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A DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH TO SHAKESPEARE'S HENRY VI PLAYS

by

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PREFACE

In this dissertation, I propose to shed light on certain aspects of Shakespeare's creative process by retracing the development of his Henry VI plays from their chronicle sources.

The dissertation begins with a presentation of certain views advanced by a few representative historical critics who propose that these plays are primarily moralistic tracts in dramatic format in agreement with conventional Tudor attitudes on rebellion. As against these views, I argue that the plays themselves are not in agreement with such interpretations but, in fact, often contradict them. I then proceed to a detailed examination of the plays in relation to their sources. This examination will show, I think, that far from reflecting any partisan moral outlook the plays are committed merely to dealing with English history in dramatic terms.

My conclusion then is that while the dominant moral or moral-political beliefs of the Tudor age necessarily find a reflection in Shakespeare's plays, it is probably an error to assume that these are simply or wholly Shakespeare's views. In fact, it is very questionable whether any system of moral opinion or unambiguous set of moral values can usefully be extracted from the play. The moral issues are of course there, but they are absorbed into the dramatic life of the plays.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

SHAKESPEARE AND THE MORALIZERS

A number of historical critics view the Henry VI plays as moral tracts concerning correct Tudor political attitudes and Shakespeare as a purveyor of these conventional moral-political attitudes. Yet the plays themselves have not been thoroughly tested to determine beyond a reasonable doubt the validity of such views. I plan to do so by retracing one at a time the approaches of two representative moralistic interpreters of the Henry VI plays, E. M. W. Tillyard and Irving Ribner, and then testing each interpretation separately against the plays. These critics are ideal for my purposes for two reasons. First, both have written at length on the Henry VI plays, Tillyard in Shakespeare's History Plays (1944) and Ribner in The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare (1957). Also, both present significantly different approaches within a moralistic framework. Tillyard's approach is in keeping with a providential-deterministic tradition, with Hall's God of vengeance playing an important part. Ribner's approach, however, is based on a moral-humanistic reading wherein man is viewed as having far more control over his actions than Tillyard's view would allow.

Tillyard's approach is to begin by tracing a widespread

Tudor political-religious outlook through a large body of contemporary materials and then applying it to the plays. The widespread Tudor outlook found by Tillyard is that which views violations of conventional codes of behavior as sins against God. He traces it through a vast body of literature stretching back to the reign of England's first Tudor monarch, Henry VII (1485-1509). He finds Tudor views first and foremost in the Tudor chronicles. They include Polydore Vergil's English History, commissioned by Henry VII in 1507, Edward Hall's Chronicle (1548), and Holinshed's Chronicle (1577 and 1587). Tillyard also cites a number of other sources: e.g., homilies written in the reigns of Edward VI and Elizabeth; The Mirror for Magistrates (1559 and 1563); and various Tudor morality and English chronicle plays.

Of particular interest to Tillyard is Edward Hall's application of a Tudor outlook in his chronicle of English history. There the cause of the War of the Roses and Henry VI's disastrous reign is traced back to his grandfather Henry IV's usurpation of the throne from England's rightful ruler, Richard II. From this clear violation of a code of political behavior, notes Tillyard, "the trouble began, and Hall is at pains to give the reason why one event led on to another right through to the Battle of Bosworth. And the cause of events is usually a crime and God's vengeance on it."[1] Thus is Hall shown to view God as a divine punisher of mortal code violators.

Tillyard argues that it is this view which is carried

over into the Henry VI plays. If this argument is sound, one would expect God to play as significant a role in the plays as he does in Hall where, to paraphrase Tillyard, it is His vengeance on a crime which is usually given as the reason for one event leading to another. Yet just the opposite is the case in Shakespeare's Henry VI plays, even in those instances where Shakespeare's characters are discussing Henry IV's usurpation, the very event which, in Hall, sets the machine of divine vengeance into motion.

Henry IV's usurpation is first mentioned in 1 Henry VI in the dying Mortimer's speech to his nephew, the future Duke of York:

> Henry the Fourth, grandfather to this king,
> Depos'd his nephew [i.e., cousin] Richard, Edward's son,
> The first-begotten and the lawful heir
> Of Edward king, the third of that descent;
> During whose reign the Percies of the north,
> Finding his usurpation most unjust,
> Endeavour'd my advancement to the throne.
> (II.v.69)[2]

Though the deposition is forcefully referred to here, together with immediately resulting events, not a single reference is made by Mortimer to the Almighty's reaction to it. Precisely the same secular pattern is repeated in 2 Henry VI in York's explanation of his titles to Salisbury and Warwick:

> Edward the Black Prince died before his father
> And left behind him Richard, his only son:
> Who after Edward the Third's death reign'd as king,
> Till Henry Bolingbroke, Duke of Lancaster,
> The eldest son and heir of John of Gaunt,
> Crown'd by the name of Henry the Fourth,
> Seiz'd on the realm, depos'd the rightful king,
> Sent his poor queen to France, from whence she came,
> And him to Pomfret; where, as all you know,
> Harmless Richard was murder'd traitorously.
> (II.ii.27)[3]

Here again Henry IV is identified as having "seiz'd on the realm, depos'd the rightful king," but again not a single reference to the Almighty in this context. The same pattern is repeated once more in 3 Henry VI in King Henry's argument with York:

> King Henry: Henry the Fourth by conquest got the crown.
>
> York: 'Twas by rebellion against his king. (I.i.133)[4]

Throughout these episodes, God is never referred to, either by those caught up in the action or by those, like Exeter, who often observe and comment from the sidelines.

