WILLIAMS, KAY PHILLIPS. Artistic Integrity in Woodstock. (1970) Directed by: Dr. James I. Wimsatt. pp. 88

Study of the anonymous Elizabethan drama Woodstock has heretofore been directed externally to the play's relationship to Marlowe's Edward II and to Shakespeare's 2 Henry VI and Richard II. Much attention has been devoted to an explanation of the literary relations of the drama but none to an explanation of how the play works, its function as art.

The organization of Woodstock toward poetic purposes is indicative of the nature of the development of the history play from the chronicle play. Mature history plays utilize form as a vehicle of meaning in contrast to the purely ornamental or episodic structure of earlier chronicle dramas. The concept of integrity is more exclusive than the concept of unity: rather than simply a relationship of parts, integrity connotes an organic condition, in which the relation of parts is not always fully amenable to separate analysis but must be considered as a total experience (gestalt) of analogous actions. The action of Woodstock is to find a rationale for disobedience to the king in order to save the state from economic and territorial disintegration. This action, in addition to the progress of plot events, is imitated in the interacting functions of the disease metaphor, the condition of inversion, and the masque-clothing metaphor.

A close examination of the internal properties of Woodstock clearly indicates the drama's significance as an

index to developments in the English drama in the period of the 1590's, including the integration of theme and form, the theatrical consciousness, and the spirit of "inquiringness".

ARTISTIC INTEGRITY IN WOODSTOCK

by

Kay Phillips Williams

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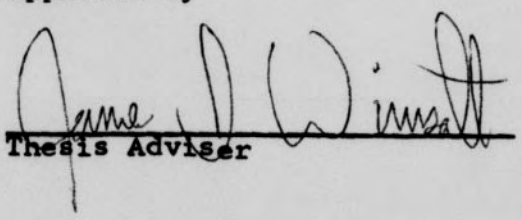

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Chapter I

THE PROBLEM OF *WOODSTOCK*

The anonymous and untitled drama variously called *Thomas of Woodstock*, *Woodstock*, *1 Richard II*, or *The Anonymous Richard the Second*[1] has occasioned much scholarly interest since its discovery in manuscript at the sale of Lord Charlemont's library in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Scholarship has been primarily historical and textual, both approaches inspired by the possible relation of this drama to the development of the history play and, more specifically, to the Shakespeare canon. Thus, the focus has tended to be directed externally rather than to the intrinsic properties of *Woodstock*: critical comment has been preoccupied primarily with the drama as a period document and less concerned with it as an integral artistic experience. The reverse procedure seems more suggestive: to view the drama first as an entity and second to examine the implications of the work as a whole for the development of the English history play.

The question of title involves the entire problem of its intrinsic integrity. E. K. Chambers refers to the drama as *I Richard the Second*,[2] while others, including Wilhelmina

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[1] *Woodstock: a Moral History*, ed. A. P. Rossiter (London, 1946). Subsequent citations will refer to the Rossiter edition.

[2] *The Elizabethan Stage*, IV (Oxford, 1923), 42.

Frijlinck, the editor of the Malone Society edition, avoid a specific commitment by calling the play by the double name, 1 Richard II or Thomas of Woodstock.[3] The title 1 Richard II implies that the drama is centered around the character of King Richard and that it is sequentially related to Shakespeare's Richard II. Yet the king is only a partially realized character, far less developed than the figure of the suffering uncle, Thomas of Woodstock; also, while Richard II is certainly related to this anonymous drama, the relationship lies in the areas of character interpretation, language, and, in some instances, thematic concerns but not in the area of plot sequence: Richard II is not meant to be a sequel to this earlier drama since there is no attempt to provide transition between the two. Thus, to call the two dramas Part I and Part II implies a relationship that does not exist.

On the other hand, a combined title is equally unsatisfactory even though the two characters in the anonymous play represent opposing points of view and dramatic tension derives from their mutual antagonism. The action and plot center on Thomas of Woodstock, a fully drawn character with the dimension of a tragic hero (Woodstock, however, is not a true tragic hero). The actions of Richard and his sycophants are basically reactions to Woodstock; in addition, the

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[3] The First Part of the Reign of King Richard the Second, or Thomas of Woodstock, Malone Society Reprints (Oxford, 1929).

momentous decision of the uncles to seek redress on the battlefield for wrongs committed by Richard's favorites is determined by the abduction of Woodstock from Plashey and his subsequent murder. Finally, Woodstock, despite his proud temperament and occasional lack of objectivity, nevertheless represents virtue in the play, since he is the embodiment of honesty, courage, patriotism, good will, and since he is loyal to the fundamental Elizabethan notions of order and divine right, even in the most trying of circumstance. Rossiter refers to Thomas of Woodstock as one representative of a type of virtuous Englishry in the Elizabethan drama.[4] The title of the drama should reflect its internal emphasis; further, to avoid choosing a title by accepting the double title is to suggest that the drama lacks organic unity since the title is then a handle, an appendage, rather than a necessary reflection of the dramatic concerns.

A more appropriate title is used by both Fred Benjamin Millett[5] and A. P. Rossiter.[6] They indicate that Thomas of Woodstock functions at the center of the play by selecting Woodstock as its title, a choice as appropriate for its brevity as for its aptness. Since the title Woodstock reflects the character of the drama's structure as well as carries

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[4]Rossiter, p. 52.

[5]The Date and Literary Relations of "Woodstock" (Chicago, 1934).

[6]Rossiter, pp. 25-32.

the prestige of precedent, it is suitable to the purposes of this study.

Woodstock, when viewed as a work deliberately constructed, becomes significant as a transitional play in the development of the history drama from the chronicle play. In order to investigate the nature of this transition, it is necessary to first consider generally the terms related to the development of the Elizabethan history play.

History-play as a generic term is applicable to any drama that combines the material of history with dramatic form. Chronicle-play, on the other hand, is a more specific term since it suggests a type of history play, one based on the materials of the English chronicles. The chronicle-play, in the manner of the English chronicles, tends to be episodic in form with emphasis on event rather than on character and on survey rather than on meaningful plot.[7] A. P. Rossiter suggests another specific type of history play that emerges in part from the chronicle play vogue, combining conventions of the English stage tradition with the impetus of rising Tudor optimism and a prevailing atmosphere of social and national cohesiveness. Rossiter calls this variety of the history play the moral history, ". . . a useful name for history-plays where the shadow-show of a greater drama of state plays continually behind the human characters . . . ."[8]

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[7]W. D. Briggs, ed., Marlowe's Edward II (London, 1914), p. lviii.

[8]Rossiter, p. xvii.

Rather than being episodic in form, as the chronicle-play, the moral history is characterized by a purposeful structuring of the source material. W. D. Briggs suggests the distinction between the two types of history plays:

> We may say only that the chronicle history passes into the historical drama when the emphasis is shifted from accidental to organic relation, from _post hoc_ to _propter hoc_.[9]

Both the moral history and the chronicle-play share a "factual" base in the English chronicles but the point of difference lies in formal principle.

Irving Ribner offers additional peculiarities of the moral history: it is a drama that utilizes chronicle material "to glorify England and to support temporal political doctrine."[10] Earlier dramas shared this didactic purpose (_e.g._, _Gorboduc_, Bales's _Kynge Johan_) but did not recognize structure as a meaningful vehicle. Therein lies the distinction.

In order to illustrate this distinction, it is useful to consider three plays as representative types: the three parts of _Henry VI_ are an example of the loosely realized structure of the chronicle play;[11] _Gorboduc_, a much earlier

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[9]Briggs, p. xxii.

[10]_The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare_, rev. ed. (London, 1965), p. 24.

[11]_The Complete Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare_, ed. William A. Neilson and Charles J. Hill (Cambridge, Mass., 1942), pp. 747-856.

play, is a prototype of the fusion of native English tradition with the classical mode, since it deals with the theme of succession to the crown, drawing its story from legendary British history, and casting it in the guise of Senecan tragedy complete with chorus and nuntius;[12] finally, Shakespeare's Richard II provides an example of a drama treating chronicle matter from a formal basis: the significance lies in the pattern of events rather than in the proliferation of incident and detail, so that selectivity is obviously exercised in the use of chronicle materials.[13] All three dramas draw on the English chronicles for story outlines and plot details.

Gorboduc is not strictly a chronicle-play in the sense that the term is applied to the Henry VI plays. Again, the distinction is structural. 2 Henry VI accomodates such diverse incidents as the feud between Gloucester and Cardinal Beaufort and the deaths of both men in Act Three; the Jack Cade rebellion; the sending of the head of Suffolk to Queen Margaret, and the York uprising -- all collected under the general theme of the evil of usurpation and rebellion. Gorboduc, on the other hand, can not be called an episodic drama since it is constructed along the lines of classical drama with almost rigid adherence to formal devices such as

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[12] Specimens of the Pre-Shaksperean Drama, introduction and notes John M. Manly, II (New York, 1897), 215-272.

[13] Shakespeare, The Complete Plays, pp. 598-631.

the dumb show and the choric passage to denote scene-division. Nevertheless, the structure is more an ornamentation than an inherent part of the play; the form seems arbitrarily applied to the incidents of the play, without internal necessity. The structural devices are extrinsic.

In contrast, Shakespeare, in Richard II, uses the chronicles for information but has as a formal principle and primary focus the delineating of political doctrine in regard to the state of England; particularly, he attempts to extract from England's past the meaning or pattern of human events so that the past can be instructive to Tudor England.

Woodstock, likewise, is a moral history. The formal principle is to establish a rationale for disobedience, and conversely obedience, to a thoroughly inept monarch. The movement of the play is toward a reconciliation of the inconsistent precepts of obedience to the king and loyalty to the state. The serious thematic concern involves not only a consideration of the question of divine right and obedience but also the establishment of requisites for obedience and a determination of the rights of the majority. Thus, unlike the chronicle play, Woodstock uses the chronicle matter in an investigative manner. Because the play presents in Act Five a full rebellion succeeding against the king, without censure, the drama has been frequently called seditious or heterodox. However, the rationale is neither to defend orthodoxy nor heterodoxy but rather to explore the inherent

contradictions in the orthodox position in terms of practical politics. Tension derives from the clash of incongruities in the traditional value system.

If Woodstock is to be considered as a transitional drama, the problem of date can not be ignored. Since the play was not published until the nineteenth century and is anonymous, early critics were much concerned with the issue of the play's date with the disputed range extending from the decade of the 1590's to the first quarter of the seventeenth century. On the basis of Woodstock's demonstrated relation to 2 Henry VI as well as to Marlowe's Edward II and Shakespeare's Richard II, a dating in the early 1590's seems now indisputable.

A. P. Rossiter conclusively establishes that the earliest probable date of the drama is 1591, a date also accepted by Ribner[14] and Robert M. Smith[15] as well as by A. H. Bullen.[16] The chronological range, according to Rossiter's study, is determined by the apparent influence of 2 Henry VI on Woodstock: Thomas of Woodstock seems modeled on Duke Humphrey and both plays are concerned with the fall and consequent murder of a loyal, admirable Englishman and the conflicts issuing from his fate. The other end of the

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[14] Ribner, p. 133.

[15] Froissart and the English Chronicle Play (New York, 1965), p. 95.

[16] A Collection of Old English Plays, II (New York, 1883), p. 427.

chronological range is closed by Richard II, a drama evidently influenced by Woodstock:[17] both plays are concerned with the reign of an immature king and the resulting civil disorder; plot similarities include a horrible murder and disrespect for an anointed king. In addition to plot and thematic resemblances, there are verbal parallels between each Shakespearean play and Woodstock, an obvious indication of borrowing.[18] Since 1591 seems a likely date for the

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[17] Rossiter, pp. 71-72. Also pp. 47-71.

[18] Numerous verbal parallels include the following examples:

> I see no reason why a king of years
> Should be to be protected like a child.
> 2 Hen. VI II.iii.28-29.
>
> The king is now at years . . . .
> His highness can direct himself sufficient.
> Wood. II.ii.105-106.

and

> Landlord of England art thou now, not king.
> Rich. II II.i.113.
>
> And thou no king, but landlord now become
> Wood. V.iii.106.
>
> Become a landlord to this warlike realm
> Rent out our kingdom like a (paltry) farm.
> Wood. IV.i.146-147.

Rossiter, pp. 47-71. Although it is not feasable to recount Rossiter's argument in detail, his basis for accepting Woodstock's influence on Richard II, rather than vice versa, is worth noting:

(1) Unless we are aware of Woodstock, references in Richard II to blank charters, farming the realm, and to Gloucester as "plain, well-meaning soul" are obscure;

(2) Many other loose ends in Richard II are explained by Woodstock; for example, the favorites are given little introduction in Richard II, making it easy to

composition and production of 2 Henry VI[19] and since the date of composition of Richard II is generally accepted as 1595,[20] the chronological range of Woodstock extends from 1591 to 1595. Further, Rossiter demonstrates that it is unlikely that Marlowe's Edward II influenced Woodstock and that it is very likely the similarities between them can be explained by a mutual dependence on 2 Henry VI.[21] The point for purposes of this study is that Woodstock obviously lies in the mainstream of the development of the drama in the 1590's,

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assume that Shakespeare accepted them as they were presented in Woodstock; also, "Plashey" is referred to in Richard II as a place the audience should be familiar with.

