

**The Renaissance in Shakespeare
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Module – 03**

**Lecture – 13
Shakespeare's Romance or the Last Plays**

Hello, the next lecture in this mock on the Renaissance in Shakespeare. We will be on the romances written by William Shakespeare in the last decade of his life. This lecture will be delivered by professor R W Desai, retired from the Department of English University of Delhi. In this lecture, Professor Desai will look at the four romances and in a very interesting analysis draw a link between the themes and issues in these 4 plays, and what was happening in the lives of Shakespeare's 2 daughters at that time.

Shakespeare's daughters and the romances Shakespeare died in 1616, exactly 400 years ago. The four romances were written during the last decade of his life Pericles in 1608, Cymbeline in 1610, and The Winter's Tale and The Tempest in 1611. Why these four plays are called romances, is a question that requires an answer, because we might well ask, whether as you like it twelfth night, and much ado about nothing, are not also romances. This term is derived from the language of the Roman Empire, which was Latin, from which the romance languages; French, Italian and Spanish are descended.

Since medieval literature dealt with knighthood and chivalry, the term romance was used to refer to stories, that were extravagant, picturesque, and remote. As of like to these four plays by Shakespeare, what distinguishes them as romances, are 3 striking features; first, a young woman is subjected to sexual cruelty. Second, the father daughter bonding is prominent, and third the women's support get returned to life in mystical or religious circumstances. While some of these features may be present in the comedies, I referred to above. They are not unique as in the romances.

In the closing years of his life, Shakespeare's daughters, 2 daughters in fact, Susanna and Judith's were implicated. Susanna directly, Judith indirectly, in aspersions of a sexual nature, attempts to unravel the details of Shakespeare's life are speculative, but it is possible to offer a plausible case purveying the fragility, despite their innocence of the reputations of these 2 women; Hermione, Imogene, Marina and Miranda, including in

varying degrees by the men in these four plays as echoing in the guise of dramatic art. The anguish that Shakespeare must have felt on account of the public shame and humiliation suffered by his 2 daughters.

Of course, he had earlier made this one of the central issues in plays, like *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Othello*, but the romances with the vindication of the women, through a mystical divine intervention, presents the subject from a radically different perspective. Nearly a century ago in *Ulysses*, the novel written by James Joyce, Stephen; the hero of the novel had detected a link between Hamlet, and the death of Shakespeare's 11 year old son Hamnet; the twin brother of Judith's. More recently the interface between the 2 has been explored in greater detail by Stephen Greenblatt. While that between Judith's and Hamnet the twins, has been seen by Cole and Wheeler, as refracted in the twin sister brother relationship of Viola and Antonio in *Twelfth Night*, that the death of his son coincided with the writing of what are arguably is greatest tragedy and comedy, *Hamlet* and *Twelfth Night* respectively, has thus been sensitively and revealingly explored.

Showing how the life of the artist, is reflected and transformed in the plays, while the plausibility of biographical detail, pertaining to Shakespeare, must always remain a lacuna, in unraveling the links between the life and the work. It may still nevertheless be possible to trace filiations between the 2 that are suggested. During the last decade of his life, from around 1608 to 1616, Shakespeare's family faced 2 serious crisis, involving the morality of his 2 daughters; Susanna, the elder one, being directly charged to adultery, and Judith's the younger one indirectly implicated, in a case against her husband who was found guilty by the court of sexual misdemeanor, that had taken place a considerable length of time, prior to his marriage to her. Though blameless, both girls and the family must have been greatly disturbed by these scandals, whose origins, it is more than likely predated or coincided, with the last phase of Shakespeare's life, while he was writing the four romances. The details are as follows;

Susanna the elder daughter was 24, when she married Doctor John Hall; the successful medical practitioner in 1607. A year later in 1608, their daughter Elizabeths was born. Sometime between this year, and 1613, one John Lane accused Susanna, of having committed adultery with 2 men; Rafe Smith and John Palmer, and they suffering from venereal disease. On the 15 July 1613, Susanna filed suit against him for defamation.

The court found her innocent, and exonerated her of the charges, and John Lane was excommunicated by the church for slander. Since Susanna had filed suit on the 15 July 1613, as extant court records show. The assumption that John Lanes charges against her were made sometimes before this date, is of course, evident. Though there is nothing on record to indicate, as to how long before this date they were made; however, assuming they were made considerably prior to the date, on which she files suit, against her accuser, in light of what you all remember, I am sure Hamlets, the laws delay in his greatest soliloquy.

This period could have coincided with that during which Shakespeare was writing the romances, from 1608 to 1611. Surely, it is more than a mere coincidence, that all four plays as we have noted, having pronounced shared features, were written during these last few years of Shakespeare's life, when the family was passing through severe emotional stress. What likely conclusions can we drawn, from these disturbing circumstances; the circumstances surrounding Judith's involvement; that is the younger daughter.

In a second scandal, in a sexual scandal, are more complex than what the direct attack. Would you like to do this again, Manjula, one slight mistake, instead of second.

Student: (Refer Time: 09:47).

It should have been sexual.

(Refer Time: 09:47).

If you want to.

Edit wasn't, sir you can read that sentence again.

Again.

Yes that part will be edited.

[FL] start. The circumstances surrounding Judith's involvement in a sexual scandal, are more complex, than was the direct attack on Susanna by John Lane. Judith's was 31, when she married Thomas Queeny, on the 10th February 1616, 2 and Half months before her Fathers deaths, a month and a Half after the wedding, a suit was filed against her

husband, charging him with having committed adultery with one Margaret Wheeler, who had died 11 days earlier in childbirths, along with the baby. As with Susanna's case, this unsavory background has come to light, through court records, no other evidence being available.

Accordingly, unless additional evidence is uncovered, we have no way of knowing whether Judith's and her family, were aware much earlier of Thomas Quiney's affair with Margaret Wheeler. An involvement which might have started at least 9 months earlier, or what is more likely long before this period. Certain related circumstances, would seem to indicate, that the Shakespeare family, was indeed aware of this murky background. Admittedly, the details are not specific enough to warrant our drawing any definite conclusions. All that can be done is to engage in fascinating speculation, which may well be true.

The background was as follows; Thomas Quiney's father Adrian Quiney, was a close friend and neighbor of the Shakespeare family. Shakespeare having even borrowed from him 30 pounds, and he had negotiated the process of land in the outskirts of Stratford through him. Besides he was an important member of Stratford municipality, holding positions of Alderman and Town Bailiff. What further complicates the situation, is the friendship that existed between Margaret Wheelers father, John Wheeler, and Shakespeare's father John Shakespeare.

What does scenario shows in, that the Shakespeare's family had links of friendship, with both the wheeler and the Quiney family. An awkward situation for both. It has been noted by Shakespeare's biographers, that the wedding of Judith's with Thomas was done hastily, through the granting of court license, within the period of length; that is the 40 days between the Ash Wednesday and Easter, when the church of banned marriage. The reason for this haste, it has been suggested, was to circumvent the danger of Thomas being forced by the wheeler family to marry the daughter Margaret, who he had made pregnant. The question that arises, is as to whether Judiths was allowing herself to be used by the Quiney family. So, as to help Thomas, Wriggle out of being forced to marry Margaret, a woman he did not love, or whether Judith was so much in love with him, that she was determined to have him at all costs. Either way this would have been an embarrassment for the Shakespeare family.