The absence of any mention of the Almighty in these passages is particularly significant in the light of the fact that in other English history plays of the period mentioned in Tillyard's study, God is referred to in passages dealing with acts similar to those in the Henry VI plays in which God is not mentioned. Typical are the following lines quoted by Tillyard from The Troublesome Reign of King John of England, a play first performed in 1588:

> Yet subjects [of an erring king] may not take in hand revenge
> And rob the heavens of their proper power.
> Where sitteth he to whom revenge belongs. 5

In Sir Thomas More, another late Elizabethan history play, God is again mentioned in the same context:

> And 'twere no error if I told you all
> You were in arms against your God himself.
> For to the king God hath his office lent,
> Of dread, of justice, power and command,
> Hath bid him rule and will'd you to obey. 6

What we may conclude from these passages is that Shakespeare's

failure to mention God in passages in his plays dealing with Henry IV's usurpation was not because of a custom or taboo of the day ruling out such practices. Rather, the opportunity was there, yet Shakespeare chose not to take advantage of it.

Disregarding this glaring omission, Tillyard argues that there are signs of Hall's God of vengeance in other passages of the trilogy. Yet in the absence of proofs from the plays themselves, he fails at every point to make his argument convincing. Typical is his analysis of the trilogy's opening scene. Various nobles are assembled at Westminster Abbey for the funeral of Henry V. Exeter, commenting on Henry's untimely death, says:

> What! shall we curse the planets of mishap
> That plotted thus our glory's overthrow?
> Or shall we think the subtle-witted French
> Conjurers and sorcerers, that afraid of him
> By magic verses have contriv'd his end?
>
> (I.i.27)

Though these lines contain not a single reference to the Almighty, Tillyard discovers Him lurking in the background hidden behind the planets, the conjurers and the sorcerers:

> One cannot understand the bearing of these lines on the play without remembering how the influence of the stars and witchcraft fitted into the total Elizabethan conception of the universe. Though these two things were thought to be powerful in their effects and were dreaded, they did not work undirected. God was ultimately in control, and the divine part of man, his reason and the freedom of his will, need not yield to them. Further, God used both stars and evil spirits to forward his own ends. 7

Having located a vengeful deity here to his own satisfaction, Tillyard next discovers a number of characters under his control. In the first part of the trilogy Joan of Arc

is singled out. Sensing the hand of God behind her dramatized defeat of the English at Orleans, Tillyard dismisses her own claims to the contrary, reasoning that she is ignorant of her true role in the play:

> Joan, then, is not a mere piece of fortuitous witchcraft, not a mere freakish emissary of Satan, but a tool of the Almighty, as she herself (though unconsciously) declares in her own words to Charles after her first appearance,
>
> Assign'd am I to be the English scourge.
>
> Who but God has assigned her this duty? True, if this line were unsupported, we might hesitate to make this full inference. But combined with the various cosmic references and the piety of Talbot, it is certain. 8

Certain, one fears, only to Tillyard, who seems to have fallen into the trap of contradicting evidence within the plays to suit his own purposes.

Tillyard fares no better in his search through the second part of the trilogy for Hall's God of vengeance. Here he associates divine retribution with the sudden deaths of Winchester and Suffolk:

> The judgement of God, invoked by Henry, is quick in striking two of Gloucester's murderers. Cardinal Beaufort dies in an agony of evil conscience, Suffolk is captured by a warship off the coast of Kent and put to death after the ship's captain has recited a list of the crimes. 9

What is irritating about this interpretation is that there is nothing in 2 Henry VI to support Tillyard's view that these deaths result from "the judgement of God." No one in the play bothers to establish this point, certainly not Henry who, far from invoking God's judgement, merely expresses his disapproval of those responsible for Gloucester's

death. Yet Tillyard treats the play as though such were not the case.

In the concluding part of the trilogy, Tillyard continues along the same lines. York's terrible punishment at Wakefield, Margaret's crushing defeat at Towton, the bloodshed and slaughter of countless individuals in countless actions of civil strife--all are viewed in the light of divine retribution in spite of an absence of corroborating evidence from the plays themselves. Singled out for special attention is Edward IV who, though unpunished in the trilogy, commits sufficient crimes therein to merit divine punishment in its sequel, Richard III. Tillyard lists three such "crimes":

> Shakespeare is extremely punctilious in furnishing a crime to justify every disaster. Indeed his lavishness tends to monotony. Edward IV, for instance, commits three major crimes, any one of which was enough to imperil himself and his posterity. He encourages his father York to go back on his oath of loyalty to Henry VI in return for the reversion of the crown; he promised the Mayor of York that he had returned to England to claim his dukedom and not the crown; and he stabbed his prisoner the young prince Edward. 10

Again we have only Tillyard's word that these events are "crimes" portrayed in the imminent light of divine retribution. For there is no moral spokesman who points a finger of accusation at an erring York, no mention of God or divine retribution. In short, there is nothing in the plays themselves to support such a reading.