(3) Finally, Rossiter offers the following explanation:

> . . . where we find a potted muddle in Q and a clear and clarifying account in F, and a label in Q . . . . and its explication in F, it is reasonable to suppose that, however great the name attached to the second, it "depends" on the first.
>
> Rossiter, p. 49.

Rossiter, pp. 47-53. There seems to be less question that Woodstock may have preceded rather than followed 2 Henry VI since, in almost all instances of borrowing, Woodstock contains the improved version.

[19]Shakespeare, The Complete Plays, p. 781.

[20]Ibid., p. 598.

[21]Among other convincing arguments, Rossiter suggests that Woodstock is not dependent on Edward II because:

(1) The anonymous author makes no attempt to imitate the Marlovian style, the "violence of phrase," which is the most distinctive trait in the drama; the tone of Woodstock is low-pitched and naturalistic in contrast to the stridency of Marlowe;

(2) The human pattern that characterizes Woodstock

especially since the anonymous author apparently attracted Shakespeare's attention with his play and evidently had, concurrent with Marlowe, an interest in the patterns of English history as test cases for Tudor orthodoxy.

The question of Woodstock's relation to the development of English drama from the less sophisticated chronicle play to the moral history after about 1588 is a significant one. Woodstock, because of its less-than-orthodox treatment of the problem of an inept monarch, has been considered an Elizabethan drama outside the main line of development. F. A. Marshall, in an early study of the drama, concluded that "the author might be looked for among those who were least favourably inclined to Elizabeth's government."[22] Robert M. Smith notes that the fact that Woodstock was never printed suggests either that the censor condemned it or that its author did not dare publish it and that the character of the rebellious uncle, Gloucester, is glorified expressly in

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(i.e., the atmosphere of normality and the use of the commons) is foreign to the nature of Edward II; for example, the conversation of Thomas with a horse could not have occurred in Edward II.

The resemblances of phrase can be as easily explained by a mutual dependence on 2 Henry VI as by a direct borrowing from Marlowe. Plot similarities (e.g., two weak kings fawning on ignoble sycophants, the hints of unnatural attachment, and the similar dreadful murders) may be explained either by an awareness on the part of the anonymous author of the accounts of Edward II's reign in the chronicles or even by the equally possible situation of Marlowe's play succeeding Woodstock, thus following the anonymous author's choice of plot detail. Rossiter, pp. 53-65.

[22] Transactions of the New Shakspere Society (London, 1886), p. 144.

order " . . . thus to sanction and encourage whether explicitly, or implicitly the spirit of sedition."[23] In fact, rather than being rebellious, Thomas of Woodstock is the epitome of orthodox allegiance. In similar contrast to critical argument, Woodstock seems at the very center of the development of the drama in the period from 1588 to the end of the century. The emphasis must be centered on construction and conception rather than on doctrine per se; the development of the history drama is not just a development of a political-philosophical drama but also the development of a control over the materials of the drama. It is in light of this advancement that Woodstock must be considered.

Finally, Woodstock is significant because it combines the traditional ingredients of English drama -- the intermixture of serious matter and low comedy, stock figures such as the "Vice" and the "Machiavel," excessive violence on stage -- with a sophisticated approach to orthodox notions. Just as the mature history play is a hybrid form, so Woodstock provides an early instance of the uniquely English approach to drama: Elizabethan drama is characterized by the combining of native and classical traditions to create a drama that is peculiarly nationalistic and intrinsically dramatic, even at the level of structure.

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[23]Smith, p. 98.

Chapter II

THEATRICAL VIRTUOSITY

Although once the subject of debate among Renaissance scholars, it now seems inappropriate to separate Shakespeare, the dramatist, from Shakespeare, the poet; that is, to ignore the inseparable and interactive function of art and technique in the creation of dramatic experience. The effort to elevate the dramatist above his medium, the theatre, is related to a general discrediting of theatricalism in the twentieth century: in the pursuit of "slice-of-life", technique must subserve the illusion of its non-existence for the drama to function. Walter Kerr notes that:

> "Theatrical" has, in this day and age, very nearly become a dirty word. We have been obsessed with naturalistic stage deportment for so long that we have got ourselves into the paradoxical position of insisting that the theatre be as untheatrical as possible. We have become suspicious of any voice raised above a whisper, or any gesture more emphatic than that required to light a cigarette, of any facial display beyond the casually raised eyebrow. An overt performance seems to be a dishonest one . . . .[24]

"Slice-of life" theatre assumes that the play is not just an imitation of an action but that it becomes the action it imitates.

The term "theatrical virtuosity," although awkward, is

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[24] The New York Herald Tribune (November 4, 1951). Quoted by Edward A. Wright and Lenthiel H. Downs, A Primer for Playgoers (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1958), p. 27.

useful to connote a theatre that exploits the potential of the medium for spectacle. Dramatists less fluent in the medium minimize the dramatic experience by denying it proper artifice: staged dialogue and gesture, no matter how "realistic" the presentation, can not exist outside of art. Low-key dialogue is nonetheless staged and therefore artificial. Such low-key performances tend to delegate to the audience a "peeping Tom" function, by implication, while performances dramatically and overtly conscious of "theatre" assume the existence of the audience as a responsive sentient; "peeping Tom" theatre, on the other hand, functions under the pretense of the audience's non-existence. Thus, the more "realistic" (i.e., "slice-of-life") the theatre becomes, the less it is overtly "performance" and the less it is theatrical; likewise, the diminution of theatricality changes the experience of theatre from primary (performance or theatricality as experience) to secondary (vicarious experience). Analogous is the difference between the artist who allows medium (paint) and subject mutual expression and the painter who distorts his medium to achieve realistic effect so that his work is a reproduction of reality rather than an interpretation of it.

Elizabethan theatre, lacking the convention of "slice-of-life", is very theatrical. Visual spectacle includes ghosts such as Don Andrea in The Spanish Tragedy, the frolic of fairies in Midsummer's Night's Dream, and the stately pageant of goddesses arranged by means of Prospero's art in The

Tempest; the staging of such violent action as the murder of Desdemona in Othello and the near excess of farcical action such as slapstick and buffoonery from comic characters like Miles in Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay and Robin and Rafe in Doctor Faustus; and elaborate use of staging machinery in effecting extravagances like the carrying off of Faustus to hell by the devils and the plunging of Barabas into the boiling cauldron at the end of The Jew of Malta. All of these examples indicate "show" as their function -- not verisimilitude. Stephen Gosson (1554-1624), playwright, theatre-critic, preacher, testifies to the Elizabethan delight in "show":

> . . . delight beeing moued with varietie of shewes, of euentes, of musicke, the longer we gaze, the more we craue . . . . yet will not my countrymen leaue their Playes, because Playes are the nowrishers of delight.[25]

Edward A. Wright unwittingly pinpoints the difference in twentieth century "slice-of-life" theatre and Elizabethan presentational theatre when he notes that "theatricalism" has acquired a negative connotation in the United States because it "implies exaggeration, something overdone."[26] It is just this love of excess, of the extravagant action, that characterizes the Elizabethan theatre. English theatre, from its rude beginnings in church liturgy through at least

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[25] Playes Confuted in Five Actions (1582), The English Drama and Stage, ed. William C. Hazlitt (New York, 1963), pp. 206, 211. Quoted by Alfred Harbage, Shakespeare's Audience (New York, 1961), p. 117.

[26] E. A. Wright and L. H. Downs, p. 26.

the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, maintains a tradition of appreciation of the possibilities of "theatre".

Woodstock, since the nineteenth century, has been treated as manuscript rather than as a stageable play; it has been infrequently studied since its recovery and staged rarely, if at all. Evidence however points to frequent staging in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For example, Marriott voices the widely accepted view that Shakespeare's Richard II assumes audience familiarity with Woodstock, although Richard II is not written as a sequel to Woodstock.[27] Even more significant is Wilhelmina Frijlinck's study of the manuscript which indicates, on the basis of physical evidence, that the manuscript was a prompt copy long in use; there are a number of prompt directions about music and stage noises, marginal warnings to actors to be ready, names of actors scribbled in, notations for stage properties, and, in all, twenty prompt directions added in different hands. In addition, the physical condition of the manuscript indicates much use with leaves torn and frayed, dirt damage, and ink blots.[28] The apparent frequent revival of the drama after its appearance in the last decade of the sixteenth century suggests that Woodstock retained audience appeal long after the vogue for history plays.

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[27]Sir John Arthur Ransome Marriott, English History in Shakespeare (New York, 1918), p. 69.

[28]Frijlinck, pp. vi and xxi.

Another indication of Woodstock's familiarity to theatre-goers (at least in the early part of the seventeenth century) is the reference to Thomas of Woodstock by Fitzdottrel in Ben Jonson's The Devil Is an Ass:[29] Fitzdottrel mentions Thomas of Woodstock, Duke Humphrey, and Richard the Third as reasons why he refuses the title of Gloucester (because "'tis fatal");

> Fitz. I know not that, sir. But Thomas of Woodstock,
> I'm sure was duke, and he was made away
> At Calice, as duke Humphrey was at Bury:
> And Richard the Third, you know what end he came to.
>
> Meer. By my faith you are cunning in the chronicle, sir.
>
> Fitz. No, I confess I have it from the play-books,
> And think they are more authentic.
>
> II.i.

Since no other extant play contains a character called specifically Thomas of Woodstock throughout, and since Woodstock uses the name Woodstock or Thomas of Woodstock exclusively (except for the epithet "Plain Thomas"), it is reasonable to conclude that Jonson is referring to this particular drama as one his audience should know.[30] At least, the parallel citing of characters implies that the plays are

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[29] The Complete Plays of Ben Jonson, introduced by Felix Schelling, II (New York, 1946), 264-346.

[30] Shakespeare in Richard II primarily refers to the historical Woodstock as Duke of Gloucester or Gloucester (the version of his title used in the English chronicles), although Gaunt once says "Woodstock".

of equal fame and popularity.[31]

Woodstock has sometimes been harshly evaluated by critics like Llewelyn Buell, who dismisses it as "a rather crude play."[32] Such severe judgments seem superficial, the prejudice stemming from a consideration of Woodstock as manuscript, not drama. The achievements of the play are those dramatic qualities most likely to be "nowrishers of delight:" the emphasis is on the active stimulation of the senses. Visual interest is served by the motif of fantastic costuming for the minions as well as by the masque and by the unusual occurrence of a horse on stage in Act Three.[33] Auditory stimuli include the whistling of treason by the local innocent of Dunstable and the singing of "God Bless My Lord Tresilian" by the Schoolmaster, as well as by the music and poetry of the masque. The play contains staged hand-to-hand combat, the appearance of two royal ghosts, an especially brutal murder followed by the execution of the murderers (also staged), and farcical burlesque in the Dunstable comic scenes. The anonymous author draws heavily from popular stage conventions catering to the desires of his audience: for

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[31]Bertram Lloyd first associated Fitzdottrel's "Thomas of Woodstock" with the drama Woodstock, Times Literary Supplement (1924). Millett, p. 22.

[32]ed., The Tragedy of King Richard the Second, the Yale Shakespeare (New Haven, Conn., 1921), pp. 123-124.

[33]Wilhelm Creizenach cites Woodstock as the unusual exception to the general rule that horses were rarely brought onto the Elizabethan stage. English Drama in the Age of Shakespeare, translated by Cécile Hugon (Philadelphia, Pa., 1916), p. 388n.

example, Woodstock even contains a revenge pattern with York and Lancaster seeking to "revenge our noble brother's wrongs" (V.iii.2).

The dramatist's use of stock figures further demonstrates his cognizance of "what plays well." Stock figures include Nimble, both a "Vice", whose morris-dancing mischief turns to black comedy in Dunstable, and a "wily servant", who betrays his master Tresilian with a trick designed to save his own neck; Tresilian, the Elizabethan prototype of the "Machiavel", who as Lord Chief Justice, pronounces, "I rule the law" (I.iii. 131); general clown types represented by the simple villagers of Dunstable, Grazier, Farmer, and Butcher, and by the whistling shepherd; Master Ignorance, a more developed clown, who, as Bailey of Dunstable, is also the feeble-witted constable (an early Dogberry);[34] the courtier who mistakes Woodstock for a groom, a "gull" or fop-prototype so preposterous in his aping of court absurdities that Plain Thomas exclaims, "Is't possible that this fellow that's all made of fashions should be an Englishman?" (III.ii.155-1556). These five character types present some aspect of disorder in the kingdom. Similarly, the figure of Queen Anne is a type of long-suffering, virtuous wife who counters her king's profligacy by sharing her personal wealth with the populace.

