1955

The Techniques of Characterization and Dramatic Imagery in 'Richard II' and 'King Lear'.

George Foster Provost Jr
Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses/107

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Historical Dissertations and Theses by an authorized administrator of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact gradetd@lsu.edu.
THE TECHNIQUES OF CHARACTERIZATION AND DRAMATIC IMAGERY IN RICHARD II AND KING LEAR

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of English

by

George Foster Provost, Jr.
B. S., Louisiana State University, 1947
M. A., University of Oregon, 1952
June, 1955
EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

Candidate: George Foster Provost, Jr.

Major Field: English

Title of Thesis: The Techniques of Characterization and Dramatic Imagery in Richard II and King Lear

Approved:

[Signatures of Major Professor and Chairman, Dean of the Graduate School]

EXAMining COMMITTEE:

[Signatures of Committee Members]

Date of Examination:

May 6, 1955
I gratefully acknowledge the untiring guidance and assistance of my adviser, Professor W. J. Olive, and of the other members of my committee, Professors M. R. Watson and W. A. Pickens. The objections made by Dr. Olive and Dr. Watson to the conception of sentimentality upon which this thesis was originally planned led me to recast the whole project into what is, I hope, a much more satisfactory and comprehensive interpretation of Richard II and King Lear. I am also particularly indebted to Professor E. C. A. Lesch of the University of Oregon, whose understanding of Shakespeare's Richard II helped shape my own conception of the character, and whose suggestions for the wording of passages in my M. A. thesis on Richard II have sometimes been adopted verbatim into this dissertation.

Miss Dyson, Miss Karlsen, and Miss Walling of the library reference department, and Miss Lynch, Mrs. Pichoff, Miss Hankins, and Mr. Blanchard of the circulation department, have all been extremely helpful in obtaining the books I have needed. I am indebted also to the entire English faculty, from whom I learned many of the principles employed in this study, and whose kindness to me as a student and colleague I will not forget.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT** ................................................................. 11

**ABSTRACT** ................................................................................ v

**INTRODUCTION** ....................................................................... 1

I THE CRITICAL BACKGROUND .................................................. 9

1 Shakespeare Imagery Criticism ............................................. 9

11 King Richard ........................................................................ 37

111 King Lear .......................................................................... 44

II THE EVASIVENESS OF RICHARD AND LEAR ..................... 60

1 Preliminary Resemblances ..................................................... 60

11 Richard's False Sorrow ......................................................... 63

111 Richard's Evasiveness ........................................................ 90

1v Richard's Tragic Flaw .......................................................... 102

v Lear's Evasiveness ............................................................... 104

III IMAGERY AND KING RICHARD'S JUSTICE ................... 137

1 Introduction ........................................................................... 137

11 The Earth-garden Theme ................................................... 143

111 The Sun Theme ................................................................. 147

1v The Royal Balm and Christ Themes ................................. 153

v The Bloodshed Theme ......................................................... 157

vi The Synthesis ..................................................................... 168
ABSTRACT

This dissertation studies parallels in the techniques of characterization and dramatic imagery in Richard II and King Lear. Shakespearean imagery criticism has revealed a number of ways in which the poet used imagery; but it has become increasingly clear that nothing helpful to an understanding of the dramas is to be gained from exhaustive categorization according to rhetorical schemes. This study, therefore, employs a flexible approach to the imagery, an approach based on the apparent dramatic purpose of each image.

The prevailing critical diagnosis of Shakespeare's Richard II is that he is a misplaced poet. This opinion has been so popular that understanding of the play has been obscured. It has been a similarly popular critical opinion that Lear's madness is an imaginative reawakening by which the king attains insight. As a result of this theory, Lear's unperceptiveness throughout his madness has not been generally recognized, and the close connection between his tragic mistake and his madness has been concealed.

Richard is actually portrayed not as a poet but as a person so committed to comfort of mind that he indulges
every whim and appetite and, disastrously, blinds himself to everything uncomfortable. His determination to preserve his comfortable idea of himself as a perfect king prevents him from admitting the injustice he has committed in seizing Bolingbroke's property. Instead, Richard convinces himself that Bolingbroke is a usurper rather than a wronged subject, resigns the throne, and takes refuge in the self-pitying and erroneous thought that he has been the victim of unprovoked villainy. His profuse imagery, far from marking him a poet, is the register of his self-pitying, evasive mind. His tragic flaw is his blindness to uncomfortable truth; his tragic error, injustice.

Unlike Richard in some respects, Lear is very much like him in the area of the tragic flaw. Lear, too, is committed to comfort of mind and evades uncomfortable truth. Outraged at Cordelia's refusal to cater to his desire for flattery, he unjustly disinherits her and silences Kent's truthful objections. Until he goes mad Lear evades the obsessive thought that he has been unjust and that he is not only directly responsible for the indignities he suffers, but in some measure deserving of them. On the heath he attempts to accept this humiliating truth, but is unable to, and takes refuge instead in an insane self-pity. His madness is characterized throughout by a refusal to face his guilt; his cure is simultaneous with his consenting at last to recognize and accept the
truth. Lear's tragic flaw, like Richard's, is an evasive blindness to uncomfortable truth; like Richard's, Lear's tragic mistake is injustice.

The similarity of the tragic errors proves to be the central fact in a general similarity of the image structures of the two plays. The imagery of each play is appropriately, and organically, constructed around the central dramatic idea of the king's injustice. Richard's blindness to truth is symbolized by the iterative image of blinding tears; Lear's blindness, by the sight-and-blindness theme. The other significant image themes in both plays symbolize various aspects of the kings' injustice; and the central idea of injustice is itself symbolized in the series of trial scenes which dominates each play.

The image techniques of the two plays are alike not only in the overall design of the image themes but in various minor ways as well. Contrary to previous critical opinion, the basic image functions of the mature tragedies are already worked out in Richard II; the improvements in Lear are largely due to economy and more expert dramatic placing. Richard II comprehensively anticipates the techniques of King Lear.
INTRODUCTION

The most fruitful approach to a poet's work is often to be found not in the exclusive study of his most mature work but with the help of some early piece which shows the literary artist fitting himself, sometimes rather mechanically, for the later performances in which his technique has become so nearly perfect that it is not easily studied. Hence Spenser's technique is best approached through the often clumsy but extremely varied and revealing exercises of the Shepheardes Calender. Likewise, the development of Pope's technique can be traced almost step-by-step in the Pastorals and the Essay on Criticism.

The same is true to some extent of Shakespeare. It is, no doubt, beyond the powers of any critic except one as gifted as Shakespeare himself to lay bare all the thousand poetic devices by which he achieves the effects of the great tragedies; yet much can be learned by comparing two reasonably similar plays, one from the poet's first literary decade and one from the second. Wolfgang Clemen operates on a similar principle in Shakespeare's Bilder, although in attempting to treat the whole canon in the scope of a single book he is
necessarily prevented from examining any single play exhaustively.\(^1\) G. W. Knight too, while relegating "comparison" to the duty of the prosaic "critic" rather than of the "interpreter" he claims to be,\(^2\) uses comparison between earlier and later plays as one of his most successful devices. Perhaps his comparison of Brutus and Macbeth is the most effective and incisive chapter in all his Shakespeare "interpretation."\(^3\) Critics of Shakespeare's verse style have likewise used comparison extensively in studying the plays, and John F. Danby illustrates a further usefulness of comparative study

---

\(^1\)Shakespeares Bilder, ihre Entwicklung und ihre Funktionen im dramatischen Werk (Bonn: P. Hanstein, 1936).


\(^2\)"Criticism" to me suggests a certain process of deliberately objectifying the work under consideration; the comparison of it with other similar works in order to show in what respects it surpasses, or falls short of these works; the dividing of its 'good' from its 'bad'; and finally, a formal judgment as to its lasting validity. 'Interpretation,' on the contrary, tends to merge into the work it analyses; it attempts, as far as possible, to understand its subject in the light of its own nature, employing external reference, if at all, only as a preliminary to understanding ..." The Wheel of Fire (4th ed.; London: Methuen, 1949), p. 1. This passage and others quoted in the present study are reprinted in the fourth edition verbatim from The Wheel of Fire (1st ed.; London: Oxford University Press, 1930).

\(^3\)The Wheel of Fire (4th ed.), pp. 120-39. This, as well as Knight's continual use of series of Shakespearean plays, is in part a side-stepping of his own precept that "criticism" compares and "interpretation" stays principally within the single work of art.
in tracing the development of the Shakespearean Machiavel from Richard III to Edmund. 4

The present study examines poetic and dramatic techniques in Richard II which seem to anticipate those in King Lear. 5 The two plays have remarkable parallels in imagery, character portrayal, and various other techniques which in the past have been little recognized. W. B. C. Watkins, though working with what is probably an imperfect understanding of Richard II, has noted similarities in structure and dialogue techniques, and incidental parallels in characterization, between the two plays. His treatment, however, is brief and suggestive, 6 and in general Richard II has been overlooked as a direct anticipation of the later great tragedy.


5 Since this introduction was composed Travis Bogard has published "Shakespeare's Second Richard," PMLA, LXX (1955), 192-209, a comparative study which voices very similar opinions about the value of examining Shakespeare's technique in plays where the artist had not yet learned to conceal his technical devices. Bogard's observations, though based on a conception of Richard II's personality which this study attempts to disprove, are acute ones, and reinforce the growing opinion among Shakespearean scholars that Richard II is one of the most revealing of all the plays, so far as the dramatist's technique is concerned.

6 Shakespeare and Spenser (Princeton: Princeton
It is assumed throughout this study that the plays are primarily dramas rather than any other kind of poetry, and that Shakespeare molded his material throughout with an eye to dramatic effect. But it is further assumed that the behavior of the chief characters, namely King Richard and King Lear, is psychologically consistent with, or at least not contradictory to, what a real human being might do in the same circumstances, within the pressing limits imposed by the dramatic form. That is to say, this study assumes that in portraying the two kings Shakespeare was both a conscious and a competent artist, achieving dramatic effect without undue violence to human probability. The position here, then, is midway between the positions of A. C. Bradley, who often treated the characters as if they were real human beings, and of E. E. Stoll, who maintains that Shakespeare was interested purely in dramatic effect and not in psychological accuracy or

University Press, 1950), pp. 75-110. This chapter, devoted to orienting the techniques of King Lear among those of other Shakespearean plays, is a recasting of an earlier article, "The Two Techniques in 'King Lear,'" Review of English Studies, XVIII (1942), 1-26. Watkins is committed to the theory of Richard as a person of "genuine imaginative and intellectual perception" (Shakespeare and Spenser, p. 85), a theory which the present study will attempt to refute. Watkins' most suggestive sentence reads, "To say that Lear is Richard grown old is one of those biographical extensions of Shakespearean characters so easy to make and so fallacious; yet there is something of the character and spirit, as well as dramatic design, of King Lear in Richard II" (Shakespeare and Spenser, p. 99).
consistency. 7

The critical tools used to examine the plays are eclectic, and no attempt is made to conduct this study in accordance with the canons of any school of poetic criticism. Because one of the chief technical phenomena to be examined is a vitally important parallel in the psychological portrayal of Richard and Lear, the entire second chapter is devoted merely to examining the kings' behavior as it is revealed in the words they speak; and thus, though technical psychological terms are avoided, a large part of the study consists of psychological analysis. It is never assumed, however, that the characters are genuine human beings; the assumption is that they are artistic portrayals of human beings. No attempt is made, for example, to run down the threads of a character's behavior before the opening of the play, unless there is reasonable evidence in the text that the playwright intended certain prior actions to have dramatic significance.

7A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy (2nd ed.; London: Macmillan, 1951), and E. E. Stoll, Art and Artifice in Shakespeare (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1933), pp. 167-73. Bradley's remarks on the prior experiences of Cordelia (p. 317), and of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth (pp. 369, 486-92) give the impression that to him they were actual people. For a discussion of Bradley's attitude, see Kenneth Muir's "Fifty Years of Shakespearean Criticism," Shakespeare Survey, IV (1951), 3. (Shakespearean Tragedy was originally published in 1904.)
The analysis of the central tragic figures in Chapter Two is a necessary preliminary to Chapters Three and Four, which examine the close-knit and remarkably parallel image structures of the two plays. Such an organization of this study is dictated by the fact that the image structure in both works depends on the tragic mistake of injustice, which in turn depends on the tragic flaw of evasive-mindedness. The tears and music images, however, are so important in the characterization of Richard that they must be discussed as a part of Chapter Two instead of being reserved, like the rest of the imagery, for discussion in Chapters Three and Four. This departure from the overall scheme of organization cannot be avoided without the loss of some important and subtle clues to Richard's personality.

Chapter One surveys the three scholarly traditions in which the study is based: the tradition of Shakespearean imagery criticism, the tradition of Richard II scholarship, and the tradition of Lear scholarship. The study as a whole will endeavor to temper imaginative interpretation with the careful attention to the text and to previous critical work which sound scholarship demands.

The conclusions of the study are briefly these: Richard II and King Lear are very similarly conceived in terms of the king's tragic mistake of injustice.
As dramatic characters, Richard and Lear, though by no means identical, are in some respects very similar; and the techniques used in characterizing them are much alike. Contrary to a large body of critical opinion, neither Richard nor Lear seems to represent Shakespeare's idea of a poet. The eloquence which has been labeled as the outpourings of a poet is, in both kings, for the most part merely the pathetic register of their self-pity; this is true even in Richard's prison soliloquy (V,v) and in Lear's final mad scene (IV,v1). In each king the tragic error stems from a compulsive appetite for mental comfort and from an evasive, self-indulgent blindness to anything uncomfortable -- a blindness which with Richard continues through the entire play and, with Lear, to the moment of his cure from madness. Lear's blindness to uncomfortable truth is symbolized in a manner strikingly similar to the way in which Richard's blindness is symbolized; and the operation of their minds under tragic stress bears the same remarkable parallel. The parallels in the two characters suggest an interpretation of Lear's madness which links the madness directly with the tragic mistake in the first act, thus throwing light on an obscure area of Shakespearean motivation. This interpretation is that Lear takes refuge in an insane self-pity because he cannot bear to face the truth of his injustice to Cordelia.

The imagery in the two plays has a variety of functions, but almost every distinct function turns up
in both plays. The iterative imagery, whose existence in both Lear and Richard II has long been recognized, proves to be tightly constructed around the king's injustice, a fact overlooked by previous imagery studies; and each important image theme in both plays is referred to the subject of injustice. The dominant image theme in each play is the theme of injustice itself, as represented by the imposing trial scenes which strategically punctuate the action -- five in Richard II, four in King Lear. These trials serve as huge symbols of the royal injustice which is the central dramatic issue of each play.

The study brings to light a great deal of detailed information about the imagery in the earlier play -- enough to make it clear that the poet's image technique in Richard II was much closer to its final complex development than has heretofore been recognized. The improvements in the imagery of Lear are mostly matters of economy and more expert dramatic placing. The study as a whole, then, reveals Richard II as a comprehensive experiment in the techniques which were later to be used in one of Shakespeare's greatest dramas.
CHAPTER ONE

THE CRITICAL BACKGROUND

To clarify the problems dealt with in this study and the critical methods to be used, the present chapter surveys three special aspects of Shakespearean criticism. Since the three are almost completely separate critical developments, and are of approximately equal importance to this investigation, the order in which they are reviewed is arbitrary. The first is the recent movement in Shakespearean imagery criticism; the second and third are the traditions of critical opinion on the behavior of King Lear and King Richard.

Modern interest in Shakespeare's imagery developed in the wake of the Imagist movement in poetry, which was at least partly responsible for a widespread scholarly interest in the poetic image during the years 1915-1930. This period saw a number of works devoted to the theory of the image, such as T. Hilding Svartengren's Intensifying Similes in English¹ (1918), Henry W. Wells' Poetic

¹(Lund: Aktiebolaget skånska centraltryckeriet, 1918).
Imagery, Illustrated from Elizabethan Literature\textsuperscript{2} (1924), Stephen J. Brown's The World of Imagery\textsuperscript{3} (1927), John Middleton Murry's essay "Metaphor,"\textsuperscript{4} (1927), and Elizabeth Holmes' Aspects of Elizabethan Imagery\textsuperscript{5} (1929). The first specifically Shakespearean studies in this movement appeared in 1929 and 1930: Monsignor F. G. Kolbe's Shakespeare's Way\textsuperscript{6} (1930), Caroline F. E. Spurgeon's Shakespeare Association Lecture entitled "Leading Motives in the Imagery of Shakespeare's Tragedies,"\textsuperscript{7} (1930), and G. W. Knight's Myth and Miracle\textsuperscript{8} (1929) and The Wheel of Fire (1930). All these works deal with the phenomena of reiterated words, expressions, and images in Shakespeare, phenomena which had been alluded to in passing by A. C. Bradley,\textsuperscript{9} and which had received detailed attention from Walter Whiter, whose eighteenth-century essay Specimen

\textsuperscript{2}(New York: Columbia University Press, 1924)

\textsuperscript{3}(London: Paul, Trench, Trubner, and Co., 1927)


\textsuperscript{5}(Oxford: Blackwell, 1929)

\textsuperscript{6}(London: Sheed and Ward, 1930)

\textsuperscript{7}In Shakespeare Criticism, 1919-35, ed. Anne Ridler (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), pp. 18-61.

\textsuperscript{8}Myth and Miracle: An Essay on the Mystic Symbolism of Shakespeare (London: Burrow, c. 1929).

\textsuperscript{9}Shakespearean Tragedy, pp. 266-70.
of a Commentary on Shakespeare,\textsuperscript{10} however, went almost unnoticed when it was written and had been long forgotten when Kolbe, Spurgeon, and Knight made their initial image studies. These last three, then, who entered the field independently of one another, may be said to be the founders of the contemporary movement in Shakespeare imagery criticism.

Although their works overlap, the fundamental approaches of these three scholars differ from one another at least in part, and each may be said to have established a trend in the imagery movement. Kolbe was largely concerned with tabulating the repetitive occurrence of various words and ideas in the plays. Spurgeon's lecture, superseded by her later \textit{Shakespeare's Imagery and What it Tells Us}\textsuperscript{11} (1935), attempted to inaugurate a method of scientific classification of Shakespearean imagery based on a count of all the images in all the plays. According to her announced purposes, the results of such a classification were to be used to derive, first, information about Shakespeare the man: (a) his personality and interests, and (b) how his mind worked (this latter part of the first purpose having implications allied to John

\textsuperscript{10}(London: T. Cadell, 1794).

\textsuperscript{11}(New York: Macmillan, 1935).
Livingston Lowes' study The Road to Xanadu;\textsuperscript{12} and second, to throw light on the dramatic technique of the plays, including both the use of symbolic imagery to convey atmosphere and theme, and the use of symbolic and other types of imagery to convey subtleties of character. G. W. Knight's studies, to the extent that they dealt with imagery, were largely concerned with the dramatic effects of iterative symbolic imagery in the plays.

The most significant descendants of Kolbe's Shakespeare's Way, probably, are The Voyage to Illyria, by Kenneth Muir and Sean O'Loughlin;\textsuperscript{13} Repetition in Shakespeare, by Paul V. Kreider;\textsuperscript{14} and This Great Stage, by Robert B. Heilman.\textsuperscript{15} It is not true that any of these descendants are concerned only with repetitive occurrence of ideas and themes in Shakespeare, but in each one the fact of repetition is strongly emphasized and used as a critical tool, often with great dexterity and insight. The members of this tradition, however, are not concerned with one point which was of great importance to the imagery studies of the late teens.

\textsuperscript{12}(Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1927)
\textsuperscript{13}(London: Methuen, 1937)
\textsuperscript{14}(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941)
\textsuperscript{15}(Baton Rouge: L. S. U. Press, 1948)
and the twenties, namely the definition of the poetic image itself. In fact, the concern in the Kolbe tradition is not necessarily with "imagery" at all but merely with repetition of idea. And though this loose approach to the subject obviously would invite abuse if adopted by a careless critic, the policy of making no rigid definition of imagery has certain advantages which have become generally apparent only in recent years, as will be seen.

Caroline Spurgeon, on the other hand, begins her *Shakespeare's Imagery and What it Tells Us* by defining the image, although she does so only in the broadest terms, as may be seen in the following quotation from the introduction to her book:

I use the word 'image' here as the only available word to cover every kind of simile, as well as every kind of what is really compressed simile -- metaphor. I suggest that we divest our minds of the hint the term carries with it of visual imagery only, and think of it, for the present purpose, as connoting any and every imaginative picture or other experience, drawn in every kind of way, which may have come to the poet, not only through any of his senses, but through his mind and emotions as well, and which he uses, in the forms of simile and metaphor in their widest sense, for the purposes of analogy.16

Such a picture, she says, may take a whole scene, such as the garden-symbol in *Richard II*; it may be suggested in a single word, as in "Ripeness is all" (*King Lear*

---

16 *Shakespeare's Imagery*, p. 5. The quotations from Miss Spurgeon's book are made with the permission of the Cambridge University Press, current owner of the rights to the book.
V,11,11); it may be an analogy from everyday affairs, like "They'll take suggestion as a cat laps milk," (The Tempest, II,1,288); it may be a full-length personification, or a personification established in a single verb: "Glais hath murdered sleep" (Macbeth II,11,42); and, finally, it may be any kind of metaphor. Miss Spurgeon points out that she has deliberately made her definition broad because one could write a whole book merely defining the image and still not say all that should be said;\(^{17}\) but even so one might anticipate that any scientific classification based on a definition as broad as the one given in her introduction would encounter as many difficulties as the psychologists have encountered, for lack of a satisfactory definition, in trying to study personality scientifically.\(^{18}\) Una M. Ellis-Fermor as early as 1937 pointed out the limitations which so far have prevented Miss Spurgeon's attempt to establish a scientific classification of imagery from becoming an accomplished fact. She named three important dangers besetting this sort of endeavor. First, there is the danger of choosing a field so large that the study cannot be thorough, and hence will risk

\(^{17}\)Ibid., p. 6.

repeating past work in the same field while contributing nothing of great value to a scientific classification. The second is the danger of choosing a field "which cannot be investigated by itself, though if (the investigator's) understanding of his subject is thorough this ought not to be possible. Against this the only remedy is thorough training in the potentialities of the field." If the scientist gets past these dangers, Miss Ellis-Fermor says,

the greatest of all dangers awaits him and one which I, for one, do not see how any man can wholly escape, the danger of amassing false evidence in the preliminary collection of data, because of the inevitable intrusion of the subjective into what ought, if it is to be valid, to be a rigidly scientific procedure. (Italics mine.) ... To put it another way, the deepest-lying danger and the factor which may even yet invalidate the whole of this so promising area of research is the intrusion of the subjective (the taste, the field of experience, the conditioning of the mind of the investigator), not as an accident but as an essential. 

Finally, she adds, after assembling all his evidence the investigator may still fail at the task of acute yet broad generalization. Miss Ellis-Fermor’s objection that the subjective necessarily intrudes into an investigation of a subject-matter so complicated as poetic imagery is perhaps the death-knell of scientific imagery.

20 Ibid.
21 Ibid., p. 15.
criticism; at any rate, no one since Miss Spurgeon has undertaken to complete her would-be exhaustive cataloguing of Shakespeare's imagery. Her classification was set up according to arbitrarily assigned subjects, such as "garden-imagery," "sun-imagery," etc., and clearly suffered from the weaknesses of subjectivism warned against by Miss Ellis-Fermor in the passages just quoted. As S. E. Hyman remarks in his essay on Caroline Spurgeon,

One obvious fault ... is that her classification of images, being purely subjective, is bound to be arbitrary and inconsistent: on page 36 "alabaster arms" is an image drawn from the appearance of a substance, "not from its feel"; on page 82 Desdemona's skin, "smooth as monumental alabaster," is a touch image. A much deeper and more basic objection to her method, raised by I. A. Richards (without mentioning her by name) among others, is that "the metaphors are being sorted in respect to only one pair of the ideas which every metaphor, at its simplest, gives us"; that is, that all the other ambiguous possibilities of Shakespeare's 'images' never get into her tabulation at all. Her comment on the 'small number' of theatrical images, for example, is absurd, since they are plentiful; she merely indexed them under a reference she found more obvious. 22

The difficulties of scientific classification of imagery are thus seen to be astronomical. Without such a classification, however, it is necessarily a very tenuous affair to draw assumptions about what sort of a man Shakespeare was, merely from tabulated data on the imagery; and so far as any useful conclusions are concerned, this aspect of Miss Spurgeon's work, which she announced

as her main purpose, has proved a dead end.

On the other hand, Caroline Spurgeon's work has been invaluable to investigators and critics who proceed on the assumptions that critical study is necessarily a subjective matter, that very little can be learned for certain about the personal life of a poet merely from his works, and that classification in literary study is a convenience in exposition rather than a means of scientifically correlating objectively established and measured data. As mentioned above, one implication of her purpose of studying the poet through his imagery embraces an attempt to investigate the workings of the creative imagination, in the tradition of J. L. Lowes' *The Road to Xanadu*. This is no more than an implication in Miss Spurgeon's work, but the hint has produced two penetrating and subtle studies, one dealing with the bird images and clusters in the plays and the other with images derived from Shakespeare's reading. The former is E. A. Armstrong's *Shakespeare's Imagination*; the latter, John E. Hankins' *Shakespeare's Derived Imagery*.

The usefulness to the present study of works like those of Armstrong and Hankins is limited to the note on *Richard II* and *The Chronicle History of King Leir* in the appendix. The issue in the body of this study is

---

23 (London: Lindsay Drummond, 1946).

24 (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1953).
dramatic technique and not the workings of the mind which produces the drama.

Of much more importance here is the tradition established by implications of Miss Spurgeon's second purpose, which was to investigate the function of the imagery as background and undertone in Shakespeare's art; and although Miss Spurgeon's own accomplishment along this line was limited, and though part of her contribution was duplicated by G. W. Knight, her importance as a stimulus to subsequent critics can hardly be overemphasized.

Part II of her book is devoted to a catalog of iterative image-themes in the various plays, themes which, as she points out, the poet seems to have used to symbolize the ideas underlying the plays. In this connection she says,

By recurrent imagery I mean the repetition of an idea or picture in the images used in any one play. Thus in Romeo and Juliet the dominating image is light with its background of darkness, while in Hamlet there hovers all through the play in both words and word pictures the conception of disease, especially of a hidden corruption infecting and corrupting a wholesome body.

This secondary or symbolic imagery within imagery is a marked characteristic of Shakespeare's art, indeed it is, perhaps, his most individual way of expressing his imaginative vision.25

Miss Spurgeon asserts that such imagery appears in almost all the plays, and that it develops in artistic force

25Shakespeare's Imagery, p. 214.
to its culmination in the great tragedies. In the histories, she says, the symbolism is of an elementary and obvious nature; in the comedies, it "contributes chiefly atmosphere and background." 26 "In the later plays, the romances, this symbolism becomes ... more subtle, and illustrates an idea rather than a concrete picture; while in the tragedies it is closely connected with the central theme, which it supplements and illuminates, sometimes with extraordinary force, as in Hamlet and King Lear, or with rare beauty, as in Romeo and Juliet and Antony and Cleopatra." 27

Miss Spurgeon's analyses of the plays in terms of their dominant images are not of great value except as they suggest ideas which such a critic as Wolfgang Clemen has used to great advantage; but her contribution in helping provide the conception of a thematic, iterative symbol (a conception almost simultaneously evolved by Knight) is an important one. Another important suggestion is provided in one of the appendices to her book, entitled "Note on images as a revelation of character in the dramas," which should be quoted in part. She says,

There are of course, other ways (besides by their purely aesthetic qualities) in which the

26 Ibid., p. 216.

27 Ibid.
images, considered from the point of view of their subject-matter only, add in tone and quality to the richness and the meaning of Shakespeare's plays, but the 'leading motive', emphasized by the repetition of certain kinds of images, is so very much the most important that I have given all my space to the description of it.

Other interesting functions which I may just note here are (1) their cumulative effect in conveying emotion or tension ...; (2) their aid to the revelation of the temperament and the character of the person using them. This is most interesting, and might well be developed further.28

She then shows that the images which Falstaff uses in the two parts of King Henry IV show a "deterioration in spirit" in the fat knight in the second play. She concludes the note by saying,

In like manner, an examination of the images used by other characters reveals much of their individuality and tastes, and their use of them must, of course, unconsciously, subtly affect our impression of their personalities. In this respect, the images of Macbeth, of Lady Macbeth, and of Hamlet are especially interesting.29

Wolfgang Clemen was the first critic to explore extensively the implications of Shakespeare's imagery as a means of revealing character. Clemen's contribution will be taken up in its place, but first the work of the third pioneer, G. W. Knight, must be considered briefly.

Knight, in working along lines parallel to Miss Spurgeon's investigations, evolved independently a very

---

28 Ibid., p. 377.
29 Ibid., p. 380.
similar notion concerning iterative symbolism in the plays. It is probably correct to give Knight, who had a much clearer grasp of symbolic effects than Miss Spurgeon, somewhat more credit for inaugurating the study of the image as thematic and atmospheric symbol, although the influence of both scholars is very important. On the other hand, Knight made only implicit acknowledgement of the function of the image in delineating character.

The introduction to Knight's *Wheel of Fire* is an essay reprinted from *Myth and Miracle*. The essay sets forth Knight's intention to balance previous Shakespearean criticism, which he felt had been too exclusively devoted to the "temporal course of action" in the plays (i.e., to character analysis and examination of cause-and-effect relations between the actions of the characters), with a close examination of the "spatial element" or "atmosphere" of each play. He asserts that the atmosphere of each play is established through an integrated system of symbols which pervades the entire play and combines with the characterization and the direct causal relations of the plot to help attain the total dramatic effect. Of these symbols the iterative imagery is an important part, but only a part. He says,

We should analyse the use and meaning of direct poetic symbolism -- that is, events whose significance can hardly be related to the normal processes of actual life (e.g., the witches in
Macbeth, whom Knight has already mentioned. Also the minor symbolic imagery of Shakespeare, which is extremely consistent, should receive careful attention. Where certain images continually recur in the same associative connexion, we can, if we have reason to believe that this associative force is strong enough, be ready to see the presence of the associative value when the images recur alone.

Many of the most successful critical contributions erected on this theory have been made by Knight himself, in The Wheel of Fire, The Shakespearean Tempest, and The Imperial Theme. His most important successor, no doubt, is Wolfgang Clemen, who has synthesized the approaches of Knight and Spurgeon to produce what probably is the best-balanced and in general most perceptive of all Shakespearean imagery criticism yet produced.

Clemen works from the premise that imagery is used in Shakespearean plays not only as a symbolic means of establishing the desired atmosphere and thematic ideas, but also as an integral part of the characterization itself (a point which, though its first explicit formulation is in Spurgeon's book, was apparently sensed by Knight in his exposition of the personalities of Brutus and Macbeth).

---

30 The Wheel of Fire, p. 15.
31 (London: Oxford University Press, 1940)
32 (London: Methuen, 1951)
33 The Wheel of Fire, pp. 120-39.
Some of the more important aspects of Clemen's theory may pertinently be quoted at this point. After giving Miss Spurgeon her full due as a pioneer of Shakespearean imagery study, Clemen says,

Miss Spurgeon holds that the fact that Shakespeare preferred certain groups and classes of images reveals his own likes and dislikes. His imagery is thus taken to be a transcript of his own individual outlook on things. The conception underlying the following study differs from this view. It seems evident that Shakespeare's choice of an image or simile at a given moment in the play is determined far more by the dramatic issues arising out of that moment than by his individual sympathies. We admit that Shakespeare preferred certain motifs and fields of imagery and that these preferences may occasionally give hints as to his personal sympathies. But it must be repeatedly observed that both the range and the motifs of imagery in drama are constantly modified by factors not inherent in the poet's personality.  

Clemen qualifies G. W. Knight's approach and warns against carrying symbolic interpretation too far:

Wilson Knight's emphasis on the imagery as an integral part of the spatial content of the play has led to a clearer recognition of the subtle correspondences existing between the different strains and motifs of imagery and has yielded illuminating insight into the relationship of the imagery to the mood, the theme, and the specific experience underlying the play. It has also led [critics] to regard the imagery as expressive of a certain symbolism which, in Mr. Knight's view, can disclose to us the meaning of the play better than anything else.  

---

34 Clemen, The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery (1951), pp. 15-16. Shakespeare's Bilder (1936) contained Clemen's theory and its application in substantially final form, although the introduction to the English edition has taken advantage of the critical thought of the intervening years.  

35 The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery, p. 16.
This symbolical interpretation of Shakespeare's imagery, he says, gained headway in Knight's later books and was applied even more exclusively by some of Knight's successors. "It is obvious, however," Clemen continues, that an interpretation of Shakespeare based solely on this approach is apt to lose sight of the "dramatic reality" of his plays and to neglect such important aspects as dramatic technique, plot, stage conditions, etc. For the student of Shakespeare, there should not therefore arise the alternative of investigating either the temporal course of the action or the imaginative "timeless background," nor the necessity of assuming such a line of demarcation as the point of departure for a study of the Shakespearean drama. It will be one of the future tasks of Shakespeare criticism to bring these diverging avenues of approach together again.

Asserting thus the necessity of imagery criticism centered in dramatic effects rather than in the poet's personality, and the necessity of a balanced examination of imagery which will give due weight both to "temporal" and "spatial" effects (to use Knight's terminology), Clemen observes that any nice categorization of image types, in the manner of the imagery studies of Henry Wells or even of Middleton Murry, is in the last analysis irrelevant to dramatic criticism of Shakespeare. Separate treatment of figures like comparison, metonymy, simile, etc., Clemen says,


37 The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery, pp. 16-17.

38 Ibid., p. 7.
would only be illuminating if there were a definite and regularly recurring relationship between these formal types and the imagery—e.g. if from the fact that an image appears in the guise of comparison, specific and similar conclusions could be drawn as to the nature and function of the image. But that is not the case; the same formal type has manifold possibilities of application, and it is solely the context in which the image stands that can offer any information about what a particular formal type may signify 'just here.'

It is an odd fact that our critical endeavours are generally satisfied when we have succeeded in classifying and cataloguing something. We believe that our perceptive faculties have reached their goal when we have divided and subdivided phenomena of poetry and history into a system of pigeon-holes and pasted a label on to everything. This is a curious error. Often enough such a rigid schematic system of classification destroys a living feeling both for the unity and for the many-hued iridescent richness of Shakespeare's style, which is of an incomparable variety and elasticity. ... Neither the statistical method nor the systematic classification of all the images is suited for the plan and purpose of this study. 39

Clemen asserts as the burden of his study that Shakespeare, beginning with images which merely embellished or repeated a prose statement in a proverb-like fashion, and bore no overall significance so far as the central dramatic purpose of the play was concerned, gradually developed a dramatic use of imagery which set the atmosphere and forebode the dramatic events of the rest of the play, and at the same time took an essential part in the characterization of the chief members of the

39 Ibid., pp. 7-8.
dramatis personae. Another brief quotation from Clemen will help to elucidate this point, which is of some significance in the present study.

In a previous chapter on the early plays, we spoke of Shakespeare's habit of embellishing certain general themes appearing in the conversation with metaphorical epithets and definitions. The resulting imagery was undramatic; it was rhetorical decoration and no integral part of the dramatic structure. But let us examine the famous words of Macbeth on sleep:

Methought I heard a voice cry "Sleep no more! Macbeth does murder sleep", the innocent sleep, Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care, The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath, Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course, Chief nourisher in life's feast, —

(II.ii.35)

Viewed from the outside, this series of metaphorical expressions for sleep is in no way different from the earlier type. Nevertheless, he says, the imagery of this passage from Macbeth is of great dramatic suitability.