Regardless of Judiths and her parent's feelings, it appears that Shakespeare mistrusted his new son in law, to re extent that he altered his will, shortly before his deaths. So, as to ensure that Thomas might never be able to lay hands on Judiths share of the inheritance from her father. It may seem likely Judiths had a genuine emotional relationship with Thomas, and therefore, married him despite possibly her Fathers disapproval. Then the likelihood of Shakespeare, having been anxious for his daughter's happiness, after her marrying Thomas, clearly a dubious kind of character is understandable. As noted above.

This was the time, when he was writing the four romances, accordingly it would be fruitful to look at these four plays, in the light of his concern, for the reputation of his 2 daughters writing concerning James Joyce, to whom I had referred earlier. Richard Ellmann perceptibly notes that, and I quote from Ellmanns statement. The life of an artist, differs from the lives of other persons in that its events are becoming artistic sources, even as they command his present attention. Instead of allowing each day pushed back by the next, to lapse into imprecise memory. The artist shapes again be experiences which have shaped him. He is a much the captive and the liberator.

In turn the process of reshaping experience, becomes the part of his life unquote. Do the romances have features that suggest Shakespeare having shaped again. The experiences which shaped him. Each of these four plays, it has often been remarked in criticism, have in their center, a young woman who faces trials of an extreme nature, yet comes through unscathed in 2 of them Pericles and the tempest. The fathers concern for his daughter's happiness, is an important element. In the Winter's tale and Cymbeline, married women Hermione and Imogen are impugned for infidelity, and made to experience ignominy.

Before being finally, vindicated and cleared of all charges. Besides the thematic parallel, between the trying circumstances to which, Shakespeare's family was subjected, and the painful trials have the (Refer Time: 17:15) of these plays, is the vehement and even virulent language of sexual assault, levied at them, by the men in their lives. Marina of Pericles, a captive in the brothel, yet determined to preserve her virginity, is threatened with rape by her captors; so, as to break her resistance and soften her up. I quote now some lines from Pericles, the bawd in the Brothel house said. Boul't take her away use her at thy pleasure, crack the glass of her virginity, and make the rest malleable, and Boul't replies. And if she were a thornier piece of ground, then she hills, she shall be ploughed.

Notice the vulgar and offensive language. In Cymbeline Posthumus imagines, a scene of intercourse between his wife and Iachimo, in a production of savage and sordid imaging. I quote, this is a Posthumus speaking o all the devils, this yellow Iachimo in an hour was it not or less at first perchance he spoke not, but like a full Acorned bear, a German one cried o and mounted, found no opposition. For there is no motion that tends to vice in man, but I affirm it is the woman's part, be it lying, note it the woman's, flattering hers, deceiving hers, lust and rank folks hers,". The sheer power and savage vividness of imagery must give us forth. Does it develop its marvelous intensity from the amalgam of Shakespeare the man suffering vicariously. Sir, can we do this again in the last bit, after the.

Quotations.

After the quotation ends.

Maybe I will do the whole quotation.

Ok

Because there was a slight mistake.

So, Pankaj can be go back.

(Refer Time: 19:48) [FL]

[FL].

Student: (Refer Time: 19:50) [FL]

Is the speed.

Yes sir, but where you are referring to characters and names, there may be you can slow down.

Slow on

So, that because these are not very familiar names.

They are not familiar.

[FL].

So, I will give the quotation again, show the quotation yeah; o all the devil, this yellow Iachimo in an hour was it not, or less at first, perchance is spoke not, but like a full Acorned boar a German one cried o and mounted, found no opposition. For there is no motion that tends to vice in man, but I affirm it is the woman's part, be it lying note it the woman's flattering hers, deceiving hers, lust and rank folks hers,". The sheer power and savage vividness of the imagery must give us pause. Does this derive with marvelous intensity from the amalgam of Shakespeare the man, suffering vicariously on his daughters account.

And Shakespeare the artist, transforming the suffering into dramatic speech, that exhibits the fine frenzy, that Theseus celebrates in his memorable description of poetic language in a midsummer night's dream. It is perhaps in *The Winter's Tale*, that this remarkable amalgam, find fullest expression. While in general following his swards Greenes Pandosto, the deviations there from, showed that Shakespeare carefully crafted the play in terms of racial and cultural notion, prevalent in contemporary or thus. Where as in the swards that is Greenes Pandosto, the jealous husband is the king of Bohemia, in the cold northern part of Europe. In the play Shakespeare makes him the king of Sicily, a hot southern region, whose males were traditionally known for their irrational and intemperate behavior, when gripped by obsessive passion or jealousy.

The oracle at Delphos we recall, categorically brands Leontes a jealous Tyrant, while exonerating Hermione from any sexual blench. Without looking minutely at specific details, our general impression of the play, is that the female suffocation by male intransigence and frenzy. Leontes consumed by jealousy, banishes his wife Hermione for 16 years, on the charge of her imagined adultery. On his orders their daughter, the baby Perdita is abandoned in the wilderness by the coward Antigonus, who is then appropriately pursued and devoured by a bear. Then Polixines justifies cross fertilization, but on discovering his son courting, a supposedly rustic girl, vindictively accuses her of practicing witchcraft, and even Camillo, though sympathetic with the plight of the wronged queen, does not have the kind of courage, that for example, kent displays in reprimanding king Lear for his folly in casting off Cordelia.

All the timidity shown by the first servant in the same play, when he deals Cornwall his death wound, while trying to protect Gloucester from getting blinded in contrast to the cowardly men in *The Winter's Tale*, it is the women who stand up against the tyranny of the men. Hermione refuses her husband Leontes accusation against her of having committed adultery. Here is a quotation from Hermione speech.

Know by my life, privy to none of this; how will this grieve you, when you shall come to clearer knowledge, that you thus have published me, gentle my lord. You scarce can right me thoroughly then to say you did mistake. And Paulina Antigonus wife, denounces Leontes for his baseless suspicion. She says this most cruel usage of your queen, not able to produce more accusation than your own weak hinged fancy, something savors of tyranny, 16 years later Polixines is as started as the Leontes. He threatens Perdita, his sons fiancée that he will have her beauty scratched with briers, and made more homely, because of her inferior social status, but she calmly tells her fiancée Florizel.

I just not much have feared, for once or twice I was about to speak, and tell him plainly he selfsame sun that shines upon his court, hides not his visage from our cottage, but looks on alike. For wanting to establish a one to one equivalence, between biography and drama, I think it is still possible to design what might be called an atmospheric correspondence, between Susanna's maligning by John Lane, and the charge of adultery to which Hermione is subjected by Leontes. His obsession comes to the fore, when he declares to his little son Mamillius, and many a man there is even at this present. Now while I speak this, holds his wife by the arm, that little thinks she has been sluiced in his absence, and his pond fished by his next neighbor.

