It would be rash to dogmatize about the chronology of Shakespeare's writing, but it is at least convenient to discuss King John as an experimental play between the two historical tetralogies. Though Richard II is also experimental, it points more directly toward the Henry IV plays, most obviously in its material, but also in dramatic technique. Traditional chronology brings these two plays together in the mid-nineties between Richard III and the Henry IV plays. Most critics agree that the verse of King John shows a growth in flexibility and power over that of the first tetralogy, though in structure it is not so clearly superior. If, as seems likely, it is Shakespeare's reworking of an earlier play, either The Troublesome Raigne of King John (1591) or a common ancestor of that play and Shakespeare’s, this disparity is not too surprising.

At any rate, King John has dramatic parallels with both Richard III and Richard II. John shares some of the qualities of the tyrant king, but he also has some of Richard II’s vacillation and weakness. Constance’s lamentations are not unlike those of the wailing
queens, but they also have the self-conscious pretti­ness and emptiness of the deposed Richard's speeches. In one respect King John along with Richard II dif­fers markedly from the earlier play. Whereas Richard III counterpoints two styles of poetry, which between them dominate the language, King John is full of the most diverse kinds of poetic virtuosity. Sometimes the language has little excuse beyond itself for being in the play. In such a passage the nobles criticize John's double coronation with an iteration of poetic figures that is colorful but finally tedious to modern ears (IV.ii.1-39).

On the other hand, King John does not abandon the concern of the first tetralogy with order in the state, and it continues using allusion to the family to support that theme. Again it shows England turned aside from the true succession, and again a usurper's rule reduces the land to chaos. As Faulconbridge watches Hubert carry young Arthur's body off, he de­scribes what is happening:

The life, the right and truth of all this realm
Is fled to heaven; and England now is left
To tug and scramble, and to part by th' teeth
The unow'd interest of proud swelling state.

(IV.iii.144-47)

This is a fallen world, one from which Astraea has fled, to suggest the two myths that lie behind the passage. Arthur once refers to his era as the iron age (IV.i.60), and Faulconbridge sums up its morality in his speech on commodity. When Constance scolds
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Queen Eleanor, she uses the doctrine of inherited guilt, that omnipresent theme of the first tetralogy:

Thy sins are visited in this poor child;
The canon of the law is laid on him,
Being but the second generation
Removed from thy sin-conceiving womb.

(II.i.179-82)

But most striking about this speech is that it is entirely personal; it is not part of an elaborate pattern of crime and punishment that enfold the generations. Nemesis does not dominate the language and mood of this play as it did the first tetralogy, especially Richard III. There is a moral antithesis between the evil of the usurping John and the good of Arthur, an antithesis that is resolved when Prince Henry succeeds to the throne, supported by the strength and loyalty of Faulconbridge. But neither the good nor the evil attains the compelling dramatic power that both have in Richard III. Somehow the moral urgency has gone out of the contrast.

Disorder is still a terrible consequence of the violated succession, and Shakespeare once again uses the family to make its impact vivid. The imagery is full of references to the family as a victim of disorder. When the French king, succumbing to the ethic of commodity, betrays Constance and Arthur, she suggests that all children born on that day will be monstrous. At least in her frenzied imagination, corruption of justice in the state will disrupt the whole order of nature, including the process of generation. King
Philip in a sterner mood alludes to the impact of war on wives and children (II.i.257), and a French herald paints a vivid picture as he proclaims a victory for Arthur:

Who by the hand of France this day hath made
Much work for tears in many an English mother,
Whose sons lie scatter'd on the bleeding ground:
Many a widow's husband grovelling lies,
Coldly embracing the discolour'd earth.

(II.i.302-6)

Here the familiar generalized references to the family are turned into powerful vignettes by the concrete verbs and adjectives. Instead of the largely verbal antitheses typical of the earlier style, this passage insists on a visual contrast, the physical reality of the men's corpses and of the weeping women whom they have left behind.