For sleep is in this case no "theme of conversation", but a dramatic issue of the first importance. That Macbeth has murdered Duncan while asleep is what is especially fearful in his deed. The wrong has been done, as it were, not only to Duncan, but also to the sacred nature of sleep. And "wronged sleep" rises in the conscience of the murderer like a real power. The rich imagery therefore is no digression. It is no burst of fine-sounding

---

40 Ibid., p. 101.
words and names, no interruption of the action. It is a vital, throbbing expression of what is taking place at this moment in Macbeth's soul. Macbeth perceives again and again what he has done with a strange clarity, and expresses this in imagery (cf. I,vii,19). Sleep runs like a key-word throughout the whole play and is the occasion of many metaphors of which the above passage is the climax.41

Finally, Clemen sees imagery study as a means of appreciating a Shakespearean tragedy as a completely integrated and interrelated organism with its own color, landscape, atmosphere, and diction. "It is amazing," he says, to observe what part the imagery plays in helping to make dramatic texture coherent as well as intricate. The same motif which was touched upon in the first act through the imagery, is taken up again in the second; it undergoes a fuller execution and expansion, perhaps, in the third or fourth. As Professor Spurgeon has demonstrated, these leitmotifs of the imagery run through the play like a brightly coloured thread. Of Macbeth it has been noted with acumen that Shakespeare substitutes the unity of atmosphere for the dramatic unities of time and action. This is true of many of the Shakespearean tragedies. This unity of atmosphere and mood is no less a "dramatic unity" than the classical dramatic unities. And the imagery of a tragedy plays an important part, not only in creating a dramatic unity of the atmosphere, but also in binding the separate elements of the play together into a real organic structure.42

Since the appearance of Shakespeare's Bilder in 1936 little has been added to Clemen's synthesis of Knight's and Spurgeon's approaches to Shakespearean image study, though

41Ibid.
42Ibid., pp. 104-105.
the methods he sets forth and applies have been pursued with varying skill since that time. This body of criticism, which is far too extensive to be surveyed here, is catalogued and criticized in a number of excellent essays. These should be approached by way of Miss Ellis-Fermor's Some Recent Research in Shakespeare's Imagery, quoted from above, which surveys the movement up to approximately the time of Shakespeare's Bildener. More recent essays are the chapter on the influence of Caroline Spurgeon in S. E. Hyman's The Armed Vision, the chapter on imagery in René Wellek and Austin Warren's Theory of Literature; Kenneth Muir's essay "Fifty Years of Shakespeare Criticism 1900-1950"; the second chapter of the 1951 edition of Shakespeare's Bildener, entitled "Imagery in the History of Shakespeare Criticism"; and Muriel C. Bradbrook's "Fifty Years of the Criticism of Shakespeare's Style: A Retrospect."

---

43 See note 19, p. 15 above.
44 pp. 209-38.
46 Shakespeare Survey IV, pp. 18-25.
47 The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery, pp. 10-17.
Although *Shakespeares Bilder* anticipated almost everything that has been said about Shakespearean imagery in the years since 1936, the various implications of Clemen's critical theory have been worked out by other writers, among whom Miss Ellis-Fermor and R. A. Foakes are prominent for their clarity and sanity. An appropriate way of rounding off this brief survey will be to quote from these critics' summaries of the various dramatic purposes of Shakespeare's imagery. As will be seen, Foakes makes an important qualification of Miss Ellis-Fermor's definition of imagery, a qualification which shows the merits of an extremely flexible approach to the subject; but Miss Ellis-Fermor's statement of the purposes so far discerned in Shakespearean imagery is an almost indispensable starting point for a critical study like the present one. In defining the image of poetic drama she says,

> When we speak of imagery . . . we generally find that we are using the term in that stricter and somewhat limited sense which recent writers have tended to adopt when considering Shakespeare, taking it, that is, either as co-extensive with metaphor or at most with the figures closely allied with metaphor. This is, I believe, advisable, even though, in the special case of drama, there are sometimes reasons for extending it to include the frontiers of symbolism, description, or even, it may be, the setting itself, when, as in much modern drama, the playwright relies on that to express a part of his intention. 49

---

Although this would seem to slight the function of iterative imagery as symbolic of dramatic atmosphere and dramatic ideas, her second category of image use, described below, actually gives the symbolic function of iterative imagery considerably more weight than seems implied in the clause "there are sometimes reasons for extending it to include the frontiers of symbolism." Of the dramatic force conveyed by functional images in drama she says,

All imagery that has a functional relation with a play increases dramatic concentration. In common with all genuine metaphorical expression, it reveals a significant and suddenly perceived relation between an abstract theme and a subject closer to the experience of the senses in such a way as to transfer to the rightly apprehending mind the shock, the stimulus with which the union of these two stirred the mind of the poet himself. Strong emotional experience is stored in the brief space of an image, and its release illuminates powerfully the emotions, the reflections, the inferences which it is the purpose of the passage to evoke. There is thus an artistic economy in imagery hardly to be equalled by that of any other kind of verbal expression, with the possible exception of irony; in each the potency comes from the high charge of implicit thought or feeling. Moreover, dramatic imagery tends to be the most strongly charged of all kinds; the concentration natural to drama impressing itself upon the imagery, just as the imagery in its turn enables the drama to increase its native concentration.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 78-79.}

She distinguishes various functions of imagery in poetic drama. Her first category, which is clearly not an attempt
to categorize in the sense condemned by Clemen, covers imagery used to connect the world of the play with the surrounding universe, a category which she illustrates by quoting, among other passages,

This my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine
Making the green one red,

commenting that Macbeth thus through single images flashes before the audience "universes of time and of causality through which the events move." Though this first category is both somewhat nebulous and rather obvious in that one could hardly write a play of any sort without some kind of reference to the surrounding universe, her other categories are important ones and are lucidly set forth. Concerning the iterative image as symbolic of the mood of the play, she says this:

This not only knits the play together but emphasizes by iteration -- and by iteration whose appeal is always to the emotions -- the idea or mood which had guided the poet's choice of theme and shaping of form. ... This, in special cases, becomes so clear as to form a continuous and recognizable undertone throughout the play; the undertone of moonlight and woodland in A Midsummer Night's Dream, of light and darkness in Romeo and Juliet, of sound and movement in Much Ado About Nothing. Miss Ellis-Fermor emphasizes the distinction between iterative imagery as an establisher of mood, on the one

---

51 Ibid., p. 81.
52 Ibid., pp. 83-84.
hand, and mere description, on the other. She concludes her exposition of this distinction by saying,

... when Othello says,

It is the very error of the moon.
She comes more near the earth than she was wont,
And makes men mad,

the passage is suffused with spellbound bewilderment, half of enchantment, half nightmare, like that which sometimes follows the waking from deep unconsciousness into the strange radiance of moonlight. Othello's mind is revealed to us in one brief piece of metaphorical illumination, the moon linking his vision of oncoming madness with the familiar, cognate physical experience in which it is imaged.
In just such a way, the iterative imagery in A Midsummer Night's Dream has, because it is imagery, the power to release associations of far fuller content than could be achieved by a long expository analysis. The picture of virginity, 'chanting faint hymns to the cold, fruitless moon', illuminates with its implications and charged associations a play whose central action is a tangle of cross-purposes and apparent frustrations in love.53

Her third category covers imagery which serves as a device for dramatic foreboding:

In the opening scenes of a play in which events are to move swiftly we often find a kind of anticipation, not only of the mood of the subsequent action, but of the very events themselves; some hint, in the subject of an image, of the course of the action, which, though we may not notice it consciously, sinks into the mind and prepares us to accept more rapidly some series of events which is to follow. This is a genuine dramatic function; imagery, that is to say, which is thus used in drama is functional to a high degree. ... In the first and third scenes of Cymbeline there is a series

53Ibid., pp. 84-85.
of images connected with or spoken by Imogen, which unobtrusively conveys her isolation, her exposure to the pricks and malice of evil eyes, and does this more quickly and more fully than would much direct comment from other actors. By helping so to convey her position, it helps also to convey the balance of the situation, the hostility surrounding her, upon which much of the subsequent action depends.\textsuperscript{54}

The next category is the first of two dealing with imagery which conveys character:

Closely akin to \textsuperscript{55}imagery of foreboding\textsuperscript{,} though probably more usual and possibly more powerful, is the aid given by imagery to the rapid and significant revelation of character. How much more impressive and vivid are the brief imagistic summaries of character given at the beginning of the Duchess of Malfi than, for instance, Ben Jonson's lucid and often exquisitely balanced character analyses in Cynthia's Revels. How much deeper, indeed, than the impressions made by these intellectual expositions is that of the imaginative picture of Ben Jonson's own Volpone?

A fox
Stretched on the earth, with fine delusive sleights,
Mocking a gaping crow.

This, or some part of the picture called up by it, stays in the memory for the rest of the play and guides us, quicker than pages of character study, to the right interpreting of Volpone's character in the action which immediately follows. Just such is the function of the image, in The Duchess of Malfi, which introduces the Cardinal and Ferdinand; they are 'plum trees that grow crooked over standing pools; they are rich and o'er-laden with fruit, but none but crows, pies, and caterpillars feed on them'.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{54}\textit{ibid.}, pp. 85-87.
\textsuperscript{55}\textit{ibid.}, p. 87.
Then she moves on to the other and more subtle kind of character-delineating imagery:

In all these images just quoted from Webster and Jonson, the function of revealing character has fallen upon the associations of the subject in which it is imaged. But there is another and sometimes subtler use of imagery. In this the characters reveal themselves by their instinctive choice of subjects in which to image their thought and often also by the form of the image, by the relation, that is, between subject and theme. Shakespeare's later characters, and in some degree those of his middle period, have their individual imagery. It is related inevitably to the underlying mood out of which the play is, like the characters, generated, but yet is subtly distinguished, within the limits of that character's relation to the whole. Hamlet, Claudius, and Gertrude; Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, Macduff, Ross, and even the murderers have their own trend of imagery in subject or in form or in both; so again have Timon, Lear, Edmund, Antony, Cleopatra, Prospero.56

An example should be added concerning characterization by means of the form of the image. Richard II's mind, as Chapter Three will show in detail, is exhibited in the clumsiness with which he chooses and constructs his images, in spite of the beauty of some of his speeches; whereas the clarity and incisiveness of Bolingbroke's mind are shown by the delicate preciseness and imaginative penetration of his metaphors.

As her last category, Miss Ellis-Fermor cites the kind of imagery which does the work of argument or

56 Ibid., pp. 87-88.
reflection:

A discussion or process of deduction may appear full or complete without the tedious and undramatic dilation that we should at once observe if it were in fact complete. In Hamlet's soliloquies imagery, rather than abstract terminology, is generally the medium for the expression of reflection, and when he speaks of 'the native hue of resolution' as 'sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought', we apprehend in two brief lines a condition of mind which would need many lines or indeed speeches if it were to be expounded. And so, throughout the soliloquy, moods and states of mind are revealed by single images or groups and related to each other by the apposition of the images and the transitions from one to another. The effect of a long psychological diagnosis is thus given in one speech, without diluting the dramatic concentration.57

It seems clear from this that the most profitable approach to the imagery in Shakespeare's plays is a flexible one, one which is alert to the subtle shading off of one use into another, and one which always attempts to keep the playwright's dramatic intentions clearly in view. As R. A. Foakes points out,

... imagery is used in a play not only with the general functions enumerated by Miss Ellis-Fermor, but has many particular functions. The playwright may differentiate his characters by means of poetic imagery, in fact must do so to some extent, since they exist only through their language. Imagery may be used in relation to plot, and because of this overall patterns occur throughout the play as a whole; or it may be used in relation to situation, which would account for the occurrence of smaller

57 Ibid., pp. 91-92.
or primary patterns within a single scene or group of scenes. Imagery can be used also for special functions, to describe an event or scene which has an importance in the play, as in Enobarbus's famous description of Cleopatra (Antony and Cleopatra II, 11,195-245), to relieve tension, to close a scene, to provide information, to create a setting, or to show powerful emotion on the part of a character, when the lines may become almost unintelligible. Evidently different kinds of images will be used for these different purposes; and not only to distinguish character, but to mark those occasions when a character steps out of role to some extent, to act as chorus like Enobarbus, or to provide necessary relief from tension, as does Horatio in the opening scene of Hamlet -- with for him an unusually vivid pictorial image:

But look, the morn, in russet mantle clad
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastern hill.

(I,1,166-7)58

Foakes adds that the dramatic functions of poetic or verbal imagery are shared by other factors, e.g. stage properties and effects, and historical setting and background, which in themselves are just as much "imagery" as verbal images. He concludes,

A discussion of dramatic imagery then would include reference to the subject-matter and object-matter of poetic imagery, to visual and auditory effects, iterative words, historical and geographical placing, and to both the general and particular uses of these things. Dramatic imagery would be examined primarily in relation to context, to dramatic context, and to the time-sequence of a play; the general or overall patterns of word and image would be

examined in relation to other effects, as well as for their own value. Considered in this way, dramatic imagery would offer a more adequate field of study than the analysis merely of poetic imagery.

Foakes' statement gives clear expression to what was implicit in Clemen's remarks on imagery quoted above, and also implicit in Miss Ellis-Fermor's definition of dramatic imagery. In the light of this feeling among the sanest and best-qualified students of the imagery movement itself, that the only ultimately valid and adequately versatile approach to dramatic imagery criticism must necessarily be a flexible and an eclectic one, such an approach will be attempted in all the imagery analyses which are pursued in this study.

The remaining preliminary to the main body of this study is the survey of the criticism dealing with the dramatic characters King Richard II and King Lear. In the critical studies devoted to both of these characters, one important aspect, an aspect on which almost everything else depends, has been unduly slighted. Richard is perhaps the classic portrayal of evasive-mindedness; Lear has an extremely similar tendency, though he also has an essential honesty of mind which is both a cause of his madness and

\[59\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 90.}\]
the means by which he at last overcomes his madness.

In both characters the quality of evasiveness is closely
associated with the tragic flaw; and Lear may be considered
a direct result of Shakespeare's experiments in drawing
Richard.

Although Richard's evasive blindness to uncomfortable
truth as part and parcel of his sentimental disposition
was deftly characterized by Launcelot Minor Harris in
1909, the tradition coming down from Pater that Richard
is a poet misplaced in a prosaic world has been so compel­
ling that Harris' diagnosis has been overlooked or for­
gotten and understanding of the play consequently obscured.

Harris says of Richard,

... there is to be found in Shakespeare one
character which, I cannot but think, is the
product of a deliberate and elaborate study
of sentimentality. ...

The key to the character of Richard is to
be found in the fatuous persistence with which
he blinds himself to fact. He lives in a fool's
paradise.60

Harris has made little or no impression on the
dominant conception of Richard's personality, which Pater
established in these words:

Richard is ... an exquisite poet if he is
nothing else, from first to last, in light and
gloom alike, able to see all things poetically,
to give a poetic turn to his conduct of them
and refreshing with his golden language the

60"Sentimentalism in Shakespeare and Elsewhere,"
Sewanee Review, XVII (1909), 431.
tritest aspects of that ironic contrast between the pretensions of a king and the actual necessities of his destiny. 61

The influence of this conception on modern Shakespeare criticism may be seen in the following quotations from twentieth century critics. To R. M. Alden,

Shakespeare's Richard is represented as a man who lives largely in the region of the imagination, and cannot -- or will not -- cope with realities. One may call him par excellence a poet. He utters himself more beautifully than any earlier character of the histories ..., with a blend of reflective and imaginative charm that looks back to ... the portrait of Henry the Sixth, and forward to Hamlet. 62

In Alden's characterization of Richard there is some justice, except for the implication that a poet par excellence has no eye for reality; Alden at least does recognize that Richard blinds himself to reality. But this latter aspect of Richard has gradually lost out to the idea of Richard the poet, and he has been endowed with the perceptiveness which one expects in poets but which one never finds in Richard. E. K. Chambers says of Richard,

The personal beauty of Richard, on which much stress is laid in the play, is but the map of his delicate intellect and his flower-like imagination. ... He is an orator, with a flow of words that runs like a river through scene after scene. He has his intuitions, and can read the hearts

of men, even though he cannot control them. ... The shocks of misfortune stimulate him only to a more and more subtle exercise of his incomparable imagination. He becomes an interested spectator of his own ruin, dressing it out with illuminating phrases and exquisite images, and so turning it into a thing of beauty and sorrow for himself and his audience. ... In Shakespeare's psychology, he stands for the type of the artist. 63

Wolfgang Clemen adopts the same position:

Richard II is the first instance of Shakespeare's habitual manner of endowing his heroes with unusual imagination and the poetic gift. ... Poet, actor, dreamer, passive spectator -- all these qualities unavoidably lead him to revel in imagery whenever he speaks. 64

Kenneth Muir and Sean O'Loughlin say,

Shakespeare refuses to obtain a dramatic effect at the expense of character. Richard is poetic to the end ... 65

Mark Van Doren apparently identifies "poet" and "moral coward":

What explains his failure to oppose Bolingbroke at all, his sudden collapse, as soon as the threat of deposition becomes real, into a state of sheer elegy, of pure poetry? The answer is simple. Richard is a poet, not a king. ... 66

G. L. Kittredge alludes to the idea in comparing Richard

64The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery, p. 55.
65The Voyage to Illyria, p. 95.
with Marlowe's Edward II:

Both are weak, impulsive, self-willed; and both are governed by unworthy favorites; but Marlowe's king is worse than frivolous; he is frankly despicable. He has neither the poetic nature nor the imaginative intensity of Shakespeare's Richard.67

G. B. Harrison says,

... when Richard admits defeat by surrendering the crown, Bolingbroke is the artistic and moral loser. It is an occasion when the plain man is self-conscious and ill at ease and the artist is in his element.68

O. J. Campbell extends the conjecture somewhat further:

Though a notorious failure as a ruler, this "antic king," if he could have been freed from the burdens and temptations of his high office, might have become a fine actor or a brilliant lyric poet. At least this was Shakespeare's conception of the man.69

Another position was adopted by a less vocal group of critics contemporary with and shortly after Pater. Though the position of this group, like Harris' diagnosis quoted above, has not made much impression on recent critics and editors of the play, it deserves mention here. This position is that Richard, in spite of his imaginative speeches, is no more than a dilettante in art, just as he is no more than a dilettante in kingship. Kreyssig,


as early as 1877, brought forth this viewpoint in these words:

...wenn man mit dem Namen des dilettantischen, im schlimmen Sinne, den Character bezeichnen darf, der eben nichts ernst nimmt als das Streben nach Genuss, und der keine gründliche und unwandelbare Ueberzeugung hat, als den Glauben an das eigne Recht und an die eigne Vortrefflichkeit; darin bestärkt durch eine Erregbarkeit und ein Unempfindungsvermögen, welches die Schmeichelei so gerne mit Geist und Genie verwechselt -- so scheint Richard II, vom Dichter recht eigenlich geschaffen, um den Typus dieser modernsten aller Characterformen ein für alle Mal mustergültig hinzustellen. ... Man sage nicht: "Eine reiche Künstlernatur geht hier zu Grunde." Dieselbe ungezügelte Phantasie, dieselbe masslose, aber oberflächliche Erregbarkeit, an welcher der König scheitert, sie hätte auch den Dichter verdorben. 70

Dowden (circa 1885) accepted Kreyssig's diagnosis. 71 Herford (circa 1917) sums up the position of these critics:

Mr. Pater has specially emphasized this aspect of Richard -- "an exquisite poet if he is nothing else, ... with a felicity of poetic imagery which puts these pages (the abdication scene) into a very select class, with the finest 'vermeil and ivory' work of Chatterton and Keats." Yet if an exquisite, he is not a great, poet. ... The name dilettante, felicitously suggested by Kreyssig and adopted by Dowden, best fits his literary as his kingly character. He is a dilettante in poetry as well as in kingship. "Let no one say," adds Kreyssig, "that a gifted artist-personality goes to ruin in Richard: the same unbridled fancy, the same boundless


but superficial sensibility which wrecks the king would also have ruined the poet.\textsuperscript{73}

Though Hardin Craig concedes that Richard is a "sentimentalist,"\textsuperscript{74} the only recent critics to qualify Richard's ability as a poet, or as an artist, are John Draper and John Bailey. To Draper,

Truly, Richard was more a poet than a king -- and not a first-rate poet, either, for his matter lacks high seriousness, and his manner is too hyperbolic to be convincingly sincere.\textsuperscript{75}

Bailey quarrels with the whole attitude which admires Richard's imagination:

There is the essence of the play: the 'sweet way' to 'despair.' All that such men as Richard ask for is for their minds a succession of dreams, for their bodies a continuous luxury of sensations; and their love of passiveness is such that it makes a luxury even of shame and death.

And yet there are people ... who will have it that this poor creature was a kind of favorite child of Shakespeare, of whom imagination was hardly a greater part than strength and common sense! When they make such assertions ..., the answer is plain. For their own choice they are free; but they must not father it upon Shakespeare.\textsuperscript{76}


\textsuperscript{74}The Complete Works of Shakespeare (Chicago: Scott, Foresman, c. 1951), p. 115.

\textsuperscript{75}"The Character of Richard II," \textit{Philological Quarterly}, XXI (1942), 233.

Draper's viewpoint, however, is no more than a qualification of Pater's, and Bailey's sensible comment, which appeared in 1929, has been ignored. In general, contemporary critical opinion agrees with F. E. Halliday that "Richard is a poet among princes."\(^7\)

The dominant appraisal of Richard's personality, as Kreyssig, Dowden, Herford, and Bailey knew and briefly noted, labels as the behavior and speech of a poet and artist a pattern of behavior which though eloquent is demonstrably another kind of behavior entirely. Before this study proceeds to an analysis of Richard, however, the tradition of criticism dealing with Lear's behavior must be examined.

\textit{iii}

There is a parallel tendency to see the eloquence of King Lear, under the tragic stress which drives him mad and even during his madness, as the eloquence of a poet or at least of a highly imaginative and extremely incisive mind, which in madness comes at last to a clear and penetrating grasp of the moral universe. Shakespeare's portrayal of Lear's madness, however, is actually the chronicle of a man who, unable either to face or to escape his moral obligations, takes refuge in an insane self-pity. His insanity is characterized by a continued

\(^{7}\text{The Poetry of Shakespeare's Plays (London: Duckworth, 1954), p. 81.}\)
refusal to accept his moral responsibilities, and it is not until his cure that he may be said to have attained any insight at all. Lear's evasion of responsibility is so much like Richard's that it is no surprise to find critics making similar diagnoses of the two characters, even when the diagnoses are apparently wrong.

There is a clear division among Shakespeare critics of the past two centuries on the subject of Lear's initial behavior. The first, and by far the less important group so far as literary criticism is concerned, holds that the king's first acts, namely the love-test and the rejection of Cordelia, are symptoms of madness, and that the play up to the time of Lear's cure is simply a chronicle of madness gradually increasing in violence. This view stems from Charlotte Lennox, a contemporary of Samuel Johnson. It was adopted in the nineteenth century by a series of professional students of insanity, among them A. Brigham and I. Ray, who wrote articles on Lear's madness for the American Journal of Insanity. It was taken up by J. C. Bucknill in his The Mad Folk of


79Furness, op. cit., pp. 412-413.
Shakespeare, and turns up in modern criticism in J. S. H. Bransom's extended study The Tragedy of King Lear.

The second group holds that Lear's love-test and his rejection of Cordelia, however foolish, are not madness. The position of the second group is obviously the only one for a critic who considers King Lear to be tragedy.

Of the first position Irving Ribner aptly remarks,

If King Lear is nothing other than the account of a madman who by his irrational action disturbs the peace of society and causes suffering and finally death for himself, of what value is the play as tragedy? In essence, Brigham's criticism, like that of Charlotte Lennox, from which it stemmed, was a denial of Lear as great drama. And that was a characteristic of most of the "scientific" criticism of the nineteenth century.

Except for Bransom, no important literary critic has held the first view, although a closely related position is taken by Lily B. Campbell and John W. Draper, who explain Lear's behavior as deriving from the Elizabethan concepts of choler, flattery, and old age. This position

---

83 Lily B. Campbell, Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1952), pp. 175-207; John W. Draper, "The Old Age of King Lear," J. E. G. P., XXXVIII (1940), 527-540. Miss Campbell discusses Lear as illustrating the Renaissance concepts of wrath and flattery; Draper discusses Lear as illustrating choler.
is essentially deterministic and, like the position that Lear is insane from the opening of the play, denies that Lear's treatment of Cordelia is really a blunder at all.

Of critics who believe Lear is not mad in the opening scene, the first important diagnosis of the king's peculiar behavior is made by Coleridge. A considerable portion of modern Lear criticism has been guided by these words:

The strange, yet by no means unnatural, mixture of selfishness, sensibility, and habit of feeling derived from and fostered by the particular rank and usages of the individual; the intense desire to be intensely beloved, selfish, and yet characteristic of the selfishness of a loving and kindly nature — a feeble selfishness, self-supportless and leaning for all pleasure on another's breast; the selfish craving after a sympathy with a prodigal disinterestedness, contradicted by its own ostentation and the mode and nature of its claims; the anxiety, the distrust, the jealousy, which more or less accompany all selfish affections, and are among the surest contradictions of mere fondness from love, and which originate Lear's eager wish to enjoy his daughter's violent professions, while the inveterate habits of sovereignty convert the wish into claim and positive right, and the incompliance with it into crime and treason; these facts, these passions, these moral verities, on which the whole tragedy is founded, are all prepared for, and will to the retrospect be found implied in, the first four or five lines of the play. They let us know that the trial is but a trick; and that the grossness of the old king's rage is in part the natural result of a silly trick suddenly and most unexpectedly disappointed. No critic before E. K. Chambers improves on this statement of Lear's behavior in the first scene. But neither

Coleridge nor any of his successors has satisfactorily related Lear's madness with his initial behavior. One of the most popular modern attitudes toward the madness is that it is a re-education of the king through a terrible reawakening of his imagination. This idea was introduced by Hudson:

But the great thing in the delineation of Lear is the effect and progress of passion in redeveloping his intellect. For the character seems designed in part to illustrate the power of passion to reawaken and raise the faculties from the tomb in which he has quietly inurned them. ... The crushing of his aged spirit brings to light its hidden depths and buried riches. Thus his terrible energy of thought and speech, as soon as imagination rallies to his aid, grows naturally from the struggle of his feelings ... 85

This attitude was adopted in part by A. C. Bradley, who asserted, however, that it is not Lear's imagination which is stimulated by insanity:

He [Shakespeare] does not ... put into the mouth of the insane Lear any such sublime passages as those just quoted. Lear's insanity, which destroys the coherence, also reduces the poetry of his imagination. ... What it stimulates is that power of moral perception and reflection which had already been quickened by his sufferings. 86

Stopford Brooke agrees that Lear's imaginative power is greatest before he goes mad, but otherwise he adds little to what had already been said of Lear's personality


86 *Shakespearean Tragedy*, p. 239.
and madness. 87 Indeed, since Bradley critical judgment of the points at issue here has largely consisted either of the position that the initial scene is irrational but unimportant or of restatements and refinements of the positions of Coleridge, Hudson, and Bradley quoted above. Taking the first position are D. Nichol Smith and E. E. Stoll. Smith says,

There is no introductory passage to explain or throw light on the story that is to be unfolded, or as in Macbeth, to symbolize it. We are introduced straightway to the action on which the whole play depends. The first scene on this account has been stigmatized by Goethe as irrational; but the structure of the play emphasizes the fact that the deeds which call the play into being are in themselves of little importance. King Lear recounts the consequences following inevitably on a rash and foolish act. 88

Stoll sees Shakespeare as interested primarily in dramatic effect, and not concerned with accurate representation of personality:

What attracted the dramatist was ... a striking, but improbable, situation — that of a king, not in his dotage, undertaking to apportion his territory, according to their protestations of affection, among his three daughters, and, because of her laconic honesty, casting off his dearest, only to discover that the others were wholly false and she divinely true ...  

... his love and the memory of the injury she has done him (or he has done her), having, like Othello's love and jealous hatred for Desdemona,


not sprung from one root, as in a veritable human bosom, as in Racine or Ibsen, they would have, do not contend or struggle but are simply opposed.89

Concerning the remarks of Smith and Stoll, it should be said incidentally that the opening scene itself, which takes the form of an unjust trial, symbolizes the central idea of the tragedy, and that Lear's memory of Cordelia's injury and his love for her do struggle in his mind. These points will be dealt with, however, in their place.

H. B. Charlton returns to the position of Coleridge:

Lear's question ... had neither political nor rational purpose behind it; it was merely sentimental. Hence many critics take the scene as a deliberate indication that the dotage had already got the better of Lear's reason and judgment, and that already he was heading straight for the madness which was soon to overtake him. But Coleridge had surer insight into the scope of Shakespeare's intuition. Lear's anger was less the outburst of occasioning circumstance than of those elements which were deep within his nature.90

But E. K. Chambers had improved upon this position long before Charlton wrote:

Lear himself, in particular, is a most subtle psychological study. He is a man of passionate fibre and unrestrained temper, wholly swayed in his old age by two imperious instincts, that of personal domination and that of natural affection for his daughters. As might be expected, his affection tends to manifest itself, not as self-renunciation, but as one among

89Art and Artifice, pp. 138-41.

other forms of domination. His instincts possess him wholly. They warp his judgment of character and drive him to acts of which he has not the imagination to foresee the inevitable results. He abdicates out of an impulse to endear himself to his daughters by a liberal abandonment of everything, and thinks, sincerely enough for the moment, that he will be for ever content to set up his rest in their kind nursery. But it has never entered his head to conceive what abdication really means. His first act after surrendering his kingly prerogative is to exercise that prerogative by ordering Kent into banishment. The same temperament determines his behavior to Cordelia. Absorbed, as a true egotist, in his own emotions, even when they are generous, he has no eye for fine shades of expression and conduct in others, and is thus led into the irony of rejecting the one daughter who would have comprehended and endured... The disillusionment of the sentimental egotist leads to a violent reaction. Outraged affection and outraged self-will find vent in unmeasured denunciations of those who have set the claims of fatherhood at nought.91

It seems that "habit of domination" and "appetite for affection" would be more felicitous terms than "instincts" to designate the forces which cause Lear to make his tragic mistake, since "instinct" smacks of determinism. With this reservation, it may be said that Chambers' interpretation is excellent so far as it goes. But it ascribes Lear's madness merely to the frustrated claims of fatherhood. Actually, the king's egoistic love of pleasant emotions and of mental comfort, besides making him angry at Cordelia and subsequently at Goneril and Regan when they fail to pamper him, also prevents him

91 Shakespeare: A Survey, pp. 242-44. It is curious that Chambers should diagnose Lear's sentimentality so acutely and miss Richard's altogether.
from acknowledging his own part in bringing about his misfortunes and thus doubles the strain on his sanity.

Just what Lear's madness is intended by Shakespeare to express has been a cause of continual bafflement; but Hudson's diagnosis of the madness as a means of imaginative reawakening and Bradley's variant theory that the madness is a moral reawakening have held the stage. In the Bradley tradition, Granville-Barker makes a close analysis of the mad scenes and concludes that in them Lear is led to a deep compassion for mankind:

There is no cry for vengeance on the wicked /Toward the end of IV, vi, where the mad Lear has encountered the blind Gloucester/ ... Shakespeare has led Lear to compassion for sin as well as suffering, has led him mad to where he could not hope to lead him sane -- to where sound common sense will hardly let us follow him:

None does offend, none, I say, none.

To a deep compassion for mankind itself:

I know thee well enough; thy name is Gloucester; Thou must be patient; we came crying hither: Thou know'est the first time that we smell the air We wail and cry. I will preach to thee: mark ... When we are born, we cry that we are come To this great stage of fools.92

This popular explanation is hampered by the fact that the very speech here quoted as showing deep compassion for mankind ends with a shout for revenge upon his persecutors. A similar objection must be made to the interpretation offered by John M. Lothian, who sees Lear's madness

as leading the king at last to a perception of the moral
chaos of the world in which he lives. Lothian finds
Shakespeare recommending stoicism as the only proper
attitude toward this world, and maintains that Lear
finally achieves stoicism in the lines

When we are born, we cry that we are come
To this great stage of fools. 93

Robert B. Heilman, whose analysis of the image
patterns in King Lear will be dealt with extensively in
a later chapter, takes a different attitude toward the
opening scene -- different, that is, from any of the
critics' attitudes so far discussed; but he adopts and
elaborates Hudson's position that Lear's madness stimu-
lates and rekindles the king's dead imagination and
gives Lear keen insight into the truth of the world.
Heilman reads Lear's original mistake as a confusion
between material and non-material values, an idea
apparently derived from the nineteenth-century German
critic Ulrici. 94 Such a confusion, Heilman says, is
basically a failure of the imagination. And by thus
asserting that Lear's original mistake results from a

93 King Lear, A Tragic Reading of Life (Toronto:

94 Heilman, This Great Stage, p. 161, and Furness,
A New Variorum, V, 454. Furness' excerpt of Ulrici is
from Shakespeare's dramatische Kunst (1539), trans. Dora
failure of the imagination, this critic is in a position to capitalize on Hudson’s original suggestion that the madness is an imaginative reawakening:

The horror of the world that his folly creates, the senselessness and meaninglessness of it, drives him to madness; yet in that very madness there is a powerful lucidity, a tremendous exercising of the imagination that had failed him before. 95

Heilman interprets this “exercising of the imagination” as leading to moral insight, thus combining the theses of Hudson and Bradley. There is a good deal of similarity, too, between Heilman’s position in the following passage and the position of Lothian, already mentioned:

... the mad Lear, in what is virtually a soliloquy, gives verbal form to his bitter comprehension of an ugly and deceptive world and of the human capacity for evil that has made it so and to his pity for the sufferers of the world. 96

After a close analysis of the last mad scene (IV, vi), Heilman quotes the same passage quoted by Lothian and Granville-Barker:

When we are born, we cry that we are come
To this great stage of fools. 97

This, he says, indicates that Lear has attained patience through pity and through his recognition that “among the fools is the Fool, the man of insight whose very

95 *This Great Stage*, p. 195.
96 Ibid., p. 199.
97 Ibid., p. 212.
presence makes the stage hold something more than a cruel farce."

Heilman's thesis is that Lear becomes a poet in his madness and having gained the "impractical" insights of a poet attains salvation, though he is unable to compete in the rationalistic world of Goneril, Regan, and Edmund. Of Lear as a poet Heilman says near the beginning of his book,

The mad Lear is in one sense the man of letters; his imagination is wholly alert, and, whatever the disorder present, he has the searching and synthesizing insight of the poet. He may not seem quite safe. But the good poet never is. And the entirely safe man is never the good poet.

He refers in a note to Mark Van Doren as the source of this idea:

Mark Van Doren calls Lear 'a great poet' and makes his poetic gift the chief basis of a contrast between him and Gloucester, 'a plain man' of prose.

That this idea traces back to Pater's diagnosis of Richard II is made probable by Van Doren's comment on Richard in the same book:

What explains his failure to oppose Bolingbroke? ... The answer is simple. Richard is a poet, not a king.

---

98 Ibid., pp. 212-213.
99 Ibid., p. 29.
100 Ibid., p. 298, and Mark Van Doren, Shakespeare, pp. 239 ff.
101 Shakespeare, p. 89.
It is interesting that the views of Lear's madness as imaginative reawakening and of Richard as a poet should have thus coalesced; but it is not surprising that something like this has happened, for Richard and Lear are in some respects very much alike. Van Doren and Heilman have sensed this likeness without defining it: they mistake the eloquence of self-pity, dramatically portrayed, for the eloquence of a poet.

The remarks of one other critic should be added to this group of statements deriving from Hudson's diagnosis of Lear's madness as imaginative reawakening. Wolfgang Clemen says,

Lear, having experienced in his personal world the destruction of human right and order, thus gains insight into the common injustice and frailty of all mankind. His fancy now sees examples of this everywhere in the world. ... In madness Lear has won eyes for reality. His inner eye pierces the outer appearances and penetrates to the true nature of things. 10

Two other recent critics have come much closer to a satisfactory interpretation of Lear's madness than any of the followers of Hudson and Bradley. These are G. W. Knight and John F. Danby. Knight picks up E. K. Chambers' assertion of Lear's sentimental behavior in the first scene and extends the trait, in a limited way, to the area of Lear's madness. And though he views the

102 The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery, p. 152.
madness as a purgatory where Lear suffers for his folly, Knight makes no assertion of deep insights gained during madness. He says in part,

Lear starts his own tragedy by a foolish misjudgment. Lear's fault is a fault of the mind, a mind unwarrantably, because selfishly, foolish. And he knows it:

O Lear, Lear, Lear!
Beat at this gate, that let thy folly in,
And thy dear judgment out!

His purgatory is to be a purgatory of the mind, of madness. Lear has trained himself to think he cannot be wrong; he finds he is wrong. He has fed his heart on sentimental knowledge of his children's love; he finds their love is not sentimental. There is now a gaping dualism in his mind, thus drawn apart by incongruities, and he endures madness ... 103

John F. Danby recognizes that Lear's madness is in itself chaotic rather than a progress toward insight, and that whatever progress the king makes toward self-blame and humility is made before he becomes insane. But Danby hampers his acute psychological insight by his insistence on seeing Lear's personality and Lear's kingdom as a two-way allegory of each other (the microcosm-macrocosm idea):

Lear in Act I, scene i, is froward, and of a corrupted nature; he acts from inordinate wilfulness and against the judgment of reason as openly expressed to him through Kent. His sin leads him to give up the throne to the machiavels and this brings on discord in the state (the threatened war between the two

103 The Wheel of Fire, p. 162.
daughters). The inner-outer parallelism works both ways. Having lost the throne Lear loses his reason. His madness on the heath is the anti-human counterpart in the 'little world of man' to the inhumanity of the official regime. The movement of Cordelia to restore the proper rule ipso facto makes Lear's return to sanity a possibility ... For Cordelia is viewed by Danby as an allegorical representation of Nature in its proper, hierarchical state of concord.104

Finally, Danby is not concerned with Lear as a person interested in mental comfort at all costs and determined to evade any uncomfortable idea, e. g., the idea that he might not be a just king or the idea that he has wronged Cordelia.