The scandalous and baseless attack on Susanna's reputation by John Lane, smudging her with public disgrace, may well be seen, as having a counterpart, in Leontes denunciation of his wife, in an open forum, rejecting outright her denial of the charge, and sentencing the newborn baby to death. This brat is none of mine he storms, it is the issue of Polixines. Hence with it and together with the gang commit them to the fire. His psychotic dementia, overflows with the shocking rejection of the oracles pronouncement on his folly, which is followed by the sudden deaths of his son Mamillius. Leontes abrupt turnaround and Hermiones deaths. There is no truth at all in the oracle, he shouts. The sessions shall proceed, this is mere falsehood. Following Susanna's acquittal by the

Startford court. John Lane found himself facing charges of rioting, drunkenness and libeling vicar. He was convicted on all 3 counts.

However unlike the swift retribution meted out to Leontes by divine intervention. The case against John Lane took its own time, and judgment was pronounced 6 years later in 1619, 3 years after Shakespeare's death. Thus denying the father, the satisfaction of seeing his daughter's tormentor punished. Since the plot of *The Tempest* is not derived from any known source, but is Shakespeare's invention. The possibility of the play reflecting the dramatist's own experience, is worth exploring. Today it is considered unfashionable and even naïve, to equate Prospero with Shakespeare the man, but there was a time in the history of Shakespearean criticism, when the belief in art, a self-expression was a truism, and it would be helpful if this autobiographical angle, which reexamined, especially in the context of Shakespeare's situation in the Judiths Thomas Quiney marriage.

As noted above, Shakespeare found himself in the embarrassing position of acquiring a son in law, who had fathered a child of a woman, not his daughter; a situation somewhat comparable to that of Prospero, whose daughter has fallen in love with the son of the king of Naples. Who by encouraging his brother Antonio to usurp Prospero's dukedom, was in Prospero's words an enemy to me inveterate, hearkens my brother's suit, but the correspondence does not stop here, as this fix to his character as his would be womanizing son in law, must have been to Shakespeare, is Ferdinand to Prospero, who by his own admission, has had affairs with numerous women, before falling in love with Miranda.

Ferdinand says, full many a lady I have eyed with best regard, he confesses to her. And many a time the harmony of their tongues hath into bondage, brought my too diligent ear. For several virtues have I liked several women, that some part of Prospero finds the womanizing Ferdinand as repellent, as Shakespeare must have found Thomas Quiney, is perhaps indicated in his corrective to Miranda's praise of her suitor. Miranda says of her fiancée. There is nothing evil can dwell in such a temple. If the ill spirit have so far a house good things will strive to dwell in it. Prospero's done the correction thou think as there is no more shapes as he having seen, but him and Caliban, foolish wench, to the most of men this is a Caliban, and they to him are angels.

And corroboration of these assumptions it is already noted, may be seen in Shakespeare's alteration of his will, shortly before his death, adding certain clauses to protect his daughter, should Thomas Quiney prove faithless to her. Unsure of his son in law's reliability, he made his elder daughter Susanna and her husband executors of his will, and left to her his landed property, new place. The Henley street and old Stratford properties in Stratford, and the Blackfriars Gatehouse in London while Judiths must to receive a 100 pounds as her marriage portion, as well as the interest on another 150 pounds. In the tempest of course, Prospero seems to be secretly promoting the match between his daughter and Ferdinand son of the king.

A union that makes his daughter the potential queen of Naples at some future time. If there is a divided self within Prospero; likewise there may have been such a condition in Shakespeare as well, for as we recall Thomas Quiney was after all, the son of Adrian Quiney, who was Shakespeare's close friend, to whom he had even lent 30 pounds, and through him had purchased lands in the outskirts of Stratford.

The picture is a complicated one, but perhaps the play does provide suggestive clues, that point implausible directions so, as to shed flickering light on Shakespeare's unenviable situation, in relation to his controversial son in law.

The romances are strikingly different from the tragedies, and problem plays in many respects. The most noteworthy being the mystical intervention that rescues the women from the tyranny of the men. A contrast of the naturalistic fate of Gertrude in Hamlet, Ophelia in Hamlet, Cordelia in King Lear, Desdemona in Othello, and Lady Macbeth. Of course, in Macbeth, were it not for the oracle in Delphi in *The Winter's Tale*, Jupiter in *Cymbeline* Diana in *Pericles*, and Prospero's magic in the tempest; the women in these plays, who undoubtedly have met the same tragic fate, as those in the earlier group of plays. Equally interesting, the mystical intervention here is not Christian, but (Refer Time: 34:16) is Shakespeare suggesting that the absence of the divine intervention in the new testament, as seen in the martyrdom of John the Baptist, Stephen and the apostles James, Paul and Peter, would not justify its presence in the romances, and so made him turn to non-Christian intervention for effecting rescue and resolution.

Whatever may have been his intent; conscious or unconscious, the oppression of women in these plays despite their blameless conduct, is quite unlike the women of the tragedies,

which I had referred earlier. All of whom are to some degree responsible for the fate that overtakes them. Ophelia we recall meekly obeys her father Polonius, and returns to Hamlet the gifts he had given. Desdemona when asked by Othello for the handkerchief, he has given her denies that it is lost; thus confirming Othello's suspicion of her being unchaste.

Young women of the romances, are not tarnished by any blame, and like Shakespeare's daughters, seem to echo resonances of the unhappy experiences at the hands of male perfidy. And yet miraculously, they come through the crucible unscathed. Hermione is reunited with estranged husband, as is Imogen with her gullible husband despite the smudging of her wifely chastity by Treacherous Iachimo. Marina escapes the ignominy of the Brothel, and Miranda the danger of being raped by Caliban, While her own fiancée fearful of the punishment which her father threatens him, should he break her virgin, not leaves intact her virginity up to her wedding day, presided over by Juno.

Caliban we all recall had threatened to rape Miranda, as is revealed with his exchange with Prospero, who claims to have defended him. Caliban said Prosperos, sorry Prospero said, just we will have to correct, Prospero says, I have used the filth as thou art with human care, and lodged thee in mine own cell till thou didst seek to violate the honor of my child, to which Caliban retorts, o ho o ho would not had been done, though its prevent me, I had people else this isle with Calibans, but Caliban is not the only potential rapist of Prosperos daughter, even Ferdinand ,who Prospero approves of, as his future son in law, is a potential rapist a threat that Prospero perceives, as a possibility, as is clear in his warning to the young man.

Take my daughter, but if (Refer Time: 37:29) break her virgin not, before all sanctimonious ceremonies, may with full and holy rite be ministered. No sweet aspersion shall the heavens let fall, to make this contract grow, but barren hate sour eyed disdain, and discord shall bestrew, the union of your bed with weeds so loathly that you shall hate it both. The vulnerability of his daughter to rape before marriage, that Prospero apprehends, could well have been Shakespeare's own fear for his daughter Judith's, whose relationship as we have seen with Thomas Quiney, was not without the likelihood of social stigma, being thrown at her. Why then accomplished dramatist like Shakespeare could view objectively, the characters he had created in the play, that he was writing. He was also a human being with human feelings that could well have colored his art. It is

worth recording, that in Theseus well known description of the process, whereby day to day experiences are transformed into the crucible of the poets imagination, into a local habitation and a name; the lines are the poets eye, in a fine frenzy rolling, doth glance from heaven to earths, from earth to heaven, and has a imagination bodies forth the forms of things are known the poets pen turns them to shapes.

