by arranging his marriage to Octavia. Octavia's wishes and possible future unhappiness are not considered; if necessary, she will be sacrificed by Caesar to political necessity. When Octavia arrives to see Caesar and he learns that Antony has returned to Cleopatra, Caesar is angry and speaks dis-

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4 Alfred Harbage argues, to the contrary, that Antony fails because of his moral defect; see As They Liked It (New York, 1947). Franklin M. Dickey also insists that Antony receives the wages of his sins; see Not Wisely But Too Well (San Marino, Calif., 1957).

5 A modern example of a politician who virtually sacrificed his public career to private desire is Nelson Rockefeller, whose marriage to Margaret Murphy, and the surrounding scandal, caused any presidential plans for Rockefeller to become impossible.

paragingly of them: "He hath given his empire/Up to a whore" (III.vi.66). But, after the first battle, when Antony's messenger asks for Antony's freedom and the "circle of Ptolemies" for Cleopatra, Caesar denies Antony, but is persuaded to forget his anger and harsh words about Cleopatra. Instead Caesar shrewdly tries to win Cleopatra from Antony. The iron hand, openly attempting to destroy Antony, will submit to wearing a velvet glove to gain a greater victory. Through his emmisary, Thryseus, Caesar approaches Cleopatra; he uses the strategy of suggesting that she was only Antony's innocent victim and asks her to request some favour of him. This technique gives Cleopatra an opportunity to accept Caesar's victory gracefully. In order to win Cleopatra, Caesar plays the diplomat rather than the arrogant victor.

When Caesar receives Antony's challenge to personal combat, there is no question of his rising nobly to the challenge. Even though Antony has insulted Caesar by calling him "boy," Caesar's response is to "Laugh at his [Antony's] challenge." Wise Caesar would never take such a foolish "dare" seriously; he orders that a battle be begun, not for honour but for victory. After he becomes the victor Caesar treats Cleopatra well, but he is merely exhibiting his characteristic trait of using any circumstances to his advantage. Cleopatra eventually discovers through Dolabella that Caesar has no intention of continuing to treat her well. He intends to take Cleopatra through the streets as a spoil of victory in order to capitalize on the impression her appearance as Caesar's captive will make on Rome and Syria and the public

prestige it will gain for him.

Caesar was a man who adapted himself to events. He was able to do whatever was required to achieve power. Of his relationship with Antony, Caesar said:

> I must perforce
> Have shown to thee such a declining day,
> Or look on thine. We could not stand together
> In the whole world. (V.i.37)

The issue to Caesar was clear; there wasn't room for both Caesar and Antony, and since one person had to fall to make way for the other, Caesar was determined to see that it was Antony who fell. Again, the man of the world adapting himself to events has succeeded, not because he is a finer or a "luckier" man, but because he has dedicated himself completely to achieving his goal at any cost.[6]

In Julius Caesar and Antony and Cleopatra, then, Shakespeare has shown the "man of the world" rise to power and the "man of imagination" fall in defeat. The victors have emerged. Shakespeare has not suggested that this should be considered a complete or final judgment of the characters. Certainly he did not moralize in either play. To be "inner-directed" in modern terms implies that one has spiritual values, and this was true of both Brutus and Antony. Yet they also were capable, as I have shown, of petty, even cruel, behaviour. Brutus did kill Julius Caesar; Antony (in Antony

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6 Octavius Caesar has been considered the ideal ruler by James Emerson Phillips, Jr., who says that Octavius Caesar succeeded not just because of natural qualifications, "but because he devotes every energy and subordinates every personal feeling to this political philosophy" (The State in Shakespeare's Greek and Roman Plays [New York, 1940], p. 203).

