

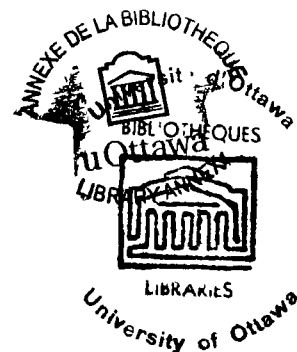
THE OCCULT IN DRAMATIC FUNCTION:
A STUDY OF SHAKESPEARE'S FIRST TETRALOGY:
HENRY VI, PARTS ONE, TWO, AND THREE, AND RICHARD III

by

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CURRICULUM STUDIORUM

Garry Engkent was born on January 24, 1948 in Sun Wei, Kwangtung, China. He attended Waterloo Lutheran University from 1967-71 and received a B.A. in English. From the University of Windsor, he received a M.A. (Creative Writing and English literature) in 1972. He has studied at the University of Ottawa from 1972-79.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	v-viii
Chapter	
I. <u>HENRY VI, PART ONE</u>	1
II. <u>HENRY VI, PART TWO</u>	43
III. <u>HENRY VI, PART THREE</u>	82
IV. <u>RICHARD III</u>	118
CONCLUSION	171
BIBLIOGRAPHY	174
ABSTRACT	213

INTRODUCTION

"The Occult in Dramatic Function: A Study of Shakespeare's First Tetralogy: Henry VI, Parts One, Two, and Three, and Richard III" is an investigation of the ways Shakespeare presented and developed the concept and theme of witchcraft in a series of plays which are predominantly historical and political in nature. Included under an umbrella term "witchcraft" is a number of related supernatural and occult elements, such as conjurations, infernal spirits, curses, prophecies, ghostly visitations, and physiognomy, along with the regular furniture belonging to the household of witchcraft. In terms of the plays' structure, content and form, both individually and collectively, these witchcraft elements have an important and pervasive role in the formation of the tetralogy. Although much has been written about these plays from various points of view, no one has approached them in terms of witchcraft.

This study is restricted in that it does not extend to Shakespeare's later use of the occult and witchcraft in other plays such as Macbeth, Hamlet, The Tempest, or A Midsummer's Night's Dream. It does, however, scrutinize how each element functions as an integral part of the play, as a dramatic device used to mirror or counterpoint characters, themes, and situations, and as a linking device to join the individual plays into a continuing whole. Furthermore, this study

explains the specialized actions and vocabulary of witchcraft--which, while they might be clear to and understood by the Elizabethan audience, are rather obscure to today's theatre-goers--and show how Shakespeare adopts and adapts these elements into the drama. For Shakespeare's application of witchcraft is never static, never totally stereotyped--although, admittedly, he used accepted conventions and ideas--and never used solely for the sake of gratuitous spectacle for the groundlings' pleasure. My contention is that, if witchcraft were left out entirely, the plays would not only diminish in dramatic effectiveness in the presentation of the complex nature of wickedness, ambition, and evil in political and power-hungry men, but also lose a strong structural link in the continuity and integrity of the tetralogy.

In Chapter One, Joan la Pucelle is analyzed in her role as a flagitious French witch in the eyes of both the Elizabethan audience and the other characters in the play. Her scenes with Charles and with Talbot are by far more interesting than those between Gloucester and Winchester, and between the pluckers of the red and white roses at Temple Garden. Joan and her brand of witchcraft are compared to the actual Elizabethan beliefs in witches. Furthermore, Shakespeare's design in dramatizing her and the witchcraft theme is explored in detail, and the various links between her and Margaret of Anjou in Act V will be discussed not only in Part One but in

the other three plays. Joan la Pucelle has a profounder effect on the entire tetralogy than is generally realized.

In Chapter Two, the witchcraft theme is quite strongly linked with the political. Complete with infernal spirit, the spectacular conjuration scene, which, incidentally, hints of political chicanery and collusion, is explored in terms of actual and theatrical conjurations. Moreover, a comparison between this scene and the one in the Contention is made. It becomes increasingly clear that the Contention is a reported version of Part Two. Shakespeare's shift from physical manifestations of witchcraft to abstract, nebulous prophecies is seen as a major dramatic development. By removing its visibility, the playwright makes witchcraft more ominous. Connected with this is Shakespeare's deliberately ambiguous prophecies, for these conundrums are central to the political fortunes of King Henry, Suffolk, Somerset, and York.

In terms of witchcraft, Part Three is a transitional play. The three major areas are the fulfillment of the last prophecy from Part Two, the changing role of Margaret from an Amazonian termagant to an occult curser, and the development of Richard Crookback as a diabolical prince. The role of the curse is seen both as a powerful occult weapon and as a dramatic device to create a sense of anticipation and foreboding and to link this play with the next. Established

here, cursing Richard Crookback becomes a leitmotif in the next play. Even though the fantastic and spectacular kind of witchcraft is missing, Shakespeare shows that the manifestations of witchcraft are as strong as ever, and, though unseen, linger.

Richard III is the culmination of both political and occult themes. Richard's character is fully explored in terms of his affiliation with the demonic for he is definitely more than just a Senecan tyrant, a Machiavellian villain-type, or a mere Vice figure. What makes his acts demonic in quality and scope while others, perpetrated by ordinary and lesser men are considered only wicked and just humanly evil? We also see a development of curses and prophecies as structural to the plot. The accepted notion that Richard has a conscience is re-examined in light of these vile curses from both the living and the ghostly. Although Richard is a devil in his own right, he cannot fend off curses and prophecies. Their fulfillment is his demise.

Previously, in the tetralogy, the witchcraft theme has not been fully examined. All past judgements are that witchcraft in this historical series is either to be ignored as unworthy of independent study, or summarily discussed in conjunction with something else. I beg to differ. My bibliography lists many scholars whom I have consulted frequently and many works which have rounded out my appreciation of the histories and my knowledge of the occult.

HENRY VI, PART ONE

Shakespeare's Henry VI, Part One is packed with broadly-conceived characters and fast-moving action, and may well be, as Maurice Morgann once described it, "that drum-and-trumpet thing,"¹ a rip-roaring drama which includes a plethora of clichés. Indeed, during the 1590s when the history play soared into popularity, Henry VI, Part One caught the imagination of the Elizabethan audience and proved to be as immensely successful on stage as any work of Marlowe's or Greene's.

Shakespeare leaves nothing to chance and no ingredient that would not appeal to some part of his London audience. His dramatic recipe is English history spiced generously with witchcraft. This is the very "stuff" of dramatic entertainment. There are the distinguished and flamboyant figures such as the patriotic Talbot and the well-known French strumpet-witch, Joan la Pucelle, and enough pageantry, bloody spectacle and turns in plot to satisfy a variety of tastes. Of course, Shakespeare's history is a loosely-based, often inaccurate and revised, account of the English in France after the untimely death of King Henry V, and his witchcraft, a curious medley of current, commonplace English and continental

¹Cited in Mark Goddard, The Meaning of Shakespeare, Vol. I (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 28.

beliefs; nonetheless, his audience clamoured for more of such entertainment.

This combination of history and witchcraft is not exclusively Shakespeare's. At this particular time, a number of playwrights incorporated into their histories, comedies, tragedies and romances various aspects of the occult. For example, Robert Greene, Shakespeare's contemporary and first critic, produced two plays, Orlando Furioso and Alphonsus, King of Arragon, that have witches appear at crucial parts of the plot. Melissa restores Orlando's sanity with her magic potion, and Medea prophesies the marriage of Alphonsus and Iphigina. In Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, Greene fictionalized the historical Roger Bacon in a slight, romantic comedy, complete with Brazen Head, magical tricks and contests. John Lyly, the Master of Revels at court, included in Endimion Dipsas, an ugly, old, lovelorn witch, and in Mother Bombie a helpful witch bearing the same name as the title. Sacrapant and the furies appear in George Peele's The Old Wives Tale, and Hecate and several of her minions take up a substantial part of the action in Thomas Middleton's The Witch. Christopher Marlowe produced the most frightening story of devil worship with Mephistophilis as the sardonic demon in Dr. Faustus.

Later, Ben Jonson mixed the legend of Robin Hood with the country witches, Maudlin and Lorell in The Sad Shepherd. In A Masque of Queenes, Jonson displayed a phantasma of witches. Barnabe Barnes wrote about satanic pacts and the

Borgia Pope, Alexander VI, in The Devil's Charter, and George Chapman included a conjuring scene with the appearance of Behemoth in the domestic tragedy, Bussy D'Ambois.

Shakespeare continued to use witches and other supernatural beings in his plays. In A Comedy of Errors, the Syracusans, Antipholus and Dromio, believe that the whole town of Ephesus is infested with witches and madmen. In A Midsummer's Night's Dream, Oberon and Puck practise spells and charms on unsuspecting lovers and country bumpkins outside of Athens. Later in his career, Shakespeare returned to the witchcraft theme in Macbeth and The Tempest. Even the tragedy, Othello, suggests the use of magic and witchcraft ("There's magic in the web of it.") in the fabric of the strawberry handkerchief.

In real life, the Elizabethans were at once fascinated with and repelled by the supernatural and witchcraft. They believed that witches existed among them and the power of the witch was efficacious. Because the "Witch was one that woorketh by the Deuill or by some deuillish or curious art,"² she brought both apprehension and curiosity. For although the Elizabethans reviled and derided the witch constantly because she was in league with the Devil and could do any one an evil turn at the slightest provocation or whim, they still sought her out when they needed a love potion, a curse, a

²George Gifford, A Discourse of the Subtill Practices of Deuills by Witches and Sorcerers (London, 1587), Sig. B₂.

charm or a spell. The witch was trapped in a paradoxical situation. On one hand she commanded fear and respect from her neighbours because nowhere could a person avoid her or be safe from her capricious malevolence. She could have her victim waste away slowly by means of a charm. On the other hand she was quite vulnerable to gossip and accusations and could be hauled before the Justice of the Peace and tried for crimes of witchcraft, real, imagined or supposed. In this way she was fair game, and anyone with or without cause could condemn her to perdition.

During the second half of the sixteenth century there was an alarming increase in witches, as evidenced by the growing number of witch trials in England. In dealing with this menace, the Crown enacted newer and harsher Statutes against witches and the practice of witchcraft. The Elizabethan Statute of 1563 was very specific in this regard. For a first offence, the convicted witch was imprisoned for one year with quarterly visits to the pillory. On a second conviction, the witch forfeited her chattels and goods and was imprisoned for life. Later, under King James I, the punishment for a second conviction was death by hanging. (Burning at the stake was reserved for high crimes such as treason in England.) The tightening up of the laws against witchcraft reflected not only a growing concern but an acknowledgement that the witch was a real menace to English

society. The famous witch trials at St. Osyth and Chelmsford brought to attention the fact that witches were plentiful.³

The witch trials were topics of conversation and ready material for the pamphlet trade.⁴ Perversely, instead of feeling repulsion for witches, the Elizabethans became more interested in these lowliest of the Devil's disciples. Whenever there was an opportunity to see the witch on stage they filled the theatre. In one way, the Elizabethans were learning more about witches and witchcraft through this medium and seeing all witches in the light of the fictional creature on stage.

But the stage witch, although familiar enough to the audience, was not the same as the common, lowly wretch brought to trial for her life. The stage witch was a different creature, a product of the inventive imagination and dramatic verisimilitude of the playwright. The stage witch contrasted with the real witch in that the evil or wicked wonders were highly fantastic, contrived and always efficacious. No real crone could ever claim that. Moreover, whether of the helping or hindering kind, the stage witch was larger than

³See: A.D.J. Macfarlane, Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England (New York: Harper-Torch Books, 1970), pp. 255-306. Macfarlane says that from 1560 to 1645 there were no less than 1,220 indictments for witchcraft in the county of Essex alone.

⁴Montague Summers, Geography of Witchcraft (New Jersey: The Citadel Press, 1965), pp. 194-95.

life and had a sense of purpose. Greene's Melissa saves Orlando from infamy and eternal insanity, and Middleton's Hecate encourages Almachildes to further wickedness.

The stage witch played a variety of roles. She could be a go-between for star-crossed lovers, a matchmaker, a troublesome old crone who mutters curses, or a wrecker of havoc. She could be either comic or thoroughly wicked, but never tragic (except, perhaps, Mother Sawyer in The Witch of Edmonton). As a dramatic tool, she was most useful. As a sort of deus ex machina she could solve a dramatic problem should the playwright find himself boxed in. She could foretell events or mutter puzzling oracles and make the audience wait with baited breath to see whether what she prophesied would come true. More often passive than active, her role was minor and supportive, but she captured the imagination of the audience. The stage witch was a favourite character.

Indeed, the Elizabethans were quite aware of, and quite interested in, this suprasensible world, both in life and in fiction.⁵ A real witch just around the corner did not prevent an Elizabethan theatre-goer from enjoying the antics of her counterpart on stage.

⁵See: Robert H. West, The Invisible World (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1939); Shakespeare and the Outer Mystery (University of Kentucky Press, 1968); and "Elizabethan Belief in Spirits and Witchcraft," Studies in Shakespeare, ed. Clark Emery and Arthur Mathews (Miami, 1952), pp. 65-73.

Following the popular trend set by his contemporaries, Shakespeare also used witches in his early works. While others took their models from legend, myth and classical antiquity, Shakespeare drew his from the pages of English history, and gave Joan la Pucelle in Henry VI, Part One a prominent role.

Undoubtedly, Shakespeare saw in Joan a colourful and dynamic personality who would make a controversial counterpart to the chauvinistic Lord Talbot. He drew her larger than life and more wicked. And unlike other dramatists who portrayed their witches as comic characters, Shakespeare made his a dramatic one. However, one must concede, he could not help but include some low comic characteristics in her and in some of the scenes in which she appears. And although the early critics condemned Shakespeare for his black portraiture of Joan, there is a certain correctness about the size and dramatic quality of her role. For unlike her stage sisters who appear full of sound and fury, complete with malediction, in a scene or two and then are heard no more, Joan is no superfluous witch. In Shakespeare's rearranged chronology of the English in France, Joan demands attention.

Unlike Shaw's heroine, Shakespeare's Joan la Pucelle is a true witch. The Elizabethans and their forebearers all believed her to be such. The English chroniclers, Halle and Holinshed, painted her as black as possible. In his

uelish witch,"

"sorceresse," "a pernicious instrument to hostilitie and bloudshed in diuelish witchcraft and sorcerie," and "strumpet."⁶ He also castigated the French, Charles the Dauphin in particular, for associating with Joan and for "dealing in diuelish practises with misbeleeuers and witches."⁷ Joan's reputation as a witch outlasted her life time. Upon hearing her name, an English audience would quickly identify her with witchcraft and sorcery. Shakespeare capitalized on her dark renown.

Unlike many descriptions of the Renaissance stage witch whose features are hard to look upon, say, a Dipsas, or a Mother Sawyer, or a Hecate, and whose outward appearance mirrors an equally deformed, malicious mind, Joan la Pucelle is a young and attractive maiden when we first meet her. Shakespeare does not follow Halle's description of her as being ugly with a "foule face."⁸ She admits that she is a transformed beauty from a black and swart complexion to what Tillyard fondly describes as a dazzling blonde.⁹ This, of

⁶Raphael Holinshed, Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland, Vol. III (New York: AMS Press, 1965), pp. 166, 168, and 171.

⁷Holinshed, p. 171.

⁸Edward Hall, The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre and Yorke in Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare, ed. Geoffrey Bullough (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), p. 56.

⁹E.M.W. Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays (London: Penguin Books, 1944), p. 171.

course, does not prevent the English from calling her "hag," "strumpet," and "ugly witch."¹⁰ Certainly, Joan does not reflect the typical appearance of a real Elizabethan witch as cynically sketched by Reginald Scot:

One sort of such as are said to be witches are women which be commonly old, lame, bleare-eied, pale, fowele, and full of wrinkles, poore, sullen, superstitious and papists. . . . They are leane, and deformed, shewing melancholie in their faces, to the horror of all that see them. They are doting, scolds, mad, diuelish. 11

Joan la Pucelle is more inclined to look like an alluring succubus who seduces men to mischief, incontinence, sin and doom. Charles the Dauphin is attracted to her passionately when she displays her prowess in arms and promises to recompense him:

Resolve on this: thou shalt be fortunate
If thou receive me for thy warlike mate.
(I.ii. 91-92)

She captivates him with her physical beauty and with words which strongly suggest sexual invitation, and he succumbs.

Among the stage witches, Joan stands unique, and her presence is felt whether or not she appears in a particular scene. This is particularly evident in the English scenes. Talbot blusters and gnashes his teeth as he strikes out to avenge Salisbury's death, and later when he is defeated the ignominy of having been trounced by a witch and a woman

¹⁰William Shakespeare, The Riverside Shakespeare, ed. G. Blakemore Evans et al. (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1974). All subsequent passages will be taken from this text and citation will follow the passage quoted.

¹¹Reginald Scot, The Discouerie of Witchcraft, ed. Montague Summers (London: John Rodker, 1930), pp. 4-5.

to boot galls him. In addition, the novelty of an Amazonian witch humbling the great Talbot comes as a shock. How else could Joan discomfit Talbot except by witchcraft?

Joan functions admirably as a kind of foil or barometer to gauge other characters and actions. She is the obvious foil to Talbot who acts predictably as a stereotyped military patriot and whose main forte is his bombastic chauvinism rather than his intellect. But because he is English, all his follies are overlooked. This is hardly the case with Joan. Whereas Shakespeare imputes no dishonour to Talbot for his military failures, he blackens the witch by her own actions, by contumelies and by ribald commentary. Joan's victories are tainted, and her set-backs at the hand of Talbot are hailed as typical examples of English resilience, hardiness and derring-do. Clearly, the playwright is biased; however, he knows the dramatic advantage of using someone having totally opposite characteristics to highlight or to contrast with other character. Compared to Joan's, Talbot's faults are then non-existent. Similarly, even Charles' follies seem pardonable when one realizes that he is enthralled by witchcraft.

Because Henry VI, Part One is analytical rather than historical¹² Shakespeare takes liberties with facts and rearranges the scattered events during the infancy of King

¹²Peter Saccio, Shakespeare's English Kings (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 105.

Henry VI at the height of the Hundred Years' War into a simpler, symmetrical pattern. Cause and effect are more clear cut. Often the playwright invents certain situations and scenes which have little or no basis in actual history, but have great significance within the framework of the play. For example, in the opening scene, the grief and frustration over the death of Henry V quickly give way to a flurry of military disasters when the three messengers report the heavy losses of English possessions and strongholds in France. Bedford and Exeter speculate, respectively, that the bad revolting stars and the use of witchcraft by the French brought on the death of their king. While this idea may be nonsense because historically Henry V died of natural causes, the mere suggestion that occult aid was used remains foremost in the audience's mind. Moreover, in the next scene, Shakespeare gives proof positive that the French are quite inept against the English and that French leadership under Charles the Dauphin is a big joke. Only when Joan appears and leads the French forces do they obtain any kind of military victory. Shakespeare's audience would accept the explanation that indeed the French use conjurers and witches to vanquish the English. Undoubtedly, Tillyard's suggestion that "the Joan episodes. . . are the clue to the whole plot"¹³ has merit.

Shakespeare draws Joan's character with more care and

¹³Tillyard, p. 169.

originality than many critics realize. Tillyard regards Joan only as an instrument of Divine Vengeance;¹⁴ Riggs finds Joan a parody of heroism;¹⁵ and Reed calls her an "English black witch" and remarks that the playwright "even denies her any attribute that might elevate her to the status of a medieval or Greco-Roman sorceress."¹⁶ But Joan is far from being the stereotyped witch whose function is limited and whose development, stunted. As a character, she is less of a card-board figure than the illustrious Talbot. In the evolution of the stage witch, Joan surpasses her sisters. Lyly's Dipsas is an unchanged "fool and scold" throughout, and Mother Bombie appears as a meddlesome old woman. Middleton's Hecate and Stadlin, along with other minor witches, are conventional cauldron-cooks and nightmares who love malice for its own sake when they meddle in other people's affairs. Even Mother Sawyer, driven to witchcraft and damnation because of poverty, physical deformity and heartless persecution from her neighbours, works mischief out of spite and desire for revenge. As a witch, Joan is beautiful, lascivious, witty and even ironic.

At the French court, Joan at first seems demure and

¹⁴Tillyard, p. 170.

¹⁵David Riggs, Shakespeare's Heroical Histories (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 104.

¹⁶Robert R. Reed, The Occult on the Tudor and Stuart Stage (Boston: The Christopher Publishing House, 1965), p. 167.

humble. The Bastard of Orleans introduces her as a "holy maid" sent from heaven and ordained "to raise this tedious siege" (I.iii. 50-57). According to the Bastard, Joan has the spirit of deep prophecy which permits her to see both past and future. A moment later, Joan describes herself as a lowly "shepherd's daughter" to whom God's Mother chooses to appear and give a divine mission. At this point, Shakespeare seems to follow Holinshed's account closely:

Of fauour was she counted likesome, of person
stronglie made and manlie, of courage great, hardie
and stout withall, an vnderstander of counsels
though she were not at them, great semblance
of chastitie both of bodie and behauour, the
name of Iesus in hir mouth about all hir
businesses, humble, obedient, and fasting
diuerse daies in the weeke. 17

Nothing in Holinshed's description at this time hints at her occult vocation; however, this picture of Joan is neither a complete nor a true one. It seems to me that Shakespeare makes much of Holinshed's choice of word in "semblance" as suggesting a facade on Joan's part, because very quickly he turns the scene into a travesty of sorts. Then, upon reflection, one could construe the Bastard's exaggerated words as a mockery of Joan's powers:

Believe my words
For they are certain and infallible.
(I.ii. 58-59)

When Charles devises his harebrained scheme to "test her skill" Joan identifies him immediately although she

¹⁷Holinshed, p. 163.

claims not to have "any kind of art." One critic interprets her disclaimer to "art" as a lack of book learning,¹⁸ but for a girl who lacks education, she speaks eloquently. Another suggests that she does not know "the black art of conjuring, necromancy, and divination."¹⁹ But Joan does know the practices of witchcraft. A witch has the ability to divine lost goods, stolen items and hidden fortunes. This particular skill is called "sortilege." In identifying the true Dauphin hidden among his lords, Joan could well be practising witchcraft. Undoubtedly, the French lords mishandled their game badly because their ruse fails, and Joan ferrets out the Dauphin, commenting:

Be not amaz'd, there's nothing hid from me.
(I.iii. 68)

Her boast belies her claim that she is "untrained in any kind of art." Furthermore, we begin to suspect her other miraculous claims, that God transformed her physical appearance and that she had heavenly visitations and heard voices. In brief, any time Joan speaks of Heaven and the saints her words are suspect. She belongs to the devilish kind.

After having been tricked into dueling with her and having lost Charles the Dauphin finds himself madly in love:

Whoe'er helps thee, 'tis thou that must help me:
Impatiently I burn with thy desire;

¹⁸G.B. Harrison, "Notes," Shakespeare: The Complete Works (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968), p. 111.

¹⁹F. Bion Bliven, "The Occult Tradition in English Renaissance Drama" (Unpub. Ph.D. Diss. University of Ottawa, 1971), p. 260.

My heart and hands thou hast at once subdu'd.
 Excellent Pucelle, if thy name be so,
 'Tis the French Dolphin sueth to thee thus.
 (I.ii. 107-12)

A witch has the power to induce unlawful love by means of a potion, a charm, or a spell. The Malleus Maleficarum explains how a witch is able to accomplish this:

Philocaption, or inordinate love of one person for another, can be caused in three ways. Sometimes it is due merely to lack of control over the eyes; sometimes to the temptation of devils; sometimes to the spells of necromancers and witches, with the help of devils. 20

Joan, however, holds the Dauphin off until she has fulfilled her promise to raise the siege at Orleans:

I must not yield to any rites of love,
 For my profession's sacred from above.
 When I have chased all thy foes from hence,
 Then will I think upon a recompense.
 (I.ii. 113-16)

She knows that he is under her spell and cannot escape. Yet her response is novel, for one does not expect a witch to keep promises.

The Dauphin's libidinous advances cause his lords to poke fun at them and make scurrilous and bawdy jokes. To be sure, these jokes are mainly directed at Charles; nonetheless, they reflect on Joan's reputation as well.

Alan. Doubtless he shrives this woman to her smock,
 Else, ne'er could he so long protract his speech.

²⁰Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, Malleus Maleficarum, trans. Montague Summers, ed. Dennis Wheatley (London: Arrow Books, Ltd., 1971), pp. 362-63.

Reig. Shall we disturb him, since he keeps no mean?

Alan. He may mean more than we poor men do know:
 These women are shrewd tempters with their tongues.
 (I.iii. 119-23)

Eric Partridge draws attention to words such as "shrives this woman to her smock," "know," and "shrewd tempters with their tongues" as having sexual connotations.²¹ Moreover, Joan herself speaks in double-entendres when she intimates that she will be his "war-like mate." The innuendo cannot be ignored: Charles will not only have a military companion to fight his battles but also a companion in his bed. At this point, although the French lords still suspect her as a fraud, they take her more seriously as a strumpet. And this notoriety remains with her in both the English and French camps. Moreover, they are right in their presumption, and for the rest of the play whenever they speak to her or about her, their words have an ironic quality.

After Joan raises the siege at Orleans, Shakespeare shows Joan securing her due recompense from Charles. When Talbot surprises the careless, celebrating French that night, Charles and Joan enter together, half-dressed. The French nobles take this opportunity to poke fun at the pair. Alanson remarks, "Here cometh Charles, I marvel how he sped," and the Bastard responds, "Tut, holy Joan was his

²¹Eric Partridge, Shakespeare's Bawdy (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968), pp. 113, 131, 183 and 199.

defensive guard" (II.i. 48-49). Their animadversions, scurrilous and ironic in tone, remind the audience of the rites of love and recompense which Joan promised the Dauphin earlier. Even after their success at Orleans, the French noblemen's esteem of Joan has not risen any higher. The Bastard's sarcastic comment lends credence to our earlier suspicion of his wry, ironic humour when he introduced this "holy maid" whom he now mocks as "holy Joan." Charles himself confirms their suspicions when, in explaining his negligence, he hints at a sexual liaison:

As for myself, most part of all this night,
 Within her quarter and mine own precinct,
 I was employ'd in passing to and fro,
 About relieving of the sentinels.

(II.i. 67-70)

Later, Burgundy, the Englishmen's ally, tells how he saw Joan and Charles:

Myself, as far as I could well discern
 For smoke and dusky vapors of the night,
 Am sure I scar'd the Dolphin and his trull,
 When arm in arm they both came swiftly running,
 Like to a pair of loving turtle-doves
 That could not live asunder day or night.

(II.ii. 26-31)

By no means is Joan the chaste and simple maid she pretends to be. Much later, when she is interrogated by the English, she pleads pregnancy and slanders all the French nobles as the father of her unborn child.

If the French ever held Joan in any awe or esteem in the beginning, they quickly lost it as they moved from campaign to campaign. Not only are the other French lords

cynical about her behaviour and suspicious of her motives, her paramour, Charles the Dauphin, sees her more or less as an instrument to be used, flattered when she wins for him, and scolded and suspected of treachery when she fails to live up to her bargain. Upon the success of raising the siege at Orleans, the Dauphin praises her highly:

Divinest creature, Astraea's daughter,
How shall I honour thee for this success.
Thy promises are like Adonis' garden
That one day bloom'd and fruitful were the next.
France, triumph in thy glorious prophetess.
(I.vi. 4-8)

and

'Tis Joan, not we, by whom this day is won;
For which I will divide my crown with her,
And all the priests and friars in my realm
Shall in procession sing her endless praise.
A statelier pyramid to her I'll rear
Than Rhodope's of Memphis ever was.
In memory of her when she is dead,
Her ashes, in an urn more precious
Than the rich-jewelled coffer of Darius,
Transported shall be at high festivals,
Before the kings and queens of France.
No longer on Saint Denis will we cry,
But Joan de Pucelle shall be France's saint.
(I.vi. 17-29)

E.A.M. Colman notes the satiric quality of the Dauphin's encomium:

Since Rhodope of Memphis has connotations of courtly prostitution, and Adonis of fertility ritual, there runs beneath the formal hyperbole an undercurrent of sexual indulgence that washes away some of the saintliness. 22

²²E.A.M. Colman, The Dramatic Use of Bawdy in Shakespeare (London: Longman, 1974), p. 49.