Clearly Theseus sees a link, between the poet's eye and the products of his pen, and it is this link that we are trying to identify in Shakespeare's writing of the romances. All of these young and innocent women, teether on the brink of ruin, but are then miraculously rescued by supernatural intervention.

Shakespeare left behind more letters, diaries or journals. Unlike ben Johnson, he never published his own plays, a neglect lamented by the editors of the folio, who in their note to the great variety of readers, wished that the author himself had lived to have set forth, an overseeing his own writing. It is only by his extrapolation from his plays and poems, and from the scattered memoirs of his contemporaries, that something of the man behind the work can be judged. In conclusion then, it seems difficult to resist, seeing the endings of the romances, as embodying the complete, and satisfied fulfillment of a father's wishes, for a happiness of his daughters, in a world of evil and male oppression. If in the tragedies, Shakespeare showed us what life is, in the romances, he gives us a vision of what life ought to be.

Shakespeare's history plays. Shakespeare's English history chronicle plays, from Richard the second to Richard the third, cover a historical span of a 108 years. From 1377 to 1485, after which began the Tudor period with Henry the seventh, which includes the reign of queen Elizabeth; however, the writing of the Henriad plays, by Shakespeare, did not follow their historical sequence, and this is a factor we must take into account, in our study of the play; thus though Richard the second in history died in 1400, and Henry the sixth in 1471.

Shakespeare wrote the Henry the sixth plays in 1591, and Richard the second in 1594, in inverse order. Likewise the historical Henry the fifth, died in 1422, and Richard the third in 1485, 60 years later, but Shakespeare wrote Richard the third in 1592, and Henry the fifth 7 years later in 1599. Again in inverse order, thus giving rise to a provocative view of events; that is we see future events first, then past events. The development of

Shakespeare's dramatic art then, is at variance with the location of the plays in history. The outcome being, that the plays he wrote later like Henry the fourth, parts 1 and 2, has such unforgettable character as Falstaff Hal later Henry, the fifth hotspur and Richard the second. Contrasting with the comparatively immature style of Henry the sixth parts 1 2 and 3. Later in this paper we will look more closely at this interesting anomaly.

Turning then to the later plays in the chronology, Richard the second Henry the fourth parts one and two, then Henry the fifth. Our focus will be on 2 aspects of these plays; one Shakespeare's view of politics, in the context of historical events, and 2 the memorable characters, as already briefly noted, and their role in the politics of the period. In passing we should note, that one of the recent critical approaches to literature, is new historicism, in which strong emphasis is laid on 2 factors; first that the literary text is embedded in its own cultural and social time and place, and therefore, should be studied in the light of its historical context, and second that the writing of the literary text could well have been influenced by conditions, that might seem too remote, to have played the role in the shaping of the text, and yet if studied carefully might uncover some remarkable traces of influence, that would well compel us, to rethink our interpretation of the text.

For example, in Henry the fourth part one, nearly Half of the play, consists of the unhistorical scenes of Falstaff, the fat knight, and his companions in the tavern. And these scenes if closely analyzed might well be regarded as a ironical, and witty commentary on the serious things of grave political import, with which the high class members of the aristocracy are occupied. This lighting from the underground so to speak is not the feature of earlier plays; like Henry the sixth part one 2 and 3 or Richard the third, which are fully occupied with history having no room for low comedy.

What we may well ask, was Shakespeare's view of history. Nineteenth century criticisms answer was, that his view was based on. Hence if a prince wishes to maintain himself, he must learn how to be not good, and to use that ability or not, as is required. Shakespeare was of course, as were all English writers, greatly influenced by the Italian thinkers. We have only to remember that, almost all of the plots of his plays came from Italian sources. And in England we are only to turn to Francis Bacon's metaphoric observation, that I quote, all rising to great place is by a winding stair. To note its relevance to Bolingbroke's that is Henry the fourth, he became Henry the fourth later, confession to

his son Hal, later Henry the fifth I quote, god knows my son by what by paths, and indirect crooked ways, I met this crown and I myself know well how troublesome, it sat upon my head as some of you no doubt know, it was Richard the second who banished Bolingbroke for 6 years, when the one to one combat, between Bolingbroke and mow bray was about to take place.

Each having accused the other of high treason against the King; the king then banished mow bray for life, and extracted from both of them a promise, to respect his sentence, and never plot against him or the throne up to this point in the plays action Richards's authority is undisputed, in accordance with the doctrine of the divine right of kings. As for example, stated by Thomas Hooker 1586 to 1647, ecclesiastical polity. Kings, I am quoting from Hooker; Kings therefore, no man can have lawfully power and authority to judge. If private men offend there is a magistrate, over them which judged. If magistrates offend they have their prince. If princes offend there is heaven, a tribunal before which they shall appear. On earth they are not accountable to any.

This is a note we can relate to the great chain of being, the theory that there is a hierarchy which is observed, in all forms and patterns of nature, whether pertaining to actual nature or the human nature. In the play itself Bolingbroke's father, john of gaunt endorses this belief. Let heaven revenge for I may never lift an angry arm against his minister, and later in the play Richard himself invokes, heaven to defend his cause. God for his Richard hath in heavenly pay a glorious angel. Then if angels fight weak men must fall.

So, heaven still guards the right. This simple straightforward assertion of faith, in the king being impregnable against challenges to his authority, is; however, shown to crumble in the face of worldly might and political strategy for at plays end, Richard is forced to abdicate by Bolingbroke, and dies at the hands of an assassin. Thus is called in question, the notion of the divine right of kings, but the further complication ensues, which Shakespeare explores and develops with fine psychological insight, namely the pangs of conscience that now haunt Bolingbroke, and run like a thread through the 2 parts of Henry the fourth, Shakespeare's most mature and gripping of all his history plays.

We will now consider briefly, some instances of the psychological insight of Shakespeare just mentioned, which shifts the reader or the viewers, attention away from divine

providence, to the human dimension in worldly affairs. Thus rendering his plays timeless as Doctor Johnson noted, Shakespeare is (Refer Time: 50:14) writers a poet of nature. The poet that holds up to his readers, a faithful mirror of manners and of life. Henry the fourth part one opens with Bolingbroke. Now king Henry, longing to set out on a pilgrimage to the holy land Jerusalem, in order to do penance for having usurped the crown from Richard, and thus assuage, the noise of his troubled conscience, but continuously he is sorted by various circumstances, as he himself says, but this our purpose now is 12 month old and bootless this to tell you we will go. Ironically on his deathbed, at the end of Henry the fourth part two.

