FAILURE OF THE WARRIOR-HERO IN
SHAKESPEARE'S POLITICAL PLAYS

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Denton, Texas
December, 1976

The problem with which this investigation is concerned is that of the warrior-hero ideal as it evolves in Shakespeare's English and Roman plays, and its ultimate failure as a standard for exemplary conduct. What this study demonstrates is that the ideal of kingship that is developed in the English histories, especially in the Second Tetralogy, and which reaches its zenith in *Henry V*, is quite literally overturned in three Roman plays—*Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus*. The method of determining this difference is a detailed analysis of these groups of plays. This analysis utilizes the body of Shakespearean criticism in order to note the almost total silence on what this study shows to be Shakespeare's growing disillusionment with the hero-king ideal and his final portrait of this ideal as a failure.

This study compares the thematic content of the chronicle plays from *Richard II* through *Henry V* with that of the Roman plays, a comparison that reveals a difference of attitude with respect to the traditional values that influence the hero's public conduct. Whereas in the English histories Shakespeare extols the duties and prerogatives of the royal person, in the Roman plays the values of Rome inhibit and at times distort the nobility of the hero.
The first half of this study deals with the Second Tetralogy, in which Shakespeare seems to accept the concept of divine right as a basic hypothesis, while severely criticizing the inequities that sometimes result from that right to rule. In this group of plays, Shakespeare's dramatization of the concept of divine right and his development of the character of the king reaches beyond Tudor propaganda into the areas of conflict that arise between the dogmatic certainty of an ideal--jus divinum--and the ever-shifting facets of personality and events.

What is significant in this group of plays is an evolving ideal of kingship. We move from the uncertainties of Richard, a "Sun-King" who cannot easily wear the mantle of divinity, to Henry IV, who for all his acumen cannot overcome the stigma to his legitimacy. We emerge at Henry V, the warrior-hero who balances power with justice, a public figure whose obligations and duties to the state are paramount to any personal or private considerations.

*Julius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra, and Coriolanus* involve worlds far removed from divine right and God-established authority, and yet a definite relationship can be discerned between the ideal of kingship as developed in the Second Tetralogy and what can only be called its antithesis. The ideal of the warrior-hero as embodied and glorified in
the figure of Henry V appears in these Roman plays as an outmoded concept that leaves the heroes singularly unfulfilled.

What Shakespeare demonstrates in these Roman plays is that the code of conduct that transforms Henry V into the mirror of Christian kings can lead in other contexts to a radical insensibility that can only pervert the public order. The basic irony of the warrior-hero concept is that the desire of the hero to act honorably, which, as he understands it, means the acceptance of duty and the negation of private feelings, subverts the humanistic tendencies that would actually render him a better ruler or a more complete hero.

It is the main conclusion of this study that in certain plays, and most particularly in the Roman plays, Shakespeare demonstrates a consciousness of something more valuable than political expediency and political legality. Indeed, the tragedy of these political heroes lies precisely in their allegiance to the standard of conduct of the soldier-king. Brutus, Antony, and Coriolanus, among others, suffer defeat in their striving to capture a higher reality. This investigation demonstrates that the concept of honor has lost its value in the social matrix of political machinations.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION: DIVINE RIGHT AND THE CONCEPT OF THE WARRIOR-HERO</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RICHARD II: MEDIEVALIST IN RENAISSANCE TRAPPINGS</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HENRY IV, PARTS I AND II: THE &quot;GOLDEN CARE&quot; OF KINGSHIP</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HENRY V: THE APOTHEOSIS OF THE WARRIOR-HERO</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JULIUS CAESAR: THE PRINCIPLE OF HEROISM VERSUS THE PRINCIPLE OF FRIENDSHIP</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI.</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA: &quot;'TIS PALTRY TO BE CAESAR&quot;</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII.</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORIOLANUS: THE FAILURE OF THE WARRIOR-HERO</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII.</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

DIVINE RIGHT AND THE CONCEPT OF THE WARRIOR-HERO

One of the most striking features of Shakespeare's history plays is his exploration of the concept of the hero. The concept is inextricably bound to both Tudor and classical influences, for the plays evince not only an acceptance of the doctrine of divine right, but also a belief in the warrior-hero, often a Herculean figure whose strength and military prowess are legendary.\(^1\) Shakespeare's English history plays, especially the plays of the Second Tetralogy, represent a search for a kingly hero who embodies the best features of both concepts, a figure that comes to realization at last in Henry V. As Shakespeare continues to explore the ethical possibilities and limitations of the political world, however, his concept of leadership and heroism changes. The ideal of kingship that is developed in the English histories and reaches its zenith in Henry V is quite literally overturned. As a result, the political certitude of a hierarchy of public

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\(^1\)In Chapter V of Eugene M. Waith's The Herculean Hero (New York, 1962), pp. 112-121, Waith discusses the influence of the Herculean myth upon Antony and Cleopatra and Coriolanus; however, he does not point out the effect of this heroic idea upon Shakespeare's evolving concept of kingship as it appears in the English histories.
values that marks the historical tetralogies and culminates in the apotheosis of Henry V gives way in three Roman plays—Julius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra, and Coriolanus—to political doubt, and doubt to political skepticism.

A comparison of thematic materials of the chronicle plays from Richard II through Henry V with those of the Roman plays reveals a difference of perspective, of mood, of attitude, with respect to the traditional values that influence the hero's public conduct. Both sequences of plays assume an intimate connection between the private and public realms; both assume a fundamental relationship between private loyalties and public responsibility. But the values that sustain the public world of Rome are not glorified as they are in the English histories. Most studies of Shakespeare's Roman and English history plays treat the two groups as essentially the same kind of genre, in which history provides a moral lesson for the nation as well as for the king, but few commentators on Shakespeare's chronicle plays recognize the difference in the concept of warrior-hero as apotheosized in the Henriad and as it is presented in the Roman plays. A

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2Michael Manheim, The Weak King Dilemma in the Shakespeaean History Play (Syracuse, N.Y., 1973), offers a corrective to the general attitude of reading Shakespeare's chronicle plays as mirrors of Elizabethan policy; instead he applies as an alternative the idea of Machiavellian ethics, an application that in fact seems to distort Shakespeare's concept of the good king as illustrated in Henry V.
detailed analysis of these groups of plays reveals the pattern of change in Shakespeare's treatment of the uses of political power and, most significantly for our purposes, of the concept of the warrior-hero and its ultimate failure as a standard for exemplary human conduct.

The traditional Renaissance view of kingship is epitomized in Francis Bacon's brief but wholly representative essay "Of a King." A king "is a mortal God on earth, unto whom the living God hath lent his own name as a great honor . . . ". Moreover, the king, according to Bacon, "is the fountain of honor, which should not run with a waste-pipe, lest the courtiers sell the water, and then . . . it loses the virtue." Two concepts are implicit in Bacon's definition of kingship: one, of course, is the premise that the king is God's deputy, exercising the authority of God on earth; the second is the close association of the words king and honor. The king is the guardian of his nation's honor, and his abuse of that virtue implies the eventual evaporation of that virtue throughout the kingdom. In Shakespeare's English history plays, the concept of the hero is directly linked with honorable and God-sanctioned conduct in the public sphere.

\[\text{Francis Bacon, "Of a King," The Works of Francis Bacon (Philadelphia, 1857), I, 62. See also Douglas Bush, English Literature and the Earlier Seventeenth Century (New York, 1945), pp. 231-235, for a short but insightful discussion of Bacon's concept of the powers and duties of the ideal king.}\]

\[\text{Bacon, I, 62.}\]
Richard II, Bolingbroke, and Prince Hal work in the framework of this view of heroism. Ultimately as the honor of the king goes, so goes that of England herself. In Richard II, the dying Gaunt laments the decline of "this blessed land, this earth, this realm, this England"; Henry V, as he exuberantly prepares for battle, cries, "God for Harry! England and St. George!" (Henry V III.i.34). Here and elsewhere we see the total identification of king with nation and God. The subject of the chronicles is England and England's fortunes as they rise and fall, primarily as a result of the qualities of the monarch.

The emergence of Prince Hal in the English histories as the ideal hero-prince testifies to the expansion of the spiritual self that is possible in the public domain; in the Roman plays, the antithesis occurs. Not only does Shakespeare's treatment of Brutus, Antony, and Coriolanus reveal a growing skepticism with politics per se, but we see that the possibilities for true heroic action are severely curtailed rather than expanded by the public code. Whereas in the English histories Shakespeare promotes the concept of order and extolls the duties and prerogatives of the royal person, in the Roman plays the values of Rome inhibit and at times

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5Richard II (II.i.50), Shakespeare: The Complete Works, edited by G. B. Harrison (New York, 1952). All further references to Shakespeare's plays are to this edition, and subsequent act, scene, and line notations will be incorporated into the body of the text in parentheses.
distort the nobility of the hero. In *Julius Caesar*, for example, personal friendship disintegrates because of a distorted idea of what constitutes honorable action. In *Antony* and *Cleopatra*, Antony's passionate responsiveness to Cleopatra seems an aberration of the public order; in fact, his tragic dilemma arises out of what appears to be contradictory values: those of duty, public responsibility, and national leadership, on the one hand, and those of love, friendship, and personal fulfillment, on the other. To comprehend adequately the different perspective given to the hero in these two groups of plays, it is necessary first to examine the theory of divine right since it constitutes the basic premise out of which the ideal of the soldier-king evolves, and second, to define the notion of the warrior-hero itself.

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The theory of divine right in English history reflects the Tudor predilection to mingle inextricably theology and politics. John Neville Figgis points out that any theory of government demanded a religious basis in order to be accepted by the English mind; even the disbelievers in the divine right concept never really quarreled with the tactic of combining theology with politics.\(^6\) The belief that authority has a

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religious origin and sanction did not originate, of course, in the sixteenth century. What is distinct in Tudor England is that the principle of *jus divinum* as formulated by the Tudor pamphleteers after Henry VIII's break with Rome conceives resistance against the legal monarch to be treasonous and heretical, regardless of the circumstances. The new attitude meant that rebellion even in the cause of religion constitutes a "sacrilege." James I declared to his first parliament in 1603, "I am the Husband, and All the whole Isle is my lawful Wife; I am the Head, and it is my body." Moreover, the office of the king, in the mind of James, was a "mystery into which lawyers nor philosophers need inquire." And, apparently, neither lawyers nor philosophers

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7For a complete account of "the divine endorsement of history" by Polydore Vergil, Sir Thomas More, Edward Halle, Richard Grafton, and Raphael Holinshed, see Lily B. Campbell, *Shakespeare's "Histories": Mirrors of Elizabethan Policy* (San Marino, Calif., 1947), p. 57. See especially Chapter VIII, "English History in the Sixteenth Century."


11Sabine, p. 392.
did so inquire. Although divine right was a popular and influential theory, it "never received, and indeed was incapable of receiving a philosophical formulation." This concept of absolute power, which defies "analysis or rational defense," was therefore the "product of political necessity rather than reason." Fear of civil wars, of economic and political instability, impelled the acceptance of a doctrine that categorically denied the right to resist, that preached the inherent duty of passive obedience. A king who was ineffectual or who abused his power would be judged by God alone, and never by his subjects. The divine right theory maintains that the right to rule, acquired by birth, cannot be forfeited by the mental or physical incapacity of the monarch, by his despotism, or by successful acts of usurpation. Because the theory regards a king as "accountable only to God and grants no recourse . . . for wrong except through prayer," the possibility of unchecked tyranny becomes apparent. In order to balance this notion of

12 For further discussion of the political and economical causes that gave rise to the theory of divine right, see J. W. Allen, A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century, 2nd ed. (London, 1951), especially section III.

13 Sabine, p. 393. 14 Figgis, pp. 5-6.

15 Sabine, p. 395.


17 Ibid., p. 143. 18 Ibid., p. 142. 19 Ibid., p. 143.
absolute power, it became popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to discuss the wise use of power, and more specifically the education of a prince.²⁰ Sometimes these discussions were quite literally directed,²¹ implying severe criticism of ineffective leadership. John Palmer explains that the "English, in dealing faithfully with their kings for over a thousand years of history, have contrived to retain a mystical respect for the royal office without in any way forgoing their right of judgment on the royal person."²²

Shakespeare's histories have to do with kings--John, the Richards, and the Henrys--and "the struggle for the English crown that went on from the close of the fourteenth to the end of the fifteenth century."²³ As Jan Kott observes, these plays concern power, and for Shakespeare "the crown is the image of power."²⁴ It is, however, not power abstractly

²⁰Ibid.

²¹For example, see M. M. Reese, The Cease of Majesty: A Study of Shakespeare's History Plays (London, 1961), pp. 28 ff, for his discussion of the criticism directed against Elizabeth I by Parliament.


²⁴Ibid., p. 9.
conceived. In Shakespeare's dramatization of history "the struggle for power is always stripped of all mythology, shown in its 'pure state.' It is a struggle for the crown, between people who have a name, a title and power." In the two great tetralogies and in the four or five other English histories, Shakespeare never loses that "mystical respect" for the monarchy. Nonetheless, he reserves the prerogative to analyze the rightness or wrongness of royal actions. Like his contemporaries, Shakespeare in his examination of English history is quite particular, and his characters are often quite critical of the modus operandi of specific English kings.

It is a tribute to Shakespeare's own complex responses to his material that such an examination of English history, which necessarily involves divine right, is never presented simply as Tudor propaganda. Nevertheless, in these history plays Shakespeare seems to accept divine right as almost an

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27 See E. M. W. Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays (New York, 1946), for the most basic analysis of the relationship of the Tudor myth as it forms a pattern in these English history plays. As Tillyard points out, p. 149, "The outlines of the pattern he [Shakespeare] derived from Hall, but the sustained energy of mind needed to develop them he got from his own ambitions and the example of other works, particularly of the Mirror for Magistrates." Also, Willard Farnham's Chapter VII, entitled, "The 'Mirror for Magistrates,'" in The Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy (New York, 1956), is very helpful in pointing out the medieval foundation for much of Shakespeare's attitude toward history.
a priori principle. In the first tetralogy the concept of kingship is intimately tied with the concept of divine right, with its sanctions for power and corresponding responsibilities. In these plays the order of the realm seems to depend wholly upon the legality of the king's position augmented by his private morality. Although M. M. Reese believes that "the cease of majesty occurs when king and subject no longer realize their partnership in greatness," the emphasis of the Tudor historians and that of the English history plays is upon divine authority and upon the duties and obligations of the monarch, rather than on any reciprocal relationship between king and subjects. It is in later plays, such as Julius Caesar or Coriolanus, that the emphasis shifts from the ruler to the responsibilities of politically powerful subjects. And, interestingly enough, it is in these plays utilizing material outside of English history, and therefore outside the framework of divine right, that Shakespeare expresses his harshest criticism of political power and of political action. But in the plays dealing with English history,

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29 D. A. Traversi, Shakespeare: The Roman Plays (Stanford, Calif., 1963), p. 12, observes, "In the process of being removed from England to Rome the study of personal motivation in politics achieves a greater degree of impersonality and so, by the very nature of things, a wider human relevance, a greater universality."
the concept of power and the concept of the hero-king cannot be separated from the religious and mythical connotations involved with the theory of divine right.

For example, in the three Henry VI plays we see the disaster suffered by the state when King Henry, the divinely ordained monarch, unofficially but effectively relegates his kingly authority to Queen Margaret and Suffolk. His desire for ascetic solitude and his political naiveté perforate the kingdom's security. Because of his refusal to accept the responsibilities of divine right in order to indulge his private inclinations, King Henry's high-minded intentions are doomed to have evil effects. In Richard III, on the other hand, the king makes no pretense to moral superiority and never denies his kingly power, but he presumes upon the royal prerogative as a personal privilege to commit wrong. Thus, in the first tetralogy moral and political chaos results either from refusal to exercise the authority of divine right, as in the case of Henry VI, or from an abuse of that power, as in the case of Richard III.

In the second tetralogy, Shakespeare seems to accept the concept of divine right as a basic hypothesis, while severely criticizing the inequities that sometimes result

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30 Tillyard, p. 158, reminds us that in this first tetralogy "Shakespeare also satisfied the popular taste in setting forth the great political theme, the horror of civil war, and in giving his plays the required chauvinist tone."
from that right to rule. In this group of plays, Shakespeare explores the meaning of divine right with greater complexity and subtlety than found in the first tetralogy. Here Shakespeare's dramatization of the concept of divine right and development of the character of the king reaches beyond Tudor propaganda into the areas of conflict that arise between the dogmatic certainty of an ideal—jus divinum—and the ever-shifting facets of personality and events. In Richard II we see a situation where verbal adherence to divine right fails in itself alone to make a successful ruler of a duly constituted king. In the two parts of Henry IV, however, we see a medieval king whose rule is based upon might and political acumen disintegrate in the face of technical legalities of kingship based upon divine right. The theme of the education of a prince who must join legality to ability begins in the Henry IV plays and is brought to a logical culmination in Henry V.

What is significant in this second tetralogy is an evolving ideal of kingship. We move from the uncertainties of Richard, a "Sun-King" who cannot wear easily the mantle of divinity, to Henry IV, who for all his acumen cannot overcome the stigma to his legitimacy. We emerge at Henry V, the warrior-hero who balances power with justice, a public figure whose obligations and duties to the state are paramount to any personal or private considerations. Henry continually
juxtaposes the words "king" and "soldier"; even in his private love-making with Katherine of France, he calls himself "a plain king" (V.ii.128) who speaks to her as a "plain soldier" (155), asking her to "take a soldier, take a king" (174) and to be "a good soldier-breeder" (219)--not a king-maker. But of course if she accepts this "plain soldier," all of England will be hers (257). In Henry V, the concept of honor and the ideal of kingship are closely interrelated; the ideal king is a warrior-hero who courageously accepts the divinely ordained role of caretaker of his nation's honor. Donald A. Stauffer sees this hero, as exemplified in Henry V, as "a single great-souled responsible ruler" who embodies "the devout Christian spirit" which seems "to spring out of thankfulness to God for having created such a perfect political order." But this "patriotic lyric" that is Shakespeare's contribution to the moral lessons of history suddenly and quite abruptly ends with the advent and development of the Roman plays.

In his Roman plays, Shakespeare obviously utilizes material outside the framework of English history. This shift in material is attributable in part to the outcry attending the publication of Sir John Hayward's The First

32 Ibid., p. 104.
Part of the Life and Raigne of King Henrie the IIII, in part to the disastrous performance of Richard II arranged by Essex and his adherents, and in part to "the current humanist interest in the classics." In part, too, the shift may have been caused by the limitations imposed upon the playwright by the concept of divine right. It is not an over-simplification to say that having thrust Henry V into glory, politically Shakespeare had nowhere else to go. Whatever the reason, Julius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra, and Coriolanus involve worlds far removed from divine right and God-established political authority, and yet when we contrast Shakespeare's English history plays with this Roman group, a definite relationship can be discerned between the ideal


35 For a discussion of whether or not "Shakespeare's Roman plays constitute a well-defined group," see Maurice Charney, Shakespeare's Roman Plays (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), pp. 207-218: "I believe there are at least three arguments for the Roman plays as a group: (1) the use of 'Roman' costume on the Elizabethan stage; (2) the Roman praise of suicide as an act of moral courage and nobility, an attitude very different from Christian belief; and (3) the common source in North's Plutarch . . ." (p. 207).
of kingship as developed in the second tetralogy and what can only be called its antithesis. In other words, the ideal of the warrior-hero as embodied and glorified in the figure of Henry V appears in these Roman plays as an outmoded concept that leaves the heroes singularly unfulfilled.

It is a platitude of medieval and Renaissance philosophy that the fall from fortune of such political leaders as Caesar and Pompey was caused by "'intemperate desire of fame, glorie, renowne, and immortalitie.'" However, what Shakespeare demonstrates in his portraits of Brutus, Antony, and Coriolanus is that each hero is one who, like Homer's Achilles, unreservedly seeks fame, glory, and immortality; and because he has been so indoctrinated with the ideal of heroic action, each of these tragic figures is unable to function as a compassionate human being. In the dramatic action of these Roman plays, Shakespeare demonstrates that it is not intemperance in the desire for fame that brings about the downfall of the hero, but rather, and quite astonishingly, the desire for fame and honor itself. This desire--whether temperately or intemperately striven for--provides a catalyst that destroys the hero's humanity. Brutus, Antony, and Coriolanus operate

as political entities as potent as the English kings, but these heroes move in a more complicated world than that defined by divine right, or defined by classical heroism, a world so complex that political wisdom becomes harder and harder to define. Quite literally, Shakespeare had to invent a new ideal, or accept the failure of the old.

Inherent in the concept of the warrior-hero is the belief in the inadequacy of private human emotions to meet the demands of public life. The warrior-hero plays a role of the public figure whose actions are replete with ritual, formality, and ceremonies which glorify the ideal of honor. And the virtue of honor is the fundamental notion that underlies the warrior-hero's code of public and private conduct. In the framework of such a code, "honor" leads to the assassination of one's friend in Julius Caesar, to the neglect of one's beloved in Antony and Cleopatra, and to the betrayal of the state itself in Coriolanus. To the warrior-heroes in these Shakespearean history plays, duties of state, which are inextricably commingled with the concept of honor, always take precedence over matters of the heart and necessarily so, for each feels that the welfare of the public sphere has a higher moral priority than that of the private. Moreover, these heroes believe that it is only in the public domain that true honor and fame and immortality can be achieved.
What Shakespeare demonstrates in these Roman plays is that the code of conduct that transforms Henry V into the mirror of Christian kings can lead in other contexts to a radical insensitivity that can only pervert the public order. The basic irony of the warrior-hero concept is that the desire of the hero to act honorably, which, as he understands it, means the acceptance of duty and the negation of private feelings, subverts the humanistic tendencies that would actually render him a better ruler or a more complete hero. In the conflict between personal feelings and patriotic duty, as we see it developed in several plays, the warrior-hero always chooses duty, or if he does not, he feels that he has dishonored himself.

For example, Caesar's actions before his death demonstrate something of the conflict. Because his idea of honorable behavior requires that he maintain a public image, he rejects the intuition which warns him of going to the capital. In fact, he equates such emotions with cowardice:

The gods do this in shame of cowardice. Caesar should be a beast without a heart If he should stay at home today for fear. No, Caesar shall not. Danger knows full well That Caesar is more dangerous than he. We are two lions littered in one day, And I the elder and more terrible. And Caesar shall go forth. (II.i.41-48)

Somehow Caesar feels that his courage will be in question if he remains at home; he and danger are "two lions," but he, Caesar, is the "more terrible." In his behavior here,
Caesar insists upon displaying the reckless courage which the concept of the warrior-hero demands. In other words, the notion of honor injects itself into a situation that calls for caution, and Caesar's refusal to submit to such a "feminine" inclination, as represented by Calpurnia's warning—"Alas, my lord, /Your wisdom is consumed in confidence. /Do not go forth today" (II.ii.48-50)—quite literally costs Caesar his life.

The concept of the hero-king as developed in the English history plays becomes in the Roman plays an ideal that is drained of its spiritual significance. In this second group of plays, we see Shakespeare's political heroes struggling to emerge from a restrictive and archaic political context into a more exalted arena where higher principles apply. It is the main contention of this study that in certain plays, and most particularly in the Roman plays, Shakespeare demonstrates a consciousness of something more valuable than political expediency and political legality. Indeed, the tragedy of these political heroes lies precisely in their allegiance to the standard of conduct of the soldier-king. Brutus, Antony, and Coriolanus, among others, suffer defeat in their striving to capture a higher reality. The concept of honor has lost its value in the social matrix of political machinations. Part of the Shakespearean metaphysic, as G. Wilson Knight has pointed out, is that "the subject
[the hero] has no knowledge of his own reality apart from an object."\(^{37}\) And the "object" in these Roman plays is an idea of honor apart from which the hero has no identity. Falstaff's conclusion that "Honor is a mere scutcheon" (1 H.IV. V.i.142-143) makes tragic sense in the context of the Roman plays, for here honor has become a social code of behavior that divorces idea from reality. As R. A. Yoder perceptively observes, "'Ceremony,' allied with 'honor' and 'courtesy,' is one of the chief virtues of the courtly world; but the word had already acquired a subordinate, disparaging sense of 'merely formal or external' in Shakespeare's time."\(^{38}\)

And in the Roman world of Julius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra, and Coriolanus, the concept of honor involves an idea of prescribed and often formularized behavior. For example, Antony and Coriolanus are both in a sense victims of their culture's concept of what constitutes honor and public responsibility. Antony is simply not allowed, either in his own eyes or those of the judging world, to become "a private man in Athens" (Antony and Cleopatra III.xii.15). Coriolanus has no Cleopatra to awaken his deeper soul to the possibilities of a private world where martial prowess is not weakened by affections. Antony and Coriolanus, like Henry V, are both


great soldiers and fascinating political personalities; but Shakespeare's vision of the soldier-hero has been seriously altered to encompass the legitimate demands of friendship and love, among other abstractions.
CHAPTER II

RICHARD II: A MEDIEVALIST IN RENAISSANCE TRAPPINGS

In Richard II, the first play of the second tetralogy, the medieval tradition of resistance to unjust rule confronts the Tudor doctrine of royal supremacy. Before the Renaissance a king was hardly more than an exalted noble whose authority remained limited by feudal and church right. In fact, on the eve of the Reformation the current theory of kingship, according to Franklin Le Van Baumer, "envisaged a king strictly limited in both the temporal and spiritual spheres, and by no flight of the imagination supreme above rival jurisdictions, or possessing unlimited power." Under the feudal theory of economics a medieval king was the landowner par excellence, a fact which accounts in part for so much ground and garden imagery in the plays. The landowner's subjects equated the succession to the crown with the inheritance of a fief; in the words of John Neville Figgis, "his lands must


descend by the same rules as those of other men." Richard's seizure of Bolingbroke's estates amounts to a most heinous feudal crime. York in his warning to Richard voices this medieval notion of kingship as basically another fiefdom subject to general laws:

Take Hereford's right away, and take from time
His charters and his customary rights,
Let not tomorrow then ensue today.
Be not thyself, for how art thou a king
But by fair sequence and succession? (II.i.195-199)

Elizabeth I utilized much the same argument to protest her counselors' advice to eliminate Mary, Queen of Scots. The Queen contended that no matter how politically dangerous Mary might be, her assassination would violate the principle by which Elizabeth herself held the throne. Of course, Elizabeth maintained that regicide was also heretical because of divine right, but the applicable legal principle in both cases is that if a monarch violates the law, then he sets precedence for his subjects. So too Richard's stripping of Bolingbroke's hereditary rights sets a precedent for his own usurpation, a legal point that Richard insists upon ignoring. According to the medieval concept of hierarchy, therefore, Bolingbroke has legal ground for his action against the King, for in an act of tyranny Richard disavows his own rights.

Thomas Aquinas sums up this medieval concept of the right of resistance when, in his essay on kingship, he allows for the overthrow of a tyrant since such a revolt is directed toward a restoration of order. But it is precisely this medieval principle of valid rebellion, that rulers may be resisted for legitimate reasons, that bred divine right, which became the Renaissance answer to the power struggle that was tearing England apart. In his chapter on "Royalist and Anti-Royalist Theories," George H. Sabine contends that "divine right was a defense of order and political stability against a view widely believed to augment the danger implicit in religious civil wars." In Richard II Bolingbroke becomes, after his lands are seized, a symbol for the old baronage and the right of resistance against tyranny.

Although Shakespeare basically denies this medieval sanction for revenge in favor of the inviolable character of the crown, he never minimizes the depth of the conflict between Bolingbroke and Richard II, and, at the very least, in this play he sets up a strikingly dramatic conflict.

4 Thomas Aquinas, On Kingship, translated by Gerald B. Phelan and revised with introduction by I. Th. Eschmann (Toronto, 1949), p. 27: "... it is not unjust that the king be deposed or have his power restricted ... if, becoming a tyrant, he abuses the royal power."

between two opposing sets of values, with the implication that neither is altogether valid by itself. Part of Richard's dilemma is that he often must act as a reluctant adherent of divine right when his instincts prompt him to uphold the medieval values of his heritage. D. A. Traversi, however, views the opposition in Richard II as "fairly simple, between its hero, lawfully enthroned but politically incapable, and Bolingbroke, a born politician who can achieve power--the goal of all his efforts--through rebellion and murder."  

If Shakespeare were only the Tudor propagandist he is on occasion alleged to be, Traversi's observation would have to be correct. For, according to the theory of sacramental kingship, Richard as legitimate king can never be rightfully deposed; Bolingbroke's act of disobedience is a sin against God and a means to certain damnation. But Bolingbroke, as characterized by Shakespeare, is no damnable villain. This aspect of divine right--that rebellion against the king constitutes rebellion against God--is, as pointed out earlier, accepted by Shakespeare as a basic hypothesis, but it is an hypothesis that raises more questions than it answers.

Indeed the limitations and dangers of such a theory of kingship are illustrated when we witness that theory being

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manipulated for private political ends. The Duchess of Gloucester, for example, in Act I of Richard II is shown using the concept of divine right in order to manipulate her brother-in-law to avenge her husband's murder:

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 cut.
But Thomas, my dear lord, my life, my Gloucester,
One vial full of Edward's sacred blood,
One flourishing branch of his most royal root,
Is cracked, and all the precious liquor split.
Is hacked down, and his summer leaves all faded,
By envy's hand and murder's bloody ax. (I.ii.11-21)

The Duchess' metaphors of the seven sons as "seven vials" of Edward's "sacred blood" (a phrase that is repeated throughout the play) and as "seven branches springing from one root" are appropriate to the concept of a kingship that is inherited from birth. However, when the Duchess argues that Gaunt, in not avenging Gloucester's death, participates "in some large measure" (I.ii.26) in his father's death, she is neglecting the fact that Richard possesses that selfsame "sacred blood," that Richard, like Gloucester, is one of those branches "springing from one root." Therefore, an attack against Richard on the principle that he has violated divine right
by killing Gloucester\textsuperscript{7} is also a violation of divine right, a violation that Gaunt points out to the Duchess in his refusal:

\begin{quote}
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. (I.ii.37-41)
\end{quote}

Gaunt too believes that Gloucester's death was caused by the King, but divine right demands that they leave their "quarrel to the will of Heaven" (I.ii.6). Because Richard is "God's substitute," heaven alone must avenge any evil that is committed by the King.