and Cleopatra) did mistreat Octavia. As to the realists, Antony (of Julius Caesar) was not incapable of feeling. He seemed to have a genuine regard for Julius Caesar and great respect for Brutus and for Brutus's ethical code. In Antony and Cleopatra Octavius Caesar appreciated how great Antony had been and was doubtless justified in feeling some disgust with Antony's neglect of duty. Octavius Caesar is probably much less likeable than Antony was in Julius Caesar. Perhaps it should be mentioned, too, that the "imaginative" characters of each play, Brutus and Antony respectively, are also the principal characters of those plays insofar as actual stage appearances, quantity of lines, and insights into their thoughts are concerned. As I suggested earlier, both Julius Caesar and Antony and Cleopatra are not purely "history" plays: Julius Caesar is an early example of Shakespeare's movement toward tragedy and Antony and Cleopatra is a later achievement in tragedy. In both cases there is increased interest in individual character and the development of a hero, which might account for the feeling that Shakespeare thought more of Brutus and Antony (in Antony and Cleopatra) than he did of their opponents. As private individuals perhaps he did prefer them. Brutus and Antony do seem to be more sympathetic characters, with many warm, admirable qualities. But that is not to say that they possess the qualities necessary for leadership; they do not. Antony (in Julius Caesar) and Octavius Caesar do possess the qualities which are prerequisites for leadership: the strength and shrewdness to

gain and retain power. Whether or not it should be so, Julius Caesar and Antony and Cleopatra have shown that men of the world rule over men of the imagination.

CHAPTER IV

A TRAGEDY FROM SHAKESPEARE'S MIDDLE PERIOD

Hamlet, probably written circa 1602, is an achievement of what is often called Shakespeare's middle period, since it marks both a chronological and artistic centre in Shakespeare's career. The general tendency of Shakespeare's development in this middle period is in the direction of high tragedy, with its themes of human suffering and searching. Yet even in this period, where the individual and his personal problems predominate, the political theme persists. Hamlet provides an illustration of this point. Aside from its strategic chronological position in Shakespeare's career, another factor influencing my decision to examine Hamlet is the "line of descent," as Granville-Barker calls it,[1] which exists in the characters Richard II, Romeo, Brutus, and Hamlet. Since I have discussed both Richard II and Brutus, a treatment of Hamlet will reveal one area in which the connection among the characters exists--in their capacities as politicians--as well as showing Shakespeare's continued interest in this middle period in political encounters between antithetical personalities.

Hamlet is not just a political play. The issue of leadership is, however, one of the primary concerns in the

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1 Harley Granville-Barker, Prefaces to Shakespeare (London, 1927), p. 61.

play. Hamlet is the Prince of Denmark with claim to the Danish throne. Claudius had interfered with Hamlet's opportunity to rule Denmark by murdering Hamlet's father and marrying Gertrude, thus becoming King of Denmark. Within the frame of the play the leadership of Denmark transfers twice: once from the old King Hamlet to Claudius (although this occurred before the play begins, it is given attention within the play), and finally (after a contest between Claudius and Hamlet), from Claudius to Fortinbras. Hamlet himself suggests that one motivation for his actions was his desire for "advancement" to the position of royal leadership.[2] So there is obviously an area of political concern in Hamlet.

I do not suggest that my interpretation of the characters in Hamlet in terms of leadership potential is all inclusive or final. I do submit, however, that there is a political motif in the play, and that insofar as the characters are in political roles, they have fallen into the same personality patterns already shown by many of Shakespeare's political figures. Hamlet, an inner-directed man of imagination, is opposed to Claudius, an outer-directed man of the world. The first ruler, King Hamlet, is also remembered as an idealistic dreamer-king, in contrast to the calculated,

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2 John Dover-Wilson presents the arguments for the advancement theory very clearly in What Happens in Hamlet, 3d ed. (Cambridge, 1951). For references within the play to the issue of Hamlet's thwarted political hopes, see II.ii.258-64, III.ii.354, and V.ii.65.

controlled strength of the final ruler, Fortinbras. Shakespeare has developed the play's "political" characters so that inner-directed imaginative men are pitted against outer-directed men of the world in contests which have the leadership of the nation at stake.

