TILLYARD finds more of Shakespeare's "official self" in Richard II than in King John—more of the ceremonial language and ritualism that underscore the political theme of the first tetralogy. The family shares in this return to an older technique. Many themes of the earlier plays recur in much the same mode, though, as King John has already shown, the growth of Shakespeare's poetic skill gives them a new intensity of coloring. Richard's deposition begins a cycle of guilt and punishment that ends only with the triumph of Henry Tudor at the end of Richard III. As a result, it is natural that this play should emphasize the prospect of a chain of inherited guilt that will destroy the whole order of the kingdom.

Just before the deposition the Bishop of Carlisle closes a powerful statement of monarchical orthodoxy with a prophecy:

The blood of English shall manure the ground,
And future ages groan for this foul act,
Peace shall go sleep with Turks and infidels,
And, in this seat of peace, tumultuous wars

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Unlike Richard's anguished prophecies, this is a purely impersonal utterance, parallel to the choric speeches of the first tetralogy. The first line prepares for the whole passage by uniting the two main senses of "blood," the sign of inheritance and of death. Latent in the image is the terrible paradox of death, the most sterile of things, as fertile and breeding. Such poetic compactness is rare in the earlier plays, but the broad sweep of phrases like "kin with kin" and "child, child's children" is typical of the generalized references to destruction of the family in the Henry VI plays. The biblical phrasing of the ninth line (145) suggests the kind of radical disorder that Christ envisages, going beyond the rival families of Lancaster and York to "this cursed earth," the kingdom, and indeed all of fallen humanity. Such allusions are less common in Richard II than in the first tetralogy, but they still have their place.

The most prominent family theme, indeed one of the main threads of the play, is inheritance. Richard II is in part a drama of fathers and sons, not only in its emphasis on orderly succession, but also in its study of moral inheritance. The opening two scenes establish
the theme in two different keys. In the first it appears in a setting of splendid pageantry and public utterance, but the second scene is a deeply emotional private discussion. The immediate impression of the opening scene is of chivalric heroism with two knights defying each other in the finest oratorical vein. Mowbray and Bolingbroke repeatedly call on the traditional association of heroic courage and honor with noble birth, the great Renaissance tradition of aristocratic idealism. Bolingbroke touches on this idea in his first defiance:

Thou art a traitor and a miscreant,
Too good to be so, and too bad to live,
Since the more fair and crystal is the sky,
The uglier seem the clouds that in it fly.

(39-42)

That is, Mowbray is “too good,” too wellborn, to be a traitor; a base nobleman is so unnatural as to have forfeited his right to live. Mowbray shows proper respect for the king’s blood in his enemy, but with Richard’s permission returns the charges of “this slander of his blood” (113). When Bolingbroke refuses to withdraw his challenge, he suggests the son’s duty to emulate his father in courage: “Shall I seem crest-fallen in my father’s sight?” (188).

The most serious charge that Bolingbroke brings against Mowbray is the murder of Gloucester, Bolingbroke’s paternal uncle. Hence his challenge is an act of filial piety, vengeance for his injured family. He refers to his uncle’s blood:
He sees his pursuit of revenge as a sign of his noble birth. But his comparison of Gloucester and Abel suggests that there is another side to all this splendid pageantry, since Abel was killed by one of his own family. Clearly the reference is a veiled attack on the king himself, who is ultimately responsible for his uncle’s death. For all his public stance of impartiality and feudal correctness, Richard has shed the blood of his own family; the judge is an unnamed defendant.

Just as Richard’s position is equivocal, so is Bolingbroke’s. His arrogation to himself of the duty to dispense justice is presumptuous in the presence of his king, however guilty that king may be; Gaunt’s declaration of Tudor orthodoxy in the next scene makes that clear. Richard is moved to a veiled reproof of his cousin’s boldness even while proclaiming his impartiality:

Were he my brother, nay, my kingdom’s heir, 
As he is but my father’s brother’s son, 
Now by my sceptre’s awe I make a vow, 
Such neighbour nearness to our sacred blood
Should nothing privilege him nor partialize
The unstooping firmness of my upright soul.

