"The Cup of Alteration": A study of time and the historical process in the Lancastrian tetralogy.

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"THE CUP OF ALTERATION": A STUDY OF TIME AND THE HISTORICAL PROCESS IN THE LANCASTRIAN TETRALOGY

BY

PAULA CLARY

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies through the Department of English in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts at University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario
1966
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ABSTRACT

Modern criticism of the plays of Shakespeare's Lancastrian tetralogy - Richard II, 1 and 2 Henry IV, and Henry V - in ranging between the polarities of either viewing Shakespeare as a spokesman for Tudor orthodoxy or as a detached observer of the political scene, ignores the view of pattern and of process which the plays encompass. The purpose of this study is to apply a method which recognizes both the imagery of pattern and of process embodied in the fabric of the plays' language, and in so doing, to add dimension to the significance which history had for Shakespeare.

Thus Chapter I constitutes a brief summary of some modern scholarship of the plays and applies a metaphor of continuity, "redeem the time," in such a way that both pattern and process are accommodated.

Chapter II, "A Sense of Pattern," demonstrates the patterns of Renaissance and Tudor historiography which Shakespeare embodies in the cycle, with special emphasis on the pattern of the circle. It is the circle which, although involved in process, yet effects that heightened consciousness of man-in-the-world which is at the core of the tragedies.

Chapter III, "A Sense of Process," examines the imagery of process, with reference to the views of time expressed in the Sonnets, and discussed in relation to the metaphor of the redemption of time in the four plays. The conclusion reached is that the specific relation of each king to time and the historical process, while it allows that man is organically bound to history, indicates the inner-directed perspective which permits the
transcendence of history in the aesthetic world of the tragedies. The
ultimate intention of this thesis, then, is to indicate a method of
study which increases appreciation of both the histories and the trage-
dies - a method which embraces both the pattern of the circle and the
process of the "cup of alteration."
Modern criticism of the plays of Shakespeare's Lancastrian tetralogy - Richard II, I and 2 Henry IV, and Henry V - has moved between the polarities of two distinct points of view. On the one hand, there is the monumental testimony of E.M.W. Tillyard's Shakespeare's History Plays (London, 1944), in which Shakespeare is viewed as the spokesman for Tudor orthodoxy, with its concern for order and degree and the stability of Tudor absolutism. On the other hand, there is the view, perhaps most fully expressed by John Palmer in The Political and Comic Characters of Shakespeare (London, 1962), that Shakespeare had no real concern for political thinking, and remained detached from political judgement.

Somewhere between these polarities is the statement by M.M. Reese in The Cease of Majesty (London, 1961) that Shakespeare was concerned with ideas of statehood, because the life of the state was a natural development of that other life which Shakespeare, the artist, presented - the life of human relationships.

In my own reading of the plays - and I must here and now acknowledge my debt to the framework of ideas provided by Professor B. Rajan in the Graduate Seminar at University of Windsor, 1965-66 - I have found that Shakespeare's embodiment of history contains both a sense of pattern and a sense of process. Much scholarly thought about the plays of the Lancastrian cycle has stopped short at the sense of pattern, which, while testifying to Shakespeare's inclusion of the patterns provided by his sources, and, in turn, by Renaissance historiography in general, does not permit that more fundamental reading.
of history which, in the end, allowed Shakespeare to transcend history. It is the sense of process, so effectively embodied in the very fabric of the plays' language, that, in placing the emphasis of the plays directly upon man, links the histories with the tragedies. And it is in viewing the histories as an organic part of Shakespeare's whole creative achievement that the most rewarding study of the plays resides.

Thus I have divided my own study - regrettably limited by the exigencies of time and scope in the Master's thesis - into three parts. The first contains a brief discussion of some modern scholarship of the plays and applies a metaphor of continuity, "redeem the time," in such a way that both pattern and process are accommodated. The second part demonstrates the patterns of Renaissance and Tudor Historiography which Shakespeare embodies in the cycle, with special emphasis on the pattern of the circle. It is the circle which, although involved in process, yet effects that heightened consciousness of man-in-the-world which is at the core of the tragedies. In the last part, the imagery of process is examined, with reference to the views of time expressed in the Sonnets, and discussed in relation to the metaphor of the redemption of time in the four plays. It is my belief that the specific relation of each king to time and the historical process, while it allows the conclusion that man is organically bound to history, also indicates the inner-directed perspective which permits the transcendence of history in the aesthetic world of the tragedies. The histories, in their essentially polyphonic effect, increase the consciousness of man-in-the-world, a consciousness which permits the agon of a Lear, and yet looks forward to the refined, but living vision of the freedom that is Prospero. The intention of my thesis, then, is to indicate a method which increases our appreciation
of both the histories and the tragedies - a method which embraces the pattern of the circle and the process of the "cup of alteration."


I gratefully acknowledge my debt to Dr. John F. Sullivan for his patient and stimulating direction and guidance of this work, and for his kindness in supplying many helpful texts. I appreciate also the critical reading and helpful comments of my advisers.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Though the world change as fast
as cloud-shapes manifold,
al things perfected at last
fall back to the very old.¹

Shakespeare's Lancastrian tetralogy - Richard II, I and 2 Henry
IV, and Henry V - first and foremost apprehends the rise and fall of the
house of Lancaster, and at the same time effects a response to the image
of kingship. This response may be called polyphonic, for in its totality
it is many-voiced, orchestrated, accompanied, at a remove from the sim-
licity and clarity of what might be termed the plainsong of the Medi-
eval morality plays. Behind this rich complexity lies a view of history
which accommodates both a sense of pattern and of process. The former
testifies to Shakespeare's inclusion of the patterns provided by his
sources, and in turn by Renaissance historiography in general. It also
allows room for the embodiment of the thought of his own Tudor age.
However, it is the latter which creates a more fundamental reading of
history, and constitutes that return "to the very old" which Rilke
describes as essential to existence. For it is the sense of process
which permits finally a transcendence of history, and places the emphasis
of the plays directly on man.

Shakespeare, like the humanists, looked backward into antiquity
with a sense of interval and direction and continuity. There indeed was
a "tide in the affairs of men" (Julius Caesar. iv. iii. 217) which,

¹ Rainer Maria Rilke, Sonnets to Orpheus, trans. C.F. MacIntyre
however, could be seized and held to propitious event by the awareness of man. Shakespeare's was a man-centered cosmos - politically, at least, very definitely so - in which "Whatever flames upon the night / Man's own resinous heart has fed." At the same time, around and within man the process of what could be termed the evil of decay went on inexorably.

Shakespeare's key characters were most frequently kings or the makers of kings, but they were never mere abstract symbols. They failed or succeeded, as Richard II may be said to have failed, or Bolingbroke to have succeeded, out of their own enfleshment. Struggle, whether with the forces within or with forces externalized and embodied in rebellion, rapacity, or the will to power, lies at the core of the dramatic experience. The direction of history, then, is always forward. This is so even in King Lear, where the process of deterioration cannot be rationalized by any intellectual or moral design, and where Lear is faced with what amounts to an ultimate ambiguity. Even his death becomes his own ultimate self-affirmation, transcending process itself in his quickening words, "Look there, look there!" (King Lear. V. iii. 313)

It is the fabric of the language of the plays which consistently embodies the sense of pattern and of process. Thus it will be the task of the final chapter of this thesis to consider the vital and organic relationship between what T. S. Eliot calls the "drama of words" and the "drama of action." But this consideration must be tempered by Puttenham's statement that a man's style is "for the most part according to the matter and subject of the writer."  


4 George Puttenham, as quoted in Rosemond Tuve, Elizabethan And Metaphysical Imagery (Chicago, 1947), p. 244.
Modern scholarship has indeed examined the imagery of pattern in the plays, but frequently has ignored the imagery of process which is just as certainly present. This amounts to stopping just short, for no single-minded view, like that expressed in the woodcuts attached to Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* (1563), could have resulted in the multifarious voices one hears in the histories. Thus scholarship which attaches Shakespeare's political belief to Tudor orthodoxy, with its concern for order and degree and the stability of Tudor absolutism, has not managed to get beyond an aspect of the imagery of pattern, and has gone wrong because it has not paid enough attention to the imagery of process and pattern, and their relation as evidenced in the plays. On the other hand, scholarship which denies Shakespeare any political belief and views him as a detached cynic who yet wrote history plays, ignores, to a great extent, the imagery of both pattern and process. Between these opposed polarities Una Ellis-Fermor comments that

The art of the dramatist has been engaged not in presenting a closely and logically coherent action that points irresistibly to a certain deduction, but in selecting those fragments of the whole that stimulate our imaginations to an understanding of the essential experience, to the perception of a nexus of truths too vast to be defined as themes, whose enduring power disengages a seemingly unending series of perceptions and responses.\

Most critics of the tetralogy, to whom the Elizabethan concepts of order and degree are paramount, have seized upon the pattern of a "logically coherent action" and ignored the "nexus of truths too vast to be defined as themes." In making Shakespeare the undoubted mouthpiece for

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Tudor orthodoxy, as E.M.W. Tillyard does in his *Shakespeare's History Plays* (London, 1944), or, at the opposite end of the spectrum, in seeking the innocence and detachment of Shakespeare, as John Palmer does in *Political and Comic Characters of Shakespeare* (London, 1962), critics also ignore, at least in part, the "art of the dramatist" and something of the "essential experience" which he provides. 7

In the meditations of William Butler Yeats at Stratford-on-Avon in the spring of 1901, one finds expression of the chief problem which surrounds the tetralogy - the problem of what modern criticism calls 'belief'. The result of Yeats' thought was his own attack on critics like Dowden, who saw in Shakespeare an infallible judge of actions and a distributor of awards and penalties. It is worthwhile to quote Yeats, whose own astuteness as a critic the world has only partially acknowledged:

> It did not occur to the critics ... that men are made useless to the State as often by abundance as by emptiness, and that a man's business may be revelation, not reformation. 9

It may be that, as Arthur Humphreys complains, Yeats' preference

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8 I would suggest that John F. Danby's brilliant analysis of the history plays in *Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature* (London, 1961) owes much to Yeats' vision of the Shakespearean mystery. This is particularly evident in Danby's grasp of the historical oeuvre which is characteristically Yeatsian, and in his discussion of the Beggar and the Fool, figures which Yeats re-cast in his own dramas and made central to his views. As Balachandra Rajan notes, "Yeats' critical comments are full of premonitions of later writers who are better known as critics" (*W.B. Yeats A Critical Introduction* London, 1965, p. 46).

for what he believes to be the "abundance" of Richard II could be termed a "complete sentimentalising of the Elizabethan position, and of Shakespeare's," nonetheless, allowing for Yeats' exuberance, his estimate of the critics is justified. He continues:

Because reason can only discover completely the use of those obvious actions which everybody admires, and because every character was to be judged by efficiency in action, Shakespearean criticism became a vulgar worshipper of success.