These words of Gaunt in Act I seem to suggest that the issue between Richard and Bolingbroke, between divine right and civil rebellion, is as simple as Traversi declares it to be. But in Act II this issue becomes suddenly quite complicated. Because Richard has decided to lease the lands of England to raise revenue for his excursion to Ireland, Gaunt believes that Richard deserves deposition. In Gaunt's

\textsuperscript{7}Although E. M. W. Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays (New York, 1946), p. 261, contends that this is a crime that is never proved, A. L. French, "Richard II and the Woodstock Murder," Shakespeare Quarterly, XXII (Autumn, 1971), 337-344, forcefully argues that the murder of Gloucester by Richard is "a central issue" in the play and is a fact that both Gaunt and York assume is well established and known by the royal circle.
famous deathbed speech, he moans that "this sceptured isle," this "other Eden, demi-Paradise," this "precious stone set in the silver sea," this England has been shamefully violated by her own King. England, he grieves, is "now bound in with shame, /With inky blots and rotten parchment bonds" (II.i.40;42;46;63-64). Because of the King's misuse of his power,

That England, that was wont to conquer others,  
Hath made a shameful conquest of itself. (I.i.65-66)

Gaunt sees that though he is "sicker" than the King, Richard is the one who is ill unto death--ill from a sickness he himself has caused:

Thou diest, though I the sicker be.

Thy deathbed is no lesser than thy land,  
Wherein thou liest in reputation sick,  
And 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,  
Whose compass is no bigger than thy head,  
And yet encaged in so small a verge,  
The waste is no whit lesser than thy land.  
(II.i.91;95-103)

Gaunt continues to rebuke the King, saying that if Edward "with a prophet's eye" could have seen "how his son's son should destroy his sons," he would have prevented Richard from ever possessing the throne. But since Richard has possession, it is the King's duty "now to depose thyself" (104-108). Even more significantly, Gaunt informs Richard
that his leasing of the lands transforms the king who rules by divine right into a landlord who is subject to laws as a landlord, and is no longer above the laws as king:

Landlord of England art thou now, not King.
Thy state of law is bondslave to the law. . . . (113-114)

Thus, Gaunt's deathbed speech explains the motivation and legal grounds for Bolingbroke's rebellion. What is curious is that Shakespeare never allows Bolingbroke to reveal himself in private speech. What Shakespeare does give us from the mouth of Bolingbroke is frequent declarations of patriotism and loyalty to the King.

In fact, in Act III after Bolingbroke has swept victoriously through England, he declares that Richard is still the lawful King, the "fire," and he Bolingbroke "the yielding water":

The rage be his, whilst on the earth I rain
My waters--on the earth, and not on him. (III.iii.59-60)

Bolingbroke couches his conciliatory speech in terms of a narrow legal distinction. His defense, of course, is that no attack has been made upon the King's person, only the "earth," the England that Gaunt contends has been abused by Richard's prerogative. In this case, Richard has further

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8See A. L. French, "Who Deposed Richard the Second?" Essays in Criticism, XVII (October, 1967), 416-417: "Bolingbroke is unique among Shakespeare's ambitious men (if he is an ambitious man) in that he is never given an opportunity to open his mind to us. . . ."
violated his power by seizing illegally Bolingbroke's estates; and if the King will restore those lands and repeal his banishment, 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. . . .
(III.iii.36-39)

Otherwise, he will "use the advantage" of his power

And lay the summer's dust with showers of blood
Rained from the wounds of slaughtered Englishmen. (42-44)

Throughout his ambivalent declaration, Bolingbroke at least seems acutely aware of Richard's legitimacy. He will use his power only if his grievances are not redressed, if the abuse of power is not rectified. Bolingbroke seems as aware as his father of the religious sanction underlying the concept of divine right, while at the same time realizing that Richard has in a sense deposed himself through his abuse of the lands under his control. Under the medieval notion of kingship, Bolingbroke has every right to protect his lands against an usurping monarch. Twice Richard has abused the "royalties and rights" (II.i.190) of his subjects; not only has he violated England herself in leasing her land, but also when he confiscates Gaunt's estates, Richard transforms himself from a Renaissance king, a figure subject only to the laws of God, into a landlord, a figure subject to the laws of men. As A. L. French observes, "in terms of feudal law, Richard is making Bolingbroke a non-subject; not only lacking an
inheritance, not only lacking rights, but also lacking any place in the social-moral order."^9

This concept of the land—a concept that lies behind the words of Gaunt and the actions of Bolingbroke—is more medieval than Renaissance because the emphasis is not exactly upon Nature as a reflector of domestic and political turmoil, but rather upon an identification of land and royal power. The era of baronage in which the notion of authority arises from control of the land is distinctly pertinent. Throughout the play, Richard consistently associates himself as king with the land that he rules. When he feels usurpation imminent, he envisions the deposition in terms of his power over the land:

That power I have, discharge, and let them go
To ear the land that hath some hope to grow,
For I have none. (III.ii.211-213)

Or, earlier in his famous "grave" speech, the earth is conceived as the proper resting place for his lost or forsaken kingship. Without land, Richard is without power, and he can but ask

... what can we bequeath
Save our deposed bodies to the ground?
Our lands, our lives, and all are Bolingbroke's,
And nothing can we call our own but death
And that small model of the barren earth
Which serves as paste and cover to our bones.
(III.ii.149-154)

When Richard loses control over his lands to Bolingbroke, he loses, according to his own words, his royal power, and nothing is left for the powerless, or landless, King except death.

H. C. Goddard criticizes Richard's imaginative linking of himself with the land as "sentimentalized perversion."\(^{10}\) John Palmer views Richard as unconcerned with politics in the crisis of rebellion, as involved with the lyrical emotion of the moment, with himself "as a tragic figure."\(^{11}\) Traversi calls Richard's "elaborate personification of inanimate nature" a "display of self-conscious sentiment."\(^{12}\) What these observers of Richard II fail to note is that other important figures in the play, such as Gaunt and Bolingbroke, link the king and his power with the land. As in no other Shakespearean play, the king in Richard II is explicitly and metaphorically identified with the land, with the very earth beneath his feet. Richard's crimes are not against persons so much as they are against the land. First, he decides to farm his "royal realm"--an act that Gaunt rightfully has characterized as a "shameful conquest" of England herself. Second, upon

\(^{10}\) Harold C. Goddard, The Meaning of Shakespeare (Chicago, 1951), I, 153.

\(^{11}\) John Palmer, Political and Comic Characters of Shakespeare (London, 1945), pp. 151-152.

\(^{12}\) D. A. Traversi, Shakespeare from Richard II to Henry V (Stanford, Calif., 1957), p. 29.
hearing of Gaunt's illness, Richard prays that God will take his uncle "to his grave immediately" so that

The lining of his coffers shall make coats
To deck our soldiers for these Irish wars. (I.iv.60-62)

And third, Richard seizes the "royalties and rights of banished Hereford" (II.i.190). These violations of the feudal order are the crimes of a king who rules by divine right but whose power comes from the land itself. It is as if the issue of divine right, in the first three acts of the play, is secondary to the medieval notion of power arising from the land. Early in Richard II we are confronted with the contradictions between two value systems. The concept of divine right, voiced by Gaunt early in the first act, is quickly superseded, this time by the dying Gaunt, by the medieval and feudal concept of the king as landlord. Therefore, if Richard's identification of his kingly power with the land is "sentimental perversion," then Gaunt, York, Bolingbroke, and Shakespeare himself are also guilty.

When Richard leaves England for his war against Ireland, he has in effect "retired his power" (II.ii.46). The King as landlord deserts his power when he leaves the aged York "to underprop" his land (82). The concept of divine right is simply not strong enough to maintain the royal position. Even York merely gives lip service to the concept as he confronts the returning Bolingbroke:
My lords of England, let me tell you this,
I have had feeling of my cousin's wrongs
And labored all I could to do him right.
But in this king to come, in braving arms,
Be his own carver and cut out his way,
To find out right with wrong, it may not be.
And you that do abet him in this kind
Cherish rebellion and are rebels all. (II.iii.140-147)

After this chastisement in the name of divine right, York
invites the rebels to his castle and confesses that though
"loath to break our country's laws," he realizes that things
are "past redress" (169-171), and he prepares to join them
and the rebellion.

Richard's own identification of kingship with the
authority of a landowner is so absolute that his imagination
is saturated with images and sentiments of the land. When
he returns to England, he embraces his "gentle earth":

. . . I weep for joy
To stand upon my kingdom once again.
Dear earth, I do salute thee with my hand,
Though rebels wound thee with their horses' hoofs.
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,
And do thee favors with my royal hands. (III.ii.4-11)

Richard's love for the land is not a monarch's abstract devo-
tion to his kingdom; rather it is the passion of a landowner,
who upon returning to his land after a long absence scoops up
the dirt and lovingly fondles it. As Richard mingles his tears with the earth, he commands his land to repel "thy sovereign's enemies":

Feed not thy sovereign's foe, my gentle earth,  
Nor with thy sweet 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.ii.12-22)

When Richard becomes aware how fantastical such personification must appear to the lords who comprise his audience, he requests them not to "mock" such "senseless conjuration," for

This earth shall have a feeling and these stones  
Prove armed soldiers ere native King  
Shall falter under foul rebellion's arms. (24-26)

Spiders, toads, adders, stones—all the earth and all of earth's creatures must reject the rape of their sovereign.

13 Much of the criticism directed against Richard's sentiments toward the land arise from what is conceived as his failure as a warrior-hero to repress such emotions in favor of the more practical business of war. Traversi, for example, says that Richard's sentimentality indicates "a character too ready to exploit his own emotions..." See Shakespeare from Richard II to Henry V, p. 30. But what is attractive in Richard, as compared to Henry V, is his ability to give reign to certain kinds of "feminine" emotions, as in this case.
When Carlisle reminds Richard of the power that makes him King "in spite of all" (28), he is, of course, referring to divine right. Whereas Richard has envisioned himself as the mother to the abused earth, Carlisle reminds the King that the royal power comes from God, not from the earth.

Richard responds immediately, and his speeches are transformed from lyrical beauty that express the devotion, the pietas of a man for his land, and the pervasive sorrow of a protective mother for her hapless child, to monologues reflecting kingly egotism. Suddenly Richard's imagination portrays him as the eclipsed sun whose absence permitted Bolingbroke to steal his regal throne. Now that Richard has returned to "light" the darkened land, Bolingbroke will "tremble at his sin," unable "to endure the sight of day" (III.ii.52-53). After all, Richard has legions of angels on his side while Bolingbroke has only soldiers:

Not all the water in the rough rude sea  
Can wash the balm off from an anointed king.  
The breath of worldly men cannot depose  
The deputy elected by the Lord.  
For every man that Bolingbroke hath pressed  
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.54-62)

In these speeches Richard's concept of kingship changes; heretofore, Richard has been preeminently landlord of England;
now he is the Sun-King. That as landowner he neglected his duties and responsibilities is of paramount importance. Now in his zeal to take upon himself the role of the divinely sanctioned king, to become the "light" in the glory of which his enemies will retreat, Richard neglects political realities and sees the present crisis in the simple terms of absolute right and absolute wrong; divine right versus unlawful rebellion. Is not Shakespeare at least implying that a monarch who has his eyes on the ground is closer to reality than if he feels himself already with the angels? The portrait of Richard as a medieval landowner in love with England surely is more attractive than Richard as the Renaissance Prince, inherently removed from the world of men because of divine right.

The famous garden scene reiterates the importance of the medieval notion of the king as feudal lord that runs throughout Richard II. H. M. Richmond, however, is among those who see the relationship of the land to the monarch in Richard II is inherently unlike the idea of nationhood that absorbs the warrior-hero. When Henry V shouts, "God for Harry! England and St. George!" he evokes the concept of nation/state. When Richard speaks of England, it is more particular, meaning the dirt beneath his feet that is his land.

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14 The two sets of imagery are very different. On the one hand, we have the image of the king as lover of the land or solicitous parent, and on the other, set in sharp contrast, is the light/dark imagery of the sun-king, an image which is typical of the divine right concept, culminating in Louis XIV, le roi soleil.

15 The relationship of the land to the monarch in Richard II is inherently unlike the idea of nationhood that absorbs the warrior-hero. When Henry V shouts, "God for Harry! England and St. George!" he evokes the concept of nation/state. When Richard speaks of England, it is more particular, meaning the dirt beneath his feet that is his land.
critics who view this episode as establishing "the universal necessity for the sort of brutal vigor that the high-minded ruler must cultivate in order to sustain his other, more civilized resources." In his defense of Richard's "finer character," which is incapable of cultivating that "coarse but efficient opportunism" of a Bolingbroke, Richmond represents those observers who neglect the significance of Richard's literal crimes against the land that is England. The gardener's discussion does indeed involve Richard's political error in not effectively opposing Bolingbroke, but it also reminds us of the king's dereliction as the landowner of England:

O, what a pity is it
That he had not so trimm'd and dress'd his land
As we this garden! We at time of year
Do wound the bark, the skin of our fruit-trees,
Lest, being over-proud in sap and blood,
With too much riches it confounds itself:
Had he done so to great and growing men,
They might have lived to bear and he to taste
Their fruits of duty. (III.iv.55-63)

According to Richmond, Richard has been "too lenient and generous" as king, and those crimes against England are merely "politically unfortunate." In Richmond's flattering

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17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., p. 131.
19 Ibid., p. 129.
evaluations of Richard, we again see the tendency of critics
to oversimplify the issues of divine right. Although
Caroline Spurgeon in her monumental work on Shakespeare's
imagery does not emphasize the feudal and medieval notion of
the land in Richard II, she still recognizes that the gar-
dener's speech is more than a metaphor for a disordered
nation. The picture of a garden "full of weeds" (44) is dis-
tressing to the careful gardener because, as Spurgeon says,
"he knows that this condition, which is a cumulative result
of long-continued neglect, can be set right only by hard
years of toil and expense. . . ." 20

Metaphorically and politically both men err. Bolingbroke
and Richard speak metaphorically to defend their political
positions: Richard, as divinely protected monarch whose
armies are angels in the service of right; Bolingbroke, as
citizen/lord who claims only what is rightfully his, who
"waters" the earth only to extinguish the King's inexplicable
rage. Legally, both have cause: Richard is the legitimate
ruler; Bolingbroke is a feudal lord, a landowner whose lands
and revenues have been illegally seized. However, both have
committed illegal acts: Richard's "robbing of the banished

20 Caroline Spurgeon, Shakespeare's Imagery and What It
Tells Us (Cambridge, 1935), p. 223. See also Mildred F.
Hartsock, "Major Scenes in Minor Key," Shakespeare Quarterly,
XXI (1970), 55-56, who says that this scene "pulls the play
together": its "primary purpose . . . is to capture our feeling
for Richard."
Duke" (II.i.261), Bolingbroke's return to England "before the expiration" (II.iii.111) of his exile. Richard becomes so enamored of absolute power that he carelessly violates the law of inheritance, feeling assured that his royal position, his "sacred blood," puts him above the law: "God omnipotent" will muster "His clouds" on behalf of his divinely elected deputy (III.iii.85-86). And Bolingbroke breaks his oath of exile by prematurely returning to England, encouraged by Richard's noblemen to "redeem from broking pawn the blemished crown," to "wipe off the dust that hides our scepter's gilt, /And make high majesty look like itself . . ." (II.i.293-295). However attractive the temptation to clean house, Bolingbroke's position gives him no legal right to "redeem" the crown; his position as subject gives him the privilege to redress grievances but not to seize the power itself.

In Henry IV, Part II, Bolingbroke as king admits to the "indirect crooked ways" (IV.v.185) of his path to the throne, but he maintains that he had no intent to unseat Richard:

But . . . necessity so bowed the state
That I and greatness were compelled to kiss. (III.i.73-74)

Indeed, considering Shakespeare's frequent examples of the futility of rebellion, Richard's abdication is a way of calling attention to the necessity of a divinely-ordained king's
realizing, as Michael Quinn observes, "that blessedness is blessed action."  In light of the condemnation of any rebellion against divine right, Shakespeare is surprisingly lenient with Bolingbroke. However, because Richard deposes himself, Bolingbroke perhaps may be regarded as a victim of "necessity." As A. L. French observes, "Shakespeare puts all the talk about deposition into Richard's own mouth. Indeed it would not be fantastic to wonder whether Shakespeare did not intend us to see Richard as suggesting the idea to Bolingbroke." In the deposition scene Richard sees that he has become "a mockery king of snow, /Standing before the sun of Bolingbroke" (IV.i.260-261), and begins to realize the implications of his own involvement in the "treason" against divinely ordained monarchy:

Nay, if I turn mine eyes upon myself,  
I find myself a traitor with the rest;  
For I have given here my soul's consent  
T'undock the pompous body of a king,  
Made glory base, and sovereignty a slave  
Proud majesty a subject, state a peasant.  
(IV.i.247-252)

Palmer finds this complication of abdication as opposed to a usurpation to be a "sacramental approach to tragedy":

Bolingbroke and Richard, in the Tudor imagination, played their parts as in a mystery, Richard accepting his humiliation as a cup that might not pass away and Bolingbroke, unconscious instrument in bringing about a second fall of man, achieving his triumph as a thing pre-ordained. \(^{23}\)

\(^{21}\)Quinn, p. 182.  
\(^{22}\)French, "Who Deposed Richard the Second?" p. 424.  
\(^{23}\)Palmer, p. 120.
This complication, which French calls a genuine confusion "about the deposition business," is also a way for the playwright to point out the dangers of divine right without sounding treasonous. Still, Richard's misuse of the power that makes him king reduces to a parody "the deputy elected by the lord." With but a kingly glance Richard is confident that he can dispel any rebellion since God's angels will be his army--an invincible force against merely mortal enemies. Shakespeare did not escape entirely from the aura of treason, therefore, as is evidenced by the omission of the abdication scene in all editions published during Elizabeth's reign. What Shakespeare is suggesting here, however, is that Richard's belief in the power of divine right to maintain his position is not so much misplaced as it is unduly excessive. His neglect of the things of this world is sheer political suicide. And while Richard looks to God, Bolingbroke, as Quinn points out, "looks for opportunities, not miracles."

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25 Figgis, pp. 5-6, points out that there is no doubt that Richard believes in the notion of the sacred character conferred by unction, but it did not play "much part in the exposition of the divine authority of kings."

26 See Palmer, pp. 118-120; see also p. 167, n. 1. Richard's abdication scene "was omitted from early published editions of the play and not printed till 1608, five years after the death of Elizabeth." However, "it was almost certainly this scene which made the play so dangerously topical and accounted for its performance no less than forty times in the years immediately following its production."

27 Quinn, p. 182.
The theme of the second tetralogy may be, as G. B. Harrison believes, "that by wrongfully seizing the throne of England the House of Lancaster caused civil war in England for nearly a century." But in Shakespeare's dramatization of the overthrow, other themes or ideas strike the reader with their complexity and significance. In Richard II too much emphasis is given to Richard's failure as a king and to the medieval notion of the king as landowner for the play to be a simple justification of divine right or a simple attack against rebellion of any kind. It is also important to remember that Bolingbroke as the "new-made King" is no political monster; on the contrary, the Bolingbroke who becomes king in Act V of Richard II is portrayed as an effective leader, a generous and merciful judge, a worried father, and a man with a conscience.

First, we see his anxious concern over the dubious activities of his prodigal son. Like any father of an "unthrifty son," the King moans that "if any plague hang over us, 'tis he" (V.iii.1-3). Upon hearing that his son is off to the brothels, King Henry can but hope that "elder years /May happily bring forth" a wiser, more mature offspring (21-22). Then, we see the new king as judge. Aumerle, York's son, has been accused by his own father of a foolish treachery against

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the recently crowned monarch. Perhaps King Henry recalls the follies of his own son when he graciously pardons Aumerle. Or, perhaps, he realizes that Aumerle's loyalty to Richard cannot truly be construed as treason. Whatever the reason, Bolingbroke's conduct in this matter is admirable. Finally, we see the King as sensitively aware of his own culpability not only in the deposition of a divinely anointed ruler, but also in the act that ultimately results in Richard's death.

When King Henry learns of Richard's murder, he immediately understands that the killing is a "deed of slander" that will fall upon his "head and all this famous land" (V.vi.35-36). Although Bolingbroke admits that he wished the King dead, he hates "the murderer, love him murdered" (40). And he protests to the lords that his soul is full of sorrow

That blood should sprinkle me to make me grow.
Come, mourn with me for that I do lament,
And put on a sullen black incontinent.
I'll make a voyage to the Holy Land
To wash this blood off from my guilty hand.
(V.vi.46-50)

Here the King is in a public role, and the sincerity of his grief, therefore, cannot be altogether determined; nevertheless, Bolingbroke as king voices the proper response. A voyage to the Holy Land is an appropriate penance, a public atonement for a public crime.

The play Richard II simply does not support the accusation of many critics that Bolingbroke is categorically "a ruthless manipulator of political forces, indifferent to any
larger issues than decided by expediency. . . "29 Richmond, for example, calls Bolingbroke's actions "either unctuous or blunt or ruthless,"30 but Bolingbroke's kindness to the Duchess of York and his pardon of Aumerle can hardly be called "ruthless." Moreover, the king's response to the death of Richard demonstrates that he is aware of the larger issue involved in the death of a deposed monarch, namely, that the interruption of legitimate succession is truly a "deed of slander"—no matter what the circumstances.

According to divine right, Bolingbroke as the usurper is doomed politically and damned morally. But of significance is the fact that Shakespeare portrays Bolingbroke as a man who is acutely sensitive to the legitimacy of Richard's kingship, a man who seems astonished by Richard's abdication, and yet a man conscious also of the tragedy of his own responsibility in the deposition business and in the regicide. In his portrait of Richard as the "Sun-King"31 Shakespeare demonstrates that the strength of religious sanction of royal power does not ensure effective leadership. In his characterization of the usurper, Shakespeare further complicates the concept of

31 Spurgeon, p. 235, points out that this "conception of the king is fairly constant with Shakespeare," but in the context of this play, Richard as "Sun-King" is invariably linked with the king as God's deputy and not with the king as landowner, and as such is a negative image.
kingship. Bolingbroke's "crime" arises out of the legal
King's inability to rule effectively and his willingness to
hand over the crown, an act not out of keeping with the
medieval tradition of kingship.

Perhaps Leonard Dean is closest to the truth when he
describes the political and thematic complexities of Richard
II: "It is a Cold War view of man and the state in which no one is perfect and no one wins."32 Shakespeare's concept of
kingship lies somewhere between the ideal of divine right
and the fallen figure of Richard II, between the political
ability of Bolingbroke and the illegality of his position.

Shakespeare's study of Richard and Bolingbroke repres-
ents a search for a hero who embodies the best qualities of
the concept of divine right and of the practical and efficient
warrior. Neither Bolingbroke nor Richard is that kingly hero.
Richard's failure as a hero-king results in part from his
ability to reconcile the conflicting demands of his medieval heritage, on the one hand, with the more insistent demands of
the divine right concept, on the other. Richard's misuse of
the land dishonors not only his own person, but England her-
self. As guardian of his nation's honor, Richard's crimes
against England abrogate the spiritual possibilities of divine
right. Bolingbroke, on the other hand, is always aware of

32Leonard F. Dean, "From Richard II to Henry V: A
Closer View," *Shakespeare: Modern Essays in Criticism*, edited
his position as embodiment of his nation's honor, but lacking the sanction of divine right, his qualities are in a sense nullified. In the two parts of *Henry IV*, the Hotspur-Prince Hal equation is emphasized as necessary to the emergence of the warrior-hero. In fact, the emergence of Prince Hal in these histories testifies to the spiritual possibilities of the heroic leader who combines God-sanctioned legality with political efficiency.
CHAPTER III

HENRY IV, PARTS I AND II: THE "GOLDEN CARE" OF KINGSHIP

The continuing development of Bolingbroke in the two parts of Henry IV evokes a political context that is both ambivalent and ironic. The ambivalence lies in the technical legitimacy of his claim to the throne. The irony lies, in part, in the fact that he must employ the same trappings of divine sanction that Richard had ineffectually employed. In these plays the concept of king as medieval landowner and liege lord is largely abandoned, and the development begins of a concept of the king as warrior-hero, a figure who must unite in the glory of his public image the honor and renown of a warrior/prince with the sanctity of a divinely ordained monarch. A major thematic development of these two plays concerns the potentialities of heroism under the auspices of divine right. Thus, Bolingbroke as Henry IV is literally tormented to death by the insecurity of his power, the power that should be his glory but is only a terrible burden because it does not have the sanction of divine right.

"So shaken are we, so wan with care (1.i.1)" is the line that opens the first part of Henry IV and establishes a major theme. As king, Bolingbroke discovers that the order and peace he became king to restore are impossible goals because
of the very act of deposition. As Traversi states, "Henry's genuine desire to play properly his royal part is flawed past mending by the way in which he came to the throne." Because his conduct, however courageous and honorable, is not God-sanctioned, Henry's heroism cannot be but fundamentally tarnished.

The key to our understanding of the Henry IV plays lies in our recognizing the legitimacy of the demands of divine right while at the same time recognizing the requirements of a hero-king. Bolingbroke as King of England fulfills only the second of these requirements. That King Henry hopes that his heroic virtues will overcome the legal difficulties of his rule is illustrated in his telling lecture on kingship which he delivers to Prince Hal. On the sole basis of his chivalric nobility and political skill rather than on Renaissance legality, Henry defends himself as the "rightful" monarch:

I could not stir
But like a comet I was wondered at . . .
And then I stole all courtesy from Heaven,
And dressed myself in such humility
That I did pluck allegiance from men's hearts,
Loud shouts and salutations from their mouths,
Even in the presence of the crowned King.

(Henry IV III.ii.46-47;50-54)

Bolingbroke's heroic posture is here contrasted with the "skipping King" who, as Henry correctly remembers, betrayed

\footnote{D. A. Traversi, Shakespeare from Richard II to Henry V (Stanford, Calif., 1957), p. 51.}
his majesty, his royal presence, "with capering fools" so that he "was but as the cuckoo is in June, /Heard, not regarded" (III.ii.60;63;75-76). And, of course, Henry is not alone in this pejorative portrait of the former king: the consensus of opinion in Richard II is that in the "balance of great Bolingbroke" Richard has "nothing but himself, /And some few vanities that make him light" (Richard II III.iv. 85-86). We also need to recall Bacon's definition of a king as "the fountain of honour, which should not run with a waste pipe, lest . . . it loses the virtue."² As we have seen in Richard II, Richard's failure to rise to the requirements of the divinely anointed monarch has resulted in the abrogation of this virtue, not only in himself but also in his nation.³ Nevertheless, in the "balance" between Bolingbroke as the comet-like soldier and Richard as the "skipping King," more is involved than a weighing for fortune's scale, as Raymond Chapman observes.⁴ What is involved is a balance between

²Francis Bacon, "Of a King," The Works of Francis Bacon, (Philadelphia, 1857), I, 63.


"Richard, an anointed king who is ruining his country, and Bolingbroke, a treasonous usurper who is an efficient ruler." Together, what with the heroic expediency of Henry and the technical legality of Richard, the two kings make a whole; separate, the ideal of the hero as king cannot be realized. Shakespeare continues his search for the kingly hero in the two parts of Henry IV.⁵

Prince Hal's struggle to unite the ideal of king with nation and God begins in these plays and is brought to a climax in Henry V. In part one of Henry IV Hal is very much his father's son, especially in his awareness of political conduct. Whereas his father on the way to the throne "dresses" himself in "such humility" that he "did pluck allegiance from men's hearts," Hal on his way to the throne imitates the sun hidden by "base contagious clouds," smothering up his beauty from the world so that

Being wanted, he may be the more wondered at
By breaking through the foul and ugly mists
Of vapors that did seem to strangle him. (I.ii.220-226)

Both father and son are mindful of the image that they present to the world, and, though their methods differ, the aim is, in


one sense, the same: "to be the more wondered at." Whether or not Hal is sincere in this early soliloquy, whether or not the prince needs princely reformation before he can become the ideal Renaissance king, is a subject that has occupied critics since the eighteenth century. Tillyard, for instance, sees that the progression of Prince Hal to a hero-king "is complicated by Hotspur and Falstaff, who stand for the excess and the defect of the military spirit, for honour exaggerated and dishonour." And Dover Wilson contends that "the mainspring of the action" in both plays is the "choice" between "Vanity and Government, taking the latter in its accepted Tudor meaning, which includes Chivalry or prowess in the field, the theme of Part I, and Justice, which is the theme of Part II." On the other hand, Sen Gupta believes that "it is wrong to speak of Falstaff as a misled of the Prince, because the Prince is never misled."


9 Sen Gupta, p. 128.
What is not debatable is that King Henry fervently believes that his son is forfeiting his "princely privilege /With vile participation" (III.ii.86-87), as did Richard. As A. R. Humphreys observes, "Hal seems to Henry a replica of Richard II, for each man mingles his royalty with capering fools and enfeoffs himself to popularity, and the benefits Richard flung recklessly upon Henry, Hal is recklessly flinging away again."¹⁰ What concerns Henry is that his son's pleasure-seeking activities are not, in his mind, the appropriate conduct for a future king of England. Whereas Hotspur is a "son who is the theme of honor's tongue," who is "sweet Fortune's minion and her pride," Prince Hal, according to Henry, is stained "with riot and dishonor" (I.i.81-85).