Thus even the most extensive and acute studies have so far established no satisfactory relation between the king's behavior in the first scene and his madness. That such a relation does exist, and that the relation is fundamental to understanding the play, will be demonstrated in the next chapter. The only critic who seems to have linked up Lear's insanity with his determination to evade the consciousness of his own shortcomings is J. S. H. Bransom, whose The Tragedy of King Lear has not made much impression on subsequent scholarship, perhaps because Bransom puts himself out of court, first by saying that Lear is already exhibiting symptoms of insanity in the first act, second by predicating a great deal of his criticism on a reconstruction of what Lear

and the others must have been doing before the play and while they are off the stage, and third because he unquestioningly accepts many hypotheses and uses many terms drawn from Freudian and post-Freudian psychology, any one of which would be enough to cripple his book as literary criticism. 105

In spite of these questionable critical procedures, Bransom makes the important points that just before going mad Lear is deeply concerned about some guilt of his own, that this guilt is doubtless the wrong committed against Cordelia, and that when he is cured Lear finally accepts this guilt. 106 These points have been generally overlooked in Lear criticism, though they seem essential to an understanding of Lear's madness. It is easy to believe that had Bransom not been so carried away with Freudian implications of psychological entanglements in Lear's early life, he might have stayed within the play and made a coherent and compelling diagnosis of the cause and progress of Lear's insanity. With Bransom the survey of previous criticism may be concluded and the comparative study of Richard and Lear may be taken up.

105 Bransom, The Tragedy of King Lear, pp. 15, 19-21, 210-227. These approaches are taken throughout the book, but see especially p. 15, where Lear's thoughts at a hypothetical council table are discussed, and p. 221, where Bransom suggests that Lear has an "old, repressed incestuous passion for one of his daughters." 106 ibid., pp. 95-96, 136-37.
CHAPTER II

THE EVASIVENESS OF RICHARD AND LEAR

Though the personalities which Shakespeare bestows upon King Richard and King Lear are in some ways very different, both kings are choleric, eloquent men who come to grief. They are both so attractive that in spite of their shortcomings and mistakes we love them; and they are both so eloquent in failure that some critics are prone, half in charity and half in admiration for their eloquence, to credit them with being poets who, as artists, are incapable of success in the practical world of kingship.

But the evidence indicates that their eloquence is nothing but Shakespeare's way of showing what is wrong with them, and since the earlier king seems to be, in many respects, a preliminary sketch for the later one, each character can help the Shakespearean scholar understand the other.

Both men come to grief by demanding flattery -- that is, they hear what they want to hear and nothing else, so long as they are in positions of power. Lear is determined to hear elaborate expressions of love from his daughters and flies into a rage when he does
not hear them from Cordelia. He is determined to hear no protests from Kent, and banishes the latter when the protests do not cease. Similarly, Richard is determined to hear nothing which reflects on his conduct of his office. Mowbray (I,iii,154-75), 1 Gaunt (II,1,93-123), and Aumerle (III,11,33-62) in turn are severely and even cruelly reprimanded when they reproach Richard, though their reproaches are not unreasonable, and though all three are loyal supporters of the king. On the other hand, whatever or whoever will make Richard or Lear feel good is indulged: Lear indulges Regan, Goneril, and the disguised Kent (I.iv,28-46, 91-99) indiscriminately when they voice the things he likes to hear; Richard surrounds himself with flatterers, and yet has a kind word too for the sincere stable groom who comes to visit him in prison (V,v,64-72).

This kindness of Richard's extends to all his behavior so long as no one gets in his way; and he exerts a personal charm on all who know him. In a play where

---

so many are opposed to the king, no word of personal dislike is spoken against Richard. His queen is so devoted to him that she has only a fleeting reproach for his weakness, even when he has ruined her (V, i, 26-34); Aumerle and many others risk their lives to restore him to power (IV, i, 321-334; V, ii; V, iii, 29-146; V, iv; V, vi); and his personal groom, referred to above, comes to visit him in prison after all his power has been stripped from him.

Lear is similarly kind and charming: witness his continual kindness to the Fool except when the latter pricks him very deeply, and the genuine devotion to Lear of all the characters except the villains.

In short, Lear and Richard are kind and charming men. But they can be cruel men, too, and the circumstances under which they become cruel are similar enough to give further reason for a comparative study of their behavior. That their cruelty is connected with sentimentality has been asserted by some critics, but the term "sentimentality" itself is so variously understood, and in some of its meanings so elusive and vague,² that

²To appreciate the confusion of ideas abroad concerning sentimentality and sentimentalism, one should compare a number of articles dealing with the subject. Perhaps the most concise definitions are to be found in W. F. Thrall and Addison Hibbard's A Handbook to Literature (New York: Odyssey, c. 1935), p. 399; perhaps the best general discussion is Launcelot Minor Harris' "Sentimentalism in Shakespeare and Elsewhere," Sewanee Review, XVII (1909), pp. 431 ff. Other, and diverse, views may be found in Ernest Bernbaum's Guide Through
it is probably best to avoid using the term in interpreting their behavior.

It will be advantageous to begin by taking Richard separately and finding underlying psychological principles for his seemingly inconsistent actions. No technical

---


2Travis Bogard's recent article "Shakespeare's Second Richard," referred to in note 5 of the Introduction, illustrates the continuing failure to recognize the genuine consistency with which Richard is characterized. "Does he," asks Bogard, "perhaps rather present now the king, now the man, allowing the two to alternate so that a tension develops which prohibits the fusion of man and king into a single portrait? Further, a comparison of Richard's consecutive appearances might well suggest that there are three, possibly four Richards in the play, no one of them brought fully into conformity with any other. His first appearance as God's delegate, the symbol of kingsness, is not notably reaffirmed by his appearance as the petulant prince of the scene with Gaunt. Upon his return from Ireland, he and his situation claim sympathy as they have not done before, and again may well cause an audience to reevaluate its earlier impression. Finally, although lines of circumstantial and psychological development are drawn, an audience may sense that the philosopher of Pomfret Castle was not really anticipated by the poseur on the battlements at Flint." (pp. 199-200)

Bogard is careful to state this position merely as a hypothesis, but the hypothesis itself is built on a failure to recognize that in these scenes Richard is not really being inconsistent.
psychological terms will be used; so far as possible the terminology will be drawn from the common literary vocabulary of the language.

That Richard's behavior seems inconsistent, at least on the surface, may be seen by reviewing some of his actions. He reduces Bolingbroke's sentence of banishment when he sees Gaunt in tears (I,iii,208-212); but in the very next scene he wishes Gaunt dead so that he can appropriate Bolingbroke's inheritance to his own uses (I,iv,54-64). He personally leads an army into Ireland (I,iv,42), and at the end of the play he dies bravely defending himself (V,v,104-113); but he has an "ague fit of fear" (III,ii,190) and later becomes hysterical (III,iii,133-70), when faced with Bolingbroke's army. Again, he is foolishly generous to his court, and cruelly tyrannical to his people in raising funds to support his government (I,iv,43-52; II,1,57-68).

An analysis of this behavior may well begin with a search for ways in which Richard, in spite of his seeming inconsistencies, does behave consistently. The most obvious way, perhaps, is in his love of ceremony. His idea of kingship is closely related to ceremony, as Richard reveals in the following despairing words when he believes his kingship is threatened:

... within the hollow crown
That rounds the mortal temples of a king
Keeps Death his court, and there the antic sits
Scowling his state and grinning at his pomp,
Allowing him a breath, a little scene,
To monarchize, be fear'd and kill with looks.
(III,11,160-65)
The opening scene at court, the trial-by-combat (I,iii),
and the abdication scene (IV,i) all manifest his love of
this theatrical ceremony. In the opening scene, he says
with great formality,

Old John of Gaunt, time-honour'd Lancaster
Hast thou, according to thy oath and band,
Brought hither Henry Hereford thy bold son
(I,1,1-3)
and

Then call them to our presence; face to face
... ourselves will hear
The accuser and the accused freely speak.
(15-17)

His love of ceremony is even more apparent in his intro-
duction of the combatants:

Marshall, demand of yonder champion
The cause of his arrival here in arms:
Ask him his name and orderly proceed
To swear him in the justice of his cause.
(I,iii,7-10)
Marshall, ask yonder knight in arms
Both who he is and why he cometh hither
Thus plated in habiliments of war,
And formally, according to our law,
Depose him in the justice of his cause.
(26-30)

And in the abdication scene, he seems to take pleasure in
ceremony even when he is giving his throne away:

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 my own tears I wash away my balm,
With my own hands I give away the crown,
With my own tongue deny my sacred state,
With mine own breath release all duty's rights:
All pomp and majesty I do forswear ... 
(IV,i,203-211)
It is, in part, this love of theatricality that gives rise to the diagnosis of Richard as a misplaced artist: there is no doubt that he has a love of theater. Whether he is an artist in the sense of being a poet, however, is another matter.

Besides his love of pomp and ceremony, a further way in which Richard is consistent is in his enjoyment of sadness and melancholy. When he returns to the England which he has stripped bare by his prodigality he says,

As a long-parted mother with her child
Plays fondly with her tears and smiles in meeting,
So, weeping, smiling, greet I thee, my earth.

(III,ii,8-10)

Later in the same scene he says,

For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground
And tell sad stories of the death of kings

(155-56)

and further on he berates Aumerle for comforting him:

Beshrew thee, cousin, which didst lead me forth
Of that sweet way I was in to despair!
What say you now? What comfort have we now?
By heaven, I'll hate him everlastingly
That bids me be of comfort any more.
Go to Flint Castle; there I'll pine away;
A king, woe's slave, shall kingly woe obey.

(204-210)

Even while he is being forced to admit his injustice to Bolingbroke, his speech, at first hysterical, degenerates into a pleasurable, "wanton" indulgence of self-pity:

Or shall we play the wantons with our woes,
And make some pretty match with shedding tears?
As thus, to drop them still upon one place,
Till they have fretted us a pair of graves
Within the earth; and, therein laid, -- there lies
Two kinsmen digg'd their graves with weeping eyes.
Would not this ill do well? Well, well, I see
I talk but idly, and you laugh at me.

(III,iii,164-71)

In the abdication scene itself he enjoys pitying himself,
as was seen above in the ceremonious abdication speech
where he says, "With my own tears I wash away my balm,"
(IV,i,207). Later, in speaking to his queen about her
forthcoming banishment, Richard becomes maudlin over the
thought of his own sad fate:

In winter's tedious nights sit by the fire
With good old folks and let them tell thee tales
Of woeful ages long ago betid;
And ere thou bid good night, to quit their griefs,
Tell thou the lamentable tale of me
And send the hearers weeping to their beds;
For why, the senseless brands will sympathize
The heavy accent of thy moving tongue
And in compassion weep the fire out.

(V,1,40-48)

And finally, when it is time for him to say good-by to his
queen, they have a contest of pleasant self-pity:

K. Rich.: Go, count thy way with sighs; I mine
Queen: So longest way shall have the longest moans.
K. Rich.: Twice for one step I'll groan, the way
being short,
And piece the way out with a heavy heart.

(89-92)

The love of ceremony and love of sadness, moreover,
are closely allied in Richard, for in both instances he
is enjoying emotions for their own sake and displaying
them to a degree considerably beyond what the situation
might seem to warrant, and often well beyond what the
dignity of his position would seem to allow.
The next consistent feature about Richard's behavior is his tendency to act on impulse (the results, of course, are not consistent). Nothing is planned; he acts apparently without at all considering the implications of his actions. After going through the process of holding a council to determine whether Mowbray and Bolingbroke shall be banished (I,iii,119-24), and after reprimanding his loyal follower Mowbray for "plaining" against the sentence pronounced (175), Richard capriciously reduces Bolingbroke's sentence upon seeing Gaunt in tears (208-212). His decision to conduct an expedition against the Irish is made in a private conversation with his flatterers (I,iv,38-41), and he seizes upon the first means of financing the expedition which falls to his hand, namely Gaunt's estate, in spite of York's querulous warnings of the dangers and injustices involved (II,1,153-62, 189-210). Then, though he has just heard York's feebly spoken but clear and definite objections to the seizure and to Richard's conduct in general, Richard makes the old man lord governor in his absence, apparently without a thought of a possible retaliation by Bolingbroke while he is gone or of how someone as weak as York would be able to meet such a retaliation even if he had the will to oppose it (II,1,219-20). Returned from the Irish wars (III,ii), Richard shuttles between despair and overconfidence; and in III,iii, rather than "sitting tight" to find out what sort of bargain may be struck
with the rebels, he impulsively accuses Bolingbroke of coming to usurp the throne. Throughout all these actions Richard is equally oblivious of justice and of good sense; he merely follows the whim of the moment.

Like his love of pomp and his love of sadness, Richard's impulsiveness seems closely connected with a tendency to indulge his emotions; in fact, in each impulsive action he is indulging the emotion of the moment, which sometimes leads to a kind action; sometimes to a cruel one, though seldom to an intelligent one so far as policy is concerned. The close link between his impulsiveness and his affinity for sadness may be observed whenever he sees someone in tears: for Richard invariably responds quickly and emotionally to tears. It has been mentioned that when he sees Gaunt in tears he reduces Bolingbroke's sentence without regard either for good sense or for the justice he has a moment before accused Mowbray of "plaining" at. To Gaunt he says,

Uncle, even in the glasses of thine eyes I see thy grieved heart; thy sad aspect Hath from the number of his banish'd years Pluck'd four away.

(I,iii,208-210)

When Gaunt dies, Richard, his sympathy for Gaunt's tears now forgotten, says,

The ripest fruit first falls, and so doth he; His time is spent, our pilgrimage must be. So much for that. Now for these Irish wars.

(II,1,153-55)

But immediately afterwards, seeing York in tears over his callous and foolish behavior, Richard says with apparently
genuine concern,

Why uncle, what's the matter?  \[\text{(II, i, 186)}\]

On the ramparts of Flint Castle, when Richard sees Aumerle in tears of despair he tones his hysterical speech down into a self-pitying, but still a kind, attempt to console his cousin:

\begin{quote}
Aumerle, thou weep'st, my tender-hearted cousin!  
We'll make foul weather with despised tears.  
\[\text{(III, iii, 160-61)}\]
\end{quote}

And again, when he sees his Queen in sorrow, Richard forgets his own woes for a moment to comfort his wife:

\begin{quote}
Join not with grief, fair woman, do not so, 
To make my end too sudden.  
\[\text{(V, i, 16-17)}\]
\end{quote}

Each of these immediate responses to tears, which invariably bring some consoling remark from Richard, proves in the long run to be merely impulsive, and not based in much genuine sympathy. For Richard callously curses Gaunt on his deathbed \[\text{(II, i, 115-23)}\] when the latter attempts to show the king the folly of his ways; he puts his uncle York in charge of the state -- an act of thoughtless cruelty to a loyal old man who has declared himself opposed to Richard's policies of state; and though he speaks consolingly to Aumerle and to the Queen, Richard brings them both to grief with never another word of sympathy for them or for anyone else he has ruined except himself. Even his sympathy for his wife's sorrow is centered in himself: "to make my end too sudden."
His responses to tears, then, even though they may contain some genuine sympathy, in each instance also contain some element or suggestion of false emotion; clearly, this sympathy for tears is closely allied with his general tendency to indulge emotions for their own sake. Richard at times seems a sensitive person, not sensitive in the signification of being easily upset (though he is that too) but in perceiving and responding quickly to the states of mind of those about him. But in reality Richard's sensitivity, if he may be said to have any, is to emotion: not to the motives or moral aspects of the situation which produces it, or to the long-range causes and effects in which it is based, or to the makeup and mentality of the person who is emotional, but merely to emotion in itself, whether his own or someone else's. This sensitivity extends beyond sorrow; it responds to other emotions, and to situations in which emotion is likely to be produced, as may be seen in the first scene:

... face to face
And frowning brow to brow, ourselves shall hear
The accuser and the accused freely speak:
High-stomach'd are they both, and full of ire,
In rage deaf as the sea, hasty as fire.
(I,i,15-19)

But his favorite emotion is sorrow, and the question he puts to Aumerle after Bolingbroke's departure is very typical:

And pray, what store of parting tears were shed?
(I,iv,5)
even though Richard is in this instance being ironical. It is of much more than passing significance that the image of tears, though exquisitely varied in manner of presentation, is in so many instances lurking near when Richard indulges his favorite false emotion. For there is an important symbolic meaning attached to the image of tears. As a prelude to an exposition of this meaning, a series of quotations will be made, which at the cost of some repetition will further emphasize how extensively this image of tears is linked with Richard's false sorrow.

Seeing tears glistening in Gaunt's eyes, Richard says,

Uncle, even in the glasses of thine eyes
I see thy grieved heart.  
(I,1,208-209)

Returning to the England he has raped, his words are,

As a long-parted mother with her child
Plays fondly with her tears and smiles in meeting,
So, weeping, smiling, greet I thee, my earth. 
(III,11,8-11)

In an orgy of self-pity later in the same scene he says,

Let's talk of graves, of worms and epitaphs,
Make dust our paper and with rainy eyes
Write sorrow on the bosom of the earth. 
(III,11,145-47)

On the battlements of Flint Castle, at a time when a resolute admission of his offense against Bolingbroke and a granting of Bolingbroke's terms seem the only sensible procedure for one in Richard's position, Richard first grants the terms; then, unable to admit that he has been
in the wrong, he becomes hysterical, and taking refuge in self-pity insists that Bolingbroke has come to depose him. It is in the midst of his self-pity at Flint Castle that Richard says to Aumerle,

We'll make foul weather with despised tears.

(III,iii,161)

During his theatrical display of self-pity in the abdication scene Richard repeats the tears image ad nauseam:

That bucket down and full of tears am I
Drinking my grieves, whilst you mount up on high.

(IV,1,197-98)

With mine own tears I wash away my balm.

(207)

My eyes are full of tears, I cannot see.

(244)

The image continues to accompany his self-pity in Act V:

Tell thou the lamentable tale of me
And send the hearers weeping to their beds.

(V,1,44-45)

My thoughts are minutes, and with sighs they jar
Their watches on unto mine eyes, the outward watch,
Whereeto my finger, like a dial's point,
Is pointing still, in cleansing them from tears.

(V,v,51-54)

This extensive association of tears with Richard's indulgence of sadness is an instance of a Shakespearean iterative image with a symbolic function. The image of tears and the psychological phenomenon, namely indulgence of sorrow, accompany each other so pervasively that the tears may be said to symbolize this false sorrow. When the tears-image turns up where Richard is not even present the reader or playgoer may take it as a poetic signal that Richard's false sorrow has some important bearing on the situation at hand. For example, the scenes
in which the Queen appears without Richard (II, i; III, iv) both contain conspicuous occurrences of the tears image; and though the Queen's sorrow cannot be said to be anything but genuine, both scenes serve to emphasize and point up the false sorrow which plays a large part in Richard's ruin.

The thing that makes Richard's false sorrow so disastrous is not that he enjoys it but that he uses it as a refuge to avoid facing his shortcomings as a king. For Richard cannot bear the idea that he is not a perfect ruler. In accordance with and in addition to his love of ceremony and pomp, he is a believer in the divine right of kings, and sees himself as an impeccable representative of Divine Justice, in spite of his habitual injustice and partiality. In the opening scene, where he continually shows bias against "boisterous" Bolingbroke and favors Mowbray (e.g. I, i, 3-4, 84-86, 109-110), he says

Mowbray, impartial are our eyes and ears.

(115)

And except where he is forced by circumstances into a momentary admission of his shortcomings, he holds this conception of himself throughout the play:

The breath of worldly men cannot depose
The deputy elected by the Lord. (III, i, 56-57)

... show us the hand of God
That hath dismiss'd us from our stewardship;
For well we know, no hand of blood and bone
Can grip the sacred handle of our sceptre,
Unless he do profane, steal, or usurp. (III, iii, 77-81)
... you Pilates
Have here deliver'd me to my sour cross,
And water cannot wash away your sin.
(IV,1,240-42)
Mount, mount, my soul! thy seat is up on high;
 Whilst my gross flesh sinks downward, here to die.
(V,v,111-112)

In preserving the deliberate blindness to his own shortcomings which this view of himself entails, Richard develops a persecution complex which simultaneously allows him to enjoy self-pity and enables him to blame his own shortcomings on others. This psychological behavior, and the fear of non-existent dangers which Richard experiences as a consequence of this behavior, are outlined in terms of the tears image in the first scene where the Queen appears, a scene which, chorus-like, seems to exist chiefly to comment on the main action. The words are placed in Bushy's mouth, and are spoken to the Queen, who is lamenting some "unborn sorrow." Bushy says,

Each substance of a grief hath twenty shadows,
Which shows like grief itself, but is not so;
For sorrow's eye, glazed with blinding tears,
Divides one thing entire to many objects;
Like perspectives, which rightly gazed upon
Show nothing but confusion, eyed awry
Distinguish form: so your sweet majesty
Looking awry upon your lord's departure
Finds shapes of grief, more than himself, to wail;
Which, look'd on as it is, is nought but shadows
Of what it is not.
(II,11,14-24)

Bushy's reference to "perspectives" should perhaps be explained before any further comment is made on the speech. C. H. Herford's note on this passage reads,
Plot's *Natural History of Staffordshire* (quoted by Staunton) describes among the treasures of Gerards Bromley there "the pictures of Henry the great of France and his queen, both upon the same incidented board, which if held directly, you only perceive a confused piece of work; but if obliquely, of one side you see the king's and on the other the queen's picture."4

Bushy thus is saying that the Queen's sorrow causes her to see dangers which have no real existence -- which are meaningless, non-existent shadows (shadows, that is, in the Platonic sense of things with no real existence), like the figures in a perspective which is viewed "awry."

This simile is rather complicated for a dramatic image, but it is ingenious, for the "blinding tears" in their figurative sense refer to sorrow and in their denotative sense to the actual tears which sorrow produces; and the non-existent shadows, produced literally by tears on the eyes, in figurative language become the false dangers seen by a person who has so abandoned himself to sorrow that he sees and fears dangers which do not exist.

Ironically, the Queen's tears cause her to see truly.

It is Richard who sees with "False sorrow's eye / Which for things true weeps things imaginary" (II,11,26-27). But the passage does characterize the king's weakness exactly, and it is so closely tied in by iterative imagery with Richard's behavior that one can hardly doubt

---

that Shakespeare meant it for a key. For Richard, once he has evasively taken refuge in self-pity and has begun seeing with "false sorrow's eye," continually sees non-existent "shapes of grief, more than himself (i.e., itself) to wail," which "looked on as it is, is nought but shadows / Of what it is not." Specifically, to keep from facing the truth of his real injustice to Bolingbroke, Richard develops a self-pitying persecution complex and imagines that Bolingbroke is a complete villain who has come to usurp the throne, instead of being a wronged subject who has come to demand the justice which Richard has denied him.

Richard's false sorrow only begins forcibly asserting itself when he can no longer completely shut off the voices of truth which say too pointedly that he is not a model king. As long as he is in complete control of things, he can merely silence these voices. Hence Richard's cruelty -- he can be deliberately cruel, even to loyal followers, in one particular situation, namely when he is reproached for his conduct of his office. For instance, he is unreasonably cruel to Mowbray in the banishment scene. After Richard has pronounced sentence, Mowbray pathetically reproaches him for such treatment of a loyal follower (I,iii,154-73). Quick to contest any reflection upon his conduct of the kingship, Richard in clipped sentences accuses the devoted Mowbray of "plaining" at justice:
It boots thee not to be compassionate.
After our sentence plaining comes too late. (I,iii,174-75)

He then forces the still-loyal Mowbray, who all along has carried Richard's own quarrel against Bolingbroke (as the conversation between Gaunt and the Duchess of Gloucester, I,ii,1-55, makes clear), to swear that he will not conspire with Bolingbroke against England.

That this treatment of Mowbray is not merely an unimpassioned insistence on justice is shown in Richard's very next speech, where he forgets justice and reduces Bolingbroke's sentence as soon as he sees the tears in Gaunt's eyes. Mowbray has made the mistake of upsetting Richard's comfortable belief in his own rigid uprightness, and Richard punishes Mowbray for doing so.

Another example of Richard's cruelty to a person who makes pointed reflections on his kingship is his venomous rebuke of the dying Gaunt (II,i,115-21). And when Aumerle, with more tact, reproaches Richard for whiling away his time in pleasant fancies, Richard reprimands Aumerle too:

Discomfortable cousin! (III,ii,36)

and defends his procrastinating behavior with a long, self-delusive avowal of divine protection (36-62).

The word "discomfortable" is particularly appropriate, for the thing above all others which Richard will not
abide is a "discomfortable" thought. It is in this sense that Richard is a coward: he cannot face uncomfortable truth; and this is why he flees more and more deeply into self-pity as his power to quiet the voice of truth diminishes. In the abdication scene, having already offered to resign (see IV,1,177-78), Richard makes a theatrical attempt to demonstrate that the crown is being forcibly and unjustly taken from him. But when Northumberland counters this maneuver by asking Richard to read over a list of the crimes which make him unfit to be king, Richard says in vexation,

My eyes are full of tears, I cannot see. (IV,1,244)

And this is a dramatic, symbolic expression, in terms of the tears image, of the deliberate blindness to "discomfortable" truth which persists throughout Richard's behavior and which finally destroys him.

The extent to which Richard thus evades reality has long been obscured by Pater's widely adopted dictum that Richard is a poet who, in E. K. Chambers' rendition of the theory, "can read the hearts of men, even though he cannot control them," and who in speech after speech is deliberately weaving splendid poetry while he goes down to defeat before the practical, prosaic Bolingbroke.

These interpretations of Richard's and Bolingbroke's personalities are disastrous misconceptions which prevent
It from being recognized that Richard's flowery speeches, no matter how beautiful, are merely the register of his evasive, fuzzy mind, and at most indicate a sense of theatrical pomp. The self-deceiving evasiveness of Richard's mind, and the much more poetic incisiveness of Bolingbroke's, are fortunately demonstrated at the climax of the tears theme, and in terms of the very passage which has been cited as the key to the tears imagery.

It was mentioned above that when Richard, in the midst of a theatrical attempt in the abdication scene to demonstrate that the throne which he has offered to resign is being stolen from him, is suddenly presented with a damning list of his crimes, he says "My eyes are full of tears, I cannot see" (IV, i, 244). When Northumberland continues to press the list of crimes upon him Richard, implying as he has done all through the scene that he is actually unable to resign a divinely appointed office, turns to Bolingbroke and with heavy sarcasm asks for evidence that he is no longer king:

Good king, great king, and yet not greatly good,  
An if my word be sterling yet in England,  
Let it command a mirror hither straight,  
That it may show me what a face I have,  
Since it is bankrupt of his majesty.  
(IV, i, 263-67)

But Bolingbroke frustrates this sarcasm by refusing to recognize it:
Go, some of you, and fetch a looking glass.

(268)

When the mirror arrives Richard is still being pressed by Northumberland to read over the list of crimes, and Richard attempts to rise to the occasion. But his effort is short-lived; he cannot bring himself to it:

They (the Commons) shall be satisfied: I'll read enough
When I shall see the very book indeed
Where all my sins are writ, and that's myself.

(Re-enter attendant with glass)
Give me the glass, and therein will I read.
No deeper wrinkles yet? hath sorrow struck
So many blows upon this face of mine,
And made no deeper wounds? O flattering glass,
Like to my followers in prosperity,
Thou dost beguile me!

(273-81)

For the first time in the play he cannot think of a way to avoid facing his follies. Being now forced literally to face himself, he falls into typical wordplay and breaks the mirror in vexation:

Was this the face that faced so many follies
And was at last out-faced by Bolingbroke?
A brittle glory shineth in this face;
As brittle as the glory is the face;
(Dashes the glass against the ground)
For there it is, crack'd in a hundred shivers.

(285-89)

He calls this petulance "sport" and attaches a feeble lesson grounded in self-pity:

Mark, silent king, the moral of this sport,
How soon my sorrow hath destroy'd my face.

(290-91)

Bolingbroke, seeing his opportunity to end Richard's exasperating display, points out the fallacy in Richard's moral; and significantly for the poetic exposition of
Richard's self-pity, Bolingbroke uses Bushy's very words about false sorrow, which sees shadows of non-existent griefs (it should be emphasized again that the term "shadow" has the Platonic sense of unreality):

\[
\text{The shadow of your sorrow (\textit{i.e.}, false sorrow) has destroyed the mirror.}
\]

This master stroke hits the heart of Richard's self-deception. In his frantic desire to avoid facing his guilt, Richard has made a theatrical display of false sorrow or self-pity culminated by his destruction of the "shadow of his face," and Bolingbroke's admirably precise figure, by correcting Richard's term "face" to "reflection," thereby points out the inaccuracy of the term "sorrow," and shows more poetic incisiveness and felicity than Richard's speeches ever do.

Richard is genuinely startled by Bolingbroke's remark:

\[
\text{Say that again.}
\]

\text{(293-94)}

Then he attempts a repartee:

\[
\text{ha! let's see.}
\]

\[
\text{Th is very true, my grief lies all within; And these external manners of laments Are merely shadows to the unseen grief That swells with silence in the tortured soul.}
\]

\text{(294-98)}

Richard's attempted repartee has been interpreted as a penetrating, poetical remark, anticipating Hamlet's
But I have that within which passeth show,
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.  
(I, 11, 85-86)

But the difference between Hamlet's genuine melancholy and Richard's treasured self-pity shows that in this remark as in so many others Richard is simply deceiving himself: he hides within his sorrow, not his sorrow within him. And Richard knows that he has not matched Bolingbroke's remark, for he spitefully gives up his long attempt to steal the show:

... I thank thee, king,
For thy great bounty, that not only givest
Me cause to wail, but teachest me the way
How to lament the cause. I'll beg one boon,
And then be gone and trouble you no more.

(IV, 1, 299-303)

If this were not enough to show the fallacy of the popular conception of Richard as a poet and Bolingbroke as a prosy, merely practical man, almost any number of examples might be chosen to show that Richard not only lacks the understanding both of himself and humanity which are normally thought of as requisite to a poet, but habitually refuses to "keep his eye on the subject" -- i.e., he makes no attempt to get to the truth of situations -- and he mixes up his images. But since it is one main purpose of Chapter Three to demonstrate the infelicity and inaccuracy of Richard's images, this point will not be pursued further here.

Bolingbroke, however, can rattle off the most poignant, apt, and concise poetic remarks almost at will, as when he characterizes the frustration anyone experiences who tries to cease being sad by merely pretending to be joyful:

Oh, who can hold a fire in his hand  
By thinking on the frosty Caucasus?  
(I,iii,294-95)

Moreover, it is Bolingbroke who has insight into character; witness his impatient reply to Northumberland's flattery:

Of much less value is my company  
Than your good words.  
(II,ii,19-20)

And his incisive diagnosis of Richard's false sorrow has already been quoted.

Yet in view of the fact that the tradition of Bolingbroke as an unpoetic, practical man and a Machiavellian usurper is part and parcel of the tradition which holds Richard to be a poet, it is necessary at this point to examine Bolingbroke's behavior to see whether the evidence supports this conception of Bolingbroke. The position is summed up by E. K. Chambers as follows:

It need hardly be said that the antithesis between Richard and Bolingbroke goes much further than politics; it rests upon one of the ultimate distinctions of mankind, that of the practical and artistic temperaments, the men of dreams and fancies and the men of deeds. . . .

Against Richard, Bolingbroke presents the incarnation of efficiency. He has no gifts
or graces; the courtesy which wins him popularity is a matter of deliberate attitude, not of instinct. He speaks few words; none unconsidered or without a definite practical end [Chambers ignores Bolingbroke's moving lament over his banishment, 1,11,294-303]. You recognize in him 'the still strong man in a noisy land'; one who knows how to bide his time, and moves irresistibly, with something of the precision of a machine, towards his predetermined end. ... In conflict with Richard, efficiency has its full triumph over imagination.  

This conception of Bolingbroke is based (1) on an acceptance of Richard's own point of view, which is always warped by his refusal to face uncomfortable truths; (2) on an arbitrary antithesis between "men of imagination" and "practical men," an antithesis which to Shakespeare apparently did not exist, and which would seem to be incompatible anyway with Shakespeare's own practical and poetical successes, as well as with the Castiglionic concept of the gentleman, which Shakespeare seems to have absorbed before portraying Hamlet if not by the time of Richard II; and (3) on the aged king of the Henry IV plays, who is as different a person from the Bolingbroke of this play as the Antony of Antony and Cleopatra is from the Antony of Julius Caesar, or the Falstaff of The Merry Wives of Windsor from the earlier Falstaff.

In examining Bolingbroke's behavior, one is struck by the fact that unlike Shakespeare's genuine Machiavels

---

(Richard III, Iago, Edmund, and even, to some extent, Prince Hal), Bolingbroke never reveals any Machiavellian thoughts, in soliloquy or elsewhere. His behavior is in sharp contrast with the supporters of Richard, who once they are out of power are immediately shown plotting to get back in (IV,1,321-34). On the other hand, Shakespeare takes pains to show that Bolingbroke has received a great injury, while neither Bolingbroke's speeches nor those of any character but Richard incriminate him with coming for any reason but to regain his property. And it may be emphasized again that Richard's appraisals in other things are consistently wrong.

It might be objected that Bolingbroke must have had designs on the throne in order to be already under way with his fleet before the end of the scene (II,1) where his property is confiscated. This, however, is merely a matter of unfortunate dramatic compression. It is clear from Bolingbroke's conversation with York (II,iii, 108-142) that the former has had time to sue for his property and to have this suit denied, and that there has also been enough time for his property to be liquidated. To York he says,

7An excellent discussion of Machiavellianism in Shakespeare may be found in Danby's Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature, pp. 57-101.
As I was banish'd, I was banish'd Hereford;
But as I come, I come for Lancaster...
I am denied to sue my livery here,
And yet my letters patents give me leave:
My father's goods are all distrain'd and sold,
And these and all are all amiss employ'd.
What would you have me do? I am a subject,
And I challenge law: attorneys are denied me;
And therefore personally I lay claim
To my inheritance of free descent.

(II,iii,113-36)

York, who throughout the play is scrupulous about speaking
everything he knows and suspects (of. II,1,17-30, 163-208;
II,11,77-122; II,iii,86-171; III,iii,11-17; IV,1,177-80;
V,11,46-102; V,iii,46-99), does not contradict one word
of what Bolingbroke says; on the contrary, he sympathizes:

My lords of England, let me tell you this:
I have had feeling of my cousin's wrongs
And laboured all I could to do him right.

(II,iii,140-42)

York then points out that, even so, it is always treason
to bear arms against the king. If Bolingbroke has, in
fact, set out before Gaunt's death, then his assertions
that he has come "for Lancaster" are equivocal, and
a shadow is cast on all his subsequent actions. But
this puts York strangely out of character in failing to
contradict him, and moreover makes irrelevant and mis-
leading the dramatic, though characteristically querulous,
warning which York makes to Richard about the danger in
seizing Bolingbroke's property:

O my liege,
Pardon me, if you please; if not, I, pleased
Not to be pardon'd, am content withal.
Seek you to seize and gripe into your hands
The royalties and rights of banish'd Hereford?
Is not Gaunt dead, and doth not Harry live?  
Was not Gaunt just, and is not Harry true?  

...  
Now afore God -- God forbid I say true! --  
If you do wrongfully seize Hereford's rights,  
Call in the letters patents that he hath  
By his attorneys-general to sue  
His livery, and deny his offer'd homage,  
You pluck a thousand dangers on your head,  
You lose a thousand well-disposed hearts  
And prick my tender patience to those thoughts  
Which honour and allegiance cannot think.  

(R, i, 186-208)

Richard's impatient reply is, "Think what you will, we 
seize into our hands / His plate, his goods, his money,  
and his lands" (II, 1, 209-10), and this is obviously the  
action which turns the whole country, the "thousand well-  
disposed hearts," against the king. This background of  
general national anger against the king stands behind  
Bolingbroke's execution of Bushy and Green, the "cater-  
pillars of the commonwealth," and though in exasperation  
Bolingbroke here takes the law into his own hands, he  
reveals no ambition for the throne in doing so. On  
the contrary, he is careful to point out that his action  
is in the interest of King Richard (III, i, 8-15), and in  
the absence of any sort of soliloquy, or accusation  
by anyone except the unjust, self-pitying king himself,  
it is hard not to believe that Bolingbroke speaks in good  
faith.

