CHAPTER III

SHAKESPEARE AND THE STATE — I

ABSTRACT:

Besides the state-conducted ideological efforts, largely through propaganda - pamphlets and the pulpit, the theatre becomes one of the most potent platforms for the shaping of consciousness, even as it affords entertainment and livelihood. Shakespeare's grasping of political concepts and the moulding them through artistic representations forms the bulk of the History plays. In the process of intellection these ideas surface with the force of his artistic genius.

The development of the nation-state, over and above the parcellized sovereignties of the middle ages, with the unitary state seeking to find its identity and bearings in the world of nation-states, required the state's internal machinery as well as its international position strengthened. The idea of 'soverigny' is crucial to this development. The sovereign power is seen to reside in a central monarch, irrevocable, though bestowed by the people, and continuing in perpetuity. The themes of nationhood and patriotism
essentially supplement the concept of sovereignty. Diplomacy and alliances are crucial to these developments.

Shakespeare's John of Gaunt ('Richard II') performs the function of propping this concept in substantial manner and the changes in the dramatic person from the historical one, are seen in this light. "Time-honoured Lancaster"'s speech on the "emerald isle", on his insistence on the unitary state, and the sovereignty of "God's deputy" are given prominence by virtue of his age, dignity, and the prophecies of a dying man. Richard's abdication is a symbolic ritual of an organic sovereign power residing in the ruler. The scene before Angiers ('King John') deliberates at length upon the notion of a sovereign power. The treaty in 'Henry VI Part II', or the 'league' in 'Henry VIII', are given prominence in insistent manner. In 'King John' foreign domination in the form of the Church is shown to be largely impotent, only political expedience and the church's influence in the European mainland are focussed.

The legitimation of society and the state finds fuller expression in the expedient of law and justice. From feudal preponderance to the development of an objectified state, was
a long process of consolidation where justice, both in principle and in administration marks a changing consciousness. The medieval notion of justice as a divine principle, and the courts as "coram rege" find expression in 'Henry VI Part II'. This is replaced by a notion of justice as legislation and will of the ruler (King John). However, the growing conciliarism, prerogative courts functioning without the ruler and yet obtaining the judicial function from the king, the changing relations in society, describe the meaning of justice as acquiring a changing interpretation from its self-revealing principle to as being contrived. The king is seen as absolute and as the power of highest appeal ('Henry VIII'). The repressive nature of justice and its penal exactitude are foremost in the minds of those in the lower strata of society. The Falstaff-Hal scenes reconstruct this idea.

In the light of the absolute and sovereign ruler, the case for the tyrant was always made with vehemence. 'Richard III', 'King John' and 'Richard II' are three tyrants that Shakespeare analyses in succession. In accordance with the History plays of the period, the tyrant, and tyrannicide, was a vexed question and was not so easily accounted for. Richard III was an unredeeming tyrant whose end was deserved. King
John was usurper and tyrant. The king who did not instill true religion was also a tyrant in the light of Elizabethan political consciousness. John in this sense worked for the 'nation' rather than for Rome, and complex as his case was he did not merit resistance. The question of resistance had been debated throughout the middle ages, and in spite of a differing degree of power allocated to the ruler in feudal literature as against civilian literature and that of the church, resistance was not generally deemed seditious. Here resistance was for a while vigorously denied. But again in 'Richard II' a new situation arises, where the inept king by virtue of tyranny merited deposition if not outright resistance. Here a Machiavellian political manoeuvre is described and set forth with brilliance.

The new bourgeois spirit of adventure and achievement pulsates in the distinctly single-minded pursuits of Richard III, but such individualism carried to its extreme was not the answer to the forstering of the state. A similar temper is displayed by the bastard whose loyalty to the king is more in tune with this new bourgeois spirit. The urging of a secular temper, in contrast to religious explication for all phenomena, was a cultural practice set forth (Richard II'). Though Providence is never rejected outright. The conservative and the liberal are both set forth.
We have noted in the previous chapter, how the Tudor State was compelled by the force of circumstances to deploy vigorous state power and how to this end it had organised its power structure. Both to reassert the weakening feudal ties, as well as to naturalise new forms of social relations resulting from increasingly capitalist modes of production, the state was being restructured to meet these contingencies, the contradictory nature of which was always apparent in the form of protests from the lower ranks of society. On the other hand, its mediatory role was seen to ascertain a certain amount of balancing among the classes, which ultimately rested upon the chief executive of the State, in this case an increasingly despotic national monarch. We have also adjudged this monarchical rule to be of an absolutist tenor, though it was presented from its full realisation by the absence of the supreme forces of coercion. The forces of repression as we have seen, have taken on a reinvigorated and renewed institutionalisation, and to this end ideology takes on a very crucial function.

In England, in the Tudor period, class consciousness, played a highly vigorous role in the capitalisation of society. Confronted with the objective historical situation of society, the bourgeoisie were comprehensively attuned to impute or
adjust consciousness. The unmediated dominance of the feudal class is now (Tudor period) wrenched by an intervening absolutist state. The consciousness of the bourgeoisie adapts to this phenomenon, and is able to grasp the necessity of the absolutist (though feudal) state in the transition period. In this connection, therefore, we are chiefly concerned with the debate that centred around the state. This is a dialectical process, in that views and expositions upon the state are not just detached reflection but had a function of sustaining the state, just as the development of the state gave form and shape to these views. It may be noted that the Tudor State performed a vigilant role in the shaping of consciousness, and the theatre, no less than the pulpit came under its strict purview. Though independent, yet through the system of patronage, censorship, and active intelligence system, the functioning of the theatres and dramatic performances were to a large extent, regulated by the state, just as texts (dramas, literary texts, political treatises and propaganda pamphlets) came under its surveillance.

We may recall briefly that the bourgeoisie had throughout the middle ages tried to extricate itself from the restrictions of guilds and of the feudal nobility and in this period (Tudor),
a paternalistic state made efforts to protect corporative industries in towns as well as manufactures in the country. However it was the nobility and especially the courtier favourites that reaped the fruits of this paternalism, in the commercial and financial expansions of the time. To this end the state's institutions, administrative and judicial, required overhauling, to maintain state power that was increasingly cohering upon the central monarch, over and above medieval particularisms. The Church had stood as the most formidable obstruction to this "modernising" process. This we have seen required tremendous effort, and as the century progressed the emphasis upon the central monarch though unabated, had also seen the development of a conciliarism, centralised, and presided undeniably by the king (Council, Privy Council, Judiciary, Regional Councils, the Justices of Peace, Parliament etc.) However, the ruler's absolute powers notwithstanding, their effective functioning had acquired a degree of independence. Therefore the monarch's supreme power, with the close supervision of this powerful body of officers was the chief warrant of meaningful governance. Legitimation of both the State and social relations, was an effort that required concentration chiefly on the judicial system, on the doctrine of justice, and the
notion of legislation. In the process, these administrative bodies had taken on an increasingly judicial function, (barring Parliament which became largely a legislative body) and political questions to a large extent centred upon this category. Together with the absolutist powers that converged upon the Tudor monarchy, yet requiring to function without the supreme instruments of coercion (army, police force), political exposition takes on a very important role, both in curbing and in extending the monarch's power. Concepts of Justice and Tyranny typifying very basic categories therefore take on a rejuvenated form of deliberation.

It has been our effort to describe the changes both in the area of the state and in the intellectual arena of literary texts. Epochal changes however show that in the arena of consciousness ideas and conceptions are not abandoned to be replaced by totally novel assumptions, but traditional ideas which had subsisted have now come to the forefront of discussion, and many a time the emphasis of other ideas have been altered. Locating these changes brings the discussion into clearer perspective and enlivens the intellectual milieu in which Shakespeare operates. Into the sharp contrast and altered emphasis in political concepts that we have located,
one basic note in the intellectual temper has become apparent, that is the line of heterodoxy that was beginning to be established, even while the orthodox position was substantially conserved. The bourgeois literate articulation grasps the essentially feudal nature of the state and the governing classes, even as it assumes a more dynamic approach. We hope to discover how Shakespeare's individual genius and artistry had assimilated and expressed this changing consciousness. The plays, being artistic renditions of consciousness shaped in a definite mould, and exemplifying a dramatic genre, are approached both in their linear progression (plot, development etc), as well as to indicate the valuations that are rendered.

Sovereignty

We have seen that in the feudal structure of society, the notion of the king as the highest overlord, and his supremacy, had from time to time been recalled. Besides, the tradition of the civilian writers had also maintained, even if restricted to highly academic debates, the notion of an absolute power irrevocably transferred from the people to the ruler (Emperor). At times it was disputed whether this transference was absolute. In the sixteenth century these ideas were seen to resurface in order to buttress a national monarch.
Bodin had referred to the perpetual and absolute power residing in the ruler which he termed 'sovereignty'. Similarly Hooker had mentioned: "The act of a public society of men done five hundred years sitheence standeth as theirs who presently are of the same societies, because corporations are immortal; we were then alive in our predecessors, and they in their successors do live still". To Hooker corporations were immortal, and that "dominion" cannot be "withdrawn" from the ruler. The right of the ruler was derived from the people which once transfered belonged solely to the ruler in perpetuity.¹ If Bodin and Hooker are but instances of serious thinkers, they constitute the intellectual environment in which thinkers were now operating.

Critics have pointed out that Shakespeare never denies the necessity of the state no matter how tyrannical the state power may seem to be.² However the great writer's observations and surmises upon the state, in the History plays, spanning

¹See C. Morris, Political Thought in England, Runale to Hooker, D.J.P. 1953, p. 183-5.

²See for instance R.H. Wells, Shakespeare Politics and the State, Pg 33, (1986) Or, M.M. Reese (London 1961), The Cease of Majesty, Pg 143-55. To quote Reese, "... power is a trust so precious that its betrayal is as much a tragedy for the individual as for the society that is involved in his ruin" (Pg 143). Or, "He (Shakespeare) feared the abandonment of power more than he feared its tyrannical exercise". (Pg 155).
over twentyone years, not only renders aesthetic delight, but describes the nature of the state of that historical period with critical insight. Proceeding from this assumption we may begin to discover in Shakespeare those notions of the state; what exactly are the political ideas upon which Shakespeare delicipates in the plays.

The notion of 'sovereignty' as in Hooker and Bodin, is expressed in the History plays in a variety of contexts. In the scene of Richard II's abdication of throne there is a persistent exposition of the theme of power residing wholly in the ruler which had to be bodily transferred to his successor, Bolingbroke, for it to become effective and legitimate. If this sovereign power had been transferred to the ruler for all posterity, all parochial rule is thereby seen to be illegitimate and unasked for. Therefore the idea of the nation operating as a unit rather than as fragmented in feudal hierarchies takes very important dimensions, in which light Richard's farming of the realm causes John of Gaunt to admonish:

"Landlord of England art thou, not king, Thy state of law is boneslave to the law."  

However, in 'King John', these ideas find a sustained deliberation in the scene before Angiers (Act II Scene I). Though not as yet fully conceived, the idea of a sovereign power, above all regional allegiances, that persisted in perpetuity, rather than change with the assertion of force or other claims, is seen to be deliberated at length. Thus when confronted by the two claimants to the throne, King John and King Philip (for Arthur), Hubert, Citizen of Angiers replies:

Hub. In brief, we are the King of England's subjects: For him, and in his right, we hold this town.

K. John. Acknowledge then the king, and let me in.

Hub. That can we not; but he that proves the king, To him will we prove loyal; till that time Have we ramm'd up our gates against the world.

K. John. But not the crown of England prove the king?

Hub. Till you compound whose right is worthiest We for the worthiest hold the right from both.  

What is evident from this encounter is that the notion of a central king finds positive acceptance. It was made clear

---

4 William Shakespeare, King John, Act II, Sc I, l. 267-69
that allegiance was to the King of England, and if the throne rests on doubtful shoulders it was to be resolved, if not by theoretical verification, then by right of force out at the level of the state. The acceptance of the citizen is however of vital relevance to whom appeal is again made. Hubert repeats his former argument after the clash of forces have arrived at a stalemate:

Hub. Strength matched with strength, and power confronted power; both are alike and both alike we like. One must prove greatest; while they weigh so even we hold our town for neither, yet for both.  

That allegiance was not to local overlordship, but to a sovereign power, namely the king of England is repeated. The person of the king and his bona fide claims were not of particular significance to the Citizen, it was to an immutable and valid conception that Hubert repeatedly adheres;

K. John. Whose party do the townsmen yet admit?
K. Phi. Speak citizens, for England, who's your king?
Hub. The king of England, when we know the king.

---

5 ibid., 1. 330-33.
K. Phi. Know him in us, that here hold up his right.
K. John, In us, that our own great deputy,
And bear possession of our person here,
Lord of our presence, Angiers, and of you.
Hub. A greater power than we denies all this,
And till it be undoubted, we do lock
Our former scruple in our strong-oarr'd gates;
Kings of our fear, until our fears, resolv'd;
Be by some certain king purg'd and depos'd. 6

We have seen that the new drive for statehood was conducted with gusto and its path was often strewn with violence. Thus the establishment of a 'sovereign' nation state, under one government, one code of laws, one customs tariff, even one religion and one language, necessitated the wielding of unlimited power. However independent nations growing out of the scattered feudal territories also required to evince their international status, and establish a balance of powers in a period of epochal change. Dynastic preponderance had resulted in diplomatic ties being conducted through marriage alliances and treaties, for the state's international function to cultivate. This aspect of the state can be seen to flourish here, as Hubert under threat of a joint aggression of England

6 Ibíd., l. 361-72.
and France comes up with the idea of an alliance between the Dauphin and Blanché, which even if temporarily, settled the vexing problem.

