THE DRAMATIC FUNCTION OF DECEPTION IN WOODSTOCK

by

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Although it has now been edited five times, the anonymous Elizabethan history play Woodstock received little attention from either editors or critics until nearly the beginning of this century.[1] No doubt its reception has been hindered by a host of textual and historical problems which are perplexing to say the least. It survives in the British Museum in a seventeenth-century collection of plays known as MS. Egerton 1994. The manuscript of Woodstock contained in this collection appears to have been used as a prompt copy in the theaters, and, as a consequence of much handling, many passages are illegible.[2] Moreover, the manuscript gives no information as to authorship, title, date or ownership. Only the rudest sort of speculation can be made about the identity of the author, so that even so knowledgeable a scholar as Sir Edmund Chambers does not venture to assign the play to any particular playwright.[3] The lack of a title has caused some confusion, for scholars and editors have variously called the play 1 Richard II or Thomas of Woodstock. The former title suggests a relationship with Shakespeare's Richard II which is not altogether true and fails to recognize that Woodstock is the play's main character. On the basis of internal evidence which indicates that Woodstock follows Shakespeare's Henry VI plays and precedes his Richard II, its date can with some certainty be set at c. 1591-95.[4] There is very little evidence at all to indicate ownership, but scholars have associated the play with either the Chamberlain's or Pembroke's men because of its resemblances to their other holdings.[5] No doubt the most inscrutable problem posed

by the text is that the last leaf is missing, so that at least the details of the play's conclusion must remain unknown.

The play portrays the downfall of Thomas of Woodstock, uncle and protector to Richard II. In his efforts to counsel Richard and correct his misguided rule Woodstock is obliged to compete with the king's wanton friends, who flatter Richard and encourage him to support their extravagance at the expense of the English commons and landowners. Beguiled by these favorites, Richard indulges in garish costumes and improvident feasting, allows the commons to be harshly and surreptitiously taxed, and even farms out his kingdom for a yearly pittance; by contrast, Woodstock is plain, humble, benevolent and patriotic. Throughout the play the state is constantly on the verge of rebellion, but Woodstock is intensely committed to the ideals of divine rule and determined to prevent violence. His efforts to reform Richard by wise counsel, however, are fruitless, and Richard contrives to have him dismissed from the court, arrested, and, finally, murdered. After Woodstock's death his brothers lead the commons in a successful rebellion against the king.

Those critics who have dealt with Woodstock in this century have discussed various matters, including its literary relations to such other early history plays as Marlowe's Edward II and Shakespeare's 2 Henry VI and Richard II.[6] These discussions furnish insight into the skill and methods of these two greatest of Elizabethan dramatists. Other critics, however, have remarked on Woodstock's intrinsic merits. As early as 1911 Tucker Brooke praised the author of Woodstock for his skill in the use of humor and in character portrayal and went so far as to claim that Woodstock is "in the convincingness and comprehensiveness of his character a more

promising tragic figure than either Marlowe's Edward II or Shakespeare's Richard II."[7] In the preface to his edition of the play, A. P. Rossiter discusses the comedy also and is particularly enthusiastic about the author's ability to create a sense of the grotesque in his humorous episodes (pp. 32-37). Wolfgang Clemen shows that the language of this play is fresher and more forceful than other plays of the period,[8] and Michael Manheim notes the author's skillful dramatization of fear through structure and tone.[9]

Related to these estimations of Woodstock's technical qualities are other discussions which focus on Woodstock's place in the development of English historical drama as a genre. Woodstock falls easily into that classification since it deals with English history and relates it to contemporary political issues. In his well-known work on the genre, Irving Ribner discusses two other characteristics not uncommon in history plays of this period which are especially noticeable in Woodstock.[10] One is the author's intentional alteration of source material to suit his own technical and thematic purposes. The author of Woodstock is quite conspicuous in this respect when, for example, he makes Thomas of Woodstock a figure of inestimable moral worth, for in the chronicles Woodstock is depicted as a malicious schemer.[11] Then, as do many other history plays, Woodstock shows a close resemblance to the morality play. In structure Woodstock resembles such plays by presenting a virtue and vice contrast from which a plot develops consisting of a struggle between these two forces for control of a central figure, in Woodstock not an Everyman but the king, with the welfare of England at stake. It further resembles the moralities in its abundant use of humorous episodes which are always made thematically significant.

Woodstock has also attracted attention because of the specific way in which it does not typify English historical drama: its treatment of certain political themes is unique among the history plays. Rossiter is the first to discuss this matter at length.[12] He shows that while in its moral and metaphysical outlook Woodstock conforms to the attitudes of its age, it is remarkably unorthodox in its attitude toward appeasement and non-resistance, a Tudor political doctrine fervently espoused by the Elizabethans in general. Although that doctrine is expressed in the play, it is not affirmed and seems in fact to be contradicted when in the final act the admirable forces are shown engaged in an armed rebellion against the king. The author of Woodstock apparently accepts the Elizabethan predilection for order in all phases of the cosmic system except with regard to rebellion in the state, which most Elizabethan dramatists consider to be as unnatural as any other disruption of the system.

Thus, although the body of criticism on Woodstock is not large, it has focused on significant issues and has increased both our aesthetic and historical appreciation of the work. One subject that critics have neglected, however, is Woodstock's considerable and effective use of deception, which heightens its artistic success and reinforces its political and moral themes. Any reader of the play must be struck at once by the abundance of tricks, knavish plots, and general rascally behavior. The lords, and especially Woodstock, constantly meet with such foul play. The favorites poison the lords' wine, Richard uses a deceitful story to maneuver Woodstock out of his protectorship, Tresilian devises a masque to capture Woodstock, and Woodstock's murderers strike him from behind. Richard, too, is deceived by the men around him, and the commons receive

similar treatment from Tresilian and his henchmen as they squeeze out unjust taxes.

Deception, of course, is a common phenomenon in Elizabethan drama. In his full length study of the subject, John V. Curry tells us that "if there was anything the Elizabethans loved to see on the stage, it was a play which gave them plenty of tricks, devices and mad hieroglyphics."[13] Curry is speaking in particular of Elizabethan comedy, where deception thrives, but it is often employed with equal success in weightier drama. In most of Shakespeare's tragedies there is at least an element of deception, and Othello hinges on a duper/duped relationship. Deception appears frequently in history plays, too, where politics is usually associated with the art of dissembling. It is not surprising, therefore, to find Woodstock, a serious history play, employing this frequently comic device and giving it a grim gravity that adds to the complexity and appeal of the play as a whole.

In this paper I intend to show that deception is important to Woodstock's artistic achievement, especially affecting characterization, structure, and tone. It increases the complexity of our response to both Woodstock and Richard by making them appear at times unwitting dupes. It contributes to the structure by recurring in such a way as to establish a pattern and connect scenes and events; and, by creating situations in which characters' expectations are repeatedly denied, it produces a consistent and effective ironic tone.

