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"RIPENESS IS ALL" --

THE WHEEL OF TIME AS A SYSTEM OF  
IMAGERY IN SHAKESPEARE'S DRAMAS

"a man may prophesy,  
With a near aim, of the main chance of things  
As yet not come to life, which in their seeds  
And weak beginnings lie intreasured.  
Such things become the hatch and brood of time."  
(2HIV.3.1. 82-8)

*Introduction: Time and History*

The human mind has always been keen on understanding the ultimate temporal limits of existence. The eternal challenge of our temporal "Dasein" has been given various responses by different cultures and races. In our Western culture it was St. Augustine who first openly "confessed" his total failure in grasping the meaning of time: "I know well enough what it is, provided nobody asks me; but if I am asked who it is, I am baffled ... my mind is burning to solve this intricate puzzle." (*Confessiones*, Ch. 11)

Nevertheless where philosophy hesitated to answer explicitly, the devices of art have often given a more authentic reply. When we study Shakespeare's lifework to find his ultimate conception of history we arrive at the

conclusion that history is organically related to the underlying concept of time. Theoretically, the latter statement was convincingly proved by a 20th century American thinker Reinhold Niebuhr, who appealingly declares that time is the stage and stuff of history. "Insofar as human agents have the freedom to stand above the flux of natural events and create forms and institutions not governed by natural necessity and not limited to the life spans of nature, time is the stage of history. Insofar as these human agents are subject to decay and mortality ... time is part of the stuff of history. It is the woof of its fabric, and human freedom is the warp."<sup>1</sup>

Shakespeare's most challenging 20th century critic, Jan Kott, presents two diametrically opposed views of historical tragedy. The first one suggests that history has a definite meaning, its flow proceeds in a discernible direction. In this case, the "price" of history is progress..Kott notes that the idea was explored and utilized by Hegel and the young Marx, but, it seems useful to add that this idea had already been propagated by the Judeo-Christian tradition long before the philosophical idea of progress came into being. On the other hand, the other view argues that history has no particular meaning, it stands still constantly repeating its cruel cycle "that is an elemental force, like hail, storm, or hurricane, birth and death."<sup>2</sup> The latter concept can be traced back to the archaic pagan cults of nature, it survived in the Middle Ages and was triumphantly revived both by

the intellectual and popular beliefs of the Renaissance. Shakespeare seems to have had some affinity with the latter conviction. He has always meant a challenge to "history-minded" cultures and philosophies believing in development and progress or evolution.

In the present paper I shall, first of all, present an exploration of the imagery of "time's condition" in Shakespeare's dramas which in the Shakespearean lifework I consider inter-dramatically organic (*Part I.*).

I hope to point out how different concepts of time might have filtered into the poet's mind (*Part II.*). My conclusion, a rather tentative one, tries to suggest that this aspect of the Shakespearean oeuvre seems to confirm the touch or even presence of *medievalism* in Shakespeare. In order to confirm the above hypothesis one would have to examine other aspects of Shakespeare's conception of the world, like the question of the "wheel of fortune", which, I believe, is especially interlinked with the problem of time. This however, will be the task of another essay.

*Part I.*

*The Imagery of "Time's Condition"<sup>3</sup> in Shakespeare's Dramas*

*1. Various Approaches to the Problem*

When reading Shakespeare's dramas we cannot avoid being fascinated by the elemental, all-permeating force of Time, whether it appears only as a flashing-fragmentary image, or

an ever-recurring *leitmotif* of long "airs", say, in the soliloquies of Ulysses (*TC* 3.144-74) or Warwick (*2HIV* 3.1.80-92) or Richard II (*RII* 5,5, 41-80).

There are various ways to approach the problem of time in Shakespeare's plays. One of them is the consideration of the dramatic function of *concrete time*. Such an attempt was made by Tibor Szobotka whose study explores the dramaturgical devices of time in many plays (urgency and density, movement towards the future, the role of the words "tomorrow" and "dawn", the age of the protagonists, the problem of simultaneity and relativity, etc.)<sup>4</sup>. Another approach tries to impose -- within the context of contemporary thinking -- the categories of philosophical *abstract time* (or its substitutes) on Shakespeare's dramas, so the quotations from the play will serve as illustrations for the premises of a pre-supposed system. This method was applied by Agnes Heller.<sup>5</sup> In the following pages, however, I will not confine myself exclusively to either of these approaches. Instead, the *image of time as the stuff or backcloth of history* will be explored from the very *context of the plays*.

My contextual approach was evoked by Caroline Spurgeon's unique and thorough work on Shakespeare's imagery.<sup>6</sup> The author provides a useful enumerative list of the functions of the time-images in the plays. These functions, accompanied by ample quotations are more or less as follows: "revealer and disentangler of truth"; "a fruit being ripened"; "a life-giving, nourishing power"; "destroyer"; "death or bloody tyrant"

etc. She maintains that contrary to the picture of time as an overwhelming power it is, especially in the *Sonnets*, nevertheless transcended by the spiritual force of love: "love is apparently killed by time, only because it transcends time; and its spiritual and infinite essence cannot be confined within the limitations of a material and finite world".<sup>7</sup> For all the author's great achievement in producing a catalogue of Shakespeare's time-imagery I still found the ordering and establishing of the evidence a bit scattered and lacking a central organizing principle that would illuminate the essence and the uniqueness of time's condition and the convincing system of imagery by which it is operated. I tried to adopt Spurgeon's exact method in my own research and managed to collect images, both explicit and implicit, from about twenty plays of Shakespeare.