Allowing for the hyperbolical style of the 1580s and 1590s in which fine praise often ran into excess and verged on the ridiculous, we find that Charles' encomium has a frivolous--if not a satiric--tone. His idea of dividing his crown with Joan is to take her to his bed. He prefers to glorify her memory with monuments, urns and catch-phrases rather than to have her alive.

When the French are surprised and forced to retreat,
Charles lambasts Joan:

Is this thy cunning, thou deceitful dame?
Didst thou at first, to flatter us withall,
Make us partakers of a little gain,
That now our loss might be ten times so much?
(II.i. 50-54)

This sudden swing from one extreme to the other is characteristic of the French, and especially of Charles. When an occasion turns sour, Joan is the first to be suspected and blamed for their troubles. In one sense Charles feels that Joan has conned him and led him to a more bitter defeat now that he has tasted the fruits of victory. In another sense, Charles knows Joan to be a witch, and he depends on her witchcraft to bring him victory. When she defaults, he feels deceived. Dover Wilson and Herschel Baker, respectively, indicate Charles' use of "cunning" to mean "magical"²³ and "skill (with magic)."²⁴ In witchcraft terminology,

²³John Dover Wilson, "Notes," Henry VI, Part 1 (Cambridge at the University Press, 1968), p. 139.

²⁴Herschel Baker, "Notes," The Riverside Shakespeare ed. G. B. Evans et al. (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), p. 605.

"cunning" is defined as the knowledge or skill in magic and witchcraft.²⁵

When success hangs in the balance, Charles and his lords do not hesitate to ask Joan to use her "cunning."

Char. We have been guided by thee hitherto,
And of thy cunning had no diffidence;
One sudden foil shall never breed distrust.

Bast. Search out thy wit for secret policies,
And we will make thee famous through the world.

Alan. We'll set thy statue in some holy place,
And have thee reverenc'd like a blessed saint.
Employ thee then, sweet virgin, for our good.
(III.iii. 9-16)

As enticement, Charles offers trust; the Bastard, earthly fame; and Alanson, religious renown. The whole incident is ironic, if not downright satirical. Alanson's promise of a statue of her in some holy place echoes Charles' earlier pledge of a "statelier pyramid" and "an urn more precious." All three offer bribes for her cunning and secret policies. Ostensibly, they pay lipservice to her holy mission, but when the chips are down they want her to use witchcraft.

When Joan proposes to lure Burgundy over to the French side, Charles asks her to enchant him with her words: "Speak Pucelle, and enchant him with thy words" (III.iii. 40). In the OED, "enchant" is defined as "to bewitch." In short, the Dauphin wants Joan to bewitch Burgundy; and she enchants

²⁵Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline in Magic (London: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 210.

him "by fair persuasion, mixed with sugar'd words" (III. iii. 18).

In her first speech, Joan begs Burgundy not to spill any more French blood. This patriotic plea has a profound effect on the warlike Burgundy who, a moment ago, has shown brusqueness, inflexibility and prejudice and is given to name-calling: "Scoff on, vile fiend and shameless courtezan" (III.ii. 45). As an ally of the English at Orleans and Rouen, Burgundy is well aware of Joan's reputation as a witch. Certainly, he has often heard Talbot denounce her as such. Even now, he suspects:

Either she hath bewitched me with her words,
Or nature makes me suddenly relent.
(III.iii. 58-59)

In her second speech, Joan reminds him how shabbily the English have treated him and calls for this prodigal son to return to the arms of France. Burgundy has a change of heart and joins the French ranks (III.iii. 78-80). Such a sudden conversion is, of course, an accepted stock convention of the period; nonetheless, how much of Joan's persuasion is "fair. . . . mixed with sugar'd words" and how much is witchcraft? Shakespeare seems to indicate that Burgundy succumbs out of patriotism rather than by witchcraft. Yet, in a telling aside, Joan scorns Burgundy for being a renegade:

Done like a Frenchman--turn and turn again.
(III.iii. 85)

Whether or not she uses witchcraft on Burgundy cannot be ascertained, but her contempt for the French belies any patriotic sentiment on her part.

In each French scene, Shakespeare erodes more and more of Joan's high motives until she is stripped bare of such pretensions. No longer does she mouth the names of saints and call on God's help. Her contempt for Burgundy is but an early indication of her total contempt for all Frenchmen. Like a Circe figure, Joan has emasculated all the French lords. They must offer bribes for her witchly favours, and being cowards and ineffectuals at heart they become dependent on her good will, cunning and occult skills. Yet, they too hold a certain contempt for her, and they show it by the ironic quality of their words. And although they do not utter the sentiment, they share the same feelings that the English have for Joan: she is a witch and a high-minded strumpet.

Joan's victories are quite suspect because she does not win by force of arms but by "art and baleful sorcery." In her first encounter with the English at Orleans, Shakespeare provides evidence to support Talbot's claim that the English are bewitched. Before Joan enters, clad in armour and chasing the English soldiers away, Shakespeare announces her witchly presence in a manner befitting a practitioner of black magic. Immediately following his eulogy to Salisbury, Talbot is startled by the sudden lightning and thunder:

What stir is this? what tumult's in the heavens?
 Whence cometh this alarum, and the noise?
 (I.iv. 98-99)

The sound of thunder, the flashes of lightning and, sometimes, the accompaniment of sulphurous smoke signal the appearance of devils and infernal spirits, or an efficacious conjuration, or the working of some magic. As a dramatic convention, these elements of sound, light and smoke are commonly used in plays involving the supernatural and the occult arts. Later, when Joan's familiar spirits appear (V.iii), they come with a roll of thunder. Besides this play, Shakespeare uses the convention in Henry VI, Part Two, Macbeth, and The Tempest. Other playwrights incorporate a combination of these three elements when they wish to draw attention to some supernatural occurrence. In Peele's The Old Wives Tale, lightning and thunder hail the appearance of Sacrapant the conjurer. In Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, Greene uses thunder and lightning to indicate the propitious time to ask the Brazen Head about magical secrets. When Dr. Faustus is dragged off to the depths of Hell by demons, the stage lightens and thunders. In Bussy D'Ambois, when Friar Comolet conjures up the irate and reluctant Behemoth, the demon surfaces with the sound of cracking thunder. Similarly, in The Divils Charter, conjured demons rise up from Hell with flashes of lightning and sulphurous smoke. The device is common and accepted; moreover, the audience could well believe that "real" demons do come with such fanfare. Unfor-

tunately, Talbot does not immediately recognize that these signs indicate some supernatural force at work.

In this battle, Joan's witchcraft powers are pervasive. Eager to rout the French attack, Talbot rushes head-on, only to see his troops retreating before Joan and the advancing French. In despair, Talbot comes to realize that he and his soldiers are under some kind of enchantment that makes them withdraw from fighting.

Where is my strength, my valor, and my force?
Our English troops retire, I cannot stay them;
A woman clad in armor chaseth them.
(I.v. 1-3)

Here Shakespeare invites comparison between Charles' abortive attempt to raise the siege through normal human agencies and Joan's successful one. Charles and his men were repulsed with great losses; now, Joan puts the hard-bitten English to flight by enchantment. It becomes evident that the only way the French could win is by means of witchcraft. We are reminded that, although spoken in a different context, Exeter's off-handed remark about the French is true: the French do use conjurers and sorcerers and magic verses.

When Talbot confronts Joan in a duel between champions, he quickly learns that she is no ordinary enemy, but a witch:

I'll have a bout with thee;
Devil or devil's dam, I'll conjure thee.
Blood will I draw on thee--thou art a witch--
And straightway give thy soul to him thou serv'st.
(I.v. 4-7)

In just four lines of dialogue, Shakespeare introduces the specialized vocabulary of witchcraft, the method of identifying a witch, and the remedies to counteract hostile bewitchment. At first, Talbot does not realize what kind of creature Joan is--a Devil or devil's dam--but by the end of his speech, he knows that she is a devil's dam, or witch and what he can do to stop her. Unfortunately, he does not get the opportunity because he has failed to break her spell on him and his men. Shakespeare uses the word "conjure" in two ways to illustrate how helpless Talbot is in this situation. In the OED, the first meaning of "conjure" is "to cause something or someone to go away by means of magic." Since Talbot is a military man and not a special emissary of the occult arts, he does not have the power to conjure her away. The second meaning is "to constrain (a person to some action) by putting him upon his oath, or by appealing to something sacred," and "to affect, effect, convey away, by the arts of the conjurer or juggler." (OED) Talbot does not appeal to something sacred except his courage to do battle, and since he is unskilled in these occult matters, he cannot constrain Joan. Luckily, Talbot does know the method of identifying a witch and a remedy against her wickedness.

The method is called "scratching." Scratching is, interestingly, both a method of discovery and a remedy to neutralize bewitchment. When blood is drawn from the

witch ("Blood will I draw on thee."), the enchantment placed on the unfortunate victim will be broken. This method has two advantages: A true witch may be discovered and brought to justice, and the victim will be freed of her heinous mischief. During this period, scratching was widely accepted and well known. In a treatise on witches, George Gifford believes in the efficacy of scratching to dispel a witch's charm and advocates its use.²⁶

Another sure test to discover a witch is to find the Devil's marks or a witch's mark on the body of the suspect. Such stigmata are usually made in some secret place on the witch's body and are insensitive to pain. But in the heat of battle Talbot has neither the opportunity nor time to perform this task, nor is he able to scratch Joan with his sword and draw blood. When the English lord cries, "Blood will I draw on thee--thou art a witch," does he scratch Joan? Logically and dramatically speaking I say Talbot does not touch Joan with his blade at any point. His accusation ("thou art a witch") is but a confirmation of what he already knows. Moreover, if Talbot were able to draw blood, then, according to the remedy, the witch's power over him and his soldiers would be broken and he would be able to defeat this Amazonian warrior. Such is not the case. Talbot loses to her, and she mocks him for this: "Come, come, 'tis only

²⁶George Gifford, A Dialogue concerning witches and witchcrafts (1603), p. Sig. E₃^r-E₃^v.

I that must disgrace thee" (I.v. 8).

In two bouts, Talbot has failed to stop Joan. Now he realizes the full force of her witchcraft:

My thoughts are whirled like a potter's wheel,
I know not where I am, nor what I do.
A witch by fear, not force, like Hannibal,
Drives back our troops and conquers as she lists.
(I.v. 9-12)

One major drawback in this scene is its lack of credibility. Why does Joan not kill Talbot when she has the perfect opportunity? Instead she prefers to humiliate him:

Talbot, farewell, thy hour is not yet come.
I must go victual Orleance forthwith.
O'ertake me if thou canst, I scorn thy strength.
(I.v. 13-15)

Surely the death of the French scourge would do more for the French cause than any temporary relief to a besieged town. Still, Joan would have us believe otherwise. Her fortune-telling ("Talbot. . . thy hour is not yet come.") lacks conviction and prompts one to suspect it is more the playwright's prognostication.

Yet, Shakespeare could hardly have Talbot killed then and there in the first Act. Dramatically, it would be a mistake. Moreover, it would be grossly unacceptable and, indeed, repugnant to his audience who cherished the name and fame of their native, national hero. Besides, Talbot is the more important character, while Joan is his foil. It simply would not do to sacrifice Talbot at this time--humiliate him, yes, but not kill him off.

In addition, a good part of the play concerns Talbot²⁷ and his gallant attempts to hold back the tides of war and to repossess the lands and towns which King Henry V won for England. Now these possessions are being taken away by the French with the help of art and baleful sorcery. To the English lords, the practice of witchcraft to secure objectives is inconsistent with the Englishman's idea of fair play, and they voice their disapproval each time they confront such abuses:

Bed. Coward of France, how much he wrongs his fame,
Despairing of his own arm's fortitude,
To join with witches and the help of hell!
(II.i. 16-18)

Tal. Well, let them practice and converse with spirits.
God is our fortress, in whose conquering name
Let us resolve to scale their flinty bulwarks.
(II.i. 25-27)

Shakespeare rounds off the Orleans episode quite unhistorically by having the tenacious English retake the town that same night. This action begins a series of see-saw, lost-and-recovered episodes between the English and the French, especially between Talbot and Joan. Of course, these events, lacking a factual basis, are too balanced to reflect the true winds of war; nonetheless, they are dramatically necessary for Shakespeare's perception of English history, Talbot and witchcraft. For although Joan with her evil powers is able to win, her victories are temporary and prove vain.

²⁷Cf., Tillyard, p. 169. He suggests that his play should be called The Tragedy of Talbot.

Those who put their faith in God and courage will regain what is lost and defeat the devil's game.

The curious episode in which Talbot outwits the Countess of Auvergne serves not only to demonstrate Talbot's chivalry toward an enemy, but also to contrast his behaviour on the field with Joan's and in the private chamber with the Countess'. Talbot's recapturing of Orleans vindicates his military reputation; now, his handling of the treacherous Countess shows his good judgment. He has plainly walked into a trap and come out of it unscathed and victorious. Under normal conditions, then, the English lord functions magnificently and magnanimously; however, when he encounters Joan, he cannot restrain his expletives: "Pucelle, that witch, that damned sorceress" (III.ii. 38) and "Foul fiend of France, and hag of all despite, / Encompass'd with thy lustful paramours!" (III.ii. 52-53). Thus, having rounded out Talbot's stature, Shakespeare continues to set him off with Joan in a series of unhistorical skirmishes. Talbot is the scourge of the French; Joan, of the English. These two compelling figures, though broadly drawn, dominate the external conflict between England and France, as York and Somerset, Gloucester and Winchester dominate the internal conflicts at home.

At Rouen, although Talbot does not get another chance to exchange physical blows with Joan, he does regain what the French witch, by means of deceit and witchcraft, captured the night before, "Lost and recovered in a day again!" and

in his exhilaration, he mocks his enemies and attributes their failure to Joan's inattentive familiar spirit:

But where is Pucelle now?
I think her old familiar is asleep.
Now where's the Bastard's braves, and Charles his glikes?
(III.ii. 121-23)

In English witchcraft beliefs, a witch usually has a familiar spirit or two to supplement her own wicked magic.²⁸ These familiar imps are given to the witch upon making a binding compact with the Devil and thus are symbols of an evil and unholy alliance. A familiar may have the appearance of a flea, spider, cat, goat, dog or any small living creature.²⁹ In a recorded case history of witchcraft involving a familiar, L'Estrange Ewen recounts one Elizabeth Frauncis who used a cat familiar to procure herself a husband but the familiar instead killed her intended husband's godson. After each act she would reward the familiar with drops of her own blood. Before Elizabeth Frauncis was tried for a second offence, convicted and punished by hanging, she gave the cat to another witch who used it to destroy her neighbours' domestic animals.³⁰ A familiar, then, is an extension of the witch's evil power, and has a variety of evil capabilities of its own.

Although Shakespeare does not provide any ocular proof

²⁸Catherine Hole, Witchcraft in England (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1970), pp. 60-62.

²⁹Hole, p. 62.

³⁰C. L'Estrange Ewen, Witchcraft and Demonianism (London: Heath Cranton Limited, 1933), pp. 144-5.

thus far, he does create a scene complete with conjuration and familiar imps (V.iii) later. This lack of proof has prompted critics to suggest that the playwright tacked on this damaging familiar spirits scene as an afterthought and that he did not truly intend Joan to be a witch:

So odd and out of key with what has gone before is the third scene of Act V, when Joan enters and starts raising evil spirits that we can only wonder whether there was not an abrupt change of intention on Shakespeare's part. Perhaps he felt that the non-evil and breezily attractive Joan of Acts I to IV was altogether too attractive and did not sufficiently accord with chauvinistic prejudices. Anyway we are not justified in assuming Joan to be a witch until the last Act. 31

Admittedly, there are some dramatic weaknesses (which he corrects in Henry VI, Part Two) in choosing to wait until the last Act to present Joan's infernal confederates. Perhaps we may attribute these flaws and oversights to Shakespeare's apprenticeship. Nevertheless, the placement of the scene has its own logic, and the familiar spirits scene should be taken as a climax to the witchcraft theme. This scene alone should not decide whether or not Joan is a witch; we should not ignore other evidence which damns her as a follower of the Devil beyond a doubt.

Shakespeare intended Joan as a witch from the outset. Her character is wholly consistent in the play, within the bounds of Elizabethan beliefs and with the playwright's

³¹A.L. French, "Joan of Arc and Henry VI," English Studies 49 (1968), p. 427.

historical sources. A good portion of this reconstruction is done, surprisingly, to accommodate Joan rather than Talbot. At Bordeaux, the French witch stands over the fallen English lord and mocks his corpse when the English emissary, Lucy, eulogizes him:

Him that thou magnifi'est with all these titles
Stinking and fly-blown lies here at our feet.
(IV.vii. 75-76)

In this incident surrounding the deaths of Talbot and his son, Shakespeare drastically altered history and preferred dramatic invention. Historically, Joan died at the stake in 1431, and Talbot, in battle in 1453. Peter Saccio notes how this change affects the play:

In a brilliant variation upon history, Shakespeare arranges for this defeat [of Talbot and his son] to result from the domestic antagonisms of the English. He takes the non-cooperation of the dukes of York and Somerset in the Norman campaign of 1443 and makes it directly responsible for an invented failure to reinforce Talbot at the crucial battle ten years later. For the sake of increased poignancy, Young Talbot is unhistorically made the old hero's only son, and his age is reduced. (He was actually in his late twenties, with children of his own.) Thus the contentiousness of the English lords caused the extinction of the noble line of the greatest of England's soldiers. 32

In sacrificing Talbot so suddenly, the playwright is left with the problem of Joan. For four Acts, he has let her live and make fools of the English at every turn with her infernal help. Shakespeare even denies Talbot the privilege

³²Saccio, p. 109.

of second. duel with Joan. In Act V, though, he brings Joan's career to a deserved end.

Talbot's death precipitates Joan's downfall and is the deciding factor which momentarily unites York and Somerset to attack the French at Anjou. Sensing imminent defeat, Joan invokes her familiar spirits:

The Regent conquers, and the Frenchmen fly.
 Now help, ye charming spells and periapts,
 And ye choice spirits that admonish me
 And give me signs of future accidents. Thunder.
 You speedy helpers, that are substitutes
 Under the lordly Monarch of the North,
 Appear and aid me in this enterprise.
 (V.iii. 1-7)

This is the scene which condemns Joan unequivocally as a powerful witch who has at her disposal, spells, charms, familiar spirits, and the help of Hell. At once, the playwright establishes that besides her "art," "cunning," and "charming spells" Joan has "choice spirits" and "speedy helpers." She can command them at will because these creatures are given her by the Monarch of the North.

Joan is not conjuring, rather she merely summons her familiars from hiding. To raise spirits, powerful ones, requires a formal conjuration with lengthy preparations, exacting rituals and secret invocations.³³ In the heat of battle, especially in a losing one, Joan would have precious little time for such ceremony when speed is essential to

³³See: Scot, pp. 217-33, and Idries Shah, The Secret Lore of Magic (London: Sphere Books, 1972), pp. 268-99. Both writers provide examples of some ancient conjurations.

effect some kind of magic to repulse York's advancing troops.

When her fiendish friends enter, Joan believes that they have come as always to help her win:

This speedy and quick appearance argues proof
Of your accustomed diligence to me.
Now, ye familiar spirits, that are culled
Out of the powerful regions under earth,
Help me this once, that France may get the field.
(V.iii. 8-12)

She quickly learns that something is amiss. Her pleas to these infernal imps fall on deaf ears. And when they do not respond, in desperation she implores their favour:

O hold me not with silence over-long.
Where I was wont to feed you with my blood,
I'll lop a member off and give it you
In earnest of a further benefit,
So you do condescend to help me now.
(V.iii. 13-17)

Unfortunately for her, Joan learns too late "that spirits refuse to help when they know that the witch is about to fall."³⁴ Here, the playwright slips in a moral that the infernal ones accrue benefits only for hell at the expense of the wretched witch, and that she is constantly at the whim and mercy of a heartless Devil. Joan further deludes and degrades herself by offering her body in recompense:

Cannot my body nor blood-sacrifice
Entreat you to your wonted furtherance?
Then take my soul--my body, soul, and all,
Before that England give the French the foil.
(V.iii. 20-23)

³⁴H.W. Herrington, "Witchcraft and Magic in the Elizabethan Drama," Journal of American Folk-lore 32 (Oct.-Dec. 1919), p. 473.

There is something terribly pitiful and irrational about Joan's willingness to give up body and soul to the hellish kind just so that she might not see France overrun by the English. Joan is a very fond, foolish, young witch. She does not understand that once she has made a compact with the Devil, her body and her immortal soul are no longer hers; she cannot use them to bargain with because she has willingly given away those precious things to the Devil the moment she enters into an infernal agreement. A contemporary treatise on infernal compacts points this out:

First the witch for his part, as a slaue of the deuill, bindes himselfe vnto him by solemne vow and promise to renounce the true God, his holy word, the covenant he made in Baptisme, and his redemption by Christ; and withall to beleue in the Deuill, to expect and receiue aide and helpe from him, at the ende of his life, to giue him either bodie or soule, or both; and for the present, either his own handwriting or some part of his blood, as a pledge and earnest penny to binde the bargaine. The deuill on the other side, for his part promiseth to bee ready at his vassals commaund, to appeare at any time in the likenesse of any creature, to consult with him, to procuring of pleasures, honour, wealth, or preferment, to goe for him, to carrie him whether he will; in a word, to doe for him, whatsoeuer he shall commaund. 35

The silent familiar spirits knows that she has nothing to offer and, therefore, are not tempted in the least. When they leave her to a fate she dreads, Joan realizes all too late that Hell will not help her:

³⁵William Perkin, A Discovrse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft (University of Cambridge, 1609), p. 615.

My ancient incantations are too weak;
 And hell too strong for me to buckle with.
 (V.iii. 27-28)

Joan is deluded by the Devil into believing that she possesses immense, awesome powers when, in fact, her abilities are circumscribed and never really her own. She may excuse her own failure by saying that her "ancient incantations are too weak/ And hell too strong," but, in truth, she cannot use any of her charms, enchantments, and spells without the help of the imps, and without the Devil's consent. And because in the past the Devil catered to her desires for revenge, greed, vanity and ambition, she was unaware, until now, that the Devil abuses all who come into contact with him.³⁶ The Devil does not need a reason to call in his debts.

Although the historical Joan was ambushed by the Burgundians in Champègne and sold to the English,³⁷ Shakespeare's Joan is captured by the Duke of York, the Regent of France, when she returns to the battlefield to meet her fate. Fortunately for York, Joan has been rendered powerless in witchcraft by the Devil.³⁸ York gets the opportunity denied to Talbot and challenges Joan to use her witchcraft:

³⁶ Thomas Cooper, The mystery of witch-craft (1617), p. 38.

³⁷ Saccio, p. 99.

³⁸ Bliven, p. 258. He suggests that York knows about Joan's vulnerability beforehand.

Damsel of France, I think I have you fast:
 Unchain your spirits now with spelling charms,
 And try if they can gain your liberty.
 A goodly prize, fit for the devil's grace!
 See how the ugly witch doth bend her brows,
 As if, with Circe, she would change my shape!
 (V.iii. 30-35)

As well as losing her supernatural powers, Joan may have lost her attractiveness--"That beauty am I blest with which you may see"(I.ii. 86)--now that Hell and her personal imps have deserted her permanently. It is possible, too, that, like the rest of the English, York considers all witches, especially Joan, ugly, or that mutual enemies never have a kind word to say about one another while they live. At any rate, her attempt to transform York with her evil eye fails. Whatever graces she possessed before are now gone, and she is left to curse both English and French, Charles in particular, as she is dragged off to prison.

In the final scene with Joan la Pucelle, Shakespeare seems to pander to the groundlings' pleasure. The playwright breaches historical fact completely in scene iv. Whereas the historical Joan was handed over to the French Inquisition to be examined, tried for heresy, convicted as a witch by the French, and burned at the stake as a recalcitrant by the English,³⁹ Shakespeare's Joan is given base and humiliating treatment by Warwick and York. Although Shakespeare wisely

³⁹Saccio, p. 99 and Holinshed, p. 171.

avoids the religious controversy surrounding Joan's trials, he surrenders to overindulgence and licence.

Implicitly, this scene invites comparison to the earlier one which introduces Joan la Pucelle to the French court. While Charles and his lords treat her with a bit of levity and a leering kind of commentary, Warwick and York, who jointly cross-examine her, are crass, crude, vindictive, and even sadistic. Throughout, Joan is shown to be a liar, a whore and a witch. Her moral shortcomings are exposed to ridicule and commented on with ribald rejoinders. Where she once was proud of her lowly birth, she now denies her shepherd father, who curses her and wishes upon a horrible death: "O, burn her, burn her! hanging is too good." When she finally realizes that her fatuous scheme gains her nothing and that the English lords have no mercy, in a last ditch effort, she claims pregnancy and uses English law to stay her execution:

Will nothing turn your unrelenting hearts?
 Then, Joan, discover thine infirmity,
 That warranteth by law to be thy privilege.
 I am with child, ye bloody homicides.
 Murther not then the fruit within my womb,
 Although ye hale me to a violent death.
 (V.iv. 59-64)

Under English criminal law, a pregnant woman convicted of a capital offence may have a stay of execution until her child is born. During Shakespeare's day, women convicted of witchcraft and sentenced to the gallows resorted to the claim of pregnancy. In the famous Warboys witch trial, an

80-year old Mother Samuels claimed that she was pregnant.⁴⁰
 When Joan demands this privilege, she is met with further
 condemnation. In a moment of perversity, she joins in
 the Englishmen's guessing game and rattles off all the
 French lords as the father of her unborn child. However,
 York decides that both she and her unborn child should die:⁴¹

Strumpet, thy words condemn thy brat and thee.
 Use no entreaty, for it is in vain.
 (V.iv. 84-85)

Such are the wages of sin and witchcraft--and the wrath of
 the English. As she is taken to the gallows, she curses
 her prosecutors and England:

Then lead me hence; with whom I leave my curse:
 May never glorious sun reflex his beams
 Upon the country where you make abode;
 But darkness and the gloomy shade of death
 Environ you, till mischief and despair
 Drive you to break your necks or hang yourselves!
 (V.iv. 86-91)

Her last words prove prophetic.

⁴⁰The most strange and admirable discoverie of the
 three witches of Warboys (London, 1593).

⁴¹Cf., Holinshed, p. 171: "But herein (God helpe vs) she fullie afore possest of the feend, not able to hold her in anie towardnesse of grace, falling streight waie into her former abominations (and yet seeking to eetch out life as long as she might) stake not (though the shift were shamefull) to confesse hir selfe a strumpet, and (vnmarried as she was) to be with child. For triall, the lord regents lenitie gaue hir nine moneths staie, at the end whereof she found herein as false as wicked in the rest, an eight daies after, vpon a further devinitive sentence declared against her to be relapsed and a renouncer of hir oth and repentance, was she therevpon deliuered ouer to secular power, and so executed by consumption of fire in the old market place at Rone, in the selfe same steed where now saint Michaels church stands, her ashes afterward without the towne wals shaken into the wind."

As harbinger of "mischief and despair" in life and now in spirit, Joan shapes much of England's dark future. Although Joan is physically removed forever as a military menace to English interests in France, the spirit of her evil still pervades the politics of the English. As she is being dragged off by York in scene iii, Suffolk enters with Margaret of Anjou as his prisoner. The very idea of having Margaret traipsing about on the battlefield boggles the mind; however, this deliberate juxtaposition of the two English lords capturing two French women simultaneously invites comparison.⁴² Shakespeare offers a very tantalizing link between Margaret and Joan. Robert Y. Turner observes:

Joan la Pucelle is captured and led offstage; the juxtaposition suggests that la Pucelle's supernatural powers to scourge the English passes [sic] to the other French woman. 43

Shakespeare concocts a medley of phrases, ideas, images and actions which echo Joan's various associations with Charles and Reignier. The most obvious connection between Joan and Margaret is, of course, Reignier. Margaret of Anjou's father is Reignier, and Joan names him last as the father of her unborn child. Another is the parallel situation between

⁴²See: David Bevington, "The Domineering Female in 1 Henry VI," Shakespeare Studies 2 (1966), pp. 51-58; John Bromley, The Shakespearean Kings (Boulder, Col.: Colorado Associated University Press, 1971), pp. 8-9; Sara E. Leopold, "Construction in Shakespeare's Henry VI Trilogy," (Unpub. Ph.D. Diss., Wayne State University, 1961), pp. 117-21.