Two things are important to consider at the outset about the means by which the deceptions are produced and the nature of the victims. The tricks are composed of a variety of devices, including disguise and eavesdropping. But more than anything else the deceptions are achieved by abusing

language in such a way that the truth is constantly distorted, hidden, or repressed. According to Curry, this deceptive use of language is also "the most obvious means by which characters in comedy are misled. . . . The victims may be deceived by lies or by ambiguities or by flattery or by being fed with false hopes" (pp. 119-20). All of these varieties of linguistic treachery are apparent in Woodstock, and they combine to create a situation in which it is impossible for men to communicate meaningfully, or, for that matter, to communicate at all. Moreover, both Richard and Woodstock, because of faults in their characters, are particularly vulnerable to deception. Richard, because of his vanity and his youthful, headstrong termperament, is both easily conquered by flattery and far too willing to give credence to untruths about his uncles. He is blinded by what Rossiter calls a perversity of will, perhaps even an inferiority complex (p. 43), and his willfulness often causes him to be self-deceived. Woodstock's weaknesses, on the other hand, are part and parcel of his virtues. His honesty and plainness make him so trusting a character that he is pathetically, tragically prone to deception.

Woodstock's weaknesses are apparent from I.i when his brothers narrowly escape poisoning at the hands of the king's favorites. This scene goes far to establish an atmosphere of alarm and uncertainty in which deception may thrive and in which Woodstock's competence as lord protector is immediately put to the test. Alarm is aroused at once when the lords enter "hastily at several doors" (I.i.s.d.), some still holding their dinner knives, and others with cloaks and rapiers. The excitement is sustained at a high pitch for several lines, mainly through Lancaster's agitation and the difficulty with which the others calm him. A broader

sense of uncertainty also prevails in this scene. The scene is set at night, and thus the first words in the play are a cry for lights and torches. York and Lancaster reveal their ignorance of the plot's details when they call for the house to be searched and for an antidote to the poison, unaware that neither is necessary. "The night is made a veil to shadow mischief," says Woodstock when he enters, and "we know not who are friends/Our foes are grown so mighty . . ." (11.119,122-23).

Woodstock's words indicate the extent to which he is himself hampered by the prevailing uncertainty, and indeed his inability to distinguish between friend and foe will contribute significantly to his downfall. "Afore my God/I know not which way to bestow myself," he confesses (11.126-27). His inclination, as Cheney says just before his entrance, is to "admit distrust to none" (1.109), and we observe that lack of caution here in his defense of Richard. Although Woodstock's claim that Richard is innocent of the attempted poisoning is reasonable, he surely goes too far when he asserts that "King Richard loves you all" (1.134). Woodstock is also trusting of the possibility that Richard can be relieved of the harmful flatterers:

> King Richard's wounded with a wanton humour,
> Lulled and secured by flattering sycophants;
> But tis not deadly yet, it may be cured:
> Some vein let blood--where the corruption lies
> And all shall heal again. (11.144-48)

We do not at this point necessarily have reason to doubt Woodstock, but, considering the extremity of the situation, there is a suggestion of over-confidence here. Repeatedly in this play Woodstock will assert this same confidence, and just as often he will be denied. His brothers castigate

him directly for this weakness, and Lancaster's words, in particular, intimate that things have already been "topsey-turvey turned" (II.ii.142) and lay the blame for this explicitly on Woodstock's plainness:

> They guide the nonage king; 'tis they protect him.
> You wear the title of protectorship
> But like an under-officer, as though
> Yours were derived from theirs; 'faith, you're too plain.
> (I.i.152-55)

Woodstock's response to his brothers' urging that he take immediate action, however, is uncharacteristic, for he advises against the blunt approach that is more typical of him:

> Soft, soft!
> Fruit that grows high is not securely plucked,
> We must use ladders and by steps ascend
> Till by degrees we reach the altitude.
> You conceit me too? . . . (11.172-76)

Woodstock is motivated, of course, by his loyalty to the "tender prince" (I.iii.251) and by his desire not to mar the day of the king's marriage to Anne, which he hopes will have a favorable influence on Richard. But the methods he urges are distinctly Machiavellian: "Pray be smooth awhile . . . Discountenance not the day with the least frown,/Be ignorant of what ye know" (11.174,182-83)--in other words, dissemble. And Woodstock's reluctant consent at the end of the scene to doff his usual plain clothes for finer dress also amounts to a veiling of his thoughts and feelings.

This scene goes far to introduce deception as an important element in the play. It creates an initial atmosphere of alarm and uncertainty, it sets forth Woodstock's simple, trusting nature, and it concludes with the lords devising a plan to hide their real emotions and adopt an appearance

of conviviality. This is the only time in the play when the right-minded group conspires to practice deception, and it must be observed that their plan is conceived for a worthy end, that it is born less of guile than of Woodstock's desire to reform Richard. Moreover, as we shall see, the scheme does not work, and for the very reason that Woodstock is unable to maintain false appearances.

There is thus something like deception on both sides when the opposing forces meet for the first time in Act I, scene iii. This masterfully constructed scene serves as a suitable introduction to all future confrontations between Richard and Woodstock. At the beginning of the scene every character is dissembling except the innocent Anne, and it is she who is chiefly led into error by the facade. The decision "not to frown" is apparent on both sides, and there is a forced politeness, a superficial "sweet accord," as York terms it (1.52), which is in direct contradiction to the realities below the surface.[14] Even Woodstock is masking reality by his brave clothes and his attempt, at first, to be congenial. But though he contributes to the false show, he is himself taken in by it, and in the long run he is self-deceived by his fond belief that there can be harmony in his relationship with Richard and by his hope that the wedding will favorably influence the young king.

The note of superficiality is struck at once by Lancaster's eloquent speech of welcome to the queen. His speech (11.7-13) consists of a lengthy sentence, formal in construction, tone and diction. The inversion of noun and modifier ("her welcomes many"), the exaggerated modesty regarding his own eloquence, as well as the hyperbolical "thousand infinites" all contribute to the lofty formality of this speech. In direct contrast is

Woodstock's speech (11.14-32), which begins with a teasing comment on Lancaster's circumlocution and is characterized by its homely diction, its many mild imprecations, its familiar tone, and its several short, broken phrases.[15] He comes more directly to the point than Lancaster and says exactly what he means: "welcome to England." But he is not as direct in chastising Richard as he is in welcoming the queen, in spite of his assertion that he "will speak the truth." In his mild condemnation of the king the full force of Woodstock's bluntness, as well as what he truly feels, does not come out. He selects slight, unforceful epithets for Richard ("wild-head," "harebrain," "wag"), and he balances his criticism with equally mild praise, so that the sum of his speech is, as Richard puts it, "double praise" (1.33).

Woodstock's compliments may seem innocent enough since this day of the king's marriage is meant, after all, to be a ceremonious and festive occasion. But there is surely a contradiction suggested by Lancaster's and Woodstock's mild-mannered behavior in the presence of the very men who the day before had so unsettled their lives. Indeed, since these men are standing in "high places" (1.2) on either side of the king and queen, we cannot help but sense the inappropriateness of Woodstock's light-hearted joking when more serious matters directly confront him. His comment (1.65) about needing spectacles is thus pertinent, for he is indeed blinded by the air of conviviality which he has himself helped to create.