Again and again, what disturbs a knowledgeable reader about the foregoing interpretations is that there is

insufficient evidence in the plays themselves to support Tillyard's contention that they reproduce Hall's providential view of history. This is so with regard to Exeter's remarks in the opening scene of 1 Henry VI wherein Tillyard, and perhaps Tillyard alone, locates the hand of the Almighty beyond Exeter's range of vision. This is also the case with regard to his view of Joan of Arc as an agent of divine retribution, which is nowhere confirmed in the plays. Moreover, the same holds true for his providential interpretation of the deaths of the evildoers in the plays. Neither Winchester nor Suffolk nor York nor Margaret nor Richard attributes his misfortunes to divine retribution. With the exception of Henry VI in a few inconsequential asides, only Tillyard makes such connections.

In the face of such meager evidence in the plays, Tillyard argues that they must not be viewed in isolation but that the three parts of Henry VI and Richard III constitute a tetralogy of plays which, together with a second tetralogy comprised of Richard II, the two parts of Henry IV and Henry V, "make up a unit"[11] containing a working out of Hall's providential view of history. The weakness in this argument is the absence of any corroborating evidence to support Tillyard's wild assumption that any playwright, let alone one of Shakespeare's promise, would tie himself down to so narrow a providential view of cause and effect for so long a period of time. Tillyard is certainly entitled to his opinions; however, he has no right to confuse suppositions

with proofs.

Tillyard offers yet another argument in his defense. Hall's divine interpretation of English history was, in Tillyard's opinion, so familiar to the Elizabethan playgoer, so much a part of his picture of the world, that Shakespeare did not have to spend time in his plays belaboring the obvious. Rather, the playgoer, so immersed in Hall and the homilies, The Mirror for Magistrates and morality plays, supplied his own providential framework for the Henry VI plays. To assume as much is tantamount to assuming that the Elizabethans had, by and large, but one way of viewing their own past, the way followed in Hall. Yet we are dealing with a rich and varied culture which produced in addition to Shakespeare such outstandingly diverse figures as Bacon, Marlowe, Nashe, Queen Elizabeth, Spenser, Sidney, Raleigh--the list is endless. Surely, this is a culture far too sophisticated to have foisted on it a single overriding view of its own past.

Perhaps Tillyard loses sight of the fact that Hall's chronicle, the work on which he chiefly bases his theory, was written a full forty years before the Henry VI plays first saw the light of day, and that it in turn is strongly influenced by Polydore Vergil's chronicle, a work conceived in the earliest years of sixteenth-century England. The providential theories in the chronicles, in all their innocence and simplicity, were manufactured originally for the subjects of Henry VII, a people barely recovered from a

century of bloody turmoil, a people devoid of Sidneys and Spensers and Shakespeares. To assume that such theories suited the tastes of the vast majority of Elizabeth's subjects in the very height of her reign seems to me to be quite unrealistic.

Sensing perhaps that the plays themselves fail to support Tillyard's approach, a number of Shakespearean scholars, notably Irving Ribner and Max Reese, have abandoned Tillyard cum Hall's providential highroad for what appears at first glance to be a safer and saner lowroad. Reese makes this turnoff with considerable facility in the following passage from his Cease of Majesty (1961):

> Most of the characters in Shakespeare's histories recognize in this way God's association with their destiny, and feel that their own lives are part of a larger pattern in which they may be already foredoomed to success or failure. But the humanist belief in the dignity and self-determination of man would not permit him to be merely the plaything of fate, even if it were God who directed it. There was a sense in which man's independent choice might fulfill the will of God. 12

Irving Ribner in his earlier work, The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare (1957), takes a similar stand:

> . . . that man had some measure of control over his own destiny, that by his reason and strength he might determine political success or failure--this had been a basic principle of Greco-Roman historiography, but it had been obscured during the Christian Middle Ages with their de contemptu mundi emphasis upon the insignificance of human affairs and their doctrine of the helplessness of man in the face of God's will and the power of divine providence as the governing force of the universe. 13

Clearly, Ribner and Reese are nudging the plays away from Tillyard's providential-deterministic tradition toward a more humanistic tradition wherein man is viewed as having

far more control over his actions. Gone in the process is Tillyard's spectre of the Almighty punishing England under Henry VI for the sins of his grandfather Bolingbroke. Thus freed, the plays are seen in the light of a later historical tradition, a key element of which, according to Ribner, "was not to present truth about the past for its own sake; [historians were] to use the past for didactic purposes, and writers of history, both non-dramatic and dramatic, altered their material freely in order better to achieve their didactic aims."[14]

Having thus defined the plays as teaching aids sacrificing, wherever necessary, historical truth for didactic point, Ribner finds in them a lesson not unlike the one pointed out so frequently in the literature unearthed by Tillyard, the lesson that rebellion against a lawful head of state leads to bloodshed and misery:

> Shakespeare is presenting a portrait of decades of civil chaos as a reminder to his contemporary Englishmen of what might again return upon the death of the now old and childless Elizabeth, should the succession to the throne be left uncertain and powerful nobles again vie with one another for the crown. 15

> Shakespeare censures rebellion against the de facto ruler, and an important purpose [of the plays] is to teach the sinfulness of such rebellion. 16

At best such a view of the Henry VI plays is limited, at worst false. It is limited because it does not take into account the wide range of human responses which the plays are capable of eliciting. True, whole sections can be interpreted as reminders of the wrongness or sinfulness of

rebellion "against the de facto ruler"--Winchester's evil plots against the good Duke Humphrey, the King's Protector, can certainly be viewed in this light. So can Margaret's selfishly motivated attempts to control the King, Suffolk's placement of private need over public duty, and a host of other events in which the plays' less admirable characters are given prominence. Still, there are just as many instances in which precisely the opposite effects may be produced. Shakespeare's York, for example, is painted in colors far different from those used on Winchester, Margaret or Suffolk. He is no stage villain eliciting hisses of contempt. He is far more complex--a rather likable sort, a competent leader, an intelligent fellow who knows, more often than not, how to get what he wants without inconveniencing those around him unnecessarily. He is a good soldier, a good politician, a good statesman--far better suited for the throne than is his Lancastrian cousin Henry.