(116-21)
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On the surface this speech is a fine public display of impartiality, but behind it is a double irony. Richard dwells with conscious sarcasm on the names of kinship that locate Bolingbroke, a mere cousin of the king in spite of his presumption. He is denying the significance of Edward III’s blood in Bolingbroke and hence the basis of his own royalty, whereas in a later scene Northumberland affirms “the royalties of both your bloods” (III.iii.107) even while plotting against Richard. Neither man accepts the full implications of the orthodox values he evokes.

Hence it is already clear that Richard is not impartial and cannot afford to be in the face of an attack on his sovereignty. But there is a second, unconscious, irony in the words, for this upstart is soon to prove “my kingdom’s heir” indeed. The lines foreshadow Richard’s bitter play on the same relationships as he surrenders to Bolingbroke’s power:

Cousin, I am too young to be your father,
Though you are old enough to be my heir.

(III.iii.204-5)

It is significant that Bolingbroke defies his father’s command to throw down Mowbray’s gage. He visibly rebels against his duty as a son just as he later will against his duty as a subject. All the spectacle and rhetoric in the first scene only partly cover a grave disorder in the state, and the theme of inheritance is closely involved with both spectacle and disorder.

If on the surface this scene illustrates proper inheritance of courage and loyalty, the second reveals a
dilemma of conscience typical of a disordered state. John of Gaunt and his brother's widow debate whether his duty to Gloucester, his brother, outweighs his duty to the king. The duchess defends the family in a set piece on the sons of Edward III (9-36), which alternates metaphors of blood and a growing tree, the standard images of the family. She sees the claim of family unity as absolute:

Yet art thou slain in him; thou dost consent
In some large measure to thy father's death
In that thou seest thy wretched brother die,
Who was the model of thy father's life.

(25-28)

To our ears her charges may seem the conceits of frenzy, but the weighty simplicity of her language suggests that more is involved. In the ordered universe of orthodox vision, the family is a union of supernatural power, part of the whole order of being. In a magical sense the son is indeed the father reincarnate. Gloucester's spilt blood is a physical sign of the noble inheritance in the House of Lancaster. For Gaunt to omit vengeance is to deny his birth, to commit the sin of despair in the name of patience (29-34). Gaunt does not deny the validity of her arguments. His words acknowledge "the part I had in Woodstock's blood" (1), but appeal to what he considers an even more basic principle than family loyalty, the sanctity of the king. Gaunt argues that in a deeper sense he lives up to his birth by his submission. He shows that Edward III's sons have not forgotten their prime duty of loyalty.
to the English monarch, the head of their family. Brother of one great warrior and son of another, he is the last full inheritor of their heroic virtue.

For this theoretical debate Shakespeare has both characters use severely impersonal rhetoric, but he gives emotional reality to the duchess’s affection for her brothers-in-law with a sudden shift in tone. Their argument left unsettled, the lonely widow tries fondly to keep Gaunt from leaving so quickly and voices her longing to see York. Shakespeare is no longer satisfied to leave even a nonce-character like her a purely impersonal voice. At the same time as he works the verse into formal conceits, he manages to express the broken accents of grief in a way that shatters the rigid formality (58-74). Even so, the main function of the scene is to establish John of Gaunt’s role of aged wisdom. In a demonstration of the noblest orthodoxy, he is prepared to sacrifice the dearest ties of kinship and love to the ideal of political order, which both his son and his nephew violate.

The first two scenes of Richard II have several important functions. They establish the theme of inheritance as a major one. They make clear that behind the ceremonial pomp of the state is a disorder that creates painful conflicts of duty. They begin a contrast between what seems to be happening and what really is, between proclaimed purpose and hidden motive, between word and deed. Finally, they make John of Gaunt a standard against which his son and nephew are measured. As the play develops, the family theme centers on three figures—the Duke of York, Bolingbroke, and Richard himself. Analysis of these three
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in their family relationships should indicate the direction that Shakespeare's art is taking.