The prominence given to the treaty can also be seen in 'Henry VI Part II'. A major agreement have been signed by Suffolk on behalf of the king for the hand of Margaret, the daughter of Reignier King of Naples, to be affianced to Henry King of England. The terms of the Treaty were extremely unsuitable to the English nobility as Anjou and Maine, the ancient territories of England had been surrendered to Reignier and no dowry was forthcoming with the Princess. Gloucester therefore exclaims in anguish:

"O peers of England! shameful is this league,
Fatal this marriage cancelling your fame,
Sloting your names from books of memory,
Razing the characters of your renown,
Defacing monuments of conquer'd France,
Undoing all, as all had never been!"

The dreadful mistake that the treaty turned out to be is

emphasised by the turn of events as Margaret the poor daughter of a foreign prince earns the aouses of the English nobility while she herself transforms from the graceful princess to a merciless virago.

In Shakespeare's last play 'Henry VIII', the pageantry of the Field of the cloth of Gold is described in all its gorgeous display, though it was retold rather than flaunted on stage. But the league wrought in spectacular circumstances was seen to end in futility for it was broken and news arrived of France having arrested English merchandise at dordeaux. Wolsey as the arch diplomat is viewed with envy and suspicion by the nobles, but his influence and power was spread beyond the country.

The notion of sovereignty therefore implies a perpetual and absolute power residing in the ruler, which Dodin had aptly summarised: "Sovereignty is the absolute and perpetual power... of commanding in a state. It is necessary to define this term since no political philosopher or jurist has yet defined it, though the presence of sovereignty is the chief property which distinguishes a state from other organisations or society of men ......... Now it remains to say exactly what sovereignty is. To begin with, then, it is a perpetual power. For, if power

**Shakespeare, King Henry VIII**, Act I, Sc. I.
be held only for a certain time (it does not matter how long a time), it is not sovereign power, and he who holds it for that time is not a sovereign prince, but only a trustee or custodian of that power so long as it pleases the real prince (or the people) not to revoke it ...

We have seen that the establishment of a 'sovereign' nation state required the propagation of the idea of a single power, above all local allegiances, as well as the idea of the sovereignty of the nation vis-à-vis other nations. In this regard diplomacy and alliances were seen to be of paramount significance, ranging from the marriage alliance to trade pacts. The supremacy of this power meant that the intrusion of alien powers was to be discouraged, and in this context the powers of the Roman Church was always suspect. Thus in 'King John', the Papal legate, influential though he was in marshalling powers against each other, was considered to be interfering by the English monarch who defies him thus:

K. John. What earthly name to interrogatories
Can taste the free breath of a sacred king?
Thou canst not, cardinal, devise a name
So slight unworthy and ridiculous,

9 W.T. Jones, Masters of Political Thought
To charge me to an answer, as the pope.
Tell him this tale; and from the mouth of England
Add thus much more, that no Italian priest
Shall tithe or toll in our dominions;
But as we, under God, are supreme head,
So under Him that great supremacy,
Where we do reign, we will alone uphold
Without the assistance of a mortal hand;
So tell the pope, all reverence set apart
To him and his usurp'd authority.

K. John. Though you and all the kings of Christendom
Are led so grossly by this meddling priest,
Dreading the curse that money may buy out;
And by the merit of wild gold, dross, dust,
Purchase corrupted pardon of a man,
Who in that sale sells pardon for himself;
Though you and all the rest so grossly led
This juggling witchcraft with revenue cherish,
Yet I alone, alone do me oppose
Against the pope, and count his friends my foes.

Though John yields eventually to the pressures of
circumstances, of revolt and disobedience at home, and submits
the crown to Pandulph who receives on behalf of the Roman
pope, yet this submission was construed to be reasonable policy

1Q Shakes. King John, Act III, Sc I, l. 73-97.
rather than acceptance of foreign domination, in the form of the Church. John therefore is quick to point out that the yielding of the Crown was a voluntary act rather than conducted under threat of force:

K. John. Now keep your holy word; go meet the French, And from his holiness use all your power To stop their marches 'fore we are inflamm'd. Our discontented counties do revolt; Our people quarrel with obedience, Swearing allegiance and the love of soul To stranger blood, to foreign royalty. This inundation of mistemp'red humour Rests by you only to be qualified; Then pause not; for the present time's so sick That present medicine must be minist'red Or overthrow incurable ensues.

.............

Is this Ascension-day? Did not the prophet Say that before Ascension-day at noon My crown I should give off? Even so I have; I did suppose it should be on constraint; But, heaven be thank'd, it is but voluntary. 11

To some writers the 'sovereign' power was perceived to be of an absolute nature. To quote Bodin again: "We may now go on to the other part of our definition, and explain

what absolute power is. For the people or the nobles of a state can give the sovereign and perpetual power to any one they choose. They can give this power simply and completely to dispose of their goods, their lives, and the whole state at the sovereign's pleasure, and to be left as he chooses, simply and completely, without any other reason than his liberality. This power is given to the prince without any charges or conditions attached (except, of course, those set by the law of God or nature), for power given with restrictions is neither absolute power nor, properly speaking, sovereignty....... However in England, as we saw earlier, (Chapter I), the notion of absolute power residing in the ruler was not asserted with positive conviction. We have seen that parliamentary curbs to power and conciliar practice had hindered such absolutism. The self-abdication of Richard II and the surrender of the symbols of majesty shown in ritualistic detail defines this notion of sovereignty as a perpetual power with greater precision. If deposition of a ruler questions the permanence of this power, its transference by the ruler himself allows the notion of sovereignty to be kept intact. Sovereignty was also implied in the divine nature of kingship, of having received the power of government from God himself.12

The ruler's divinity rendered him supreme as John was seen to affirm. The critical question of absolutism, mainly propounded through the concept of law, in relation to the ruler, was beginning to be newly defined. Therefore we turn to Shakespeare's evaluation of the concepts of law and justice.

**Justice**

If laws had the function of mitigating the inherent contradictions of society and legitimising them, in pre-capitalist society justice was venerated as a religious and natural principle and laws authenticated through the principle of custom. The Stoical tradition of justice as the expression of a universal principle, of a Law of Nature, and Will of God, that existed before all states and positive law, was maintained in the middle ages. While social justice seeks to establish that perfection in an imperfect world, aided by natural reason, the actual mitigation of justice was the ruler's priority and primary function. This of course rendered a divine nature to the ruler. This particular function of the ruler was never lost as Shakespeare was always prompt to define in the various judgements that his kings were called upon to make. As the monarchy was inculcated with novel powers in the matters of
Church, the notion of legislation and the king's independent powers in this regard, entertained for a while, finds a preponderance of valuation (as in Tyndale for example). However as we have noted, the medieval notion of the ruler as under the law, even if the guardian of law, does not recede. As conciliarism and representative institutions take root, the idea of justice takes on a markedly new stance, that is law and justice as procedural cases. These rapidly changing conceptions can be clearly perceived in Shakespeare's History plays.

The traditional role of the king as justiciar and as the fount of justice is amply portrayed in 'Henry VI Part II'. The scene (Act II, Sc III) is set in a hall of justice and the king is called upon to pass judgement upon two cases. One on the Duchess of Gloucester for indulging in anti-state activities by consorting with the witch Margery Jourdain and her circle of charmers, with a view to obtaining clairvoyant knowledge regarding the future of the throne and the noble aspirants to it. The Duchess herself had her sights on the throne and as no amount of prodding would induce the loyal Duke to succumb to such an idea, and when insulted by an apparently misdirected box on the ear by the queen herself,
Eleanor takes recourse to necromancy. Court intrigue had however set the trap for her, and caught red-handed in what was deemed a capital offence, the Duchess awaited justice in the hands of the King.

Henry, inept in matters of state on every account, and dependent on the Protector for all decision, performs this function with rehearsed ease:

King. Stand forth, Dame Eleanor Cobham, Gloucester's wife. In sight of God and us, your guilt is great; Receive the sentence of the law for sins Such as by God's book are adjudg'd to death You four, from hence to prison back again; From thence unto the place of execution; The witch in Smithfield shall be burn'd to ashes, And you three shall be strangled on the gallows. You, madam, for you are more nooly born, Despoiled of your honour in your life, Shall, after three days open penance done, Live in your country here in banishment, with Sir John Stanley, in the Isle of man. 13

and when the Duchess exclaims:

"welcome is banishment; welcome were my death", Duke Humphrey replies with inviolate submission:

"Eleanor, the law, thou seest, hath judged thee: I cannot justify whom the law condemns." 14

Law speaks with unchallenged authority and for all his power and position the Protector does not but acknowledge the verdict of the law. With new found confidence the King in the very next line demands the staff of the Protector, symbol of his command, and empowers himself with supreme authority of the realm, promising to conduct himself under the guidance and light of God:

King. Stay, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester; ere thou go Give up thy staff; Henry will to himself Protector be; and God shall be my hope, My stay, my guide, and lantern to my feet. 15

This episode reveals that the state's repressive function conducted in its judicial capacity can come with a heavy hand upon any challenges to its authority (witchery being potentially subversive with its claimed powers of darkness). It can be selective in its oppression, for Eleanor,

14 ibid., l. 15-16.
15 ibid., l. 22-3.
as was pointed out, enjoying a superior social status would be spared her life but not her humiliation ("open penance"), and deprived of honour so essential to her position. It is perhaps a realisation of this power that makes Henry, almost in the same breath, demand to be relieved of the protectorship.

Justice was a divine principle to the Middle Ages and the King's function as judge sanctified his authority, just as now Henry claimed he was eager to pursue his divine intention. Law itself was immutable and could not be redefined or created anew according to the medieval version. On the other hand the axiomatic character of law, being but a reflection of God's law (natural law), is amply demonstrated in the second case that Henry had to sit in judgement upon.

Henry himself is well versed in what Justice implied and is eager to perform that role traditionally ascribed to the king:

King. To-morrow toward London back again,
   To look into this business thoroughly,
   And call these foul offenders to their answers,
   And poise the cause in Justice 'equal scales,
   Whose beam stands sure, whose rightful cause prevails. 16

Both the accuser, Peter, and the defendant Thomas Horner the Armourer, had witnesses to support their claims, Peter's being a petition of treason against his master, and Horner's that it was a lie borne out of malice by his apprentice. Now the law condemned Horner with punishment of death, but the king unable to pass judgement, for doubts remained, as Horner claims to have witnesses testifying Peter's malice toward him. The king therefore orders mortal combat, wherein judgement would be passed demonstrating the axiomatic nature of law and impressing its customary nature, rather than the idea of law as legislation. Peter mortified with the prospect, however emerges the winner as Horner dies with the last confession:

"Hold, Peter, hold! I confess, I confess treason."

What to us may seem to be a complex feature of law, was demonstrated with exceeding clarity by Shakespeare through this episode. Where preceptorial law failed to provide an immediate judgement, the divine principle of justice and its impartial, invincible character could find the true culprit and mete out his deserved punishment. Therefore the King moralises:
King. Go, take hence that traitor from our sight; For by his death we do perceive his guilt; And God in justice hath reveal'd to us The truth and innocence of this poor fellow, Which he had thought to have murder'd wrongfully. 17

So far the views depicted are straight forward enough and the issues themselves are resolved without creating further tension in the play's narration, but this was only part of the story. Shakespeare illuminates a contrary feature of law in the later play 'King John', and raises questions and misgivings about these very fundamental notions of law agreed upon for ages.

It has been rightly pointed out that the play ('King John') is a construction of several oppositional concepts put to open contest in finely pointed dualism such as crime and punishment (II.1.184-90) faith and need (III.1.137-42) law and justice (III.1.111-16) etc.

We have already noted that in "Henry VI Part II" this dualism did not appear with regard to law and justice. That law was the embodiment of justice and the divine principle of justice which animates the king in his judicial function was unquestioned. Here, the king weakens the very foundation of his kingship by himself violating the first condition of the Crown, that is the law of primogeniture and heredity.

K. John. Our strong possession and our right for us

Elsa. your strong possession much more than your right. 18

And a frenzied but rational Constance questions the validity of law:

Pand. There's law and warrant, lady for my curse.

Const. And for mine too; when law can do no right
Let it be lawful that law bar no wrong!
Law cannot give my child his kingdom here,
For he that holds his kingdom holds the law;
Therefore, since law itself is perfect wrong,
How can the law forbid my tongue to curse? 19

Here is a major challenge to the idea that law is immutable and embodied perfect goodness. Secondly, the idea of the medieval king's function as interpreting the law but not creating it is turned topsy-turvy, for the king here is fancied as the sole legislator and there is no contradiction to this accusation from any quarters.

