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THE ENIGMA OF HISTORY

A Study
Of Shakespeare's Historical Tetralogies

by

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PREFACE

Shakespeare is a poet standing at the gateway of a new world; observing Commodity as the bias of the world and commemorating the yet vivid picture of the world of chilvalrous romance. He is a poet that created great drama out of the tensions and irreconcilabilities of an inescapably tragic transformation. Out of the painful coexistence of two clashing worlds he could create a tragic outlook on life, though full of hope. And out of the irresistable ironies of history he could create a comic outlook, though loaded with tragic insight. No poet has so vigorously portrayed the ideals of a disintegrating world and no poet has undermined these ideals with so fierce an irony. He is too much an Elizabethan - with his genuine yearning for medieval ideals - to be called our contemporary, yet he is too much our contemporary - with his realist insight into the relations that still dominate our century - to be called an Elizabethan. Watching his plays, we are no longer the audience of the Globe who were advised by the great dramatist to laugh at

their tragic history and also feel sorrow for the comic sides of it; yet we have our bitter tensions and, feeling ourselves too much a part of a historical tragedy, need, among other things, the enlightened and comprehensive mind of so great a realist to create a tragedy out of the comic ironies of our age and a comedy out of its tragic character. It is this realistic attitude to the political world he lived in that it will be the purpose of the following work to study.

CHAPTER ONE

THE DEVIL IN THE NOBLE ROBE:

ON THE DISCREPANCY BETWEEN THE REALITY AND THE IDEOLOGY OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

> *Moreover take away order from all things, what should then remain? Certes nothing finally, except some man would imagine eftsoons Chaos, which of some is expound a confuse mixture. Also where there is any lack of order needs must be perpetual conflict, and in things subject to nature nothing of himself only may be nourished; but when he had destroyed that wherewith he doth participate by the order of his creation, he himself of necessity must then perish, whereof ensueth universal dissolution.*
>
> Elyot, The Book named The Governor[1]

It is strange, though a fact, that the sixteenth century - in England and generally in Europe- is an epoch in which not much changed radically in theory though the social practice was constantly revolutionizing itself. People still thought in terms of Dante's Divine Order, conceiving themselves to be a part of the *Civitas Dei* of St. Augustine. "Degree, priority and place" - concepts expressing the stability of medieval life- were still the *sine qua non* of sixteenth century thought; the Universe was an articulated Whole and man was only a particular link in the universal cosmic order,

(1) Sir Thomas Elyot, The Book named The Governor, p.2.

a link which preserves its meaning as a long as it is attached to other links that constitute a single perfect Unity. The centuries of radical change that linked St. Augustine, Dante, and other medieval thinkers to the sixteenth century seem to have wiped nothing away from the building blocks of sixteenth century thought and seem to have brought nothing new to their essential conception of the universe, society, the state and man. Despite the serious blows it has taken, the idea of "order" has been triumphant over the great reality of social disorder. Similarly, it is the idea of the universal Christian Commonwealth which is triumphant over the social-religious upheavals leading to the nationalisation and to the Reformation of the sixteenth century. It is the concept of the *body politick* as a simple reflection of the universal Whole which is triumphant over the complex realities of *Realpolitik*.

Regarding only the ideological assumptions of the age, that is, the age's image of itself, one could hardly get a true picture of reality. Faced with the strong belief of "Order" - preached in the Homilies, taken for granted in political writings, formulated in pamphlets of official propaganda, in theological debates

in educational treatises, and in the popular literature of the age - one would hardly understand that the age was one in which the winds of change were sweeping the stable order back into the distant past. The sixteenth century was undergoing a social revolution; commercialism and political centralisation were challenging the feudal society with its hierarchical fixity of rank and with the sacerdotal autonomy of the medieval church. Although men busied themselves theoretically with the ways of men to God, it was in fact the day of those that busied themselves with the ways of men to wealth. Gold, which was given high esteem since it reflected the perfection, durability, and proportion of the universal cosmic order, as the perfect metal composed of four elements in equal proportion, now interested men more for its quality of changing fortune, changing the balance and proportion of the hierarchy which it had once symbolized. Though much 'be content' philosophy was preached, and though the stability of hierarchy and strict distinction of social estates were formulated in theory, the old barrier between the social estates were slowly disintegrating; some people were climbing up the ladder never content with their places, while some others were falling from it. Although much esteem

was given to the virtues of the nobility and the lordly way of life, the aristocracy, those in England that survived the Wars of Roses, were in much decadence, their idlenes growing apace from day to day and their conduct more impudently immoral. The lords of generosity were now at the financial mercy of the upstarts of humble birth. The *nouveaux riches*, coming up with the new virtues of ambition, diligence, efficiency, and industry, were buying offices in the state, getting noble titles from the queen, acquiring with great envy the 'noble' mode of life of the aristocracy. The aristocrat either left off any claim to be ethically noble, running after wealth, rank, and power just as the upstarts taught him or else he left his noble titles, together with his property, to the new men, though much unwillingly. Neither the decadent aristocrat nor the new upstart fitted into the ideal of the 'verray, parfit, gentil knicht' that Chaucer described in The Canterbury Tales:

> A Knight ther was, and that a worthy man,
> That fro the tyme that he first bigan
> To ryden out, he loved chivalrye,
> Trouthe and honour, freedom and curteisye.
> Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,
> And therto hadde he riden (no man ferre)
> As wel in Christendom as hethenesse,
> And ever honoured for his worthinesse.[2]

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(2) Goeffrey Chaucer; The Complete Works, p.2

It was no longer the age when the ideal was that of the chivalric knight of noble birth serving the king, his liege lord. It was the age of the new magistrate, probably of humble birth ,but of high capacity in the service the king, the soul of the national state.

There was a wide gulf that could not be bridged between the real face of things and their ideological counter-part; between the 'Elizabethan World Picture' and our picture of the Elizabethan world. This was a discrepancy that emerged on the antagonism between the corruption of feudal society and the metaphysical rationalisation of that society still living in the minds of people as the sole model of a world they could identify themselves with. It was a disproportion between the dynamic character of reality and the static nature of the ideology.

As the people clung to the ideals of a noble age, that noble age itself was negating its own nobility by giving knighthoods to the rich merchants while keeping silent while its nobles were ruining themselves with lavish entertainment, but it had no power yet to negate its own ideology. Louis B.Wright, in Middle Class

Culture in Elizabethan England, 1965, gives a very good account of how a body of literature developed in England towards the end of the sixteenth century exalting the merchant. Yet in the sixteenth century, the self-justifying world of enterprise, ambition, and competition is far from being glorified or even accepted, it is far from being as strong an alternative against the outlook based on the great models of order, degree, and hierarchy. Although new men were singing on the stage, it is the echoes of the old songs that the people heard and wanted still to hear. Though the medieval -feudal society lost its economic-political existence by the end of the sixteenth century, the ideas of Order and Chain of Being were echoed as late as the eighteenth century, finding one of their perfect expressions in Pope's Essay on Man:

> Vast chain of being which from God began,
> Natures, ethereal, human, angel, man,
> Beast, bird, fish, insect! what no eye can see,
> No glass can reach! from Infinit to thee,
> From thee to Nothing. On Superior powers
> Were we to press, inferior might on ours:
> Or in the full creation leave a void,
> Where, one step broken, the great scale's destroyed
> From Nature's chain whatever link you strike,
> Tenth or ten thousandth, breaks the chain alike.[3]

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(3) Alexander Pope, 'Essay on Man' in Pope, ed.by Peter Levi, p.62.

Pope's account of the great Chain of Being is a good example, though a quite late one, of the disproportion there is between the way things are in real life and the way things ought to be, ideologically. 'The reason of this disproportion lies in the fact, that long after nobility and feudalism had ceased to be really essential factors in the state and society, they continued to impress the mind as the dominant forms of life'.[4]
In every age of upheaval, people cling to old ideals long after new realities had come to be facts that mattered . People still find a formula in the familiar conceptions of the old to explain the appalling complexity of the new world's way. Long after the Roman Empire had lost its materail existence, it continued to fascinate men's minds as the only political organisation that could be, long after chivalry as an institution crumbled into insignificance did it present a rationale of history and life. In the sixteenth century, long after the universal order of the Middle Ages - an order which reflected the decentralized federative Christian world - died out did the concept of 'universal order' lived in people's minds and long after the strict hierarchy of feudalism died out with the constant

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(4) J.Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages, p.56.

flux of estates, it persisted in occupying men's minds. Stability of the medieval ages lived longer in ideology - long after it was disintegrated by the revolutionizing dynamism of the new world. It is this discrepancy between reality and the ideological theory of the sixteenth century that C.Morris is pointing out in Political Thought in England:Tyndale to Hooker;

> Certain obvious facts were admitted grudgingly to exist, but no satisfactory niche was ever found for them in the official theory. Theory still clung to ideas of universal empire long after national monarchies had come to be the facts that mattered. Theory remained strictly feudal, basing everything upon lordship over land, long after the rise of city-states and of merchants who owned money but not land.[5]

The new world yet needed time to create its own prophets and the *nouveaux riches* time to formulate their ideas theoretically into a complete Weltanschauung. Though the nobility is at the financial mercy of the new middle classes, the middle classes are yet at the ideological mercy of the nobility, even if that has grown feeble and decadent in real life. Society does not let go the old image it has of itself, as if it is afraid to face its real image, as if it is trying to get use to the new image little by little. This is the reason why

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(5) Christopher Morris, Political Thought in England: Tyndale to Hooker, p.7.

in the sixteenth century of social revolution, as Tillyard points out,'the Elizabethan conception of world order was in its outlines medieval, although it has discarded much medieval detail'[6]. Similarly, Huizinga argues that 'the characteristic modes of thought of the Middle Ages did not die out long after the Renaissance'[7]. Pope's Essay on Man - one of the latest but also best expressions of the medieval ideals - shows that these modes of thought even survived into the eighteenth century.

In every age men hate to see a naked image of themselves, they need a mystic veil to hide things even from their own eyes. The characteristic modes of thought of the Middle Ages had provided the sixteenth century with its mystic veil, hiding from view the radically different picture of the reality. Looking at the age it is not a clear image that we get, but a vague one; a veil that has grown faded with time and a shadowy face behind it. Having a closer look at the age, the real face of things can be seen, though as mere shadows behind the veil, yet growing more and more vivid as we approach and as time passes. It is only behind the veil of 'degree' that we can see the cracking of all

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(6) Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays, p.11.
(7) Huizinga, p.323.

bonds of degree, and behind the veil of 'body politick' can we see the shadows of an earthly world of policy-making and get a sense of the *Realpolitik.* Again it is behind the veil of 'nobility' that we see the shadows of the ambitious tradesmen eagerly seeking the titles of the nobility and the shadows of the nobility either engaged in ignoble greed or else in decadent entertainment and idleness. The sixteenth century is like a man standing at the gateway of a new world, engaged in much greedy and cunning business, in much policy and self-interest, but wearing a noble robe. Though the robe is an old one, faded with patches all around, the man wears it, not to deceive people but because he still loves his old robe as much as the things he is engaged in. He is a man of two natures, but the duality can be explained better with the word 'schizophrenia' rather than the word 'hypocrisy'. He is no hypocrite who wears a noble mask to hide away the ignoble deeds he has committed consciously; he cannot part with his old robe whereas he cannot refrain himself from doing things that are totally in contrast with its image of himself. This dicrepancy, or rather the duality, is observed by B.L. Joseph, in Shakespeare's Eden:

> Looking back from the twentieth century there is a temptation to insist that, for all its talk of virtue and nobility of blood, the age of Shakespeare was really concerned with nothing more than respect for wealth combined with land, rank, and power - that in essence, hierarchy was nothing more than the apotheosis of snobbery. There is some truth, but not the whole truth, in this judgement. It was possible for an idealistic and honesty worship of honour as wholly divorced from mateial gain to go hand in hand with respect for wealth and power. Throughout this age an ideal conception of 'virtue' as the quality of the nobility persists and even determines behavior despite the corruption of wealth and power.[8]

It was not mere lip-service that the people gave to the idea of order, rather they had a sincere faith in it. They had faith in Elyot's words, 'Take away order from things, what should then remain? Certes nothing finally, except some man would imagine eftsoons *Chaos*, which of some is expound a confuse mixture.'[9]
or in Cranmer's words, 'Take away gentlemen and rulers, and straightaway all other falleth clearly away and followeth barbarical confusion '[10]; likewise in the Homily on Obedience (1547),

> Take away kings, princes, rulers, magistrates, judges and such estates of God's order, no man shall ride or go by the highway unrobbed,

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(8) B.L.Joseph, Shakespeare's Eden, p.77

(9) Sir Thomas Elyot, The Book named The Governor, p.2

(10) Cranmer, Sermon on Rebellion, cited in Joseph, Shakespeare's Eden, p.172.

> no man shall sleep in his own house or
> bed unkilled, no man shall keep his wife,
> Children, and possessions in quietness,
> all things shall be common: and there needs
> must follow all mischief and utter destruction
> of both of souls, bodies, goods, and
> commonwealths.[11]

And without doubt the sixteenth century's genuine yearning for order and great fear of disorder found its most memorable expression in Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida with Ulysses' speech:

> The heavens themselves, the planets and this centre
> Observe degree, priority, and place,
> Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,
> Office and custom, in all line of order:
> And therefore is the glorious planet Sol
> In noble eminence enthroned and sphered
> Amidst the other; whose medicinable eye
> Corrects the ill aspects of planets evil,
> And posts like the commandment of a king,
> Sans check to good and bad: but when the planets
> In evil mixture to disorder wander,
> What plagues and what portents, that mutiny,
> What raging of the sea, shaking of earth,
> Commotion in the winds, frights, changes, horrors,
> Divert and crack, rend and deracinate
> The unity and married calm of states
> Quite from their fixure! O, when degree is shaked,
> Which is the ladder to all high designs,
> The enterprise is sick! How could communities,
> Degrees in schools and brotherhoods in cities,
> Peaceful commerce from dividable shores,
> The primogenitive and due of birth,
> Prerogative of age, crowns, sceptres, laurels,
> But by degree, stand in authentic place?
> Take but degree away, untune that string,
> And, hark, what discord follows!
> (I,iii,85-111)

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(11) cited in Christopher Morries, The Political Thought in England, p.73

The words of the political theorist, the homily writer, and the dramatist, rather than reflecting a profound belief in an accomplished order, reveal more of a sense of immense horror felt when confronted with the threat of social change. Any social change, particularly action against political authority and the demands for political change, summed up in the word 'rebellion', were conceived as the destruction of all universal and natural order. Shakespeare's rebelling Northumberland in 2 Henry IV is threatening not only the political order but the whole order which keeps each thing in its prescribed place in a universal Unity;

> Let heaven kiss earth! now let not Nature's hand
> Keep the wild flood confined! let order die!
> (I,i,1534)

Similarly in Julius Caesar after Caesar's murder, Mark Antony prophesies the utter destruction of the social order. (III.i.259-75)

The Elizabethan commonplaces of order, reveal both a sincere tone of lament for the corruption of the medieval order of society and a strong tone of protest against the social change that has uprooted this order; both the moralistic-pragmatic tone of the Tudor official theory aiming at the propaganda of an

unconditional obedience to political authority and a tone of insecurity which even the strong political authority of the Tudors could not pluck from people's minds. Every protest of the sixteenth century, being in vain aganist the irresistable current of social change, turned out to be a lament. Strong cries of protest were raised against disorder and rebellion, greed and cunning, ambition and intrigue, profit and self-interest, against the men seeking every means to making wealth, against the politician seeking eagerly for power, against the base merchant and the greedy usurer. The only world the sixteenth century could conceive of was one 'in which everything had its place, and it was the perfect work of God. Any imperfection was the work not of God, but of man' [12] And since the century is more a century of imperfections and radical deviations from the ideal norm-as are all centuries of transformation- it is a century of great protest. As long as men thought in terms of a perfect order, an ideal commonwealth or an ideal governor, they protested, since neither the commonwealth nor the governor in real life fitted into that ideal-perfect picture. Sir John Cheke, typical of the political

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(12) Tillyard,p.11

idealists of the sixteenth century, wrote in <u>The True Subject to the Rebel</u>, 1549, that

> Love is not the knot only of the commonwealth, Whereby divers parts be perfectly joined together in one politique body, but also the strength and might of the same, gathering together into a small room with order, which scattered, would else breed confusion and debate'13

Another political teorist of the century, Thomas Starkey, in his <u>Dialogue,</u> written between 1536 and 1538, dreamed the 'true commonweal' to be a place

> Where as all the parts, as members of one body, be knit together in perfect love and unity, every one doing his office and duty thereto pertaining with all diligence [so that] he busily fulfill and without envy or malice to other accomphish the same '14

These were certainly ideals - to which can be added Sir Thomas Elyot's conception in <u>The Book named The Governor</u> (1531) of the polity of the beehive which Shakespeare probably copied in the Archbishop's speech in <u>Henry V</u>, I,ii, 187-204- and not real pictures of the politicial world. Similarly, Elyot drew an ideal picture of the governor in <u>The Book Named The Governor</u>, and Castiglione, who influenced Elyot much

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(13) Sir John Cheke, <u>The True Subject to The Rebel</u>, cited in Allen, <u>A History of Politicial Thought in the Sixteenth Century</u>,p.141

(14) Thomas Starkey, <u>Dialogue</u>, ciled in Allen, p.141

the ideal picture of the courtier in II Cortegiano (1528), later published in English as The Courtyer in 1561. But their perfect ideals could never free themselves from the threats of the imperfections of real life. What Elyot was most afraid of was cases 'where majasty approacheth to excess and the mind is obsessed with inordinate glory, lest pride, of all vices most horrible, should suddenly enter and take the prisoner the heart of a gentleman called to authority'.[15] Awareness of the corruption of power in real life is also present in Castiglione: 'princes are made drunk by the great license that rule gives'[16]. Elyot has one whole chapter on ambition, denouncing it to be a vice to shun, and for Castiglione, 'whosoever is moved thereto(to great and daring deeds in war) for gain or any other motive, apart from the fact that he never does anything good, deserves to be called not a gentleman, but a base merchant'[17].