For most of the play the Duke of York has a straightforward role. He is a weaker John of Gaunt, one who voices all the right sentiments, but lacks the will to carry out his good intentions. When Richard confiscates Gaunt's estates, York protests in words that predict the whole course of events:

Take Herford's rights away, and take from time
His charters, and his customary rights;
Let not to-morrow then ensue to-day:
Be not thyself. For how art thou a king
But by fair sequence and succession?

(II.i.195-99)

To violate succession, the outward equivalent of moral inheritance, is to deprive a man of his place in society and hence of his very identity, as Richard is to discover. But York cannot act on this wisdom, nor can he oppose the rebel Bolingbroke despite his bold "I am no traitor's uncle" (II.iii.87). York is the last of Edward III's seven sons, a fading remnant of the old order. In this new order in which there is no simple duty, no clear object of loyalty, he is an anachronism. Like Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, and that other Gloucester in the anonymous play Woodstock, he fails as a statesman through a too-innocent goodness, one that cannot cope with the power politics of a degenerate age.

At the end of the play York transfers his loyalty to the new Henry IV as king de facto, having convinced
himself that Richard's voluntary deposition is valid. However, since his son Aumerle is Richard's zealous supporter, York is caught in another dilemma of loyalty. When he discovers that Aumerle has joined a plot against the king, he threatens to denounce his son and does so. If York's determination here seems to contradict the established impression of his vacillating character, perhaps it is because Shakespeare indulges in rather frivolous self-parody, what R. F. Hill calls "a kind of savage farce." Often before he has created scenes of stylized emotion using couplets, stichomythy, and abstract language. Even in this play Gaunt expresses just such a dilemma of loyalty as York's in stiffly formal couplets (I.iii.236-46). But nowhere else has the dignity of the technique been so undermined by comic bathos. While York rages at his son's treachery, he calls angrily for his boots. The duchess caps a noble appeal to the pains of childbirth with a housewifely proof of her son's legitimacy:

He is as like thee as a man may be,
Not like to me, or any of my kin.

(V.ii.108-9)

Finally, so that Aumerle may hasten to get the king's pardon, his mother proposes that he steal York's horse. The confrontation before the new king at first seems serious enough. In nobly metaphorical language Henry expresses the traditional shock at vice descended from virtue, a muddy stream sprung from a silver fountain (V.iii.58-61). But with the arrival of the duchess he comments, "Our scene is alt'red from a serious thing"
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(77), as he drops into the prevailing couplets. From now until the speech with which he closes the episode, Henry is almost as taciturn as in the deposition scene; but his countenance, varying between anger and amusement, governs the tone. The old-fashioned style of this dispute is as out of place in the usurper's court as is York's anachronistic virtue. Both are objects of laughter to the generous but pragmatic king. It is as though Shakespeare were bored with the easy success of a stylized dilemma-scene. The Duke of York amuses him too much to be taken seriously in a tragic conflict of loyalty between son and king.

The shadowy figure of Bolingbroke is shown both as son and as father, the latter only briefly in this play. He is a somewhat colorless figure so as not to compete with Richard in dramatic interest, but Shakespeare turns this technical necessity into a point of characterization. At moments of crisis he is taciturn, Richard's "silent king." Although he is not without eloquence, there is always an element of calculation to his rhetoric, as though the reality were something colder and harder that lay behind his words. Shakespeare makes this quality clear by contrast with his father, that magnificently conventional figure. His virtue established in the first two scenes, John of Gaunt acts as another of the idealized old counselors of the king, like Eubulus in Gorboduc. On his deathbed he expresses the political ideal of the play in the accents of public rhetoric. "Like a prophet new inspir'd" (II.i. 31), he denounces his nephew's crimes:

O, had thy grandsire with a prophet's eye

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Behind the elaborate wordplay is Gaunt's sense of Richard's unnatural and self-destructive attack on his family, the roots of his being. The clearest dramatic representation of Richard's guilt and the act that ensures his deposition is the betrayal of this old man's loyalty by seizing his estates. As he appeals to the traditional sanctions of family and state, Gaunt's poetry is laden with the abstract eloquence characteristic of virtue in the first tetralogy.

