Public and Private Life in Shakespeare's English History Plays

by

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this thesis is to show that the contrast between public and private life serves as a unifying theme in the eight plays that make up the two tetralogies (the three parts of Henry VI, and Richard III; and, Richard II, the two parts of Henry IV, and Henry V). An understanding of this dualism between public and private life may also contribute to the reader's appreciation of the social, political, and intellectual milieu in which the plays were written and may increase his understanding of the characters' psychological motivations.

The first chapter is introductory in nature, setting forth the major features of the social and political theories which, for the Elizabethans, defined the public world. Marriage and the use of particular types of rhetoric are introduced in this chapter as "indicators" of a proper balance (or lack of it) between public and private portions of the characters' lives.

The second chapter develops in greater detail the most important of these "indicators," the royal marriage. A character's marriage may serve as symbol of his private life indicating whether private matters are kept in a properly subordinate position, or the marriage may mirror or serve as analogue to his public life.
Chapter III explores the desire for escape from public duties and responsibilities that so many of the public figures in the histories exhibit. The type of escape desired is particularly interesting; it is most often escape into a world of the imagination, into dreams or into play-acting and make-believe.

A detailed reading of Act I, scene ii of Richard III makes up the final chapter. This is an attempt to illustrate the added significance that may be gained through a consideration of the public/private theme in the history plays.
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CHAPTER I: THE PUBLIC WORLD

Of the ten plays in the Shakespeare canon that have English history as their theme, eight fall into two groups of four closely linked plays: the three parts of Henry VI, and Richard III; and Richard II, the two parts of Henry IV, and Henry V. Further, the two tetralogies make a single unit for they deal with a continuous period of history that is meant to be seen in its entirety. These plays present the period of civil strife between the houses of Lancaster and York (the Wars of the Roses) with the causes and the final resolution of that conflict. The second half of the story is dealt with in the first tetralogy. Some years later Shakespeare presented to his audiences the events leading up to the civil disorder that characterizes the Henry VI plays. But even though the plays were not written in chronological order, one may safely say that Shakespeare intended them to be seen as a unit. The plays of the first tetralogy refer repeatedly to events that were to make up the second group of plays. The opening lines of Henry VI recall events only considered in the last play to be written, Henry V:

Hung be the heavens with black, yield day to night!
Comets importing change of times and states,
Brandish your crystal tresses in the sky,
And with them scourge the bad, revolting stars
That have consented unto Henry's death!
King Henry the Fifth, too famous to live long!
England ne'er lost a king of so much worth.

1
And in the closing lines of *Henry V*, as Professor Tillyard notes, Shakespeare implies the continuity of the two tetralogies and accepts responsibility for all eight plays:

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Henry the Sixth, in infant bands crown'd king
Of France and England, did this king succeed;
Whose state so many had the managing,
That they lost France and made his England bleed:
Which oft our stage hath shown; and for their sake
In your fair minds let this acceptance take.
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Since these eight plays were seemingly intended as a unit, it is only reasonable to read them as one. Such reading reveals unifying patterns of imagery and thematic concepts as well as historically continuous subject matter. One of the thematic concepts that is observable in all the plays is that of the public life and its relationship to private life. This theme is particularly evident in the presentations of the kings themselves, but it appears in the lives of other public figures as well.

The pervasiveness of the theme of public life versus private life in the plays which compose the two tetralogies is, partially at least, a result of the Elizabethan concern with the well-governed state and the ideal ruler. It seems very likely that Shakespeare's history plays had a didactic purpose. In portraying the causes and horrors of civil war on stage Elizabethan playwrights warned their audiences of the evil that could result from rebellion. A didactic intent on the part of Shakespeare would imply that there was, for him, a proper relationship between the public and private parts of the life of a public figure. And the plays bear this out. There is a proper balance between public and private
life to be defined from the examples presented in the Histories. But to define this balance one must first consider the public world of Shakespeare's English history plays. The concept of order in the plays is indispensable to an appreciation of the proper relationship of public to private life.

Doubtless, the theme of order is the greatest single theme to be found in the Histories; it defines the public world of the plays. This theme has been thoroughly investigated by many scholars, and a review of some of the major critical commentary on the concept of social and political order in the Histories will be useful.

The most common viewpoint is that which defines the world order of the Histories according to the political and social orthodoxies of Shakespeare's day. This is the basis of E. M. W. Tillyard's book, The Elizabethan World Picture. He explains the concepts of the "Great Chain of Being" and the correspondent planes on which the universe was thought to be organized. Man, of course, occupied the central position in the chain, being between and yet linked to both the beasts and the angels. Correspondences were recognized between objects or beings which occupied the same place with respect to their particular planes. As Tillyard says: "God among the angels or all the works of creation" occupies the same position as "the sun among the stars, fire among the elements, the king in the state, the head in the body, justice among the virtues, the lion among the beasts, [or] the eagle among the birds." That these commonly held notions are evident in the history plays has been proved. One need only look at
the comparison of the state to a beehive in *Henry V* or to the many instances in which correspondences form the basis of imagery. The king is often spoken of as a lion, the sun, a rose, or an eagle, and he is frequently being urged to be God-like in his exercise of power.

The Elizabethans considered rebellion the greatest of sins for it destroyed all order and virtue. It was an example of the Luciferian sin of Pride and ushered in again that chaos from which God's created order had originally rescued the world. The doctrine of Divine Right was also current in Shakespeare's day, and it, of course, augmented the horror of rebellion since opposition to a divinely appointed king had to be viewed as opposition to God himself. The only legitimate method of dealing with an unjust king was non-resistance. As John of Gaunt says to the injured Duchess of Gloucester:

> God's is the quarrel; for God's substitute,  
> His deputy anointed in his sight,  
> Hath caused his death: the which if wrongfully,  
> Let heaven revenge; for I may never lift  
> An angry arm against His minister.  

*(Richard II, 1.ii.37-41)*

The whole of this theory has become increasingly commonplace to students of Shakespeare and of the Renaissance in general. The danger at present is in taking Tillyard's analysis of Shakespeare's political concepts and themes to be the total answer. To place Shakespeare without reservation always on the side of order and stability, to label him "pro-establishment" seems an oversimplification. One need look no farther than *Henry IV* for an example. The similitude of the situations of Henry Bolingbroke when he rebelled against
Richard II and Hotspur in his rebellion against Henry IV is noted in the play. Yet Shakespeare's treatment of these two rebels is not the same. Bolingbroke is given a generally sympathetic presentation—the legitimacy of his complaints and the appropriateness of his conduct are emphasized. Hotspur is treated as a hot-headed, blood-thirsty young militant. Shakespeare undeniably considers and portrays his characters and situations individually. To say he always took the part of the state against the rebels and usurpers, like a good Elizabethan, is not consistent with the evidence presented in the plays. Perhaps the greatest lesson that can be learned from a study of Renaissance and Elizabethan political and social theory is that even though the sixteenth century was, like the twentieth century, often chaotic, it did not accept chaos as the normal condition of the universe. To the Elizabethans order was the primary virtue on which all other virtues depended.

These are the basic social and political theories of Shakespeare's day, and for most critics these theories define the order of the history plays. Anthony LaBranche, though, takes a somewhat different approach to the political bases of public order. He concludes that "the play [1 Henry IV] does not suggest any simple system of values which give voice to current political orthodoxies." In examining 1 Henry IV, LaBranche remarks the nearly even lack of justification for the two political camps (Henry's in III. ii and Hotspur's in IV. iii and V. i). Henry, for example, is never charged with Richard II's death, an omission which certainly detracts from Hotspur's case. LaBranche observes, "The effort to strike
an ambiguous balance between the two camps appears too deliberate to be explained as merely a kind of dramatic emphasis. He indicates that Shakespeare is striving, by twisting Holinshed, to make the cases more nearly equal in order to accentuate the workings of "historical necessity" in the play. This idea, to LaBranche, is the only political concept that Shakespeare has in mind in 1 Henry IV.

Historical necessity requires that the old order be cut off and the new allowed to flourish. The discussion of "courtesy" illustrates this idea. Hotspur's idea of courtesy is antiquated military honor while Hal's is a graceful flexibility. Being up to date, as Hal is, is more effective publicly but not necessarily more virtuous privately. Timing is the all-important factor. Hotspur's courtesy had once been the recognized standard, and though its intrinsic value has not been altered, it has become outmoded. LaBranche makes his case stand for 1 Henry IV, but perhaps other history plays would present greater difficulties. "Historical necessity" is, of course, a factor to be considered whenever one uses historical events as subject matter. The plots of the history plays are, in their major features, predetermined by the course of history itself. But Shakespeare has too much emphasis on themes (such as the value of unity, the sanctity of the king, etc.) which grow directly out of "current political orthodoxies" for one to believe that he did not intend to illustrate them.

A third view of the question of order in the Histories is presented by Johannes Kleinstuck who takes issue with the common approach, saying that
"Shakespeare did not teach us the doctrine of order but presented us with the problem of order instead."^9 Shakespeare, he says, has no message or doctrine but makes us face the same problems we have to deal with in contemplating history or mankind in general; "order is not an absolute value, it is ambiguous."^10 Kleinstuck examines the Archbishop of Canterbury's speech on order (Henry V, i. ii. 183ff.) and John of Lancaster's treachery to the Gaultree Forest rebels (2 Henry IV, iv. ii) and concludes that Shakespeare is linking "bee-hive-like" order to Machiavelism. For, he says, men must be reduced to purely instinctive beings that perform without will or intellect (as do bees) for this type of order to be operative. If one seeks this kind of order it is for the purpose of using people as mechanical instruments, and one who advocates such order is a Machiavel. So it is that order may prove dangerous to man; it serves to dehumanize him. Although one's initial reaction to Kleinstuck's article might be that it "considers too curiously" in a number of places or that it disregards evidence in others,^11 it must be granted that Shakespeare's history plays do, indeed, point to problems that are inherent in the Tudor doctrine of order. It has already been noted that Shakespeare considers characters and situations individually and does not always handle analogous ones in a similar manner. And, it is obvious from the low-life scenes of the Henry IV plays that the common folk do not see themselves as worker-bees in Henry's hive striving for a common good. They do not care in the least for the wars of the Lancastrians. They, like Falstaff, see war as a chance to line their own pockets
and say with Falstaff, "What is honour? a word—air—nothing." Shakespeare's portrayal of this side of society proves to the reader that he realized that its values, though antithetical to the doctrinaire ones, did exist. But what Kleinstuck fails to note is that the world of the Henry IV plays is not portrayed as an ideally ordered world. The taint that is on Henry's crown as a result of usurpation and regicide affects every relationship in the kingdom. Henry's action has thrown the world into disorder; faith and recognition of proper allegiances can no longer form the framework of the state. The only order possible in Henry's kingdom is the order of power. If Henry Bolingbroke has broken the hierarchical chain of relationships in seizing the crown, what is to hinder Falstaff from using the "King's press" to his own advantage?