Salisbury provides a moving example of the older rhetoric when, in lamenting the need to rebel against John, he uses the familiar image of children revolting against their mother. Later in the same scene Faulconbridge intensifies the same figure to picture the rebels as “bloody Neroes, ripping up the womb / Of your dear mother England” (V.ii.152-53). The violence of this figure is typical of the excess in the language of King John, which helps to maintain an atmosphere of disorder and corruption extending from the court to individual men and families. If this kind of poetry is sometimes more intense and more visually conceived than in Richard III, still it is similar in structure and purpose.
Like their counterparts in the first tetralogy, these statesmen use marriage as a device in their political schemes. England and France patch up their quarrel through a match between the Dauphin and Lady Blanche, John's niece. Again Shakespeare uses the extravagances of the Petrarchan love idiom to suggest how artificial are the emotions expressed. Hubert proposes the marriage in such language when his motive is entirely to save Angiers from destruction. Both Blanche and Lewis profess their love in the most precious rhetoric. Faulconbridge carries out his role as a choric voice of common sense when he parodies their style and comments directly on the match in his speech on commodity. A sudden interruption, the recurring Shakespearian symbol of the broken ceremony, makes clear the emptiness of this marriage feast. Pandulph's curse on John renews the war between France and England and leaves Blanche to bemoan her dilemma. Unlike Constance, she has no strong personal identity, and so her lamentation falls into a purely conventional pattern:

Husband, I cannot pray that thou mayst win;
Uncle, I needs must pray that thou mayst lose;
Father, I may not wish the fortune thine;
Grandam, I will not wish thy wishes thrive.

(III.i.257-60)

There is no parody in this language, but Shakespeare is content to let the rhetoric fall back on generalized pathos. Blanche is an undifferentiated representative of the women whose loyalties are divided by war,
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whose marriages are hopelessly corrupted by a world of commodity.

Since this is a play about the royal succession, inheritance is even more prominent than marriage, though Shakespeare is less direct and obvious in using it than the author of The Troublesome Raigne. The central issue is the rival claims of John and Arthur (later replaced by Lewis) to be the worthy inheritor of Richard I, the hero-king. John is a tainted heir, a younger brother who has usurped the throne with his mother’s connivance. He is an alien figure like Richard III, warring against his own kin to preserve an illegal rule, but John is neither so strong as Richard nor so unequivocally evil. Arthur has moral right on his side, but in his weakness he can hope to achieve the crown only by relying on foreign aid against his own countrymen. He has inherited no more than an empty right, without strength or actual possession. There is a hint of corrupt inheritance in the portrayal of King Philip and Lewis, his son and the would-be heir of Richard I as well. The Dauphin has inherited his father’s treachery, though he replaces Philip’s spinelessness with the vigor of youth. This base Frenchman’s claim to the throne of England is clearly a monstrous perversion of order.

Another prominent use of inheritance is in the quarrel between Lady Faulconbridge’s sons, which provides a comic parallel to the main theme of royal succession. It is ironic that John, false holder of the throne, should judge a quarrel over inheritance, one that like his title involves a will and the kin of Richard I. Faulconbridge’s history is clearly intended to
comment on the issue between John and Arthur, but its implications are not plain. If Faulconbridge parallels John, then his repudiation of his inheritance may contrast with John’s attempt to maintain an unrighteous inheritance, or his acceptance of a tainted descent from Richard I may imply that virtù is more important than a formally correct title. The ironies of the parallel are not simple like the contrast between the loyal Talbots and the divided court of Henry VI. This technique foreshadows the ironic use of the comic subplot in the Henry IV plays.

Thus King John repeats many themes from the first tetralogy, but their significance is seldom so direct and uncomplicated. E. M. W. Tillyard describes the change: “Shakespeare troubles less with what I have called his official self but in redress allows the spontaneous powers of his imagination a freer, if fitful, effusion.” In this play the orthodox doctrine of the Tudor myth is still present, but no longer a controlling dramatic principle. As a result, the position of the family as a microcosm of the state, illustrating political issues at a personal level, is less apparent. Shakespeare’s art is turning in new directions, though as yet the changes are probing and tentative.