Earlier in Richard II, the newly crowned Bolingbroke refers to his son as "effeminate" (V.iii.10) for his self-indulgent forays into the taverns and the streets of London. Behind Henry's disparaging evaluation of his son's behavior is the traditional attitude toward what constitutes masculine, and therefore honorable, conduct. King Henry is frantic about his own "thriftless" son whose lack of honor dissipates his own. Moreover, within the framework of divine right, heroic conduct is closely connected with religiosity. The association of divine right with heroism implies that the heroic endeavor be

as spiritual as it is public. In light of tradition and the
Elizabethan attitude toward proper royal behavior, it is no
wonder therefore that Henry sees his son's "vile participation"
as "effeminate" and as a spiritual reckoning for his own sins.

Although Henry A. Kelly, following the Renaissance histor-
ians Welsingham, Vergil, and Hall, contends that Henry does
not "express the least remorse or show any signs of guilt for
his treatment of Richard in the whole of I Henry IV,"\(^\text{11}\)
Henry's association of his own "mistreadings" with those of
his son indicates the opposite, as we see in the king's
address to his errant son:

\begin{verbatim}
I know not whether God will have it so,
For some displeasing service I have done,
That, in his secret doom out of my blood
He'll breed revengement and a scourge for me;
But thou dost in thy passages of life
Make me believe that thou art only marked
For the hot vengeance and the rod of Heaven
To punish my mistreadings. (III.ii.4-11)
\end{verbatim}

The irony of Henry's dilemma, as Goddard states, is that
Henry's "best-man theory of kingship," as opposed to that of
divine right, seems to be overturned in "his own good-for-
nothing son."\(^\text{12}\) Henry fears, and rightly so, that his good
conduct as king will not be enough to escape "the rod of

\(^{11}\)Kelly, p. 215.

\(^{12}\)Goddard, I, 168.
Heaven" in its "hot vengeance" for the overthrow of Richard. Henry's anxieties over his son are adequate reflections of his own standard of moral and royal worth, as well as his realization that without the sanction of divine right, his own reign and, in a sense, his own heroism, are perhaps irreparably damaged. His hopes for the fulfillment of the ideal, then, lie with his son. In this context there is an absolute necessity that the Prince strike the right balance between the legal obligations of divine right and the public responsibilities of a hero-king.

Further, according to his father's expectations, Hal is an instrument of God, but not as "hot vengeance" to punish the crime of usurpation; rather, he becomes that standard of the military ideal who will redeem the time of dishonor through his heroic endeavors on the battlefield. Because Prince Hal is as conscious of the image of the proper hero as is his father, he vows in his first soliloquy to redeem his reputation "when men think least I will":

13See Robert B. Pierce, Shakespeare's History Plays: The Family and the State (Columbus, Ohio, 1971) pp. 174-196, for a more personal evaluation of the conflict between Hal and Henry: "Henry IV and Hal are not only king and prince; they are also a very concrete father and son, going through all the painful misunderstanding that fathers and sons have always faced (176)."
And like bright metal on a sullen ground,
My reformation, glittering o'er my fault,
Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes
Than that which hath no foil to set it off.
I'll so offend, to make offense a skill,
Redeeming time when men think least I will.

(I.ii.235-240)

Against the backdrop of his youthful wildness, Hal as king will appear more resplendent than if he had always shown himself to be a model of princely behavior. His about-face, however, is more than the result of calculation and policy; Hal realizes that fate has determined a certain public role for him from which he cannot escape. Because of the circumstances of his father's acquired majesty, to Hal goes the burden of "redeeming time" by restoring the monarchy to full health. Not that Hal does not heartily envy bawdy life and the companionship of Falstaff and crew, but his mind's eye never loses sight of his role as hero-king. He knows that he must escape from the stigma under which his father rules, in addition to assuming the enormous duties that a king must take up even in the best of times.

For all their hilarity, the play's comic scenes frequently illustrate Hal's awareness of his future role as king of England. Entering the Boar's Head Tavern, for example, the

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14 Goddard and John Palmer, Political and Comic Characters (London, 1962), are among those critics who feel that Hal is altogether his father's son, concerned only with the political consequences of his acts, and that the tension between the two arises from the son's desire to supplant his father's authority with his own. See Goddard, I, 191-196, and Palmer, pp. 185-187.
prince declares that his experience with the world outside of Court will prove invaluable; although his London friends take it already upon their salvation that though I be the Prince of Wales, yet I am the king of courtesy; and tell me flatly I am no proud Jack, like Falstaff, but a Corinthian, a lad of mettle, a good boy, by the lord, so they call me, and when I am king of England, I shall command all the good lads in Eastcheap. (II.iv.9-15)

Because of his youthful participation in the worldly pleasures of his future subjects, Hal perceives that as king he will appear all the more attractive. When he throws off "this loose behavior" and pays "the debt he never promised" (I.ii.231-232), Hal, as David Riggs points out, "tacitly acknowledges that he has an obligation to justify his claim to the throne." Another meaning, however, may reside in these lines, and one more significant to the theme of kingship.

Hal demonstrates that he is aware of his companions' belief that as king he will be "their salvation," that as king he surely could not, out of "courtesy," deny their friendship. But Hal must reject his tavern fellows once he removes himself to the life at Court, once these long "holidays" end (I.ii.227). The necessity for such a denial lies in Falstaff's mock defense of thievery: "Why, Hal, 'tis my vocation, Hal. 'Tis no sin for a man to labor in his vocation" (I.ii.116-117).

Because Hal's vocation is the kingship, it is no sin to exclude those pleasurable but inappropriate elements that interfere with the enactment of the public role as king, a role that because of divine right automatically assumes a spiritual as well as political function.

Indeed, we see Hal rejecting Falstaff and his world quite early in the play. Hal "deposes" Falstaff in the role of King Henry, and immediately, although in comic terms, banishes Falstaff from his son's presence. Defending himself, Falstaff declares that in banishing "him thy Harry's company," he banishes "all the world" (II.iv.525-526). Hal-as-king briskly replies, "I do, I will" (527). Hal's clipped rejoinder indicates his knowledge that the world of the Boar's Head Inn may be a world for an heir to the throne but certainly not for the actual king of England. Implied too is the irony that in a sense a king must perforce separate himself from the humor and relaxation, from--if it can be so termed--the normalcy of a citizen in a tavern.

The concept that a king must play a role that necessarily isolates him from the ordinary joys and comforts, and even the vices, of a citizen can be seen throughout the second tetralogy. In Henry IV's apostrophe to sleep, for instance, he voices the paradox: a king, responsible for the care of an entire kingdom, is unable to sleep because of that responsibility, while his "poorest subjects" lie "in forgetfulness":
Canst thou, O partial sleep, give thy repose
To the wet sea-boy in an hour so rude,
And in the calmest and most stillest,
With all appliances and means to boot,
Deny it to a king? Then happy low, lie down!
Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.

(III.i.4;8;26-31)
The irony and tragedy of the kingly situation deepen when we
remember Richard's words as he abdicates his kingly position:

My care is loss of care, by old care done.
Your care is gain of care, by new care won.
The cares I give I have, though given away.
They tend the crown...

(Richard II IV.i.196-199)

When Richard gives the crown to Bolingbroke, he also surrenders
all the sorrow and anxiety that "tend the crown." And in so
doing, Richard must bear the terrible loss of his "sacred state"
(209), and in a real sense his only identity.

In light of this concept of kingship as a glory and a
burden, Hal's "loose behavior" seems but a manifestation of
a normal reluctance to assume the burden of kingship, and
the enforced conduct demanded by that role. It is no wonder
that Hal as prince refuses to play the part of heir apparent.
Hal's unexpected reference to Hotspur in Act II is so pointed
that it is as if he overheard his father comparing the glory
of Hotspur--the son "who is the theme of honor's tongue"--
with himself--the son whose brow is stained with "riot and
dishonor." The following speech demonstrates that Hal sees
through the posture of bombastic ferocity that characterizes
Hotspur's "heroic" activity:
I am not yet of Percy's mind, the Hotspur of the North, He that kills me some six or seven dozen of Scots at a breakfast, washes his hands, and says to his wife, "Fie upon this quiet life! I want work." (II.iv.113-117)

Knowing that once he is king he will have no choice as to his public behavior, Hal resists as Prince playing the role of the warrior-hero that Hotspur so enjoys and which the court so applauds. In order to understand his transformation from the prodigal prince into the ideal hero-king, we must be aware, as Hal is aware, of the part he plays as "the unthrifty son" as well as his consciousness of his future role of king of England. Hal knows that he is not "the king of honor," as Hotspur is called (IV.i.10), but he also realizes that Hotspur's version of heroism is a kind of sham and hypocrisy. Through choice, Hal loses his "place in Council" and becomes "an alien to the hearts /Of all the court and princes" of the royal blood (III.ii.32;34-35). Through choice, he "lavish[es]" his presence among "vulgar company" of the tavern (39;41). Too soon, he will have no choice.

Hal may seem "counterfeit," but he is "a true piece of gold" (II.iv.539-540). Percy, on the other hand, according to his own wife, is "altogether governed by humours"

16S. L. Bethell, Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition, introduction by T. S. Eliot (Durham, N.C., 1944), p. 56, contends that "Hotspur is seldom taken seriously," but the fact that Hal's father and the court do appreciate Hotspur's heroics is an important aspect of Shakespeare's thematic scheme. In the final analysis, Shakespeare, although praising heroic valor on the battlefield, rejects Percy's brand of leadership and heroism as too self-centered.
(III.i.237), which sometimes shows itself as "greatness, courage, blood" but too often presents itself as

harsh rage,

Defect of manners, want of government,

Pride, haughtiness, opinion, and disdain. . . .

(III.i.183-185)

The qualities in Prince Hal that the court mistakes as "counterfeit" are actually a reflection of Hal's enjoyment of worldly pleasures and emotions, passions which he, unlike Percy, can control. Falstaff, the symbolic representation of the excesses of the flesh, is relished by Hal, but never governed by him. Percy, on the other hand, because of the uncontrollable excesses of his "heroic" nature, is not "pure gold," although he appears to be. 17

The view of King Henry that his son has lost his princely privilege because of "vile participation" is, of course, based upon his own dubious claim to the throne, a claim of merit rather than hereditary right. As Humphreys points out, succession "as an inherited right is a shadow unless confirmed by merit, as Richard II had found when faced with Bolingbroke." 18 And to the King, Percy is "more worthy" of the throne because he and not Prince Hal is "Mars in swathling clothes" (III.ii. 98; 112). We are meant to believe, however, what the King

17 Humphreys, p. 61, n. 99, points out that Hal "instinctively recognizes the antithesis between his own sociable nature and his rival's combative militarism."

18 Ibid., p. 105, n. 98.
cannot: Hal will "redeem all this on Percy's head" (132). Like the Hamlet who returns restored from his interrupted trip to England, Hal knows that "readiness is all." The time will come when Hal will exchange his "indignities" for Percy's glory (144-146). At the proper time Hal will combine the masterful qualities of his father, the warrior-hero image of Percy, the essential humanity of Falstaff, and the God-sanctioned legality of Richard II.¹⁹

And the proper time is at Shrewsbury. Percy's rebellion transforms the "nimble-footed madcap Prince of Wales" (IV.i.95) into that glorious warrior-hero that history and culture demand. As if to emphasize the image of the "new" prince, Shakespeare has one of the rebel chieftains describe the prince as warrior:

I saw young Harry with his beaver on,
His cuisses on his thighs, gallantly armed,
Rise from the ground like feathered Mercury,
And vaulted with such ease into his seat
As if an angel dropped down from the clouds
To turn and wind a fiery Pegasus,
And witch the world with noble horsemanship.
(IV.i.104-110)

Hal's actions at Shrewsbury confirm in fact the mythological fire of this description. Even Hal's challenge of Percy is ideal in its chivalric courtliness. As Sir Richard Vernon

¹⁹Richard II's best feature as king is his love of the land, a quality that we will see manifested in Prince Hal as Henry V.
confesses to Percy when he realizes the nature and circumstances of that challenge to Percy,

... by my soul, I never in my life
Did hear a challenge urged more modestly,
Unless a brother should a brother dare
To gentle exercise and proof of arms.
He gave you all the duties of a man,
Trimmed up your praises with a princely tongue,
Spoke your deservings like a chronicle. . . .

(V.ii.52-58)

So impressed is Sir Richard that he proclaims,

... let me tell the world
If he outlive the envy of this day,
England did never owe so sweet a hope
So misconstrued in his wantonness. (V.ii.66-69)

The King himself, although he will later misconstrue again his son's actions, declares at Shrewsbury that Hal has "redeemed his lost opinion" (V.iv.48), adding to the praise a remark that strikes the young prince to the soul. Because Hal has rescued his father from the sword of Douglas, the King concludes that perhaps his son does love him and has "some tender of my life" (49). For the Prince this accusation, even couched in this kingly commendation, is too much:

O God! They did me too much injury
That ever said I hearkened for your death.
If it were so, I might have let alone
The insulting hand of Douglas over you. . . . (V.iv.50-54)

Later in Part Two others will voice the opinion that the Prince's grief at his father's death cannot be very deep because of what he inherits. But Hal has effectively demonstrated his profound reluctance to assume the heavy burden of monarchy. All that can be said in his defense, Hal himself
declares: "Let the end try the man" (2 Henry IV II.ii.50).
A serious purpose lies back of Hal's behavior—a purpose that manifests itself at Shrewsbury when he is Prince of Wales and later when he is the King of England. His chivalric courtesy and Mars-like valor at Shrewsbury reveal his awareness of the king as hero; his heart-felt sorrow surrounding the inheritance of the crown indicates his knowledge of the enormous responsibilities of the king as leader.

At Shrewsbury, Hal's "repentance" is a fait accompli; Henry IV, Part Two simply unravels the ill-fated reign of Henry IV and prepares for the actual assumption of the throne by Prince Hal. The controversial scene in Act IV, in which Hal prematurely assumes his father's crown, is not, as Richmond suggests, simply the perfect illustration of the "younger generation's will to supplant the older one."20 On the contrary, the scene seems designed to show that the Prince is ready and has been ready to accept the burdens of kingship. Never has Hal, either in Part One or Part Two of the Henry IV plays, heralded the glories of kingly office; his theme rather has been, as it is in this episode, the oppressive task demanded by a position that involves spiritual priorities as the divinely ordained monarch as well as public ones. Seeing the crown on the dying king's pillow, Hal calls

it a "troublesome . . . bedfellow," a cause of anxiety, a "Golden care":

O majesty!
When thou dost pinch thy bearer, thou dost sit
Like a rich armor worn in heat of day,
That scalds with safety. (IV.v.22;23;28-31)

When Hal believes that his father is dead, he reluctantly assumes the crown, which to him symbolizes the burdens, not the glories, attendant upon the English throne:

My gracious lord! My father!
This sleep is sound indeed, this is a sleep,
That from this goldenrigol hath divorced
So many English kings. (34-37)

Hal's image of sleep recalls his father's apostrophe to sleep, in which the insomniac king groans with the weariness of his office. Only the sleep of death will bring the blessed forgetfulness that a monarch longs for; only the sleep of death will divorce a king from the terrible responsibilities that cause his bone-weary restlessness. King Henry's legacy to his son is not the glory of earthly power; it is, as Hal himself has always known, an inheritance of tears and sorrows:

Thy due from me
Is tears and heavy sorrows of the blood,
Which nature, love, and filial tenderness
Shall, O dear Father, pay thee plenteously. (37-40)

Vowing to repay in plenty for his truancy in chivalry, Hal vows as king to protect what his father struggled so valiantly to obtain:
And put the world's whole strength
Into one giant arm, it shall not force
This lineal honor from me. This from thee
Will I to mine leave, as 'tis left to me. (44-47)

Hal obtains the throne by right of birth, achieving a sanction denied to King Henry. The Prince proclaims that no one—not even a Bolingbroke—will take that right away from him. Surely Hal is thinking at this moment of his father's frequent comparisons of his son to the wasteful and ineffectual Richard II. But Hal has proved to be no Richard. Nor has he chosen to emulate the rash and vainglorious Hotspur. He combines the best qualities of both these men who have proven deficient. And, most importantly, Prince Hal combines the sanction of divine right with rule of merit. He is, as Bacon defines kingship, "of the greatest power"; therefore, "he is subject to the greatest cares, made the servant of his people, or else he were without a calling at all."21 Hal is on the threshold of apotheosis as the warrior/king that is the culmination of a long development in Shakespeare's English history plays.

21Bacon, I, 63.
CHAPTER IV

HENRY V: THE APOTHEOSIS OF THE WARRIOR-HERO

In Henry V, the final play of the second tetralogy, the divine right theory is diminished in importance, and primacy is given to the actual execution of kingship. The play's grand design of presenting Henry as "the mirror of all Christian kings" (II.prologue.6) is worked out primarily on the battlefield, and there the formerly ambivalent Prince Hal is transformed into the "warlike Harry," who has taken on "the port of Mars" (I.prologue.5-6). Lily B. Campbell observes that "the theme of the play is war, and the progress of the warrior-hero is the progress of the play."¹ What Campbell sees as a kind of oversimplification of theme is actually quite complex, for the concept of the warrior-hero as it is dramatized in Henry V illustrates the more exalted possibilities of a public role, a role that is, as M. M. Reese says, among "the highest destinies to which God might call a man."²

Or, as Rose Zimbardo believes, Henry V demonstrates that "the


ideal kingdom realizes the kingdom of God on earth, the ideal
king is the instrument and our soul the medium through which
that realization takes place." Henry V rounds out a
Shakespearean ideal of the king as hero in both the spiritual
and temporal realms; he is the king who recognizes, as Aquinas
states, "that he is to be in the kingdom what the soul is in
the body, and what God is in the world."  

Shakespeare presents Henry as a king whose standard of
honor is determined by ideals of soldiership and statesman-
ship. He "is full of grace and fair regard," a "true lover
of the Holy Church," who can as easily discourse on matters of
divinity as "any cause of policy" (I.i.22-23;38-45). And yet
all theories of theology and government must be based on "the
art and practic part of life" (51). Primarily, however, we
see Henry as king engaged in foreign wars, a man of the mili-
tary spirit whose glory and honor are shown on the field of
battle rather than in a council chamber. As Sen Gupta points
out, Henry is a man of "heroic action" who "seldom analyzes
the basis of his claims or the subtler implications of his
conduct"; he is a king who is "heroic but pious, stern yet
merciful, and intrepid and resolute beyond comparison."

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No criticism of Henry is implied here; on the contrary, what is apotheosized in the warrior-hero figure of Henry V is the king as the fountain of honor, whose masculine traits of courage and military prowess inspire the nation to its own greater glory and place in the divine order of things. Because the excellence of Henry is the excellence of an extraordinary soldier, the method of illumination must necessarily be in a quick succession of scenes, all dealing with policy in war or the actual execution of that policy on the battlefield.  

In the first act, for example, we see Henry refusing to engage in what might be considered a politically expedient war in France until he has firm assurance that his cause is right and that England is secure enough to be left "empty of defense" (I.ii.153). He warns Canterbury to take heed how they "incite" him to awaken his "sleeping sword of war":

We charge you, in the name of God, take heed.  
For never two such kingdoms did contend  
Without much fall of blood, whose guiltless drops  
Are every one a woe, a sore complaint  
'Gainst him whose wrongs give edge unto the swords  
That make such waste in brief mortality.  
(I.ii.20;22;23-28)

Since even one death is "a woe" and "a sore complaint," since any death is a "waste" in our brief lives, it is imperative, says Henry, that the blood drawn in war be without guilt. Therefore, his counselors must speak "under this conjuration,"

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6See Reese, pp. 320-321, for a discussion of the rationale for the epic style of Henry V.
For we will hear, note, and believe in heart
That what you speak is in your conscience washed
As pure as sin in baptism. (30-32)

Henry's consciousness of the spiritual obligations of his
divinely sanctioned office is everywhere in this speech.
God's name is always on his lips in his acknowledgment of the
idea of divine endorsement, and, yet, unlike Richard II, he
is not about to sit back and let angels fight his battles for
him. He will wage a justifiable war against France only
after much political groundwork has been laid.

But when the French ambassadors appear before him and
hesitantly ask whether or not to speak plainly, Henry deals
with them directly and with the constrained power of a knight
after the gauntlet has been dropped:

We are no tyrant, but a Christian king;
Unto whose grace our passion is as subject
As our wretches fettered in our prisons.
Therefore with frank and with uncurbed plainness
Tell us the Dauphin's mind. (I.ii.241-245)

Though no tyrant, Henry's image of himself is totally disci-
plined; his passions are subject to the grace of God and are
as "fettered" as any wretch in prison. Therefore, when he
hears the Dauphin's message which mocks his purposefulness
and ability, Henry is quick to challenge that image. Accord-
ing to the French leader, there is nothing in France that can
be won "with a nimble galliard," warning the English king that
he "cannot revel into dukedoms there" (252-253). To match
what the Dauphin considers the frivolous nature of the king,
he sends him a "treasure" of tennis balls (255-258). Henry understands this message well, for men in his own kingdom have found it a "wonder" how a prince who filled his hours "with riots, banquets, sports," and in whom was never "noted" any "study, /Any retirement, any sequestration /From open haunts and popularity" could have effected such a transformation (II.i.53;56-59). But Henry reminds the French ambassadors that the Dauphin, although knowing of the King's "wilder days," has not measured "what use we made of them" (I.ii.267-268) -- an error of judgment that could be France's downfall. Therefore, he sends a warning to the Dauphin:

. . . tell the Dauphin I will keep my state,
Be like a king and show my sail of greatness,
When I do rouse me in my throne of France.
For that I have laid by my majesty,
And plodded like a man for working days
But I will rise there with so full a glory
That I will dazzle all the eyes of France--
Yea, strike the Dauphin blind to look at us.
(I.ii.273-280)

Traversi sharply criticizes the tone of this declaration of heroic intent because, he feels, it follows "the swell of emotion" and "rises to one of ruthless and triumphant egoism. . . ." 7 What Traversi fails to realize is that in the tradition of the warrior-hero, such a "boast" is a statement and confirmation of heroic feelings and desires, as in the classic

7 D. A. Traversi, Shakespeare from Richard II to Henry V (Stanford, Calif., 1957), p. 174. See also Harold C. Godward, The Meaning of Shakespeare (Chicago, 1951), I, 231, who also sees this speech as "an orgy of boasting and threatened vengeance."
cases of Achilles and Beowulf. Both Achilles in the assembly and Beowulf in the meadhall make similar declarations of their own glory and heroic courage. Neither is accused of hubris, for each accomplishes in fact what is promised in rhetoric.

Inherent in the classical idea of honor is the importance of fame or reputation, for the sake of which Achilles chooses a short but glorious life. The concepts of honor and fame are closely aligned throughout the second tetralogy. In Richard II, for example, Mowbray refuses to compromise in his argument with Bolingbroke because

The purest treasure mortal times afford
Is spotless reputation; that away,
Men are but gilded loam or painted clay.
A jewel in a ten-times barred-up chest
Is a bold spirit in a loyal heart.
Mine honor is my life; both grow in one;
Take honor from me, and my life is done. (I.i.177-183)

A similar ideal of heroism in Part One of Henry IV is voiced by Hotspur, who will "pluck bright honor from the pale-faced moon" (I.iii.200), who exhorts his men to overthrow "this canker Bolingbroke" in order to "redeem" their "banished honors" and to "restore" their good name or reputation into "the good thoughts of the world again. . ." (I.iii.180-182). However, as Robert B. Pierce points out, although "Hotspur offers a pattern of military chivalry to Hal and a rival whom he must overcome and transcend," he can offer "no final model."^8

What is wrong with Percy's incessant search for immortal glory is that, ironically, his search is too emotional, too frantic, too unrestrained. Thus, though both Henry V and Hotspur glory in the idea that honor makes a man's life worthwhile, Henry's determination to "dazzle" the eyes of France with his "sail of greatness" cannot be separated from the fact that he is the symbol of England. His glory is necessarily hers. Hotspur, on the other hand, seeks battle as a testimony of his personal heroism. To Percy war is a "sport" with "blows, and groans" that will "applaud" his own military skill and courage (I.iii.302).

Henry's heroic reputation is not a private concern. As king he represents God as well as nation; consequently, his status as a warrior-hero must be defended with resounding rhetoric when that position is scorned and mocked, as it is by the Dauphin. Of course, Henry is all the more sensitive to slurs made against his character, knowing that the fame of his "wilder days" with Falstaff and company will be difficult to overcome. Against the insults of the French, Henry must reply, and reply in terms that reveal his cognizance of his position as the fountain of his nation's honor and as the

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9 Michael Manheim, The Weak King Dilemma in the Shakespearean History Play (Syracuse, N.Y., 1973), p. 146, comparing Hotspur to the Bastard in King John, points out that to both heroes the existence of honor "goes no farther than the limits of its possessor's ego."
Henry tells the Dauphin's messengers that their leader is now "sore charged for the wasteful vengeance" that is war:

For many a thousand widows
Shall this his mock mock out of their dear husbands,
Mock mothers from their sons, mock castles down;
And some are yet ungotten and unborn
That shall have cause to curse the Dauphin's scorn.

(I.ii.284-288)

For a hero who, as Mark Van Doren claims, "struts on tiptoe," or who, according to Hazlitt, has "no idea of any rule of right or wrong," Henry is remarkably aware of the senseless brutality of war, of its tragic touch upon the "thousand widows," upon the mothers who will lose their sons, and aware of its effect upon generation after generation to come. But, as Henry says,

this lies all within the will of God,
To Whom I do appeal, and in Whose name
Tell you the Dauphin I am coming on,
To venge me as I may and to put forth
My rightful hand in a well-hallowed cause. (289-293)

Henry's revenge is couched in the honor of England, projected with a spirit of piety that identifies his own "rightful hand" with that of his nation. As Martha Shackford points out, Henry as king "is represented seeking divine approval and divine guidance throughout the drama, with a wholly Christian

10 Mark Van Doren, Shakespeare (Garden City, N.Y., 1939), p. 144.

devoutness."\textsuperscript{12} Henry's association of king and God and nation
is not a "puerile appeal"\textsuperscript{13} to patriotism, nor is it "religious
hypocrisy."\textsuperscript{14} Rather, such an association illustrates Henry's
understanding that "the ideal kingdom realizes the kingdom of
God on earth. . . ."\textsuperscript{15}

In Henry's speech before Harfluer, he shows himself to
be the ultimate warrior-hero whose martial virtues must be
demonstrated and emulated by his troops for the honor and
fame of England. Henry reminds his men that in peace "nothing
so becomes a man /As modest stillness and humility," but in
war they must "imitate the action of the tiger," and

\textit{Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood,
Disguise fair nature with hard-favored rage. (III.i.3-8)}

They must take on "the port of Mars," with a "noble luster" (30)
in their eyes and stretch "every spirit" to its "full height"
(16-17). As grim-faced but courageous soldiers, the men
of England will give their fathers "war proof" of their noble
heritage as Englishmen:

\textit{On, on, you noblest English,
Whose blood is fet from fathers of war proof!
Fathers that, like so many Alexanders,
Have in these parts from morn till even fought
And sheathed their swords for lack of argument.}

\textsuperscript{12}Martha Hale Shackford, \textit{Shakespeare, Sophocles} (New

\textsuperscript{13}Van Doren, p. 147.  \textsuperscript{14}Hazlitt, p. 191.

\textsuperscript{15}Zimbardo, p. 17. 
Dishonor not your mothers. Now attest
That those whom you called fathers did beget you.
Be copy now to men of grosser blood,
And teach them how to war. (17-25)

The idea behind this speech is that war provides an opportunity for the display of virtue, virtue that is inherited from the blood of noble fathers and mothers. Henry's men must prove on the battlefield the "worth of their breeding" (28); a man who proves himself valiant in war testifies to the quality of the nation that he represents. And, if death should be the result of such steadfastness and courage, that death honors his family, his nation, and his king. Pierce contends that this "conception of patriotic unity, symbolized by the bonds of family" is a "precondition of political and military success."16

It is also an idea that is particularly classical, most especially Spartan. In Tyrtaeus of Sparta's paean to the heroic spirit, he asserts that true glory and immortal fame can accrue to an individual who proves his "courage, man's finest possession" and "the noblest prize that a young man can endeavor to win," only on the field of battle.17 Tyrtaeus takes no "account" of the great athlete, rhetorician, or other achiever, "not if he had all splendors except the fighting spirit,"

16Pierce, p. 232.

For no man ever proves himself a good man in war
unless he can endure to face the blood and the slaughter,
go close against the enemy and fight with his hands.18

Over and over, Shakespeare emphasizes the special community of
spirit that belongs to fighting men, and when, as at Agincourt,
the danger is the "greater," then the greater the courage
(IV.i.1-2), the greater the honor. In fact, Henry declares
that he does not wish "one man more" (IV.iii.32), and warns
if there is any Englishman who has "no stomach to this fight,"
then "let him depart" (35-36), for the glory of this victory
should be shared only by those most worthy:

We would not die in that man's company
That fears his fellowship to die with us.
This day is called the feast of Crispian.
He that outlives this day and comes safe home
Will stand a-tiptoe when this day is named
And rouse him at the name of Crispian. (38-43)

Immortal fame will belong to those "few" who in the "fellow-
ship" of war band together like brothers:

We few, happy few, we band of brothers.
For he today that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother. (60-62)

Indeed, according to Henry, those "gentlemen in England now
abed" will be "accursed" and their manhood will be held "cheap"
(64-66) whenever Saint Crispin's Day is mentioned. Again we
see accentuated, without irony or satire,19 these special

18Ibid.
Reading of Henry V," English Review, XXIX (1919), 42-55, see
Shakespeare as parodying the concept of the warrior-hero in
Henry V.
qualities and characteristics which the warrior code evokes in man, with its potential to elevate even the ordinary citizen to near god-like proportions.