Hamlet's basic desire throughout the play, to avenge his father's death, is essentially an inner-oriented goal. Since revenge implies the righting of a wrong which one feels personally, the motive for revenge is primarily personal satisfaction to be gained from the act of vengeance, rather than secondary gains which may be achieved. If Hamlet's motive for revenge is purely to fulfil the Ghost's demands, then Hamlet's satisfaction from killing Claudius would be completely personal--the successful completion of a personal mission.[3] Hamlet would know he had carried out his dead father's wishes, had extracted from Claudius the payment of a soul for a soul, and had in some sense put time back in joint. But there would not necessarily be a tangible, practical goal achieved. And if Hamlet's motives in wishing to murder Claudius are mixed, and part of his reason is to clear the way for his own ascent to the throne, it is still indicative of Hamlet's imaginative, inner-directed nature that he is unable to murder to achieve that goal.

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3 Fredson Bowers discusses the personal nature of Hamlet's private revenge, and calls this the primary flaw in Hamlet's character (although for a purpose quite different from mine); see "Hamlet as Minister and Scourge," PMLA, LXX (1955), 740-49.

It is unmistakable that Shakespeare has portrayed Hamlet as a man apart from the real world around him. Our introduction to Hamlet and Claudius in I.ii is an interesting study in contrasts. Claudius is very busy with state matters, dispatching ambassadors to deal with Fortinbras and granting an audience to Laertes. Hamlet, dressed in mourning, stands apart from the court and comments, aside, on Claudius's instructions. And as soon as Hamlet is left alone he communicates his distaste for the world and expresses a desire to escape the world through suicide.

It is in Hamlet's Act I soliloquy that we are also given a highly idealized picture of the old King Hamlet and of the relationship between King Hamlet and Gertrude. Hamlet's comparison of his father to the sun-god, Hyperion, and his description of the extremely protective attitude of his father towards Gertrude are revealing. They disclose Hamlet's idealistic hero-worship of his father and suggest that Hamlet's father was far from an "earthy" personality himself. (As Henry V was his father's son, it appears that Hamlet, the imaginative dreamer, is also his father's son.)

A strong awareness of the influence of fate on his life is also expressed by Hamlet in the first act of the play. This is another quality which obviates worldly realistic behaviour on Hamlet's part.[4] There is little point in purposefully planning your actions in the light of realistic external

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4 Hamlet's inaction because of a sense of fatalism is quite similar to Richard II's passivity in accepting his "fate."

goals, if you feel impelled by fate to fulfill some non-worldly destiny. As he sets out to follow the Ghost, Hamlet says "My fate cries out" (I.iv.82). After he has heard the Ghost's demands, Hamlet again refers to his fate: "The time is out of joint. Oh cursed spite/That ever I was born to set it right!" (I.v.190).

Hamlet's statement in II.ii.254 is perhaps the most overt expression of his own inner-directed nature: ". . . for there is nothing either good or bad/but thinking makes it so." This reveals a belief in complete subjectivity and totally internalized standards of value and judgment. Emphasis is placed on subjective abstractions, not on real, concrete actions about which objective judgments can be made.

Before Hamlet can bring himself to act on the Ghost's demands for revenge, he decides he must have further proof that Claudius did kill Hamlet's father. Hamlet cannot accept the Ghost's word that Claudius is a murderer; he wishes to prove to his <u>own</u> satisfaction that Claudius "deserves" to die. It is in keeping with Hamlet's unrealistic imaginative personality that the device he chooses to expose Claudius's guilt is a dumb show and play; the device itself is not reality but a fiction. (This is also reminiscent of Shakespeare's other imaginative men: Hotspur's "game" of war; Richard II's play-acting; Brutus's ritualistic, ceremonial view of Caesar's murder; Prospero's magic. All of these are barriers between the individual and reality.)