Because its characters are less subdued to any such overriding thematic pattern, King John is more psychological than the earlier plays. John approaches being a disinterested study of a tyrant’s thinking and behavior, and Constance, Arthur, and Faulconbridge are also of special interest. Since all four of these characters are involved in family ties, the family begins to assume a new, fuller, and subtler role in King John.
With Constance and Arthur, Shakespeare mostly expands on the dramatic technique of *Richard III*. Arthur is pathetic in the same vein as the two little princes; Constance is like the Duchess of York in her moral dignity and like Queen Anne in her helplessness. Shakespeare's conception of the mother and son is abstract, based on the idea of right without power. He changes Arthur from a valiant young man to a child and ignores Constance's historical husband (in the latter step following *The Troublesome Raigne*). So modified, they are all the more clearly innocents trapped in a world of commodity and driven to self-destruction. Stopford Brooke describes Constance as "primeval motherhood isolated from everything else in its own passion," and Arthur is even more simplified as innocent childhood without any distinctive individuality. That they are mother and son is important, yet they have practically no direct contact. Even when they are together, Constance talks past her son in her fiery quarrels for his sake, and he responds to her only by revealing a shy embarrassment at her emotion.

Seizing on a few metaphors from courtly love in Constance's language about Arthur, E. A. J. Honigmann drops an ominous hint about her psychology: "This suggests that a particular fixation was meant." Of course, her hyperbolic grief should suggest madness, since we are later told that she "in a frenzy died" (IV.ii.122). But to seek the cause of her madness in an abnormal attachment to her son is to theorize at random about what Shakespeare has left in shadow. Constance is not a psychologically complete character with incestuous desires and such; she is the apotheosis of
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maternal love. She and her son speak in an artificial idiom because they are stylized figures, expressive of moral and emotional states rather than idiosyncratic personality. Their only power is verbal, and the artificiality of their language suggests the ineffectuality of such power in a world where King John and King Philip rule.

Mark Van Doren calls Constance “the last and most terrible of Shakespeare’s wailing women.” His phrase suggests both similarity and difference compared to Richard III. Like the women of that play and like Arthur, Constance is a voice of integrity coupled with weakness. The stylized formality of her language suggests idealistic nobility, but also detachment from the cold reality of John’s world. Constance is alone in her suffering, surrounded by the embarrassed and fugitive sympathy of a group of cynical men. Cardinal Pandulph’s dry comments and King Philip’s clumsy ministrations isolate her grief. If the Dauphin seems for a moment to be sympathetic, it soon emerges that his real concern is with the dishonor of losing to the English, and Pandulph quickly ends that concern with his Machiavellian counsel. Counterpointed by such worldliness, Constance’s laments cannot develop the symbolic weight of those in the first tetralogy. They cannot expand into a ceremonial antiphony with choric power. On the other hand, her isolation intensifies the pathos of her anguish. Even more than in portraying Arthur, Shakespeare seems to develop the pathos of Constance for its own sake.

According to C. H. Herford, she is “the Juliet of maternal love.” Like Juliet she reveals a deeply emo-

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tional nature in spite of the artificiality of her poetic idiom. As Arthur’s fortunes decline, one sees her austere pride crumble before the overwhelming passion of maternal grief. In her mad scene (III.iii) the ravings of this queenly figure, deprived of husband and son, circle obsessively around marriage and Arthur. The former dominates her opening apostrophe, which shows how the artificial mode can express intense emotion:

Death! death, O amiable, lovely death!
Thou odoriferous stench! sound rottenness!
Arise forth from the couch of lasting night,
Thou hate and terror to prosperity,
And I will kiss thy detestable bones
And put my eyeballs in thy vaulty brows,
And ring these fingers with thy household worms,
And stop this gap of breath with fulsome dust,
And be a carrion monster like thyself:
Come, grin on me, and I will think thou smil’st,
And buss thee as thy wife.

(III.iii.25-35)

Here the language of Petrarchan love meets that of the memento mori. The fusion begins in the grotesque oxymorons of the second line and extends through the image of death as a bridegroom. The bizarre combination is emphasized by the insistent physicalness of the images and their implicit violence: “And put my eyeballs in thy vaulty brows.” Because of these incongruous contents, the ingenuity of the rhetorical patterns becomes perverse.