Yeats views the antithesis (established by such criticism and attributed to Shakespeare himself) between Richard II - sentimental, weak, selfish - and Henry IV - the ideal hero-king, model for all England - as a profound misreading of the last history cycle, for:

To suppose that Shakespeare preferred the men who deposed his king is to suppose that Shakespeare judged men with the eyes of a Municipal Councillor weighing the merits of a Town Clerk.12

In the "Introduction" to the Arden edition of King Henry V, edited by J. K. Walter, occurs a discussion of the traditional theme of the education of a prince. The conclusion reached is that Shakespeare had assimilated ideas from the Institutio Principis (1516) of Erasmus, Elyot's Governor and a treatise by Chelidonius, translated from Latin into French by Bouvaistateau and from French into English by Chilester, entitled Of the Institution and firste beginning of Christian Princes (1571).13 There follows a detailed comparison, point by point, of the

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11 Essays and Introductions, p. 103

12 Ibid.

merits of Henry V and the merits of the Christian Prince outlined in these sources. There is no question of the quality of such scholarship. Shakespeare undoubtedly was familiar with ideas that were, after all, available to his time. The danger comes, as Yeats so clearly indicates, in attributing total belief to Shakespeare himself. If Henry V were only the ideal king to Shakespeare, then truly, Shakespeare was a judge of men, and he must have weighed men's merits according to a pre-existing standard. One may, therefore, rightly demand to know that standard. But if one concludes that Shakespeare preferred Henry V to Richard II on the basis of the public virtues that Henry possessed, then the question arises as to whether Shakespeare was writing history plays or Tudor polemic. It is indeed the latter which E.M.W. Tillyard describes with the phrase, the "Tudor Myth."

The Tudor Myth evolved out of the pattern which Polydore Vergil, in the reign of Henry VII, gave to historical events. It was consciously fostered by Henry VII to enhance the prestige of the Lancastrians, and involved an interpretation of the Wars of the Roses replete with characteristic portraits - the evil Richard Crookback, the saintly Henry VI and the glorious Henry V. It contained divine confirmation 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. While Vergil himself somewhat discredited the latter idea, historians and theorists developed the pattern in order to magnify the royal power, until, in Tillyard's words, "... the golden age of Elizabeth" was seen as "the providential consummation of a vast process that had its beginnings in the remote and fabulous past."  

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The Tudor apologists were, in essence, apologists for absolutism, and in theory, if not in practice, the Tudors based their thought in the belief that politics must be governed by a moral order, in turn based upon divine law which could not be defied. Thus Tillyard views the Tudor pattern as adequate for Shakespeare's picture of man in his history plays. But for Yeats, writing some years before Tillyard, such a view is inadequate. Yeats, himself not above personal preference, places two comments against the antithesis between Richard II and Henry V which the Tudor pattern creates: first,

He [Shakespeare] saw indeed ... in Richard II the defeat that awaits all, whether they be artist or saint, who find themselves where men ask of them a rough energy and have nothing to give but some contemplative virtue ...

and secondly, of Henry V,

Shakespeare watched Henry V not indeed as he watched the greater souls in the visionary procession, but cheerfully, as one watches some handsome spirited horse, and he spoke his tale, as he spoke all tales, with tragic irony.  

Perhaps the most valuable element in Yeats' criticism of the history plays is his awareness of their importance to Shakespeare, the developing dramatist. They do not constitute a stasis for Shakespeare, written merely for audiences who were eager for history plays, or to satisfy "the insatiable demand of the Tudor middle-class public for patriotic history." Instead, they contribute in some way to the image of man in the universe which culminated in the tragedies, and ultimately, in King Lear. What Yeats sees in the histories as seminal to the tragedies is the

15 Essays and Introductions, p. 109.
myth of failure, for "all men great and little fail in Shakespeare."

Even Henry V fails, although he appears to succeed, for: "That boy he and Katharine were to 'compound' turns out to be a saint and loses all his father had built up at home and his own life." 17

It makes little difference whether one accepts as endemic to Shakespeare the concept of the myth of failure - a concept which led Yeats over the threshold of the Theatre of the Absurd in his Cuchulain cycle. Henry V may only be said to have failed in perspective, that is, he is defeated by time. The point is that for Shakespeare, the developing artist, the history plays are something more than history plays. In their more or less faithful adherence to their sources, they are a kind of history, and Shakespeare is, in a sense, an historian. But Yeats calls the plays of the Lancastrian tetralogy "but one play" and sees in it "something extravagant and superhuman, something almost mythological." 19

It is hardly necessary to state that Yeats did not have in mind what has come to be called the Tudor Myth. Erich Auerbach also describes the presence of a kind of magic, essential to drama, in Shakespeare's plays:

The dynamic throbbing of elemental forces which we feel in his works has nothing to do with the depths of the popular soul with which those men [critics of the 'Sturm und Drang' period] of a later age connected it. 20

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17 Essays and Introductions, p. 108.

18 Eugène Ionesco, also discussing the question of failure, cites Richard II as the first genuine play of the Absurd and links the play with Shakespeare's concept of tragedy. He focuses upon Richard's tragic degradation: "All men die in solitude; all values degraded in a state of misery; this is what Shakespeare tells me ... Richard II's prison is not a truth that has been overtaken by the flow of history." (quoted by Martin Esslin, The Theatre Of The Absurd [New York, 1961] p.306.)

19 Ibid., p. 109

Indeed, if one examines some of the many statements which claim Shakespeare for the Tudor Myth, one finds that there is something contradictory beneath their surface. For example, Lewis Einstein declares that:

Like his contemporaries, Shakespeare expressed the idea of the sacredness of royalty without giving reason to suppose that it was foreign to his own political convictions. He accepted it, in the same way as he accepted other current beliefs and prejudices of his age.21

In such acceptance is involved recognition of those Tudor theories which evolved to magnify the royal power, theories thought of as manifestations of the patriotic loyalty of the age which identified the nation and its sovereign. And yet, Einstein continues to the inevitable recognition that there was indeed a wide breach between practice and ideas, and that "A moral effigy taking little account of life became shaped into an ideal ethical image."22 Shakespeare, as dramatist, could not avoid taking "account of life", and his plays do embody a "dynamic throbbing of elemental forces". It is necessary, then to look to his reading of history for the key to the mystery, and to do so with the constant awareness that the tragedies lie just beyond the histories. One might confidently expect that with a dramatist of Shakespeare's stature, his use of history will somehow reach beyond the commonplaces of his time, and will be, in a sense, metaphysical. It will in any case not be the lesser art of representation, but the greater achievement of embodiment.

A metaphor of continuity, which embraces both the sense of pattern and of process, may be applied to the cycle. That the history plays lend

22 Ibid., p. 49.
themselves readily to an interpretation embracing continuity is apparent in their subject matter, perhaps less so in their method. While one should approach the subject of the demarcation of periods of artistic experiment with caution and consideration, it is helpful to examine one writer's comments. Madelaine Doran cites Richard II, C.1595, as marking the end of Shakespeare's experimentation with devices of style which allow his mastery and virtuosity, and I Henry IV as indicating a more orthodox and unobtrusive use of imagery and rhetoric. She comments:

It may be said that the images in Richard II tend to be direct or explicit, complete, correspondent, point by point, to the idea symbolized, and separate one from another; whereas the images in I Henry IV tend to be richer in implicit suggestion and in ambiguity, not fully developed, fluid in outline and fused with one another.  

She concludes that the imagery of Richard II is most striking because it is "so beautifully adapted to exhibit the central character." Thus, the play's perfection is in the "union between character and style that Shakespeare had mastered at that stage of his career." While the discussion deals mostly with the imagery of Richard II, she has made a valuable contribution to our awareness of the tonality of the play, in keeping with G. Wilson Knight's views on the running imagery of the plays and with T. S. Eliot's "musicality of images." While each play of the cycle may be said to possess its own tonality, a metaphor of continuity may still be applied. The response to the images of kingship embodied in the plays may be viewed primarily as an attempt to

24 Ibid., p. 245.
redeem the time. A view of history as essentially embedded in the time process (it also allows room for the political process) lies behind the metaphor.

Thus, first, the metaphor will be applied in a brief summary of the cycle. Time, flux, process, evils of decay and disorder, all abound in Richard II. The action of the play may be seen as a powerful downthrust of disordering, both within the person of Richard and externalized in the strife of insurrection and embodied in the image of England as an "untended garden." Against this, there is a counter-thrust, an attempt at stabilization on the part of Bolingbroke, but it is a stabilization stained by the crime of regicide, and at once so precariously achieved that it will be "threatened by another thrust towards disorder.

Rebecca West has said that at this point we have, in fact, two irreconcilable assumptions:

... he [Shakespeare] thought power so dangerous that no man born of woman could express it without falling into sin, but at the same time he regarded with horror all attempts to take power away from any monarch who had been entrusted with it ... no matter how sinfully he may have misused it.26

It would seem also that there is a subtly dangerous assumption on the part of Miss West, who attributes to Shakespeare the attitude of York, in his warning to Richard:

Take Hereford's rights away, and take from Time
His charters and his customary rights;
Let not to-morrow then ensue to-day;
Be not thyself; for how art thou a king
But by fair sequence and succession? (Richard II, II.i. 196-200)

26 The Court and the Castle (New Haven, 1957), p. 68.
Rather, such attitudes (and Bolingbroke's all, in effect, quite different) are expressed to lend aesthetic tonality to all the plays of the cycle, and are essential to the polyphonic effect of the whole. In I Henry IV, where Bolingbroke's assumption of power is used by Worcester and Northumberland as a springboard for their own rebellion, although their action is in part dictated by fear and desire for self-preservation, there is yet a further shading and colouring, and consequent deepening, of complexity. However, the action in both I and 2 Henry IV consists of a movement towards order, but constantly threatened by counter-thrusts of disorder and rebellion. I Henry IV, in particular, is a seething, shifting sea, in which it is appropriate that the imagery reflect a world of shadows as much as of substance, where appearance mingles with reality, the seen with the unseen, and the stain of Bolingbroke's crime becomes a factor in the obscurity of the whole. It is Prince Hal who leads the thrust towards order, and while he is at once seen and unseen by those about him, it is fitting that he should appear first behind the mask of disorder, in the company of Falstaff.

By the close of 2 Henry IV, after a process of elimination which embraces the rebels as well as Falstaff, order appears to be established and the time redeemed. It is the dancing figure who speaks the epilogue to the play, but the dancing figure is at once a symbol of movement and pattern. In the process of time, the action of ordering must be extended, in Henry V, to France, where King Henry carries the confusion of war so that England might be united within herself. The stain of Bolingbroke's guilt is still present, though diminished, and the King is still seen but unseen, so that the effect of his conversation with the troops on the eve of battle is one of truth marked by deception. Stability, when it is
achieved, is itself part of a process, and as such, subject to time and change.