⁴³Robert Y. Turner, "Characterization in Shakespeare's Early History Plays," English Literary History 31 (1964), p. 246.

the capturing of Joan and Margaret. In the Joan half of the scene, York enters and exclaims:

Damsel of France, I think I have you fast:
Unchain your spirits now with spelling charms,
And try if they can gain your liberty.
(V.iii. 30-32)

Then, Suffolk drags in Margaret and says:

Be what thou wilt, thou art my prisoner. Gazes on her.
O, fairest beauty, do not fear nor fly,
For I will touch thee but with reverend hands.
(V.iii. 45-47)

Whereas Joan, now impotent and possibly unattractive, loses her role as temptress, paramour and witch, Margaret, who is Suffolk's prisoner, seduces him with her beauty and tempts the Earl to the heights of vaulting ambition--the English throne--and of devoted but unrequited love. In the same way that Charles fell in love with Joan (I.iii. 108-12), Suffolk is enamoured:

O, stay! (Aside) I have no power to let her pass,
My hand would free her, but my heart says no.
As plays the sun upon the glassy streams,
Twinkling another counterfeited beam,
So seems this gorgeous beauty to mine eyes.
Fain would I woo her, yet I dare not speak.
(V.iii. 60-65)

Moreover, Shakespeare leads us to believe that Margaret is a kind of Protean witch, a Circe who can turn men into swine. Earlier, Joan too, is compared to Circe (V.iii. 35) and she does turn the Frenchmen, figuratively, into swine.

As a bewitching Frenchwoman, Margaret not only carries

the banner of dissension and enchantment over to the English homeland--a feat that Joan and the Countess of Auvergne could not accomplish--but also regains almost all the important, lost lands for France. That, too, is another feat that Joan could not do for Charles the Dauphin, either by force of arms or by art and baleful sorcery. Charles gains more by nominally surrendering to the English than by using Joan and her witchcraft.

By winning the war, England loses to France in the most Pyrrhic manner. In addition, Shakespeare designates Margaret--now having been baptized, so to speak, on the battlefield--to the role of Amazonian warrior in the next play. And like Joan who supported a weak Charles, Margaret must protect a weak Henry VI.

Ostensibly, the English have eliminated the external dangers in the form of war, and in the character of Joan; however, more insidiously, they acquire the seeds of dissension and treachery which are sown here in France, will fester in England. Strife does not end with an effeminate peace, with a symbolic marriage between Margaret and King Henry VI, or with the burning of a witch. The play ends ominously with Suffolk revealing his ambition:

Margaret shall now be Queen and rule the King:
 But I will rule both her, the King and realm.
 (V.iv. 108-09)

CHAPTER TWO
HENRY VI, PART TWO

Henry VI, Part Two, a more tightly constructed play, follows basically the dramatic formula which has already proved successful. Shakespeare repeats this tried-and-true recipe, mixing the main ingredients of political intrigue and witchcraft together in a loosely-based, often inaccurate and certainly revised, chronology of King Henry's reign. Fostering his own particular conception of English history for dramatic effect rather than for historical authenticity, the playwright makes witchcraft vital to the plot structure and draws attention to his use of it quite early in the play.

As a pivotal and connecting theme, witchcraft holds the dual plot--the fall of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester and the rise of Richard, Duke of York--together. As spectacle, witchcraft, complete with conjurers, witches and prophesying infernal spirits, not only adds dramatic excitement to an already explosive melange of political chicanery in Henry VI's court, but also establishes the importance of the witchcraft theme in the histories. Because witchcraft is an external manifestation of insidious, inward corruption, it works as an effective occult mirror to the body politic of human greed and driving ambition. Moreover, witchcraft is good theatre, and Shakespeare plays it for all it is worth to entertain an audience enthralled with the precepts of human destiny and supernatural agency.

In many respects the witchcraft here is a converse mirror of the witcheries that Joan la Pucelle practised on the English soldiers, especially on Lord Talbot. Whereas in Henry VI, Part One the witchcraft theme remains almost solely a military matter on the battlefields of France, fought between champions who have diametrically opposite principles, and is apart from the court of England and away from the person of the young King Henry, in Henry VI, Part Two, witchcraft is brought right into the midst of the English court, mixed in with the various political conspiracies and intrigues among the English lords and touches deeply the person of the King himself. In an oblique manner, then, Shakespeare keeps his promise, which he made at the end of Henry VI, Part One, by bringing into the heartland of the English the curse of witchcraft.

Ostensibly, Shakespeare established a structural and symbolic link between Joan and Margaret in the final scenes of Henry VI, Part One. Margaret's association with Joan is through her father, Reignier. Besides being the progenitor of Margaret, Reignier is also the last paramour whom Joan admits as the father of her unborn, illegitimate child. Shakespeare's juxtaposing of the capture of these two women on the same battlefield further establishes a tie. David Bevington notes:

Margaret is explicitly the successor to Joan as femme fatale. Her appearance as Suffolk's

captive coincides, though not by coincidence, with York's capture of Joan. Whereas Joan's capture leads to her just trial and execution, Margaret's capture leads by a turning of the tables to her enslaving of the English king. A Frenchwoman is to rule an English monarch. This fateful reversal, brought about by Henry's corrupted will, signifies national as well as familial inversion of authority. 1

By this marriage, Margaret is able to regain for France many of the lost territories which Joan was unable to reacquire with her infernal aid. Furthermore, Margaret later becomes "England's bloody scourge," an epithet which rivals and echoes Joan's announcement, "Assign'd am I to be the English scourge" (Henry VI, Part One, I.ii. 129). Because of these links in action and theme, we presume that Shakespeare will make Margaret a witch figure; however, the playwright shows her to be a scheming, politically-avaricious Queen who dominates her weak-willed husband, Henry VI, and who is more wedded, in spirit, to Suffolk.

Historically, Queen Margaret never came in contact with the occult. In this play, Shakespeare removes all suggestions that would link her to the practices of witchcraft.² This is not to say that Shakespeare, who has taken such liberties with facts and history, could not have invented situations and circumstances to fit Margaret in a supernatural role. He chooses not to do so. Margaret

¹Bevington, p. 56.

²Shakespeare transforms Margaret into a mad Cassandra-like prophetess in Richard III.

is no Lady Macbeth, who would have evil spirits unsex her in the open night air. But Margaret has very much the tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide.

Shakespeare confers the mantle of witchcraft on Dame Eleanor Cobham, the ambitious Duchess of Gloucester. On several occasions, the historical Eleanor procured love potions and spells to secure Duke Humphrey's love. A few years later, when she attempted to divine the King's future, she was arrested, tried, and convicted of witchcraft and treason.³ Shakespeare's Eleanor is not a witch but she does consult witches and conjurers in order to divine the King's future and find her niche in fortune's pageant. Needless to say, her activities are dangerous, reprehensible and treasonous.

Shakespeare fractures historical facts in order to accommodate Eleanor and Margaret as contemporaries. Historically, the two women never met. Eleanor was banished to the Isle of Man for her part in the witchcraft plot some four years before Margaret ever set foot on English soil.⁴ In the play, though, they appear as rivals, driven by vaulting ambition and ruthless determination to succeed.

As the unwelcomed and impoverished Frenchwoman, Queen

³George L. Kittredge, Witchcraft in Old and New England (New York: Atheneum, 1972), p. 83.

⁴Saccio, p. 119.

Margaret must assert her royal presence and influence at court by challenging Eleanor and Duke Humphrey, for both pose separate but genuine threats to her social standing, regal dignity and authority, and political power. Eleanor's flashy lavishness offends her sense of pride and shows her up as a rag-tag Queen. Duke Humphrey's role as Protector galls her and prevents her from totally dominating her husband and ruling the country. In a telling statement, Margaret vents all her frustration and hatred:

Am I a queen in title and in style,
And must be made a subject to a duke?
(I.iii. 48-49)

In short order, Shakespeare delineates the several and separate conspiracies against the Duke of Gloucester and points out quite clearly that personal gain rather than public duty drives them on to remove good Duke Humphrey from his privileged office. The Cardinal bears ancient grudges against the Duke; Buckingham and Somerset covet his job; and Margaret and Suffolk want him disgraced and dead. Finally, they all agree to a united effort and assault Duke Humphrey at his most vulnerable spot, his wife Eleanor. And knowing Eleanor's inclination to witchcraft, the Cardinal and Suffolk have "lim'd a bush for her," hired the opportunist, John Hume, and sent Buckingham to spy on her.

As a linchpin holding together the conspiracy, witchcraft then is a political tool. The conspirators entrap

Eleanor first and remove her completely as a social threat to and political enemy of the Queen. Her downfall precipitates Gloucester's resignation from his office of Protectorship. Duke Humphrey is doubly disgraced, privately and publicly by this one moment of indiscretion on Eleanor's part. Shakespeare also points out that, once removed from political power, Gloucester falls prey to other trumped-up charges of bribery, embezzlement of royal funds, improper use of torture, and treason. Furthermore, Suffolk indicts the good Duke as the ringleader of Eleanor's witchcraft conspiracy against the King, or, at the very least, the instigator of his wife's high ambitions:

The Duchess by his subornation,
 Upon my life, began her devilish practices;
 Or if he were not privy to those faults,
 Yet, by reputing of his high descent,
 As next the King he was successive heir,
 And such high vaunts of his nobility,
 Did instigate the bedlam brain-sick Duchess
 By wicked means to frame our sovereign's fall.
 Smooth runs the water where the brook is deep,
 And in his simple show he harbors treason,
 The Fox barks not when he would steal the lamb.
 No, no, my sovereign, Gloucester is a man
 Unsounded yet and full of deep deceit.
 (III.i. 45-57)

But the Queen, Suffolk, the Cardinal and York are not satisfied until they murder the Duke of Gloucester.

Car. But I would have him dead, my Lord of Suffolk,
 Ere you can take due orders for a priest.
 Say you consent, and censure well the deed,
 And I'll provide his executioner,
 I tender so the safety of my liege.

Suf. Here is my hand, the deed is worthy doing.

Queen. And so say I.

York. And I; and now we three have spoke of it,
 It skills not greatly who impugns our doom.
 (III.i. 273-81)

Witchcraft and political intrigue, then, prove to be a deadly combination. In this kind of witchery though, the victims suffer not at the hands of the infernal spirits and inexplicable evil spells, but at the instigation of arrogant, ruthless men who use the reputation, the notoriety, of witchcraft to further their personal objectives. Used in the context of a political conspiracy, witchcraft is but a sham of the real thing. Margaret, Suffolk, and the Cardinal know that Gloucester is not an occult practitioner, and certainly not a treacherous man, but they find it useful to hang him on such a pretext. Now, they may not know whether Eleanor's seance with nefarious witches and conjurers is real, but since their objective is the destruction of the Protector, they care not. Ironically, that is their grave error, because the conjuration is authentic and the infernal prophecies are real.

Shakespeare begins the witchcraft theme by way of Duke Humphrey's ominous dream:

Glou. Methought this staff, mine office-badge in court,
 Was broke in twain (by whom I have forgot),
 But, as I think, it was by th'Cardinal),
 And on the pieces of the broken wand
 Were plac'd the heads of Edmund, Duke of Somerset,
 And William de la Pole, first Duke of Suffolk,
 This was my dream, what it doth bode God knows.
 (I.ii. 25-31)

Humphrey's dream is an ingenious piece of dramatic invention which captures the main events in the play and shows the future of Humphrey and his bitter enemies. But, like the later prophecies, his dream is treacherously double-edged. Unbeknownst to the dreamer, his dream foreshadows his own downfall and the loss of his Protectorship. Secondly, it reveals how his staff will be divided. Suffolk and Somerset will, each in turn, share in the ruling of the realm as a "Protector" of the king. The ominous aspect of the broken staff becomes apparent when we see it as a representation of Humphrey's body. The conspirators break the Duke into two. However, the broken staff with the heads of Suffolk and Somerset on it foreshadows not only their rise to power, but also their deaths and decapitations. In short, the dream is but a taste of the more perplexing, infernal oracles.

To Gloucester, the dream is a riddle. To his wife, the dream bodes destruction of his political enemies. Eleanor is much deceived in her insensibility and ambition. Both she and her husband fail to recognize the dream as a warning. Eleanor is more enthralled by her own treasonous plot to use witches and conjurers. She profits neither from the warning of the dream nor from the infernal answers to her questions.

Although the conjuration scene is Shakespeare's own invention, he does loosely base the episode on historical accounts:

For first this yere, dame Elyanour Cobham, wyfe to the sayd duke, was accused of treason, for that she, by sorcery and enchauntment, entended to destroy the kyng, to thentent to aduance and to promote her husbände to the croune: upon thys she was examined in saint Stephens chappel, before the Bisshop of Canterbury, and there by examinacion convict & judged, to do open penaunce, in. iij. open places, within the citie of London, and after that adjudged to perpetuall prisone in the Isle of Man, under the kepyng of sir John Stanley, knyght. At the same season, wer arrested as ayders and counsailers to the sayde Duchesse, Thomas Southwel, prieste and chanon of sainte Stephens in Westmynster, John Hum priest, Roger Bolyngroke, a conyng nycromancier and Margerie Jourdayne, surnamed the witche of Eye, to whose charge it was laied, that thei, at the request of the duchesse, had devised an image of waxe, representyng the kyng, whiche by their sorcery, a litle and litle consumed, entendyng therby in conclusion to waist, and destroy the kynges person, and so to bryng hym death, for the whiche treison, they were adjudged to dye, & so Margery Jordayne was brent in Smithfelde, & Roger Bolyngroke was drawn & quartered at Tiborne, takyng upon his death, that there was never no suche thyng. by theim ymagined, John Hum had his pardon, & Southwel died in the toure before execution: the duke of Gloucester toke all these thynges paciently, and saied litle. 5

The type of witchcraft magic reported by Hall is image magic. Usually, a model is made from wax or clay of the victim, and imbedded with the victim's very personal effects, such as strands of hair, and nail parings. The image is then pricked by pins and needles into the parts to be inflicted.⁶ By this means the victim will waste away with inexplicable sores, illls and pains until he finally dies. However, this is not the kind of magic and

⁵Hall, cited in Bullough, pp. 101-02.

⁶Thomas, p. 613.

witchcraft that Shakespeare dramatizes in the play because it lacks dramatic quality.

The ceremony used in raising the infernal spirit by Margery Jourdan and Roger Bolingbroke is a dramatic rather than an authentic representation; however, Shakespeare does preserve much of the prescribed rituals. In making the transition to the stage, obviously some adaptation or alteration must be made and licence be taken. For example, the entire conjuration is staged in the Duke of Gloucester's garden,⁷ instead of some deserted place where such practices are said to be more efficacious:

Wherefore desolate and uninhabited regions are most appropriate, such as the borders of lakes, forests, dark and obscure places, old and deserted houses, whither rarely and scarce ever men do come; mountains, caves, caverns, grottos, gardens, orchards; but best of all are cross-roads, and where four roads meet, during the depth and silence of the night. 8

Shakespeare's choice does have merit dramatically. It is more damaging to Duke Humphrey to have Eleanor and her witches caught red-handed on his own property. But Shakespeare's choice of Gloucester's garden is not unduly outrageous. Marlowe, Greene and Barnes had their respective magi, Faustus, Bacon and Pope Alexander, make the magic circle and conjure infernal spirits in their chambers. Even Chapman has Friar Comolet cast the magic circle and conjure up

⁷Harrison, "Notes," p. 151.

⁸E.M. Butler, Ritual Magic (Britain: Newcastle Publishing Company, 1949), p. 52.

Behemoth at Montsurry's house.

In raising a spirit from the ground, four parts are necessary: There must be the conjurers and their associates, the act of conjuration, the words and rites used in conjuring, and the spirits that are conjured.⁹ Without describing details, King James gives a skeletal outline of the complexities of a conjuration:

Then laying this ground, as I haue said, these conjurationes must have few or mo in number of the persones conjurers (alwaies passing the singular number) according to the qualitie of the circle, and forme of apparition. Two principall things cannot well in that errand be wanted: holie-water (whereby the Deuill mockes the Papistes) and some present of a liuing thing vnto him. There ar likewise certaine seasons, dayes, and houres, that they obserue in this purpose: These thinges being all readie, and prepared, circles are made triangular, quadrangular, round, double, or single, according to the forme of apparition that they craue. 10

In addition, James I warns that after long prayers and mutterings when the spirit appears, if the conjurers miss one small part of the ritual or if they overstep the bounds of the protective circle, the spirits will drag them to Hell.¹¹

⁹James I, King James the First Daemonologie (1597), The Bodley Head Quartos. ed. by G.B. Harrison (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head Ltd., 1924), p. 17.

¹⁰James I, p. 17.

¹¹James I, p. 17. Although James I speaks about the necessity of the magic circle, he denies its power, the efficacious use of God's names in blasphemy and the rituals involved in conjurations.

Indeed, the circle, a powerful symbol in magic since time immemorial, requires exacting care in the making. Richard Cavendish, a noted demonologist, cautions that there should be no gap or break in the circle through which evil forces might get into it and care must be taken not to scuff or blur its lines.¹² Cornelius Agrippa stresses the necessity for protection even in the circle:

In the Circle itself, there are to be written the general Divine names, and those things which do yield defence unto us; the Divine names, which do rule the said planet, with the offices of the Spirit himself; and the names, finally, of the Good Spirits which bear rule and are able to bind and constrain the Spirit which we intend to call. 13

In a conjuration, Agrippa recommends first an oration to God and then a reading of the Holy Scriptures. Throughout the conjuration, the magician and his assistants must show no fear. And if the desired spirit does not appear, then the conjurer or magician must use various objurcations contumelies, curses and other coercions. But, when and if the spirit appears, the conjurer should receive it with courtesy.¹⁴ Often, says Francis Coxe, a spirit may demand a sacrifice from the magician before doing what is bid of it:

¹²Richard Cavendish, The Black Arts (London: Pan Books, 1967), pp. 264-65.

¹³Shah, p. 227.

¹⁴Shah, p. 228.

Whē the spirite is once come before the circle, he forthwith demaūdeth the exorciste a sacrifice, which moste commenlye is a pece of wace cōsecrated or hallow'd after their owne order. (For they haue certayn bokes, called bokes of consecration.) or els it is a chicke, a lap-wing, or some liuinge creatur, whiche when he hath recyued: then doeth he fulfill the mynde of the exorcist, for oneles he hath it, he will neither doe, neither speake any thinge, Of this testifieth bacon in his boke of Necromancie. 15

Still, if the spirit should prove to be lying, reluctant or obstinate, the conjurer must bind the spirit in the figure of a triangle or pentacle made by the extension of his consecrated sword outside the circle.¹⁶ When the magician is satisfied with the performance of this spirit, he should release it with courteous words and command it to do no harm.¹⁷ And as an added precaution, the conjurer should not leave the circle until he has made prayers for his defence and given thanks to God.¹⁸

In The Discoverie of Witchcraft, Reginald Scot catalogues the names of the important demons in Hell and various kinds of conjurations. He describes a number of long and elaborate ceremonies and gives an example of a lengthy ritual which liberally uses the secret names of God:

¹⁵Francis Coxe, A Short Treatise declaringe the detestable wickedness of magicall sciences (London, 1563), p. Sig. Biiv.

¹⁶Shah, p. 228.

¹⁷Shah, p. 228.

¹⁸Shah, p. 228.

Oh, great and eternall vertue of the highest,
 which through disposition, these being called
 to judgement, Vaicheon, Stimulamaton, Esphares,
 Tetragrammaton, Oilioram, Cryon, Estyion,
 Existion, Eriona, Onela, Basim, Noym, Messias,
 Soter, Emanuel, Sabboth, Adonay, I worship thee.
 I invoke thee, I implore thee with all the
 strength of my mind, that by thee, my present
 praier, consecrations, and conjurations be
 hallowed; and whersoever wicked spirits are
 called, in the vertue of thy names, they may
 come together from everie coast, and dili-
 gentlie fulfill the will of me the exorcist.
 Fiat, fiat, fiat. Amen. 19

Exactly how elaborate and authentic Shakespeare would have wanted this relatively short scene to be we can only speculate. As a highlight and pivotal piece in the play, the conjuration itself would necessarily be staged with spectacle and the appropriate properties belonging to the lore of witchcraft and the raising of an infernal spirit. The stage ceremony could take the form of an actual conjuration--something like what we have described in the treatises--but that would consume too much stage time. We must assume that there is more than "Conjuro te" and the forming of the magic circle as given in the stage directions. Although a few verses in Latin and the drawing of the circle would suffice, it would be rather paltry to an audience that expects more than flashes of lightning and rolls of thunder as the only special effects.

In Dr. Faustus, Marlowe establishes Faustus' credibility

¹⁹ Scot, p. 227.

as a conjurer by having him recite, for the audience's benefit, the formulas and actions necessary in raising an infernal demon.²⁰ Faustus' magic proves efficacious when he conjures up Mephistophilis.²¹ In terms of dramatic plausibility, then, Shakespeare must also establish a similar rapport with his audience. It is not good enough that Margery Jourdan and Roger Bolingbroke are as historically famous for their exploits in black magic as Faustus is for his. In addition, these two conjurers' black magic must rise above the suspicion cast upon it by John Hume, who has earlier confided in the audience that he is the Cardinal's man (I.iii. 93-96).

I suspect the scene opens with the assistants of the two conjurers making the magic circle with some degree of solemnity and ceremony. When the impatient Duchess of Gloucester enters, Bolingbroke informs Hume that he and Margery have already begun the ritual, and assures the Duchess that everything is going well. This piece of information not only mollifies the audience's apprehensions, but also gives Bolingbroke a chance to assert himself as a conjurer of merit.

²⁰Christopher Marlowe, The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus in English Drama 1580-1642, ed. Brookes and Paradise (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1933), p. 174; scene iii.

²¹Although his conjuring works, Faustus is surprised that his magic may be a cause but only incidentally. Mephistophilis comes whenever a man endangers his immortal soul. (Sc. iii, 39-57).

Patience, good lady, wizards know their times.
 Deep night, dark night, the silent of the night,
 The time of night when Troy was set on fire,
 The time when screech-owls cry and ban-dogs howl,
 And spirits walk, and ghosts break up their graves,
 That Time best fits the work we have in hand.
 Madam, sit you and fear not. Whom we raise
 We will make fast within a hallow'd verge.
 (I.iv. 15-22)

There are two puzzling matters concerning this conjuration. We do not know the exact purpose served by having Margery prostrate herself and grovel on the ground. Obviously, the player in the role of Margery must have some stage business during the ceremonies, which are done by Southwell and Bolingbroke, but what that may entail we can only guess. The second matter is Bolingbroke's words, "Whom we raise, we will make fast within a hallow'd verge" (*Italics mine*). According to the treatises on ritual magic, the magician and his assistants are to be stationed safely within the magic circle to protect themselves from a disobedient or wrathful spirit rising out of the depths of the earth. Great care is taken in performing these ceremonies, specifically to protect the conjurers. Yet, Bolingbroke states clearly that the conjured spirit will be bound within the magic circle. Is this another of Shakespeare's liberties in handling dramatic witchcraft? Katherine Briggs takes note of this peculiarity and explains:

Margery Jourdain is told to grovel, and one would expect her to act as the scryer, or medium, but

actually she initiates the conversation with the spirit. Another unusual feature is that the spirit is confined in a circle. It was more usual for a magician to conjure it into a crystal and employ a scryer to interpret for him or else make a circle round himself and his companions as protection against the devils he called up. A fourteenth century manuscript [B.M. Royal MS 6 EVI f 535v] in the British Museum shows the devil confined in a circle, so that this must have been considered correct, though it was uncommon. It would be more effective for staging than to have the magician and all his companions crowded together in a small circle. 22

Dramatic necessity would obligate Shakespeare to take advantage of these short cuts. As Briggs suggests, it is effective. Quite possibly, too, Shakespeare may allay some of the fears that his audience might have by stating that this infernal spirit would be contained and rendered harmless in the magic circle.

Shakespeare was not the only dramatist to enclose his demon in a circle. In the dumb-show in The Devils Charter, the stage directions suggest that the devils are to be raised in one magic circle while the conjurers remain in another:

To whome from an other place a Moncke with a magical booke and rod, in priuate whispering with Roderick, whome the Monke draweth to a chaire on midst of the Stage which hee circleth, and before it an other Circle, into which (after semblance of reading with exorcismes) appeare exhalations of lightning and sulphurous smoke in midst whereof a diuill in most vgly shape: from which Roderigo turneth his face,

²²Katherine B. Briggs, Pale Hecate's Team (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), pp. 71-72.

hee being coniured downe after more thunder and
 fire, ascends another diuill like a Sargeant with
 a mace vnder his girdle: Roderigo disliketh. Hee
 discendeth: after more thunder and fearefull fire,
 ascend in robes pontificall with a triple Crowne
 on his head, and Crosse keyes in his hand. . . . 23

Similarly, in Chapman's Bussy D'Ambois, Montsurry draws
 an analogy between Bussy unconfined and a spirit raised
 outside a circle:

I fear him strangely, his advanced valour
 Is like a spirit rais'd without a circle
 Endangering him that ignorantly rais'd him,
 And for whose fury he hath learnt no limit. 24

Montsurry may have used "without" to mean both "not having
 any" and "outside of." In either case, such negligence is
 dangerous.

In The First Part of the Contention betwixt the two
 famous Houses of York and Lancaster with the death of the
 good Duke Humphrey (1594),²⁵ the reported version of Henry VI,
 Part Two,²⁶ we find a remarkably clear explanation of
 Margery's actions.

²³Barnabe Barnes, The Divils Charter (1607), Kraus Reprint,
 1970), p. 4.

²⁴George Chapman, Bussy D'Ambois in English Drama 1580-
 1640, ed. Brooke and Paradise (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1933),
 III.ii. 390-94.

²⁵Andrew Cairncross, ed., "Appendix 4," King Henry VI,
 Part II (London: Methuen, 1969), pp. 186-87.

²⁶I agree with Peter Alexander, "2 Henry VI and the Copy
 for the Contention 1594," TLS (9 Oct. 1924), and Madeleine
 Doran, "Henry VI, Parts II & III: Their Relation to the "Con-
 tention" and the "True Tragedy," University of Iowa Humanistic
 Studies IV, no. 4 (1928), pp. 1-88. The Contention is a
 of Shakespeare's play.

Enter Elnor, with sir Iohn Hum, Roger Bullenbrooke,
a Coniurer, and Margery Jourdain, a Witch.

Elnor. Here sir Iohn, take this scrole of paper here,
Wherein is writ the questions you shall aske,
And I will stand vpon this Tower here,
And here the spirit what it saies to you,
And to my questions, write the answeres downe.

She goes vp to the Tower.

Sir Iohn. Now sirs begin and cast your spels about,
And charme the fiendes for to obey your wils,
And tell Dame Elnor of the thing she askes.

Witch. Then Roger Bullinbrooke about thy taske,
And frame a Cirkle here vpon the earth,
Whilst I thereon all prostrate on my face,
Do talke and whisper with the diuels below,
And coniure them for to obey my will.

She lies downe vpon her face.

Bullenbrooke makes a Cirkle.

Bullen. Darke Night, dread Night, the silence of the Night,
Wherein the Furies maske in hellish troupes,
Send vp I charge you from Sosetus lake,
The spirit Askalon to come to me,
To pierce the bowels of this Centricke earth,
And hither come in twinkling of an eye,
Askalon, Assenda, Assenda.

It thunders and lightens, and then the spirit
riseth vp.