Constance’s sicklied imagination plays with an ob-
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Sessive image of the human form distorted by time and calamity: the corpse-husband of these lines, and Arthur turned to "a babe of clouts" (58) or so changed by grief that she cannot recognize him in heaven. Half-conscious of her own madness, she says that her grief is the only image of Arthur she has left. Even in her ravings Constance overwhelms the French king and the papal legate by sheer personal force. Her single emotion gives her integrity, that rarest of qualities in this play. But firmness of will merely accelerates her self-destruction in a world where physical strength and cunning alone matter.

Her son is even weaker in the face of wrong supported by brute power. The play leaves no doubt that Arthur is the true inheritor of the crown and John a usurper; Faulconbridge's words over the child's body make that clear. Although there is some suggestion that England's woes spring from the violation of proper succession, the whole theme seems less vital in King John than before. Shakespeare is even careless enough to leave Arthur's genealogy in some confusion. King Philip, who can be counted on for proper sentiments if not worthy actions, makes a noble defense of Arthur's right. He contrasts John's "rape / Upon the maiden virtue of the crown" with his rival's honorable title by descent from Geoffrey (II.i.89-109). But Arthur's abstract right has no visible support: a helpless woman is the only representative of his heritage. Hence he is in the impossible position of having to accept aid from Austria, who caused the death of his heroic uncle, Richard I. When Arthur and Austria meet, King Philip refers to "thy unnatural uncle, Eng-
lish John” (II.i.10), “unnatural” because John has stolen the crown from his own kin; but Arthur’s alliance with Richard’s enemy is also monstrous.

Arthur’s most important scene comes after his separation from his mother when his desperate quibbling dissuades Hubert from blinding him. In spite of the artificial, punning style typical of children on the Elizabethan stage, the scene creates a simple but powerful pathos. Arthur tries even to repudiate his parentage in an appeal to the evil-looking Hubert’s sympathy:

Is it my fault that I was Geoffrey’s son?
No, indeed, is’t not; and I would to heaven
I were your son, so you would love me, Hubert.

(IV.i.22-24)

One is reminded of Henry VI wishing that he were a shepherd rather than a king and the widowed Queen Elizabeth promising to slander her daughter’s birth in order to save her from Richard III. Hubert responds to the claims of Arthur’s weakness and innocence, the claims of affection that King John has ignored.

Despite this victory over his uncle’s malice, Arthur is too weak to survive. He jumps to his death during a futile attempt to escape. It is ironic that the first disinterested support of his claims, the nobles’ rebellion, comes just too late to be of any use. As the murder of the princes in the Tower rallies England against Richard III, so Arthur’s death marks the turning-point in John’s fortunes. Both episodes evoke similar pathos
and rely on the same artificial rhetoric. But John is less clearly guilty than Richard III, and the chain of moral causation that leads to his downfall is perfunctorily developed. There is no overwhelming tide of familial and political indignation that carries John to his death. Faulconbridge, whose views are by now the main moral guide of the play, supports him, though with reluctance.

There are close parallels between Shakespeare’s John and Richard III as politicians, as warriors, and as conspirators against their own families, as this discussion has already suggested. Shakespeare ignores the Protestant effort to whitewash John as a heroic opponent of Catholic interference, a tendency somewhat more prominent in The Troublesome Raigne and central to John Bale’s Kynge Johan. In defying France, John expresses the sentiments of Tudor orthodoxy (Shakespeare’s villains often do), and there is some inconspicuous anti-Catholic or at least anti-clerical satire centering on Cardinal Pandulph. Nevertheless, this John is primarily the villain-king, a foe of order and succession who sacrifices England’s welfare to his own position. His unconcern for the bonds of family shows plainly enough in his treatment of Arthur. Though he is upset when Hubert reports Arthur dead, that is merely because the murder has turned out to be harmful to his interests. Occasionally he shows the brilliant delight in evil of Richard Crookback himself. Thus, when Arthur is captured, he feigns an uncle’s love while hiding his real intent behind a sardonic pun:

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The best thing about John is the love that he moves in Prince Henry and Faulconbridge. Selfish and inarticulate though he is, he has a rough fondness for those closest to him that earns their loyalty. He is genuinely fond of his mother and dependent on her...
advice, as his aimlessness after he leaves her in France suggests. When he hears of her death, his first reaction is a selfish concern with the state of his French territories, but some fifty lines later he is still brooding on the news: "My mother dead!" (IV.ii.181). If he has no real feeling for his nephew, at least he has some scruples about ordering his death. In the much-praised scene in which he arranges for the killing, it is not Hubert whom he is persuading; it is himself.

Faulconbridge's rough-hewn good nature stirs John to his closest personal warmth, even to submissiveness. It is as though he were still subservient to his brother's heroic personality, now reincarnate in Richard's illegitimate son. Early in the play he can reprove Faulconbridge's levity with kingly dignity (III.i.60), but he finally hands over to the Bastard his generalship, his strongest claim to personal significance. It is ironic that John's few affections come out as vacillation and submissiveness, the yielding of a weakly evil man. He is a very different version of the traditional dramatic tyrant-usurper. By showing him as son, uncle, and father, Shakespeare has probed more deeply into his psychology than by similar means with Richard III. If the second handling gives a less compelling stage figure, it is also more recognizable as a human form of evil.

In Faulconbridge, the main choric figure, Shakespeare turns to the symbolism of bastardy, but the meaning of the symbol is by no means clear. Bastardy in Elizabethan lore is a sign of moral depravity. By this tradition Faulconbridge should be the epitome of England's decline, a representative of how John's
usurpation has corrupted the state. But in fact his Machiavellianism is of a singularly unconvincing sort. He plays at deep policy, but in real conflicts of principle he acts uniformly on the basis of loyalty to the king, first John and then his heir. His main role is in the quasi-pastoral tradition of satiric comment on the court by a naïve but realistic observer from the country. He is the bright country squire who comes to the court, learns its ways, and comments shrewdly on the decadence that he sees. Just as his political significance does not fit the patterns of stage Machiavellianism, so the tag of bastardy does not describe his whole relationship to the family. Shakespeare complicates the symbolism with considerable subtlety.

John F. Danby describes Faulconbridge’s symbolic place: “Broadly speaking, Shakespeare’s problem is how to legitimize the illegitimate.” He argues that King John reveals Shakespeare’s abandonment of the theological framework of the first tetralogy for a benign Machiavellianism. That might be so if Faulconbridge were to become king, but there is no suggestion of any such possibility. On the contrary, he supports orthodox succession in Prince Henry’s title, though when John was king de facto, Faulconbridge supported him with equal loyalty. Hence his bastardy is not a symbol that defines his whole being, only part of a complex figure. Shakespeare is not content to rely on the stock emotions of a tag like “bastard” any more than he does on those of “Jew” in Shylock. In the corrupt world of King John, Faulconbridge embodies the highest good available. He combines clear-eyed insight into unscrupulous politics with a deeply idealistic
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patriotism. Even The Troublesome Raigne is able to rise above the crudities of stock response to bastardy, but Shakespeare goes far beyond his predecessor in creating a psychologically convincing moral commentator for his play.

Looking at the externals of the play, one can make a case for him as another Jack Cade, a representative of the New Men who try to rise above the station in life prescribed by medieval orthodoxy. Faulconbridge advances himself by supporting a usurper; Cade hopes himself to replace the reigning king. Both men mock the forms that uphold tradition, especially ceremony and religion. Cade repudiates his parentage, and Faulconbridge denies that his mother’s husband was his father. Indeed, he undercuts the whole Elizabethan doctrine of inheritance with words that echo Richard III’s declaration of moral self-sufficiency: “And I am I, howe’er I was begot” (I.i.175). From this point of view there is a terrible irony in the fact that John steals the throne from his legitimate nephew and drives him to his death, only to make this bastard nephew the most powerful man in England. Because John’s usurpation has corrupted orderly succession in the realm, men like Faulconbridge and Hubert rise while the nobles are forced into rebellion. One might conclude that Faulconbridge is the bastard as natural man, one whose base impulses lack ethical restraint.