The song of protest against the new world of competition and political policy, against the morality of business expediency and political expediency in which the ends justify the means, is present in almost all of the political and theoretical writings of the sixteenth

(15) Elyot, p.103
(16) Castiglione, The Book of the Courlier, p.291
(17) Castiglione, p.69

century. It takes many forms with different writers, though the essential tone of protest is always there. Richard Hooker, in The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, published in 1594, starts with the commonly shared premise of the century: 'Of earthly blessings the meanest is wealth' , but he goes on to say: 'We all make complaint about the iniquity of our times; not unjustly, for the days are evil. But compare them with those times, wherein there were no civil societies... and we have surely good cause to think that God has blessed us exceedingly and make us behold most happy days'[18]. On the other hand Sir Thomas More in Utopia published in 1553, while denouncing the world where everyone 'draweth and plucketh to himself as much as he can', was aware that his ideal commonwealth was an utopia, that it can only be realised in a land such as never was and such as is nowhere nor will be. No matter how people justified their writings, everyone in the age was aware that there was a devil under the noble robe of wishful ideals. Some of them, like Hooker, comparing the evil times with those of the past, saw that the devil was no longer as devilish as before,

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(18) Richard Hooker, The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, in Allen, p.189-190

so they thanked their God for blessing them. While others, like Cheke and Starkey, dreaming of a commonwealth with love and unity as its binding force, asked the devil to come out of the noble robe that it had usurped. They asked men to be other than they are so that their ideals would be realised. Still others, like Sir Thomas More, thought of a commonwealth where the people were free of the devil, like Cheke and Starkey did, but knowing that this was an utopia, a dream, though a noble one. On the other hand, same others, like Elyot and especially Castiglione, tried to teach the devil to be noble as the robe it wears, with the great patience and confidence of the humanists. With a great trust in the weapon of education in shaping the persononality of men,they tried to train an ideal courtier so that he 'little by little, will inform his princeis mind with goodness, and teach him continence, fortitude, justice and temperance '[18] And despite its belief in educating an ideal courtier, like More's Utopia

> Castiglione's II Cortegiano is a kind of utopia, or better, an Arcadia, for it begins with a lament for the deaths of so many of the beautiful and charming people who graced the court of Urbino and created that perfect moment, now gone forever, of which the Courtier is an imaginative representation '[19]

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(18) Castiglione, p.293

(19) Joseph Antony Mazzeo, Renaissance and Revolution,p.134.

No matter how different the tones of their voices were the protesting men were resisting any attempt to rationalize and justify the new world they found themselves in. What they did in fact was 'little more than protest against the commercialism of a world that regarded them not '[20]. Their voices were loud and violent though without much echo for the future; yet their protest had time to be heard clearly over the powers of the new world.

The history of the sixteenth century thought was in a sense the history of the struggle between the old ideology and the new reality, reality forcing the bounds of the old yoke that it found restrictive, and the ideology attempting to tame the new reality to put it inside the norms of order that lives in people's minds. The reality is forcing the limits attributed to it, while people are forcing their conceptions to find a satisfactory niche for it there. Naturally, it will be the new reality that will be triumphant, making every noble dream, every violent protest in vain, but not yet in the sixteenth century. It is yet a time in which there is a great struggle and also a practical compromise, though built on much tension, between the things as they are and as they ought to be. The devil yet wears the noble robe and it yet befits him. But as

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(20) Allen, p. 152

he grows up to be stronger with time, he will tear up his noble robe, to wear his own. But, then, he no longer will be the devil that the sixteenth century is so afraid of, but the angel of the new world, an angel till that, too, is challenged by the new forces that will grow up in its womb.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DEVIL UNVEILED:

FROM ELYOT'S GOVERNOR TO MACHIAVELLI'S PRINCE

Many have dreamed up republics
and principalities which have never
in truth been known to exist; the
gulf between how one should live and
how one does live is so wide that
a man who neglects what is actually done
for what should be done learns the way
to self-destruction rather than self-preservati

Machiavelli, Il Principe '[21]

The same discrepancy exists, as in all the other spheres of thought, between the political theories of the sixteenth century and the political realities of the age. The century certainly did not have a political theory in the sense of a theory of state, nor did it have a conception of 'politics'. L.C. Knights stesses this fact in his article 'Shakespeare's Politics' by saying that if you had said to Shakespeare, 'Do you take any part in politics?'or 'What are your politics?' he would probably have been puzzled'[22] The sixteenth century men lacked the ability to think of the political world as an autonomous sphere of social life, and in abstract terms. Their political ideas were part of a wider context of ideas which constituted the theory of Universal Order, explaining the cosmic, social, and

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(21) Niccolo Machiavelli, The Prince, p.90-91

(22) L.C.Knights, Shakespeare's Politics, with some Reflections on the Nature of Tradition in Further Explorations, p.12

political orders as a Chain of Being, each a reflection of the other and all an image of the universal plan of God's design. Instead of a conception of 'politics', they had a conception of the 'body politick', as a passive reflection of the Universal order and a part of the single unity created by God. Rather than using abstract concepts in dealing with the state, they could only define it in terms of the concrete human body, different functions in the state corresponding to different functions and organs of the body, the king corresponding to the soul or head to which the other organs were subservient. Politics was yet a manifestation, a derivation of the universal order, the Natural Law and the Divine Will. Political ideas were yet defined in metaphysical and theological terms. That was the political scene of the age, in theory.

Yet, starting with the end of the fifteenth century, despite all the theological attributions to politics as part of a universal divine plan, with the development of national monarchies in England and all through Europe, a complex centralized political machine was developing, also creating an autonomous and secular world of policy. The actual world of political affairs - practiced on a national and secular bias - was growing to be in conflict

with the metaphysical and the universally defined conception of the'body politick'. The universal plan was getting narrower to have the nation as its focus, a national consciousness of the English public weal was taking the place of the religious one of the Christian Commonwealth, yet, as Morris points out,

> Social theory had of course a Christian setting and was supposed to have a universal application. Society was in fact generally called the Christian Commonwealth and many Tudor Englishmen, Protestants as well as Catholics, showed reluctance to admit that the society they spoke of meant England and not Christendom.'[23]

Though politics was defined in a madieval setting theoretically in reality, it was freeing itself from its medieval yoke, becoming autonomous by refusing the guardianship of any theological or decentralized authority that of the papacy and the feudal barons. The state was emancipating itself from its medieval guardians under the influence of increasingly powerful rulers, tearing up the old contracts signed with the barons and the Pope, the Magna Carta, and the oaths of coronation sworn to the Pope. The state, in which all the legislation, jurisdiction, and the property of the Church is collected, is from then on the secular head of the national political body. While medieval men theorised much about the limits of state power, the sixteenth century men, starting with

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(23) Morris, p.2

the Tudors, theorised much about the limits of the Church's or the subject's right. While the fourteenth century was deposing its king, Richard II, since he was disloyal to his contract, the sixteenth century was lamenting, after his deposition, in Tyndale's words, in The Obedience of a Christian Man (1528):

> Let England Looke about them, and marke what hath chaunced them since they slew their right kyng, whom God had anointed over them, King Richard II. Their people, townes and villages are minished by the third parte'[24].

This moralistic interpretation of political history, together with a political doctrine of unconditional obedience to the king, was the premise of Tudor political theory which dominated sixteenth century political thought. And it found one of its best expressions in the Bishop of Carlisle's words in Shakespeare's Richard II:

> What subject can give sentence on his king?
> And who sits here that is not Richard's subject?
> Thieves are not judget but they are by to hear,
> Although apparent guilt be seen in them;
> And shall the figure of God's majesty,
> His captain, steward, deputy elect,
> Anointed, crownèd planted many years,
> Be judged by subject and inferior breath,
> And he himself not present?
> (IV,i, 121-130)

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(24) William Tyndale, The Obedience of a Christian Man cited in R.W Carlyle and A.T Carlyle, A History of Medieval Political Theory in the West vol.VI p.290-91

With the Tudor theory of the sixteenth century, the clergy, the bishops, and the Pope became the Subjects of the secular magistrate. While the medieval ages wept after the 'tyrants' and 'usurper kings' that the Pope excommunicated, now there were few to weep after the Pope who turned out to be the 'usurper' this time, who, according to Tyndale, had usurped powers which were originally in the hands of the secular princes and the magistrates. The 'prince' was the new hero of the new political age, as the soul of the public weal and the 'Supreme Head of the English Church'. He was no longer to be regarded as the secular arm of the Church, and the official-political ethic of the age was the doctrine of unconditioned obedience to the secular hero. THe new century, under the dominating influence of the offical Tudor propaganda was supposed to forget all the charters that the old kings had signed once, had to forget the times when the kings admitted the right of his subjects to resist him if he violated his duty, the times when the king himself decreed the coercive machinary which his subjects were to set in motion against him in such a case. With the Tudor political theory, the prince was to be the hero; whether he is a tyrant or not, usurper or not, he is the angel through whom the God expressed his will.

BOĞAZİÇİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ KÜTÜPHANESİ

When he is a tyrant, he is again God's angel, though an 'angel with horns', as A.P Rossiter uses the term for Shakespeare's Richard III. And an evil angel which punishes people as God's minister can be overthrown only by a good angel, which the figure of Richmond Shows in Shakespeare's play.

What made the prince the hero, freeing him from his medieval guardians, was something more than the personal of the new kings; it was the need of the Englishmen relying upon a centralized power, wearied of feudal anarchy and disgusted with ecclesiastical interference. This urgent need for a centralized single power to organise all the spheres of social life, which made it possible for the prince to be the hero, was also to make a body of new politicians, effective statesmen, and policy-makers also the heroes of the day.
While the feudal nobility had long lost its social and political prestige as the natural counsellors of the King, or as his guardians, it was now time for the new men equipping themselves for the urgent needs of the government service with the new learning. It was men like Wolsey, Cromwell, and Crammer that the king needed. As the old nobility desperately observed, capacity and expediency

and policy counted rather than noble birth.

A new Political scene rose up, a scene in which the national will rather than the Christian one dominated and all the ties that bound the subject to any authority but the state were to be crushed, leaving him in an unconditioned duty of obedience to the political authority. The process of secularization and political centralization that cracked the autonomy of the feudal-medieval institutions, including the autonomy of the Medieval church, only made it possible for the national political body to emerge as the sole authority of the age, with its centralized administrative machine. Looking at the sixteenth century, one sees the sovereign as the only hero, shining as the soul of the public weal and the head of the church; there was much hero worship for the sovereign at the time. But behind the sovereign there was the new political world of the new politicians though in fact Tudor theory made them more subservient than hitherto, as will be shown later. Though the image of that world was not as noble as the image of the sovereign who stood in front of it, there is no doubt that it was completely new and inevitably dominating. This scene, having much new together with the noble old, was the outcome, in the political sphere,

of a long process of revolution which brought with it the secularization of culture, the centralization of political authority and the disintegration of all feudal bonds. In this sense, politics, in the actual sphere of life, was freeing itself from its medieval ties under the centralized authority of the Tudor monarchs, it was secularizing and throwing off its medieval yoke, thus coming closer to the modern context of the term 'politics'. Yet the conception of body Politick, dealing with the political world as a manifestation of the Divine Will or the Natural Law, was still essentially medieval, reflecting the political sphere as only a passive mirror of the Universal Order. It was a conception of politics in terms theological and metaphysical. The sixteenth century traces the constant struggle of the two essentially different conceptions of politics; a struggle between a modern 'politics' which yet did not find its ideological reflection in the political thought of the century and a medieval politics that had lost all its ties with the challenging reality though still dominating people's minds. This was the same disproportion that is observed in other spheres of life between the way things are in real life and in people's minds, betfeen the reality and the ideology, between what is de facto and what is de jure.

The new political reality which had arisen towards the end of the fifteenth century and the sixteenth century, with the Tudors in England - and with the rising of the national monarchies throughout Europe - surely did change a lot concerning the idea of kingship, though it did not change the conception of politics which remained essentially medieval throughout the century. The Tudor idea of politics was a modified version of the medieval conception; what they had in front of them was 'a legacy of the middle Ages which the Tudors had only to adopt and adapt'[25] Within the limits set by the Medieval legacy, only within those limits, much changed concerning the limits of the political authority and the subject's duty. The limits of the King's rights were widened, while those of the subject were narrowed. The Tudor political theory, which aims at the practical end of consolidating Tudor supremacy, is basically a theory of non-resistance on the part of the subject, whether he be a noble baron or a churchman. It is the time when the idea that 'a tyrant is better than many tyrants' and that 'a rebel is worse than the worst prince' is preached. this idea of non - resistance was basically alien to the Medieval ages when kingship was conceived as a contractual relationship betfeen the subject and the king, re flecting the feudal contract between the noble and the king.'[26]

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(25) Allen,p.124.

(26) R.W.Carlyle and A.J.Carlyle, Otto Gierke, and J.N.Figgs all bring up the same argument that the doctrine of unconditioned duty of obedience,i.e.the doctrine of non-rebellion,was wholly foreign to the Middle Ages.Figgis points out that the idea of sovereignty developed together with the development of the modern state;Figgis The Divine Right of Kings,p.31,Otto Gierke,Political Theories of the Middle Ages, p.35 R.W.Carlyle and A.J.Carlyle, pp.290-91.

The great sin of the age changed to rebellion and not tyranny, but the conception of handling the political sphere in terms of a theological universal setting, as part of a theologically conceived universal order, persisted as the essential assumption of political thought long after the collapse of the Papacy as a universal center nourishing the conception of the universal world-state. The great sin of the age changed, but the political body was still conceived to be a penalty and a remedy for sin; thus the duty of the citizen to the state was still a religious duty and the rights of the king were still Divine. The political reality to be justified changed, but the terms of justification stayed the same. As J.W. Allen suggests, 'Increased emphasis on the prince alone separates all this from medieval conceptions '[27] The Tudors had absorbed the medieval conceptions , changing some of the details as far as the idea of sovereignty is concerned, to serve their political ends. The Tudor modification was an easy one, since, in the middle Ages, too, 'The king was the theoretical apex of civilisation the head of everything: but practice robbed him of most of his powers and divided them among his barons '[28] With the Tudor modification, St. Augustine's Civitas Dei was freed of its earthly guardians, from the Pope and the barons, but it was still there.