Claudius is not so scrupulous in attempting to discover

whether Hamlet is really plotting against him and, therefore, deserves to die. He simply arranges for Hamlet's death in England. But even after Claudius's reaction to "The Mousetrap" convinces Hamlet that Claudius is guilty, Hamlet cannot go through with a calculated murder (III.iii.73-95). Only on an impulse and as a result of great inner turmoil does Hamlet stab through the arras and mistakenly kill Polonius. This is not a reasoned action performed with an awareness of its results. This is the blind action of a man motivated only by inner impulse and emotion. "Nay, I know not. Is't the king?" (III.iv.26). Hamlet does not even know what he has done.

Hamlet is aware of his own limited ability to direct his actions to external achievements; he has a habit of "thinking too precisely on the event," Hamlet admits to turning problems over within his own mind (IV.iv), whereas Claudius, as well as Fortinbras (whose military campaign prompts Hamlet's comment), are "with divine ambition puffed" and need only have their positions and authority challenged to be provoked into action. His distress at the spectacle of men fighting and dying over a worthless plot of land stresses the great difference between Hamlet and Fortinbras, who will finally become Denmark's ruler. Fortinbras is in the tradition of Henry V; he can send men "to their graves like beds" if it will serve his "divine ambition" to rule.[5]

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5 The horror of men dying over worthless plots of land to help ambitious men to power is something which is a political reality for our time as much as it was to Fortinbras; for example, Verdun, described in a recent television documentary as having "no military value, only the value men's

While Hamlet has been trying to come to terms with himself and to resolve his inner conflicts about murdering Claudius, Claudius makes some decisions about Hamlet. The decisions Claudius reaches are not based on his inner needs, but on practical issues. Early in the play Claudius had engaged Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to report to him on Hamlet's behaviour and intentions. A similar intelligence system might be employed by any realistic ruler. Claudius decides the situation warrants getting rid of Hamlet, but he dares not kill Hamlet where the Danish people will learn of it. Claudius realizes that Hamlet is "loved of the distracted multitude" (IV.iii.4), and he has no intention of creating for the people an unfavourable impression of himself. (Claudius's calculated attempts to maintain a favourable public image put him in company with Shakespeare's other political realists, for example, Henry IV, Henry V, and, in a sense, Antony in Julius Caesar, who knew how to please a crowd.) So a plan is devised for sending Hamlet to England, where he can be quietly liquidated. Claudius killed the old King Hamlet to get the throne; he has no qualms about killing Prince Hamlet in order to keep it.

But Hamlet escapes his would-be assassins. When he returns to Denmark he has begun to carry out his earlier

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passions gave it." This reference in Hamlet may have been to the siege of Ostend, particularly the heavy attack of 1601, another worthless piece of land defended, under the command of Sir Frances Vere, at the cost of many lives; the Ostend incident is described by G. B. Harrison in "The National Background," in A Companion to Shakespeare Studies (Cambridge, 1934), p. 172.

resolution to have bloody thoughts. (It is quite consistent with our total impression of Hamlet that, even when resolving to be bloody, he speaks of his bloody "thoughts" rather than his bloody deeds.) Hamlet was able to effect his escape by turning the tables on Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, causing them to sail to their deaths. Bloody and deliberate action might seem to have begun, but rather than patterning his future actions in some calculated direction, Hamlet simply surrenders himself to the fate he feels he cannot escape. He gives in to the "divinity that shapes our ends." His cold attitude towards the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern seems fatalistic too. They came between forces bigger than themselves and so were destroyed. Hamlet's thoughts may be bloody now, but his actions are still the result of personal passion and surrender to his personal fate. He gives no thought to what he might achieve except personal satisfaction and fulfillment of his private destiny; instead, "Hamlet thought only of himself,"[6] and "could kill only on his own behalf."[7] So he agrees to fence with Laertes rather than "defy auguery" and places himself in the hands of providence. "Readiness is all," and apparently Hamlet is ready to submit.

Claudius, of course, has not trusted to providence in

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6 G. Wilson Knight, The Crown of Life (London, 1947), p. 12.