It becomes fruitless to speculate as to whether Hal is the ideal king, that "mirror" for all Christian kings. He is a man aware of time:

I know you all, and will awhile uphold
The unyoked humour of your idleness. (I Henry IV.I.iii, 216-7)

He is aware also, of the necessity for struggle, and perhaps is better equipped with those qualities which enable him to seize and hold the propitious moment. He redeems time, but his awareness acutely includes an awareness of the moment. Perhaps the knowledge of the brevity of his reign, which the Elizabethan audience would possess, only intensifies the sense of history as process. This is not to say that Hal is only a Machiavel, although (as John F. Danby has shown) he has the qualities of a benign Machiavellian, or that Shakespeare implies condemnation or approval of his methods of statecraft. Hal's kingdom is subject both to the evils of decay and the evils of growth, and there are critics such as Miss West, who declare that Shakespeare "saw no benign purpose in the universe." If this is so, Shakespeare must have possessed a view of the limitedness of man very much like St. Augustine's view, or like Kierkegaard's idea that consciousness of sin was consciousness of God. However, Hal's actions, insofar as they pertain to his kingdom, have meaning in time, if indeed they do not place meaning upon process, and they are a part of the movement into life which characterizes Shakespeare's use of history. Hal's relation to history is organic, that is, although there is some case for chance and fortune (the Middle Ages

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28 Rebecca West, The Court and the Castle, p. 42.
were not at such a great remove) he is history in the sense that he makes it. So also does Richard, for he deposes himself:

But for the concord of my state and time
Had not an ear to hear my true time broke.
I wasted time, and now doth time waste me.
(Richard II. V. v. 47-9)

Thus, Richard's actions - his banishment of Bolingbroke, seizure of his inheritance, passivity in the face of his time serving court - release a political process in which struggle remains the constant feature until the close of Henry V. However, before a more detailed study of Shakespeare's embodiment of the political process may be undertaken, it will be necessary to examine the essentials of the historiography with which Shakespeare was familiar. An attempt (although necessarily limited by the exigencies of the thesis) must be made to discover how Renaissance historiography in general had refined the relation of historical events to the time process. As this historiography, and the particular branch of it known as Tudor, dealt frequently with patterns of history, the relevance that the sense of pattern had for Shakespeare's last history cycle must, to some extent, be determined. In considering this relevance, the danger of stopping short must be precluded by the constant reminder of that "cup of alteration," and its special relation to Shakespeare's historical events and persons.

29 Myron P. Gilmore illustrates the difference between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance in a description of the relation to time and the historical process. The Middle Ages had "no conception of anachronism, that is, something which is out of its own proper time." The sense of the anachronistic is found first in the writings of Petrarch. See "The Lessons of History," Facets Of The Renaissance (New York, 1963), pp. 73-98.
In attempting to come to terms with the sensibility of an age long past, one must remember that the past sensibility, when it is discovered, will always be modified by the answerability\(^1\) of our own time. Thus the first consideration of this chapter must be our response to the presence of pattern in the Elizabethan cosmology, and the extent to which it permeated the consciousness of the age.

The Elizabethan cosmology was basically Aristotelian, though Christianized and somewhat modified, and it placed man at the centre of the cosmos. While the plays of the Lancastrian tetralogy consistently build a response to the image of kingship - as in part do \textit{Hamlet}, \textit{Macbeth}, \textit{King Lear} and even \textit{The Tempest} - in a larger sense, their subject is always man, and man placed at the centre of the cosmos. The world, for the Elizabethan, was both compact and, at the same time, full of wonder, for:

\begin{quote}
... the forces presumed to govern nature were mysterious, unknown and perhaps unknowable, though the universe had been made for man, whose abode was at the centre.\(^2\)
\end{quote}

\(^1\) The term is B. Rajan's, used in a graduate seminar at the University of Windsor, 1965-66.

\(^2\) John F. Danby, in his discussion of man and nature in Renaissance thought, in Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature, p. 28, points out that the Elizabethan best discovered the pattern of his inner nature by looking out on the world of his fellows and forefathers. His nature was a maximum to which he must attain, and this would involve the successful and willing co-operation of man and the world in order to realize the richest image of man. The ideal for man was not the beggar but the king, and thus the frequency and potency of the image of kingship in Elizabethan works.

Also, the universe was both unique and unified, for it was a universe

... where every part knew its proper place, behaved in expected fashion and was neatly related to the whole.4

Thus, we have in Shakespeare's plays the comparison of the well-run state and the cosmos, as well as the concept of degree. Perhaps the best known statement of cosmic order occurs in Troilus and Cressida, in Ulysses' speech on degree:

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

Take but degree away, untune that string,
And hark, what discord follows. Each thing meets
In mere oppugnancy... (I.iii.109-11)

In I Henry IV, Henry asks Worcester to "...again unknit/This churlish knot of all-abhorred war," (V.i.15-16) to "... move in that obedient orb again" and "be no more an exhaled meteor." (VII. 19.)

This conception of order, as E.M.W. Tillyard points out, was given expression under three forms: "a chain, a series of corresponding planes, and a dance."5 It was, in any case, a commonplace thought of the age: "so much part of the collective mind of the people, that it is hardly mentioned except in explicitly didactic passages."6 Tillyard further notes that the "cosmic lore" present in the Lancastrian


5 Because this subject is well known and has been so thoroughly explicated by E.M.W. Tillyard in The Elizabethan World Picture (London, 1943), it will receive only limited consideration in this thesis.

6 The Elizabethan World Picture, p. 138.

7 Ibid., p. 25.
tetralogy lessens in *Henry V*, and cites this lessening as a "sign of slack construction." But in the Archbishop's sermon on the community of the honey bees in *Henry V* there is expression of that thought, endemic to both Bacon and Hooker, of nature as a beautiful and ordered pattern, to which man must subject himself in order to discover his duties.

John F. Danby summarizes what must be called the traditional or orthodox view. Nature displayed both pattern and ideal form; reason was displayed in nature; custom was the basis of law, and law was an expression of nature's pattern. He states that:

> Each creature...was an intelligence observing its rightful place in a community. What held it in place and held the community together was Reason. The law it observed was felt more as self-expression than as external restraint...And rebellion against this law was rebellion against one's self, loss of all nature, lapse into chaos.

Even the aim of sixteenth century astronomers was still that suggested by Plato: "to represent the apparent motions of the planets by a combination of circular motions." Thus such events as eclipses were seen as symptoms of a disease which affected all nature, and the cumulative effect of all this emphasis on pattern was, in a word, conformity. Perhaps the best example of thought based firmly in pattern was given by the Homilies of the English Church. These attempts at inducing political conformity first appeared in 1547. They were re-issued with additions, in 1563, and the most famous, the "Homily against

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9 *Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature*, p. 25.

Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion", appeared in 1569, in response to the Northern Rebellion of that year. The significant fact is that, in the latter, obedience is required on the basis of man's place in the whole scheme of nature, or of God's creation. The tone of the entire Homily may be taken from its impressive opening:

Almighty God hath created and appointed all things in heaven, yeart, and waters in a moste excellent and perfect ordre.  

The notion of an order in the universe lay even behind the theories of the rhetoricians, and consequently, conditioned those theories. To grasp this, it is necessary to briefly recount the way in which the Elizabethans regarded the process of rational activity, for, as Rosemond Tuve states: "... the main impression one receives ... in any typical treatise, is an impression of the unity of the total mind-act." Renaissance writers, unlike most moderns, did not place experience and emotion in opposition to thought and idea, for:

The work of the Imagination or the Fantasy... was to receive, compare, and combine impressions of whatever the senses enabled man to perceive, and it was in continual and unbroken co-operation with the Understanding which judged of the truth or falsity of things (by logic) and with the Will, which (if uninfected) moved man to favorable affections towards the good, and unfavorable toward the evil.  

Thus the modern sensibility, in coming to terms with the didactic intentions of the writers of the Renaissance, falls short by 

13 Ibid., pp. 396-7.
not grasping the way in which the structure and operation of the mind were then envisaged. If the moral aspect of poetry was viewed as a natural part of its rational functioning, then the modern concept of the poet as propagandist would not exactly apply, for as Miss Tuve states, the Renaissance writer believed he had justification for his persuasive effort:

> When the contemplation of universals in truly judged relation to particular events urges a reader to a particular course of action, the poet finds himself a propagandist.\(^{14}\)

Thus it is possible (once one embraces the Renaissance concept of the end of poetry as true knowing) to view Shakespeare in his history plays - and necessarily, in all his plays - as a propagandist, but in a quite modified sense. One cannot view him as one would Bertolt Brecht, say, in a play like *Mother Courage*. And to sub-title the Lancastrian tetralogy the "Tudor Myth" is to place a limitation born of our own sensibility on a view of history that must be regarded as essentially part of a greater poetic process.

There is, in the Lancastrian cycle, a view of history as exhibiting pattern. This comes partly from Shakespeare's sources for the plays and, partly from the extent to which the whole historiography of the Renaissance held to a theory of pattern.

Any attempt at discussion of the historiography of the Renaissance must begin with Italy, where the revival of classical learning was felt most intensely and the new humanism obtained its first patrons among the Italian despots. This was so because they saw in classical learning, in historical resemblances between princes of classical antiquity and them-

\[^{14}\text{Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery (Chicago, 1947), p. 397.}\]
selves," ... a justification, in an age of reason, of the same despotic power they were then endeavoring to wield."\(^{15}\)

The main effort of Renaissance historiography was to negate the Mediaeval idea of Christian transcendency, and this effort appeared in Italian work as early as the fourteenth century, in the writing of Leonardo Bruni. Thus the term "secularization" is applied to Renaissance historiography, and in the work of Bruni, Bracciolini, Machiavelli and Guilliardini, there is no attribution of events to Divine Providence, or to miracle, but rather an attempt to analyse character and the effects of men's actions. Ancient historiography had done this in deserting "mythological history and its ruder form, prodigious or miraculous history" and entering "earthly or human history."\(^{17}\)

For an historian like Polybius, complex human struggles due to human interests were the focus of an historiography which sought to aim at truth. However, as Benedetto Croce affirms, the return to classicism undertaken by the Renaissance was not actual but an illusory return, for "the Renaissance preserved the Middle Ages deep in its heart". While on the surface of things the humanistic historiography opposed the Mediaeval form of writing history-the Chronicle—and a man like Polydore


\(^{16}\) For Bruni, history was of practical value "in that it brought about an understanding of the origins and developments of events and the achievements of peoples and kings, enlarged one's foresight in contemporary affairs, furnished lessons ... and contained examples of moral precepts." See Karl H. Dannenfeldt's essay, "The Italian Renaissance" in *The Development of Historiography*, ed. Matthew Fitzsimmons and Alfred Fundt (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 1954), p. 96.