At the other end of the social scale, the oppressive nature of law is more distinctly realised and it is a constant threat hanging upon those whose lives veer very closely between the respectable and the disreputable that Law demarcates. If royalty supposedly represents benevolent justice, to the populace of 'The Boar's Head Tavern' in Eastcheap, it is associated in their perceptions with its repressive nature, the objective representation of which is the gallows. In presenting the underworld with mock comic appeal Shakespeare tones down the harshness that world is subject to, but the vital question of existence always under the threat of forfeit
by the law is never lost. Even when the lines of the social divide are drawn closer, it is the state's repressive functions that is uppermost in the minds of those below, and in the Hal-Falstaff scenes this theme is clearly represented. For all the cheer and bonhomie that the two share, the Prince of Wales does not lose his authoritative essence, and Falstaff speaks tongue in cheek when he appeals to Hal's essential powers of repression:

Fal. Indeed, you come near me now, Hal, for we that take purses go by the moon and the seven stars, and not "by Phoeous, he, that wand'ring knights so fair"; and I prithee sweet wag, when thou art king, as God save thy Grace --- Majesty I should say, for grace thou wilt have none ---

Prince. What, none?

Fal. No, my troth, not so much as will serve to be prologue to an egg and butter.

Prince. Well, how then? Come, roundly, roundly.

Fal. Marry then sweet wag, when thou art king let not us that are squires of the night's body be called thieves of the day's beauty; let us be Diana's foresters, gentlemen of the shade, minions of the moon; and let men say we be men of good government, being governed as the sea is, by our noole and chaste mistress the moon, under whose countenance we steal.
Prince. Thou sayest well, and it holds well too, for the for-
tune of us that are the moon's men both ebb and
flow like the sea, being governed as the sea is, by the
moon --- as for proof now, a purse of gold most reso-
lutely snatched on Monday night, and most dissolutely
spent on Tuesday morning, got with swearing "Lay by!",
and spent with crying "Bring in!", now in as low
an ebb as the foot of the ladder, and by and by in
as high a flow as the ridge of the gallows.

Fal. By the Lord thou sayest true, lad; ...........
............... 
Yea, and so used it that were it not here apparent
that thou art heir apparent --- But I prithee sweet
wag, shall there be gallows standing in England
when thou art king? and resolution thus fubbed as it
is with the rusty curb of old father Antic the law? Do
not thou when thou art king hang a thief.20

The ominous note of the Prince is always present. Hal
21 has himself proclaimed through his soliloquy that his un-
bridled youth was a surge of idleness that would be shed off
presently and would in fact offset his intended sobriety,
displaying it to advantage. To use his own image, like the

20 Shakespeare, King Henry IV Part I, Act I, Sc. II,
l. 30-60.
21 Ibid., l. 190-212.
sun "breaking through the foul and ugly mists of vapours that did seem to strangle him", his authority never goes unacknowledged and its repressive character is driven home:

Bard. My lord, do you see these meteors? do you behold these exhalations?

Prince. I do.

Bard. What think you they pretend?

Prince. Hot livers, and cold purses.

Bard. Choler, my lord, if rightly taken.

Prince. No, if rightly taken, halter.22

This repressive function of the state in its judicial capacity is increasingly expressed in representational terms and is embodied in the person of the Lord Chief Justice who plays a significant part in 'Henry IV Part II'. This however requires a separate treatment. While the History tetralogies portray the king on the one hand as the fount of justice, divine and irrefutable in this capacity, on the other they present him as a legislator, high-lighting the repressive function of the state. He is seen to increasingly perform this function in a representational manner, as the last play of Shakespeare so amply demonstrates. In 'Henry VIII', which

also happens to be a chronicle play, justice acquires an independent status capable of functioning without the king. The King never ceases to be the fountainhead of justice, but allowed to perform independent of the king, justice takes its own devious path, instrumentated by those close to the high seat of power, intriguing when their own interest are at stake.

In the series of trials that are dramatised in 'Henry VIII', the King is shown as standing outside the proceedings of the course of justice. Law is encoded and follows a procedure seemingly objective, but in fact closely monitored by those wielding power and position. Thus while the King remains detached, the councillors, chancellor, secretary etc. conduct the trials and implicate the accused, out the King's absolute powers are ready to be deployed whenever willed. Therefore when the Surveyor recounts the treasonous practices, and sworn intentions of the Duke of Buckingham, towards unseating the King (Act I, Sc II, l.132-208), the King expostulates in anger and directs that Buckingham be put to trial:

King. There's his period,
To sheath his knife in us; he is attach'd
Call him to present trial; if he may
Find mercy in the law, 'tis his; if none,
Let him no seek't of us, by day and night,
He's traitor to th'height!

Being the sworn enemy of Wolsey, the spectacular officer and chief wielder of state power as signified in the great seal entrusted upon him, Buckingham had called upon his own doom by inveighing against him. Therefore he stood little chance in the trial organised by Wolsey. Narrated by the 1st Gentleman this trial gives a clear indication of the course that justice can contrive:

2 Gent. But pray, how pass'd it?

1 Gent. I'll tell you in a little. The great duke came to the bar; where to his accusations he pleaded still not guilty, and alleged many sharp reasons to defeat the law.

The king's attorney on the contrary urg'd on the examinations, proofs, confessions of divers witnesses, which the duke desir'd to have brought vivo voce to his face; at which appear'd against him is surveyor, Sir Gilbert Park his chancellor, and John Car, Confessor to him, with the devil monk, Hopkins, that made this mischief.

2 Gent. That was he that fed him with his prophecies.

1 Gent. The same; all these accus'd him strongly, which he fain

Would have flung from him; but indeed he could not,
And so his peers upon this evidence
Have found him guilty of high treason. Much
He spoke, and learnedly for life; but all
Was either pitied in him or forgotten.

2. Gent. After all this how did he bear himself?

1. Gent. When he was brought again to th'bar, to hear
His knell rang out, his judgement, he was stirr'd
With such an agony, he sweat extremely,
And something spoke in choler, ill and hasty;
But he fell to himself again, and sweetly
In all the rest shou'd a most noble patience.

2. Gent. Certainly

The cardinal is the end of this.24

The King does not directly involve himself in the
judicial proceedings but the King's arbitrement over and
above penal law was recognised, and in fact the King's law
could be moulded to his desires even if that was not advisable.
Thus the condemned Buckingham, on his way to the Tower,
recognises the benevolence of the absolute ruler:

"The law I bear no malice for my death,  
'T has done upon the premisses but justice;  
But those that sought it I could wish more Christians;  
Be what they will, I heartily forgive 'em;  
Yet let 'em look they glory not in mischief,  
Nor build their evils on the graves of great men,  
For them my guiltless blood must cry against 'em  
For further life in this world I ne'er hope,  
Nor will I sue, although the king have mercies  
More than I dare make faults". 25

and the King himself had earlier noted: "we must not rend our subjects from our laws/And stick them in our will".

Justice is increasingly defined in trials that are contrived, whose outcome is forgone. Yet the condemned Buckingham or the deserted Katherine preaches the virtue of patience when justice pursues them relentlessly. Even the trial of Katherine at Black Friars is preceded by the manipulations of Wolsey and the Papal Commission, though the King is demonstrated to act with kindness and generosity. Here is however the unique case of the King himself as an appellant, thereby underpinning the accepted notion that the Law was the King's but the King himself

was subject to law. Thus the procedural aspect of law gains precedence:

Wol. I know your majesty has always lov'd her
So dear in heart, not to deny her that
A woman of less place might ask by law,
Scholars allow'd freely to argue for her.

King. Ay, and the best she shall have; and my favour
To him that does best, God forbid else: 26

Queen Katherine eventually denies to bide by such a
court of commission, pleading that her marriage was deemed
lawful by the law of states and the Roman church, by her chastity
and loyalty, and to that end she argues:

Kath. ...... ...... If in the course
and process of this time you can report,
And prove it too, against mine honour aught,
My bond to wedlock, or my love and duty
Against your sacred person; in God's name
Turn me away, and let the foul'st contempt
Shut door upon me, and so give me up
To the sharpest kind of justice. Please you, sir;
The king your father was reputed for
A prince most prudent, of an excellent
And unmatch'd wit and judgement; Ferdinand
My father, King of Spain, was reckon'd one

The wisest prince that there had reign'd by many
A year before. It is not to be question'd
That they had gathered a wise council to them
Of every realm, that did debate this business,
Who deem'd our marriage lawful; wherefore I
humbly
Beseech you sir, to spare me till I may
Be by friends in Spairn advis'd, whose counsel
I will implore. If not, i'th' name of God
Your pleasure be fulfill'd. 27

Though her speech was directed to the King, it was
the judges of this special court, Cardinal Wolsey and Cardinal
Campius who answer her, and in the debate that followed it
becomes evident that justice had made complex advances. The
judges are now able to exert tremendous pressure on the
appellants, though royal members:

Wol. You have here lady
(And of your choice) these reverend fathers, men
Of singular integrity and learning,
Yea, the elect o'th'land, who are assembled
To plead your cause. It shall be therefore bootless
That longer you desire the court, as well
For your own quiet as to rectify
What is unsettled in the king.

27Ibid., Act II, Sc. IV, l. 35-55.
Cam

Hath spoken well and justly; therefore madam,
It's fit this royal session do proceed,
And that without delay their arguments
Be now produc'd and heard. 28

The smooth tongued Wolsey, practising unbounded power while he preached humility, was openly condemned by Katherine. No longer able to tolerate his ministrations of law Katherine refuses the Court's prosecution:

Kath. I must tell you,
You tender more your person's honour than
Your high profession spiritual; that again
I do refuse you for my judge, and here
Before you all, appeal unto the Pope,
To bring my whole cause 'fore his holiness
And to be judg'd by him.

I will not tarry; no, nor ever more
Upon this business my appearance make
In any of their courts. 29

The King expresses his displeasure with the proceedings in an aside:

28 Ibid., Act II, Sc. IV, l. 55-66.
29 Ibid., Act II, Sc. IV, l. 113-31.
"I may perceive/ These Cardinals trifle with me;  
I abhor/ This dilatory sloth and tricks of Rome." 30

Of course the play points out that neither the Roman Pope, or his legates, nor Spain could possibly intervene in the course of justice that had a national definition under a national monarch. The King finds the means of getting his work accomplished, and with one act of will would bring Wolsey crashing down, but the nature of justice is best defined by the Papal Commissioner himself as the Cardinals try to persuade the Queen to their way:

Cam. Put your main cause into the King's protection,  
He's is loving and most gracious. 'Twill be much  
both for your honour better and your cause,  
For if the trial of law o'ertake ye,  
You'll part away disgrac'd

Wol. He tells you rightly. 31

and Katherine is quite clear in her indictment:

Kath. Ye tell me what ye wish for ooth, my ruin  
Is this your Christian counsel? Oot upon ye.  
Heaven is above all yet; there sits a judge  
That no king can corrupt. 32

30 ibid., Act II, Sc. IV, l. 233-35.  
31 ibid., Act III, Sc. I, l. 93-98  
The King himself was to advise Cranmer about the devious ways of justice, as Cranmer awaited to be tried by the tribunal of councillors, secretary and chancellor, in the last of the play's trials:

---

King, .......... 

Your enemies are many, and not small; their practices Must bear the same proportion, and not ever 
The justice and the truth o' th' question carries The due o' th' verdict with it; at what ease 
Might corrupt minds procure knaves as corrupt 
To swear against you? such things have been done. 33

---

This was the King's comment to Cranmer who believed in his own goodness and honesty and thereby confident that he stood immune to the carps and contrivances of his enemies. If not for the timely intervention of the King through the rendition of an emblematic ring upon him, by virtue of which Cranmer appeals to Court and King, his life would have been dexetiously sealed.

The world of 'Henry VIII' portrays a politicking, clique forming, power hankering medley of courtiers and officials, ...
ready to pounce on those that thwarted or threatened their ambitious purposes, with the king standing over and above his court, absolute in his powers of intervention or will. Justice is seen as contrived and corrupt, which was a far cry from the notion of justice as self-revealing and portraying divine goodness, but its verdict is accepted with submission and with patience. The abstract of Justice is unquestioned, the concept remains valid even to the person who is the victim of its repression and who thereby take recourse to the justice of heaven. Justice has taken a procedural course which needs to be acknowledged. The King himself is subject to the course of justice, though his powers of intervention is absolute. Whether he seeks to be benevolent in seasoning justice with mercy, or to assert his will upon the law is left to his arbitrement. Yet the King would rather act with subtlety than dogmatically. Therefore when the King starts in his meditation to exclaim: "Who am I? Ha?" the obvious answer was, "A gracious king that pardons all offences".

The Tyrant

We have seen that the Tudor state had organised itself in order to meet the exigencies of a rapidly changing society,
where new forms of class relations were being forged, while old ones were flagging or being strengthened. That this process was one which involved violence and upheavals is evident from historical material. The powers of intervention of the state had thereby increased and it was seen to cohere upon a central monarch. Though the state had acquired a degree of independence of classes, it rested upon an absolutist monarch, the possibility of whom overreaching his powers always loomed large. The tyrant, who was the antithesis of the just ruler, was therefore always the target of great concern (See Chapter II).