It is, however, the innocent Queen Anne who is really taken in by all this togetherness. Partly because of her femininity, partly because she is the only one who has nothing to hide, but mostly because of her newness to the country, she is distinct from the others in this scene and seems

especially vulnerable. It is no accident that her response (11.36-50) to her welcomers is one of the finest passages of verse in the play, for the beauty of the poetry is at the furthest remove--beyond Lancaster's eloquence and Woodstock's cheer--from the ugly reality that underlies the situation. The rhythm (regular but by no means mechanical), the ornamental and metaphorical language, and the three concluding couplets all contribute to the impression of a "magical restraint" which she claims has tied her senses and "charmed" her from what she was. As she describes the sort of rebirth which she feels has taken place in her since her arrival in England, having forgotten her former country like a "tale told in my infancy," she appears the epitome of innocence and naiveté. Her mistaken impression of England as a "fair Elysium" is produced by the superficial sweet accord that momentarily prevails.

Dissension seems to rise almost naturally out of this semblance of affinity. It begins when the king engages Woodstock in what he intends to be light-hearted criticism of his dress, and swells to a brief but tumultuous session of name-calling (11.155-60) when Richard announces that Arundel's prizes have been awarded to the favorites: the shouting and the expletives superbly contrast to Lancaster's previous eloquence and the queen's charming poetry. It is typical of the relations between this king and his counselor that once appearances are dropped Woodstock's honest speech and blunt criticism are incapable of communicating wisdom. Here they have the opposite effect of inducing Richard to meet defiance with defiance by adding to the already growing number of his follies. Anne's tears and the news of war and civil dissension, which close the scene, indicate just how far this kingdom is from the Elysium it earlier seemed

to be to Anne. The element of deception in this first confrontation between Richard and Woodstock and the futility of Woodstock's plainness and sincerity set a trend for future confrontations between the two.

The same elements of character and situation are evident when Woodstock intends to give Richard petitions against the flatterers from the *commons* and have them resolved in parliament (II.ii), and here Woodstock's simple, trusting nature makes him an easy victim of the deception that is practiced on him. We are aware from Richard's closing lines in the preceding scene that he has a trick in mind (II.i.160-62), and we are thus in a position to appreciate the impending doom in II.ii even more than in I.iii. Reassuring Queen Anne while they wait for Richard to appear, York and Woodstock, as Bagot implies (1.30), are indeed like unsuspecting birds about to be trapped in the net that has been set for them. "This happy parliament shall make all even/And plant sure peace betwixt the king and realm" (11.20-21), Woodstock declares, expressing the same ingenuous optimism that he felt for the outcome of the king's wedding. As in I.iii, a superficial affinity is set up when the king enters. Bagot advises him to "give them fair words and smooth awhile" (1.29), and accordingly Richard adopts a jovial manner, joking about Woodstock's clothes and urging him not to be angry. Woodstock, though he may be deceived by Richard's good humor, is adopting no appearances this time and frankly announces that "I'm now myself, Plain Thomas" (1.34).

Upon such plainness Richard's trick is easily practiced. The trick is anyway a masterpiece of subtlety and shows the abuses to which language may be put, for it is filled with equivocation. The king neatly turns the whole situation around: instead of Woodstock presenting Richard with his

petitions from the commons, Richard, in effect, presents a petition of his own to Woodstock. He cleverly disguises his intentions to dismiss Woodstock in terms of a common man's honest complaint, so that Woodstock does not hesitate to side with the "poor man's son" (1.66). Richard also feeds his uncle with false hopes by making it appear he is for once engaged in a right action, and both York and Woodstock, the latter as usual admitting distrust to none, are duped into praising the subtle king. Richard has them trapped here, and once he reveals that the poor man's cause is in fact his own, Woodstock is hardly in a position to quarrel with him.

That he does not even attempt to refute Richard's claim to be of age testifies to Woodstock's own passion for honesty and candor in political dealings. Woodstock is far less appalled at the prospect of losing his protectorship than he is at Richard's having tricked him. "You need not thus have doubled with your friends," he cries (1.94), and as though to prove this and to set an example for Richard he willingly gives up his mace and agrees "With all our hearts" (1.115) to re-crown the now all-powerful king. On one level Woodstock's openness and plain dealing are admirable as a contrast to Richard's guile, but he is so concerned to establish an above-the-board relationship with his nephew that he fails to consider the possible political consequences of his so easily yielding his mace. We are forced to consider them, however, as Richard immediately exercises his new power by expelling his uncles from the court, his reason being that their "age is such/As pity twere ye should be further pressed/With weighty business of the common weal" (11.124-25). Such double-talk indicates that Woodstock's example of openness has had no effect on the young king. Moreover, Woodstock's blunt attempt to convince the king

that his action is wrong also fails. As Woodstock's eyes are opened to a world "topsey-turvey turned" and "subject now to rash unskillful boys" (ll.142,148), he penetrates shrewdly to the truth of the matter and prophesies the ruin of the realm. But these important words obviously fall on deaf ears, for Richard twice interrupts with "I'll not hear ye" and "We'll hear no more" (ll.144,153).

Woodstock entered in this scene encumbered with three significant hand props--his mace, his staff, and the petitions from the commons which he had intended to deliver to the king. He expected, of course, to keep his mace and staff, but he leaves without either, and with the forlorn petitions. The effect is to point out again the pitiful state to which communications are falling in this realm. While the king uses deceitful language to deprive Woodstock of his official power, honest and deserving speech goes ignored, whether it be Woodstock's verbal advice or the written complaints from the commons.

The most elaborate deception in the play takes place when Woodstock is captured and arrested in IV.ii. Here, Woodstock's trusting nature and ingenuous optimism make him totally vulnerable to the false hopes that are fed to him. The scene is set at night amid an atmosphere of alarm and foreboding the significance of which Woodstock does not perceive. He fails to heed the warnings implicit in his wife's dream and in the "flakes of fire [that] run tilting through the sky/Like dim ostents to some great tragedy" (ll.67-68). He also exhibits again that fond hopefulness for the favorable outcome of events:

> . . . what think'st thou, Cheney:
> May not Plain Thomas live a time to see
> This state attain her former royalty?
> Fore God I doubt it not: my heart is merry,
> And I am suddenly inspired for mirth.
> Ha: What sport shall we have tonight, Cheney? (ll.74-79)

From this point on there is extremely effective irony created by the merry masque which follows and by Woodstock's lamentable conviction that it is the commons who come to him thus "in love" (l.97). The deception produced by superficial sweet accord which we have seen in previous encounters attains its limits here. In Woodstock's own words, as he recalls the event in Act V, he is betrayed by a "show of friendship" (V.i.140). The show is splendidly created by poetry, music, dancing, and fanciful costumes, all of which combine to produce a pleasant, even dream-like atmosphere that is all too rudely contradicted by what we know is about to take place. The most pleasantly unpleasant incongruity of all lies in the discrepancy between Richard's subtle, malicious intentions and the "kind, simple intendiments" (V.i.141) which Woodstock feels for the supposed commoners. As a result, almost every line Woodstock speaks is charged with irony:

> A general welcome, courteous gentlemen.
> And when I see your faces, I'll give each man more particular.
> If your entertainment fail your merit,
> I must ask pardon: my lady is from home
> And most of my attendants waiting on her,
> But we'll do what we can to bid you welcome.
> Afore my God it joys my heart to see
> Amidst these days of woe and misery
> Ye find a time for harmless mirth and sport;
> But tis your loves, and we'll be thankful for't. (IV.ii.126-35)

The irony still increases when Woodstock, concerned for Richard's safety, utters the most extreme expression of loyalty a king could expect:

> But he's our king: and God's great deputy;
> And if ye hunt to have me second ye
> In any rash attempt against his state,
> Afore my God, I'll ne'er consent unto it.
> I ever yet was just and true to him,
> And so will still remain: what's now amiss
> Our sins have caused . . . and we must bide heaven's will.
> (11.144-50)

The author seems intent on getting as much out of the situation as he possibly can: even when Cheney suddenly informs his master that "The house is round beset with armèd soldiers" (1.158), Woodstock's first thought is for the welfare of the king.