Perhaps these questions concerning order must be resolved by noting that Shakespeare, like any man of understanding, would be able to see that though the ordered state as the Elizabethans conceived of it would be a very good thing, given the nature of man as he observed it such order would also be very unlikely. A. P. Rossiter in a lecture titled, "Ambivalence: The Dialectic of the Histories" calls this Shakespeare's "two-eyedness." He points up numerous examples from Henry IV in which Shakespeare treats the same subject with seriousness and with comic irony. Returning to Falstaff's abuse of the "King's press" we note with Rossiter that all the episodes dealing with the subject are implicitly "serious commentary on the wickedness and irresponsibility inseparable from war." Falstaff's actions are "damnably wrong,
clean contrary to all the war-values associated with Crecy, Agincourt, or Harfleur." These episodes become, therefore, critical comic commentary on a set of human facts which the "Agincourt-values" insist on viewing only disapprovingly. It is as if there were two voices, says Rossiter. "'This is damnably wicked,' says the one. 'It's damn' funny,' says the other." I think we can say with Rossiter, "Shakespeare heard them both." Rossiter's resolution is summarized as follows:

... the Tudor myth system of Order, Degree, &c. was too rigid, too black-and-white, too doctrinaire and narrowly moral for Shakespeare's mind: it falsified his fuller experience of men. Consequently while employing it as FRAME, he had to to undermine it, to qualify it with equivocations: to vex its applications with sly or subtle ambiguities: to cast doubts on its ultimate human validity, even in situations where its principles seemed most completely applicable.

The dual perspective that Rossiter calls "two-eyedness" is definitely present in the plays. But the quoted resolution seems to me to falsify that dualism. The skepticism that causes a writer to seek to qualify or undermine commonly accepted moral and social doctrines is a relatively modern (at least post seventeenth-century) phenomenon. Shakespeare's ambivalence does not seem to be skeptical ambivalence, but ambivalence rooted in a Christian view of the nature of man. Man, though created Godlike, became earthy through the Fall. He, consequently is able to see from both the heavenly and the earthly points of view. It is more nearly this ambivalence of dual perspective—one, God's; the other, man's—that constitutes the "two-eyedness" of the history plays.
In its essentials, then, the public world in which Shakespeare's English kings find themselves is defined by the "frame" of Tudor order to which Rossiter refers. Being, as kings, so integral to this public world and so closely tied to its order or disorder presents a number of problems for the Shakespearean characters. Most of these hinge on finding the proper relationship between public and private life. The conflict between public and private life may be seen in a number of ways. LaBranche would see individual desires constantly frustrated by the exterior force of historical necessity; Rossiter finds this limitation of individuals by history and "retributive reaction" ("the sins of the fathers come home to roost" as William Faulkner says) just short of tragic. And, it seems that the conflict of public and private interests and virtues is what troubles Kleinstuck most. He finds order dangerous to man because it tends to dehumanize him. Henry V's turning away of Falstaff is thus taken by Kleinstuck to be a complete repudiation of Hal's humanity. Falstaff is everything the Lancastrians do not approve: He is spontaneous, witty, free, and human. And in rejecting Falstaff Hal suppresses all that he was formerly; he changes himself into a soulless functionary of power and public duty. Perhaps saying that Hal is "soulless" and dehumanized after becoming Henry V is stating the case a bit too strongly. Even as a riotous young prince Hal had been aware of the requirements of proper kingship and the demands of the office. He tells the audience in his first soliloquy that he will put off this wild behavior "And pay the debt [he] never promised" (1 Henry IV, I. ii).
He knows he must become serious and must place himself definitely on the side of order. His private life when he becomes king will no longer be his own. Throughout the history plays the private actions of public figures are judged by their public consequences. Henry V knows this and therefore can no longer have any association with Falstaff. But, Henry V is never portrayed as "soulless." One need only look at his genuine care for his dying father in 2 Henry IV or, for an example from his role as king, at the comradeship with his soldiers or the prayer before the battle at Agincourt in Henry V (IV. i. 295-311).

Henry V exhibits most clearly the traits that the Tudors would have considered necessary in an "ideal" king. Perhaps, as Rossiter says, Henry V is a "one-eyed" propaganda play. But, since kings are necessarily linked to "order, degree, etc." Henry V may still serve as example. Henry's virtues are explicitly public ones. He puts the welfare of the kingdom above all else. He is just, praising the Lord Chief Justice for administering the laws equally to all members of society, including himself. He is similarly righteous in his dealings with the French. He has his claim to the French throne thoroughly investigated before he sets about defending it. He is merciful, saying:

We are no tyrant but a Christian king;
Unto whose grace our passion is as subject
As are our wretches fetter'd in our prisons.
(Henry V, I. ii. 241-243).
This quotation also calls to mind another important kingly quality—self-control. Henry's passions are held firmly in check. He does not make war on France because of anger over taunts or tennis balls. He never gives way to anger until the young boys left in the camp are murdered (Henry V, IV. vii, 58-59). In short, a king ruling by Divine Right, as God's deputy, is expected to exercise his power and authority in a Godlike manner. And, as each of the qualities mentioned would illustrate, the ideal king must have characteristics that reflect the subordination of private to public life. As Anthony LaBranche notes, "The positive discovery of the plays [he has been discussing Richard II and Henry IV] is that a public man's public worth is what matters and that private virtues must have public worth to justify their maintenance."19

Shakespeare and his contemporaries would have seen in this subordination of private to public life the proper balance between private and public interests in the life of a public figure. Such subordination would be seen as the proper response to the public world we have been describing: one in which order was considered the supreme virtue and in which public men (the kings in particular) were depended upon to maintain that order. In looking at the plays composing the two tetralogies one may observe certain indicators of the proper balance or lack of it in the lives of particular public figures.

One of these indicators is to be found in the rhetoric employed by public figures. It is obvious that some forms of rhetoric are appropriate to public occasions while others definitely are not. Public rhetoric is often
used in a pageant-like "set scene." Elevated rhetoric and pageantry emphasize the public pomp, the outward show of royal power and right—the "glitter" of kingship. Wolfgang Clemen mentions several types of public "set scenes" which give opportunity for "rhetorical show pieces:" "the ceremonial welcome, the coronation scene, the triumph scene, in fact all the ritual of court and political life . . .". Of course, some types of rhetoric are completely inappropriate to such public occasions, and when private rhetoric appears in a publicly significant situation one may be certain that the proper balance between public and private life is not being maintained.

Act IV, scene i of Richard II serves to illustrate these observations. The major portion of the scene deals with Richard's abdication in favor of Bolingbroke. There could hardly be imagined a scene of more distinctly public significance. In addition to the public orientation of the action itself it is clear from the text that Richard is being brought in to abdicate formally. He has already sent word by the Duke of York that he is giving up the throne to Bolingbroke (11. 107-112), and Henry sends for him "that in common view / He may surrender; so we shall proceed / Without suspicion" (11. 155-157). What is required, then, of Richard is a rhetoric distinctly public, formal, and controlled. The time for personal grief over his loss is certainly not during this formal ceremony. But Richard's abdication speeches are suffused with his personal meditations and private griefs. He enters with York and the officers bearing the regalia (in procession) and immediately
breaks into voiced personal meditation in a style more appropriate to
soliloquy:

Alack, why am I sent for to a king,
Before I have shook off the regal thoughts
Wherewith I reign'd? I hardly yet have learn'd
To insinuate, flatter, bow, and bend my limbs:
Give sorrow leave awhile to tutor me
To this submission. Yet I well remember
The favours of these men: were they not mine?
Did they not sometime cry, 'all hail!' to me?
So Judas did to Christ: but he, in twelve,
Found truth in all but one; I, in twelve thousand, none.
God save the king! Will no man say amen?
Am I both priest and clerk? well then, amen.
God save the king! Although I be not he;
And yet, amen, if heaven do think him me.

(11. 162-175).

These thoughts of the distastefulness of submission, his betrayal by the
courtiers, and the possibility that God is still on his side are all rather
private ones voiced by Richard in a pettish tone. The speech is inappro-
priate both in subject and in style, and it sets the tone for the remainder
of the scene. Bolingbroke asks if he is contented to resign the crown, and
Richard replies "Ay, no; no, ay; for I must nothing be" and proceeds to
"undo" himself. In this speech (11. 201ff.) his style improves, but the
major concern is still Richard's personal grief. When asked to read a list
of his injustices as king, again as a formality to assure the people that
Bolingbroke's actions are justified, Richard asks,

Must I do so? and must I ravel out
My weaved-up folly? Gentle Northumberland,
If thy offences were upon record,
Would it not shame thee in so fair a troop  
To read a lecture of them?  

(11. 228-232).

Upon being urged again to read the articles he replies that he cannot see for his eyes are full of tears. He next asks for a mirror to see what his face looks like without its majesty, again emphasizing the continual concern with the private self—the very vanity that has cost him his kingdom.

The inappropriateness of Richard's privately oriented rhetoric on such an occasion and in Westminster Hall is even more noticeable on looking at the action immediately preceeding Richard's entrance. The scene begins with Bagot's testimony against Aumerle concerning the murder of Thomas, Duke of Gloucester. The nobles take sides on the question of who is lying, throwing down their gages and declaring their intentions to defend their honors in conventional, highly elaborate rhetoric:

Percy. Aumerle, thou liest; his honour is as true  
In this appeal as thou art all unjust;  
And that thou art so, here I throw my gage,  
To prove it on thee to the extremest point  
Of mortal breathing: seize it, if thou darest.  
Aum. An if I do not, may my hands rot off  
And never brandish more revengeful steel  
Over the glittering helmet of my foe!  

(11. 44-51).