Whatever the origins of this concept of honor and fame, we must not forget that the cultural milieu of the play in question is still Tudor England. Therefore, though Agincourt is a "glorious and well-foughten field" where Englishmen "kept together in . . . chivalry" (IV.vi.18-19), the resultant honor belongs also to God. When Henry learns of the sparcity of English casualties, he recognizes the divine endorsement of his rule:

O God, Thy arm was here,
And not to us, but to Thy arm alone,
Ascribe we all! When, without stratagem,
But in plain shock and even play of battle,
Was ever known so great and little loss
On one part and on th' other? Take it, God,
For it is none but Thine! (IV.viii.111-117)

The Agincourt victory provides a sacramental confirmation of the ideal kingdom where political and spiritual values can be realized in the public sphere. The Agincourt victory also re-establishes the reputation of England and establishes Henry as the apotheosis of the warrior-hero. No longer is there any need for Henry to "boast" of his prowess and of his potential to "dazzle" the eyes of France. Therefore, when he returns triumphant to England, he forbids his lords to bear his "bruised helmet and his bended sword /Before him through
the city" (V.prologue.17-19). These literal signs of Henry's heroic endeavor on the battlefield are superfluous; he shows himself to be

free from vainness and self-glorious pride,
Giving full trophy, signal, and ostent
Quite from himself to God. (V.prologue.20-22)

As an established warrior-hero whose conduct is God-sanctioned, Henry V is the soldier-king who combines in the glory of his person the concepts of God and nation and honor. And as a play, Henry V is a proper close to Shakespeare's eight-part treatment of English history, for it not only dramatizes the successful union of the words honor and king, but it also provides a testimony to the expansion of the human spirit that is possible when the ideal of divine right is balanced with public and private morality.

It is ironic, however, that chronologically it is almost at the point of Henry V, in which the culmination of the warrior-hero concept is reached, that Shakespeare seems to waver in his advocacy of this ideal. Possibly through his interest in the Roman world, Shakespeare comes to see deficiencies in a code that restricts the accomplishment of honor solely to the public sphere. Brutus, Antony, and Coriolanus, among other Roman heroes, find themselves in political situations in which the hierarchy of public values, so confidently
presented in the English histories, no longer apply, or have become corrupted. Moreover, as the succeeding chapters will demonstrate, the struggle of these heroes often focuses upon their determination to maintain these values, a struggle that leads to bitter disillusionment and ultimately to personal failure.
CHAPTER V

JULIUS CAESAR: THE PRINCIPLE OF FRIENDSHIP VERSUS
THE PRINCIPLE OF HEROISM

As the earliest of the three major Shakespearean plays based on Roman history, Julius Caesar is separated "by no great distance in time"1 from the Henry group. Goddard calls Julius Caesar "a bridge between Shakespeare's Histories and his Tragedies"2; Traversi contends that this first Roman play is very similar in terms of composition and in subject matter to "the political interests . . . recently expressed in the two parts of Henry IV and in Henry V."3 Because Hardin Craig sees Caesar as "a sort of Richmond,"4 he believes that the play "presents the ancient theme of regicide versus the tyrant. . . ."5 Mark Van Doren criticizes Julius Caesar precisely because he finds it too historical, too much an

5Ibid., p. 172.
expression of the "author's idea of antiquity rather than his knowledge of life." T. J. B. Spencer, in his exploration of the views of Roman history in Shakespeare's time, points out that "the moral purpose of history in general, and of Roman history in particular, was directed toward monarch." Therefore, according to Spencer, the interest of the Elizabethans in the moral lesson of Roman history was essentially the same as that motivated by English history, both being directed toward the "relevant political lessons" connected "with princes." And the political lesson of Julius Caesar to most observers of the play is, as R. A. Yoder states, that "Rome, like Shakespeare's England during the reigns of Richard II and Henry IV, is a study of continuous disintegration and the inevitable progress of power..."

Although most of the emphasis of Shakespearean criticism is upon the similarities between Julius Caesar and the English histories, Julius Caesar is still recognized as a kind of

8Ibid.
"turning point of Shakespeare's career" in that it "points ahead to the great tragedies...." Few, however, understand the extent to which this first of these Roman plays is a departure from the perspective of and attitude toward political events that characterize the English histories. Northrop Frye reminds us that the social order in *Julius Caesar* is still Elizabethan "with the ruler at its head, and a personal chain of authority extending from the ruler down," but a close comparison between *Julius Caesar* and its English predecessors reveals a growing skepticism on the part of Shakespeare toward the ethical framework of this structured and hierarchical society. Although Brutus bears resemblance to Henry V, who conceives that it is no "sin to covet honor" (*H.V. iv.iii.28*), Brutus' choice of duty over personal loyalties—a choice that is sacrosanct in the English histories—leaves him not only spiritually unfulfilled but also morally flawed. 

10 Yoder, p. 309.  
12 Irving Ribner, *Patterns in Shakespearean Tragedy* (London, 1960), pp. 53-64, sees Brutus as an essentially good man who opposes political tyranny, and maintains that his only "sin" is the manner in which he opposes that threat" (56). See also R. W. Foakes, "An Approach to Julius Caesar," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, V (Fall, 1954), 259-270, for a similar attitude toward Brutus.
The focus of attention in *Julius Caesar*, for all its political machinations, is only partly on the public arena, where duty and valor and honor are of absolute importance as symbols of a healthy state. There is equal emphasis, if not more, upon the private world of love and friendship, a world where personal allegiances become increasingly significant. This second world is betrayed by Brutus precisely because he chooses to conform to the standard of conduct demanded for the public figure, a standard that not only worked for Bolingbroke and for Prince Hal but is glorified in the total experience of the English history plays. In *Julius Caesar*, however, this standard of heroic leadership, which is the rationale of the hero, is shown as a restricting code of human behavior. Brutus, who loves Caesar, distorts his mind in order to divorce friendship from what he considers his public duty. Such a divorce is applauded in the history plays, most significantly illustrated in York's denunciation of his son and in Hal's rejection of Falstaff, an act which is depicted as altogether fitting for a newly crowned monarch. In *Julius Caesar*, on the other hand, Brutus' Stoic categorization of love for Caesar as irrelevant and immaterial results in a total distortion of political reality. Brutus' main failures in the world of affairs come after he wraps himself in the cloak of the defender of his nation's honor; in short, Brutus becomes a kind of warrior-hero who thinks he will rescue Rome
from an enemy within. Brutus' assuming such an incongruous role is as tragic as Richard II's dressing himself in the Renaissance trappings of the divinely anointed monarch. It is relevant to note again that Richard II's most intense feelings toward the land represent the best qualities of his kingly personality, qualities that are abrogated when he assumes what he considers the more appropriate role of God-sanctioned authority. Similarly, when Brutus assumes the public mantle of soldier/protector of the state, he too, like Richard, nullifies the best part of himself, a part that involves the private workings of his heart. He loves Caesar, and yet he betrays him. Richard loves England, and yet he betrays her. It is ironic that both Brutus and Richard seem to consider their most intense feelings to be a weakness, and as such need to be expunged; and, as we have seen in Richard II and will see in Julius Caesar, when these feelings are denied, errors in judgment become increasingly apparent.

We do have a kind of "monarch" in Julius Caesar, and many commentators regard Caesar as a Roman Richard II and Brutus as another Bolingbroke, who is "outraged by the cruelty and tyranny around him" and must therefore, like his English counterpart, "sadly and reluctantly" oppose that tyranny. But

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13 See, for example, John W. Velz, "Cassius as a 'Great Observer,'" Modern Language Review, LXVIII (April, 1973), 256-259, who compares Caesar to Richard II as "singularly unattractive before his fall. . . . (256)."

14 Goddard, I, 312.
Caesar is no Richard, nor is Brutus a Richmond. In the context of the entire play, it is Brutus who is the enemy of the state, not Caesar. He is its enemy because his honorable presence lends dignity and moral approbation to an illegal act. Furthermore, the Brutus-Caesar relationship signifies a concept of friendship, of loyalty and obligations beyond political expediency. Without such private loyalties political maneuvers have no moral basis. Whereas the English histories stress the idea that the king's honor is also the nation's, Julius Caesar locates proper political action squarely in the realm of more private responsibilities. Under the misguided notion that his public allegiance to an ideal state of Rome requires a betrayal of personal friendship, Brutus negates both. With keen insight, Cassius in the temptation scene reads Brutus' conception of the choice as between the safety of Rome and the safety of Caesar, a false dilemma to say the least.\footnote{In the English histories, as we have noted, the dilemma that confronts Bolingbroke is infinitely complex, since Richard proves over and over his "treason" against England, as Caesar does not. For a contrary view, see E. M. W. Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays (New York, 1946), p. 252, who contends that both Caesar and Richard abuse the power of their office.} And typically, Brutus, following his idea of honorable conduct, chooses duty over love: "I slew my best lover for the good of Rome" (III.ii.49-50).

Brutus' "best lover" is Caesar, and the degree of our severity of judgment concerning the assassination depends upon
whether or not Caesar has abused his office. As Ribner declares, Caesar does not rule with the religious sanction of divine right, and therefore, as an "ordinary man, no matter how great, he could not aspire to kingship; he could only aspire to tyranny..." Even if we accept that Caesar is a tyrant, and we see no evidence of this in the play, rushing to remove Caesar from power through murder is hardly an attractive prospect, no matter how tyrannical he is envisioned to be. In this case many elements are bluntly ignored, the most important being whether or not Caesar has been falsely accused. No such considerations take place. To the conspirators Caesar's guilt is accepted prima facie. Their justification for assassination is that Caesar might become a tyrant, not that he is one. Only Brutus, in the famous soliloquy, provides supposed justification. And while it seems adequate for him, it is totally inadequate for us.

Although G. B. Harrison concedes that Caesar "commits no act that justifies murder," his concession is based upon the notion that "as a character, Caesar is singularly negative," that "he certainly maintains an attitude of insufferable superiority which infuriates lesser men such as Cassius and fills them with the lust for his blood." Harley Granville-Barker

16 Ribner, p. 16.

describes Caesar as a wooden figure who "is more shadow than substance."18 H. M. Richmond, although recognizing the importance of Caesar in terms of Brutus' tragedy, calls him an "unrelentingly self-confident tyrant," who will fulfill Brutus' expectations of a great ruler succumbing to "monarchical absolutism."19 In Richmond's belief that politically the future of Rome under Caesar will be an inevitable disaster,20 he falls prey to the same rationalization that serves the conspirators so well. The possibility of Caesar's becoming a tyrant is certainly a political consideration, but the fact remains that at the time of the assassination, Caesar is not guilty.21 No abuse of office has occurred. His triple refusal of the crown, even in the face of his growing inclination to accept it, his will proclaiming the citizens heirs in his

18 Harley Granville-Barker, Prefaces to Shakespeare (Princeton, N.J., 1946), II, 162.


20 Ibid.

21 M. W. MacCallum, Shakespeare's Roman Plays and Their Background (London, 1910), p. 230, points out that Caesar's faults would "have seemed venial to the subject of the Tudor monarchy; at worst, when compared with the splendour of his achievement, they were spots in the sun."
estate, his trust in his counselors, mistaken though that trust may be, provide an adequate defense against the dogmatic assertion that Caesar is, or surely will become, a tyrant. Not only has Caesar not committed acts that justify the extreme measures taken against him, but also, and most significantly, Caesar is Brutus' friend.

But the idea of Caesar's potential tyranny is imbedded in Brutus' mind. When Brutus accepts his supposition as fact, he denies both political reality and his emotional ties with his leader and friend. What is particularly significant is that Brutus already has embraced the notion of Caesar's tyranny, before he is "seduced" by Cassius. In I.ii., Cassius notices Brutus' brooding countenance and speaks to him in the name of their friendship:

Brutus, I do observe you now of late.
I have not from your eyes that gentleness
And show of love as I was wont to have.
You bear too stubborn and too strange a hand
Over your friend that loves you. (I.ii.32-36)

What Cassius immediately fears is a falling off of love—a fear that absorbs him throughout the play and which provides the motivation for all his activities, including his personal

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See Goddard, I, 314, who represents those who condemn Cassius as the "seducer": Cassius "is cynically aware of every step he takes. He is the Seducer. He proceeds to lay siege to Brutus' integrity exactly as a seducer in a commoner sense does to a woman's chastity." See also Taylor, already cited in footnote #9, p. 303: "Brutus has literally been seduced. Brutus has the 'harmlessness of the dove' while Cassius has the Biblical 'wisdom' of the serpent."
animosity toward Caesar. But Brutus assures his friend that his "veiled look" results from his turning inward to deal with conflicting emotions and declares that the blemish in his behavior stems from the fact that "poor Brutus" is "at war" with himself (I.ii.46). Their friendship reaffirmed, Cassius offers himself as a mirror to Brutus' soul:

... good Brutus, be prepared to hear.
And since you know you cannot see yourself
So well as by reflection, I your glass
Will modestly discover to yourself
That of yourself which you yet know not of. (66-70)

Like a lover whose sympathetic understanding draws forth the hidden realities from his beloved's soul, Cassius carefully urges Brutus to verbalize what he rightly suspects is the cause of these melancholy anxieties. And at once Brutus enters the game. Hearing the shouting of the people, Brutus expresses his fear that the citizens "choose Caesar for their king" (80). It is important to notice that in this political chess game, the actions of Brutus and Cassius, in what has been called the "long seduction scene,"\(^23\) indicate an awareness on both their parts of the other's thoughts. Cassius does not seduce Brutus into accepting the idea of Caesar's tyranny; Brutus has already seduced himself. He is simply waiting to hear voiced the expression of his own thoughts, and Cassius promptly complies:

Aye, do you fear it?
Then must I think you would not have it so. (80-81)

\(^23\) Velz, p. 257.
Although proceeding with his famous Stoic caution, Brutus still offers Cassius all the ammunition he needs:

I would not, Cassius, yet I love him well.  
But wherefore do you hold me here so long?  
What is it that you would impart to me?  
If it be aught toward the general good,  
Set honor in one eye and death i' the other,  
And I will look on both indifferently;  
For let the gods so speed me as I love  
The name of honor more than I fear death. (82-89)

We have heard the theme of this speech before; the "love of honor" over life itself; but in Julius Caesar, unlike the English histories, the word honor takes on ironic connotations. In this scene, Brutus' use of the word informs Cassius how to couch his case against Caesar. It is as if Eve told the serpent that not only did she love apples, but she also could not resist them. Nothing more is needed for the "temptation" to become a fait accompli than for Cassius to state the dilemma in terms of "the general good," and keeping in mind that "honor" is the proper end. Although Brutus loves Caesar, he tells Cassius that in a choice between love and duty, he must choose the public virtue. Moreover, once the common good has been established, which in this case involves the overthrow of Caesar, Brutus stipulates only that the act of deposition be "honorable," and, of course, we know what political advantage Antony will make of that word "honorable."

Therefore, when Cassius puts his case against Caesar, he properly couches his argument according to Brutus' instructions:
I know that virtue to be in you, Brutus,
As well as I do know your outward favor.
Well, honor is the subject of my story. (90-92)

But "honor" is hardly the subject of Cassius' tale; rather, the subject is personal jealousy. Cassius argues that both were "born free as Caesar," have fed as well, have endured "the winter's cold as well as he." Why, then, should this man "now become a god" and Cassius "a wretched creature," bending his will to Caesar's nods? (97-118) Almost petulantly Cassius complains that it is not fair that a man who could become as ill and helpless "as a sick girl," who has such a "feeble temper," should become the leader of "the majestic world" and "bear the palm alone" (128-131). At this moment more shouts are heard from the citizens, and Brutus returns to his theme:

I do believe that these applauses are
For some new honors that are heaped on Caesar. (133-134)

In these lines Brutus reveals his own jealousy, jealousy of the conferment of "new honors" on another man. And Cassius once again makes the appropriate response:

Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world
Like a Colossus, and we petty men
Walk under his huge legs and peep about
To find ourselves dishonorable graves. (135-138)

Since Brutus' name is "as fair" as Caesar's, then why should Caesar's be "sounded" more? The fault, continues Cassius, lies not in the stars, "but in ourselves, that we are underlings," that we permit another man's honor to overshadow our own (140-144).
The concept of honor implied in this exchange between Brutus and Cassius is antithetical to that seen in the history plays discussed earlier. In *Henry V*, for example, it was suggested that the more honor the king garners, the greater the glory of the nation. The king's honor, therefore, increases his countrymen's, for they have a share in it. Here, however, rather than augmenting his countrymen's honor, Caesar is said to diminish it. Instead of the king as the fountain of honor, spilling over to nourish and vitalize his nation, in the eyes of Brutus and Cassius, Caesar is a kind of sponge that soaks up the honor of the citizens, leaving them "lean and hungry." Cassius reveals over and over his abhorrence of the idea that one man alone embodies the glory of Rome:

    Age, thou art ashamed!
    Rome, thou hast lost the breed of noble bloods!
    When went there by an age, since the great flood,
    But it was famed with more than one man?
    When could they say till now that talked of Rome
    That her wide walls encompassed but one man?
    Now is it Rome indeed, and room enough,
    When there is in it but one only man. (150-157)

Echoed here is Henry V's call upon the heritage of blood in his speech before Agincourt, but Cassius' calling upon the same principle--that the "breed of noble bloods" demands heroic action--has the opposite application. Instead of being "together . . . in chivalry" (*H.V. vi.19*), the men of Rome are separated and dishonored by the accruing honors of their leader.
Brutus' reply to Cassius' observation is to affirm his lack of jealousy in this matter—"I am nothing jealous" (162)—but jealousy is exactly what is involved. Brutus' denial indicates that he is aware that Cassius' complaints are stimulated by envy and not by the spirit of comitatus between friends or between citizen and leader,24 and he wishes to assure Cassius that his motivation is not so personal. With some "show of fire" Brutus declares that he would "rather be a villager /Than to repute himself a son /of Rome" under the condition of Caesar's potential tyranny (172-177). In effect then, Brutus agrees with Cassius' idea that one cannot be "a son of Rome" and allow the possibility of Caesar's increasing glory. We are here far removed from the Tudor identification of king with nation and honor; in the Roman world, these terms are conceived as mutually exclusive.

In the entire "seduction" scene, neither Brutus nor Cassius presents a shred of evidence that Caesar is a tyrant; as Doublas Peterson observes, "Whatever weaknesses Shakespeare may attribute to Caesar, one thing is certain. He presents Caesar on his return to Rome as politically blameless."25

24 See Frye, p. 25: "In the histories there is no conception of any loyalty broader than England, and even when Shakespeare's subject is the Roman Empire in which Stoicism grew up, loyalties are still concrete and personal. It is a comitatus group that gathers around both Caesar and Antony."

What Shakespeare does reveal through Cassius' argument is that Caesar is totally human, a man who dares his companion Cassius to leap with him into an "angry flood," and when he flounders, cries to his fellow swimmer for assistance (100-111). The portrait of Caesar in Cassius' story is not that of a despot; instead, it is a portrait of a man equal to other men, a creature with human virtues and human limitations. The image of the groaning leader, thrashing about in his feverish illness, evokes sympathy, not scorn, and serves to remind the audience of the human, rather than kingly, relationship that exists between Caesar and his men, a relationship based upon friendship and mutual respect rather than upon a political hierarchy. Cassius' rescue of Caesar during the swimming match, his attentive nursing of the ill Caesar, illustrate the intimacy of friendship, and more important, suggest the inherent obligations in such a relationship.

A major theme of the play is here confirmed. What is repeatedly emphasized is that Caesar has given friendship to several men, Cassius included, and the obligations of friendship are denied through what the conspirators claim as political necessity, which at least one of the conspirators conceives as "honorable" action. Unlike the history plays, the right to rule does not occupy here a central thematic position. The conspiracy works against political power, but equally important it violates cherished personal concepts, especially
the bonds of friendship. L. C. Knights observes this unusual emphasis as he notes how "often the verb 'love' appears in this play, how often different characters speak of their love--their 'dear love' or 'their kind live'--for each other, how often they seem to find special satisfaction in referring to themselves as 'brothers.'" The effect of all this is to focus attention upon issues that transcend the exigencies of politics, issues that could not be explored in the English histories because the concept of divine right rigidly circumscribed the personal and political context.

The cry which succinctly expresses the play's theme of violated friendship rather than violated authority is Caesar's, "Et tu, Brute?" Seeing Brutus, dagger in hand, Caesar understands that death will come at the hands of a friend, and therefore he submits: "Then fall, Caesar!" (III.i.77). Caesar "chooses" death not because honor is dead, but because friendship is. Even Cassius, who has been denied friendship with Caesar, admits that if he were as loved as Brutus, no "humor" could persuade him to take arms against that love (I.ii.317-319). But Brutus is easily persuaded; and since the conspirators realize that the presence of a man who "sits high in all the people's hearts" can transform an "offense" into "virtue.

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and to worthiness" (I.iii.157-160), they manipulate him to their purposes. Because Brutus ostensibly presents all that is noble and honorable, his is the most effective dagger of all. Brutus' honor is manipulated, and Brutus acquiesces because he believes that public duty requires it.

The idea of betrayed friendship is again the central theme of Antony's forum speech. Antony stresses neither that the murder is constitutionally illegal nor that Brutus "is guilty of what for Shakespeare amounted to regicide."27 Instead, Antony focuses upon the comitatus relationship that existed around Caesar:

Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.
He was my friend, faithful and just to me. (III.ii.89-90)

According to Antony, Caesar was "faithful and just" to him, not the words of a subject to a king, but proper among true friends. In this manner, Antony juxtaposes the concept of friendship with the fact that Caesar has been murdered by "honorable" men, some of whom purported to be his friends. Antony does not directly question Brutus' word that Caesar is ambitious; he merely presents evidence that illustrates Caesar's lack of ambition:

. . . Brutus says he was ambitious,
And Brutus is an honorable man.
He hath brought many captives home to Rome,
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill.
Did this in Caesar seem ambitious? (91-95)

27Peterson, p. 23.
Contrary to Cassius' negativism about Caesar is Antony's point that Caesar's successes on the battlefield increased the general good. Moreover, according to Antony, Caesar's concerns were for his people:

When the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept—
Ambition should be made of sterner stuff.
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious,
And Brutus is an honorable man. (96-99)

This picture that Antony draws of Caesar as a weeping friend of the people, sensitive and responsive to their needs, is significant in terms of the play's emphasis upon the quality of friendship.

Antony continues his funeral oration on the theme of betrayed love rather than on the betrayed state:

You all did love him once, not without cause.
What cause withholds you then to mourn for him?
0 judgment, thou art fled to brutish beasts,
And men have lost their reason! Bear with me,
My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar,
And I must pause till it come back to me. (107-112)

Men have indeed "lost their reason" and have become "brutish beasts" when love is returned with violence and ingratitude; one of the moral truths of Julius Caesar is that friendship is a reciprocal relationship, demanding allegiance on both sides. Antony's heart and the hearts of the people belong in Caesar's coffin. Antony properly asks what cause refrains the mourning of such a friend and leader, for there was "cause" to love Caesar, to honor him, even to crown him. Men have lost their judgment and become "brutish" when a man is killed
without a cause, when a friend is betrayed without cause, when a leader is assassinated—without cause. However hypocritical Antony's political posture may seem, his eulogy rings passionately true throughout the play. We "are not wood"; we are "not stones, but men" (147), whose passions should be inflamed nearly to madness when friendship is brutally sacrificed in the name of public duty and the good of the state.

Like the other characters in the play, Antony speaks repeatedly of love, love that "had cause." But what cause had Brutus, who was "Caesar's angel" (185)? When Antony first views the murdered corpse, he asks Brutus this question. And Brutus agrees that if sufficient cause had not existed, such an act would be a "savage spectacle" III.i.223). The answer is terrible, for Brutus not only admits his love for Caesar, but he also prides himself on the fact that he has chosen duty over love:

If there be any in this assembly, any dear friend of Caesar's, to him I say that Brutus' love to Caesar was no less than his. If then that friend demand why Brutus rose against Caesar, this is my answer—not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more. Had you rather Caesar were living, and die all slaves, than that Caesar were dead, to live all freemen? As Caesar loved me, I weep for him; as he was fortunate, I rejoice at it; as he was valiant, I honor him. But as he was ambitious, I slew him. There is tears for his love, joy for his fortune, honor for his valor, and death for his ambition. (III.ii.18-30)
How far we have come from the English histories is made clear when we note, as Goddard says, that Falstaff does not say, "'Et tu, Henry!'" when his friend "killed" their relationship. It is precisely our point that we do not hear such a cry in Henry IV, Part Two, because Shakespeare at that time accepts the standard of conduct, the code of honor, for the warrior-hero, a standard that in the Roman plays is found to contain a fundamental fallacy. And that fallacy is the dogmatic belief that duty inherently exercises a priority over love.

What Antony later asserts about Caesar, Brutus affirms in his own address to the people: Caesar was a friend; he was "fortunate"; he was "valiant." But because Brutus "loved" Rome more, he "slew" his "best lover" (III.ii.49-50). Antony's speech simply takes up where Brutus' leaves off: both emphasize the murderer's love for his victim. Pointing to the bloody tunic, Antony demands public notice of the irony in a love that carries a dagger:

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28 See Goddard, I, 309, who sees the analogy between the rejection of Falstaff and the murder of Caesar as examples of putting "the public good above personal feeling." My thesis is the opposite: namely, that what was valid in the English world of divine right is no longer valid here.

29 See G. Wilson Knight, The Imperial Theme (London, 1931), p. 81: "Virtue, to Brutus, is a quality to be rigidly distinguished from love. Love regularly conflicts with it. He denies the greatest force in life and the only hope in death. He thus fails in life and dies sadly, pathetically searching at the end for someone 'honorable' enough to slay him."
Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabbed,
And as he plucked his cursed steel away,
Mark how the blood of Caesar followed it,
As rushing out of doors, to be resolved
If Brutus so unkindly knocked, or no.
For Brutus, as you know, was Caesar's angel.
Judge, O you gods, how dearly Caesar loved him!
This was the most unkindest cut of all,
For when the noble Caesar saw him stab,
Ingratitude, more strong than traitors' arms,
Quite vanquished him. Then burst his mighty heart. . . .
(III.ii.180-190)

It is more than metaphor that Antony calls "ingratITUDE"
rather than the knife the weapon that killed Caesar; "the
most unkindest cut of all" lies in the sacrifice of friendship
in the name of political honor, and it is especially fitting
that Antony imagines that the cause of Caesar's death is the
shock of betrayal. "Well-beloved Brutus" vanquishes Caesar
by a weapon stronger than "traitors' arms"; Caesar's "mighty
heart" bursts under the blow of "ingratITUDE."

Political disaster in Julius Caesar occurs because of a
violation in the moral order. In the sense that "ingratITUDE"
kills Caesar, Julius Caesar truly marks a new emphasis in the
plays of Shakespeare; it is, as Goddard aptly notes,
"Shakespeare's Copernican revolution."\(^{30}\) Indeed, this play in
its most profound significance is only secondarily political.
Shakespeare has always emphasized the ethical considerations
of political acts; in Julius Caesar more than ever, ethical
considerations take precedence over the political. In this

\(^{30}\) Goddard, I, 307.
context, and from a narrower perspective, Cassius is more "honorable" than Antony, more "honorable" than Brutus, for Cassius consistently acts out of friendship. Because Caesar is no longer his friend, Cassius rejects him. As noted earlier, Cassius contends that he would never act against Caesar if Caesar treated, or loved, him as he treats and loves Brutus (I.ii.317-319). A strong character who is too frequently dismissed as another Iago, Cassius is the best representative in the play of friendship. One of the most acclaimed scenes in Julius Caesar, and one of the "most moving," has been termed irrelevant by the same critics who recognize its power to move us. The quarrel scene between Brutus and Cassius has

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31 Foakes, p. 58, in his discussion of the failure of Brutus and Caesar to "measure up" to the Roman ideal, says that Cassius "proves to be nobler than a manipulator, than a mere sketch for Iago."

32 For analysis of Cassius' character see Granville-Barker, "Cassius," II, 170-175: Granville-Barker sees Cassius as "the man of passion" who "is set in contrast to Brutus, the philosopher," but in no way does he find Cassius admirable (170). Cf. Robert B. Heilman, "To Know Himself: An Aspect of Tragic Structure," A Review of English Studies, V (April, 1964), 36-43: Heilman views Cassius as "a plotter and born follower," another example of the fact that "in Julius Caesar it is rare that anyone holds a mirror to self" (40).

33 Knights touches upon this point when he says, "Cassius, less scrupulous, shows, as always, more awareness of heart. Cassius is always in touch with realities--of love, of conspiracy, of war: Brutus is ever most at home with ethical abstractions" (pp. 74-75). See also pp. 82-92.

that power, but it is also one of the most pertinent in the development of the theme of friendship. Brutus describes Cassius as "a hot friend cooling"; he notes that Cassius' "love begins to sicken and decay," that "there are no tricks in plain and simple faith" (IV.ii.19-22). There is terrible irony in this speech, uttered by the man who used his Stoic aloofness to betray the "plain and simple faith" of Caesar. Brutus' accusation of Cassius as one of those "hollow men" who make postures of friendship with great solemnity and ceremony but "sink in the trial" (IV.ii.23-27) can easily be turned against himself.

Indeed, there is little ethical difference between Othello's destruction of his "pearl of great price" and Brutus' murder of "his best lover for the good of Rome." Neither has the "right" even if "cause" existed, a point neither realizes. Neither experiences that Aristotelian awakening or insight of the tragic.