When at last he is made aware of the masquers' identity and intentions Woodstock displays both strength and insight. He cannot be deceived as to Richard's presence, and, in clear contrast to all the whispering that is going on between Richard and his men, he speaks out courageously in his own defense and against Richard's crimes. But, as usual, honest speech is thwarted, for Richard commands his men to "drown all his words, with drums, confusedly" (1.170), and even clamps a vizard on his face to silence him. The false face also allows for the commission of one last deception in this scene, for it enables Richard to have Woodstock taken from the country without the commons' recognizing him.

The effect of these deceptions played on Woodstock is to enrich his character and increase the complexity of our response to him. Our admiration of Woodstock's plainness and simplicity is always tempered by our realization that these very attributes make him helpless to cope with the

world. Furthermore, by endowing Woodstock with some of the qualities of a stage dupe, the author is able to assert, in a rather subtle way, his own rejection of the popular doctrine of appeasement and non-resistance. It is mainly from Woodstock that we get the orthodox expressions of this doctrine, and clearly we are not being asked to give them simple approval considering Woodstock's shortsightedness as to his own political and personal welfare. We are surely meant to suspect Woodstock's judgment when, for example, he opposes rebellion on the grounds that "We may not so affright the tender prince" (I.iii.251), and when he makes his impassioned plea for non-resistance in front of the supposed commoners we can hardly accept it considering how far out of touch with reality he is at the time. Instead, Woodstock's misjudgment regarding this matter prepares us to accept fully the rebellion which eventually does take place after his death. Just as interesting as the author's unorthodox political position is his effective way of communicating this position through an intentionally unreliable mouthpiece.[16]

In a similar way, deception is used to enrich the character of Richard. We have considered Richard so far in the role of deceiver, but it should be evident that, in all his confrontations with Woodstock, Richard suffers from a degree of moral imperceptiveness equal to his uncle's political naivete and gullibility. Richard is unable to discern the true nobility beneath Woodstock's age, plain clothes, and simple behavior; instead he places his confidence in wild-headed youth, gaudy appearance, and extravagance--just the distortions of nobility. Moreover, his adolescent impatience to assert his independence causes him to misinterpret Woodstock's disinterested concern for him as a threat to his budding authority, and

he is unaware that his self-seeking friends pose a much more harmful threat to him and to the very foundations upon which his kingship rests. These favorites prey upon Richard's appetite for power in order to deceive him, and, just as Woodstock is fed with false hopes, Richard is fed with flattery and humored according to his disaffection for his uncles.

We see this in Act II, scene i, which begins by having Bagot, Greene, Bushy, and Scroope surround Richard and embrace him, a vivid externalization of the extent to which the king has willingly encumbered himself with a set of fawning counselors. They proceed to shower him with compliments composed of the standard symbols for royal might and majesty--the sun, the lion, and the oak--while at the same time they whet his hatred for his uncles. Bushy penetrates directly to Richard's adolescent misgivings when he says,

> Your uncles seek to overturn your state,
> To awe ye like a child--that they alone
> May at their pleasures thrust you from the throne. (ll.11-13)

Bushy's reading from the chronicles is likewise a deception, a clear distortion of the written word. Although, for the most part Bushy has his facts straight, their significance is twisted and made to support Richard's challenge to his uncles. Continuing his flattery, Bushy reads those passages which he knows will appeal to Richard's hatred of his uncles and determination to be rid of them, thus leading him on and allowing him to stumble upon the misinterpretations for himself.

Bushy's first selection from the chronicles has to do with Edward the Third's protector, Mortimer, whom the youthful Edward had executed for treason. As Bushy no doubt expected, Richard relates this to his present

situation and concludes:

> Why should our proud protector then presume
> And we not punish him, whose treason's viler far
> Than ever was rebellious Mortimer? (11.66-68)

The truth, of course, is just the other way around: the former protector was far viler than the present one and was justly put to death. Adding to the irony of Richard's misinterpretation here, as Tillyard points out (p.124), is the fact that the chronicles from which Bushy is reading relate to the reign of Edward II, another king ruined by flattery and deception.

Bushy next fills the young king with a false conception of his own worth by reading the account of the Black Prince's noble exploits in France at the battle of Poitiers. The underlying argument here is one of vindication by association, but throughout the play we are constantly reminded that Richard is very unlike his father,[17] and we are conscious of this disparity in Richard's response to the reading of his father's deeds:

> O princely Edward, had thy son such hap,
> Such fortune and success to follow him,
> His daring uncles and rebellious peers
> Durst not control and govern as they do.
> But these bright shining trophies shall awake me,
> And as we are his body's counterfeit,
> So will we be the image of his mind,
> And die but we'll attain his virtuous deeds. (11.88-95)

Whereas the Black Prince won honor and renown fighting for a worthy cause against a foreign enemy, Richard intends to engage himself in the inglorious action of opposing not only his own country but his own family as well. However sincere his wish to emulate his father may be, Richard is sadly confused as to what constitutes a virtuous deed.

Finally, Bushy misreads the date of Richard's birth. We need not know that Richard was actually born in 1367, and not 1365 as Bushy claims, in order to infer that he is as deceived on this matter as he was on the other two. This is the very policy they have been fishing for, the treacherous piece of twisted legality by which Richard, bolstered with illusions regarding his similitude to his father and his right to absolute rule, will tragically deny Woodstock his protectorship.

Richard is again deceived by the men around him in IV.i, and with consequences that are potentially even more tragic, for they involve the ruin of the whole kingdom. This act begins with Tresilian's announcing in a soliloquy that, of the seven thousand pounds so far taken from the commons by the deceptive blank charters, he intends to keep four thousand for himself and leave only three thousand for the king. This relatively minor embezzlement serves as a fitting prelude to the larger theft of the realm itself.

It would not be accurate to say that Richard is entirely deceived by the favorites' plan to have him farm out the realm. He does express an awareness of the adverse consequences such an act would have for his reputation as well as of the discrepancy it would imply between himself and his royal father (ll.138-49). But there can be no question that the farming out of the kingdom is to be thought of as a "trick afoot" (l.39), as Tresilian calls it, and it is obvious that throughout this scene Richard is wholly in the sway of his false friends and helplessly maneuvered by them into signing the document. They dominate him, as Nimble does the commons in the preceding scene, "like so many St. Georges over the poor dragons" (III.i.169). Nor do they have any more respect for him than

Nimble does for the commons, as their repulsive behavior before Richard enters reveals. They can in practically the same breath criticize the landowners for not giving the king what they think is rightfully his, and then gloat over the prospect of taking from the king themselves those very lands and livings (IV.i.35-49). Nowhere else are they so perfectly frank about their intentions with regard to Richard: they will flatter and use their "soothest faces" and "humor him finely" (11.62-63).