As Richard relies on his inherited right against the usurper's threat, so Bolingbroke with scrupulous piety cites his inheritance from this great father:

O thou, the earthly author of my blood,
Whose youthful spirit in me regenerate
Doth with a twofold vigour lift me up
To reach at victory above my head,
Add proof unto mine armour with thy prayers.

But both members of the new generation have lost touch with the meaning behind their words. Although Gaunt gives Bolingbroke his blessing, his son has defied both him and their king in pressing the quarrel with Mowbray. Still Shakespeare is careful not to turn his future king into an unredeemed rebel or a pure Machiavel. Bolingbroke is a chastened figure when
Richard announces his banishment, and the grief of his parting from father and homeland seems real enough. But later, when his uncle York chastises his rebellious return to England, he shows his glib mastery of the language of filial piety. With sincere feeling he argues his right of inheritance, which is legitimate, but he also plays on York's emotions:

You are my father, for methinks in you
I see old Gaunt alive.

(II.iii.116-17)

York is able to sort out the valid from the specious in his nephew's plea, though he lacks the power and will to act on his knowledge. No doubt Bolingbroke's pride in his inheritance is real, but most of his public appeals to the bonds of family are mere rhetoric at the service of practical ends.

At least in Richard II Bolingbroke is the master of this contrast between verbal tribute to family ideals and the reality of power politics. Deprived of his proper inheritance from the noble John of Gaunt, he makes himself seem to be moral inheritor of the Black Prince and true bearer of England's royalty. Only at the end of the play does his son's alienation give a hint of the nemesis that threatens him. He complains of the wastrel Prince of Wales just before facing York's rebellious son. Bolingbroke seems unconscious of any parallel, but the suggestion is that disorder in the state growing out of his usurpation has put an unnatural strain on the bonds of father and son. The isolation characteristic of Shakespeare's kings, and especially of
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his usurpers, has enveloped the new ruler. At the end of the play, the only member of his family who appears with him in unshaken loyalty is his ineffectual old uncle York. Tainted with his cousin’s blood, Bolingbroke suffers from a guilt and loneliness that run deeper than pragmatic politics.

It is in Richard, however, that Shakespeare first develops with full power the tragic effects of isolation. Richard III freely chooses to alienate himself from his family, and the early Richard II does much the same thing. His counselors are not his wise uncles, but the favorites Bushy, Bagot, and Greene. He has had one uncle killed and confiscates the estate of another. His flippancy cynicism with his coterie about his kinsmen Bolingbroke and Gaunt (I.iv) is less evil than Richard III’s ironic scorn at family bonds only because Richard II is weaker. He is an amateur playing at professional villainy. In the scene (II.i) that most clearly establishes his guilt, both Gaunt and York suggest that he has repudiated his heroic father’s example. The cavalier way in which he names his uncle York to govern in his absence suggests, not only his folly in appointing a weak man, but also his bland confidence in an affectionate loyalty that he has just come near to shattering. He exploits the family bond that he is not willing to support himself.

But if this Richard willfully chooses his isolation, the later Richard feels the weight of loneliness. Stripped of the realities of power and of any meaningful personal contact, he tries to generate these things verbally. Over and over again he creates ceremonies to replace the lost ceremonial pomp of his office.
Because he knows that he has lost the reality of power, the ceremonies are aimless and perverse. Since the ideals of succession and kingly right that he appeals to are real ones, his voice every now and then catches a note of prophetic insight, but it soon dwindles into petulance and self-pity.