35See Brents Stirling, Unity in Shakespearian Tragedy (New York, 1956), p. 41, who makes a similar comparison: "The Elizabethan tragedy of Brutus, like that of Othello, is marked by an integrity of conduct which leads the protagonist into evil and measures him in his error." Both Othello and Brutus follow the standard of conduct for the warrior-hero in their respective murders. When the hero feels that his image as a public figure is endangered, he protects that image through violence. Othello kills Desdemona because her alleged adultery dishonors him; Brutus kills Caesar because his reputation as protector of Rome seems in jeopardy because of Caesar's growing fame.
hero; instead, each accepts death as an inevitable consequence of his act, and not in the realization that murder is execrable, a failing that results from the murderer's own flawed thinking about what constitutes honorable behavior.36

Cassius, in contrast, loves Brutus as completely as Cleopatra loves Antony, and like Cleopatra in relation to Antony, Cassius has a clearer notion of the bonds of love than Brutus does. Reacting to Brutus' accusations, Cassius is as shocked as Caesar at Brutus, dagger in hand. As effectively as he tore Caesar's tunic, Brutus tears into his friendship with Cassius, accusing him of "an itching palm," of selling his offices "for gold/ To underservers," of denying Brutus' request for monies (IV.iii.10-12). As with Caesar, Brutus makes an ethical judgment contrary to political realities and without sufficient evidence. Under extreme duress, Cassius cries out to Brutus to stop these insults attacking the integrity of his person:

I'll not endure it. You forget yourself,
To hedge me in. I am a soldier, I,
Older in practice, abler than yourself
To make conditions. (29-31)

36Stauffer, p. 115, points out that Brutus' "exultation" in his remark, "I slew my best lover for the good of Rome," reveals that "there is something of the spiritual sadist and masochist in Brutus." See also Ernest Schanzer, The Problem Plays of Shakespeare (New York, 1965), p. 63, who believes that Brutus has no recognition scene: "... Shakespeare's Brutus is nowhere shown to be tormented by the thought of having murdered his friend and benefactor."
Typically, Brutus hears only what he wants to hear, once more turning his inward demon against his friend for claiming that he is a "better soldier" (51) which, of course, Cassius did not say. What Cassius does say is that he is a soldier, older in experience, more able to attend to the practical affairs of war than the "honorable" statesman. And Cassius the soldier is willing to get his hands dirty to keep clean his friend's more scrupulous ones. Thus, it is entirely understandable for Cassius to shout in fury that Brutus has "presume[d] too much upon my love," that "Brutus hath rived my heart" (64;85). Cassius' righteous indignation leads to the following exchange, an exchange that explores once again the concept of friendship:

Cass. A friend should bear his friend's infirmities, But Brutus makes mine greater than they are.
Bru. I do not, till you practice them on me.
Cass. You love me not.
Bru. I do not like your faults.
Cass. A friendly eye could never see such faults.
Bru. A flatterer's would not, though they do appear As huge as high Olympus. (IV.iii.86-92)

At this point, Cassius succumbs to Brutus' attack, as surely as Caesar falls physically. We remember Antony's cry of "ingratitude," in reference to the act that burst the noble heart of Caesar. Cassius' heart is similarly affected as he calls for death:
Come, Antony, and young Octavius, come,
Revenge yourselves alone on Cassius,
For Cassius is aweary of the world--
Hated by one he loves, braved by his brother,
Checked like a bondman, all his faults observed,
Set in a notebook, learned and conned by rote,
To cast into my teeth. Oh, I could weep
My spirit from mine eyes! There is my dagger,
And here my naked breast; within, a heart
Dearer than Plutus' mine, richer than gold.
If that thou be'st a Roman, take it forth,
I, that denied thee gold, will give my heart.
Strike, as thou didst at Caesar; for I know
When thou didst hate him worst, thou lovedst him better
Than ever thou lovedest Cassius. (IV.iii.93-107)

As Stauffer points out, Brutus is more conscious of the
faults of others than his own sins. 37 Cassius' heart is more
valuable than the material gold that Brutus has demanded.

Again Brutus is guilty of misplaced priorities, guilty of
placing honor above love. The parallels between this scene
and those depicting the Caesar-Brutus relationship are strik-
ing, both as to mode of attack, as well as judgments made. It
is interesting to speculate on the play's final moral and poli-
tical outcome if Caesar had been verbally so attacked before
the daggers struck. We can imagine Caesar in Cassius' role,
defending his position as a soldier-leader, as faithful friend,
and as disturbed to the heart that a beloved companion could
find him wanting. Cassius himself sees this parallel between
his position and that of the besieged Caesar, as he commands

37See Stauffer, p. 115: "It may be that Brutus' evil
spirit is his unshakable sense of always being right, as if
man could take it upon himself, in the closed circle of his
own integrity, to judge and punish other men."
Brutus, "Strike, as thou didst at Caesar..." (IV.iii.105). But the self-righteous Brutus can but superficially respond to Cassius' terrible agony; with horrifying coldness, Brutus replies:

Sheathe your dagger.
Be angry when you will, it shall have scope;
Do what you will, dishonor shall be humor.
O Cassius, you are yoked with a lamb
That carries anger as the flint bears fire,
Who, much enforced, shows a hasty spark
And straight is cold again. (107-113)

Like the Iliad's Agamemnon, who blames the goddess Delusion for his outrageous treatment of Achilles, Brutus blames duress for his anger, accepting no real responsibility. His anger vented, Brutus, as if in Stoic resignation to the whole affair, agrees to accept Cassius' dishonorable conduct as a "humor." Brutus fails to see that in the more important issues the dishonor is his--not Cassius'. And because Brutus admits that he is "much enforced," Cassius like a true lover leaps to repair their friendship: "Do you confess so much? Give me your hand" (117). Whereas Brutus seems tired, resigned, and passive, Cassius is still full of turmoil, a mood that Brutus cannot comprehend: he has to ask, "What's the matter?" (118). Cassius cannot so easily dismiss his emotions as can the Stoic Brutus. And curiously, Cassius is the one who apologizes:

Have not you love enough to bear with me
When that rash humor which my mother gave me
Makes me forgetful? (119-121)

Pleading that Brutus' love must be hardy enough to accommodate his faults, Cassius begs forgiveness. But of what fault is
Cassius guilty? He has attended to the nasty business of war, thereby permitting his friend the purity of his ideal. Brutus has rebuked Cassius for taking bribes, then raising money illegally, then for not sending that money to Brutus for the maintaining of his troops. Brutus does not want to "contaminate our fingers with base bribes" (24), but he will accept the money raised by others who are not so scrupulous in getting their hands dirty. Characteristically, no logic guides anything that Brutus says or does, except the logic of the warrior-hero who perceives passion to be a "humor." Cassius, however, also believes in the code; he admires Brutus precisely because his friend is not "forgetful" of his manliness. Cassius also sees his passionate display in the quarrel as a "humor," a weakness that he regrettfully inherited from his mother.

Cassius believes that Brutus is what he represents himself to be: honorable, virtuous, restrained, and aloof from the emotional turmoil of the ordinary man. Actually, however, Brutus has only his reputation, for little factual evidence is given to support the existence of these other virtues. For example, when a poet interrupts the conclusion of the Brutus-Cassius quarrel, admonishing them to "love and be friends, as two such men should be," (131) Brutus rudely sends him away. Cassius, on the other hand, asks Brutus to bear with the old man, for, "'Tis his fashion" (135). But Brutus is not in the mood for "these jigging fools" (137). When Cassius observes,
"I did not think you could have been so angry," Brutus' defense against this lapse in his Stoic resolve and heroic fortitude is "I am sick of many griefs" (143-144). Cassius realizes that the virtues of the warrior-hero reveal themselves best in times of crisis; and he remarks,

Of your philosophy you make no use
If you give place to accidental evils. (145-146)

What Cassius does not realize is that Brutus' kind of heroism provides him with a mask for emotions that he cannot handle. Early in the play, Brutus' noble demeanor hides his conflicting thoughts about Caesar. Caesar's warning to Antony that Cassius is "dangerous" with his "lean and hungry look" (I.ii.194;210) haunts this fourth act of the play. We witness now the tragic consequences caused by the inscrutable face of Brutus rather than the easily readable one of Cassius.

In light of the events, Brutus is the more "dangerous" friend. When Cassius discovers the fact of Portia's death, he responds openly and instinctively with sincere exclamations of grief for his friend's loss. Brutus, on the other hand, again retreats behind his mask of noble manliness: "No man bears sorrow better," he brags (IV.iii.146). What Brutus does not understand, nor for that matter does any of the warrior-heroes, is that emotions are often valid indicators of a spiritual reality beyond the physical world of fact. A great part of Brutus' personal tragedy lies in his conviction that showing emotion is a weakness and is more "dangerous" than honest,
straightforward, even at times passionate, expressions of feelings. When Brutus assumes the cloak of a warrior-hero, a role that is ill-fitting as it is inappropriate, he loses contact with the reality of his identity as a virtuous and wise man. In the guise of a soldier, protecting the state, Brutus commits errors of judgment that range from the assassination of Caesar to the debacle at Philippi.

At the center of Brutus' tragedy is the failure of the ideal of the warrior-hero, a concept that conceives personal feelings as "humors," and automatically disruptive and irrational a concept that often leaves an adherent deficient in qualities of judgment and reason. Because Brutus represses the pertinent, and often instinctive, emotions in a situation, the exact opposite occurs from what he expects. Because he believes, for example, that any utterance of feeling over the news of his wife's death would be improper, he vents his grief in a pettish quarrel with Cassius; instead of confronting Caesar with his profound fears of tyranny, he retreats into a quarrel with himself. It does not require a Freud to predict the emotional chaos of such "unnatural restraint," and for a man in power, political chaos also. On the personal level, Brutus attacks Cassius rather than utter his private grief;  

38 See Goddard, I, 326.

39 Schanzer, p. 63, contends that Brutus' harsh treatment of Cassius is due to that fact that Cassius "has above all sullied for Brutus the image of his ideal republic, and so contributed most to his tragic disillusion."
on the political level, Brutus murders Caesar rather than express his suspicions of Caesar's ambition.

Further ruin awaits Brutus and his friends because of Brutus' inability to face reality outside the context of a fixed ideal. With the experienced insight of the soldier, Cassius counsels his friend to permit the enemy to come to them, noting that thereby "shall he waste his means, weary his soldiers, /Doing himself offense," while their troops are "full of rest ... and nimbleness" (IV.iii.199-202). Brutus, however, rejects Cassius' sound strategy because his idea of heroic action tells him to attack in full sail:

There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which taken at the flood leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallow and in miseries.
On such a full sea are we now afloat,
And we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures. (IV.iii.218-224)

This pronouncement in the context in which it is uttered, with its metaphor of the tide and ships propelled to victory, is but lovely nonsense. Playing a role now in which he is incompatible and in which he feels uncomfortable, Brutus insists on immediate action. As warrior-hero, Brutus will have none of Cassius' cautious and professional wisdom. That Cassius submits to his friend's rhetoric at first seems surprising, but we soon see that what occupies Cassius' mind is not war, but his relationship with Brutus. Taking leave of his friend, Cassius is still preoccupied with their quarrel:
0 my dear brother!
This was an ill beginning of the night.
Never come such division 'tween our souls!
Let it not, Brutus. (IV.iii.233-236)

What is important to Cassius in this murderous business is
the perpetuation of their friendship and the private loyalties
it reflects; what is important to Brutus is the protection of
the image of himself as a warrior-hero.

In order to see Brutus in the proper perspective, it has
been necessary to discuss him in conjunction with Caesar,
Cassius, and Antony. As in Hamlet, the proper understanding
of the symbolic experience of the play depends to a great
extent upon our seeing how Shakespeare uses characters as
foils. For example, Hamlet is seen as unduly indecisive only if
an observer fails to understand the relevance of the impetuous
and chaotic activities of Laertes and Fortinbras, two charac-
ters who leap into action before the proper time. Similarly,
failure to see Cassius, Caesar, and Antony as foils to Brutus
results in an improper emphasis upon Brutus' virtues. 40 In

40 For example, Hardin Craig, p. 172, views Brutus as "a
man too great and good for his age, time, and associates." See also
Arthur Sewell, Character and Society in Shakespeare
(Oxford, 1951), p. 55: "Brutus is honest, intellectually and
all-otherwise. So far as conduct in this life can be guided
by principles, his is so guided." Ernest Schanzer, "The
Tragedy of Shakespeare's Brutus," A Journal of English Literary
History, XXII (March, 1965), 1, states: "Shakespeare shows
Brutus to be a bad judge of character, but as by no means
devoid of political shrewdness and practical wisdom."
Brutus, Shakespeare creates a sympathetic character, kind, generous, well-spoken and well-thought of. Indeed, he is a literally classic example of the tragic hero. Nonetheless, without diminishing his stature as tragic protagonist, we are forced to see a pathetic failure in his sense of values and a failure in his ability to live up to an ideal that has left him without the resources to cope.

In the last act, the thematic stress is on the loss of friends rather than the loss of victory. Misconstruing the vociferous clamor from Brutus' side of the field, Cassius thinks that his friend has been taken. Grief-stricken, he holds off the enemy no more, welcoming instead defeat:

Oh, coward that I am to live so long,
To see my best friend ta'en before my face! (V.iii.34-35)

Whether in the context of romantic love or in the ideal of friendship, each of Shakespeare's tragic lovers responds in the same way when the beloved is dead: Romeo to Juliet, Antony to Cleopatra, and Cassius to Brutus. The surviving lover considers it cowardice to stall death in the face of such a loss. Critics sometimes forget that a man is capable of the same passion toward another man. Giving his servant his own sword, Cassius directs Pindarus to stab him:

Guide thou the sword. Caesar, thou art revenged,
Even with the sword that killed thee. (V.iii.45-46)

An appropriate end to what had begun as a betrayal of a friend: Caesar is revenged. Our memories are short if we do not
recall Antony's declaration that Caesar died from a broken heart; surely, the same can be said for Cassius.

Discovering the fallen Cassius, Titinius and Messala—ironically coming to inform Cassius of the good news of Brutus' victory over Octavius—are disconsolate, determining that if "Cassius' day is set" then "our day is gone" (V.iii.62-63).

Titinius speaks as movingly over the dead Cassius as Antony has over the dead Caesar; he rebukes his friend for sending him away so that he could not die with him:

Why didst thou send me forth, brave Cassius?
Did I not meet thy friends? And did not they Put on my brows this wreath of victory, And bid me give it thee? Didst thou not hear their shouts? Alas, thou has misconstrued everything! But hold thee, take this garland on thy brow. Thy Brutus bid me give it thee, and I Will do his bidding. Brutus, come apace, And see how I regarded Caius Cassius. By your leave, gods, this is a Roman's part. Come Cassius' sword, and find Titinius' heart. (V.iii.80-90)

With his own death, Titinius uses his life as a garland for the slain Cassius, demonstrating how highly he regarded his friend. The death scenes of Cassius and Titinius are as beautifully and poignantly rendered as those between more "romantic" lovers, such as Romeo and Juliet, Antony and Cleopatra.Echoing the lament of Old English poetry, these scenes express the belief that with the death of lord and friend, life has no meaning. Cassius without Brutus, Titinius without Cassius, even Caesar without Brutus--for each of these men, there is no choice except death. According to
Titinius, the "Roman's part" is death, an idea that is repeated by Brutus as he encounters the dead Cassius and Titinius:

Are yet two Romans living such as these?
The last of all the Romans, fare thee well!
It is impossible that ever Rome
Should breed thy fellow. Friends, I owe moe tears
To this dead man than you shall see my pay.
I shall find time, Cassius, I shall find time.

(V.iii.98-103)

There is a sense in this passage and elsewhere of what it means to be Roman, but there is not a sense of the nation-state as we have seen it in the English histories. The concept of Rome is basically different from the concept of England. The glory of Agincourt is not the glory of Philippi; the comitatus bond that united Englishmen in war here gives way to private deaths by one's own hand—a death offered as a tribute to a friend, not as a gift to a nation. Brutus will not die solely for a friend; we know that Brutus will not "find time" to weep for Cassius. Not only does he refuse to shed the tears for his friend, he will not permit a funeral in their camp "lest it discomfort us" (106). At this point, the full implication of Brutus' personality must dawn on us. It does not seem possible that this "honorable" man would deny Cassius the honor that he deserves. Reason has fled indeed to "brutish beasts" when there is a refusal to mourn a good and beloved friend. Brutus' heart belongs with Cassius, but he will not give it, perhaps is incapable of giving it.
Paradoxically, the Stoic Brutus cannot bear such an assault upon his emotions as a ceremony would inflict. This is another example of Brutus' curious inconsistency in the use of ceremony, such as his refusal to have the conspirators swear an oath, a logical ceremonial rite considering the circumstances, and then his insistence upon rites in other cases, such as the bathing of the murderers' hands in Caesar's blood, or the wine ceremony with Cassius in which he buries "all unkindness" (IV.iii.159). At times Brutus seems to find the needed release from the turmoil of his emotions in ceremony; even the quarrel with Cassius can be seen as a rite through which Brutus purges himself of grief over Portia's death. In ceremony, Brutus reduces and distorts emotions, often so that he can Stoically deal with them. His use of euphemism also reveals this tendency to avoid the emotion of the moment; for example, when Brutus discusses Caesar's assassination, he deals with the fact in less offensive terms. The murderers will be "purgers," not "butchers," who will merely kill the

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41This scene has evoked much critical comment; see, for example, Leo Kirschbaum, "Shakespeare's Stage Blood and Its Critical Significance," PMLA, LXIV (June, 1949), 517-529: "That the dignified and gentle Brutus should propose the ghastly procedure of the conspirators bathing their hands in the blood of Caesar's body wrenches the mind. It emphasizes the disorder in the man (524)." Granville-Barker, II, 50, sees this ceremonial rite as "the ritual of friendship as the blood of Caesar, murdered by his friends, may best cement." See also Brents Stirling's discussion of this scene as of crucial importance to the "thematic design" of the play (pp. 40-54).
"spirit of Caesar," for "in the spirit of men there is no blood" (II.i.180;168). In rhetoric, in ceremony, in misdirected anger, Brutus recoils from the reality of feelings, whether they be of grief, guilt, or of love—a recoil that he feels necessary to protect his honorable image. Characteristically, Brutus longs to "come by Caesar's spirit" (II.i.169) without killing him. But, of course, even Brutus cannot accomplish this logistic feat; therefore, as the next best procedure, Brutus declares to his "gentle friends" that they will kill "boldly but not wrathfully," carving Caesar "as a dish fit for the gods" (II.i.171-173). The brutal fact that Caesar will be dead no matter what idea is in the mind of the conspirators is neatly avoided. The brutal fact that Caesar is hacked to death with thirty-three wounds gives evidence that the "noblest man" who "ever lived in the tide of times" (III.i.256-257) was indeed butchered "as a carcass fit for hounds" (II.i.174).42

Surrounded by political disaster and the death of his friends, Brutus remains the same man at the end of the play as in the beginning. Tragically, his idea of honorable behavior does not even allow for feelings of regret and remorse; instead, another idea enthralls him—the idea of death, and he asks his friends to do the deed:

42 G. Wilson Knight, p. 50, contends that such "blood-imagery does not horrify. It rather excites. . . ."
Countrymen,
My heart doth joy that yet in all my life
I found no man but he was true to me.
I shall have glory by this losing day,
More than Octavius and Mark Antony
By this vile conquest shall attain unto.
So, fare you well at once, for Brutus' tongue
Hath almost ended his life's history.
Night hangs upon mine eyes, my bones would rest
That have but labored to attain this hour. (V.v.33-42)

The first lines of Brutus' speech have an ironic ring in the context of the play's theme of betrayed friendship: although his friends have all been "true" to him, can Brutus' friends honestly say that he was as true? Brutus' concern here is still with his own "glory," and his desire to have more "glory" than anyone else. But Brutus' glory is of his own imaginings, for he has "labored" his own life "to attain this hour," labored to glorify his name above any other Roman's. Unable to face his faults, his culpability in the needless death of Caesar, his lack of political acumen, his barbaric treatment of Cassius, Brutus rationalizes that in death he and not the enemy will be victorious. Assuredly, if Brutus' troops had won the day, he would have acclaimed the triumph as an affirmation of his ideals and of himself as an heroic figure. With incredible mental dexterity, Brutus transforms defeat into a celebration of his fame as a noble Roman.

To many critics, this speech constitutes Brutus' recognition of his tragedy. John Palmer, for example, declares that at Philippi Brutus attains a "bright flash of self-knowledge" and is "sure of his moral triumph after expiation."43

Granville-Barker maintains that although "we expect nemesis approaching, some deeper revelations, some glimpse of the hero's soul," there are none; and this lack of revelation evinces Shakespeare's failure to understand Brutus, a failure to confront "the spiritual issue" involved. Matthew Proser, in his lengthy analysis of Brutus as the image of the patriot, believes that Brutus' glorification of reality is a paradoxical necessity in a tyrannical world, that in fact Brutus' honor is betrayed "by a self-deceiving Caesar, an envious Cassius, a fickle and deluded populace, an opportunistic Antony. . . .

In this heated controversy, little is mentioned of the play's theme of betrayed friendship, yet the word "friend" reverberates throughout *Julius Caesar*. A significant movement of this play lies outside of pure politics and in the private world of personal relationships, of loving friends. Caesar himself is the matrix, around whom sworn loyalties are expressed verbally, then refuted in act. No matter that he dies in the third act; his presence remains. His name is on everyone's lips; his betrayal is theirs, for the fellowship of men is also betrayed. And no one fails more than Brutus. Whereas

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^Granville-Barker, II, 168.

^Ibid., p. 169: "The plain fact is, one fears, that Shakespeare, even if he can say he understands Brutus, can in this last analysis make nothing of him; and no phrase better fits a playwright's particular sort of failure."

Caesar, Cassius, and Titinius die in the name of friendship, Brutus greets death as another "honor" to be won. No nemesis is possible, "for Brutus' tongue" has "ended his life's history" (V.v.39-40). As Mark Van Doren observes, Brutus "is not mad, or haunted, or inspired, or perplexed in the extreme. He is simply confused." Shakespeare has not failed to understand Brutus; he understands him too well. Operating in the narrow context of a questionable code Brutus, like Othello, demonstrates throughout the play a fundamental inability to comprehend reality; a flash of self-knowledge would be dramatically inconsistent.

In *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare brilliantly embodies in the character of Brutus a man whose mind is imprisoned in the wrong kind of idea, a man who summarily disregards personal allegiance in order to protect his reputation as a public servant. Brutus' struggle for renown leaves in its wake the debris of broken promises and destroyed lives. And with magnificent irony, Shakespeare shows us that Brutus has succeeded in preserving his reputation, if not in our minds, at least in the Roman consciousness. Antony's funeral oration focuses upon that success:

47 Van Doren, p. 161.
This was the noblest Roman of them all.
All the conspirators, save only he,
Did that they did in envy of great Caesar.
He only, in a general honest thought
And common good to all, made one of them.
His life was gentle, and the elements
So mixed in him that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world, "This was a man." (V.v.68-75)

It is no wonder that Antony fails to know Brutus; after all, Brutus fails to do so; moreover, Antony's idea of heroic action is the same as Brutus'. It is here that the "Romanness" of both men becomes finally apparent. Nature might "stand up" and declare that Brutus "was a man," but we as readers realize that Shakespeare's concept of what constitutes true "manliness" has grown more complex than that revealed in the English histories. In Julius Caesar the concept of "honor" is used to defend a public posture that is privately indefensible. And Brutus' public role is clearly not the highest destiny "to which God might call a man." The ideal state is never approached, much less realized. Never is Brutus aware, as is Henry V, of the spiritual obligations inherent in his position as "the noblest Roman of them all." That he hopes, even believes, that his overthrow of possible tyranny and his death at Philippi will further elevate his stature, will allow him to realize the heroic aim of immortality, is seen in the line: "I shall have glory by this losing day," more than "Octavius and Mark Antony." The ceremonial bathing of hands in Caesar's

blood is an early sign that the purpose behind the act was not the honor of Rome but rather the achievement of eternal fame. Cassius shouts to his bloodied brothers,

Stoop then, and wash. How many ages hence
Shall this our lofty scene be acted over
In states unborn and accents unknown! (III.i.111-113)

As Brents Stirling correctly points out, "although Brutus is commonly thought to be unconcerned over public favor, he expresses clear concern for it." An overriding concern that Brutus demonstrates throughout the play is that no stigma of envy or jealousy be attached to the murder of Caesar; therefore, when he gives instructions to his men, he tells them that their method must appear

necessary and not envious,
Which so appearing to the common eyes,
We shall be called purgers, not murderers. (II.i.178-180)

Machiavelli's belief that it was unnecessary for a Prince to be virtuous as long as he appeared so has a telling parallel in Brutus' anxieties about the appearance of his actions. Although Antony's elegiac speech at the end of the play states that Brutus was the only murderer untouched by envy and that he acted for the "general good," the testimony of the play is otherwise.

Whereas the importance of reputation to the warrior-hero, as we have seen in Chapter IV, is glorified in Henry V, in Julius Caesar that selfsame longing for heroic fame is treated

49Stirling, p. 47.
with heavy irony. Cassius believes that "ages hence" will categorize their bloody action as "lofty" (III.i.111-112). Brutus wants to be remembered as a "purger" of the potential tyranny of Caesar and not as the envious man he is, for Brutus is not only jealous of his own reputation, he cannot bear that the fame of Rome might rest in "but one man," unless that man were himself. His speech at Philippi reveals as much when he states that in death he will be remembered as the most famous Roman of them all, not Octavius, not Mark Antony.

In *Julius Caesar* the failure of the warrior-hero and the concept of honor attending it comes as much as on the Senate floor as on the field of battle. It is as if these "heroes" believe that courage and honor can only be attained by blood-thirsty deeds, and can be divorced entirely from the private sphere. The special community that belongs to the fighting men of England in *Henry V* is, however, in *Julius Caesar* treated with bitter irony, as we see that the culmination of the fighting spirit of the conspirators is the mangled corpse of Caesar. Here dishonor rather than honor follows those who in "fellowship" band together to kill a brother. In the central situation of the play the most obvious failure in the code comes in the area of friendship. Without friendship and its concomitant virtues, the standard of heroic conduct is found wanting.
Some of the same qualities that have led to the apotheosis of Henry V are viewed from a sharply different perspective in Julius Caesar. The shift is especially startling in view of the chronological proximity of the plays. There is no question that Julius Caesar marks a change in Shakespeare's treatment of heroic endeavor and of those values that sustain that endeavor, a change that will be increasingly evident as we examine two more Roman heroes whose allegiance to the code of the warrior-hero as a standard of heroism makes for further tragedy and for further irony.
Nowhere is the concept of the warrior-hero more explicitly presented than in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra;* from Philo's first speech about Antony, the play explodes with images of the soldier paragon, whose Mars-like prowess is the wonder of the world. The portrait of Antony, as drawn by his Roman friends, by the generals, and by Cleopatra, is soundly based in the traditional view of a hero: he is the great soldier whose eyes are trained for the "files and musters of . . . war," whose eyes, it is said, glow "like plated Mars"; his heart is a "captain's" which "in the scuffles of great fights" can burst "the buckles on his breast" (I.i.2-8). The fame of his military exploits and his personal stamina and prowess constitute only a part of his image. Like Henry V, Antony wields great political power. He is referred to as "triple pillar of the world" (12), as a "demi-Atlas of this earth" (I.v.23) by those who would reflect his political potency.

In view of the strength of his reputation, it is noteworthy that the play opens with his reputation as hero-monarch already somewhat tarnished in the eyes of some few. To the Roman mind, the Antony in Egypt, the Antony in love with Cleopatra, is a hero whose virtues have been dissipated
through an irrational submission to passion. Moreover, Antony's friends are not alone in their condemnation of the supposed falling-off of their warrior-hero. To the critical mind of many commentators on *The Tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra*, Antony's passion for the Egyptian queen is considered excessive, a "dotage" that "o'erflows the measure" (I.i.1-2), especially since in the warrior ideal this passion should be directed toward "martial" activities. For example, Traversi believes that Antony's "former martial virtues, through which he maintained his position of responsibility as 'triple pillar of the world' . . . have been shamefully abandoned. . . ."

1 G. B. Harrison also assumes in his criticism of Antony the superiority of martial activities: "At the beginning Antony was a captain in his dotage and, except for one brief period when he took his rightful place as leader of the Triumvirate, he has steadily degenerated until he has become indeed a ranting old ruffian." 2 Thomas McFarland is another critic who believes that "the moral bankruptcy of Egypt" is unequivocally "opposed to the virtue of Rome, the near-bankruptcy of the relationship of Antony and Cleopatra as

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opposed to the call of Antony's duties in the great world.”

Hardin Craig also assumes the moral primacy of the "masculine" virtues as they are brought into play by the endeavors of war, political leadership, and public duty. He states that the "case of Antony is clear": here is a man "who with his sword 'quartered the world' and then gave it away in the infatuation of love." And, although S. L. Bethell's evaluation of Antony is more sympathetic as he recognizes the moral complexities, he can still praise Caesar, who "would never be betrayed into Antony's abandonment of the solid benefits of the triumvirate."

Implicit in these categorical judgments of Antony's failure as a warrior-hero is the acceptance of a standard of duty in public affairs as basically superior to the qualities evoked in the private domain inhabited by two lovers. The "classic" solution that results in the triumph of duty over love, raised to the realm of myth in the story of Dido and Aeneas, has been demanded of Antony by Cicero, Lucan, by

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6 For a complete discussion of Antony and Cleopatra as part of the tradition of noble lovers, see Donna B. Hamilton, "Antony and Cleopatra and The Tradition of Noble Lovers," Shakespeare Quarterly, XXIV (Summer, 1973), 245-251.
Appian in his *Auncient Historie*, and, of course, by Shakespeare's source, Plutarch. As J. E. Phillips points out, the attitude of the Elizabethan thinkers was also that "Antony suffered a flaw which the Renaissance considered, with equal conviction, fatal to the 'speciality of rule.'" Moreover, as we have seen in Shakespeare's English histories, the playwright himself at one time also seemed to have assumed that the heroic choice lay in duty rather than love. However, we have observed in *Julius Caesar* a fundamental change in Shakespeare's attitude toward the traditional heroic values as he shows, through Brutus, the deficiencies of the code of honor that supports the betrayal of a friend in the name of duty.