And just preceeding Richard's entrance, after York has brought the message that Richard is adopting Bolingbroke heir and relinquishing the sceptre to him, the Bishop of Carlisle delivers a highly appropriate speech that stands in immediate contrast to Richard's laments. Carlisle's concerns are strictly
public ones expressed in a formal oration. Milton Kennedy defines an oration as "a speech delivered in public for the purpose of persuading an audience to adopt the speaker's view of the question in hand." 21 Certainly the Bishop's speech satisfies this definition and exhibits the organization of classical oration even to the point of including the final rhyming tag. The Bishop's premise is that no subject is fit to judge a divinely appointed king; therefore, Bolingbroke's actions are treason. He defends the cause of public order saying that if this order is violated (by Henry's usurpation) the whole kingdom will be thrown into civil strife:

Peace shall go sleep with Turks and infidels,
And in this seat of peace tumultuous wars
Shall kin with kin and kind with kind confound;
Disorder, horror, fear and mutiny
Shall here inhabit . . .

Prevent it, resist it, let not be so,
Lest child, child's children, cry against you'woel'
(11. 139-143, 148-149).

Carlisle's argument has nothing to do with Richard personally. It has no reference to his actions as king. It is the integrity of the public office that Carlisle defends, and the horror that he prophesies is the horror of public disorder. He does not consider (as Richard does immediately thereafter) the question of personal betrayal of one's king, the breaking of a personal vow of allegiance. These personal, private considerations are, as Carlisle realizes, simply not appropriate to the public place (Westminster Hall) and the public occasion of an abdication. Richard's failure to under-
stand this and conduct himself accordingly thus becomes indicative of his overall failure to give public considerations their proper precedence over personal ones.

The other indicator of the proper balance (or lack of it) between public and private life to be considered in this paper is to be found in marriage, particularly in the royal marriage. Marriage may serve as an especially good indicator of the relationship of public to private life because it is one of the areas that is for private men private. It is also a good basis for comparison because almost every public figure in the history plays is seen at some point in relationship to his wife. A public figure may illustrate the proper balance of public and private life either in his choice of a bride or in his treatment of his wife after he is married. Since the marriage is such a good situation in which to observe the workings of the public and the private interests in an individual life, it will be given more detailed treatment in the following chapter.

The balance to which the "indicators" point leaves public figures in the Histories with no really legitimate private portion to their lives. The kings, in particular, are always aware of the cares of public responsibility; and, the burdened "man-beneath-the-crown" becomes a major symbol in the Histories. All of the kings feel this burden and eventually desire escape from it. This is a very natural response, and the interesting aspect is not the desire for escape but the particular form which this desire takes. What
the kings want is escape into an extremely private world, a world that is private to the point of being a world of the imagination. Escapism, too, is an extremely important concept that will be considered in detail in a later chapter.

This pattern of proper balance between public and private life leading to an appreciation of the cares of kingship and a consequent desire for escape is a pattern observable in the eight plays composing the two tetralogies. This paper will seek to study the plays through an investigation of the pattern described.
CHAPTER I: NOTES


2. Ibid., p. 148.

3. This was, of course, particularly concerning to Elizabethan England for Elizabeth persisted year after year in failing either to marry or name an heir. The fear of a disorderly succession and consequent civil war was painfully real. For a full discussion of the relationship of the history play to the social and political milieu of Elizabethan England as well as a definition of genre and insightful readings of the plays, see Irving Ribner, *The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare* (Princeton, 1957). Of course Ribner's research is fundamental to the study of the plays presented in this paper. Since his work is so well known, I will simply refer the reader to his book rather than attempt a summary of it.

4. This view is expounded most clearly by Tillyard and M. M. Reese, *The Cease of Majesty* (London, 1961), and held by virtually everyone else.


8. Ibid., p. 373.


10. Ibid., p. 269.
He says, for example, that Henry IV has made himself an instrument for gaining power and "he therefore must exercise so much control over himself that he can adjust his emotional life to any given situation" (p. 274). But one may think of the rather impolitic sparing of Aumerle as a counterexample. Henry cannot force himself to order his execution even though York advises it.


I realize that reading this speech as a sincere one, one in which Hal purposes to reform even though it means giving up Falstaff's fun (which he so obviously enjoys)—is not the usual reading. But, I do not see Hal as either diabolic or calculating here. It seems that he is trying to find a way of justifying his behavior. For while he enjoys Falstaff and his world of jokes and trickery, he knows that world to be inappropriate to his position as prince. He knows it will have to be forsaken once he becomes king. Ribner does not see Hal as a scheming hypocrite either, but views this soliloquy as an example of a common dramatic convention. Hal steps momentarily out of character to inform the audience of what is to come. (Ribner, p. 171).

I do not think this prayer is a wholly selfish one ("Not today, O Lord . . "). His concern for his soldiers, with whom he has just been chatting (in disguise), seems to me genuine. Mr. Kleinstuck does not agree.

Rossiter, p. 165.

LaBranche, p. 381.


Gladys Willcock, "Shakespeare and Rhetoric," Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association, XXIX (1943), 57. Classical oration as
known during the Renaissance consisted of: (1) insinuato; (2) statement of thesis; (3) establishment of general principle; (4) application and recapitulation; (5) rhyming tag.

23Rossiter, p. 150.
CHAPTER II: THE ROYAL MARRIAGE

Nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature.
—Samuel Johnson, Preface of 1765.

Johnson's famous statement concerning the cause of Shakespeare's continued popularity is nowhere more appropriate than to a consideration of his treatment of marriage. For in the scenes dealing with the relationship of husband and wife, occur some of the most convincingly natural representations of human psychology. It is because of the universality encountered in these scenes that marriage can be taken as the most important indicator of the balance between the public and the private portions of a public man's life. Marriage functions as "indicator" in at least two ways. First, taken as a major portion of the private life, it may show whether the private life is actually kept in a subordinate position with regard to public duties and responsibilities. Secondly, the marriage relationship may be considered as an analogue to the relationships of public life: it acts as a mirror. The first function is one particularly relevant to the themes and subject matter of the Histories; the second is a function observable in many other plays of Shakespeare.

It is in the lives of the kings of the history plays that marriage is seen as the major portion of the private life. Its relationship to the life as
a whole is thus indicative of the position occupied by the private life. Royal marriages, to be proper ones, must be politically advantageous. They must provide public as well as private good. Private sentiment alone is never enough to justify an English king's choice of a bride. She must, additionally, be of royal birth, bring a sizeable dowry, and, if necessary, be a symbol of unity between her people and her husband's subjects. Private considerations are almost, though not completely, irrelevant.

There are two royal marriages in the Histories that satisfy all the public requirements mentioned: the marriage of Henry Tudor (Richmond) to Elizabeth of York, Edward IV's daughter; and, the marriage of Henry V to Katherine of France. These are, significantly, the marriages that close the two tetralogies. Their political aptness is emphasized, for in the case of Richmond and Elizabeth the unity of the warring houses of Lancaster and York is symbolized, and in Henry V and Katherine one sees the unity of England and France. Each of these marriages indicates a reconciliation of opposing parties and a promise of peace and good things to come.

The first tetralogy closes with the marriage of Henry Tudor to Elizabeth of York, a primarily political marriage. There is no indication of any private sentiment that may be involved. The first and only consideration is that the marriage will reunite the factions in England and heal the civil strife that has been thematic throughout the four plays:
And then, as we have ta'en the sacrament,
We will unite the white rose and the red:
Smile heaven upon this fair conjunction,
That long have frown'd upon their enmity!

O, now, let Richmond and Elizabeth,
The true succeeders of each royal house,
By God's fair ordinance conjoin together!

(Richard III, V.v. 18-21, 29-31).

Indeed, this reconciliation of the white rose with the red is the only basis for lasting peace. The final words of the play (spoken by Richmond and quoted above) stand in direct contrast to Richard's opening soliloquy.

Now is the winter of our discontent
Made summer by this glorious sun of York;

Grim-visaged war hath smooth'd his wrinkled front;
And now, instead of mounting barbed steeds
To fright the souls of fearful adversaries,
He capers nimbly in a lady's chamber
To the lascivious pleasing of a lute.

(Richard III, l.i. 1-2, 9-13).

These speeches are emblematic of the contrast between Richard and Richmond implicit in the early acts of the play and explicit in Act V with the parallelism of the dream scene (V.iii). In both speeches the progression is from the public duties of war to the private pleasures of love in peacetime. The peace of which Richard speaks, however, cannot last for it is only the momentary peace of victory. The Lancastrians are only temporarily defeated; they have not been reconciled to the Yorkists. The love mentioned here is also of the wrong sort. It is that strictly private and personal flirtatiousness that is seen as antithetical to the public world. Richmond's peace and
pursuit of a lady are contrasted to Richard's. The peace with which the play ends is not the peace of the ascendancy of the red rose but the peace of reunion of York and Lancaster. And, the marriage to which Richmond turns his attention once the battle has been won is integral to that public peace.

Richmond was a Lancastrian, being the grandson of Katherine, Henry V's widow, and a Welsh lord, Owen Tudor. His hereditary claim to the throne was strengthened by his mother's descent from Edward III. Historically, there were others who stood nearer the throne but none had Henry's courage and ability, qualities amply demonstrated by Shakespeare in his portrayal of Richmond's leadership of the rebellion against Richard III. Richmond's marriage to Elizabeth gave him the benefit of the Yorkist claim to the throne to solidify his own position and, additionally, united the warring factions. Elizabeth thus brought as her dowry the one thing which Richmond needed most, the Yorkist title to the English throne. This marriage, giving Richmond indisputable right to the throne, ends the Wars of the Roses and serves as a symbol of the re instituted political unity of England.