He ruefully laments never having the label to realize his dream due to his failing health's, and asks an attendant lord to convey him to the chamber named Jerusalem, where he may die in peace. It has been prophesized to be many years, I should not die, but in Jerusalem, which mainly I suppose the holy land, but bear me to that chamber, there I lie, in that Jerusalem shall Harry die. Henry is a complex character, portrayed is ambitious and unscrupulous, yet eliciting our sympathy for his sensitivity and introspection. Thus anticipating in certain ways, Shakespeare's creation of a far more memorable character, Macbeth who like Henry, cannot resist succumbing to the temptation of securing the crown, yet is tormented by his restless conscience. To add to Henry's predicament, is the anguish he feels over the manner in which he was forced by political necessities, to take decisions for the public good, that he personally and privately abhorred, struggling against the trap in which he finds himself a captive. He discusses with the earl of Warwick, the way in which the men are drawn into the vortex of historical necessity. Not so much by choice as because they fit in with the shape that events take.

And. So, are enlisted by the forces of political compulsion, to fulfill their in nest capable destiny. Henry by this reasoning absolves himself for personal guilt, in the deposition of Richard, and blames the events that compelled him to become a factor in the formula that history was evolving, though then god knows, I had no such intents, but that necessity. So, bowed the state, that I and greatness, like compelled to kiss. The earl of Warwick's reply is strongly reminiscent of Cassius's view in Julius Caesar, a play that I am sure many of you know very well. A freedom and determinism warring with each other, is not in agreement with Henry's self-exoneration, but places an equal responsibility on the individual's freedom to make the right choice in terms of moral and ethical principle. In

other words Warwick insists, that each individual is accountable for the choices he or she makes.

He says there is a history in all men's lives, figuring the nature of the times deceased, is then history, the biography of only certain individuals. Do we agree with Henry or with Warwick, at this stage of his dramatic and theatrical career, Shakespeare was grappling with questions that are relevant for us today. How do we define words like nationalism, patriotism, tolerance, intolerance, freedom of speech? While Henry the fourth is addressing the problem of freedom and determinism, this does not prevent him from being a canny politician, even on his deathbed.

He advises his son Harry, later Henry the fifth to use political acumen in distracting the minds of the people from thinking of these issues, by the cunning strategy of waging foreign wars. Therefore, by having (Refer Time: 55:03) to busy giving minds with foreign quarrels, that action. Hence born out may waste the memory of the former days. How well Harry learns this lesson, is the mainstream of Henry the fifth, the play that we will now examine in some detail having heard his father's advice to busy giving minds with foreign quarrels. Harry did it to the letter.

Henry the fifth is replete with wars, raged against France, but we must remember that these wars were fought by men, like the groundlings, who watching the play, saw themselves as pawns to be sacrificed on the battlefield. So, as to secure the continuing authority of the aristocrat rulers, and politicians thus Shakespeare's history plays, were a powerful lesson exposing the subterfuges, and the exploitation of the common people in the name of patriotism and nationalism Henry the fifth with soft support for his kingship with restoring exhortation. We few, we happy, few we band of brothers, for he today that sheds his blood with me shall be my brother. For the heck of it, may well have sounded hollow to many in the audience, who saw through its ulterior motive and resisted being dazzled by its celebration of military valor and reckless war-mongering.

By turning now to an examination of the comedy scenes in these plays, in which Falstaff plays a major role. We will realize that Shakespeare included these scenes, not merely to provide entertainment, but also to expose through them the hypocrisy of the ruling class. In one of the most extraordinary scenes, in Henry the fourth part two, Falstaff is shown recruiting soldiers, from the lower strata of society, with cynical contempt for their

simplicity and naivety. Falstaff and justice shallow are in charge of the recruitments. Shallow said, where is the roll, where is the roll, where is the roll, let me see, let me see, let me see, so, so. so, so. So, yea marry sir. Rafe Mouldy let them appear as I call, let them do so, let them do so, let me see where is Mouldy, Mouldy, here am not please you shallow, what think you sir john, a good limbed fellow young, strong and of good friends.

Falstaff is thy man Mouldy, Mouldy yes ant, please you, Falstaff this the more time thou were not used, shallow ha ha ha ha ha, most excellent I faith, things that are Mouldy lack use, very singular good in faith well said sir john very well said Falstaff prick him, Mouldy; I was pricked well enough before, and you could have let me alone, my old dame will be undone now, for one to do her husbandry, and her drudgery. You need not to have pricked me. There are other men fitter to go out than s. Falstaff go to peace Mouldy you shall go Mouldy it is time you were spent, Mouldy spent.

The scene is both hilarious and deadly serious, beneath the hilarity is corrupt practice, bribes from the more well to do recruits, was taken by Falstaffs pauper. So, that they may escape enlistment, and when the army finally, is formed, it consists of that of (Refer Time: 59:06) men totally unfit for battle. On seeing the men, Hal remarks I did never see such pitiful rascals, to which Falstaff replied, tut tut good enough to toss food for powder, food for powder they will fill a pit as well as better, Tosh man mortal men, mortal men. Hal continues to be shocked ay, but sir John Methinks, they are exceeding poor and bare too beggarly, is Falstaff hard hearted and callous towards the men, who will be cannon fodder, or is he a hardnosed realist, who knows how in any war, the worst sufferers are the soldiers, who died or are wounded on the battlefield.

Exposing the hollowness of the notion of valor, cultivated by the politicians, who are responsible for conflicts; Falstaff soliloquy on the notion of honor, has been ranked by many readers as being on par, with Hamlets famous soliloquy to be, or not to be; that is the question. In the first part of Henry the forth before the battle of Shrewsbury begins, the prince and Falstaff have a brief exchange. Falstaff says Hal if thou see me down in the battle and bestride me so, to the point of friendship. Hal why, thou Owest God a death, Falstaff did not due yet. I would be loath to pay him before his day, what need I be so forward with him that calls not on me. Well tis no matter, honor pricks me on yea, but how if honor prick me off, when I come on how then, can honor set to a leg, no. Or an

arm, no. Or take away the grief of a wound; no. honor has no skill in surgery then, no. what is honor a word. What we may well ask is Shakespeare attempting in these scenes one answer is of course, that he is satirizing the corrupt state of affairs in the English army.

Queen Elizabeth's sanction of sons for the army, was pitifully inadequate on account of her determination to build up a strong navy. As all of you no doubt are aware, in 1588 England had repulsed the Spanish armada and won a great victory over Spain. Since then the royal navy had become invincible, plundering the Spanish ships that carried bullion back to Spain from South America. Thus enriching the coffers of the English queen, who as a consequence neglected the army, giving rise to the kind of corruption witnessed in the scene with Falstaff and Mouldy, but Falstaff is not entirely a parodist of the high up political goings on in the country. In the second part of Henry the fourth, he captures Sir John Colville of the dale, a most furious knight and valorous enemy, but Falstaff is not entirely a parodist of the high up political goings on in the country. In the second part of Henry the fourth, he captures Sir John Colville of the dale.

A most furious knight and valorous enemy, as Falstaff describes him, with his usual dose of wit. The scene is both comical and serious a technique that Shakespeare perfected in the creation of Falstaff, and continued to use with telling effect in all of his subsequent plays. For example, in Antony and Cleopatra, the rustic who brings the asp, whereby Cleopatra commit suicide, thus to use big words, that being, without being too sure of their meaning, when Cleopatra asks him hast thou the pretty worm of Nilus there, that kills and pains not. His reply is comical truly I have him, but I would not be the party that should desire you to touch him for his biting is immortal, those that do die of it do seldom or never recover.