This new Richard appears at the midpoint of the play, after his absence in Ireland. The sight of a king weeping and caressing the earth establishes the perversity of his sorrow:

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

(III.ii.8-11)

He inverts the normal figure of the earth as mother, a figure that Bolingbroke uses of English soil at I.iii.306-7. The effeminacy of his language is the first sign of how weak Richard is when he can no longer depend on his royal power. Lest this scene be taken for a stylized representation of normal grief, Shakespeare provides certain guides for the audience, including an earlier episode of just such conventional grief. After Richard sails for Ireland, his queen Isabel has premonitions of disaster. She expresses her fears and Bushy consoles her in the most conceit-filled euphuistic style (II.ii.1-40). But Richard is alone in the extravagant language of his landing and conscious of his followers' embarrassed disapproval: “Mock not my senseless conjuration, lords” (III.ii.23). Also his style
fluctuates with his mood, so that no established pattern of conventional grief can be felt. The artificial method is internalized in one character and thus made an expression of his detachment from reality. In Isabel and Richard, Shakespeare contrasts an artificial character and a character who willfully pursues artificiality.

Having forfeited his place in the state and in his own family, Richard can only play with the remnants of his glory. When he confronts Bolingbroke at Flint Castle, his first speech is an impressive declaration of divine right, ending in a prophecy that foresees the whole course of the Wars of the Roses:

But ere the crown he looks for live in peace,
Ten thousand bloody crowns of mothers' sons
Shall ill become the flower of England's face,
Change the complexion of her maid-pale peace
To scarlet indignation and bedew
Her pastures' grass with faithful English blood.

(III.iii.95-100)

Here in passing is the familiar use of a general family reference in order to intensify a broad view of disaster. Even the cold-blooded Northumberland seems taken aback by this speech, but he is soon moved to scorn as Richard's voice rises to hysteria. By the time that the waning king descends to the base court, self-consciously pointing out the symbolism of the act, his language has become shrill and maudlin. His next appeal to the family is the petulant irony of calling Bolingbroke his heir. In the deposition scene he turns the renunciation of his inherited crown into a loss even
of “that name was given me at the font” (IV.i.256). (The speech is more naturally read as the embroidery of Richard’s despair than as an obscure reference to the legend of his bastardy recounted by Froissart.) To break the unity of the king’s two bodies, his office and his private self, is to destroy his personal identity, which is as much based on inheritance as his crown. 

One might have expected Shakespeare to make considerable use of the queen, whose continued loyalty to her husband counterpoints the nobles’ treachery, but he does not. Only once does Richard talk to her on stage, when she intercepts him on the way to the Tower. The result is a conventionally lyric expression of joint sorrow, given a touch of irony by the presence of the cynical Northumberland through most of it. Again Richard is more self-consciously dramatic than Isabel as he arranges (and characteristically changes his mind about) an “inverted ceremony”: 

\[
\text{Doubly divorc’d! Bad men, you violate} \\
\text{A two-fold marriage— ’twixt my crown and me,} \\
\text{And then betwixt me and my married wife.} \\
\text{Let me unkiss the oath ’twixt thee and me;} \\
\text{And yet not so, for with a kiss ’twas made.} \\
\text{Part us, Northumberland.} \\
\] 

(V.i.71-76)

The figure of marriage to the crown is not quite conventional and so loses the power of orthodox commonplace, and it lacks the startling inevitability of Shakespeare’s richer metaphors. Later Richard uses Constance’s image of loving and marrying a personified
sorrow (93-94), with perhaps the same suggestion of passionate excessiveness. For the most part, however, neither the characterization nor the emotion gets beyond conventional (and not very interesting) dramatic technique.

To Richard the family is little more than a useful figure of speech. Having forfeited the loyalty of his own kin, he can find little consolation in his wife's love. In his prison cell he makes only one reference to the family, a strained conceit that describes the working of his imagination (V.v.6-10). Even this late he shows only the most general consciousness of his guilt and none at all of his crimes against the right of succession, on which he bases his own sense of injustice. Alone, self-destroyed, even now self-deceived, he achieves only the lesser triumph of fighting bravely against his assassins. In his world nothing is real enough to make his isolation from the ties of family love tragically painful. Paradoxically enough, his hard-headed rival Bolingbroke will turn out to be vulnerable to that kind of suffering.