In the 'Henry VI' trilogy, the King had been portrayed as qualifying the essentials of a virtuous Prince, the perfect rendition of a just, pious and faithful ruler. These qualities maintained to perfection were however inadequate to meet the escalating violence and lawlessness of the nobility around the King. Civil dissension and personal vendettas, inhuman brutality and strife for power, make for a chaotic state and Henry's ineptitude takes the reins of power away from him, while he meanders helplessly, loosing his bearings in the labyrinth of strife and chaos.
If such a Prince is shown to be inadequate, though he qualified to the medieval notion of a just ruler, was the Prince who at the opposite extreme, was antithetical to this notion, the answer to the needs of the state? The 'Henry VI' trilogy is followed by three chronicle plays which portray three tyrants in succession, namely Richard of Gloucester, King John, and Richard of Bordeaux. Substantially, they embody the types of tyrant and the consequent outcome of such tyranny that we have analysed in detail. (See Chapter I.) For instance, Richard III's unprincipled villainy necessitated his termination and Richmond's speech before the battle of Bosworth vindicated tyrannicide in this case. As for King John, whose blood legitimacy was questionable in Shakespeare's rendition, and therefore a usurper and tyrant who defied law and resorted to murder (Arthur), was deserted by the nobility for his tyranny, was yet not forcefully dethroned by the nobility or the commons. His was the case of the bad king who came to a bad end, that is he was poisoned by a monk rather than politically exterminated. In the chronicle play 'King Camoyses' we saw that a similar message was set forth for the tyrant. (See Chapter I) With Richard II the question of the tyrant takes on a more complex deliberation for Richard
was a legitimate Prince. Such a Prince was acknowledgedly of God's installation (See Chapter I) and this theme of the Divine Right of Kings is set in debate. Of course Richard fails in his duties to the commonwealth and to work for the common good, which implicates him in tyranny. His deposition, critical though the question was, was justified under the exigencies of the circumstances. The forerunner of this play 'Woodstock' had entertained similar notions of resistance as we have seen. And in fact resistance to the ruler was an issue gaining acceptance to a growing body of influential opinion.

(1) 'Richard III'

In order to evaluate Shakespeare's rendering of the tyrant we propose to analyse the portrayal of Richard III in this play. In his relentless pursuit of power, which of his own admission was the targeted Crown, Richard stops at nothing that would make possible this coveted goal. He substantiates the tyrant in all its essentials; he pursues his individual goals without concern for the public good; he does not represent the royal role of justiciar, and flaunts the principle of justice in the sundry murders that he master-minds; he does not promote the kingly virtues of faith, piety
and justice, rather it is the diabolic and relentless pursuit of power that constitutes the play's theme and Richard testifies to the arch tyrant. Indeed Shakespeare never shows him in the role of the public ruler of the state, rather as the pursuer of individual goals and the seeker of power, who thereby never ceases to forget the compulsions of his individual self. However, his tyranny does not exceed to forcible appropriation of land and possessions of others, or for that matter his diabolic role of winning over Anne (the widow of Henry VI's son) and later Elizabeth (Edward's widow, for her daughter) were not presented as examples of lust and covetousness, but as politic measures, performed with winning suavity. For the Duke of Gloucester, Anne's inheritance at her husband's (King) death could have been the coveted prize, but Shakespeare does not mention this aspect of Richard's intentions, thereby focussing on his singular mission.

In 'Henry VI Part III', Richard announces the fascination that power holds for him as he persuades his father York to arms:

Rich. ...........

Silence. Yet think
How sweet a thing it is to wear a crown,
Within whose circuit is Elysium
And all that poets feign bliss and joy. 35

34 For the economics of marriage of the sixteenth century, see L. Stone, The Crisis of the Aristocracy, Penguin, p. 632-45.
This intoxication of power never diminishes to the end and at the outset of his career, Richard, in a self-revealing soliloquy, balances his own shortcomings and gathers together his resources that will make possible the realisation of the Crown. That this would involve a diabolic Machiavellianism on his part is admitted, and to this end Richard never falls short of aplomb or dexterity and spirit. Thus he ruminates:

Rich. Ay, Edward will use women honourably.
Would he were wasted, marrow, bones, and all,
That from his loins no hopeful branch may spring,
To cross me from the golden time I look for!
And yet, between my soul's desire and me—
The lustful Edward's title buried—
Is Clarence, Henry, and his son young Edward,
And all the unlook'd for issue of their bodies,
To take their rooms ere I can plant myself—
A cold premeditation for my purpose!
Why then I do put dream on sovereignty;
Like one that stands upon a promontory
And spies a far-off shore where he would tread,
Wishing his foot were equal with his eye;
And chides the sea, that sunder him from thence,
Saying he'll lade it dry to have his way;
So do I wish the Crown, being so far off;
And so I chide the means that keeps me from it;
Flattering me with impossibilities.
My eye's too quick, my heart o'erweens too much,
Unless my hand and strength could equal them.
Well, say there is no kingdom then for Richard;
What other pleasure can the world afford?
I'll make my heaven in a lady's lap,
And deck my body in gay ornaments,
And 'witch sweet ladies with my words and looks.
O miserable thought! and more unlikely
Then to accomplish twenty golden crowns.
Why, Love forswore me in my mother's womb;
And, for I should not deal in her soft laws,
She did corrupt frail Nature with some bribe,
To shrink mine arm up like a wither'd shrub;
To make an envious mountain on my back,
Where sits Deformity to mock my body;
To shape my legs of an unequal size;
To disproportion me in every part,
Like to a chaos, or unlick'd bear-whelp
That carries no impression like the dam.
And am I then a man to be balov'd?
0 monstrous fault to harbour such a thought!
Then, since this earth affords no joy to me
But to command, to check, to o'erbear such
As are of better person than myself,
I'll make my heaven to dream upon the crown;
And, whiles I live, t'account this world but hell,
Until my misshap'd trunk that bears this head
Be round impaled with a glorious crown.
And yet I know not how to get the crown,
For many lives stand between me and home;
And I, — like one lost in a thorny wood,
That rents the thorns and is rent with the thorns,
Seeking a way and straying from the way;
Not knowing how to find the open air,
but toiling desperately to find it out —
Torment myself to catch the English crown;
And from that torment I will free myself,
Or hew my way out with a bloody axe.
Why, I can smile, and murder whiles I smile,
And cry 'Content!' to that that grieves my heart,
And wet my cheeks with artificial tears,
And frame my face to all occasions.
I'll drown more sailors than the mermaid shall;
I'll slay more gazers than the basilisk;
I'll play the orator as well as Nestor,
Deceive more slily than Ulysses coulo,
And, like a Sinon, take another Troy.
I can add colours to the chameleon,
Change shapes with Proteus for advantages,
And set the murderous Machiavel to school.
Can I do this, and cannot get a crown?
Tut! were it further off, I'll pluck it down.36

The gruesome nature of his intentions, and their realisation with unfailing alacrity and masterly improvisation, by

his own allusion always converge on the physical deformity of Richard.  

The carnage of the Henry VI plays is replaced in 'Richard III' not by any form of placidity or violence forsaken, but here it is bloody murders carried out behind the scenes, masterminded by Richard as he desperately reaches out at power and hacks and hews his way through. After the murder of Henry VI, Richard wins Anne in dexterous fashion, in spite of his physical drawbacks or arch enmity with the Lancastrians, and Shakespeare holds the audience spell bound as he promotes the type of feminine flexibility which makes Anne relent. Clarence, the second of the royal brothers is next to be eliminated, (Henry VI having been murdered by him in the earlier play) even as Richard incriminates the Queen's circle as having managed it:

Rich. I do the wrong, and first begin to brawl: 
The secret mischiefs that I set abroach
I lay unto the grievous charge of others.
Clarence, whom I, indeed, have cast in darkness,
I do beweep to many simple gulls,
Namely to Derby, Hastings, Buckingham;


38This scene has held the fascination of critics, especially of the Romantic school; while some see it as abominable (Coleridge for example), others believe the play would have lost its fascination but for it, Richard would be then the "very wicked man, who kills little children in their beds" (Lamb). See John Palmer, 'Political and Comic Characters of Shakespeare', 1962, p. 81.
And tell them 'tis the queen and her allies
That stir the King against the Duke my brother.
Now they believe it, and within what me
To be reveng'd on Rivers, Dorset, Grey.
But then I sigh, and, with a piece of Scripture
Tell them that God bids us do good for evil;
And thus I clothe my naked villainy
With odd old ends sto'il'n forth of Holy Writ, 39
And seem a saint, when most I play the devil

After Edward's death Richard does not lose time.
Hastings who was unwilling to vote for Richard's assumption
of Crown, was beheaded in a trice, though given out to
understand that Hastings had plotted the murder of Richard
and the subversion of the state. He imprisons Rivers, Grey
and Vaughan, bastardizes Edward's children, even hinting
that Edward himself was of doubtful parentage.

The wielders of state power debate upon the nature of
sanctuary where Prince York had taken refuge with his mother.
Though this privilege was seen as a disintegrating form, and
the case for its abandonment made, Shakespeare shows this
question in debate as mother and son take refuge from the
wolfish secularism:

Card. My Lord of Buckingham, if my weak oratory
Can from his mother win the Duke the York
Anon expect him here; but if she be obdurate
To mild entreaties, God in Heaven forbid
we should infringe the holy privilege
Of blessed sanctuary! Not for all this land
would I be guilty of so deep a sin.

Buck. You are too senseless-obstinate, my lord,
Too ceremonious and traditional.
Weigh it but with the grossness of this age,
You break not sanctuary in seizing him;
The benefit thereof is always granted
To those whose dealings have deserved the place,
And those who have the wit to claim the place.
This prince had neither claimed it nor deserved it;
And therefore in mine opinion cannot have it;
Then taking him from thence that is not there,
You break no privilege nor charter there.
Oft have I heard of sanctuary men,
But sanctuary children, never till now.

The Cardinal seems to be convinced as he acquiesces; "My lord
you shall 6'er-rule my mind for once". However both Princes are
sent to the Tower and the murderer Tyrell engaged to liquidate
the claimants and therefore make way for Richard's enthronement.

Buckingham whose complicity and assistance had been unstintingly given so far, on refusing to comply to the murder of the young Princes could only meet with Richard's casual slogan, "Off with his head". Anne is eliminated quietly announcing that she had been predisposed to sickness for sometime and as a repetition of the first courtship, Elizabeth the former Queen wooed for her daughter. With villainous counterfeit Richard always presumes innocence and goodness. In referring to Hastings' execution he reports to the Mayor:

Rich. What, think you we are Turks or infidels?
Or that we would, against the form of law,
Proceed thus rashly in the villains death,
But that the extreme peril of the case,
The peace of England, and our persons' safety,
Enforc'd us to this execution. 41

Tyrant though Richard was, he does not fail to see that the consent of the people was a pre-requisite to the perpetuation of the state and the wielding of royal power. In the scene at Baynard's Castle with the Citizens, Shakespeare denotes not only the stark realism of political behaviour, but serves to remind that consent was a political imperative that

42 ibid., Act III, Sc. VII.
could be manipulated. Richard, and the caucus around him, led by Buckingham, manoeuvre the proceedings until this consent is attained and Richard's claim to the Crown settled. By their own admission, Richard and Buckingham are well versed in the strategies of counterfeit or dissembling:

Rich. Come, cousin, canst thou quake and change thy colour,
Murder thy breath in middle of a word,
And then again begin, and stop again,
As if thou were distraught and mad with terror?

Buck. Tut, I can counterfeit the deep tragedian,
Speak, and look back, and pry on every side,
Tremble and start at wagging of a straw,
Intending deep suspicion. Ghostly looks
Are at my service like enforced smiles
And both are ready in their offices
At any time to grace my stratagems.  

Indeed the kingly qualities of piety and humility are assumed in exaggerated form as a mode of deception of the gullible citizens, thereby bringing the tyrant's image into sharper focus. Religion serves only a political purpose to Richard. Richmond's prayers before the battle at Bosworth are by contrast

---

filled with religious fervour, when Richard makes no attempt at prayer.

Certain nineteenth and twentieth century critics have admired Richard III, for in him they saw a jubilant libertarian spirit, regaling the audience and readers to his wit and intellect, inducing a suspension of ethical judgement and providing a glimpse into a condition of freedom of conscience, so much so that the murder of the princes have been approved for "theatrical effectivity". To romantic critics like Lamb Shakespeare's villains encourage an admiration; "we think not so much of the crimes which they commit as of the ambition, the aspiring spirit, the intellectual activity which prompts them to overleap those moral fences". To this "idiotic intoxication" generations of critics have succumbed.