The bribery and corruption that Falstaff and his corporal practice, is a replica of that prevailing among the upper echelons of society, but Falstaff's imitable wit and perpetual gaiety, are redeeming factors recognizing the combination of opposites in Shakespeare's creation of Falstaff, Doctor Johnson addresses Falstaff as a personal friend and companion, but Falstaff unimitated, unimitable Falstaff how shall I describe thee. Thou compound of sense and vice. A sense which may be admired, but not esteemed, of vice which may be despised, but hardly detested. Falstaff is a character loaded with faults, and with those faults which naturally produce contempt, he is a thief and a glutton, a

coward and a boaster, yet the man thus corrupt, thus despicable, makes himself necessary to the prince, that despises him by the most pleasing of all qualities perpetual gaiety, by an unfailing power of exciting laughter. This is Doctor Johnson's description of Falstaff.

Yet despite prince Hal's ostensible friendship with Falstaff, and I stress the word ostensible, at the end of the second part of Henry the fourth when Hal becomes king on the death of his father, he rejects Falstaff, and banishes him till such time as he reforms himself and becomes a good citizen. This scene has become one of the central subjects for critical discussion and controversy, and needs to be examined more closely. At the beginning of the first part of Henry the fourth, Hal had declared in soliloquy, that his plan is to reject Falstaff after he becomes king.

So, as to show his subjects, how complete his commitment to good kingship is, a speech that is a some critics is evidence of political expediency, and calculatedness unworthy of a king, but for others, an indication of his shrewd sense of the need to cultivate a popular public image, and therefore, a proof of his potential to be a good ruler. In soliloquy he addresses Falstaff and his companions thus. I know you all, and will awhile uphold the unyoked humor of your idleness, yet herein will I imitate the sun, who doth permit the base contagious clouds to smother up his beauty from the world, that when he please again to be himself, being wanted he may be more wondered at, by breaking through the foul and ugly mists of vapors, that did seem to strangle him.

So, when this loose behavior I throw off, and pay the debt I never promised, by how much better than my word I am, by so much shall I falsify men's hopes, and like bright metal on a sullen ground my reformation, glittering on my fault shall show more goodly, and attract more eyes than that which hath no foil to set it off. I will so offend to make offence a skill, redeeming time, when men think least I will. The rejection of Falstaff by Hal at the end of the second part of Henry the fourth breaks Falstaff's spirit. And in Henry the fifth he dies of a broken heart. For those of you who are captivated by Shakespeare's creative genius, displaying itself in the person of Falstaff, and who are fascinated by the abundance of contradictory ingredients, that go into his making. My advice is that you read the deeply moving account of his death by the hostess, in Henry the fifth at 5; scene 3, and then try to examine critically your assessment of Falstaff.

There is a considerable school of criticism that sees Falstaff and Hamlet as Shakespeare's 2 most remarkable characters. Hal's speech on his intention to reform himself, and thus impress his subjects, anticipates in some ways, the soliloquy by the hunch backed Richard the third who plans to be ruthless and totally self-serving. So, as to attain the crown, and thus compensate himself for the physical deformity, with which nature has made him suffer. Some of us may feel that Hal's speech is a callous betrayal of friendship, at the altered self-promotion.

Others may feel as did doctor Johnson that the soliloquy prepares the audience for his future reformation, but the truth is, that Shakespeare's hands were tied by history. The early chronicles describe Hal's wild youths, which he renounced on becoming king. So, that Shakespeare had no alternative to incorporating this into the text of his play. Here as we shall see in greater detail later, is a drawback that the dramatist using history as a base, has to contend with. Here as we shall see in greater detail later, is a drawback that the dramatist using history as a base, has to contend with. History dictating the plot and perhaps going against the grain of the dramatist's own creative judgment.

This is an issue that each reader must come to terms with, using personal judgment as a guide. An example of the way in which literature, challenges us to react one way or another, depending upon our own critical faculties towards the conclusion of the second part of Henry the fourth, Shakespeare gives us a highly dramatic scene, in which Henry the fourth on his deathbed finds his crown missing from the pillow, and is told by his attendance that Hal has taken it away. King, where is the crown, who took it from my pillow. Warwick, when we withdrew my liege we left it here. King, the prince hath taken it. Hence go seek him out. Is he so hasty, that he doth, suppose my sleep my death, find him my lord of Warwick, chide him hither. In any stage enactment of this scene the crown becomes a powerful symbol of the goals for which aspirants strive, fight and perish.

We should note that while Shakespeare gives us a dramatic version of history, he is at the same time giving us a lesson on the futility of the lust of power and fame. A lesson that Tolstoy gives us in his short story, how much land does a man require. Are then the history plays intended to undercut the glory, and the grandeur, that is associated with the monarch? The martial music, the trumpets, soldiers marching in perfect formation, the speeches celebrating military valor, and national honor. And if so why was Shakespeare

not arrested by the authorities, for thus sowing the seeds of discord among the common people. The answer to this question will be found I suggest in the willingness of the queen to accommodate a wide range of attitudes and views in the governance of the country. A couple of years before her death, she addressed parliament with affectionate humility, though god hath raised me high, yet this I count the glory of my crown, that I have reigned with your loves. There will never queen sit in my seat with more zeal to my country, care for my subjects, and that sooner with willingness will venture her life for your good and safety than myself.

For it is not my desire to live nor reign longer than my life, and reign shall be for your good. I unquote. Another possible explanation for the censor board, not taking exception to criticism of prevailing conditions, could well be the long past historical context of the chronicle plays. Shakespeare wrote going back to the 14th and 15th century, a good 150 years prior to the reign of queen Elizabeth's, and therefore, immune from censure; however, members of Shakespeare's audience who were perceived, could have seen through the veil of history, and recognized the contemporarity of the plays and the message they contained. An interesting instance of this was the staging of Richard the second, 2 years before the queen's death, in the hope that the deposing of Richard by Bolingbroke will alert the populous to the possibility of James the 6th of Scotland; son of Mary Queen of Scots, succeeding Queen Elizabeth's to the throne of England. The details of this episode are as follows.

Robert Devereux earl of Essex handsome, bold, ambitious and the favorite of the queen went to war against Spain, and captured the important port city of Cadiz. As a result of this success his reputation soared immensely, and he next persuaded the queen to send him to Ireland, with an army of 15000 men, to quell the Irish rebellion of 1599; however, the expedition proved a failure, the queen was furious, and Essex felt insulted and humiliated. It was at this point, that Essex and his friends stormed into London, and arranged the performance of Richard the second by Shakespeare's acting company, with the hope that the citizens of the city would raise a rebellion, and depose the queen knowing up that I am not Richard, the queen said to her supporters Essex was brought to trial.

The chief prosecutor being Francis Bacon convicted of treason and executed. Essex rise and fall greatly disturbed the nation, and according to some eminent critics, like John

Dover Wilson, it may not be a simple coincidence, that in the same year Hamlet was written. Apart from the Henriad chronicle plays, Shakespeare also wrote in 1596 the life and death of King John, which features between the early Henry the sixth plays, and the later more sophisticated and mature Henry the fourth and Henry the fifth plays. Historically it goes back to the 13th century to the Magna Carta.