Although more abbreviated than the Folio version, the witchcraft in the Contention is better defined. Here Dame Eleanor explains clearly what questions she wants asked and gives Bolingbroke a list. Since no one else knows her questions in advance there can be no possibility of collusion between Bolingbroke and his "conjured spirit" (if it is a fake) in doctoring answers beforehand. Moreover, since the

Duchess chooses to go up to the Tower to observe the proceedings, she has a better vantage point from which to notice any irregularities in the ceremony when the lightning and, possibly, sulphurous smoke hail forth the spirit from the ground. In the Folio, Eleanor's presence and demeanor are secondary to Bolingbroke's; the conjurer controls the situation. In the Contention, both Margery and Bolingbroke share the task of raising the spirit from the "centric earth." As equals, each has a specific function in the ceremony, whereas in the Folio, Bolingbroke is the archmagus, he commands the others to do specific tasks, and Margery merely assists.

In the Contention, Margery's role is better defined: the reason for prostrating herself on the ground and grovelling is to persuade the demons below to appear and to conjure them to obey her will. This is not evident in the Folio. In the Contention, Margery's presence on the stage is functional rather than ornamental, and her speech indicates that she is no less a conjurer herself, knowledgeable in the black arts and, if necessary, quite capable of conjuring by herself. Her speech informs the audience the method by which she will speak to the devils below, and it is she who instructs Bolingbroke how to make the magic circle:

Then Roger Bullenbrooke about thy taske.
 And frame a Cirkle here vpon the earth,
 Whilst I thereon all prostrate on my face. . .

In the Folio, we are certain that the spirit will be confined in the magic circle, whereas in the Contention, the spirit could appear anywhere in the vicinity--within or without the magic circle. Nonetheless, in both versions, it appears that some restraint is put on the spirit once it rises up.

M. Jord. Asmath.
 By the eternal God whose name and power
 Thou tremblest at, answer that I shall ask:
 For, till thou speak, thou shalt not pass from hence.
 (I.iv. 24-27)

By using the holy names of God, Margery has the power to coerce the infernal spirit to do her bidding. Although this passage is in the Folio as well, in the Contention, Margery's words have purpose and are more logical.

With both witch and conjurer summoning the spirit from the depths of the earth, we can see that conjuring is no easy matter. And the spirit they call up is a reluctant one.

The difference between the Contention and the Folio versions of Bolingbroke's speech is striking. The scrivener who copied or interpolated the Contention may have had some knowledge of the black arts. The preliminary incantation in the Folio stresses the darkness of night and paints a picture of unnatural goings-on ("Deep night, dark night,

the silence of the night") where treachery abounds (" . . . when Troy was set on fire"), with portentous creatures crying out ("when screech-owls cry and ban-dogs howl") and where ghosts and lost souls wander and haunt the night ("And spirits walk and ghosts break up their graves"). Bolingbroke reassures the Duchess that this is an auspicious time and that she will be safe under his direction. In the Contention, the Duchess does not speak with the conjurer at all. When Bolingbroke recites "Darke Night. . . " he has begun his conjuring. Fittingly, Bolingbroke emphasizes vengeance ("Wherein the Furies maske in hellish troupes") because one of the reasons for Eleanor's visit here is to learn how to avenge wrongs done to her by Queen Margaret ("She shall not strike Dame Eleanor unavenged." I.iii.147). The conjurer charges the spirit to rise immediately and asks specifically for Askalon.

In both versions, the infernal spirit rising out of the earth is reluctant and curtly acknowledges his presence to the witches. Abramelin the Mage says that "Evil spirits flee as much as possible on all occasions of submitting themselves to man."²⁷ Margery coerces the infernal creature to do her bidding with threats and the spirit acquiesces. In the Folio, Margery identifies the spirit as Asmath, and

²⁷The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage, trans. S.L. MacGregor Mathers (New York: Dover Publications, 1975), p. 87.

in the Contention, Bolingbroke calls for Askalon but Asmath²⁸ appears. Fortunately, this infernal spirit does not seem to have any menacing or malefic intentions. It neither solicits damned souls as Mephistophilis does, nor tempts these particular mortals to further damnation, nor offers help readily (for its own benefit, of course) like Barne's Asteroth and Chapman's Behemoth. Because it loathes to be disturbed for this distasteful task and prefers to respond ambiguously, the infernal spirit answers the three questions quickly and begs to leave "for more [it] hardly can endure."

In both versions, Bolingbroke is splenetic toward the reluctant spirit. In the Contention, the conjurer curses it graphically before he releases it back to Hell:

Then downe I say, vnto the damned poule,
Where Pluto in his firie Waggon sits,
Rydyng amidst the singde and parched smoakes,
The Rode of Dytas by the Riuer Stykes,
There howle and burne for euer in those flames,
Rise Iordaine rise, and staie thy charming Spels. 29

In the Folio, Bolingbroke is more curt:

Descend to darkness and the burning lake!
False fiend, avoid.

(I.iv. 40-41)

²⁸John Dover Wilson suggests that Asmath is Asteroth, the ruler of the North and the same demon that Joan invokes on the plains of Anjou (1 Henry VI, V.iii. 6). "Notes" to Henry VI, Part II (Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 135.

²⁹Cairncross, "Appendix 4," p. 187.

Dame Eleanor's three questions concern the fates of the King, Suffolk and Somerset, and the equivocating answers pertain to these three men and an unidentified duke. Incredibly, not one question asks about the fates of the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester. Shakespeare is asking us to believe that the ambition-ridden Eleanor is not inquisitive enough to inquire about her part in Fortune's pageant. If the error is the character's, then this terrible oversight on her part proves disastrous for her and her husband. Certainly, this omission seems rather out of character for the haughty Duchess.

In terms of the overall design, the three infernal prophecies are quite important, and we can see why the playwright sacrifices character consistency for plot. The conjuration overshadows Eleanor's part completely, for when she goes up to the Tower, she is effectively removed from the focal point of attention. Similarly, once the infernal spectacle is finished, the three prophecies dominate all else. In order that no one may forget them, Shakespeare repeats these prophecies twice at this time--once, by the infernal spirit, and once, by the Duke of York--and again, separately, upon the fulfillment of the particular oracle. The first prophecy concerns the King:

The duke yet lives that Henry shall depose;
But him outlive, and die a violent death.
(I.iv. 30-31)

The other two disclose the manner in which the Dukes of Suffolk and Somerset will die. Suffolk's fate is that "By water shall he die, and take his end" (I.iv. 33). Somerset is warned:

Let him shun castles.
 Safer shall he be upon the sandy plains
 Than where castles mounted stand.
 (I.iv. 35-37)

While it is almost a rule of thumb that any prophecy uttered on stage will be fulfilled, the obscure wording of these three predictions gives precious little information. For the rest of the play, part of the attraction for the audience is to guess when and how each person will meet his end.

Because there is evidence that a trap has been laid for Eleanor, the authenticity of the conjuration is questioned. Some critics³⁰ argue that because John Hume is in the pay of the Cardinal and Suffolk (I.ii. 87-107), the conjuration is a political plot concocted solely to fool the Duchess and entrap her in the act of committing

³⁰ See: John P. Cutts, The Shattered Glass (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1968), pp. 116-18; Henry A. Kelly, Divine Providence in the England of Shakespeare's Histories (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 254-55; Eva L. Latif, "Ghosts on the English Renaissance Stage" (Unpub. Ph.D. Diss., State University of Iowa, 1961), p. 169; M. Quinn, "Providence in Shakespeare's Yorkist Plays," Shakespeare Quarterly 10 (1959), p. 48; M.M. Reese, The Cease of Majesty (London: Edward Arnold, 1961), p. 188; and S.C. Sen Gupta, Shakespeare's Historical Plays (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 75.

treason. John P. Cutts suggests that the conundrums are framed by the Duke of York himself³¹ and that

the obvious initiator is Winchester, working through the two priests, Hume and Southwell. Buckingham informs Winchester that he will follow and spy on the Duchess (I.iii. 151-54) but he is congratulated on his efforts by York who remarks that it was " a pretty plot well chosen to build upon!" (I.iv. 59) which is suggestive to say the least. 32

Clearly this is not the case. York could not have known in advance the questions that the Duchess would ask and, therefore, could not have made up the answers. Admittedly, the possibility of collusion exists either if it is Hume who hands Bolingbroke the questions,³³ or if Bolingbroke is in possession of it beforehand. York's congratulating Buckingham is for Buckingham's success in keeping a close watch on the Duchess, not for his ability to concoct a seance. But there is stronger evidence, pointing to a true conjuration.

There is no evidence whatsoever to support the argument that Margery Jourdan, Roger Bolingbroke and Southwell are either fakes or in collusion with York. Historically, they were practitioners of witchcraft in their own right and had

³¹Cutts, pp. 116-17.

³²Cutts, p. 118.

³³In the Contention, the scrivener avoids the problem of political collusion by having Eleanor herself hand Bolingbroke the scroll with her questions.

done some occult service for the Duchess before this fiasco took place.³⁴ In the play, Shakespeare portrays them as witches and conjurers who know their business in the black arts. Quite adept, they perform the conjuration without a hitch and, as promised, raise a spirit from the depths of Hell to answer the Duchess' questions. In the Contention, Bolingbroke shows great surprise when they are discovered: "Sonnes, we are betraide." In the Folio, the conjurers say nothing and are quickly dragged off to gaol.

The infernal spirit could hardly be a counterfeit one. Shakespeare uses the conventional signals--thunder, lightning and smoke--to herald in and usher out the infernal creature. With these accompaniments, the infernal spirit materializes from the ground, answers reluctantly, and promptly disappears when the task is done. Because it comes perforced, it answers enigmatically. These riddling predictions prove highly accurate later on in the play. Neither York, nor Buckingham, nor Bolingbroke, nor the spirit (if false) could have contrived and achieved such accuracy.

A real set of prophecies accomplishes more for the play dramatically. Although equivocal, these predictions are quite intrinsic to the plot structure. It would be

³⁴Kittredge, 83.

frivolous of Shakespeare to waste this highly dramatic and functional episode by exposing it as a sham, contrived by ambitious men. Here, at least, there is a sense of mystery: how will these prophecies be fulfilled?

We note that Shakespeare underscores the prophecies' importance by having York read them aloud. And although York is curious about the "Devil's writ," he does not comprehend a word:

Come, come, my lords, these oracles
Are hardly attain'd and hardly understood.
(I.iv. 71-72)

Surely Shakespeare again sacrifices character consistency for expediency when he portrays an obtuse York to the audience. The irony is a bit heavy-handed. Although York may not be able to make head or tail of the answers, the questions are plain enough. They pertain to the fates of the King, Suffolk and Somerset. It is difficult to believe that York, who has a vested interest in the future of these particular men, would cavalierly dismiss the importance of the "Devil's writ." Here is a man who has in his possession information about his enemies, but cannot make use of it.

The arrest of Eleanor and her conjurers has some remarkable similarities with the capture of Joan la Pucelle. In the Joan episode, York as Regent of France arrests her moments after her familiar spirits desert her.

In this play, York rushes in and arrests Eleanor and her conjurers only moments after Bolingbroke has dismissed the infernal spirit back to Hell. In both plays, by a stroke of luck (and by the playwright's design), York misses confronting enchantment and supernatural beings. One may wonder what would have happened if such creatures had been still on the stage. It should be duly noted that York captures the practitioners of witchcraft when their power is at its lowest ebb. In both instances, York gains a certain recognition as a witch-hunter in the eyes of the audience. By ending Joan's witcheries, York is seen as the man instrumental in forcing the Dauphin to sue for peace and in vanquishing a detested witch. By arresting Eleanor, Margery, and Bolingbroke, however, he is seen as the man instrumental in bringing down the good Duke Humphrey. In the former action, York is considered patriotic and worthy of praise; in the latter, he is self-serving. Although he is not aware of this, York profits most from the conjuration. Moreover, as we shall see later, York's connection with the supernatural is far from over.

The dealers in witchcraft are quickly tried and sentenced. Eleanor's confederates receive the harshest penalty--death. Historically, Margery was burned at the stake in Smithfield and Bolingbroke was strangled and drawn and

quartered. Southwell died in prison and Hume was set free.³⁵ In the play, Margery is sentenced to burn at the stake, and the male conjurers, including the mercenary Hume, are to die by strangulation. Dame Eleanor is sentenced to three days of public penance in London and then banished to the Isle of Man for the rest of her life. She fares better than she deserves. Under Elizabethan laws³⁶ she would have suffered the supreme penalty along with her minions.

³⁵Hall, cited in Bullough, pp. 101-02.

³⁶The Elizabethan Statutes of 1580 on witchcraft strictly forbade any attempt to divine a monarch's future.

" That if any person or persons, of what estate, condition, or degree soever he or they be, at any time, after the end of the said forty days, and during the life of our said sovereign lady the Queen's Majesty that now is, either within her Highness' dominions or without, or by casting of nativities, or by calculation, or by any prophesying, witchcraft, conjurations, or other like unlawful means whatsoever, seek to know, and shall set forth by express words, deeds, or writings, how long her Majesty shall live or continue, or who shall reign as King or Queen of this realm of England after Her Highness' decease, or else shall advisedly and with a malicious intent against her Highness, utter any manner of direct prophecies to any such intent or purpose, or shall maliciously by any words, writings, or printing, wish, will or desire the death or deprivation of our sovereign lady the Queen's Majesty (that now is) or any thing directly to the same effect, That then every such offence shall be felony, and every offender and offenders therein, and also all his or their aiders, procurers and abettors in or to the said offence, shall be judged as felons and shall suffer pains of death and (forfeit) as in case of felony is used, without any benefit of clergy or sanctuary. [Stat. of the Realm, Vol. iv, pt. i, p. 659.] *Witchcraft*, ed. B. Rosen (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1969), pp. 56-57.

Although the practitioners of the Devil's art are eliminated (by equally wicked men), the effects of their evil survive in the form of infernal prophecies. Because these prophecies are bred from corrupted intentions and brought forth from the bowels of Hell, they cannot augur any good. Although the ranks of wicked men diminish as these prophecies are fulfilled, evil perpetuates evil. This aspect is graphically illustrated in the unravelling of the prophecy about Suffolk's demise.

The death of Duke Humphrey precipitates the downfall of Suffolk. In one way, Suffolk is hoisted by his own petard by having the good Duke murdered. The hue and cry for his removal could neither be ignored by the King nor overruled by Queen Margaret. The sentence of banishment from England assures his death.

Shakespeare anticipates the fulfillment of the prophecy by establishing beforehand associative images and words that suggest death. In Suffolk's maudlin farewell to his Queen, a real death awaits him; although now being unaware of this, he expresses the idea of death metaphorically as in lovers' separation:

To die by thee were but to die in jest,
 From thee to die were torture more than death.
 O, let me stay, befall what may befall.
 (III.ii. 400-02)

and

A jewel, lock'd into the woefull'st cask

That ever did contain a thing of worth.
 Even as a splitted bark, so sunder we;
 This way fall I to death.

(III.ii. 409-12)

There is a touch of mirthless irony in the manner of Suffolk's death. When the English lord falls into the hands of the mariners, and of Walter Whitmore in particular, he recalls an earlier astrological prediction:

Thy name affrights me, in whose sound is death.
 A cunning man did calculate my birth
 And told me that by water I should die:
 Yet let not this make thee be bloody-minded;
 Thy name is Gaultier, being rightly sounded.

(IV.i. 33-37)

Although the prophecies (both the infernal one and his astrological one) warn him by naming the executioner and the place of execution, he still cannot escape his fate. In a grotesque way, he also completes an interpretation of Gloucester's dream in which the good Duke saw Suffolk's head on a pole made from one-half of the Protector's broken staff. Walter, the patriotic pirate, becomes the human instrument in fulfilling the prophecies and in avenging Gloucester's death (IV.i. 76) by striking off Suffolk's head.

Once primed, we expect Shakespeare to follow through with another unravelling; however, the playwright offers a bit of spurious "witchcraft" when he dramatizes the Cade Rebellion. In Cade, Shakespeare demonstrates that even a minor tyrant may use whatever power or excuse he has at his disposal as ruthlessly as any lord in England.

Using the notorious reputation that witchcraft has, Cade condemns two innocent people to death, and his cry of witchcraft is as fraudulent as Simpcox's blindness. Because Emmanuel, an innocent clerk, "can write and read and cast accompt," Cade accuses him of being a conjurer (IV. ii. 91) and has him hanged with his "pen and inkhorn about his neck." Emmanuel's only crimes are literacy and holding a respectable job. One suspects that the ignorant Cade takes the notion that "casting accompt" is some mysterious occult art. No matter; Cade holds ignorance and illiteracy and superstition as virtues, and in such company the innocent clerk has no friends and must die.

Lord Say, captured by Cade and his mob, fares no better. The eloquence of his plea condemns him in Cade's eyes, for the rebel fears that the nobleman may sway the hearts of his motley crew. Cade accuses Lord Say of witchcraft and on this charge has him murdered:

Away with him, he has a familiar under his
tongue, he speaks not a 'God's name.
(IV.vii. 107)

The unfounded accusation of having a familiar under his tongue is enough to condemn a man to death. In this episode, unlike the conjuration scene, Shakespeare makes certain that that accusation of witchcraft has no foundation whatsoever. Cade concocts this piece of rubbish for expediency and gets away with murder. Yet Cade's mischief

invites comparison with those crimes perpetrated by the nobles at court. In the Duke of Gloucester's case, guilt by association led to the charge of instigating an entire witchcraft conspiracy against the King (III.i. 42-57). With impunity, the ambitious nobles had the Duke murdered in his bed. The arrogance of such power is expressed succinctly by York: "It skills not greatly who impugns our doom [on Gloucester]" (III.i. 281). The murders of Emmanuel and Lord Say on the charge of witchcraft are no less outrageous.

The prophecy concerning Somerset offers some ironic twists. When York rides home from Ireland with his army, he uses the pretense that he seeks "to remove proud Somerset from the King/ Seditious to his Grace and to the State" (V. i. 36-37). In a ploy to trick York, the King sends Somerset to the Tower. Since the Tower is part of a castle, we assume that this is the castle which Somerset should shun and that York will be the instrument in fulfilling this particular prophecy. Instead, Shakespeare makes young Richard Crookback, son of York, the human instrument to dispatch Somerset, his father's old enemy, and thus fulfill the infernal prophecy:

So Lie thou there!
For underneath an alehouse's paltry sign,
The Castle in Saint Albons, Somerset,
Hath made the wizard famous in his death.

(V.ii. 66-69)

The prophecy becomes a grisly joke on the Duke for he suffers a paltry, ignominious death. Like Suffolk's corpse left lying on the strand, Somerset's lies underneath a common alehouse sign, The Castle.

In using Richard Crookback, Shakespeare takes great liberties with history. The historical Richard was only two years old at the time of the battle at Saint Albans in 1455.³⁷ The character Richard is a grown-up lad, blood-thirsty, and able to ride alongside his father in war. His physical shape is so extraordinary and stigmatized that Old Clifford draws attention to it:

Hence, heap of wrath, foul indigested lump,
As crooked in thy manners as thy shape!
(V.i. 157-58)

In addition, Richard is more ruthless than his father; his credo is; "Priests pray for enemies, but princes kill" (V. ii. 70-71). He has a delightful sense of the macabre when, in Henry VI, Part Three, he presents his father with the decapitated head of Somerset as a token of filial devotion. Shakespeare's choice of Richard as the human instrument to fulfill an infernal prophecy is not without merit. Indeed, this bloody baptism is an auspicious beginning for Richard's career, which spans the next two plays.

The first infernal prophecy is the most difficult to

³⁷Saccio, p. 133.

unravel:

The duke yet lives that Henry shall depose;
But him outlive, and die a violent death.
(I.iv. 30-31)

While the other two prophecies concerning the Dukes of Suffolk and Somerset have historical bases,³⁸ this particular one is Shakespeare's own invention. The syntax is deliberately awkward and tends to obscure the meaning. Indeed, Shakespeare imitates too well the kind of equivocation associated with infernal prophecies and oracles.

The most intriguing aspect of this conundrum is that we have two prophecies. One concerns the fate of the king, the other, this unnamed duke. But who is this unnamed duke? John P. Cutts suggests that he is none other than Duke Humphrey of Gloucester:

It is York who reads aloud the three prophecies in full exactly as they had been revealed in the seance. This would seem to me to be quite unnecessary repetition unless there were some special dramatic significance. Since the first prophecy obviously concerns the death of Gloucester, though it is worded like the Delphic oracle to sound as if Henry's death were the subject, and the second and third the deaths of Suffolk and Somerset, it can hardly be either of the latter who "framed" the prophecies. 39

Henry A. Kelly comes to a similar conclusion:

When York reads this "devil's writ" as he calls it, he points out that it is simply the kind of

³⁸Holinshed, pp. 220 and 240; Hall, cited in Bullough, pp. 112 and 124.

³⁹Cutts, p. 117.

ambiguous answer that Apollo gave to Pyrrhus-- it could mean either that Gloucester would depose Henry (as the duchess was obviously intended to read it), or that Henry would depose Gloucester from his protectorship (as Suffolk intended it to happen). It is not so clear how the second line could be meant to apply to Gloucester (as subject); it does fit Henry, of course, (in the event), but it is not the sort of thing that Suffolk would either intend to happen or invent for Eleanor's consolation. 40

Although this solution neatly disposes of the conundrum, Duke Humphrey is not the man. In one sense, Henry does remove Gloucester as Lord Protector by asking for the return of the staff of office (II.iii. 22-27); however, Duke Humphrey resigns his commission because he feels slighted by the Queen's jibes (II.iii. 32-38). Furthermore, in normal parlance, a person can only "depose" someone already on the throne. Since Duke Humphrey neither wears a crown nor sits on a throne, he cannot be deposed. Therefore, Henry VI cannot, technically, depose a nobleman, whose rank is below that of king. As Kelly rightly suggests, the second line of the prophecy is too ambiguous to fit Duke Humphrey. The problem lies in the troublesome syntax of the two clauses, "that Henry shall depose," and "but him outlive." The last clause "and die a violent death," fits almost every member of the court.

If "Henry" is the subject of the subordinate clause

⁴⁰Kelly, p. 256.

"that Henry shall depose," then the statement should read "Henry shall depose the Duke;" but, if "Henry" is the predicate--Shakespeare may have been toying with Latin syntax, or the infernal spirit may have acquired a smattering of Latin--then, it should read, "the Duke shall depose Henry." The other troublesome clause is "but him outlive." Who is the "him?" Is "him" the unidentified duke or Henry? The four combinations are:

- a) Henry shall depose and outlive the duke.
- b) Henry shall depose the duke but die before him.
- c) The Duke shall depose and outlive Henry.
- d) The Duke shall depose Henry but die before him.

Since there is no duke in the play who outlives the King and since the King cannot depose a person of lesser rank, the first three interpretations are invalidated. The only logical interpretation is: the Duke shall depose Henry but die before him.

The only duke alive who has the power to bring Henry to his knees and force him from the throne is the Duke of York. Robert A. Law suggests that York is the unnamed duke:

Therein they find predictions of not only the King's end and York's but also those of Suffolk and Somerset, all four to be carried out later in the play. 41

⁴¹Robert A. Law, "The Chronicles and the Three Parts of Henry VI," University of Texas Studies in English 33 (1954), p. 21.

Although Professor Law is correct in assuming that York is the unnamed duke, he is wrong in assuming that "York's end" is carried out "later in the play." It occurs over in the next.

Undoubtedly, York is the unidentified duke in the prophecy. Although his rise to fortune is slow, he is the most seditious of them all. He believes that he is the rightful heir to the throne (I.i. 214-58), he manipulates disorder in the form of Cade's rebellion (III.i. 355-83), and he finds excuses readily to break faith with his King (V.i. 90-105). York is also linked to the witchcraft theme as the witch-hunter who stopped the careers of Joan la Pucelle, Margery Jourdan, Roger Bolingbroke and Eleanor Cobham. Furthermore, he is the only person to benefit wholly from these prophecies.

Although York wins the battle at Saint Albans and forces the King to flee to London, he has not really deposed his king. Henry still wears the crown, and his person has not been touched. The play ends rather abruptly and suggests a continuation in both the political and occult themes.

The spectre of the witch and her evil survives in the form of prophecies, curses, and desperate men.

CHAPTER THREE

HENRY VI, PART THREE

Henry VI, Part Three marks a dramatic change in the pattern already established in the two earlier plays. Shakespeare's approach to the occult theme becomes more subtle and leans toward a more abstract and suggestive treatment. Compared with the highly impressive displays of witcheries in Parts One and Two, no provocative witch, no fearsome conjurer, and, certainly, no infernal spirit from the bowels of this centric earth appear. Instead the occult is expressed in terms of prophecies, curses, omens and human acts which resemble the devil's work.

In the two earlier plays, when witches and spirits threaten to dominate the stage for a brief time, they tend to distort the thematic perspective. At times, these supernatural displays suggest a weakness in the playwright's ability to plot wisely, and raise the question of whether or not he uses witchcraft primarily to pander to the groundlings' tastes. If so, then, it was fortunate for Shakespeare to have such historical personages as Joan la Pucelle, Margery Jourdan, Roger Bolingbroke, and Eleanor Cobham to buttress an otherwise ordinary plot. This, though, is hardly the case. In those plays, Shakespeare was able to achieve a rough harmony between history and witchcraft and a structurally functional role for the occult elements. In this play, although the present-

ation may be either altered or minimized, Shakespeare does not abandon the occult theme completely. The quantity may have diminished, but the quality remains.

The transition in the presentation of the occult theme is, of course, already apparent in Henry VI, Part Two. After the conjuration, Shakespeare focuses on the results of the infernal predictions, primarily because they all have political ramifications and are part of the timber that holds the dramatic structure together. Unfortunately, in Shakespeare's plotting, one prophecy causes an embarrassing misadventure. Unless the audience is forgetful--and how could they be when the prophecies are repeated for emphasis?--they will remember that the infernal prophecy concerning the fate of the King remains unfulfilled. Either Shakespeare forgot about this prophecy (which is highly unlikely because it is the most important one), or he gave a quick but unsatisfactory answer (in which case, it shows careless structuring), or he intended it to be completed in the next play (which seems to be his solution).

When York defeats the King's army at Saint Albans, the infernal prophecy is supposedly fulfilled. However, to vanquish his army does not mean that York has deposed Henry as King. Moreover, the King has retreated from battle and headed for London. In Shakespeare's later play Richard II there is ocular and physical evidence that the weak Richard

II is deposed by Henry Bolingbroke. There is no scene of this nature in Part Two; however, Shakespeare does provide a deposition scene in Part Three.

Act I, scene i, is, of course, a recapitulation scene¹ and a necessary one because of the various actions and themes already established in the preceding play. King Henry Vi, Queen Margaret and the Lancastrian forces have been put to flight by the victorious York, the Earl of Warwick and the Yorkist army. Warwick wonders how Henry escaped capture, and York charges that the King dastardly left the field before his men (I.i.3). When each Yorkist noble reports his part in the battle, Richard Crookback gives his father the chopped-off head of the Duke of Somerset, York's long-hated enemy (I.i. 16). With the showing of Somerset's bloody head the audience would recall both the ominous, disturbing dream of Gloucester's and the infernal prediction. In Part Two, Duke Humphrey saw in his dream the head of Somerset on a staff (Henry VI, Part Two, I. ii. 25-31), and the infernal spirit's oracle foretold Somerset's ignominious death (Henry VI, Part Two, I.iv. 34-37). Upon Somerset's death, Richard Crookback repeats the prophecy:

So lie thou there;
For underneath an alehouse's paltry sign,
The Castle in Saint Albons, Somerset

¹Wolfgang Clemen, "Anticipation and Foreboding in Shakespeare's Early Histories," Shakespeare Survey 6 (1953), p. 25.

Hath made the wizard famous in his death.