Indeed this spirit of enterprise and adventurism, undaunted and Machiavellian, that Richard embodied, was the essence of the Renaissance man. Like Marlowe's heroes Richard too portrays this undeniable spirit, which has won him such admiration, heinous though his activities were. If for a moment Richard is crestfallen at the battle of Bosworth, "Give me a soul of wine/I have not that alacrity of spirit/ Nor cheer of

44 See Palmer, op.cit., p. 116-77.
mind that I was wont to have", and after the cursing dreams
that he had through the night he exclaims, "O Ratcliffe, I
fear, I fear!" He however composes himself:

K. Rich. The sun will not be seen today!
The sky doth frown and pour upon our army:
I would these dewy tears were from the ground.
Not shine today? Why, what is that to me
More than to Richmond? For the self-same heaven
That frowns on me looks sadly upon him. 46

and regains his alacrity once more:

"Come, bustle, bustle! Caparison my horse."

and takes charge of the situation:

K. Rich. Go, gentlemen; every man unto his charge!
Let not our babbling dreams affright our souls;
Conscience is but a word that coward use,
Devis'd at first to keep the strong in awe.
Our strong arms be our conscience, swords our law
March on! Join bravely. Let us to it pell-mell—
If not to Heaven, then hand in hand to hell! 47

and even as he is cornered, his buoyancy does not desert him,
as with a mark of chivalry and with abandon he gambles with

life: 'A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!'

In Richard, traditional values are seen to turn away as Richard pursues a relentless self-seeking: "I am myself alone". Critics have noted that Shakespeare portrays the "value of the state in the value of the individual" or the "moral nature of the ruler". What we wish to point out is that in Richard, Shakespeare tests that quality of 'individualism' which was to be however tempered only at a later age and which later formed the ethos of liberalism. Self-analysis and debates within himself, seek to bring Richard to terms with this individualism, which only leads him from one heinous crime to another. Thus the tyrant reflects at the outset:

"I have neither pity, love nor fear.

........
That I should snarl, and bite and play the dog.
Then, since the heavens have shaped my body so,
Let hell make crook'd my mind to answer it.
I have no brother, I am like no brother;
And this word 'love', which greybeards call divine,
Be resident in men like one another,
And not in me; I am myself alone.49

49 Shakespeare, King Henry VI Part 3, Act V, Sc. VI, l. 68-83.
His preoccupation with the self is evident in the speech quoted earlier. At the commencement of 'Richard III' he comments on his setbacks with marked accent upon the singular 'I':

Rich. ...........

But I, that am not shap'd for sportive tricks,
Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass;
I, that am rudely stamp'd and want love's majesty
To strut before a wanton ambling nymph;
I, that am curtail'd of this fair proportion,
Cheated of feature by dissembling Nature,
Deform'd unfinish'd sent before my time
Into this breathing world scarce half made up---
And that so lamely and unfashionable
That dogs bark at me, as I halt by them---
Why, I, in this weak piping time of peace,
Have no delight to pass away the time,
Unless to spy my shadow in the sun,
And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover
To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
I am determined to prove a villain, 
And hate the idle pleasure of these days.

To his amazement, Richard finds that both his physical deformity and his fiendish knavery, qualities that have offset each other,

work not to his detriment, but wins him the lady Anna. This in turn goads him to further villainy and confidence in the self:

Was ever woman in this humour woo'd?
Was ever woman in this humour won?
I'll have her, but I will not keep her long.
What, I that kill'd her husband and his father;
To take her in her heart's extremest hate,
With curses in her mouth, tears in her eyes,
The bleeding witness of her hatred by,
Having God, her conscience, and these ears against me——
And I, no friends to back my suit at all
But the plain devil and dissembling looks——
And yet to win her, all the world to nothing! 52

This kind of single preoccupation with the self, where religious and moral values are temporarily shunned is an experiment in empiricism that Shakespeare conducts. Richard takes courage and confidence from his success and still ruminates on the self:

Rich. .......... 
And will she yet demean her eyes on me, 
That cropp'd the golden prime of this sweet prince, 
And made her widow to a woeful bed? 
On me, whose all not equals Edward's moiety? 
On me, that halts and am misshapen thus? 
My dukedom to a beggarly denier 
I do mistake my person all this while! 
Upon my life, she finds — although I cannot — 
Myself to be a marvellous proper man. 
I'll be a charges for a looking - glass, 
And entertain a score or two of tailors 
To study fashions to adorn my body: 
Since I am crept in favour with myself, 
I will maintain it with some little cost. 
...........
Shine out, fair sun, till I have bought a glass, 
That I may see my shadow as I pass. 53

The lyrical accent of the lines are marked upon the "I" and "me", thereby emphasising the preponderance of this element in the speech. However Shakespeare shows that this relentless self-seeking proves to be futile. At Donworth, after the torment of his dreams, he realises this futility, convinced

53 Ibid., Act I, Sc. II, l. 251-68.
of the dreadfulness of this egotism, and though he urges himself not to despair, his conscience condemns him. However, Richard in his role as the inverter of fixed values, does not estimate the fate of his own soul, nor is he filled with remorse. Yet, there is self-realisation that human traits (in this case pity), being absent in him or undeserved of him, he cannot expect such humanity from others upon himself:

K. Rich. ........

Have mercy, Jesu! -- Soft, I did but dream.
O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me!
The lights burn blue; it is now dead midnight.
Cold fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh.
what do I fear? Myself? There's none else by;
Richard loves Richard, that is, I and I.
Is there a murderer here? No. Yes, I am!
Then fly. What, from myself? Great reason why,
Lest I revenge? What, myself upon myself?
Alack, I love myself. Wherefore? For any good
That I myself have done unto myself?
O no, alas, I rather hate myself
For hateful deeds committed by myself.
I am a villain -- yet I lie, I am not!
Fool, of thyself speak well! Fool, do not flatter.
My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale,
And every tale condemns me for a villain;
Perjury, perjury, in the highest degree,
Throng to the bar, crying all, 'Guilty, guilty!' 
I shall despair. There is no creature loves me,
And if I die, no soul will pity me —
And wherefore should they, since that I myself
Find in myself no pity to myself?
Methought the souls of all that I had murder'd
Came to my tent, and every one did threat
Tomorrow's vengeance on the head of Richard.  

Richard's attitude throughout his career had converged
upon a secular temper, and the other-worldly or religious
questions had been studiously avoided. He consciously demeaned
and flaunts accepted values:

Duch. God bless thee, and put meekness in thy breast;
Love, charity, obedience, and true duty.

Rich. Amen; (rises; aside) and make me die a good old man—
That is the cutt-end of a mother's blessing:
I marvel that her Grace did leave it out.  

But such unmitigated knavery, coming from a 'public'
person was all the more threatening to public good. Indeed,
'like the Vice-Iniquity' Richard falls into a type, with no
redeeming feature. Yet Shakespeare had sparkled this dramatic
person, deliberately projecting upon him those values which

54 ibid., Act V, Sc. III, l. 179-207.
were growing apace in society, and which the state seemed to require to grow from its feudal origins towards an absolutist form. To Shakespeare of course such values in their extreme and unmitigated form, exemplified in Richard, boded no well for the state or society.

To the Elizabethan, such a tyrant unequivocally called for tyrannicide, as Richmond's rationalisations towards rebellion give voice, in his oration to his soldiers:

Richard:...........
Richard except, those whom we fight against
Have rather have us win than him they follow
For what is he they follow? Truly, gentlemen,
A bloody tyrant and a homicide;
One rais'd in blood, and one in blood establish'd;
One that made means to come by what he hath,
And slaughter'd those that were the means to help him
A base foul stone, made precious by the foil
Of England's chair, where he is falsely set;
One that hath ever been God's enemy.
Then, if you fight against God's enemy,
God will, in justice, ward you as his soldiers;

See also R.H. Wells, op.cit., p. 99-100.
If you do sweat to put a tyrant down,
You sleep in peace, the tyrant being slain;
If you do fight against your country's foes,
Your country's fat shall pay your pains the hire;
If you do fight in safeguard of your wives,
Your wife shall welcome home the conquerors;
If you do free your children from the sword,
Your children's children quits in it your age.
Then, in the name of God and all these rights,
Advance your standards, draw your willing swords!

(ii) 'King John'

If Richard III was a wanton homicide, King John fared no better as a tyrant. However, the ground upon which his tyranny prominently rests is his questionable inheritance of the Crown. That John was a usurper, precisely for which he was indicted as a tyrant, and the consequences of such tyranny namely bloodshed, murder, rebellion, and death, are the chief concerns of the play, upon which Shakespeare has turned the debate. In fact the theme of usurpation was Shakespeare's own particular approach to the problem of the tyrant, a condition which his source materials have not emphasised. Historically, John was not illegitimate. The situation in that period (11th-12th century) was highly fluid, the opinion of magnates and the

---


The dynamism of various heirs all came into the question of succession. If the question of primogeniture was a fixed requisite, it had also proved to be vexatious in the 15th century. The question of succession as fixed by the will of the ruler and ratified by Parliament was a novel proposition (See Chapter I). It is to this aspect of inheritance that Shakespeare turns the debate in 'King John'.

The play commences with this complexity brought into immediate focus, which becomes the central problem of the play's proceedings. Thus the embassy from France greets John as the "borrowed majesty of England here" and lays the claims of Arthur his nephew, to the throne of England and its territories:

Chat. Philip of France, in right and true behalf
Of thy deceased brother Geoffrey's son,
Arthur Plantagenet, lays most lawful claim
To this fair island and the territories:
To Ireland, Poictiers, Anjou, Touraine, Maine,
Desiring thee to lay aside the sword
Which sways usurpingly these several titles,
And put the same into young Arthur's hand,
Thy nephew and right royal sovereign.

---

59 See P. Saccio, Shakespeare's English Kings, p. 190.
K. John. What follows if we disallow of this?

Chat. The proud control of fierce and bloody war,
To enforce these rights so forcibly withheld.

Thus the question of usurpation has immediate consequences in the form of a claimant and impending war, promoted by foreign powers. To Eleanor, the Queen mother, Arthur's claims, though her grandson, were not palatable for his mother would then assume the seat of Queen and her rights would be forfeit. Yet she admits of the fact of usurpation and answers thus:

K. John. Our strong possession and our right for us.

Elean. Your strong possession more than your right,
Or else it must go wrong with you and me;
So much my conscience whispers in your ear,
Which none but heaven, and you, and I, shall hear.

In the scene before Angiers, the theme of usurpation, of the lost rights of Arthur, are reiterated:

K. Phi. ............
But thou from loving England art so far,
That thou hast underwrought his lawful king,
Cut off the sequence of posterity,
Outfaced infant state, and done a rape

60 Shakespeare, King John, Act I, Sc. I, l. 7-18.
Upon the maiden virtue of the crown.
Look here upon thy brother Geoffrey's face;
These eyes, these brows, were moulded out of his;
This little abstract doth contain that large
Which died in Geoffrey; and the hand of time
Shall draw this brief into so huge a volume.
That Geoffrey was thy elder brother born,
And this his son; England was Geoffrey's right,
And this is Geoffrey's; in the name of God
How comes it then that thou art call'd a king,
When living blood doth in these temples beat,
Which o'er the crown that thou o'ermasterest?

K. John. From whom hast thou this great commission, France,
To draw my answer from thy articles?

K. Phi. From that supernal judge that stirs good thoughts
In any heart of strong authority
To look into the plots and stains of right.
That judge hath made me guardian to this boy;
Under whose warrant I impeach thy wrong
And by whose help I mean to chastise it.

K. John Alack, thou dost usurp authority.

K. Phi. Excuse it is to beat usurping down.

Tlea. Who is it thou dost call usurper, France?

Const. Let me make answer; thy usurping son.

---

62 ibid., Act II, Sc. I, l. 94-121.
In the slanging between Eleanor and Constance, the passionate outbursts of Constance voice her deprivation with venom, and the nature of this usurpation is harped upon;

Const. Thou monstrous injurer of heaven and earth!
Call not me slanderer; thou and thine usurp
The dominations, royalties and rights
Of this oppressed boy; this is thy eldest son's son,
Infortunate in nothing but in thee;
Thy sins are visited in this poor child;
The canon of the law is laid on him,
Being out the second generation
Removed from thy sin-conceiving womb.

If possession was also a claim to rights, John does not hesitate to affirm them, and the wielding of power therefore becomes more an assertion than its loyal acknowledgement. This supreme authority was also beginning to take on the form of legal acknowledgement, as legitimation to Crown could be affirmed by will of king to successor. Thus Eleanor refers to the presence of such legal claims to which Constance only has scorn;

Elea. Thou unadvised scold, I can produce
A will that bars the title of thy son.

Const. Ay, who doubts that? a will! a wicked will;

---

This question of primogeniture, blood lineage and inheritance, and the compelling nature of a will are debated at another level. The predicament of the Faulconbridge brothers, where bastardy deprives Philip of his patrimony, though he was the elder son, is an issue debated at length. The King called upon to adjudicate, quibbles with legal artistry and in fact judges in favour of the bastard:

K. John. .......

Tell me, how if my brother,
Who, as you say, took pains to get this son,
Had of your father claim'd this son for his?
In sooth, good friend, your father might have kept
This calf, ored from his cow, from all the world;
In sooth he might; then, if he were my brother's,
My brother might not claim him; nor your father,
Being none of his, refuse him; this concludes;
My mother's son did get your father's heir;
Your father's heir must have your father's land.

Rob. Shall then my father's will be of no force
To dispossess the child which is not his?

Eust. Of no more force to dispossess me, sir
Than was his will to get me, as I think.