Now Holinshed, from whom the phraseology of York's  
and Bolingbroke's speeches about "letters patents" is  
taken, makes it clear that Bolingbroke's expedition was  
ot organized until after his letters patents to sue his
livery had been called in by King Richard. The only way in which the play at this point does not correspond with Holinshed's account is in the individualizing of the characters and in the dramatic compression which unfortunately does not leave room for the denied legal suit which Shakespeare apparently intended as the motive for Bolingbroke's invasion.

There is a parallel instance of impossibly tight dramatic compression in King Lear, whose structure is much like that of Richard II. Cordelia's army lands before she could have much more than heard about Lear's initial mistreatment by Goneril; and yet we are not to believe that the invasion was made for any purpose but to right Lear's wrongs at the hands of Goneril and Regan (see Cordelia's speech IV, iv, 23-29). When all the evidence is viewed impartially, it does not seem much more violent to accuse Cordelia of Machiavellian designs on the English throne than to accuse Bolingbroke merely on the evidence of a fault in dramatic structure.

---


9For the apparent duration of the action in days, see Furness, A New Variorum, V, 408-412. The time between Lear's first clash with Goneril and the landing of Cordelia would not seem to be more than seven days, during which the news has had time to get to France, and an invasion fleet has been prepared and manned.
The crux in Richard II could be cleared up by beginning a new scene after Richard's exit in II,ii, following Pope's procedure. This would allow time for the suit and so eliminate the contradiction in time sequence which this matter presents as the text stands.

To return to Richard: it has been shown that the profuse tears-imagery in which he indulges, far from labeling him a poet, is a symbolic means of pointing up and reinforcing his "false sorrow" and the integral part false sorrow plays in preventing him from clearly seeing anything connected with his own culpability. Richard is portrayed as having an extremely evasive mind, one which will go to nearly any length to avoid discomfort. But, true to Bushy's diagnosis of "false sorrow," Richard in blinding himself to reality sees dangers which exist principally in his own mind. Even before he is finally cornered in Flint Castle and confronted with his injustice, Richard is obsessed with the thought of Bolingbroke, the man he has wronged. Determined not to recognize his own injustice, Richard characteristically inverts the situation in order to throw the blame upon his victim. He sees Bolingbroke

---

as a thief and a usurper:

Feed not thy sovereign's foe, my gentle earth,
But let thy spiders, that suck up thy venom,
And heavy-gaited toads lie in their way,
Doing annoyance to their treacherous feet
Which with usurping steps do trample thee.

(II,ii,12-17)

So when this thief, this traitor, Bolingbroke ...
Shall see us rising in our throne, the east,
His treasons shall sit blushing in his face.

(47-51)

For every man that Bolingbroke hath press'd ...  
God for his Richard hath in heavenly pay
A glorious angel.

(58-61)

Richard is first confronted with his culpability in the theft of Bolingbroke's estate when he is standing on the battlements of Flint Castle (III,iii). The only sensible thing for Richard to do would be to accede to Bolingbroke's reasonable demand of being refranchised, as Aumerle recognizes and tries to impress on Richard (III,iii, 131-32). Had he been willing to do so, his kingship itself apparently would have been in no danger. But acceding to the demand involves at least a tacit admission that he has been unjust in his conduct of the kingship, and Richard cannot bear the idea. After giving in to the demand for a moment, he becomes frantic, and exhibits symptoms of hysterica passio, Lear's "climbing sorrow":

O God! O God! that e'er this tongue of mine
That laid the sentence of dread banishment
On yon proud man should take it off again
With words of sooth! O that I were as great
As is my grief, or lesser than my name!
Or that I could forget what I have been,
Or not remember what I must be now!
Swell'st thou, proud heart? I'll give thee scope
to beat,
Since foes have scope to beat both thee and me.

(III,iii,133-41)
It is at this point that he returns to his conviction that Bolingbroke has come to take the throne, and actually offers to abdicate. It should perhaps be emphasized again that Bolingbroke never, unlike the Shakespearean Machiavel, mentions any intention to be king until Richard has offered to resign; on the contrary he shows complete respect for Richard's kingship at Flint Castle, as he has done all the way through the play:

Boling.: Stand all apart, and show fair duty to his majesty. (He kneels down)

K. Rich.: Fair cousin, you debase your princely knee
To make the base earth proud with kissing it. Me rather had my heart might feel your love Than my unpleased eye see your courtesy. Up, cousin, up, your heart is up, I know, Thus high at least, although your knee be low.

Boling.: My gracious lord, I come but for mine own. (187-96)

This is the "offer'd homage" mentioned in York's warning against the confiscation of Bolingbroke's property, homage which Richard has denied by refusing suit for the property, and which Bolingbroke now offers again. Then in the abdication scene comes the unequivocal statement from the mouth of the ever-frank York that Richard has offered to abdicate, a statement which significantly is not denied by Richard:

K. Rich.: ... To do what service am I sent for hither?
York: To do that office of thine own good will Which tired majesty did make thee offer, The resignation of thy state and crown To Henry Bolingbroke.

(IV,1,176-80)
The next significant example of Richard's evasiveness comes when, in the midst of his theatrical, equivocal, and sarcastic attempt to show that the crown he has resigned is being taken by force, he is asked to read aloud a list of his crimes. His attempt to avoid reading the crimes culminates in the mirror episode, where Richard's self-pitying evasiveness itself is dexterously exposed by Bolingbroke, and Richard, unable to counter effectively, asks to leave the chamber.

In bidding farewell to his queen, Richard displays his usual evasiveness when he is reprimanded for his weakness:

Queen: ... and wilt thou, pupil like, Take thy correction mildly, kiss the rod, And fawn on rage with base humility, Which art a lion and a king of beasts? K. Rich.: A king of beasts, indeed; if aught but beasts, I had been still a happy king of men. (V, i, 33-37)

Finally, in his prison soliloquy, where Richard has been credited with attaining "self-knowledge and penetration" and with arriving at an "understanding of the ineffable," he displays the same evasive inability to face the truth whenever the subject of his own guilt enters his mind. The soliloquy, far from showing any penetrating vision in Richard, emphasizes and sums up the evasiveness and moral cowardice which have led to

---

11Knight, The Wheel of Fire, p. 361; Watkins, Shakespeare and Spenser, p. 86.
his ruin. The speech as a whole is characterized by his persistence in shying away from the obsessive thought of Bolingbroke and from the associated fact that his own injustice to Bolingbroke has caused his downfall.

Before an analysis of the soliloquy is begun, however, it will be well to examine G. W. Knight's pronouncement on this long speech, which he sees as conclusive evidence of Richard's poetic vision. Knight's opinion of Richard's poetic powers was one of the earliest issued among contemporary critics, and to judge by the present widespread acceptance of Richard as a poet, it has carried considerable authority. It is perhaps the source of Watkins' comparison of Lear and Richard, though Knight himself does not associate the two except at the one point which is now to be examined. At any rate, even if it is based on an erroneous conception of Richard's mind, Knight's discussion suggests an extremely important point about Shakespeare's symbolic technique. The discussion, after an extended analysis of the soliloquy, culminates as follows:

Richard's thought-sequence ends in music:

Music do I hear?

We must consider the music which is indicated to continue for some appreciable time. Then we shall see that the movement which I have been tracing in Richard's thought is a thing strangely beautiful and uniquely interesting. Starting from religious perplexity, developing through agnostic pain and stoic acceptance to a serene faith in death's essential goodness, it finally
makes 'a swan-like end fading in music'; it fades into music, is lost in music, those melodies which express more than the mind may speak in words, music which is the utterance of a consciousness understanding the ineffable, and drawing the veil which hides that unity distorted by our conventional dualism of 'life' and 'death.'

He continues by saying that Richard's soliloquy anticipates the philosophical themes of Shakespeare's subsequent plays. "Thus Richard, in poetic mood, becomes a true poet, a miniature of the future Shakespeare, his thought turning on that very axis about which the visionary sequence of the plays unwritten was destined to revolve."

The music outside Richard's cell, however, is hardly the serene harmony which one might expect to correspond to "the utterance of a consciousness understanding the ineffable"; it is discordant music, and it makes Richard uncomfortable, as Knight himself is uncomfortably aware. He goes on for several more pages in an attempt to resolve this difficulty, and concludes that the music is maddening to Richard because his "finely tuned intellect" is not harmonized with worldly things.

Knight says that Lear (who is now brought into the discussion for the first time), in contrast with Richard,

---

12The Wheel of Fire, p. 361.
13Ibid., p. 362.
14Ibid., pp. 362-65.
15Ibid., p. 365.
does attain this harmony with worldly things and thus
is helped to his cure by music when he is reunited with
Cordelia.

Whether Knight has sensed an affinity between the
personalities of Richard and Lear, or merely brings
Lear in at this point because of the music used to help
cure the mad king, is not completely clear; in any event,
the parallel is not mentioned by Knight anywhere else.
But to return to the soliloquy itself, it must be made
clear that Knight is allowing himself to be misled by
the conception of Richard as a poet, and does violence
to the soliloquy in forcing it to correspond to such a
conception. What he sees as a supremely poetic passage
is actually a series of bitter, shifting, unresolved
thoughts shot through with Richard's guilty preoccupation
with Bolingbroke and with his own miscarriage of justice.

But it should be conceded that the present study is
very much indebted to Knight for his recognition of the
symbolic significance of the music in both plays. Such
a symbolism fits in perfectly with the interpretation of
Richard's and Lear's behavior which is made in the present
study, though Knight's reading of the exact meaning of
the symbolism is not easy to agree with. For while Lear's
music does symbolize the king's new-found concord of mind,
the discordant music outside Richard's cell symbolizes
the fundamental disorder of a mind which can never bring
itself to face the truth. Because of the culminating
importance of this point, a minute consideration of
Richard's prison soliloquy is in order.

As the soliloquy begins, Richard is trying to take
stock of himself and the causes of his miserable situation.
In characteristic Shakespearean fashion, the self-revela-
tions in this soliloquy are made in terms of the character
being portrayed; Richard does not step out of character
in analyzing himself, but on the contrary is still
limited by the same mentality which has caused the
situation he is in. Indulging his restless love for
fanciful figures, he begins by saying,

\[ \text{I have been studying how I may compare} \\
\text{This prison where I live unto the world:} \\
\text{And for because the world is populous} \\
\text{And here is not a creature but myself,} \\
\text{I cannot do it; yet I'll hammer it out.} \\
\text{My brain I'll prove the female to my soul,} \\
\text{My soul the father; and these two beget} \\
\text{A generation of still-breeding thoughts,} \\
\text{And these same thoughts people this little world} \\
\text{In humours like the people of this world,} \\
\text{For no thought is contented.} \text{ (V, v, l-ll)} \]

It is typical that all the thoughts which people "this
little world," i.e., the microcosm, or Richard himself,
are humorous or discontented. In examining these thoughts
he reveals implicitly the instability and lack of resolu-
tion that have prevented him and would always prevent him
from adopting any steadfast outlook on life, and do
prevent him from doing so even in prison. Of the first
kind of thought he says,
... the better sort
As thoughts of things divine, are intermix'd
With scruples and do set the word itself
Against the word:
As thus, 'Come little ones,' and then again,
'It is as hard to come as for a camel
To thread the postern of a small needle's eye.'

(11-17)

This consideration of the religious viewpoint reveals an essential shallowness and an incapacity to discern the governing effect of context on Biblical quotation; Christ in the first instance is demonstrating the child-like humility required of the Christian, and in the second is reminding His listeners that a rich man cannot easily attain that humility (St. Luke 18:16 and St. Matthew 19:16-28); and so the "word" is not actually against the "word" in the passages which trouble Richard, though it is easy to see why Richard should be troubled, since he so much resembles the rich young man who loved wealth too much to forsake it and follow Christ. Thus the passage reinforces his behavior throughout the play, where he has loved comfort of body and mind far too well either to seek truth or to govern properly.

Leaving religious thoughts, Richard moves on to others:

Thoughts tending to ambition, they do plot
Unlikely wonders; how these vain weak nails
May tear a passage through the flinty ribs
Of this hard world, my ragged prison walls,
And, for they cannot, die in their own pride.

(18-22)

In considering "thoughts tending to ambition" he shows
the lack of resolution that causes a person like Richard to abandon purpose at the first disappointment. With such persons all firm courses of action remain mere inclination or "tending" until they "die in their own pride," as Richard is presently to do. He continues:

Thoughts tending to content flatter themselves
That they are not the first of fortune's slaves
Nor shall not be the last; like silly beggars
Who sitting in the stocks refuge their shame,
That many have and others must sit there;
And in this thought they find a kind of ease,
Bearing their own misfortunes on the back
Of such as have before endured the like.

(23-30)

This stoic mood is also a mere "tendency" with Richard. He contemptuously rejects stoicism; all stoics, like "silly beggars," are beneath his dignity. He moves on to consider other discontented thoughts or "people" of his brain:

Thus play I in one person many people
And none of them contented; sometimes I am king;
Then treasons make me wish myself a beggar,
And so I am: then crushing penury
Persuades me I was better when a king:
Then I am king'd again: and by and by
Think that I am unkings'd by Bolingbroke,
And straight am nothing.

(31-38)

Typically, he oscillates between the extremes of kingship and penury, as in Act Three he oscillated between extremes of self-delusive overconfidence, and self-delusive, comforting self-pity. And, typically too, he thinks of kingship only as opposed to penury. The thought of Bolingbroke, however, sends him briefly into another tendency, this one suicide, and at this point the
discordant music is first heard outside the cell:

But whate'er I be
Nor I nor any man that but man is
With nothing shall be pleased, till he be eased
With being nothing. Music do I hear? 
Ha, ha! keep time: how sour sweet music is
When time is broke and no proportion kept!

The music is both a symbol of the jangling discord in his discontented thoughts -- a discord which reaches a climax when he thinks of Bolingbroke -- and a dramatic device which gives Richard an excuse to change the subject, which has become too painful for him to dwell on any longer. Having thought of his nemesis, Bolingbroke, he thinks momentarily of suicide and changes the subject to a meditation on the "music of men's lives" which is anything but the picture of a man contemplating the ineffable wonder of the universe:

Ha, ha! keep time: how sour sweet music is
When time is broke and no proportion kept!
So is it in the music of men's lives.
And here have I the daintiness of ear
To check time broke in a disorder'd string
But for the concord of my state and time
Had not an ear to hear my true time broke.

The philosophizing on "the music of men's lives," it will be noted, becomes ambiguous when it gets close to the subject of the concord of his state. He may mean that he himself broke his "true time" by not dealing swiftly enough with the invaders, or that the invaders broke it, or neither of these. At any rate, his "true time" is presumably the condition of his kingship before anyone
actively interfered with his misconduct of affairs. His following comment, "I wasted time, and now doth time waste me," shows he is not confessing guilt. He merely regrets that he was not swift enough in dealing with the invaders. There is still no admission, a few lines before his death, that his failure to deal justly with Bolingbroke was at fault. Perhaps uncomfortably aware that his statement is not the whole truth (for Richard is not so much a conscious liar as an expert self-deluder), he tries to reinforce his position with a long, bitter conceit in which he makes himself "time's numbering clock" and which moves to the false and self-delusive conclusion that he is a victim of time (50-60).

But having mentioned Bolingbroke again (line 59), Richard drops this conceit too and again becomes aware of the discordant music. He blames the music for the discomfort he feels in trying to face his own thoughts; and as in the previous instance it is not a coincidence that his discomfort reaches a climax at the moment he thinks of Bolingbroke, and that the discordant music comes in just at this point:

... my time
Runs posting on in Bolingbroke's proud joy,
While I stand fooling here, his Jack o' the clock.
This music made me; let it sound no more.
For though it have holp madmen to their wits,
In me it seems it will make wise men mad.
(58-63)
And at this point, with one of the flashes of sweetness that make Richard irresistible in spite of all his pernicious shortcomings, he finishes the soliloquy:

Yet blessing on his heart that gives it me!
For 't is a sign of love; and love to Richard
Is a strange brooch in this all-hating world.

(64-66)

Yet even this last, charming remark is twisted, for no one in the whole play shows a personal hatred for Richard, while Mowbray, York, Aumerle, Carlisle, the Queen, and the groom are devoted to him.

iv

The various personality traits which this analysis has shown Richard to possess have clustered about an egotistical and self-indulgent desire for mental comfort at any cost. The behavior of such a person is at first glance bewildering, for his principle of action often seems to be pure whim; whatever takes his fancy, he does. But this surrender to his appetites is itself a recognizable principle, one which operates throughout the play. Richard's best-developed appetites are for the theatrical pomp and adulation of kingship, and for emotion, especially sadness; it is in these, primarily, that he finds the mental comfort he so much desires. It is true that there is no way of predicting just what will take the fancy of such a person: it may be an expedition against the Irish, or it may be an act
of kindness, like Richard's kindness to the weeping Gaunt. Once he has fixed upon a pleasant object, however, this kind of person uses any means that fall to his hand to attain that object, with no scruples whatever. To Richard one source of revenue is as good as another, even if he has to mortgage the realm or seize the property of a banished subject. The disastrous weakness of a personality like this is that it simply rejects anything which interferes with the comfort and indulgence to which it is committed. Richard has fixed on his divine stewardship as one chief source of comfort. Any reflection on this stewardship upsets his comfort, and is not to be countenanced. This is the cause of his cruelty to Mowbray and Gaunt. Similarly, his deliberate blindness to the implications of seizing Bolingbroke's lands is adopted because such implications are uncomfortable. Hence, too, his blindness to the dangers of procrastination in meeting the invaders; such dangers are uncomfortable to think about, and are simply ignored. Hence his fatuous action of resigning the throne instead of simply granting Bolingbroke's terms. To grant the terms would be a confession of injustice, unthinkable in God's steward; much better to feel that Bolingbroke is a thief. Finally, the king's self-pity is a comfortable refuge from the truth of his injustice.

Richard's tragic flaw, then, is his evasive blindness to uncomfortable truth, a blindness symbolized by the
tears of false sorrow; and his tragic mistake is injustice -- the specific injustice of seizing Bolingbroke's property, and the general, fundamental injustice of never recognizing any truth which interferes with his mental comfort. And though Richard's actions are inconsistent, Shakespeare's conception of Richard is consistent from the first lines of the play, when the audience learns why Bolingbroke's appeal has been postponed:

Which then our **leisure** would not let us hear,  
(I,1,5)

to the king's dying words, in which after all his injustices he still clings to his comfortable conception of himself as God's steward:

Mount, mount, my soul! thy seat is up on high,  
Whilst my gross flesh sinks downward, here to die.  
(V,v,111-112)

In the trait of deliberate blindness to uncomfortable truth, King Lear's mind is curiously like Richard's. An introductory example of this may be seen in their responses when loyal subjects, attempting to save their sovereigns from folly, are overly blunt about pointing out the injustice of their respective kings' behavior. First, the encounter between Richard and Gaunt:

**Gaunt:** ... thou, too careless patient as thou art,  
Commit'st thy anointed body to the cure  
Of those physicians that first wounded thee:  
A thousand flatterers sit within thy crown ...
K. Rich.: A lunatic lean-witted fool
Presuming on an ague's privilege
Darest with thy frozen admonition
Make pale our cheek...
Now, by my seat's right royal majesty,
Wert thou not brother to great Edward's son
This tongue that runs so roundly in thy head
Should run thy head from thy unreverent shoulders.  
(II,i,97-123)

Kent speaks in almost the same phraseology, and receives
a similarly cruel reply for daring to voice an unwelcome truth:

Kent: Kill thy physician, and the fee bestow
Upon the foul disease. Revoke thy gift;
Or whilst I can vent clamour from my throat,
I'll tell thee thou dost evil.

Lear: Hear me, recreant!
On thine allegiance, hear me!
That thou hast sought to make us break our vows,
Which we durst never yet, and with strain'd pride
To come betwixt our sentence and our power,
Which nor our nature nor our place can bear,
Our potency made good, take thy reward.
(I,i,163-72)

In a second parallel instance, when loyal followers remind
the kings of something uncomfortable to think about, both
sovereigns abruptly dismiss the thought:

Aumerle: He means, my lord, that we are too remiss;
Whilst Bolingbroke, through our security,
Grows strong and great in substance and in power.
K. Rich.: Discomfortable cousin!
(III,ii,33-36)

Knight: Since my young Lady's going into France,
Sir, the Fool hath much pined away.
Lear: No more of that; I have noted it well.
(I,iv,77-79)

When Aumerle suggests that Richard is lax, the latter
abruptly dismisses the thought, as Lear does when Cordelia
is mentioned. It must be recognized, however, that Lear
is more honest-minded than Richard; Richard would have
denied the assertion altogether unless pinned down to it.

It is well to emphasize that Lear and Richard are different personalities. Lear is portrayed as a man who has been a good and a strong king, to judge by the respect which Kent accords him, even though as Regan points out "he hath ever but slenderly known himself" (I,1,293-94). Lear has a capacity for understanding and making allowances for the weaknesses of others, as is shown when he momentarily forgives Regan and Cornwall for refusing to see him (II,i,105-112); and, finally, Lear has an under-lying honesty of mind. Richard simply does not have these qualities. But if we think of Richard's moral weakness, his lack of any true sympathy for others, and his incapacity for candor either of thought or statement as negative qualities, it may be fair to say that Lear's personality includes Richard's and a great deal more besides. In the area of their tragic flaw, however, their personalities are nearly identical; and it is probably not far wrong to suppose that in Shakespeare's mind Richard was the father of Lear.

Although it is more briefly displayed, Lear has a love of ceremony which closely parallels Richard's. As Coleridge points out, the formal division of the kingdom is nothing but a ceremony, for the division had been carefully made beforehand; and Lear is almost as precisely formal in this scene as Richard always is in public. Richard outdoes himself in ceremoniously swearing
in the combatants in the trial-by-combat scene. Lear's resignation ceremony, conducted with the aid of a map on the stage, and phrased in involved, carefully turned periods, has this same flavor:

Tell me, my daughters,
(Since now we will divest us both of rule, Interest of territory, cares of state)
Which of you shall we say doth love us most?
That we our largest bounty may extend
Where nature doth with merit challenge. Goneril, Our eldest-born, speak first.

***
Of all these bounds, even from this line to this, With shadowy forests and with champaigns rich'd, With plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads, We make thee lady; to thine and Albany's issue Be this perpetual. What says our second daughter, Our dearest Regan, wife of Cornwall?

***
To thee and thine hereditary ever
Remain this ample third of our fair kingdom
No less in space, validity and pleasure,
Than that conferr'd on Goneril. Now, our joy, Although our last, and least; to whose young love The vines of France and milk of Burgundy Strive to be interest'd; what can you say to draw A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak. (I,1,48-86)

Again, both kings take pride in the unchanging firmness of kingship. To the pathetic reproaches of Mowbray, a completely loyal follower, Richard says, "It boots thee not to be compassionate. / After our sentence plaining comes too late" (I,iii,174-75). This is, in a slightly different way from that pointed out above in relation to Gaunt's reprimand and Richard's reply, an anticipation of Lear's attitude when Kent objects to the treatment of Cordelia. Lear, too, haughtily asserts the rigid firmness of his kingship:
... thou hast sought to make us break our vows,  
Which we durst never yet ...  

(I,1,168-69)

In both instances the king forgets all his gratitude at 
the first word of reproach from a loyal follower, and 
becomes as cruel to him as to the primary target of 
wrath, Bolingbroke and Cordelia respectively.

This love of ceremony, this tendency to change the 
subject when an uncomfortable truth is brought up, this 
callousness to a devoted follower who questions a royal 
act, this pretense of kingly firmness as defense against 
criticism, all establish Lear as having qualities of mind 
similar to Richard's. These instances are by no means 
the full extent of the parallel; but running through the 
behavior already examined the deeper principle, namely 
a compulsive desire for comfort of mind at any cost, 
amay be observed. The first hint of this in Lear is 
his demand for flattery. With his cruelty to Cordelia 
and Kent when they upset his pleasant whim the principle 
becomes more clearly evident; and it extends throughout 
the first three acts of the play, closely paralleling 
Richard's disastrous compulsion to maintain comfort of 
mind. In their agonizing(descents from power to help-
lessness both kings, rather than face an uncomfortable 
truth, lay themselves open to new rebuffs by transferring 
their confidence to some still remaining but not really 
very promising reserve of strength. Thus Richard, when 
he has learned that Glendower's army is dispersed (III,II),

after a moment of despair revives and places his hopes on the feeble York:

Look not to the ground,  
Ye favorites of a king: are we not high?  
High be our thoughts: I know my Uncle York  
Hath power enough to serve our turn.  
(III,11,87-90)

Upon hearing what he takes to be the defection of Wiltshire, Bushy, and Green, he first violently curses them:

O villains, vipers, damn'd without redemption!  
... terrible Hell make war  
Upon their spotted souls for this offence!  
(129-34)

Then, learning that they have been executed, he revives from another siege of despair in the same way as before:

This ague fit of fear is over-blow'n;  
An easy task it is to win our own.  
Say, Soroop, where lies our uncle with his power?  
(190-92)

Lear's behavior is very similar, when first Goneril and then Regan threaten their father's position. Treated with disrespect by Goneril, Lear flies into the same sort of rage as Richard when the latter thinks his followers have deserted:

Darkness and devils!  
Saddle my horses; call my train together.  
Degenerate bastard!  
(I,iv,260-62)

Like Richard, he falls back on an unpromising reserve of strength:

I'll not trouble thee:  
Yet have I left a daughter.  
(I,iv,262-63)
Rebuffed in turn by Regan, he almost surpasses Richard in desperate clutching at straws; he decides to go back to Goneril:

Those wicked creatures yet do look well-favour'd When others are more wicked; not being the worst Stands in some rank of praise. (To Gon.) I'll go with thee: Thy fifty yet doth double five-and-twenty. (II, iv, 258-61)

Of course Richard's fleeing into any comfortable thought he can find is colored by his disposition to pity himself, while Lear's is colored by a more stable pride; but the self-pity is in Lear, too, from the first rebuff, and it is expressed in language similar to that used by Richard when the latter thinks Bushy, Green, and Wiltshire have defected. Richard says,

Snakes, in my heart-blood warmed, that sting my heart! (III, ii, 131)

Lear says,

How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is To have a thankless child! (I, iv, 297-98)

And later,

O Regan! she hath tied Sharp-tooth'd unkindness, like a vulture, here. (Points to his heart.) (II, iv, 135-36)

When all support is gone, both kings give rein to self-pity:

K. Rich.: ... alack the heavy day, That I have worn so many winters out, And now know not what name to call myself! O that I were a mockery king of snow
Standing before the sun of Bolingbroke
To melt myself away in water drops!  
(IV,1,261-62)

Lear: You see me here, you Gods, a poor old man,
As full of grief as age; wretched in both!
If it be you that stirs these daughters' hearts
Against their father, fool me not so much
To bear it tamely; touch me with noble anger,
And let not women's weapons, water-drops,
Stain my man's cheeks!  
(II,iv,274-78)

Again the echoing of phraseology from Richard II is
apparent in Lear's speech. This passage shows some
pride left in Lear still; but his self-pity gradually
gains full control:

I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness;
I never gave you kingdom, call'd you children,
You owe me no subscription: then let fall
Your horrible pleasure; here I stand, your slave,
A poor, infirm, weak, and despis'd old man.  
(III,ii,16-20)

O Regan, Goneril!
Your kind old father, whose frank heart gave all,—
(III,iv,19-20)

Perhaps it will be objected at this point that after
all Lear truly is helpless; but the tendency to self-pity
in Lear is just as much a refuge from his own guilt as it
is in Richard. It is essential to observe how parallel
their responses are whenever they are faced with the
fact that they have themselves committed a tragic crime
and are thus responsible for their own misery. This is
the culminating parallel in their psychological behavior.

Two points brought out in the analysis of Richard's
evasion of guilt are especially pertinent. First, Richard
is obsessed with the idea of Bolingbroke, whom he has
wronged; and second, he dexterously avoids facing his guilt, which is closely associated of course with the idea of Bolingbroke, either by blaming the latter with his own guilt, or by changing the subject. Although he repeatedly touches, just for a moment, on his guilt, he invariably avoids examining it closely and frankly.

Lear's mental behavior with reference to his crime against Cordelia is extremely similar to this. His sore subject is his rejected daughter, as Richard's is Bolingbroke; and granted a candor which Richard simply does not possess, Lear does the same thing as Richard whenever the sore subject crosses his mind. He takes refuge, first by mere evasion, then by dwelling on unkindnesses done to him by Regan and Goneril. And although Lear's mind is broader and more comprehensive than Richard's, and hence is in some ways more difficult to analyze, in one sense the problem of Lear's guilt is easier to grasp, because retribution does not come from the person wronged, as with Richard. Richard brings his misery on himself by mistreating Bolingbroke, and he avoids facing his own guilt by blaming everything on Bolingbroke. Lear brings his misery on himself by mistreating Cordelia, but he avoids facing his guilt by blaming everything on Goneril and Regan. Yet the problem is also made more complex by the fact that Goneril and Regan are extremely culpable themselves, so much so that one is in danger of losing sight of Lear's initial responsibility for the
whole thing. Lear, however, is guilty, and does evade his guilt, disastrously for himself. His mental processes in this regard are very analogous to Richard's.

When the knight tells Lear (I, iv, 77-78) that the Fool has been pining for Cordelia, Lear cuts him off: "No more of that; I have noted it well" (I, iv, 79). When the Fool first reproaches Lear for giving everything to his daughters the king says, "Take heed, sirrah, the whip" (116). The Fool responds, "Truth's a dog must to kennel; he must be whipp'd out when the Lady Brach may stand by the fire and stink" (117-18). This is, symbolically, exactly what Lear has done with truthful Cordelia and the "brachs" Goneril and Regan; and Lear responds painfully: "A pestilent gall to me!" (120). After this exchange Lear pays little attention to the Fool, who tries to call his patron's attention: "Mark it, Nuncle" (123). Kent gets no reply either when he says, in reference to the Fool's stinging remarks, "This is not altogether Fool, my Lord" (157). After Goneril's entry, the king ignores the Fool completely (197 ff.).

In scene five of the first act, it is clear that the king is at first ignoring the Fool's remarks:

**Fool:** Thou canst tell why one's nose stands i' the middle on's face?

**Lear:** No.

**Fool:** Why, to keep one's eyes of either side's nose, that what a man cannot smell out, he can spy into.

**Lear:** (Obviously ignoring the Fool) I did her wrong. (I, v, 20-24)
But when he touches this painful subject he suddenly diverts his attention to what the Fool is saying, and takes refuge in self-pity, not much differently from the way Richard would do:

Fool: Canst tell how an oyster makes his shell?  
Lear: No.  
Fool: Nor I neither; but I can tell why a snail has a house.  
Lear: Why?  
Fool: Why, to put's head in; not to give it away to his daughters, and leave his horns without a case.  
Lear: /Obviously responding to the Fool's remark this time/: I will forget my nature. So kind a father?

(25-33)

It is important to notice that Lear makes this agonized assertion of his kindness only nine lines after admitting to himself that he has wronged Cordelia. In view of his honest-mindedness, of which there can be no doubt, it seems clear that he has now completely repressed the thought of Cordelia — a thought which, Richard-like, he veered away from a moment before. Then, being directly confronted with his own responsibility for the situation he is in, he continues to behave like Richard, who in prison fears madness when he cannot get the thought of Bolingbroke and his own misrule off his mind:

Fool: Thou should'st not have been old till thou hadst been wise.  
Lear: O! let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven.

(47-48)

It is not far wrong, probably, to view the Fool as among other things the voice of Lear's good sense, which Lear sometimes ignores completely, sometimes partially
hears, and sometimes hears well. When he hears the Fool well, he behaves very similarly to the way Richard does when the latter is for the moment brought face to face with the painful truth.

This notion of the Fool as the voice of one part of Lear's mind is stated by Watkins (though not in connection with Richard) in these words:

... the fool is a personification of the truth tormenting Lear to madness: 'Truth's a dog must to kennel.' He is a psychological device, but stylized and unrealistic, a dramatization of what really goes on in Lear's mind, supplementing those few revealing remarks: 'No more of that, I have noted it well,' and 'I did her wrong.' Watkins reasons from the premise that Lear is thinking about Cordelia all along and that sometimes he speaks his thoughts himself, while sometimes the Fool speaks them. Although it contains a valuable idea, Watkins' statement seems to complicate the issue unnecessarily. It seems more sound dramatically to assume that remarks like "I did her wrong" represent the few instances when Lear allows himself, for a moment, a full consciousness of his guilt, which he quickly brushes aside by thinking about something else. The continual needling of the Fool, on the other hand, is the voice of Lear's good sense, which the king sometimes listens to and responds to, sometimes ignores completely. Anyone who has ignored

16 Watkins, Shakespeare and Spenser, p. 97.
or repressed his better judgment only to be sorry for having done so will recognize that this is a valid and accurate psychological personification.

If it be assumed, with Watkins, that conscious thoughts like "I did her wrong" are continually in Lear's mind — that is, that Lear is thinking all along about things which Shakespeare conceals or only hints at, and that these things are significant to the development of the drama — then Shakespeare has clearly failed as a dramatist in this instance and, moreover, psychological criticism of this and of other Shakespearean characters is rendered almost useless. The position taken in this study is that the psychological behavior of Lear and Richard is consistent with, or not contradictory to, what might happen in a real person, within the limits of drama, and that the dramatist has revealed all the motives and responses to motives that he feels are significant. Lear says little about his guilt because he cannot bring himself to face it and think about it for more than an instant at a time.

Watkins is correct, however, in saying that the Fool voices the truth which drives Lear to madness. But he does not go on to show just how and why this truth drives the king mad.

The device of the Fool, incidentally, shows the progress of Shakespeare's dramatic art; with Richard,
the painful thought had to be put into the mouth of someone like Aumerle or had to be expressed by Richard himself in soliloquy. With the Fool, Shakespeare can meet the dramatic requirement of an interlocutor and at the same time show how a person of Lear's makeup sometimes merely ignores the voice of his good sense. It is true, however, that in using devices like the Fool, Shakespeare is increasing his demand on the imagination of his audience, and whether the consequent loss of communication is worth the increase in psychological accuracy is a matter for debate.

From the point where Lear first fears madness until he and the Fool are alone on the heath, the Fool's needling makes no impression on Lear, except once; and this one impression is in the characteristic pattern of Richard's behavior:

Fool: ... But for all this thou shalt have as many dolours for thy daughters as thou canst tell in a year.
Lear: O! how this mother swells up toward my heart; Hysterica passio! down, thou climbing sorrow; thy element's below. (II,iv,54-58)

D. Nichol Smith gives a note on "hysterica passio" which is pertinent to the behavior of both Richard and Lear:

Mother and Hysterica passio were the popular medical names for the complaint now known as hysteria. The use of these terms was probably suggested by a passage in Harsnett's Declaration of Popish Impostures, 1603, to which Shakespeare is otherwise indebted in the play.
Lear's anguish of heart makes him ascribe to himself the complaint which, according to Harsnett, 'riseth of a winde in the bottome of the belly, and proceeding with a great swelling, causeth a very painful collicke in the stomach and an extraordinary giddiness in the head' (quoted by Bishop Percy). Hence Lear's words 'climbing sorrow' and "swells up towards my heart.'17

That Lear's *hysterica passio* is in the pattern of Richard's behavior when faced with an extremely uncomfortable situation may be observed by recalling the scene in which Richard, faced with refranchising Bolingbroke, has the same "swelling" in the region of the heart, as well as a "giddiness in the head"; apparently a like attack of *hysterica passio*:

```
O God, O God! ...
O that I were as great
As is my grief, or lesser than my name! ...
Swell'st thou, proud heart? I'll give thee scope to beat ...
```

(III, iii, 133-40)

Watkins, the only critic who has remarked on similarities between Richard and Lear, notices a likeness between the two at this point, but reads the parallel as a "greatness of spirit."18 It seems doubtful that an attack of hysteria over being forced to face an uncomfortable truth should be called "greatness of spirit." But it does seem likely that Shakespeare is portraying the same complaint in both instances. Richard's "swelling" occurs

---

17 *King Lear*, pp. 155-56.

during a genuinely hysterical speech, and Lear actually names his disorder as hysteria. This would mean, of course, that Shakespeare was familiar with the "great swelling" and "painful collicke" which accompany hysteria long before Harsnett's *Popish Impostures* appeared, although the terms mother and hysterica passio are not used in *Richard II*. From other references to hysterica passio cited by Kenneth Muir, it may safely be assumed that the symptoms of the complaint were widely known in Shakespeare's time.