In a stimulating <sup>essay</sup> Quinones introduced a conceptual rather than an enumerative positivistic approach. He differentiates between three kinds of time in Shakespeare: (1) *augmentative time*, that is a concept providing a "basic framework by which we can judge actions and characters in the earlier *Sonnets* and the English history plays... it is a *morale* whose importance does not end with political plays; the violation of the code of augmentative time is crucial in such tragedies as *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *King Lear*".<sup>8</sup> (2) *contracted time* is the term to depict the subjective-psychological aspect in the love tragedies of *Romeo and Juliet*, *Antony and Cleopatra* and to a certain extent *Troilus and Cressida* and *Hamlet*. In the case of the first two

dramas "time is a moribund reality that denies the continuance of their love" and in the latter case "time is corrosive that feeds on human will and purpose and fidelity. Love falls apart through the woman's vulnerability to the changes of time". In both cases "time makes the heroes fatally-minded".<sup>9</sup> The contracted time of love is permanently in conflict with outward reality -- that can be illustrated by the farewell of Romeo and Juliet.

Juliet: O! no he gone, more light and light it grows.

Romeo: More light and light, more dark and dark our woes.

(*RJ3*, 5, 35-6)

In the case of *Antony and Cleopatra* there is a general tension of contracted time that can be perceived when the man-in-love is continually in conflict with his external circumstances. Both he and Cleopatra are apparently the victims of time and are defeated by the "time-possessing" Caesar. Nevertheless they gain victory in the immortality of their love over the mortally and physically limited Caesar. *Hamlet* is explained to be a sort of mid-way between the categories of contracted and (3) *extended time*. This latter category is considered as a dominant perspective in the last plays where the idea of the "repetition" of life is possible by the means of the children who are the "agents of reconciliation" for the sin of their parents. "In the last plays they (the children) represent the *regenerative potential* of Time and Nature that reconciles and re-unites"<sup>10</sup> (it, mine).

Although the three emerging concepts seem to be convincing, in order to unfold my view on time-imagery, I must dismiss the second category. The term "contracted time", unlike the other two, is rather a psychological aspect which can primarily be justified within the drama from perhaps a dramaturgical point of view (Szobotka); its meaning and value however, are bound to the situation, it does not contribute to the organic totality of the inter-dramatical time-imagery.

The other two concepts, however, indicate a definite dynamism, which, I think is characteristic of the movement of time in the dramas. Approaching now the idea I wish to adopt, let me dwell on the nature and alternatives inherent in the term of "augmentative time". Quinones depicts it as "an agent of reality that leads the organism ceaselessly to destruction or perhaps oblivion", There is a strong disaster-provoking, destructive reality in the nature of augmentative time. To complete the author we can say that the advantage of the term is that due to its dynamism, it also includes its opposite which can be labelled as "*diminishing time*". Quinones points out that the idea of augmentative time plays an important role in the histories where "the strong ruler is he who clearly perceives the issues of augmentative time... both the hazards of vanities... and the possibilities of success."<sup>11</sup> King Henry IV is an example of the monarch who is well aware of the identity of his role as a king, and his son the Prince will also grow into this awareness. Quinones' merit is that

he points out that the family-line or the *linear heritage* is central to the augmentative time. Richard II and Henry VI are weaklings and for them "time is broke" only because the first one is childless and the latter disinherits his son. Augmentative time also involves the destructive process of "emulative time" (TC3.3.268) but fortunately the "father-son relationship provided some insulation and protection against the emulative strife of Time, nature and man". Augmentative time is also prevalent in the tragedies where any violation of it (eg. Macbeth's) would bring about catastrophe. Banquo and Fleance's bond is considered symbolical. The *de jure* inheritor (Fleance) of augmentative time escapes with a torch in his hand from the agents of the darkness-representing violators (the temporary *de facto* rulers) of the rightful process. It is fatal both to violate (as in the tragedies) and to waste (as in *Richard II*) augmentative time. "Time, like Nature, is notoriously frank and gives only to the free, those who can make most of her gifts. To the careless and unprepared she is a tyrant... Richard's tears now tell the time which rings him out and Bolingbroke in."<sup>12</sup>

## 2. *The Idea and the Description of the "Wheel of Time"*

However strange and unusual the term "wheel of time" may sound, we must say that this is not an arbitrary coinage. Dictionaries of the English language register mainly the well-known term of the "*wheel of fortune*" or the less known idea of the "*wheel of life*" the latter meaning "the endless



series of transmigratory cycles of birth, death and re-birth". The great *Oxford Dictionary of English* provides some evidence based on 17th century texts, concerning the "*wheel of Providence*" (Howell, 1645) and even-that of the "*wheel of time*" (John Taylor, 1613). Though this metaphor, a connotation of images is rather implicit than explicit in Shakespeare's dramas, the metaphor "wheel of fortune", was a contemporary cliché. We can say that Shakespeare created the *"imago Fortunae"* Shakespeare very often depicts the tragedy of human life in the image of a wheel. King Lear's famous cosmic cries seem to justify this statement:

" I am bound  
Upon a *wheel of fire*, that my own tears  
Do scald like molten lead"  
(*KL 4,7, 46-8*)

And shortly before his death he comprehends his life also in terms of the wheel. He tells Cordelia:

"Thou hast spoken right, 'tis true;  
The *wheel is come full circle*; I am here"  
(*KL 5,3, 175-6*)

A synonym for the "wheel of time" is "the whirligig of time" - meaning "the changes of fortune that come with time". The phrase was first used by Shakespeare:

"And thus the *whirligig of time* brings in his  
revenges"  
(*TN 5,1, 388*)

a/ "The Perfectness of Time" -- the image of the totality  
of time

The self-disclosure and self-revelation of the great  
"I am" of Time takes place in the form of a chorus-like  
personified abstraction in the middle of *The Winter's Tale*:

"I, that please some, try all, both joy and terror  
Of good and bad, that make and unfold error,  
Now take upon me, in the name of Time,  
To use my wings..."