Vergil in the reign of Henry VII, revolutionized English methods of historiography, Croce asks:

And what is 'humanism' but a renewed formula of that 'humanity' of which the ancient world knew little or nothing, and which Christianity and the Middle Ages had so profoundly felt? . . . is not the conception of humanism perhaps the affirmation of a spiritual and a universal value ... altogether foreign, as we know, to the mind of antiquity, and an intrinsic continuation of the 'ecclesiastical' and 'spiritual' history which appeared with Christianity? 19

The question of humanism and Christianity raised here by Croce is, of course, more complex than Croce states. Paul Oskar Kristeller, in his Renaissance Thought describes Christianity as "... not only Mediaeval, but also ancient and modern ..." 20 Thus, Croce's oversimplification is perhaps clarified by R. G. Collingwood's description of Renaissance man as:

... not man as depicted by ancient philosophy, controlling his actions and creating his destiny by the work of his intellect, but man as depicted by Christian thought, a creature of passion and impulse. 21

Thus, history allowed room for the "infected will," and one of the processes it might depict would be the process of that infection. Some historiography retained the Mediaeval concept of Divine Providence functioning as a first cause. In this view, "God ordains human affairs after a pattern that is rational and inevitably good." 22 But


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Croce indicates that histories which maintained this sense of Divine ordering became the popular histories of countries of little culture, or were "limited to the circle of Protestant or Catholic confessional historiography". The formulas of such historiography "were still repeated by preachers, writers of verse, and rhetoricians ... but they found no response in political reality and in the conscience of the people."\(^23\) Instead, the conception of value which the Middle Ages had placed in religious faith was filled with what Croce calls the pragmatical conception ... which inclines to explain facts by the individual in his singularity and in his atomism, or by means of abstract political forms.\(^24\)

And for Machiavelli, the state, which was the object of his meditations "... is almost the national state felt as something divine, to which even the salvation of the soul must be sacrificed ... as the institution in which the true salvation of the soul is to be found".\(^25\) The exaltation of the prince was a further development suited to the development which Tudor historiography was to give it. For Machiavelli, as Croce states: "... the prince is not only the ideal but the criterion that he adopts for the explanation of events".\(^26\) Thus, early in Italian historiography, we find descriptions of prosperous periods whose happiness was ruled over by a princely figure, alternating with periods of decline during which no such figure controlled events. Out of this periodicity, a pattern which is cyclical in nature eventually emerged. It was Polydore

\(^{23}\) _History in Theory and Practice_, p. 225.

\(^{24}\) _Ibid.,_ p. 234.

\(^{25}\) _Ibid.,_ p. 234.

\(^{26}\) _Ibid.,_ p. 234.
Vergil, in the reign of Henry VII, who demonstrated this sort of historical thinking to future English historians. 

Renaissance historiography retained yet another ancient idea, that of Chance or Fortune, which resulted, in the end, in a sense of pattern. Machiavelli assigned half the course of events to human prudence and half to fortune, while Guicciardini warned that human affairs are aided by fortuitous events. M. M. Reese states that, although Machiavelli allowed for fortune, "... cunning and ruthless calculation" provided him a means "... to escape the capricious tyranny of Fortune or of God's unpredictable visitations." To the extent that fortune was given significance, the idea of development which the Mediaeval period allowed within the scope of God's plan weakened or disappeared. Croce firmly states that "... all the historians of the Renaissance ..." were dominated by "... the ancient Oriental idea of the circle in human affairs." History was an alternation of lives and deaths, of goods and ills, of happiness and misery, of splendour and decadence. As Lewis Einstein summarizes the view of history expressed by Francesco Patrizi and Jacopo Acontio: "History was treated from the point of view that everything had its cause, and every cause a beginning, early growth, climax, decline and end." J. W. Allen states that to Machiavelli, the idea of the cycle "must actually be a fact",


28 The Cease of Majesty, p. 95.

29 Selections from these writers, entitled The True Order and Method of writing and reading Histories according to the Precepts of Francisco Patrizio and Ascontio Tridentino, two Italian writers were published by Thomas Blundeville (London, 1574). See Lewis Einstein The Italian Renaissance in England (New York, 1962), p. 309.
for in Machiavelli's view, "Action and reaction alternate and out of prosperity comes decay and out of dissolution rebirth." Only anarchy can disturb the circular course which, otherwise, would continue "to infinity." Thus history, cyclical in nature, reflected natural processes of growth and decay. The circle, that most perfect figure, involved a fusion of pattern and natural process, and as Croce describes it, such a view permitted that "sad, bitter, pessimistic tone which we observe among ancient historians, which sometimes bursts forth into the tragic..."

It also aided in the Renaissance formulations of the ends of history, which were to exhort men towards the useful and good and to provide suitable models for posterity. Thus, the "Renaissance idea of

30 A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century, p.455.

31 Wylie Sypher, in Four Stages of Renaissance Style (New York, 1955) assigns the achievement of Renaissance art to the situation of "... the image of man, confidently, within a new world-order, within a new coherent space and perspective." Thus, the "final problem of all renaissance artists is not to represent objects naturalistically but instead to dispose objects within a rationalized composition, to reconstruct about the figure of man a cosmos whose proportions are determined from a fixed point of view." He concludes that the aesthetic world of the Renaissance "tried to obey in both art and science a theory of quantitative relations." In the Renaissance circular churches, the builder"... rationalized his system by basing it upon the ratios of the circle and musical harmony", but when one stands "at the proper focal point", it is to discover that "man is the measure." The result is a "heightened 'realization' of being which makes us fully aware of our situation within a cosmos." See pp. 55-81. The historiography which sees historical events in cyclical patterns is very much behind the pattern of the Lancastrian tetralogy, and at the same time, man is indeed the "measure" of these events. I would suggest that the action in King Lear is, in a sense, circular, for Lear's progress is really a return to his beginning. T. S. Eliot echoes the idea in "Little Gidding", where the return constitutes knowledge for the first time. The imagery of King Lear, so linked with the process of deterioration, substantiates the movement and intensifies the experience.

32 History it's Theory and Practice, p. 236.
fame and individuality led to a description ... of character and virtue of outstanding men."  

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With the consequent emphasis on utility in history, as Croce puts it: "... truth had been placed outside of historical narrative..." and "The truth of history was thus not history, but oratory and political science."  

34 M. M. Reese points out what this meant for an English historian such as Thomas More:

Historical truth ... was to be tested by the historian's fidelity to the object he had set himself; which in More's case was to justify the Tudor usurpation by showing what a bad king Richard III had been.

33 Karl H. Dannenfeldt, "The Italian Renaissance" in The Development of Historiography, p. 102.

34 History its Theory and Practice, p. 239.

35 The Cease of Majesty, p. 10.


37 Ibid., p. 315.

38 The evidence linking Cromwell with Machiavelli consists of a letter of 1525, described in an unpublished University of London dissertation (1908) by John Wesley Horrocks (see J.W. Allen, A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century, p. 249, n. 3) and of an account by Cardinal Pole, in his Apologia ad Carolum V Caesarem, written about 1539. Pole's story has been frequently challenged. See T. M. Parker, "Was Thomas Cromwell a Machiavellian?" The Journal of Ecclesiastical History, I (April, 1950), 63-75.
through which the influence of Machiavelli first entered England. He describes Cromwell as "... the first English minister in whom there can be traced the steady working out of a great and definite aim to raise the king to absolute authority on the ruins of every rival power within the realm." Further evidence of Italian thought Einstein cites in the work of Sir Thomas More, and in Sir Thomas Elyot's Governour, in which the influence of Pontano, Patrizi and Pico is recognized. The political thought of John Ponet, in his A Short Treatise of Politic Power and of the True Obedience which Subjects owe to Kings, 1556, also according to Einstein, reflects Italian thinking. Machiavelli's arguments for absolute monarch appear in William Thomas' The Historie of Italie, 1549; John Leslie's Treatise, 1584; Thomas Bedingfield's translation of The Florentine History, 1595. Guicciardini's Wars of Italy was translated by Geoffrey Fenton, 1579, while his The Description of the Low Countries was made available by Thomas Danett, 1594. Einstein's conclusion that although Machiavelli was much maligned, his works provided substantial arguments for the absolute power of the state, is of significance in a consideration of Tudor historiography. As Einstein says: "... to Englishmen then the state meant the monarchy."41

In the necessarily brief analysis of Tudor historical thought


40 Sir Richard Morison (?-1556) wrote tracts supporting the government against the rebels. In these tracts appear the first printed references to Machiavelli in England. See W. Gordon Zeeveld, Foundations of Tudor Policy (Cambridge, Mass., 1948). It is also known that there were three different manuscript translations of The Prince in English in the sixteenth century, which had wide circulation. See Napoleone Orsini, "Elizabethan Manuscript Translations of Machiavelli's Prince," Journal of Warburg Institute I (October, 1937), 166-69.

41 Ibid., p. 315.
which follows, it must be noted that while both new and old ideas existed simultaneously, there was a conservative and conventional theory of the writing of history which reflected the early humanistic attitudes.

The chief purpose of historical writing was to furnish political and moral, or religious, instruction. It followed that histories were to contain lessons of political wisdom, accompanied by explicit comments or judgements, and were to immortalize great deeds. As to causation, God was the first cause of human actions, and events on earth demonstrated the power of providence and the certainty of divine judgement. Human motives were the secondary causes of events, and histories contained long paragraphs of the probable thoughts of great men at critical moments. Thus, the instructional value of history was ensured by rhetorical effort.

In organization, the chronological arrangement was preferred, and unity and coherence were ensured by tracing the fortunes of a great personality. While history was to reveal accurate and true information about the past, the endeavour to educate with politically useful information was also present, and this amounted to an essential dichotomy at the heart of the historian's efforts. Of course, Miss Tuve's analysis of the Renaissance regard for the process of knowing, in which there was always a final "affective" stage in the process, restores partial

42 The summary of Tudor historiography is based chiefly on the work of Leonard Dean, Tudor Theories of History Writing, in The University of Michigan Contributions in Modern Philology, Number 1, April, 1947.

43 Professor William Haller comments: "One can only marvel ... at the unfailing gift which all sorts of English people ... seem to have had to command for appropriate, expressive, and dramatic speech," Foxe's Book of Martyrs and the Elect Nation, 1963, quoted by Arthur Humphreys, "Tudor Perception of History" in Stratford Papers on Shakespeare, 1964 (Toronto, 1965), p. 69.
unity to the Renaissance view of history.

But there remains a further complication, for histories which were avowedly to provide a guide for proper action, in so far as they presented a more detailed and accurate account of events, became less apt to be a suitable guide for the good life in the moralistic sense. Histories which considered the human passions and how they are controlled became histories which were really instruments to effect control of subjects. Dean cites Bacon's work as belonging to this genre, as well as Sir John Hayward's Henry IV (1599).

Raleigh's History of the World demonstrates this dilemma. His chief stated purpose was to point out the operation of God's plan and to furnish a degenerating race with examples of divine retribution, but he was also deeply concerned with human affairs for their own sake.

Thus, Dean concludes that Tudor historiography was transitional - modern in its application to factual content and its studies of statesmanship, but Mediaeval in its concern for Christian interpretation. He states that Tudor histories "... should be read in part at least as poetic interpretations of human behaviour."44

It was Polydore Vergil, who, in his cyclical view of a succession of strong governments disintegrating into anarchy and rebellion, provided the sense of pattern which the men to whom Shakespeare was directly indebted incorporated in their work. Pattern was further established by Vergil in his interpretation of "... the personalities of the Wars of the Roses in ways which enhanced the prestige of the historians ...", for he viewed history as an organized narrative pos-

44 Tudor Theories of History Writing, p. 23.

45 Stratford Papers on Shakespeare, p. 65.
sessing a sense of direction. Much of Vergil's organization passed into Hall's 1548 Chronicle of the Union of the Two Noble and Illustrate Families of Lancastre and Yorke. In his pattern, each reign had a title marking the specific character of the reign - "The unquiet tyme of Kyng Henry the Fowerth," "The victorious actes of Kyng Henry the V," "The troublesome season of Kyng Henry the VI," culminating in "The Politike 46 governaunce of Kyng Henry the Vlij." Thus Hall perceived a continuous cyclical shape in fifteenth century history, and his theme resulted in the Tudor myth. Humphreys reminds us not only that Hall was one of the main sources for the compilers of A Mirror for Magistrates in 1599, a sequence of verse biographies which stressed the moral drama of statesmen's fates, but also that Roger Aschem's Toxophilus, in 1545, contained, in substance, the Tudor myth.