However, the ethical pattern of King John is not that simple. As John Dover Wilson remarks, “The Bastard] is a kind of obverse to Richard III; Richard is always telling us he is determined to prove a villain and proves one; Faulconbridge is always proposing to
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follow the way of the world and fights for a losing cause.”

His decision in the first scene can be viewed in quite a different light. After all, Richard I was in fact his father, and so in taking his name, he is really accepting his parentage, not denying it. As Honigmann’s note points out, Eleanor tests his moral inheritance before accepting him as her grandson and ally, and he passes the test when he displays the cavalier boldness of his father. He completes the proof that he is heir to Richard’s courage by killing Austria and going on to become the mainstay of the English army and John’s rule.

Besides, it is not fair to call him cruel to his mother. His filial piety may seem unusually frivolous, but that is because he invariably hides his affections behind flippancy. Even to the formidable Queen Eleanor his gratitude and respect are tinged with impudence. Also he treats his mother with some kindness in their brief interview, in contrast with the same episode in The Troublesome Raigne, where he rantingly threatens to kill her in order to discover his father’s name. In King John he bullies and teases her into revealing her shame, but only after getting James Gurney out of the way. Finally, he undertakes to defend her honor from the world, though with a characteristically irreverent pun in his last word (on “naught,” meaning “naughty”):

If thou hadst said him nay, it had been sin;
Who says it was, he lies: I say ’twas not!

(I.i.275-76)
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Thus from another point of view Faulconbridge, like Alexander Iden, is a representative of the deep-rooted virtue that emerges to save England when its leaders seem hopelessly weak or corrupt. He demonstrates that the heroic tradition of Richard I is not dead even in the new world of commodity. His bluntness is opposed less to ceremony itself than to pretended ceremony and artificial rhetoric, the hypocrisy of a degenerate society. He sneers at the Dauphin’s love language because the marriage is obviously one of convenience, but he does not sneer at Arthur’s title to the crown. Just as he is loyal to his mother and Eleanor while avoiding the cant of devotion, so he defends the established order with his blunt speech and his strength. There is nothing metaphysical about his conservatism, no speeches on order among the bees or the divine right of kings. Like the keepers who take Henry VI prisoner (3 Henry VI, III.i), he supports the established order, the reigning king, no matter what the king’s faults may be. Shocked though he is at Arthur’s death, he never doubts where his loyalty should rest, and the play supports his choice. The rebels turn out to be aiding French domination of England, and Faulconbridge’s loyal defense allows the noble Prince Henry to succeed to the throne with undisputed title.

Faulconbridge is indeed one of the New Men. Of equivocal birth, he establishes a place for himself by his valor and efficiency, his virtù. But he never really violates the order of his society. Above all, he never commits the worst of political sins, rebellion. His is the conservatism of common sense, just as his love for his mother does not blind him to the fact that the
uncertainty inherent in paternity may apply to his father. He makes an ideal commentator for this play because he is resolutely loyal and yet without illusions. Shakespeare could not afford this kind of commentator in the first tetralogy, where the moral polarity is tidier; but in this play of half-hearted villainy and ineffectual good, the blunt choric figure of Faulconbridge is so useful that he steals the center of the stage from his betters, even from King John.