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7A thorough treatment of the classical, medieval, and Elizabethan attitudes toward the Antony and Cleopatra story is found in Franklin Dicky, *Not Wisely But Too Well* (Princeton, N.J., 1957), pp. 104-16: "As in Plutarch and the other classical authors, Cleopatra is responsible for Antony's final degradation, for after he met her, 'hee did all things as Cleopatra would have him, without respecte of God or mannes lawe'; and his love for her 'was the beginning of his troubles and ende of his life'" (p. 151). Here Dicky's quotes are from Appian's *Auncient Historie*.

8J. E. Phillips, *The State in Shakespeare's Greek and Roman Plays* (New York, 1940), p. 193. Phillips also agrees with this Renaissance view of Antony's tragedy: "His fatal passion leads him to disregard political reason and to commit blunder after blunder; such missteps not only demonstrate his unfitness to govern but eventually accomplish his total ruin" (p. 196).
About seven years separate Antony and Cleopatra from Julius Caesar, but in terms of identity and spirit, the events of these two tragedies occupy the same kind of universe, a world where the possibility of rewarding political activity is severely limited. The historical events of Julius Caesar live again in Antony and Cleopatra. Antony plays the role that Brutus plays in the earlier play as the antagonist to love and personal loyalty. The determined neglect of friendship in Julius Caesar is repeated in Antony's determined flight from Cleopatra and Egypt, in his political marriage with Octavia, and in his resumption of military leadership. Antony submits to his Roman conscience and Roman sense of obligation just as Brutus submits to his idea of honor and returns to Rome to recapture that image he has been taught to revere--the hero of near mythic exploits and soldierly courage. Like Brutus, Antony is culturally committed to an idea of honorable conduct that distorts and nullifies the quite normal response of one private individual to another. The consensus of opinion that Antony's sense of himself as a soldier and leader has been drastically dislodged by a "gypsy's lust" (I.i.10) is simply incorrect if it is judged in a broader context. Antony, as Cleopatra so perceptively but regretfully remarks at the beginning of the play, "will be himself" (I.i.43). As Michael Payne observes, Antony "sees the world with the only eyes he has, and they are trained to
see what Rome has defined as real." No matter how "transformed /Into a strumpet's fool" (I.i.12-13) he appears to be in Roman eyes, Antony is the epitome of Roman virtus. Only Cleopatra perceives the extent and depth of Antony's allegiance to the idea of the warrior-hero, a perception which leads her to praise Rome, on the one hand, and on the other to mock it. Antony's loyalty to Rome is first illustrated, ironically, in his refusal to attend to the Roman messengers. What Cleopatra realizes is that Antony's peremptory dismissal of that other world is not a testimony to his devotion to her; in fact, it is the opposite. If Antony were indeed hers, if Antony truly accepted that "the nobleness of life" (II.i.36) is to love this woman, then news from Rome would not seem such a disruption. Thus Cleopatra, even though fearful of the consequences, forces Antony to face squarely his emotional ties with that public world whose demands he feels. She anticipates the message, and places it in what she considers the proper perspective:


10 Julian Markels, The Pillar of the World: Antony and Cleopatra in Shakespeare's Development (Columbus, 1968), p. 18. Markels contends that in Cleopatra's taunting of Antony and of things Roman, "she is pursuing that feminine strategy which she thinks will best sustain her love," but my contention is that her motive is deeper and beyond "feminine" wiles.
Nay, hear them, Antony.
Fulvia perchance is angry, or who knows
If the scarce-bearded Caesar have not sent
His powerful mandate to you, "Do this, or this.
Take in that kingdom, and enfranchise that.
Perform't, or else we damn thee." (I.i.19-24)

With fine verbal irony, she reduces the seriousness of such political business to a superficial and temporary enterprise, implicitly contrasting the public reckoning of empire with the private reckoning of love.11 Under the scorching eyes of a woman in love, who, we must remember, is a ruler herself, the taking of kingdoms--the proper and supposedly ennobling work of the warrior-hero--is reduced to game playing by Caesar, who is more boy than man. That she hits her mark with her irony is evidenced by Antony's response:

Call in the messengers. As I am Egypt's Queen,
Thou blushest, Antony, and that blood of thine
Is Caesar's homager. Else so thy cheek pays shame
When shrill-tongued Fulvia scolds. The messengers!
(I.i.29-32)

Antony blushes to hear the truth spoken so clearly; his allegiance, his blood, his soul is still Roman--an allegiance that is an embarrassment in the presence of such love.

Theodore Spencer believes that "Antony and Cleopatra . . . are never disillusioned, for they have no illusions to start

with." On the other hand, Granville-Barker sees Antony and Cleopatra as a "tragedy of disillusion," a play not of "spiritual insight" but of action in which Antony's "passion for Cleopatra is his ruin." William Rosen sees Antony's illusion as more of a desire, "an indulgence in the pleasure principle in order to escape reality." Rosen contends that to view Antony otherwise is "to neglect dramatic action and indulge in romantic delusion." Again we see that behind these judgments of Antony and Cleopatra lies the categorical assumption that in the hierarchy of values, duty always takes precedence over love, and that the failure to make the "correct" choice constitutes a lack of manliness. Spencer's comment that Antony and Cleopatra have "no illusions" is correct when

14Ibid.
16Ibid., p. 110.
17Rosen, p. 112: Antony "can regain his manhood only through self-mastery; if he yields to passion, he is unmanned."
applied to Cleopatra, for she is wholly aware of Antony's "disillusion," of his ineluctable belief in the standard of public duty whose obligations demand total devotion.

Seen in this light, Antony's declaration of love's priorities is simply hyperbole, but we are to see that in the context of the entire play what he says is not "romantic delusion," nor is it a betrayal of the public world and its values. Antony should let "Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch / Of the ranged empire fall"; in the place of empire, Cleopatra should be his "space," and compared to the soul-expanding potential of his relationship with the queen, "Kingdoms are clay." When "such a mutual pair" as Antony and Cleopatra love, then their very embracing is "the nobleness of life," and in the eyes of a larger world than the Roman, they should "stand up peerless" (I.i.33-40).  

Cleopatra labels Antony's impassioned words, "Excellent falsehood!" (40), excellent in content, treacherous in its "sincerity," for Antony's fidelity, as Cleopatra realizes, is to duty and not to love. As soon as Cleopatra is out of the room, Antony hears the messengers, immediately confirming the accuracy of Cleopatra's judgment of Antony's "falsehood."

Antony orders the messengers to "speak to me home," to voice to his willing ears the Roman opinion of the Egyptian queen and idle lover:

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18Markels, p. 19, says that this speech has "that Brobdingnagian quality characteristic of the whole play. . . ." Danby, p. 133, on the other hand, says that it "has the ring of absolute and heroic self-committal."
Like all warrior-heroes, certainly the ones so far examined in this study, Antony is vitally concerned with his reputation; the "general opinion" of the world is almost sacrosanct since it is the endorsement of his stature as a hero. Antony's metaphor of his inactive mind as an unweeded garden echoes the gardener's speech in Richard II; in both situations, the anxiety of the speaker is that inattention to the demands and duties of public life results in surfeiting idleness, a disease that is fatal to the reputation of the warrior-hero. What is also significant in this passage is that Antony once again dismisses the messengers without hearing what he has demanded of them; the reason for this seemingly illogical action is that Antony needs no reminder. And the real Antony, the soldier-hero who is totally committed to the ideal of public life, speaks now without hyperbole:

These strong Egyptian fetters I must break,
Or lose myself in dotage. (I.ii.120-121)

The "greatest soldier in the world" is, as Cleopatra later charges, "the greatest liar" (I.iii.38-39), for he speaks of the nobility of love, but in his heart, he agrees with the world: his love for Cleopatra is but "dotage." He therefore vows to break off with "this enchanting queen" since to the
warrior-hero, such emotional intensity is but "idleness" that produces "ten thousand harms" (I.ii.132-134). Women, in the traditional, masculine view of proper conduct, must be "esteemed nothing" if they stand between the potential hero and "a great cause" (I.ii.142-144).

What is fascinating is that when Antony accuses Cleopatra of duplicity--"she is cunning past man's thought" (150)--it is another soldier, who also endorses the soldier-ideal, who defends the queen's emotional honesty:

> Alack, sir, no, her passions are made of nothing but the finest parts of pure love. We cannot call her winds and waters sighs and tears, they are greater storms and tempests than almanacs can report. This cannot be cunning in her. If it be, she makes a shower of rain as well as Jove. (I.ii.151-157)

Although Enobarbus is in total agreement with the masculine ethic, he cannot fault the veracity of Cleopatra's passion for Antony. Surely, the audience even at this early point in the play's action must be dimly aware that Shakespeare is not taking the conventional line of Elizabethan thinkers who represented "Cleopatra as guilty of lechery and pride, Antony of ambition and pride." It is the soldier who is "cunning

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past thought," and not the passionate queen. Antony's call to fulfill himself in the role of peerless soldier should outweigh any private desires or feelings, but even as early as the first act the suggestion is made that the world of Cleopatra might possess a higher morality, that in the quality and intensity of her love, a greater honor might be found. Ernest Schanzer, on the other hand, believes that "it would be a gross falsification of Shakespeare's conception to see Antony . . . as a conscious deceiver, hiding his true feelings and intentions from Caesar, Octavia, or Cleopatra." But Antony is like Brutus, who says that he is "with himself at war" (Julius Caesar I.ii.46). In reality what is at war are those intuitive and human feelings of love with those "heroic" feelings that demand a public forum. Antony and Brutus are "conscious deceivers" in the sense that they both deny the validity of their emotions as indicators of true virtue. Therefore, both put on a mask, for if they were to wear their emotions openly,

Not Erebus itself were dim enough
To hide [them] from prevention. (Julius Caesar II.i.84-85)

21 See Donald A. Stauffer, Shakespeare's World of Images (New York, 1949), p. 233, who shares my opinion that Shakespeare, in Antony and Cleopatra, "dares to reverse the tragic pattern."

To both heroes, their "native semblance" (Julius Caesar II.i.83), their natural inclinations are dangerous, for they might get in the way of the necessary pursuit of glory.

Because Antony, as a true warrior-hero, is convinced that the political business of the state "cannot endure [his] absence" (I.ii.179), he will have none of the "finest part of pure love." Again it is Enobarbus who reminds Antony that the business you have broached here cannot be without you, especially that of Cleopatra's, which wholly depends on your abode. (I.ii.180-182)

Raised in a world shaped by the masculine ideals of politics and power, Antony not surprisingly delays the love of Cleopatra for what he considers a deeper service. He takes leave of Cleopatra in order to play the soldier, "making peace or war" (I.iii.70) as the role demands. His "excellent dissembling" looks "like perfect honor" (I.ii.79-80), but Cleopatra mocks "this Herculean Roman" (84) who with his sword and shield sees himself as Honor and his lover as Idleness (93). At this point, however, Cleopatra realizes that she has no choice but to acquiesce gracefully, voicing what she knows her hero wants to hear:

Your honor calls you hence,
Therefore be deaf to my unpitied folly,
And all the gods go with you! Upon your sword
Sit laurel victory! And smooth success
Be strewed before your feet! (97-101)

In this scene, Cleopatra is hardly the "vain, selfish, and
frivolous woman," as Craig describes her, who "wants Antony for her own, encourages the worst in him, ruins him, and brings about his death." Although Irving Ribner recognizes that Cleopatra is "portrayed with a magnificence and adulation," he too contends that Shakespeare shows her to represent "the lust which destroys Antony," and that "the magnificent Cleopatra is never entirely separate from the scheming harlot. . . ." But Cleopatra's conduct as she sends Antony off to Rome is not that of the "scheming harlot"; instead, we see Cleopatra's wisdom as she "surrenders" for the moment to the power of Antony's other, and more esteemed, mistress--Honor. Therefore, she graciously and with magnanimity, a virtue normally only ascribed to Antony, wishes for the reward of such successful public endeavor: the "laurel" of victory.

From the Egypt of Cleopatra we move swiftly to the Rome

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23 Craig, p. 280.
24 Ibid., p. 281.
26 Ibid., p. 175.
of Caesar and find the generals also discussing the image of the true hero, once again defined in masculine and feminine terms. Antony is considered unmanly in his enjoyment of Cleopatra and utterly ridiculous in neglecting "a kingdom for a mirth" (I.iv.18); such luxurious indulgence would be permissible in the Roman ethic only in one's leisure:

But to confound such time
That drums him from his sport and speaks as loud
As his own state and ours, 'tis to be chid
As we rate boys who, being mature in knowledge,
Pawn their experience to their present pleasure,
And so rebel to judgment. (I.iv.28-33)

Compared to the Antony who "fishes, drinks, and wastes /The lamps of night in revel," Cleopatra is "more manlike" and he "more womanly" (I.iv.4-7).²⁸

²⁷I agree with Granville-Barker, III, 13, when he insists upon the importance of the reader realizing that "in this play there is no dramatically indicated act-division at all. There is, that is to say . . . no juncture where the play's acting will be made more effective by a pause. On the contrary, each scene has an effective relation to the next, which a pause between them will weaken or destroy." Cf. A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy (London, 1904), p. 213, who calls Antony and Cleopatra "the most faultily constructed of all the tragedies." For a corrective to Bradley, see Schanzer, pp. 132-145.

²⁸See Barroll, "Antony and Pleasure," p. 716, who contends that this entire scene serves to remind the audience that "it is Sloth accompanying sensual indulgence which tends to subvert judgment and cause neglect of duty."
Antony's "lascivious wassails" (56), his voluptuous vacancy (26), are disparaged because to the Roman mind, such conduct that wastes so much of the hero's precious time is considered boyish or feminine, behavior understandable in immature boys and in women, but not in a great warrior-hero. The generals obviously admire the image of Antony as the disciplined soldier, an image that is eulogized by Caesar, as he rebukes the prodigal warrior:

\[
\text{Thou didst drink}\\
\text{The stale of horses and the gilded puddle}\\
\text{Which beasts would cough at. Thy palate then did deign}\\
\text{The roughest berry on the rudest hedge--}\\
\text{Yea, like the stag when snow the pasture sheets,}\\
\text{The barks of trees thou browsedst. On the Alps}\\
\text{It is reported thou didst eat strange flesh}\\
\text{Which some did die to look on. And all this--}\\
\text{It wounds thine honor that I speak it now--}\\
\text{Was borne so like a soldier that thy cheek}\\\text{So much as lanked not. (I.iv.61-71)}
\]

Antony in his role as lover, who in Egypt "sits at dinner,"

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29H. A. Mason, "Antony and Cleopatra: Angelic Strength--Organic Weakness, Part I," *Cambridge Quarterly*, I (Summer, 1966), 215, agrees with the Roman judgment that Antony "has become the professional clown, the hired entertainer of a courtesan--something less than her fancy man." See also Phillips, especially pp. 196-198.
and will make "No wars withoutdoors" (II.i.11-13) is considered unmanly, while the Antony as dedicated soldier who did "eat strange meat" and drink the urine of horses is judged manly. In the context of the traditional myth of the warrior-hero, the masculinity of a man is not only proven but is also nourished by the hardships of war and privation. Antony, according to Caesar, endured in the Alps starvation so "like a soldier" that he did not grow thin.

Juxtaposed to this image of Antony in "soldier's dress" (II.iv.4) is the image of Antony as lover, perjoratively described by Pompey. Since Antony's "soldiership is twice" that of Caesar and Lepidus (II.i.34-35), Pompey fervently hopes that Antony will stay in Egypt and out of the war,

Caroline Spurgeon, Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us (Cambridge, 1935), pp. 320-321, says that Shakespeare "instinctively" expresses his "disgusts at woman's wantonness . . . in terms of physical appetite and food." See also Barroll, "Antony and Pleasure," p. 709, who also contends that Shakespeare uses "food as a metaphor for sexuality in this play, especially since the Cleopatra story itself, was so often associated with the idea of gluttony"; and that "gluttony--overeating or feasting--had long been regarded as a cause of lechery." However, the image of Antony eating "strange flesh" is hardly sexual or attractive. Such disparaging attitudes toward Shakespeare's use of food imagery reflect the Roman point of view, and not necessarily Shakespeare's.
But all the charms of love,
Salt Cleopatra, soften thy waned lip!
Let witchcraft join with beauty, lust with both!
Tie up the libertine in a field of feasts,
Keep his brain fuming. Epicurean cooks
Sharpen with cloyless sauce his appetite,
That sleep and feeding may prorogue his honor
Even till a Lethed dullness! (20-27)

It is important that the contrast between Antony's heroic past and his supposed debauched present be kept in perspective; Antony as a cannibalistic soldier is glorified by the Roman ethic, not by Shakespeare, and Antony as an "amorous surfeiter" (33), a "libertine" who suspends his honor even "till a Lethed dullness," is in turn denigrated by the Roman ethic, not by Shakespeare. When Pompey learns that Antony has indeed left Egypt, he is amazed that

This amourous surfeiter would have donned his helm
For such a petty war. (33-34)

But Antony too, like Caesar and Pompey, believes, as Payne observes, that "the proof of man's virility is his ability to fight and his dedication to war."32 For the warrior-hero,

31 Rosen, p. 112, points out that here Shakespeare's portrait of Antony sharply differs from Plutarch's: "It is, indeed, most striking that not a hint of criticism is ever directed at Antony's past exploits, for this is a prominent departure from Shakespeare's primary source, North's Life of Marcus Antonius, where Antony's faults before his union with Cleopatra are amply illustrated." Rosen's supposition about this departure, however, is that Shakespeare wants to castigate Antony "for present actions, never past performances."

32 Payne, p. 270.
a rejection of these values would be to forfeit his honor; therefore, for Antony "to reject the world for love is simply not possible."³³

Moreover, once Antony is in Rome, he busily sets about to refurbish what he and the world consider to be his blemished honor. He blames his neglected duty on the "poisoned hours" (II.ii.90) spent with Cleopatra, a charge that is, as Markels terms it, a "gross disloyalty" to the Egyptian queen.³⁴ Even Enobarbus cannot accept such falsehood, but when he tries to remind Antony that such dissembling is not necessary--after all, Caesar needs Antony's soldiership--Antony sharply silences his friend:

Ant. Thou art a soldier. Speak no more.
Eno. The truth should be silent I had almost forgot.
Ant. You wrong this presence, therefore, speak no more.
Eno. Go to then--you considerate stone. (II.ii.108-112)³⁵

The entire scene is ironic, for Antony in his Roman guise "the truth should be silent"; consequently he rejects the validity of his emotional commitment to Cleopatra. The Roman

³³Ibid., P. 268.
³⁴Markels, p. 24.
³⁵It is interesting to compare this quarrel scene with that of Brutus and Cassius in Julius Caesar; in each case the ordinary soldier, that is Cassius and Enobarbus, is more aware of the higher loyalty of love than is his "superior." Schanzer, pp. 166-167, on the other hand, says that the rejection of Cleopatra is as necessary as is Prince Hal's disavowal of Falstaff.
Antony is a "presence," not a friend, not a lover. Antony in Rome is a "considerate stone" whose renewed dedication to fame warps his natural magnanimity. When Agrippa suggests to Caesar that "the hoop" (117) that would cement the two generals might be Antony's marriage to Octavia, even Caesar is shocked, realizing the bond between Antony and Cleopatra:

Say not so, Agrippa.
If Cleopatra heard you, your reproof
Were well deserved of rashness. (II.ii.122-124)

Antony, however, would not "dream of impediment," for nothing should "sway our great designs" (148;151). Caesar, too, quickly capitulates as he "lovingly" bequeaths to Antony "a sister . . . whom no brother /Did ever love so dearly" (152-153). Caesar's use of his sister as "a blessed lottery" (248) is admired by Phillips because "her own content must be sacrificed to the higher destiny of Rome."36 Traversi, however, seems closer to the point when he calls Caesar's sacrifice a "shameful proceeding,"37 a transaction that is "as cynical as it is clearly destined to be impermanent."38 In this politic marriage, there is a sharp contrast between the value placed upon love in Rome and the "infinite variety" of love as it

36Phillips, p. 203.
37Traversi, An Approach to Shakespeare, p. 244.
38Ibid., p. 245.
exists in Egypt. For the sake of reputation, to repair the blemish "in the world's report" (II.iii.5), Antony marries Octavia, reminding her of his great position:

The world and my great office will sometimes Divide me from your bosom. (1-2)

Moreover, he assures her that whereas formerly he has "not kept my square," his actions henceforth "shall all be done by the rule" (6-7). Surely the entire Octavia business is intended by Shakespeare to demonstrate the coldness of following "the rule"; such efficient practicality in the name of reputation seems "a gap in nature" (II.ii.223) compared to the "rare Egyptian" (223), whose person "beggared all description" and who makes "defect perfection" (203;236). The "beauty, wisdom, modesty" of Octavia (246) appear also wearily pragmatic compared to the Egyptian queen who once hopped

forty paces through the public street
And having lost her breath, she spoke, and panted,
That she did make defect perfection,
And breathless, power breathe forth. (II.ii.234-237)

Although Menas has been enthralled by Enobarbus' glowing portrait of Cleopatra--"Oh, rare for Antony!" (210)--he too believes that "Antony must leave her utterly" (238); but Enobarbus confidently declares what Antony himself does not realize:

39Shakespeare's own idea of marriage, as seen throughout his plays, especially in his comedies, is normally viewed as an equal partnership in which the woman has as much wit and wisdom as the man, if not more. Recall, for example, Portia in The Merchant of Venice, Rosalind in As You Like It, and Beatrice in Much Ado About Nothing.
Never. He will not.
Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
Her infinite variety. Other women cloy
The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry
Where most she satisfies. For vilest things
Become themselves in her, that the holy priests
Bless her when she is riggish. (11.ii.239-245)

Only Cleopatra is the fitting and proper partner for the
great Antony—a fact that Enobarbus, in his glorification of
"the mutual pair," consistently emphasizes, a fact that many
critics ignore. Maurice Charney, for example, says that "the
implication" of the play is clear: 'Antony's manly will has
been effeminated in Egypt."^0 Although Payne rejects any
"simplistic formal arguments against passion,"^1 he still sees
Cleopatra as "the embodiment of self-destructive, death-dealing,
boundless sexuality. . . ."^2 Like Charney, Payne charges
Cleopatra with being "a destroyer of men and their mascu-
linity,"^3 an aggressive female, a "strumpet" who turns Antony
into "her fool."^4 Such criticism is based upon the view that
Cleopatra interferes with Antony's destiny "to be a man above
all men,"^5 and therefore "she takes on the role of temptress,
or even sorceress."^6 Thus, when Cleopatra puts on Antony's

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41 Payne, p. 271.
42 Ibid, p. 270.
44 Danby, p. 135.
45 Rosen, p. 115.
46 Ibid.
sword, which in the masculine ethic, according to Payne, "is quite literally the symbol of Antony's manhood," she is disparagingly judged as not only seducing Antony but also emasculating him "because she wishes, like Portia, that she were a man." To the critics who subscribe to the Roman attitude toward female and male roles, Octavia is far superior to Cleopatra. Schanzer sees that Antony's choice lies "between the path of virtus and voluptas . . ., between two women embodying these values." Octavia, according to Ribner, "represents a private morality whose signs are chastity and loyalty." For Ribner, therefore, Octavia represents an "ideal of womanhood against which the abandonment of Cleopatra to unlawful passion may be measured."

The issue of "What Venus did to Mars" (I.v.18) can be resolved not only textually, through a close examination of the play itself, but perhaps also historically. The portrait of Cleopatra as Shakespeare presents her in Antony and Cleopatra resembles in some ways that of Elizabeth I. As Keith Rinehart points out, it is obvious that for at least one scene "Elizabeth is clearly the model," not Plutarch.

Cleopatra's anxious concern for a personal description of Octavia in Act One, scene three, "is matched by Elizabeth's for the Queen of Scots," as reported by Sir James Melville, ambassador to England in 1564.\textsuperscript{53} Rinehart provides ample evidence that in the comparison between Cleopatra and Elizabeth "their similarities . . . in temperament and technique" are startling:

"both used feminine wiles to gain political advantage; both were consummate actresses, but both could show the woman behind--or within--the queen. Indeed, it is this skill that makes them endlessly fascinating."\textsuperscript{54} The Freudian belief that "feminine" implies passive behavior and aims is used to attack Cleopatra as unfeminine, as a woman who emasculates her mate, but Shakespeare's Cleopatra is an Elizabethan queen who in her splendid "aggressiveness" overturns the traditional notion of proper womanly behavior.\textsuperscript{55} In fact, compared to

\textsuperscript{53}Ibid., p. 82. \textsuperscript{54}Ibid., p. 83.

\textsuperscript{55}Elizabeth also struggled against the notion of what constitutes proper and appropriate conduct for a female monarch. As M. M. Reese, in his The Cease of Majesty: A Study of Shakespeare's History Plays (London, 1961), p. 28, points out, the view of the English people reached the "sharp edge of panic" when in 1563, the queen was still unmarried: "It was unprecedented and unthinkable that a queen should not marry, and subdue in wifely submission to the male the inborn capriciousness of woman. Her business was to raise a family, and to leave the mysteries of government to the sex traditionally capable of understanding them."
Cleopatra's Renaissance variety, Octavia's "noble" passivity, her wifely and sisterly submission, belong more to "a market maid [come] to Rome" (III.vi.51) than to a great queen.

Cleopatra does not emasculate Antony as a warrior-hero; on the contrary, it is Antony's fervent allegiance to the standard of conduct befitting "the demi-Atlas of the earth" (I.v.23) that is paradoxically the cause of his tragic downfall. For example, Antony's sudden decision to return to Cleopatra is no recognition of the narrowness of the Roman ethic or the expansiveness of the spirit possible in Cleopatra's Egypt; instead, he still envisions Cleopatra and her love as a "sport" (I.i.46) and a "pleasure" (II.iii.40), no matter how much he loves her. Traversi claims that these terms of sport and pleasure "turn out, when we pass from the universal lyrical to concrete reality, to be the true ends of Antony's devotion."\(^{56}\) However, "the true ends of Antony's devotion" are honor and fame. In such a framework one can only view passion as a sport or a pleasure. Since love is seen as an antithetical force working against the proper aims of duty, Antony allows himself to pursue such an idle indulgence only when the pursuit of honor itself is doomed to failure. And that failure is precisely what the Soothsayer predicts if Antony remains with Caesar:

\(^{56}\)Traversi, *Shakespeare: The Roman Plays*, p. 84.
If thou dost play with him at any game,
Thou art sure to lose, and, of that natural luck,
He beats thee 'gainst the odds. Thy luster thickens
When he shines by. (II.iii.25-28)

Without the promise of increasing reputation, the very essence
of his existence as a warrior-hero, Antony immediately declares,

I will to Egypt,
And though I make this marriage for my peace,
I' the East my pleasure lies. (II.ii.38-40)

Moreover, when fact seems to confirm the Soothsayer's prophecy--
Caesar has spoken "scantly" of him and read it "to public ear"
(III.iv.4-6)--Antony, whose sacred honor (II.ii.85) and reputation are everything, has actually no recourse but to Egypt.
Like Brutus' fearful jealousy of Caesar's fame, Antony's anger
and envy of Octavius Caesar's rising star impell him to
"raise the preparation of a war" that "shall stain" Caesar
(III.iv.26-27). Antony therefore returns to Egypt, but not
as a lover. Once in Egypt, Antony acts like a general and
that course of conduct is fatal. He cannot be content as a
lover and co-ruler of Egypt; instead he wages war against
Caesar in order to discredit him and to elevate his own
stature as a warrior-hero. It is not, as Caesar claims, that
Cleopatra "hath nodded him to her"; it is not as Caesar
claims that Antony "hath given his empire /Up to a whore"
(III.vi.65-67). Antony has given up his kingdom in Rome for
Caesar, not for Cleopatra. Antony returns to Egypt because he
is "sure to lose" against any odds, if he chooses to play with
Caesar "at any game"(II.iii.25-26). Antony returns to
Cleopatra to pursue empire from what he considers a more advantageous, more exclusive position. The colossal military disaster that occurs at Actium is not the fault of Cleopatra, but rather the fault of Antony, who does not heed the Soothsayer's warning.

Nor does Antony heed the warning of Enobarbus, who advises his general not to fight against Caesar at sea, reminding Antony that "no disgrace" shall fall him when he is better "prepared for land"; in fighting at sea Antony will "therein throw away" his "absolute soldiership" (III.viii.39-42). Like Henry V at Agincourt, Antony revels in the odds that increase the danger and, by extension, in the honor that will be won in the victory. But the world of Antony and Cleopatra is not the world of Henry V. Such "valiantness" for the sake of an elusive honor is no longer glorified; it is indeed ridiculous. Too many of the play's scenes mock the public world and the values that sustain it for the reader to remain in his illusion that honor is everything—an opinion we accepted in the Henriad. In scenes as disparate as the drunken debauchery aboard Pompey's galley (II.vii) and the scene in which Enobarbus and Agrippa mock the hyperbolic "love" of Caesar, Lepidus, and Antony, who ply each other with "excellent praises" while conscious only of self (III.ii), Shakespeare

57 See Shakespeare's Plutarch, II, edited by C.F. Tucker Brooke (London, 1909), 138-139: "... valiantness was honored in Rome above all other virtues..."
dramatizes the fact that "there's beggary in the [honor] that can be reckoned" (I.i.15). Just as we have seen in *Julius Caesar*, in *Antony and Cleopatra* the pursuit of glory, honor, and immortality can be a dangerous thing, inhibiting and distorting the emotional bonds that should exist between men, and, perhaps more especially, between men and women.