In the first scene on the heath (III, ii) Lear's injustice to Cordelia is beginning to obsess him more continually. The tradition of Lear scholarship coming down from H. H. Hudson holds that Lear in these lines is learning sympathy for all humanity; but as J. S. H. Bransom recognizes, Lear's obsession with "close pent-up guilt's" is more immediate and personal than a sudden concern for the problems of all suffering humanity, though this concern is no doubt present. The chief anxiety is over a guilt of his own, which he can neither face nor forget, as Richard can neither face nor forget Bolingbroke. On the heath Lear says,

> ... Tremble, thou wretch,
> That hast within thee undivulged crimes,

---

19*King Lear*, p. 85.

20*The Tragedy of King Lear*, pp. 95–96.
Unwhipp'd of Justice; hide thee, thou bloody hand,
Thou perjured, and thou simular man of virtue
That art incestuous; caitiff, to pieces shake,
That under covert and convenient seeming
Has practis'ld on man's life; close pent-up guilts,
Rive your concealing continents, and cry
These dreadful summoners grace. (III,ii,51-59)

It is evident that Lear is recognizing here the inescapable
consequences of "close pent-up guilt"; and he is guilty of
a crime against Cordelia and acknowledges that he is
guilty whenever he can bring himself to face it. The
next line of his speech emphasizes that he is concerned
with a guilt of his own, though he can still, like Richard,
escape into self-pity:

I am a man
More sinn'd against than sinning. (59-60)

But this is almost as far as he can keep up his Richard-
like evasion of the truth and still remain in control of
his thoughts. Richard's lack of candor never lets him
admit that he has sinned at all, unless someone else pins
him down to it; he always manages to evade. Candid Lear
can now no longer escape into any kind of controlled
self-pity; the more violent escape of insanity is the
only alternative to facing his relentless guilt, and it
is significant that Edgar, who symbolizes Lear's insanity,
mimics a person with an insane guilt-and-persecution
complex, for it is guilt which drives Lear to forsake
reality, and it is the persecution of his daughters
which he allows to fill and to dominate his consciousness
while he is insane.

In the second scene on the heath (III, iv) Lear wavers between an almost insane self-pity and the humility of admitting his own shortcomings, a humility which he had almost attained in the speech just quoted from the first heath scene. In III, iv he says,

... Filial ingratitude!
Is it not as if this mouth should tear this hand
For lifting food to 't? But I will punish home:
No, I will weep no more. In such a night
To shut me out? Pour on, I will endure.
In such a night as this? O Regan, Goneril!
Your kind old father, whose frank heart gave all --.

(14-20)

Here his self-pity stops for a moment. His candor is too great, much greater than Richard's. Lear knows that he did not give all, and he resolves to try to face things instead of indulging in more self-pity, which he realizes is already verging on insanity:

O! that way madness lies; let me shun that;
No more of that.

(21-22)

By way of momentary recapitulation, it has been shown that before the scenes on the heath Lear repeatedly, when faced either with the thought of his wrong to Cordelia or of his own responsibility for the situation he is in, turns away from the thought, and that his usual response is to take refuge in self-pity and dwell on his own kindness and the unkindness of Goneril and Regan. On the heath he is obsessed with some "close pent-up guilt," of which there is only one that he can be personally
concerned with, namely his wrong to Cordelia, the one which has been on his mind ever since the first scene; and his escape from this guilt is found in raging against the cruelty of Regan and Goneril and in lamenting over his own wretched position. Finally, in the passage just quoted (III, iv, 21-22) he recognizes as he has done before that this self-pity is bordering on madness; and he resolves for the moment to try to face things. And face things he does, for a moment:

... I'll pray, and then I'll sleep.
... Take physic, pomp!
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel
That thou mayst shake the superflux to them
And show the Heavens more just. (III, iv, 27-36)

But still he is too proud to go ahead and plainly admit his injustice to the wretch, Cordelia, of the first scene; instead he returns as he has repeatedly done before to the Richard-like persecution complex where he is himself the wretch. But whereas Richard's evasions of truth only made him uncomfortable, Lear's defense against his guilt at this point passes into insanity — as symbolized by the ravings of Edgar, who now puts in his appearance as Mad Tom, to personify Lear's mad vision of himself under the unwarranted injustice of "pelican daughters":

Didst thou give all to thy two daughters
And art thou come to this? (48-49)
From here on, Lear raves about Regan's and Goneril's injustice, but he has no more to say about "taking physic, Pomp," or of his own unkindness and injustice. The Fool's attitude falls in with this fact: after Edgar's appearance, the Fool no longer persecutes Lear as he had done continually up to this point; instead, he helps arraign Goneril and Regan. In madness Lear has totally suppressed the discomforting voice of his better judgment. On the other hand, Edgar continually raves about guilt; and at this point must be considered another problem which has been neglected in Lear scholarship and criticism, namely, the significance of the intense guilt complex assigned to Edgar in the mad scenes. Is it merely coincidence that of all types of insanity he might pick, he happens to mimic a person with an insane guilt-and-persecution complex? Or is it a part of Shakespeare's design that just as Lear completely ceases all conscious recognition of his guilt, Edgar the pseudo-paranoid should appear? The fact that Lear's responses to Edgar's guilty babbling are merely an exaggeration of his previous responses to the Fool's needling, except that the step in which he consciously recognizes his guilt is eliminated, should provide some answer to these questions. There is no purpose here of providing a pseudo-Freudian analysis of Lear's insanity into various "levels of consciousness," etc., as one might be tempted to do; it is enough to point out that the Fool, who has personified the voice
of Lear's good sense, no longer persecutes the king, and that Edgar, who personifies Lear's idea of himself under Goneril and Regan's persecution, constantly harps on guilt, and continually elicits from Lear sympathy for his plight and rage against his persecutors. This pity and rage are what Lear has expressed all along concerning his own guilt and persecution, except that now he makes no acknowledgment of any "close pent-up guilt"; in fact he never acknowledges any of Edgar's guilty remarks. Shakespeare has thus contrived to show that somewhere in Lear's mind there is a constant preoccupation with the guilt which drove him mad in the first place, a guilt which he has gone mad in order to keep from acknowledging.

Robert Heilman, though he does not associate Edgar's guiltiness with the guilt obsession which has been preying on Lear's mind, has well observed that Edgar confesses six of the Seven Deadly sins:

In one of his mad speeches Edgar describes himself as "hog in sloth, fox in stealth, wolf in greediness, dog in madness, lion in prey" (III,i,95-96). If we can read madness as wrath and prey as covetousness and consider that he mentions pride and lust literally (87, 88,92), Edgar has six of the Seven Deadly Sins, not to mention other vices on the side. Not only is such a catalogue a useful auxiliary way of stressing the sense of evil that permeates the play, but it also — even in Edgar's incoherent speech — ties in with and supports the animal imagery of the rest of the play: man in his sins is animal-like.21

21This Great Stage, p. 99.
The key ideas here, for the present interpretation, are the association of Edgar's guilt with natural, but inhuman, animal behavior, and a corresponding association of his guilt-complex with a general concern over violations of the obligations of the traditional Christian "natural law." As John F. Danby has observed in another connection, the orderly, benignant "nature" to which Lear and the other protagonists appeal throughout the play seems to be closely allied with Christian "natural law" and its obligations, as opposed to the Hobbesian, law-of-the-jungle "nature" appealed to by Edmund. Edgar, while he is with Lear in the mad scenes, babbles about violations of "nature," and warns his listeners not to violate nature and natural law:

[quote]
... obey thy parents; keep thy word's justice; swear not; commit not with man's sworn spouse; set not thy sweet heart on proud array.
(III,iv,80-83)
[/quote]

Now Lear's own crime, the one which has tormented him throughout the play, is a crime against the "nature" he believes in: the crime of un-naturally, in the sense of the Christian natural law, rejecting Cordelia; and his refuge from this crime all the time he was sane, and in making the last great step into insanity, has been self-pity over being un-naturally treated by Regan and Goneril. And now in madness, when Edgar harps on

---

violations of natural law, Lear responds by vituperating the un-natural treatment which Edgar, "unaccommodated man," (III,iv,109) has received.

Danby's comments on "nature" are again of value respecting "unaccommodated man"; as he shows, it was conceived as part of man's status in God's nature that he be better accommodated than the animals, an accommodation which Goneril and Regan have refused Lear by not allowing him his accustomed comforts as symbolized by his train. It may pertinently be added to Danby's remarks that Lear conversely has denied accommodation to Cordelia, and is in this way, too, guilty of the same things as Goneril and Regan.

When Edgar voices the amazing confession of unnatural guilt, a confession which follows immediately upon his recitations of the injunctions of natural law, Lear responds with a lament over the terrible state of "unaccommodated man," i.e. himself, under the persecution of his daughters, which is what Edgar represents to Lear:

Thou wert better in a grave than to answer with thy uncover'd body this extremity of the skies. Is man no more than this? Consider him well ... unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art. \(^{23}\) (103-111)

And, emphasizing dramatically that it is himself whom he views as "unaccommodated man," Lear concludes this speech

---

by tearing off his own clothes.

Thus while insane Lear is still responding to the thought of guilt just as he had done when sane, except that everything is now exaggerated, and that there is now no conscious recognition of guilt on his part. At first Lear's error and guilt were voiced by the Fool or, briefly, by his own conscious remark: "I did her wrong"; and at first his response was to dwell on wrongs done to "so kind a father." Now the guilt is voiced continually in the ravings of Edgar, and Lear is overwhelmed with pity for himself and Edgar. Lear asserts his insane self-pity to the full by conducting a trial to condemn Goneril and Regan. This trial occupies the second mad scene (III,vi).

This interpretation of Lear's and Edgar's behavior in the first two mad scenes has the advantage that it provides a hitherto non-existent explanation for Edgar's intense preoccupation with guilt, in terms of Lear's behavior throughout the previous scenes of the play (though with characteristic Shakespearean irony the guilt is assumed merely by chance, so far as Edgar is concerned). This interpretation also provides a connection between Lear's madness and his original tragic error of injustice, in terms of the king's tragic flaw of evasive blindness to uncomfortable truth.
The next significant incident in the career of the king's madness falls into this same pattern of behavior. In one of his clearer moments he is brought to the opportunity of seeing Cordelia herself (IV,iii). To go by the pattern already established, Lear might be expected (1) to avoid the sight and thought of her, and (2) to retreat as before into an outraged and revengeful self-pity which blames everything on Goneril and Regan. This is exactly what happens. As Kent says,

Well, sir, the poor distressed Lear's i'th'town; Who sometimes, in his better tune, remembers What we are come about, and by no means Will yield to see his daughter. (IV,iii,39-42)

When asked why, Kent explicitly points out the things which, as has been seen in this analysis, have prevented Lear from facing the thought of Cordelia all through the play:

A sovereign shame so elbows him: his own unkindness, That stripp'd her from his benediction, turn'd her To foreign casualties, gave her dear rights To his dog-hearted daughters, these things sting His mind so venomously that burning shame Detains him from Cordelia. (IV,iii,43-47)

There is no reason to believe that Lear himself would explicitly avow the unkindness Kent speaks of, since nowhere in the play up to this point does he for more than an instant admit his own guilt; and in the mad scenes he does not even touch on his guilt, much less
admit it, except in the sense that Edgar's babbling represents the continual presence of suppressed guilt somewhere in Lear's deranged mind. Kent, who from the first scene has displayed insight into the motives of the other characters, has sized up Lear's mental condition as Bolingbroke does Richard's:

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

(IV, i, 292-93)

Bolingbroke sees what Richard himself is unconscious of in his own behavior, and Richard shies away from admitting to himself the truth of Bolingbroke's assertion, though he is so crushed by it that he cannot continue his attempt to dominate the abdication scene. And it would be inconsistent with all the rest of Lear's behavior for him to admit to Kent at length that he has been so unkind to Cordelia that he is ashamed to face her. Just as an extreme un-self-consciousness, so far as his own motives are concerned, characterizes Richard, so does it characterize Lear: "He hath ever but slenderly known himself."

But if a conscious admission of his motive for refusing to see Cordelia is inconsistent with his other behavior, Lear displays an extremely typical response in his next appearance on the stage; in this scene (IV, vi), he is even more violently revengeful and self-pitying than ever:
Ha! Goneril with a white beard! They
flattered me like a dog. (97-98)

Let copulation thrive; for Gloucester's
bastard son
Was kinder to his father than my daughters
Got 'tween thelawful sheets. (117-19)

And when I have stol'n upon these son-in-laws,
Then kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill! (188-89)

In this scene, responding to the most violent stress so
far applied to his determination to evade his guilt,
Lear passes on from a particular condemnation of Goneril
and Regan to a general condemnation of mortality's
baseness and of all institutionalized justice, just as
Richard, faced with his guilt in the form of Northum­
berland's explicit written statement of crimes to be
read to Parliament, responds by accusing everyone in
sight:

Nay, all of you that stand and look upon
Whilst that my wretchedness doth bait myself,
Though some of you with Pilate wash your hands,
Showing an outward pity, yet you Pilates
Have here deliver'd me to my sour cross
And water cannot wash away your sin. (IV,1,237-42)

This parallel between Richard's and Lear's behavior
when thus at last brought face to face with their guilt,
together with another important parallel which will be
introduced below, helps clear up the meaning of the final
mad scene, which has either met with silence from critics
or has been viewed, as in the Hudson tradition reviewed
in Chapter One, as the final step in a moral reawakening
of the king through a rekindling of his imagination.

Granville-Barker, Heilman, and Lothian, working in the Hudson tradition, take Lear's raving condemnation of all institutionalized justice as the culmination of this moral reawakening, and applaud as a final attainment of serenity the king's momentarily stoical attitude, expressed in these lines spoken to the weeping Gloucester:

Thou must be patient; we came crying hither:
Thou know'et the first time that we smell the air
We wawl and cry. I will preach to thee: mark. ...
When we are born, we cry that we are come
To this great stage of fools.

(IV,vi,180-85)

Even J. S. H. Bransom, who briefly notices the element of guilt in Lear's retreat from reality, succumbs to the influence of this same tradition:

He realizes that Gloster, like himself, is suffering. That is the point; and he goes on to persuade him to what his own bitter experience had taught him was the true need:

Thou must be patient; we came crying hither.

He then starts to preach to him a little sermon, which he never finishes, on infant weeping:

When we are born, we cry, that we are come
To this great stage of fools.

It is a remarkable sermon and ... remarkably characteristic of Lear's intellect. ... His intellect was very like Shakespeare's own. It penetrated to the heart of things as few intellects have done .... the world is a stage, a place to play in, and the children, poor little fools, are crying because they

24See Chapter One, pages 48-55.
would rather not be there. The sermon, in all probability, would have gone on to introduce the need of patience, man's truest need on this stage of life.\footnote{The Tragedy of King Lear, pp. 126-27.}

All these critics are forced to ignore the fact that this "stoical" speech is concluded by the most insanely revengeful lines in the whole play. The king's "stoicism" comes as only one of a long series of shifting moods and occurs in the middle of a speech which itself begins with self-pity: "If thou wilt weep my fortunes, take my eyes" (178), and which ends with a resumption of his determination to revenge the wrongs done him. The king, here as elsewhere in his madness, is evading his own guilt. It is he, not the general human injustice that he has been berating all through the scene, that is the cause of the miseries he endures, though Lear makes not the slightest hint of self-accusation; and moreover, just before this last burst of madness he has refused shamefacedly to see the Cordelia who embodies his own injustice. It is hardly fair, considering all these things, to say that Lear has now achieved calmness and penetration; he is still hiding from himself as he has done all along.

Lear's recommendation of stoicism when he sees Gloucester weeping for him is extremely reminiscent of Richard's recommendation and avowal of a stoical attitude.
when, at a similar point in the play, the Queen laments over his downfall:

Join not with grief, fair woman, do not so,
To make my end too sudden: learn, good soul,
To think our former state a happy dream;
From which awaked, the truth of what we are
Shows us but this: I am sworn brother, sweet,
To grim Necessity, and he and I
Will keep a league till death.  

(V, 1, 16-22)

Richard here is responding as he always does to tears: he is carried away by momentary compassion, but it is his own downfall, "my end," that he is principally concerned with, just as with Lear the main concern is himself: "If you will weep my fortunes, take my eyes"; and Richard, like Lear, is soon lamenting his troubles once more and not really stoical at all. Richard-like, Lear responds with momentary compassion to Gloucester's tears, but he is not long concerned with Gloucester, and not stoical. This is not to say that Lear has no compassion in his makeup; but in his madness he gives full rein to the Richard-like side of himself, which is completely self-centered.

Lear's moral blindness, unlike Richard's, is finally ended, and in a manner befitting Lear's much greater candor; but the manner of his cure is also very reminiscent of Richard's ultimate failure to face the truth. When, at last, Lear has thoroughly exhausted himself, and has slept, he finally brings himself to face his guilt, which a second time is presented to him in the living
form of his wronged daughter. He makes one final, half-hearted attempt to retreat into self-pity:

I am mightily abus'd. I should e'en die with pity
To see another thus. I know not what to say.

(IV, vii, 53-54)

Then he gives way to the humility which he has abandoned throughout his madness, firmly appreciates his own guilt instead of putting it off on others, and is cured:

Pray, do not mock me:
I am a very foolish fond old man ...
And, to deal plainly,
I fear I am not in my perfect mind. ...
Pray, now, forget and forgive: I am old and foolish.

(60-84)

Here his superiority to Richard becomes manifest. He becomes humble, as Richard could never have done. And, significantly, the music played as Lear is cured symbolizes his new-found mental concord; whereas Richard, always unable to face the truth of his own guilt, says of the discordant music outside his cell,

This music made me; let it sound no more.

(V, v, 61)

Richard's discordant music symbolizes the fundamental discord of a mind which can never bring itself to face the truth.

Yet Lear's mental behavior, in childishly asserting his love of pomp; his cruelty and violence in punishing those close to him who persist in telling him truths he does not want to hear; and his adoption of a persecution complex to avoid facing truth when it pursues him: all
these are so much like Richard's behavior, and are portrayed in such similar fashion, that they can hardly be accidents. Richard is, in a very grand way, a schoolboy exercise of the poet's literary nonage; he is a stepping-stone to Lear, and a key to those parts of Lear's personality which are exhibited when he is indulging his appetites and when he is fleeing from truth. Other hints of Lear -- the kindness which Richard shows his groom, the charm he exerts on his wife and followers, these further mark Richard as an anticipation of the great tragic king; but there is nothing in Richard of that "authority" which Kent pays tribute to, or of the genuine concern for others' feelings that Lear shows to the Fool on the heath before he goes mad. Lear, again, betrays only incipiently the complete lack of consistent thinking which is exhibited in Richard's behavior throughout, and exposed at length in the prison soliloquy. For though given to rashness, Lear also embodies authority, and his personality is in the last analysis an integrated one. It is integrated around his fundamental honesty of mind, and his love for his subjects and his family, whereas Richard displays the complete lack of integrity of a personality completely given over to self-love and self-indulgence. This is, perhaps, the fundamental difference between the two personalities, which though so much alike in the details
of their portrayal are so unlike in the total impression
they make on the audience.

Richard II is not only an exercise in the sort of
character portrayal employed in King Lear, but also in
the techniques of dramatic imagery used in the later play.
Previous critical studies have not recognized that the
imagery of either play is integrated around the tragic
mistake of injustice. Now that the close parallels in
the tragic flaws and the resulting tragic mistakes of the
two kings have been shown, this study may move on to ex­
amine the image techniques of Richard II and to show how
extensively these techniques anticipate those in King
Lear.
CHAPTER III

IMAGERY AND KING RICHARD'S JUSTICE

Richard D. Altick has demonstrated how pervasively Shakespeare uses iterative words and images in Richard II.¹ Altick sees this word-usage as a sort of extension of Shakespeare's earlier punning word-play, in the direction of the image technique of the great tragedies. He singles out a number of word-themes which are reiterated in various combinations throughout the play; and he remarks that through these themes the poet has achieved a unity of tone which few of the plays attain. The conclusion of Altick's article reads, in part, as follows:

... from beginning to end Richard II is, in a double sense of which Shakespeare would have approved, a play on words. As countless writers have affirmed, it is entirely fitting that this should be so. King Richard, a poet manqué, loved words more dearly than he did his kingdom, and his tragedy is made the more moving by the style, half rhetorical, half lyrical, in which it is told. Splendid words, colorful metaphors, pregnant poetic symbols in this drama possess their own peculiar irony.

But the language of Richard II, regarded from the viewpoint I have adopted in this paper, has another significance, entirely apart from its


137
appropriateness to theme. It suggests a vital relationship between two leading characteristics of Shakespeare's poetic style: the uncontrolled indulgence of verbal wit in the earlier plays and the use of great image themes in the plays of his maturity. As I suggested in the beginning, word-play and iterative imagery are but two different manifestations of a single faculty in the creative imagination -- an exceedingly well-developed sense of association. In Richard II we see the crucial intermediate stage in the development, or perhaps the utilization, of Shakespeare's peculiar associative gift. ... When we stand back and view the play as a whole, its separate movements bound so closely together by image themes, we are enabled to anticipate the future development of Shakespeare's art. The technique that is emerging in Richard II is the technique that eventually will have its part in producing the poetry of Lear and Macbeth and Othello. Here we have the method: the tricks of repetition, of cumulative emotional effect, of interweaving and reciprocal coloration. What is yet to come is the full mastery of the artistic possibilities of such a technique. True, thanks to its tightly interwoven imagery Richard II has a poetic unity that is unsurpassed in any of the great tragedies; so far as structure is concerned, Shakespeare has levied from iterative language about all the aid that it will give. The great improvement will come in another region. Taken individually, in Richard II Shakespeare's images lack the qualities which they will possess in the later plays. They are, many of them, too conventional for our tastes; they bear too many lingering traces of Shakespeare's affection for words for words' sake. The ultimate condensation, the compression of a universe of meaning into a single bold metaphor, remains to be achieved. 2

2Ibid., pp. 364-65.
A careful consideration of Altick's approach will reveal that while he has made an important contribution to the understanding of Shakespeare's image techniques and of Richard II itself, he still has not taken the final and perhaps the most important steps in laying bare the poet's techniques in this play. Altick has not shown why the mere repetition, association, and interweaving of theme ideas should give the play poetic unity. Drama is not music, and only a very mechanical sort of unity is to be achieved by merely repeating and associating theme ideas unless those theme ideas have some fundamental unity which is entirely independent of the interweaving process. Altick points out no such fundamental unity, and it seems unlikely that he ever would be able to do so until he had abandoned the concept of Richard as a "poet manqué." To view Richard as a poet, and his profuse imagery as a poet's ironical comments on his own downfall, is to misunderstand not only Richard but the dramatic imagery as well, for the genuine unity of tone lies in the fact that all the dramatically significant image themes are, in one way or another, based in the tragic flaw of the main character; and the tragic flaw is considerably obscured, if not totally concealed, if Richard is viewed as a "poet manqué."

This is one reason why Altick has not given Shakespeare nearly enough credit for having already worked
out the principal techniques of the great tragedies. The basic techniques were not merely "emerging" in Richard II; they had emerged. Another reason why Altick does not recognize this, besides the premise of accepting Richard as a poet, is that he relies so heavily on the mere fact of repetition that he overlooks many important functions of the images in this play. It is true that he hints at the importance of imagery as a foreboding device, and makes some illuminating remarks about the dramatic effectiveness of Shakespeare's associative gift.

But his chief tool is the theory that repetition of words and images at strategic points ties the play together like a symphony. This is an excellent tool, but it is a limited one, not only because it fails to reach the heart of the play's dramatic unity, but also because it makes Altick overlook many of the extremely varied uses to which images are put in the play.

It will be very helpful, however, to make a brief summary of Altick's findings. He points out a series of words which occur frequently in the play: (1) earth and associated terms like land and ground, all of them closely associated with the garden imagery of III, iv; (2) blood; (3) pallor; (4) sun; (5) tears; (6) tongue; (7) infection; (8) blot; (9) sourness and sweetness;

---

3Ibid., pp. 361, 339-40, 364.
(10) **generation; (11) jewels and crowns.** He then remarks that these images seem to occur most frequently at emotional climaxes of the play, e.g., John of Gaunt's deathbed speech (II,1), Richard's return from Ireland (III,11), and the scene at Flint Castle (III,iii). Finally he notes that speeches carrying a large number of images have been prepared for by an introduction, at earlier points in the play, of the various themes employed in the image-packed speeches.

These findings are only preliminaries to an explanation of the dramatic functions and significations of the image themes, and such an explanation Altick never makes, except to remark that the imagery of blood

... does underscore the basic idea of the play, that violation of the laws of blood descent leads but to the spilling of precious English blood. That is the meaning of the word as it pulses from beginning to end, marking the emotional rhythm of the play.7

This perhaps is not the basic idea of the play, nor the meaning of the word **blood;** but it should be conceded that here, at any rate, Altick goes beyond the mere facts of repetition and association.

---

5 Ibid., pp. 359-61.
6 Ibid., pp. 361-64.
7 Ibid., p. 346.
The next step in the present study is an examination of the image themes mentioned by Altick, and other themes not mentioned by him, to see how they serve, in various ways, to further the poet's dramatic purposes. Whereas mere repetitive occurrence appears to have some importance, of much more significance are such aspects as were considered in dealing with the tears and music images in the previous chapter. Such questions as the following are pertinent: what are the metaphorical implications of the image, and how do they bear on the dramatic issues of the play? What is the idea symbolically tied in with a particular repetitive image, and how is that idea related to the particular situation in which the image occurs? Does the image help portray the mind of the person who speaks it, and if so, how? Is the theme idea of the image somehow based in the main tragic issue of the play? The answers to such questions reveal that some of the themes mentioned by Altick have much more dramatic significance than others; furthermore, the significant dramatic image themes are related to one another in a more organically unified way than Altick suspected. In brief, Shakespeare was much closer to his mature image techniques in writing Richard II than either Altick or Clemen\(^8\) will allow. These two critics are correct in saying that the

\(^8\)The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery, pp. 53-62.
play shows more of a tendency to revel in words and images for their own sake than such plays as Macbeth and Lear. But the most significant development in Shakespeare's image technique between Richard II and Lear, probably, is merely the more expert placing and emphasis used in the second play. At any rate, images are used in as many ways, and often as subtly, in Richard II as they are in King Lear.

While it would not be correct to say that Shakespeare makes any final, didactic statements on kingship in Richard II, anyone who reads or sees the play will agree that the playwright seems obsessed with the ethical problems of kingship. The chief dramatic issue, in fact, is Richard's tragic miscarriage of justice and its disastrous, far-reaching consequences both on the king himself and on the country as a whole. Even the new actions at the end of the play, namely Bolingbroke's kingship and the rebellions he faces, which seem partly irrelevant to the career of the main figure, are direct results of Richard's tragic mistake of injustice, and thus are directly related to the central dramatic idea. This dramatic idea of injustice also unifies the significant image themes of the play.

It will be remembered that the key passage for the tears imagery is given in a short scene, II.11, where
neither Richard nor Bolingbroke appears. There are other such chorus scenes, among them III, iv.

This scene is associated with the tears theme, for the Queen weeps throughout, as she had done in II, ii; and the scene closes on the subject of the Queen's tears. But the scene is more important as the key to the earth-garden imagery of the play. The gardeners' conversation, which is overheard by the Queen, begins,

Serv.: Why should we in the compass of a pale
Keep law and form and due proportion,
Showing, as in a model, our firm estate,
When our sea-walled garden, the whole land,
Is full of weeds, her fairest flowers choked up,
Her fruit-trees all unpruned, her hedges ruin'd,
Her knots disorder'd and her wholesome herbs
Swarming with caterpillars?
Gardener: Hold thy peace: He that hath suffer'd this disorder'd spring
Hath now himself met with the fall of leaf:
The weeds which his broad-spreading leaves did
shelter,
That seem'd in eating him to hold him up,
Are pluck'd up root and all by Bolingbroke,
I mean the Earl of Wiltshire, Bushy, Green.
(III, iv, 47-53)

This so clearly symbolizes Richard's and England's ruin at the hands of the flatterers whom Richard has unjustly indulged, that Caroline Spurgeon calls it heavy-handed, an appellation which is probably justified. Richard Altick points out, however, that the various references throughout the play to weeds, caterpillars, withered trees, and earth are clearly linked, by association, to

---

9Shakespeare's Imagery, p. 222.
this idea of England's earth as an unkempt garden; and the final logical step would be to say that these references to ill-kept gardens, as well as the pervasive idea of royalty falling to earth, were intended by the poet to be associated with the gardener's symbolic picture of Richard as a withered and tottering tree whose strength and health have been sapped by parasites. It is significant, for instance, that Bolingbroke calls Bushy and Bagot "the caterpillars of the commonwealth" (II,iii,166).

But if Bolingbroke to some extent characterizes Bushy and Bagot when he calls them caterpillars, the earth-garden theme for the most part has an exclusively symbolic function; that is, it does not play nearly the part in characterization that the tears-imagery does. As used by the gardeners, the earth-garden figure unifies two parallel symbols: the blighted or parasite-infected garden, and the impressive object tottering or crashing to the earth. The idea of England as a garden has been introduced early in the play in the famous deathbed speech of John of Gaunt:

This other Eden, demi-paradise

and the idea of the flatterers as garden-parasites is introduced in the same act by Bolingbroke:

The caterpillars of the commonwealth
Which I have sworn to weed and pluck away.

(II,iii,166-67)
The idea of falling royalty is introduced in the ominous scene II,iv:

Ah, Richard, ...
I see thy glory like a shooting star
Fall to the base earth from the firmament.

(18-20)

Though this is not a garden image, the idea of an impressive object falling to earth has clear associations with the tottering tree of the garden image.

Yet while the various images associated with the garden theme are introduced early in the play and are echoed often enough to keep the idea of Richard's collapse in the atmosphere, the theme does not have the same extensive functions outside its own chorus scene that the tears image and several other images have. And since many of the garden references given by Altick seem to fit better into the bloodshed theme discussed below (e.g., III,ii,42-44; III,iii,95-100; IV,1,136-38; V,vi,45-46), it seems unnecessary and undesirable to pursue the earth-garden theme further. References to the idea of royalty falling to earth have been catalogued by Paul Jorgensen in his "Vertical Patterns in Richard II"; sample passages are III,ii,145; III,ii,153; III,iii,178; IV,1,164; IV,1,181.10 Jorgensen accepts the popular theory of Bolingbroke and Richard as Machiavel and actor-enigma, respectively, and suffers from his lack of a

---

10Shakespeare Association Bulletin, XXIII (1948), 119-34.
cogent view of Richard's personality; but the paper is a useful supplement to what Altick has done.

iii

The basic ideas which the playwright associates with the tears imagery and the earth-garden imagery are set forth in chorus scenes. How effective such scenes are in a fast-moving drama is a point for debate; it will be found that Shakespeare partially abandoned the idea in King Lear. Other image themes in Richard II, which are no less dramatic in function than the tears imagery, have no chorus scenes devoted to a definition of their meaning. Some of these images must be examined before other chorus scenes are taken up.

These themes fall in with a fundamental pattern already established -- the overall pattern of injustice. The tears image has been seen to symbolize Richard's tragic flaw itself, his evasive refusal to see or to face anything uncomfortable. In this tragic flaw is based the tragic mistake of injustice. The earth-garden imagery symbolizes an effect stemming from the tragic flaw, for it is Richard's unjust abandonment of fact in favor of his appetite for mental comfort which causes him to permit the "caterpillars of the commonwealth" to destroy the garden of England. Thus these images have a dramatic unity much more organic than could be accomplished by merely tying themes together at crucial points.
These images are tied directly to the central dramatic idea of the play, which is the fundamental injustice of a self-indulgent mind which will sacrifice both subjects and kingdom to avoid discomfort.

The image themes now to be considered are the sun, royal-balm, and Christ themes. They too symbolize, in various ways, Richard's tragic miscarriage of justice and its disastrous consequences to himself and his nation. But the same images have, like the tears image, other functions besides thematic symbolism; and the chief of these other uses is the revelation of Richard's slipshod and evasive mental processes.

The image of the sun as a symbol for kingship pervades the play. It is introduced in the ominous chorus scene II,iv: "Thy sun sets weeping in the lowly west" (21), where its associations with the decline of the sorrowful king are too clear to need explication. Richard uses the image himself two scenes later when Aumerle reminds him that his preparations for dealing with Bolingbroke are not so vigorous as they could be:

Samuel Kliger points out most of these images in his paper "The Sun-Imagery in Richard II," Studies in Philology, XLV (1948), 196-202. He associates the sun images with certain heat-and-cold images in the play and says that the theme "contributes to the tragic form by arousing ... pity and terror" (p. 197). He sees light as symbolizing kingship, and darkness, banishment. He makes no connection between the imagery and any centrally important dramatic idea, however, and he does not analyze the images individually for their poetical implications.
Discomfortable cousin! Know'st thou not
That when the searching eye of heaven is hid,
Behind the globe, that lights the lower world,
Then thieves and robbers range abroad unseen
In murders and in outrage, boldly here;
But when from under this terrestrial ball
He fires the proud tops of the eastern pines
And darts his light through every guilty hole,
Then murders, treasons and detested sins,
The cloak of night being pluck'd from off their
backs,
Stand bare and naked, trembling at themselves?
So when this thief, this traitor, Bolingbroke,
Who all this while hath revel'd in the night
Whilst we were wandering with the antipodes,
Shall see us rising in our throne, the east,
His treasons will sit blushing in his face,
Not able to endure the light of day,
But self-affrighted tremble at his sin.

(III,11,36-53)

The beauty of this image should not obscure the fact that
something is not quite right here. Anyone who has read
or seen what has gone before in the play might be expected
to take issue with Richard's concept here of his position
in the cosmological struggle of good and evil. He makes
himself the good whose very presence confounds evil as
the sun confounds darkness: a very clear and definite
avowal of divine right, with all the implications of
unswerving justice which a divine steward might be ex-
pected to show. The difference between this concept of
himself and the way he has actually administered justice
in England shows this image for what it really is: a
typically self-delusive fancy by which he preserves his
pleasant opinion of himself and blinds himself to uncom-
fortable truth. But the image is too elaborate, and its
echoes in the rest of the play too numerous, for the critic
to think that Shakespeare meant it merely as another instance of self-delusion. It means a great deal more, as the first of a series of sun-images relating to the king's obligation to his subjects.

Richard has made himself out to be the fiery sun who will frighten Bolingbroke into submission; but when he is at the other end of his wild vacillation between overconfidence and despair he momentarily brushes upon a much more just concept of himself, without pursuing its implications:

Discharge my followers: let them hence away
From Richard's right to Bolingbroke's fair day.
(III,ii,217-18)

Significantly, Bolingbroke uses the sun image himself when he first sees Richard on the battlements of Flint Castle:

See, see, King Richard doth himself appear
As doth the blushing discontented sun
From out the fiery portal of the east,
When he perceives the envious clouds are bent
To dim his glory and to stain the track
Of his bright passage to the occident.
(III,iii,62-67)

As usual, Bolingbroke's elaborate image is more accurate than the long sun image spoken by Richard. For the nobles have no intention of tolerating any longer the kind of glory -- i.e., absolute and callous tyranny -- which Richard sees as his right. This introduces the notion, already implicit in Richard's ironically warped sun image quoted above, that the king to preserve his position as God's representative in the cosmological order is expected
to act accordingly -- a sort of ethical noblesse oblige, to which Richard is totally blind, as he is to so many things which are uncomfortable to him.

This image does not imply that Bolingbroke intends to depose Richard; the foregoing lines (35-61) outline a reasonable set of terms and carefully deny any intent to "wash the balm off an anointed king." The image simply implies that Bolingbroke as a noble recognizes his right, and his power, to demand justice from the king.

Toward the end of the same scene Richard uses the sun image again, when after hysterically refusing to go through with his momentary concession of justice to Bolingbroke, he convinces himself instead that he is being deposed by criminals:

Down, down, I come; like glistening Phaethon, Wanting the manage of unruly jades.

(178-79)

Again Richard twists his view of things to suit his fancy: Phaethon was not the victim of "unruly jades" except in the sense that he wasn't the man to rule them; the jades had run all right for a competent driver, and the nobles had made no move to revolt until Richard had outrageously abused his office. But like Phaethon he does come down through his own irresponsible foolishness, and in this sense Richard has characterized his situation perfectly. Richard does have a way of unconsciously sizing himself up; but it is always unconscious.
Thus the Phaethon image falls in with the two long sun images quoted above, in implying some obligation in the king to **deserve** his position in God's order.