7 Rebecca West, The Court and the Castle (New Haven, 1957), p. 15.

arranging the Hamlet-Laertes fencing match.[8] He relies instead on an unbated sword and a poisoned drink. And they prove quite effective. The only person who is not "accidentally" killed by them is Claudius. So Hamlet finally becomes the murderer of Claudius, but even then Hamlet's act seems almost on the spur of the moment. The treachery he witnessed finally caused Hamlet to turn on Claudius and kill him in a moment of passion, a moment of final personal revenge.

Neither Hamlet nor Claudius has won. Fortinbras says at the end of the play that if Hamlet "had been put on" he was likely to have "proved most royally." But to be capable of behaving royally once you become king is not sufficient. You must first become king, and Hamlet was not capable of gaining the throne. He thought only of his private destiny. A national leader can have no private destiny; his destiny must be publicly realized.

Claudius was better able to act without being restrained by personal feelings and twinges of conscience. He proved this by the way in which he seized the throne and in his attempts to keep it. Yet Claudius, too, fails to remain king. It has been suggested that Claudius is too villainous to be allowed to succeed; that the enormity of his crime is such that it could not seem to be condoned by allowing

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8 Note that Claudius has arranged to have Laertes act as Hamlet's murderer. Claudius's use of Laertes to avoid direct involvement and responsibility for the murder is similar to Henry V's use of Canterbury to avoid direct responsibility for war with France.

him to remain king.[9] Perhaps this is at least partially so. Claudius did kill his brother and incestuously marry his sister-in-law. Yet Henry IV murdered his cousin, Richard II, and retained the kingship nevertheless. Perhaps another element figured in Claudius's final failure. Calculating and conscienceless Claudius was not really cold and conscienceless enough. Initially Claudius would have been wiser not to indulge a personal passion and marry Gertrude, whom he admits was one of his reasons for murdering the old King: "My crown, mine own ambition, and my Queen" (III.iii.55). This flaw partially precipitated Hamlet's feeling against Claudius.

There are also two definite situations within the play when Claudius's personal weakness is revealed. The first time Claudius loses control of himself and reacts spontaneously, it is in response to "The Mousetrap" which Hamlet has set for him. Apparently Claudius was feeling sufficiently conscience-stricken that he could not check his shock at seeing his crime enacted before him. He was trapped by his personal feelings. He forgot the dictum for public figures which Henry V set down: "Yet in reason, no man [nor a king] should possess him with any appearance of fear" (Henry V, IV.i.116). The king must not display personal emotions; he

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9 Alfred Harbage argues that moral defects in Shakespeare's characters are the cause of their failure, and he includes not only Claudius, but also Antony in Antony and Cleopatra, and Richard II as being victims of Shakespeare's "scheme of moral justice" (As They Liked It [New York, 1947], p. 119).

must always consider their affect on others. If Claudius had controlled his reaction, Hamlet would not have had proof of the Ghost's charge against Claudius. The second time Claudius indulges in a demonstration of personal feeling is in his attempt to pray. Claudius confirms the fact that he is conscience-stricken and is having difficulty carrying out his intentions: "My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent" (III.iii.40). This moment of introspection on Claudius's part almost cost him his crown and life. It provided Hamlet with an opportunity to "do it pat." Only chance and Hamlet's indecision saved Claudius, not his own precautions. Claudius is not quite "man of the world" enough; he cannot continue to repress all inner feelings in order to retain the throne he murdered for and which is the external goal necessary to fulfill his own ambitions. Claudius fails to keep his crown.

Fortinbras remains to claim the Danish throne. From all we have learned of him he is a man who knows how "Rightly to be great." He can and does send men to their graves to further his cause. Fortinbras is the strong man of few words (reminiscent of Bolingbroke in Richard II), who takes charge of the play's last scene, makes funeral arrangements, and asserts his own "rights of memory in the kingdom," which cannot now be disputed. Fortinbras, the final ruler of Denmark, is the opposite personality type to the idealistic picture presented of the first Danish ruler, the old King Hamlet. The struggle for a crown has now moved full circle from the apparently unrealistic King Hamlet, to the near-

Machiavellian Claudius, through an attempt at challenge by introspective Hamlet, and ends with strong, cold Fortinbras, who can still sleep after causing the death of twenty thousand men for the sake of "a little patch of ground" (IV.iv.18), and his own military and political prestige. Fortinbras is a man who understands and accepts what he must do to achieve success in this real world, and he is the political victor.