A close examination of the fraud reveals that it is successful mainly because of the favorites' ability to humor Richard's disposition toward his uncle. Ironically, it is only Richard's preoccupation with apprehending Woodstock which has so far secured him from the flatterers' machinations and restrained him from submitting to their demands. So necessary is it for the success of their plot that Richard's mind be soothed with regard to Woodstock, that Greene tells Tresilian, "thy wit must help or all's dashed else" (11.86-87). Tresilian's plan to surprise Woodstock in the masque thus serves a dual purpose for the favorites and is doubly deplorable. Elated by the idea of the masque, Richard is unaware that while he is thus so happily scheming against his uncle the men around him are at that moment preoccupied with a plot against himself. Even when Richard experiences a moment of insight and hesitates to comply with them, it is Greene's cunning remark about deserting him and joining the uncles that gets him back.

The fraudulence of the transaction Richard enters into here is made conspicuous when Tresilian, in response to Richard's question "Is't just" (1.179), reads a lengthy itemization of all that the king is giving up

for seven thousand pounds a month (11.180-93): we cannot help but be astonished by the incredible lack of justness and dismayed by Richard's gullible "Tis very good" (1.198).

In both these scenes Richard is made to appear foolish and easily duped, but not, like the men around him, innately base. He is an insecure and balky juvenile whose moral intelligence is affected by adolescent flaws which are understandable if not excusable. Sometimes the author uses special devices to heighten our appreciation of Richard's imperceptiveness. In III.i, for example, Richard is made to appear especially unwitting when he boasts to Anne about his alterations of the kingdom, for in his lines are equivocal elements of which Richard is unaware. Thus when he sums up a defense of his favorites and their new fashions by confidently declaring, "I tell thee, Nan, the state of Christendom/Shall wonder at our English royalty" (11.50-51), he does not recognize the self-incrimination implicit in the ambiguous "wonder." He makes an even more telling remark in the same scene when, after describing the daily feasts at Westminster hall, he expostulates on his place in history:

> Not all our chronicles shall point a king
> To match our bounty, state, and royalty.
> Or let all our successors yet to come
> Strive to exceed me . . . and if they forbid it,
> Let records say, Only King Richard did it. (11.89-93)

Richard is totally unaware of all the implications of what the playwright has made him say, but an Elizabethan audience familiar with Richard's reputation in the chronicles would understand at once. "Point" implies "accusation," and "exceed" is suggestive of Richard's wastefulness. The

last five words are, of course, the clincher, and are to be taken in the same spirit as the schoolmaster's memorable "God bless my lord Tresilian" (III.iii.179).

It is true that at times, according to the wildness and unpredictability of his youth, Richard shows an awareness of the immorality of his actions, but he is always so completely controlled by his flattering companions that he cannot make a right action even when it occurs to him. We see this not only in IV.i just before he signs away his realm but also in IV.iii when the death of Queen Anne moves him to lament his wrongs against Woodstock. There, his flatterers carry him "by violence" (1.27) away from the Duchess of Gloucester as he is about to inform her of the plot against her husband, and then they contrive to send her away from the court altogether. Even Richard's command that word be sent to reprieve Woodstock is conspicuously ignored, for there is no indication that anyone on stage makes the slightest effort to carry it out. In his final appearance Richard again expresses some insight (V.iv.47-54), but we last see him fastened to his false flatterers and helplessly in their control.

The deceptions in this play thus go far to enrich the characterizations of both Woodstock and Richard, the one suffering from political, the other from moral imperceptiveness. In addition to this function, deception also figures prominently in the play's structure. I have discussed the repeated use of deceit in the confrontations between Woodstock and Richard; there is also a pattern of increasing severity in the nature and execution of those deceptions. The rather harmless attempt by both parties to be congenial with each other in I.iii gives way in II.i to Richard's deliberate, treacherous plotting, and finally, in IV.ii, to Tresilian's elaborate

and ingenious masque. Similarly, the consequences of the deceptions increase in severity for Woodstock: they lead from his political demise to his arrest and eventually to his death.

In other ways, too, deception works to unify the play. Several minor characters and seemingly tangential events are related to the play as a whole by the way in which they resemble the deception that is going on among the major characters. Such is the case in III.ii when the fantastically attired courtier mistakes Woodstock for a common groom and offers him a tester to keep his horse. This scene is often noted for its comedy as well as for the extraordinary bringing of a horse on stage, the only known instance of this in the Elizabethan theater.[18] But beyond the humor and the sensationalism, the scene functions to provide a significant comment on the major characters and to affect our judgment of them, for in it both Richard and Woodstock are subjected to parody. The courtier, like Richard, is blinded to the true nobility that is inherent in Woodstock's plainness. We are to understand that Richard is no less fatuous than his messenger, and in the latter's lines the author carefully establishes a connection between this fool and the king, as the man compares his own ridiculous garb to his master's: "The king himself doth wear it . . . the king doth likewise wear" (ll.206,209). The horse, a "very indifferent beast" that will "follow any man that will lead" it (ll.162-63), is a symbol for the commons, and Woodstock's brief encounter with the animal enhances our impression of his political ineffectiveness. Though Woodstock sympathizes with the horse and cares for it well while it is in his keeping, his love is in the long run insufficient to provide for it or to prevent its abuse:

> Now truly sir, you look but e'en leanly on't: you feed not in Westminster Hall adays, where so many sheep and oxen are devoured. I'm afraid they'll eat you shortly, if you tarry amongst them. . . . Faith, say a man should steal ye--and feed ye fatter, could ye run away with him lustily? Ah, your silence argues a consent, I see . . . By th'Mass, here comes company: we had both been taken if we had, I see. (11.163-66,170-73)

As always, Woodstock's moral qualities are unimpeachable, but as a political agent he is deficient. As he walks the horse around the stage and speaks to it as though it were a rational being, he must appear a little pathetic and a little ridiculous, and we are reminded of his futile attempts to communicate with Richard. This diminution of the play's hero throughout this scene is extremely important for the author's purposes, for it helps to establish the unreliability of Woodstock's political precepts regarding non-resistance, and it also helps to justify the rebellion which occurs at the end of the play.

In addition to this scene there are several others involving Nimble, Tresilian's comic servant, which reinforce the deception motif as it pertains to the greater figures in the realm. We first see Nimble in I.ii just after Tresilian, having learned that he is to be made lord chief justice, assures the king's favorites that he will "screw and wind the subtle law/To any fashion that shall like you best" (11.47-48). It is, of course, Tresilian who is the chief mastermind behind most of the major deceptions in the play: he devises the blank charters, arranges the farming out of the realm, and concocts the masque as a means of capturing Woodstock; his ingenuity and lawyer's skill in manipulating language make him dreadfully capable. This idea that language can be used for deceptive purposes is developed in the comic exchange between Nimble and Tresilian, but

developed in such a way as to cast upon Tresilian the discredit which he so deserves. Here, it is the lesser man whose wit enables him to trap and make a fool of his superior. Puffed up with a sense of his own importance and anxious for recognition, Tresilian asks Nimble to find "some better phrase" than "sir" to salute him with, but the adroit servant turns the table on his master when he "frenchifies" him with foreign titles and subtly points out that even "sir" is but an amelioration for the less dignified "sirrah" with which Tresilian used to be addressed (ll.72-83). In the following lines there is much good fun and humor, but there is also a serious suggestion of the linguistic treachery which plays such a vital role in the abuse of Woodstock and the realm:

> TRES. Thou gross uncaput, no, thou speak'st not yet.
> NIMB. My mouth was open, I'm sure. . . . If your honour would please to hear me . . .
> TRES. Ha, honour sayst thou? Ay, now thou hitt'st it, Nimble.
> NIMB. I knew I should wind about ye till I had your honour. (ll.85-90)

This brief and rather simple dialogue contains overtones of what, as we have seen, will become a matter of practice for Tresilian, the favorites, and especially for Richard, who in all his confrontations with Woodstock ignores speech when it is not to his advantage to hear it and uses language as a means of tricking and capturing his opponent.