In the abdication scene Richard uses the image again, in the plaintive but sarcastic speech where he laments his inability to resign his divinely appointed office; and again he unconsciously and ironically limns his true position. The image, already quoted in connection with Richard's self-pity, is,

```
O that I were a mockery king of snow
Standing before the sun of Bolingbroke
To melt myself away in water-drops!
```

(IV,i,260-62)

This sarcasm is intended by Richard to emphasize the fact that an anointed king remains the rightful king regardless of his own will in the matter, or anyone else's will; but as in the Phaethon image, Richard in a way hits on the truth: he **is** a mockery king who melts himself away in tears of false sorrow; and Bolingbroke as king is a great deal closer to the sun-like ideal of justice and dignity than Richard ever is, as is shown in the long series of challenges and counter-challenges which Bolingbroke presides over at the beginning of this scene. Bolingbroke's strict justice is to be contrasted with Richard's fumbling, partial treatment of the earlier appeal between Mowbray and Bolingbroke in I,i.
The explication of the sun imagery included a reference to Richard's royal balm, the official symbol of divine approbation of a king. Richard is, of course, the anointed king, as Gaunt recognizes in I,ii, when he refers to Richard as "the deputy anointed in His sight" (line 38). The subject of royal balm forms a separate image pattern, one whose significance is out of proportion with the relatively small number of times the image occurs. Introduced in I,ii by Gaunt, the image is used by Richard as a part of his long, unjust accusation of Bolingbroke at the beginning of III,ii: "Not all the waters in the rough rude sea / Can wash the balm off an anointed king" (54-55).

At the climax of the play, Bolingbroke echoes the phrasing of Richard's balm image, and contradicts it: "Be he the fire, I'll be the yielding water; / The rage be his, whilst on the earth I rain / My waters; on the earth, and not on him" (III,iii,58-60).

The last occurrence of the image comes in the abdication scene, where Richard, as a part of his spiteful attempt to steal the show from Bolingbroke, reverses his former figure and this time tells the truth, though unconsciously, as usual:

With mine own tears I wash away my balm.  
(IV,1,207)

Throughout this scene Richard is sarcastically trying to demonstrate the impossibility of resigning a divinely
appointed office, and this mention of royal balm contains a hint of the same sarcasm; but it is the literal meaning and not the sarcasm which has poetic accuracy, for his blinding tears of false sorrow are exactly what have washed away his balm, although Richard cannot face the fact.

The royal balm theme is significant as one of a number of ways in which Shakespeare conveys the egotistical warping of Richard's mind. This further callous avowal of divine appointment and privilege on Richard's part is extended in another and still more outrageously twisted series of images and symbols which will be called the Christ theme. This theme is introduced in the same long speech in which Richard first uses the sun image and the royal balm image:

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.

(III,ii,56-62)

This is no less than an allusion to Satan's temptation of Christ, where Satan reminds Jesus that He is guarded by angels (St. Matthew 4:6). It is no less than blasphemy, considering Richard's deliberate refusal to see that justice and law prevail in his kingdom.

If this were only an accidental identification with
Christ, or if Richard were at all deserving, it might be too severe to accuse the king of blasphemy. A recent paper by I. B. Cauthen, Jr., makes a compelling argument against condemning Richard for referring to Christ and himself in the same breath. But Cauthen's paper overlooks the image just quoted, and also overlooks the complete antithesis between Richard and Christ in the other uses of the theme; and moreover the paper is based on the premise that the image themes in the play are intended largely to gain sympathy for a poet and royal martyr. Therefore it is worth while to examine the theme afresh to see whether it accords with the others as an index of Richard's injustice and egotism.

Richard uses the image again when he vituperates what he thinks is treachery on the part of his parasites:

O villains, vipers, damn'd without redemption! ... Three Judases, each one thrice worse than Judas! Would they make peace? terrible hell make war Upon their spotted souls for this offence! (III,ii,129-34)

Needless to say, Richard is something less than Christlike in this terrible condemnation of his sycophants. He touches on the theme again in his dialogue on the battlements of Flint Castle, when he implies that he is not merely "of blood and bone"; and characteristically he

---

delineates his own position while accusing others:

... show us the hand of God
That hath dismiss'd 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.

(III,iii,77-81)

And usurp, steal, and profane are exactly what Richard
does while he "gripes the sceptre," though he intends
these words for the nobles. He usurps Bolingbroke's
rights, steals Bolingbroke's property, and profanes his
own royal dignity. Witness his words as he enters Par-
liament for the abdication:

... I will remember
The favours of these men: were they not mine?
Did they not sometime cry, 'all hail' to me?
So Judas did to Christ: but he in twelve
Found truth in all but one; I, in twelve thousand,
none.
God save the king!

(IV,1,167-72)

It is hard to express the callously poor taste Richard
displays in a statement like this. It seems a little
unjust to Shakespeare to say that he would put words
like these into the mouth of a man whom he viewed as
a poet and a martyr. Richard is no royal martyr, but a
royal blasphemer who, as Shakespeare intended, fully
deserves the fate he brings on himself. Consider the
implications of Richard's speech: he may be, like
Christ, a divinely appointed king (Christ in His human
nature), but his behavior is antipodal from Christ's.
For Richard, with Judas, has sold his trust for money.
Once more in the same scene, under the pressure of Northumberland's attempt to get him to read his crimes aloud, Richard resorts to the identification of himself with Christ:

Nay, all of you that stand and look upon
Whilst that my wretchedness doth bait myself,
Though some of you with Pilate wash your hands
Showing an outward pity; yet you Pilates
Have here deliver'd me to my sour cross,
And water cannot wash away your sin.  
(237-42)

It is again characteristic that in desperation Richard should accuse everyone in sight. The discrepancy between his view of himself and the reality of the situation is here more manifest than ever: having delivered himself into this situation, and having spent the whole play washing his hands of his own guilt, he becomes his own Pilate, as well as his own Judas.

v

Three subsidiary image themes have now been considered. All three, the sun, the royal balm, and Christ, symbolize or directly relate to the position of the king in the traditional Christian hierarchy: God's steward, with his obligation to administer strict justice to his subjects. If there was any doubt before about Shakespeare's attitude toward kingship as it is seen in Richard, there should be none now: divine right of kings is by definition right, or else non-existent; and a king who callously arrogates
to himself the rights of kingship without performing
the corresponding duties is himself a usurper and fit
only to be deposed. But such a king is a tragic figure
in the sense that he not only destroys himself but lays
his subjects, innocent and guilty alike, open to the
horrors of civil war.

The tragic implications of Richard's injustice are
the burden of another image theme, the bloodshed theme,
which is numerically the most extensive of all the
significant image themes. Bartlett's concordance lists
the word "blood" as appearing thirty-eight times in
Richard II, exactly the same number of times as the all-
pervasive word "nature" occurs in Lear.\(^\text{13}\) And while
mere frequency of occurrence is no accurate guide to
the significance of an iterative image, the striking
quality of the individual bloodshed images and their
strategic location in the play lead one to suspect that
some over-riding significance is tied in with this theme.
This theme, even more than the ones already considered,
is based in and lends emphasis to Richard's tragic
mistake of injustice.

The key to the whole series of bloodshed images,
so far as they are tied in with the main tragic burden
of the play, is in the first two important occurrences

\(^{13}\)John Bartlett, A Complete Concordance of
130-31, 1067.
of the theme. The first of these two is in Bolingbroke's accusation of Mowbray as the slayer of Gloucester:

... he did plot the Duke of Gloucester's death, Suggest his soon-believing adversaries, And consequent, like a traitor coward, Sluiced out his innocent soul through streams of blood; Which blood, like sacrificing Abel's, cries Even from the tongueless caverns of the earth, To me for justice and rough chastisement.

(1,1,100-106)

This speech initiates an idea which is clarified in the subsequent chorus scene, I,ii. It is not so much the accusation of Mowbray, but rather the death of Gloucester, which is significant; for Mowbray's exact guilt or innocence of implication is never determined, since he dies in exile. The significant point is that Richard himself is somehow responsible for the death of his uncle, Gloucester. This is made clear in the chorus scene, where Gloucester's widow picks up Bolingbroke's earlier bloodshed image. To Gaunt she says,

Hath love in thy old blood no living fire? Edward's seven sons, whereof thyself art one, Were as seven vials of his sacred blood Or seven fair branches springing from one root: Some of those seven are dried by nature's course, Some of those branches by the Destinies out; But Thomas, my dear lord, my life, my Gloucester, One vial full of Edward's sacred blood ... Is crack'd and all the precious liquor spilt ... What shall I say? To safeguard thine own life The best way is to venge my Gloucester's death.

(I,11,10-36)

To this Gaunt replies,

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

(37-41)

This second occurrence of the bloodshed image, emphasized by its appearance in a chorus scene, reflects the most important implications of the first one. Before the second image is dealt with, however, it will be helpful to examine the quarrel with which it deals. By showing that Richard is guilty of instigating Gloucester's murder, this conversation between Gaunt and his widowed sister-in-law not only helps to clear up the king's attempt (I,i) to silence the charges against Mowbray, but helps prepare for Richard's decision (I,iii) to stop the jousting. For as Gaunt's and the Duchess of Gloucester's speeches suggest, Richard will stand to lose regardless of the outcome of the trial-by-combat. If Bolingbroke survives, Richard will be left alone to face reprisals for Gloucester's murder; if Mowbray survives, Richard will still face the possibility of being asked to investigate the crimes charged to Mowbray. Thus it is no surprise to find the king, regardless of justice, deeply interested in getting rid of both contestants.

To return to the bloodshed image, it is its occurrence in the conversation between Gaunt and the Duchess that begins to reveal the far-reaching implications of the first bloodshed image voiced by Bolingbroke. In the first, Bolingbroke speaks of Gloucester's blood "like sacrificing Abel's," crying from the earth for justice; in the second,
it becomes clear that Richard, the successor to Gloucester's brother, like Cain has spilled the blood upon the earth. The bloodshed theme, then, is closely tied in with Richard's flouting of justice in his kingdom -- closely related, therefore, to the three subsidiary image themes just considered, as well as the other major themes.

It remains now to trace the more significant occurrences of the bloodshed image, which symbolizes Richard's self-damning injustice to his subjects, from his own uncle on down. As in the other themes, Richard's own use of the image is twisted in accordance with his self-delusively point of view.

The bloodshed images already cited have been named as the first two significant occurrences of the theme. Richard, however, himself uses the image in scene one, in a way that deserves passing mention. In trying to suppress the quarrel between Mowbray and Bolingbroke he says,

Wrath-kindled gentlemen, be ruled by me; Let's purge this choler without shedding blood: This we prescribe, though no physician; Deep malice makes too deep incision; Forget, forgive; conclude and be agreed; Our doctors say this is no month to bleed.  

(I,1,152-57)

This analogy with the disease of excess choler is an echo of Richard's characterization of the appellants at the beginning of the scene:

High-stomached are they both, and full of ire, In rage deaf as the sea, hasty as fire.  

(18-19)
The characterization of Bolingbroke here, as usually occurs in Richard's speeches, is not very just; Bolingbroke proves to be anything but choleric: phlegmatic rather. But on the temporary premise that both men are choleric in temperament, Richard's speech (152-57) may be examined for further signs of his usual hazy grasp of reality. As might have been suspected from his handling of the images already considered (although this is his first chance in the play to twist an image), he makes an unhappy analogy in fixing the blame for the quarrel on cholera; for the solution he has in mind, namely, to avoid bloodletting, directly contradicts accepted medical procedure for dealing with violently choleric patients. The standard treatment in such cases was bloodletting. An alternate remedy, usually applied in less violent cases, was purgation; but Richard, though he mentions purging, offers no purge.

An investigation and a royal judgment might possibly be analogous to purgation; Richard, however, fails to suggest any such alternative. Thus he again does violence to his medical analogy, for he leaves the patients just as they were -- no bloodletting and no

---

purgation. At the end of the scene his medical analogy flies back in his face when he is forced, after all, to permit bleeding — the proper medical treatment:

There shall your swords and lances arbitrate
The swelling difference of your settled hate.
(200-201)

This is a rather bad start for a king who is supposed to be Shakespeare's idea of a poet; and as has repeatedly been seen, he seldom does better anywhere in the play, except by accident. This imagery does, however, serve important dramatic purposes; it helps establish Richard from the very first as a man willing to do any sort of violence before permitting the fulfillment of justice when justice involves discomfort or embarrassment for himself. It shows, too, as he himself unconsciously points out, that he is "no physician" of human affairs (I,i,154); his mind is too wedded to its own comfort to be able to flirt much with harsh reality. He is neither a poet nor a man of affairs.

The next significant appearance of the bloodshed image takes place in Richard's triumphant speech when he has decided to banish both appellants in the jousting. Concealing his own deeply personal interest in getting both combatants out of the realm, Richard attributes the sentences of exile to his desire for peace and his revulsion against fratricide:

Draw near,
And list what with our council we have done.
For that our kingdom's earth should not be soil'd
With that dear blood which it hath fostered;
And for our eyes do hate the dire aspect
Of civil wounds plough'd up with neighbours' sword; ... 
Therefore, we banish you our territories. 
(I,iii,123-39)

This speech should sound very hollow in the ears of an audience which has just learned of Richard's implication in Gloucester's death. And the hollowness of Richard's pretended concern over bloody "civil wounds" reverberates in the very next scene, where he rejoices over Gaunt's imminent death and makes plans to steal Bolingbroke's inheritance:

Now put it, God, in the physician's mind
To help him [Gaunt] to his grave immediately!
The lining of his coffers shall make coats
To deck our soldiers for these Irish wars. 
(I,iv,59-62)

In the first scene of Act Two, where Richard's touchy regard for his own dignity upsets his show of concern over Gaunt's condition, the bloodshed image is picked up again. Furious at being reprimanded by Gaunt, Richard says,

Now, by my seat's right royal majesty,
Wert thou not brother to great Edward's son,
This tongue that runs so roundly in thy head
Should run thy head from thy unreverent shoulders. 
(II,i,120-23)

To this Gaunt replies,

O, spare me not, my brother Edward's son,
For that I was his father Edward's son;
That blood already, like the pelican,
Hast thou tapp'd out and drunkenly caroused:
My brother Gloucester, plain well-meaning soul, ...
May be a precedent and witness good
That thou respect'st not spilling Edward's blood.
(124-31)

Instead of making any attempt to refute this charge of murder, Richard guiltily dodges it:

And let them die that age and sullens have;
For both hast thou, and both become the grave.
(139-40)

Obviously both Gaunt and Gloucester's duchess have been introduced into this play largely for the purpose of commenting on Richard's actions, and both have used the bloodshed image to castigate Richard's Cain-like disregard for justice in spilling his kindred's blood. York, who throughout the play is devoted to the best interests of the state regardless of his personal feelings, now picks up the same image in his bitter, loyal meditation on Richard's injustice. He speaks of Richard's father, the Black Prince:

His hands were guilty of no kindred blood,
But bloody were the enemies of his kin,
O Richard! York is too far gone with grief,
Or else he never would compare between.
(182-85)

It should be pointed out, in recognition of the dangers involved in basing critical pronouncements purely on the frequency with which an image occurs, that the word blood is often mentioned in the play without any apparent reference, or relevance, to the bloodshed theme; but wherever bloodshed comes up in connection with Richard, it is used in such a way as to reiterate his responsibility,
as the murderer of Gloucester, for the bloodshed which is to engulf England after the house of Lancaster comes to the throne.

This is true even where the image is used by members of Richard's party other than himself. Carlisle, like Mowbray and Aumerle, has been rendered fanatically loyal by Richard's personal magnetism. He picks up Richard's "party line," and in the face of Richard's callous disregard for the justice required of God's minister, with tragic irony correctly prophesies the consequences which will follow the crowning of Bolingbroke:

My Lord of Hereford here, whom you call king,  
Is a foul traitor to proud Hereford'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.  
(IV,i,134-38)

It is significant that Carlisle immediately enters into a conspiracy to unseat the new king, and thus takes upon himself the same responsibility for interfering with divine order as he places upon the opposing party. It has been seen repeatedly emphasized, through the bloodshed imagery, that the forthcoming carnage of the civil wars has its instigation in Richard himself. Carlisle's speech, however, does point up the ironical truth that injustice in a king has wide and tragical consequences because Divine Justice can then be re-established only through the agency of the imperfect men who have been wronged by the king.
The tragic culmination of the bloodshed imagery occurs in the last two scenes, where Bolingbroke himself is drawn into the bloody injustice begun by Richard. Exton, overhearing the very natural laments of Bolingbroke over the continual threat posed by Richard while still alive (V,iv), takes it upon himself to murder the deposed monarch.

When he has been fatally wounded, Richard with last-ditch self-righteousness joins the remorseful Exton in prophesying future disaster for England in terms of the bloodshed image:

K. Rich.: ... Exton, thy fierce hand
Hath with the king's blood stain'd the king's own land. ...

Exton: As full of valour as of royal blood:
Both have I spill'd: 0 would the deed were good!
For now the devil, that told me I did well,
Says that this deed is chronicled in hell.
(V,v,109-116)

Significantly, when Bolingbroke hears of Richard's murder he neither denies that he is relieved by Exton's act nor is thankful that a lamenting wish has thus become a reality; instead he uses his own Cain image of the very first scene in the play to label Exton's unexpected deed:

The guilt of conscience take thou for thy labour,
But neither my good word nor princely favour:
With Cain go wander thorough shades of night,
And never show thy head by day nor light.
Lords, I protest, my soul is full of woe,
That blood should sprinkle thus to make me grow.

I'll make a voyage to the Holy Land,
To wash this blood off from my guilty hand.
(V,vi,41-50)
Thus Bolingbroke, who never showed any purpose of seizing the throne when he came to demand justice of Richard, now does not deny his own responsibility for Richard's death even though he made no deliberate plot. On the contrary, he is fully conscious of his indirect guilt in this murder, which completes the tragic cycle of bloodshed which had begun with Richard's murder of Gloucester.

The bloodshed imagery, then, like the other image themes examined in this play, takes its significance from and in turn lends a permeating immediacy and concreteness to Richard's tragic injustice, which first appears in the murder of Gloucester, is reasserted twice in the banishment and in the confiscation scenes, and at last not only crushes Richard himself but sets up a train of misfortune involving everyone in the play. The bloodshed theme, like the other themes, helps make clear what is otherwise likely to be obscured by Richard's personal attractiveness: namely, that the initial tragic crime is committed by Richard, not Bolingbroke, though the latter is soon dragged in.

Altick emphasizes the point that the iterative words and symbols in this play occur most frequently at emotional climaxes, and cites as examples Gauk's famous deathbed speech (II,1), Richard's return from Ireland (III,11), and
the scene before Flint Castle (III,iii). It should be noticed, however, that there is an important difference in image usage in the first of these and the other two. In Gaunt's speech, which is a "set speech" appealing to the patriotism of the audience rather than a completely integral part of the play, the image themes are merely brought up one by one and not used with the multiple dramatic significances which they bear in III,ii, and III,iii. Gaunt's speech, indeed, contains the sort of imagery which Clemens associates with the early plays: one comparison or metaphor tacked on after another, seemingly with the intent of exercising the poet's ingenuity in finding apt comparisons. In the other two scenes the poet's art is approaching maturity; for the imagery is packed with dramatic significances and, though still somewhat more extensive and conspicuous in itself than it would have been if the play had been written later, is carefully subordinated to and worked in with the main dramatic idea.

The speeches at Flint Castle are particularly remarkable for the way in which the imagery is integrated. A convenient way of summarizing and reasserting the organic unity of all the themes so far considered is to show how, one by one, they take part in the speeches which occur at the height of the tragic conflict. What the poet does is to use another iterative theme, the tempest-theme, to weave
the themes together; and all are referred to the idea of injustice.

The tempest theme is introduced in the chorus scene II,iv, where Salisbury attempts to persuade a Welsh captain to keep his loyal troops together until Richard's return. The captain in reply voices a passage of typically Shakespearean omens of disaster:

The bay-trees in our country are all wither'd
And meteors fright the fixed stars of heaven;
The pale-faced moon looks bloody on the earth
And lean-look'd prophets whisper fearful change;
Rich men look sad and ruffians dance and leap,...
These signs forerun the death and fall of kings.

(8-15)

This passage obviously anticipates two extremely similar, but much better known, passages of dramatic foreboding in Julius Caesar. First Casca says,

O Cicero,
I have seen tempests when the scolding winds
Have rived the knotty oaks, and I have seen
The ambitious ocean swell and rage and foam ...
But never till tonight, never till now,
Did I go through a tempest dropping fire.

(I,iii,4-10)

and a moment later Cassius says of the strange phenomena observed in Rome,

... if you would consider the true cause
Why all these fires, why all these gliding ghosts,
Why birds and beasts from quality and kind,
Why old men fool and children calculate ... you shall find
That Heaven hath infused them with these spirits
To make them instruments and warning
Unto some monstrous state.

(62-71)

Such omens of disaster are a standard part of what G. W. Knight calls Shakespeare's "storm-symbolism," which
throughout the tragedies is used to forebode and to symbolize a tragic conflict. The omens quoted from Richard II are followed in the next speech by more omens which specifically forebode tempests:

Ah, Richard . . .
I see thy glory like a shooting star
Fall to the base earth from the firmament.
Thy sun sets weeping in the lowly west,
Witnessing storms to come, woe and unrest.
(18-22)

The unifying idea of the two passages is the foreboding of a tragic disaster to come, a disaster symbolized in the word "storms." All the other omens lead up to the words "storms to come"; and the storm or tempest, which so extensively symbolizes tragic conflict in Shakespeare, dominates the crucial, climactic conflict between Richard and Bolingbroke.

The storm symbol turns up again, however, before the climax of the play. In III,ii, the scene which sets forth the gradual dissolution of Richard's hopes of finding some military support which will enable him to continue his misrule of England, the storm image occurs in the crushing announcement by Scroop that all England has taken arms in support of Bolingbroke's demand for justice:

Like an unseasonable stormy day,
Which makes the silver rivers drown their shores,
As if the world were all dissolved to tears,
So high above his limits swells the rage
Of Bolingbroke, covering your fearful land
With hard bright steel and hearts harder than steel.

(106-111)

This image serves to echo the omens of II.iv, and to
point forward to the storm imagery in the climactic
scene, III.iii. As III.iii, opens Bolingbroke learns
that Richard is in Flint Castle and says,

Noble lords,
Go to the rude ribs of that ancient castle
... and thus deliver:

Henry Bolingbroke
On both his knees doth kiss King Richard's hand
And sends allegiance and true faith of heart
To his most royal person, hither come
Even at his feet to lay my arms and power,
Provided that my banishment repeal'd
And lands restored again be freely granted.

(31-41)

The conditions having thus been stated, the storm imagery
commences, first in terms of the bloodshed theme:

If not, I'll use the advantage of my power
And lay the summer's dust with showers of blood
Rain'd from the wounds of slaughter'd Englishmen.

(42-44)

The bloodshed theme then gives way to the earth-garden
theme:

The which, how far off from the mind of Bolingbroke
It is, such crimson tempest should bedrench
The fresh green lap of fair King Richard's land
My stooping duty tenderly shall show.
Go, signify as much, while here we march
Upon the grassy carpet of this plain.

(45-50)

To underline his own willingness to have peace, Bolingbroke
sends to his men while Northumberland leaves with the message,

Let's march without the noise of threatening drum,
That from this castle's tattered battlements
Our fair appointments may be well perused.

(Marlowe, 1598, 51-53)

Musing to himself over his meeting with Richard, Bolingbroke brings his speech to a climax with an image of lightning, which is followed by references to the royal balm theme and the earth theme:

Methinks King Richard and myself should meet
With no less terror than the elements
Of fire and water, when their thundering shock
At meeting tears the cloudy cheek of heaven.
Be he the fire, I'll be the yielding water;
The rage be his, whilst on the earth I rain
My waters; on the earth, and not on him.

(Marlowe, 1598, 54-60)

Though he may be granted an ironical reference to Richard's choleric disposition, Bolingbroke here carefully places himself below Richard in the natural hierarchy of elements (water yields to fire); and he specifically denies that he intends to do what Richard has implied that he would -- that is, use his "waters" to wash off the royal balm.

The image of lightning, which occurs approximately at the center of the storm imagery in this scene, serves two dramatic purposes: first, the straightforward purpose of declaring Bolingbroke's unequivocal intention of observing the traditional feudal hierarchy if he is allowed

---

to do so — *i.e.*, if he is allowed to pledge allegiance and is granted in return his rightful inheritance in fealty to the king. Second, the image serves as a dramatic symbol of a tragic conflict of personalities; for Richard, still unwilling to face the uncomfortable thought that he is fallible, is unable to meet Bolingbroke's reasonable, almost charitable terms — since these terms involve the tacit admission that he has been unjust and unkindly in his previous dealings with Bolingbroke. This tragic conflict is the climax of the play; after the meeting, the descending action — Bolingbroke's accession, the rebellions against him, and Richard's death — occupies the stage.

The storm imagery, which synthesizes the other dramatically significant themes at the height of the play, has been followed to its climax in the lightning image. When Richard first appears on the battlements of the castle, Bolingbroke continues the tempest imagery in terms of the sun theme:

See, see, King Richard doth himself appear
As doth the blushing discontented sun
From out the fiery portal of the east,
When he perceives the envious clouds are bent
To dim his glory and to stain the track
Of his bright passage to the occident.

(62-67)

The implications of this image were discussed above in the section on the sun image. Thus announced to the audience as the "blushing discontented sun," Richard now takes over the tempest symbol. Making a show of empty
bravado before he has heard the terms, he begins to talk of his divine stewardship, bringing in the Christ theme by his implication that he is not of "blood and bone," (79), and speaking of supernatural protection, in the form of an Old-Testament visitation:

... my master, God omnipotent,
Is mustering in his clouds on our behalf
Armies of pestilence ...

(85-87)

Then he too uses the bloodshed image and the earth-garden image, with overtones of Bolingbroke's "crimson tempest" passage:

... he Bolingbroke is come to ope
The purple testament of bleeding war;
But ere the crown he look for live in peace
Ten thousand bloody crowns of mother's sons
Shall ill become the flower of England's face,
Change the complexion of her maid-pale peace
To scarlet indignation and bedew
Her pastures' grass with faithful English blood.

(93-100)

While Northumberland delivers the terms and Richard momentarily accepts them, the storm imagery ceases. But when Richard hysterically blinds himself to this opportunity because he will be required to face the truth and admit his guilt, and insists instead that he is to be deposed, the tempest symbol enters one last time, appropriately in terms of the tears image:

We'll make foul weather with despised tears;
Our sighs and they shall lodge the summer corn,
And make a dearth in this revolting land.

(161-63)
Thus the tears image, the bloodshed image, the earth-garden image, the sun image, the royal balm image, and the Christ image all enter into the tempest symbolism at the crux of the tragedy, and lend to the tempest symbol the emotional force of all their associated symbolic ideas, each one grounded in or closely related to the injustice which gives the tempest symbol itself tragic significance in this play -- the truth-evading injustice of Richard's mind, which makes the king's encounter with Bolingbroke a tragic one.

Various image themes all centering about Richard's injustice have now been examined. It has been seen that they are all tied together at the climax of the tragedy, in III,iii. There is, however, one more important image theme in which the images are so large in scope that they are likely to be overlooked altogether in an analysis, although they powerfully dominate the play on the stage. These images are specifically concerned with injustice and with the machinery of justice and injustice, and may be said to be by far the most important images of the play. Several of them take up whole scenes, and they are spaced through the play so as to serve as a final reinforcement to the contrast between the injustice of Richard and the comparative justice of Bolingbroke. These images are the five scenes in which royal justice is administered.
The first is I,i, where Mowbray and Bolingbroke accuse each other of high treason. It is a mockery of justice, for Richard favors Mowbray throughout, and does his best to silence the appeals, even though the issue is the murder of a prince. The second trial scene is the trial-by-combat (I,iii), where Richard continues his injustice first by triumphantly banishing both contestants for his own personal benefit, then by capriciously reducing Bolingbroke's sentence because of the tears in Gaunt's eyes just after refusing clemency to Mowbray. The other three trials, in sharp contrast, display in Bolingbroke the princely virtues which Richard lacks. The first, IV,i,1-106, shows Bolingbroke's firm impartiality in handling a long series of appeals reminiscent of his own appeal against Mowbray in I,i. In the second (V,iii), Bolingbroke grants clemency to Aumerle, even though the latter has made a plot on the new king's life. This clemency reveals Bolingbroke's essential humanity, a quality which many commentators have overlooked. The last trial scene (V,vi) demonstrates that Bolingbroke is neither vindictive toward his enemies nor unconscious of his duty to be just: he grants clemency to the grand conspirator Carlisle (lines 19-29), but banishes Exton for the unauthorized murder of Richard.

These images of injustice and justice in the form of trial scenes are the final huge iterative theme. They symbolize and, in the case of the just trials, place
in relief by contrast, the tragic injustice which has also served as the focal point for the series of lesser image themes previously considered. The pervasiveness of the topic of injustice shows that Shakespeare conceived and executed the whole play in terms of the tragic mistake, and reinforces the conclusion already arrived at in Chapter Two that Shakespeare's conception of Richard was a consistent one throughout the play. The use of the king's injustice as a structural principle also reinforces the conclusion that Richard II was a stepping-stone to King Lear; for Lear's injustice proves to be, in a very similar way, the comprehensive structural principle for the image patterns in the later play.

Something remains to be said of the iterative themes mentioned by Altick but not analyzed in the discussion above. These are the themes of pallor, tongue, infection, blot, sourness and sweetness, generation, and jewels and crowns. All these themes are more or less related to the central dramatic idea, Richard's injustice; but for one reason or another none of them seems as significant and as clearly a part of the dramatic structure as the ones discussed at length above. Pallor seems to symbolize peace, in such a passage as this:

Ten thousand bloody crowns of mother's sons
Shall ...  
Change the complexion of her maid-pale peace  
To scarlet indignation.  

(III, iii, 96-99)  

And it may symbolize a passing state of peace in  
The pale-faced moon looks bloody on the earth.  

(II, iv, 10)  

But it does not seem to have the same significance in  
these passages:

A lunatic lean-witted fool  
Presuming on an ague’s privilege  
Darest with thy frozen admonition  
Make pale our cheek, chasing the royal blood  
With fury from his native residence.  

(II, i, 115-19)  

But now the blood of twenty thousand men  
Did triumph in my face, and they are fled;  
And, till so much blood hither come again,  
Have I not reason to look pale and dead?  

(II, ii, 76-80)  

The second passage, though it emphasizes Richard’s inability to wage war, also emphasizes his inability to hold the allegiance of his kingdom and thus to prevent civil war.

Similar ambiguities seem to pervade the themes of

infection and tongue; and the themes of blot, sourness
and sweetness, generation, and jewels and crowns do not seem to carry the same weight of poetic and dramatic meaning as the justice, tempest, garden, bloodshed, sun, royal balm, and Christ themes. Hence they have been omitted from the discussion. In King Lear, the number of themes is considerably limited, and all themes have a clear reference to the central dramatic idea. The poet
seems to have realized that the very profusion of image themes in *Richard II* makes the play somewhat bewildering, and that themes not carefully and dramatically referred to the central idea simply confuse the audience.

Although the most pervasive use of the images examined in this chapter would correspond to Miss Ellis-Fermor's second category, in which she places thematic symbolism, a variety of other uses has appeared as well, such as (1) the revelation of Richard's evasiveness of mind in subtler ways than would be achieved merely by associating tears with false sorrow; (2) the revelation of other aspects of the main characters' mentality, such as Richard's love of the dramatic and, incidentally, Bolingbroke's acuteness of intellect; (3) dramatic foreshadowing; (4) heightening of the tragic conflict by the use of the spectacular storm imagery, culminating in the lightning image; (5) heightening of the tragic conflict by combining all the main themes, with their associations of the various aspects of Richard's evasiveness and injustice, into the storm imagery; (6) conveying a particular state of mind, as when the discordant music symbolizes Richard's mental discord. Furthermore, the music serves as a sort of interlocutor, in that it gives Richard something to talk about.
But when all these various functions have been analyzed, there still remains the question of overall dramatic effectiveness. One point is clear: such an extremely heavy load of poetic meaning can hardly be apprehended at a single performance even by the best-equipped members of the audience. This is no argument against the dramatic effectiveness of the imagery, so long as the imagery itself is not misleading, for well-designed and strategically placed symbols should have the effect of arousing the desired ideas in the beholder's mind without any consciousness of how the ideas got there, and the more of these symbols, the more chance that the audience will be properly receptive, at least up to a certain point. Again, Richard's twisted imagery should establish him as a person of slipshod mental processes without the viewer being conscious of the poetic devices used. In fact, it is essential to the dramatic process that ideas be conveyed without too much reflection on the part of the audience; and the sheer volume of significant imagery, all bearing on the same essential dramatic idea of injustice, should make this play a clear and effective one.

But such is not the case. Nothing can be clearer than that Richard II is not a completely successful drama, even though it is popular enough not to have disappeared entirely from the stage. Probably the chief
handicap, besides the tedious length of some of the
speeches, is that in spite of his love of the dramatic,
King Richard simply is not a suitable tragic hero because
of his extreme ambiguity. He attracts and repels at the
same time, so that the audience's sympathy is split from
the outset. Even with all the poetic devices which point
up and emphasize his unfairness and egotism, his personal
charm is overwhelming. No one can dwell on Richard's
infuriating selfishness when he says to the musician,

Yet blessing on his heart that gives it me!
For 'tis a sign of love.

(V,v,64-65)

But there are other reasons why the play is dramatically
ambiguous. Richard's images, though unpoetic in the
essential sense that they seldom get at the truth of a
situation, are undeniably beautiful; and so the images
themselves are ambiguous in effect. The beauty of
Macbeth's images supports rather than contradicts the
agonized struggle in his mind; but Richard's outrageously
unfair accusations against Bolingbroke are either so
striking or so beautiful that the inaccuracy of what
Richard says is never noticed:

High-stomached are they both, and full of ire;
In rage deaf as the sea, hasty as fire.

(I,1,18-19)

Bolingbroke's felicitous speeches, on the other hand, are
so few that he is simply overborne, so far as the audience
is concerned, by the volume of Richard's accusations.
In the original production, no doubt, the poet took care that the actors made Richard's pettiness and Bolingbroke's masterly incisiveness completely clear to the audience. A cast so instructed could go a long way toward clearing up the dramatic ambiguity which has helped prevent Richard II from being a highly popular stage play.

A further reason for the dramatic ineffectiveness of the play, and one which can hardly be remedied without destroying the image themes, is the handling of the chorus scenes. The play is filled with sub-actions designed to comment on the main action by giving keys to the main themes: Gaunt and the Duchess of Gloucester clarify the bloodshed theme in I, i; the Queen and Bushy define the tears theme in II, i; Salisbury and a Welsh captain define the tempest imagery in II, iv; the Queen reappears in the somewhat tedious garden scene (III, iv), and hears the gardeners define the garden imagery. To have so many sub-actions inevitably lessens the clarity and effectiveness of the comments they make on the main action; and thus the all-important keys to the most significant image patterns are buried. Even worse, a director trying to tighten up the play would probably be tempted to leave these scenes out before cutting the scenes where the main characters appear.

King Lear shows the benefit of these mistakes. In Lear there is but a single sub-action, which parallels the main action throughout; and the two plots are so manipulated
that the image themes are defined at some peak of dramatic interest rather than in low-voltage chorus scenes like those in Richard II. To take a single example, the significance of the pervasive sight-and-blindness theme is defined in a brutally dramatic way when Gloucester's eyes are put out as a direct result of his inability to perceive the truth about his children.

Yet it is only in the effectiveness of dramatic emphasis, and the increased brevity and economy of imagery, that the poetic technique of Lear differs from that of Richard II. The multiple poetic implications of the images in Lear, often thought to be a mark of Shakespeare's complete maturity, had already been accomplished in the earlier play.
CHAPTER IV

IMAGERY AND KING LEAR'S JUSTICE

Like the tragic flaws of the main characters in Richard II and King Lear, the image structures of the two plays bear a remarkable similarity. This latter fact, apparently unsuspected heretofore, has probably been obscured both by misconceptions of Richard's personality and by the widespread belief that the basic image techniques of the great tragedies emerged after Richard II was written. Robert Heilman's extended study of the patterns in King Lear¹ might have benefited greatly had he recognized the parallels in the two plays, for it might then have been clear that the tragic mistake of injustice in King Lear is the structural, poetic, and dramatic coordinator of the play. This, along with the parallels in the main characters and the extensive evidence that Richard II is not Shakespeare's idea of a poet, casts very strong doubt upon Heilman's conclusion that Lear in the final mad scene becomes a poet with a penetrating vision of the moral universe.