All of these stock figures have a tradition of

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[34] A. P. Rossiter suggests that Master Ignorance is possibly the model for Shakespeare's Dogberry. Rossiter, p. 42.

popular success. The suffering wife motif occurs in medieval literature (e.g., Chaucer's Grisildis), and the "Vice", a corruption of the morality figure, became so popular in dramas of the first half of the sixteenth century that he is frequently revived in later plays of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. On the other hand, the "Machiavel", the fop, and the clown are relatively recent types on the English stage, but the high incidence of their appearances in Elizabethan dramas as well as in later dramas indicates audience demand for them.[35]

The author of Woodstock is not content to wholly adopt characterizations and thus particularizes to varying degrees the types he uses. The resulting characters are exceedingly vigorous and entertaining, having their own viability. For example, Master Simon Ignorance, as clown-simpleton, is marked off from his fellows by a remarkable fondness for the word "pestiferous"; indeed, in Scene Three of Act Three, Ignorance uses "pestiferous" in varying contexts nine times in seventeen utterances and on yet another occasion remarks, "I will do my best to reform the pestiferousness of the time" (III.iii.219-220). Tresilian is also to some degree individualized as a very middle-class "Machiavel"; he enjoys recalling his rise to power (a self-made man) as occasion for issuing moral injunctions to Nimble, his former

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[35]Creizenach, pp. 278-314.

playfellow:

> Those days thou knewst, I say,
> From whence I did become a plodding clerk,
> From which I bounced, as thou dost now, in buckram
> To be a pleading lawyer . . .
> Till by the king I was Chief Justice made.
> Nimble, I read this discipline to thee
> To stir thy mind up still to industry.
> I.ii.110-116.

Similarly, Tresilian indulges in adages, as in a soliloquy expressing his philosophy of self-interest:

> Good husbands will make hay while the sun shines
> And so must we, for thus conclude these times:--
> So men be rich enough, they're good enough.
> IV.i.11-13.

and in clichés, as when news of Anne's death is announced, "Peace with her soul, she was a virtuous lady" (IV.iii.111). Still another distinguishing detail is Tresilian's insistence on retaining his beard over the protests of Greene and the other favorites. Finally, the self-serving "Machiavel" nonetheless exhibits some human feeling when he reacts to news of the duchess' return to Plashey, unaware of her husband's abduction, "She'll find sad comforts there . . . " (IV.iii.135).

The spruce courtier likewise has a language peculiarity: in addition to his ridiculous habit and extravagant behavior, the courtier is addicted to euphuistic prose, which is as appropriate for his character as is Tresilian's propensity for clichés: e.g.,

> In a most kind coherence, so it like
> your grace:---For these two parts, being
> in operation and quality different, as for
> example: the toe a disdainer, or spurner:
> the knee a dutiful and most humble orator;
> this chain doth, as it were, so toeify the

knee and so kneeify the toe, that between
both it makes a most methodical coherence,
or coherent method.
III.ii.216-221.

The murderers of Thomas are also stock figures but easily distinguished one from the other. Creizenach identifies Thomas' murderers as the type of professional murderers, typically in pairs, in which "often one of the two murderers is not without a spark of compunction; but his unscrupulous companion always manages to keep the upper hand."[36] The second murderer certainly reveals distaste for the chore he is nevertheless committed to do, while the first murderer seems eager:

2nd m. Do it quickly whilst his back is towards
ye, ye damned villain: If thou letts'st
him speak but a word, we shall not kill him.
V.i.215-217.

and

2nd m. Tis done ye damned slave . . . pull ye dog:
and pull thy soul to hell in doing it . . .
for thou hast killed the truest subject,
that ever breathed in England.
V.i.231-233.

as contrasted to:

1st m. Do you prate sir, take that and that,
Zounds put the towel about's throat
and strangle him quickly ye slave . . . .
V.i.228-229.

In this case, the author adopts the stock distinction between the two professional murderers, as a means to heighten audience tension: the murder of Thomas is

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[36]Creizenach, p. 290.

theatrically exciting in itself, but, by utilizing the stock distinction, the author is able to delay temporarily the fulfillment of audience expectations and thereby to augment the effects. In addition, because the second murderer is separated from the first by human feeling, the consequent inhumanity of the murder becomes more heinous (audience members are thus given the opportunity to identify briefly with murderer as well as victim).

Another indication of the author's sense of "good theatre" is his manipulation of historical detail found in his main source, Holinshed. All details that do not directly advance the plot are eliminated, and the dramatist freely telescopes and rearranges chronicle time sequence.[37] Rossiter notes that two historical sequences of events comprise the plot action, working much like a double exposure (i.e., the superimposing of one sequence of action on another). The first sequence centers around the falls of De Vere, De la Pole, and Tresilian in the opposition of "Lords" and upstarts between 1383 and 1388; the second is based on the Woodstock-

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[37] Wilhelmina Frijlinck notes that Holinshed is the primary source and possibly the only source: Richard's birth is recorded as 1365 in Woodstock even though the actual date is 1366 (as indicated by all chronicles except Holinshed's). Holinshed fails, in the marginal notes, to record the change from 1365 to 1366 so that the chronicler appears to fuse the events of 1365 and 1366. Frijlinck, pp. xxvi-xxvii. A. P. Rossiter agrees that, "The main source is certainly Holinshed, but some noticeable details quite as obviously came from Stowe;" in addition, Rossiter suggests Grafton as a possible source. Rossiter, p. 18. Smith admits a combination of sources, including Froissart's Chronicles, Grafton, and/or Holinshed. Smith, pp. 116-117.

Richard friction, encompassing a period from about 1389 (when Richard gained control over the government) to 1397 (when Woodstock was murdered).[38] Each conflict is inherently dramatic since the first suggests the favorite notion of Fortune's wheel and the second, the victory of an innocent boy-king over the treasonous designs of an ill-intentioned uncle. The author, refusing to settle for easy solutions, modifies and combines the two conflicts to enlarge the dramatic base.

The most imaginative innovation is the recasting of the figure of the historical Gloucester, who is interpreted by the chronicles as being scheming and ill-tempered, to make the gentle, patriotic protector of the drama. The author's use of the variant name "Woodstock" seems an acknowledgment that the character is a different Gloucester. The Gloucester of Holinshed, Stowe, and Froissart was an instigator of rebellious plots, and his death, according to Holinshed, was ordered because of his particularly seditious plot to seize Richard and his brothers, the dukes of Lancaster and York

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[38]Although space does not permit a review of Rossiter's total analysis of time and action in Woodstock, the following is a summary of basic deviations: the favorites of 1398 and 1399 are defeated in a fictional battle that also results in the apprehension of Tresilian, who was, according to the chronicle, hanged in 1388; this battle follows the death of Woodstock while Tresilian's death actually preceded Woodstock's. In contrast to the chronicles, Woodstock dies because he is too loyal and too peace-loving rather than because he sanctioned such treasonous activities as provoking war with France. See Rossiter, pp. 19-23, for a full account of source manipulation and change.

(he also intended to execute the king's entire council).[39] If the playwright had been interested only in bloodshed and violent gesture, he would have found bucketfuls enough in the literal translation of chronicle matter to the stage. Likewise, had he retained the moral alignments of the chronicle (the spectacle of innocent youth abused by evil machinator-uncle), the play would too easily elicit emotional response; the effect would be that of melodrama.

Disregarding the unknown political affinities of the author, the remodeling of Gloucester's personality serves, from the consideration of its intrinsic dramatic qualities, to provide the more significant tension between two irreconcilable rights (rather than the more superficial tension between a right and a wrong): the obligation of Englishmen to obey the anointed king and to preserve national integrity and order. Sidney Hook argues that "the most dramatic of all moral conflicts is . . . between right and right." Hook distinguishes the <u>good</u> as "a generic term for all the values in a situation," (related to satisfaction of an interest) from the <u>right</u>, a "generic term for all the obligations" (the fulfillment of a community rule).[40]

Richard's antagonism toward Woodstock stems from the protector's function as a father-figure rather than from the

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[39]Raphael Holinshed, <u>The Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland</u> (London, 1807), pp. 836-837.

[40]"Pragmatism and the Tragic Sense of Life," <u>Tragedy: Vision and Form</u>, ed. Robert W. Corrigan (San Francisco, Calif., 1965), pp. 64 and 66.

threat of the duke's popularity with the commons; in fact, Woodstock fails to exercise his power as protector and counselor and certainly does not exploit his popularity. The conflict between Richard and Woodstock is psychological, based on the differences of generations, of son-figure and father-figure. The quarrel apparently originates in Woodstock's related needs to successfully fulfill his office of protector by maintaining the reputation of the royal family and by preserving England; Richard, on the other hand, is anxious to be rid of the protectorship entirely. In the tumultuous wedding-day scene of Act One, Richard already challenges his uncle's objections to his extravagances by refusing to rescind his order to give Arundel's spoils of battle to the minions,

> Our word, good uncle, is already passed,
> Which cannot with our honour be recalled.
> I.iii.151-152.

Following the ensuing argument, Richard directly contests Woodstock's power as protector, serving notice to the deepening polarization of allegiances,

> Who is't that dares encounter with our will?
> . . . . . .
> Hear me, kind uncles:
> We shall ere long be past protectorship
> Then will we rule ourself . . . And even till then
> We let you know those gifts are given to them:
> We did it, Woodstock . . . .
> I.iii.161-166.

That this polarization is demarcated by age is indicated by Richard's speech, promising his minions power in his new government:

> Your youths are fitting to our tender years
> And such shall beautify our princely throne.
> II.i.4-5.

Bushy furthers the distinction,

> Your uncles seek to overturn your state,
> To awe ye like a child . . . .
> II.i.11-12.

as does Greene, soon after, "May not the lion roar, because he's young?" (II.i.18). Woodstock too is suspicious of those at the other end of the age-continuum,

> Shall England, that so long was governed
> By grave experience, of white-headed age,
> Be subject <u>now</u> to rash unskilful boys?
> II.ii.146-148.

Beards become an external symbol of one's generation-affiliation, as the conflict moves to open confrontation. Richard sanctions his favorites' decision to "not have a beard amongst us" (II.ii.178). Interestingly, Tresilian refuses to give up his beard, despite the protests of the other minions; of all the friends of the king, Tresilian most desires to project the image of authority-figure; the others seem to be motivated primarily by greed.

Another psychological conflict lies in Richard's inability to resolve the inconsistencies of desiring to be the image of his hero-father's mind while acting to destroy both his personal reputation and his kingdom. Richard obviously idealizes both his grandfather, Edward III, and his father, the Black Prince; <u>e.g.</u>,

> Examples such as these
> Will bring us to our kingly grandsire's spirit
> II.i.69-70.

> O princely Edward, had thy son such hap,
> Such fortune and success to follow him,
> His daring uncles and rebellious peers
> Durst not control and govern as they do.
> But these bright shining trophies shall awake me,
> And as we are his body's counterfeit,
> So will we be the image of his mind,
> And die but we'll attain his virtuous deeds.
> II.i.88-95.

Yet Richard consistently engages in actions directly contrary to the courageous deeds of his father. For example, rather than directly confronting Woodstock about ending the protectorship, Richard weaves a parable to trick his uncles into compliance; Woodstock indicates that the stratagem was unnecessary, "Was this the trick, sweet prince! Alack the day,/ You need not thus have doubled with your friends" (II.ii.93-94). Similarly, Richard treacherously invades his uncle's home and abducts him in lieu of open confrontation and arrest; during the masque, Richard, dressed as one of Diana's knights, even refuses to acknowledge his own identity when Woodstock calls out to him.

There is then a tension in Woodstock between what Richard's father and grandfather were and what Richard is not. Richard's own words serve to juxtapose his inadequacies beside the virtues of the Black Prince and Edward III:

> We shall be censured strangely, when they tell
> How our great father toiled his royal person
> Spending his blood to purchase towns in France;
> And we his son, to ease our wanton youth
> Become a landlord to this warlike realm,
> Rent out our kingdom like a pelting farm.
> IV.i.142-147.

Richard's earlier reference to his father's "hap" and "fortune"

as reason for the Black Prince's successes is clue to the king's inability to attain "virtuous deeds". Richard throughout the drama seems very aware of criticism or the possibility of being criticized; his resentment of Woodstock seems in part a reaction to his uncle's persistence in finding fault, and the passage quoted above clearly indicates guilt ("We shall be censured strangely"). Richard apparently tries to escape responsibility for his failure to attain "virtuous deeds" by believing that success is a function of "hap"; Woodstock's efforts to show Richard how he might become the image of his father's mind threaten the king's rationalization. Richard's behavior consequently is related to his cognizance of what Woodstock is likely to disapprove; for example, in speaking of the fantastic costumes of his minions, Richard says, "If Gloster hear of this/ He'll say our Council guides us much amiss" (II.ii.210-211).

In addition to the core conflict between Richard and Woodstock (as well as the related one between Richard's ideal and his behavior), minor personality differences are developed between individuals of the same group. Lancaster, for instance, shows marked irritation at his brother Woodstock's fidelity to a personal code of behavior, expressed in homely clothing; Lancaster complains, " . . . 'faith you're too plain" (I.i.155). Individualization of the uncles provides opportunity for differences. Lancaster is easily angered, impetuous, and prone to violence; York, the

peacemaker, has tact and is the uncle preferred by Richard.[41] Woodstock shares Lancaster's quick temper but not his inclination to respond violently. York and Woodstock in any provocative situation consistently express loyalty to Richard whereas Lancaster sometimes broaches heterodox positions. For example, when learning of the aborted poison plot, Lancaster vows, "By kindly Edward's soul, my royal father,/ I'll be revenged at full on all their lives" (I.i.68-69). York, on the other hand, counsels prudence, "Nay, if your rage break to such high extremes/ You will prevent yourself, and lose revenge" (I.i.70-71).