Nimble's most notable appearance is in III.iii when he joins with Bailey Ignorance and other of his scurrilous friends to afflict the commons with blank charters, Tresilian's ingenious device for obtaining the funds necessary to support the favorites' extravagances. This scene is the longest in the play, and certainly it concerns a crucial event. But it is especially important because it shows the lesser figures of the realm

mimicking the deceptive behavior of their superiors and thus commenting on those superiors with specific effect. The scene is worthy of careful examination.

The abuse of language which we have seen Richard wield against Woodstock and the favorites against Richard is in this scene executed to the hilt by Nimble and his henchmen against the commons. The idea of the blank charters contains that same spirit of paradoxical jest as so many other tricks in the play, and the author gets a great deal of humor out of it while at the same time demonstrating the serious consequences of the deception. The basic irony, of course, is that what appears to be nothing can yet entail such extreme consequences, whether they be hoards of money for the king or a surplus of misery for the commons. The author is often quite playful with the idea. When Tresilian first explains the charters to the king in III.i there is this delightful exchange in which Tresilian is for once charmingly frank about his duplicity:

> TRES. See here, my lord: only with parchment: innocent sheepskins. Ye see here's no fraud: no clause, no deceit in the writing.
> ALL. Why, there's nothing writ!
> TRES. There's the trick on't! (11.11-15)

A little later in the same scene Tresilian and Nimble engage in a similar exchange (11.139-43). But the joke is used with more seriousness in III.iii when the butcher, grazier, and farmer, about to sign the charters, observe that they are "somewhat darkly written" and "done i' the night, sure" (11.112,113). Obviously, these men are not entirely deceived by the blank charters. They are aware that, in spite of the harmless appearance of the sheepskin, they are risking their doom by signing, and they submit only because "there's no remedy" (1.122). What began as clever political

deception has developed here into absolute tyranny--it is no longer necessary for the deception to be successful as a means to an end, for the ends may be extorted by brute, witless force, by Bailey Ignorances. This is a difference from the deception practiced against Woodstock, but it is the logical extension of the same treacherous activity.

Similarly, Richard's determination not to listen when the truth is spoken to him evolves in this scene into a total repression of free speech, which is even more appalling than the clamping of the vizard over Woodstock's mouth when he is arrested. Nimble has been ordered by Tresilian not only to secure the signing of the blank charters, but also to "attach for privy whisperers" any persons who speak against the charters, the king, or the king's favorites (III.i.130-33). The result is to create a situation filled with fear, rumor, and treachery in which men must speak clandestinely if they are to speak at all. This is apparent at once when the butcher and his friends enter in great alarm and attempt to repeat to each other in secret rumored information. Nimble's eavesdropping and the subsequent arrest of the three men for treason indicate the deplorable state to which the freedom to speak truth has fallen in the realm.

Things have, in fact, got so bad that honest men (and scholars at that) must resort to the methods of the adversary in order to express the truth. The schoolmaster, aware that someone may be eavesdropping, attempts to disguise his criticism of the charters and the favorites in a delightfully vague little song:

> A poison may be green,
> But bushy can be no faggot:
> God mend the king and bless the queen,
> And tis no matter for Bagot.

For Scroope he does no good;
But if you'll know the villain,
His name is now to be understood:
God bless my lord Tresilian. (11.188-95)

The last line he modestly calls "a kind of equivocation" (1.184) which he expects will absolve him from guilt. It does not do that, but it does succeed in paying Tresilian back in kind, if not degree, for his treachery and in bringing us full circle to the truth again, for Bailey Ignorance is duped into avowing that to say "God bless my lord Tresilian" is to utter "most shameful treason" (1.206). The comedy in this scene does not blind us to the realization that the schoolmaster is worthy of much respect for his bold and spirited attempt to speak the truth in spite of complications, and his companion the serving man is equally admirable for the stance he takes in favor of free speech as they are being led away: "We'll speak more ere we be hanged, in spite of you" (11.212-13).

But tyranny, it seems, has no bounds, and the situation becomes absurd when the next man is arrested for "whistling" treason. It is all ludicrous and incredible as Nimble constructs a confused syllogism in order to prove that the man spoke treason because "he that can whistle can speak" (1.123), and Bailey Ignorance sets about cross-examining the man to find out who put him up to whistling. But there is terror as well as absurdity here, especially in the whistler's "Good Mr. Bailey, be pitiful" (1.258); and Fleming's announcement that thirteen hundred charters have been signed and seven hundred men arrested for treason reminds us that the situation is quite serious. The Bailey's repeated "pestiferous" is an apt comment on the sum of events in this scene.

Structurally, this scene is especially effective in guiding our

judgment of Tresilian's and the favorites' actions toward Richard. The scene is significantly juxtaposed with Act IV, scene i, where Richard is tricked by the favorites into signing away his realm. Thus we see consecutively the swindles of the English people and their king. In both cases the trick is consummated by a treacherous legal document, and the significance of each event is heightened by having the documents signed, sealed and delivered in intricate detail on stage. This parallel stage action connects the two events and makes it obvious that the king, no less than the commons, is tricked into signing away his possessions. In other ways, too, the juxtaposition of the two scenes increases the effect of the latter. In III.iii the commons are subjected to mistreatment by the lesser evils of the realm, whose behavior is ridiculous in the extreme yet even more loathesome than ludicrous; consequently, when we next see the superior forces operating on the king we are aware that it is merely a reproduction of the same abject treachery only on a higher level. Together, the two scenes clearly point out the extent to which intrigue now grips the kingdom.

It is apparent by now that in addition to its usefulness in depicting character and contributing to structure, deception also helps to create an effective and consistent ironic tone: in this play, what one expects is exactly the opposite of what one gets. The tone is set forth at the very beginning with the plot to poison the lords, who were to have gone to their deaths (as Woodstock eventually does) while toasting the health and wishing good for the man who is in some sense responsible for their murder. A similar irony is inherent in the paradoxical jests and equivocal utterances that appear throughout the play. We are aware of this

as early as I.ii when Tresilian, anticipating his duties as lord chief justice, recites the phrase "Lord have mercy upon thee" (I.ii.33). The words are equivocal. Spoken by any other man they would bless, but spoken by the lord chief justice they are a death sentence, and coming from the merciless Tresilian they add spite to injury. Nimble specifically points out the irony a little later in the scene when he begs Tresilian not to "pray" for him (l.95). The idea of the blank charters, Richard's equivocal utterances to Anne in III.i, and especially the schoolmaster's oft repeated "God bless my lord Tresilian" all work to the same paradoxical effect.