---

65 ibid., Act I, Sc. I, l. 120-33.
However the question is settled by the dastard's wilful submission to forego his claims and opt for a knighthood instead, and thus to serve the King. Shakespeare makes a very clear connection between the concept of private property and marriage, and in the political sphere these legal/blood relations are brought into the forefront of discussion.

Resting upon this pivotal question of usurpation the play continues to demonstrate the ensuing violence. In the battle before Angiers the blood-shed and destruction that the usurpation had brought about is described with repeated emphasis. The image of the swelling river, caused by the assertion of 'right' of possession, described this destruction more vividly. And the Bastard aptly comments that this clash of majesty had only "blows, blood, and death" to be speak of:

dast. Ha, majesty! how high thy glory towers
when the rich blood of kings is set on fire!
0, now doth death line his dead chaps with steel;
The swords of soldiers are his teeth, his fangs;
And now he feasts, mousing the flesh of men,
In undetermined differences of kings. 67

As the play advances, the tempo accelerates with John's tyranny finding expression in every act of his. In the field of battle (Act III Sc II) Arthur is taken by John and placed into the custody of Hubert. Dastard is given instruction to ransack the abbey:

K. John (to the dastard) Cousin, away for England! haste before:
And, ere our coming, see thou shake the bags
Of hoarding avoots; imprison'd angels
Set at liberty; the fat rics of peace
Must be the hungry now be fed upon:
Use our commission in his utmost force.

As he cajoles Hubert and fills him with tender words, John makes his desires explicit, that was the execution of the murder of Arthur. The conversation reveal the merciless tyrant John could degenerate into, as the desperation of retaining the crown prohibited not even brutal murder:

K. John. ........
Good Hubert, Hubert, Hubert, throw thine eye
On your young boy; I'll tell thee what, my friend,
He is a very serpent in my way;
And wheresoe'er this foot of mine doth tread,
He lies before me; dost thou understand me?
Thou art his keeper.

Hub. And I'll keep him so
That he shall not offend your majesty.


Hub. My lord!


Hub. He shall not live.


I could be merry now. Hubert, I love thee, well, I'll not say what I intend for thee:

Remember ---- 69

The play's action hinges upon John's usurpation, and as Pandulph, the Papal legate, prophesies with political insight, this unnatural act would never leave John in peace, only enlarge the turmoil in the state as John would of necessity cling desperately on to power.

Pand. ........

Now hear me speak with a prophetic spirit;
For even the breath of what I mean to speak
Shall blow each dust, each straw, each little rub,
Out of the path which shall directly lead
Thy foot to England's throne; and therefore mark,
John hath seiz'd Arthur; and it cannot be
That, whilsts warm life plays in that infant's veins,
The misplace'd John shou'd entertain an hour,
One minute, nay, one quiet breath of rest.

A sceptre snatch'd with an unruly hand
Must be as woisterously maintain'd as gain'd;
And he that stands upon a slippery place
Makes nice of no wild hold to stay him up;
That John may stand, then, Arthur needs must fall;
So be it, for it, cannot out be so.

Pandulph of course had come to make political mileage out
of the situation and hopes to persuade Louis of France to
make aggression upon John, for the time was now ripe for
striking the King who had defied the Church. To Lewis Pandulph
observes upon the usurper and tyrant's predicament:

Pand, How green you are and fresh in this old world!
John lays you plots; the times conspire with you;
For he that steeps his safety in true blood
Shall find out bloody safety and untrue.
This act so evilly borne shall cool the hearts
Of all his people, and freeze up their zeal,
That none so small advantage shall step forth
To check his reign, but they will cherish it;

and when Lewis notes that perhaps John will not take the life
of Arthur but only hold him in imprisonment, Pandulph replies:

Pand. 0, sir, when he shall hear of your approach,
If that young Arthur be not gone already,
Even at the news he dies; and then the hearts
Of all his people shall revolt from him,
And kiss the lips of unacquainted change,
And pick strong matter of revolt and wrath
Out of the bloody fingers' ends of John,
Methinks I see this hurly all on foot.

John is seen to be forced by circumstances to assume
tyrranical rule and this is more evident in the case of his
dealings with Arthur. John however fulfills the requisites
of kingship, as his role of judge, his chivalric distinctions,
is regal bearings in confrontation with France, give ample
supporting qualification. Though the attempted murder of the
youth fails, in the poignant scene with Hubert (Act IV sc I),
Shakespeare seems to establish a humanity, that the state un-
avoidably lacks, but which flow from the heart of the most
brutal of murderers. The figure of Hubert seems to convey a
deliberate vagueness, playing a significant part in the play,
but whose personal identity remains not clearly defined. What
is known to us is that he is a Citizen of Angers. However,
Arthur's death, self determined though it was, is seen to be
the deciding factor in prompting the ensuing rebellion. John

requires to reaffirm his kingship and is twice crowned at
his own behest. As Pandulph was quick to notice with
political opportunism, the time was set for rebellion. The
ransacking of the church had antagonised the commons and
they were eager to turn to France for leadership and notes,
"Tis wonderful/what may be wrought out of their discontent,/
Now that their souls are topful of offence".

The tyrant is full of misgivings as desertion by
nobility is imminent, and King John realises the shaky
foundation on which his kingship rested. Shakespeare was
always conscious to note that warfare and bloodshed induced
terror and sorrow as the tyrant John is made to realise that
murder was not the answer to the stability of the Crown:

"I repent;
There is no sure foundation set on cloud,
No certain life achieve'd by others' death". 73

The King is hedged in with tidings of France's advance for
war upon England, compounded with news of Eleanor's death,

73 ibid., Act IV, Sc. II, l. 103-5.
thereby giving momentum to the play and the tyrant's end approaches.

Shakespeare notes that the State even when it rested on violence, had to abide by rules of its foundation. When the ruler takes upon himself to liquidate royal claimants by personal appointment, he goes beyond the bounds of instituted power, and is therefore condemned as a tyrant. After the crime of Arthur's death had been supposedly committed, John reproves Hubert for doing what he himself had provoked and sealed. In fact Hubert must bear the burden of responsibility even if it was by the personal summons of the King:

Hub. .... why, did you not provoke me ?
K. John. It is the curse of kings to be attended
    by slaves that take their humours for a warrant
    To break within the bloody house of life,
    And on the winking of authority
    To understand a law, to know the meaning
    Of dangerous majesty, when perchance it frowns
    More upon humour than advis'd respect.

Hub. Here is your hand and seal for what I did.
K. John. O, when the last account 'twixt heaven and earth
      Is to be made, then shall this hand seal
witness against us to damnation!
How oft the sight of means to do ill deeds
Make deeds ill done! Hadst not thou been by,
A fellow by the hand of nature mark'd,
Quoted and sign'd to do a deed of shame,
This murther had not come into my mind;
But taking note of thy abhor'd aspect,
Finding thee fit for bloody villainy,
Apt, liable to be employ'd in danger,
I faintly broke with thee of Arthur's death;
And thou, to be endeared to a king,
Made it no conscience to destroy a prince.74

In 'Richard III', a similar observation had been made
by Clarence as the murderers go to kill him in captivity, and
he tries to plead for his life:

"O sirs, consider: they that set you on
To do this deed will hate you for the dead."75

Precisely such a state of mind is expressed by Bolingbroke
when Extrem comes to give him the news of Richard's murder,
and is carried out at Bolingbroke's behest.76

74ibid., Act IV, Sc. II, 1. 207-29.
75Shakespeare, King Richard III, Act I, Sc. IV, 1. 244-45.
76In this connection we may be reminded that Elizabeth never
took upon herself the liquidation of Mary Stuart, but only at the
behest and ratification by Parliament, was the execution legalised
and carried out as an act of state. The monarch's powers had these
constitutional curbs which, as we saw, were clearly maintained by
a large body of opinion (See Neale, op. cit., p. Also see Chapter II).
dol. Exton, I thank thee not, for thou hast wrought
A deed of slander with thy fatal hand
Upon my head and all this famous land.

Exton. From your own mouth, mylord, did I this deed.

Bol. They love not poison that do poison need,
Nor do I thee. Though I did wish him dead,
I hate the murtherer, love him murthered.
The guilt of conscience take thou for thy labour,
but neither my good word or princely favour.

Indeed law was not the sovereign's will. For all his sovereignty
the king must abide by the process of law.

To such a tyrant as Joann, the inevitable question
arises, was he to be resisted and was rebellion and perhaps
tyrannicide justified? That rebellion is imminent, and foreign
powers (France and Roman Church) seize an opportune moment to
make their claims and even entice the English nobility in their
wake is apparent. The Jastard anticipates civil dissension as
he wonders upon the heinous murder of Arthur;

dast. .......
I am amaz'd, methinks, and lose my way
Among the thorns and dangers of this world.
How easy dost thou take all England up
From forth this morsel of dead royalty!


---

Shakespeare, King Richard II, Act V, Sc. VI,
1. 34-42.
The life, the right and truth of all this realm
Is fled to heaven; and England now is left
To tug and scumble and to part by th' teeth
The unaw'd interest of proud swelling state.
Now for the bare-pick'd bone of majesty
Doth cogged war bristle his angry crest
And snarleth in the gentle eyes of peace;
Now powers from home and discontents at home
Meet in one line; and vast confusion waits,
As doth a raven on a sick-fall'n breast,
The imminent decay of wrested pomp.
Now happy he whose cloak and ceinture can
Hold out this tempest; dear away that child
And follow me with speed; I'll to the king.
A thousand businesses are brief in hand,
And heaven itself doth frown upon the land. 78

The dastard, loyal as he was, realises that such
tyranny cannot go unscathed and muses upon the decay of
majesty. Yet he determines to perform his loyal duty. In the
person of the dastard we note that kind of active participation
in the state, and in fact he epitomises the new bourgeois spirit
of adventurism, dauntlessness, and protectionist affiliation
with the state, as no other personage in the History plays of
Shakespeare.

78 Shakespeare, King John, Act IV, Sc. III, l. 140-59.
The nobles were quick enough to realise their mistake in forsaking their country, and the fierce nationalism and patriotism of the age are seen to surface in the speeches of Salisbury and the Bastard. Therefore rebellion becomes a condemned issue and tyranny does not justify rebellion in this case. Besides John epitomised that defiance against the Roman Church that was so crucial to the Tudor State. John substantiates that notion of a tyrant whose bed and is providentially assured, for John meets his end at Swinstead Abbey where he is poisoned by a monk. It is not a political end as much as a personal operation, which does not merit much elaboration in the play. The fact that such a tyrant meets a pitiful but condemned end was a lesson brought home by Shakespeare. The state, as always in Shakespeare, does not lose its sovereignty in perpetuity, and the nobility assume their duty. Here, King John's son appears at a late stage in the play, precisely to hold the reins of the State at once.

(iii) 'Richard II'

With 'Richard II' we enter with Shakespeare into a world of politics more Machiavellian in character where the struggle for power is carried out with ruthless suavity. We find dramatisation of a state geared to practicality, with the aid of public support. For the Machiavellian Bolingbroke to assume such power, it was necessary to depose the reigning monarch Richard II, whom Shakespeare has portrayed as the tyrant in all its diversity.

Richard has unquestionable credentials as the legitimate ruler. Given sovereign authority, such a ruler could degenerate into a tyrant. Richard substantiates the notion of the tyrant from the outset. His complicity in the murder of Gloucester was impressed. Of greater concern for the realm was Richard's decision to farm the land and to issue blank charters, even while dallying with irresponsible favourites, and urging the discontentment of the commons through extortionate taxes. As Richard admits to his favourites:

Rich. ...........