As York in 2 Henry VI takes the highroad in moving us toward a kindlier view of rebellion, so is Jack Cade dramatized as a traveller on the lowroad. He is free from so much which imprisons the rest of us--he is free to lie, to riot, to pillage, to kill, to carry out his wildest dreams. He does what we can only think about doing secretly. He is a dionysian hero. Of course, he is destroyed in the end lest we move over to his side. Yet in his sweep toward power, who is to say that he does not sweep his audience along with him?

Undeniably, we in the twentieth century are moved, to some degree, to want characters like York and Cade to succeed. Yet Ribner would have us believe that our Elizabethan counterparts were unable to evoke a similar response. He offers as proof differences in education, but neglects a great deal more that makes us one with them--a preference, on a rational level, for the shining promise of Yorkist order over the bleak reality of Lancastrian disorder and, on an irrational level, an eagerness to exchange even York's promise for Cade's freedom from restraint.

There is yet another reason for questioning the propriety of Ribner's view of the plays. He assumes that they were written in the hope of saving Elizabethan England from repeating past mistakes. Supporting such an attitude is the belief that people are capable of learning from past mistakes, specifically that the Elizabethans can be programmed not to rebel against their head of state by being reminded of the disastrous results following in the wake of such actions in England's past. One would assume that if the author of the Henry VI plays shared such a belief he would have reinforced his audience's faith in it ever so often by portraying some of his characters avoiding past mistakes. Actually, just the opposite happens throughout the plays.

A clear example is contained in Shakespeare's 1 Henry VI. The English barons jar among themselves no fewer than four times. Each such event is followed by precisely the same effect--disastrous losses of territory and life abroad.

Yet in each ensuing jar not one of the disputants shows the slightest indication of having benefited from his participation in previous jars. None recognizes the insidious pattern. As a result none knows enough to step outside it.

The same holds true in 2 Henry VI. Here certain characters are continually being outguessed and put down by other characters. As such incidents of outdistancing are repeated, none of the losing characters is allowed to become any more capable of defending himself. Gloucester, typical of such characters, does nothing to defuse the plots against his position as Protector and, ultimately, against his life. Shakespeare, rather than allowing him to grow adept at protecting himself against his enemies, dramatizes him as continuing to live in a false state of security until (alas) time runs out and he is simply murdered in his bed.

A similar pattern is repeated in the third play of the trilogy. Here the Yorkists rise to the top of the political heap on no fewer than three occasions. Yet each time they fall from power they are presented without exhibiting the slightest sense of having learned from experience how to stay one step ahead of their Lancastrian adversaries. Instead, similar mistakes and misfortunes trip them up each time. Even at the close of the play, with Yorkist Edward on the throne and all of his major Lancastrian adversaries out of the way, there is not the slightest indication that he has learned from past experience how to stay where he is. Just the contrary is so. Before his investiture as king,

his brother Clarence betrays him. Yet, far from learning from this to keep a wary eye on his brothers, he assumes a false sense of security at the end of the play, remaining utterly oblivious to his brother Richard's plans to replace him on the throne.

Henry VI in this respect is no better than his Yorkist adversaries. What accounts for his inability to learn from past mistakes is his failure to size up situations correctly, a shortcoming highlighted by Shakespeare in the Simpcox episode in 2 Henry VI. While on a hunting expedition with his wife and advisors, Henry bumps into a ragged fellow, Saunder Simpcox, who claims that though born blind he can now see, thanks to a miracle recently enacted at a nearby shrine. The King's companions, smelling a rat, make light of the matter. But Henry, gullible to the last, offers thanks to the Almighty for having performed a miracle, even though he has not yet ascertained whether Simpcox is telling the truth. It is left to Henry's loyal advisor, Gloucester, to put Simpcox to the test. Without much effort he tricks Simpcox into distinguishing colors, thereby proving that his claim is quite without factual basis. Because the King departs sadder but no wiser, we are left to conclude that Henry has learned nothing from this mistake. Thus does he, like his Yorkist adversaries, argue against Ribner's contention that the plays were written in the hope of saving Elizabethan England from repeating past mistakes.

What makes Henry an even less likely supporter of

Ribner's contention is his refusal to admit to himself that he is a maker of mistakes. This fatal flaw in his character is predicated on his penchant for holding the Almighty responsible for "acts of retribution" which, to an audience, appear to be catastrophes stemming from Henry's incompetence in handling his office. The play is studded with incidents illustrating the phenomenon. Upon learning of serious losses in France after his disastrous appointment of York and Somerset as joint commanders, Henry responds with a self-serving "God's will be done" (III.i.86). Upon hearing of Gloucester's death shortly after abandoning him to his enemies, Henry professes, "But how he died God knows, not Henry" (III.ii.131). Venturing an opinion that violent hands were laid on his former Protector's life, Henry is quick to add, half apologetically, that "judgment only doth belong to Thee" (III.ii.140). Thus, by not judging others he is not obliged to judge himself, nor to learn from such judgments. With such an attitude, he is hardly in a position to encourage us to have faith in our ability to learn from past mistakes--as he would have to were he to support Ribner's contention. Since there are no characters in the plays who learn from past mistakes, one can only conclude that the plays by offering us no models are not encouraging us to learn from past mistakes.