A significant conflict also functions between Queen Anne, who attempts to mitigate the ill-effects of Richard's extravagances, by charity, and Richard, who resents what he terms her "housewifery". The single function of the last scene of Act Two, in which the queen discusses England's distresses with the duchesses of Gloucester and Ireland, is to establish her disapproval of Richard's behavior, "O riotous Richard,/ A heavy blame is thine for this distress,/ That dost allow thy polling flatterers/ To gild themselves with other's miseries" (II.iii.23-26). As among the uncles,

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[41] In Act Two, Richard describes York in contrast to Lancaster and Woodstock:

> Our uncle Edmund. So. Were it not he
> We would not speak with him: but go admit him.
> Woodstock and Gaunt are stern and troublesome
> But York is gentle: mild and generous.
> II.i.123-126.

the tension between Anne and Richard serves to make their relationship more exciting from a dramatic standpoint. In addition, the overt conflict is a reminder of the moral tension between Richard, the king who abuses his subjects, and Anne, the ideal queen who ministers to their needs.

The homosexual bond between Richard and Greene is a plot addition that contains undercurrents of tension. That Richard's love for Greene is indeed passion is indicated by his consistent capitulation to the demands of Greene, even to the point of signing away his sovereignty,

> The love of thee and these, my dearest Greene,
> Hath won King Richard to consent to that
> For which all foreign kings will point at us.
> IV.i.138-140.

Richard, despite his acknowledgment that "we shall be censured strangely" (IV.i.142), nevertheless is willing to "let crown and kingdom waste, yea life and all,/ Before King Richard see his true friends fall!" (IV.i.125-126). In order to suggest that the king's relationship to Greene is more significant than his relationship to the other minions, the author has individualized Greene more than his fellow co-tenants of England. Greene is child-like and vain,

> Prithee sweet king,
> Let's ride somewhether an it be but to show
> ourselves. Sfoot, our devices here are like jewels
> kept in caskets, or good faces in masks, that
> grace not the owners because they're obscured.
> If our fashions be not published, what glory's
> in the wearing?
> III.i.76-80.

Even more indicative of the relationship is Greene's readiness

to tease the king, especially in regard to their private relationship. In Scene One of Act Four, as Richard divides the kingdom, Greene playfully baits him,

> Since ye have served me last, an I be not the last shall pay your rent, ne'er trust me!
> IV.i.244-245.

Similarly, Greene accepts his share ("even from the Thames to Trent" IV.i.248) with a subtle provocation, "Is there any pretty wenches in my government?" (IV.i.250-251). The occasional exchange of banter between Richard and Greene is interesting from the aspect of inherent theatricality: first, the overt social behavior, certainly flirtatious in tone, stimulates curiosity about the implied covert behavior; second, this courtship teasing contains the threat of conflict, since Richard is sometimes sensitive about references to himself (e.g., his offense at Woodstock's jests in the wedding day scene of Act One). Greene's teasing assumes an equality with the king which, in addition to being disturbing, reminds the audience of the central problem of the play: a king who betrays his own kingship.

The author's use of dramatic material borrowed from Shakespeare's 2 Henry VI to further the purely theatrical value of the drama is a conclusive indication of his fluency in the medium. For example, in the similar incidents of the protector being deprived of his staff of office, Good Duke Humphrey sadly resigns his,

> Here, noble Henry, is my staff.
> As willingly do I the same resign;

> As e'er thy father Henry made it mine;
> And even as willingly at thy feet I leave it.
> II.iii.32-35.

In contrast, Woodstock defies Richard verbally and then illustrates his defiance by breaking his staff:

> My staff, King Richard? See, coz, here it is:
> . . . This staff hath always been discreetly kept;
> Nor shall the world report an upstart groom
> Did glory in the honours Woodstock lost;
> And therefore, Richard, thus I sever it.
> II.ii.154-160.

In addition, in 2 Henry VI, the murder of Humphrey takes place off-stage and is reported to Suffolk by the murderers who are then sent away with promise of reward; in Woodstock the murder is staged and in much detail, as the murderers advance on the duke and then retreat, hoping to catch him unaware; before the murder is accomplished, Woodstock is visited in his sleep by the ghosts of his father, Edward III, and his brother, the Black Prince, who come to warn him of Richard's treachery. The murder itself is particularly vigorous, with a struggle between Woodstock and his killers, and it is followed by more bloodshed, the double execution of the murderers (who expect to be rewarded with gold).

Theatrical effect in Woodstock compliments the development of theme; the author never permits the spectacle to vie with the progress of plot, and in most cases plot, theme, and spectacle are inseparable. Three particuliarly exciting examples are Woodstock's conversation with the courtier's horse, the masque, and the appearance of the ghosts at Woodstock's bedside. Significantly, each is fiction and is

developed with view to maximum theatrical effect. The horse as a prop is impressive in Act Three but the fact that he functions also as a symbol of Richard's subjects makes him doubly so. Likewise, the masque is stimulating theatre, a fusion of the effects of mask and role-playing, music and dance, conflict, and poetry, while providing the occasion for the seizure of Woodstock; the masque also has symbolic function. The ghosts augment the horror of the death scene, provide a critical evaluation of Richard, and serve as visual evidence of disorder in England.

Chapter III

WOODSTOCK AS POETIC DRAMA

Since mature Elizabethan drama is poetic drama and since the most significant innovation in that drama is the development of a formally realized organic structure, a study of the treatment of theme in Woodstock is important in determining its intrinsic value as dramatic art as well as its relationship to dramatic trends of the 1590's.

Woodstock, unlike the earlier chronicle plays, has a well-defined plot, sequential rather than episodic. An episodic plot consists of various happenings, not specifically or necessarily related, but having a general relationship to a period of history or to an event. In contrast, a sequential plot consists of successive incidents causally related. In addition, Woodstock's plot has internal necessity.

Causation is readily apparent in Woodstock. The uncles' anger over the sycophants' poison plot strengthens their resolve to eliminate the king's favorites, and the king counters their hostility by elevating the minions to his uncles' offices; in Act Three, Woodstock refuses the king's command to come to court thus provoking Richard to abduct him from Plashey and to implement his execution; the murder of Woodstock leads directly to rebellion by York and Lancaster, supported by the English populace (with whom Woodstock is a popular hero). Comic scenes are similarly

related to the progress of central action. The absurdities of the spruce courtier stem from his affiliation with Richard's court, and his arrival in Plashey advances the progress of the Woodstock-Richard conflict; the abuse of the rights of the Dunstable folk is a result of the exercise of the minions' newly achieved power, and the Dunstable scene, as well as the scene based on the protests of the men of Kent and Northumberland, indicates the source of support for rebellion in Act Five. In short, Woodstock contains no material extraneous to the development of the theme.

The selectivity that the author exercises in choosing chronicle detail as well as his lack of inhibition in rearranging or fictionalizing chronicle history suggests that, as W. D. Briggs argues, the author really desires "to unify his action".[42] Indeed, the playwright is far more concerned with plotmaking and developing a dramatic pattern than the mere recount of historical event.[43] Fidelity to source would have made Woodstock a staged chronicle, a representational experience. Rearrangement of chronicle matter, on the other hand, assumes interpretation of the matter at the level of design and offers an experience that is different from that of the chronicle account. The

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[42]Briggs, p. cxii.

[43]For a brief summary of the author's manipulation of chronicle material, see note 37 on page 23.

distinction between the representation of facts and the presentation of dramatic experience (and artistic truth) is the difference between the earlier chronicle plays and the formally realized dramas of the late sixteenth century.

In the Henry VI plays and in Gorboduc, structure is not necessitated by form. The loosely joined units of the Henry VI dramas add nothing to the meaning of the plays (i.e., form is not in itself meaningful); Gorboduc's structure is ornamental, superficially imposed. In contrast, Woodstock develops and mirrors theme at the level of structure. Thematic concerns include the related problems of defining the limits of sovereignty and therefore of obedience to the king.[44] Underlying both questions is the enigma of kingship and state: to what degree is the monarchy separable from the state and, in the event of conflicting interests, which takes precedence? In Woodstock, the institution of monarchy is evaluated in terms of economic criteria, with good and evil becoming economic questions as well as moral ones. The action (i.e., movement) of the drama therefore is toward uncovering a rationale for disobedience and conversely obedience. This quest involves the resolution of conflicting loyalties and

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[44] E. M. W. Tillyard observes also that the limits of obedience are set in Woodstock, "The author of Woodstock plainly accepts the orthodox doctrine that a man must not obey the king to the danger of his immortal soul." Tillyard specifically refers to the decision of Lapoole to disregard his conscience in order to obey Richard's command to kill Woodstock. Shakespeare's History Plays (New York, 1947), p. 119.

is pursued on analogous planes of action using imagery and props as means to expression.[45]

Irving Ribner has cited Woodstock as one of the clearest examples of a "political morality" in which the stock morality device of Mankind torn between good and evil angels has been changed into a king torn between good and evil counselors.[46] While Woodstock superficially retains vestiges of morality structure in the basic configuration of evil against good, Richard is not "torn" in the sense implied by Ribner. Richard never considers the alternative action represented by his uncles; he does not actually choose but is set on a predetermined course from Act One. Richard, in the meaning of the morality, is lost from the beginning.

The true focus of the drama is on England, England physically torn into shares for the minions, economically torn by blank charters and the prodigality of the court, and spiritually torn between political ideals and political

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[45]Action as used here denotes the biological, organic meaning that Francis Fergusson associates with Aristotle's use of the phrase "imitation of an action":

> For Tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and of life, and life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action, not a quality.

Aristotle's Poetics, introduced by Francis Fergusson, translated by S. H. Butcher (New York, 1961), p. 62. Fergusson believes that "action" is an analogical concept (i.e., analogous to a living organism) and therefore must be expressed by an infinitive phrase to denote the changing quality of life. The Idea of a Theater (Garden City, N. Y., 1953), pp. 243-244.

[46]Ribner, pp. 136 and 139-140.

realities. England is often a topic of discussion and is usually personified so that in a real sense England functions as a pervasive presence in the drama. Thomas more than anyone is preoccupied with the problem of saving England:

> May not Plain Thomas live a time, to see
> This state attain her former royalty?
> IV.ii.75-76.

> We'll thus resolve, for our dear country's good
> To right her wrongs, or for it spend our blood.
> I.iii.262-263.

> And in the Commons' hearts hot rancours breed
> To make our country's bosom shortly bleed.
> III.ii.88-89.

Thomas' most suggestive statement concerning England's difficulty is couched in the traditional, Elizabethan metaphorical guise, "When the head aches, the body is not healthful" (I.i.144). In the traditional idiom, when the head of the body politic is unwholesome, the state suffers the effects of the disease. This anthropomorphic view of the state, as E. M. W. Tillyard's work indicates, is related to the whole body of assumptions that comprise the Elizabethan order or "world picture". One example of the theme of the correspondence between the state and the body (provided by Tillyard) is in Thomas Starkey's Dialogue between Cardinal Pole and Thomas Lupset:

> Like as in every man there is a body and also a soul in whose flourishing and prosperous state both together standeth the weal and felicity of man; so likewise there is in every commonalty city or country. The thing which is resembled to the soul is civil order and politic law, administered by officers and rulers. For like as the body in every man receiveth his life by virtue of the

> soul and is governed thereby, so doth the multitude of people in every country receive, as it were, civil life by laws well administered by good officers and wise rulers, by whom they be governed and kept in politic order.[47]

Woodstock begins with the premise of a state suffering the effects of a king manipulated by sycophants, whose influence is corrosive. Salvation, the metaphorical restoration to health, is contingent on the purgation of the source of infection: "Some vein let blood -- where the corruption lies/ And all shall heal again" (I.i.146-147). Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language (college edition) defines disease as "a particular destructive process in an organism, with a specific cause and characteristic symptoms." In an organic sense, disease is an "action": the totality of the experience (beginning, effects, end) in a time continuum. The pre-existing condition of disease in England is a given in Woodstock. The action it imitates is the process of disease, not from inception to restoration of health, but the progression of symptoms to the "turning point", the betrayal of Woodstock, followed by a foreshadowing of regeneration in the meting out of justice to the minions, to Richard, and to Tresilian.

The structure of Woodstock is amenable to a traditional four-part analysis. Exposition is largely confined to Scenes One and Two of Act One, although pertinent information

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[47] The Elizabethan World Picture (New York, 1943), p. 97.

pre-dating Act One is revealed throughout (e.g., the exploits of Edward III and the Black Prince are discussed in Scene One of Act Two and Scene One of Act Five); in addition to providing information concerning misrule in England, Scene One of Act One initiates plot movement with the device of the foiled poison plot; the immediacy of the opening dialogue, the calling for lights and the murmuring of treachery and poison, directs audience attention to issues underlying the play: "Are his uncles' deaths become/ Health to King Richard?" (I.i.18-19). Complication consists of the progression of offenses, from the making of Tresilian Lord Chief Justice, of Greene Lord Chancellor, and of Bagot Lord Keeper of the king's privy seal (I.iii); to the duplicity in throwing off protectorship before its legal conclusion (I.ii); to the transfer of council places from the royal uncles to the minions (II.ii); to the implementation of the blank charter plot (III); to the division of the kingdom among the minions (IV.i); and, finally, to the betrayal and murder of Woodstock (IV.ii and V.i). The movement is from offenses primarily against individuals (poison plot, removal from office) to collective offenses against English subjects (economic abuse and judicial perversion), moving finally to the destruction of the political and territorial integrity of England (farming out of the kingdom) and of human values and life (the seizure and murder of Woodstock).