And for our coffers, with too great a court
And liberal largess, are grown somewhat light,
We are inforc'd to farm our royal realm,
The revenue whereof shall furnish us
For our affairs in hand. If that come short,
Our substitutes at home shall have blank charters
Whereunto, when they shall know what men are rich,
They shall subscribe them for large sums of gold,
And send them after to supply our wants. 80

The outrage upon John of Gaunt and flouting of the
dying man confirms Richard's contemptible tyranny in the play.
In the dramatic scheme, John of Gaunt, 'old' and 'time-honoured',
initiates two themes which assume importance by the fact of his
age, his proximity to the royal blood, and as the utterance of
a dying and prophetic man. One, urged in his deathbed, that
is the spirit of nationhood, and second, the theme of divinity
of the king as a bulwark against rebellion. In reply to the
promptings of the Duchess of Gloucester to stir against King
Richard for his part in the murder of her husband Woodstock,
Gaunt replies:

Gaunt. Alas, the part I had in Woodstock's blood
Doth more solicit me than your exclains
To stir against the butchers of his life;
But since correction lieth in those hands

---

80 Shakespeare, 'King Richard II', Act I, Sc. IV, l. 43-51.
Which made the fault we cannot correct
Put we our quarrel to the will of heaven,
Who, when they see the hours ripe on earth,
Will rain hot vengeance on offenders' heads.
.........
God's is the quarrel -- for God's substitute,
His deputy anointed in His sight,
Hath cause'd his death; the which if wrongfully,
Let heaven revenge, for I may never lift
An angry arm against His minister. 81

Gaunt, like York, belongs to an older generation of
noblemen in the play, whose commitment to a divine ruler
rests assured. Historically, John of Gaunt was an enormously
rich and powerful baron, a county palatinate with semi-
autonomous, almost regal powers, contentious and ambitious,
82 according to Holinshed. This changed adaptation by Shakespeare
is significant, for Gaunt typifies the kind of nobility whose
respect and loyalty to the throne remains intact. It was this
nobility who rallied behind the Tudor monarchs and made possible
the development of the absolutist though essentially feudal state.
The dignity thus afforded to Gaunt, and Richard's actions in
confiscating his lands and moveables, marks out with greater

82See Saccio, op.cit., p. 20.
emphasis the tyrannical role of Richard. Therefore with prophetic vision Gaunt indicates the quality of Richard's tyranny and its inevitable outcome. The dislodging of traditional ties that worked in absolute contrariety to the new notion of nation and statehood, being one of the ideological functions, finds apt expression in Gaunt's speech. This legitimation process is enhanced in the association of blood lineage:

Gaunt. .......
O, had thy grandsire with a prophet's eye
Seen how his son's son should destroy his sons,
From forth thy reach he would have laid thy shame,
Depositing thee before thou wert possess'd,
Which art possess'd now to depose thyself.
Why, cousin, wert thou regent of the world,
It were a shame to let this land by lease;
But for thy world enjoying but this land,
Is it not more than shame to shame it so?
Landlord of England art thou now, not king,
Thy state of law is bondslave to the law,
And thou —— \(^8\)

\(^8\) ibid., Act II, Sc. I, l. 104-14.
As with characteristic irresponsibility Richard orders the possessions of Gaunt be seized, York expostulates against this outrage, for Gaunt is marked out as that form of nobility whose compliance and support was necessary for the new State. Indeed the maintenance of status and wealth of this traditional nobility was part of the programme of the Tudor State. Defiance of the values of hereditary rights and successions, undermining of true nobility, did not bode well for Richard and posterity:

York. How long shall I be patient? ah, how long
Shall tender duty make me suffer wrong?
Not Gloucester's death, nor Hereford's banishment,
Nor Gaunt's rebukes, nor England's private wrongs,
Nor the prevention of poor Bolingbroke
About his marriage, nor my own disgrace,
Have ever made me sour my patient cheek,
Or bend one wrinkle on my sovereign's face.
....... 

O my liege,
Pardon me, if you please, if not, I pleas'd
Not to be pardoned, am content withal.
Seek you to seize and gripe into your hands
The royalties and rights of vanish'd Harford?
Is not Gaunt dead? and doth not Herford live?
Was not Gaunt just? and is not Harry true?
Did not the one deserve to have an heir?
Is not his heir a well-deserving son?
Take Herford's rights away, and take from time
His charters, and his customary rights; 
Let not tomorrow then ensue to-day; 
Be not thyself. For how art thou a king 
But by fair sequence and succession? 
Now afore God — God forbid I say true; —
If you do wrongfully seize Herford’s rights,
Call in the letters patents that he hath
By his attorney-generals to sue
His livery, and deny his off’red homage,
You pluck a thousand dangers on your head
You loss a thousand well-disposed hearts,
And prick my tender patience to those thoughts
Which honour and allegiance cannot think.⁸⁴

Indeed York's misgivings are not unfounded because recognition of laws of inheritance and succession was crucial for both the State and the changing societal relations. They are reiterated as Northumberland and other lords muse upon Herford's "gilded patrimony".

---

85 Ornstein (A Kingdom for a Stage, 1977) sees York's admonishments as a reiteration of feudal hierarchy, which worked in the absence of a centralised State (p. 105). However as we note, Gaunt, even while substantiating the form of feudal nobility, yet belongs to a breed of noblemen whose function and attitude had vastly altered from the centrifugal feudalism. The speech on the 'emerald isle' confirms this:

Gaunt. This royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-Paradise,
This fortress built by nature for herself
Against infection and the hand of war,
This happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall,
Or as a moat defensive to a house,
Against the envy of less happier lands;
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this
England

This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings,
Fear'd by their breed, and famous by their birth,
Renowned for their deeds as far from home,
For Christian service and true chivalry,
As is the sepulchre in stubborn Jewry
Of the world's ransom, blessed Mary's son;
This land of such dear souls, this dear dear land,
Dear for her reputation through the world,
Is now leas'd out — I die pronouncing it ---
Like to a tenement or pelting farm.

England, bound in with the triumphant sea,
Whose rocky shore beats back the envious siege
Of Wat'ry Neptune, is now bound in with shame,
With inky blots and rotten parchment bonds;
That England, that was wont to conquer others,
Hath made a shameful conquest of itself.
Ah, would the scandal vanish with my life,
How happy then were my ensuing death!

North. Now afore God 'tis shame such wrongs are borne 
In him, a royal prince, and many mo 
Of noble blood in this declining land; 
The king is not himself, but basely led 
By flatterers; and what they will inform, 
Merely in hate, 'gainst any of us all, 
That will the king severely prosecute 
'Gainst us, our lives, our children, and our heirs. 86

The Tudor monarchy has been seen to assume rights of confiscation and appropriation of property, both of a refractory nobility and of the ecclesiastical feudality. Yet property rights, both of the traditional feudality and of recent inheritances needed to be doubly protected. Law itself has been invigorated as common law courts abided side by side with prerogative courts, and even a suggestion of introducing Roman law had been made. We have seen that the ruler operating with autocratic powers could indeed change the laws though he was best advised not to tamper with them (See Chapter I). Indeed these apprehensions are brought into focus in the history play. These fears escalate as tidings of Richard's tyranny mount, having antagonised the nobles and commons, and especially his kinsman with forfeitures and exactions for the Irish wars. Thus the nobles are seen to

desert the tyrant in mounting numbers.

To such a tyrant is resistance and deposition the prescribed answer? This theme is debated in all its contradictions by Shakespeare. The notion of divinity presented at the outset is freshly contemplated. Richard himself continues to believe in the sanctity of the blood royal and of divine sanction and intervention in the ruler's aid, though events belie this single-minded faith. To the old-timer York indiscriminate desertion of the royal side was not easily acceptable:

York. ........

......... Both are my kinsmen:
Th'one is my sovereign, whom both my oath
And duty bide defend; th'other again
Is my kinsman, whom the king hath wrong'd,
Whom conscience and my kindred bide to right.

Well, somewhat we must do....

York chides Bolingbroke for his defiance of his banishment and braving of arms against his king and incriminates all the lords as rebels. Yet he realises the fruitlessness of his admonitions, and the case against Richard being strong he decides, "I do

87ibid., Act II, Sc. II., l. 111-16.
remain neuter", though he would be loath to break the country's laws.

If Henry VI's moral platitudes had proved politically ineffective, Richard II's exposition of the theory of divine right yielded no positive results towards the retention of Crown and power. In 'Richard II' the idea of divine sanction finds exegesis in its faithful representations by Richard, and Shakespeare, like his contemporaries, expounds upon orthodoxy, and in the process attempts to inculcate a secular temper. (See Chapter I).

As Richard begins to yield to the belief in the workings of a divine intervention, and expresses a naive assurance of a natural protection, (therefore relating kingship to a law of nature) even the cleric the Bishop of Carlisle advises positive action:

Car. Fear not, my lord. That power that made you king
Hath power to keep you king in spite of all,
The means that heaven yields must be imbrac'd
And not neglected; else, heaven would,
And we will not; heavens offer, we refuse
The proffered means of succour and redress. 88

But Richard insists on his divinity and faith in the succour that God will provide;

Rich. Not all the water in the rough rude sea Can wash the balm off from an anointed king; The breath of worldly men cannot depose The deputy elected by the Lord; For every man that Bolingbroke hath press'd To lift shrewd steel against our golden crown, God for his Richard hath in heavenly pay A glorious angel; then, if angels fight, Weak men must fall, for heaven still guards the right. 89

Ironically immediate news arrive of all the soldiers having dispersed and fled to Bolingbroke. Richard, for all his tyrannical rule, now surrenders to the force of circumstances and is seen to be unable to make preparations for counter-attack. However he continues to take recourse to the political common places which are thereby called into question and would in future take on very changed forms. (See Chapter I) Richard seeks to find sustenance in the double nature of the contract. The contract here is a kind of feudal allegiance of lord and tenant, only that the King being of a divine installation, has an additional prop, for the contract in his case is wrought of God as well. This

89 I b i d ., Act III, Sc. II, l. 54-62.
double nature of the contract was to provide the basis of argument against monarchical absolutism in the years of the Civil War, ("Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos" being one of the most influential pamphlets forwarding this notion). The contract was then explained from the viewpoint of the people, to establish not justification of the monarch but of his deposition. Here Richard's appeal to this covenant has little practical value and Shakespeare's devaluation of this idea of absolute divine right is apparent, though he does not as yet seek to establish the direct right of resistance on grounds of violation of a double contract by the ruler. Thus Richard falls back upon the tested theory:

Rich. Mine ear is open and my heart prepar'd
   The worst is worldly loss thou canst unfold
Say, is my kingdom lost? why, 'twas my care,
   And what loss is it to be rid of care?
Strives Bolingbroke to be as great as we?
Greater he shall not be. If he serve God,
   We'll serve him too, and he his fellow so.
Revolt our subjects? that we cannot mend;
They break their faith to God as well as us.
Cry woe, destruction, ruin and decay——
The worst is death, and death will have his day. 90

90 *ibid.*, Act III, Sc. II, l. 93-103.
News of desertion crowd upon Richard, and he submits to the turn of events, as he disperses his army and abides in Flint Castle. He still argues from the condition of his divinity as he answers Northumberland:

Rich. ........
If we be not, show us the hand of God
That hath dismissed us from our stewardship;
For well we know no hand of blood and bone
Can gripe the sacred handle of our sceptre,
Unless he do profane, steal or usurp.
And though you think that all, as you have done,
Have torn their souls by turning them from us,
And we are barren and bereft of friends,
Yet know, my master, God omnipotent,
Is mustering in his clouds, on our behalf,
Armies of pestilence, and they shall strike
Your children yet unborn and unbegot,
That lift your vassal hands against my head,
And threat the glory of my precious crown.\(^{91}\)

If Richard III as an aberration in nature, performs the task of disrupting the accepted postulate of a harmony in nature, being an exemplification of this disruption in extreme form, Richard II dispels the tradition of divine right as an undeniable

\(^{91}\)ibid., Act III, Sc. III, l. 77-90.
theoretical form. If this was briefly asserted in the period of the Henrician Reformation (see Chapter II) it was beginning to wane in influence. The Bishop of Carlisle of course gives fair warning, but the secular temper is set:

Car. Marry, God forbid!
Worst in this royal presence may I speak,
Yet best beseeming me to speak the truth.
Would God that any in this noble presence were enough noble to be upright judge
Of noble Richard! then true nobleness would
Learn his forbearance from so foul a wrong.
What subject can give sentence on his king?
And who sits here that is not Richard's subject?
Thieves are not judged but they are by to hear,
Although apparent guilt be seen in them,
And shall the figure of God's majesty,
His captain, steward, deputy elect,
Anointed, crowned, planted many years,
Be judged by subject and inferior breath,
And he himself not present? O forfend it, God,
That in a Christian climate souls refined
Should so such heinous, black, obscene a deed!
I speak to subjects, and a subject speaks,
Stirr'd up by God thus boldly for his king.
My Lord of Herford here, whom you call king,
Is a foul traitor to proud Herford's king,
And if you crown him, let me prophesy—
The blood of English shall manure the ground,
And future ages groan for this foul act,
Peace shall go sleep with Turks and infidels,
And, in this seat of peace, tumultous wars
Shall kin with kin, and kind with kind, confound.
Disorder, horror, fear and mutiny,
Shall here inhabit, and this land be call'd
The field of Golgotha and dead men's skulls ---
O, if you raise this house against this house,
It will be the woefullest division prove
That ever fell upon this cursed earth
Prevent it, resist it, let it not be so,
Lest child, child's children, cry against you woe.

The question of deposition of a tyrant takes the forefront of action. R.H. Wells has noted that the tyrant's deposition, in the tradition of sixteenth century political versiage, became acceptable only if performed in constitutional manner. Here Shakespeare's sources (Hall) had been cited. Thus Richard's deposition in Parliament, where consent of people is given supposedly through representation, requires to be displayed as an elaborate rigmarole of voluntary abdication, and thereby to mould consciousness of an Elizabethan audience. (The performance of the play before the insurrection of Essex is an

---

92 ibid., Act IV, Sc. I, l. 114-149.
93 See R.H. Wells, op.cit., p. 109-16.
example of deliberate attempt at shaping consciousness.) However we take note that Shakespeare makes a sustained argument for the case of a Machiavellian political manoeuvre, against which Richard's naivety can but only relent to submission. Richard is quick enough to note Bolingbroke's enterprising political acumen to which he submits:

Richard's mismanagement of state, being unmindful of statecraft, he would now reap the fruits of his own carelessness, as the Gardener so aptly puts it:

Richard's mismanagement of state, being unmindful of statecraft, he would now reap the fruits of his own carelessness, as the Gardener so aptly puts it:

Gard.  