(27) Allen, p. 133
(28) A.F. Pollard, Factors in Modern History p.56

Although the political body was emancipating itself from its medieval fetters under the strong rule of its monarchs, becoming an autonomous sphere of social life in the sense that it was subjected to its own laws of policy_making and with its own central organization , it was still ideologically the slave of a Universal order and a Divine Will. In contrast to the national and secular arena of Realpolitik,the universal and theological idea of the body politick persisted. This disproportion between the secular national world subjected to political laws and the theological-universal scheme in which it was conceived constituted the main tension of sixteenth century political thought. This was a tension resulting from the conflict between the medieval -feudal idea of politics and the disintegration of the feudal political institutions in actual life. Just as theory clung to ideas of universal empire long after national monarchies had come to be the political fact, and just as it clung to the conception of the christian Commonwealth and the universal Church long after that proved to be a dream in reality, political theory still clung to the idea of the body politick as an expression of Divine Will, long after politics freed itself from the guardianship of any other force than the National Will.

As the people clung to the old ideals - as is the case in every age of transformation - ideology lagged behind. This was both a violent struggle and also a practical compramise between the new face of the world which the people resisted accepting in theory though they confirmed to it in practice, and the old noble face of the world which they were so familiar with. It was both a struggle and a compromise between the Tudor practice of politics, completely on a national and secular bias, and the Tudor theory of politics, completely on a universal and theological bias. Till the end of the century people lived with the triumph of the compromise, though also in the threat of the tension. It is this compromise built on much tension that Morris observes as the assential characteristic of Tudor political thought :

> For long they allowed irreconcilable concepts to lie side by side in their minds because they could not bring themselves to cast out any doctrine which had been immemorially received. Tudor Englishmen were still medieval enough to persist in discussing political matters in what to us are not political terms, and if we wish to elicit or elucidiate Tudor political ideas we must accustom ourselves to finding them wrapped up in the traditional language of theology or jurisprudence.
> In the sixteenth century the state became an obvious fact, and the art and craft of statesmanship were consciously pursued and practiced. Yet theories of the state as such remained curiously inexplicit; and most men thought of the state as existing not in its own right but in relation to other things, as subservient not to laws of its own being but to some external law.' [29]

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(29) Morris, p.2

This gulf to be bridged between what happened, *de facto*, and the way it was rationalized, *de jure*, stays throughout the sixteenth century, widening as the century drew to its close. The Realpolitik was shut inside the medieval yoke, wrapped up with garments of theology, dressed up with a noble robe. Inside was the Devil. This is the image that dominates the sixteenth century, also in the sphere of political thought. But there is a place where the devil was confident enough to break the medieval yoke it was shut in, wandering unveiled; this was the thought of Machiavelli, the 'Devil', as the sixteenth century called him early in the century. [30]

The influence of Niccolò Machiavelli's ideas-which represent the only radical departure from the sixteenth century's conception of politics- on the English political thought was much debated; while wyndham Lewis suggested that 'the master figure of Elizabethan drama is Machiavelli.. he was the great character of supreme intrigue that, however taken, was at the back of every Tudor mind' [31]

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(30) In History Choice and Commitment, (p.158) Felix Gilbert mentions that identification of Machiavelli with Satan was made by Reginald Pole in 1539.

(31) Whyndham Lewis, The Lion and the Fox, p.64

Tillyard reached a conclusion totally in contrast to that of Lewis:

> The conclusion is that in trying to picture how the ordinary educated contemporary of Shakespeare looked on history in the gross we do not need to give much heed to Machiavelli. His day had not yet come.[32]

Bearing in the mind that I Discorsi was printed in English only in 1636, Istorie Fiorentine in 1595, Il Principe in 1640 and Gentillet's Contre-Machiavel, contributing much to the myth of the Machiavellian villain in England, in 1602, it would be wrong to suggest a direct theoretical influence of Machiavelli on Tudor thought, despite the fact that the Italian editions and the English manuscripts were ciculated toward the 1580s. There is much to indicate that his theory was not much debated early in the century, but as Felix Raab points out, 'Everything indicates that, at least from the middle eighties onwards, Machiavelli was being quite widely read in England'.[33] Whether it was only through the Contre-Machiavel of Gentillet [34] or due to others factors before him, there developed in the popular consiciousness of the sixteenth century the

(32) Tillyard, p.23

(34) This is a controversial point the details of which are beyond the limits of this study. While Lewis argues that 'Machiavelli was only known through the French of Gentillet' (p.64), Rabb argues that the stock figure of Machiavelli had been created for some time before Gentillet (p.56)

(33) Felix Raab, The English Face of Machiavelli, p.56

myth of Machiavelli as the 'political villain', a stock figure of the wicked godless Machiavelli. He was identified with the Devil and Satan, as the tempter, the tyrant, the traitor, the hypocrite, the teacher of evil and immoral intrigue, the inventor of perjury, and the discoverer of ambition and revenge. And with the 'stage-Machiavel' the myth found its spectacular manifestation in the Elizabethan drama. At last the sixteenth century had found its scapegoat, to which all the imperfections of the age were attributed.

It is widely accepted that Machiavelli's image in the popular consciousness of the sixteenth century is due to ignorance; it is true that the Tudors got the image essentially from sources other than his own works, but Raab is completely right in suggesting that

> The Tudor horror of Machiavelli was not a 'distortion' due to ignorance, it was the horror of a generation which saw its traditional _Weltanschauung_ seriously and validly challanged.35

The century was, for the first time, seing the devil unveiled. The sensitive balance that the Tudor mind developed between the way things are and the way things ought to be was threatened. The only feeling one gets in such a situation is defence, counter –

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(35) Raab, p.70.

attacking with the utmost violence the challenger while he hides himself deeper inside the noble robe that he is afraid to lose. The sixteenth century Englishman is determined not to let his ideology perish with the threats of an Italian thinker, that ideology which he saved from even the threats of his own practice. The Tudor reaction to Machiavelli is due to an awareness of this challenge, rather than to ignorance. It was the genuine defense of an age which has not yet lost its 'noble' image, its faith in itself, despite the social and political upheavals it had lived through.

What disturbed the Tudors most was Machiavelli's utter rejection of the idea of the body politick, of the idea of correspondence between the political order and any other order, be it cosmic, ecclesiastical, or moral. *Il Principe* was only a political testament, it was conceived to be a threat to the medieval concept of the Universal Order; any crack in the theory, the destruction of the hierarchy in any link of the Chain of Being, challenged the whole system of thought since every order was interdependent as a reflection of the single universal design. As Pope would say later in the eighteenth century,

> Where, one step broken, the great scale's destroyed:
> From Nature's chain whatever link you strike,
> Tenth or ten thousandth, breaks the chain alike.[36]

Thus Machiavelli's new conception of politics, emancipated from the guardianship of moral, ecclesiastical orders, was, in fact, the total violation of the whole system of metaphysical justification of feudalism, the only system of rationalization the people held then. Politics, with Machiavelli, is no longer justified by Natural Law or Divine Will, but by laws of its own; it is a self-justifying sphere. Far from being a passive reflection of a divine plan, it is the arena of the active intervention of men. In Machiavelli's thought, the classic conception of Fortuna takes the place of the medieval Providence; 'Fortuna is a woman and if she is to be submissive it is necessary to beat and coerce her'[37]. It is with Machiavelli that the political order is freed from being a derivation of Providence, and it is with him that the prince begins to appear not as a dependent member of a given moral order but as the creative politician. With Machiavelli, the discrepancy of the sixteenth century between the practice and theory of politics is broken since *Il Principe* is the first systematic exposition of power politics as it was

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(36) Pope, p.62

(37) Machiavelli, p.133

practiced in Europe in the early part of the sixteenth century[38]. It is in the mirror that Machiavelli held that the sixteenth century got a glimpse of the modern understanding of politics and the politician. What the people saw in Machiavelli's mirror was not alien to them, it was, in fact, their own images wandering naked; so they reacted in horror. The only thing that an age which is afraid of its naked image could do is to break the mirror as an invention of the Devil. The most it could do is to fight with the images they saw. That was what the sixteenth century Englishmen did, but what they were wighting against was themselves.

The sixteenth century's ideal conception of the prince and the governor were highly challenged by Machiavelli's 'Prince'. Elyot's 'most excellent virtue' justice, being the criterion of political behavior and moral right as the basis for political action - unchallenged concepts throughout the sixteenth century - were concepts irrelevant for Machiavelli's prince. What he valued was practical necessity rather than moral obligation in defining the behavior of man as a governor; it is power rather than right, necessity rather than justice that counts, in fact ' a necessary war is a

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(38) George W.Keeton, Shakespeare's Legal and Political Background, p.315

a just war and where there is hope only in arms, those arms are holy';[39] so 'let a prince set about the task of conquering and maintaining his state; his methods will always be judged honourable and will be universally praised'.[40] The political conduct of the prince is no longer defined in terms of the never-changing static virtues as is seen in the medieval theorists and the humanists from Erasmus to Elyot, rather it is expressed in terms of *virtu*, a dynamic concept expressing the adaptability to different political occasions. Contrary to Elyot, Machiavelli has no list of virtues and vices:

> The fact is that a man who wants to act virtuously in every way necessarily comes to grief among so many who are not virtuous. Therefore if a prince wants to maintain his rule he must learn how not to be virtuous, and to make use of this or not according to need. [41]

It is no longer a question of virtue as such, or cruelty as such, but 'it is a question of cruelty used well or badly'.[42] The prince is free to violate law, free to be not virtuous, free to pursue any means that he was restricted to do by medieval theory as long as he serves the necessary political end. The modern conception

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(39) Machiavelli is quoting Livy,p.135

(40) Machiavelli, p.101

(41) Machiavelli, p.91

(42) Machiavelli, p.65

of the purposeful <u>politician</u> found its first expression in Machiavelli's *Il Principe* although no politician would accept the picture to be that of himself.

> You should understand that there are two ways of fighting: by law or by force. The first way is natural to man, and the second to beasts. But as the first one often proves inadequate one must needs have recourse to the second. So a prince must understand how to make a nice use of the beast and the man.. So, as a prince is forced to know how to act like a beast, he should learn from the fox and the lion, because the lion is defenceless against traps and a fox is defenceless against wolves Therefore one must be a fox in order to recognize traps, and a lion to frighten off wolves Those who simply act like lions are stupid.[43]

Machiavelli's ideas were the total negation of Cicero's conception of political behavior in *De Officiis*,which represented the official sixteenth century doctrine concerning the behavior of man as a governor.

> There are two ways of settling a dispute, first by discussion, second by physical force, and since the former is characteristic of man, the latter of the brute, we must resort to force only in case we may not avail ourselves in discussion.. While wrong may be done... in either of two ways, that is by force or fraud, both are bestial: fraud seems to belong to the cunning fox, force to the lion, both are wholly unworthy of man, but fraud is the more contemptible.[44]

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(43) Machiavelli, p.99

(44) Cicero, <u>De Officiis</u>, cited in Theodore Spencer, <u>Shakespeare and the Nature of Man</u>, p.41

The sixteenth century men, just like Cicero, hated the fox simply because its cunning stood for the ways of behavior which much protest was raised against throughout the century; for the ways of the greedy merchant and the power lusted politician, for a morality of expendiency and intrigue in which the ends justifiy the means. They preferred the might and valour of the lion, a preference natural for an age which has not yet lost its faith in a chivalrous past and which still wore the noble costume of that chivalrous world. The sixteenth century men insisted in seing history and politics as a noble tournament, while Machiavelli saw it as a game of chess which rests on much intrigue and policy rather than might and valour.

What makes Machiavelli our center of interest lies in the fact that, though the sixteenth century moved away from his ideas in violent defense, it came closer and closer to them in reality, confirming his precepts. As J.A.Mazzeo observed,

> If Machiavelli saw the state as a dynamic unit with no particular internal goal, a quantity of power awaiting a ruler to achieve direction, so did the great statesmen of the rising sixteenth century national satates.[45]

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(45) Mazzeo, p.83

If Machiavelli released the state from the long dominating idea of Natural Law in theory, so did the Tudors, releasing it from the restraint of feudal and ecclesiastical law, in practice. And it is in this sense, marking the development of a radically different modern political practice- that of the autonomous secular state, that of a new world based on policy and intrigue - that the Tudors represent the 'Machiavellian Face' of English politics. And it is in this sense that what A.F.Pollard suggests is right;

> indeed Henry VIII is Machiavelli's Prince in action. Expediency was the test of everything and not principle; religion was to be subservient to the interests of the State. Fair means and foul might alike be employed if the end was the national welfare.[46]

But since the Tudors justified and rationalized their practice in the wider context of the medieval ideology which saw the state as a means, rather than as an end in itself, they needed an 'English Face' for Machiavelli, whose ideas, in fact, reflected the political practice of the new age reaching its climax with the Tudors. In fact, the 'English Face' of Machiavelli was a defense against the 'Machiavellian Face' of English politcs in the sixteenth century. Although they called him the Devil, they never could ignore him, and 'below the surface,

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(46) Pollard, p.78

men realized with a fascinated conviction which they were afraid to admit-that the ideas of Machiavelli might after all be true'.[47]

So long as the Tudors were the kings <u>de facto</u> ruling with the capacity to govern rather than right and subjecting every other thing-also religion- to the interests of the emerging modern state they needed the sharp knife of Machiavelli to cut all the ties that bound them and their state ideologically to the medieval past that their practice constantly moved away from, but they refused to use it, both genuinely since they yet had not lost their faith in the medieval past, and also pragmatically since they could yet make use of the past for their political ends. J.R.Hale is totally right in saying that.

> Statesman had been functioning efficiently on Machiavellian lines for centuries, and by begging them to be self-conscious about the motives of their actions. Machiavelli was not aiding but embarrassing their freedom of action'[48]

This is the temperament of an age embarrassed to see its own practice theorized openly, embarrassed to see its own body naked. So every age of transformation is a fight of the age with its own real images as well as the institutions it crumbles to pieces. While Machiavelli

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(47) Theodore Spencer, <u>Shakepeare and the Nature of Man</u>,p.45

(48) J.R.Hale, <u>Machiavelli and Renaissance Italy</u>,p.158.

had to face that image, since he was trying to accomplish a fact, (The unity and the political centralization of the Italian states), The Tudor rule being already a fait accompli needed not to face it radically. With his theory, tearing up the noble veil of the sixteenth century, 'Machiavelli's day had not yet come' as Tillyard argues, but the Devil that he symbolized was at the back of every Tudor mind, to quote Wyndham Levis.

It is generally thought that Elyot's Governor is a perfect reflection of the sixteenth century English political ideas and conduct. It is so, in fact, with its strong belief in the idea of degree and hierarchy, the idea of body politick as a mirror of a Divine Plan, the idea of monarchy based on the analogy of the beehive, the list of virtues to be acquired and virtues to be shunned, and also with its stong awareness of the urgent need of answering the demands of the new secular state, the demands of an age of professionalism which needed new governors determined not by noble birth or wealth, but by capacity. Just as Elyot reflected the political ideals of the sixteenth century, so did Machivelli reflect the political reality. In fact, the sixteenth century was both a struggle and a

compromise of the two, The Governor in theory and The Prince in practice, what is reflected by the political idealism of Elyot and the political realism of Machiavelli. This was a discrepancy, a duality, a sphinx which reflected the spirit not only of Tudor England, but all the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as a whole:

> The abrupt translation of an entire society from one set of values to another, from the values of the feudal commune to the.. conditions of the modern state, from a mystical view of the world to a 'realistic'one is responsible for all the monsters and angels produced by the renaissance. A sphinx, from one point of view, was the result of this release of vitality in all directions. The meeting of these two different ages, with their respective passions and characteristics, produced a 'mysterious sphinx, which excites our wonder and almost our fear': half angel and half devil.[49]

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(49) Lewis, p.84.

CHAPTER THREE

BODY POLITICK OR REALPOLITIK: SHAKESPEARE'S CONCEPTION OF POLITICS IN THE TWO TETRALOGIES

Then everything includes itself in power,
Power into will, will into appetite,
And appetite, an universal wolf,
So doubly seconded with will and power,
Must make perforce an universal prey,
And last eat up himself.