CHAPTER V

THE FINAL PERIOD

The Tempest, in existence by at least 1611, is Shakespeare's last comedy and perhaps the last play written completely by him. Artistically, as well, it could only be the product of his mature final period. Yet even though it is in the comic genre and from his final period, The Tempest still conveys Shakespeare's concern about the problem of what constitutes competent leadership of a nation, and provides a logical ending to my examination of this continuous Shakespearean theme.

The main theme of The Tempest is not political. But, again, politics and the essential qualities of a leader are involved. Prospero is a deposed ruler who lost his throne because of his own impracticality. His devotion to books and studies was the great personal interest which caused him to ignore his public responsibilities and, ultimately, to lose his throne to his brother, Antonio. Antonio was willing to concentrate on public issues, and capable of deposing his own brother to gain the throne.

> The background action is, as usual with Shakespeare, political . . . Prospero's story is set between an impractical idealism on the one side and political villainy and lust on the other.[1]

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1 G. Wilson Knight, The Crown of Life (London, 1947), pp. 253-54.

And in this play from Shakespeare's last period, as in the early and middle works examined, the two opposing personalities, Prospero and Antonio, may be seen as the man of imagination versus the man of worldly affairs.

Prospero himself tells us how Antonio was put in a position from which he could usurp the duchy (in I.ii). Prospero was considered pre-eminent among the rulers of the Italian duchies because of his great learning. But he found that study required so much of his time that he turned more and more of his duties over to Antonio for attention. Antonio began to feel he was really the Duke; it "awaked an evil nature" (I.ii.93), as Prospero put it. Antonio became ambitious to be the Duke of Milan, in fact, rather than just playing the role for Prospero, and so he had Prospero and Miranda removed from Milan.

Prospero explains these events to Miranda and stresses that the treatment he received at the hands of Antonio was false, unjust, and completely unwarranted. Prospero's intentions were very good; he was "neglecting worldly ends" so that he could be "all dedicated/To closeness and the bettering of my mind/With that which, but by being so retired,/O'erprized all popular rate. . . " (I.ii.89-92). He defends his own position by saying that his studies were worthwhile. They acquired for him a reputation "in dignity and for the liberal arts/Without a parallel," and he argues that bettering the mind is worth more than the "popular rate." But it is apparent that the value Prospero received from his studies was

purely personal. Since he was not actively engaged in ruling his dukedom, none of the benefits which might result from having an enlightened ruler were being received by the people.

Prospero contrasts Antonio and himself by pointing out that Antonio's ambition was so great that he wished to become "Absolute Milan," while Prospero, on the other hand, felt that his library "Was dukedom large enough." Even after losing Milan Prospero seems unable to realize his own deficiencies as a ruler and to concede that a role of political power cannot be maintained from a library. A ruler is a public figure who must gear his actions to and realize his goals through external realities. Prospero tried to live on a private level, devoting his energies to the accomplishment of inner, personal goals without giving them any external public expression. He was of "temporal royalties . . . now incapable" (I.ii.110). So Prospero lost his dukedom to Antonio, a man who did not live in his own world of books and ideas, but gave his attention to the real political situation.