(WT 4,1, 1-4)

This is the picture of an overwhelming, majestic power of  
Time, whose monster-like manifold face is perhaps best revealed  
in Ulysses' speech:

"For beauty, wit,  
High birth, vigour of bone, desert in service,  
Love, friendship, charity, are subjects all  
To envious and calumniating time"

(TC 3,3, 171-174)

That image, which suggests that everything on earth is  
subordinated to its substance, is reinforced by several pictures.  
Hastings says the following.

"We are time's subjects, and time bids be gone"

(2HIV 1,3, 110)

Or in *Pericles* we read:

"Time's the king of men;  
He's both their parent, and he is their grave  
And gives them what he will, not what they crave."

(P 2,3, 45-7)

The dying Hotspur's wisdom witnesses the notion of life's being ridiculously petty to the grandiose measures of time:

"But thought's the slave of life, and *life time's*  
*fool*  
And *time*, that makes survey of all world,  
Must have a stop."

(1HIV, 5,4, '81-3)

These words seem to echo Macbeth's famous fatalistic-nihilistic soliloquy delivered immediately before his destruction.

"*Life's* but a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his *hour* upon the stage,  
And then is heard no more."

(Macb. 5,5, 24-6)

The triple image of life-stage-time is most appealingly evoked by Jacques' well-known monologue: "All the world's a *stage*..." where the different ages of human life as "one man in his *time* plays many parts" are so colourfully depicted. (AYLI 2,7, 130-66)

The eternity and agelessness of Time described by the apparent contradiction of alluding to human age and adopting the picture of an old wise man. Hector says as follows:

"that *old* common arbitrator, *Time*  
will one day end it".

(TC 4,5, 223-6)

And Rosalind:

"Time is the *old* justice that examines  
all such offenders, and let Time try."

(AYLI 4,1, 210-1)

This dynamic wheel of time is permanently in motion, and this is why there is so much allusion to the future in human destiny. What the present constellation of the stars cannot solve will be yielded by the next or the "after next" position of the wheel. Cordelia's hidden justice will come to light only in the future:

"Time shall *unfold* what plaited cunnings hid"

(KL 1,1, 283)

This motif is also present in an early comedy; Viola sighs:

"O *time*, thou must untangle it not I"

(TN 2,2, 41)

Harry's immature and un-kingly behaviour will also come to an end.

Warwick says:

"The Prince will in the *perfectness* of time  
Cast off his followers"

(2HIV 4,4, 74-5)

He who is not aware of the turning of the wheel and the whirligig of time will cruelly be destroyed. Richard II's fatal mistake was that he, unlike Bolingbroke, did not see

the "revolution of the times" (2*HI*V 3,1, 46) despite the mocking warnings of York:

"Take Hereford's rights away, and take from *Time*  
His charters, his customary rights."

(*RII* 2,1, 196-7)

Later on he must admit violating the rules of augmentative time through not heeding its course:

"I wasted *time*, and now doth *time* waste me"

(*RII* 5,5, 49)

Understanding the proper rotation of the wheel of time and its being analogous to that of fortune, it seems to be natural that King Henry IV associates time (or "times") with fate.

"O God! that one might read the *book of fate*  
And see the *revolution of the times*  
Make mountains level..."

(2*HI*V 3,1, 45-7)

For all his fatal mistakes Richard II realizes step by step the existence of the wheel of time. When he is out of joint with his medieval security he will prophesy the threat of Bolingbroke's usurpation. The fascinating imagery of the hidden sun that will rise again from the east and annihilate the powers of darkness shows his conscious awareness of the motion.

"Discomfortable cousin! know'st thou not  
That when *searching eye of heaven is hid*  
Behind the globe, and lights the lower world,  
Then thieves and robbers range about unseen,  
In murders and in outrage bloody here,

But when, from under this terrestrial ball  
He fires the proud tops of the eastern pines  
And darts his light through every guilty hole,  
Then murders, treasons and detested sins,  
The cloak of *night* being pluck'd from off their backs,  
Stand bare and naked, trembling at themselves,  
So when this *thief*, this traitor, Bolingbroke,  
Who all this while hath revell'd in the *night*  
Whilst we were wandering with the antipodes,  
Shall see us *rising* in our throne, *the east*,  
His treasons will sit blushing in his face,  
Not able to endure the *sight of day*  
But self-affrighted tremble at his sin."

(*RII 3, 2, 36-53*)

We shall see this aspect more explicitly unfolded in the context of historical perspective.

One aspect of the irreversible strength of the flow of time or the movement of the wheel is yet to be emphasized; namely, that human efforts are ridiculously ineffective in interfering with the elemental course of time even if the wheel's position favours evil forces. In *Macbeth*, for example, the infective disease of supernatural evil will *grow until it destroys itself*. King Henry IV gives the advice to his second son Clarence not to try to interfere with Prince Hal's potential wickedness when he becomes king, for, we can add, due to time's course unnatural evil will ruin itself.

"Chide him for faults, and do it reverently,  
When you perceive his blood inclin'd to mirth;  
But, being moody, give him line and scope  
Till that his passions, like a whale on ground,

Confound themselves with working"

(2HIV 4,4, 36-41)

The identity of this mighty and majestic power of Time cannot clearly be perceived and seen in human measures. Its life-giving energy can be grasped in super-human terms, for both masculine and feminine images are attributed to it. The idea of "begetting" justifies its male characteristic features:

"heavy times, *begetting* such events"

(3HIV 2,5, 63)

"till *time* *beget* some cheerful remedy"

(TA 4,3, 30)

On the contrary its female-essence can also be illustrated.