Yet another reason for eschewing a view of the Henry VI plays as a tidy little moral lesson on the folly of rebellion is also due to the kinds of mistakes Henry makes.

As the de facto head of state through the better part of the trilogy he would, according to Ribner, be entitled to unswerving loyalty from his subjects. Thus Ribner's remark: "Shakespeare censures rebellion against the de facto ruler."[17] In theory, no doubt, Ribner is correct in reasoning that rebellion would cease if everyone remained unswervingly loyal to a de facto head of state. But what he seems to have lost sight of is that Shakespeare's plays, far from recommending such behavior under Henry VI, present their audience with a nation ruled by a king under whom such loyal behavior is ruled out. This is so because Henry is presented as acting in such a way as to perpetuate dissent among his subjects. Ultimately, he becomes so inept as to tempt even his most loyal subjects into acts of treason against the crown.

Shakespeare illustrates Henry's knack for perpetuating dissent among his subjects through his blundering attempts to mediate between Winchester and Gloucester, vying barons under his authority. Both are sworn enemies to one another. Each will do anything to remove the other from power. Yet the King, rather than initiating any practical measures to resolve their conflict, relies on mere verbal contracts to heal their bone-deep rift. It is difficult to view forthcoming broils between Winchester and Gloucester outside the light of their sovereign's inability to keep them effectively apart. As a result, we are encouraged in the plays to view Henry VI himself as a cause of civil disorder. In the light of such evidence, one can only suspect

that Ribner's stand is inconsistent with the plays' thrust. For on the one hand Ribner views the plays as tracts against civil disorder based on an espousal of complete loyalty to a de facto head of state, while on the other hand the plays themselves portray the de facto head of state as a cause of civil disorder.

Further evidence along these lines crops up in Shakespeare's presentation of Henry's idiotic actions in resolving a conflict between Somerset and York. Like Winchester and Gloucester, each has absolutely no trust or use for the other. In the play they are dramatized as not hiding their feelings from each other, from their fellow barons, or from their monarch. The major characters in the plays know that they are sworn enemies who will do anything to undermine each other. Yet Henry, in spite of the facts and contrary to all sense of reason, places France under their joint command. Severe territorial losses result, followed by further dissent at home. And all because of Henry.

Henry is dramatized as perpetuating dissent in yet another way, by increasing the power of those most likely to undermine his regime. To Richard Plantagenet, whose father committed an act of treason against his father, Henry restores all titles and properties. This he does in spite of the fact that Richard gives him no reason to believe that he, Richard, will be any more loyal to Henry VI than his father was to Henry V. He commits a similar blunder by failing to stand in the way of Winchester's elevation to

Cardinal. His father, realizing that Winchester's loyalties lie closer to Rome than Westminster, blocked such an advancement, fearing that Winchester, with his foreign connections, might get out of line. No such consideration directs his son's hand. As a result Winchester is equipped under the rule of Henry VI to commit acts of disruption which heretofore were beyond his capabilities. In addition to strengthening Winchester's hand, by willfully discharging York from his position as Regent of France he makes it possible for a potential rival to his throne to return to England and plot against him. As if this were not enough, Shakespeare shows him later bestowing a dukedom on Suffolk, a subject who has already done much to undermine the regime. Far from being portrayed, as Ribner would have us believe, as a king entitled to his subjects' unswerving loyalty, Henry is shown time and time again committing acts which elicit precisely the opposite responses.

Very little in the plays militates against these responses. In fact, Shakespeare deliberately emphasizes Henry VI's role in creating political chaos in his treatment of one of the most important events in the trilogy--Henry's decision to marry Margaret of Anjou. An agreement has already been reached for Henry to marry the daughter of the Earl of Armagnac, kinsman to King Charles of France. A large dowry is promised, plus a chance for England to end once and for all its bloody and costly broils on French soil. Gloucester argues in favor of Henry marrying the Earl's

daughter, pointing out the advantages sure to result from such a union. Suffolk on the other hand argues in favor of Henry marrying Margaret of Anjou, in spite of the fact that she, unlike the Earl's daughter, would come to him without a penny for his coffers or an olive branch from France. Persuaded by Suffolk to break his royal oath to Armagnac and marry Margaret, Henry succeeds only in straining his subjects' bonds of loyalty to him by choosing a mere nobody over a wealthy kinswoman to the King of France. As if this were not enough, he signs a grossly unfavorable treaty with France, giving up without a whimper the very lands that his father spent a lifetime conquering. Thus is Henry once more portrayed as a source of disorder in the plays. And as long as he remains so, he cannot function in agreement with Ribner's contention that "Shakespeare censures rebellion against the de facto ruler."

Clearly the plays fit no more securely into Ribner's humanistic-didactic framework than they do into Tillyard's medieval-providential framework. Before going on, however, to the problem of how Shakespeare actually confronts English history, it might be helpful to view the work of Tillyard and Ribner from a greater distance, in the hope that what is thereby discerned may be of some help to future critics of these plays.