The treatment of Woodstock has communal overtones:

Woodstock throughout the play has been identified as a hero to the commons, and, in his insistence on peasant dress, he functions as a representative of the values of those most injured by Richard's excesses. The treachery directed toward Plain Thomas is an offense against community (the seizure of Woodstock is the final cause of civil rebellion), against family (the ghosts of Richard's grandfather and father denounce Richard's deeds), and is ultimately interpreted by Richard as an offense against Heaven ("O my dear friends, the fearful wrath of heaven/ Sits heavy on our heads for Woodstock's death" V.iv.47-48).

The abduction of Woodstock is also the climax of the drama, the point from which Richard can no longer influence events: at separate junctures of the drama, Richard justifies questionable behavior by citing the precept that a king is bound to abide by his word, "Our word, good uncle, is already passed,/ Which cannot with our honour be recalled" (I.iii.151-152) and "King's words are laws:/ If we infringe our word, -- we break our law" (III.i.64-65). Yet ironically when Richard, distraught after the death of Anne, tries to take back his command to murder Woodstock, the maxim that the king cannot break his word becomes truer than Richard knew. The seizure of Woodstock is the last decision of Richard's to be implemented, and it is followed by events which he can no longer control: the death of Anne (which Richard views as retribution for his treatment of Woodstock), the death of

Woodstock, the successful progress of civil rebellion led by Lancaster and York, and the death of the king's beloved Greene. Denouement then begins with Anne's death as the first indication that events are not working out to Richard's liking and proceeds through the consequences of his misdeeds.

The underlying organic principle of Woodstock has more in common with the morality play than other dramas preceding it. However, Ribner too readily assumes that "in morality fashion Richard chooses the evil forces and under their influence commits political crimes."[48] Rather it is the fundamental design premise of the morality that Woodstock shares: the significance of process rather than the answering of an unknown;[49] for example, tension in The Castle of Perseverance derives more from the process of sin and redemption than the uncertainty of Humanum Genus' salvation. It is the pageantry of royal ineptitude and political suffering (i.e., the working through) that is important in Woodstock, just as the ritual despairing of Everyman leads inevitably to renewal of hope and spiritual regeneration. In the morality, suspense is expendable but not pageantry. Thus Richard never "chooses" evil over good, as Ribner would have us believe; his capitulation to the sycophants is a given, and, similarly, salvation is political (the removal of

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[48]Ribner, p. 137.

[49]According to Tillyard, moralities contributed to the structure of the Elizabethan history play more than to theme. Shakespeare's History Plays, p. 92.

the sycophants) rather than spiritual (the saving of Richard's soul); likewise, the modification of Richard's behavior in itself is not a viable option. Thus, the first imitation of the action of process (metaphorically a disease running its course) is at the level of structure: the movement from the despair of the poison-plot scene to the renewed sense of purpose in the rebellion of Act Five, a movement from death-focus to life-focus.

The primary tension in the drama is the pull between positive and negative forces, between a mode of action that reinforces life-values and one that is clearly destructive to them. Thomas and Anne both function as representatives of the life option: Thomas is honest and frugal, and consistently loyal to English and human values. In many ways, Thomas is the English prototype; Rossiter refers to him as one representative of a "type of virtuous Englishry" in the Elizabethan drama.[50] Even the second murderer perceives that his victim is exceptional, "Tis done . . . ye dog; and pull your soul to hell in doing it . . . . for thou hast killed the truest subject that ever breathed in England" (V.i.231-233). Robert Lindabury suggests that were it not for Woodstock's exemplary loyalty the play would easily be taken as seditious.[51] Woodstock exercises his prerogative

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[50]Rossiter, p. 52.

[51]R. U. Lindabury, A Study of Patriotism in the Elizabethan Drama (Princeton, 1931), p. 183.

as protector and elder kinsman to criticize Richard's behavior but refuses to take up arms against him ("what's now amiss/ Our sins have caused . . . and we must bide heaven's will" IV.ii.149-150); Thomas fends off civil disorder despite the propagation of injustices, acting under the certainty that traditional loyalties must be preserved.

Anne counters Richard's profligacy by extending charity to the commons:

> In Essex, Surrey, Kent and Middlesex
> Are seventeen thousand poor and indigent
> Which I have numbered; and to help their wants
> My jewels and my plate are turned to coin
> And shared amongst them.
> II.iii.19-23.

Anne also seeks to mitigate factionalism and resentments; she petitions Greene not to interfere in the quarrel between Richard and Woodstock at the wedding celebration (I.iii) and timidly tries to heal the breach between Richard and his uncles:

> But would your grace consider with advice
> What you have done unto your reverend uncles?
> (My fears provoke me to be bold, my lord).
> III.i.60-62.

Like Thomas, Anne specifically identifies with English values:

> My native country I no more remember
> But as a tale told in my infancy,
> . . . . . .
> And, having left the earth where I was bred
> And English made, let me be englished:
> They best shall please me shall me English call.
> I.iii.41-49.

Ironically, Anne and Woodstock, who embody the life principle, die during the play, but these deaths are not

without function. Critics of Woodstock have had difficulty determining the drama's attitude toward allegiance. Lindabury argues that the hero represents the attitude intended by the playwright:

> One may conclude that this author admired the virtue of absolute allegiance, since he made Woodstock the hero of his play, and not the dupe. But one can feel no assurance that a performance of the piece would teach rebellious subjects the error of their ways.[52]

Although the play establishes "Plain Thomas" as an ideal figure, the drama is not so doctrinaire as to prescribe final answers, using one character as a mouthpiece; rather the meaning of the drama is indicated by the totality of the play's movement and is derived intuitively and collectively, not from a rational basis alone. Thus the significance of Woodstock, and to a much lesser degree, Anne, is in the total action of each, not the philosophy expressed at points along the way. Both figures maintain their integrity in a world, as Woodstock describes it, "topsy-turvy turned!" Each remains true to a mode of being: Anne to conciliatory and healing actions and Woodstock to candor and patriotism. Woodstock's plain dealing, his forthrightness, permits him to frequently understand the import of events of plot (e.g., he knows before York and Lancaster that rhetoric will no longer serve to calm the rebellious commons) while also realizing that he is unable to translate his insights into action. Both Thomas

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[52]Lindabury, p. 184.

and Anne are disinterested, suffering for the community rather than for themselves. Thus, even though Woodstock is a hero, he is not a tragic hero. He steadfastly remains true to himself in a fragmented world and neither answers Richard's summons to court nor the call of the people to seek redress on the battlefield. Woodstock's death is the completion of a unified action, that of the wholesome personality untouched by contagion around it. Woodstock's death is a victory for the "English way", as is Anne's. Both provide contrasting actions to the disease action. Therefore, the completions of the Anne-Woodstock actions provide impetus to the forces of purgation: Woodstock's adherence to the ideal of resolving the conflict of allegiances to king and to state is important, despite his inability to directly act to accomplish it. Similarly, the model of the loyal Englishman that he provides is important, not his personal allegiance per se.

Richard is a nihilistic force in the drama. He is suspicious of the well-intentioned counsel of his uncle and devious in his dealings with Woodstock, York, and Lancaster; yet, in his relationship to the minions, Richard is naive, failing to see their affection and approval as opportunism. Richard's love for Greene, as well as for the other sycophants, is usually expressed in action destructive to English order; thus, Richard embraces the notion of blank charters as a means of accomodating the minions' greed and agrees to the farming out of the realm as a special expression of love for

Greene, "The love of thee and these, my dearest Greene,/ Hath won King Richard to consent to that/ For which all foreign kings will point at us" (IV.i.138-140). This love is not perverted because it is homosexual but because it is destructive: Richard's love for his minions destroys order, individual rights, national integrity, and ultimately life itself. The extent to which the king is willing to go to preserve this relationship is indicated by Richard himself,

> Let crown and kingdom waste, yea life and all,
> Before King Richard see his true friends fall!
> IV.i.125-126.

But the most serious indictment of nihilism is spoken by the ghost of Edward III:

> Becomes a landlord to my Kingly titles,
> Rents out my crown's revenues . . . racks my subjects
> That spent their lives with me in conquering France.
> V.i.90-92.

Ultimately, Richard's destructive proclivity is self-directed. He expresses a desire to imitate the career of his father, but his deeds in addition to farming out the realm include the sacrifice of Guisnes and Calais to France as bribe for French aid in quelling the civil uprising (Calais was won for England by the efforts of Edward III and the Black Prince). Richard's reaction to Anne's death is particularly characteristic: rather than building a monument to her memory, he orders that the house in which she died be demolished, "For ever lay it waste and desolate" (IV.iii.159).

Lancaster is initially touched by the moral contagion of the world of the play in a way that York and Woodstock never

are. In Act One, he is ready to suspend orthodoxy in order to achieve the immediate goal of ridding England of the minions: e.g.,

> By kingly Edward's soul, my royal father,
> I'll be revenged at full on all their lives.
> I.i.68-69.

and

> Let's think on some revenge: if we must die
> Ten thousand souls shall keep us company.
> I.i.95-96.

Both Lancaster and York, in the process of the play, focus more and more on the distresses of England and less on personal revenge. Thus, in the last meeting of the brothers at Plashey, York counsels,

> Let each man hie him to his several home
> Before the people rise in mutiny,
> And, in the mildest part of lenity,
> Seek to restrain them from rebellion--
> III.ii.91-94.

and Lancaster responds affirmatively, "York counsels well. Let's haste away./ The time is sick" (III.ii.97-98). The change in emphasis makes possible a less reprehensible rebellion in Act Five, one that looks to restoring England more than to destroying the minions. While revenge is nonetheless a motive, it is revenge for outrages perpetrated against England, represented by the murder of Thomas:

> It was an easy task to work on him,
> His plainness was too open to their view:
> He feared no wrong, because his heart was true.
> V.iii.6-8.

The progress of the rebellion is to reverse the topsy-turvy condition so that Englishmen whose hearts are true can once

again prosper, as indicated by Lancaster,

> We'll call King Richard to a strict account
> . . . for his realm's misgovernment.
> You peers of England, raised in righteous arms
> Here to re-edify our country's ruin,
> Join all your hearts and hands never to cease
> Till with our swords we work fair England's peace.
> V.iii.20-25.

The restoration to order (i.e., to a wholesome condition) is already manifest in the sense of unity underlying Lancaster's speech. In contrast, Richard's forces desert on the field and even Tresilian chooses to hide until the outcome of the battle is determined, "If good, I stay; if bad, away I run" (V.ii.42).

The "topsy-turvy" image is introduced by Woodstock, after being deprived of the protectorship:

> What transformation do mine eyes behold
> As if the world were topsy-turvy turned!
> II.ii.141-142.

It coexists with the disease metaphor, adding to its meaning. The minions are the infection and the inversion of order is the ensuing condition. Inversions operative in the drama include the giving of the uncles' staffs of office and council positions to the minions as well as the assumption by the minions of the function of protector and adviser to the king. The primary inversion is that of a king ruled by his subjects and is paralleled in Nimble's capture of Tresilian with his own sword of justice. Yet another inversion in social hierarchy occurs when Woodstock plays the role of groom in response to the mistake of Richard's courtier.

The homosexual dimension of the Richard-Greene relationship relates to the interacting disease-inversion motif. Homosexuality is, in the world of the play, both disease and inversion. Woodstock diagnoses it specifically as disease:

> King Richard's wounded with a wanton humour
> Lulled and secured by flattering sycophants;
> But tis not deadly yet, it may be cured;
> I.i.144-146.

Similarly, Woodstock looks to Richard's marriage to Anne as cure, implying that the relation with the minions is inversion (i.e., that the heterosexual relationship is natural):

> I have good hope this happy marriage, brothers,
> Of this so noble and religious princess
> Will mildly calm his headstrong youth, to see
> And shun those stains that blur his majesty.
> I.i.184-187.

Richard's immoderate affection for the minions (particularly Greene) is both one incidence of inversion as well as precipitator of other inversions (specifically, the king ruled by his subjects and become landlord to his kingdom); hence, the relationship is disease.

The comic scenes best indicate the effects of corruption on England. Rather than functioning to provide relief from emotionally-charged action or as extraneous entertainment, the comic scenes imitate one mode of the corruption-inversion action. The Tresilian-Nimble episodes, for example, are based on the principle of the independent "Vice"-wily servant and the upstart "Machiavel". Tresilian is "translated" from Nimble's schoolfellow to clerk to pleading lawyer to Lord

Chief Justice of England and in the process has become Nimble's master:

> At first, when we were schoolfellows then I
> called him Sirrah, but since he became my master
> I pared away the Ah and served him with the Sir.
> I.ii.80-82.