Iago says in *Othello*:

"There are many events in the *womb of time*  
which will be delivered"

(*Oth.* 1,3, 378)

Spurgeon is right to say that time appears very often in the image of a life-giving, nourishing power, a nurse or a breeder.<sup>13</sup>

"*Time* is a nurse and breeder of all good"

(*TGV* 3,1, 243)

"New confused events *hatched* to the woeful *time*"

(*Macb.* 2,3, 62)

"With new the *time* 's with labour and throes forth  
Each minute some"

(*AC* 3,7, 80-1)

b/ "Ripeness" and "Rottenness" -- the nature-imagery

Time, it will be pointed out later, was far from being an abstract idea in the Renaissance. On the contrary, it very frequently appeared in an organic connotation with nature. Therefore the role of the nature-imagery of time is of primary importance. The idea of time is mostly depicted by the two extreme conditions of the rotation or cycle of nature: ripeness and rottenness. It will also be mentioned that the notion of time hardly appears as correlative to space: time in the Renaissance is always correlative to the place. So when "time is out of joint" (*Ham. 1, 6, 188*) or "everything is out of joint" (*TC 1, 2, 28*), it means that "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark" (*Ham. 1, 6, 90*) or we could phrase the idea thus: "there is an evil force in the place"...

The image of rottenness is used when personal and political tragedy is either experienced or anticipated. King Henry IV visualizes the catastrophe of the future:

"The blood weeps from my heart when I do shape  
In forms imaginary the *unguided days*  
And *rotten times*"

(*2HIV 4, 4, 58-60*)

A deep pessimism on human rottenness is also flashed in the conversation of Hamlet and the grave-diggers of the grave-yard scene:

"How long will a man lie i' the earth *ere he rot?*  
Faith, if he be not *rotten before he die* -- as we  
have  
many pocky corpses now-adays..."

(*Ham. 5, 1, 177-8*)



When the movement of the wheel of time results in rotten conditions the imagery is very often interwoven with the idea of being sick or suffering from a disease. We have to bear in mind that this is also a natural state of man, however abnormal it may seem. Sickness and disease are also natural human attributes. The idea of disease mainly comes forth in the second half of Henry IV. The Archbishop laments as follows:

"... we are all *diseas'd*  
And, without *surfeiting* and *wanton hours*  
Have brought ourselves into a *burning fever*  
And we must *bleed* for it: of which disease  
Our late king, Richard, being *infected*, died...  
... We see which way the *stream of time* doth run  
And are *enforc'd* from our most quite sphere  
By the rough *torrent of occasion*"  
(2HIV 4,1, 64-8; 70-2)

Northumberland uses a similar image:

"The *times* are *wild*, contention, like a horse  
Full of high feeding, *madly* hath broke loose  
And bears down all before him."  
(2HIV 1,1, 9-11)

The disease is similar to an infectious epidemics:

"Tis the *time's plague* when madmen lead the blind"  
(XL 4,1, 46)

The tragical position of the wheel of time is sometimes described in a pun:

"These *times of woe* afford no time to woo"  
(RJ 3,4, 8)

The permanent movement of the wheel of time, however, results in the fact that the idea of rottenness is very frequently connected with its opposite: ripeness -- in the sense that "beginning and end shake hands". Jacques' proverb-like wisdom says:

"And so, from *hour* to *hour* we *ripe* and *ripe*  
And then from *hour* to *hour* we *rot* and *rot*  
And thereby hangs a tale."

(AYLI 2,8, 26-8)

Northumberland's revengeful fury gains its energy for action (ripeness) from disease (rottenness).

"For this I shall have *time* enough to mourn  
In *poison* there is *physic*; and these news  
Having been well, that would have made me sick,  
*Being sick*, have in some measure *made me well*.  
... let not *nature's hand*  
Keep the *wild flood* confin'd! Let order die!"

(2HIV 1,1, 136-9

and 153-4)

The roundness of the movement between ripeness and rottenness is also frequently associated with the image of birth and death.

Cassius' farewell is heroic:

"This *day* I breathed first, *time* is come round  
And where I did *begin*, there shall I *end*."

(JC 5,3, 23-4)

Let us recollect some images already mentioned:

" Time is the king of men  
He is both their parent, and he is their grave"  
(P 2,3, 45-8)  
"The wheel is come full circle; I am here."  
(KL 5,3, 178)

Or let us listen to Falstaff:

"Let time shape, and there is an end"  
(2HIV 3,2, 352)

The juxtaposition of the images of rottenness and ripeness appears perhaps in the most appealing way in the wisdom of the disguised Edgar's conversation with the blinded Gloucester, his father.

G1. "No further, sir, a man may rot even here.  
Ed, What! in ill thoughts again? Men must endure  
Their going hence, even as their coming hither  
Ripeness is all. Come on."  
(KL 5,2, 8-11)

That short declarative sentence makes for us -- by the help of nature-imagery -- perhaps the most important observation on the eternal relation between man and time. "Ripeness" is a sunken image "which suggests the sensuous concrete without definitely projecting and clearing it" - say Wellek and Warren in their *Theory of literature* (p.202). They maintain that this sunken image is presumably out of orchards and fields. The analogy that is suggested by this image is

between the inevitability of natural cycles of vegetation and the cycles of life. The idea of "endurance" or "patience"; this stoic observation of life is a key-word in *King Lear* and at the same time it is also a predominant motif that permanently determines man's attitude to the wheel of time.

The idea of ripeness, the fruit-yielding quality of time is very frequent, In this position of the wheel the clouds of tragedy are either no longer or not yet threatening. It is very often associated with confidence in future. Disease or evil will not and cannot operate when ripeness prevails. The sun that ripens the fruit is the agent of clarity and the age-old enemy of darkness.