(Henry VI, Part Two, V.ii. 66-69)

By this act Richard, as human instrument in the fulfillment of the infernal prophecy, is given prominence as his father before him was given prominence in the eyes of the audience when he arrested both Joan la Pucelle, the French witch, and Eleanor Cobham and her accomplices. By this kind of association with the supernatural, York's son is also identified with the occult theme. (Later in this play and in Richard III Richard is seen as a devil figure himself.) Except for his ugly physical features, at first Richard is seen more as a ruthless prince whose predilection is sharply defined: "Priests pray for enemies, but princes kill" (Henry VI, Part Two, V.ii. 71). His ambition is as great as his father's:

And, father, do but think
How sweet a thing it is to wear a crown,
Within whose circuit is Elysium
And all that poets feign of bliss and joy.
Why do we linger thus? I cannot rest
Until the white rose that I wear be dy'd
Even in the lukewarm blood of Henry's heart.

(I.ii. 28-34)

Of Richard's character and role in this play, we shall speak later.

In the last chapter there was some ambiguity concerning the third and final prophecy left unfulfilled at the end of the play. Did Shakespeare truly forget about it? Did he consider that particular prophecy completed? Or did he continue it in Part Three? The controversy is minor but not insignificant. From the occult view, the problem requires

solving because Shakespeare clearly does not abandon the workings of the occult.

The infernal prophecy yet to be fulfilled is:

The Duke yet lives that Henry shall depose;
But him outlive and die a violent death.
(Henry VI, Part Two, I.iv. 30-31)

This prophecy is, by far, the most ambiguous and intriguing of the three. Shakespeare deliberately makes it so, as the playwright has a penchant for such conundrums because in later plays he returns to riddling oracles and convoluted prophecies as important to the content and form.² In this prophecy, Henry's fate is very much intertwined with the fate of an unnamed duke. Throughout Part Two, this duke's anonymity remains.

The only duke alive who has the power to bring Henry to his knees and force him from the throne and whom Henry regards as the only threat to his "weak title" (I.i. 34) is the Duke of York.

Shakespeare leaves no doubt in the audience's mind that York has deposed his king. First, having reached London and entered Parliament before Henry and his Lancastrians, York ascends the empty throne as a symbolic gesture of his seizing the crown of England and claiming his right. Warwick is the most insistent in installing York:

²See: Macbeth and The Winter's Tale. Both have riddling oracles which are unfathomable until their fulfillment.

War. The bloody parliament shall this be call'd,
 Unless Plantagenet, Duke of York, be king,
 And bashful Henry depos'd, whose cowardice
 Hath made us by-words to our enemies.

York. Then leave me not, my lords, be resolute,
 I mean to take possession of my right.

War. Neither the King, nor he that loves him best,
 The proudest he that holds up Lancaster,
 Dares stir a wing if Warwick shake his bells.
 I'll plant Plantagenet, root him up who dares.
 Resolve thee, Richard, claim the English crown.

(York takes the throne.)
 (I.i. 39-49)

When Henry finally reaches Parliament, York dictates the terms of Henry's reign when the King begs to retain his crown:

K. Hen. My Lord of Warwick, hear but one word:
 Let me for this my lifetime reign as king.

York. Confirm the crown to me and to mine heirs,
 And thou shalt reign in quiet while thou liv'st.

K. Hen. I am content: Richard Plantagenet,
 Enjoy the kingdom after my decease.
 (I.i. 170-75)

Taking the throne in Parliament is a symbolic as well as a real act of deposing Henry VI. The empty throne is now occupied by a duke who has won it by military might and by proper lineage. When Henry must bargain and accept a compromise for his own throne, he is deposed. The King is king in name only, for he has no power. Even some of his most loyal supporters, Exeter being one, recognize the valid claim of the usurper York.

However, York neither lives long enough to enjoy his success nor to wear the crown of England on his head; instead, Margaret mocks him with a paper crown and stands him on a molehill before she and Young Clifford murder him. If we look back to the aftermath of the conjuration scene in Part Two, how ironic it is that York reads his own destiny and dismisses it with:

Why, this is just
 "Aio (te) Aeacida, Romanos vincere posse."
(Henry VI, Part Two, I.iv. 61-62)

Present events have now identified him as the duke who deposes his king. But along with the prediction of success, the oracle also foretells his downfall. In a sudden turn of events, York is suprised by Margaret's sudden and savage attack and is captured at Wakefield. He dies a violent death when Young Clifford (I.iv. 175) and Margaret (I.iv. 176)³ settle old scores.

Now, the last of the infernal prophecies is fulfilled. Or is it? This last oracle lingers as a leitmotif throughout the play. In the two prophecies concerning Suffolk and Somerset, when the duke in question is about to die or has been slain, the prophecy about him is repeated in one form or another. This dramatic contrivance is missing here; no one repeats the prophecy before or after York's demise. This is to be

³Cf., Cutts, p. 122. He suggests that Margaret stabs York in revenge for Suffolk's death.

expected because the infernal prophecy--although it involves York--belongs to King Henry VI, not to the unnamed duke. After all, Eleanor Cobham asked about the King's welfare, not York's. Thus, the identity of this unnamed duke could be another person. It is possible then that this prophecy is truly an occult motif which binds the two plays together.

Let us examine this possibility. In Part Two when the Duchess of Gloucester asks about the fate of the King, we take her to mean--and it is probably what she wants to hear--what will happen to King Henry within the immediate future, a prognostication from which she can profit greatly. But this is not what the infernal spirit gives her. The conjured spirit is reluctant to appear at first and when he is duly coerced he gives future conundrums that remain undecipherable until the events happens. Moreover, the spirit is from Hell and cannot be trusted to provide a clear, simple and logical answer to satisfy human ears. And because it is coerced, the spirit confounds his human tormentors by not expressly providing the precise time when each prophecy will be fulfilled. This is especially true of the prophecy concerning King Henry. When the infernal spirit announces that "the duke yet lives" we assume that the man in question is now a duke. This may not be so.

The men of the York household are particularly linked with and affected by the occult oracle. Upon his father's

murder, Edward, as the new Duke of York, deposes Henry and ascends the throne de facto as Edward IV. In a soliloquy, Henry admits that even Margaret, his Queen and wife, says he is deposed (III.i. 45). In the woods near Scotland, friendless and alone, Henry is apprehended by game-keepers who recognize the former king and who accept Edward rather than Henry as their lawful sovereign:

Well, if you be a king crown'd with content,
 Your crown content and you must be contented
 To go along with us; for, as we think
 You are the king King Edward hath depos'd;
 And we his subjects, sworn in all allegiance,
 Will apprehend you as his enemy.
 (III.i. 66-71)

Later, in a number of reversals of fortune, Henry and Edward exchange roles as deposer and deposed, until Henry is finally and conveniently murdered in the Tower. Unfortunately, Edward does not fit completely into the role because he dies in bed (disquietedly but not violently) and because Henry dies before him.

To carry this point one step further, Edward's younger brother, Richard, who is made Duke of Gloucester, helps him depose King Henry. (The oracle does not stipulate that the duke-deposer has to ascend the throne.) It is Richard who dispatches the imprisoned Lancastrian king in the Tower. In murdering Henry, Richard deposes him with a finality that both his father and his brother could not successfully do. Here, Richard indicates unequivocally that he is the human

instrument of prophecy:

I'll hear no more; die, prophet, in thy speech;
For this, amongst the rest, was I ordain'd.
(V.vi. 57-58)

Although the infernal prophecy ends, the occult theme continues. In Henry VI, Part Three, Shakespeare grooms two extraordinary characters, Queen Margaret and Richard Crookback taken out of historical context, to play major and dynamic roles in this and the following play. First, we shall speak of Margaret.

Upon close examination, Margaret's dramatic development is peculiarly multi-faced, and not, as McNeal suggests, wholly the metamorphosis from a romantic princess to a troubled queen.⁴ In Part One, Margaret changes from a damsel in distress to a Circe figure. Like the classical enchantress, she captivates Suffolk and stirs within him not only amorous emotions but also treasonous ambitions. Bevington attributes her power of enchantment to "her eyes and her physical beauty:"

Her appeal magically confounds and muddles the senses
of those who behold, producing in turn an inability
to move, to spring to exercise self-control (V.iii. 61-
71).⁵

Significantly, Shakespeare fabricates her role to a greater extent than can be historically accounted for, and gives

⁴T.H. McNeal, "Margaret of Anjou: Romantic Princess and Troubled Queen," Shakespeare Quarterly IX (1958), pp. 1-10.

⁵Bevington, p. 57.

her the dubious honour and metaphorical distinction of having a tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide. It is fitting that a woman should bring low York, her husband's enemy, who has in his long career been the bane to extraordinary women. Needless to say, Shakespeare's portrait of Queen Margaret comes from no whim, but a very carefully nurtured development of character.

Margaret is the only major character to appear in all four history plays. Certainly, this is no mean distinction that Shakespeare allots her. Although Margaret is constantly reminded by her English peers that she is a Frenchwoman and that she comes to the English court in penury, her liabilities become assets in disguise. A survivor of the first degree, she is highly intelligent, ambitious and ruthless. Although she is an adulteress, she is true to Henry, her husband, in her own fashion. She does not take an insult lightly without some kind of revenge in turn. In comparison to the other women--the Countess of Auvergne, Joan la Pucelle, Eleanor Cobham, and Elizabeth Grey--Margaret is the most resourceful, and most dangerous of them all. She is loved and adored by men, weak men whom she chooses to dominate with her feminine wiles and physical beauty. The strong men shun, fear and hate her with a passion equal to those who adore her.

Although Margaret ostensibly appears as merely a termagant in Part Two, on second glance she is not so

blatantly stereotyped as we are led to believe. At once she is both a scheming Queen, flexing her new-found prestige, power and will, and an adultress, who finds comfort in men stronger than her husband, but weaker than herself. One such man is Suffolk.

Shakespeare takes licence in establishing an amorous, adulterous relationship between Suffolk and Margaret. In the proxy marriage, Suffolk stands in Henry's stead, and, symbolically, the earl weds Margaret in spirit. When he is banished by Henry, Shakespeare writes a long drawn-out emotional outpouring from the two lovers (Henry VI, Part Two, III.ii. 289-412). Margaret is fiercely loyal to Suffolk even after his death. In a grisly scene, reminiscent of the conventional shock-and-grief scenes of the period, Margaret enters the court with the lifeless head of Suffolk (Henry VI, Part Two, IV.iv.) in her arms and compares the dead man with the indecisive Henry.

Margaret is also a political creature who feeds on ambition and hatred. Promptly, upon her investiture as Queen of England, she is caught up in the courtly intrigues. She is not beyond consenting to the disgrace and murder of Duke Humphrey and avenging personal slights. In passion and action, she overshadows her weak-willed Henry, and subjugates all the lords, namely, Somerset and the Cliffords, under her influence.

Up until she leads the Lancastrian army in the battle at Saint Albans, we see her as the scheming Queen rather than a woman driven by personal ambition, dissatisfaction with her weak husband, and political circumstances. In becoming "Captain Margaret", she is like her compatriot, Joan la Pucelle.

The affinity between Margaret and Joan is striking and intriguing.⁶ Both women are hated by the English as "England's bloody scourge" and the "English scourge" respectively. Called a strumpet, Joan is the paramour of the French Dauphin, and, later, she confesses to her English captors that she is "a free and liberal girl" who has her compatriots-at-arms as lovers. Similarly, accused of being a "shameless callet" (II. ii. 145), Margaret takes on a number of lovers after Suffolk. Both women shoulder the burden of responsibility and command because Henry and Charles are too weak and ineffectual as kings and rulers, respectively. As Joan musters the flagging morale of the French forces and bring them to victory, Margaret wins similar successes against the Yorkists. Sara E. Leopold draws attention to this point:

York's railing speech at Wakefield (3 H. VI. I.iv. 111-49) also calls attention to the resemblance between the two women. He compares Margaret to an "Amazonian trull;" Burgundy earlier calls Joan a "Trull" (I H. VI. II.ii. 28).⁷

⁶See Chapter One, pp. 40-42.

⁷Leopold, pp. 248-49.

In addition, Margaret serves as Joan's avenger when she torments York--much in the same manner as he did Joan--before stabbing him to death. As surely as Joan, who caused so much havoc to the English in France through art and baleful sorcery, Margaret tears the English realm apart in her own fashion.

Margaret is also linked both directly and indirectly with the occult theme. Although she is defeated in the battle at Tewkesbury, she succeeds in her battle of words here, and later, in the palace of King Edward IV. Although Shakespeare does not show her as an outright witch, her Cassandra-like curses, imprecations and prophecies ally her with the supernatural. This aspect of Margaret's character, of course, is readily established in Part One. Because of the affinity drawn between Joan and Margaret, a number of scholars have pointed out that "La Pucelle's supernatural powers to scourge the English passes to the other French woman [Margaret]." ⁸

Shakespeare shows Margaret's uncanny ability to predict misfortune. She is among the first to read correctly Richard Crookback's physiognomy, and she sees in him a creature bent on hellish practices--practices that are indicated and shown in Part Three, and will flourish in Richard III.

⁸Turner, p. 246. Cf., Alice L. Birney, Satiric Catharsis in Shakespeare (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973), p. 29; Bromley, p. 25; Cutts, p. 112; Leopold, pp. 248-49; Robert Ornstein, A Kingdom for a Stage (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), pp. 40-41.

But thou art neither like thy sire nor dam,
 But like a foul misshapen stigmatic,
 Marked by the destinies to be avoided,
 As venom'd toads, or lizards' dreadful stings.
 (II.ii. 135-38)

Later, as an unwelcomed visitor to King Edward's court in Richard III, she warns everyone about Richard's demonic nature:

Take heed of yonder dog!
 Look when he fawns he bites; and when he bites,
 His venom tooth will rankle to the death.
 Have not to do with him, beware of him;
 Sin, death, and hell have set their marks on him,
 And all their ministers attend on him.
 (Richard III, I.iii. 288-93)

Like Cassandra, Margaret rails and warns without anyone listening to her until it is too late.

After her capture at Tewkesbury, Margaret is threatened with death, and paradoxically she wishes to die. Richard would have gladly obliged her, but he is stopped by his brother. Commonly accepted here is the notion that when Richard says: "Why should she live to fill the world with words?" he means that he has had enough of the termagant's ranting and raving. It could also mean that he, who is aligned with Hell itself, recognizes in her the power of the word, words spoken in curses and in prophecy. Margaret launches into a particularly loathsome curse on all those involved in the killing of her son:

Butchers and villains! bloody cannibals!
 How sweet a plant have you untimely cropp'd!
 You have no children, butchers; if you had,

The thought of them would have stirr'd up remorse,
 But if you ever chance to have a child,
 Look in his youth to have him so cut off
 As, deathsmen, you have rid this sweet young prince!
 (V.v. 61-67)

Directed at Edward IV, Margaret's curse is later fulfilled in Richard III.

Those who are impotent, downtrodden and frustrated after exhausting all human means of redress can always find some sort of satisfaction and comfort in cursing their enemies, for the curse is not without occult power,⁹ and should not be brushed aside lightly.¹⁰ The curse is the word of blighting, "the damaging word that has magical effects, that is of the nature of a spell."¹¹ A seventeenth-century writer remarked that although cursing is the last and poorest revenge, yet, "as long as breath lasts, they have a bottomlesse inexhaustible treasure of Curses to bestow vpon any man, whom they know or imagine have wronged them."¹² Margaret's triple loss--her husband, her son, and her regal position--places her in the category of the downtrodden and impotent, and as we will see she proves to be a vile curser. Alice Birney explains that Margaret has had this occult power all along:

⁹James Rice, "Shakespeare's Curse: Relation to Elizabethan Curse Tradition and Drama," (Unpub. Ph.D. Diss. University of North Carolina, 1947), p. 17.

¹⁰Rice, pp. 82-83.

¹¹Lewis Spence, An Encyclopedia of Occultism (Secaucus, New Jersey: The Citadel Press, 1960), p. 278.

¹²Cited in Rice, p. 58.

Margaret's destruction of her self-declared enemies, Protector Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester and his wife, Eleanor, is a case in point. While the actual harm comes about through her non-magical royal power, the attack depends on her verbal power and is marked by references to the primitive magic of incantational Celtic verse. 13

Shakespeare adopts this new role for Margaret as curser and prophetess after a fashion suggested in Hall's account of Margaret's mental condition during the last years of her husband's reign:

The calamitie and misery of her time, she detested, and abhorred, her unstable and contrariant fortune, she steadfastly blamed and accused, her painful labor, her care of mynde, turned into infelicitie she much lamented and bewailed the evill fate and destenies of her husband, which eminently before her eyes, she sawe to approche she accused, reproved, and reviled, and in conclusion, her senses were so vexed, and she so afflicted, and caste into suche an agony, that she preferred death before life, rather desirynge soner to die, then lenger to live, and peradventure for this cause, that her interior eye sawe privily, and gave to her a secret monicion of the greates calamities and adversities, which then did hang over her hed, and were likely incontinent to fall and succede whiche other persones, neither looked for nor regarded. 14

This metamorphosis from a warrior queen to a privileged Sybil and curser of the first order gives a new dimension to the occult theme. Indeed, as many scholars have surmised correctly, Margaret does take over the role that Joan has as an English scourge; however, her motives are far more personal

¹³Birney, p. 24.

¹⁴Hall, cited in Bullough, p. 203.

and vindictive than Joan's rough patriotic sentiments. Shakespeare gives Margaret an axe to grind, and her tool is the sharp bite of curses dark.

Historically, Old Queen Margaret never set foot on English soil after her father, Reignier, ransomed her. She spent the rest of her days in France, a broken woman and past queen.¹⁵ The English chroniclers never interested themselves in her after her banishment. So with complete disregard for history--such as he shows in the other plays in the tetralogy--Shakespeare reintroduces Margaret in Richard III, because this old Lancastrian queen is the only person who can hold her own against Richard. Moreover, she is the only worthy adversary for him in the first half of the play. Wolfgang Clemen's assessment of her role is quite astute:

Margaret stands outside the action, her only activity is to accuse, to call down curses, and, not least, to prophesy. Yet she dominates the action more than might at first appear, for everything that happens later fulfills her curses and prophecies. She seems almost to be an instrument of providence, coming from some higher sphere, possessing a knowledge of the past through which she plumbs the present and foresees the future. But at the same time she is an old woman consumed with hatred and grief, far too human to be considered a mere choric observer. She alone in the play is Richard's equal in demoniac and elemental force, suggesting that there exist opposing powers which are neither duped by Richard's trickeries nor prepared to bow to his will. 16

An earlier scholar, Dowden, observes that Margaret is beyond

¹⁵Saccio, p. 149.

¹⁶Wolfgang Clemen, Commentary on Shakespeare's Richard III. Trans. Jean Bonheim (London, 1968), p. 48.

the stature of common humanity:

Shakespeare personifies in her the ancient Nemesis; he gives her more than human proportions, and represents her as a sort of supernatural apparition. She penetrates freely into the palace of Edward IV., she there breathes forth her hatred in presence of the family of York, and its courtier attendants. No one dreams of arresting her, although she is an exiled woman, and she goes forth, meeting no obstacles as she had entered. 17

Margaret's role, indeed, transcends the normal bounds of a flesh-and-blood character. In one way the old queen symbolizes the years of hostilities and civil strife, a war not yet finished in the hearts of the participants and a peace far from being realized. Old hatreds, cynical bitterness and vaulting ambitions never die; in some, like Richard, these qualities are submerged beneath a veneer of civility and polity, but the savageness of these heinous qualities is always present, always ready to be used. In others, like Margaret, they fester in unhealing wounds. The only balm is ruthless vengeance wreaked upon those who inflict or have inflicted pain. She has so much hatred and splenetic bitterness in her body and soul that her every word overflows with venom. As she looks down upon her enemies her choric and caustic asides are none other than curses dark. Her words follow fast upon Richard's, calling him unnatural names, accusing him of past crimes, and trying to exorcise him on

¹⁷Edward Dowden, Shakespeare: A Critical Study of his Mind and Art (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1875), p. 192.

the spot:

Hie thee to hell for shame and leave this world,
 Thou cacodemon, there thy kingdom is.
 (Richard III, I.iii. 142-43)

Yet all the old queen utters before she reveals her presence to the Yorkists merely reinforces what we know of Richard in Richard III---he is all that and more.

A virulent curser, Margaret forgets that imprecations have a way of rebounding on the curser's head. In this case, Richard reminds her that she was cursed by York for her heinous deeds and now must suffer the consequences (Richard III, I.iii. 173-80). A less determined virago would have hesitated and pondered over the validity of those words. Margaret, instead, launches into a full scale barrage of imprecations on all the characters for their part in censuring her. She is sure that her curses will be more effective than York's:

Did York's dread curse prevail so much with heaven
 That Henry's death, my lovely Edward's death,
 Their kingdom's loss, my woeful banishment,
 Should all but answer for that peevish brat [Rutland]?
 Why then give way, dull clouds, to my quick curses!
 (Richard III, I.iii. 190-95)

Each imprecation is tailor-made to suit the character. Old Queen Margaret curses King Edward for usurping the throne and for having her husband, King Henry VI, murdered' (Richard III, I.iii. 196-97). She curses the Yorkist heir-apparent, young Edward, to die young as her own Edward died. From one queen to another, Margaret damns Elizabeth to a fate which she has already experienced:

Thyself a queen, for me that was a queen,
 Outlive thy glory like my wretched self!
 Long mayst thou live to wail thy children's death,
 And see another, as I see thee now,
 Deck'd in thy rights as thou art stall'd in mine!
 Long die thy happy days before thy death,
 And after many lengthen'd hours of grief,
 Die neither mother, wife, nor England's queen!
 (Richard III, I.iii. 201-08)

Although this blighting curse affects the entire royal family and calls upon the dark forces to destroy Edward's male line, Queen Elizabeth is the only recipient who, living, must suffer every moment while her more fortunate husband and sons need only to die.

To Hastings, Rivers, Grey and Dorset, Margaret wishes that "None of you may live his natural age/ But by some unlooked accident cut off!" (I.iii. 211-13). When Buckingham scorns her "gentle counsel," she includes him in her imprecations:

What, dost thou scorn me for my gentle counsel?
 And soothe the devil that I warn thee from?
 O, but remember this another day,
 When he shall split thy very heart with sorrow,
 And say poor Margaret was a prophetess!
 Live each of you the subjects to his [Richard's] hate,
 And he to yours, and all of you to God's!
 (Richard III, I.iii. 296-302)

Only Dorset is fortunate enough to escape the fulfillment of her curses.

Margaret saves the most damning imprecations for her arch-enemy, Richard:

If heaven have any grievous plague in store,
 Exceeding those that I can wish upon thee,
 O, let them keep it till thy sins be ripe,
 And then hurl down their indignation
 On thee, the troubler of the poor world's peace!

The worm of conscience still begnaw thy soul!
 Thy friends suspect for traitors while thou liv'st,
 And take deep traitors for thy dearest friends!
 No sleep close up that deadly eye of thine,
 Unless it be while some tormenting dream
 Affrights thee with a hell of ugly devils!
 Thou elvish-mark'd, abortive, rooting hog!
 Thou slander of thy heavy mother's womb!
 Thou loathed issue of thy father's loins!
 Thou rag of honour!

(Richard III, I.iii. 216-30)

All of Margaret's curses prove prophetic and efficacious, and remind us of an earlier pattern established with the infernal prophecies. In Part Two, when each victim falls to his doom and thus fulfills the infernal prophecy, either he himself or his slayer repeats a version of the prophecy before or after his death. Similarly, before each of Margaret's victims goes to the gallows, he is reminded of her dreaded curse upon his head:

Grey. Now Margaret's curse is fall'n upon our heads,
 When she exclaim'd on Hastings, you, and I,
 For standing by when Richard stabb'd her son.

Riv. Then curs'd she Richard, then curs'd she Buckingham,
 Then curs'd she Hastings. O, remember, God,
 To hear her prayer for them, as now for us!

(Richard III, III.iii. 15-20)

Hast. O, Margaret, Margaret, now thy heavy curse
 Is lighted on poor Hastings' wretched head.

(Richard III, III.iv. 92-93)

and

Buck. Thus Margaret's curse falls heavy on my neck:
 "When he," quoth she, "Shall split thy heart with sorrow,
 Remember Margaret was a prophetess."

(Richard III, V.i. 25-27)

When Queen Elizabeth suffers the loss of her husband and her two sons in the prescribed manner, she too remembers Margaret's words (Richard III, IV.iv. 79-81).

Margaret's curses function in a paradoxical manner and in a dual capacity. In the former, as curses they are meant to hurt and blight through vile words; yet, at the same time, once uttered, they serve as a warning to the accursed. Theoretically, it is possible to protect oneself from the disagreeable effects of a curse. We recall that Richard attempts to redirect Margaret's detailed curse from himself onto her head by ending it with her name. By and large, though, her victims choose to ignore her words as anything serious, and thus they fail to guard themselves against the supernatural powers inherent in curses. Afterwards and much too late, they regret their mistake. In almost every curse, the human instrument who fulfills it is Richard. Although primarily Richard causes the downfall of Rivers, Grey, Hastings, and Buckingham for his own benefit, he unwittingly and inadvertently helps Margaret, his enemy and nemesis, to punish her victims as well.

In the latter, Margaret's detailed curses come early in the first Act of Richard III and thus tend to structure much of the plot.¹⁸ As a dramatic device, the curses heighten a

¹⁸Cf., Birney, p. 31.

sense of anticipation and foreboding,¹⁹ for they arouse a ghoulish fascination in the audience to see how each curse will affect the intended victim. Like the spell or the infernal prophecy, it seems, the curse once uttered must run its course. And because these curses are linked to an "inescapable cycle of guilt and expiation"²⁰ the only kind of expiation that will do justice is violent death. In one way, Margaret is the harbinger of bad tidings, and Richard is the one who will carry out those hateful prescription.

Margaret's role as a prophetic curser, then, puts her in league with the supernatural, an association left hanging in the earlier plays. Her words ensure more harm to her enemies than her sword ever did at Towton and Tewkesbury. And although she calls on God and heaven to effect her dire wishes, it is the demonic forces that help her achieve any kind of vengeance that she desires. Indeed, her curses are not ordinary variety. Usually, cursing out of grief, spite or frustration at one's enemy is quite human; but attaining such accuracy points suspiciously to something extraordinary. Although she appears to her enemies as an aged Cassandra, Margaret boasts that those accursed will prove her a prophetess before they die. With this occult power of prophesying and cursing, Shakespeare sets her further apart from her fellow human beings. She possesses powers beyond normal human

¹⁹Clemen, Commentary on Shakespeare's Richard III, p. 48.

²⁰Ibid., p. 54.

ability, and these powers make one suspect that she could be a witch.

Once having cursed all her enemies and watched some effects of her curses, Margaret leaves as abruptly as she first returned to the court. In a sense, she has achieved a measure of satisfaction. She teaches Queen Elizabeth how to curse Richard, and ironically, this lesson may have helped the Yorkist queen to withstand Richard's later wooing for her daughter's hand in marriage. Shakespeare does not have her appear again, and in terms of the drama she has served her purpose. Nonetheless, for a character who appears only twice (out of twenty-five scenes in Richard III), the spectre of her and her vitriolic curses permeate the entire play. We have no doubt that her remaining curses will be as efficacious as those already fulfilled.

In contrast to the introduction of the young and beautiful Margaret of Anjou. in Part One, Richard Crookback's first appearance in Part Two is marked by derisive name-calling, such as "foul stigmatic," "crookback," and "a heap of wrath, foul, undigested lump." His physical deformity, greatly exaggerated, is a constant source of ridicule by the Lancastrians, and marks him as being quite different from the rest of humanity. In this respect, Shakespeare follows the accepted Renaissance view of physiognomy and character-stereotypes.²¹

²¹Ruth L. Anderson, Elizabethan Psychology and Shakespeare's Plays (New York: Russell and Russell, 1973), p. 144.