When Antony is defeated at sea, as the Soothsayer has prophesied in general terms and as Enobarbus has predicted in particular, he blames his failure upon Cleopatra, blaming his love for her as the reason he followed her ships rather than continuing the battle:

You did know  
How much you were my conqueror, and that  
My sword, made weak by my affection, would  
Obey it on all cause. (III.xi.65-68)

Antony, like his critics, feels that his passion for Cleopatra has caused his martial virtues to be weakened. But Antony never abandons these virtues; throughout the play, he leaps into political and military action at the "magical word of war" (III.i.31). Antony, like his detractors, dwells lovingly upon his heroic past, especially when the present is too painful to bear. Nostalgically, he recalls to Eros his heroic endeavor at Philippi:

He [Octavius Caesar] at Philippi kept  
His sword e'en like a dancer, while I struck  
The lean and wrinkled Cassius. And 'twas I  
That the mad Brutus ended. He alone  
Dealt on lieutenancy and no practice had  
In the brave squares of war. Yet now----No matter. (III.xi.35-40)
The events at Philippi were quite otherwise, as we have seen in *Julius Caesar*, but that is no matter, for Antony here again demonstrates his inexorable belief in the martial virtues and in reputation, for the sake of which a man must give his all and by which he is judged a man. As a consequence, what torments Antony after the battle of Actium is that his fleeing after Cleopatra constitutes an unmanly act, an act that offends reputation, "a most unnoble swerving" (*III.xi.49-50*). Throughout the play, for Antony, war is "the royal occupation" (*IV.iv.17*) and he "a workman in 't" (*IV.iv.17-18*); war is an exalted business (*20-21*) in which his "dying honor" might "live again" (*IV.ii.6-7*). For Antony, honor simply does not exist, except as won through heroic deeds on the battlefield, and without honor he feels himself to be but a "mangled shadow" (*IV.ii.27*). His military failures signify to Antony and to the world that the god Hercules has left him (*IV.iii.16-17*). Ironically, but significantly, it is here that Antony appears to recognize another god, and in that recognition wins a kind of nobility that Brutus, for example, never obtains.

In a play that is replete with irony, that recognition comes through Enobarbus. At Alexandria, Antony learns of his friend's desertion. Instead of another tirade upon the obligations of soldiership, Antony sends his friend "gentle adieus and greetings," fervently wishing that "he never find more cause /To change a master." And exclaiming, finally,
"Oh, my fortunes have /Corrupted honest men!" (IV.v.14-17). Antony's magnanimity is at last demonstrated; for the first time, no duplicity can be detected in his relationship with another human being. It is ironic that a more glorious honor is won by Antony as he is utterly defeated militarily, but it is an irony totally to Shakespeare's purpose. As we have seen in Julius Caesar, the bonds of friendship are the means to another kind of heroic endeavor, an endeavor that respects and honors the worth of a friend. Enobarbus' reaction to Antony's kindness parallels Cassius' when he thinks Brutus has been taken at Philippi:

    I am alone the villain of the earth,
    And feel I am so most. O Antony,
    Thou mine of bounty, how wouldst thou have paid
    My better service when my turpitude
    Thou dost so crown with gold! This blows my heart.
    If swift thought break it not, a swifter mean
    Shall outstrike thought. But thought will do 't, I feel.
    I fight against thee! No. I will go seek
    Some ditch wherein to die, the foul'st best fits
    My latter part of life. (IV.vi.30-39)

For Cassius, it constitutes a betrayal to remain alive without his friend; for Enobarbus, it constitutes a betrayal to remain alive after he has deserted such an honorable friend, benefactor, and mentor. Antony's generosity to Enobarbus reveals his recognition that his pursuit of honor has resulted in the forfeiture of friendship, an unnecessary betrayal.

    However, Antony has only momentarily demonstrated that he is capable of realizing the value of human relationships and human loyalties, for as soon as victory unexpectedly seems
to be his, he reverts to his military stance. In the flush of temporary triumph, Antony waxes hyperbolic, reveling in his martial feats. To Cleopatra, he declares that he has fought like a god:

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Behold this man.
Commend unto his lips thy favoring hand.
Kiss it, my warrior. He hath fought today
As if a god in hate of mankind had
Destroyed in such a shape. (IV.viii.22-26)
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Subsequently, when defeat has once again overwhelmed him, Antony curses his fate that has tied him to Cleopatra, who, he believes, "has robbed" him "of his sword" (IV.xiv.23) and betrayed him to Caesar. That Cleopatra has "mingled" her fortunes with Antony's "entirely" (24-25) is something that Antony, as failed warrior-hero, cannot comprehend, and he vows to kill her. In the mirror of the public world, Antony loses the sense of what is significant. Like Othello, who feels that Desdemona has shamed his public image and therefore kills her in the name of honor, never realizing his own failure, Antony blames Cleopatra for his fall from the public adulation and not his terrible failure in an intimate personal context, indeed, as a lover.

Antony suffers because of his contradictory and irreconcilable values; he believes that public duty must come before private loyalties. Unlike Hamlet, he is unable to maintain a balance between public responsibility and private duty.

Bradley states that Antony possesses a "clear knowledge that
the worse of two courses is being pursued," but Antony's tragedy lies precisely in the fact that Egypt is not the wrong course, nor does he at any time in the play pursue that course. What is wrong is that he persists in pursuing an image of the ideal warrior-hero, regardless of any personal relationship. Antony's choice of the public world of Rome and the values it espouses is the choice of the warrior-hero, but Shakespeare goes to great lengths to show the incongruities, even the absurdities, of that public world. When Antony requests Caesar to let him breathe between the heavens and earth, /A private man in Athens" (III.xii.14-15), it is too late. Not only has he outraged Rome with his obvious enjoyment of the Egyptian world and its queen, but Rome as well as Antony cannot conceive of any alternative conduct except the wholehearted pursuit of a public life. In spite of the encomia to his worth and fame, Antony's role in Roman affairs is not crucial in the end. Although his expert soldiership is valuable, Antony's abdication of public responsibility does not have the heinous implications that such a surrender has in Richard II. As Antony says to Caesar upon his initial return to Rome,

My being in Egypt, Caesar,
What was 't to you? (II.ii.35-36)

58Bradley, p. 15.
What is it, indeed, to anyone, except to Cleopatra and to the Roman world that conceives of honor and fame as being defined in terms of public activity? Harrison contends that the story of Antony "is not by any standard essentially tragic, for a man who throws his wealth into the lap of a harlot and then kills himself is no tragic hero; his death is not heroic, but the final degradation." Harrison, Shakespeare's Tragedies, p. 226.

Mason declares that Shakespeare "has not made us know what it is for a man to be like Mars, nor has he brought us near knowing what it would be for a man to be like Bacchus." H. A. Mason, "Antony and Cleopatra: Telling versus Shewing, Part II," Cambridge Quarterly, 1 (Fall, 1966), 347.

In a sense, perhaps, Harrison is correct, for Antony and Cleopatra is more of a comedy than a tragedy. Its conclusion partakes of the same kind of resolution as Dante's Divine Comedy. Contrary to Mason's observation, Shakespeare does show us the tragic, albeit sometimes comic, role of a warrior-hero, a Mars who cannot let Venus have her proper influence in his life. Only in death does Antony allow Cleopatra to be his Beatrice, for his suicide places him in the realm of those who die for love, with an accompanying transcendence of the mundane that brings him greater glory than anything.
Antony's final speech is full of love. He hopes to overtake Cleopatra in order to "weep for my pardon" (IV.xiv.44-45). Although Antony has failed Cleopatra in life, he will be "a bridegroom" in death, "and run into 't /As to a lover's bed" (100-101). Although Antony has pursued honor relentlessly in life, in death he feels that

> Since Cleopatra died
> I have lived in such a dishonor that the gods
> Detest my baseness. (IV.xiv.55-57)

Only in death does Antony submit to his passion for Cleopatra, and in so doing testifies that with such love, between such "a mutual pair," "'Tis paltry to be Caesar" (V.ii.2). In death at last, Antony chooses Egypt over Rome, thereby surrendering the claims of the world of Caesar, a world that is "paltry" compared to the eternal world he claims with Cleopatra.

Antony's failure as a warrior-hero--"withered is the garland of the war, /The soldier's pole is fall'n" (IV.xv.64-65) --is a world catastrophe only in the context of political achievement; in the private world of the consciousness of the lovers, Antony's loss of his royal occupation is a gain that, in the microcosm of love's bounty, ennobles

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61 Othello, on the other hand, does not achieve this transcendence. He has made a tragic mistake in judgment while trying to salvage his "honor." Therefore, his final speech is concerned only with his reputation as he instructs the attending officers to repeat his story with compassion, remembering, of course, his heroic past.
all of Nature, "past the size of dreaming" (V.ii.97). In their deaths, Antony and Cleopatra "call great Caesar ass /Unpolicied" (V.ii.310-311); in their deaths, moreover, Shakespeare presents the "great solemnity" (369) of a world made cunningly by love. At the same time, Shakespeare diminishes the value of the world of Caesar and its politic tricks, practical efficiency, and martial virtues.

In the final Roman play to be examined, Coriolanus, Shakespeare again scrutinizes the code of the warrior-hero by placing his hero in a situation in which that code, its beliefs and rules, do not apply. That situation for Antony is Cleopatra, whose "infinite variety" strikes at the rigidity of her lover's standard of proper and heroic conduct. That situation for Coriolanus, as we will see, is the consulship whose politic demands obviates his own integrity as a warrior-hero.
CHAPTER VII

CORIOLANUS: THE FAILURE OF THE WARRIOR-HERO

Although Coriolanus has achieved in recent years a more respectable position in the hierarchy of Shakespeare's tragedies than it formerly had, it can hardly be called a popular play. The cause, according to Marchette Chute, lies with the hero, whom she calls "too rigidly simplified to achieve the humanity and reality of most of his [Shakespeare's] people." Moreover, Chute criticizes Coriolanus as "one of those plays that an audience can admire but cannot take to its heart." This view of Coriolanus and of his play seems representative. William Rosen considers him a totally unsympathetic character, and that "chief of his glaring faults is pride." Theodore Spenser closely echoes Chute's lament: "Coriolanus is not conceived as the kind of man whose behavior would cause sympathetic responses in any


3Ibid.

world outside himself. He is too rigid." Traversi labels Coriolanus "a mechanical warrior, a man turned into an instrument of war, grotesquely indifferent to the suffering he has caused." Further, Traversi contends that the cause of Coriolanus' ferocious rigidity is ultimately "a failure on the part of a whole society," particularly the inevitable result of the nature of war upon the individual.

The significance of the influence of society upon Coriolanus is undeniable; Coriolanus is another Roman like Antony who can see the world and himself "with the only eyes he has, and they are trained to see what Rome has defined as real." The political lesson of Coriolanus is not, as Phillips declares, that "a state can prosper only when it conforms to that pattern of degrees, vocations, and authority ordained by God and nature." Coriolanus conforms absolutely to the pattern of behavior ordained by his society for a warrior-hero. Like Brutus, whom Coriolanus also resembles,

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7 Ibid.


Caius Marcius believes that his conduct is without blemish because he follows honor—a virtue idolized by the world in which he functions as "the arm our soldier" of the state. (I.i.120) What is reality for Coriolanus resides in the Roman concept of *virtus*. As Plutarch puts it in his account of Coriolanus, "valiantness was honoured in Rome above all other virtues: which they called *virtus*, by the name of self, as including in that general name all other special virtues besides."\(^{10}\) Therefore, according to Plutarch, "*Virtus* in the Latin was as much as valiantness."\(^{11}\) Like Antony, Coriolanus is the embodiment of this Roman *virtus*, a warrior incapable of operating outside its established criteria for heroic behavior. The crucial difference, however, between Antony and Coriolanus is that Coriolanus has Volumnia as his Cleopatra, a Roman matron who allows no room for ethical flexibility or for a discovery of values higher and more pertinent than those dictated by "valiantness." For Volumnia, unlike Cleopatra, not only subscribes to the narrowness and rigidity of the Roman ethic but reinforces Coriolanus' own fanatic beliefs in the values that sustain this ethic. Coriolanus loves Volumnia with a

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passion as relevant as Antony's for Cleopatra, but whereas Cleopatra awakens Antony to the possibilities of a world not so rigidly conceived, Volumnia manipulates her son's feeling for her in order to increase and intensify his military spirit. In a very real sense, Coriolanus' passion for Volumnia, unlike Antony's for Cleopatra, is his ruin, for as Plutarch explains, "the only thing that made him to love honour was the joy he saw his mother did take of him." The paradox of Coriolanus is that the love between Volumnia and her son, a devotion that normally stimulates more humane virtues than those incorporated in the ideal of "valiantness," actually confines love's customary expansiveness to a stultifying rigidity—a perversion that also occurs in Macbeth between husband and wife. Regardless of how often Coriolanus is classified as "a slaying machine of mechanic excellence," this Shakespearean hero is a man full of passion, a man who rarely denies the validity of his emotions, a denial that is the norm for Antony and for

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12 It is interesting to note that most of the criticism leveled against Cleopatra, as reviewed in the last chapter, can be accurately applied to Volumnia. For example, Hardin Craig, An Interpretation of Shakespeare (New York, 1948), p. 280, describes Cleopatra as a woman who "wants Antony for her own, encourages the worst in him, ruins him, and brings about his death"—a description more valid for Volumnia than for Cleopatra.

13 Shakespeare's Plutarch, II, 142.

Brutus. Coriolanus' passions, however, have been so wholly manipulated by Volumnia that he responds only to his mother and the values she has inculcated in him. What Shakespeare reveals in Coriolanus is the absolute failure of the warrior-hero ideal as an ennobling way of life. He so thoroughly scrutinizes this ideal in Coriolanus that we come to see its values of honor and nobility and fame to constitute "a gap in nature." As Rosen observes, "in Coriolanus Shakespeare submits to searching scrutiny the problem of human integrity, its conception, its worth, [and] how it may be destroyed." Shakespeare's increasing skepticism of the political and personal values of the warrior-hero ideal as we have watched it develop through several plays can no longer be in question. No longer do we see this ideal, as is plain in Henry V, fostering a unifying patriotism and extraordinary heroism on the part of both ruler and subjects. In short, as Henry V apotheosizes the warrior-hero, Coriolanus symbolizes the crippling limitations of the masculine values of honor and valor that form the basis and direction of the hero's conduct.16

15Rosen, p. 163. See also Knights, "Shakespeare and Political Wisdom," p. 49: "Once again, honour--both the public regard that men seek and the social sanction of their actions--is a main subject of the story, and . . . it is subjected to a radical scrutiny."

16See Kenneth Muir, "The Background of Coriolanus," Shakespeare Quarterly, X (Spring, 1959), 139-140, who claims that in Antony and Cleopatra and Coriolanus Shakespeare places stress on the "glory of 'the royal occupation' of soldiering."
The ideal of the soldier-king, which was so successful for Henry V, is the precise cause of Coriolanus' tragedy. As the warrior-hero of Rome, Coriolanus devotedly serves the only world he knows, but its simplistic values are inadequate to satisfy the needs of a man forced to operate in a world more complex than he has imagined. As Knights points out in his discussion of *Julius Caesar*, "it is the intolerable divorce between public life and trust, loyalty, and affection that men look for in personal living that explains the barrenness of action that is purely public and political. . . ." 17

Matthew Proser also believes that the impulse of the warrior-hero "to play the heroic part" cannot but "fail to capture the entire human reality of the man." 18 In Shakespeare's original image of the warrior-hero, shaped by the Homeric ideal and by the Tudor concept of divine right with its association of king as hero, works only in a world where loyalty to the state also fosters and encourages personal loyalties, and not where these loyalties appear antithetical. The world of *Julius Caesar* still accommodates the ideal of the comitatus relationship, although it is betrayed by Brutus in his divorce of public and private

commitments. In Antony and Cleopatra, Egypt provides a world in which duty and love can be reconciled, although Antony only dimly perceives this fact as he surrenders to Cleopatra in death. In Coriolanus, however, the ideal of comitatus is more narrowly conceived. It is realized only on the battlefield. It has no place in the "peaceful" society of civic brawls about grain and corn. The state has been out of joint for some time. Dominating the play's imagery are the metaphors of body and sickness. Caroline Spurgeon diagnoses the condition of the society that forms a framework for Coriolanus' failure as in "a 'violent fit' that craves physic, a sore which needs a physician, for it cannot be cured by self-probing. . ."¹⁹ Like Hamlet, Coriolanus perhaps could have been this physician, but the disease has spread so deeply as to include the hero himself, and its malignancy destroys "the rarest man i' the world" (IV.v.168-169).

The unpopularity of Coriolanus seems to lie not in the nature of the hero,²⁰ but rather in the type of world we are

¹⁹Caroline Spurgeon, Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us (Cambridge, 1935), p. 349. See also Maurice Charney, Shakespeare's Roman Plays (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), p. 142, who says that food, disease, and animals form image patterns that are "the three dominant motifs in Coriolanus."

²⁰See John Middleton Murry, John Clare and Other Studies (London, 1950), p. 222, who claims otherwise: "The reason why it is so seldom performed is that the theme is unsympathetic to the ordinary man, who cannot accept as a tragic hero one whose ungovernable pride forces him to become a renegade."
given--a world that is never restored to health as are the worlds of Lear and Hamlet. This is not to say that Coriolanus is entirely a victim of his society, but part of his suffering definitely stems from the excesses and flaws of the body politic. Menenius' famous parable of the belly aptly pictures this world where its parts are not mutually supporting, where "the kingly crowned head, the vigilant eye, /The counselor heart, the arm our soldier, /Our steed the leg, the tongue our trumpeter" (I.i.119-121) are divorced in terms of values and goals. Menenius fails to realize, however, that this metaphor, as Traversi points out, can be turned "equally against his own position,"\textsuperscript{21} for if the belly "gives life to the rest of the body, it is also the receptacle of the worthless bran."\textsuperscript{22} Traversi condemns both the populace who are "incapable of discerning its own good" and the patrician who has "forfeited [his] right to superiority by showing a complete selfishness and lack of responsibility";\textsuperscript{23} both classes fail in their duty to participate in the comitatus bond that must exist for a healthy society. In the midst of this turmoil is Coriolanus who is passionately embittered against the plebeians and aligned with the

\textsuperscript{21}Traversi, An Approach to Shakespeare, p. 221.
\textsuperscript{22}Ibid., p. 222.
\textsuperscript{23}Ibid.
patricians by virtue of birth and training. Arriving on stage in a fury, Coriolanus curses the citizens for their rebellious words and demonstrations:

What would you have, you curs,  
That like nor peace nor war? The one affrights you,  
The other makes you proud. He that trusts to you,  
Where he should find you lions, finds you hares,  
Where foxes, geese. (I.i.172-176)

Associating valor on the battlefield with honor, as he has been taught, Coriolanus cannot but disparage those whom he considers "hares" in contrast to "lions." He is convinced that the "rabble . . . will in time /Win upon power, and throw forth greater themes /For insurrection's arguing" (I.i.223-225). Ironically, Coriolanus predicts his own doom, for he, not corn, will be the theme of further insurrection as he becomes not only the "chief enemy of the people" (I.i.7-8), but also the chief enemy of the state.

Coriolanus' scorn for the citizens has frequently been used as an example of our hero's "overriding egotism" and inveterate snobbery. Menenius, himself, "one that hath

24 Examining the contemporary attitude toward the commonwealth, W. Gordon Zeeveld, "Coriolanus and Jacobean Politics," Modern Language Review, LVII (July, 1962), 321-334, sees Coriolanus as demonstrating "the spectacular failure of representative government. . . "(333), but the play is much more than Shakespeare's comment upon Jacobean political problems.


26 Oscar James Campbell, Shakespeare's Satire (New York, 1943), p.200:"This unsavory figurative language is characteristic of most of the utterances of the haughty patrician."
always loved the people" (I.i.52-53) and who is supposedly from the start "set in sharp contrast to Coriolanus," also views the populace as "passing cowardly" (I.i.207). He also sees the imminent war as a means to dispose of some of these unnecessary rascals, what he calls "our musty superfluity" (I.i.230). The difference between Coriolanus and Menenius and every other patrician is that Coriolanus never dissembles, never pretends respect when he feels none. Nevertheless, Coriolanus' otherwise admirable openness and directness blind him to any virtue the people may have and, what is more significant, to any vice that may be found in his patrician friends. F. H. Rouda points out that the noblemen are "the persons he has been trained to respect; they are his compeers, owed his loyalty: he cannot suspect them of lip-service." Coriolanus is incapable of making fine distinctions in values and lacks the subtlety to see the bankruptcy in the values of his peers. A great measure of his tragedy lies in the fact that those whom he has admired and respected all his life are as superficial and as inconsistent in their values as the mob.

For an adequate understanding of Coriolanus, it is necessary to juxtapose two crucial episodes: one contains


the discussion of honor between Volumnia and Virgilia, Coriolanus' wife; the second actually involves a series of scenes: Coriolanus on the battlefield, cursing the cowardice of his troops, challenging Aufidius to single combat; then Coriolanus after victory, wounded and bleeding but emotionally exalted. Volumnia's scene reveals the essential boyishness of Coriolanus—a quality that remains with him until the end of the play. The battle scenes capture the great warrior in action, episodes that are as important thematically as the "savage spectacle" of Caesar's assassination in *Julius Caesar* (III.i.223).

From the first scene, which gives a glimpse into his boyhood, Coriolanus emerges as much more than "a mechanical warrior" for whom we can have no sympathy. Volumnia lovingly portrays her young son as a "tender-bodied" youth with the "comeliness" to pluck "all gaze his way" (I.iii.6-8). In a description of Martius, Coriolanus' son, we are to see the father's image:

I saw him run after a gilded butterfly, and when he caught it, he let it go again: and after it again, and over and over he comes, and up again; caught it again. Or whether his fall enraged him, or how 'twas, he did so set his teeth and tear it--oh, I warrant, how he mammocked it! (I.iii.65-70)

The rage that interrupts the boy's childish game with a butterfly is considered one of his "father's moods" (72) by Volumnia, whereas Virgilia calls it "a crack" (74), a mar in his nature, an uncurbed and destructive passion. Volumnia
and her friends, however, look upon the boy's fury as a noble and encouraging sign, for such "valiantness" marks the hero, as they too have been taught. Maurice Charney points out that the butterfly "is a curious sort of imagery, particularly because so frail and delicate a thing as a butterfly is made to represent the height of violence; perhaps the butterfly is apt just because it is so vulnerable." If we extend the image to include Coriolanus as the butterfly, instead of his victims in war, an especially poignant portrait results. Throughout the play, we are constantly reminded of Coriolanus' vulnerability to emotional attacks, whether of his own making or stimulated by his mother's disapproval.

Earlier in the scene, Volumnia has proudly pointed back to her training of Coriolanus: when "for a day of kings' entreaties," a normal mother would not permit her child "an hour from her beholding," she, on the other hand, sent her son to "a cruel war" and "was pleased to let him seek danger where he was like to find fame" (I.iii.8-15). Moreover, if her young son had "died in the business" (19), then "his good report," she boasts, "should have been my son" (20-21). Volumnia swears that she had rather eleven sons "die nobly for their country than one voluptuously surfeit out of action" (22-28). To Volumnia, a famous dead son is preferable to

29 Charney, p. 168.
one who is alive but without renown. Such devotion to "valiantness" seems hyperbolic and unnatural, especially in a mother, but Shakespeare's point seems to be that the ideal of the warrior-hero is reduced to absurdity when voiced by the hero's own mother. Campbell points out that "it is Volumnia who has forced her son to become a soldier and to exult in the blood and sweat of war."\(^{30}\) Volumnia, moreover, according to Traversi, "has made it her life's work to impose upon his simplicity the imperatives which rule her own life."\(^{31}\) It is, however, crucial to recognize that Volumnia, as Coriolanus is the military arm of the state, is the perfect embodiment of the state's mind toward honorable behavior. Volumnia merely represents the culture which "stresses those 'masculine' qualities that range from genuine physical courage to hardness and insensitiveness in the fact of life. . . ."\(^{32}\) The imperatives which rule her life are also the imperatives of the Roman culture which the play reflects. The satiric impact of this scene arises out of the ideal of the warrior-hero exalted by a mother, and not by a warrior.

It is no wonder that Coriolanus eagerly longs for battle, having been thoroughly indoctrinated in the view

\(^{30}\)Oscar Campbell, p. 211.


\(^{32}\)Knights, Some Shakespearean Themes, p. 152.
that no honorable action is possible outside the battlefield. Moreover, the intent of Volumnia's speech to her daughter-in-law is to demonstrate that to Coriolanus' mother should go all the praise for the creation of such a magnificent war machine. With fine dramatic irony, Shakespeare emphasizes the discrepancy between what Volumnia considers *sans peur et sans reproche* and what the audience sees as unconscienced culpability. Further, with Volumnia's boast goes the implication that temperamentally no man, not even a Coriolanus, is normally inclined toward brutality of war. What we have at the end of this scene is a glimpse of a more complex and interesting hero than has been suspected: the stress upon the boyish nature of Coriolanus is set in sharp relief to his present "maturity," a contrast that reveals the disparity between the potential humanity of the hero, on the one hand, and his realized "congenital ferocity," on the other.

Coriolanus' present "maturity" is seen on the battlefield, a display which actually occupies a series of scenes, which taken together comprise one of Shakespeare's more explicit renderings of war, a war in which the glory of Agincourt is not so easily effected. Coriolanus' exhortation to his troops echoes Henry V's battlecry before

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33 Zeeveld, p. 329. See also Granville-Barker, III, 107, who says, in his characterization of Volumnia, "if martial spirit were all she would seem to be almost more soldier than he."
Harfluer, but Coriolanus' men, unlike Henry's Englishmen, are quickly routed, retreating in fear and confusion. Coriolanus' reaction is predictable, as he curses the Roman soldiers and finally shames them into following him to the gates at Corioli, where, also predictably, his soldiers once again desert him, as Coriolanus enters the city alone. To the men, Coriolanus' courage is "foolhardiness." No shame is evidenced on the part of the soldiers; on the contrary, they seem totally unaware of their perfidy, their breaking the comitatus bond of the battlefield, a bond that is as necessary for the safety of the individual as the nation. The citizen soldiery is oblivious to the idea of valor that Coriolanus gloriously demonstrates. Contrary to what many commentators believe, Coriolanus' conduct in the battle scenes is wholly appropriate to the Roman ideal of virtus. Surely then, Titus Lartius' eulogy to the "slain" hero cannot be heard, in the context of the citizen's military cowardice and Coriolanus' own heroism, as Shakespeare's ironic disparagement of Coriolanus, the machine-like warrior:

Thou wast a soldier
Even to Cato's wish, not fierce and terrible
Only in strokes; but, with they grim looks and
The thunderlike percussion of thy sounds,
Thou madest thine enemies shake as if the world
Were feverous and did tremble. (I.iv.56-61)

Paul Zolbrod in his comparison of Coriolanus with Molière's Le Misanthrope contends that "both Coriolanus and Alceste
are quick to insult others, and both are so presumptuous as to set up as superior men who may judge their fellows."  

In view of the soldiers' disingenuous behavior on the battlefield, in contrast with Coriolanus' single-handed heroism, it does not seem "presumptuous" for Coriolanus to level criticism where criticism is due. Coriolanus' ferocious conduct is wholly appropriate to the temper of war, as appropriate as Volumnia's attitude toward war as a means of measuring honor is inappropriate. Therefore, when Coriolanus re-enters the scene, bleeding from several wounds, surely he has the right to insult "the common file" (I.vi.43). On the other hand, his greeting of Cominius, his general, reveals a tenderness out of keeping with Volumnia's harsh warrior:

Oh, let me clip ye
In arms as sound as when I wooed, in heart
As merry as when our nuptial day was done,
And tapers burned to bedward! (I.vi.29-32)

Obviously deeply affected by the sight of his friend and commander, Coriolanus expresses himself in an image of love and pleasure, not of blood and battle. The joy he experiences at seeing his friend safe from the war is automatically connected with the joy of the bridal bed, not that of combat. This association seems curious when we remember that

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Coriolanus is considered the "mechanical warrior," to achieve any kind of humanity. And, more importantly for Shakespeare's point, we see Coriolanus as possessing qualities other than those of a martial automation, qualities which even his mother thinks he does not possess. Coriolanus is no misanthrope; his disgust for humanity is directed at least on the field of battle against those who have proven themselves unworthy.

Moreover, Coriolanus reveals his awareness of the comitatus relationship between soldiers when he begs Cominius to permit his return to battle:

I do beseech you,
By all the battles wherein we have fought,
By the blood we have shed together, by the vows
We have made to endure friends, that you directly
Set me against Aufidius and his Antiates. (I.vi.55-59)

Coriolanus magnanimously thanks the men who enthusiastically volunteer to accompany him:

A certain number
Though thanks to all, must I select from all. The rest
Shall bear the business in some other fight,
As cause will be obeyed. (I.vi.80-83)

Further, when Coriolanus returns victorious, dismissing praise for his valor, considering it "a bribe to pay my sword" (I.ix.38), he does, however, make a request of his general for the life of the prisoner who was his host

Chute, p. 271.
at Corioli. His request of course is granted, but when Coriolanus is asked the man's name, he moans,

By Jupiter, forgot.
I am weary, yea, my memory is tired.
Have we no wine here? (I.ix.90-92)

A. P. Rossiter reminds us that "no such forgetting [is] in Plutarch." However, Rossiter interprets this incident as illustrating the "absurdity" of Coriolanus' histrionics: "The man's self-greatness frustrates himself, his own good aims, endangering not merely life but honour." If we remember that in this scene, "the hero, according to the text, must have appeared on the Elizabethian stage so covered with stage blood from head to toe as to be almost unrecognizable," Coriolanus' lapse of memory is altogether understandable and, in fact, evokes enormous sympathy. His simple statement, "I am weary. . . ./Have we no wine here?" emphasizes the warrior's humanity, not his insensitivity. According to Kirschbaum, this scene's "savage spectacle" (Julius Caesar III.i.223) is Shakespeare's dramatization of "the brutality of the military hero which is basically a denial of charity, of identification, of Christian brotherhood and mercy." Campbell claims that Shakespeare, "instead

38 Ibid., pp. 245-246.
40 Kirschbaum, p. 527.
of enlisting our sympathy for Coriolanus . . . , deliberately alienates it. Indeed he makes the figure partly an object of scorn.\textsuperscript{41} Murry contends that Coriolanus' forgetfulness represents the fact that he "knows nothing of himself. His consciousness, his memory, his purpose—these are all in the keeping of his mother Volumnia, or Menenius."\textsuperscript{42} Such criticisms make too much and too little of the scene's significance. The savage spectacle of Coriolanus covered in blood shocks us into an awareness of the brutality of war, but Coriolanus is the one shown as wounded—not his victims. If we recall the butterfly image, such wounds reveal Coriolanus' vulnerability, since he is the one "mammocked." His bone-weary plea for some wine and the failure of his memory do enlist our sympathy for Coriolanus. Perhaps, as some say, he does not know himself, but this scene hardly demonstrates that fact. Indeed, nowhere does Coriolanus know himself and his abilities more than on the battlefield; it is outside that realm that he finds his tragic unfitness.