Troilus and Cressida (I,iii,119-124)

Are Shakespeare's Histories to be handled as the dramatization of history which unfolds itself according to a rational and just 'Providence' or a blind and 'Grand Mechanism?[50] Can they be taken as Hall dramatized, conveying the political assumptions of the Tudor pattern of history, a dramatic Mirror for Magistrates, presenting the history of the fall of rulers as a moral example, or are they to be taken as a 'dramatized version of a chapter from Machiavelli's Prince?'[51] The first critical approach taking the Histories as an embodiment of the medieval-providential scheme of history, moralized on the Tudor pattern, was associated with Tillyard, and not unfairly, since, in Shakespeare's History Plays (1947), he was the first critic to formulate systematically, with a comprehensive study of Shakespeare' s cosmic, historical, and literary backround, that the Histories were written

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(50) The concept of the 'Grand Mechanism' is a key word in Jan Kott's criticism expressing the cruel mechanism of history— a mechanism not divinely controlled- that subjects men to be its victims.

(51) Jan Kott, Shakespeare Our Contemporary, p.17

with ' a scheme fundamentally religious, by which events evolve under a law of justice and under the ruling of God's Providence, and of which Elizabeth's England was the acknowledged outcome' [52] What the more recent approach of Jan Kott, expressed in Shakespeare Our Contemporary (1965), suggested was totally in contrast to Tillyard's ideas:

> Shakespeare views the implacable mechanism without medieval awe , and without the illusions of the early Renaissance. The sun does not circle round the earth, there is no order of the spheres or of nature.The King is no Lord's Anointed, and politics is only an art aiming at capturing and seizing power. [53]

There is an apparent discrepancy between the two criticisms. The first approach takes Shakespeare's politics to be an orthodox one, fostered by the Tudor political assumptions to be theological and pragmatic, a dramatized version of the Tudor Myth, the homiliy doctrines of anti-rebellion based on the idea that kings are the anointed ministers of God and also an embodiment of the medieval-Tudor notions of order, degree, and hierarchy expressed in the first chapter of Elyot's The Governor and in many other political treatises of the Tudor age. The other approach, in open contrast, takes Shakespeare's politics to be free of all Tudor mythology and Renaissance

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(52) Tillyard, p. 320-1.
(53) Kott, p.41

illusions, purely Machiavellian in the sense that political power alone, apart from all moral hindrances, operates as a cruel and tragic force in the 'grand staircase of history'. For Jan Kott, Richard III signifies 'The crumbling of the entire moral order '.[54] For Tillyard, who finds much medievalism and religious tone in the play 'The play's main end is to show the working out of God's will in English history'.[55]

Two totally different conceptions of politics are attributed to Shakespeare; a medieval-Christian conceptian of the Tudor political theory, where politics, like history, is God-controlled and divinely prescribed, where political characters are moral agents of Divine Will; and a Machiavellian one of power - politics stripped of all moral and divine implications where men are totally motivated by the lust for power to push each other town the paths of earthly glory- on the one hand the politics of Elyot's Governor, and on the other that of Machiavelli's Prince. That there is a discrepancy between these two 'politics' is obvious, but the discrepancy cannot be explained merely by the different critical attitudes of Tillyard or jan Kott; the discrepancy has its roots in the ambiguous dynamism of Shakespeare's play's themselves- an ambiguty which reflects the discrepancy there exists in his age between the theory

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(54) Kott, p.40

(55) Tillyard, p.208

and practice of politics.

The idea that Hall 'did so much to shape the philosophy of history in the plays of shakespeare'[56] cannot be rejected. Even in his choice of dramatizing the period from 1398-1485 in the two tetralogies, Shakespeare seems to be indebted to him. Hall, like all the propagandists of the Tudor political myth, saw this period of civil war as a penalty for the original political sin committed by the deposition and murder of Richard II: the sin is remedied by the uniting of the two roses with the advent of Henry Tudor to the throne. The conception of politics is theological and providential, seeing political disorder as a penalty, and political order as a remedy, for sin commited against God. It is also politically pragmatic in the sense that it sees the political secular ends of the Tudors as coincident with the religious ends of Divine Will. The question is whether Shakespeare adopts this scheme of political history to set forth an orthodox doctrine, showing the working out of God's will on the English body politick, with the realisation of a poetic justice which makes the moral forces triumphant over the immoral ones.

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(56) Irving Ribner, 'History and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare' in <u>Shakespeare's Histories, ed</u> . William A. Armstrong, p.31.

At firstsight the medieval-providential frame of the Tudor political theory, historiography, and church homilies shines throughout Shakespeare's two tetrologies. The networks of prophecies, curses, dreams, oracles, and omens are the connecting threads of the eight plays, as they relate present with the past and the future. They serve the function of both a dramatic scheme in which the plays are united organically into a double tetralogy, and also the function of a providential scheme, creating a sense of divine justice neatly unfolding itself according to a rational plan. God's hand is creating its prophets and victims in the process. John of Gaunt's prophetic words in <u>Richard II</u>

> Methinks I am a prophet new inspired
> And thus expiring do foretell of him:
> His rash fierce blaze of riot cannot last,
> For violent fires soon burn out themselves;
> Small showers last long, but sudden storms are short
> He tires betimes that spurs too fast betimes;
> With eager feeding food doth choke the feeder.
> Light vanity, insatiate cormorant,
> Consuming means, soon preys upon itself.
> (II,i,31-40)

contribute both to the dramatic scheme, tying the play Richard's deposition and murder, and to the providential idea that runs throughout the tetralogies as a <u>leitmotiv</u>.

The unfolding of the events seems to be so irresistibly deterministic that Richard's prophecy at the end of the play,

> Northumberland, thou ladder wherewithal
> The mounting Bolingbroke ascends my throne,
> The time shall not be many hours of age
> More than it is, ere foul sin gathering head
> Shall break into corruption: thou shalt think,
> Though he divide the realm, and give thee half,
> It is too little, helping him to all;
> And he shall think that thou, which know'st the way
> To plant unrightful kings, wilt know again,
> Being ne'er so little urged, another way
> To pluck him headlong from the usurped throne, —
>
> (V,i,55-66)

is to be remembered word for word by the uneasy Bolingbroke faced with Northumberland's rebellion in <u>2 Henry IV</u>. With Richard's prophecy, the first play of the tetralogy is tied to the second dramatically and the political history of each is tied providentially. The Bishop of Carlisle's words to Bolingbroke in <u>Richard II</u>

> And if you crown him let me prophecy;
> The blood of English shall manure the ground
> And future ages groan for this foul act; —
>
> (IV ,i,136-9)

have a prophetic - and dramatic, too - significance for the disorder of the first tetralogy. In the three parts of <u>Henry VI</u> and in <u>Richard III</u>, the network of

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prophecies and curses had been even more naive. Every character tends to become a prophet; they either leave a curse behind before they leave the stage, or they are subjected to a curse. Shakespeare presents this as a process so beyond men's control that Lady Anne is subjected to her own curse in Richard III. The figure of Margaret of Anjou emerges as the great prophetess and avenging fury. In Richard II, Carlisle's words had pointed to the civil wars of the first tetralogy, and before the bloody tragedy starts Shakespeare reminds us, with the prophecy of Warwick in the beginning of Henry VI, that the brawl that started between Lancaster and York in the Temple garden

> Shall send between the red rose and the white
> A thousand souls to death and deadly night.
> (II. iv.126-8)

Thus the prescribed scenes of vendetta follow one another, getting more beyond control as they get more cruel, till the fulfilment of another prophecy - Henry VI's prophecy of Richmond- ends the tetralogy. Shakespeare seems to suggest the idea of Providence and Divine justice, the idea of history as a scheme of retribution unfolding itself in recurring patterns beyond human control. With this as a frame, all the political assumptions of the Tudor theory- the divine right of kings, the king as Lord's anointed, the body politick as the beehive,

rebellion as a sin against God - can be traced throughout Shakespeare's plays. And this frame of history is strengthened with vivid images and analogies that imply a correspondence between the macrocosm and the political world.

I Henry VI starts with a reference to the 'heavens' as 'hung with black '.[57] It is the 'comets' that are 'importing change of times and states' it is the 'bad revolting stars' that have consented to Henry's death. The political combats are, as the Welsh Captain observes in Richard II, a reflection of the combat in heaven between the 'mateors' and 'the fixed stars of heaven'. The Duke of Bedford asks Henry V's ghost to ' combat with adverse planets in the heavens' to prosper the realm and to keep it from civil broils.
It is the result of this heavenly combat that will reflect on the political world below.

With Constance's words in King John,

> Arm, arm, you heavens, against these perjured kings,
> A widow cries, be husband to me, heavens.
> (III,i,107-9)

Shakespeare gives a vivid picture of the heaven arming itself to operate divine justice. One gets the idea of it as a noble chevalier, and when the curses

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(57) This involves a kind of pun, 'The heavens' was a theatre term for the canopy over the stage, which would be draped with black for a tragic scene. So spectators would see this at the same time as they imagined the celestial 'heavens' darkened for Henry V's death.

ascend the sky,
And there awake God's gentle-sleeping peace,
(Richard III,I.iii.88-90)

The chevalier arms himself to take vengeance, and sends war to to the earth as his avenging minister:

O war, thou son of hell,
Whom angry heavens do make their minister.
(2 Henry VI,V.ii.33-35)

It is only after the angry armed chevalier takes his vengeance on the 'revolting stars' and the perjured kings' that 'God's gentle sleeping peace'returns. And vengeance will be taken;

if angels fight,
Weak men must fall, for heaven still guards the right
(Richard II,III.ii.61-3)

This leitmotiv of the 'will of heaven' and the 'quarrel of God' runs throughout the plays and when this theme unites with the fulfilment of the prophecies and the curses,and with the analogies that Shakespeare uses to describe the body politick - the beehive, the garden, the ship, and the human body- there emerges a framework which Shakespeare may seem to share with Hall, the homily writers, and the political theorists of the Tudor age but nevertheless often suggests is

unrealistic, since the appeals to heaven are not always answered, just as they are not in real life. Despite Constance's cries to heaven, young Arthur is captured and loses his life, and despite Richard II's confidence in heavenly justice, he loses his crown and life. 'God's is the quarrel' says old Gaunt in Richard II and so says the Citizen in Richard III; 'But leave it all to God'. The dying Gaunt can leave it, and the citizen can, but we cannot, since Shakespeare leaves us with the question:

> Can curses pierce the clouds and enter heaven?
> (Richard III, I.iii.195)

The answer is increasingly ambigious, even though the guilty against whom the curses are directed are ultimately doomed-for the unguilty are oftened doomed as well.

At first sight the moral — theological conception of the Tudor political theory shines throughout the plays organizing Shakespeare's historical material to a dramatic unity and connecting the plays ideologically under a providential scheme. But this is only an ideological frame which shakespeare no doubt took from the political idealists of his age - inside which Shakespeare draws the realistic picture of the sixteenth century political world; a world of power- politics

that was associated with the precepts of Machiavelli, a world the laws of which found its realistic theoretical formulation in Machiavelli's II Principe. In this world men are political animals rather than divine agents; they fall victims not of God' s divine Justice but of their unguardedness against the merciless rules of the political world where only power, intrigue, and policy count. The tension that arises with the juxtaposition of the two contrasting views of politics - the politics of Tudor idealism and that of Machiavellian realism - can be traced throughout the ambiguity of Shakespeare's Histories. The tension is dominating in the first tetralogy, since Shakespeare, yet in the very beginning of his dramatic career, seems to be unguarded against the paradoxes of the Tudor theory in explaining the political reality of his day; both a genuine belief in a providential scheme of history and a strong realistic sense have caused Shakespeare to end up with a series of plays which are the battlefield of the two notions, a total medieval scheme, a naively optimistic political pattern, into which is inserted a pessimistic picture of the real political world. But despite his

realistic analysis of the political world, Shakespeare ends the tetralogy with the advent of the heavensent figure of Richmond - an end in agreement with the medieval setting of the tetralogy and the pragmatic Tudor conception of history. In the second tetralogy, the tension resting on the disproportion between the two contrasting political attitudes does not weigh so heavily on the plays, Shakespeare seems to be more in control of the tension, more guarded against the paradox which arises on the discrepancy between the Tudor theory and practice of politics, and less dependent on the illusions and mythology of the Tudor political theory in the first tetralogy, through a series of confrontations Shakespeare traces this tension which makes the play intensly tragic and highly ambiguous, while in the second tetralogy he, freed of the dominating influence of the providential setting, studies the rules of the political world in their actual complexity. 'It is the development from a dominant tragic intensity towards a symphonic complexity'[58] that marks the sequence of Shakespeare's history plays. And in this sequence, King John and Richard II are the two 'bridge' plays in which the providential belief is presented but to be challenged by the fact that there is little sign of any divine

(58) A.R. Humphreys, 'Shakespeare's Histories:From Antithesis to Synthesis' p.l.

judgement.

Cardinal Pandulph in King John is a very striking instance of how the old religious forms turned to the new secular ones. His address to the king of France pressing him to break his sworn oath (I,i,263-97) and that to the Dauphin about the fate of prince Arthur (III, IV.145-81) are Machiavellian in the most outrageous way, though they claim to be made by the old religious canons.

The curse arising from Richard II's deposition and murder, which connects the two tetralogies under a providential scheme of history, is there from the very start, but stays dormant till the reign of Henry VI; it stays dormant in the period covered by Shakespeare's two parts of Henry IV and Henry V.Bolingbroke is made uneasy by it but he does not fall into the abyss as a victim to it; Henry V remembers it before the battle of Agincourt, but that is all. If it is Henry V's piety that delays the fulfilment of the curse, as the political idealists had come to believe, then why does Henry VI, one of the most pious of Shakespeare's kings, fall victim to it? If Henry VI is punished by God, then Divine justice is unjust, since

Bolingbroke who has committed the original sin is punished with only a torment of conscience, and Henry V is almost totally free of any retribution. The problem presents an insoluble paradox for the Tudor pattern which sees history as a retribution to sin, the answer of which can be observed in Shakespeare's realistic political world; Henry V falls victim to his own political weakness, and so does Richard II his own recklessnes And Bolingbroke's usurpation of the crown is totally legitimate in a world where the politically strong triumph; Bolingbroke is both strong and legitimate, since he has got the political means-power and the people's support - and he has a firm rationale arising from the injustices and political follies of Richard II. Although Richard II may be 'The reightful heir' of the English crown, his political recklessness and his deficiency in the true kingly qualities is apparent from the very beginning of the play; although he appears as a powerful king with his words

> We are not born to sue, but to command;
> (I,ii.196)

This is nothing but ceremonial show of power, politically hollow. Throughout the play,his inefficiency, proving him a political failure, is contrasted with the resoluteness and quickness of action of Bolingbroke. While Richard

is contemplating on his power de jure ;

> Not all the water in the rough rude sea
> Can wash the balm off from an anointed king;
> The breath of worldly men cannot depose
> The deputy elected by the Lord:
>
> (III.ii.54-58)

Bolingbroke is acting to be a power de facto. Time is on the side of Bolingbroke since in the political world politicians are first a power de facto and then attribute themselves a power de jure. They are first kings of might, then kings of right; that is the case with the Tudors, Shakespeare observes, and that will be the case with Bolingbroke, he suggests.

Having lost all his political support, from the commons and the nobles, Richard waits for heaven to combat for him and guard his right, while Bolingbroke uses earthly means that'breath of wordly men' which Richard undervalued, to win his quarrel and guard his rights. Richard wants to believe that

> God for his Richard hath in heavenly pay
> A glorious angel: then, if angels fight,
> Weak men must fall, for heaven still guards the right.
>
> (III.ii.60-63)

But in the political world it is men and not angels that

fight; men guard their own right and it is so long as they have the worldly-political means-people's support and political skill-that they can guard it. 'Weak men must fall' indeed; so falls Richard, since there appear no angels to help him, and Bolingbroke is stronger. Richard is strong when he has yet the power to do in injustices but when he is faced with injustices or with the consequences of his injustices, he is totally weak to confront them. His weakness, he himself observes, though too late:

> I wasted time, and now doth time waste me.
> (V.v.49)

Indeed he wasted the time first in ceremonial impotency and then in waiting for heaven's angels to fight for his rights. And Shakeslpeare, through the helpless figure of Richard II, shows that when men of political responsibility say 'But leave it all to God' they are wasted by the time that bends towards the politically strong. Richard falls as a victim to his own political follies as much as to the calculation and strength of his foe, as Carlisle had noted:

> To fear the foe, since fear oppresseth strength,
> Gives in your weakness strength unto your foe,
> And so your follies fight against yourself.
>
> (III. ii. 80-3)

And it is these follies, that are never tolerated by the bilind movement of the political world, that Shakespeare stresses as a cause of his political failure rather than his sin of murdering Gloucester, though it was this, as the play makes clear, from which the fatal struggle originated and which in fact is an example of Richard's political recklessness.