According to physiognomic beliefs, Richard's bodily deformity is an outward sign of sinister and evil inward traits. Baldassare Castiglione remarks that the beautiful is good and that "ugliness is the dark, disagreeable, unpleasant and sorry face of evil."²² Bartholomeus Cocles, a physiognomist, points out that "the crookednes of the backe, declareth the maliciousness of condicions and ouerthwartnesse in manner."²³ According to Holinshed, Richard's physical defects gives "proofoe to this rule of physiognomie: Distortum vultum sequitur distorsio morum."²⁴ Furthermore, the chronicler describes Richard thus:

He was close and secret, a deepe dissembler, lowlie of countenance, arrogant of heart, outwardlie companiable where he inwardlie hated, not letting to kiss whome he thought to kill; despitious and cruell, not for euill will alway, but often for ambition, and either for suertie or increase of his estate. 25

Margaret draws attention to the fact that "Sin, death, and hell have set their marks on him/ And all their ministers attend on him" (Richard III, I.iii. 289-90). In short, Shakespeare sets Richard into a mould that the audience would recognize as evil, malicious and sinister by appearance alone.

²²Baldassare Castiglione, The Book of the Courtier, ed. and trans. George Bull (London: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 330.

²³Bartholomeus Cocles, A Brief and Most Pleasant Epitomye of the Whole Art of Phisiognomie, Englished by T. Hyll (London, 1556), Chap. 35.

²⁴Holinshed, p. 362.

²⁵Holinshed, p. 362.

Richard himself admits that his physical deformity sets him apart from others and motivates him to seek the crown as the only satisfactory goal in life:

Then since this earth affords no joy to me
 But to command, to check, to o'erbear such
 As are of better person than myself,
 I'll make my heaven to dream upon the crown,
 And whiles I live, t'account this world but hell,
 Until my misshap'd trunk that bears this head
 Be round impaled with a glorious crown.
 (III.ii. 165-71)

Furthermore, although his enemies mock his deformed shape, Richard regards his physique with a sense of perverse pride. He holds himself up to a bitter self-parody:

Well, say there is no kingdom then for Richard;
 What other pleasure can the world afford?
 I'll make my heaven in a lady's lap,
 And deck my body in gay ornaments,
 And witch sweet ladies with my words and looks.
 (III.ii. 146-50)

Since he is like no man, he owes allegiance to no one. Therefore, anything he says or does benefits only himself and his goal, the English crown. He denies his paternity and fraternity with the world in one stark statement: "I am myself alone." According to Robert Pierce, his words repudiate the last vestige of order and morality:²⁶

Then since the heavens have shap'd my body so,
 Let hell make crook'd my mind to answer it.
 (V.vi. 78-79)

If it were only his deformity that makes him villainous,

²⁶Pierce, p. 82.

then Richard would merely be a stereotyped Marlovian over-reacher. Shakespeare, however, imbues him with other qualities, ominous and unnatural, which lift him beyond the ordinary. Richard's birth is unlike any other. In a soliloquy, he recalls his hard birth:

Why, love forswore me in my mother's womb;
 And for I should not deal in her soft laws,
 She did corrupt frail nature with some bribe,
 To shrink mine arm up like a wither'd shrub,
 To make an envious mountain on my back,
 Where sits deformity to mock my body;
 To shape my legs of an unequal size,
 To disproportion me in every part,
 Like to a chaos, or an unlicked bear-whelp
 That carries no impression like the dam.
 (III.ii. 153-62)

Later, before he murders King Henry in the Tower, he learns from the saintly king the sequence of unnatural events during his nativity:

The owl shriek'd at thy birth, an evil sign;
 The night-crow cried, aboding luckless times;
 Dogs howl'd, and hideous tempest shook down trees;
 The raven rook'd her on the chimney's top,
 And chattering pies in dismal discords sung;
 Thy mother felt more than a mother's pain,
 And yet brought forth less than a mother's hope,
 To wit, an indigested and deformed lump,
 Not like the fruit of such a goodly tree.
 Teeth hadst thou in thy head when thou wast born,
 To signify thou cam'st to bite the world.
 (V.vi. 44-53)

After dispatching Henry, Richard adds further information about his unnatural birth:

I, that have neither pity, love, nor fear.
 Indeed 'tis true that Henry told me of;
 For I have often heard my mother say
 I came into the world with my legs forward.

Had I not reason, think ye, to make haste,
 And seek their ruin that usurp'd our right?
 The midwife wonder'd and the women cried,
 "O, Jesus bless us, he is born with teeth!"
 And so I was, which plainly signified
 That I should snarl, and bite, and play the dog.
 (V.vi. 68-77)

Shakespeare's purpose in each version of Richard's freakish birth is, obviously, to reinforce a character delineation already established in most part by Richard's previous wicked actions and by his revealing soliloquy. His abnormal birth and the strange circumstances surrounding it set Richard further apart than ever from his fellow man. Brought forth into the world in a monstrous birth, Richard becomes the bringer of unnatural deaths to his enemies. Indeed, in the words of Queen Margaret, Richard is "Marked by the destinies to be avoided" (II.ii. 137).

In every instance Richard's unnaturalness is equated with wickedness and evil beyond the natural scope of human ambition and cruelty of ordinary men. Richard is evil incarnate.

Shakespeare heaps on Richard further ominous distinctions. Historically, Richard received the title of Duke of Gloucester from his brother, King Edward IV; in the play, this conferment of honour becomes dubious and inauspicious. Richard draws attention to the Gloucester title:

Let me be Duke of Clarence, George of Gloucester,
 For Gloucester's dukedom is too ominous.
 (II.vi. 107-08)

From Hall's account, Shakespeare is quite aware of this dukedom's unfortunate history:

[T]hat the name and title of Gloucester, hath been unfortunate and unluckie to diverse, whiche for their honour have been erected by creacion of princes, to that stile and dignitie, as Hugh Spencer, Thomas of Woodstocke, sonne to kyng Edward the third, and this duke Humfrey, which thre persones, by miserable death finished their daies, after them king Richard the III. also, duke of Gloucester, in civill warre was slain and confounded: so that this name of Gloucester is taken for an unhappie and unfortunate stile. 27

In the play, the title of Gloucester is doubly grim. Richard finds the dukedom "ominous" in the sense that it is unlucky and that past holders of it met with untimely and violent ends. Shakespeare adds another dimension to the meaning of "ominous." The holder of the dukedom is dangerous to all those who associate with him. Later, Richard will slaughter his way to his brother's crown. Edward IV does not realize how apt the title is for Richard.

Richard's true nature is evil and hellish, and Shakespeare makes this evident throughout Part Three. In his candid soliloquy, Richard reveals not only his great ambition to be king but also the method which he will use to achieve his objective:

²⁷Hall, cited in Bullough, p. 108.

Why, I can smile and murther whiles I smile,
 And cry "Content" to that which grieves my heart,
 And wet my cheeks with artificial tears,
 And frame my face to all occasions.
 I'll drown more sailors than the mermaid shall,
 I'll slay more gazers than the basilisk,
 I'll play the orator as well as Nestor,
 Deceive more slily than Ulysses could,
 And, like a Sinon, take another Troy.
 I can add colors to the chameleon,
 Change shapes with Proteus for advantages
 And set the murtherous Machevil to school,
 Can I do this and cannot get a crown?
 Tut, were it farther off, I'll pluck it down.
 (III.ii. 183-95)

The man's confidence borders on extreme arrogance, and he takes full pleasure in his ability to dissemble. Each analogue he chooses represents a facet of deception and is akin to talented, if not innate, wickedness. But, if selfish opportunism were Richard's sole characteristic, he would be in good company with his predecessors, such as Suffolk, Somerset and York, and with ambitious lords, such as Warwick and Edward. They all hacked with the sword and schemed with treasonous plots, and in a sense they were all overreachers. Richard, however, surpasses the Marlovian overreacher. He subscribes to the guidance of Hell,²⁸ for indeed Richard is a devil in human shape.²⁹ Ruthlessly, he murders the Prince of Wales and King Henry, both progeny and sire, blotting out entirely the direct male Lancastrian line. Then,

²⁸Turner, p. 247.

²⁹Bromley, p. 28.

he plots the overthrow and the deaths of his brothers, Clarence and Edward, as a matter of course to the throne.

Before King Henry dies, he calls Richard a "good devil," and thus the saintly king associates Richard with infernal evil which transcends human bounds. As the "devil's butcher," Richard performs exceedingly well. In Part Three, Richard's savagery makes pale Margaret's ruthless torture of York before stabbing him to death and chopping off his head.

In addition, Shakespeare confers on Richard York's association with the occult. As a human instrument of the infernal prophecy, Richard dispatches Somerset underneath the alehouse sign and brings the chopped-off head to his father as a show of his valour in battle. York readily praises Richard as the "best deserv'd of all my sons" (I.i. 17). York does not mention any other son in this regard. It seems to me this distinction may be taken as a symbolic transfer of the occult theme onto Richard's crookback shoulders by the playwright.

In identifying Richard with the demonic, Shakespeare looks ahead to his next play. As a devil figure here, Richard possesses the traits of the sardonic mocker: along with Clarence, he ridicules his brother Edward's wooing of Lady Grey (III.ii. 1-124), and as the play ends, he casts a shadow on King Edward's wish for prosperity and peace and previews future discord in the English realm:

I'll blast his harvest, and your head were laid,
 For yet I am not look'd on in the world.
 This shoulder was ordain'd so thick to heave,
 And heave it shall some weight, or break my back;
 Work thou the way--and that shall execute.
 (V.vii. 21-25)

Richard is the treacherous Judas, the dissembling Sinon, the scheming Ulysses in King Edward's court.

Shakespeare also links the occult theme with King Henry, the saintly but ineffectual monarch. Upon seeing the young Earl of Richmond, Henry makes one prediction. However, his prophetic utterance seems oddly out of place in this play because Richmond appears only once in Part Three and does not reappear until the final Act in Richard III, and because this prophecy is not fulfilled until the next play. Nonetheless, Henry's prediction not only proves correct but also acts as a counter-measure to the evil that Richard does later.

Come hither, England's hope, (lay his hand on his head)
 If secret powers
 Suggest but truth to my divining thoughts,
 This pretty lad will prove our country's bliss.
 His looks are full of peaceful majesty,
 His head by nature fram'd to wear a crown,
 His hands to wield a sceptre and himself
 Likely in time to bless a regal throne.
 (IV.vi. 68-74)

At first glance, the purpose behind this prediction seems both awfully contrived and baldly complimentary, probably worked in as an extravagant gesture to the reigning Tudor sovereign. Apparently, this is not altogether true. In line with what he has done in this tetralogy already, Shakespeare introduces a historically prominent personage

in a relatively minor role (such as the appearance of Margaret in Part One and Richard in Part Two) and then in the following play gives him a meatier part to play. In this case, Shakespeare changes this formula slightly by not re-introducing Richmond until the final Act of Richard III. In addition, as he does with the infernal prophecy concerning King Henry, Shakespeare leaves this prediction about Richmond dangling here. It is not fulfilled until Richard is slain and Richmond wears the crown in Richard III. Thus, using both Richmond and Henry's prophecy, Shakespeare links the two plays and the occult theme together.

Henry's descriptive prophecy takes into account physiognomy, and surely Richmond's looks of peaceful majesty contrasts strikingly with Richard's "foul, indigested lump." Richmond's untried virtues become a foil to highlight Richard's active wickedness, bloodthirstiness and treachery. Since the death of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, in Part Two, there has not been a truly virtuous character on stage. (Henry's saintliness is not a virtue but rather a burden which makes him ineffectual as king. Although he does no harm to anyone personally, his moral weakness is in itself a kind of evil.) Shakespeare has given the audience various shades of evil and cruelty, culminating in the supreme evil of Richard Crookback. At last here in Richmond, Shakespeare provides a glimpse of optimism after the years of bloodletting and of unnatural and

occult happenings. Unfortunately, Shakespeare understates Richmond's role here so much that the point may be lost. It is interesting to note that in Richard III Richard is the man who recalls Henry's prediction about Richmond.

With respect to both the political and occult themes, Henry VI, Part Three shows itself to be a transitional rather than a culminating play. Nothing is completely settled. Political treachery and bloody conflicts merely change from a Lancastrian-Yorkist feud to purely internecine campaigns among the surviving Yorkists. The prophecies and curses uttered here condemning the Yorkists must wait for their fulfillment in the next play. Here, also, Richard's monstrosity is but a small sampling of his evil energies, and there is an implicit promise that the audience will be treated to more of this particular brand of evil. In short, Richard is too engrossing a character to be abandoned, and Shakespeare is too astute a playwright not to take the opportunity to explore Richard's far-ranging personality. Furthermore, there are promises to keep. Shakespeare deliberately ushers Richard away from Tewkesbury for good reason. Richard, who has now become something nearing a symbol for Evil, must be the one to murder the saintly king. All previous actions point to it ("I cannot rest/ Until the white rose that I wear be dy'd/ Even in the lukewarm blood of Henry's heart" I.ii. 32-34). Secondly, Richard dominates the final scenes as a horrendous, terrifying, and menacing Sinon promising death and destruction

to all who stand in his way. Thirdly, Shakespeare deliberately postpones the classic confrontation between two dynamic personalities, Margaret and Richard.

In short, there are too many unresolved conflicts at the end of Part Three. When Richard in an aside counters Edward's hope for a lasting joy, Shakespeare leaves his audience with a cliffhanger.

CHAPTER FOUR

RICHARD III

Richard III shows the most vigor in presenting the occult theme in the tetralogy. Shakespeare, of course, has used this successful formula before, and now he again draws on the supernatural and witchcraft elements to add a further dimension to what could have been just another chronicle play of the Elizabethan period depicting a depraved, immoral tyrant waist-deep in blood and slaughter, murdering and scheming his way to the coveted English crown. Indeed, the portrait of a notoriously diabolical man, because he is so consummately evil, is at once fascinating and repulsive to Shakespeare's audience. In short, the playwright pulls out all the stops and gives his audience a phantasmagoria of occult happenings which bolster structure of Richard III and exert significant influence on the rise and fall of its protagonist. Richard III, then, is an early tour-de-force in combining English history and occult phenomena.¹

In Henry VI, Part Three Shakespeare ends the play with a tantalizing suggestion that there will be all sorts of treachery and palace intrigue from the crookbacked Richard, when he has the character, in an aside, contradict King Edward IV's hope for a lasting joy. Here, we have an implicit promise from

¹In Macbeth, Shakespeare combines Scottish history and witchcraft.

the playwright that the audience will see more of Richard's nefarious conspiracies and that the character will try to surmount every obstacle in his path to the English throne. Shakespeare does much to secure an incredibly menacing role for Richard.

In the context of Elizabethan psychology,² and the occult the playwright first introduces Richard as a bloodthirsty, cruel prince who not only dispatches his father's and, later, his brother's enemies, but also fulfills a number of infernal prophecies. At once he is portrayed as ambitious and as one associated irrevocably with the infernal. Even his twisted body--a very distinguishable and symbolic feature of Richard's--marks him as evil and aligns him with the forces of Hell. Queen Margaret, Richard's nemesis and a supernatural figure in her own right, warns everyone that Richard is "Marked by the destinies to be avoided" (Henry VI, Part Three, II.ii. 187) and that

Sin, death, and hell have set their marks on him,
And all their ministers attend on him.
(I.iii. 292-93)

His birth is extraordinary and destines him to be a bane of humanity. Before King Henry VI dies from murderous wounds, he calls Richard "a devil." This epithet is given further credibility in Richard III.

²Cf., Anderson, p. 144.

Richard Crookback is a devil disguised in human form. In this play alone, Shakespeare has his characters refer to Richard as "devil," "devilish," "hell's black intelligencer," "minister of hell," "dissembler," and "caco-demon" over twenty times collectively. Richard's motives and ambitions may be those of an overreaching Machiavellian, but his actions belie those of mere mortal men by making all other mischiefs and misdeeds pale in comparison. Is Shakespeare simply using these infernal epithets as metaphors, or is he suggesting that Richard is what others claim him to be? Turner suggests that Richard "submits to the guidance of hell."³ There is evidence enough to show that Richard, indeed, is in league with the Devil and that he possesses a demonic nature far beyond any nightmarish imaginings of mortal men.

In Part Three, Richard seems to express his views much like the stereotyped Elizabethan Machiavellian:

Why, I can smile, and murder whiles I smile,
 And cry "Content" to that which grieves my heart,
 And wet my cheeks with artificial tears,
 And frame my face to all occasions.
 I'll drown more sailors than the mermaid shall,
 I'll slay more gazers than the basilisk,
 I'll play the orator as well as Nestor,
 Deceive more slyly than Ulysses could,
 And like a Sinon, take another Troy.
 I can add colors to the chameleon,
 Change shapes with Proteus for advantages,
 And set the murderous Machevil to school.

(Henry VI, Part Three, III.ii. 183-93)

³Turner, p. 247.

What Richard intended in Part Three, he amply executes in this play. Yet, in these lines, Shakespeare aligns Richard more with the demonic than with the treacherous Machiavellian character-type. The ability to drown sailors, to slay like basilisks, to deceive and change shapes like Proteus is the same skills which the Devil grants his initiates and followers. Moreover, the analogy with Machiavelli is exceedingly important. First, this analogy characterizes Richard as a devious political manipulator or a "Machevil", the notorious personage whom the Elizabethans took to be grossly immoral and ruthless in politics. Secondly, there is a connection between this particular Italian and the Devil, for the Elizabethans used the name "Machiavelli" often as a synonym for Satan. Mario Praz explains:

Diabolical atheism is another abiding feature of the mythical Machiavelli. The accusation dates from the first ecclesiastical campaign against The Prince. It will be remembered that already Cardinal Pole had called The Prince a book 'Satanæ digito scriptum.' Gentillet did little else but give the finishing touches to the dark picture the Catholic clergy had been elaborating for a half-a-century against the anticlerical writer, whose comparison between the Pagan and the Christian religion (in Discorsi, II,ii) was purposely misconstrued into an atheistical argument. This accusation reflected on the popular account of Machiavelli's life. He was portrayed as a thoroughly bad and ignorant man, addicted to all vices, hating his country, banished from Florence (Gentillet) and dying in despair (Greene). They distorted his name in order to see it an emblem of his villainy: he was called Match a villain 'Match-evill that evill none can match' (Davies), 'Hatch-evil.' His Christian name got confused with the previously existing 'Old Nick' for the Devil. Sometimes he was described as

a new Simon Magus (George Whetstone, English Myrrour, Lib. iii); he was compared with Sin, Judas, Julian the Apostate (Greene, Groat's Worth of Wit). But the most fruitful side of the Machiavelli myth was the representation of the Florentine as an instrument of Satan, as ridden by an incubus, as the Secretary of Hell, as the Devil himself turned moralist. So much did the terms Machiavelli and Satan become interchangeable, that, whereas at first the tricks attributed to Machiavelli were called devilish, later on the Devil's own tricks were styled 'Machiavellian' (Nash, Terrors of the Night). By an inversion of the process which has resulted in describing Machiavelli as a devil, the Devil himself became tinged with Machiavellianism.

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Richard sets aside temporarily the bloody sword with which he has fought for his father and brother, and, like a Machiavel, takes up wit and treachery as the tools by which he will attain the throne of England. Of course, Richard does not abandon the sword entirely, but for now he suspends the blade in favour of wit.⁵ The killing of King Henry VI is the last bloody, personal act Richard performs until he rages across Bosworth Field slaying five Richmonds in personal combat. In his first major soliloquy, Richard speaks in metaphors about using a bloody axe to hew his way to the crown; in reality, he depends on his sharp, insidious wit and has others do the slaughtering for him.

Spivack interprets Richard in terms of the Vice-figure⁶

⁴Mario Praz, "Machiavelli and the Elizabethans," Proceedings of the British Academy xiv (1928), pp. 82-83.

⁵Ornstein, p. 66.

⁶Bernard Spivack, Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), p. 397.

and, indeed, Richard himself relishes the comparison to that of the Vice, Iniquity (III.i. 82). But Shakespeare does not limit Richard's role to a mere Mischief delighting in confounding wayward mankind and leading them to damnation. Richard voices his intentions as a kind of boast in defiance against all odds of his success. When he says,

Clarence, beware, thou keep'st me from the light
 But I will sort a pitchy day for thee;
 For I will buzz abroad such prophecies
 That Edward shall be fearful of his life.
 And then to purge his fear, I'll be thy death.

(Henry VI, Part Three, V.vi. 84-88)

Richard is no mere vice that entices sinners to doom, rather he actively works towards a goal, the crown, and his relatives are then just so many obstacles in his way. What makes Richard diabolic or Satanic is the energy he puts into each small enterprise to reach his objective. His victims seek to become his tool in many cases, and Richard uses them and then destroys them.

Richard's methods are at once simple and devious, a rare combination in the planning and the execution of plots and inductions dangerous. He takes each scheme to the end of its tether, and when the odds against winning are the greatest, he then succeeds. A more prudent man would have taken better care to guard himself from such dangers and exposures, but Richard defies--indeed, mocks--the face of hazard and danger. Except for a selected few, his victims think well of him, regard him as an innocent at

court, and learn only too late the mistake they made in underestimating his abilities. Richard has a certain genius in disguising his devilish nature with a false appearance of piety and sincerity. For that he is doubly dangerous. Shakespeare repeats these qualities of Richard's a number of times in this play, notably in the first Act.

The famous opening soliloquy is none other than a skillfully handled recapitulation of Richard's other soliloquies in Part Three and a choric summary of events between curtains. Even if a theatre-goer were not privileged to see the other plays in this series, he would still recognize Richard as an unnatural and wicked creature. Richard's deformed body encourages that impression, and Shakespeare makes certain that that effect is sustained not only by the twisted hunchback, withered arm, and uneven legs--features to which Richard himself draws attention--but also by the actions, and plots which Richard puts into effect immediately.

Richard's disarming directness in intimating his ultimate evil nature--a quality determined both by Nature and by personal choice--sets him apart from all others. Only Richard is privileged to be intimate with the audience, and this rapport tends to intensify the audience's feeling that Richard is more monstrous than if Shakespeare had had him remain aloof from them on the stage. In sharing his innermost thoughts and schemes, Richard allows the audience to see an aspect of himself masked from the other characters. One effect achieved is an

anticipation of its results. When Richard states that he has laid plots and "inductions dangerous,/ By drunken prophecies, libels and dreams," the audience would see him not only as a devious schemer, but as one who has the power to manipulate dreams and prophecies. No mean feat for any man. This ability to utilize such occult powers shows him to be in league with the demonic forces. We recall that in Henry VI, Part One Joan la Pucelle was immediately labeled a witch by historical association and by her feats of witchcraft on stage. Richard's use of prophecies and dreams to help him subvert Edward's throne and cause enmity between the king and Clarence points to no less an occult association:

Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous,
 By drunken prophecies, libels, and dreams,
 To set my brother Clarence and the King
 In deadly hate the one against the other;
 And if King Edward be as true and just
 As I am subtle, false and treacherous,
 This day should Clarence closely be mew'd up
 About a prophecy, which says that G
 Of Edward's heirs the murderer shall be.
 (I.i. 32-40)

The "G" prophecy of which Richard makes use and the subsequent events that befall Clarence are historical. According to the accounts by Hall and Holinshed, such a prophecy was buzzed about during King Edward's reign:

IN the. xvij. yere of kyng Edward, there fel a sparcle of privy malice, betwene the king & his brother the duke of Clarence whether it rose of olde grudges before time passed, or were it newly kyndeled and set a fyre by the Quene, or her bloud which were ever mistrusting and prively barkynge at the kynges lignage, or were he

desirous to reigne after his brother: The fame was that the king or the Quene or bothe sore troubled with a folysh Propheſye, and by reason therof began to stomacke & greuously to grudge agaynst the duke. The effect of which was, after king Edward should reigne, one whose first letter of hys name shoulde be a G. and because the devel is wont with suche wytchcraftes, to wrappe and illaqueat the myndes of men, which delyte in such develyſhe fantasyes they sayd afterward that that Propheſie loſt not hys effect, when after kyng Edward, Gloucester vsurped his kyngdome. . . . The king much greved and troubled with hys brothers dayly querimonye, caused hym to be apprehended, and caſt into the Towre, where he beyng taken and adjudged for a Traytor, was prively drowned in a But of Malveſey. 7

Although Hall and Holinshed admit that "that Propheſie loſt not hys effect, when after kyng Edward, Gloucester vsurped his kyngdome," neither ſays that Richard part in framing or using the prophecy. Shakespeare, on the other hand, ſhows Richard to be reſponsible for this prophecy. By drawing on this historical incident, complete with rumoured devilish witchcraft ſurrounding it, Shakespeare links Richard again with the occult and the infernal as he did in the other two plays.⁸ Shakespeare eſtabliſhes this point immediately becauſe prophecies--and, later, curſes--will play a deciſive role in the play.

Clarence, who does not ſuſpect Richard in this enterpriſe, informs his brother how Edward picked the letter "G"

⁷Hall, cited in Bullough, pp. 249-50.

⁸Cf., Kelly, p. 277.

from the crossrow and how the wizard interpreted this omen:

He hearkens after prophecies and dreams,
 And from the cross-row plucks the letter G,
 And says a wizard told him that by G
 His issue disinherited should be;
 (I.i. 54-57)

Edward's choice of the crossrow as a tool for divination is novel, but in divination almost any object, animal or thing may be used. The kind of divination described is called "onomatomancy," or divination by name. Accordingly, there is a natural correspondence between a man's name and his destiny. Therefore, by discovering the name or the meaning of the name, a person's future or destiny is revealed.⁹ Shakespeare does not, however, explain satisfactorily how Edward decided on the letter "G" from all the other twenty-five letters in the alphabet. Because Richard has previously admitted that he uses dreams and prophecies as part of his induction dangerous, we can assume that he has a hand in either framing the prophecy or causing Edward to choose the letter. Unfortunately, in either case, the explanation or assumption proves unsatisfactory. If Richard were to have formed the prophecy, or to have caused his brother to pick it, why would he have the King choose "G"? Why would he place

⁹Spence, p. 307. See also, Rossell H. Robbins, The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1959), p. 139.

himself in needless jeopardy if Edward should decide that "G" refers to Gloucester rather than to George? Off-handedly, there are several explanations. First, since Richard has provided Edward with a wizard to interpret this omen, the accomplice steers the King in the direction of Clarence as the most likely suspect. Even if any other letter were chosen, the wizard would have somehow arranged a satisfactory explanation to point the accusing finger at Clarence. Secondly, there is no jeopardy involved in Richard's directing his brother to the letter "G". Richard knows his two brothers well. In his opening soliloquy, he compares himself to Edward and he seems to know Edward's inclinations much better than Edward himself. Moreover, in Henry VI, Part Three, Clarence did for a time betray his regal brother (and, certainly, this would account for something to say the least) while Richard remained loyal throughout the campaigns. It is difficult to believe that this "G" prophecy alone caused Edward to imprison Clarence (although the king has reason enough when Clarence proved his perfidy during the civil wars). This incident with the cross-row "G" must be the last straw in a series of clashes between Clarence and the King which Richard, of course, instigated. Thirdly, the gods may have had a hand in the King's choice of letters, and in a way they are warning Edward about Richard's conspiracy against the royal family, but the King foolishly misinterprets the

signs of heaven and thus condemns his children to a violent fate. At best, all three explanations are speculative and fanciful. The answer is simple. Shakespeare takes it upon himself to embellish the historical version of the "G" prophecy. In the Tudor chronicles, its origin escapes scrutiny. Shakespeare, on the other hand, takes the opportunity to show that, like Dame Eleanor Cobham, Edward dabbles in unholy practices such as witchcraft, divinations, and prognostications and believes in their validity as to the future of his royal line. Clearly, Richard plays upon this weakness. Since he has twice confessed that he tampered with the prophecy, and that, more than likely, he accomplished this feat by occult means, the audience would suspect him of being a devil, or, at the very least, in league with the infernal ones. The repetition of "prophecies and dreams" seems rather a heavy-handed technique, lacking dramatic subtlety, unless the playwright meant this to be of prime importance. Moreover, Shakespeare keeps ambiguous and elusive Richard's occult qualities. A more detailed account, say, a feat of conjuration of spellcasting, would, of course, mar the mystique which the crookbacked prince exudes. It is enough that Edward acted in precisely the way Richard wants him to. The audience could imaginatively fill in the manner in which Richard works his devilry.