"When *time is ripe* which will be suddenly"  
(*IHV 1,3, 294*)

"Keep me in patience with *ripen'd time*  
Unfold the evil which is here wrapt up."  
(*MM 5,1, 117*)

"Upon this land a thousand blessings  
Which *time will bring to ripeness*"  
(*HVIII 5,5, 20-21*)

Gloucester in *Richard III* says of Edward that

"The royal tree hath left us royal *fruit*  
Which, *mellow'd* by the *stealing hours of time*,  
Will well become the seat of majesty,  
And, make, no doubt, us happy by his reign"  
(*RIII 3,7, 166-9*)

Or some other examples:

"But stay the very ripening of the time"

(*NV* 2,8, 40)

"Were growing time once ripen'd to my will"

(*1HVI* 2,4, 99)

When the young Hamlet is summoned by the Ghost to remember, he recognizes that memory, as a dimension between the past and the present of time, results in purpose, which will emancipate itself by the ripening of the time:

"Purpose is but a slave to memory  
Of violent birth, but poor validity;  
Which now, like fruit unripe, sticks to the tree  
But falls unshaken when they mellow be,"

(*Ham.* 3,2, 200-4)

Ripening is always associated with the pictures of seeds or grains. See motto and:

"If you look into the seeds of time,  
And see which grain will grow, and which will not,  
Speak then to me..."

(*Macb.* 4,1, 144-6)

A very important aspect of ripening, or, we can say, augmentative time is, that one cannot benefit from the fruit unless one is able to catch the proper moment for action. Macbeth realizes this when he tries to defy time:

"Time, thou anticipat'st my dead exploits,  
The flighty purpose is never o'ertook  
Unless the deed go with it

(*Macb.* 4,1, 144-6)

Though we have to catch the favourable position of the wheel of time, we are nevertheless helpless against its fatally moving course. ("there is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow.") And our task is readiness. "Readiness is all" (*Ham. 5,2, 432-8*)

*of The powers of necessity and hope*

The dynamic wheel of time is set in motion by the energy or the elevating powers of necessity and hope. Necessity is a power of neutral charge, hope is positive. Due to the equal strength of the push and pull of these powers man keeps his constant distance from the wheel of time. (See the chart.)

Derek Traversi was right, when he pointed out that "allied... to the idea of time... is the conception of over-ruling necessity... necessity is a fact generally accepted by all the political characters in this play (*2HIV*), the young and the successful not less than the old and disillusioned."<sup>15</sup>

King Henry IV asks Warwick after his great monologue about the necessary change in the wheel of time (see motto):

"Are all these things then *necessities*,  
Then let us meet them like *necessities*"  
(*2HIV 3,1, 92-3*)

Westmoreland also acknowledges man's pettiness, even if he be a King, in relation to the overwhelming wheel of time.

"Construe the *times* to their *necessities*  
And you shall say indeed, it is the time  
And not the King, that does you injuries"  
(2HIV 4,1, 104-7)

The other elevating power of the wheel of time is already of positive charge. Man regards the wheel of time -- for all its destructive and wasting force -- with hope and confidence. It was L.C. Knights who first called my attention to the recurring and repeated pattern of hope emerging with the image of time.<sup>16</sup> The word hope turns up with an unusual frequency within a few lines and it is connotated with the nature-imagery analyzed-above.

" if this present quality of war, -  
Indeed the instant action, -- as a cause on foot,  
Lives so in *hope*, as in an early *spring*  
We see the appearing *buds*, which, to prove *fruit*  
*Hope* gives not so much warrant as *despair*  
That frosts will bite then..."  
(2HIV 1,3, 34-9)

And earlier Mowbray says:

"Thus do the *hopes* we have in him touch ground  
And dash themselves to pieces"  
(2HIV 4,1, 17-8)

Hastings adds:

"Grant that our *hopes*, yet likely of fair  
Should still be *born*, and that we now possess'd  
The utmost man of *expectation*"  
(2HIV 1,3, 63-6)

So the idea of hope is deeply rooted in human existence and it regards the wheel of time with a touch of optimism, secretly being sure that it will arrive at a position when "time is free" (*Maob. 5,8, 55*), when evil destroys itself, when the inauguration of a new order will be "in measure, time and place" (*Maob. 5,8, 73*)

d/ "Discord" and "Concord" -- the music-imagery

It is far beyond the scope of my paper to explore the abundant images of music in Shakespeare's plays and especially in the Sonnets. I must confine myself to examining the relationship of time and music.

Without the sense of music, man is exposed to the unfavourable position of the wheel of time:

"The man hath no music in himself,  
Nor is not mov'd with the concord of sweet sounds  
Is fit for treason, stratagems and spoils."

(*MV 5,1, 83-5*)

Concord and harmony form the condition of the wheel of time which corresponds to ripeness and health on the level of nature-imagery.

"My pulse, as yours, doth temperately keep time  
And makes a healthful music. It is not madness  
That I have utter'd..."

(*Ham. 3,4, 140-2*)



The relationship between "ripeness" and "concord" i.e. the analogous connection between the levels of nature-, and music-imagery in the wheel of time was also emphasized by Michel Grivelet: "Time in this texture appears as belonging to the deeper harmonies of nature, as something which partakes of the essence of music... harmony is specially perceived in the field of human relations."<sup>17</sup>

The striking correspondence between the levels of the wheel of time, namely the organic relation between musical harmony and the natural level can be illustrated by alluding to Richard II's comment on the death of the old John of baunt. Northumberland announces his death:

"His tongue is now a *stringless instrument*,  
Words, life and all, old Lancaster hath spent"  
(*RII 2,1, 150-1*)

And Richard comments:

"The *ripest fruit falls*, and so doth he.  
His *time is spent*..."  
(*RII 2,1, 153-5*)

The apparent correspondence between the "stringless instrument" (= discord -- or no music) with the image of ripeness might be misleading, but we have to bear in mind that, immediately after falling, the ripest fruit will rot when fallen. So the proper relationship is between the images of the "stringless instrument" and rottenness.