In the first tetralogy, Henry VI is the political figure that falls for his inadequate 'politicalness'. His disorderly age is a result of his deficiency in political skill rather than his inherited guilt, as Clifford explains;

> For what doth cherish weeds but gentle air?
> And what makes robbers bold but too much lenity?
> (<u>3 Henry VI</u>,II.vi.21-3)

Only in a garden where the gardener is too gentle and lenient to root away the wild-growing weeds, do weeds grow apace, like 'unruly children' sucking the 'soil's fertility from wholesome flowers'. It is only in such a medium where there is a lack of strong authority that curses directed to providence are uttered to be used as a noble rationale, giving a kind of divine force to private ambitions and political aims. Here

again Shakespeare contrasts the effective and calculating means of York with the impotent holiness of Henry VI. Just like Richard II, though much more virtuous, Henry VI, as a gardener unable to weed his garden or a captain unable to fight as the pirates take hold of his ship, prays and begs the heavens. He wishes that he were only a subject or, even, dead; he shelters himself under the thought that he was crowned when he was only a baby; he shows feelings of humility in a time when all humulity is untolerated and wasted by the time. He has all kinds of virtues but lacks the political weapons to fight. Margaret says that his weapons are 'holy saws of sacred writ' tnat would fit more to the state of Rome, and that

> frowns, words, and threats
> Shall be the war that Henry means to use.
> (_3 Henry VI_, I.i, 71-73)

Since virtues do not fight, as they do in a miracle play, these weapons are not of much worth in a political world. Henry is weak and his weakness he himself admits;

> I know not what to say;my title's weak.
> (_3 Henry VI_, I.i.134)

But he is not weak because his title is weak: his title is weak because he is weak. That weak title he inherited from the usurping Belingbroke, but Henry V also inherited the same title and with that 'weak' title he won France which Henry VI is to lose, and united his kingdom which under Henry VI, will be wounded with civil broils. Contrary to the Tudor theory of kingship it is always kingship de facto that precedes kingship de jure as is the case with the Tudor practice itself; it is Henry V's power de facto that makes his title strong.

Shakespeare, though writing within a frame of the political assumptions of the Tudor theory, takes the gilt off to show the real surface of political practice. What York formulates in 2 Henry VI is the irresistable law of a totally political world:

> Let them obey that know not how to rule;
> This hand was made to handle nought but gold
>
> (V.i.6-8)

York is here claiming not any legal right but right ensuing from power. He can claim his 'long - usurped' right - which, in the process, turns out to be a noble cloak to cover up his ambitious designs - only when there is lack of power; he takes his right from Henry's weakness rather than that he inherited from Richard II:

> I am far better born than is the king,
> More like a king, more kingly in my thoughts:
> But I must make fair weather yet a while,
> Till Henry be more weak and I more strong.
>
> (2 Henry VI,V.i.28-32)

In contrast to York's 'brain more busy than the labouring spider' weaving snares to trap his enemies, Henry VI lacks any understanding of the laws that operate in the political world; he is too virtuous for this world whose laws make a fool of him, making a 'childish - foolish ' king out of a virtuous man. Here is a man sacrificed not by God as a consequence of an Original sin but by the rules of the political world and by his follies of mistaking them; he is not suffering retribution , he leads himself to self-destruction. This is what J.P. Brockbank suggests in his article 'The Frame of Disorder - Henry VI':

> In Henry VI the sacrifical idea,which makes catas_trophe a consequence of sin, is sharply challenged by the'machiavellian' idea that makes it a consequence of weakness. '59

Indeed, With the self-destructive figure of Henry VI, Shakespeare seems to be portraying the rule that found its theoretical formulation in Machiavelli:

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(59) J.P. Brockbank, The Frame of Disorder Henry VI'in Shakespeare's Histories, ed. by William Armstrong, p.103

> the gulf between how one should live and how one does live is so wide that a man who neglects what is actually done for what should be done learns the way to self-destruction rather than self-preservation. The fact is that a man who wants to act virtuously in every way necessarily comes to grief among so many who are not virtuous.'60

In the three parts of Henry VI, Shakespeare, in agreement with Machiavelli's premises concerning the rules of the political world, traces the tragedy of virtuous men who fall a victim of their blind reliance on virtue. Henry VI falls a victim to his blind reliance on piety and kindness, Duke Humphrey to his blind reliance on law, and Talbot to his blind reliance on valour. Duke Humphrey is relying on the sole weapon of law in a lawless world,

> This is the law, and this Duke Humphrey's doom.
> (2 Henry VI, I.iii.107)

These are his words while operating law in the court; it will be his reliance on law, indeed, that will bring 'Duke Humphrey's doom'. There is no civil law in the jungle and if one dives into a jungle, trusting that law will guard him,he will be torn to pieces by the beasts. This is what Shakespeare traces in the tragically helpless figure of Duke Humphrey and this was what Machiavelli had formulated in Il Principe:

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(60) Machiavelli, p.91

> .. there are two ways of fighting : by law or by force. The firstway is natural to men: and the second to beasts. But as the first way often proves inadequat one must needs have recourse to the second. So a prince must understand how to make a nice use of the beast and the man.'61

Duke Humphrey chooses to be a man but in a political world the choice brings self-destruction rather than self-preservation. Shakespeare is portraying the political reality freed of all idealistic attributions and illusions since ' historically, the period is one in which the rule of law was for three decades replaced in England by the rule of might'[62]

Duke Humphrey is being virtuous in a world that regards him not, and so is 'Valiant' Talbot who falls victim neither to French witchcraft, nor to any inherited guilt, but to his blind reliance on the qualities of a lion. He is a Hector, a Hercules, but, as Machiavelli observes..

> The lion is defenseless against traps... therefore one must be a fox in order to recognize traps and a lion to frighten off wolves. Those who simply act like lions are stupid'[63]

The irrisistably cruel rules of the political world have made 'Childish-foolish' men out of the noble chevaliers of the past. Talbot loses his way 'among the thorns and dangers of this world' Which the Bastard Falconbridge

(61) Machiavelli, p.99.

(62) Kecton, Shakespeare's Legal and Political Background,p.237.

(63) Machiavelli, p.99.

and all others find themselves in, which mercilessly devours its own men. Confronted with the tricks and intrigues of this world, the great Talbot, that tremendous figure, becomes like a helpless child totally lost:

> My thoughts are whirled like a potter's wheel,
> I know not where I am, nor what I do:
> (_I Henry_ VI,I.iv.19-21)

Talbot is neither the first one, nor will be the last to fall victim to the bloody tragedy, 'unarmed prophets'[64] leave the stage while 'armed prophets' occupy it. And heaven sitting in the seats of the audience,watches the action silently, now and then smiling on the victor, as Charles observes in _I Henry VI_:

> Now we are victors; upon us he smiles.
> (I.ii.4)

Not only heaven but the people , too, whose 'conscience lies in their purses' indeed frown on the losers and smile on the victors. They watch silently as the virtuous men fall and do not hesitate to applaud the stronger men that enter on the stage.

This fickleness of the wind-changing common men Henry VI describes:

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64) The terms, 'armed prophet' and 'unarmed prophet', belong to Machiavelli.

> Look as I blow this feather from my face
> And as the air blows it to me again
> Obeying with my word when I do blow,
> And yielding to another when it blows,.
> Commanded always by the greatest gust;
> Such is the lightness of you common men..
>
> (3 Henry VI, III. i. 84-90)

The wind that blows with a stronger gust wins the support of the people. When Edward wins they bow to him in obedience; when Henry takes over they cry 'For now we owe allegiance to Henry', never thinking why just a moment ago they owed allegiance to Edward. Similarly they bow to Richard II and when Bolingbroke enters the stage they bow to him with loud applause.

This is nothing but realpolitik, freed of all principle but that of self-interest. Shakespeare's pessimistic observations of human nature are totally in agreement with those of Machiavelli.

> One can make this generalization about men: they are ungrateful, fickle, liars, and deceivers, they shun danger and are greedy for profit: while you treat them well, they are yours. They would shed their blood for you, risk their property, their lives, their children,
> so long .. as danger is remote, but when you are in danger they turn against you.'[65]

Though not as hypocritical as Machiavelli says, King Lewis words to Margaret in 3 Henry VI reveal much of this

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(65) Machiavelli, p.96

> But if your title to the crown be weak
> As may appear by Edward's good success,
> Then 'tis but reason that I be released
> From giving aid which I late promised.
>
> (III. iii.145-9)

Lewis is behaving like a businessman choosing between two business proposals offered to him by Margaret and by Warwick. He is thinking of the best place to invest his daughter and to get the most profit out of her. Since Henry's'weak' position will be of little profit to him, he gently refuses Margaret's proposal, breaking his oath. Though the bargain is made in a noble setting and with gentle words, this is pure bargaining diplomacy which was a natural norm in the sixteenth century political world. When Lewis learns that Edward will not marry his daughter, he quickly turns to Margaret's proposal. Margaret, too, blesses Warwick, that same Warwick that she cursed a moment ago. Warwick suddenly remembers to take revenge of his father and proposes his daughter to Margaret's son. So another bargain is made in a political world where pure advantage, commodity, and intrigue reign; and if the rules of this world found their thoeretical formulation in Machiavelli, they found their artistic expression, no doubt, in Shakespeare:

Mad world! mad kings! mad composition!
John, to stop Arthur's title in the whole,
Hath willingly departed with a part:
And France, whose armour conscience buckled on,
Whom zeal and charity brought to the field
As God's own soldier, rounded in the ear
With that same purpose-changer, that sly devil,
That broker, that still breaks the pate of faith,
That daily break-vow, he that wins of all,
Of kings, of beggars, old men, young men, maids,
Who, having no external thing to lose
But the word 'maid', cheats the poor maid of that
That smooth - faced gentleman, tickling Commodity,
Commodity, the bias of the world,
The world, who of itself is peised well.
Made to run even upon even ground,
Till this advantage, this vile-drawing bias,
This sway of motion, this commodity,
Makes it take head from all indifferency,
From all direction, purpose , course, intent:
And this same bias, this Commodity,
This bawd, this broker, this all-changing word,
Clapp'd on the outward eye of fickle France,
Hath drawn him from his own determined aid,
From a resolved and honourable war,
To a most base and vile-concluded peace.

(King John II.i.561-588)

Behind the mythology of the Tudor political ideals, behind 'God's ministers', avenging angels, Kings as the Lord's anointed, villains as ministers of hell, political order as the harmonious beehive, history as a retribution to sin, political failure as a retribution to inherited guilt; behind all these idealistic attributions, which Shakespeare no doubt took from the political theorists of his age, Shakespeare

portrays a totally realistic picture of the sixteenth century political world, with its own uncontrolled logic; a world which men create but which in turn controls them. He is indebted to Hall, taking his ready made scheme to organize his historical material to a unity but

> The problem is that this providential design is visible, for the most part, only as a bare outline of the events that Shakespeare selected from the chronicles '[66]

As if he is writing a play within a play, inside this bare outline of static <u>moral history</u> shakespeare draws a vivid picture of the <u>political history</u> with its own dynamism. Howewer divinely prescribed history may seem to be in Shakespeare's frame, in the inner world men have their own political motives for action, independent of any divine inspiration or moral consequence. York has his own political motives for reviving the curse that followed Richard II's deposition; the Archbishop of Canterbury in <u>Henry V</u> has his own political reasons for uttering so holy a speech on order and obedience, and so 'legal' a speech providing a just claim for Henry V in France; and so does Henry V have his own political reasons in accepting

(66) David Riggs, <u>Shakespeare's Heroical Histories</u>, p.5

the Archbishop's intrigue. Boling broke has his own in planning a Holy Crusade - that of 'busying giddy minds with foreign quarrels'. And so does Prince Hal, in leading a wild life so that his reformation 'Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes'.

When in 2 Henry IV Mowbray is arrested after he has dismissed his army on the word of honor promised by John of Lancaster that he, too, would disperse his army, he asks in fury,

> Is this proceeding just and honourable?
> (IV.ii.110)

It is not 'just' and 'honourable' by medieval criteria of political behavior -which the Tudor theorists share - but it is totally just for the new standards of political practice although the only person that admitted this as the norm was Machiavelli. His answer to Mowbray's question would be plain enough: 'Any prince who has come to depend entirely on promises and has taken no other precautions ensures his own ruin '[67]
So we are in Shakespeare's Machiavellian world where everything is subjected to political necessity, where

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(67) Machiavelli , p.96

as is the case in Richard III, 'The holy privilege of blessed sanctuary' has become 'too ceremonious and traditional' to be respected by politicians. (III,ii,41-45)

In this world of political necessity, one rises with the waning of another,

> for curses never pass
> The lips of those that breathe them in the air.
> (Richard III,I.iii285-87)

Shakespeare believed in Tudor political theory, in a providential scheme of history, and in medieval political illusions, enough to take these as an ideological frame to organise his material in, but as a realist dramatist he did not hesitate to dramatize what he read in Hall or the church homilies. He grasped the irreconcilable discrepancy of the sixteenth century between the theory and practice of politcs, the discrepancy that existed between the medieval conception of politics and the modern political reality that challenged it. His beliefs bent him toward the political idealists of his age to the Tudor political theory in particular- while his realistic outlook moved him closer to the political realism of Machiavelli, creating

an 'unstable equilibrium' between the two, asRossiter suggests:

> Shakespeare wrote in an unstable equilibrium between a 'world' or 'Universe of thought' of faith in God-ordained ness, and another world: the Inverted World of belief only in Power! [68]

Though he has the naive and optimistic frame of the Tudor theory, it is constantly challenged by the <u>Realpolitik</u> he put into it, and though he has the medieval conception of the <u>body politick</u> governed by God's hand and with love and amity between its members, this is challenged by the picture of the autonomous and secular world of policy. As, L.C.Knights says, 'Within the formal pattern Shakespeare can make us feel human actuality'.[69]
His plays are like a modern picture put inside a gothic frame, there is much disproportion, a constant challenge or an 'unstable equilibrium' between the picture and the frame it is put in.

It is both this challenge and this equilibrium that creates the 'two - eyedness' that Rossiter finds'[70] underlining Shakespeare's Histories. And though Shakespeare is realistic enough to challenge

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(68) A.P. Rossiter, <u>Angel with Horns</u>, p.59

(69) L.C. Knights, <u>Some Shakesperean Themes and An Approach to Hamlet</u>, p.27.

(70) Rossiter, p.62.

the political assumptions of his age, he no doubt remains the greatest poet that revealed the Tudor ideals wishfully. Though he is portraying disorder as the norm of the age he lives in 'there can be no doubt that with the possible exception of Dante no great western thinker has so dearly loved the ideal of hierarchical order as Shakespeare.'[71]

Political amoralism may prompt vigorous and interesting verse, as it does from the vehement Lancastrians and Yorkists of the _Henry VI_'s from Cardinal Pandulph in _King John_, but the traditional honours and reverence of political orthodoxy are what prompt the rich poetry of John of Gaunt's royal throne of kings' speech, Richard II's greeting to his realm when he returns from Ireland,or the Archbishop's 'honey- bees' speech in _Henry V._

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(71) Normon Rabkin, _Shakespeare and the Common Understanding_,p.

CHAPTER FOUR

SHAKESPEARE'S CONCEPTION OF 'THE POLITICIAN':(1)

THE PRINCE AS THE VIRTUOSO VILLAIN

Albeit the world think Machiavel is dead,
Yet is his soul but flown beyond the Alps,
And, now the Guise is dead, is come from France,
To view this land, and frolic with his friends.
To some, perhaps, my name is odious,
But such as love me, guard me from their tongues,
And let them know that I am Machiavel,
And weigh not men, and therefore not men's words.
Admir'd I am of those that hate me most:
Though some speak openly against my books,
Yet will they read me, and thereby attain
To Peter's chair: and when they cast me off,
Are poison'd by my climbing followers.