However, in Humphreys' view, Shakespeare's debt to Hall was not chiefly in the adaptation of the continuous historical cycle (the downfall of Richard II and the rise of Henry V) but in Hall's reading of History in terms of personal character and conduct. Thus, for Humphreys, Shakespeare shows "... great understanding of, and feeling for, the condition of human life in historical actions," and,

His poetry in the history plays is indeed the bloom and fragrancy of human knowledge; thoughts, and passions about great actions of the past; he has a deep instinctive though hardly formulated philosophy about them. ...47

E.M.W. Tillyard, in his discussion of the historical background of the Lancastrian tetralogy, points out two writers belonging to the same period as the tetralogy who "have the closest intellectual kinship with

46 Stratford Papers on Shakespeare, p. 65.
47 Ibid., p. 66.
Those are Samuel Daniel, and Sir John Hayward. Daniel whose work was well known just before Shakespeare's Lancastrian tetralogy was begun, depended upon Hall for his cycle of history, which began with a period of prosperity in the reign of Edward III. Tillyard quotes his epistle dedicatory to the 1609 edition of his *History of the Civil War between the Houses of York and Lancaster*:

> to show the deformities of civil dissension, and the miserable events of rebellions, conspiracies, and bloody revengements which followed (as in a circle) upon that breach of the due course of succession by the usurpation of Henry IV; and thereby to make the blessings of peace and the happiness of an established government in a direct line the better to appear.  

He concludes that both Shakespeare and Daniel are similar in their "sense of history repeating itself, of history educating through the example, of one crime leading to another." It is, "however, in the phrase, as in a circle," that one finds the key to that historical pattern which Croce states so dominated Renaissance thinking. The notion of the circle, linked as it must be with a concept of natural and political process, thus combines with the view of the significance of men's actions. Behind it lies a sense of the importance of the times or of time, as is indicated in the terminology of Hall's headings: "the unquiet time," "the troublesome season". It is man's relatedness to time which formed an important aspect of Shakespeare's use of history. History itself, in perpetuating memory of past times, transcended time. But equally, time and man's relation to it, defined, not so much his environment, as man himself. One must remember that time was one of

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48 *Shakespeare's History Plays*, p. 270.


Hamlet's deep concerns, while process formed an abyss for Lear. There is, then, something more elemental in Shakespeare's adoption of the frame or pattern established by Polydore Vergil, Hall and the Holinshed group.

John Danby recognizes that Shakespeare introduced into the dramatic form the wave-like workings of fate and fortune in history. In speaking of the first history cycle he adds that Shakespeare pursued a principle of emergence. "Each play ends with a group destined to grow in importance, to become dominant, and thence decline." This is also true of the second tetralogy, and the principle illustrates what is actually a biological metaphor for historical process. Behind any such metaphor lies something of the new, "scientific" thinking which was emerging in the sixteenth century. John Danby cites Hobbes as the man, who in the 1640's only expressed thought which had been current in the 1600's. This thought, embodied in Edmund, the "New Man", Danby sees as "an actuality in regard to Shakespeare's own historical setting."

Basic to Hobbes is the idea of nature as a self-running machine, set going by an absentee God, but capable of being observed and measured. In any such view, the connections of material cause and effect become important. Man, possessing an animal body, is a part of nature's structure and system, but insofar as he has a mind, he is superior to nature and

52 Ibid., p. 44.
53 This mechanist view only intensified the "existential" problem of man which was already present in Christian thought. Man is both related and unrelated to his world. The struggle thus set up within man as "paragon of animals" constitutes the Prometheus tragedy. There is a reflection of this struggle in the two aspects of man - king and man - embodied in the history plays, and, of course, intensified in Hamlet.
can even manipulate it. In this sense, he is separated from nature by
his power of reasoning, which becomes of paramount importance in the
necessary choices which he must make. The New Man, a superior figure and
a rationalist in a new sense, is politically, a Machiavel.

Struggle for power is his prime concern, thus the study of history
becomes a study of the power process in operation, and the Medieval
world view becomes less and less felt as credible. Danby regards the
embodiment of the New Man in Edmund as "part of Shakespeare's staggering
inclusiveness of mind...", but both the societies present in King Lear
- that of the Medieval and that of nascent modernism - are subject to
decay and corruption, and to the operations of time. I would suggest
that the study of man in relation to the processes of time, which per-
mitted also the great vision of regeneration which we have in King Lear,
had its incubation in Shakespeare's long observation of history. Thus,
Shakespeare's use of history, characterized as it is by an awareness of
pattern which substantially included a view of time and process, resulted
in a heightened consciousness of man-in-the-world, which in turn intensified
to produce the consciousness of tragedy which was so much more than the
Greek consciousness had been. Shakespeare, then, performed for the theatre
what the Renaissance painters, in their concern for perspective, per-
formed for art, or the polyphonic orchestraters for music.

While his chief concern is man, and not an abstract truth or a
philosophy, Shakespeare did possess what R. G. Collingwood calls the

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"historical imagination", that is, he provides a structured and continuous picture of past events. In this picture, there is an emphasis on cause and effect, and the inter-relation of events. Human action, placed, as it were, centre-stage, releases a process that reflects the Renaissance concern for political process, and it is, in the main, only human action that can change or direct the process initially released. At the same time, human action serves a further function of defining its human agent. Thus, the study of character deals with "the forces by which man is motivated", and this study is a part of Shakespeare's interpretation of historical persons.

The political process is at the same time interwoven with the larger natural process, that is, the relationship is integral, or essential, and the one is not felt as a mere background for the other. Thus, Shakespeare's use of history transcends the historiography of the Tudors, which saw order and stability finally achieved in the union of the red rose and the white. If at times one hears among the many voices of the history plays the voice of Hall or Holinshed, of Daniel or Hayward, of Machiavelli or More, or even of Polybius, it is only to recognize the great extent to which Shakespeare was a man of his time. It is the extent to which his history plays embody a consciousness of man-in-the-world which ensures their author a place in our own time, for neither Henry V nor Elizabeth I truly conquered time, and the rulers of the twentieth century have power perhaps merely to destroy, not time, but themselves.


56 Honore Balzac, quoted by Erich Fromm in Man for Himself, An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics (New York, 1947), p. 64.
CHAPTER III

A SENSE OF PROCESS

The old chronicle histories, in professing to provide a continuous register of events in order of time, without philosophical treatment, had, nevertheless, an awareness of the importance of considerations of time to historical thought. Renaissance historiography had refined this relation of events to time, adding a sense of direction and purpose to events in a study of cause and effect - had even seen patterns and cycles in events. The Tudors, seizing upon a period of the past which provided interpretation in accord with their own dynastic values, had achieved the creation of a national myth. Thus history, although periodicized, was given continuity.

Shakespeare, in adopting the favourite period of the Tudors for his plays, also provided dramatic history in a continuum and, to do so, was concerned with time and its operative processes in a special way. It is necessary, then, to examine some of the ways in which time is regarded in the Lancastrian tetralogy, as well as in the Sonnets, where there are ample supporting illustrations.

1 The Mediaeval chronicles were related to the annals which were basically a yearly record set down by a contemporary. The chronicles, more comprehensive in scope, consisted mainly in the summarizing of the history of a considerable period on the basis of one or two sets of annals. They preserved the chronological and annalistic arrangement of the basic annals. For a detailed treatment, see Harry Elmer Barnes, A History of Historical Writing (New York, 1962), pp. 64-97.

2 The Sonnets have further relevance to this study, as the general consensus of critical opinion is that they are contemporaneous with Richard II.
First, is the role of time as revelatory of the truth. In this capacity, which is frequently embodied in metaphors of generation or of biological growth, time will reveal and unravel events, but while nourished by time, these events may be either propitious or evil. Thus, in Richard II, the Queen expresses her fears:

Some unborn sorrow, ripe in fortune's womb,
Is coming towards me ... (II.ii.10-11)

Of a similar nature are the prophetic speeches of the plays, for example, York's warning to Richard:

take from Time
His charters and his customary rights;
Let not tomorrow then ensue today ... (II.i.196-198)

In these three lines is the fusion of cause and effect, in the reference to unwise political action, and the daily process of time, with the resultant intensification of the inevitability of the future's course. The prophetic speeches serve a further function, as does Richard's about the usurping Bolingbroke:

The time shall not be many hours of age
More than it is, ere foul sin gathering head
Shall break into corruption (V.i.57-59)

Here, coupled with a vision of decay, is a link between present and future, which constitutes historical continuity. Similarly, when King Henry in 2 Henry IV recalls Richard's prophecy, Warwick expresses the idea that events repeat themselves in time:

There is a history in all men's lives,
Figuring the nature of the times deceas'd;
The which observ'd, a man may prophecy,
With a near aim, of the main chance of things
As yet not come to life, which in their seeds
And weak beginnings lie intreasured.
Such things become the hatch and brood of time...
(III.i.80-96)

Couched in images of generation and growth - natural processes - is

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a reference which unites present and past in continuity and yet provides
a sense of historical interval. We may agree with Miss Spurgeon that time 
"... is also the medium, the necessary condition by the aid of which 
events, qualities, projects, ideas and thoughts are born into actual and 
material being". Thus, time is important to Prince Hal, who by his own 
actions and through time itself, will redeem time, and to Falstaff, who
nearing the end of his career, is prepared to abandon all to time when he
says: "Let time shape, and there an end". (2 Henry IV, III. ii. 341)
Time, then, is generative of fortune, as in Bolingbroke's promise of 
future reward to those who have aided him, "... till my infant fortune 
comes to year", or of honour, as in the case of "time-honoured Lancaster".
(Richard II, I. i. 1)

Or again, embodied in an image of natural growth and decay, it brings
death, as in Richard's comment about Gaunt. "The ripest fruit first falls,
and so doth he: / His time is spent." (II.i.514) It is necessary to stress
the frequency with which time is linked with the biological processes, as
in York's statement about Richard: "Now comes the sick hour that his surfeit
made" (II.ii.84) which also embodies the cause and effect of political
process. It is further expressed in the imagery of natural processes such
as the passing of days and nights, as in Salisbury's speech condemning
the absence of Richard:

Thy sun sets weeping in the lowly west,
Witnessing storms to come, war and unrest.
Thy friends are fled to wait upon thy foes,
And crossly to thy good all fortune goes. (II.iv.21-24)

or in the passing of seasons, as in the "Four lagging winters and four
wanton springs" (I.iii.214) of Bolingbroke's exile.