On the other hand the next correspondence can be established between musical harmony, the state of concord and the historical-political perspective by juxtaposing a fragment from Sonnet VIII and a part of Richard II's emotional laments but intellectually still illuminating realization. The famous music-sonnet contains the lines:

"If the true *concord* of well tuned sounds  
By union married offend thy ear"

And the dethroned King laments:

"For the *concord* of my state and *time*  
Had not an ear to hear my true *time broke*"  
(*RII* 5, 5, 47-8)

The idea of sickness on the level of nature-imagery runs parallel with political disorder and disjoint on the historical level. In between the idea of discord of proportionless music reflects the condition of "time is broke". Or in the context of my so-far explored imagery it is not the time which is broken, but it is man who breaks his proper obedience to the all-determining power of the wheel of time. Let me allude back to Richard's fatal fault that he, despite the warnings of York, violated the rule of augmentative or ever-moving time. For all the genuine selfpity of his soliloquy, he remains responsible for his tragedy.

" Music do I hear?  
Ha, ha! Keep time. How sour sweet music is  
When time is broke and no proportion kept!

So it is in the music of men's lives:  
And here have I the daintiness of ear  
To check time broke in a disorder'd string;  
But for the concord of my state and time  
Had not an ear to hear my true time broke.  
I wasted time, and now doth time waste me;  
For now hath time made me his numbering clock:  
My thoughts are minutes, and with sighs they jar  
Their watches on unto mine eyes, the outward watch  
Whereto my finger, like a dial's point,  
Is pointing still, in cleansing them from tears.  
Now sir, the sound that tells what hour it is  
Are clamorous groans, that strike upon my heart  
Which is the bell: so sighs and tears and groans  
Show minutes, times and hours; but my time  
Runs posting on in Bolingbroke's proud joy,  
While I stand fooling here, his Jack o'the clock"  
(*RII* 5,5, 41-80)

*Part II.*

*The Wheel and its Alternative: The Linear Line in the Context  
of the History of Thought*

In the following pages I wish to elucidate various time-concepts that had piled up in the cultural memory of mankind up to the age of the Renaissance, thus reflecting the cultural coordinates of Shakespeare's wheel. The survey will be perhaps an over-simplified attempt at outlining the sharp difference between the "non-history minded" cultures of "cosmic", "archetypal" or "mythic" time and the "history-minded" cultures of the one-way view time. These two basically different ideas resulting in the notion of the wheel or

the cycles on the one hand and the linear, one-way view time on the other, have either struggled with each other or co-existed (as in the Middle Ages) and one of them was and is still revived at certain periods of history. Neither of them has lost its validity; the choice between them has always been a matter of personal conviction. In order to set up some points of comparison I shall make a distinction between the traditions of classical antiquity roughly based on primitive nature-worship and those Judeo - Christian thought. All the concepts (whether archaic, classical, biblical, medieval or renaissance) can be traced back to the two basically different concepts.

It was Paul Tillich who pointed out the struggle between space and time throughout the history of cultures.<sup>18</sup> Though the term "space" seems to be inappropriate in the context of time -- as we shall see later -- and should be substituted by "place", nevertheless Tillich genuinely argues that the primitive and pagan cultures lacked a sense of history based on chronology. Instead of worshipping the God of history they adored "gods" bound to their special places, the divinities of earth and soil. The idea of "beside-each-otherness" of the members of a certain group, however, quite often gave place to "against-each-otherness" when they were forced to co-exist with a community worshipping a different deity. This primitive idea of soil-mysticism, however, has survived throughout the centuries and very often led to fierce nationalistic conflicts. The primitive-pagan soil and place

adoration is inseparable from nature-worship. There is development in nature but it is endlessly repeated. Time is measured by the cyclic and circular recurrences of nature.

As for the classical concept of time Niebuhr argues that in both oriental and classical thought the temporal world is comprehended in terms of cycles of endless recurrences. The world of history is equated with this realm of natural cycles. The identification of natural with historical time determines the non-historical character of this form of spirituality. History is a realm of ambiguity. It is, for the classical mind, intelligible only insofar as it participates in the cycle of birth and death which characterizes nature.<sup>19</sup> In classical philosophy both Plato and Aristotle stood for the idea of growth and decay, for the continuous coming into being and passing away. Similarly, in Indian thought time or temporal existence -- versus eternity -- is considered an illusion (maya). So "this-worldliness" or temporal reality have no meaning. One has to liberate oneself from the chains of illusions by self-transcendence and arrive at the level of real existence.

A totally different concept of time and history was revealed in the Old and New Testament of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Judaism and Christianity brought about the idea of *historicism*, as C.S. Lewis put it: "the belief that by studying the past we can learn not only historical but meta-historical or transcendental truth."<sup>20</sup> Contrary to the circular and cyclic views the Bible introduces the *linear conception of*

*time and history.* The Jewish mind motivated by its inherent moral justice presupposes the world as being God's creation. God in his self-revelatory act declares his law which is to be obeyed by the chosen people. At the same time he promises deliverance from suffering by the help of the Messiah. The historical expectations tend to proceed towards the arrival of a Messiah. Therefore time and history have a definite meaning. The Christian way of thinking declares that the expectations were fulfilled at a certain point in history. God's first covenant with his chosen people was re-iterated by Christ, who stands at a crucial point in the exploration of the total meaning of history. God's self-disclosure was manifestly taking place in the appearance of Christ who pointed towards the eschaton, the end of the times and history. "Christianity embodies the whole of history in its universe of meaning because it is a religion of revelation which knows by faith some events in history, in which the transcendent source and the end of the whole panorama of history is disclosed. Christian faith fully appreciates the threat of meaninglessness which comes into history by the corruption of human freedom... the revelation of God in history, is, in fact, according to the biblical faith, evidence of a divine grace which both searches out... the life, death and resurrection of Christ represent an event in history, in and through which a disclosure of the whole meaning of history occurs, and all of these questions are answered.. "21

The Middle Ages represented a cathedral-like synthesis of both the classical and Christian views on time and history. The system of Thomas Aquinas could embrace both the pagan Aristotle and the Christian Augustine. Gurevich emphasizes that in the medieval mind beside the Judeo-Christian concept of time there was room for a wide-range of time-images.<sup>22</sup> The surviving archaic pagan views emphasized that time is an eternal present which can be measured by space. The idea of eternal recurrences (which was later revived and adopted by Nietzsche) was inseparable from nature-worship and religious rite. These concepts seem to have filtered into the Catholic church when "liturgical time" was a sort of imitation of "agrarian time".<sup>23</sup> The dominant idea, however was primarily determined by Christianity. Due to the Christian idea of the Fall there is a split between sacral time (including God's purpose of salvation) and worldly time meaning human history. In consequence of human sin there is a deviating tendency from God's linear process of salvation. Man is not able to obey God's purpose of salvation therefore there is a need for a Redeemer.