¹This Great Stage.
This chapter, besides pointing out various specific parallels in the image technique of the two plays, attempts a more cogent interpretation of the image structure in *King Lear* than is furnished in Heilman's book. It is recognized here that Heilman makes many discoveries and observations which seem perfectly valid. This study is indebted to those observations and discoveries. They are summarized at appropriate points in the present chapter, and no attempt is made to repeat in detail what Heilman has already done so well.

1

This Great Stage has met with hostility from reviewers belonging to diverse literary camps. This hostility seems chiefly concerned with three issues: first, whether Heilman makes a sufficiently selective, imaginative, and critical interpretation of the various images; second, whether it is correct for Heilman to view *Lear* as essentially a philosophical poem rather than a dramatic one; and third, whether it is possible to justify Heilman's closing argument, where Lear's supposed calmness and stoicism after gaining "Reason in Madness" is demonstrated from the most violently revengeful speech in the play.

These are important issues, but it is hard not to feel that in some instances Heilman has been too severely
criticized. The book has its share of critical flaws, but even so it is an extremely important contribution to Shakespearean criticism, and deserves respect.

The following excerpt from a review by R. G. Cox will show the severity to which Heilman has been subjected:

Professor Heilman has something of interest to say on all the main [iterative] themes ... and a critical reader could derive useful hints from most chapters. But the 'scientific' thoroughness ultimately defeats its own object; insufficiently controlled by sensitiveness of response, it catalogues all references to a theme without adequate attention to their varying degrees of significance. 'Meaning,' in fact, comes to be too much a matter of sense alone, and the analysis does not allow for the fact that one reference to a theme may be more important than another.

This diagnosis should be carefully compared with Heilman's incisive comments on the animal imagery, pp. 93-105, or with the analysis of the significance of Edmund's "Nature," pp. 115-30. Heilman's conclusions about "Nature" exactly parallel the conclusions of John F. Danby, whose Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature seems to furnish a definitive pronouncement on the meanings of the word so often repeated in King Lear.

---

2"This Great Stage," Scrutiny, XVI (1949), 7.
If Heilman goes astray it is not because of a failure to respond sensitively to individual images, but because of the way he has synthesized his findings. His synthesis, based on a misconception of Lear's tragic mistake, does at times seem over-labored and forced; and the most significant objections to This Great Stage seem to be raised against symptoms of this inadequate synthesis. These objections, it is true, are also couched in the over-severe language which characterizes many of the reviews of this book. For instance, O. J. Campbell belabors Heilman for slighting the playwright's dramatic intentions:

... the author discovers in King Lear various systems of images: those relating to sight, to clothes, to animals, to sex, to nature, to age, and to justice, each of which constitutes an imagery group. These various groups combine to convey the essential meaning of Lear's career. Viewed from this point of vantage, Lear's tragedy ceases to be the catastrophe of a figure of heroic size and becomes a general philosophical statement about the nature of human experience.4

R. W. Babcoock adds,

Here is a book written about a Shakespearean play, written in its turn for an audience — and a special type of audience, at that, historically — and yet Mr. Heilman never once mentions the word audience anywhere in his book! He substitutes the word reader and student persistently: Nor does he use the word actor in the book, and only occasionally

4 "This Great Stage," J. E. G. P., XLVIII (1949), 406.
the word character in its normal sense in a play. He prefers words like metaphysics or metaphysical, dichotomy, philosophic. ... In short, this is not a regular dramatic criticism of a Shakespearean play. 

Yet if Heilman does not spend much time discussing stage technique and the effects of the play on a theatre audience, he nevertheless is centrally concerned with what he sees as the tragic flaw; and he endeavors to show that the various image patterns are unified to exhibit the devastating and ironical effects of a certain tragic mistake on the hero and the hero's world. If This Great Stage does not have the primary effect of elucidating the poet's dramatic intentions, perhaps the reason is merely that Heilman has misread Lear's tragic flaw and his tragic mistake, and thus has put an erroneous and misleading interpretation on the passage which unifies all the image themes with overwhelming dramatic force.

This passage is Lear's long mad speech to Edgar and Gloucester (IV,v,84-189), a speech which Heilman sees as the last step in Lear's curative madness. He says that Lear in this speech shows a "devastating insight into the moral reality of the world," and that at the end of the passage the king has achieved the calmness of resignation and wisdom. On this interpretation William


6 This Great Stage, pp. 198, 213.
Empson comments,

Mr. Heilman goes on to say that Lear has 'put the world together again' in the tremendous passage that ends with this great stage, and that the process purges him so that he no longer wants revenge. This is nonsense, I think; the very train of thought Mr. Heilman is quoting is broken by a scream for revenge with "Kill!" six times repeated. Among the last words before Lear dies, for that matter, he says 'a plague upon you, murderers, traitors all' ...

Heilman's contention is that Lear gains insight and wisdom through the kindling of his imagination which madness provides. Though this idea stems from H. H. Hudson, as was shown in the introduction of the present study, Heilman gives it a rational basis by saying that Lear's tragic flaw is a failure of imagination:

Speaking of the flattery contest among the daughters in Act One, Heilman says of Lear,

He assumes ... that there are (1) verbal symbols and (2) property symbols which can denote quantity of love; he seeks an exchange equivalent which by its nature is not marketable. He wants to make a trade where there can be none. He forgets that love, if it is to prove itself, cannot prove itself in a way alien to its very nature. He treats love as if it were a material quantum of a certain size and weight; in his intellectual confusion he forgets that deeds and not words are the symbols of love. This confusion may be described quite literally as a failure of imagination; love must be apprehended by images, and the images are richly available to him -- not in verbal shortcuts and formulae, but in the lives of the daughters whom he has observed from infancy. Now this kind of evidence, when it is not abstracted by literary art from the full and resistant texture of experience, is vast and inchoate and difficult;

"This Great Stage," Kenyon Review, XI (1949), 350.
Lear shirks a demanding task -- the imaginative apprehension of symbols, we know, is not easy -- and seeks an easy, rationalistic way out.8

At the end of the same chapter Heilman adds,

The basic irony of the play is that Lear himself refuses an imaginative act when it is essential and introduces an inapplicable rationalism. Thus Goneril and Regan come to power, and with them comes to power the spirit of calculation. Lear wanted to measure love, which is a state of the soul, in material terms (property); his daughters wish to deal with a symbol (Lear's retainers), which represents a state of the soul, in terms of rational need. Instead of relying on imaginative insight, they apply the techniques of the bargainer.9

William Empson objects that Lear, far from introducing a spirit of rational calculation in his demand for flattery, has already apportioned the property and is now only indulging a love for adulation and ceremony; and, echoing Coleridge, Empson points out that Lear's anger stems from the fact that Cordelia has spoiled his ceremony and publicly embarrassed him.10 There is certainly nothing rational about the spirit with which Lear rejects Cordelia; and it should be added to Empson's comment, with reference to the second of the two passages just quoted from Heilman, that Goneril and Regan are no more relying on a spirit of pure bargaining when they take away Lear's

---

8This Great Stage, p. 161.
9Ibid., pp. 170-71.
10Empson, "This Great Stage," p. 346.
retainers, than Lear is when he rejects Cordelia. They want to humble their father, and they correctly recognize that the best way to insult him is to remove "all th' addition to a king," although he refuses to become humble. Moreover, Heilman's implication all through his book that Goneril and Regan are lacking the imaginative insight necessary to recognize such "states of the soul" as love, seems ill-founded too; their conversation in the very first scene (283-308) shows that they know whom Lear loves best.

It may be further pointed out that in order to hold Heilman's position about the imaginative effort required to recognize love, one would have to endow considerable imaginative power on every human being who can tell his friends from his flatterers, a position which would be hard to defend.

But Heilman is only slightly wrong. What Lear actually does is, not to confuse spiritual and rationalistic values, but to substitute "un-natural," animal values for human values; he indulges his passion for adulation to the extent of violating the traditional values of "Nature," which require among other things that children be protected. This is not basically a failure of the imagination; it is a succumbing to an appetite, the appetite for mental comfort, which Lear like Richard possesses in a very high degree. Lear makes an essentially
unjust demand from his daughters, and punishes Cordelia when she will not comply; from this action stem all of Lear's misfortunes and every other terrible event of the play. The flaw itself is a deliberate blindness to unpleasant truth, and the tragic mistake resulting from this flaw is a terrible injustice. The king's injustice is the central dramatic idea of the play, and the idea around which all the dramatic imagery is unified.

But if Heilman's diagnosis of the tragic flaw be rejected, then the remainder of his argument, which occupies the last four chapters of his book (pp. 173-291) collapses -- that is, his concluding argument that the various themes are unified into a grand rekindling of Lear's imagination in the culminating mad scene, where the tragic flaw of unimaginativeness is supposedly remedied. Conveniently for the present study, however, Heilman does not introduce the issue of the tragic flaw until almost all of the image themes have been examined; therefore the problem of remedying his questionable synthesis may be begun without much damage to the first six chapters of his book.

In the task of perceiving just how the poet designed the image structure of the play, the experience gained from the foregoing examination of Richard II is very useful. Richard and Lear are both evasive-minded; they will not willingly face anything uncomfortable, and they
commit tragic injustices in their determination to indulge their pleasant whims and in their determination not to recognize uncomfortable truth. And the imagery of King Lear is conceived in almost the same way as the imagery of Richard II, even though the image technique in the later play is much more successful dramatically. In both plays the focal point of all the significant image themes is injustice; and the hints derived from the various techniques of Richard II, combined with this guiding idea of what was central in Shakespeare's mind in the earlier drama, prove to be invaluable aids in analyzing the imagery of King Lear.

The image themes, in the order of their consideration here, are (1) sight-and-blindness; (2) nature; (3) animal; (4) sex; (5) clothes; (6) age; (7) values; (8) injustice. The first theme symbolizes the tragic flaw itself, and thus stands somewhat apart from themes 3-7, which are clustered about the nature theme and can best be considered after the nature theme has been discussed. All the themes, however, take their dramatic significance from the fact of Lear's injustice; hence the injustice theme is considered last, by way of synthesis. The only individual images which are analyzed minutely in this chapter are (1) those which show typical techniques derived from Richard II, and (2) those whose implications, overlooked by Heilman, become clear when examined in the light of
what has been learned from Richard II.

As Heilman shows, King Lear is filled with references to eyes, to sight and blindness, and to the associated facts of light and darkness. These references are particularly, though by no means exclusively, associated with Gloucester, who exists largely to symbolize the disastrous effects of moral and spiritual blindness. Heilman observes that when Gloucester clutches at Edmund's counterfeit letter from Edgar, the old man says "Let's see," three times (I,ii,34,44) and "if it be nothing, I shall not need spectacles" (34-35). Ironically, Gloucester fails to see the truth. When he attempts to apprehend Edgar, he comes "with torches" (II,1,37), but again he fails to see the truth of the matter. When he puts in an appearance in the first mad scene, the Fool sees him in the distance as "a walking fire" (III,iv,117). Gloucester enters with a torch, still blind to the truth about his sons; in fact, he has just revealed to Edmund (III,iii,1-22) the letter from Dover. These are merely typical examples of images associated with sight and

---

II. This Great Stage, pp. 41-64. Heilman's analysis in some respects parallels the section on "Gloucester's Eyes" in Paul V. Kreider's Repetition in Shakespeare, pp. 194-214. Heilman cites Kreider but says that his own analysis had been made before he knew of Kreider's discussion (This Great Stage, pp. 303-304).
seeing which occur in connection with lack of insight; there are many others. And at the very height of the play, Gloucester's eyes are put out, a direct result of his moral blindness and of his blindness to the personalities of his sons. Thereafter whenever Gloucester appears, or is even mentioned (IV,i,17-79; IV,ii,70-81; IV,v,9-14; IV,v,i,1-237; V,iii,169-218), there is continual reference to his blindness. Most significant of all, he is on hand to provide the chief topic of conversation when the mad Lear, still tragically blind to his own injustice, makes the final mad speech which ties all the image themes together (IV,v,i,84-189).

Except for the assertion that Lear is still blind to his injustice throughout IV,v,i, all of this evidence is presented in Heilman's chapter "I Stumbled When I Saw" (pp. 41-64). The sight-and-blindness image, then, is lurking wherever the play exhibits moral or spiritual blindness, just as the image of tears was seen in Chapter Two to be lurking wherever Richard indulges in self-delusive emotions. And in view of the fact that Lear's specific tragic flaw is his evasive blindness to any uncomfortable truth, it may be confidently added that the sight-and-blindness theme symbolizes the tragic flaw. This tragic flaw leads to Lear's initial injustice, and hence to all the injustices in the play.

The poetical mechanics of the sight-and-blindness theme consists in associating a particular signal (a
reference to eyes, sight, or blindness) with a particular human characteristic (lack of insight), and making the association so continually that soon the mere appearance of the signal will arouse the thought of spiritual blindness, without any necessary awareness on the playgoer's part of how the thought was aroused. This function of iterative imagery has of course been observed all through the present study; but the climax of the sight-and-blindness theme, in contrast with the tears theme in Richard II, is a clear, simple, and supremely dramatic action, the blinding of Gloucester, which makes unmistakable the meaning of the symbolism and at the same time clearly defines the disastrous effects of moral and spiritual blindness in the tragic world. Here more than almost anywhere else in the play the progress of Shakespeare's dramatic art may be seen; for the key to the tears theme in Richard II is buried in a comparatively undramatic chorus scene, and the significance of the theme is defined in terms so complicated (shadows of sorrow) that they have gone practically unrecognized throughout the history of the play. This is not necessarily a poetic weakness, for Richard's mental behavior is outlined with great exactness and subtlety; but it is a dramatic weakness, nonetheless. Yet the artistic progress is a matter of more expert placing and emphasis in the later play. All the mechanical elements of the symbolism were
present in Richard II.

It must be emphasized that though Gloucester's blindness is partly due to stupidity, Lear's refusal to recognize uncomfortable truth is deliberate, even though it is perfectly in accord with his Richard-like love of mental comfort. For Kent, France, and Cordelia herself in the first scene, and later the Fool (as the voice of Lear's better sense) continually present the truth for him to see if he only would; but Lear just as continually blinds himself to the truth and occupies himself instead with his outraged dignity.

Heilman's attitude toward the sight-and-blindness imagery is somewhat different. He holds that it symbolizes a paradox about practical and impractical human beings. He divides the main characters into (1) those who, though blind in practical matters, gradually attain spiritual insight -- Lear, Edgar, and Gloucester; and (2) those who see very clearly in practical matters, but ironically have no insight at all into spiritual things, and simply use their practical clear-sightedness as a means of self-advancement. It is clear that Shakespeare meant some such opposition to exist between the two sets of characters, but it is doubtful whether Heilman has made sufficient explanation. The difference between Edmund, on

12This Great Stage, pp. 28-29, 57-64, 225-53.
the one hand, and Edgar or Kent, on the other, is not a difference between clear-sightedness and blindness in practical affairs. The difference seems, rather, to be closely parallel to the celebrated difference between the sophists and Socrates. The sophist, as Jacques Maritain skillfully points out, very much resembled the self-seeking, power-mad "man of virtu" of the Renaissance (whom Edmund himself so closely resembles): the sophist loved knowledge for the power it gave him, and delighted in subtle uses of his knowledge; but he simply was not interested in the truth, particularly if it stood in the way of personal advantage and comfort. Socrates, on the other hand, recognized the essential depravity of the sophist attitude and devoted himself to attaining the truth. The present study has shown at length that Lear's madness is the final result of a conflict in his mind between a desire for his own advantage and comfort regardless of the truth (sophist attitude) and a relentless conviction, symbolized by the Fool's pointed remarks, that paramount importance attaches to truth, justice, and all the other obligations of the Natural Law which he rejected when he rejected Cordelia. As the Fool says, in a world dominated by

selfishness "Truth's a dog must to kennel"; and it is Lear's attempt to kennel the horrible truth of his injustice to Cordelia which drives him mad. The difference between the protagonists of the play, other than Lear, and the villains, is the same as the difference between the two attitudes fighting for control of Lear's mind. Edmund, Goneril, and Regan, in terms of the symbolism of the play, are by nature blind in the same respect as Lear is deliberately blind until he finally consents to see the truth; this blindness is a failure to be concerned with truth, justice, or anything else which interferes with personal advantage and comfort. Cordelia, Kent, and Edgar are concerned primarily with justice and truth, and therefore are clear-sighted in the terms of the play's symbolism. The fault, then, of all the villains including Oswald is a basic, fundamental injustice: they direct all their energies toward self-advancement, and are unconcerned with anything else.

It seems better to view the villains this way than simply to assert that the clear-sighted practical man has no moral or spiritual insight; for though Edmund, Goneril, and Regan are clear-sighted and intelligent in worldly affairs, Oswald is simply a fool; and all suffer from the same basic blindness. Edgar, on the other hand, though he is portrayed as something of a fool in his first appearance, is a genius in things practical when he is roused
to action; yet no one would accuse him of lacking insight simply because he has skill in practical affairs.

Throughout the play, then, blindness may be viewed as symbolizing a failure to see or to be concerned with truth and with the moral obligations which are recognized by a person devoted to the truth; and sight symbolizes the devotion to truth and justice which Cordelia, Kent, and Edgar display from the first and which Lear briefly attains, when he is cured of his madness. The symbols are often used with dramatic irony; for example, when Edgar says, "I see the business" (I,ii,189), actually he is being insanely blind, in the manner of the self-seeking sophists whom Socrates condemned. Again, the symbolism must be recognized as a generalization which does not attempt to delineate all the subtleties of the individuals involved: Gloucester's blindness is partly a deliberate refusal to see the validity and truth of moral obligations, as may be seen in his attitude toward adultery, and partly mere stupidity -- he is by no means the intellectual equal of Lear, Edmund, Goneril, Regan, Albany, or Kent.

It must not be regarded as a dramatic flaw that the symbolism is not as subtle as the characterization, and that Gloucester, who is quite different from Lear in mental constitution, is nevertheless the character whose blindness symbolizes Lear's flaw. Richard II shows the disadvantages of oversubtle symbolism; the meaning of the tears symbol is so complicated that it is hard to
follow. The important thing in Lear, so far as the sight-and-blindness symbolism is concerned, is that blindness to truth and to moral obligations leads to disastrous injustice. As for the differences between the fathers (Lear is blind to his daughters' personalities and to other things largely because he desires comfort of mind, while Gloucester is blind partly because of plain stupidity), these may be viewed as Shakespeare's way of recognizing that human failings may subtly differ from one another and still have a common basic reference -- namely, the obligations of traditional "natural law."

Yet it is only in the overall pattern that the imagery has been simplified; the subtlety of individual images remains, and to the subtlety is added the compression which so many of the images in Richard II conspicuously lack. There is never any danger in Lear that the image itself will steal the audience's attention away from the dramatic effect which the image is intended to produce.

An early occurrence of the sight-and-blindness theme may be used to demonstrate the compression which in Lear prevents the images themselves from being over-conspicuous. It will be recalled that King Richard, with characteristic blindness to his own position, describes himself in terms of the sun, which puts darkness to confusion. This speech reads in part,
Know'st thou not
That when the searching eye of heaven is hid, ...
Then thieves and robbers range abroad unseen
In murder and in outrage, boldly here:
But when from under this terrestrial ball
He fires the proud tops of the eastern pines ...
Then murders, treasons, and detested sins ...
Stand bare and naked, trembling at themselves?

(III,ii,36-46)

This image is so long that it slows down the play, and so beautiful that its irony is partially lost; the spectator is likely to forget that Richard is the thief and murderer. In Lear a similar irony is established in a few words.

When Kent tells Lear to "see better" (I,1,158), the king swears by the most inappropriate of all mythological gods, the god of the sun and of light: "Now, by Apollo — " (160); and Kent drives the irony home: "Now, by Apollo, king, / Thou swear'st thy gods in vain" (160-61). Like Richard, Lear reverses his imagery unconsciously, in a way that is both ironical and very revealing; for like Richard he has persuaded himself that it is actually he who can see well and who represents justice. Heilman seems to have noticed only the irony in this image, and not the fact that it helps reveal Lear's peculiar mentality.14

Again, when he is angry at Goneril, Lear with a great show of righteousness conjures the elements to punish her:

You nimble lightnings, dart your blinding flames
Into her scornful eyes. Infect her beauty,
You fen-sucked fogs, drawn by the powerful sun
To fall and blast her pride.

(II,iv,167-70)

---

14This Great Stage, p. 54.
The chief technical difference between this speech and a similar conjuration in Richard II is compression. Richard addresses the earth of England:

Feed not thy sovereign's foe, my gentle earth, Nor with thy sweets comfort his ravenous sense; But let thy spiders, that suck up thy venom, And heavy-gaited toads lie in their way, Doing annoyance to the treacherous feet Which with usurping steps do trample thee. Yield stinging nettles to mine enemies, And when they from thy bosom pluck a flower, Guard it, I pray thee, with a lurking adder Whose double tongue may with a mortal touch Throw death upon thy sovereign's enemies.

(III.11.12-22)

The two passages are greatly similar in ironical dramatic intent, for it is Lear whose scornful eyes will be punished by lightning, and it is Richard whose "ravenous sense" will finally be punished by the England he has wronged. And both passages have a similar purpose of conveying the un-self-consciousness of the speaker, who blinds himself completely to the very shortcomings in himself which he condemns in others.

At least three remarkable improvements have been noted in the handling of the sight-and-blindness theme as compared with the tears theme of Richard II. First, the significance of the symbolism is made much simpler and clearer. Second, the key passage, which drives home the meaning of the symbol, is placed in a much more conspicuous and dramatic position. Third, the individual images are much shorter and less obtrusive in themselves. The basic image techniques, however, are the same. First, the themes
of tears and of sight-and-blindness are both clearly oriented toward the tragic mistake whose consequences form the central dramatic subject of the play. The images in both themes, taken together, have an iterative, symbolic function, defined in a key passage; but taken separately they serve both to characterize the speaker and to establish dramatic irony. Another function of imagery in Richard II, that of dramatic foreboding, appears in the nature pattern, which is considered next.

iii

With the single exception of the injustice theme itself, the themes remaining to be considered in King Lear do not have such specific counterparts in Richard II as the sight-and-blindness theme has. These other themes, however, show the development of certain techniques of overall image structure which appear in Richard II; and they also show that some apparently abortive techniques of the earlier play have been abandoned, or at least suppressed. Richard II contains all sorts of ambiguous image patterns which do not seem to fall in with the main patterns. It is of course not certain that these other patterns do not have some unity which has been overlooked in the present study; but seemingly they are contradictory within themselves, as was suggested in the section devoted to these extraneous patterns in Chapter Three. If it is true that they have no organic function related
to the central dramatic idea of the play, then they are mere clutter, for Richard II is already so overloaded with the poetic freight of the significant patterns that the action drags; moreover, the central issue is often obscured by the beauty of the imagery. That the poet did feel that the earlier play was unnecessarily cluttered with imagery seems likely when one considers the comparatively few iterative themes in Lear; and this impression is deepened by the fact that each theme in the later play is clearly related to injustice. Also, Shakespeare further unifies the imagery in Lear by subordinating a whole series of themes to the nature theme, a structural development which perhaps derives from the bloodshed, sun, royal balm, and Christ themes in Richard II. The word nature, which serves as a coordinator and reference for the animal, sex, clothing, age, and values themes in Lear, corresponds in the frequency of its occurrence to the word blood in Richard II; and while the bloodshed image has no corresponding function as a reference for other images, there does exist a series of images in the earlier play which are all closely associated with the idea of the divine hierarchy: the sun, royal balm, and Christ themes. Seemingly the poet in writing Lear combined the techniques of an all-pervasive theme and of associating images around the idea of the divine hierarchy, and the result is the nature theme, with its subordinates.
Danby's *Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature* makes a compelling and apparently an undeniable case for the position that "Nature" to the protagonists in *Lear* means the traditional hierarchy of beings associated with the Christian theology of the time, together with the hierarchy of rights and duties as prescribed in Christian "natural law" (pages 20-43).\(^{15}\) In the hierarchy of Nature, as understood by Elizabethans and Jacobins who still adhered to traditional ideas, man has top position among the creatures of the visible world, and as such may regard as his due certain "accommodations" beyond the mere bare necessities of life which animals have. On the other hand, he has certain obligations. He must subdue his animal passions of pure rapacity and lust, in accordance with the precepts of natural law. And he must respect age and parenthood. The obligations are an essential part of man's elevated position, and to reject or ignore these obligations reduces man to the level of the animals beneath him in the divine order.

Certain points may be added which Danby's analysis touches on but does not emphasize, and which Heilman

\[^{15}\text{Danby's basic position agrees with that outlined in Theodore Spencer's *Shakespeare and the Nature of Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1942), pp. 1-20, 135-52. Danby's accomplishment is that he accounts for such things as "accommodation" and also fits Edmund's "Nature" into its place.}\]
overlooks. Besides receiving respect, parents conversely must provide for their children and protect them; all ages have a combination of privilege and responsibility depending on their stage in life. The old are at the top of the order and may expect veneration; but children must be cared for too. Also, the natural law provides for and requires an orientation toward the Deity at the top of the hierarchy. This aspect of Nature becomes significant in the values pattern, which has reference to the prior claims of truth and love over the objects of the passions and appetites — a claim summed up in the first commandment and in Christ's teaching about God and mammon.

Danby shows that Nature for Edmund represents something very close to the nature conceived later by Thomas Hobbes: a nature governed entirely by the animal impulses which the traditional natural law is designed to curb in human beings. When Edmund says, "Thou, Nature, art my goddess; to thy law / My services are bound," he is denying allegiance to traditional natural law and announcing his intention to satisfy his impulses and appetites regardless of the "plague of custom."

Heilman catalogues various references to Nature in the play and shows their alignment with the two Natures, which he interprets in the same way as Danby although he makes no reference to Edmund as an anticipator of Hobbes, and does not mention the theory of "accommodation" specifically (though he refers to such a duty, pp. 139, 143).
It seems likely that the two critics developed their ideas about Edmund's Nature independently, while adopting the ideas of Theodore Spencer on the benign, traditional Nature of the protagonists.¹⁶

Danby sees Cordelia as an allegorical representation of Nature: when Lear rejects her, he rejects traditional Nature and thus releases the villains who recognize only Edmund's Nature. With slight modification, this idea fits into the whole scheme of injustice without requiring an allegorical interpretation. Cordelia's rejection is a personal rejection and denial of the code of Nature regardless of any allegorical significance, because she is just as much entitled to her rights under Nature's law as Lear is. This shows the integration of the Nature theme around the tragic mistake of injustice. Lear's injustice is, specifically, to assert his appetite for flattery while blinding himself to all the obligations of natural law: the obligation to accommodate one's offspring and to seek and respect the truth. For the moment Lear acts in accordance with Edmund's Nature, whose "law" is that nothing shall be allowed to hinder the satisfaction of appetites. Having sanctioned such an unjust "law," he invites others to indulge their appetites without

¹⁶See note 16, p. 207 above.
regard for traditional obligations, and is ground under when they do so.

It should be clear from this in just what way Heilman is off center in saying that Lear's tragic error is due to a failure of imagination. Heilman's implication is that Lear is being over-rational, that his tragic mistake is to try to measure love in terms of property. Actually Lear does not try to do anything of the sort. He merely asserts his appetite for flattery without restraint, while blinding himself to truth and to traditional obligations, in accordance with Edmund's nature. This is not an unimaginative confusion of values, as Heilman asserts. Lear's error is not essentially different, ethically, from succumbing to the sexual appetite illicitly. A Christian who does so no doubt blinds himself temporarily to the values and obligations in which he believes, but there is no confusion involved. He knows what the law is.

Heilman's analysis of the nature pattern concentrates on the turmoil in the moral world of King Lear. Gloucester graphically portrays this turmoil as follows:

These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us: though the wisdom of Nature can reason it thus and thus, yet Nature finds itself scourg'd by the sequent effects. Love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide: in cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces,
treason; and the bond crack'd 'twixt son and father. This villain of mine comes under the prediction; there's son against father: the King falls from the bias of nature; there's father against child. We have seen the best of our time: machinations, hollowness, treachery, and all ruinous disorders follow us disquietly to our graves. . . .

(I,11,107-120)

The ironical reflections of this speech upon Gloucester's own "falling from the bias of nature" are obvious, and Heilman points out the close relationship of this passage to the conception of traditional Nature held by all the protagonists in the play. Heilman also sees Lear's storm as the symbolic expression of the "convulsion in Nature" which the action of the play as a whole sets forth, and as such the storm is to Heilman the height of the nature pattern. It should be added, moreover, that Gloucester's speech contains the kind of omens which forebode the tragic climax of Richard II:

... meteors fright the fixed stars of heaven;  
The pale-faced moon looks bloody on the earth,  
And lean-look'd prophets whisper fearful change;  
Rich men look sad and ruffians dance and leap . . .  
These signs forerun the death or fall of kings.  
(II,iv,10-15)

Chapter Two showed how this imagery in Richard II is a part of the storm pattern. In similar fashion Gloucester's utterance, with its omens and its references to Nature, forebodes the storm in Lear, which comes at the height

17 Heilman's discussion of the nature pattern extends from p. 89 to p. 130 in This Great Stage. For the symbolism of the storm, see pp. 89-90.
of the nature pattern. The storm itself not only symbolizes the "convulsion in Nature" but symbolizes the conflict of the two Natures in Lear's mind -- the conflict, mentioned above in the analysis of the basic difference between the attitudes of the protagonists and the villains, between his determination to reject the truth of his injustice and his relentless conviction that he has been unjust. Counterpoising the storm is the music which accompanies and symbolizes Lear's final recognition of his injustice and his acceptance of the truth.

Appropriately, throughout the storm which symbolizes the conflict between the two Natures in his mind, the king dwells on the subject of injustice: his daughters' injustice to himself, and his own "undivulged crime," the fear of facing which drives him at last to madness. It is significant that Lear calls the raging elements "servile ministers" of Goneril and Regan's injustice (III,ii,21); for throughout his madness, whose onset is signalled by the storm, he is obsessed with the injustices done to him, and conveniently blind to the basic tragic injustice of his own. Thus the height of the nature theme, like all the rest of it, is conceived in terms of injustice.
Heilman correctly regards the animal and sex imagery of the play as an integral part of the nature pattern, supplementing with concrete images the repeated uses of the words "nature," "natural," and "unnatural." Almost nothing need be added to his analysis of the extensive animal and sex themes, which he sees as representing the animal aspects of men who have "emancipated" themselves from the restraints of traditional Nature. The relationship of the two themes to injustice is obvious, since it is Lear's unjust rejection of natural law which frees the animal passions of the villains. This is the symbolic significance of almost all of the extremely numerous references to animals in the play, such as the ones in Albany's speech to Goneril:

Tigers, not daughters, what have you perform'd?  
A father, and a gracious aged man,  
Whose reverence even the head-lugg'd bear would lick,  
Most barbarous, most degenerate! have you maddened.  
(IV, ii, 40-43)

Similar symbolic meaning inheres in Edgar's pseudo-mad anatomy of the abandoned servingman: "hog in sloth, fox in stealth, wolf in greediness, dog in madness, lion in prey" (III, iv, 94-95).

The references to animals are sometimes used almost

\[18\] Ibid., pp. 93-105.
without irony, as in Albany's angry accusation of
Goneril, and at other times with varying degrees of irony.
Edgar is Lear's idea of himself under the persecution of
Goneril and Regan; yet Edgar is all this time confessing
the "unnatural" animal-like behavior which Lear initiated
and now conceals from himself. Also, Regan and Goneril
use animal epithets to label actions against themselves;
Regan says of Gloucester, "Ingrateful fox! 'tis he" (III,
vii,28); and to the servant who defends Gloucester from
Cornwall she says, "How now, you dog!" (74).

The sex theme is introduced in the opening lines,
when Gloucester jokes about Edmund's begetting. Like the
animal theme, the theme of illicit sexual relations sym-
bolizes the viciousness and the ultimately self-destroy-
ing effect of abandoning the traditional natural law.
Edgar's assumed depravity is dealt with largely in terms
of sex; Goneril and Regan both have sexual designs on
Edmund, and are mutually destroyed by these designs; and
Gloucester's blindness is in effect a punishment for
flouting the natural law, as Edgar reminds Edmund:

The dark and vicious place where thee he got
Cost him his eyes.

(V,iii,172-73)

All these ideas are subordinated to the theme of natural
law and its restrictions and obligations, and in turn
to Lear's original injustice.

As Heilman points out, the sexual symbolism is
closely associated with the idea of an offensive odor,
a stench. At the height of his insanity, Lear says of women,

Down from the waist they are Centaurs,
Though women all above:
But to the girdle do the Gods inherit,
Beneath is all the fiend's: there's hell, there's darkness,
There is the sulphurous pit -- burning, scalding,
Stench, consumption; fie, fie, fie! pah, pah!

(IV,iv,126-31)

This is prepared for from the opening lines of the play, where Gloucester says, referring to the begetting of Edmund, "Do you smell a fault?" (I,i,16). The foul smell of "emancipated" human passion permeates the play, linking the ideas of sex, animality, and degradation even more firmly together.

vi

The next theme which has direct reference to Nature and natural law is the clothes theme, which Lear introduces when he says, "... now we will divest us both of rule, / Interest of territory, cares of state" (I,i,49-50). It is carried through the play by such references as "thou gav'st them the rod and putt'st down thine own breeches" (I,iv,180-81); "Fathers that wear rags / Do make their children blind" (II,iv,48-49); "on my knees I beg / That you'll vouchsafe me raiment" (II,iv,156-57); and "Poor naked wretches, whereso'er you are" (III,iv,23). The

19Tbid., p. 204.
theme reaches its climax when Lear actually strips off his clothes:

unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art. Off, off, you lendings! Come, unbutton here. (Tearing off his clothes.)

(III, iv, 109-112)

There is little room, and less need, for original comment on this theme; for Heilman and Danby have both analyzed the significance of Lear's stripping, which is obviously the guiding symbol of the clothes theme, and both have come to the conclusion that Lear is simply carrying to a relentlessly logical conclusion his daughters' refusal to treat him like a human being rather than an animal. 20

Danby does not study imagery specifically, and does not speak of image themes. But it is his analysis, and not Heilman's, which shows that the stripping is directly related to the traditional concept of Nature. As Danby makes clear, it was a part of man's "natural" privileges that he have not only the bare necessities of life, but somewhat more; hence Lear's speech

O! reason not the need; our basest beggars Are in the poorest thing superfluous: Allow not nature more than nature needs, Man's life's as cheap as beast's. Thou art a lady; If only to go warm were gorgeous, Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st, Which scarcely keeps thee warm. (II, iv, 266-72)

Thus Danby has supplied the particular link which
subordinates the clothes pattern to the nature pattern.
Only one more step need be taken here, and that is to
show the particular aspect of the central issue of in-
justice which the clothing pattern illuminates. Lear
is not only furious at Goneril and Regan for failing
to "accommodate" him in accordance with natural law,
but is desperately trying to avoid facing his own "un-
natural" treatment of Cordelia. Just before he goes mad
he humbly thinks of the "poor naked wretches" to whom he
heretofore has not paid enough attention; but unable to
face this thought for long, he returns to his violent
preoccupation with the wrongs done to him by Goneril
and Regan. This is where Edgar puts in his appearance.
Edgar, who represents Lear's idea of himself under the
persecution of Goneril and Regan, is also to be closely
associated with the "poor naked wretches" whom Lear
has just been regretfully thinking of. When Lear strips
to be like Edgar, his stripping symbolizes not only the
pitiful, animal state to which Goneril and Regan have
reduced the king, but also the general plight of anyone
who is not given his just "natural" deserts as a human
being; and the original, tragic injustice is Lear's
failure to accommodate Cordelia. Cordelia, ultimately,
is the "poor naked wretch" to whom Lear refers when
he says,
O! I have ta'en
Too little care of this. Take physic, Pomp;
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel ...  
(III,iv,32-34)

And it is his wish to avoid the consciousness of having
stripped Cordelia of her rights which generates the mood
of violent self-pity in which Lear strips himself. The
clothing theme, therefore, like the other themes helps
point up the dramatic fact of Lear's injustice.

vii

The clothes theme has another function besides
underlining the tragic injustice Lear commits when he
refuses to accommodate Cordelia with her natural rights
as human being and daughter. This second function is
that of pointing up the disastrous folly of concealing
injustice. In the first scene the banished Cordelia
says to Goneril and Regan as she takes her leave,

Time shall unfold what plighted cunning hides;
Who cover faults, at last shame them derides.
(I,i,280-81)

"Plighted" here means folded or pleated, and thus has
reference both to clothing and to careful concealment.
The most obvious dramatic association of the statement
is with the shame which finally overtakes the cunning
Goneril and Regan -- an association which Heilman skill-
fully pursues, at the end of a chapter whose particular
emphasis is on the opposite dangers which accompany too
little cunning in hiding one's true nature. He slights one apparent implication of the theme, however, which is that Lear himself is guilty of cunningly hiding his fault of injustice. Hence the extreme irony of his violent outburst in the final mad scene,

Through tatter'd clothes small vices do appear; Robes and furr'd gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold, And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks; Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw does pierce it. (IV,v1,168-71)

The tenor of this whole speech is bitterness at the injustice of the whole world; but Lear himself is a palpable contradiction of what he is asserting, for though he wore "furr'd robes" when he was unjust to Cordelia, retribution came inexorably; and justice will shortly be delivered to Edmund, Goneril, and Regan as well. Thus it is wrong to say, as Heilman does, that Lear in this speech has a "devastating insight into the moral reality of the world"; for he is wholly cynical, and does not once recognize the all-important fact that he himself is to blame for the whole affair, and that regardless of who may suffer unjustly, the world he lives in is at least thorough in punishing injustices. It is this fact, the fact of Lear's own injustice, which makes the play a tragedy. The second function of the clothing theme, then, is to emphasize that Lear, no less than Goneril, Regan, and Edmund, hides his fault and is thereby brought to misery.
Heilman's chapter "If You Do Love Old Men" (pp. 133-51) catalogues the numerous references to age in the play, and deftly establishes the respect to which age is obviously entitled in the traditional Nature. All the protagonists accord this respect to age, while Goneril, Regan, and Edmund simply view the old as a nuisance. Thus the idea of old age is another symbol of the daughters' flouting of traditional duties. An old person is even more entitled to love and respect than the rest of one's family. But here as elsewhere it is necessary to point out that the theme is directly related to Lear's tragic mistake of injustice.