But it is the series of deceptions played on Woodstock which more than anything else produces the dominant tone of the play. Here again, it is ambiguous or deceptive language, combined with Woodstock's gullible, unassuming nature, which work constantly to produce ironic situations. In I.iii Woodstock's hopes for a reconciliation with his nephew are rudely shattered by dissension, and in II.ii, not only are his expectations of redress for the commons denied, but he unexpectedly is deprived of the only official means by which he may represent the commons. I have noted, too, that the scene of Woodstock's arrest is fraught with irony produced by the discrepancy between what appears to be love and affection and what is actually malicious purpose. In these same scenes there is also an incongruity between Woodstock's good intentions and the effects they have on Richard. The wise counsel Woodstock gives Richard in I.iii is mocked outright by Richard's decision to bestow more favors on unworthy men. In II.ii Richard responds to Woodstock's example of honesty and openness by dismissing him from his court, and then he exploits Woodstock's

genuine love for the commons and extreme loyalty to himself in order to have him arrested and removed from the country altogether. The weighty and disturbing irony that thus develops suggests that without policy good is rewarded with evil and right intentions are likely to meet with the wrong results.

The several functions of deception focus in Act V, scene ii, the play's climactic event. Here, the pattern of severity in the series of deceptions against Woodstock reaches its peak and culminates in Woodstock's death, and here, too, the estrangement of the wise counselor from the king reaches its completion--the initial barrier of verbal seeming having been superseded first by disguise, then by physical separation, and now finally by death. There is irony in this scene produced by the discrepancy between Lapoole's false assurances and his actual intentions; furthermore, Woodstock is struck with what is perhaps the cruellest irony of all when he discovers himself a prisoner at Calais:

> This town of Calais where I spent my blood
> To make it captive to the English king,
> Before whose walls great Edward lay encamped
> With his seven sons almost for fourteen months;
> Where the Black Prince my brother, and myself
> The peers of England, and our royal father,
> Fearless of wounds, ne'er <u>left</u> till it was won--
> --And was't to make a prison for his son?
> O righteous heavens, why do you suffer it? (ll.158-166)

Here is the complete distortion of order and normalcy, and it conforms to the basic spirit of deception that governs the play, in which things are constantly turned topsy-turvy and what one expects is contradicted by what one gets.

The deception in this scene is especially effective in augmenting the complexity of our response to Woodstock's character, for nowhere else are his virtues and faults so apparent. Throughout the scene Woodstock behaves nobly and courageously, but our overall estimation of him is significantly lowered by our awareness of his incredulous, gull-like nature which contributes as much as anything else to his downfall. The result is to enhance our appreciation of his tragic end: we are grieved by the sight of a virtuous man mercilessly slaughtered, and we pity the human failings which make him so vulnerable. The result, further, is to establish finally the author's didactic purpose, for there can now be no question but that Woodstock's method of passive resistance in response to tyranny is wrong--this is poignantly shown to us when Woodstock is struck down while making a final futile effort to communicate with Richard, still foolishly hoping that "This counsel if he follow may in time/Pull down those mischiefs that so fast do climb" (11.191-92).

The success of the murder depends in part on the thwarting of honest language and the use of deceptive language, just as in Woodstock's previous experiences with Richard. In the planning of the deed the major consideration of the murderers is that Woodstock be prevented from speaking, for the strength of his character is such that "If thou lett'st him speak but a word, we shall not kill him" (11.216-17). Thus they plan to kill Woodstock while he sleeps, and, when that is prevented, they strike him down from behind. Their attack, however, is greatly facilitated by Lapoole's appearance of frank honesty toward Woodstock and his assurance that "there is no hurt intended" (1.168).

But though his opponents are extremely skillful, Woodstock's own trusting nature and lack of caution make him far too easy a victim. The ghosts of his father and brother warn him in dreams of his peril in such a way that they could hardly make themselves more clear. "Thou art beset with murder, rise and fly," cries the Black Prince (1.64), and Edward the Third reiterates:

> Thou sixth of Edward's sons, get up and fly:
> Haste thee to England, close and speedily!
> Thy brothers York and Gaunt are up in arms,
> The murderers are at hand: awake, my son! (11.98-102)

The initial effect of these warnings, Woodstock's awakening, is indeed to forestall the murder and prevent the assailants from making an attack. Woodstock is initially aroused to defend himself, and with uncommon insightfulness and eloquence he identifies Lapoole as an enemy and defies him. Moreover, it is true that Woodstock never really doubts he will die at Calais and that he is more interested in saving Richard from folly than he is in saving his own life. But what he fails to perceive is that the only way he can save Richard is to save himself, as the ghost of the Black Prince explicitly tells him:

> Thy blood upon my son will surely come:
> For which, dear brother Woodstock, haste and fly,
> Prevent his ruin and thy tragedy. (11.74-76)

Clearly, Woodstock's duty now is less to counsel Richard than to protect himself, to flee for safety and take armed action against the favorites.

Woodstock's trusting nature is never more evident than in his final moments when he makes his pitiable apology to Lapoole:

> Goodnight, Lapoole, and pardon me I prithee
> That my sad fear made question of thy faith.
> My state is fearful, and my mind was troubled
> Even at thy entrance, with most fearful visions;
> Which made my passions more extreme and hasty.
> Out of my better judgment I repent it,
> And will reward thy love. Once more, goodnight. (11.195-201)

But Woodstock's judgment is obviously impaired. He recognized his handicap early in the play--he cannot distinguish between friend and foe. Because of this lack of insight which has dogged him all through the play, it is fitting that at the moment of his death he should literally lose his vision as "A thick congealed mist o'erspreads the chamber" (1.223). He dies without having even glimpsed his murderers.

These various effects of deception on characterization, structure, and tone all work toward the play's conclusion in such a way as to make the rebellion seem both inevitable and justified. The insurrection strikes us as at last an adequate response to the series of deceptions which have ruined Woodstock and plagued the realm, for in the midst of the armed uprising neither Richard nor Tresilian is able to survive by their previous deceitful methods. Their attempt to beguile the commons into believing that York and Lancaster are traitors and that Woodstock died a natural death fails miserably. Richard's pretentions to honor and innocence are lucidly shattered by Lancaster:

> Hast thou, King Richard, made us infamous?
> By proclamations false and impudent
> Hast thou condemned us in our absense too
> As most notorious traitors to the crown?
> Betrayed our brother Woodstock's harmless life,
> And sought base means to put us all to death?
> And dost thou now plead doltish ignorance
> Why we are banded thus in our defense? (V.iii.64-71)

And Tresilian, desperate for a trick to save himself from apprehension, musters another disguise only to be undone by Nimble, who has learned from his master how "to save myself from hanging" (V.vi.24). The final irony is thus served upon the sly lord chief justice himself, who finds his nemesis in the same deceitful treachery that he has practiced throughout the play.

The author of Woodstock obviously was writing with serious purpose. He was deeply disturbed by political treachery and he had distinct ideas about its effect and about what must be done to oppose it. And the very method by which he conveyed his ideas was to employ deception itself as the key to his drama's structure, tone, and character development. He wove it into the body of his art to make a well-wrought play.