While Prospero pursued his "secret studies," Antonio assumed political control by allying himself with the King of Naples for support in ousting Prospero. And since Prospero was loved by the people, Antonio follows the pattern of shrewd political judgment Claudius established in Hamlet, and rather than damage his own reputation with the people by killing someone they admire, Antonio sends Prospero and Miranda out to sea in a badly damaged boat hoping they will

drown well away from Milan. Such behaviour caused Bernard Spivak to call Antonio a "man of the world" and to comment that, "A sensible man of the world . . . takes his pleasure and profit wherever he finds them, plays to win by any trick . . . For he knows that the world belongs to the worldling . . . ."[2]

Prospero and Miranda were saved by Gonzalo. Yet even after such a thought-provoking experience, Prospero does not question or alter his attitudes towards his studies. After rescuing Prospero, Gonzalo gave Prospero a library of books, and, in spite of his deposition, Prospero still can say that he prizes the books "above my dukedom."

Prospero's ambitions to become a learned man were capable of being internally realized; he was motivated by personal desire to measure up to standards which he himself had established and which needed no public expression. Antonio's ambitions could only be realized through achieving a tangible external position in the public world of politics.

Because The Tempest is a fairy-tale play, Prospero's magic gains for him a chance to regain his duchy from Antonio. The tempest brings Prospero's enemies, Antonio and Alonso, to his world. And Antonio and Alonso are so shaken from their experiences in this world of magic, that when Prospero confronts them as the wronged Duke of Milan and requires his dukedom from them, they acquiesce and return his dukedom.

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2 See Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil (New York, 1958), p. 424.

Prospero has been given a second chance to be a successful ruler. And his actions in Act V reveal a changed attitude towards this challenge. Early in the play Prospero's description and justification of his own love of studying and books, as well as his condemnation of Antonio, suggested that he had not yet admitted that he contributed to his own downfall. And Prospero's reason for bringing Antonio and the others to his feet is not initially clear. But by Act V Prospero tells Ariel that his project was not motivated by a mere desire for revenge. Prospero wants his dukedom back and he is willing to give up his secret studies and magic to return to his political responsibilities: "But this rough magic/I here abjure" (V.i.50). He destroys the source of his magic and, in so doing, destroys the source of his trouble as a ruler:

> . . . I'll break my staff
> Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
> And deeper than did ever plummet sound
> I'll drown my book. (V.i.54-57)

Then Prospero removes his magic robe and dresses himself in the clothes which were his as the Duke of Milan, a symbolic rejection of the imaginative, magic role, and an acceptance of the role of Duke. Prospero has accepted the necessity of leaving this imaginative personal world behind him. He turns instead to the external world he previously denied; he demands his dukedom, and when the demand is met, he says he will be content with this dukedom.

The Epilogue is Prospero's restatement of his decision to give up the world of learning and secret studies, a world

which was really of his own making, and to return to his dukedom to live and rule in a world where you must realize yourself through others.

Prospero is Shakespeare's compromise personality. He is the inner-directed imaginative man "reformed"; and leaves his personal world behind to accept public responsibility in a real world where he must adapt constantly to external circumstances in order to preserve his own high position. Significantly, only in a fairy-tale setting has Shakespeare presented this change in attitude and subsequent return to power. In a realistic setting, even if a character were to undergo such a change in attitude, the opportunity to regain power would not exist. In politics failure is usually final; there are rarely second chances. Perhaps when Prospero returned to Milan he became an ideal ruler. He was learned, more interested in virtue than vengeance, loving towards Miranda, willing to pardon those who had abused him, and so forth. There is a possibility, of course, that Prospero will not fare much better as a ruler on his return to Milan. He does return to rule, but he adds "Every third thought shall be my grave" (V.i.310), hardly an encouraging beginning for a successful politician.[3] This is speculative, however, inasmuch as within the play Prospero does commit himself to returning to his responsibilities as Duke. And in The Tempest,

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3 Northrop Frye says that Prospero's talents are dramatic not political, and describes Prospero as a "remarkably incompetent Duke of Milan and not to be promising much improvement after he returns"; see "Introduction" to The Tempest (Baltimore, 1963), p. 20.

a "magical" play, Shakespeare can allow this composite "man of imagination-man of the world" to succeed. If this play had followed the precedent established in the realistic plays, it is unlikely that Prospero would have regained control. Antonio would probably have remained ruler so long as he retained his ability to seize favourable opportunities and assess accurately the political climate of his dukedom. Only in a fairy-tale can the world be as we would have it.[4] In reality we must take the world as it is and accept the fact that practical men who operate in the real world defeat men of imagination.