King John may be regarded as a transitional play, that combines the characteristics of both periods, while at the same time containing at least 3 outstanding scenes; one the likelihood that Constance's lament over the death of her son Arthur, reflects Shakespeare's grief over the death of his 11 year old son Hamnet in 1596, two, the pleading of Arthur with the assassin Hubert, to spare his life and his subsequent death, and 3, the bastard who in many ways is a precursor of Falstaff and Edmund in King Lear. Here is some lines some Constance's lament over the death of Arthur. Grief fills the room up of my absent child, lies in his bed, walks up and down with me, puts on his pretty looks repeats his words, remembers me of all his gracious parts, stuffs out his vacant garments with his form. Whether Shakespeare wrote these lines with the kind of artistic detachment, that James Joyces Stephen in portrait of the artist as young man believes, is the Hallmark of great writing, or whether they reflect in some way his own personal loss in the death of his son, is a question that each reader must answer individually. King John has noted an interlude in the writing of Henriad plays. So, our survey of the Henriad plays, brings us back to 3 parts of Henry the sixth, glanced at briefly at the commencement of this paper.

As noted, these 3 parts were written much before, the later Henry the fourth and Henry the fifth plays. Thus giving us a projective view of history, by which is meant an inversion of history. This may seem confusing, but on closer examination, may turn out to be more enlightening, than the conventional linear view of history, as cause and effect; if we reverse the sequence. We first see the effect and then the cause a bipolar view of history, in which hindsight can give us a new kind of insight in historic change and circumstance. Those of you who are interested in the subject, will want to read the 3 parts of Henry the sixth, and will I fear, initially be repelled by the complexity and plethora of characters, that interact with one another. In all 3 parts there are no less than 100 characters as peter alexander points out. The England at medieval times was driven by civil disorder, each feudal leader duke, earl or baron having his own coterie of followers. Similar to the

many Rajahs, Maharajahs, and Nawabs who had their fiefdoms in India. Until such time as the Mughal Empire in the North, and Shivaji in the South, united a major part of the country, followed by the British, who further consolidated its political structure.

Of course, these are broad generalizations; hence without going into particulars it can be said that with the battle of Bosworth, and the crowning of Henry the seventh, under the Tudors, we see the end of the feudal epoch. The rise of the middle class, the political significance, and the realization of the idea of the state; this is an incisive comment by Peter Alexander; one of the leading Shakespeare's followers, particularly with reference to the history plays. In passing it is worth noting, that the chaos and endless conflict of the wars of the roses, the red and white rose, that sets in during this period of English history, as a result of hostility between 2 houses of Lancaster and York, both being descendants of King Edward the third, has a parallel in the Mahabharat, with which all of you are no doubt familiar from India, in the rivalry between the Kauravs and the Pandavas. Both being descendants of King Shantanu, and his wife Queen Satyawati. In both cases the rival parties are cousins, demonstrating that history often throws up patterns that are similar, human nature being the same, regardless of time and place. The turmoil that sets in the war of the roses, culminates with the rise of the hunchback in Richard the third, who determines to win the crown by hook or by crook, deformed and repulsive in looks.

His bitter soliloquy is an admission of his grudge against the world, and is the first great psychological study by Shakespeare of an embittered soul, from whom we do recoil in horror, who yet kindles in us some feelings of sympathy. Why, love forsook 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 withered 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 disproportionate me in every part, like to a chaos, and am I then a man to be beloved; O monstrous fault to harbor such a thought.

Then since this earth affords no joy to me, but to command, to cheque, to overbear such as are of better person than myself. I will make my heaven to dream upon the crown, and while I live to account this world, but hell until my misshaped trunk that bears this head be round impaled with a glorious crown. For many lives stand between me and home, and I like one lost in a thorny wood, that rends the thorns and is rent with the thorns,

seeking a way and straying from the way. Not knowing how to find the open air, but toiling desperately to find it out, torment myself to catch the English crown.

And from that torment, I will free myself or hew my way out with a bloody axe. 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 will drown more sailors than the mermaid shall. I will slay more gazers than the basilisk, I will 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 Machiavelli to school. Can I do this and cannot get a crown, tut were it farther off I will pluck it down, as is evident in this devastating soliloquy.

Shakespeare anticipates the workings of Macbeth's mind, of Claudius Schemings, of Edmund's Villainy, while at the same time exposing the machinations of all politicians in all ages, including our own to win votes by deception and hypocrisy. Hateful as Richard may seem on one plane. On another he emerges as a single dominating and energetic figure, a contrast of the preponderance of characters in Henry the sixth plays thus giving us Shakespeare's view of history as a movement towards the unification of the country politically.

Richard perishes in battle with Richmond, Henry the seventh at the end of the play, after which Henry the seventh has the last word; proclaim a pardon to the soldiers fled, that in submission will return to us, and then as we have obtain the sacrament, we will unite the white rose and the red, smile heaven upon this fair conjunction, that long have frowned upon their enmity. What traitor hears me, and says not amen. England hath long been mad and scarred herself. Now civil wounds are stopped, peace lives again that she may long live here, god say amen.

In the portrayal of Richard the third, we can detect the scenes that make it germinate, and give rise to the creation of the great villains of the later tragedies, like Claudius, Macbeth, Iago and Edmund. In writing to English history plays Shakespeare is inevitably restricted, by historical necessity. Even though he did take liberties with historical facts at times, while adhering to the broad outlines of history. The history plays then, were in some sense a training ground for Shakespeare, to probe cause and effect,

boundless ambition followed by disastrous consequences, self-aggrandizement by using others as dispensable pawns in the way of advancement. So, that by the time he wrote Hamlet in around 1600, he was able to create an amalgam of history and insight into the intricacies of human aspiration, endeavor and the workings of conscience.

With Hamlet Shakespeare seems to deliberately turn away from English history, which he found too restrictive, and went to Danish history, dating back to the twelfth century A D in the *Historia Danica* by Saxo Grammaticus. This camouflage was, but a thin disguise for the ongoing politics of England at the time. The queen's death everyone knew was not far off, and the absence of an heir was a cause of much anxiety, as the historian Trevelyan observes, for 40 years and more the English had lived in the black shadow of the question, what will befall us when the queen dies.

Even though the Spanish armada had been repulsed and routed in 1588 as we saw earlier, it was well known throughout Europe that Spain continued to have imperialistic designs against England. Not only in terms of an old rivalry, but on account of the English navy, as we have noted, plundering Spanish ships, laden with bullion from south America from the high seas, as well as the threat of the up and coming East India Company, posing stiff competition to Portugal's presence in India, Portugal and Spain having been united under a single crown from 1580 to 1640, while Hamlet is not strictly speaking, not an English chronicle play.