Both err in failing to view the Henry VI plays as a trilogy of plays in spite of the fact that they can be taken for nothing but plays. Tillyard treats them as though they

were dramatized versions of Hall, a chronicle in dramatic format as it were, while Ribner assumes that they are dramatized homilies with humanistic overtones. What results is a view of the trilogy as a mere mirror of its literary sources, and not what it is, an original dramatic work in its own right.

It is a pity to arduously uncover an artist's source materials and then to treat them as originals that the artist merely duplicated. So much more could be done with more discriminating eyes. Viewing an artist's sources as the very stuff out of which a finished product, a play, is manufactured, one is presented with an opportunity to reconstruct a picture of the artist selecting this and discarding that, refashioning and reshaping, taking a bit of material apart and creating out of it a different, a better, pattern, working away until new effects, new ideas, new sensations evolve.

I propose to outline just such an approach here, first by locating and briefly describing Shakespeare's sources and then by defining my system for tracing their development into drama. With regard to locating Shakespeare's sources, I have elected to confine myself to well within the range of probability, lest I repeat the kinds of errors found in the historical studies of the plays cited above. As to my system for tracing their development into drama, I have tried to make it as needlessly complex and as all-encompassing as possible.

With regard to the first of these tasks, few problems

arise in locating the literal and unvarnished sources of the Henry VI plays. Based on a painstaking search through narrative and dramatic materials, Geoffrey Bullough in Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare (1960) assures us of the following with regard to 1 Henry VI:

> The chief historical sources used in the play are Edward Hall's The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancastre and Yorke (1548-50), or (less probably) Richard Grafton's A Chronicle at Large (1569) together with Raphael Holinshed's The Chronicles of Englande, Scotlande, and Irelande (Vol. III, 2nd edn. 1587), and Robert Fabyan's The New Chronicles of England and France.[18]

With the exception of a few episodes involving Joan of Arc in Holinshed and Shakespeare's invention of the episode featuring the Countess of Auvergne (the only incidence of the invention of a major character in the play), every significant event in 1 Henry VI can be traced back to Hall. The same holds true in 2 Henry VI, with the exception of the Simpcox incident, contained in Grafton, and a few minor touches in the Jack Cade scenes, also in Grafton, specifically in his description of the Peasant's Revolt of 1381. Bullough refers to Hall again as the main historical source for 3 Henry VI. The only significant missing event is Richard Crookback's murder of Henry. Bullough notes in passing that The Mirror for Magistrates anticipated Shakespeare in making Richard the murderer of the King but, he adds, "there is no certainty of direct influence here." Based on these findings, it seems reasonable to treat Hall as Shakespeare's major source and Holinshed, Grafton and The Mirror for Magistrates as minor sources. Accordingly, I

will work primarily from Hall and refer to other sources wherever the occasion arises.

In the following chapters, it is with an eye out for what Shakespeare as a dramatist did to these materials that I study each play's development. In that study, treating each play separately, I first identify the elements in Hall from which a play's basic structure is derived: the structure of 1 Henry VI is derived from three maxims in Hall dealing with leadership, discord and destiny; the structure of 2 Henry VI comprises an imaginative reconstruction of Gloucester's downfall and York's rise to power; the structure of 3 Henry VI develops out of an alternating series of Yorkist rises and falls from power.

Next, I trace the development of each play out of these elements. In my analysis of 1 Henry VI, I first locate Hall's three maxims in his Chronicle and then show how they are incorporated into the play's opening scene. Moving into the body of the play, I then show how Shakespeare extended this pattern of dramatized maxims into subsequent scenes. In my analysis of 2 Henry VI, I demonstrate how Shakespeare's development of Gloucester's downfall is based on suggestions in Hall of incidents of threat and setback. With regard to Shakespeare's development of York's rise to power in the same play, I show how it is based on accounts in Hall of the deaths of York's enemies. My analysis of 3 Henry VI shows how each Yorkist rise and fall is constructed out of dramatized "reasons" taken largely from Hall.

Always implicit in these studies is the conviction that the plays are nothing more than plays and that Shakespeare is, first and foremost, a dramatist. Accordingly, I am concerned with the development of historical drama and not dramatized history or moralities in dramatic format. As a result, I place great emphasis on dramatic considerations in accounting for what Shakespeare did to his source materials to make them into plays. His additions and deletions, his changes in characterization, his re-sequencing of events, his concern with confrontation--all are explained in terms of Shakespeare's needs as a dramatist.

CHAPTER I

FOOTNOTES

[1]E. M. W. Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays (New York, 1944), p. 57.

[2]Henry VI, Part One, ed. by Sylvan Barnet (New York, 1967). All quotations from 1 Henry VI are taken from this edition.

[3]Henry VI, Part Two, ed. by Sylvan Barnet (New York, 1967). All quotations from 2 Henry VI are taken from this edition.

[4]Henry VI, Part Three, ed. by Sylvan Barnet (New York, 1968). All quotations from 3 Henry VI are taken from this edition.

[5]Tillyard, p. 125.

[6]Ibid., p. 129.

[7]Ibid., p. 189.

[8]Ibid., p. 190.

[9]Ibid., p. 211.

[10]Ibid., p. 217.

[11]Ibid., p. 171.

[12]M. M. Reese, The Cease of Majesty (London, 1961), p. 15.