Marlowe, The Jew of Malta, Prologue

There is no doubt that Shakespeare created the figure of Richard III as an ambodiment of all the villainous deeds that the Elizabethans associated with Machiavelli. And there is also little doubt that Shakespeare shared with his age the prejudiced and perverted conception of Machiavelli as the personification of diabolic policy. Throughout the first tetralogy, there are two places where the word 'Machiavel' occurs; in 1 Henry VI, where York, when la Pucelle tells him that it was Alençon that she had an affair with, cries 'Alençon' that notorious Machiavel'. and in 3 Henry VI, where Gloucester explains his plans to 'set murderous Machiavel to school'. acknowledging his machiavellism'.The words 'murderous' and 'notorious'

convey that Shakespeare had no sympathy for him as a political figure, using his name either as a synonym for hypocritical policy or as a term of abuse; he associates him either with Richard of Gloucester, the 'stage-Machiavel', or with the 'fickle-wavering nation of the french, to which throughout the play are applied such words as 'secret policy', 'stratagem', 'fair persuasion mix'd with sugar words', implying the qualities of the cunning fox in contrast to the lion-like valour of 'valiant' Talbot. In most cases Shakespeare uses the word 'policy' with a pejorative meaning, implying all the crooked ways that were attributed to Machiavelli, namely oath-breaking, hypocrisy, deception, and intrigue. (There are, however, a few places where Shakespeare uses the word with a positive connotation implying political-diplomatic skill, as is the case where Duke Humphrey talks of his brother Bedford toiling his wits 'To keep by policy what Henry got'.) The contexts in which in general Shakespeare uses the word imply that its pejorative meaning - as directed to no public good but to self-interest- is associated with Machiavelli, totally in agreement with the popular Machiavel-image of the sixteenth century,

synonymus with ' a villainous, atheistical tyranny designed solely for the malicious pleasure and selfish advancement of the prince'.[71] It is in this pejorative sense that Richard III is 'the politician'; he is the Machiavel.

Shakespeare's Richard III does not stand alone in its portrayal of 'the politician' with an imputad Machiavellism answering the demands of the Elizabethan audience who enjoyed the appetizing figure with a fascinated horror. As Keeton points out, 'The term 'Machiavellianism' gained its sinister character at this period'[72] and it found its theatrical expression in the stereotyped figure of the stage - Machiavel and Shakespeare 'had an abundance of anti- machiavellian literature at his command when he drew the character of Richard III'.[73]
Among this Marlowe's prejudiced view in the Jew of Malta, where he brings Machiavelli on the stage to acknowledge his sinister machiavellism, has an outstanding place. Theodore Spencer has counted in the Elizabethan drama 395 referances to Machiavelli as the ambodiment of human villainy. '[74]This immense

(71) Phillips, The State in Shakespeare's Greek and Roman Plays cited in Keeton, Shakespeare's Legal and Political Background,p.317

(72) Keeton, p.312

(73) Keeton, p.317

(74) Spencer, Shakespeare and the Nature of man, p.44

popularity, distorted into a dramatic type of the stage Machiavel, shows how profoundly Machiavelli's ideas, though in a perverted form wrested out of their real context, impressed the popular consciousness of the Elizabethans. This melodramatic vulgarisation or rather mispresentation, was partly the result of Gentillet's anti-machiavellian propaganda in Contra Machiavel, written in France in the 1570 's but published in England only in 1602, and partly the result of the Tudor political theory which used the word 'Machiavel' as a term of abuse implying cynical ambition end atheistical tyranny. But it was essentially the product of a popular consciousness in ideological defence; the people, faced with a serious challenge in the essentials of their thought, created a Devil out of the challenger. Neither the propoganda of Gentillet nor the official propoganda would have been so irresistably influential if the Elizabethan public mind had not creatively contributed to the development of a Machiavellian myth. And Shakespeare with the figures of Aaron the Moor in Titus Andronicus and Richard of Gloucester in Richard III, was the most creative contributor to the popular myth. The exaggerated figure of Richard III he already found

in the Tudor historiographers who were all influenced by Sir Thomas Moore's Richard III. The figure was exaggerated partly with the pragmatic end of strengthening Henry Tudor's right in taking the crown since the act's sole legitimacy lay in the fact that Richard's power was tyrannical. But with whatever pragmatism the Tudor historians made a Machiavel out of Richard of Gloucester, the Elizabethan audience with its never-ending appetite for watching political viliany on the stage and with the spectator's creativity was ready to receive every villainy as a trait of Machiavelli and to identify the tyrant with Machiavelli. When Shakespeare makes Richard of Gloucestar acknowledge his machiavellism with great delight and confidence while he is planning to 'set the murderous Machiavel to school', he is simply helping the audience in their identification and is writing totally in line with their emotional responses. The Elizabethan audience watched the 'murderous Machiavel ' with emotions of pity and fear - which Aristotle desired in every tragedy; they were delighted in being horrified by his threatening monstrosity so long as they could get the chance to pity him - a chance which they could get only in

the imaginary world of the theatre - while he was overcome by some kind of virtue to be sent into the abyss from where he had arisen. '[76]
The public drama provided the people with their only chance of facing and overcoming the political villain which they were so helpless against in real life.

Though Shakespeare presents Richard of Gloucester as the embodiment of villainy <u>par excellance</u> reserving special interest to his characterization as the diabolic usurper, he does not trace his gradual transformation into a villain. Richard does not evolve as a villain but abrubtly proves to be one with a <u>coup de theatre</u>, the word John Palmer uses to convey the appalling abrubtness with which he breaks into his first soliloquy in <u>3 Henry VI</u>'.[77]
With an unexpected outburst Richard sets his end :

> So do I wish the crown, being so far off;
> And so I chide the means that keeps me from it;
> And so I'll say, I'll cut the causes off,
>
> (III,ii,140-3)

his motives :

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(76) Our reactions no doubt are meant to vary. No one pities an I ago, but for half-likeable Machiavels like Barabas and Edmund we do feel some real regard. Richard III, as will be argued later, is mostly not pitiable, yet in his soliloquy about his nightmare he proves to be a suffering human being.
(77) John Palmer, <u>Political and Comic Characters of Shakespeare</u> p.70.

> Then, since the earth affords no joy to me,
> But to command, to check, to o'erbear such
> As are of better person than myself,
> I'll make my heaven to dream upon the crown ,
> And, whiles I live, to account this world but hell,
> Until my mis-shaped trunk that bear this head
> Be round impaled with a glorious crown.
>
> (165-172)

his villainous-hypocritical qualities:

> Why, I can smile, and murder whiles I smile,
> And cry, 'Content' to that which grieves my heart,
> And wet my cheeks with artificial tears,
> And frame my face to all occasions.
>
> (182-6)

and means:

> I'll play the orator as well as Nestor,
> Deceive more slily than Ulysses could,
> And, like a Sinon, take another Troy.
> I can add colours to the chameleon,
> Change shapes with proteus for advantages,
> And set the murderous Machiavel to school.
>
> (188-194)

Gloucester makes his first enterance on tb the stage in the fifth act of 2 Henry VI. Shakespeare presents him as just another of the cruel and power-seeking political figures, taking his part on his father's side in the ruthless scenes of vendetta, with no special hint of his uniquely monstrous qualities. Probably he is slighthy more cruel than the others, acting with no hesitation or show of conscience,

> Priests pray for enemies, but princes kill.
>
> (2 Henry VI, V,ii,71)

more quick in action;

> Sound drums and trumpets and the king will fly.
>
> (3 Henry VI, I.i,118)

more cunning in justifying evil means;

> An oath is of no moment, being not took
> Before a true and lawful magistrate,
>
> (3 Henry VI, I.ii.22-4)

and more delighted in the sweetness of the crown:

> And, father, do but think
> How sweet a thing is to wear a crown;
> Within whose circuit is Elysium,
> And all that poets feign of bliss and joy.
>
> (3 Henry VI,I,ii,29-32)

(This, with great similarity, reminds Temburlaine's words while he contemplated the 'sweetness of a crown': 'That perfect bliss and sole filicity / that sweet fuition of an earthly crown')

But he is no monster, he is another York or a Suffolk though doubtless more ruthless and determined. He is working for his father's cause and there are no implications as to show that he is making his father's cause just a step for his own far-fetched policy. He is not playing the hypocrite when he grieves for his father's death:

> I cannot weep, for all my body's moisture
> Scarce serves to quench my furnace-burning heart:
> Nor can my tongue unload my heart's great burthen
> For selfsame wind that I should speak withal
> Is kindling coals that fires all my breast,
> And burns me up with flames that tears would quench.
> To weep is to make less the depth of grief:
> Tears then for babes; blows and revenge for me.
>
> (3 Henry VI, II, i, 79-87)

If there is hypocrisy in this, so is Clifford a hypocrite promising to revenge his father's death, and so is Margeret grieving for her son's death. After his father's death, Richard becomes an angry hunter seeking Clifford for revenge until his revenge is taken -until his brother Edward becomes king. Then he is leftwith no end; the means that he had used so far becomes his end. At this point he emerges as the perfect Machiavel figure of the Elizabethan drama; a political villain using every means of villainous policy as an end in itself. As he becomes conscious of his bodily deformity that isolates him from all the others, the audience notices his unique Machiavel qualities that separate him from all the other 'politicians'. Throughout the three parts of Henry VI no policy-maker is bold and confident to see his real face, so deligtedly throwing every noble mask aside, so villainous to admit his villainy in so plain words:

I am determined to prove a villain.

(*Richard III*,I,i.30)

The unscrupulous York is fighting for his 'usurped right' even when he is at the climax of his ruthlessness and ambitious Suffolk does need the noble name of the 'red rose' in masking his private designs. Margaret of Anjou is fighting for her 'husband's right' and for revenging her son even when she is lost in the private delight that revenge gives her. On the other hand Richard is fighting for no right but because he has 'no delight to pass away the time'. After his revenge for his father is taken, he has nobody to direct revenge against but Nature who has sent him deformed into the world before his time. Though he has some of York's unscrupulousness, Suffolk's ambition and far-fetched policy, and Margaret 's mocking cruelty in him, he stands totally apart from them as a unique political monster. Shakespeare portrays the others both as politicians who hide their ambitious, self-seeking ends with noble masks of family and kingly right and also as politicians controlled solely by the means they use to reach their ends; they are sometimes seen as hypocrites and nothing else and at other times they are

using hypocritical means to reach their more or less genuinely expressed 'rights' ; nevertheless they are the victims of the means they use in the process. The case of York is drawn with such an ambiguity; he starts with the legitimate aim of restoring himself to his blood and with the noble cause of taking his right that he inherited from Mortimer and Richard II, a right 'choked with ambition of the meaner' sort.He takes his advice from dying Mortimer to 'be politic' and starts to realise his far-fetched policy patiently, using every foul means to attain his right, winking at 'the Duke of Suffolk's insolence', at 'Beaufort's pride', at 'Somerset's ambition', at Buckingham and 'the crew of them'. The journey to the end is so long and the means used so complicated that they take hold of him to leave him an embodiment of sole ambition and secret policy; 'This hand was made to handle nought but gold'. At the end he turns to be a fighter for 'gold' rather than right. Finally Shakespeare portrays him not only as a hypocrite whose mask has fallen but at the same time, though ambigiously, a politician <u>victim</u> of the means he uses. It is the same process that turns Margaret from a maiden to a 'she-wolf' no longer fighting

for her husband's or son's right but for the delight revengeful and mocking cruelty gives. Although Shakespeare portrays Margaret as an avenging fury taking delight in murderous revenge and York as a ruthless man seeking his way to the top, he has some kind of tragic sympathy for them since they have got some kind of 'right' somewhere, sometimes genuinely uttered too.

The case is totally different with Richard of Gloucester. Though Shakespeare introduces Richard first as just another of these characters that have turned out to be slave of the foul means they use, he does not trace his evolution into a villain for villainy's sake. He seems to have left the justifiably revengeful Richard and got fascinated in the Machiavel-Richard, and this Richard is not a political victim but a natural devil, no slave of the political world but a deformed product of the natural. In no other character does Shakespeare give so great an emphasis to natural deformity and deficiency as he does in Richard, the Crookback. His infected will is there from his birth,

> I came into this world with my legs forward:
> Had I not reason, think ye, to make haste,
> And seek their ruin that usurped our right?
> The midwife wondered, and the women cried
> 'O Jesus bless us, he is born with teeth.
> And so I was; which plainly signified
> That I should snarl and bite and play the dog.
>
> (3 Henry VI, V, vi, 71-8)

Though he is talking of 'usurped right', what he is implying is his natural rights of being a proper man usurped by nature. As Richard himself observes, it is 'dissembling nature' which had sent him 'deformed, unfinished' into 'this breathing world, scarce half made up' that is responsible for his villainy. Since his natural qualities of being a proper man are usurped, leaving him with a deformed body, he has no alternative to take delight in and pass away the time with but villainy:

> And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover,
> To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
> I am determined to prove a villain,
>
> (Richard III, I, i, 28-31)

Though it seems that it is he who chooses to be a villain, it is Nature which forces the choice on him, affording him no other joy, and leaving him with no alternative. It seems as if he, with his chaotic figure, is corrupting the world, obeying no natural law. But it was Nature which deceived him first, corrupting and disproportioning him in every part. He shows neither pity nor love to the world, but it was love which first forswore him in his mother's womb. He took delight in mocking everybody around him, but Nature first sent

him a deformity to mock his body. And since Nature deprived him of his natural rights he will take his revenge by depriving people from theirs;

> Then, since the heavens have shaped my body so,
> Let hell make crooked my mind to answer it.
>
> (3 Henry VI, V,vi,78-80)

In contrast to the politicians that Shakespeare portrays throughout the first tetralogy who fall victims to their own weaknesses Richard of Gloucester emerges as a complete master even of his weakness, turning natural deficiencies into political advantages. His disproportioned body, which has left him with no other alternative way of life tempting him to other earthly pleasures but the 'glorious crown', becomes his advantage. He takes delight in his deformed body which turns out to be the source of his determination and the constant reminder of the 'dissembling nature' on which he had to wreak revenge:

> Shine out, fair sun, till I have bought a glass,
> That I may see my shadow as I pass.
>
> (Richard III,I,ii,258-9)

Shakespeare portrays Richard's villainy totally as a natural phenomenon , as a monstrosity that nature rather than politics reared. All his soliloqies convey a fixation of his deformed physical nature and an obsession of his revenge against Nature. This is his end and it is surely no merely political end; it is a psychological end expressed through political action. His end is the sole practising of every unnatural means, the usurpation of every natural right, and the violation of every natural law. Taking the 'glorious crown' was by no means an end, but just a means to an end. While York and all Shakespeare's other ruthless politicians, used foul means to reach the crown, Richard aimed at the crown for the corruption of all natural order; for him villainy - which is the violation of all natural right - is an end in itself , though certainly it has as its object (as Tamburlaine had had) 'The sweet fruition of an earthly crown'.

Since for him each means is an end in itself, he takes immense delight in pursuing it as each helpless figure bows before his deformed nature. Unlike York, he is no victim of the means he uses, rather he is a complete master over them, having total control over himself and the fickle world that he aims to make his toy. He is

a fascinating actor; plays the orator, the saintly king, the passionate lover, the loyal brother and the good uncle. But he never gets himself lost in the crooked paths of intrigue; he does not,even for a moment let himself be carried away with the belief in the holy masks he wears. Even when he is playing the passionate lover with Lady Anne, he is not carried away with lust and sensuality in the delight of being accepted by a woman; even at that moment, he is totally aware of his bodily deformity though Lady Anne seems to have forgotten it;

> Upon my life, she finds, although I cannot,
> Myself to be a marvellous proper man.
>
> (Richard III,I,ii,253-5)

Even when he is at the climax of his art,he is not lost in the delight that acting the 'marvellous proper man' gives him. He is like an actor, who, though playing a most tragic part, can laugh at himself with an immense indifference; an actor who laughs with delight as he makes his audience cry.

Richard has transformed his bodily deficiency into such an inspiring and inciting quality that he himself seems

to be in love with his crooked body. Though he was made 'not to court an amorous looking glass', he ended up courting his own deformed shadow with rather an amorous delight. He is a lover of chaotic and disproportioned Nature; he is a lover of himself:

Richard loves Richard: that is I am I.