The Nimble-Tresilian relationship functions as a comic parallel to the Tresilian-Richard relationship: both masters are served by a self-seeking subordinate with excessive vanity and overweening pride in his new authority. Thus Nimble creeps "into the court fashion" just as Tresilian puts on the dignity of Chief Justice (Tresilian refuses to have his beard shaved, arguing, "I will not lose a hair of my lordship" III.i.33). The conclusion of the Tresilian-Nimble relationship is foreshadowed in Tresilian's desertion of Richard on the battlefield: Nimble captures Tresilian and turns him in to the uncles, saying, "I thank him he taught me this trick, to save myself from hanging" (V.vi.22-24). The black-comedy dimension to the Tresilian-Nimble episodes is indicative of the monster-like qualities of those who prosper in Richard's inverted kingdom; Nimble's capture of the Dunstable innocents, and their property, is a counterpart to the minions' seizure of Arundel's spoils of battle, of the uncles' offices, of the king's sovereignty, and finally of Woodstock's person.

The ironies in the comedy function to underscore the climate of inversion that prevails in the world of the play. Law, a positive force in a healthy society, is perverted in England so that it undermines justice and invalidates legal

and political precedents. The shrieves of Kent and Northumberland, for example, protest the blank charters, pleading

> . . . our ancient liberties
> Recorded and enrolled in the king's Crown-office,
> Wherein the men of Kent are clear discharged
> Of fines, fifteens, or any other taxes:
> For ever given them by the Conqueror.
> IV.iii.19-23.

Tresilian responds indirectly, "Is not the subject's wealth at the king's will?/ What, is he lord of lives and not of lands?" (IV.iii.30-31). Those who comply with the law and sign the blank charters are nevertheless apprehended on an assortment of charges including "whispering", "grumbling", and saying, "God bless my lord Tresilian" (Bail. "Mine ears have heard your examinations, wherein you uttered most shameful treason, for ye said 'God bless my lord Tresilian'" III.iii.205-207). Compliance with the law then does not guarantee exemption from punishment. In this comic world, Bailey Ignorance and Nimble prevail because the environment supports dull-witted acquiescence (Bail. "I have begun myself and sealed one of your blanks already, and by my example there's more shall follow. I know my place and calling, my name is Ignorance" III.iii.8-11) as well as quick-witted opportunism (Nimb. "Ye see one of your own swords of justice drawn over ye. Therefore go quietly, lest I cut your head off" V.v.48-50). In the world of Woodstock, one must speak in riddles because words do not mean what they seem: thus, "God bless my lord Tresilian" has a reverse connotation; in addition, whistling and singing, normally conveying a sense

of well-being and affirmation, may be interpreted as "treason in the ninth degree." The climate of suspicion depicted reinforces the view established in the serious action: a world in which the "truest subject, that ever breathed in England" is murdered for his loyalty.

Betrayal of trust and love is very much a function of the central problem of inversion, and the various betrayals are indicative of the atmosphere of distrust, fear, and despair that permeates the play. The masque provides one example: the maskers arrive in the dark of night promising the relief of fantasy from uncomfortable realities,

> Chey. Some country gentlemen,
> To show their dear affection to your grace
> Proffer their sports tonight to make you merry.
> IV.ii.85-87.

> Wood. They come in love--and we'll accept it so.
> IV.ii.97.

The betrayal of Woodstock's trust and love is one of many spiritual betrayals, including throughout Richard's rejection of his uncle. The king's treatment of Anne is yet another love-betrayal, and, after the queen's death, Richard recognizes both betrayals:

> She was too virtuous to remain with me,
> And heaven hath given her higher dignity.
> IV.iii.145-146.

and

> We have too much provoked the powers divine
> And here repent thy wrongs, good uncle Woodstock.
> IV.iii.173-175.

The king's sincere affection for his minions is similarly

betrayed by their pretense of affection. Related betrayals of trust include the initial betrayal of the minions' poison plot by the Carmelite friar, Bailey Ignorance's betrayal of his neighbors, the killing of Woodstock's murderers by Lapoole's guards, the desertion of Richard's army, and Nimble's capture of Tresilian. The central betrayal is Richard's failure as King of England.

Dramatic irony compliments the atmosphere of betrayal: in an ordered world, one is safe to make assumptions and likely to receive what he expects (e.g., obedience is rewarded and disobedience punished); in Woodstock, however, characters are continually faced with the unexpected, yet another analogue of the order-inversion. Tresilian boasts to Nimble of his power as Lord Chief Justice:

> Thou hast an executing look
> And I will put the axe into thy hand.
> I rule the law: thou by the law shalt stand.
> I.iii.129-131.

Yet Tresilian is surprised when Nimble does indeed stand by the law, taking advantage of the uncles' proclamation by delivering Tresilian into their hands. Similarly, the sycophants expect to win all by destroying Woodstock but instead precipitate the rebellion that causes their downfall. Woodstock assumes that the maskers come to him as a gesture of love and reiterates his loyalty to Richard just as the king and the minions are preparing to seize him. After taking Woodstock at Plashey, Richard enthusiastically announces, "The boar is taken, and our fears are past"

(IV.ii.218). However, in Act Five, Richard views his treatment of Woodstock as the source of all his woe:

> O my dear friends, the fearful wrath of heaven
> Sits heavy on our heads for Woodstock's death.
> Blood cries for blood; and that almighty hand
> Permits not murder unrevenged to stand.
> V.iv.47-50.

Lapoole in Scene One of Act Five debates whether or not to follow Richard's order to murder Woodstock, deciding to obey the king rather than his conscience because "either he must die/ Or great King Richard vows my tragedy" (V.i.45-46). Ironically, Richard in the previous scene has reversed his position, commanding, "Lapoole forbear/ On pain of life, to act our sad decree" (IV.iii.170-171). In like manner, the murderers expect to be rewarded with gold for killing Woodstock but instead receive death at the hands of Lapoole's guards.

The second scene of Act Three functions as a central gathering of the drama's motifs. The scene is rather long, beginning with the last gathering of the uncles at Plashey followed by first the arrival of Cheyney with samples of blank charters and then the arrival of Richard's courtier. The scene is a microcosm of issues current in Woodstock: England diseased and beset with storms so that proper relationships between men are destroyed. Initial dialogue concerns a review of the abuses of Richard's court, during which York romanticizes Plashey as a refuge:

> This house of Plashey, brother
> Stands in a sweet and pleasant air, 'ifaith:

> Tis near the Thames, and circled round with trees
> That in the summer serve for pleasant fans
> To cool ye; and in winter strongly break
> The stormy winds that else would nip ye too.
> III.ii.7-14.

Woodstock immediately perceives the metaphorical content of York's observation and suggests that contrary to York's conclusion the encircling trees are deceptive, rendering Plashey vulnerable to both the storms of nature and of the court:

> And yet these trees at length will prove to me
> Like Richard and his riotous minions . . .
> Their wanton heads so oft play with the winds
> Throwing their leaves so prodigally down,
> They'll leave me cold at last; and so will they
> Make England wretched; and, i'the end, themselves.
> III.ii.18-23.

As if to support Woodstock's interpretation, two intrusions from the court immediately follow, both indicating that Plashey is indeed accessible to the evil of the court.

The comparison implicit in the image relates the natural process of seasons to the reign of King Richard, suggesting an action akin to the disease metaphor. It looks to both ends of a continuum: from the summer of Edward III's reign (when the trees "serve for pleasant fans/ To cool ye") to the winter of Richard's reign when the monarchy serves not as buffer to disorder but as provoker of it. Thus, the political poles of the play are the two reigns. The seasonal connotation also looks beyond the winter of political disorder to a regeneration, when trees once again have the strength to mitigate the ill-effects of weather and so to

the time when the king will again become the source of political order. The inevitability of the plight running its course is reinforced by Woodstock's certainty that the brothers lack the power to manipulate either the weather or Richard:

> We talk like good divines, but cannot cure
> The grossness of the sin: or shall we speak
> Like all-commanding wise astronomers,
> And flatly say, such a day shall be fair . . ?
> And yet it rains, whether he will or no.
> So may we talk; but thus will Richard do.
> III.ii.45-50.

That the paternalistic role of the monarch has been inverted is suggested by Woodstock's image of England as a vulture:

> O vulture England, wilt thou eat thine own?
> Can they be rebels called, that now turn head?
> I speak but what I fear: not what I wish.
> This foul oppression will withdraw all duty,
> And in the Commons' hearts hot rancours breed
> To make our country's bosom shortly bleed.
> III.ii.84-89.

The conclusion of the figure of England as vulture implies that England and the commons are one, just as England and king are synonymous. If the commons are devoured, then England bleeds. But the image has yet another meaning. Just as the trees shield Plashey so the commons fortify the monarchy (even as the monarchy should shield the populace). In perceiving the inversion of function on the part of monarchy (become a vulture to its own), Woodstock understands the other part of the inversion-process, that the citizens turn on the monarch: the turning of citizens' heads toward rebellion recalls the earlier figure of bare-leaved trees

with "wanton heads" manipulated by forces of disorder (winds). The idea of inevitability (i.e., that the situation will work through to its own conclusion) underlies both images and is also associated with the disease metaphor.

The succeeding episode with the spruce courtier derives much of its effect from juxtaposition to the conversation of the despairing uncles. The mood of the entire scene contradicts the humor of the courtier's outrageous behavior: one might laugh at his mistaking a duke for a groom if one did not have before him the image of "Vulture England" eating her own. This image is recalled in a peculiarly poignant way, as Woodstock, patiently assuming the role of groom, finds the courtier's horse a more comprehensible companion than his master,

> I'm afraid they'll eat you shortly, if you tarry amongst them. You're pricked more with the spur, than the provender . . . I see that.
> III.ii.165-167.

Both Woodstock and the horse are being victimized by the court, both in danger of being devoured, but here the similarity ends; Woodstock ultimately identifies the horse, not with himself, but with the followers of the king:

> Faith, say a man should steal ye -- and feed ye fatter, could ye run away with him lustily? Ah, your silence argues a consent, I see . . . .
> II.ii.170-172.

This brief byplay between a saddened Woodstock and a starving horse alludes to both the physical and spiritual deterioration of the kingdom: the physically abused animal represents the

suffering of the commons, in danger of being economically devoured; at the same time, the horse imitates the moral corruption at court in his bestial willingness to follow whomever feeds him. The horse is thus a symbol of the type of loyalty surrounding Richard and a poetic parallel to the trees of the first figure who bend to the direction of the winter wind. In addition, the horse interlude associates animal values rather than human values with Richard's reign.

The spruce courtier represents the absurdities of the court; the mistaking of Woodstock for the groom is an indication that the duke is totally alienated from the world of the courtier. There is no communication between the two, just as the gulf between the uncles and the court can no longer be bridged by rhetoric: York proposes that "eloquence is best in this distress" (III.iii.96) and Woodstock perceives, "I have no eloquence/ To stay this uproar . . ." (III.iii. 111-112). Dialogue between the courtier and Woodstock consists of Woodstock's insistence that he be paid for minding the horse, "I'll have my money first: promise is a promise" (III.iii.184-185); he views the situation in terms of maintaining order by adhering to contract. The courtier sees it as a matter of social decorum, that a duke should not accept wages, "I know your grace's goodness will refuse it" (III.iii. 186). Thus the scene functions by underscoring the disparity in two systems of values: the courtier assumes personal value is reflected in dress and in manner; hence, he is

unable to identify a duke who wears peasant clothing. Woodstock, on the other hand, defines himself not in terms of role or dress but in terms of individual integrity: being true to an internal principle. Thus, according to Woodstock, an Englishman should not be one "all made of fashions" who is loyal to any man who feeds him.

Finally, the scene with the courtier epitomizes the inherent contradiction of Richard's reign. The courtier diligently tries to explain the rationale behind the fashions devised by the court:

> Wood. But this most fashionable chain, that links
> as twere
> The toe and knee together--
>
> Cour. In a most kind coherence, so it like your grace:
> -- For these two parts, being in operation and
> quality different, as for example: the toe
> a disdainer, or spurner: the knee a dutiful
> and most humble orator; this chain doth, as
> it were, so toeify the knee and so kneeify the
> toe, that between both it makes a most
> methodical coherence, or coherent method.
> III.ii.214-221.

Richard, unable to achieve political order or continuity, exerts the energies of his government in unifying the toe and knee. It is not insignificant that the device for implementing this unity should be a chain. The dichotomy is outlined: the followers of Richard are, metaphorically speaking, knees and the well-meaning dissenters, toes. Since the two lack a natural bond, the solution is arbitrary unity (chain). This is the same type of spurious unity that Richard forges at court, using deceit and destructiveness

against his subjects to buy the loyalty of the minions and betrayal and violence to contain the protests of the uncles.

As suggested earlier, the meaning of Woodstock can not be deduced from an isolated speech or a single episode but rather from the total experience of the play. In addition to the thematic function of Act Three, Scene Two, and the comedy scenes, the author uses the essential tools of drama as poetic mechanisms: the manipulation of audience desires and the language of stage props. Thus dress has both a literal content (prop) and a figurative value, relating to the motifs of disguise and role-playing. Likewise, masque is both a stage ornament (show) and the poetic center of the drama, gathering and uniting interacting metaphors.

The opening of the first scene of Act One is indicative of the author's use of what Kenneth Burke terms "psychology of the audience" to accomplish poetic purposes (as well as theatrical purposes).[53] Plot action begins amid great physical and verbal activity, with the confused shouting of the imperative, "Lights, lights, bring torches knaves" (I.i.1).