The marriage ending the second tetralogy, that between Henry V and Katherine of France, shows the private as well as the public side of the ideal royal marriage. Katherine possesses all the qualities necessary to a king's bride: she is the daughter of the king of France; she will bring a dowry of half of France, a regency, and a claim to the French throne for Henry; she
will symbolize the peace between their nations. So the marriage is as politically desirable as that of Richmond and Elizabeth, but Shakespeare in Act V of Henry V gives the reader a sense of its private rightness as well. Peter G. Phialas says, "Henry's insistence on balancing the king and the man is stressed in the wooing scene, where he tells the fair Katherine that she would find him 'such a plain king that thou wouldst think I had sold my farm to buy my crown,' a man no more adept in the badinage of love than a butcher."\(^2\)

Phialas sees Henry V as the only figure in the second tetralogy who properly balances the public and the private life. He understands the problem that Henry has expressing his love to be indicative of his sincerity and his reliance not on his public identity as king but on his private plainness. Paul A. Jorgensen also sees the difficulty that Henry encounters as a sign of his sincerity, saying that Henry is a typical "wooing soldier" experiencing all the traditional problems of a man of action in a situation that calls for eloquence and elegance.\(^3\)

The wooing scene does, though, have its critics. Both John Palmer and Derek Traversi take an adverse view of Henry's avowals of love. Traversi says, "Henry's wooing of Katharine [sic], distant and consistently prosaic in tone, befits what is after all never more than a political arrangement undertaken in a spirit of sober calculation."\(^4\) And Palmer adds, "His bluff but very competent wooing of Katherine, in which the word 'love' falls so easily from his lips, provokes in us the reflection that in the whole course of his
long career we have never been able to detect in him one spark of disinterested affection for a living soul." These judgments are, I think, too harsh. Henry's wooing is neither "distant" nor "bluff but very competent." He is painfully aware of his difficulty with Katherine's language and is extremely anxious to please her. And, it is only natural that an Englishman who has been acting as field commander should feel somewhat "plain" in comparison to the elegant Frenchwoman. He is purposely presenting himself as Henry, the man. Had he desired to address Katherine in his public role as king, Henry would surely have had no trouble being "distant" or "competent." His skillful and rather lengthy reply to the French ambassador (I.ii.259ff.) has displayed to the audience the public rhetoric that is at his disposal. The fact that he does not employ such publicly oriented address here seems a testimony to the sincerity of his suit. It would seem to require quite a lot of determination to read words like the following as delivered "in a spirit of sober calculation:"

Give me your answer; i' faith, do: and so clap hands and a bargain: how say you, lady?

If thou canst love a fellow of this temper, Kate, whose face is not worth sunburning, who never looks in his glass for anything he sees there . . .

. . . shall not thou and I, between Saint Denis and Saint George, compound a boy, half French, half English, that shall go to Constantinople and take the Turk by the beard?

Palmer and Traversi seem to assume that since the marriage is to Henry's benefit publicly he can have no sincere private feeling for Katherine. But,
the whole intent of the wooing scene seems to be the portrayal of Henry's private interest in Katherine (as well as hers in him). Had Shakespeare intended us to see only a political aptness in the proposed marriage, he could have accomplished it in the same way as in the Richmond-Elizabeth episode at the end of Richard III, devoting the last few lines rather than a complete fifth act to it.

There are, however, marriages in the tetralogies which do not fulfill the public requirements of the ideal marriage. Consequently, they indicate that the proper balance between public and private life is not being observed. One of these marriages that is less than ideal is between Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou. Margaret's birth is noble (though not actually royal), and Henry marries her in an attempt to make peace between England and France, but her lack of dowry angers the English lords. York notes:

I never read but England's kings have had Large sums of gold and dowries with their wives; And our King Henry gives away his own, To match with her that brings no vantages. (2 Henry VI, I. i 128-131).

In addition to the fact that Margaret brings no dowry, Henry has given his claim to Maine and Anjou to her father. These unfavorable political conditions come about through the machinations of his own advisors and ambassadors. Margaret had been taken prisoner in France and should have been held for ransom, but Suffolk, in effect, ransoms her for Henry at the price of Maine and Anjou. The marriage is not politically advantageous; neither can it be
justified on private grounds. Henry and Margaret are not, like Antony and Cleopatra, considering the world well lost for each other. Margaret has been wooed by Suffolk as Henry's proxy, but Suffolk has won her love for himself. From the beginning he and Margaret intend to create more public disorder by taking Henry's authority to themselves. Suffolk proposes, "Margaret shall now be queen, and rule the king; / But I will rule both her, the king and realm" (1 Henry VI, V. v. 106-107). The next two plays show how Suffolk and Margaret do just that.

Henry VI fails to balance properly public and private life both in choosing a bride and in his relationship to his wife in later years. Since Henry will not take firm control of the public world, Margaret leaves the place of obedience given to her as wife. She begins interfering in public matters and asserts more and more authority until she and Suffolk are planning and leading the battles against the rebellious Yorkists. They chide Henry from the field, and the fact that he is so completely helpless is ample testimony to his absolute surrender of public authority. As Margaret says (3 Henry VI, I.i.230ff), Henry's weakness is most unkingly. Margaret, though, is seen to be out of place as a woman, a wife, and a subject. She tortures York with the handkerchief dipped in Rutland's blood, and ends her career as the cursing hag of Richard III. The marriage of Henry VI to Margaret is thus shown to be inappropriate both publicly and privately. In allowing Margaret to exercise authority that rightfully belongs to the
king alone, Henry fails to keep private relationships in their proper subordinate position.

The marriage of Edward IV to Lady Grey is another that is not ideal. Edward does not illustrate the same failure to exercise authority that Henry VI does, but he is obviously placing private considerations above public ones. Lady Grey is of the lower nobility, not of royal blood; she brings no dowry except relatives eager to be advanced; she makes no peace treaties and symbolizes no political agreement. His brothers realize the impropriety of Edward's marriage:

K. Edw. You'd think it strange if I should marry her.
Clar. To whom, my lord?
K. Edw. Why, Clarence, to myself.
Glou. That would be a ten days wonder at the least.
Clar. That's a day longer than a wonder lasts.
Glou. By so much is the wonder in extremes.
(3 Henry VI, III.ii. 111-116).

Their contemptuous amusement is indicative of the attitude of the English nobles and of Henry's loss of their respect.

But the marriage is inappropriate from other standpoints as well. Edward is smitten with Lady Grey's beauty while Warwick is in France on the mission of gaining the Lady Bona, sister to the French king, to be Edward's bride. He has just managed to convince Lewis and Bona of the sincerity of Edward's suit when a Post enters with the news of Edward's marriage to Lady Grey (3 Henry VI, III. iii). Warwick, of course, has been betrayed and turns against Edward to join with Margaret and the Lancastrians. The French are offended, and
Lewis promises to aid the Lancastrian faction. The marriage, therefore, not only fails to help Edward politically, it does him positive public harm. He has lost his alliance with France and the support of Warwick, the "Proud setter up and puller down of kings." Edward lets private considerations alone rule in his choice of a bride and fails in the primary duty of a king—to choose the politically beneficial course of action in every situation. Private action is only acceptable when it is advantageous in the public world. Private deeds are measured by their public consequences, and it is on this basis that Edward's marriage to Lady Grey must be condemned.

As these four royal marriages demonstrate, the relationship of public to private life may often be seen in the position that marriage is given in the overall pattern of the life of public figures. Whether a private relationship such as that between husband and wife is allowed to interfere with the king's public life may indicate whether proper balance of public to private life is being observed. But the marriage relationship may also act as an indicator of this proper balance by mirroring the public life. Marriage, in this case, functions as an analogue or correspondent to the public life, i.e., the relationship of husband to wife is analogous to that of king to subject. This emblematic function would be particularly obvious to Elizabethan audiences, for it grows directly out of the Renaissance notion of planes of correspondences. God is to the creation as the head is to the body or the king is to the state or the husband is to the household.
Marriage as a part of such a system of correspondences is perhaps more obvious in Macbeth than in any other Shakespearean play. The play opens in disorder on the cosmic level with the meeting of the three witches in "thunder and lightning." They introduce the moral disorder that is to be the play's major theme: "Fair is foul, and foul is fair." Macbeth begins listening to the prophecies of the weird sisters, letting his thoughts become rebellious. He, at first, only would like to be king, but gradually he becomes willing to murder guest and king to accomplish that end. This disorderly conduct of Macbeth's public life, which increases as the play progresses, is frequently echoed in his disorderly relationship to his wife. She is the agent who sets Macbeth on the course of crime; it is Lady Macbeth who has the determination to gain by any means what she believes has been promised her by her husband's supernatural visitors. The rebellious nature of Macbeth's desires (he "would wrongly win") and the consequent disorder in his public life are mirrored in Lady Macbeth's usurpation of her husband's role of leadership in the family. She becomes the moving force behind Macbeth's bloody deeds. She, like the earlier character, Queen Margaret, leaves the place of submission and obedience in which she belongs as woman and wife. In words that recall her earlier observation that Macbeth "is too full o' the milk of human kindness," she asks to be "unsexed" and to have her milk replaced by gall.
The effect of such private disorder in a marriage is often distortion of the women involved. Lady Macbeth becomes cruel, hard, extremely masculine and finally goes insane. Returning to Margaret, Henry VI's queen, it may be observed that she is, in many respects, an earlier model of Lady Macbeth. She, too usurps her husband's position and becomes bloody and cruel. Her end is similar to Lady Macbeth's as well; she is, by the time Richard III comes to the throne, an old, cursing witch nearly mad with grief, rage, and guilt.

The disorderly relationships of Margaret and Lady Macbeth to their respective husbands cause them to assume masculine roles. This reversal of traditional roles in marriage is, perhaps, the greatest symbol of private disorder. We find in Lady Macbeth not the womanly characteristics of softness, gentleness, or submissiveness but the determination, cruelty, and domination usually reserved for male characters. Macbeth submits to her and every indication of hesitation or of regret (until the sleepwalking scene) comes from him. In a similar manner Henry submits to the stronger, more determined Margaret. She has no compassion for old York, bidding him wipe his eyes with the handkerchief dipped in his son's blood, while Henry pities even the common folk that must be involved in civil war (3 Henry VI, II.v). The distorted personalities of Lady Macbeth and Margaret result from the improper relationships in their marriages, and this private disorder is emblematic of the disorder to be found in the public world. Neither the public nor the private relationships of Henry VI and Macbeth are proper.
This use of marriage as an emblem of the public relationships of a character is noticeable in the Histories. The marriage of Hotspur and Kate in 1 Henry IV may serve as example. The scene at Warkworth Castle (II.iii) gives the reader a glimpse of their relationship. Lady Percy enters and Hotspur tells her abruptly that he will be leaving in two hours time. She then asks why she has been banished from his bed for the past two weeks and reminds him of the constant preoccupation with "iron wars" that keeps him from sleeping or eating. She asks what he is planning, and before he answers a servant enters and Hotspur becomes completely absorbed in his preparations. Kate finally regains his attention and begins again to question him. He puts her off with equivocations and then suddenly loses his patience entirely,

Away, you trifler! Love! I love thee not,
I care not for thee, Kate: this is no world
To play with mammets and to tilt with lips:
We must have bloody noses and crack'd crowns.