The characteristic device of Richard II, what sets it off most clearly from the earlier histories, is its use of artificial poetic and dramatic modes to establish different levels of reality. There is something to Tillyard's distinction between the ceremonial old order and the practical world of the New Men, but more important is the distinction between the ideal and the real. Artificial rhetoric can suggest hypocrisy, as it does in the first scene, or a genuine ideal with prophetic force, as in Carlisle's and Richard's warnings for the future. Or it can suggest self-deceived unreality, Richard's
characteristic state after his return from Ireland. Shakespeare's audience was alert to shifts in dramatic technique and tolerant of the most startling juxtapositions of realistic and conventional elements. They were accustomed to see the family as an emblem of disorder in the state, and they must have noticed this device in Richard II. All the familiar pattern of violated order and inherited guilt is sketched out there. Richard's crime against his uncles begins the cycle, and Bolingbroke's crime against his king and cousin extends it.

Nevertheless, this technique is less obtrusive in Richard II than in the first tetralogy once the ceremonial use in the early scenes fades away. Shakespeare is now more interested in another subject, the psychology of kingship. He shows, not only the qualities that make Richard lose his crown, but also what happens to his vision of himself when he is deprived of the position that gives him identity. Richard imaginatively projects himself into a simpler world where right and power are the same, though in flashes he is bitterly conscious of the self-deception. But for him there is no bearable alternative. Because he lives in an unreal world, he cannot have a truly intimate relationship. That is why the parting between him and Isabel has to be conventional. Though his suffering is real enough, it is almost entirely egocentric.

Consequently the family in Richard II hangs in a kind of limbo. As an emblem for political morality, it suffers the fate of all ideals in this play. The moral voice of Richard's wise uncle, John of Gaunt, is real enough, but Gaunt dies. Transferred to Richard's emotional
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tirades, the old code becomes illusory, unsupported by real physical power. On the other hand, Shakespeare cannot explore family bonds in a more psychological way because of his tragic hero’s special character. The great dramatic power of Richard II lies in its study of a ruler whose weakness betrays him as a king and isolates him as a man; of course, the fact that it does not further explore the dramatic potentialities of the family detracts in no way from that value. Also its technical development beyond the first tetralogy, its subtle probing into the psyche of a man, opens the way for just such an exploration in the Henry IV plays.

Conclusion: The Two Experimental Plays

In a sense all of Shakespeare’s plays are experiments. He never simply repeats an earlier success, his own or another’s. Nevertheless, King John and Richard II are more precisely experimental plays. At least in part they abandon the dramatic structure that Shakespeare worked out in the Henry VI plays and demonstrated complete in Richard III. The theme of political disorder having led him to study the bad king, perhaps he found the figure of Richard III too theatrical, too much a hypothetical construction like the Senecan tyrant and the Vice, too little a recognizable human being. Or perhaps he merely wanted to avoid repeating himself. At any rate, John and Richard, though bad kings, are remarkably different from the heroic villain Richard III. Not only are they weaker men, but they resist, and suffer from, the isolation that he relishes.
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John clings first to his mother and then to Faulconbridge, and Richard laments even his horse's disloyalty. Incapacity to feel personal bonds is a perverted kind of strength to RichardCrookback, but in these two kings it is part of their weakness. Neither has self-knowledge enough to realize that part of his crime is against the bonds of family, and so both seek an affection that they have forfeited.

Because of their weakness, John and Richard II do not dominate their plays completely. The vigorous Faulconbridge steals much of the interest from John, and Bolingbroke fails to do so from Richard only through a tour de force of dramatic shading and highlighting. Shakespeare's explorations carry him beyond any severe decorum of style or form. As a result King John is a hodgepodge of brilliant fragments and workmanlike joints, and even Richard II is not entirely focused either as a psychological portrait or as a political study.