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[53]Burke suggests that a dramatist creates a need in his audience ("appetite"), delays temporarily its fulfillment ("a temporary set of frustrations") so that ultimate fulfillment will be more intense and therefore more pleasurable. Burke distinguishes between (1) psychology of information (the focus is on matter and interest is maintained by suspense, the need to know how it all works out), and (2) psychology of form which focuses on the use of matter to shape audience desires. "Psychology and Form," Perspectives on Drama, ed. James L. Calderwood and Harold E. Toliver (New York, 1968), p. 92.

The staging directions appended above the dialogue suggest the vigor of the opening:

> Enter hastily at several doors: DUKE OF LANCASTER, DUKE OF YORK, the EARLS OF ARUNDEL and SURREY, with napkins on their arms and knives in their hands, and SIR THOMAS CHEYNEY, with others bearing torches and some with cloaks and rapiers.

Just as the tumult immediately engages audience attention so this attention is at once directed toward impending action, the bringing of lights. While this is a patently trivial, even domestic, detail, a tension nonetheless intrudes: it is dark and confusion prevails; light is called for in an effort to dispel confusion and, metaphorically, to restore order. The bringing of torches satisfies the immediate need by removing external darkness, but the sense of a more significant darkness and disorder remains unresolved. The important appetite is unsatisfied: (1) to know the cause of the disorder in the world of the play, and (2) to witness its removal.

The momentum of the ensuing action derives from the metaphorical content of "Lights, lights, bring torches knaves!" Superficially, the call for light is a function of the discovery of the poison plot, and light is intended as a safeguard against further intrigue, as is the following command, "Shut to the gates" (I.i.2). In contrast, a call for lights in Act Four is a gesture of hospitality, as Woodstock prepares to welcome the maskers: "Prepare a banquet: call for lights and music" (IV.ii.96). Light in

Act Four functions differently from the light-imperative in Act One, in regard to the psychology of the audience. The actual arrival of the lights is secondary to the arrival of the maskers: the audience's appetite to see the announced but yet unseen maskers takes precedence over the desire to have lights and music arrive. The servant, ordered to prepare the banquet with lights and music, exits and does not return; instead, all audience expectations are satisfied poetically as the first masker enters, to the flourish of cornets:

> From the clear orb of our ethereal Sphere
> Bright Cynthia comes to hunt and revel here.
> IV.ii.103-104.

Woodstock responds, accepting Cynthia as both masker and light-source, "We shall have a clear night, the Moon directs the mask" (IV.ii.124).

In the configuration of the drama, light becomes synonymous with order and symbolizes life. The uncles demand metaphysical light for their world, with York and Lancaster viewing the rebellion of Act Five as a means to restore light (i.e., to remove dark confusion) and order, "This day shall here determinate all wrongs . . . ./ Or all shall sink to dark confusion" (V.iii.32-36). Thus death and darkness are specifically associated: Woodstock is seized at night and murdered on yet another dark night; in addition, death comes to Woodstock as the extinguishing of light,

> My sight o'the sudden fails me!
> I cannot see my paper,

> My trembling fingers will not hold my pen,
> A thick congealed mist o'erspreads the chamber.
> V.i.220-223.

That these associations are traditional is indicated by Tillyard's remarks concerning a poem by Fulke Greville in which "true love in man corresponds to the eternal light of the fixed stars and of the sun in particular, and lust and its miseries to deprivation of light . . . ."[54]

The masque relates deeply to the thematic content of the drama. According to the notion of the chain of being, a king is frequently viewed metaphorically as the sun, because both king and sun have primary position in their respective hierarchies. The correspondence is alluded to in Woodstock:

> Lanc. Men need not gaze up to the sky to see
> Whether the sun shine clear or no, tis found
> By the small light should beautify the ground,
> Conceit you me, a blind man thus much sees:
> He wants his eyes to whom we bend our knees.
> I.i.160-164.

Figuratively, Richard is blind both in the sense that he is unperceptive of the needs of his people and also in the metaphorical sense that his eyes are lacking: that is, as sun, he generates no light to "beautify the ground". According to Tillyard, Raleigh's History of the World associates "our eyes to the light of the sun and the moon,"[55] a correspondence between man and the cosmos that is echoed in Woodstock, "But were the eye of day once closed again/ Upon

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[54] Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture, p. 92.

[55] Ibid.

this back they never more should come" (I.iii.84).

In the masque, Richard assumes the role of one of Diana's knights and is obscured by a spurious "Moon". Rather than assuming his proper position as a primary, the king intentionally hides behind the "Moon" in order to avoid openly confronting Woodstock. It is this void that the uncles seek to fill: England has an obscured king who produces no affirmative effects (no light upon the ground).

The motif of Richard's royalty obscured by the "Moon" has parallel expression elsewhere in the drama. For example, Woodstock similarly diagnoses the problem during an argument with Richard, "Let the sun dry up/ What th'unwholesome fog hath choked the ground with" (I.iii.140-141). The sun is hidden by fog much the way Richard's true identity is literally masked in Act Four and his kingship is obscured by the sycophants throughout the drama (in the figure, "unwholesome fog" means the sycophants). In Woodstock's metaphor, the ground is England and its desperate plight is indicated by the use of the word choked, the violence of which recalls the image of "devouring" from the horse-courtier scene. The mist of death that covers Woodstock's eyes in Act Five also relates to the fog-image: the evil of Richard's reign is pervasive and elusive as the fog and mist, and harbors both corruption ("unwholesome fog") and death ("a thick congealed mist"). Yet another variation of the sun-obscured motif makes the comparison explicit:

York. For shame, King Richard, leave this company
That like dark clouds obscure the sparkling stars
Of thy great birth, and true nobility.
V.iii.83-85.

The sycophants are poetically fog, mist, and dark clouds: inherent in the related images is the idea of covering (the action of fog, mist, and clouds) and blending: in the masque Richard is indistinguishable from the other maskers, assuming the role of a subordinate to Cynthia. Richard's affinity for disguise is apparent earlier in the play when he tricks Woodstock into ending the protectorship (he assumes the role of paternalistic ruler who is concerned for his subjects); as defeat and capture seem imminent in Act Five, Richard characteristically seeks a hiding place, "Come, come, we yet may hide ourselves from worldly strength,/ But Heaven will find us out, and strike at length" (V.iv.51-52).

Related to the disguise, role-playing, and hiding motifs is the use of dress both as stage prop and as a suggestive dramatic symbol. Dress is the ultimate mask and is employed by every major character as a means of functioning in Richard's England. For example, in Scene One of Act One, the brothers agree to mask hate with smiles in order to further their purpose of eliminating the sycophants. Dress as mask is assumed by Woodstock who puts on the courtly apparel of his station to grace the king's wedding day, although viewing dress as packaging:

My heart in this plain frieze sits true and right
In this I'll serve my king as true and bold
As if my outside were all trapped in gold.
I.i.203-205

His brothers argue, "We'd have you suit your outside to your heart" (I.i.196). Gloucester's plain frieze and tother hose disguise his station but reveal his nature ("There's honest plain dealing in my tother hose" I.iii.103). Those who lack nobility in the drama view finery as a substitute. Dress thus becomes a status symbol to those at court: Tresilian and Nimble both mark their rise in the world in terms of dress, and the first act of Richard as king in his own right is to sanction the minions' desire to fashion elaborate clothing. The resulting collective court mask provides group identity: the spruce courtier is not a person but an appendage of the court, a fact Woodstock recognizes when he calls the courtier "this fellow that's all made of fashions" (III.ii.155). Similarly, Richard has put on the corporate identity of his sycophants in the masque.

In terms of imagery, office or position is also a type of dress, the putting on of role. Dress metaphors are plentiful. After ending the protectorship, Richard desires Woodstock to place the crown on his head, for, "This day we will be new enthronished" (II.ii.113). Richard then with great satisfaction relates the taking off of protectorship and the replacing of the crown to a renewed sense of personal identity (a putting on of self):

> Now we feel ourself.
> Our body could not fill this chair till now,
> Twas scanted to us by protectorship.
> II.ii.117-119.

In a related materialistic interpretation of experience,

Richard assumes that by stripping his uncles of their staffs of office, and thereby of their places on the council, he is simultaneously diminishing their political threat. From the point of view of the court, power may be put on and taken off, just as costuming is an indicator of status.

The role of the minions at court is as ornament, according to Richard:

> Thus shall King Richard suit his princely train
> . . . . . .
> Your youths are fitting to our tender years
> And such shall beautify our princely throne.
> II.i.1-5.

The two functions of clothing are beauty ("shall beautify our princely throne") and protection ("fitting to our tender years"). Tresilian agrees with Richard's metaphor, calling the minions, "The jewels of his heart" (I.ii.46), and, in speaking of assuming the office of chief justice, he echoes the king's earlier association of office with garments to be put on and felt, "I will wear the office in his true ornament" (I.ii.38), and, a bit later,

> But yet until mine office be put on
> By kingly Richard, I'll conceal myself;
> Framing such subtle laws that Janus-like
> May with a double face salute them both.
> I.ii.65-68.

Similarly, Greene views law itself as clothing in the sense that it is amenable to change (i.e., trend) and serves as protection for those who would hide behind it: "You must observe and fashion to the time/ The habit of your laws" (I.ii.40-41).

Masque is a collective symbol in Woodstock. As an event, it functions in a time continuum, as does the disease figure, and it implies a ritualistic action: to hunt a "cruel tuskèd boar, whose terror flies/ Through this large kingdom, and with fear and dread/ Strikes her amazèd greatness pale and dead" (IV.ii.108-110). The knights are unable to directly accomplish the action, to kill the boar, but must use indirection; that is, to engage in "sprightly dancing" for the "faithful prince and peer/ That keeps a court of love and pity here" (IV.ii.113-114). Thus the masque imitates the condition and process of the entire play: England is beset by beast-like sycophants (variously represented by the horse and the images of wolves and wild boars), but the condition can not be remedied by direct attack. The uncles can respond by trying to quiet the commons but not by removing the source of evil, until the process works around to the time propitious to the redress of England's ills. The masque-event is then a mirror, a play within the play.

The masque is also a mousetrap. It is intended to catch Woodstock, as it does, but, in the ironic world of the play, it also catches both the minions and the king. The minions intend the presentation to be misleading, that Woodstock should identify with the prince while being represented by the boar. The play itself however proves Woodstock's interpretation: that the condition of the diseased kingdom is caused by "so many wild boars" and "by wolves and lions".

While the masque determines Woodstock's death, it also determines the consequent rebellion by the uncles and the commons. Therefore the masque, intended as a tool of injustice, becomes just the pivot to turn the plot movement in the direction of redress of injustices.

Finally, the masque is the culminant disguise. It provides both Richard and the minions a mask to cover their true plot (to abduct Woodstock). On the other hand, the masque deceives the minions with false security ("The boar is taken, and our fears are past" IV.ii.218). In many ways, Woodstock itself is masque, its action couched in deceptive modes, moving by indirection to a problematical conclusion (Can order be returned to England by means of rebellion, the epitome of disorder?). As the masque begins in darkness with a call for lights, so does the play itself, and the condition of the play is a metaphorical darkness. As the movement of the masque is from intellectual confusion (Who is the cruel tusked boar?) to physical confusion (the seizure of Woodstock), so the play moves from the confusion of how to resolve the state-monarchy conflict to the physical confusion of the battlefield.

Chapter IV

THE RATIONALE

According to political-philosophical tenets of sixteenth century England (the moral environment of Woodstock), the individual's obligations to monarch (obedience) and to state (patriotism) are ideally interdependent. In Woodstock, however, these moral obligations prove contradictory: within the world of the play, one can not be both obedient to Richard and responsive to the needs of the state. Richard's destructive bent sustains the perversion of law and the perpetration of injustice to satisfy his minions' inordinate greed. The king violates national integrity by agreeing to rent out his kingdom to the sycophants and to return Calais to France.

The drama effects a state of cognitive dissonance in those of the characters who view the progress of the action in terms of moral options. Cognitive dissonance is a psychological tension deriving from the clash of incongruities. According to Leon Festinger, cognition means "any knowledge, opinion, or belief about the environment, about oneself, about one's behavior."[56] In a condition of cognitive dissonance, one is

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[56] A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance (Stanford, Calif., 1957), p. 3. Festinger offers the following illustration of the condition: an individual may believe that smoking is bad for his health and yet continue to smoke. To reduce dissonance and achieve consonance, the person would have to either change his cognition about his behavior (smoking) or his cognition about the effects of smoking. He may fail to reduce dissonance and continue to smoke, knowing it is harmful to him. Festinger, pp. 1-6.

motivated toward dissonance reduction, although reduction is not always achieved.[57]

Woodstock more than any other character in the drama suffers from the inherent inconsistency in the code of orthodoxy: he believes that England must be saved, "May not Plain Thomas live a time, to see/ This state attain her former royalty?" (IV.ii.75-76) but that "any rash attempt against his state" is not morally feasible. Woodstock can neither act to save Richard from his own folly by violently removing the minions nor to save England from the effects of the king's capitulation to the minions. Since Woodstock is unable to reduce the inconsistency, he assumes a passive role that violates neither precept. Woodstock allows the king to take away the protectorship before the legal time and to seize his position on council; he makes it possible for Richard to betray him at Plashey by not fortifying himself against the danger he senses. Woodstock is passive in the sense that he removes himself from direct action to restore England to her former glories. He is not apathetic but rather functions as a critic of the court and an interpreter of the English plight. Woodstock serves his loyalty to England by continually opposing the minions and Richard verbally; he serves his loyalty to the monarchy by counseling allegiance to the king both to his angry brothers and to the outraged commons, "I must tell them plain/ We all are struck

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[57]Festinger, pp. 3 and 6.