Hotspur is so completely obsessed by war and its glories that, by comparison, he does not love his wife. He has no time for Kate and speaks to her perfunctorily to have her out of the way. Prince Hal masterfully parodies their relationship in the tavern scene immediately following. He says:

I am not yet of Percy's mind, the Hotspur of the north; he that kills me some six or seven dozen of scots at a breakfast, washes his hands, and says to his wife 'Fie upon this quiet life! I want work.' 'O my sweet Harry,' says she, 'how many hast thou killed to-day?' 'Give my roan horse a drench,' says he; and answers 'some fourteen,' an hour after; 'a trifle, a trifle.'

(II. iv. 110-122).
Hal pinpoints exactly Hotspur's habits in conversation with his wife. He has, in the preceding scene, evaded her questions to ask about his roan horse. And, the answers that he does give are greatly delayed; as Hal says, he answers "an hour after." What Hal finds most amusing, though, is Hotspur's excessiveness. He is so completely taken up with war and military honor that he has no time for private relationships.

The scenes in which Hotspur confers with his allies show that he handles public relationships in just the same manner as that in which he treats Kate. He has no spirit for the fanciful or the artistic just as he has no time for the emotions. He argues with Glendower about the cosmic signs at the time of Glendower's birth, saying that the same things would have happened if his "mother's cat had but kittened." He says poetry is "like the forced gait of a shuffling nag" and that he "had rather be a kitten and cry mew / Than one of these same metre ballad-mongers." Later, he breaks off suddenly to go inside saying, "I'll away within these two hours; and so, come in when ye will." The hurry that Hotspur exhibits in his conversation with Kate is also evident in his public relationships. He will not, for example, take time to read the letter from his father brought to him immediately before the battle. Hotspur's relationship to his wife thus parallels his public relationships. In both realms he is so completely obsessed with honor that he has neither the time nor the inclination for any sort of human contact. He is mechanical, seeming to care nothing about any human relationship, either public or private.
Not every marriage relationship in the history plays mirrors public relationships as the marriages of Hotspur and Henry VI do. Sometimes the public and private lives seem almost completely opposite. One particularly good example is to be found in the episodes in 2 Henry VI dealing with the good Duke Humphrey of Gloucester and his wife. Gloucester is very sympathetically portrayed throughout 1 and 2 Henry VI, although in the end he is falsely accused of treason and murdered by the ambitious Suffolk, Buckingham, and York. His actions and motives are consistently above reproach. Gloucester has, also, the proper balance between his public life as Lord Protector and his private life with his duchess. The duchess is portrayed as a proud and ambitious woman. She draws Queen Margaret's ill will immediately, and it is soon discovered that the duchess has been meeting with sorcerers hoping to obtain some information concerning the future of the persons engaged in the political struggle underway at court. When Gloucester hears of this he states that he has always been loyal to his king but cannot answer for his wife.

Noble she is, but if she have forgot
Honour and virtue and conversed with such
As, like to pitch, defile nobility,
I banish her my bed and company
And give her as a prey to law and shame,
That hath dishonour'd Gloucester's honest name.

(2 Henry VI, II. i. 194-199).

After she has been convicted Gloucester meets her as she is going in shame to her prison (2 Henry VI, II. iv). He is dressed in mourning and is grieving because of her punishment. He thinks how hard it will be for her to endure
the tauntings of the "abject people" and the sharpness of the stones on her tender feet. Gloucester is not by any means cold or emotionless; he is obviously feeling intense pity for his duchess and real tenderness toward her. His servants offer to take her from the officers but he refuses. The duchess enters and reproaches him for not doing something to help her:

    For whilst I think I am thy married wife
    And thou a prince, protector of this land,
    Methinks I should not thus be led along.

He replies:

    Wouldst have me rescue thee from this reproach?
    Why yet thy scandal were not wiped away.

The scene is a very touching one, for while it causes Gloucester great pain to see his wife's shame and suffering he knows that he must not interfere. He does not let the private consideration that she is his wife have anything to do with his public capacity as Lord Protector of England. Although the duke's marriage is less than ideal, it is not at all emblematic of his public life. The two worlds are separated here: Duke Humphrey's wife can be unruly, signifying that his marriage relationship is not what it should be, and at the same time his public relationships can be above reproach.

The practice of using marriage as an emblem of the public life is not, to reiterate, confined to the history plays. Its use in Macbeth has been noted, but marriage in the problem comedies, for example, carries these same connotations. The audience comes to expect public life to conform to the
type of relationship shown in a character's marriage. In fact, this audience expectation is integral to a play like Measure for Measure. Duke Vicentio, Escalus, and everyone else think Angelo to be such a righteous and worthy man. His public reputation is excellent. It is, therefore, all the more surprising when his rather disorderly arrangements with Mariana, his betrothed, come to light. The attempt to seduce Isabella becomes a bit more shocking too, since the audience and the other characters have not been led to expect Angelo's private life to be any less perfect than his public one. Of course, Angelo in using his public position to try to seduce Isabella corrupts his public image (at least for the audience). Even though the public and private lives are not parallel here, Shakespeare can count on his audience to expect them to be.

In The Winter's Tale the same expectation is played upon. This is a play of a more mythic type, and the interconnection between public and private relationships becomes even more emblematic, although less logical, than elsewhere. The disorder in the marriage of Leontes and Hermione causes, as the audience expects, disorder in the public and natural worlds. The false accusation and confinement of Hermione and the proposed death of Perdita cause a period of infertility and winter in the kingdom of Bohemia. Only after Leontes realizes his error and makes an attempt to atone for it can spring, resurrection and fertility return to the winter world. Perdita comes back, Hermione miraculously returns to life, and Perdita and Florizel are married.
The treatment of marriage in the Histories is, therefore, similar to its treatment throughout Shakespeare's plays. Marriage is taken as an analogue of public life in many of the plays. In this emblematic function it indicates whether public relationships are proper ones. The function more particularly applicable to the history plays, marriage as representative of private life, indicates whether private matters are being properly subordinated to public ones. In both cases, marriage serves as an indicator of the balance between public and private life, a balance that often becomes demanding and limiting for public figures. The burdens and limitations that the public figures experience and their reactions to them will be the subjects of the chapter to follow.
CHAPTER II: NOTES


CHAPTER III: ESCAPISM

Common to many of the public figures in the history plays is the pattern of understanding the burdens of public duty and then desiring escape from them. Escapism is the subject of the present chapter, and the discussion to follow will rest directly upon the concepts presented in the two previous chapters. In Chapter I the nature of the public world was considered. Basically, the public world of the Histories is the social and political hierarchy of Elizabethan and Renaissance theory. The system requires a strong ruler to occupy the uppermost position in the hierarchy. In fact, in looking at the plays it seems that Shakespeare would have feared abandonment of power far more than tyrannical abuse of it. Naturally, such a system places quite burdensome demands upon public figures, particularly upon the kings. It is from these burdens that the kings desire escape.

One of the most obvious ways to escape public burdens would seem to be through private life. But, as was noted in Chapter II, public figures have almost no legitimately private life. Their marriages, like all their private relationships, must be politically expedient. Prince Hal finds that he cannot choose his private friends without severe criticism; his tavern life must be justified on political grounds (1 Henry IV, I.ii. 231-240). Richard II and Henry VI cannot lead the contemplative lives they would
enjoy. The aspects of an ordinary man's life which would be private, such as his marriage, his friends, or his thoughts are all a part of the overall public life of a king.

Since there is no real private world allowed a king, he must supply that private world through the imagination. It is into an imaginative private world that the kings desire to escape when they are burdened by public responsibilities. Some desire sleep; some, the tranquility of pastoral life; others escape through acting.

Henry V, upon assuming the throne, turns away Falstaff. In rejecting Falstaff Henry is, of course, repudiating that portion of his life which has been completely private. He speaks of this past private life in rather unusual terms:

I have long dream'd of such a kind of man,  
So surfeit-swelled, so old and so profane;  
But, being awaked, I do despise my dream.  
(2 Henry IV, V.v. 53-55).

The private life he once enjoyed has no more reality now than does a dream after one wakes. It exists now only in the realm of imagination. The metaphor, though, is in perfect keeping with the terms in which the kings speak of desired private lives. Whether existing in the past or only wished-for, private life is completely antithetical to the reality to which the kings are bound.
The desire for escape is particularly noticeable in the lawful kings. The figures such as Richard III or Henry Bolingbroke (in Richard II) that are seen as usurpers usually do not express the same desire for escape. A wish for escape is a natural response to an appreciation of the cares and burdens of kingship, and usurpers are often attracted to the crown because of the public glory.¹ They usually fail (at least in the beginning) to see the magnitude of responsibility and care that accompany it.

The sense of burden and desire for escape that several figures in the Histories experience will be considered in this chapter. The pattern observable in the lawful kings will be examined first, with particular reference to Henry VI, Richard II, and Henry V. Henry IV will be treated as a separate case since he alone is portrayed both as lawful king and as usurper. Richard III is, of course, the most fully developed usurper and, therefore, will be taken as our example of the usurper’s view of kingship.

Perhaps the most outstanding characteristic of Henry VI is his inadequacy as king. He is a good, gentle man, and Margaret notes that he would make a better priest than king. He is lacking in political insight and understanding of the public world of which he is the nominal head. He, for example, fails to see the significance of the rose controversy in its earlier stages. He takes the red rose of Lancaster saying:

I see no reason, if I wear this rose,  
That any one should therefore be suspicious  
I more incline to Somerset than York:  
Both are my kinsmen, and I love them both  
(1 Henry VI, IV.i. 152-155).
Henry probably does love them both, but he fails to realize that other men are not so magnanimous. He understands the danger of civil strife (1 Henry VI, IV.i. 138-150), but does not see how great the rift has already become. Civil war is one indication of Henry's weakness, but it is only one of his problems. The losses in France, the bad bargain with Margaret's father, his surrender of the crown to York's line, and his inability to keep Gloucester from being falsely condemned all point to his political weakness. And, Henry does not enjoy being king. He cares nothing for public glory and feels intensely the burdens of the office. He laments that he was born to public office ("I was made a king, at nine months old"), and never had a private life even as a child. His desire is for a private life: "Was never subject long'd to be a king / As I do long and wish to be a subject" (2 Henry VI, IV.ix. 5-6). Henry understands that his cares, burdens, and griefs are due to his public office.