(Richard III,V,iii,85)

Interestingly enough, this final expression of his individualism is uttered in despair: the earlier 'I am myself alone' (3 Henry VI,V,vi,83) was triumphant and defiant. (By a great and similar irony, the early 'I am determined to prove a villain' turns to the final miserable 'And every tale condemns me far a villain' (V,iii,96)

However perverted a Machiavel he may be, Richard is starting off from Machiavelli's premises about the nature of men as a slave to appearances. He is a keen observer of human nature, hitting people just at the point where they are weakest; he takes advantage of Edward's sensuality and Clarence's unpoliticalness, promises the dukedom of Hereford to Buckingham, a conqueror's bed to Lady Anne, a saintly king of appearances to the people, earthly glory to Lady

Elizabeth, loyalty to Edward. He even has got something to offer to little York, simply the delight of competing whith his brother. As Rossiter, points out, 'he inhabits a world where everyone deserves everything he can do to them'[78]. The people are so fickle, so 'shallow' and 'changing' as he uses the words for Elizabeth, so a slave of appearances that they deserve to be mocked by the diabolic villain. When Richard is playing the saintly king between two reverend fathers with a book of prayer in his hand, it is a clean invitation for the audience, even if it be an Elizabethan one, to join Richard in his mocking delight. In this sense the tragedy turns out to be a comedy - Richard as the diabolic comedian. As people fall victim to their blind reliance on appearances it is really hard for the audience not to sympathize with Richard who emerges as the devilish clown and the comic Vice.

At the end of 3 Henry VI Edward looks forward to the 'mirthful comic shows'; with his words Shakespeare seems to be anticipating the comic shows of the devilish clown, though comic only for Richard himself and for us, the audience. In contrast to the tragic sympathy that Shakespeare had for the ambitious York and the

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(78) A.P. Rossiter, p.16

avenging Margaret, he had something of a comic sympathy for his monstrous villain that mocked this world as it deserved to be mocked. He surely did not have any moral sympathy for the amoralistic Machiavel-figure but it seems that he, too, like his audience, could not keep himself from getting fascinated in the creative energy, mocking realism, and clownish indifference with which Richard challenged the world. At this point Shakespeare's moralistic prejudice against Machiavelli gave way to a comic sympathy while his 'moral history' gave way to a 'comic history':

> Had he entirely accepted the Tudor myth, the frame and pattern of order, his way would have led, I suppose, towards writing moral history . Instead his way led him towards writing comic history. The former would never have taken him to tragedy: the latter(paradoxically) did. Look the right way through the cruel comic side of Richard and you glimpse Iago. Look back at him through his energy presented as evil, and you see Macbeth.[79]

The twofold insight with which Shakespeare characterized Richard - as the naturally deformed political villain and the mocking Comedian, as the narcissist tyrant and the fascinating politician, as the embodiment of atheistical immorality and charismatic policy - reflects a vivid picture of what Reese mentions as 'the Elizabethan's

(79) Rossiter, p.22

strange love-hate relationship with the teachings of Machiavelli':

> Many of the political complexities of Shakespeare's age are mirrored in the Elizabethans' strange love-hate relationship with the teachings of Machiavelli. In so far as they understood him, which was imperfectly, Machiavelli held them alternately appalled and fascinated: appalled because he defied all their cherished dogmas about order and natural law, and yet fascinated because everyday experience taught them that in many respects he might very well be right.[80]

Though Shakespeare shared with his age the perverted Machiavel-image as the Devil armed with his naturally crooked mind, he made him so a part of the world he inhabited, so befitting it so an *alter ego* of his audience that his prejudiced image of natural monstrosity now and then gave way to a sympathetic presentation - though still a mispresentation - of his political charisma. Though he is a deformed monster in his soliloquys, with his motives of revenge against Nature, as soon as he starts acting he becomes politically a natural figure, so a part of real life that the Elizabethan audience got fascinated as much as appalled in his enthusiastic charisma, boldness of action freed of

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(80) Reese, <u>The Cease of Majesty</u>, p.92

all moral hindrances, and genuine hypocrisy. Shakespeare has created an everyman out of the unique Machiavel-monster. The Elizabethans had made a Devil out of the challenger; Shakespeare was a realist enough to create a Clown and an Everyman out of it. Though he made his audience pity Richard at his doom, he did not hesitate to make them laugh at his successes in a world well deserving villainy, and sympathize with their own *alter ego*.

Shakespeare made his diabolic Clown fall with the same *coup de théatre* that he made him rise. He neither traced his evolution into a villain nor did he trace the emergence of conscience -as he did in the tragic figure of Macbeth - that weakened him:

> Give me another horse: bind up my wounds.
> Have mercy, Jesu! - Soft! I did but dream.
> O coward concience, how dost thou afflict me.
> The lights burn blue. It is now dead midnight.
> Cold fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh.
>
> (V,iii,179-84)

and also fear:

> O Ratcliff, I fear, I fear,-
>
> (ibid. 215)

With the same abruptness that he made him emerge as a villain in 3 Henry VI, he made him fall in Richard III ,

bringing in a *deus ex machina* - Richmond- to take the appalling Machiavel-figure off the stage, ending the play conventionally, in line with the Tudor myth. The mythical figure of the Machiavel could only be overcome by the mythical figure of Richmond whose development into a triumphant political figure Shakespeare does not show. Though the unique Machiavel-monster was overcome by God's minister, - abruptly falling a pray of the means of uses - the everyman that Shakespeare presented via Richard's unending appatite for human vilainy was left unconquered since no mythical figure, nor 'God's hand', nor a symbolic virtue would wipe that from the audience's mind, but a real political figure. Shakespeare's development of such a real political hero armed with real political means against the evil everyman was beyond the scope of his first tetralogy, to be realised in the second one with the figure of Henry V. But until then, Richard continued winking at other Richards among the audience, tempting them with his tremendous charisma over which Richmond's piety was triumphant only morally.

Richard of Gloucester, as the embodiment of the naturally deformed politician, reflects both Shakespeare's conception of 'the politician', totally conceived in the

pejorative sense, and also what the Elizabethans had made of Machiavelli in the theatre. Though the Elizabethan audience, behind their pity and horror, secretly and enviously sympathized in him, seeing their alter ego freed of all moral hindrances, the image of the stage Machiavel was a monster enough to wrest Machiavelli's precepts out of their real context. It is only with beastly images that Shakespeare describes him, as the 'bottled spider', 'Poisonous bunch-back'd toad', elvish marked, abortive, rooting hog', 'a hellhound that doth hunt us to death', 'cacedemon', and the 'dog'. The means he used - oath -breaking, hypocrisy, evil intrigue, cruelty, deception and even murder - were no doubt on the list of Machiavelli's <u>prince</u>, but not as ends in themselves, rather directed to the fulfillment of a political end. Machiavelli's <u>prince</u> does not choose to act the beast for taking private delight but for the very practical reason that manly ways of achieving an end often proved inadequate. He does not prefer to be feared rather than loved to get a narcissist delight but for the simple reason that 'the bond of love is one which men, wretched creatures that they are, break when it is to their advantage to do so.[81] Similarly,

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(81) Machiavelli, p.96-7

he does not prove a villain for the sake of villainy but because 'in order to maintain his state he is often forced to act in defiance of good faith, of charity of kindness, of religion'[82]. He does not aim at deviating from all things natural as much possible, as Richard does, but in contrast he aims that 'he should not deviate from what is good, if that is possible, but should know how to do evil, if that is necessary'.[83] Since Machiavelli's <u>prince</u> practices every evil means only for serving the welfare of the state, Richard of Gloucester more deserves the name <u>pseudo-Machiavellian</u> villain. If Machiavelli had ever met the Machiavel of the Elizabethans, he propably would have despised his evil means serving no end, and justified by no end, though he probably could not keep himself from getting fascinated in his vivid charisma, <u>virtu</u> , unending potential to cunning means, and cold bloodedness.

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(82) Machiavelli, p.101

(83) Machiavelli, p.101

CHAPTER FIVE

SHAKESPREARE'S CONCEPTION OF 'THE POLITICIAN '-(II)

THE PRINCE AS THE PURPOSEFUL GUARDIAN

Shakespeare, through a series of confrontations of ruthless and unscrupulous men, each rising with the waning of another, studies the merciless rules of an infected political world in the four plays of the first tetralogy. He has no illusions as to finding a way out of this infected world; as the virtuous men fall, he clearly conveys that neither a Hercules, nor a saint, nor law alone can cure the 'infection of the time'. As the four plays draw to an end, Shakespeare has no real therapy, no real political figure to face the political necessities. So he ends his play in a conventional way, bringing in a *deus ex machina* to solve the problem with the promise of

> smooth-faced peace ,
> With smiling plenty and fair prosperous days;
> (*Richard III*.V.iii.33-34)

As Ribner points out, the ending of the play with the providential figure of Richmond 'is like the

conventional ending in Bernard Shaw's unconventional plays'.[84] The Tudor myth solves the problem but the dramatist could do so only by accepting it, which was merely a theoretical solution. This is the only place in the two tatralogies where Shakespeare needed the abrupt bringing in of 'God's hand' to solve the problem which his drama could not. When Richmond says

> Now civil wounds are stopped, peace lives again:
> (Richard III. V. iii. 40)

the Elizabethan audience, believing the Tudor myth with no reservations, probably enjoyed this, ready to be convinced, but a slightly indifferent audience would not, and Shakespeare seems not convinced, too, since in his following tetralogy he attempted studying just what he lacked in the first, portraying the emergence of the real physician - king rather than a symbolic one. In the first tetralogy, Shakespeare draws a realistic picture of the political world as the gilt is taken off, but finally he had to put the gilt on again to end his tetralogy, while in the second one, having already analyzed the rules of the political world earlier, he set about creating an ideal yet convincing ruler under whose guidance the nation would free itself from the

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(84) Ribner, p.83

'machiavellian world'.

Shakespeare has grouped his historical material into two tetralogies, the first one culminating in the figure of Richard III as the Machiavel - tyrant and the second one in that of Henry V as the national hero and the ideal ruler. With the portrayals of the diabolic villain and the national hero, the naturally infected politican and the physician - politician, Shakespeare's two different conceptions of 'the politician' find their perfect reflections; the villain - politician seeking policy as an end in itself and the hero - politician seeking policy as a means to a public good. The two different conceptions were associated with the Prince of Machiavelli and the Governor of Elyot, resepectively, as the embodiments of villainous policy and stainless political glory.

Zdeněk Stříbrný, in his article Henry V and History, draws attention to the fact that, although Shakespeare's Richard III is generally agreed to be a throughgoing villain there has been much clashing criticism on the figure of Henry V.[85]

(85) Zdeněk Stříbrný, 'Henry V and History' in Shakespeare in a Changing World, ed. Arnold Kettle, p.85

Though he has been generally accepted as the personification of the orthodoxly conceived ideal of a king - as the stainless Christian warrior and ideal statesman - starting with the nineteenth century, there was much critical deviation from this idea; William Hazlitt found in him nothing but an 'amiable monster' with'no idea of any rule of right or wrong, but brute force, glossed over with a little religious hypocrisy and archiepiscopal adivice'[86]. And Bernard shaw moved as far to call him 'an unable Philistine inheriting high position and authority', not forgiving Shakespeare for trying 'to thrust such a Jingo hero as his Henry V down our throats'[87]. Though Hazlitt and Shaw are moving to an extreme, their criticisms help to point to the discrepant critical attitutes for Henry V , the seemingly irreconcilable views of him as the personification of heroism and as that of policy.

The problem arises from the fact that Shakespeare's Henry V is heroic and politic at the same time, both morally virtuous in the medieval sense of the term, and possessing political virtu, in the Machiavellian sense. With the figure of Henry V,

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(86) William Hazlitt, Characters of Shakespeare's plays, cited in Shakespeare Henry V,ed. Micheal Quinn,p.36

(87) Bernard shaw, Dramatic Opinions and Essays, cited in Quinn,p.55-6

Shakespeare, now in a more mature stage of his dramatic career, and more in control of the complexities of the political world, portrays the prince as the purposeful guardian ; master in policy but also deeply conscious of the heroic end he serves. Since he so far had portrayed confrontations between effective policy and ineffective heroism, the figure of Henry V stands alone for being politic and heroic at the same time: a master in political <u>virtu</u> without losing his contact with the virtuous end he serves. Shakespeare with his last historical play (not to count <u>Henry VIII,</u> written collaboratively with Fletcher as late as 1612-13) has developed a more comprehensive conception of the politician than that he had in the first tetralogy, describing him with the ideals of Elyot - piety, justice, and mercy - but also showing his moral virtues ensuing from his political virtu. From now on, he no longer associates the word 'policy' - in which Henry V is an expert - with natural monstrosity as he had done with Richard III, and with self- interest as he hed done throughout the first tetralogy, nor does he portray heroism only as a disintegrating trait of the medieval past

which is to be totally forgotten - as is the case with the fall of Talbot - to be superseded by the irresistably dominating non - heroism of a blind political world. And neither does he find the sole way out of this 'machiavellian world' in a mythological figure, like that of Richmond personifying the orthodox traits of kingship in the abstract. Rather he develops the conception of the politician as the <u>hero</u> reflecting a new attitude towards 'policy' - which he treats as a moral right in so far as it is pursued with the aim of fulfilling a public good . Shakespeare, who had treated heroism and policy - making as mutually exclusive traits throughout the first tetralogy, with the figure of Henry V united the two concepts to create a <u>heroic politician</u>. The word 'policy' that was associated either with the atheistical and amoral Machiavel figure or with the cunning means of La Pucelle in the first tetralogy was now used with a positive conotation:

> Turn him to any cause of policy,
> The Gordian knot of it he will unloose,
> Familiar as his garter;
>
> (<u>Henry V</u>, I.i.46-48)

In contrast to the coup de theatre with which Shakespeare introduces and makes fall his political villain, throughout the two parts of Henry IV he traces the transformation of his politician - from prince of Wales to Henry V and from Eastcheap to Westminister - to be a hero . Though he fascinates his audience with the abrupt rise and fall of his villain - king, he gradually makes them admire his hero - king, Though he artisticly exploits the poetic opportunities of the ready Machiavel theme, in which, as Reese points out, 'to travel hopefully become more exciting than to arrive.'[88] In Richard III, in the two parts of Henry IV and in Henry V he creates a real character with which he arrives at a new conception of the politician - a conception that he could neither find in Elyot's Governor nor in any other utopian - idealistic description of the prince.

Prince Hal's first presentation was made at the end of Richard II, while Bolingbroke was worrying over the unthriftiness of his son:

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(88) I.MM Reese, The Cease of Majesty, p.95.

> Can no man tell me of my unthrifty son?
> 'Tis full three months since I did see him last :
> If any plague hang over us, 'tis he.
>
> (V,iii, 1-4)

The first image of the prince that Shakespeare offers the audience is that of a 'young wanton and effeminate boy ', passing away his time irresponsibly in taverns, robbing passengers, 'with unrestrained loose companions' He is a plague hanging over his father; this image of him as feckless youth is strengthened in the first Act of I Henry IV, where his father contrasts his son with young Percy, wishing that some night - tripping fairy would exchange their places. The image is again vividly portrayed in the second scene where the prince is persuaded to take part in the Gadshill robbery - then , with Hal's soliloquy at the end of the scene, the image falls! Shakespeare presents him, even when he seems to be a part of the dissolute and shallow life of Eastcheap, as totally conscious of his idleness which he pursues as a policy to attract more respect with his reformed nature:

I know you all, and will a while uphold
The unyoked homour of your idleness:
Yet herein will I imitate the sun,
Who doth permit the base contagious clouds
To smother up his beauty from the world,
That, when he please again to be himself,
Being wanted, he may be more wondered at
By breaking through the foul and ugly mists
Of vapours that did seem to strangle him.
If all the year were playing holidays,
To sport would be as tedious as te work;
But when they seldom come, they wished for come,
And nothing pleaseth but rare accidents
So, when this loose behavior I throw off
And pay the debt I never promised,
By how much better than my word I am,
By so much shall I falsify men's hopes;
And like bright metal on a sullen ground,
My reformation, glittering o'er my fault,
Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes
Than that which hath no foil to set it off.
I'll so offend, to make offence a skill;
Redeeming time when men think least I will.