In the first scene Lear presumes upon the prerogatives of old age to the point of mocking the obligations of the same natural law which establishes these prerogatives. There is no disregard of natural law merely in his desire to give up his responsibilities; age is deserving of ease and honor, under natural law, regardless of competence. But when he indulges his prerogatives to the point of injuring his own daughter for telling the truth, he rejects the very code which establishes his respected position. And every reference to the respect due to age, in so far as these references may be considered an iterative symbol, underlines the fact that Lear has
personally and deliberately rejected the very prerogatives which he so loudly demands from Goneril and Regan.

The references in *King Lear* to what is "dear," i.e. valuable, form what Heilman calls the "values" pattern. Goneril says Lear is "Dearer than eyesight, space and liberty; / Beyond what can be valued rich or rare" (I,1,56-57); Lear laments that he has let folly in and his "dear judgment out" (I,iv,280-81); and so on through the play. This is an important theme, in the sense that values are always important in tragedy; as Heilman says,

> The whole play, of course, acts values; it is a metaphor for the values of human experience. Besides, each deed is a value judgment, for it shows the kind of choice a character makes.

Yet it is wrong to say that this pattern is the one most central to the tragic flaw, as Heilman does — on the premise that the flaw is a failure of Lear's imaginative grasp of values. The flaw, however, is blindness to uncomfortable truth, and it is symbolized in the sight-and-blindness pattern. The values theme, moreover, is developed far less extensively than most of the other patterns examined so far. It has no such dominant images

---

21 *This Great Stage*, pp. 153-71.
as the sight-and-blindness, the nature, or the clothes pattern, which are climaxed respectively by the blinding scene, the tempest, and the stripping of Lear. And compared with the huge series of images, in the form of trials, accorded to the injustice theme, the values pattern seems rather insignificant. Perhaps it is wise to view the values theme as merely a facet of the nature theme, the facet which deals with the commandment "Thou shalt have no other gods before me"; that is, it deals with the question of what the final object of one's endeavors should be. The traditional, "natural" view is that the Deity is the object of one's endeavors, and that all other values are to be oriented accordingly. Man orients his actions toward the Deity specifically by seeking truth and acting charitably; truth and love have prior claim over everything else. What Goneril, Regan, and Edmund do is to deify the objects of their passions, while negating truth and love; and in allowing his passionate appetite for flattery and his passionate pride to blind him to truth and love, Lear commits his tragic injustice to Cordelia. But even though all the actions in the play have some bearing on values, the value aspect of Lear's mistake is merely a part of the whole injustice, at least in the terms in which the image patterns are constructed. False values are a part of the new Nature, and true values a part of traditional Nature;
but it is Nature as a whole which Lear rejects, and his rejection of it is caused by the fundamental injustice of a mind which refuses to see anything uncomfortable. Injustice is the image theme which dominates the dramatic action of the play, not only because the tragic mistake and the central dramatic idea of the play are Lear's injustice, but because the injustice theme has the most imposing set of images and serves as the reference for the other themes, and, finally, because the idea of injustice is the means by which all the other themes are united in Lear's final mad scene. This mad scene (IV.vi), which Heilman calls the synthesis scene and which has a function curiously like the scene at Flint Castle in Richard II (III,iii), should now be considered.

In his chapter "Reason in Madness," Heilman says,

In IV.vi we have the climax of the Gloucester plot and the climax of the Lear plot; Gloucester, won from despair by Edgar, reaches his philosophic heights, and Lear comes to his most penetrating vision. Not only are their experiences parallel, but the men are brought together physically -- a dramatic indication of the unifying function of the scene. It is just after Gloucester has promised Edgar to "bear / Affliction till it do cry out itself" that Lear enters, crowned with weeds, and, with Gloucester and Edgar as audience, speaks about one hundred lines -- his most important in the play.

In these lines there are few irrelevancies; almost every phrase of Lear's relates in some significant fashion to the experiences which he has had. What we become aware of first is
the irony of his demonstrating a kind of "understanding" of the very world which had been too much for him when he was in possession of his mind; before, he could but exclaim in anguish, now he incisively goes to the heart of the Goneril-Regan world, of all human evil as it is incarnate in them, and even apparent in himself. Outside the limits of everyday rationality he displays immense imaginative resources and finds exact forms for his devastating insight into the moral reality of the world, and, by implication, into himself and the situation of mankind generally.23

Heilman goes on to remark that this long speech by Lear takes on further strength and importance because it is the point of junction for all the main image patterns of the play.

This last is an invaluable discovery about Shakespeare's technique, but Heilman's interpretation of the scene should be challenged; for Lear's attitude toward the world in this scene is wholly cynical. If Lear is intended to be displaying insight into the moral reality of the world, then Shakespeare's view of moral reality is bleak indeed, and contradicts the very idea of tragedy, which demands a positive sense of values.24 In no instance does Lear grasp the centrally important moral fact of the world of the play, which is that he is himself tragically guilty. It must be recalled that this scene follows shortly after his encounter with Cordelia, whom he refuses to see. Here as before when

23Ibid., pp. 197-98.

24See the chapter on tragedy in A. C. Bradley's Shakespearean Tragedy, pp. 4-39.
faced with the fact of his injustice, Lear retreats into self-pity and begins belaboring Goneril and Regan. This speech in IV, vi is indeed the nexus of all the image patterns; it is a summary of all the aspects in which Lear's tragic mistake of injustice has dramatic importance in the play. First, there is the basic aspect of his deliberate blindness to uncomfortable truth (the sight-blindness pattern). Then, as a result of this blindness, there is his contradictory, unjust attitude toward Nature and its prerogatives and obligations: its prerogative of "accommodation" (clothes pattern) which Lear has refused Cordelia but has demanded of Goneril and Regan; its duty of repressing animal passions (animal, sex patterns), which Lear failed to observe in not restraining his rage against truthful Cordelia; its special prerogatives accorded to age (age pattern), which Lear demands loudly but in fact forfeited when he unjustly rejected Cordelia and crowned the "emancipated" Goneril and Regan, who recognize none of the obligations of Nature; and finally, its obligation to value truth and love above the objects of the appetites (values pattern), which Lear failed to do in demanding pleasant, comfortable flattery and rejecting uncomfortable truth.

Since Lear's final mad speech sums up and reasserts all these faults, and instead of showing a humble acceptance of guilt, expresses a giant self-pity while
condemning all humanity except himself, it is incorrect to say that there is insight here into moral reality. Insight into moral reality, in the terms in which the play is conceived, would consist in the humble admission that he has been flagrantly unjust himself, and unjust in the face of an overwhelming obligation, as king and father, to be just. The cohesive force in the synthesis speech is the ironical fact that Lear is indeed obsessed with the idea of injustice: with everyone's injustice but his own. An analysis of the speech will show how the subject of injustice weaves together all the other patterns.

As the king rushes in upon Edgar and Gloucester, he is under the delusion that he has been charged with counterfeiting: "No, they cannot touch me for coining; I am the king himself" (IV,v1,83-84). This suggests the values pattern, and also suggests that Lear has again retreated into his persecution complex after the refusal to see Cordelia recounted by Kent (IV,iii,39-48). As before, Lear denies unjust behavior. Kenneth Muir remarks that "coining" often had a sexual significance in contemporary plays; hence the possibility that Lear's mind is dwelling on his offense against Nature also appears here. This first sentence of Lear's, however, is preliminary to the main synthesis passage. The importance

25 King Lear, p. 174.
of the first remark is that he begins talking on the same note of persecution he has continually used when fleeing from his injustice to Cordelia.

The first extended prose speech, lines 86-97, is largely nonsensical, though it is plain that Lear thinks he is training soldiers for a campaign, an idea which keeps turning up throughout the scene and to which he returns at the end of the synthesis passage in his cry for revenge upon his "sons-in-law," presumably the commanders of Goneril's and Regan's forces. The synthesis passage, then, is begun and ended on the same note as is sounded in all the rest of the king's madness: persecution and revenge.

The nearest Lear comes to genuine insight in the scene is the recognition that his imagination is diseased, and in need of "sweetening." Edgar, the one person in the scene who has real moral insight, gives the password "sweet marjoram" (94), whereupon Lear says, "pass" (95); later Lear says, "Give me an ounce of civet ... / To sweeten my imagination" (132-33). All the rest of the synthesis passage lends weight to this acknowledgement that his imagination needs sweetening; for Lear moves, like Richard in the abdication scene, from a condemnation of his chief enemies to an unwarranted condemnation of the very world which he himself has thrown into a turmoil.
Having heard Gloucester speak for the first time, Lear says, "Ha! Goneril with a white beard!" (97), and starts berating his daughters for giving the very flattery which he had demanded of them. Then, at line 110, he partially recognizes Gloucester, and changes from prose into the verse which begins the main part of the synthesis passage. His first remarks in verse are a pardon of Gloucester's adultery in begetting Edmund:

Ay, every inch a king:
When I do stare, see how the subject quakes.
I pardon that man's life. What was thy cause?
Adultery?
Thou shalt not die: die for adultery! No:
The wren goes to't, and the small gilded fly
Does lasher in my sight.
Let copulation thrive; for Gloucester's
bastard son
Was kinder to his father than my daughters
Got 'twixt the lawful sheets.  

(110-119)

This passage, rendered in terms of the sight, sex, and animal themes, is, of course, pathetically ironic because Gloucester knows that Edmund was no truer than Goneril and Regan. Thus the speech emphasizes the disastrous blindness to the real nature of their children which both men have suffered from. But there is no new insight here; before he went mad Lear was already denouncing the cruelty and injustice of Goneril and Regan. The significant point is that Lear is conscious of no guilt on his own part; instead, he condemns the injustice of a world in which he is punished equally with those whom he considers wrongdoers under traditional Nature. Cynically, he hints that all
mankind must simply be viewed as animals: "The wren goes to't; ... let copulation thrive."

The succeeding lines continue the animal and sex themes, the themes which most particularly emphasize the bestiality which Lear's unacknowledged injustice has released upon the land. The passage concludes with his viciously cynical condemnation of women:

Down from the waist they are Centaurs,
Though women all above:
But to the girdle do the Gods inherit,
Beneath is all the fiend's: there's hell, there's darkness,
There is the sulphurous pit -- burning, scalding,
Stench, consumption; fie, fie, fie! pah, pah!

(126-31)

This arraignment of women in general is, of course, unjust in terms of the world of the play. When one considers that such people as Cordelia exist in the play, and reflects that Cordelia and other moral people have been disabled only by the blind foolishness of Lear and his counterpart Gloucester, it seems unfair to say that this speech reveals insight into moral reality; it indicates, rather, Lear's continued failure to face and admit the injustice which permitted such Centaurs as Goneril and Regan to get control of things. The fact that Lear is now condemning women in general rather than Goneril and Regan in particular shows how his persecution complex is gaining force. His next remark widens the condemnation to all humanity. Gloucester says, "O! let me kiss that hand"
(134). Lear replies, "Let me wipe it first; it smells of mortality" (135). From this point on, his cynicism is directed toward the whole world and all the institutions of justice. The eyesight theme is repeated as he berates Gloucester for not recognizing the injustice of a world which has placed them both in such misery:

> What? art mad? A man may see how this world goes with no eyes. Look with thine ears: see how yond justice rails upon yond simple thief. Hark, in thine ear: change places, and, handy-dandy, which is the justice, which is the thief?

(151-56)

This must be recognized as cynicism too, as a basic injustice to humanity; it shows no recognition that such people as Edgar, Cordellia, Kent, or Albany exist. This speech may reveal a very dim recognition that his own justice was somewhat less than complete, a recognition which grows slightly clearer when he says, "A dog's obeyed in office." But the condemnation is more obviously directed at the injustice of a world in which "dog-hearted daughters" can get into office and be obeyed, and a world in which a "poor naked wretch" like himself is persecuted. As usual, even a partial glimpse of his shortcomings is too much for him; and Richard-like, he continues the cynicism, completely devoid of humility, with which he has been belaboring the persecutors of naked wretches and their "small vices":

> Thorough tatter'd clothes small vices do appear; Robes and furr'd gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold
And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks;
Arm it in rags, a pygmy's straw does pierce it.
(166-69)

The irony of this pronouncement of universal injustice is that the whole movement of the play at this point is toward the punishment of those who plated sin with gold. His own punishment has been in progress ever since he himself began concealing his sin; and Goneril's, Regan's, and Edmund's sins are in the process of being punished, too. Here as elsewhere in the speech Lear shows little insight into moral reality. The mention of gold, incidentally, brings in the values theme again, in such a way that Lear is condemning false values without himself adopting true ones.

Now comes the most cynical comment of all, in which Lear gives a blanket pardon to all men, but on the grounds that everyone is corrupt (the same grounds as were implied in his pardoning of Gloucester's adultery, a few lines before):

None does offend, none, I say none: I'll able 'em.
Take that of me, my friend, who have the power
To seal the accuser's lips.
(170-72)

This part of his speech draws to a close with another reference to Gloucester's blindness -- and an ironical reminder that Lear himself is still suffering from the tragic blindness in which he started the play:

Get thee glass eyes;
And like a scurvy politician, seem
To see the things thou dost not.
(172-74)
It is at this point that Edgar makes his famous comment "O! matter and impertinency mixed; Reason in madness" (176-77). The occasion is Lear's sudden request to have his boots removed; but Edgar's remark has a direct relevance to the whole speech, which makes a frighteningly comprehensive arraignment of the kind of behavior Lear has loosed upon the world, but makes this arraignment from an essentially insane viewpoint, for Lear does not see his own primary responsibility for the things he condemns, nor does he admit that such a thing as ethical behavior is possible to people in authority. His unawareness of his guilt is emphasized when, seeing Gloucester in tears, he exhorts the blind old noble to be stoical; this is the passage which contains the reference to "this great stage of fools." Lear himself shows no evidence of stoicism, however; and having advised stoicism for Gloucester, he concludes his speech with a shout for revenge upon his sons-in-law.

From beginning to end the synthesis speech is concerned with injustice. It begins upon the values theme, asserting the injustice of his being persecuted for "coining"; then it arraigns in turn the injustice of Goneril and Regan, all women, organized judiciary systems, and finally the whole world, in terms of eyesight, animals, sex, clothes, and values; and in the passage "They flattered me like a dog, and told me I had the white hairs in my beard ere the black ones were there" (97-100), the
age theme is brought in too, with an implication of injustice on the part of the flatterers. Appropriately, in the middle of Lear's speech, Gloucester says, "O ruin'd piece of Nature" (136).

Thus all the image themes are united in Lear's long, mad condemnation of the injustice which he is planning to revenge himself upon.

Ironically, just after Lear has finished his diatribe against women, organized justice, and the world, Cordelia's men appear and treat him with great respect and kindness. Lear's response is of course irrational; he simply runs away.

Not until he has had his long, curative sleep can he finally face the truth, concede injustice, and say to Cordelia,

Pray now, forget and forgive; I am old and foolish. (IV,vii,84)

It is Heilman's contention that Lear's exhortation of stoicism shows that Lear recognizes in the naked sufferers of this world those who have genuine spiritual insight, or those who can attain it.26 Included in this group are Edgar, Gloucester, Cordelia, Lear, and especially the Fool, who is handicapped throughout his role and yet has insight continually.

26 This Great Stage, pp. 212-22.
This contention fits in with Heilman's paradox that the successful, practical, rational man destroys himself through spiritual blindness, while the unpractical, imaginative man through misery comes at last to spiritual insight and hence to salvation. And it is Lear's imaginative, ragged madness, in this view, which gives him insight.

The faults of this view are that (1) Edgar comes not only to spiritual insight but also to great practical skill; (2) Goneril, Regan, and Edmund are not merely "rationalistic"; they have some insights of the sort which Heilman defines as imaginative -- e.g., the ability to see that Edgar is noble (I,11,186), and the ability to see that Lear loves Cordelia best and that he behaves foolishly in casting her off (I,1,292-94); and (3) Lear does not actually say anything about the spiritual virtue of being ragged, physically handicapped, and incompetent in things practical; nor does he act on his prescription of stoicism. All of these difficulties are resolved by the view that Lear's tragic flaw is his deliberate blindness to "discomfortable" truth and that his tragic mistake is the unjust rejection of the obligations of Nature which results from his blindness. In this view, both practical skill and imaginative gifts are merely accidental to a basic orientation toward the obligations of Nature and toward truth; and while
a powerful imagination may help Edgar, for instance, to spiritual insight, it is the basic orientation toward truth as opposed to the objects of the appetites which marks the difference between the "saved" and "unsaved" of this play. Whether one is brilliant like Edmund or stupid like Oswald, he is still "lost" if he deifies the objects of his appetites; and whether he is tactful like Edgar or blunt like Kent and Cordelia, he is "saved" if he loves the truth and respects the obligations of Nature.

Heilman sees the theory of salvation through imaginativeness and lack of practicality as set forth in the "madness" theme. Folly and madness are the terms applied by the villains to those who actually have spiritual insight; the perceptive Fool supposedly takes his name from this underlying idea; and Lear, through madness, supposedly comes to spiritual insight. The synthesis speech fits in because Lear is mad when he voices it; hence all the themes are synthesized in terms of the madness which leads to salvation.

But when it appears that Lear's madness produces no insight, and when practicality and imaginativeness prove to be merely accidental to the main issues of the play, and when in addition the various themes are seen to be

27Ibid., 173-222.
woven together in terms of injustice, then the madness theme seems actually not to exist in the sense that the other themes do. It is true that "fool" and "folly" are applied frequently to those who respect truth and Nature above the objects of the appetite (I, i, 188; II, iv, 78-85; IV, i, 28, 37, 54, 58, 61); and the Fool himself, as the voice of Lear's suppressed good sense, is the symbol of this attitude. To this extent, Heilman's "madness" theme fits in with the other patterns by symbolizing the contempt into which Lear's injustice precipitates truth and the obligations of Nature.

In connection with the theory of imaginative madness, something should be added about the conjecture that Lear is a poet. The fact that Lear all the way through his madness is still deliberately blinding himself to the reality on which the poet Shakespeare, and all competent poets, have a firm grasp, makes it unreasonable to call Lear a poet, just as it is unreasonable to call Richard a poet when he indulges his self-delusive fancies. The outpourings of both men are simply Shakespeare's way of portraying these characters' violent and willful delusions, by which they avoid facing the truth.

Since King Lear's tragic mistake so closely parallels that of King Richard, and since so many image themes in both plays have been seen to be centered in the tragic
fact of injustice, it is no surprise to find in King Lear as in Richard II a series of trial scenes which serve as huge symbols of the chief dramatic idea. There are four in King Lear, one in the opening scene and one in the closing scene as in Richard II, and two at the very center of the play (III,vi and III,vii), corresponding roughly to the three other trial scenes which occur in the course of the earlier play. Like Richard II, the later play opens on a court scene: in this instance a mock-trial of the daughters' love, which ends very seriously with the sentencing of Cordelia and Kent. Indeed, the playwright seems to have subordinated everything else to the opportunity of making the opening scene a gigantic image of royal injustice, so that the introduction of the dramatis personae and of the various lesser dramatic ideas, and the commission of the tragic error itself, are all combined in the dramatic image of the trial, instead of being spread out into several scenes as they are in Macbeth.

The next two trial scenes are farces which occur during the time Lear is mad. Lear, a fugitive from his own injustice, arraigns Goneril and Regan (III,vi,20-83); Cornwall and Regan, with "the form of justice" (III,vii,25), conduct a kangaroo court which ends in the blinding of Gloucester. The play is balanced on the other end with a final trial scene (V,iii), which like the second
trial in Richard II is a trial-by-combat. The justice meted out to the villains in this scene throws into ironic relief the tragic fact that the consequences of Lear's original injustice are still operating, when Lear appears with Cordelia dead in his arms.

The entire play, then -- the tragic hero himself, the dramatic theme, the play's balanced structure, and the whole system of imagery -- is conceived in terms of injustice, the effects of injustice, and the final destruction of those who were unjust. The tragic world of King Lear, with its premises of justice and natural law, undergoes a gigantic convulsion in eliminating the elements of injustice within itself. And in genuinely tragic fashion, the guilty carry some of the innocent along with them, at least to physical destruction; Cordelia helps pay the price of Lear's injustice.

The multiple parallels in the techniques of character and imagery in Richard II and King Lear make it abundantly clear that the later play is a direct descendant of the first one; and the unifying of both plays around the tragic mistake of injustice, together with the series of conspicuously placed trial scenes in both plays, is the final evidence that Richard II was the direct pattern for Lear.

There are multiple technical improvements in the later play, but almost no technical innovations; the
improvements are matters of restraint and increasing virtuosity. Images are compressed and made less conspicuous in themselves, except where they serve a key symbolic function as do the trial scenes, the storm, the stripping, and the blinding; the themes are related more closely to one another; and key symbols are simplified and placed at points of high dramatic interest. The most significant change in the image technique of the two plays is a negative one: the almost complete suppression of iterative themes which do not fit obviously into the pattern of injustice. And even in this it can be seen that the later play benefited from the lessons of the former. Richard II is thus seen to be an invaluable storehouse of materials for the technical study of King Lear, a play universally conceded to be among the greatest poems of all time.
CONCLUSION

This study has examined parallels in the imagery and characterization of Richard II and King Lear, with the purpose of elucidating dramatic technique by comparing a mature play with a similar, but immature one. The conclusions of the study are as follows. The central dramatic idea of both plays is the king's tragic injustice; and the various techniques of characterization and dramatic imagery are largely oriented toward this dramatic idea. The two kings are apparently not intended to be thought of as poets, but they do have similar, almost identical tragic flaws — their evasive refusals to face anything uncomfortable, refusals which stem from strong appetites for mental comfort. These tragic flaws are symbolized by very similar iterative themes: Richard's by the blinding tears of false sorrow, Lear's by the sight and blindness imagery. The tragic mistake of injustice is symbolized in both plays by a series of trial scenes which serve as the dominant images. A group of lesser image themes in each play symbolizes various aspects of the king's injustice; and thus all the important themes in both plays take their significance from the chief dramatic idea.
Images are used in a number of different ways in the two plays: as iterative symbols, as foreboding devices, as indexes of the speakers' personalities, as symbols of particular states of mind, and as a means of heightening climactic scenes, as when the various themes are woven together in terms of a unifying theme. It is plain that *King Lear* profited greatly from the experience of *Richard II*; but there is little basic change in image technique. The changes are matters of virtuosity. For instance, the key to the tears theme in *Richard II* is placed in an undramatic scene, and is too complex to be grasped quickly; the key to the sight theme in *Lear*, by contrast, is at a peak of dramatic interest, and is very simple and clear. By limiting the chorus actions in *Lear* to a single sub-plot, the dramatist avoids another shortcoming in the technique of *Richard II*. Other improvements are the reduction of the number of image themes in the second play, and the grouping of almost all of the minor themes around the idea of Nature in a way similar to the close relationship of the sun, balm, and Christ themes in *Richard II*. Finally, by compressing the individual images and making them less conspicuous in themselves, Shakespeare eliminates the distracting features which prevent many images in *Richard II* from accomplishing their proper functions.
The study as a whole seems to reveal that the basic image techniques of Shakespeare's great tragedies were developed somewhat earlier than has hitherto been supposed; that in these two tragedies, at least, almost everything in the play is oriented toward the central dramatic idea; and that Shakespeare was perhaps not so much concerned with the nature and the problems of poets in a hostile world as he was with the nature and problems of humanity in general.
APPENDIX

RICHARD II, KING LEIR, AND KING LEAR

The similarities noted between Richard II and King Lear in this study lead to the conjecture that Shakespeare might actually have had the Lear story in mind when he wrote Richard II, and might have been consciously experimenting with devices for handling that story. Such a conjecture can never be proved, of course, but it is interesting that there are some remarkable parallels, not previously noticed, between Richard II and The Chronicle History of King Leir, which was produced not long before Richard II was written.¹ These similarities, which are quoted below, show that Leir may have influenced the earlier Shakespearean tragedy as well as the later one.²


²For the influence of Leir on Lear, see "The Date of King Lear and Shakespeare's Use of Earlier Versions of the Story," The Library, 4th Series, XX (1939-40), 377-400.
(1) When Richard returns from Ireland, Aumerle's first remark is,

Yea, my lord. How brooks your grace the air?  
(III,11,2)

When Mumford and the Gallian king arrive in Brittany, Mumford says,

My lord, how do you brook this British air?  
(II,iv,1)

(2) In Leir, Mumford says,

My leige, 'tis needless to spur a willing horse.  
(Vi,vi,20)

A very similar line occurs in Richard II:

How fondly dost thou spur a forward horse!  
(IV,i,72)

(3) The man whom Ragan pays to murder Leir says, just before abandoning the murder,

Oh, but my conscience for this act doth tell
I get heaven's hate, earth's scorn, and pains of hell.  

(IV,vii,203-204)

Exton, when he has murdered Richard, expresses his twinge of conscience in a couplet with the same rhyme-sound and a similar conviction of damnation:

For now the devil, that told me I did well,
Says that this deed is chronicled in hell.  
(V,v,115-16)

(4) Cordella says to the King of Gallia,

---

3Line references are to The Chronicle History of King Leir: The Original of Shakespeare's 'King Lear,' ed. Sidney Lee (New York: Duffield, 1909).
Yet well I know, you come of royal race,
I see such sparks of honour in your face.  
(II,iv,139)

Bolingbroke says of Carlisle in granting him clemency,

For though mine enemy thou hast ever been,
High sparks of honour in thee I have seen.
(V,vi,28-29)

(5) Leir muses about his treatment of Cordelia:

My bitter words have gall'd her honey thoughts,
And weed of rancour chok'd the flower of grace.
(V,iii,70-71)

In Richard II, these lines appear:

I will go root away
The noisome weeds, which without profit suck
The soil's fertility from the wholesome flowers.
... the whole land
Is full of weeds, her fairest flowers choked up.
(III,iv,37-44)

(6) Ragan hypocritically describes her false sorrow
over Leir's absence:

All sorrow is but counterfeit to mine,
Whose lips are almost sealed up with grief:
Mine is the substance, whilst they do but seem
To weep the loss, which tears cannot redeem.
(V,i,12-15)

She adds later in the same speech,

Oh, but my grief, like a swelling tide,
Exceeds the bounds of patience.
(34-35)

Ragan's phrasing seems to have come to Shakespeare's mind
when he shows Richard, after a long display of self-pity
in the abdication scene, trying to explain away Bolingbroke's precise diagnosis of his theatrical false sorrow:

4My italics mark distinctive phrasing which occurs in both plays.
Bol.: The shadow of your sorrow hath destroy'd
The shadow of your face.
K. Rich.: ... 'T is very true, my grief lies
all within;
And these external manners of laments
Are merely shadows to the unseen grief
That swells with silence in the tortured soul;
There lies the substance.
(IV,1,292-99)

(7) King Richard's rhetorical speech on the battlements of Flint Castle seems to echo a passage in Leir. Richard's speech reads in part,

I'll give my jewels for a set of beads, ...
My gay apparel for an almsman's gown,
My figured goblets for a dish of wood,
My sceptre for a palmer's walking-staff, ...
And my large kingdom for a little grave ...
(III,iii,147-53)

Compare the following excerpts, where the king of Gallia and Mumford, disguised as palmers, meet the disinherited, lamenting Cordella:

Cor.: These costly robes ill fitting my estate
I will exchange for other meaner habit.
Mum.: Now if I had a kingdom in my hands,
I would exchange it for a milkmaid's smock ...
(II,iv,31-34)

Later in the same scene Cordella says to the king,

I'll hold thy palmer's staff within my hand
And think it is the sceptre of a queen.
(115-16)

Examples (6) and (7) are especially valuable in that they seem to show synthesizing of separate ideas which are located fairly close together in Leir. This seems to rule out the possibility that the influence, if any, was in the other direction -- a possibility which is remote in any event, since Leir was not a new play when it was
produced ca. 1594. Other possible echoes of Leir in Richard II are as follows:

(8) Pericles says to Leir,

Why, say the worst, the worst can be but death,
And death is better than for to despair.

Richard apostrophizes,

Cry woe, destruction, ruin, and decay;
The worst is death, and death must have his day.

(9) When Perillus comes to comfort the sorrowing Leir,

Leir's remark is,

What man art thou that takest any pity
Upon the worthless state of old Leir?

Richard's greeting to the stable-groom who comes to comfort him in prison contains both the phrasing of Leir's question and the idea of worthlessness:

Thanks, noble peer;
The cheapest of us is ten groats too dear.
What art thou? and how comest thou hither
Where no man never comes but that sad dog
That brings me food to make misfortunes live?

(10) In King Leir Cordella, lamenting over her father's hatred, says,

... all my lifetime would I sackcloth wear
And mourning-wise pour dust upon my head.

York describes the lamenting Richard's entry into London after the abdication:

... dust was thrown upon his sacred head;
Which with ... gentle sorrow he shook off.
(11) Ragan says of Leir,

And is he now come hither, with intent  
To set divorce betwixt my lord and me? ...  
In Cornwall he hath made such mutinies,  
First, setting of the king against the queen;  
Then stirring up the commons 'gainst the king.  
(Iv,11,21-33)

Richard says to Northumberland's men,

Doubly divorced! Bad men, you violate  
A twofold marriage, 'twixt my crown and me  
And then betwixt me and my married wife.  
(V,1,71-73)

In another possible echo of the same speech in Leir,

Bolingbroke says to Bushy and Green,

You have in manner with your sinful hours  
Made a divorce betwixt his queen and him.  
(III,1,11-12)

(12) Perillus cautions the would-be murderer in  
these words:

Oh, but beware, how thou dost lay a hand  
Upon the high anointed of the Lord.  
(Iv,vii,250-51)

Richard says of Bolingbroke's forces,

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 of the Lord.  
(III,11,54-57)

(13) Worried about Leir's absence, Cambria organizes  
a search:

Can no man tell us what's become of him ... ?  
My lords, ...  
Myself will make a strict inquiry here,  
And all about our cities near at hand.  
(V,11,3-10)
Bolingbroke, concerned about his son, says,

Can no man tell me of my unthrifty son?
'T is full three months since I did see him last:
... I would to God, my lords, he might be found:
Inquire at London, 'mongst the taverns there.
(V,iii,1-5)

These parallels in phrasing prove nothing, of course, but they do suggest that Shakespeare might have had the Lear story already in mind when he wrote Richard II, or at least that he might have seen or read Lear shortly before.

There are similarities between Richard II and King Lear, entirely independent of those studied in the body of this dissertation, which make it almost certain that Shakespeare had his earlier play in mind, consciously or unconsciously, when he wrote Lear. The most conclusive evidence that Lear draws directly on the text of Richard II occurs in the scenes where Aumerle and Edmund conceal (or pretend to, in Edmund's case) letters from their respective fathers. When York sees the letter in Aumerle's bosom, this conversation ensues:

York: What seal is that ...? ...
Aumerle: My lord, 't is nothing.
York: No matter, then, who see it:
I will be satisfied; let me see the writing.
Aumerle: I do beseech your grace to pardon me.
(V,ii,55-60)

Having read the letter, York exclaims,

Treason! foul treason! Villain! traitor! slave!
(72)
The conversation between Gloucester and Edmund is almost identical in wording:

*Gloucester*: What papers were you reading?
*Edmund*: Nothing, my lord.
*Glou.*: No? ... Let's see: come, if it be nothing, I shall not need spectacles.
*Edmund*: I beseech you, Sir, pardon me. 

(I,ii,30-36)

Having read the letter and heard Edmund "defend" Edgar, Gloucester says,

O villain, villain! ... Abhorred villain!  
Unnatural, detested, brutish villain!  
(75-77)

Again, the first challenge in the respective combat scenes of the two plays is voiced in very similar language. In *Richard II*, Mowbray says he has come against Bolingbroke by the grace of God and this mine arm

To prove him ...  
A traitor to my God, my king, and me.  
(I,iii,22-24)

Edgar's challenge reads in part,

... thou art a traitor,  
False to thy gods, thy brother, and thy father,  
Conspirant 'gainst this high-illustrious prince ...  
A most toad-spotted traitor. Say thou "No,"  
This sword, this arm and my best spirits are bent  
To prove ... / Thou liest.  
(V,iii,133-41)

The close similarities both in situation and phrasing of these two parallels seem to be almost conclusive evidence that *Richard II* was in Shakespeare's mind when he wrote *Lear*. 
There is at least one instance which seems to indicate influence of Leir on Lear by way of Richard II. This is in the use of the word "pelican." Kenneth Muir has noted the fact that the word in the Shakespearean Lear does not have exactly the same implication as in Leir. Lear speaks of his "pelican daughters" (III, iv, 75); Leir says,

I am as kind as is the pelican
That kills itself, to save her young ones' lives.

(II, iii, 43-44)

The implications are opposite, for in Shakespeare the initiative is on the side of the young birds. There are two other occurrences of "pelican" in Shakespeare, one in Hamlet, the other in Richard II. The word in Richard II has almost exactly the same meaning as the one in Lear. The dying Gaunt accuses Richard of murdering Gloucester, in whose veins flowed the blood of Richard's father and grandfather:

That blood already, like the pelican,
Hast thou tapped out and drunkenly caroused.

(II, i, 126-27)

While making a final check of bibliographical references I came across a note in G. W. Knight's

---

5King Lear, p. 118, note 75.
The Imperial Theme which points out incidental minor parallels between Richard's prison soliloquy and King Lear (The Imperial Theme, pp. 356-57). Knight does not alter the position which is attacked in Chapter Two of the present study, and he makes no references to parallels between the personalities of the two kings. It may be, however, that I was unconsciously influenced by this note when I first conceived the present study, for I remember having read Knight's remarks several years ago.

Finally, it is worth pointing out the parallels in the plots of the two plays which no one seems to have noted before. Both Lear and Richard II are centrally concerned with a royal miscarriage of justice; both have a trial-by-combat, a banishment, and a counter-movement launched from France; and both open upon a scene where one monarch blindly mis-administers justice, and close upon a scene where another monarch makes an attempt to distribute justice according to his subjects' deserts.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. Principal Texts


II. Works Cited


———, "This Great Stage," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, XLVIII (1949), 408-408.


Cox, R. G., "This Great Stage," *Scrutiny*, XVI (1949), 73-74.


Greg, W. W., "The Date of King Lear and Shakespeare's Use of Earlier Versions of the Story," The Library, 4th Series, XX (1939-40), 377-400.


III. Other Pertinent References and Critical Material Employed in Preparing this Dissertation


VITA

George Foster Provost, Jr. was born August 16, 1925, in Mansfield, Louisiana. He attended public schools in Centerville, Tennessee, and Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and was graduated from Baton Rouge High School in May, 1941. His undergraduate study was done at Louisiana State University, 1941-44 and 46-47, and he was graduated B. S. in Chemical Engineering in June, 1947. From April, 1944 until June, 1946 he served in the United States Navy, attaining the rank of Aviation Electronics Technician's Mate, Second Class. He was employed by the Shell Chemical Corporation in Houston, Texas, during 1947 and 1948, and he spent the years 1948-55 teaching and attending graduate school at the University of Oregon and at L. S. U. He was awarded the M. A. in English at the University of Oregon in June, 1952.