This understanding leads him to wish for escape. He "longs to be a subject" but in the soliloquy of 3 Henry VI, Act II the wish is made more specific. Margaret and Clifford have "chid [him] from the battle" and he sits down on a molehill. His wish is for an idyllic, pastoral life:

O God! methinks it were a happy life,
To be no better than a homely swain;
To sit upon a hill, as I do now,
To carve out dials quaintly point by point
Thereby to see the minutes how they run
. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
How many years a mortal man may live.
(3 Henry VI, II.v. 21-25, 29).
Henry's concern with time is significant to his desires. The shepherd's life is desirable because of its simplicity and peace, but its most attractive characteristic is its order. Henry imagines dividing up his life into an orderly pattern with particular events for particular times:

So minutes, hours, days, months, and years,  
Pass'd over to the end they were created, 
Would bring white hairs unto a quiet grave.  
Ah, what a life were this! how sweet! how lovely! (11. 38-41).

Order is precisely what is lacking in the public world in which Henry finds himself. The rhetoric of the soliloquy directly echoes the wish expressed. The repeated initial phrases "How many" and "So many" give the language the quiet, repetitive order that Henry so fervently desires in life. It is interesting to note that Henry does not express a desire to escape the office of king; he only wants to escape its burdens. He imagines himself ruler of a smaller, more orderly realm. He would exchange his throne for a molehill and his unruly subjects for obedient and gentle sheep. He continues the analogy with the comparison of the "hawthorn-bush" to the royal canopy, the "homely curds" to delicate food and drink, the sleep under a "fresh tree's shade" to the king's "curious bed." Henry does not truly wish himself a subject; he wants to be king of an orderly, even if smaller, realm.

But the peaceful, pastoral world of his imagination is not the world of which Henry is king. The contrast is made apparent by the entrance of the son who has killed his father and a few moments later, the father who
has killed his son. The remainder of the scene serves to remind Henry (and the reader) that the real world is not one of order, that burdens cannot be escaped. Peace and order are characteristic only of an imaginary private life that the king may never enjoy in reality. The real world is one in which fathers and sons kill each other unknowingly and the king must flee for his life (11. 125ff).

Richard II presents a more unusual case. He, like Henry, would enjoy a quieter life since he has a rather poetic bent, but Richard is also an actor and enjoys the pomp and pageantry of his office. These characteristics become, in the play, the causes of Richard's failure. He does not see clearly the burdens and responsibilities that accompany kingship. The excessive concern with words rather than the realities they designate and the play-acting in which Richard engages are forms of escape from reality. Richard tries to realize what should be an imaginative escape, and it costs him his throne.

Richard lives in an imaginary world. He is enamored of the outward show of kingship and fails to realize that it is symbolic of actual royal power. To Richard the symbol is essence. This is apparent in the scene before Flint Castle with his concern for his "jewels," "gorgeous palace," and "figured goblets." These are the symbols of royal authority, but Richard mourns them as realities. To him, they are the essence of kingship. Richard has a particularly strong sense of possession as well. He sees the royal vestments and lands not as belonging to the state or to the office of king but as belonging to him personally. On returning from the Irish wars he salutes England as
"my earth." Richard's problem is that he does not distinguish between symbol and reality or between office and man. The concept of self and the name of "king" are completely identified for Richard. The personal self, though, has not been made to fit the public role of king. Instead, the office of king has been made a part of the private, individual life, and Richard's actions as king are personally motivated. It is because of this substitution of personal preference for impartial justice that Bolingbroke has any reason to rebel. The cancellation of the duel of Act I and the unjust seizure of Gaunt's estate are two instances of Richard's arbitrariness.

Richard's substitution of symbol for reality is particularly noticeable in his use of language. He considers language as a reality and dwells not on facts but on language that simulates but does not correspond to facts. His awe for the name of king is an especially good example. He seems to think that the name of king makes his arbitrary, personally motivated acts lawful. But his misuse of the name weakens its authority and his own right to command. After considering the odds facing him in the upcoming battle with Bolingbroke, Richard says:

I had forgot myself: am I not king?
Awake, thou coward majesty! thou sleepest.
Is not the king's name twenty thousand names?
Arm, arm, my name!

(III.ii. 82-85).
But the "name of king" cannot, of course, arm to match twenty thousand rebels. It is another of Richard's imaginary escapes to believe that it can. The world of Richard II is one of appearance and make-believe.

Since Richard sees only the ceremony, honor, and riches of royalty, he never associates his cares with his position as king. He thoroughly enjoys being king, for it is a wonderful role for him to act. His grief and care come from having to give up his throne. He does not, like Henry VI, weep for his subjects caught up in civil war or for the destruction that comes to his country. His grief is wholly self-centered; his deposition is considered a personal loss. In the abdication scene Bolingbroke says that since he is taking the crown he will also be taking Richard's burdens. But Richard says that his griefs are his own. His self-concept is so fully tied to his kingship that he must be king of something even if it is only grief or a grave. This is the only way that Richard can retain his sense of being. In having to give up the crown he says he "must nothing be." His imaginative wish in the abdication scene is to be a "mockery king of snow" and melt into nothing before Bolingbroke's sun (the image that he has used throughout the play as emblematic of his own royalty). Richard must either be some sort of king or be nothing.

The scene in Pomfret Castle (V.v) displays an interesting change in Richard's character. The scene opens with Richard still play-acting and identifying himself as king:
Thus play I in one person many people,
And none contented: sometimes I am king;

and by and by
Think I am unking'd by Bolingbroke,
And straight am nothing.

(V. v. 30-31, 35-37).

But Richard begins to show an adjustment to reality. The groom enters and
hails Richard as "royal prince." Richard ironically replies, "Thanks, noble peer." He indicates that he has managed to dissociate the title of king from himself. He hears how roan Barbary pranced so proudly with Bolingbroke on his back and first rails against the horse. But Richard checks himself, realizing that such talk is foolish. He is beginning to understand that such things as Barbary's pride in carrying him were never due to his position as rightful king. The fictions about the magical name of king are becoming less real to him. And with the entry of the Keeper, Richard's transformation becomes explicit. He is no longer relying on supernatural forces to vindicate the wrongs done to a divinely appointed king or depending upon a name. When the Keeper refuses to taste the food, Richard, for the first time, takes positive action and stops depending upon words and symbols. He beats the Keeper and kills two of Exton's servants with an axe before Exton can strike him down. Richard like the dying lion "thrusteth forth his paw." As Michael Quinn says, Richard dies as "somebody . . . and not as one who has become nothing." Exton sees him afterwards as the "dead king" and says he was "as full of valour as of royal blood." It is only in his death that Richard stops trying to live
an escape. He regains his dignity by having grappled with reality on its own terms.

Richard never identifies his cares with the crown and never desires escape into an imaginative private world. He tries to live his escape and incorporate his public role as king into his private life. The two Henry’s that succeed him have a completely opposite orientation. For the Lancastrians, the public identity takes unquestioned precedence. In fact, Gail Thomas sees Henry IV as "duty-centered," being overly concerned with the public life. Since Henry Bolingbroke is portrayed in Richard II as a usurper, we shall postpone consideration of his attitudes toward kingship and treat Henry V next.

Henry V presents a case entirely different from that of either of the two kings already considered. Henry is not a weak or unsuccessful ruler, but the most gloriously successful in the Shakespearean canon. In looking at Henry it becomes apparent that a desire for escape is not limited to the weak or to the failed kings; it is a desire common to them all. Henry V, even as the riotous young Prince Hal, is aware of the cares and burdens of kingship. Even in the banter with Falstaff when he "plays" his father the king, Hal says that he will one day "banish plump Jack." The private fun will have no place in his life when he is king. Hal assures the audience in an early soliloquy that he knows this (1 Henry IV, 1.ii. 218ff). His ability to drop the tavern life in order to defeat the rebels (Hotspur particularly) is another indication that Prince Hal has the proper attitude toward public duty.
His appreciation of the burdens of living a wholly public life, though, is most clearly expressed as he "trys on" the crown when his father is dying. The others withdraw from the king's bedchamber; Hal remains and addresses the crown:

Why doth the crown lie here upon his pillow,  
Being so troublesome a bedfellow?  
O polish'd perturbation! golden care!  
That keep'st the ports of slumber open wide

(2 Henry IV, IV.v. 21-24).

The association of sleeplessness with the burdens of public office is particularly common to both Henry IV and Henry V. It is important to note that although Henry IV has some feeling of guilt concerning the methods by which he gained the crown, Henry V sees himself as a lawful king and says that he will leave the "lineal honor" of the crown to his heir as it was left to him. Sleeplessness is not associated with guilt in the case of Henry V. Henry IV fails to understand the magnitude of his son's appreciation of what it means to be king. He accuses him of stealing the crown because of a desire for gold and a wish to be king. Hal explains that he upbraided the crown and put it on his head "To try with it, as with an enemy / That had before my face murder'd my father" (IV.v. 167-168). They discuss the state of the nation and Henry IV's reign, and the scene fully convinces the reader that the young prince knows what he is about.

Perhaps it is because of this extensive preparation for kingship that Henry V is so successful. Shakespeare draws him in almost superhuman pro-
portions in *Henry V*, but if, as Gail Thomas says, Richard II is "self-centered," and Henry IV is "duty-centered," Henry V is certainly "life-centered." Shakespeare portrays him not only as a superman but as a man who feels the same burdens that other men imagine they would feel if placed in the same situation. Henry speaks of his cares immediately before the battle of Agincourt:

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Upon the king! Let us our lives, our souls,
Our debts, our careful wives,
Our children and our sins lay on the king!
(Henry V, IV.i. 247-249).
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He compares his lot to that of the private man and decides that private men can have an "infinite heart's-ease" which kings lack. All the advantage he has is "idol ceremony," and Henry catalogues the "ceremony" of kingship (recapitulating the cause of Richard II's failure) and concludes that it is empty—merely a "proud dream" that plays with the king's repose. He introduces once again the image of sleeplessness, comparing the king in his "bed majestical" to the slave who with "a body fill'd and vacant mind" goes to his rest. The slave works all day and sleeps soundly, never seeing "horrid night, the child of hell." The slave's life is characterized by order and regularity just as was the life of the shepherd of Henry VI's imaginings. This orderly simplicity is appealing to Henry, and sleep here becomes a desired private escape from the cares of kingship.