[13]Irving Ribner, The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare (New York, 1957), p. 16.

[14]Ibid., p. 8.

[15]Ibid., p. 96.

[16]Ibid., p. 108.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Geoffrey Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare, III (New York, 1960), p. 25.

CHAPTER II

PLAYING WITH MAXIMS: 1 HENRY VI

Edward Hall (1498-1547), Cambridge graduate, lawyer, member of Parliament and a keen supporter of Henry VIII, seems to have had a much more secular mind than Tillyard's reading of him would suggest. He began about 1530 to write a history of England from the reign of Richard II to his own times. Published posthumously in 1548, The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancastre & Yorke is divided into eight sections, each covering the reign of an English king. His history "compiled and gathered (and not made) out of diverse writers, as well forayn as Englishe" (vii), Hall absorbed from them not only the raw facts of history but a number of historical maxims as well. Three occur in the sections coinciding with 1 Henry VI. One deals with leadership, another with discord, and a third with destiny. These maxims serve Shakespeare as the basis for his organization of 1 Henry VI. I will now identify them as they appear in Hall. Then I will trace their development in the plays.

In his maxim on leadership, Hall views the sudden death of a towering national leader as a cause of catastrophe. This maxim is introduced, appropriately enough, in Hall's made-up version of "an exhortacion of kyng Henry the fift made a lytle before his death":

> no doubt but this my sodaine chaunce molesteth your heartes and disquieteth your senses, and not without a cause, you lament the calamitie and mischaunce that is like to fall on your countrey because that I in this troublous worlde and tempestious season leue you destitute of a gouernour and ruler . . . [p. 111]. 1

History more than amply confirms Henry's fears in the first few years of his son's reign--at home eruptions break out between various palace factions hungering for absolute authority, while abroad the French enemy, only recently conquered by Henry V, grows more confident in the light of English disunity.

Just at a point when England seems to have recovered from the effects of Henry's death, an occasion arises for Hall to repeat his leadership maxim. The time is 1428, the setting the siege of Orleans, the subject another towering military leader, the Earl of Salisbury, mortally wounded by a piece of ordnance fired from within the city:

> What detriment, what damage, what losse succeded to the Englishe publique wealthe, by the sodain death of this valiaunt capitain, not long after his departure, manifestly apered. For high prosperitie, and great glory of the Englishe nacion in the parties beyond the sea, began shortely to fall, and litle and litle to vanishe awaie: which thing although the Englishe people like a valiant & strong body, at the firste tyme like a pestilent humor, which succesciuely a litle and litle corrupteth all the membres, and destroyeth the body. For after the death of this noble man, fortune of warre began to change, and triumphant victory began to be darckened. Although the death of therle were dolorous to all Englishmen, yet surely it was moste dolorous to the duke of Bedford, regent of Fraunce, as he whiche had loste his right hand or lacked his weapon, when he should fight with his enemie [p. 146].

Again history confirms Hall's maxim in a series of startling English setbacks. Less than six months after Salisbury's

death the English are forced to give up their siege of Orleans. The French, flushed with victory, advance from Orleans through the Duchy of Champagne, conquering towns and fortresses along the way, not stopping until Charles in 1429 is proclaimed King in Rheims, France's traditional city of royal investiture.

In 1435, with England now fully recovered from the shock of Salisbury's sudden death, the Duke of Bedford, Regent of France since the death of his brother Henry V, is himself suddenly carried away. Here is an event which provides Hall with yet another opportunity to voice his maxim on leadership:

> After the death of this noble prince, and valeaunt capitain, the bright sunne, that commonly shone in Fraunce faire and beautifully vpon the Englishmen, began to be cloudie, and daily to waxe darker: for the Frenchmen seyng the chief capitain taken awaie, began not only to refuse their obedience, and loyaltie, which thei had sworne, and promised to the kyng of Englande, but takyng swearde in hande, rebelled, persecuted, and openly defied the Englishmen . . . [p. 178].

Following Bedford's death, the English lost their possessions between the rivers Somme and Marne, including Paris, plus a number of Norman towns on the Brittan frontier. Thus once more history conforms to Hall's maxim on leadership.

Every bit as relevant to this period in history is Hall's maxim on discord which, simply stated, views divisiveness at home as a cause of territorial loss abroad. Hall invokes this maxim in his coverage of Bedford's 1431 dispute with Winchester--"thorowe which unhappie deuision, the glory of thenglishmen within the realme of Fraunce, began firste

to decaye, and fade awaie in Fraunce" (p. 162). He repeats it in his explanation of territorial losses following Bedford's death--". . . either the disdayne emongst the chief peres of the realme of Englande (as you have hearde) or the negligence of the kynges counsaill, (which did not with quicke sight, forsee the present thinges for to come) was the loss of the whole dominion of Fraunce, between the rivers of Soame and Marne" (p. 179). Hall might just as well have applied his maxim on discord to a number of similar occurrences, among them Gloucester's 1426 and 1441 Parliament squabbles with Winchester, Gloucester's self-aggrandizing military ventures in the 1420s and, in the next decade, Somerset's hindrance of York from carrying out his duties as French Regent.