The time of human history is bound to locality and permanently subordinated to the sacral time of salvation history. The flux of sacral and eschatological time is revealed and unfolded in the Bible. Just as the Old Testament includes and anticipates the New Testament, so the eschaton, the final perfection of time is involved within the New Testament. St. Augustine was wrestling with the problem

of time -- in the eleventh chapter of his *Confessions*. With him the problem of time-consciousness appears as man's inward psychological condition.<sup>24</sup> (To some extent this will correspond to Shakespeare's "contracted" time-image.) For St. Augustine the realm of God is incompatible with the defects of human history. (Civitas Dei and Civitas Terrena) One has to strive to become a citizen of the world of God. Gurevich is right when he emphasizes that the medieval world-picture, for all its effort to include everything was nevertheless static. There was no room for any sort of development. Neither the individual, nor the world was a process. Rarely was the spiritual transition emphasized in the lives of the saints. For Dante time also stands still; the permanent present includes both past and future.

By the end of the Middle Ages the abstract Christian idea of time faded more and more, gradually giving place to the revival of the cyclic concepts in both intellectual and popular life. In the 13th century Neo-Platonism under the influence of the Averroists of Paris disseminated the idea that the periods of human life are analogous to the circular movement of celestial bodies.<sup>25</sup> In the popular mind human life was considered as following the endlessly repeating pattern of agriculture and nature in birth-growth-decay-desolation. This period, the late Middle Ages is at the same time the cradle of English Renaissance drama, of medieval miracles and moralities. Even when considering the genesis of



this genre which took place at the "waning" of the Middle Ages we cannot avoid noticing the ritualistic pattern of life-death-rebirth in the miracle plays. The elements of fertility ritual and regeneration permeated the shaping of the morality plays and became interwoven with the inherently didactic character of moralities -- as Robert Potter put it: "The morality play, an archetypal example of the theatre of demonstration, is both didactic (in the sense of teaching Christian doctrine) and ritualistic (in the sense of "proving" it). These interwoven strands of didacticism and ritual together provide the origins of the morality play."<sup>26</sup>

Once arrived at the Renaissance concept of time we have to bear in mind that the religious universalism of the Middle Ages with its dominant science of theology disappeared -- or at least withdrew -- from the map of contemporary thought and gave place to its secularized inheritor: philosophy. Within the context of natural philosophy of the Renaissance the *abstract idea of time-unlike that of space-did not exist*. Agnes Heller points out that it was Hegel who in his *Logic* differentiated between space (Raum) and place (Ort). In the Renaissance both ideas of space existed. *But the notion of time was never correlative to that of space, it appeared always in the context of place.*<sup>27</sup> However central to the Renaissance the notion of time was, it never appeared in the image of abstract time but there were some interchangeable aspects of time. Heller proposes to distinguish three interpretations of time. (1) point of time "moment";

(2) continuity and (3) rhythm. To a certain extent all three ideas reflected the dynamic movement of the social change of the age. We have to add, however, that the new concepts of time cannot be separated from the new interpretation of *fortuna* which has already been hinted at. The image of the "wheel of fortune" moving irreversibly in history was a contemporary cliché. The movement of the wheel stands for continuity (no.2) which periodically bears fruit (rhythm no.3) and one has to catch the proper moment for action (no.1) in this ever-moving dynamism.

*Conclusion: The "Tides of Time" -- the Historical Perspective*

After a long digression in search for the philosophical and the intellectual background of Shakespeare's wheel we return to the imagery. The so-far disclosed levels and components of the Shakespearean wheel of time are, of course, in every respect analogous to the historical perspective. I tried to anticipate in my introductory lines that the course of history can be forecast and prophesied by understanding the mechanism of the wheel of time. So Richard II's prophetic discernings will be echoed by the threatened King, who recognizes the elevating power of necessity:

"But that *necessity* so bow'd the state  
That I and greatness were compelled to kiss,  
The *time* shall come, 'thus did he follow it,

The *time* will come, that foul sin, gathering head,  
Shall break into *corruption*: so went on,  
Foretelling this same *time's* condition  
And the division of our amity,"

(2HIV 3,1, 73-8)

The cycle of history and the wheel of time is perhaps best described by the help of the metaphor *tide*. This metaphor, however, denoted at an earlier stage of language-history had the same meaning as time today. (Cf. tide-Zeit) The word *tide* today is endowed with the meaning of regular rise and fall in the level of the sea caused by the attraction of the moon. It still preserved the meaning of flow or tendency and that of season. The word suggests the ever-recurring regularity of events. Shakespeare used the term in connection with history and time in *Julius Caesar*. Antony describes Caesar as follows:

"Thou art the ruins of the noblest man  
That ever lived in the *tide of times*."

(JC 3,1, 257-8)

To close my exploration of Shakespeare's time-imagery I have chosen to quote Brutus' stoic observations on the "tides of time", which, perhaps not only by chance, contains a hint at fortune, a motif which I consider justifies my concept of the "wheel of time". Perhaps it is Shakespeare's most concise summary of the notion of time and history.

"We at the height, are ready to decline,  
There is a tide in the affairs of men,  
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune,  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.  
On such a full sea are we now afloat;  
And we must take the current when it serves,  
Or lose our ventures."