It can be seen as an extension of the same in the form of a Danish Vania, the successor to the old king Hamlet, is his brother Claudius, who like Richard the third can smile and smile and be a villain, as Hamlet notes. He marries Gertrude, his elder brother's widow, even as an Henry the eighth first wife Catherine, was the widow of his elder brother Arthur. And at the play's end Fortinbras of Norway walks in the bout of fight, and gains possession of Denmark. Even as James the sixth of Scotland; son of Mary queen of Scots Elizabeth's cousin, steps in the bout of fight and occupies the throne of England. Like Denmark and Norway between whom an uneasy truce existed, every now and then marred by skirmishes as in reported in act one scene one of Hamlet. The relations between England and Scotland were and are similar, as is evident from the likelihood of Scotland, breaking away from the union of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should a referendum be held today.

Further, the role of Falstaff to provide satirical comedy, directly against the high politics intrigue and treachery, prevalent in the English history plays, finds the yet more penchant expression in the roles of the gravedigger in Hamlet. The porter in Macbeths, Edmund in King Lear, and Iago in Othello, audience describing him as a joker in the pack; all of these characters disrupt the trajectory of the tragedies, in various ways too complex for us to analyze in the limited time at our disposal, though it can briefly be said, that each of them seems to deflect the plays action into an unexpected channel, that both surprises and educates the audience. In Hamlet, the gravedigger scene as Maynard Mack pointed out, is responsible for Hamlets considerable change of mood, as seen in his acceptance of the boundaries in which human actions are enclosed, which Bradley erroneously called term fatalism. Hamlet, then may be regarded as being not only the culmination of the turmoil of the English chronicle plays, but as the kind of resolution as well, towards the plays end Hamlet realizes. There is a divinity that shapes our ends, and there is special providence in the fall of a sparrow. He succeeds in revenging his father's murder, but he accomplishes under the aegis of providence, thus introducing a new dimension in the unraveling of history in the earlier period.

As Lord Reesmogg perceptively notes, if one looks at earlier in contemporary English history, when Hamlet was written. It is a fact, that every English monarch had been forced by political events, or he decided to execute or murder a Kingsman or kings woman in order to retain power, and that is after all is what Claudius did. Something is rotten in the state of Denmark, Marcellus observes. And Hamlet a few lines later, accepts the responsibility that is. Now his the time is out of joint o cursed spite, that ever I was born to set it right. Unlike the bloodthirsty aspirant power of the history plays, Hamlet is a reluctant agent of justice. As lord Richmond further observes, on one level Hamlet is always a little way behind Claudius, who seems to be taking the initiative at every turn, but on another level, perhaps in a more fundamental way, Hamlet is ahead of Claudius, precisely because he is not limited by the politicians perceptive as Claudius is.

Hamlet the intellectual can look before and after something Claudius is incapable of doing. With the writing of Hamlet then, Shakespeare concludes the saga of the English chronicle plays, and begins a new chapter with the great tragedies; Othello, Macbeth, King Lear, and Antony and Cleopatra. Queen Elizabeth died in 1603, and these plays were written after James the first of Scotland had become the new king of England. The

political climate had gone a radical change, whereas under the Elizabeth's the navy had prospered, and England had asserted her maritime rights.

Under James she lost the supremacy, and England lost out to Spain, France and Holland, in the competitions of supremacy, both in Europe as in distant lands, both east and west of England. In India for example, the Portuguese had established colonies in Goa, Daman and Diu. While the French presence under Dupleix, had gained political commercial and military superiority over the English presence under lord Clive. While reading Shakespeare's history plays, we must always bear in mind that they were being written during the reign of Queen Elizabeth's, and were therefore, viewed in retrospect from the perspective of the queens glorious reign.

In other words Shakespeare's view of history, is colored by the belief, that history comes to with fullest and most lofty fulfillment with the reign of the queen. I am not suggesting that this phenomena logical view is incorrect or subjective. On the contrary history has fully vindicated the queens rule, for its many spectacular achievements, among which is the defeat of the Spanish armada, and the establishment of East India Company in 1600. It now only remains for us only to look at the last of the Henriad plays; Henry the eighth.

That was staged at the globe in 1613, 3 years before Shakespeare's death, and 10 years after the queen's death. As we might expect the play is more a pageant than a play celebratory of the queen's birth in 1533, and the prophecy at the time of a long and glorious reign, to be followed by that of the successor James the first of Scotland; the Archbishop of Canterbury Prophesizes. This royal infant heaven still move about her, though in her cradle yet now promises upon this land, a 1000-1000 blessings, which time shall bring to ripeness and concludes with the tribute to James the first. So, shall she leave her blessedness to one, when heaven shall call her from this cloud of darkness? Who from the sacred ashes of her honor, shall star like rise as great in fame as she was and so stand fixed.

The play is by no means devoid of great speeches, even though for obvious reasons there is no dramatic suspense worth mentioning. One such speech is the denunciation of Cardinal Wolsey, by Catherine of Aragon; daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella, King and Queen of Spain, and the first wife of Henry the eighth. You are mine enemy, and make my challenge; you shall not be my judge. For it is you have blown this coal betwixt my

lord and me, which gods dew quench. Therefore, I say again I utterly abhor, yea from my soul refuse you for my judge, whom yet once more, I hold my most malicious foe, and think not at all a friend to truth. The plays most remarkable scene is the fall of Cardinal Wolsey, from the king's favor for his ill-gotten wealth, followed by Wolsey's moving dialect. Had i, but served my god with half the zeal I served my king. He would not in mine age, have left me naked to mine enemies.

In conclusion, it is important that we understand how difficult it is, to convert history into drama. The play enacted on the stage cannot exceed 3 hours. No audience can sit through a span of time longer than this. Least of all Shakespeare's audience, it consisted of a large percentage of groundlings, who required to stand in the open space in front of the stage for the length of time. Accordingly, Shakespeare had to compress historical time so as to make it fit into the limited span of 2 hours of dramatic time. And this necessitated in having to make a selection of episodes from history, and weave them into unified and composite whole so as to form a baton that could be grasped and comprehended by his audience. In modern times, with the marvel of cinematography, at the disposal of film directors, task of accomplishing what Shakespeare had to do without this technology, is indeed a miracle. It is imperative therefore, that we realize that Shakespeare's history plays, are not historical documents, but rather highlights; an impressions of historic moments, that had been chosen highly selectively that have a times been transposed, rearranged, magnified and thus rendered dramatic so as to make a powerful impact on the minds of the viewers.

We must not read Shakespeare's chronicle plays as historians would expect, but a spectacular renderings of events out of history, which because of they having been captured in Shakespeare's vivid and inimitable language, give us insights into the essence of historical truths, which transcend mere historical fact. In other words, Shakespeare's plays are concentrated microcosms of history. Similar to the way in which a diamond is composed solely of carbon. In 1901 W B Yeats visited Stratford of Avon, and saw the history plays performed in their right order. He was deeply stirred by the experience, and noted, I quote the theater moved me as it has never done before, that strange procession of kings and queens of warring nobles, of insurgent crowds, of courtiers and the people of the gutter, has been to me almost too visible, too audible, too full of an unearthly energy.

We must, but gift to Aristotle; the last word on the distinction between drama and history. I quote from Aristotle's the poetics which all of you know. Hence poetry that is drama, is something more philosophic and of graver import than history. Since its statements are of the nature rather of universals whereas, those of history are singulars or particulars.