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4 It is interesting that in II.i.144-71, when Gonzalo describes the world as he would have it, an ideal commonwealth which strongly resembles a Garden of Eden where all are simple and innocent, the response to his description, even in this "fairy-tale" play, is to laugh at Gonzalo for talking "nothing." Gonzalo's dream world is rejected by the practical "villains" of the play, Alonso and Antonio. But in giving up his little island--which is surely closer to Gonzalo's description than Milan could ever be--Prospero, too, rejects this ideal world.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Christopher Morris has called The Tempest Shakespeare's "political testament."[1] This is too restricted a statement to make of a playwright who produced so many plays which make a political statement. The sum of the work containing a political motif--with any changes and developments in thought--must stand as his political testament. I have presented an aspect of Shakespeare's political insight in a group of plays which range across his career so that any alteration of attitude towards the character of kings might be detected. But as I have shown, Shakespeare perceived the realities of rule from the first of his career to the last. The worldly wise, realistic, calculating politician defeats the imaginative, impractical man who lives in his private world. Shakespeare knew this (and well he might, living as he did in Elizabethan England with some opportunity to observe this overt political truth) and his plays reveal his knowledge without totally condemning political practice.[2]

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1 Political Thought in England Tyndale to Hooker (London, 1953), p. 107.

2 W. H. Auden noted that the fascination of the Machiavellian villain for Elizabethan dramatists was "because they had such first-hand experience under the Tudors of Machiavellian politics" ("Introduction," to Marlowe to Marvell, Vol. II of Poets of the English Language [London, 1952] , p. xxiii).

As I have mentioned in connection with each pair of characters discussed, they are never shown to be merely black or white, bad or good. Both types of men have bad and good qualities. It is true that Shakespeare became more interested in the imaginative characters as his career progressed. Brutus, Hamlet, Antony and Prospero are the central figures in the plays in which they appear, and their political roles are not the only context in which they function. As human beings they seem more understandable; there is always a greater interest and sympathy extended by people--audiences and readers--to human weakness rather than to human strength. The very single-minded dedication of energy required of a ruler makes him less humanly and dramatically interesting than the multi-faceted imaginative character. Derek Traversi[3] has argued that Shakespeare's politically successful kings (and he is referring to the English history plays) have become successful at the expense of their spiritual development. Henry V, for example, is an efficient king but a deficient human being. Success has been paid for by moral and human loss. In the same vein, Johannes Kleinstuck[4] suggests that Shakespeare was asking whether efficient rule and the order it precipitates were worth the price of lost humanity; Shakespeare, according to Kleinstuck, does not answer the question. The Tempest, with Prospero, the imaginative-realistic compromise ruler, may be, as I suggested in my analysis of the play,

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3 Shakespeare from Richard II to Henry V (Stanford, 1957).

4 "The Problem of Order in Shakespeare's Histories," Neophilologus, XXXVIII (1954), 268-77.

Shakespeare's ideal answer--efficient rule with as little as possible "human" loss. But it is ideal. And even Prospero must give up something of human value, his learning and magic, and return to his responsibility.

> If Shakespeare can be said to preach at all, he can be said to preach the responsibility of rulers. Rulers, he is always saying, must accept this responsibility even if it means abandoning Falstaff or Cleopatra.[5]

The problem of whether strong government and order are worth this price is a theoretical discussion--the sort of question ethical and political philosophers ponder. In the meantime someone must maintain sufficient order so that philosophers may think and players play. Shakespeare's plays reflect his realization of this basic truth. And in the actual political world which Shakespeare understood, that someone, whether or not we wish it or consider it "ideal," is the practical, worldly-wise, realistic ruler.

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5 Political Thought in England, pp. 103-4.

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