But time, which possesses such generative quality, is to be feared and distrusted, for it is as well a destroyer - tyrannical, capricious, subject to accident. This is the view which occurs most frequently in the Sonnets, for example, in Sonnet C X V:

But reckoning Time, whose million'd accidents
Creep in 'twixt vows, and change decrees of kings,
... fearing of Time's tyranny ...

As tyrant, time destroys youth and beauty, as in Sonnet CVIII:

So that eternal love in love's fresh care
Weighs not the dust and injury of age,
Nor gives to necessary wrinkles place,
But makes antiquity for aye his page;
Finding the first conceit of love there bred,
Where time and outward form would show it dead.

In these lines, in the juxtaposition of youth and age, is a means to gain the advantage of time, by eternal love, which is a suitable sentiment for the Sonnets, which are, after all, love poems. The sentiment is repeated in Sonnet CXVI, where "Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks, / But hears it out even to the edge of doom". Accompanying the vision of time, the destroyer, is that of time, the waster of life, in Sonnet C. Here the poet calls upon the Muse to "... redeem / In gentle numbers time so idly spent ..." And to survey his love's face, for:

If Time have any wrinkles graven there;
If any, be a satire to decay,
And make Time's spoils despised every where.
Give my love fame faster than Time wastes life;
So thou prevent'st his scythe and crooked knife.

The process of aging, by which 'Time wastes life' is accompanied by the picture of Time with his scythe and his knife, which is a traditional

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4 In a sense, Prince Hal may be thought of as making 'antiquity his page' in his relationship with Falstaff in I Henry IV. In so doing, in his later rejection of the old knight, the "latter spring", "Allhallow summer" (I.ii.176) he is conquering time, or at least, discarding it.
Mediaeval depiction of time. But Miss Spurgeon comments that "...Shake­
spere was but giving his audience and readers the figure he and they were
accustomed to have presented to them." Nevertheless, there is yet
another reason expressed in the sonnets for distrusting time, and that
is because its "registers" and "records" may lie. These, because they
are "Made more or less by thy time's continual haste", are to be
defied. While it is dangerous to strain this viewpoint by looking at it
out of context, it contains a link with the appearance and reality motif
which is central to I Henry IV, and it may have been present in its
author's regard for the sources of his history plays. He was, however,
writing plays and not history, as his eclecticism in regard to events
indicated.6

Thus one may conclude from this brief summary that time, as Shake­
spere incorporates it in his poems and history plays, has both power and
limitations. In the Sonnets, time is confronted with transcendent love,
while in the plays, the necessity of confronting time, or what time brings,
(most frequently as a result of human action) is integral to the dramatic
structure. The plays provide many examples of those who are the "fools
of time" (Sonnet CXXIV), that is, those who engage in "policy" in the
negative sense the Elizabethans gave the word. It is worthwhile to quote
more fully from Sonnet CXXIV:

If my dear love were but the child of state,
It might for Fortune's bastard be unfather'd,
As subject to Time's love or to Time's hate,
Weeds among flowers, or flowers with flowers gather'd.

5 Shakespeare's Imagery, p. 176.

6 A Study of Shakespeare's eclecticism in regard to his sources is
contained in Lily B. Campbell's Shakespeare's "Histories": Mirrors of
Elizabethan Policy (San Marino, 1947).
Thus, Bushy and Green, in Richard II are accused by Bolingbroke of "sinful hours" (III.i.11.), the Gardener speaks of Richard as "He that hath suffer's this disorder'd spring / Hath now himself met with the fall of leaf ..." (III.iv.48-9) and again, we have the meld with images of natural growth and decay. Richard admits his "profane hours" (V.1.25,) which have cost him the crown and admits he "... wasted time, and now doth time waste me" (V.v.49.). In this context, it is appropriate that Prince Hal should appear to be a "fool of time", when he is in reality aware of the double aspects of time, prepared to confront and "redeem" time, and to give it meaning. Thus, Exeter, who has been deceived by appearance, expresses his viewpoint of the new king:

As we his subjects have in wonder found -
Between the promise of his greener days
And these he masters now. Now he weighs time
Even to the utmost grain ... (Henry V, II.iv.135-8)

In contrast, Richard wasted time, and comes to his "untimely bier" because he has not confronted time, or perhaps has not understood how to master its operations. Among the many references to inheritance, a natural process attendant with the biological process of generation and the projection of man's line in time, in Richard II, is the suggestion that Richard has violated time and the natural process in seizing Hereford's rights. York expresses this in his, "... take from Time /
His charters and his customary rights ..." (II.i.196-7)

If Richard has been a server of time, Hal has been both server and master. Other characters in the plays confront time with a common sense attitude, as, for example, the Chief Justice, who, fearing that the new king will mistreat him, says: "... and do arm myself./ To welcome the condition of the time ..." (2 Henry IV, V.ii.11). Nym and Pistol, as Falstaff is dying, comment that "... it must be as it may" (Henry V, II.i.133)
and console themselves with the fact that they will live.

There is yet another quality of time in the plays, and that is that it alters its rhythms, so that between Bolingbroke and Gaunt, "... grief makes one hour ten" (Richard II, I.iii.261). But the chief sense in which time is important to the Lancastrian tetralogy is that in which it is generative of, and a medium for, human events, and so is bound into the very texture of the plays. It is necessary now to turn to the plays in order, for it is in the deep concern for the human involvement in time and its processes that the essential in Shakespeare's embodiment of history resides.

RICHARD II

It has been noted that the action of the play may be seen as a powerful movement into disorder, both within the person of Richard and externalized in the strife of insurrection. Disorder makes its first appearance in the formal opening lines of the king, when he speaks of "the boisterous late appeal / Which then our leisure would not let us hear ..." (I.i.4-5.), but these lines, if heard keenly, prepare us for what is to come. They establish the situation in which intrigue is evident, centred about the death of Gloucester, and they identify Richard as one who has already delayed in attending to a matter of relevance to the peace of his kingdom.

In the formal salutations of both Bolingbroke and Mowbray to the king, which ask, "Many years of happy days" (I.i.20.) for the sovereign, is the seed of the recognition that Richard stands for the traditional conception of royalty, "by fair sequence and succession". (II.i.200.) In Richard's world, "Not all the water in the rough rude sea / Can wash the balm from an anointed king" (III.ii.54-5). His is the old world,
sanctioned and seemingly impregnable, but into it comes a new force, represented by both Bolingbroke and Mowbray, for in the accusation hurled by Bolingbroke against the latter, is an element, ambiguous and unclear, but foreign to Richard's hierarchical world. Richard himself is involved in the accusation regarding Gloucester's death. As Derek Traversi rightly points out, "... the sense of possible involvement affects the visible firmness of the royal stand ... the royal gesture of peace-making takes on a cynical, almost bored expression ..." in speeches such as Richard's. "Let's purge choler without letting blood". (I.i.153.) Thus there are, in the first scene, references to time wasting and to illness, and it may be that the old order of feudal structure is already infected, in the person of the king, and the political process which marches to its inevitable conclusion, already begun. This is further born out in Richard's statement: "We were not born to sue, but to command / Which since we cannot do ..." (I.i.196-7.), and in the short scene in which the Duchess of Gloucester laments the mystery shrouded crime.

However, as he interrupts the trial by combat, Richard does attempt to meet the exigencies of the time, and in the role of feudal monarch, announces the banishments. Bolingbroke points to the significance of Richard's action in his statement to Mowbray: "By this time, had the king permitted us, / One of our souls had wander'd in the air" (I.iii.194-5). It is Richard's action in banishing Bolingbroke, coupled with his later

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7 Robert Speight's suggestion that the scene be played over the coffin of Gloucester, although humorously presented, has a certain relevance. See "Shakespeare and the political spectrum", Stratford Papers on Shakespeare, 1964 (Toronto, 1965), p. 136.

which ensures the political process of the rest of the cycle. The parting
scene between Gaunt and his son is intensified with time and season
images, but contains a speech which is seminal to future developments:
"Think not the king did banish thee, / But thou the king" (I.iii.279-280).
Richard is aware of the possibility of the future, when he says "... but
'tis doubt, / When time shall call him home from banishment / Whether our
kinsman come to see his friends." (I.iv.20-1.) In Richard's conversation
with his courtiers, Bushy and Green, the mask of kingship is stripped
away as he desires that Gaunt, who is ill, come to a speedy death so
that he might strip his coffers.

It is Gaunt, who, caught in the process of dying, represents what
Richard should be to England. His extreme age is opposed to Richard's
youth, and he expresses the fear that "all too late comes counsel to be
heard" (II.i.27) by Richard. In the juxtaposition of sickness and
health, appearance and reality, is intensification of the knowledge that
the old order is doomed, and the present infected, and must now observe the
process by which the future will be infected. Evidence of the latter
abounds in Richard's neglect of York's warnings, "Let not tomorrow then
ensue to-day" (II.i.198.), and his emphasis that "To-morrow next / We
will for Ireland". (II.i.218-19) Thus his comment to the Queen, "... our
time of stay is short" (II.i.224.) takes on ironic value.

The pace of events increases after Northumberland's announcement
that Bolingbroke is approaching England. Thus is the Queen's foreboding
that time will give birth to misfortune, followed by a sense of time
running out. Green hopes that the king "... is not yet shipp'd for
Ireland" (II.ii.42.); "the sick hour" (II.ii.84.) approaches; Aumerle
is gone before York's servant reaches him; the Duchess dies "An hour
before" (II.ii.97.); finally, "time will not permit". (II.ii.120.) With
Richard's absence, we observe the real assumption of power by Bolingbroke, whose fortune is "infant". (II.iii.65) Perhaps the key lies in York's bewilderment: "... to know what pricks you on / To take advantage of the absent time". (II.iii.78-9.) In a sense, Bolingbroke serves time by being present. He does not so much appear to manipulate events as to capitalize upon them, and by so doing, as in his execution of Bushy and Green, "Time wasters," he establishes a counter-movement towards order.

Salisbury complains of Richard's return, "One day too late" (III.ii.67) and bids "time return" (III.ii.69), but fruitlessly. Richard recognizes that "time hath set a blot upon his pride"(III.ii.81) as well as the finality of the situation of Richard's night" and "Bolingbroke's fair day." (III.ii.219.) Thus, much of the play which remains allows us to watch the process by which Richard strips away his kingship. The focus is increasingly on Richard, not on the political struggles which Shakespeare might have found in his sources, and we may agree with the comment in the "Introduction" to the Arden edition of the play:

That part of his [Richard's] fall which was political and entailed the loss of power has been accomplished; there remains ... the divesting of royalty of its mysterious panoply. It is the wish to set this last in a clear ... light, as a thing which happened to man who was also a king, which ... shaped the design of the play as a whole.⁹

Thus we witness the confrontation of Bolingbroke and Richard at Flint Castle, Richard's abdication and leave-taking of the Queen, and finally, his death at the contrivance of Bolingbroke. In all these scenes, we hear Richard's reactions to what is happening to him, to a

process which he cannot control and which works towards the inevitable.