On the whole the family continues its previous role in these two experimental plays, though the political ideas that it echoes no longer seem primary in their dramatic life. But even as this symbolic function wanes in significance, one kind of family relationship receives special attention: inheritance, the handing-on of power and an ethical and political code from father to son. In imagery, in short episodes, and in character portrayal, fathers and sons occupy an important place while marriage fades in importance. It is as though Shakespeare were reaching toward a new potentiality in the family as a dramatic subject, one that will find triumphant expression in the Henry IV plays.
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4. Shakespeare seems to assume that his audience knows these earlier events. His company may have been performing Woodstock, an anonymous chronicle play on the earlier part of Richard's reign, if indeed Woodstock predates Richard II. On the other hand, he may be relying on knowledge from A Mirror for Magistrates and other, perhaps untraceable, sources.

5. One other father and son, Northumberland and Hotspur, appear in Richard II. Northumberland plays a role of some importance, but little is made of his relationship with his son. Still, the contrast of their characters foreshadows the use to be made of them in Henry IV. Hotspur's bluntness to the rising Bolingbroke contrasts with his father's oily flattery. Just after Northumberland pointedly omits Richard's title and is reproved for it by York, Hotspur enters and speaks in quite a different vein (III.iii.20-26).

6. Hence there is symbolic weight in Bolingbroke's charge that Bushy and Greene have

Rac'd out my imprese, leaving me no sign,
Save men's opinions and my living blood,
To show the world I am a gentleman. (III.i.25-27)


8. "Never, in an age of drama marked by discursive self-revelation, has a character disclosed his traits with such economy and understatement" (Brents Stirling, "Bolingbroke's Decision," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 2 [1951], 34). This article is perhaps the best single analysis of his motivation.

9. Irving Ribner, "Bolingbroke, a True Machiavellian," *Modern Language Quarterly* 9 (1948), 177-84, argues that Bolingbroke is a true Machiavellian as opposed to the Elizabethan stage distortion, but
his argument is qualified by the fact that most of the parallels with Machiavelli's doctrines are already implicit in Holinshed's narrative. Shakespeare is imitating nature, not The Prince.

"Peter Ure, King Richard II, New Arden Shakespeare, 5th ed. (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), pp. lxviii-lxxii, vigorously objects to descriptions of Richard as self-consciously verbal, a poet rather than a king. He is properly reacting against critical excesses, but surely it is fair to say that Richard is conscious of his own language in a way that Othello or Macbeth (or John of Gaunt) is not. Using verse is of course a dramatic convention, but as always Shakespeare is perfectly capable of turning the convention into a point of characterization.

"In "Phaethon: The Metaphysical Tension between the Ego and the Universe in English Poetry," Accent 16 (1956), 30, Parker Tyler argues that the figure also shows Richard pursuing "the illusion of divine parenthood." But even in this expression of hybris his effeminate weakness is clear.

"See the valuable study of Richard II in Ernst H. Kantorowicz, The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology (Princeton, N.J., 1957).


"Quinn relates Richard's failure to have an heir to this passage. "In his last hour he is reduced to making his brain and soul parody the sex-act, so as to breed, instead of children, 'A generation of still-breeding thoughts'" ("'The King Is Not Himself," p. 183).

"Tillyard, pp. 244-63. Peter G. Phialas, "The Medieval in Richard II," Shakespeare Quarterly 11 (1961), 305-10, emphasizes the contrast between the time of the Black Prince and Richard's degenerate mediaeval reign. The article is a valuable supplement to Tillyard's view, but the two are more compatible than Phialas suggests. For a recent development of Tillyard's contrast, applied to the whole second tetralogy, see Alvin Kernan, "The Henriad: Shakespeare's Major History Plays," Yale Review 69 (1969), 3-32.