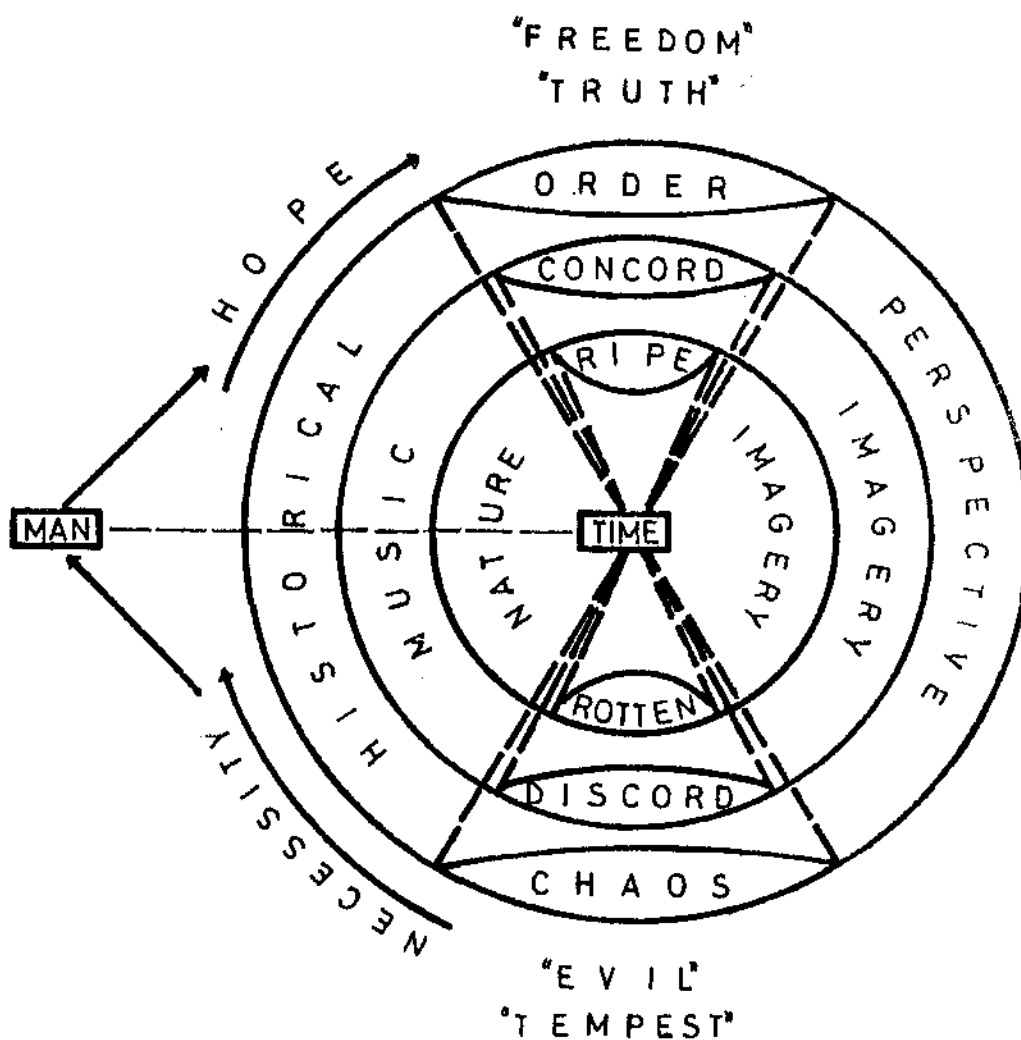
(JC 4,3, 218-23)

Reaching our a conclusion, we can say that for Shakespeare time is such an elemental force that it includes nature music and also history. Time's substance is nature, its rhythm evokes music and its perspective embraces history.

Nevertheless the movement of the wheel is not always just. Or perhaps it has nothing to do with justice at all. Tillyard emphasizes that Richard II was the last King of the medieval order, the last man to rule by hereditary right direct and undisputed by the conqueror. He was the last *de jure* king who had had the full sanctity of kingship; all the other rulers were *de facto* kings. However powerful the Tudors were, none of them shared the sanctity of medieval kingship. So there are definite ceremonial and ritualistic elements in Richard II's dethronement that can only be compared to the sufferings of Christ.<sup>28</sup>

In Tillyard's view Shakespeare must have realized that. Perhaps. If it is true, then it can be argued that below and beyond the idea of the cruel movement of the wheel of time Shakespeare might have preserved some fragments from that other tradition which believes in history and development, namely, in the linear line whether it is going upwards or downwards.

A Chart Illustrating the "Wheel of Time" in Shakespeare's Imagery



N O T E S

- 1 Niebuhr (1949, 34)
- 2 Kott (1964, 31-2)
- 3 2HIV 3.1, 78
- 4 Szobotka (1965, 327-59)
- 5 Heller (1971, 137-55)
- 6 Spurgeon (1952)
- 7 Spurgeon (1952, 180)
- 8 Quinones (1965, 328)
- 9 *ibid.* (335)
- 10 *ibid.* (347)
- 11 *ibid.* (330)
- 12 *ibid.* (335)
- 13 *ibid.* (334)
- 14 Spurgeon (1952, 173)
- 15 Traversi (1948, 121)
- 16 Knights (1959, 45-6)

- 17 Grivalet (1970, 69-78)
- 18 Tillich (1964, 30-9)
- 19 Niebuhr (1949, 16)
- 20 Lewis (1964, 174)
- 21 Niebuhr (1949, 22 and 26)
- 22 Gurevics (1974, 80)
- 23 *ibid.* (90)
- 24 *ibid.* (99)
- 25 *ibid.* (123)
- 26 Potter (1975, 171)
- 27 Heller (1971, 135)
- 28 Tillyard (1966, 180)

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