**Conclusion**

*King John* is a rich but untidy play. No one theme or character dominates it as the theme of order and disorder controls the first tetralogy and the title character dominates *Richard III*. In structure John is clearly at the center of the play, but, if anything, Faulconbridge comes closer to holding the center of attention. Again Shakespeare portrays a world corrupted by the violation of proper order, but this view is less desolate than in the first tetralogy. A world governed by commodity is no doubt less desirable than a world of perfect order, but at least it is recognizable as rather like our own. It is not the demon-ruled England of *Richard III*, not even the chaos of the Henry VI plays. If the violent evil of those plays is less conspicuous in *King John*, so is the severe ordering of events that compels evil to destroy itself and good to triumph. Instead of the titanic war between Richard III and nemesis, there are only equivocal figures like King John, the wavering tyrant, and Faulconbridge, the baseborn hero.
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Shakespeare has cast off the rigid quasi-Senecan order of the first tetralogy. His new freedom has resulted in growing complication of the characters, who thereby become more interesting; but what traces of shape the play has are left over from the pattern of Richard III. John is the villain who struggles against the forces of order and is defeated, to be replaced by a monarch who returns to order and due succession. But the moral urgency has gone out of this contrast; it does not govern the details of King John as it does those of Richard III. Among other elements the family loses its clarity of function even while gaining new richness and variety.

1 Peter Alexander and others have argued for about 1590 as the date of King John, though Alexander would put the whole first tetralogy back into the 1580s, thus preserving the orthodox order. See a tentative passage in Shakespeare's Life and Art (London, 1939), p. 85, and Shakespeare's Henry VI and Richard III (Cambridge, 1929), pp. 193-215. E. A. J. Honigmann in his New Arden Edition (Cambridge, Mass., 1954) argues for "the winter/spring of 1590/91" (p. lviii). The evidence for that date is not very compelling, but neither are the arguments for 1596 or any other date. If on internal grounds one is inclined to believe King John later than the first tetralogy, it is almost impossible to decide whether it precedes or follows Richard II, though the continuity of narrative makes it natural to associate the latter play with the second tetralogy. Once again, references to these plays that imply an order of composition should be taken as a matter of convenience in writing, not a necessary presumption of the analysis.

2 Following Alexander's hint, Honigmann argues that The Troublesome Raigne derives from King John rather than the other way around (pp. liii-lviii, Appendix B). He raises a few points difficult to explain on the older assumption that John is based on The Troublesome Raigne in its present form, but he does not overcome the far greater difficulties of his theory. Without going through the very complex arguments here, I will proceed on the assumption that, if King John is
not derived from *The Troublesome Raigne*, it comes from a source-play rather like *The Troublesome Raigne*. Since such a play is unlikely to have been by Shakespeare, it will not distort the probable truth too much to refer to *The Troublesome Raigne* as one of his sources.


I follow my source-text, Honigmann’s edition, in assuming that Shakespeare intended to merge the parts of the Citizen and Hubert. It is possible that the two parts were simply taken by the same actor.

The basis for this parallel exists in *The Troublesome Raigne*, although Shakespeare changes its whole tone by his handling.


Note at III.iii.104.


Quoted in New Variorum, p. 633.

See especially the problem at II.i.177, where Constance describes Arthur to Eleanor as “thy eldest son’s son.”

William H. Matchett, “Richard’s Divided Heritage in *King John*,” *Essays in Criticism* 21 (1962), 244-46, argues that the nobles are not disinterested, as their previous correspondence with the Dauphin proves. However, there is no hint that this correspondence precedes the break with John, and Salisbury’s grief at having to revolt (V.ii.11-39) has the ring of truth. James L. Calderwood, “Commodity and Honour in *King John*,” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 29 (1960), 345-47, agrees with Matchett, but his reading demands a retrospective irony untrue to any impression in the theater.

Bale’s morality play is a rigidly Protestant propaganda piece dating about 1538 in its original form. There is no evidence that Shakespeare knew this play, and it survived only in manuscript until the nineteenth century.

Indeed, John W. Draper, *Stratford to Dogberry* (Pittsburgh, 1961), p. 63, denies that the characteristics of bastardy are relevant to Faulconbridge since he is by law and custom legitimate. The point seems strained, since even Faulconbridge’s mother admits that Richard I is his real father.


Matchett’s article argues the contrary, but he is stretching the text, especially when he contends that Hubert implicitly offers the
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crown to Faulconbridge in V.vi. Again Calderwood anticipates his argument.


Note at I.i.135.

In The Troublesome Raigne Faulconbridge is jealous of the Dauphin because Blanche has been promised to him. Shakespeare eliminates this motive, perhaps in order to maintain the Bastard's sardonic detachment.