Coriolanus resists the open expression of his general's gratitude, but knows his mother will be pleased, and to her he will allow such praise (13-15). Returning from the defeat of the Volces, Coriolanus kneels to his mother,

\textsuperscript{41}Oscar Campbell, pp. 198-199.

\textsuperscript{42}Murry, p. 224.
as he acknowledges that his victory is hers. \(^{43}\) "You have, I know, petitioned all the gods, /For my prosperity" (II.i.186-188). Knowing that she has cause to be satisfied, that her wish for "deed-achieving honor" (190) has been fulfilled, Coriolanus is once again the young boy reveling in anticipation of a mother's praise for a task extraordinarily accomplished. Moreover, turning to his wife, he makes a statement that seems to contradict his mother's belief that sons and husbands who die "in the business" of war should be a glory rather than a grief to mothers and wives:

My gracious silence, hail!
Wouldst thou have laughed had I come coffined home,
That weep'st to see me triumph? Ah, my dear,
Such eyes the widows in Corioli wear,
And mothers that lack sons. (II.i.192-196)

Tenderly rebuking his wife for her tears, Coriolanus reminds her of those who have real cause to be grief stricken. It would appear that Coriolanus is not "grotesquely indifferent to the suffering he has caused." \(^{44}\) His responses in this scene have the mark of a man aware of something more than "deed-achieving honor."

Volumnia, however, and the world she represents will not allow Coriolanus to remain a soldier. Interrupting his

\(^{43}\) Donald A. Stauffer, Shakespeare's World of Images (New York, 1949), p.250, finds that "kneeling" in Coriolanus is a "repeated symbol" of the hero's "quest for a responsible authority. . . .To whom or to what should allegiance be accorded--in the state, in the family (that microcosm of the state), in the hierarchy of man's own faculties?"

\(^{44}\) Traversi, An Approach to Shakespeare, p. 226.
homecoming, Volumnia announces that she has "lived to see inherited my very wishes," but "there's one thing wanting" -- the consulship (II.i.214-217). And as always, Coriolanus submits to her urging rather than his own instinctive revulsion of a position that requires policy and indirection. To obtain the consulship, Coriolanus must put on the gown of humility, go to the marketplace, display his war-wounds, and beg of the citizens the right to rule--an incongruous ritual in light of Coriolanus' recent heroic stand on the field of battle. Coriolanus would rather "let the high office and the honor go /To one that would do this" (II.iii.129-130). This reluctance is hardly the voice of an upper-class militarist, concerned only with "absolute power," whose "end is not the benevolent dispersion of good but the restraint imposed upon inferior and untrustworthy beings. . . ." 45

However, Coriolanus, preferring to let his only honor derive from his military exploits, does have powerful connections who insist that he "practice the insinuating nod" and "counterfeit" feelings of humble camaraderie (II.iii.106-107). Therefore, because he respects the values of his mother and his friends, Coriolanus puts on the "napless vesture of humility" (II,i.250) and goes to the people and manages to win their approval. The scene puts in sharp relief the contrast between the Coriolanus who

45 Rosen, p. 181.
naturally and intuitively resists what he sees as demeaning honor in the marketplace and the Coriolanus who surrenders to the worldly demands for ever-increasing fame.

Once, however, is enough. When the tribunes, almost immediately, induce the citizens to withdraw their approval, Coriolanus refuses another display of hypocritical posturing. Anticipating Volumnia's disapproval, Coriolanus reminds his friends that she "was wont /To call them woolen vessels, things created /To buy and sell with groats" (III.ii.8-10). Therefore, he reasons, surely she will understand his revulsion against such unnatural pretense. And as she enters his company, Coriolanus addresses her:

I talk of you.

Why did you wish me milder? Would you have me False to my nature? Rather say I play The man I am. (III.ii.13-16)

As Charney observes, "the moderation [that] Volumnia and Menenius advise does not make sense to Coriolanus, a creature of extremes without that neutral state between honesty and dishonesty." Charney calls Coriolanus' statement--"I play/The man I am"--his "simple working principle" that is "at once a source of weakness and strength, for it ensures his integrity but leaves him vulnerable to attack." Even Rossiter, who finds no reason to be

46 Charney, p. 172.
47 Ibid.
sympathetic to Coriolanus at any stage of the play, admits that there is an "ethical rightness . . . in Marcius's sudden revulsion against playing the male harlot to catch votes, piping like a eunuch, smiling like a knave, and whining for a hand-out like a beggar." But such political play-acting is precisely what Volumnia wishes, for her son to dissemble nature and assume a role contrary to the one imposed upon him as a youth. Raised to be a military hero, Coriolanus must now move "from the casque to the cushion" (IV.vii.43)—a role that denies his unique personality as a warrior. His mother demands that her son use his anger "to better advantage" (III.ii.31) and to address the people

not by your own instruction,
Nor by the matter which your heart prompts you,
But with such words that are but roted in
Your tongue, though but bastards and syllables
Of no allowance to your bosom's truth. (III.ii.53-57)

Making no attempt to disguise what he must do, Volumnia rather emphasizes the falseness and intrinsic dishonesty of the act. Coriolanus must lie and deny the promptings of his soul, but the glory of political power, it is suggested, justifies the means. After all, she would not hesitate "to dissemble" when "honor" is "at stake":

I would dissemble with my nature where
My fortunes and my friends at stake required
I should do so in honor. (III.ii.62-64)

48 Rossiter, p. 242.
49 Ibid., p. 244.
The key to Volumnia's motivation is her phrase, "my fortunes and my friends"; her concern is with the glory that will fall upon her and her companions when Coriolanus is ruler of the state. Coriolanus' ideal of honor must be superseded by political expediency. Her values, as are those of her class, are as abstract as they are false, but Coriolanus has not the maturity and confidence to resist the pressure of the class he has been taught to respect. However, Coriolanus seems to recognize the discrepancy between the ideal of honor and its prostitution as he vacillates between submission to Volumnia and refusal:

Well, I must do 't.
Away, my disposition, and possess me
Some harlot's spirit!

I will not do 't.
Lest I surcease to honor mine own truth,
And by my body's action teach my mind
A most inherent baseness. (III.ii.110-123)

Although Coriolanus struggles against the forces that would drive him to commit what he considers a dishonorable act, his ingrained allegiance to his Roman teachers, especially to Volumnia and Menenius, cannot be ignored. The unconquerable warrior finds himself in a battle where there can be no victory.

50 MacCallum, pp.549-551, claims that Volumnia is "the great-hearted mother, the patrician lady, the Roman matron," who is motivated by a "public spirit of no ordinary kind" and "this is the first and last and noblest thing in her."
Volumnia chides her son with being overly proud and "absolute" (III.ii.39); he will "come all to ruin" (125), she says, and he will be completely to blame:

Thy valiantness was mine, thou suck'dst it from me,
But owe thy pride thyself. (129-130)

In the face of her anger and disgust, Coriolanus surrenders, only asking that she "chide me no more" (132). Again, it is not unreasonable to suggest that Shakespeare intends us to view Coriolanus in irreconcilable roles: as the vulnerable butterfly with the implacable warrior.

The tribunes are ready for him. Knowing Coriolanus' inability to regulate his behavior to the extent that they will require, the tribunes strike at the basis of his self-esteem, his achievement in the defense of Rome, when they call him "a traitor to the people" (III.iii.66). Astonished at such an attack, Coriolanus explodes in a terrible rage:

Call me their traitor! Thou injurious Tribune!
Within thine eyes sat twenty thousand deaths,
In thy hands clutched as many millions, in
Thy lying tongue both numbers, I would say
"Thou liest" unto thee with a voice as free
As I do pray the gods. (69-74)

Coriolanus' anger, if not politic, is understandable; his body testifies with its scars "which show like graves i'
the holy churchyard" (50-51) to his loyalty to Rome. The reaction of the people, however, is not so understandable, as they judge his scorn to deserve "the extremest death" (82). Since Coriolanus has "served well for Rome" (81-82), the Tribunes "mercifully" punish Coriolanus with banishment "as
enemy to the people and his country" (117-118), an act as perfidious as the people's cowardice upon the battlefield. Surely, we should be as shocked at this turn of events as we were at the sight of the wearied, blood-stained Coriolanus at Corioli.

Coriolanus' pride, which has been called "inordinate" and the "chief of all his glaring faults," resces him from total humiliation. Contemning banishment, he, in turn, banishes them (120ff):

Despising,
For you, the city, thus I turn my back.
There is a world elsewhere. (III.iii.133-135)

Like Lear on the heath, Coriolanus finds himself expelled from his home and his family. Society has thrown out its undigestible particle--the man of uncompromising values and honor. In the type of world reflected in the Rome of this play, a good man can find no refuge for his ideals or his principles. Coriolanus responds to the charges of treachery by embracing the role of traitor, a role that he cannot help but despise. Believing that he can turn his back on his homeland, he goes to Corioli, Rome's traditional enemy, to find a "world elsewhere,"

As if a man were author of himself
And knew no other kin. (V.iii.36-37)

Expelled from the comitatus bond, for grossly insufficient

51Rosen, p. 161.
reasons, Coriolanus removes himself to Corioli, in part, in order to continue to serve his ideal. But the world of Corioli proves in the end no better than that of Rome. The play testifies to the depth of Coriolanus' humanity in his consuming desire and need for love and approval: "I shall be loved when I am lacked" (IV.i.15).

In Corioli, Coriolanus finds himself "a kind of nothing, titleless" (V.i.13). With a loneliness comparable to Macbeth's, he is a man without a country--"a lonely dragon" (IV.i.30), sitting

in gold, his eye
Red as 'twould burn Rome, and his injury
The jailer to his pity. (V.i. 65-65)

Coriolanus can only contemplate the terrible injustice done to him, and vengeance becomes all consuming. Betrayed by those who do not conform to the ideal of heroic behavior he has so devotedly followed, Coriolanus knows of no other means of expressing his frustration than in terms of that ideal: he declares that he will not rest until he has "forged himself a name o' the fire/Of burning Rome" (V.i. 14-15). Like other Shakespearean warrior-heroes, Coriolanus' immediate reaction to what he considers betrayal is violence; Othello, certain that his wife has shamed his honor through adultery, kills Desdemona; Antony vows to kill Cleopatra when he thinks she is to blame for his military defeat; Brutus, thinking Caesar wishes to become a god, assassinates him. In these hyperbolic reactions, Shakespeare scrutinizes
the code itself that enshrines violence as a pattern of heroic activity. Feeling rejected and betrayed by Rome, Coriolanus simply conforms to this pattern as he vows to destroy his homeland with fire.

The soldiers of Corioli call Coriolanus "the rock, the oak not to be wind-shaken" (V.ii.116-117), but as we have seen this "oak" is frequently shaken to the roots by betrayals that he cannot comprehend. All that now sustains him is his unshakable faith in himself and his constancy. Cast away from family, friends, country, he clings desperately to the idea that he can be "author of himself," an idea intrinsic to the warrior-hero concept, but wholly inadequate to serve the hero as a man relating to other men. Tragically, Coriolanus hopes that honor and fame will still be his if he will remain true to his present course of action; his mood directly parallels Othello's before the murder of Desdemona. Both warrior-heroes feel that "honor" demands such violence. Coriolanus is not the mechanical warrior he believes himself to be. No sooner has he sworn unwavering allegiance to Aufidius and vengeance on Rome, than this unshakable man finds himself rudely shaken. Hearing that his family has come to the Volscian camp, he cries

Ha, what shout is this?
Shall I be tempted to infringe my vow
In the same time 'tis made? (V.iii.19-21)

Realizing his danger, Coriolanus tries to strip himself of natural affection:
But out, affection!
All bond and privilege of nature, break!
Let it be virtuous to be obstinate. (24-26)

Coriolanus, like Lady Macbeth, attempts to divest himself of all human emotions, but he is no more successful than she:

What is that curtsy worth? Or those dove's eyes,
Which can make gods forsworn? I melt, and am not
Of stronger earth than others. (27-29)

His militaristic hardness melts with but a glimpse into the eyes of a beloved. Coriolanus struggles to maintain his image of honorable independence, but his "tender-bodied" (I.iii.6) nature overcomes what has been called "a blind mechanism of self-centered pride."52 The intensity of his feeling focuses at first upon his wife, and from her he asks forgiveness, a request that to his idea of proper heroic conduct is "a full disgrace":

Like a dull actor now
I have forgot my part and I am out,
Even to a full disgrace. Best of my flesh,
Forgive my tyranny, but do not say,
For that "Forgive our Romans." Oh, a kiss
Long as my exile, sweet as my revenge!
Now, by the jealous Queen of Heaven, that kiss
I carried from thee, dear, and my true lip
Hath virgined it e'er since. You gods! I prate,
And the most noble mother of the world
Leave unsaluted. Sink, my knee, i' the earth. (V.iii. 40-50)

In the concept of the warrior-hero, such a speech itself is treachery; he feels that now his disgrace is complete, for he has succumbed to instincts which he considers ignoble—if only, however, Othello had so surrendered to his wife's tears.

52Knight, p. 160.
Failing to live as if he were "author of himself/And knew no other kin" constitutes for Coriolanus a failure of honor. Believing that in constancy to his military "part," he could preserve his ideal of honor, Coriolanus can only consider that his nature has betrayed him to act in an unnatural way, that is, contrary to the code of the warrior-hero. Coriolanus cannot comprehend that the values inculcated by Volumnia are a travesty of any true sense of honor and that his open-hearted response to his family constitutes a higher value than "reckoned" by society or by himself. Shakespeare surely at this point wishes to enlist our wholehearted sympathy as he directs Coriolanus to say,

O mother, Mother!
What have you done? Behold, the Heavens do ope,
The gods look down, and this unnatural scene
They laugh at. O my mother, Mother! Oh!
You have won a happy victory to Rome,
But, for your son, believe it, oh, believe it,
Most dangerously you have with him prevailed,
If not most mortal to him. But let it come. (V.iii. 182-189)

This speech has been wrenched from his very soul; let death come, he says, for there is no honor for him now—not the kind of honor he has been instructed to revere and to follow. Coriolanus has learned his lessons too well. Although he recognizes the sickness in his society, he fails to discover a tenable, alternative existence. The standard of conduct that conceives his capitulation to his mother and wife as a disgrace to the gods and as an "unnatural scene" is a horror almost beyond comprehension. The magnificence of Coriolanus,
however, lies in the completeness of his devotion to that standard of conduct; and the tragedy of Coriolanus lies in his failure to recognize the inherent falseness of the values that drive him unremittingly.

But the play does not end here. The man who has not been able to compromise before makes a feeble attempt here. After surrendering to the demands of his mother, Coriolanus turns to Aufidius, the Volscian general, again the boy asking for approval of one whom he considers another warrior-hero: "Now, good Aufidius, Were you in my stead, would you have heard/A mother less? Or granted less, Aufidius?" (V.iii.191-193). Coriolanus seizes upon Aufidius' answer that he "was moved withal" (194), gratefully accepting such an acknowledgement from an equal, who has also been taught that emotions are an obstacle to heroic activity:

I dare be sworn you were.
And, sir, it is no little thing to make
Mine eyes to sweat compassion. (V.iii.194-196)

The opposite, of course, is true; a "little thing" can make his eyes "sweat compassion," if it be only a glance. Like Brutus, Coriolanus never accepts the truth of his own failing, never accepts that he is a man like other men, subject to the demands of affections and personal loyalties. With dogged persistence, Coriolanus plays the role of military hero to the end, becoming enraged when Aufidius accuses him of treachery and slanders him with the name of "boy" (V.vi.101). With a final burst of fury, he shouts
Coriolanus' last speech is a military boast that reminds his enemies of his heroism on the battlefield. Ironically, the emphasis here lies upon the words "alone" and "boy," for Coriolanus, with all his heroic strength, is merely a boy unable to cope with society and always alone in his unbending allegiance to an abstract code of honor. But here as elsewhere Coriolanus wins our sympathy, for he is a man who feels deeply, confused by the demands of personal relationship which conflict with the values of an ideal that has been rendered archaic.

Order is not restored at the end of the play, as in most good tragedy. With Coriolanus' death at the hands of the Volsces, "the rarest man i' the world" (IV.v.168-169) is destroyed and there is no hope for another. The vision Shakespeare presents to us is darker and more gravely pessimistic than is found in most of his plays. The final glimpse that we have in Coriolanus is of a tragic hero who dies completely in vain, leaving only "a noble memory" (V.vi.155). Paul A. Jorgenson contends that "in no other Shakespearean play is the hero's flaw so conveniently, so frequently, and so monotonously explainable."\footnote{Paul A. Jorgensen, "Shakespeare's Coriolanus: Elizabethan Soldier," PMLA, LXIV(March, 1949), 238.}
belief that Coriolanus is simply the soldier who is unable to move from "the casque to cushion" is perhaps partially correct, but is also a terrible oversimplification. According to Jorgensen, Coriolanus is merely "a war-lover." And with the Elizabethans, as now, such an attitude was considered unsocial. Coriolanus is enslaved by his feeling for Volumnia and for what she represents. Moreover, Volumnia's enslavement of Coriolanus is all the more terrible because it wears the guise of love. Coriolanus sees his mother as a source of wisdom and strength; we perhaps can see her as a kind of enchanter, seducing her son away from a knowledge of himself as a complete human being. Volumnia and her Rome, having lost touch with their instinctive life, which is the real source of honor and morality, have also lost the right to speak the word "honor." Coriolanus, however, wholly subscribes to their notion of the word, and because of his commitment to that ideal, he cannot leap into another element. The code has not allowed him that freedom. Volumnia and Rome both categorize the human condition into a net that entraps all its members. As devotees of a system which they still imagine to embody honor, his mother and peers impose their value system upon him, and Coriolanus' own polarization of values results. But Coriolanus does not

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54 Ibid., p. 229.
reckon honor as the world does. When the consulship is set before him as the great desideratum, he cannot bring himself to follow the devious paths to achieve it.

Following another kind of deviousness, the tribunes determine that Coriolanus has "grown /Too proud to be so valiant" (I.i.262-263), disdainful, because of his martial successes, "the shadow" that "he treads on at noon" (I.i.264-265). Naively perhaps but understandably, Coriolanus associates courage and valor automatically with honor; nothing further is required. The world, however, measures honor, on another scale, for computations of honor are all too apparent in the Roman plays. In *Julius Caesar*, Cassius and Brutus resent Caesar's acquiring more honor than they, reasoning that they are men as Caesar is a man. In *Antony and Cleopatra* the soldiers in III.ii.5-37 discuss honor as measurable; but to alter Antony's famous phrase, there's beggary in the honor that can be reckoned.

*Coriolanus* brings to a culmination this study of the warrior-hero concept, and we have seen that Shakespeare finds it, in fact, the cause of the hero's tragedy. *Coriolanus* displays the failure of the heroic ideal, when honor does not flow naturally from valor, when honor divides one man from another, when honor is the subject of envy. This last of the Roman plays demonstrates with some finality its failure as a system of values that sustains and encourages society
and its members to strive together in a *comitatus* relationship. *Coriolanus* is Shakespeare’s final commentary on the tragedy of a once ennobling ideal, an ideal that has perverted the very values it was designed to foster.
CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

What this study of Shakespeare's political plays has demonstrated as much as anything else is that a large body of Shakespearean criticism, evolving over a period of several decades, is inadequate to do justice to the breadth and subtlety of Shakespeare's political themes. It is not so much that critics such as Tillyard, Palmer, Lily B. Campbell, Charney, and others are wrong, as that they have stopped short of the full synthesis necessary to do justice to a continuing evolution of some of Shakespeare's most important political and moral concepts. Nowhere is this deficiency more apparent than in the critical treatment of the warrior-hero ideal, where there is almost total silence on what this analysis has shown to be Shakespeare's growing disillusionment with the hero-king ideal and his ultimate portrayal of it as a failure.

The evolution of Shakespeare's views on this important concept in the history of ideas is complex. As this study has shown, the earliest significant transmutations appear in Richard II, where the warrior-hero ideal is brought into juxtaposition, and often into uncomfortable conformity, with the Tudor doctrine of divine right. It may well be that Arthur Sewell is correct when he claims that critical treatment of
kingship in Shakespeare's plays has often been reduced "to the prose of politics," neglecting thereby "the indisputable work of poetry."¹ This study of necessity takes into account the unavoidable ideal of God-sanctioned authority, but Shakespeare's poetry has been the ultimate criterion for interpretation, a claim that cannot be made by some commentators. The play clearly reveals that a key to the tragedy of Richard II is to be found in the King's imaginative association of himself with the land. Through the mysterious truth of poetry, Richard can be seen as more than a man who has forfeited his right to be king, or who has been unlawfully dislodged from his divinely sanctioned position. With the lyrical force of Richard's imagery in mind, we recognize that the king's impassioned love for the land is not "sentimentalized perversion,"² but instead represents the most admirable quality of his kingship. Further, we see that quality radically diminish as Richard, unnaturally for him, assumes the role of God's deputy on earth.

As medieval liege-lord, Richard exhorts the land to repel his enemies, for "this earth" has "a feeling and these stones" will "prove armed soldiers" to protect their "native King" (III.ii.24-26). Richard as medieval landowner in love with England is intrinsically more attractive than Richard as


Renaissance Prince. Further, this role makes him a much more understandable and sympathetic figure than his inadequacies as a "Sun-King" indicate. As we have pointed out, Shakespeare further complicates his theory of kingship in his dramatization of the conflict between Richard II and Bolingbroke. Shakespeare's ambivalent characterization of the King's rival defies easy categorization. In the framework of divine right, Bolingbroke has been considered "a ruthless manipulator" who deposes the rightful King of England. However, Shakespeare presents Bolingbroke as an efficient and able ruler, acutely sensitive to the problems of legitimacy.

In the two parts of Henry IV, we have seen Shakespeare continue his search for a kingly hero who combines the best qualities of Richard and Bolingbroke, a hero who effectively balances God-sanctioned authority with political acumen and martial efficiency. In that search, we have noted Shakespeare's emphasis upon the "golden care" of legitimate kingship. In the plays of the second tetralogy, the doctrine of divine right is altered to incorporate the king's spiritual function as guardian of his nation's honor, while at the same time it retains its utility as an instrument of political power. The more traditional view of these plays is correct in that we do indeed find the education and "reformation" of Prince Hal as a major theme. What this study has stressed is the spiritual

\[3\text{H. M. Richmond, Shakespeare's Political Plays (New York, 1967), p. 131.}\]
element in kingship as equal in importance with the political. Heroic deeds are to be performed in the service of the nation, and not, as in the case of Hotspur, as a means of self-aggrandizement.

It is only in this context that the apotheosis of the king as warrior-hero that occurs in the last play of the second tetralogy can be accepted. This exaltation of the king is not merely "the reconstruction of a political theorist," but is, as Sewell reminds us, "a poet's representation of a king."\(^4\) It has been claimed that Henry V lacks the poetic fire of true artistic inspiration because "the Tudor myth . . . was too rigid, too black-and-white, too doctrinaire and narrowly moral for Shakespeare's mind: it falsified his fuller experience of men."\(^5\) This study has shown such an opinion to be itself narrow and confined. Shakespeare explores with an open, and often critical, eye the meaning and significance of the ideals that he inherits. The result is never "doctrinaire and narrowly moral." We have seen Henry V dramatize the more exalted possibilities of the hero in a public role. Henry V shows himself to be a king whose standard of conduct is guided by the ideals of military valor and practical statesmanship. He is the warrior-hero whose battlefield heroics

\(^4\) Sewell, p. 46.

bestow honor upon the entire nation, heroics that unite the King and his subjects in a brotherhood of chivalry and patriotic fervor. The idea behind the battle scenes in Henry V is that war can provide the opportunity for the display of virtue, thereby winning immortal fame for King and citizen soldiery. In war, the ordinary soldier, participating in the comitatus bond of "together . . . in chivalry" can be elevated to the glorious ranks of mythic heroes.

We have also noted, however, that as the culmination of the warrior-hero concept is reached in Henry V, Shakespeare almost immediately begins to question the validity of this ideal as if his intuition told him that the values of war and heroic valor were no longer morally adequate. The glory that is England's and Henry's at Agincourt becomes in the Roman plays somewhat tarnished. Brutus, Antony, and Coriolanus show themselves to be warrior-heroes whose devotion to "the bubble reputation" (As You Like It. II.vii.152) distorts and nullifies their natural nobility. In Shakespeare's development of these heroes, we have seen the playwright's growing skepticism with the public realm and its values, particularly with the attitude toward war and the heroic posture. Shakespeare's disillusionment with the ideal of the kingly hero is startling, but once we recognize this disenchantment, keys are discovered that open the Roman plays to quite different interpretations than normally proposed.
In *Julius Caesar*, we have noted the betrayal of other ideals, notably friendship, because Brutus subscribes to a mode of conduct that he narrowly conceives to involve his honor. Paradoxically, it leads him to kill his "best lover." In the context of the ideal of friendship, a value that Shakespeare demonstrates deserves a higher loyalty than any political cause, Cassius can be seen as something other than an arch-villain, luring a great man into an act that taints his honor. In this same context, Brutus must be judged as something less than the "noblest Roman of them all." Brutus' tragic error in judgment involves a betrayal of friendship, an act more reprehensible than latter-day moralists concede. Criticism of *Julius Caesar* has for the most part neglected the fact that the ideal of friendship is exalted in any Renaissance discussion of moral philosophy. Curtis Watson points out that "for the moralist of the age, the nature of friendship is so demanding of complete integrity and high idealism . . . that friendship was sometimes placed in the hierarchy of values far ahead of all social obligations. . . ."

Further, as this study shows, without our appreciation of the ideal of love, we cannot properly understand Antony's tragedy in *Antony and Cleopatra*. If we recognize the play's emphasis upon love, we can see Antony in death achieving as

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lover a kind of blessedness, an honor beyond the reach of hero-soldier that he holds in such esteem. When Antony is viewed as a warrior-hero who relentlessly follows the criteria designated for that role, much of the confusion about his characterization is resolved. Antony does not vacillate between the worlds of Rome and Egypt; on the contrary, he follows honor and fame as his most beloved mistresses until his death, when in an epiphany of grief he concedes the more glorious honor of love.

Shakespeare's Coriolanus, the most complex treatment of the failure of the warrior-hero, unfolds the tragedy of a noble individual who is wholly destroyed by his ineluctable allegiance to the standard of conduct demanded by the hero as soldier. As noted before, it is with Coriolanus that this study reaches the culmination of a development that extends from Richard II, through the Henriad, and to the late Roman plays. In Coriolanus, Shakespeare dramatizes the potential for disaster in a formulized code of heroic conduct. Honor in Coriolanus, as to a somewhat lesser degree in Julius Caesar and Antony and Cleopatra, has become an instrument of self-defense insulating the hero from his emotions and from a reality beyond the exigencies of political fame and fortune. Ernest Schanzer declares that Coriolanus is "alone among [Shakespeare's] tragic heroes," because he "undergoes no
experience to which the name 'tragic' can be applied. . . ."  

But we have seen that Shakespeare places his hero in a situation that questions, with dark and ironic probing, the certainty of the public code, in which Coriolanus believes and which Coriolanus devotedly follows.

This study has stressed that the Roman plays do not stand in isolation from their predecessors; on the contrary, Shakespeare's Brutus, Antony, and Coriolanus have much in common with Richard II, Bolingbroke, and Henry V, and, more important, they are to a degree logical extensions of some aspects of the English history plays. However, Shakespeare takes his Roman protagonists and places them in situations that question rather than defend the values by which they order their lives. According to Watson, "Shakespeare's contemporaries believed . . . that 'fame, in times to come, may canonize us' (Troilus and Cressida. II.ii.202) and that, in the words of Cassio, to lose one's reputation is to lose 'the immortal part' of oneself (Othello. II.iii.263-264)."  

In the English histories Shakespeare accepts this attitude toward the heroic ideal almost without reservation. In the Roman plays, on the contrary, Shakespeare seems to have become almost antagonistic toward this ideal. Undoubtedly,

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8Watson, p. 4.
Shakespeare was very much a man of his age, but our understanding of the Elizabethan and Jacobean milieu must not restrict our vision to the extension of his insight. This work has explored some of these deviations, particularly Shakespeare's complex rendering of the concept of divine right, which, as we have seen, becomes inextricably involved with the ideal of the warrior-hero. This study has then proceeded to substantiate the most significant deviation of all: Shakespeare's general disillusionment with the ideal of the hero-warrior.

The tragedy of the warrior-hero concept is ultimately its inability to reconcile the values of love and duty; perhaps Shakespeare is saying that such a reconciliation is impossible. Only Prospero in *The Tempest*, in a world totally divorced from the public domain, accomplishes this feat; perhaps, then, *Coriolanus*, with its savage scrutiny of the warrior-hero ideal, permitted Shakespeare to move on to more complex and interesting worlds, worlds where honor is more than a name, where love is ultimate in Shakespeare's hierarchy of values.
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