A consummate liar and schemer, Richard deflects all suspicion to persons other than himself. Clarence blames

the King for "hearkening after prophecies and dreams." Richard insinuates that Queen Elizabeth and her kindred are responsible for Clarence's arrest and imprisonment. This is a nice touch, since the former Lady Grey has also a "G" in her name.¹⁰ Richard enjoys the slight banter about Jane Shore with Clarence and Brackenbury, but his words are double-edged ("I moralize two meanings in one word" III.i. 83). The joke is on his victim:

Brother, farewell, I will unto the King,
 And whatsoe'er you will employ me in,
 Were it to call King Edward's widow sister,
 I will perform it to enfranchise you.
 Mean time, this deep disgrace in brotherhood
 Touches me deeper than you can imagine.
 (I.i. 107-12)

Although Robert Ornstein says that Richard "takes a detached, ironic, almost kindly, view of such victims as simple plain Clarence,"¹¹ Richard is hardly ever "detached" and never "almost kindly;" he is always quite involved in his plots and inductions dangerous. Double-edged in wit, and ironic in speech and meaning, Richard possesses a wry, grotesque sense of humour and he shares this secret and masked villainy only with the audience. When Richard says:

Simple plain Clarence, I do love thee so
 That I will shortly send thy soul to heaven,
 If heaven will take the present at our hands.
 (I.i. 118-20)

¹⁰Cf., Cutts, p. 129.

¹¹Ornstein, p.66.

he means the very opposite of what he says. Although Richard may veil his feelings he is always devilish and hatefilled. He even mocks heaven with his unholy joking, about sending Clarence to heaven. Richard knows that heaven will reject Clarence because his brother is as deeply mired in blood and sin as he for past deeds, and therefore belongs to hell. Moreover, Richard makes impious remarks at heaven because he believes that heaven was unkind to him at birth:

Then since the heavens have shap'd my body so,
 Let hell make crook'd my mind to answer it.
 (Henry VI, Part Three, V.vi. 78-79)

Because of this, he aligns himself with the forces of hell.

If Clarence is the unsuspecting, trusting dupe to fall prey to Richard's devilish schemes, Lady Anne Neville is the very opposite. She knows Richard for what he is, a devil. As she mourns the death of King Henry VI, she curses Richard vehemently:

O, cursed be the hand that made these holes!
 Cursed the heart that had the heart to do it!
 Cursed the blood that let this blood from hence!
 More direful hap betide that hated wretch
 That makes us wretched by the death of thee
 Than I can wish to wolves--to spiders, toads,
 Or any creeping venom'd thing that lives!
 (I.ii. 14-20)

She further adds a curse on Richard's issue and on his future wife. Lady Anne has inadvertently cursed herself, for Richard's intention is to make her his wife (I.i. 153-59).

Shakespeare's striking juxtaposition of Clarence's naive trust in Richard and Lady Anne's bitter hatred of him is

really two sides of a coin. Richard is the master dissembler in both cases. Whereas the playwright suggests strongly Richard's devilish connections in scene one, here he dramatizes and gives ocular proof of Richard's unnatural powers.

When Richard appears, Lady Anne immediately identifies him as a fiend conjured up by a black magician, as a foul devil, and as a dreadful minister of Hell, and calls him so not only because his monstrous actions show him in such a light, not only because his physical monstrosity makes him appear like a deformed devil, but because she sees him as one. To her, Richard knows "nor law of God nor man" and has come to make this happy earth his hell. Although Anne has no special powers and is unable to exorcise him from this place, she knows by the unnatural bleeding of dead King Henry's congealed blood that Richard is the murderer (I.ii. 55-56). She knows his deeds to be inhuman and unnatural and calls on God and earth to avenge Henry's death, a foul murder done by "his hell-governed arm." She cries out that Richard cannot have Henry's soul; she does not perceive that her own soul is in greater jeopardy and that Richard's sole purpose here is to possess her in body and in spirit. She understands why her two armed attendants cannot stop Richard:

What do you tremble? are you all afraid?
 Alas, I blame you not, for you are mortal,
 And mortal eyes cannot endure the devil.
 (I.ii. 43-45)

But she does not realize how quickly her eyes and her weak spirit are mesmerized by Richard's words, wooing, and persistence. With ever weakening resolve she tries to wound him, but he wins her over and takes

her in her heart's extremest hate,
With curses in her mouth, tears in her eyes,
The bleeding witness of [his] hatred by,
Having God, her conscience, and these bars against [him].
(I.iii. 231-34)

With a sense of the macabre, Shakespeare parodies the courtly love tradition in the seduction of Lady Anne. At once, Richard flatters and torments her, never giving her a chance to regroup her spent spiritual resources. Richard offers Anne his sword and dares her, goads her on, to kill him while at the same time he outrages her moral sensibility with his stark confession that he murdered both King Henry and her husband, the Prince of Wales. He flatters her, lies outrageously to her, and twists her words to suit his purpose. When he has won her he mocks her weakness:

Was ever woman in this humour woo'd?
Was ever woman in this humour won?
I'll have her, but I will not keep her long.
(I.ii. 228-30)

According to Francis P. Bernard, Richard possesses the occult power of "fascination" through the Evil Eye. With this supernatural power, he dominates Lady Anne:

It is true that Shakespeare does not say this in so many words, but the fact of the prevalence of the belief in the evil eye in his day would render it unnecessary for him to do more than hint at or suggest it; and a far stronger argument in explan-

ation of his not making the statement directly would be found in the common persuasion that attaches to so many folk-lore superstitions, that it is dangerous to mention supernatural or uncanny things by name. We are not obliged to assume in consequence of this that Shakespeare himself believed in the evil eye, and for the present purpose it does not matter whether he did or not; but we do know, as he knew, that most of those who formed his audiences believed in it. . . . Ann Nevil says, with reference to Gloucester, "Mortal eyes cannot endure the devil." The word "devil" here would have, in this case, not a general, but a special appropriateness, since possessors of the evil eye were supposed to have acquired that mischievous organ, with its power of bewitchment, through a compact with Satan. 12

The power of fascination is, of course, an infernal charm or spell used to bewitch the victim with the eyes and to keep him in thralldom as long as the charm is efficacious.¹³ Usually dwarfs, hunchbacks, and unusually ugly or attractive persons are suspected of having the evil eye and using it to their personal advantage.¹⁴ According to the Malleus Maleficarum, fascination is definitely the work of the Devil:

These charms or fascinations seem capable of division into three kinds. First, the senses are deluded, and this may truly be done by magic, that is to say, by the power of the devil, if God permit it. And the senses may be enlightened by the power of good angels. Secondly, fascination may begin about a certain glamour and a leading astray, as when the apostle says: Who hath bewitched you? Galatians iii, 1. In the third

¹²Francis P. Barnard, "Shakespeare's 'Richard III' and the Evil Eye," Notes and Queries (May 23, 1896), p. 402.

¹³Spence, p. 156.

¹⁴Frederick Elworthy, The Evil Eye (London: Collier Books, 1958), p. x.

place, there may be a certain fascination cast by the eyes over another person, and this may be harmful and bad.

And it is of this fascination that Avicenna and Al-Gazali have spoken; S. Thomas too thus mentions this fascination, Part 1, question 117. For he says the mind of a man may be changed by the influence of another mind. And that influence which is exerted over another often proceeds from the eyes, for in the eyes a certain subtle influence may be concentrated. 15

Although Lady Anne realizes what is happening to her, she is powerless to prevent herself from acquiescing in Richard's will. Her curses and invectives diminish once Richard applies his power of fascination. At first, recognizing that the man has some evil power, she cries, "Out of my sight, thou dost infect mine eyes!" (I.ii. 148). Soon, her words change to:

Arise, dissembler! Though I wish thy death,
I will not be thy executioner.
(I.ii. 184-85)

And by the end of the scene, completely under his domination, Anne says:

With all my heart, and much it joys me too
To see you are become so penitent.
(I.ii. 219-20)

From an embittered adversary, and rightly so, Anne changes to a docile, pliable woman unable to rise ever more from Richard's demonic will. She may later reveal her misery as his wife, sleepless in his bed, but she has no will to defy

¹⁵Malleus Maleficarum, p. 63.

his wishes. She has become a piece of furniture to decorate his throne and a creature to be discarded when she proves of no further use to his ambition. This is one aspect of Richard's unnatural power: he can twist ideas and change minds under the thinnest pretext.

For a man who claims that he is "not shap'd for sportive tricks," Richard's ability to woo and dissemble at the same time is amazing. He accuses Anne of "fascinating" him with her beauty, blaming her for his murderous actions:

Your beauty was the cause of that effect--
 Your beauty, that did haunt me in my sleep
 To undertake the death of all the world,
 So I might live one hour in your sweet bosom.
 (I.ii. 121-24)

He exhausts her emotions, frustrates her determination to hate him wholly, and offers her his sword at his breast:

If thy revengeful heart cannot forgive,
 Lo, here I lend thee this sharp-pointed sword,
 Which if thou please to hide in this true breast,
 And let the soul forth that adoreth thee,
 I lay it naked to the deadly stroke,
 And humbly beg the death upon my knee.

He lays his breast open: she offers at
 it with his sword.

Nay, do not pause: for I did kill King Henry--
 But, 'twas thy beauty that provoked me.
 Nay, now dispatch: 'twas I that stabb'd young Edward--
 But 'twas thy heavenly face that set me on.

She falls the sword.

Take up the sword again, or take up me.
 (I.ii. 173-83)

Richard wins his gambit. He gloats over his victory, boasting

of his powers in "the plain devil and dissembling looks" (I.iii. 236).

Richard's admission to using "the plain devil" puts him in the diabolical class, regardless of what earlier critics have described or labeled him. The audience of his day would recognize Richard as a kind of devil, for he has shown himself able to deceive far beyond any expectation of success. Shakespeare impresses upon the audience traits which point to Richard as a devil. Richard's own rather metaphorical use of "the plain devil and dissembling looks" hints at an affiliation with the infernal world. Richard's preoccupation with his black shadow as he passes is quite telling because the shadow he casts on others is as symbolically evil and ominous as the physiognomic determinants of his deformed body. His shadow would appear like a devil, hunched and ugly, blotting out the light of truth. Anyone who fails to see this is doomed to be his victim.

Women who have been hurt, like Lady Anne, in some way by Richard's actions and who come within his sphere of influence recognize the demonic quality of the man, and do not hesitate to call him a devil. Men, it seems, are less perceptive, blinded by personal ambition and political price, and, like Hastings, see Richard's mask ("For by his face straight shall you know his heart" III.iv. 53) rather than his true character.

In Act I, scene iii, Old Queen Margaret, like Lady Anne,

is one of those women abused grievously by Richard's cruel deeds, the murders of her son and husband. She carries grudges and wounds that are as cankerous and hateful as her invectives and curses on the Yorkist clan. Shakespeare reintroduces her to the English court from exile at the height of a political brawl among the court factions. Cold comfort it is for her to witness the dissension and petty jealousies among her hated enemies, and she acts as a choric figure, at first, commenting critically on the figures below. She directs most of her remarks at Richard, calling him "devil," and "cacodemon," and trying to exorcise him back to hell with vile words:

Hie thee to hell for shame and leave this world,
Thou cacodemon, there thy kingdom is.
(I.iii. 142-43)

Unlike the frail, reticent Lady Anne, Old Queen Margaret defies the penalty of death and reveals her presence to this company. Like the classical Cassandra, Margaret warns all those present of Richard's perfidy and unnatural powers, but fails to achieve her goal.¹⁶

The unhistorical presence of Margaret is motivated, of course, by dramatic necessity. Imbued with some supernatural qualities, Margaret is the only creature hateful, cunning, and savage enough to confront and attack Richard on a supernatural level. At this time, she alone knows best Richard's

¹⁶See Chapter Three, pp. 99-106.

demonic nature and appoints herself as his tormentor. (In Henry VI, Part Three, Shakespeare has transformed Margaret from an Amazonian termagant to a vile curser in order that she may persecute Richard on his own level.) After she warns and then curses all those she considers guilty in some way of spilling Lancastrian blood, she exposes, as none has done before, Richard's true face. Unfortunately, the others, especially Queen Elizabeth, still see Richard only as another political enemy envious of the Queen's power, position and prestige. For Queen Elizabeth has yet to realize that Richard is out to eliminate her family entirely.

Old Queen Margaret has a supernatural weapon which is quite effective against, and feared by, Richard--the power of cursing. For among the downtrodden and the impotent cursing is the only redress, verbal weapon, and last resort left to extract some form of retribution. Strangely, although Margaret hates Queen Elizabeth for usurping her rightful place on the throne, she offers her adversary the only recourse for revenge:

The day will come that thou shalt wish for me
To help thee curse this poisonous bunch-back'd toad.
(I.iii. 244-45)

Later, when Richard has the two princes murdered in the Tower and maligns her in a deceitful accusation of witchcraft with Jane Shore, Queen Elizabeth remembers Margaret's prophecy and begs from her a pattern of curses so that she too may revile Richard:

O thou well skill'd in curses, stay awhile
 And teach me how to curse mine enemies!
 (IV.iv. 116-17)

With Margaret's help. Queen Elizabeth learns to hate Richard enough to be on guard against his infectious wooing for the hand of her daughter in marriage. Thus fortified, she can withstand the devil himself.

Even Richard's mother, the Duchess of York, merely suspects her son to be deceitful:

Ah! that deceit should steal such gentle shape,
 And with a virtuous visor hide deep vice!
 He is my son--ay, and therein my shame
 Yet from my dugs he drew not this deceit.
 (II.ii. 27-30)

She does not suspect the monstrosity of his act in murdering the princes until later. Learning of this, she recalls Richard's youth:

Thou cam'st on earth to make the earth my hell.
 A grievous burthen was thy birth to me,
 Tetchy and wayward was thy infancy;
 Thy school-days frightful, desperate, wild, and furious,
 Thy prime of manhood daring, bold, and venturous;
 Thy age confirm'd, proud, subtle, sly, and bloody,
 More mild, but yet more harmful--kind in hatred.
 (IV.iv. 166-75)

Both as mother and as victim, the Duchess curses her own son as vehemently as any other victim:

Therefore take with thee my most grievous curse,
 Which in the day of battle tire thee more
 Than all the complete armour that thou wear'st!
 My prayers on the adverse party fight,
 And there the little souls of Edward's children
 Whisper the spirits of thine enemies
 And promise them success and victory.
 Bloody thou art, bloody will be thy end;
 Shame serves thy life and doth thy death attend.
 (IV.iv. 188-96)

Because the women are living recipients of sorrow and bitterness and are more hurt by Richard's malice towards them and their men, they see in him a demonic monster of immense proportion. The men, however, have different views of Richard Crookback. Motivated by high ambition and insatiable greed--though less energetic and certainly less devious in approach than Richard--they are mere, stringed puppets that dance to Richard's constant manipulation. And although some have been forewarned by old Queen Margaret through her prophetic curses, they disbelieve her and fail to see Richard as anything but a man who is either an innocent at court, or one in a position to advance their standing and to give them wealth and power. Clarence, who was once as treacherous and disloyal as Richard is now, believes his brother Gloucester to be nothing but good, and learns, at the moment of his death, that Richard has sent the two murderers to do him in. Hastings, an obtusely outspoken nobleman, whose sense of political reality is quite distorted by his dogged loyalty to Edward's heirs, misjudges Richard's power and ability completely, and lives to regret his gracious but thoughtless statement about Richard: "For by his face straight shall you know his heart" (III.iv. 53). Regretting his shortsightedness, he dies on the executioner's block. And Buckingham, whose role as a Beelzebub to Richard's Satan, makes him privileged to Richard's machinations for the crown, learns too late to escape his master's distrust and wrath. Although Buckingham plays a

significant role in tricking the Mayor of London to consent to Richard's succession and coronation, he pays dearly for his perfidy to Edward's heirs. Only Dorset and Stanley escape Richard's clutches. Dorset is the only fortunate Yorkist to escape both Margaret's dire curse and Richard's relentless slaughter of Queen Elizabeth's kindred, by sailing to Richmond in France. Stanley, who heeds his ominous dreams, turns renegade and lives to crown Richmond on the battlefield at Bosworth Market. Shakespeare makes it clear that both men evaded death because they heeded supernatural warnings. Upon the news of the murder of the two princes, Queen Elizabeth remembers Margaret's curses and tells Dorset to flee. Mindful of his dreams about the boar razing his helm, Stanley does not cross Richard as his friend, Hastings, did, and lives to plot against the usurper king. Those who heed warnings about Richard live to fight another day; and those who have been affected by Richard's lethal schemes know him to be none other than a devil.

In Act I, scene iii, Richard's devilry surpasses that of a mere Vice figure. Although he takes perverse delight in making his peers gulls and fools, he takes greater joy in mocking Providence. Smugly, he admits to playing the saint when he is most devilish in practice:

I do the wrong, and first begin to brawl,
The secret mischiefs that I set abroad
I lay unto the grievous charge of others.

Clarence, who I indeed have cast in darkness,
 I do beweepe to many simple gulls--
 Namely, to Derby, Hastings, Buckingham--
 And tell them 'tis the Queen and her allies
 That stir the King against the Duke my brother.
 Now they believe it, and withal whet me
 To be reveng'd on Rivers, Dorset, Grey.
 But then I sigh, and, with a piece of scripture,
 Tell them that God bids us do good for evil:
 And thus I clothe my naked villainy
 With odd old ends stol'n forth of holy writ,
 And seem a saint, when most I play the devil.
 (I.iii. 323-37)

In this leitmotif, then, Shakespeare draws a sharp contrast between Richard's professed saintliness and his truly demonic acts. Richard himself appears to delight in pointing out to the audience this unholy kinship of saintliness and devilry.

Richard's favourite oath is "by Saint Paul." G. Carnell suggests that the oath is merely mock piety on Richard's part and the only identification Richard has with Saint Paul is that he too has a weak body.¹⁷ There is more than this is Shakespeare's deliberate irony: Richard is the perversion of Saint Paul. The apostle became a man of God, although before his conversion he persecuted the early Christians. Richard, instead, chooses evil and the devil, whereas Saint Paul cast out devils.¹⁸ In 1 Corinthians 10: 12 the apostle says:

¹⁷G. Carnell, "Shakespeare's Richard III and St. Paul," Shakespeare Quarterly XIV (1963), pp. 186-88. Cf., John B. Harcourt, "Odde Old Ends, Stolne:" King Richard and St. Paul," Shakespeare Studies 7 (1974), pp. 87-100.

¹⁸King James I Authorized Version of The Holy Bible, Acts 16: 16-19.

Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup
of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's
table, and of the table of devils.

Richard drinks from the cup of devils and pursues a destiny diametrically opposite to Saint Paul's. Whereas the apostle preaches peace and love, Richard subverts Edward's last attempt for a "peace with enmity" by polarizing the various factions back to their former political rivalries. Richard mocks his own efforts at making peace with the Queen's faction with a sardonic statement:

I do not know that Englishman alive
With whom my soul is any jot at odds
More than the infant that is born tonight.
I thank my God for my humility.
(II.i. 70-73)

Although "by Saint Paul" is by far Richard's most common oath, we find only five occasions when Richard uses it. Each outburst is marked by potential, physical violence. When Richard orders the pall-bearers of King Henry's coffin to stop, he threatens to kill anyone who dares disobey. Similarly, when he sentences Hastings to the block, he impatiently states:

Off with his head. Now by Saint Paul I swear
I will not dine until I see the same.
(III.iv. 76-77)

Earlier, when he feigns anger and indignation against the Queen's faction, he swears by Saint Paul (I.iii. 45). Finally, when he is stricken with the horror of the ghosts and nightmares, he awakens and suspects his followers to be traitors:

By the apostle Paul, shadows tonight
 Have strook more terror to the soul of Richard
 Than can the substance of ten thousand soldiers
 Armed in proof and led by shallow Richmond.
 'Tis not yet near day. Come, go with me,
 Under our tents I'll play the ease-dropper,
 To see if any mean to shrink from me.

(V.iii. 216-22)

Once again, Richard's violent and untrusting soul, veiled behind a slight oath, contrasts with the real Saint Paul's piety and Godliness. This contrast between Richard and Saint Paul is immense, and one wonders if Richard chooses this oath as an sardonic, grotesque expression of his mockery of God.

In his own devilish way, Richard ridicules God's laws. He bears false witness against Queen Elizabeth and Jane Shore in order to eliminate Hastings and his opposition to installing Richard as king. Richard attacks Hastings at his weakest point, his paramour, Jane Shore, by accusing her, along with Queen Elizabeth, of using witchcraft together to wither his arm.¹⁹ Shakespeare takes Hall's account, almost verbatim, and dramatizes Richard's outrageous treachery:

Then the lorde Hastynges as he that for the familiar-
 itie that was betweene them, though he might be

¹⁹Historically, Jane Shore was made to do penance for her "part" in the witchcraft plot against Richard. However, surprisingly, Queen Elizabeth deems to have escaped this public infamy. The Queen does not mention this incident when she rails at Richard in Act IV.iv. Cf., Thomas Churchyard, "Shore's Wife," The Mirror for Magistrates, ed. Lily B. Campbell (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1960), ll. 306-08, 355-92.

boldest with him, aunswered and sayd that they were worthy to be punished as heynous traytours what soever they were, and all the other affirmed the same, That is (quod he) yonder sorceres my brothers wife and other with her, menyng the quene. At these woordes many of the lordes were sore abashed whiche favoured her, but the lorde Hastynges was better content in hys mynde that it was moved by her then by any other that he loved better albeit hys hart grudged that he was not afore made of counsail of this matter as well as he was of the takyng of her kynred and of their puttyng to death, which were by his assent before devysed to be beheaded at Pomfrete, this selfe same daye, in the whiche he was not ware that it was by other devised that he hym selfe should the same daye be beheaded at London: then sayed the protectour in what wyse that sorceresse and other of her counsayle, as Shores wyfe with her affinitie have by their sorcery and witchecrafte this wasted my body, and therewith plucked up his doublet sleve to his elbowe on hys left arme, where he shewed a weryshe wythered arme & small as it was never other. And therupon, every mannes mynde mysgave theim, well perceyvyng that this matter was but a quarell, for well they wist that the quene was both to [o] wyse to go about any such folye, & also if she would, yet would she of all folke make Shores wyfe least of her counsaile whom of all women she most hated as that concubine whom the kyng her husband most loved.

Also, there was no manne there but knewe that hys arme was ever such sith the day of his birth. Neverthesse the lorde Hastynges, which from the death of kyng Edward kept Shores wife. . . . Yet nowe his hart somewhat grudged to have her whom he loved so highly accused, and that as he knewe well untruely, therefore he aunswered and sayed, certaynly my lorde, yf they have so done, they be worthy of heynous punishement. What quod the protectour, thou servest me I wene with yf and with and, I tell the they have done it, and that wyll I make good on thy bodye, traytour. 20

His scheme is so outrageous as to defy logic and intelligence, yet it is so simple in execution. The direct assault with a bald lie works, for no one, other than Hastings, is foolish enough to speak out. This nefarious deed cannot be

²⁰Hall, cited in Bullough, p. 264.

witchcraft; it is sheer tyranny at its worst. Nonetheless, Richard appears the more devilish in his modus operandi.

It is also characteristic of Richard to display irreverence to, and even contempt for, those things which everyone else holds dear or sacred. In part, this would explain Richard's preference for swearing by Saint Paul, but his mockery of Providence runs deeper than just an ironic jest, or bearing false witness against innocents. At first, he may seem sardonic in thanking God for his humility, but in reality, Richard defies the deity more often than is generally realized. Often the irreverent scenario which Richard and Buckingham rig for the Mayor of London and the citizenry to solicit their hard consent is taken as a masterpiece of deception, irony, and hypocrisy:

Definitively thus I answer you:
 Your love deserves my thanks, but my desert
 Unmeritable shuns your high request.
 First, if all obstacles were cut away,
 And that my path were even to the crown,
 As the ripe revenue and due of birth,
 Yet so much is my poverty of spirit,
 So mighty and so many my defects,
 That I would rather hide me from my greatness--
 Being a bark to brook no mighty sea--
 Than in my greatness covet to be hid
 And in the vapor of my glory smother'd.
 But God be thank'd, there is no need of me,
 And much I need to help you, were there need:
 The royal tree hath left us royal fruit,
 Which mellow'd by the stealing hours of time,
 Will well become the seat of majesty,
 And make (no doubt) us happy by his reign.
 On him I lay that you would lay on me,

The right and fortune of his happy stars,
Which God defend that I should wring from him.
(III.vii. 153-73)

And later,

For God doth know, and you may partly see,
How far I am from the desire of this.
(III.vii. 235-36)

However, the scenario is also a travesty of Christian virtues, qualities which Richard neither has nor wants. Shakespeare draws for us again Richard's chameleonic abilities which make him seem a saint when he is most devilish. When Richard, holding a religious book in hand and ostensibly meditating on spiritual matters, appears between two bishops-- "Two props of virtue for a Christian prince/ To stay him from the fall of vanity" (III.vii. 96-97)--he not only gulls the Mayor and the citizenry of London, but also ridicules those who have deep faith in Christian virtues. In the light of his various, devious acts, his part in the repartee with Buckingham can only be taken ironically:

I do beseech your Grace to pardon me,
Who, earnest in the service of my God,
Deferr'd the visitation of my friends.
But leaving this, what is your Grace's pleasure?
(III.vii. 105-08)

When Buckingham entreats further (III.vii. 109-10), Richard's self-abasement reveals paradoxically more truth than he dares admit:

I do suspect I have done some offense
That seems disgraceful in the city's eye,
And that you come to reprehend my ignorance.
(III.vii. 111-13)

Although he asks it of others, Richard is constantly undermining Christian virtues and morality.

Once on the throne, Richard finds assassins to murder the two princes, a deed he swore earlier (III.vii. 165-73) he would not do, and contemplates how to rid himself of a burdensome Anne and gain Edward's daughter as wife and queen to secure his own weak title. Often the speech on sin is taken as Richard's admission of a troubled conscience, a quality that is rather Christian:

But I am in
So far in blood that sin will pluck on sin.
Tear-falling pity dwells not in this eye.
(IV.ii. 63-65)

But his actions point to an opposite direction altogether. Shakespeare's sense of the macabre is never more acute than in this scene in which Richard sits on the throne pondering whom he should eliminate.

The sheer temerity of his bloody enterprises points to a demonic quality--a quality which every one now acknowledges and recognizes in Richard once he is wearing the crown. Buckingham is among the first to realize the length Richard will go to to secure his position, and when the nobleman fails to give immediate consent to the murder of the two princes, he is discarded:

The deep-revolving witty Buckingham
No more shall be the neighbor to my counsels.
Hath he so long held out with me untir'd
And stops he now for breath? Well, be it so.
(IV.ii. 42-45)

Queen Anne, whom Richard wooed earlier, is also given short shrift:

Rumor it abroad
That Anne, my wife, is very grievous sick;
I will take order for her keeping close.

.

I say again, give out
That Anne, my queen, is sick and like to die.
About it, for it stands me much upon
To stop all hopes whose growth may damage me.
(IV.ii. 51-53; 56-59)

Although the wording is vague, one suspects that Richard means to have her murdered as he does the two princes. (Anne herself has foreseen this: "Besides, he hates me for my father Warwick,/ And will, no doubt, shortly be rid of me" IV.i. 85-86). Without remorse and speaking matter-of-factly, Richard mentions her death: "And Anne my wife hath bid this world good night" (IV.iii. 39).

Shakespeare contrasts Richard with his hired assassins. Whereas Tyrrel and the two murderers are conscience-stricken and remorseful at their deed, Richard desires to hear all the gory details after supper (IV.iii. 31-34). We remember that Richard has this bloody penchant for the macabre when he, earlier, wished to see Hastings' head on a platter before he dined on the Bishop of Ely's strawberries. Far more chilling, however, is the revelation that Richard decides to take Edward's daughter as his new wife. We have already seen how well Richard uses women.

Act IV, scene iv is very important. In succession,

Shakespeare aligns three major developments which change the tempo to a frenzy--the general condemnation of Richard as a devil, his bravura wooing of Elizabeth through her mother Queen Elizabeth, and the invasion by his two enemies, Buckingham and Richmond.