0, what pity is it

That he had not so trimm'd and dress'd his land
As we this garden! We at time of year
Do wound the bark, the skin of our fruit-trees,
Lest, being over-proud in sap and blood,
With too much riches it confound itself;
Had he done so to great and growing men,

---

They might have lived to bear, and he to taste
Their fruits of duty. Superfluous branches
We lop away, that bearing boughs may live;
Had he done so, himself had borne the crown,
Which waste of idle hours hath quite thrown down. 95

Richard now has only "some few vanities" to cling to, whereas by contrast Bolingbroke sets about with ruthless tenacity to rid himself of all obstacles to the throne. It was to Bolingbroke's credit that the peers and the commons were in support of him and with tactical brilliance he assumes power even before it is formally bestowed upon him. It may be recalled that Bolingbroke, even at his banishment, had won popularity among the commons of which Richard had taken note:

Rich. ........
Ourself and Bushy
Observe'd his courtship to the common people
How he did seem to dive into their hearts
With humble and familiar courtesy;
What reverence he did throw away on slaves,

95 Act III, Sc. IV, l. 55-66.
The garden imagery enlivens Richard's failure as a ruler. Its aptness is enhanced in view of the 'art' and 'nature' association of the Elizabethan age. Bacon's 'Of Gardens' and Thomas More's beautiful home gardens are instances of how art was seen to contrive upon nature to produce an artifact (See also Chapter I)
Wooing poor craftsmen with the craft of smiles
And patient underbearing of his fortune,
As'twere to banish their affects with him.
Off goes his bonnet to an oyster-wench;
A brace of draymen bid God speed him well,
And had the tribute of his supple knee,
With "Thanks, my countrymen, my loving friends"—
As were our England in reversion his,
And he our subjects' next degree in hope. 96

When York announces 'plume-plucked' Richard's willing
submission of sceptre to Bolingbroke he quietly assumes: "In
God's name, I'll ascend the royal throne". However, again with
Machiavellian foresight he commands:

"Fetch hither Richard, that in common view
He may surrender; so we shall proceed
Without suspicion". 97

We may quote Machiavelli's famous assessment of 'laudable
deceit' over here, for over and above political questions of
tyrant/deposition/constitutionalism/soverignty/justice, the

96 _ibid._, Act I, Sc. IV., l. 23-36.
Machiavellian world that Shakespeare here pictureses cannot be overlooked. Indeed Bolingbroke and Aumerla describe a new breed of politicians in contrast to the older generation of York and Gaunt.

"In what way Princes must keep Faith
...........You must know, then, that are two methods of fighting, the one by law the other force; the first method is that of men, the second of beasts; but as the first method is often insufficient, one must have recourse to the second. It is therefore necessary for a Prince to know well how to use both the beast and the man......

A prince being thus obliged to know well how to act as a beast must imitate the fox and the lion, for the lion cannot protect himself from traps, and the fox cannot defend itself from wolves. One must therefore be a fox to recognize traps, and the lion to frighten wolves. Those that wish to be only lions do not understand this. Therefore, a prudent ruler ought not to keep faith when by doing so it would be against his interest, and when the reasons which made him bind himself no longer exist......But it is necessary to be able to disguise this character well, and to be a great feigner and disssembler; ........

It is not, therefore, necessary for a prince to have all the above named qualities, but it is very necessary to seem to have them .......

... for men in general judge more by the eyes than by the hands, for everyone can see, but very few have to feel. Everybody sees what you appear to be, few feel what you are, and those few
will not dare to oppose themselves to the many, who have
the majesty of the state to defend them;...... Let a prince
therefore aim at conquering and maintaining the state, and
the means will always be judged honourable and praised by
everyone, for the vulgar is always taken by appearances and
the issue of the event; and the world consists only of the
vulgar and the few who are not vulgar are isolated when the
many have a rallying point in the prince.98

Tillyard had pointed out certain details in the play
which when considered in the light of this political world,
take on a new significance. As Tillyard notes, the actions
tend to be symbolic rather than real, the pomp of tournament,
the assembly of great armies, the challenge of impending battle,
are described, though the actual clash of armies do not occur.
Secondly, where emotions are engendered, the speeches take on
the formality of conceits and conventions. Thirdly, in the
cosmic references too this elaboration and formality surfaces.
To Tillyard this laboured formality was the outcome of an
insistence on means more than on ends by Shakespeare, which
Tillyard finds more medieval than Elizabethan.99

What strikes us is that this kind of formality underplays the pathos and strong emotional considerations to the more distinctly practical and empirical methods of political achievement. For those who "intended to thrive in this new world" it would be more meet to follow the adage reflected in Northumberland's remark, "That were some love, but little policy."  

Even in the deposition scene the ritual element is maintained, thereby impressing the act of abdication itself as well as its voluntary nature. Here the emphasis is again on the self (as in Richard III) and what is noteworthy is that Richard, who had been God's anointed king, now takes upon himself the task of dispensing with the lineaments of majesty.

---

100 Wilson Knight has noted stylistic variations in speeches of emotion in contrast to political narratives and factual reports (especially in reference to Henry VIII) Knight puts it, "we may conclude that Shakespeare regularly employs a complicated syntax for the rough and tumble of actual life, and those divisions of consciousness it awakes; but automatically uses a simple expression where the speaker functions as a unit and further, it is these later, not the former, that give us our generally recognised set-pieces of supreme poetry". (G.W. Knight, The Crown of Life, Methuen, 1969, p. 263).

101 In defining the "character" of Bolingbroke Palmer notes; "Richard's abdication must be justified to the people of England. No one knows that better than Bolingbroke. But this supple, audacious and secret man has the politician's art of allowing others to do the ignoble things necessary for his advancement while he himself remains in the background to reap the profit and show to advantage in gestures of mercy, magnanimity and honest care for the public weal". (Palmer, op. cit. p. 63).
Rich. Ay, no; no, ay; for I must nothing be. Therefore no "no", for I resign to thee. Now, mark me how I will undo myself. I give this heavy weight from off my head, And this unwieldy sceptre from my hand, The pride of kingly sway from out my heart; With mine own tears I wash away my balm, With mine own hands I give away my crown, With mine own tongue deny my sacred state, With mine own breath release all dueous oaths; All pomp and majesty I do forswear; My manors, rents, revenues, I forgo; My acts, decrees, and statutes I deny. God pardon all oaths that are broke to me, God keep all vows unbroke are made to thee! Make me, that nothing have, with nothing griev'd, And thou with all pleas'd, that has all achiev'd. 102

Here is indeed a displacement of valuation, from an insistence upon an all encompassing providence, to a worldly site of contemplation, and even more acutely upon the self. This is not to deny to Shakespeare the acceptance of Providence, and just as the Bishop of Carlisle's prophecy echoes in spite of physical restriction, Richard does not fail at climactic moments to declare:

102 King Richard II, Act IV, Sc. I., l. 201-17.
Rich. .........

If thou wouldst,
There shouldst thou find one heinous article
Containing the deposing of a king,
And cracking the strong warrant of an oath,
Mark'd with a blot, damn'd in the book of heaven. 103

As noted earlier the abdication is an insistence of the
notion of sovereignty and power. Flourishing in civilian
literature of the middle ages was the notion of power as residing
in the people which had been surrendered irrevocably to the ruler.
(See Chapter I). In Hooker we see a revival of this idea. For he
too notes that power once given cannot be recalled, that it
should be limited ere it is given, and that "things should
be thought beforehand". In this light, sovereign power attached
to the ruler could not be dismantled. And yet Richard's deposition
has become inevitable and Shakespeare with artistic skill carries
forth the dramatic movement towards this climax, at the same time
devouring notions (divine right) that sustain such fixed principles.
Thus the ritualistic abdication becomes necessary, when Richard
submits his symbols of power with elaborate detail, to convey

them upon his successor, thereby to leave the prescriptions of sovereignty intact. That this also involves Machiavellian finesse is a major perspective that the play expounds.

Critics have noted with a degree of bafflement that "an ideal cosmological schema" is placed beside brutal facts of political realities. 104 To this point arguments have been provided that there is not in Richard II "universality of cosmic harmony" but "universality of contention and change" 105 promoted in the form of the sovereign ruler. We note that in Richard II that world order is seen to be buffeted and blown and if Richard clings to it with desperation, in the last symbolic act he seems to shatter that image with the breaking of the mirror, thereby giving weight to a new order, alien to himself, but where Bolingbroke rises high. In an illuminating essay E. H. Kantorowicz has made a similar point. The King's Two Bodies, political and natural, contains potentially three prototypes the King, the Fool, and the God. In the symbolic (mirror) act, the possible duality is shattered, and all three

104 See I. Ribner, "The English History Play in the age of Shakespeare", 1957, p. 164
105 Ornstein, op. cit., p. 105.
facets are reduced to one. What remained was a body natural. The last vestiges of power in Richard is shattered through the mirror and he is left only with the unalienated self. Bolingbroke comments with stark precision:

Bol. The shadow of your sorrow hath destroy'd
   The shadow of your face.

However, to return to the notion of the tyrant and its resistance, though Richard merited deposition, (and is eventually murdered) more importantly, the state continues to be fostered and here the consent of the people is seen to be of crucial importance in the perpetuation of the state. As Hooker had maintained, rulers were installed by human rights though sanctioned by the divine. Thus York's account of the glorious entrance of Bolingbroke to London (in contrast to Richard's) point towards a depiction of that idea:

York. Then, as I said, the Duke, great Bolingbroke,
   Mounted upon a hot and fiery steed
   Which his aspiring rider seem'd to know;
   With slow but stately pace kept on his course,
   Whilst all tongues cried "God save thee, Bolingbroke!"
   You would have thought the very windows spake,

So many greedy looks of young and old
Through casements darted their desiring eyes
Upon his visage; and that all the walls
With painted imagery had said at once
"Jesu preserve thee! Welcome Bolingbroke!"
Whilst he, from one side to the other turning,
Bare-headed, lower than his proud steed's neck,
Bespake than thus, "I thank you, countrymen"
And thus still doing, thus he pass'd along.

Ouch. Alack, poor Richard! where rode he the whilst
York. As in the theatre the eyes of men,
After a well-grac'd actor leaves the stage,
Are idly bent on him that enters next,
Thinking his prattle to be tedious;
Even so, or with much more contempt, men's eyes
Did scowl on Richard. No man cried "God save him!"
No joyful tongue gave him his welcome home,
But dust was thrown upon his sacred head;
Which with such gentle sorrow he shook off,
His face still combating with tears and smiles,
The badges of his grief and patience,
That had not God for some strong purpose steel'd
The hearts of men, they must perforce have melted,
And barbarism itself have pitied him.
But heaven hath a hand in these events,
To whose high will we bind our calm contents.
To Bolingbroke are we sworn subjects now,
Whose state and honour I for aye allow. 107

Consent of the people not only in representational terms but by direct assent, even if not formalised, was an additional qualification for the central monarch. Bolingbroke does not fail to perceive this while Richard had continued to reign not for the 'common good' but largely for personal benefit. He therefore deserved the title of tyrant, conforming to the qualifications of the term as denoted by the new consciousness of the age.

In conclusion to this section we may note that Shakespeare's 'Richard III', as we have seen, enthralled his audiences with the spirited adventurism that he displayed, a mark of that bourgeois enthusiasm and enterprise which we have already referred to in Chapter I and II. However, in instilling the relentless individualism in Richard, which was yet to find its niche in the nascent bourgeois consciousness, Shakespeare brings into the forefront a conflict of values, and here a traditional spirit seems to be restored in place of the new found libertarianism. Another thing we may note is that, Richard's unqualified wickedness was not related to man's sinful nature, rather it was a positive wickedness emanating from the self, defined in uncompounded villainy, and bereft of any goodness that can give shape to the state. The annihilation of Richard on that score is therefore inevitable.
In 'Richard II' two opposed values are openly in conflict, and here it is a positive rejection of that orientation to the other worldly, of resolving issues upon considerations of eternal decrees. However there is no armed resistance actually conducted (as Tillyard notes), rather the assumption of power with shrewd manoeuvres, and what the play conclusively conveys is a notion of consent as bestowed by the general people was an important qualification for state leadership. In the detailed abdication by Richard, Shakespeare seems to denote that novel idea (detailed in Hooker, See Ch. I) of a body politic, which had transferred its authority as an organic unit to the ruler, which now Richard transfers to Bolingbroke, and sheds the last vestiges of this glory with the shattering of the mirror. The Providential scheme is never rejected outright as we have seen (in York's speech, or Carlisle's speech for instance). King John on the other hand had assumed power without rightful inheritance and therefore he could not 'by just means' hold on to it. But John was also dauntless in his pursuit of establishing an Erastian state, which to an extent justified non-resistance towards this ruler. These plays therefore seem to bring into discourse a dichotomy of values, traditional on the one hand and libertarian on the other, and Shakespeare displays his finesse and mastery in grasping the contradictions of these ideas and placing them in explicit debate in these
plays. Tradition itself is not a monolith, as we noted earlier, and it is in the grasping of these ideas and installing their importance to the needs of that particular society that Shakespeare's genius shines forth.