Although Henry Bolingbroke begins his career as a usurper, he reigns long enough to be viewed by most as rightful king and to leave the throne to
his son. He also, in the course of his reign, learns that the position carries
with it many burdens. He must always be quelling rebellions and worrying
about what will happen when his son succeeds him. Henry's position never
becomes secure enough for him to leave for the Holy Land as he would like
to do. He expresses his sense of care and the burden of public duty as he
talks with his son just before he dies. But in an earlier scene he voices a
desire for escape in a soliloquy comparable to those of Henry VI and Henry
V. Henry's desire is for sleep, the usual symbol for freedom from care in
the last three plays of the second tetralogy.

The soliloquy occurs in III.i. of Part 2. Henry has called Warwick
and Surrey for a midnight conference, and while he waits for them he thinks
about the fact that he cannot sleep peacefully. He considers the poorest of
his subjects resting in "smoky cribs" on "uneasy pallets" just as Henry V thinks
of his sleeping soldiers. Henry thinks how even the ship's boy atop the mast
in a storm at sea can sleep. He obviously envies the ship's boy's isolation
and freedom from worry. He would like to escape into sleep, but particularly
he would enjoy the ship's boy's sleep. There he would be separated from the
society which he has to rule and would be oblivious even to the natural dis-
order of a storm.

The soliloquy is placed in a scene to which it is particularly appro-
priate. Henry's inability to sleep is only one of the anxieties expressed.
Warwick and Surrey arrive to discuss Northumberland's rebellion. Henry wants
"to read the book of fate" to know where all the turmoil will lead. The tenor of the whole scene is one of distress, anxiety, and worry, but as Henry begins thinking about Northumberland the problem of guilt comes up. Henry remembers Richard II's prophecy that Northumberland would prove as false to Bolingbroke as he already had to Richard. Henry is forced to think about how he gained the crown in the first place. He says he took it only because of necessity:

Though then, God knows, I had no such intent,
But that necessity so bow'd the state
That I and greatness were compell'd to kiss.

(III.i. 72-74).

Henry is obviously worried. Although he knows that he had to act the way he did, he cannot help wondering if some sort of retribution is coming for his deposition of a lawful king. The question of guilt, of course, reflects back upon the soliloquy that opened the scene. Perhaps Henry's inability to sleep is caused by guilt just as is Macbeth's similar malady.

Through such flashbacks to earlier events Shakespeare reminds the audience of Henry's role as usurper in the first play of the tetralogy, Richard II. And, although he rules long and well, Henry is never fully absolved of the sin of usurpation. At least he never feels such absolution. He speaks as he is on his deathbed of the "indirect, crook'd ways" by which he gained the crown. Henry also desires for most of his life to go on the Crusades in order to expiate his sin. Throughout the three plays in which he appears,
Henry is characterized by expediency. This is a characteristic particularly evident in his role in *Richard II*, and its manifestations in the later plays serve to recall that role of usurper.

Henry does not, like his son, come to the throne with an understanding of the burdens that accompany kingship. His coldness to Richard II during the abdication scene shows that he has no real understanding of Richard's position. He lightly remarks that he will take Richard's burdens with his crown and then abruptly asks if he is willing to give up the crown. He sends Richard off to the tower and immediately begins making plans for his coronation. It is only when Henry is himself faced with rebellion in *Henry IV* that he sees the cares that attend the crown. This teaches him, like the lawful kings, to desire escape.

Henry Bolingbroke is for the most part sympathetically portrayed. He is a usurper but not a villain. He is a politician like Richard III, but he is saved from Richard's villainy because he never plans to be a usurper. Bolingbroke takes what is offered to him without the slightest trace of calculation. Richard knows himself; he is completely self-conscious and plans and aims to be exactly what he is. There is no similar self-recognition in Bolingbroke. He can guiltily refer to the "indirect, crook'd ways" by which he met the crown and also say he took it only out of necessity. He is, as Kleinstuck says, immensely real because he is like a living man: He is not furnished with a fixed and definable character.
The greatest of the usurpers and perhaps the greatest villain is Richard III. Richard does not consider the crown a care; to him it is a heavenly joy. Long before he becomes king he says to his father:

And, father, do but think
How sweet a thing it is to wear a crown;
Within whose circuit is Elysium.
And all that poets feign of bliss and joy.

(3 Henry VI, I.ii. 28-31).

Later, in soliloquy, he speaks of the crown in these same terms:

I'll make my heaven to dream upon the crown,
And, while I live, to account this world but hell,
Until my mis-shaped trunk that bears this head
Be round impaled with a glorious crown.

(3 Henry VI, III.ii. 168-171).

But the closer Richard comes to actually gaining the crown the more he speaks of cares. Immediately before he is declared king he speaks of the "golden yoke of sovereignty" and asks, "why would you heap these cares on me?"

(Richard III, III.vii. 146, 204). He then says he must have patience to bear the load and accepts the crown. All of the protestations are, of course, only Richard's deceptions. He does not consider the crown a yoke or a care or a burden; he has been murdering and intriguing to gain it for three full acts. Anne, his wife, has a much clearer notion of what a crown gained in such a manner means. She wishes it were "red-hot steel" and the anointing oil, "deadly venom" (IV.i. 61-62). Richard has his troubles and cares, for Anne says that he has "timorous dreams" and does not sleep well, but he never associates his nightmares with the crown. Richard says his enemies, the two
young nephews in the Tower, disturb his sleep. The real disturbers of his sleep are the ghosts of his victims that appear at Bosworth Field. It is only at this last moment that Richard understands what kingship really entails, and what his crimes committed to gain the crown mean. He must defend his country against the invading Richmond since it is his duty as king, yet he knows when the ghosts appear that the retribution for his sins is coming and that there is no longer any way to elude it. Richard never sees until this last moment that there is anything to kingship besides glory and power. He never really desires escape from the cares of kingship because he never, until immediately before his death, realizes that they really are there.

The basis of the concept of escapism that has been discussed in this chapter is a clear dualism of symbol and reality. Henry VI's escape is into the pastoral world. He, in effect, substitutes a symbolic realm where he can be a symbolic king (in the role of shepherd) for the more troublesome real world and real kingship. Richard II does not substitute symbol for reality so much as he fuses the two. To Richard, symbolic robes of royalty, lands, and wealth are the total reality of kingship. He does not see that in misusing these symbols he weakens the real power behind them. Henry IV and Henry V may be characterized as political realists. Henry IV is not, like most usurpers, attracted to the throne by the outward, symbolic glitter. He wants only the power to regain his inheritance and never really intends to become king. Henry's political power is the "necessity" that he says forces the crown upon him. When
he desires escape, it is not into a world of which he is symbolically king. He wants to escape both the reality and the appearance of kingship in being like the ship's boy. Henry V uses the world of appearances to prepare himself for kingship. In the tavern scene in which he plays his father he demonstrates his understanding of the role and his readiness to assume it. But, for the most part Prince Hal's private life in the tavern is not one in which he practices being king. He uses it to gain what his father only wishes for—a chance to be a subject instead of a king. Perhaps it is because of this earlier experience that Henry's desire for escape into sleep (just before Agincourt) is not so anguished as his father's. Henry V has experienced the reality of being both subject and king, and he does not have to wish for either symbolically. Richard III presents the case of the very self-conscious character who thinks he understands perfectly both worlds. But once Richard reaches the top and is actually king, he becomes careless. He thinks that the title and symbolic strength of kingship will be ample protection even after he has lost Buckingham's support and had his two young nephews murdered. Through misusing symbolic privilege and prerogative, Richard undermines his actual power and influence. There is, therefore, a tension between symbol and reality in kingship as presented in the Histories. A misunderstanding of this tension can cause a king's failure or can provide the basis for his desire for escape.
CHAPTER III: NOTES


3 Samuel Weingarten, "The Name of King in *Richard II,*" *College English*, XXVII (1966), 537.


5 Weingarten, p. 538.

6 Michael Quinn, "'The King is Not Himself': The Personal Tragedy of Richard II," *SP*, LVI (1959), 184.

7 Thomas, p. 40.

8 Ibid., p. 40.

9 Henry is, as L. S. Champion says ("King and Princes: Approaches to the Throne in *Henry IV*," *Ball State Teachers College Forum*, Autumn, 1964, pp. 26-33) expedient to the point of cruelty in this play. The executions of Warwick and Vernon and his treatment of Richard are obvious examples.

CHAPTER IV: RICHARD AND ANNE

Richard III is for many readers one of the most fascinating characters in the Histories. The character Shakespeare presents is a particularly strong one and the critical responses elicited, both positive and negative, are similarly intense. Few critics and few readers are indifferent to Richard. It seems to be Richard's audacity of intent and his diabolical power to achieve his aims that make him so interesting, and in the wooing of Lady Anne he is at his most audacious and most powerful. Shakespeare's purposefulness in character development in this scene is evident, for the incident presented has no basis in the sources. John Palmer's statement that "Shakespeare's portrayal of Richard stands or falls by this scene" is particularly just.

The scene involving Richard's courtship of Anne (I.ii.) not only reveals the major characteristics of Richard; it reveals the nature of the play itself. The play is a melodrama, and the wooing of Anne over the bleeding corpse of her father-in-law by his hunchbacked murderer makes up an incident singularly appropriate to melodrama. Seeing the play as a melodrama casts Richard, of course, as a stage villain, but he is real enough in the scene with Anne to cause rather intense critical comment. There are two basic reactions to the scene, perhaps best exemplified by Coleridge and Lamb, respectively. Coleridge is so outraged that he flatly states that Shakespeare "certainly did not write the scenes in which Lady Anne yielded to the
usurper's solicitations."^ And there have been others to complain of the im-
plausibility of the incident. The eighteenth-century critic, Richardson, finds
it necessary to explain Anne's capitulation by saying that she is temperamental.
He says that Richard knows Anne to be subject to violent feelings that are
quickly exhausted. Therefore, all he has to do is suffer her anger to pass
away and then skillfully bring a more favorable emotion into its place. But
if the scene's detractors emphasize Anne's weakness, its admirers concentrate
their attention on Richard's strength. Lamb sees in the incident "lofty genius,
the man of vast capacity, the profound, the witty, the accomplished Richard"
and blames Cooke, the actor, as lacking in the "fine address" necessary to
make it completely convincing. Most modern critics consider Lamb's state-
ment a judicious one. Wolfgang Clemen sees revelation of Richard's character
as the purpose of the scene. He says, "... Shakespeare shows Richard in a
situation displaying not only the intellectual superiority of the hero but also
his mysterious personal fascination. The audience is likely to feel that the
man who can bring off a venture as fantastic as this one can surely accom-
plish anything."^7

Most analyses of the scene, however, stop at this point. Certainly
the scene reveals Richard's power, whether intellectual or personal, but the
wooing of Anne clearly has a wider significance. In looking at Richard's
opening soliloquy (1.i.) in Chapter II, a contrast between the public concerns
of war and the private pursuit of a lady was noticed. The play opens with
this contrast, and the second scene further develops the theme.