NOTES

1. The play was first printed by James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps in 1870 in a limited edition consisting of eleven copies. Wolfgang Keller edited it for the Shakespeare Jahrbuch in 1899 ("Richard II. Erster Teil," SJ, 35, 3-121), and there is a Malone Society reprint edited by Wilhelmina P. Frijlinck that appeared in 1929 as The First Part of the Reign of King Richard the Second or Thomas of Woodstock (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press). The standard edition, with the best notes and an excellent preface, is A. P. Rossiter, Woodstock: A Moral History (London: Chatto and Windus, 1946). The most recent printing of the play is in William A. Armstrong, ed., Elizabethan History Plays (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965). All references to the play in this paper are to Rossiter's edition.

2. See Frijlinck, pp. v-vi, for a description of the manuscript and a discussion of some of the problems it presents.

3. Rossiter, however, gives some tentative but interesting suggestions about what sort of man the author may have been, pp. 73-76.

4. So Rossiter dates it, pp. 71-72. Alfred Harbage accepts his argument in Annals of English Drama (London: Methuen, 1964), p. 56.

5. E. K. Chambers, in The Elizabethan Stage (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1923), IV, 42, assigns Woodstock to the Chamberlain's Men on the basis of its relationship to Richard II. Frijlinck, pp. xxiv-xxv, thinks it belongs to the Pembroke's Men because of its similarities to the earlier Edward II and 1 and 2 Henry VI. Harbage, p. 56, accepts Chamber's argument.

6. It was originally assumed by Keller that the author of Woodstock was influenced by Marlowe and that both were influenced by 2 Henry VI, but Rossiter has argued well that any similarity between Woodstock and Edward II is merely the result of their shared dependancy on 2 Henry VI. On the other hand, Rossiter shows solid evidence that Shakespeare knew Woodstock when he wrote Richard II. Rossiter's discussion, pp. 47-71, is also the best summary of the arguments surrounding the relations between these plays. John James Elson has a unique, if somewhat tenuous, argument about a relationship between Woodstock and another Shakespeare play in "The Non-Shakespearean Richard II and Shakespeare's 1 Henry IV," Studies in Philology, 32 (1935), 177-88.

7. The Tudor Drama (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), pp. 328-29.

8. English Tragedy Before Shakespeare: The Development of Dramatic Speech, trans. by T. S. Dorsch (London: Methuen, 1961), pp. 207-10.

9. "The Weak King History Play of the Early 1590's," Renaissance Drama, N. S., 2 (1969), 71-80.

10. The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1965), pp. 135-36.

11. Rossiter lists and summarizes numerous other examples of the author's departures from his source material, pp. 21-23.

12. See especially pp. 25-32. Also see Ribner, pp. 140-41, M. M. Reese, The Cease of Majesty (New York: St. Martin's, 1961), pp. 84-85, and David Bevington, Tudor Drama and Politics (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1968), pp. 250-53. E. M. W. Tillyard is unique among the critics for his opinion that the author's political attitudes are "scrupulously orthodox" (Shakespeare's History Plays, London: Chatto and Windus, 1944; rpt. Penguin Books, 1969, pp. 121-25).

13. Deception in Elizabethan Comedy (Chicago: Loyola Univ. Press, 1955), p. 1.

14. The scene is reminiscent of Richard III, II.i, with its show of affection between the queen's party and Richard's party with King Edward the main victim; there, the sweet accord is shattered by the news of Clarence's murder.

15. Clemen, p. 208, has a good discussion of the stylistic qualities in this speech, his purpose being to show the departure it represents from the conventional, formal styles of dramatists like Peele. Of course, as Lancaster's speech illustrates, the author of Woodstock is capable of using either style when it suits his purposes.

16. Tillyard, however, extracts all of Woodstock's speeches on non-resistance and uses them as evidence of the author's orthodoxy. As I have noted above, Tillyard is exceptional for this. Even the other critics, however, while noting the play's prevailing heterodoxy, seem to accept Woodstock's speeches as the author's acknowledgment of the Tudor position. If I am correct in my interpretation of Woodstock as a gull, it seems to me that the author is hardly acknowledging the Tudor position by having Woodstock cite it; rather, he is cleverly and effectively refuting it.

17. Lancaster very early in the play calls Richard "far degenerate from his noble father" and elaborates the differences (I.i.27-45). At one point, Richard himself expresses an uncommon awareness of the discrepancy (IV.i.138-49), and see also the speeches of the ghosts in V.i.

18. See, for example, Wilhelm Creizenach, The English Drama in the Age of Shakespeare (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1916), p. 388. Also see Keller, p. 35, Frijlinck, p. 29, and Rossiter, pp. 36-37.

A List of Works Containing Substantial Discussion of Woodstock

Armstrong, William A., ed. Elizabethan History Plays. London: Oxford University Press, 1965, pp. x-xii.

Bevington, David. Tudor Drama and Politics. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968, pp. 250-53.

Boas, Frederick S. "Thomas of Woodstock--A Non-Shakespearean Richard II." Shakespeare and the Universities. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923, pp. 143-66.

Brooke, C. F. Tucker. The Tudor Drama. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911, pp. 328-29.

Carpenter, Frederick Ives. "Notes on the Anonymous Richard II." Journal of Germanic Philology, 3 (1900-01), 138.

Chambers, E. K. The Elizabethan Stage. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923, IV, 42.

Clemen, Wolfgang. English Tragedy Before Shakespeare: The Development of Dramatic Speech, trans. by T. S. Dorsch. London: Methuen, 1961, pp. 207-10.

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THE DRAMATIC FUNCTION OF DECEPTION IN WOODSTOCK

by

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After reviewing the criticism of Woodstock to date, I argue that deception is important to the artistic achievement of this anonymous Elizabethan history play, especially affecting characterization, structure, and tone. In the series of confrontations between Richard and Woodstock, Woodstock is repeatedly tricked, his plainness and simplicity making him an easy victim of the false hopes, lies, and ambiguities that are fed to him. The effect of these deceptions is to increase the complexity of Woodstock's character, for while morally he is an admirable figure, politically he is weak and deficient. The effect, also, is to enable the author to assert in a subtle way his rejection of the popular Tudor doctrine of appeasement and non-resistance, for it is mainly from Woodstock that we get the orthodox expressions of this doctrine, and clearly we are not meant to give them simple approval considering Woodstock's shortsightedness as to his own political and personal well-being. Richard suffers from a degree of moral imperceptiveness equal to Woodstock's political naiveté. His favorites prey on his appetite for power and his youthful apprehensions in order to deceive him; just as Woodstock is fed with false hopes, Richard is fed with flattery and humored with lies about his uncles.

Deception also contributes to structure and tone. The play is unified by having the minor characters mimic in a ridiculous and despicable manner the deceptive behavior of their superiors, and the effect of this is to clearly label as foul the treacherous actions of Richard and his favorites. By creating situations in which characters' expectations are repeatedly

denied, the deceptions also produce a consistent and powerful ironic tone.

These various effects of deception on characterization, structure, and tone culminate in the play's climactic scene, the killing of Woodstock, and they all work toward the author's unconventional portrayal of a successful rebellion in order to make it seem both inevitable and justified. Clearly, the author of this play was fascinated by the evils of political treachery, and he wove deception into the body of his art to make a well-wrought drama.