But the condemnation of the Gardener, that Richard had "suffer'd this
disorder'd spring" (III.iv.48.) remains valid, and in a very real sense
Gloucester's end is "timeless". (IV.i.5.) Richard expresses himself in
imagery which is tied to natural processes - the sun, the earth, the grave -
and which runs parallel to the political process. But as he admits his
"profane hours" (V.i.25), he prophesies the future, for. "The time shall
not be many hours of age ... ere foul sin, gathering head, / Shall break
into corruption." (V.i. 57-8.) This is the counter-thrust towards disorder
which is a part of the future, and even Bolingbroke's mention of Hal, who
is to be a part of that future, is in terms of time: " 'Tis full three
months since I did see him last." (V.ii.2)

Richard approaches knowledge of his inability to control the times,
and one might think of his tenacity in holding to the view of the "divinity
that doth hedge a king" as a form of madness or sickness, at least in view
of the political operations of his own times. His smashing of the mirror
may be interpreted in part as a repudiation of his past self. However, in
prison, as he states that his "time / Runs posting on in Bolingbroke's
proud joy" (V.v. 8-9.), and that he is Bolingbroke's "Jack o'the clock"
(V.v.10), he reveals himself as a "fool" of time. It is in prison that
he experiences the flow of time, and the image of the clock means es-
entially that he has confronted the action of time itself. He does not
regard time as a meaningless process, for his words about Bolingbroke
indicate that man can act in time, and thus bestow meaning on time. For
himself, time has served to direct his thoughts inward, to the very nature
of his being. What he views as constant in his being, the essence of his
kingship, is actually subject to change, and if his role is tragic, it is
so in this discrepancy between the timeless and the changeable.

This is what writers of our time, such as Eugène Ionesco, see as the
"existentialist" problem in Richard II. It is significant, too, that so many writers - Marcel Proust, Franz Kafka, William Butler Yeats, to name but a few - examine the question of time and the timeless, or non-meaning and meaning, but do so with the added view of time as meaningless process, or mechanism. Such writers either end with the picture of man waiting helplessly, as in Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot, or with that of heroic absurdity, as in Yeats' Cuchalain cycle. Shakespeare, in the history cycle, does see the problem of the relation of the individual to time. That Richard is yet an anointed king adds to the pathos of his situation, and as his role of victim gains in ascendancy, increases our awareness of him as a man who has failed to master his world and its time, yet who remains enmeshed in its actualities, and suffers accordingly. His end is, in a double sense, "untimely" (V.vi.52), but one must think of Richard finally, as free.

10 In Richard's suffering, there is an element of passivity, of permission, and an inability to transcend suffering. He remains embedded in the destructive process, and his language works to reveal a successful embodiment of his character. This, critics who cite Richard's love for verbalizing as springing from the illusory nature of his reality, do so without the basic realization that Richard's suffering is his reality, for a large part of the play. Richard D. Altick is among these critics of Richard's "poetic nature" in his articles "Symphonic Imagery in Richard II," PMLA, LXII (1947), 339-65.
I HENRY IV

King Henry in his opening lines sets the tonality of the action which is to follow, for he does not discover "a time for frightened peace to pant". (I.i.2.) His kingdom is a hotbed of disorder, of which the "bloody hour" (I.i.56) at Holmedon is only a prelude. The thrust of the action, then, is towards the establishment of order. In this play, crucial to the cycle as it is, the references to time increase, expanding to include many references of a specific nature, such as King Henry's to the council, "... on Wednesday next". (I.i.103.) These are consciously part of the fabric of the play, for they point to the pervasiveness of time, its importance, and the necessity for its redemption. Present also is an extra emphasis on the motif of reality and appearance. The political process released in Richard II continues, and the "fools of time" appear prominently, while on the lower level, their presence echoes and counterpoints that of their superiors.

The establishment of order, which is Henry's prime concern, has to do not only with the country, but with the king himself. Henry seeks to serve the time by putting down rebellion, and he acts, on the political level, as incisively as the times dictate. He promises to "henceforth rather be myself" (I.iii.5.) and that is the self who dispatched Bushy and Green to their execution for the good of the state. But in this play we see more and more of him as he gradually reveals himself to us. He is deceived by the actions of Hal in company with Falstaff, and wishes self-pityingly that "some night-tripping fairy" (I.i.87.) had exchanged his son for Hotspur. In Hotspur's denunciation of Henry, "this subtle king" (I.iii.169), "this vile politician" (I.iii.241.), and later in Henry's own account to his son of Richard's political mistakes and of the "opinion" (III.ii.42.) which helped him to the crown, are the seeds of a deeper
disorder in the king himself. Henry is troubled by the past. Although his attempt at a pilgrimage to the Holy Land is later revealed as a political necessity, his troubled past is real to him. In his anxiety, the sense of Henry as man increases, although he maintains the mask of kingship. Thus, on "the perilous day" (V.ii.95), there are many kings at battle, and the deception is a double necessity. In wave-like motion, the action of the play subsides at the close, but to rise again as Henry states: "Rebellion in the land shall lose her sway / Meeting the check of such another day." (V.iv.41-2).

Hotspur is also concerned with the generative processes of time, as he indicates to the rebels: "... yet time serves wherein you may redeem / Your banish'd honours". (I.iii.180-1.) His hope for heroic achievement is doomed, for to some extent, his role is that of victim to those other time servers, Northumberland and Worcester. His singular lack of political awareness causes him to ignore the warning of the letter: ",,,, the time itself unsorted", (II.ii.14.) and, later, although he recognizes that the "justling time" (III.iv.18.) is made, as Worcester says, unwhole, by Northumberland's absence, he single-mindedly proceeds to the "one, doubtful hour". His hope remains that "The powers of us may serve so great a day" (IV.ii.132.), and his attitude becomes firmly cavalier: "Doomsday is near, die all, die merrily". (IV.ii.134.) He is, although gaily so, essentially passive towards time. To him, "... life's time's fool / And time must have a stop". (V.iv.81-2.) Hal's attitude before Agincourt, frequently paralleled with Hotspur's, is at base, quite different.

Falstaff, whose opening line to Prince Hal asks, "What time of day is it, lad?" (I.ii.1) is not, as we first see him, indifferent to time. He looks to the future with misgivings: "... when thou art king, let not us that are squires of the night's body be called thieves of the day's
beauty . . . " (I.ii.26-28). Again, there is the identification with images of natural process, but Hal only appears to belong among the "minions of the moon". (I.ii.30.) The image suggestive of Hal is that of the sun. If as Hal says, Falstaff has anything to do with "the time of day" (I.ii.6.), then "hours were cups of sack, and minutes capons, and clocks the tongues of bawds... And the blessed sun himself a fair wenche . . ." (I.ii. 7-10.) But if this were so, time would be debased, and this is not Hal's vision. Thus Falstaff, presented as old and gross, a "latter spring" (I.ii.176), is already subjected to time and to its processes of decay. This powerfully realized metaphor deserves consideration, for in it, Falstaff is a season already in its decline. The future rejection is necessary, although we are to be provided the exciting, lively, comic adjustments to time which Falstaff makes. In short, Falstaff's "date is out" (II.iv.561), although we are yet to share in his laughter.

Even among the carriers, and Gadshill, the perpetrator of the robbery, time is important. The Second Carrier laments, "... this house is turned upside down since Robin Ostler died" (II.i.11-12) in a diminished and humourous hankering after times past. Gadshill must know the time of departure of the carriers if the plot is to be successful. This is an echoing of the folly of the rebels who challenge an unpropitious time.

However, it is Hal's attitudes which embody a difference. In this play, the attitudes that are carried forward into the rest of the cycle are made manifest. When Hal says: "I know you all, and will awhile uphold / The unyok'd humour of your idleness" (I.ii.217.), he is declaring himself .

The idea that Shakespeare "... degraded the knight to make the rejection palatable; he subjected him to Time to make it inevitable" is expressed by Peter J. Sing in an article entitled "Songs, Time and the Rejection of Falstaff," Shakespeare Survey, 15 (1962), p. 36.
aware of time's significance, and willing to confront its exactions. He appears first as a time server (his father refers to him as an "alien"), and his presence bears nothing of the "robe pontifical" (III.ii.56.) which Henry so prizes. Behind the mask of riot, he yet declares that he will redeem time ... when men think least I will." (I.ii.239) This clause is doubly important because it reveals how deeply into the matter he has already thought, as well as how keenly he is possessed of political acumen. The future is for Hal in a special sense, and he will master it chiefly as a soldier when, "in the closing of some glorious day" (III.ii.133) he will "redeem all ... on Percy's head". (III.ii.132) Thus when he and Poins march about the Boar's Head Tavern, this is not simply parody but serves to establish the Prince for what he is and remains, to his wooing of Kate in Henry V. It is not too much to say that he has a superior consciousness of time. Even in apparent idleness he is using time, for example, when he declares that he has "sounded the very base string of humility" (II.iv.6.), and his conversation with Frances, which is in tone derisive of the server who must yet serve "five years" (II.iv.45), is cast in reference to time.

Harold Toliver, in an essay entitled "Falstaff, the Prince, and the History Play", writes that

The Prince's control over impulse of the minute comes primarily through his capacity to see history as a continuous succession of events linking present to past and future. As he learns to control 'time', Falstaff more and more loses himself in the present.12

This is perfectly true, although I do not agree that Hal has to 'learn' mastery of time. The special awareness is there, from the first

12 Shakespeare Quarterly, XVI (Winter, 1915), 63-80.
time we see him. In the remaining plays of the cycle it is given greater 
opportunity for amplification, but at the close of I Henry IV, it has 
played no little part in the movement towards order, which, in the sweep 
of the whole cycle, is as yet only precariously achieved.

2 HENRY IV

With the opening of the play, in which Rumour speaks an Induction, 
there is yet another counter-thrust towards disorder. The times are 
spoken of as "wild" (I.i.9.) and there is immediate embroilment in 
rebellion. The process of political insurrection continues, with the 
memory of Richard enlivened by the Archbishop of York, who speaks of the 
Commonwealth as "sick of their own choice". (I.iii.87.) The Archbishop, 
unlike Hal, condemns the present, and with the viewpoint of the revo­

lutionary of any age says: "Past and to come seem best; things present 
worth". (I.iii. 108.) Hastings identifies the rebels as "time's subjects" 
whom "time bids begone". (I.iii.110.) Later, Northumberland, reflecting 
his actions in the previous play, decides to wait "Till time and vantage 
.crave his company". (II.iii.68.)

Again the imagery of disease is united to references to time, as the 
Archbishop speaks out against the present:

... we are all diseas'd;
And, with our surfeiting and wanton hours
Have brought ourselves into a burning fever,
And we must bleed for it: of which disease
Our late king, Richard, being infected, died.
(IV. i. 54-8.)