Richard has in the first scene revealed his plot to rid himself of
Clarence. Edward has interpreted the prophecy that "G" should disinherit
him to mean George, Duke of Clarence, rather than Richard, Duke of
Gloucester. Richard has suggested and encouraged this interpretation, and
in the soliloquy with which the scene closes he reveals his plans for gaining
the throne. He wishes the ailing King Edward dead, and then with Clarence
gone, he will inherit the throne. But to gain an indisputable title, he says
he will marry "Warwick's youngest daughter," Lady Anne. The proposed
marriage, like the murder of Clarence, is strictly for political reasons. As
Richard says, he will marry her

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{not all so much for love} \\
\text{As for another secret close intent} \\
\text{By marrying her which I must reach unto.}
\end{align*}
\]

That "secret close intent" is revealed in the lines that immediately follow.
Richard returns to the questions of Clarence and of Edward, saying that they
must be settled first. He thinks of the marriage to Anne in just the same
terms as political murders. Norman Nathan explains why having Anne as
wife is so indispensable to Richard's plans. Anne was not merely an eligible
Lancastrian woman who might add to Richard's popular support; she held the
legal right to the throne by virtue of being the wife of Crown Prince Edward,
Henry VI's son. Palmer believes that although the marriage to Anne is
necessary, Shakespeare allows this motive to fall into the background. The purpose for the dramatist, says Palmer, is to show Richard's insolent virtuosity in persuasion. But the public motivation that Richard mentions in scene one is important to the public/private theme in that scene and in the wooing scene itself. Richard, in addition to expressing public motivation for wanting Lady Anne, picks a public occasion to woo her. The public motivation is also comparable to the reasons given for royal marriages in the other history plays. A shrewd king marries for political advantage, and Richard III is no exception.

The wooing scene opens with a very public spectacle. The occasion of Henry VI's funeral gives a formal public setting for the action that is to follow. But the public formality is further emphasized by Anne's opening monologue. Her soliloquy takes the form of a conventional lament marked by a high degree of rhetorical balance and stateliness. The language itself is that of formal elegy: "shrouded," "obsequiously lament," "virtuous Lancaster," "bloodless remnant." These terms and the repeated words such as "honour" and "blood" lend formality to the language. Anne addresses her lament to the corpse (also the subject of her meditations) focusing all attention on the dead man. The bier remains on stage throughout the scene to remind the audience of the occasion on which Richard's wooing takes place. After Anne has addressed the corpse in a general way and has identified herself, she mentions "the self-same hand that made these wounds" and Richard becomes the subject of her monologue. The remainder of the soliloquy is devoted to curses.
upon Richard. The language of the curses and the attention focused upon the murderer prepare for Richard's entrance. Anne's mention of "wolves," "spiders," "toads," and "creeping venomed things" combined with her wish that his child be "abortive," "prodigious," and "untimely brought to light" recall Richard's own bodily deformity and the spiritual monstrosity of which it is the symbol.  

Richard's manner of entrance is surely in keeping with Anne's impassioned description of him. In contrast to Anne's measured "Set down, set down your honourable load," Richard roughly commands, "set it down," and threatens to strike down the halberdier. The deeds that Anne has just reported make this threat entirely believable. Richard is not just talking; he fully intends to kill anyone who opposes him. As Clemen says, this entrance reveals a new facet of Richard's character. He is imperious and overbearing, not the jovial flatterer of scene one. But Richard changes with chameleon-like rapidity. The "jovial flatterer" reappears almost immediately as he answers Anne's angry outburst (11. 42-49) with, "Sweet saint, for charity, be not so curst."

The rhetorical formality of Anne's opening lament continues in the dialogue with Richard. Richard and Anne parallel each other's statements:

Lady, you know no rules of charity
Villain, thou know'st no law of God nor man

O wonderful, when devils tell the truth!
More wonderful, when angels are so angry
Vouchsafe, divine perfection of a woman
Vouchsafe, diffused infection of a man

Fairer than tongue can name thee
Fouler than heart can think thee

The parallel form of each set of statements maintains the level of rhetorical formality established at the beginning of the scene and also emphasizes the contrast in content in each pair.

In addition to Richard's public reasons for wanting Anne to be his wife, the public occasion on which he woos her, and the formality of stage setting and rhetoric, Richard's argument is based on a clear contrast between the public and private worlds. Anne reviews Richard's crimes, while Richard makes up lame excuses. He tells her that King Edward, his brother, killed her husband Edward; he admits killing Henry VI but says he was "fitter for [heaven] than earth" anyway. But this witty defense is not Richard's real argument and does not in any way convince Anne. His persuasive arguments begin as he takes the initiative from Anne by asking,

Is not the causer of the timeless deaths
Of these Plantagenets, Henry and Edward,
As blameful as the executioner?

(11. 119-121).

Richard is no longer simply defending himself against Anne's accusations. He has put the question, and for the remainder of the dialogue Richard is in control. He answers his question by saying that Anne's beauty was the cause of the murders. For the next seventy lines Richard argues that the public,
established throughout the Histories: royal marriages always have political overtones. Richard immediately puts to use the public influence gained from his private relationship to Anne. He sends her to Crosby and takes over the public duty at hand, the burial of Henry VI. Anne surrenders to Richard the public authority that she had previously exercised.

Richard's exuberant soliloquy (II. 227-263) completes the structural pattern of the scene. The scene began with Anne's formal soliloquy of lament, progressed through the dialogue of accusation and glib answers to Richard's persuasive arguments, and ends with his soliloquy. This rather formal structure is also evident in the first scene of the play which both begins and ends with soliloquies. In the closing soliloquy of the wooing scene Richard first goes over the complete audacity of his attempt and expresses amazement at his success. The contrast between Anne's opening lament and this speech is made explicit as Richard recalls Anne's previous state: "curses in her mouth, tears in her eyes, / The bleeding witness of my hatred by." The spotlight of Richard's attention moves from Anne to Edward, her husband, and finally shines full upon himself. There is a certain horror in this clear look at Richard. The audience cannot fail to realize that Anne will soon learn that she was right when she called him "dreadful minister of hell," for he revels in that demonic power to assume any form and accomplish anything he should desire. This look at his moral monstrosity is reinforced by the consideration of Richard's bodily deformity. He remarks that his success in winning Anne
would seem to indicate that she finds him "a marv'illous proper man." He appears to be something he is not both physically and morally.

The final ten lines of the speech refer directly to the soliloquy with which Richard opened the play. There he said:

But I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks,  
Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass  
. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .  
I am determined to prove a villain.

But ironically Richard proves most villanous in the "idle pleasures" of love for which he found himself most unsuited. Of course, Richard's wooing has nothing to do with "idle pleasure;" like all he does, it is strictly for political advantage. His one suggestion of "idle pleasure" is to "entertain a score or two of tailors, / To study fashions to adorn my body." But Richard characteristically gives primary attention to public matters. He says he will first attend to the public duty of burying "yon fellow" and further his deception of Anne by "returning lamenting" to her. The final couplet explicitly recalls the first two lines of that first soliloquy, "Now is the winter of our discontent / Made glorious summer."

He commands the "sun of York:"

Shine out, fair sun, till I have bought a glass  
That I may see my shadow as I pass,

tyng together the two major concerns of his thoughts, his progress toward the throne and his newly discovered physical attractiveness.

A consideration of the public/private contrast leads, I think, to an increased appreciation of the scene's internal coherence and of its relevance
to the play as a whole. Richard's argument (that he committed public murders for private reasons) is in perfect keeping with the presentation of his suit on an occasion of public importance. The rhetorical formality and symmetrical structure of the scene also contribute to that sense of public importance. The public/private contrast operates within the scene on verbal, visual, and conceptual levels to give the scene increased coherence. But Richard's argument is pure dissimulation, and in relationship to the rest of the play the wooing scene occupies a unique position. It proves to the audience that Richard will regard every relationship and every activity only with respect to his public image and political advancement. He will attempt anything, for nothing could be more preposterous than what he achieves in this scene. The character presented here, who will propose to the widow of his victim over the body of her father-in-law for public reasons alone, has, as Anne says, no pity. He is the Richard who is capable of murdering his young nephews and turning against his friend Buckingham when political considerations require these actions of him.

This chapter has been an attempt to demonstrate the added significance that may be gained through a consideration of the public/private theme in the wooing scene of Richard III. That scene is not by any means an isolated case, for the public/private theme is basic to each of the history plays. The relationship of public to private life is of major importance to the very concept of kingship around which the plays are constructed. An understanding of this
dualism between public and private life as it is presented in the Histories may
contribute to the reader's appreciation of the social, political, and intellectual
milieu in which the plays were written, may increase his understanding of the
characters' psychological motivations (especially of the common desire for
escape), and may enable him to see the plays as a unit bound together by a
common, pervasive theme.
CHAPTER IV: NOTES


2 John Palmer, Political Characters of Shakespeare (London, 1945), p. 82.


4 Palmer, p. 81.

5 W. Richardson, Essays on Shakespeare's Dramatic Characters (London, 1797), p. 18. W. Oechelhäuser in Essay über Richard III (Berlin, 1894) counters this argument. He says, "What great interest could this wooing-scene arouse . . . if indeed we regard her as mentally insignificant? I think Shakespeare wishes her to be recognized, both intellectually and morally, as a true daughter of Eve, with the normal weakness, and especially the normal vanity of her sex, no more, no less." (p. 82).

6 Palmer, p. 81.

7 Clemen, p. 22.


9 Palmer, p. 81.

10 The imagery of "toads," etc. also anticipates a series of animal images to be applied to Richard later in the play (Clemen, p. 25).


12 Palmer, p. 84.
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