(I.ii.188-210)

Even when he seems like a plague hanging over his father, Shakespeare clearly conveys his future transformation into the physician curing the infection of the time ; even when he most seems playful and wanton, he merges as the purposeful politician attempting

to show the incredulous world
The noble change that (he has) purposed

(IV.v.152-54)

Even when he seems to be carried away in the delight of leading a disorderly life, he is making this a pursuit of policy, as Warwick explains to the worried Bolingbroke who busied his mind only with the appearence of things:

> My gracious lord, you look beyond him quite:
> The prince but studies his companions
> Like a strange tongue, wherein, to gain the language,
> 'Tis needful that the most immodest word
> Be looked upon and learned: which once attained
> Your highness knows, comes to no further use
> But to be known and hated. So, like gross terms ,
> The prince will in the perfectness of time
> Cast off his followers; and their memory
> Shall as a pattern or a measure live,
> By which his grace must meet the lives of others,
> Turning past evils to advantages.
>
> (2 Henry IV, IV.iv.67-80)

In contrast to Bolingbroke who gets carried by the mere appearance of things, the prince is a total master over himself, and over the weaknesses of human nature, with the study of which he becomes an artist in policy. Shakespeare, through the contrasting figures of Richard of Gloucester and Prince Hal, traces the idea of politics as an art requiring much political skill, capacity to turn weaknesses and past evils into advantages, adaptability to different political

occasions, self- knowledge and a deep understanding of human nature.While with Richard of Glouster's acknowledged machiavellism Shakespeare got further away from Machiavelli's Prince, in Henry V's purposeful policy he moved away from Elyot's Governor, to get closer to the Prince. Although in Henry V the king seems to be embodying all the traits of an utopian - ideal king of Elyot, through the long process of the transformation he undergoes, Shakespeare traces his deviation from that ideal to be a real political figure so that he can really face the problems of the infected nation. And paradoxically enough, to find the way out of the 'Machiavellian world', Shakespeare had to deviate from the idea of a utopian Christian king of constant and never - changing virtues, to move closer to Machiavelli's Prince as an artist in policy, his actions justified by the end he pursues. As the prince himself conveys:

> Let the end try the man.
> (2 Henry IV.II.ii.45)

As long as 'his cause (is) just and his quarrel honourable', the tricky ways that he has travelled do not stain his heroism and gallant comradeship

in battle. His repudiation of Falstaff, though arousing a tragic sympathy for the old knight, never impairs Henry's heroic presentation because Falstaff has clearly become an impossibly anarchic companion and Henry's adherence to the Lord Chief Justice makes the rejection inescapably necessary:

> I know thee not, old man: fall to thy prayers;
> How ill white hairs become a fool and jester!
> I have long dreamed of such a kind of man,
> So surfeit - swelled, so old and profane;
> But being awaked, I do despise my dream.
>
> (2 Henry IV.V.v.48-52)

At this point, Shakespeare presents the discrepancy there is between what is politically right and what is morally or humanely right ; between human desire and political necessity, no doubt to choose the latter ; as Gaunt says in Richard II,

> There is no virtue like necessity.
> (I,iii.278)

Throughout the two tetralogies, Henry V is the only politician that can make a virtue of policy and of political necessity.All the other virtuous politicians

lose in the game of politics because of their strict pursuit of abstract considerations of how one ought to act. Virtuous means becomes an end in itself: Hotspur has 'honour' and all his 'proud titles', Duke Humphrey his 'law', Talbot his 'valour' and strength, Henry VI his piety, and these means soon become their ends. They all belong to a medieval world of ceremony where how one acts is dominatingly important, rather than to a new world of political efficiency where the ends justify the means . Shakespeare, with the inescable fall of his virtuous men, observes that virtue pursuaded as an end in itself is ineffective and self - defeating. The same he observes for policy; when policy becomes the end it also becomes a 'universal wolf' eating itself up ; when it serves to no end, it becomes a 'consuming means soon (preying) upon itself'. With the figure of Henry V, Shakespeare unites the two - virtue and policy - to arrive at the conception of political virtu designed for the welfare of the state. Henry V is both the political hero of the new political world and the heroic 'politician' of Shakespeare's dramatic world. And with Henry V, Shakespeare's conception of the politician

moves closer to Machiavelli's _prince_, though never leaving the medieval ideals totally aside In contrast to the pseudo-machiavellism of Richard III, Henry V emerges as the machiavellian hero, in the real context of the word. His purposefully designed actions, his patient effective policy do point to many of Machiavelli's political precepts. Henry V does use religion in making his claims in France - necessiated by the rules of the political world - seem just, totally in agreement with Machiavelli's premise that 'a necessary war is a just war '. Similarly, his policy of gradual reformation so that it 'shall show more goodly and attract more eyes' highly reminds Machiavelli's advice to the prince that 'benefits should be conferred gradually; and in that way they will taste better.'[89] Again , when Henry goes to a holy war ' to busy giddy minds with foreign quarrels' he is fulfilling a machiavellian advice that his father gave him. Henry V is an _artist_ in policy, but only to receive it as a inescapable means of political necessity.

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(89) Machiavelli, p.66

In contrast to the dominating idea of Providence in the first tetralogy, Shakespeare traces the concept of Time or Necessity in the second tatralogy and it is through an understanding of time and necessity that he arrives at a criterion by which he judged the political efficiency of his characters. Richard II wastes time, to be wasted with time, the hot - headed Hotspur who is 'altogether governed by humuors' ignores Necessity and is carried away in his illusionary world,

> (he) lined himself on hope,
> Eating the air on promise of supply,
> Flattering himself in project of Power,
> Much smaller than the smallest of his thoughts;
> And so, with great imagination
> Proper to madmen, led his powers to death,
> And winking leaped into destruction.
>
> (2 Henry IV, I.iii.28-34)

to be conscious of the pressing time only after he is wasted by it:

> But thought's the slave of life, and life time's fool
> And time, that takes survey of all the world,
> Must have a stop.
>
> (1 Henry IV.V.iv.81-3)

So is cruel time working against Falstaff as he cries desparately

> I am old, I am old.
> (2 Henry IV.II.iv.276)

The only figure who can see 'which way the stream of time doth run' and who arms himself accordingly is Prince Hal; he is the only one that takes advantage in the movement of time and is the only politician that meets his end as a necessity. When the time comes, he takes the crown in complete awareness of the burdens it brings him, in total contrast to Richard III who keyed himself with the zest of the chase while pursuing the crown but was aimless and restless once he had succeeded.

In total contrast to the perverted machiavellism of the Elizabethan villain, Machiavelli's ideas are in agreement with Shakeslpeare's conception of the prince as the purposeful politician in Henry V:

> But if a prince who builds his power on the people, One who can command and as a man of courage, who does not despair in adversity, who does not fail to take precautions, and who wins general allegiance by his personal qualities and the institutions he establishes, he will never be let down by the people; and he will be found to have established his power securely. '90

Despite the fact that Shakespeare associates Machiavelli with diabolic policy and atheistical villainy, the only political figure that he presents as a real

(90) 1. Machiavelli,p.70

hero is a machiavellian king - in the real context of the word. Shakespeare, no doubt, portrayed him with an eye on Tudor politics and Henry V just fitted in that picture ; many of Machiavelli's tricks of statecraft were being played in the courts and as A.F. Pollard says 'Henry VIII is Machiavelli's Prince in action.'[91] Though Shakespeare had a settled dislike for the political realist, his realism in portraying the political world moved him closer and closer to Machiavelli. After all, Shakespeare's keen insight into the urgent needs of the national state coincided with Machiavelli's realistic solutions. Machiavelli wanted a strong state, capable of imposing its authority on a hopelessly divided Italy. Shakespeare, too, was on tha side of social unity and political order which could only be realized with the guardianship of an efficient politician. The celebrating of order at all costs was dominating the sixteenth century popular consciousness; J.P. Brockbank explains this, to be true for the whole chronicle tradition of the Tudor age:

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(91) Pollard, p.78

> They wrote in a tradition which had quietly assimilated the mundane, realistic attitudes for which Machiavelli was to become the most persuasive apologist; and whenever they write with an eye on the prospect of Tudor society they show themselves sympathetic to the 'machiavellian' solution - stability imposed by strong authority.'[92]

But they never acknowledged their sympathy to lie with Machiavelli himself; he was yet to remain the Devil of the sixteenth century political thought.

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(92) Brockbank, in Armstrong, p.102

CHAPTER SIX

POLITICAL REALISM AND REALISTIC POLITICS

Shakespeare, as L.C. Knights has underlined, 'had no politics', in the sense that he made no arbitrary separation between what is politics and what is not,'[93] and in this sense his plays convey no political doctrine or political theory. Yet his profound interest in political history, his great sensibility to the political problems of his age, and his yearning for political order all combined to create a comprehensive political thought - a conception of politics - which, viewed in the political context of his age, is to be taken as a realistic attitude.

Realism, being too worn out a concept to be used without contextual elaboration, will be used here not as a specific form or school of writing, rather in a wider context conveying the artist's attitude to historical reality and ideology in their interactive relation; an attitude, though not always necessarily intentional, derived from the total meaning ensuing from a work of art. L.C.Knights, appropriately remarks that 'Shakespeare's

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(93) L.C.Knights, 'Shakespeare's Politics'in Further Explorations, p.13

political realism is not of course Machiavellian or modern realism .. but it is certainly based on a clear perception of the actualities of political situations.'[94] Machiavelli, in a different context, does well deserve to be called a political realist, in the sense that he annihilated the widening gap between underlying assumptions and the practical conduct of politics, introducing into political theory the study of political facts regardless of the moral consequences. By the end of the century, Bacon was to write, 'We are much beholden to Machiavel and others that write what men do and not what they ought to do'.[95] While it is the annihilation of this gap between what men do and what they ought to do that makes Machiavelli the politically realist in the field of political theory, reflecting the political practice of the sixteenth century with no moral attributions, it is the portrayal of the irreconcilability between what men do and what they ought to do, between reality and its ideological counterpart, that makes Shakespeare's works realistic, in a context particularized

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(94) L.C.Knights, p.13

(95) Bacon cited in Morris, p.9

for art. Though Machiavelli never got the chance of watching Shakespeare's plays, interestingly enough, the realist Shakespeare had a strong and settled dislike for the political realist Machiavelli. This is a discrepancy to be explained.

Shakespeare's work, as Margot Heinemann points out, is not 'a mirror of the reality of the age unmediated by any world - view'. [96] The dramatic reproduction of so vast a historical material as Shakespeare had before him, and so complex a political reality without the unifying force of a world-view , would be impossible. Without the unifying scope of a Waltanschauung the farthest point a dramatist could have arrived at would be a naturalistic portrayal of the political actualities piling on each other other. But the selection of what is typically real, or to use Aristotle's definition in Poetics as 'What is possible according to the law of probability or necessity', Shakespeare made with the ideological keys of his own age. Only with an ideological frame which was underlined by the concepts of order, degree, and hierarchy could he reproduce the reality of disorder

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(96) Margot Heinemann, 'Shakespearean Contradictions And Social Change' in Science and Society, p.8

in a comprehensive scheme. Only through the mediation of such an ideology could he drive from the complexities of his age a dramatic reproduction of reality. That ideological frame taken out, that connecting thread, that unifying cement removed, Shakespeare's work would be left as pessimistic photographic depictions of Elizabethan political life. This is what Jan Kott tends to find in Shakespeare's drama: a cruel and blind, endless and irresistable mechanism devouring one victim after another: his approach is criticized by Georg Lukács for interpreting 'the Shakespearean understanding of history from an historical perspective of the Kafka frame of referance of our time'.[97]

Shakespeare is not free from the idelogical assumptions of Tudor political theory; and due not merely to a censorship or official control in the theatres, but to genuine belief in Tudor ideals; the providential idea of history, the medieval conception of the body politick as the harmonious beehive, the king as the Lord's Anointed, political order as a remedy and political disorder as a penalty for sin, rebellion as the greatest sin of the age - all the political

(97) George Lukacs, An unpubliched Letter by Georg Lukaes, 1964, in Science and Society, p.67

assumptions elaborated as the commonplaces of Tudor political theory in Chapter Two and to be shown in Shakespeare's tatralogies in Chapter Three - shine throughout his plays but only to be challenged and undermined by the same dramatist that took those as his ideological premises. Only a genuine believer in order - whom Rabkin points out to be equal to Dante in his love of medieval hierarchy - could have written such good poetry celebrating order. But, on the other hand, only a realist dramatist who does not put his yearnings in front of realities, who does not let himself be carried away with wishful ideals, can portray, though within the bounds of a contrasting ideological framework, the way things are in real life. What Shakespeare otherwise would have done would either be an apologetic and homiletic drama propagandizing the official Tudor view or a nostalgic - illusive poetry praising the good old days. In total contrast what he arrived at was a doubleness of mind; a genuine belief in the ideological assumptions of his age and a keen insight in discovering their paradoxes. Shakespeare depicted a real picture of the political world - a world whose laws found its theoretical formulation in Machiavelli's thought-

only to find that his picture was in total contrast to the ideological frame with which he set off.

On the conflict between Shakespeare's political orthodoxy and his uncompromising realistic observations rose his tragic realism; tragic, since he had one foot bound ideologically to the medieval world while the other was on the new world of 'Commodity' and Realpolitik. This tragic insight, essentially a product of the discrepancy between his ideological perspective and the reality it aims to explain, was what differentiated Shakespeare's realistic politics from Machiavelli's political realism. Machiavelli had spared himself from the moral- ideological hindrances of a medieval world by leaping completely to a new world of the autonomous, secular modern state. The total agreement between his theory and the reality it aimed in explaining emancipated him from a tragic point of view :

> Thoughtful Elizabethans agonised over the terrible gaps between the 'erected wit' and the 'infected will' of man and between the majastic harmony of an ideal state and the habitual chaos of the earthly polity. Machiavelli spared himself such agonisings by cutting out the 'erected wit' altogether, thereby making irrelevent the question that most disturbed men's minds. Disorder was the

> natural state of man.... Such a way of thinking was abhorrant to the Elizabethans who preferred to think order as the norm to which disorder, though lamentably common was yet the exception'[98].

This conflict, that Tillyard observes, between the 'erected wit ' and the 'infected will', the ideological face of the old world and the new face of the new is the tension and dynamism that gives Shakespeare's conception of politics its profound _tragic_ character. Though he was indebted to the political idealists of his age - whose ideas found their perfect embodiment in Elyot's _Governor_ - he was forced by realistic insight to move closer to Machiavelli's _Prince_, though he would never believe that he portrayed the very rules of the political world which Machiavelli had theoretically formulated.

Shakespeare's history is both providentially prescribed and individually created, his kings both God's ministers and powers _de facto_, his polity both a harmonious beehive and a place where dogs are quarreling for the bone of majesty, usurpation both a moral wrong and a political right. Between the contrasting ideas lie the dynamism, complexity, and impartiality

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(98) Tillyard , p.21.

of Shakespeare's politics. Within the bounds of an idealistic - providential conception of history is to be found, in Warwick's words to the king in 2 Henry IV, a conception of History totally in contrast, rather materialistic:

> There is a history in all men's lives,
> Figuring the nature of the times deceased;
> The which observed, a man may prophesy,
> 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;
> And by the necessary form of this
> King Richard might create a perfect guess
> That great Northumberland, then false to him,
> Would of that seed grow to a greater falseness;
> Which should not find a ground to root upon,
> Unless on you.
>
> (III,i,80-83)

What are prophesies but a keen understanding of the logic of history, and is not the 'book of fate' written by people themselves? What are dreams but torments of the unconscious? Shakespeare's plays are a battlefield in which different ideas and conceptions make war, with no one to enjoy the final triumph. Conscience is both just 'a word that cowards use' and an afflicting torment of soul, so is honour

both 'the purest treasure mortal times afford' and just a 'word' 'air', as Falstaff remarks. Richard III is both a Devil and a Clown, Henry V is both the policy - maker and the hero, Talbot the chevalier and the foolish politician, Falstaff both a mediaval Vice and a parody of feudal ethics. With all the complexity, impartiality, and doublenass of view, Shakespeare's drama well deserves to be called tragic, and with its portrayal of the political reality of his age - as the ideological gilt taken off - it well deserves to be called realistic. Being the great dramatist that revealed both what the Tudor political ideology revealed and also what it concealed from view, he well deserves to be called in Ben Johnson's words: The Soule of the Age.

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