In the first part of this long scene, old Queen Margaret, symbolic of England's earlier miseries, sets the tone and stamp of what is to follow. A bitter, hate-filled old woman, she stays to see the waning of her enemies "into the rotten mouth of death." When Queen Elizabeth and the Duchess of York enter, grieving over their common losses, Margaret's words describe England as a hell; for King Richard's realm has become a hell when death and destruction dog all who dwell in England. Much like Macbeth's hellish Scotland where he reigns as a demonic king, Richard's rule is hellish for England. The fairest and the most natural are now destroyed by his deathly hands, and the women's woes are for those who have died violently in one form or another at the hands of Richard. As each woman recounts the dead and the tangled web of wrong-doings, it becomes apparent that England is a hell on earth. Shakespeare makes certain that his audience remembers this well: Richard, as Margaret says, is hell's black intelligencer, and the world he creates is as infernal as Hell itself. The Duchess, Richard's mother, also accuses her own son of coming on earth "to make the earth [her] hell." Her very words are similar to those spoken by Lady

Anne when she first saw Richard:

For thou hast made the happy earth thy hell
 Filled it with cursing cries and deep exclaims.
 (I.ii. 51-52)

Essentially, then, the first third of this scene is a recapitulation, a gathering of main events earlier dramatized and now restated in a succinct, choric fashion. Shakespeare does very little to advance the plot. As a devil-figure, Richard has not only been identified but recognized by men and women. Old Queen Margaret's words are taken as true, and she ghoulishly delights in the misery of those who have transgressed against her or who have ignored her dire curses. Her revenge is accomplished through the agency of her most hated enemy. More wretched than ever, the Duchess of York now curses her own son lengthily and forcefully for the murder of her grandchildren. No longer does she merely slight Richard by leaving out blessings (II. ii. 107-11); she wishes him dead.

Richard now has succeeded in turning all the women and most of the powerful lords against him. At last, he is himself alone, having severed totally all familial and human propinquity. He is, as old Queen Margaret characterized him, hell's black intelligencer, here to buy souls and send them to hell. Unfortunately for Richard, this recognition by others of his demonic qualities works against him. When Richard attempts to repeat his virtuosity in wooing Elizabeth through her mother, he fails. Richard had hoped that like

his wooing of Lady Anne, he would be able to secure his new wife immediately and win the approval of his wife-to-be's mother. He miscalculates in this bravura, and he is not even aware that he has failed. Queen Elizabeth can resist the devil's temptation and illogical persuasion. She is not like Lady Anne. When Richard contemptuously mutters, "Relenting fool, and shallow, changing woman!" (IV.iv. 431), he is more the fool than she.

In the final third of the scene, Shakespeare deftly juxtaposes Richard's ostensible victory over Queen Elizabeth and the frantic reports of uprisings and invasions by various messengers. The shift in tempo is quite telling, in that the sudden change marks a break in Richard's fortune. A sense of madness and collapse in Richard's world prevails as each messenger delivers the bad news. Richard can handle occurrences and chance happenings only when he has set them in motion or when it is on a one-to-one basis. Now that he must defend his hard-won throne, he finds himself severely attacked from several quarters.

Clearly Richard is losing ground. Queen Elizabeth has led him to believe that he has won her heart and will. He is wrong. Furthermore, Richmond and Dorset are leading invading armies from France, and in Devonshire and Kent, noblemen are revolting against his rule. Richard knows Stanley to be deceitful, but he is powerless to control the man completely. His holding of Stanley's son, George, as hostage lacks his usual finesse and

restraint, and shows his moment of frantic desperation. News of Buckingham's ill-fated rebellion and subsequent capture is cold comfort indeed compared to the news that Richmond has landed.

Shakespeare has long prepared for Richmond's sudden entry in the play for his role as Richard's arch-nemesis. In Part Three, the playwright introduces the young Richmond to King Henry's court, and the King makes a prophecy about Richmond's role in England's future (Henry VI, Part Three, IV.vi. 69-76). Shakespeare, of course, takes his information from Hall. Richmond was thirteen when the Earl of Pembroke brought him to court:

[H]e brought the childe to London, to kyng Henry the sixte, whom, when the kyng had a good space by himself, secretly beholden and marked, both his wit and his likely towardnes, he said to suche princes, as were then with hym: Lo, surely this is he, to whom both wee and our adversaries levyng the possession of all thynges, shall hereafter geve rome and place. So this holy man shewed before, the chaunce that should happen, that this erle Henry so ordeined by God, should in tyme to come (as he did in deede) have and enjoye the kyngdome, and the whole rule of the realme. 21

In the Chronicles, Holinshed adds that Henry VI "was indued with a prophetical spirit."²² Of course, by Shakespeare's time, history had already borne out the accuracy of old

²¹Hall, cited in Bullough, p. 195.

²²Holinshed, p. 302.

King Henry's prediction.

Strangely, this prophecy lies dormant until late into Richard III.²³ As Richard sits on his newly-won throne and plots the deaths of the two princes, he recalls King Henry's prophecy:

I do remember me Harry the Sixt
Did prophesy that Richmond should be king
When Richmond was a little peevish boy.
(IV.ii. 95-97)

In Part Three, Richard was not present when Henry made this prediction, but the accuracy of Richard's report is not the point. That Shakespeare should have Richard introduce the prophecy again at this particular time is important. Richard has eliminated most of his powerful enemies in his climb to the English throne. Even scowling, foul-mouthed Margaret has lost her sting, and she does not appear again to torment and curse him face to face. Richmond is the fresh, but not unknown, enemy and he poses the only real threat to Richard's security. The usurper-king may jest about why King Henry did not tell him that he should kill Richmond (IV.ii. 100-01), but clearly, Richard is worried.

Richard recalls an incident, a portentous incident which occurred during a trip to Exeter:

Richmond! When last I was at Exeter
The mayor in courtesy show'd me the castle

²³See Chapter Three, pp. 114-16.

And call'd it Rouge mount, at which name I started
 Because a bard of Ireland told me once
 I should not live long after I saw Richmond.
 (IV.ii. 103-07)

As with Shakespeare's other historical prophecies used in the tetralogy, he takes this one from Holinshed's account:

King Richard (saith he) came this yeare to the citie, but in verie secret maner, whome the maior & his bretheren in the best maner they could did receiue, and then presented to him in a purse two hundred nobles; which he thankefullie accepted. And during his abode here he went about the citie, & viewed the seat of the same, & at length he came to the castell: and when he vnderstood that it was called Rugemont, suddenlie he fell into a dumpe, and (as one astonied) said: Well I see my daies be not long. He spake this of aprophesie told him, that when he came once to Richmond he should not long liue after: which fell out in the end to be true, not in respect of this castle, but in respect of Henryie earle of Richmond, who the next yeare following met him at Bosworth field where he was slaine. 24

Shakespeare's use of two prophecies about Richard's downfall is significant. In Part Three, although King Henry's prophecy concerns Richmond's accension to the throne of England, it does not involve Richard. Only by circumstance and implication does Richard fit into the scheme of the old king's prediction. In Richard III, however, Shakespeare includes Richard in it. The adaptation of Holinshed's account may be slight but hardly unimportant. By having Richard recall it, Shakespeare has Richard's fate hang upon a deadman's prophecy. Just as Richard was ordained to kill King Henry, so Henry's prophecy includes Richard's

²⁴Holinshed, p.421.

death in its fulfillment. To make sure that the audience remembers this, Shakespeare has Henry's pale ghost repeat the prophecy at the eve of Bosworth for good measure:

(To Richmond).Virtuous and holy, be thou conqueror!
 Harry, that prophesied thou shouldst be king
 Doth comfort thee in thy sleep. Live and flourish.
 (V. iii. 128-30)

The power of prophecy of King Henry before and after his untimely death acts as a nemesis for Richard.

Shakespeare does not stop at one prophecy. The "Rouge mount" incident serves to buttress Henry's oracle and Richard's own involvement in it. Whereas one predicts the rise of a new king, the other foresees the doom of the present sovereign. In a way, both prophecies are but two sides of a coin. Richard's destiny is sealed up by a pun on Rougemount and Richmond, something quite fitting for Richard, who is himself a jolly ironic punster. Prophecy, then, becomes a part of Richard's downfall. Just as he announced that he was ordained to dispatch Somerset under an alehouse sign and to murder Henry in the Tower, so Henry's saintly prophecy, reinforced by the anonymous Irish bard's dire prediction, dooms Richard at Richmond's hands.

Without labouring the point, Richard's imminent downfall is not solely due to his alienation of allies alone and to his accumulation of enemies, but also to this accumulation of dire imprecations, curses, and prophecies. Even from the grave, curses and prophecies harrow Richard for his crimes and sins

against his fellow men. And these intangible, verbal and deadly actions Richard cannot forestall and stop. We remember that he once tried to end Margaret's lengthy curse on his person (I.iii. 216-26); Richard succeeded only in confusing her momentarily, The curse he could not stop. Now Margaret's curse on his head begins to ripen and joins forces with other curses.

In his bloody career, Richard has accumulated a hefty number of dire imprecations and curses. When Rivers, Grey, and Vaughan go to the executioner's block, they remember Margaret's curses on their heads, regret not having heeded her warning about Richard, and curse Richard to a similar fate (III.iii. 19-20). When Hastings is ushered to the gallows, he delivers the same regrets and predicts that "They smile at me who shortly shall be dead" (III.iv. 107). When Buckingham is taken to be executed for his unsuccessful revolt, he catalogues all of Richard's victims, victims who will later reappear in a spectral pageant and curse Richard anew as he fretfully sleeps.

Buckingham's mea culpa is especially relevant to Richard's own fall later. Shakespeare provides details in Buckingham's speech not expressed in the other victims'. Here Buckingham regrets his own part in perfidious actions against King Edward and his children. Is this not conscience at work? When he recalls Margaret's heavy curse, we are reminded tacitly that Margaret's heaviest curse has yet to be fulfilled. Furthermore, if her imprecations have so great an effect

on these lesser wretches, how much greater they must be on Richard's head.

Shakespeare never lets his audience forget--and even takes pains to tell them frequently--that Richard is no mere human tyrant, but one allied with the infernal world, and that to combat him successfully there must need be powers beyond physical confrontation and mere palace intrigue. Occult powers such as those imbued in curses and imprecations must be used against Richard. Prophecies may foretell his end, but curses and imprecations must first be applied to weigh him down. These the mourning women have uttered at every opportunity.

As the battle looms imminently between Richard and Richmond, the Yorkist king worries too much about soldiers and arms and forgets the weighty curses placed on his soul. During a night of restless sleep, Richard has nightmares, and ghosts from his bloody, ruthless past come to curse him soundly from beyond the grave. In the Chronicles, Holinshed attributes this restlessness to Richard's guilty conscience:

But I thinke this was no dreame, but a punction and pricke of his sinfull conscience: for the conscience is so much more charged and agreeued, as the offence is greater & more heinous in degree. So that king Richard, by this reckoning, must needs haue a woonderfull troubled mind, because the déeds that he had donne as they were heinous and vnnatural, so did they excite and stire vp extraordinarie motions of trouble and vexations in his conscience. 25

²⁵Holinshed, p. 438.

Ostensibly, Shakespeare seems to be following Holinshed's analysis of Richard's disposition and using it as the main reason for Richard's troubled spirit. But this simple answer will not suffice. Richard does not suddenly develop a case of bad conscience. Throughout, Richard either kills his opponents in battle or murders them himself, or hires assassins to murder his enemies for him. In either case, he does this with a certain amount of glee and without a second thought. More often the King delights in his enterprise and desires to hear every gory detail. How then does this case of conscience come about? Richard has no conscience to speak of. That Shakespeare should tack on a guilty conscience to Richard's personality at this late date seems rather heavy-handed to say the least. To have Richard a faint-hearted milksop quivering and quavering over his past sins at this point definitely weakens the already-entrenched characteristics of Richard. It would be difficult to accept Richard as being cowed and shaken by mere conscience. If Richard has a guilty conscience, then the growth of this new sensation, this disturbance in his mind, comes not from within his hardened soul, but from without. We remember that when he acknowledges his own degree of complicity and sin, he adds that "Tear-falling pity dwells not in this eye" (IV.ii. 65). By this, presumably, he means that he has no compassion for any one, and as a cruel man, allied with the devil, he cannot stop for self-pity. The gnawing of conscience comes not from any innate virtue left

in Richard's heart, but rather from intangible, occult curses. When Lady Anne confides that Richard has timorous dreams and nightmares, the curses are efficacious and are taking their toll on Richard's soul. The imprecations of his enemies act as a kind of charm or spell. Richard has no power to stop them, and that is why he is afraid.

In Act V, King Richard is under the full effect of the curses from all his victims. The appearance of the ghosts is significant for as each spectral figure in turn curses Richard and blesses Richmond (V.iii. 118-76), we recall how the imprecations from Margaret and the Duchess of York are coming to fruition. Margaret wishes Richard tormenting dreams:

No sleep close up that deadly eye of thine
Unless it be while some tormenting dream
Affrights thee with a hell of ugly devils!
(I.iii. 224-26)

The Duchess of York wants her son to die on the battlefield while the ghosts of the two murdered princes urge his enemies to victory (IV.iv. 188-94). These dire wishes and others are given expression in the pageant of spectral victims. And all the ghosts stand in judgment of Richard's unnatural deeds. That both Lancastrian and Yorkist victims who have suffered grievously under Richard's evil come forth collectively, and individually renew their curses on Richard's head underscores the enormity of his crimes against both royal Houses and humanity, and the depth to which he has fallen.

Shakespeare's technique of alternating curses and blessings can be seen as a judgment scale weighing both Richard and Richmond. Clearly Richard's victims demand a full measure of vengeance to fall on this demonic tyrant. They are not merely satisfied with his death on the battlefield; they wish him to suffer the pain and anguish of despair and hopelessness. Their blessings on Richmond, on the other hand, is conditional. Since as disembodied spirits they cannot extract physical retribution themselves, they choose the Earl of Richmond as their human instrument. Thus, the magnitude of Richard's crimes spills over the boundaries of earthly reality, and the demands for justice and vengeance come not only from men but from their spirits. Lewis Lavater explains why such ghosts and spirits appear on occasions like this:

God doth suffer spirits to appeare unto his elect,
unto a good ende, but unto the reprobate, they
appeare as a punishment. 26

And in Richmond these ghosts find a God-fearing soul, ready and willing to do justice and restore England from the ravages of a demonic king.

These fresh curses are on Richard's mind as he suddenly awakes. He perceives them as vile dreams and cries out:

Give me another horse, Bind up my wounds.
Have mercy, Jesu. Soft, I did but dream.

²⁶ Lewis Lavater, Of Ghostes and Spirites, Walking by Night trans. R.H. (London, 1596), p. 175.

O coward conscience how dost thou afflict me.
(V.iii. 177-79)

Richmond, on the other hand, has sweet dreams:

The sweetest sleep and fairest-boding dreams
That ever ent'red in a drowsy head
Have I since your departure had, my lords,
Methought their souls whose bodies Richard murder'd
Came to my tent and cried on victory.
I promise you, my soul is very jocund,
In the remembrance of so fair a dream.
(V.iii. 227-33)

Richard's nightmares are, moreover, a premonition of the battle to come. Artimoddorus points out that a dream of fighting, combatting, is ominous: "To combat with any one, is ill to all men, for besides shame, he shall have hurt."²⁷ Richard fails to take heed of supernatural warnings (like Hastings) and attributes his unnatural fright to "coward conscience." He perceives the light in his tent burns blue. In Renaissance beliefs, such a phenomenon signifies the appearance of ghosts and spirits. Unwisely he dismisses this portent and wallows in self-pity and despair. These are the very emotions which the vengeful spectres wish upon him.

Richard is friendless, frightened, and alone. In this condition he tries to control his fears, but all he succeeds in doing is to confuse himself further. One moment, he acknowledges himself a villain; the next, he flatters himself so that he may not despair. The wicked man who wishes to see his

²⁷ Artimoddorus, The Ivdgement, or exposition of Dreames (London, 1606), p. 37.

shadow as he passes is now afraid of shadows, for the shadows which he has cast over his victims envelop him now.²⁸

Deftly, Shakespeare transforms the image of the shadow from being Richard's demonic symbol to being symbolic of Richard's de casibus downfall:

By the apostle Paul, shadows to-night
Have strook more terror to the soul of Richard
Than can the substance of ten thousand soldiers
Armed in proof and led by shallow Richmond.
(V.iii. 216-18)

He now believes that his conscience "hath a thousand several tongues," that "every tongue brings in a several tale," and that "every tale condemns [him] for a villain" (V.iii. 193-95). For a brief moment he seems to be a pathetic, even tragic, creature aware of the immensity of his wickedness. Surely this is brought about by the awesome appearances of the cursing spectres and the curses by the Duchess of York and Margaret. Richard recognizes at last that he must pay for his crimes and that he is quite alone:

Perjury, perjury, in the highest degree;
Murther, stern murther, in the direst degree;
All several sins, all us'd in each degree,
Throng to the bar, crying all, "Guilty, guilty!"
I shal despair; there is no creature loves me,
And if I die no soul will pity me.
And wherefore should they, since that I myself
Find in myself no pity to myself?
Methought the souls of all that I had murther'd

²⁸Clemen, Commentary on Shakespeare's Richard III, pp. 211-14.

Came to my tent, and every one did threat
 To-morrow's vengeance on the head of Richard.
 (V.iii. 196-206)

In the light of day, however, Richard scoffs at his most intimate fears and reveals a certain recklessness of spirit:

Let not our babbling dreams affright our souls;
 Conscience is but a word that cowards use,
 Devis'd at first to keep the strong in awe:
 Our strong arms be our conscience, swords our law!
 (V.iii. 308-11)

In four lines, Richard reduces the concept of conscience--the honourable, the moral and the principled part of man, a spark of the divine--to an inconvenience, to something despicable, something that is almost immoral to possess. He advocates instead the law of the strong and the mighty, a bestial code of the jungle. And his world is the realm where savagery dwells and where pity can find no home. At the same time, though, Richard's obsession with "conscience" shows that he has not forgotten the nightmares and fears he suffered only hours earlier. Now, grandly, he dismisses Norfolk's letter as enemy propaganda and seems to have recovered his former self. He is as Richmond characterizes him:

A bloody tyrant and a homicide,
 One raised in blood, and one in blood established.
 (V.iii. 246-47)

The orations of Richmond and Richard to their respective armies are quite telling. Richmond expounds a sense of duty and of public and private morality to his soldiers. The reason for this battle is to eliminate "God's enemy." Richard,

on the other hand, instills the basic fears of a soldier
into the hearts of his men:

Shall these enjoy our lands? lie with our wives?
Ravish our daughters?

(V.iii. 336-37)

In short, Richard's rhetoric is based on emotional blackmail
rather than on the righteousness of the war. He

exploits fears rather than exalts his men to high ideals.

Whereas Richmond justifies his reasons for fighting:

God and our good cause fight upon our side;
The prayers of holy saints and wronged souls,
Like high-rear'd bulwarks, stand before our faces.

(V.iii. 240-42)

and rallies his troops in the name of God, Richard slanders
Richmond's soldiers as "bastard Britains" whom "our fathers/
Have in their own land beaten, bobbed and thumped." Richard
obscures the truth by not mentioning that many of Richmond's
nobles and soldiers are native Englishmen and have a right
to be in the realm. Moreover, Richard does not justify his
right to the throne by calling on God. In brief, Shakespeare
portrays Richmond as a God-fearing Christian prince, and
Richard as a perverted tyrant in league with the devil.

The battle cries of the two opposing armies are rather
curious. Ostensibly, both seem to advocate the same thing
and rally to the call of St. George, England's patron saint.
Richmond cries: "God and St. George! Richmond and victory!"
(V.iii. 270). The equation is clear enough: God and St.
George are on Richmond's side in battle. However, Richard's

battle cry is curiously demonic:

Our ancient word of courage, fair Saint George,
Inspire us with the spleen of fiery dragons.
(V.iii. 349-50)

In English legend, St. George, the patron saint of England, and his famous duel with the fire-dragon are an allegory of the battle between the forces of good and evil, with St. George triumphant over the dragon. Richard distorts this simple allegory and gives it a twist by equating St. George with the dragon. In short, they fight as companions rather than as enemies. Shakespeare is rather subtle here, but he is adroit in his transformation of the original myth. G. Wilson Knight observes:

Notice how Shakespeare's usual patriotic battle-cry is cleverly aligned with its opposite, so that Richard stands not merely for Saint George as against the Dragon, but for Saint George and the Dragon; as though he were in a state beyond good and evil. 29

Edward Berry also sees this diabolical equation of St. George and the Dragon as "Shakespeare's images for Richard's satanic bestiality" and makes the dragon analogous to "the Great Beast of the Apocalypse."³⁰

The Renaissance saw the dragon as a synonym for Satan

²⁹G. Wilson Knight, Shakespeare's Dramatic Challenge (London: Croom Helm, 1977), p. 29.

³⁰Edward Berry, Patterns of Decay (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1975), p. 101.

the Devil:

Then tell me, is not the diuell like a red or
fierie Dragon, Reuelat. 12. burning in malice
agaïnst God, and with all bloudie and cruell
hatred that may be against me: And is he not
farre readier unto all mischiefe, then any man
or woman? 31

Ultimately, the dragon is a symbol of the Devil and of evil. To ask for the help of the dragon, side-by-side with St. George, perverts the original moral of the allegory. But having allied himself with the Devil, Richard would naturally call for the dragon's help. Richard's battle cry is a supplication to the Devil.

The battle of Bosworth Field is more than just a struggle for the crown of England. Richmond and Richard are no longer mere human beings destined to fight for the throne. Shakespeare has made both characters symbols: Richmond stands on the side of good, righteousness and order; he is God's captain on earth. Richard, hell's black intelligencer, symbolizes wickedness, tyranny and chaos. He is the Devil's man. If one subscribes to the concept of God's scourge, as Tillyard did, then Richard has scourged all the wicked and evil men from the realm, and now he himself--having accomplished God's task unwittingly--is scourged by Richmond. But Richard is more than a mere scourge, a mere desperate tyrant; he is

³¹Gifford, A Dialogue concerning witches and witchcrafte,
p. Sig. D^r.

a demon in human shape. And although God uses and commands evil instruments, such as Richard, unto good ends,³² Richard does evil for his own sake and is no bondsman to anyone.

Just as he does not demean Macbeth's valour on the battlefield and in the duel with Macduff Shakespeare takes care to present Richard's courage in face of insurmountable odds. Emrys Jones suggests that the Bosworth battle has already been fought decisively in the procession of ghosts;³³ if it were so, then Richard would be more admirable than he ever were to go out knowing that he has already lost. Richard is no coward:

Slave, I have set my life upon a cast,
And I will stand the hazard of the die.
(V.iv. 9-10)

Richard's last utterance is "A horse, a horse! My kingdom for a horse!" This anguished outcry is but an echo of "Give me another horse! Bind up my wounds!" In this final moment of despair before he is slain by Richmond, Richard's prophetic nightmare is realized. At once, all the curses, prophecies, and portents are fulfilled when Richmond says, "The day is ours, the bloody dog is dead."

With Richard's death, disorder and chaos end. Richmond wears the English crown and restores peace, order and harmony

³²John Cotta, The Triall of Witch-craft (London, 1616), p. 125.

³³Emrys Jones, "Bosworth Eve," Essays in Criticism 25 (1975), p. 47.

to England. By marrying Elizabeth, the Yorkist princess, Richmond as King Henry VII unites the red and white roses:

And then as we have ta'en the sacrament
 We will unite the White Rose and the Red.
 Smile heaven upon this fair conjunction,
 That long have frown'd upon their enmity!
 (V.v. 18-21)

The fair conjunction of Richmond and Elizabeth, of course, is the marriage of the two factious houses and, traditionally, the political method of mending fences. Secondly, it is a prayer--a welcome change from all the cursing, imprecations, foul prophecies and witchcrafts. In addition, "conjunction" is also an astrological term, expressing a fortuitous union. In one sense, the marriage is symbolic of cosmic as well as earthly harmony. "This fair conjunction" is an optimistic view, a far cry from the bleak opening of Henry VI, Part One where the heavens are hung with black, and comets whirl about importing changes of times and states.

Richard's death marks the end of the vicious circle of occult, supernatural and witchcraft agencies and instruments by which the ambitious and the power-hungry sought political domination. Although curses, prophecies and omens occur frequently, witchcraft is the manifest instrument which all the wicked ones embraced. And since witchcraft is considered the Devil's work, so witchcraft ends fittingly with the death of Richard, hell's black intelligencer. Richmond's allusion to judicial astrology points to harmony and the restoration of peace and cosmic order in the realm.

CONCLUSION

From Henry VI, Part One to Richard III, Shakespeare has developed and nurtured the witchcraft theme in connection with politics in the history plays. In short, witchcraft is embedded in both the content and the structure of the individual plays and of the tetralogy, and it serves in several capacities at once. When one studies Shakespearean imagery, one finds both commonality and inventiveness; one can also find this in Shakespeare's various themes. Similarly, in terms of witchcraft, Shakespeare does not isolate each occult element exclusively in each play. For example, the character of Joan la Pucelle may be defined and dramatized in Part One, but the spectre of her is often seen, albeit implicitly, in the other plays. The connection between Joan and Margaret is never truly severed from one play to the next; it is merely postponed until a more propitious time. In Part Three, Margaret dons the mantle of a supernatural figure, bent on destroying Richard, the man who has murdered both her husband and son, and whose father, York, has caused her no end of grief. Like Joan, Margaret takes her revenge on Richard by occult, not human, means. Her curses and prophecies are, respectively, efficacious and fulfilled. Yet her vengeance makes way for Richmond to gain the throne, and his motives are political.

The fusion of witchcraft and politics, then, cannot be divorced. Indeed, they are strange and ironic bedfellows.

In Part Two, although he is not aware of it, York benefits most from Eleanor Cobham's prophecies. Suffolk, Somerset, Cardinal Beauford, and Margaret, who all conspired against the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, succeed only in removing their enemies, but by their very own actions, they agitate unforeseen reactions and thus cause the infernal prophecies to be fulfilled.

Shakespeare develops a bridging, dramatic pattern in the opening and closing scenes in the tetralogy. Each opening Act includes one scene with one or more occult occurrences. For instance, in Part One, Exeter expresses his fears that the French use black magic and witches, and soon we have Joan joining the French and raising the siege at Orleans. In Part Two, Eleanor Cobham arranges a conjuration with known witches, and Duke Humphrey has an ominous but prophetic dream about his enemies and himself. In Part Three, Richard reminds the audience implicitly that the infernal prophecies are efficacious by bringing in Somerset's head. And in Richard III, Richard plots against his kinsfolk by means of prophecies and dreams, and Margaret, as vengeful curser, denounces him as a devil. Moreover, as complements to the openings, in the first three plays, the endings are inconclusive. In Part One, Suffolk, bewitched by Margaret's physical charms, threatens to undermine the throne. In Part Two, York wins the battle at St. Albans, but fails to depose

King Henry; and in Part Three Richard intends to hew his way way to Edward's throne and promises treachery and mischief.

The pervasiveness of the occult is as insidious as it is complementary to the political themes of intrigue, violence and vaulting ambition. Witchcraft is totally evil, and those who practise the devil's art are regarded as more wicked, more evil, and more perverted than those who scheme and murder. In one sense, the side of goodness cannot take the entire credit for bringing down Richard, for curses and prophecies weigh him down so that Richmond may have the opportunity to dispatch the demonic king. With the death of Richard, witchcraft terminates.

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ABSTRACT

This study deals with Shakespeare's treatment of the occult in his first historical tetralogy. The main thrust of this examination is witchcraft and how it functions dramatically and structurally. Each play is analyzed thoroughly for its witchcraft and occult contents, and then viewed in relation to the tetralogy.

Examination reveals that Shakespeare used witchcraft far more pervasively than previously thought by scholars. Far from being just an added attraction to an otherwise humdrum chronicle series, witchcraft is structural and tends to put in relief a whole cosmos of chaos and disorder. Witchcraft underscores the essence and breadth of evil in man.

In addition, the vocabulary and practices of witchcraft are explained in terms of sixteenth and seventeenth century understanding, and in terms of Shakespeare's adaptation of them for the stage.