-- but must not strike again" (III.ii.112-113), and,

> I ever yet was just and true to him,
> And so will still remain: what's now amiss
> Our sins have caused . . . and we must bide heaven's will.
> IV.ii.148-150.

Woodstock has a positive attitude about his own death, although he does not wish to die needlessly; to the contrary, he apparently senses that his death might prove the means for accomplishing regeneration for England:

> If I must die, bear record, rightious heaven,
> How I have nightly waked for England's good,
> And yet to right her wrongs would spend my blood.
> Send thy sad doom, King Richard: take my life.
> I wish my death might ease my country's grief.
> V.i.124-128.

and, finally, just as he is about to be murdered,

> But tell him plain -- though here I spend my blood--
> I wish his safety . . and all England's good.
> V.i.211-212.

The only reasonable benefit England might accrue from the shedding of Woodstock's blood would be as impetus to direct action, either the voluntary removal of the sycophants by King Richard himself or the use of force against the king's volition to remove the minions. Since Richard's behavior heretofore negates the first option, the latter from a speculative point of view seems more likely. Of course, Woodstock never rationally examines the implications of his vaguely expressed desire that his death might "ease my country's grief." He remains consistent to his personal ideals, although suffering psychologically from his inability to reconcile them. Woodstock provides a model upon which to fashion

Englishmen in a wholesome England but does not provide the behavior necessary to accomplish his desire to "ease my country's grief."

York and Lancaster, however, as well as the members of the audience, presumeably, are able, through a process of rationalization, to accept the real necessity of active rebellion: the temporary suspension of civil order to accomplish permanent national order is accepted as politically feasible. Despite the fact that Scene Two of Act Five opens with the rebellion in progress, omitting the less dramatic action of the decision-making, the author has York and Lancaster imply the underlying rationalizations for rebellion:

> We will revenge our noble brother's wrongs;
> V.iii.2.
>
> We'll call King Richard to a strict account
> . . . for his realm's misgovernment;
> V.iii.20-21.
>
> Join all your hearts and hands never to cease
> Till with our swords we work fair England's peace.
> V.iii.24-25.

The rationales may be inferred as follows (in sequential order):

(1) A king who murders should be treated as a murderer and is therefore subject to retribution;

(2) The king governs by contract and is liable for the consequences of violating it;

(3) Unified and purposeful rebellion, undertaken to accomplish community well-being, is preferable to the uncontrolled uprisings of the commons, which would more likely foster further disruption rather than end disruption.

The problem of dissonance reduction actually begins early

in the drama. Act One of Woodstock establishes the inconsistency so that the succeeding movement of the drama is in the direction of dissonance-reduction. In order for audience members to accept the event of rebellion in Act Five, they must first achieve consonance by either disregarding the principle of divine right or by coming to accept Richard as less than king, a moral compromise less damaging to orthodox values. The playwright bases his formal design on the latter solution.

Within the time span of the drama, Richard is not of legal age, despite his protestations of being denied his inheritance; Woodstock's agreement to end the protectorship is not given in acknowledgment of Richard's maturity, since Woodstock obviously knows that Richard will not be twenty-one until "the third of April next."

Every step that expands Richard's power diminishes him as a true king. For example, he gains total control over the kingdom by deceit and then uses the power to replace responsible and loyal counselors with the sycophants. Richard assumes that he is bound by no laws, except his own word, and thus encourages the undermining of English law. Richard, not satisfied with the power to destroy England economically and politically, claims the power to subdivide England territorially. The division of the kingdom is also a division of Richard's sovereignty since he will remain king in name only, as indicated by Greene, "Sfoot, what need you care what

the world talks?/ You still retain the name of king" (IV.i.150-151), and,

> . . . and then your grace . . . farming out the kingdom to us four, shall not need to trouble yourself with any business -- this old turkeycock Tresilian shall look to the law, and we'll govern the land most rarely.
> IV.i.133-137.

Traditionally, England and king are synonymous so that the notion of a king without territory is ludicrous to Lancaster:

> Her royalties are lost: her state made base;
> And thou no king, but landlord now become
> To this great state . . . .
> V.iii.105-107.

From a poetic point of view, Richard symbolically abdicates by dissociating his title from direct control over the land.

The masque represents this abdication. The king is virtually invisible in the masque, with Cynthia having primary position in its hierarchy. Not only has Richard assumed the self-seeking nature of the minions in the course of the play, he now completes the identification by being indistinguishable from them in the masque. Furthermore, Richard has taken the role of upstart, using the methods of an upstart (not king) to consolidate his position: deceit, betrayal, and murder.

As a final assurance to those members of the audience unaccustomed to sanctioning rebellion, either tacitly or overtly, Lancaster draws a final distinction, with obvious patriotic overtones:

> His native country! why, that is France my lords!
> At Bordeaux was he born, which place allures

> And ties his deep affections still to France.
> Richard is English blood; not English born.
> Thy mother travailed in unhappy hours
> When she, at Bordeaux, left her heavy load.
> The soil is fat for wines, not fit for men,
> And England now laments that heavy time.
> V.iii.97-104.

The implication is that English soil could not produce such a king as Richard. This view is supported by the ghost of Edward III who addresses his grandson as "Richard of Bordeaux". In Act Three, Woodstock similarly dismisses the courtier as not possibly representing English values, "Is't possible that this fellow that's all made of fashions should be an Englishman?" (III.ii.155-156). The agricultural image of Richard as a heavy load left to grow on soil fat for wine is directly related to the indictment "landlord of England": Richard issuing from soil "not fit for men" has no appreciation of English land values. And to draw on an earlier image, to which it relates, the ground of England is "choked" because its king grew on soil conducive to those effects associated with wine drinking: inability to act logically and directly, sensuousness, profligacy, and inconstant temperament.

Chapter V

WOODSTOCK AS AN INDEX TO THE CHANGING CHARACTER OF ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

Because Woodstock stands between Shakespeare's 2 Henry VI and Richard II and was probably written concurrent with Marlowe's Edward II, the question of its position in the mainstream of developments in the English drama can hardly be ignored. The concept of drama underlying this anonymous play is basic to mature Elizabethan drama: Woodstock has a cohesive structure, with all parts directly contributing to the theme of a "topsy-turvy" England. Further, the progress of the plot (the organization of events) moves by indirection from indecision and moral confusion (how to restore order to England without being disloyal to Richard) to decisive action, from metaphorical darkness to the anticipation of light, with the plot development thus contributing to the meaning of the drama. The significance of the play's unity is that it derives internally, rather than being artificially imposed (as in the formal structure of Gorboduc). The author unifies his play by means of interrelated associations (disease, masque, inversion, mask, clothing). This internal cohesion, the unity derived from poetic structures, is a characteristic foreign to the chronicle play but a distinctive feature of the mature moral history and of Shakespearean drama.

As a transitional play, Woodstock reflects the pure

theatricalism of the English dramatic tradition in the use of stock figures such as the "Vice", Nimble, and his "Machiavel" master, Tresilian, and in the use of conventions including the revenge motif, profuse bloodletting, and the appearance of ghosts onstage. However, theatrical effects are intimately tied to the main progress of the plot, unlike the majority of earlier (before 1580) English dramas; likewise, the ghost's appearance in Hamlet is both theatrical and thematic as is the gory murder of Richard in Richard II and the comic antics of Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo in The Tempest. Woodstock contains vestiges of morality conflict in the motif of a young king beset by evil flatterers, functioning beside more sophisticated internally motivated conflicts; as in Hamlet, overt action stems from complex ideological and psychological conflicts.

Briggs argues that the criterion used to evaluate dramas having source in the English chronicles must be based on the organization of material to definite ends.[58] Ribner cites serious political purpose as a distinguishing feature of mature history plays.[59] Woodstock shares the propagandistic focus of the chronicle plays but is not so confined in focus. While Gorboduc is didactic, Woodstock is a drama that tests political precepts. Ribner calls Woodstock a mature history because it uses the past to illumine current political

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[58]Briggs, p. xvii.

[59]Ribner, pp. 7-9.

problems (i.e., explores parallels between Elizabeth's reign and the reign of Richard II).[60] Rather than teaching a moral lesson to the queen, the author uses the events of Richard's reign as opportunity to investigate underlying ambiguities in contemporary political orthodoxy, namely the potential conflict of loyalties to the state and to the monarch. Whereas earlier dramatists simplified conflict by fully embracing established truths, this dramatist is interested in the complexity of human interaction, particularly in political situations; the author of Woodstock, however, certainly shares the patriotic emphasis of earlier playwrights.

Shakespeare also treats political questions from an investigative point of view: in Richard II, the political issue of an inept but anointed king and a talented usurper is developed with a view to both sides of the question; Dover Wilson suggests that,

> Shakespeare's only prejudices are a patriotic assertion of the paramount interests of England above those of king or subject, an assertion which . . . he places upon the lips of the dying John of Gaunt, and a quasi-religious belief in the sanctity of an anointed monarch.[61]

Similarly, in Woodstock, England is emphasized rather than partisan doctrine. The author at different times seems orthodox and heterodox, but he is never unpatriotic.

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[60] Ribner, p. 36.

[61] ed., Richard II, New Cambridge Edition (Cambridge, 1939), p. xxxv.

Woodstock reflects central currents in English national life. The play opts for pragmatism in state affairs rather than idealism for its own sake, a shift in focus akin to the move from Catholicism to Protestantism; just as Protestantism is more conducive to nationalism so the rebellion of loyal uncles to preserve national integrity supports nationalistic goals. The underlying premise of Woodstock, that a king's royalty in part derives from his bearing and behavior, is also current both in other dramas and in literature of the period. For example, Shakespeare's 1 Henry IV concerns the making of an ideal king out of unlikely Prince Hal; his father, Henry IV, is the usurper Bolingbroke and, consequently, when seen from an uncompromising divine right position, Hal's right to the throne is questionable. Further, Hal's behavior is that of a truant schoolboy while his cousin Hotspur, also with claim to the throne, is busy making himself a national hero. The solution reveals Hal as having the true courage of Hotspur (but not his impetuosity) as well as the political acumen of Bolingbroke and what appears to be the pragmatism of Falstaff. The attitude of 1 Henry IV indicates that birthright alone is not of singular importance in the making of an ideal king.

Related to the attitude of 1 Henry IV is the tribute to the infant Elizabeth, spoken by Archbishop Cranmer in Henry VIII:

> In her days every man shall eat in safety
> Under his own vine what he plants, and sing

> The merry songs of peace to all his neighbours.
> God shall be truly known; and those about her
> From her shall read the perfect ways of honour
> And by those claim their greatness, not by blood.
> V.v.35-40.

and,

> She shall be, to the happiness of England,
> An aged princess; many days shall see her,
> And yet no day without a deed to crown it.
> V.v.57-59.

As in Woodstock, the monarch is judged in terms of deeds and effects, with emphasis placed on the material prosperity of the people.[62] In his study of early democratic ideas in England, G. P. Gooch discusses A Short Treatise of Politique Power, by Poynet, the Bishop of Winchester (published around 1592). Poynet argues that a king is equally subject to God's laws so that if he commits murder he must suffer the prescribed punishment; in addition, kings receive their authority from the people and, if the state is in danger of being destroyed by a king, Poynet declares it natural "to cut away an incurable member."[63] Woodstock's author never goes so far as to suggest deposing Richard and there are no candidates for his throne: the uncles seek to control Richard, not to replace him. Yet the assumption of the play that a king should be controlled is in the spirit of Poynet's treatise: that national order and integrity take precedence

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[62] Shakespeare, The Complete Plays, pp. 903-941.

[63] English Democratic Ideas in the Seventeenth Century (Cambridge, 1927), pp. 30-31.

over the institution of monarchy.

The point is not to argue the orthodoxy or heterodoxy of Woodstock, only to demonstrate that its spirit of inquiry and compromise in dealing with traditional beliefs and values is closely associated with the deepening awareness in the drama of ambiguities in the orthodox position and of the need to adjust values to serve realities. Just so, the commons in 2 Henry VI justify their rebellion after the death of Gloucester as necessary to save the king from an unknown danger (i.e., if the king commands that he not be awakened, but, when he sleeps, a snake comes up, then a subject should disobey the king to save his life; III.ii.255-269). Although this rationalization is never stated in Woodstock, it is applicable since York and Lancaster rebel to save both England and Richard from the undue influence of the sycophants. What mature drama, and particularly mature history plays, reflect is the gestalt of the Elizabethan experience, not isolated intellectual doctrine but the complexities of working out human lives amid the bustle of conflicting ideologies and allegiances and the profusion of new ideas. Woodstock exemplifies this spirit of the Elizabethan drama, which Rossiter terms "the spirit of inquiringness".[64]

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[64] A. P. Rossiter, English Drama: from Early Times to the Elizabethans (New York, 1950), p. 162.

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