The disease is Bolingbroke, and "the stream of time" has "enforc'd" 
(IV.1.71.) the rebels to action. Westmoreland cautions against blaming 
either the times or the king for the Archbishop's situation, and adds a 
further historical perspective to past events when he says to Nowbray:

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"... if your father had been victor there / He ne'er had borne it out of Coventry". (IV.i. 134-5.). Thus Bolingbroke would not have been stopped, and Mowbray's comment that the king's offer "proceeds from policy, not love" (IV.i.148) gains significance in the present.

But in Lancaster's condemnation of Hastings lies the truth about the rebels' confrontation with the present time: "You are too shallow, Hastings, much too shallow, / To sound the bottom of the after-times." (IV.ii.30-1) The rebels go to their deaths, albeit with the calculating aid of Lancaster, at least in part because they are time's fools.

Henry falters in his attitude to the exigencies of the times: "The body of our kingdom, / How foul it is" (III.i.38-9), and he fears to see "the revolution of the times" which "Make mountains level". The word 'revolution', which suggests a circular motion and a return, points to his fear that Richard's prophecy is coming true. Henry is also subjected to the process of decay - he is aged and he is sick. He is jealous of his son's apparent "stab at half an hour" (IV.v.107.) of his life. As the mask slips finally away we hear of his "indirect crook'd ways" (IV.v.183.) which led him to the crown. Yet, he is still firm in awareness of political processes, for he warns Hal that his friends "Have but their stings and teeth newly ta'en out". (IV.v.204.) The pilgrimage to the Holy Land is revealed as instrumental in maintaining his state, and he will die, fittingly, in a room called Jerusalem. Thus, the journey of his own life is in a sense, circular, for he ends where he began, an embodiment of shrewdness and expediency. Although he has faltered (and this intensifies

13 Irving Ribner concludes for basically similar qualities, as well as certainty and promptitude in action, in his study of the qualities of Machiavelli's Prince in Bolingbroke, in his article, "Bolingbroke, A True Machiavillian," Modern Language Quarterly, IX (1948), 177-84.
him as man rather than king) he remains one who has served the time, with some success, through political action.

Falstaff in this play is identified with sickness, old age, and disease, and we see him in not so flattering a light as previously. Although subjected inexorably to natural processes, he still tries to make material gain, with somewhat pathetic, and desperate hopes for the future. The scene in Gloucestershire is dominated by references to past times, while even the names of its principals embody their marriage with decay and deterioration: Mouldy, Feeble, Shallow. When Falstaff states, "Let time shape, and there an end" (III.ii. 341.) he is giving full commitment to the processes which will result, first in his banishment, and finally in death.

It is in Warwick's speech of reassurance to the king that the attitude of Hal, already established, is clarified:

The prince but studies his companions ...
The prince will in the perfectness of time
Cast off his followers; and their memory
Shall as a pattern or as a measure live,
By which his Grace must meet the lives
   of others ... (IV.iv.68. 74-77.)

This is exactly what he does, as the propitious time has come. It is also part of his calculation to appear not to be "the thing" that he was. As he confronts time, he necessarily banishes Falstaff, and as the play ends, there is yet a further thrust into the future: "ere this year expire/ We bear our civil swords and native fire / As far as France." (V.v.111-112.) Order is temporarily restored (the dancing figure, symbol of order, ends the play) and the future belongs to the new king Henry.

14 Toliver puts it concisely: "The discrepancy between present and past appearance has never "really" existed, however, for he is the thing he was ... "

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Henry V bears the unusual presence of a chorus, no doubt primarily a device for achieving historical perspective, rather than for clarifying meaning. The thrust of the action is still towards the achievement of order, and in its compass, we witness the redemption of time, achieved by a king who appears to transcend time.

A striking impression of Henry (and one in apparent conformity with that given by Hall and Holinshed) is provided by the Archbishop of Canterbury, who marvels at the "consideration" which "like an angel came, And whipp'd the offending Adam out of him." (I.i.28-9) However, in the image of the strawberry that "grows underneath the nettle" is a reflection of the motif of appearance and reality which has already characterized Henry, if we admit the means "How things are perfected" (I.i.69 - and "miracles are ceas'd" (I.i.67) - we must recall Warwick's explanation in 2 Henry IV. It is the "memory" of former followers which provides the "pattern .../ By which his Grace must mete the lives of others." (IV.iv.76-7)

As king, Henry is superlatively in control of the political process, and it is absurd to think that he could achieve this without a deep understanding of himself and others. Henry's actions are not merely the result of rational responses to realistic situations. Rather, they are determined by the specificity of his character - that character which he declared so openly in his first soliloquy. "I know you all ..." (I.ii.217) Thus, the surge towards disorder represented by the action of Grey, Scroop and Cambridge, is quickly despatched, and that Henry attains moral ascendancy over these

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15 In a production of the play at Stratford, Ontario, 1966, the characters formed a tableau on stage while the chorus spoke, which heightened the audience's awareness that the action belonged to a more remote past than the lines of the chorus.
men is part of the mask of his kingship. They are "fools of time" and, as such, fail against a superior consciousness. Perhaps the difference between Henry and Richard as kings lies in the dynamism of Henry's character which propels him toward realization. In this sense, Henry is a fitter figure for tragedy (if Shakespeare had cast him in such a role) because of the energy and intensity of his character, which might push him to the extreme of a Macbeth or an Othello.

There is also an intensity and exaggeration in the language in which he frequently expresses himself, as, for example, in his speech to the English before Harfleur. Here, he calls upon the men to "imitate the action of the tiger," to "disguise fair nature with hard'favour'd rage," to "set the teeth and stretch the nostril wide." (III.i.6-7) Or again, he threatens the Governor of the town in an excessive picture of brutality: "Your naked infants spitted upon pikes." (III.iii.38) While in both of these instances he employs rhetoric for a calculated effect (as an actor might) to rouse his men, and to frighten the Governor into submission, there is the awareness that he savours such expression. This awareness is also present in the Tavern scene, in which there is the added sense that he savours the discomfiture of Francis. Henry in a tragedy would be no submissive Promethean bound. He would be capable of rage.

Henry himself defines his role for us when he says, "I am a soldier- / A name that in my thought, becomes me best," (III.iii.5-6) and it is as a soldier that he masters the day, Saint Crispian's day, and redeems the time. The French, who talk much and delay action. "Why do you stay so long, My Lords of France?" (IV.i.38) are time servers, ignoring the real warning Exeter gives about Henry: "Now he weighs time / Even to the utmost grain." (II.iv.137-8) The Constable is perhaps an exception for he recognizes that Henry is "terrible in constant resolution" (II.iv.35.)
while the French King associates Henry with Edward the Black Prince, calling him "a stem / of that victorious stock". (II.iv.62-3.)

We see Henry, as the ominous time of battle approaches, urging courage in his men, as indeed a large part of his action in the first part of the play consists in uniting those "happy few" into a "band of brothers". (IV.iii.60.) His knowledge of men, of leaders as well as men of the ranks, is perhaps what Hotspur lacked when facing his own trial, and when Henry says, "The fewer men, the greater share of honour" (IV.iii.22.) he rouses a sentiment in his followers which Hotspur's "die all, due merrily" (I Henry IV, IV.iii.134) never could achieve. When we oppose the "little touch of Harry in the night" (IV.47 chorus) to the bantering which ensues in the French Camp, we are less surprised at the outcome of the day. Shakespeare omitted mention of the English bowmen, to whose presence history credits a large share in the victory, perhaps to heighten the sense of the man in Henry. That Henry prays that the day be not judged by his father's guilt "in compassing the crown" (IV.i.314.) increases our awareness of the man, as does his envy of the peasants "best advantages". (IV.i.304) But, the pressure of time does not unbalance him, but rather seems to work to his advantage, as he employs his knowledge and all that he is to redeem time. We must agree with Harold Toliver that; "Time and Death which defeat Falstaff, sanctify the lineal descent, wash the blood from the inherited crown, and establish the Prince as Vice-regent of cosmic stability."

But this is not quite all. Time is felt in Henry V, if not so

16 Ibid., p. 71.
specifically as in *Henry IV*, rather as a vast and progressive movement toward the future. This is the play in which Henry's "infant fortune" comes to flower, and time serves as both generative of and a medium for events. It is in this sense that "Fortune made his sword". (Chorus, V.ii.408) But the process which has permitted both Henry's ascendancy and the decay of Falstaff and his companions, who are eliminated in the course of this play, permits also the boy Henry and Katharine are to "compound" to lose what is, after all, a precarious stability.

Thus, if it is historical process with which one is concerned, the circle does come round in the end. Indeed, in *Henry VI*, the circle is closed. Henry V, then, does only seem to transcend time: the process, historical and natural, goes on.

Shakespeare's historical perspective is related to that perspective pursued by Renaissance historiography. But in building upon the basic patterns of history which his sources preserved (one must include, to some extent, the pattern of the Tudor historians) he added a depth perspective to the events of the past, very much like that space perspective which the Renaissance painters gave to painting. The angle of his historical vision placed man at the centre of the historical world, but did so with an ever-increasing complexity of vision. It is this complexity which allows, on the one hand, the political attitude of a Richard II, or, on the other, that of a Bolingbroke, as well as the multifarious shadings of the attitudes of a Worcester, a Hotspur, or even a Falstaff. Shakespeare's kings, as well as their makers, are at the centre of events in a special sense. They are

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17 Falstaff's companions appear in this play as degraded time servers who speak of themselves as parasites, for example, in Pistol's speech, "let us to France; like horse-leeches, my boys / To suck, the very blood to suck." (II.iii.58-9).
organically bound to their histories, in the sense that they make history, and as this chapter has demonstrated, they do so out of their particular relation to events in time.

Shakespeare's chief interest in time in these plays may be expressed in the sense in which Iago speaks of events as "delivered" from the "womb of time". (Othello, I.iii.389) It is out of the "womb of time" that Richard II makes his prison, Bolingbroke, his prison of guilt, with its politic yet haunting walls, and Henry V, his redemption of time, which is also a prison because it envies "the peasant's best advantages". (IV.i.304) These kings are bound to time. Their kingdoms grow, attain maturity, are beset by evils of decay and deterioration, are cropped off, and return to grow again. They themselves are subject to growth and decay. As men, as kings, as makers of history, they are a part of process - that process is the elemental, the primitive, the "very old" of Rilke's poem.

It is not only the world of history which Shakespeare embodies in his history plays, but the inner world of man, where he is also concerned with the processes of growth and decay in time. When the circle is broken, it is in the tragedies, for if the histories provide only a limited glimpse of this interior centre, the tragedies, culminating in King Lear, provide an increasingly intense and expanding focus. It is necessary, then, for criticism to view Shakespeare's history plays as in themselves part of a creative process, the direction of which is forward. To the extent to which criticism possesses this vision, it will be modified to include an awareness of both pattern and process.

Not only the circle, but the "cup of alteration" as well, must be given consideration. It is in the latter that so much of that intense consciousness of man-in-the-world resides, and it is in the very fabric of his language that Shakespeare's unique consciousness is embodied. Out of
his deep sense of both pattern and process, Shakespeare has made history plays. Out of man's struggle with process which is itself timeless - that struggle, which, in the idea of the elder Yeats, is conducted with man himself - Shakespeare has made his greatest poetry.
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