In his third maxim Hall gives as a reason for man's failure to control his destiny his inability to foresee the consequences of his actions. A case in point is Henry VI's restoration of York's titles and rights at the conclusion of the 1427 Parliament at Westminster:

> . . . the kyng caused a solemne feast, to be kept on Whitson sondaie, on the whiche daie, he created Richard Plantagenet, sonne and heire to the erle of Cambridge (whom his father at Hampton, had put to execution, as you before haue hearde) Duke of Yorke, not forseyng before, that this preferment should be his destruccion, nor that his sede should, of his generacion, bee the extreme ende and finall confusion [p. 138].

Hall applies the same maxim to Bedford's refusal a year later to cede Orleans to the Duke of Burgundy:

> . . . the Regent answered the dukes ambassadors, that it was not honorable nor yet consonaunte to reason, that

> the kyng of Englande should beate the bushe and the duke of Burgoyn should haue the birdes: Wherfore sithe the right was his, the war was his, and the charge was his, he saied that the citie ought not to be yelded to no other person, but to hym or to his vse and profite. By this litle chance, succeded a great change in thenglishe affaires, for a double mischief of this answere rose and sprang out. For first the duke of Burgoyne, began to conceiue a certain priuye grudge against thenglishmen for this cause: thynking them to enuy & beare malice against his glory and profite, for the whiche in continuance of time he became their enemy, and cleued to the French Kyng. Secondly, the Englishemen left the siege of Orleaunce, whiche by this treaty they might haue had to frend, or to haue continued neutre, till their Lord the duke of Orleaunce, or the erle of Angulosie his brother wer deliuered out of the captiuitie of the English people. But if men wer angels and forsaw thynges to come, they like beastes would not ronne to their confusion: but fortune which gideth the destiny of man, will turne her whele as she listeth, whosoeuer saith nay [p. 147].

Having concluded locating these three maxims in Hall, I will now trace their development in the play. It would not be far off the mark to describe 1 Henry VI as a full-length dramatization of Hall's three maxims on leadership, discord and destiny. All three fill the play from beginning to end, much like musical themes in a symphony. Moreover, each is shown off to greatest advantage when reflecting Shakespeare's success in turning narrative into drama, static statement into pulsating action.

Each maxim is dramatized in the play's opening scene with remarkable success. Abjuring Hall's windy and wooden Henry V deathbed speech as a vehicle for introducing the leadership maxim, Shakespeare chooses a far more fluid device. Henry is already dead. His survivors are assembled around his coffin bickering over the causes of his death.

Bedford blames the "bad revolting stars" (I.i.4), Exeter the "subtle witted French" (25), while Gloucester singles out Winchester's diabolical churchmen. Thus, with remarkable economy does Shakespeare show the earliest signs of catastrophe filling the void left by the death of a great national leader.

Using Gloucester and Winchester as the basis for his dramatization of Hall's maxim on discord, Shakespeare provides them with an opening-scene squabble growing out of Gloucester's accusation, already used in illustrating the maxim on leadership, that Winchester hastened Henry's death. From that starting point Gloucester accuses Winchester of religious hypocrisy and greed, with Winchester firing back that Gloucester seeks to "command the prince and realm" (38). Thus is the note of discord again sounded in the play. The dramatization of the maxim on discord is completed a few seconds later with the arrival of a messenger announcing sad tidings from France:

> Of loss, of slaughter, and discomfiture:
> Guienne, Champagne, Rheims, Orleans,
> Paris, Guysors, Poictiers, are all quite lost.
> (61)

Through the simple device of following an incident of discord with an announcement of loss, Shakespeare establishes in the minds of the audience, subconsciously at this point, a cause-and-effect relationship between these two events. The relationship is reinforced a few minutes later through repeating the same sequence of events, beginning with a

quarrel between Bedford and Gloucester resulting from Gloucester's overeagerness to turn back the tide of English defeat. "Bedford, if thou be slack I'll fight it out" (99), threatens hotheaded Gloucester. "Gloucester," Bedford lashes back, "why doubt'st my forwardness? / An army have I mustered in my thoughts, / Wherewith already France is overrun" (102). But before Bedford has a chance to carry out his plans another messenger arrives with a fait accompli every bit as disturbing as that brought by his predecessor: Talbot, great Talbot, "encompassed by three and twenty thousand of the French" (113), has been captured at Orleans. With the repetition of this sequence of events over so short a span of time, Shakespeare has in effect subtly programmed his audience to expect the cacophony of territorial loss to follow discordant soundings among England's leaders. As we shall see later, these expectations are more than fulfilled throughout the play.

Shakespeare illustrates Hall's maxim on destiny by showing in his opening scene characters utterly oblivious to the pattern of events unfolding before their eyes. It never occurs to Gloucester or Winchester or Bedford that their arguments may be precipitating announcements of territorial loss and military defeat. Nor is Bedford, Exeter or Gloucester aware that their disagreements over the causes of Henry V's death are themselves a result of it. Instead, they go their merry ways, utterly oblivious to the consequences of their own and other people's actions. Only the audience,

from its privileged vantage point well removed from the arena of action, can make such vital connections.

In order to carry over Hall's maxims, Shakespeare was forced at times to falsify history. Restricting my attention to the opening scene as representative of Shakespeare's treatment of history throughout the play, I plan here to identify the kinds of historical falsifications committed by Shakespeare. Next, I will determine the benefits Shakespeare derived as a dramatist from falsifying history.

The kinds of historical falsifications in the opening scene of 1 Henry VI are as many as they are frequent. Continually, incidents are being made up, circumstances altered, sequences rearranged; the lives of some characters prolonged, those of others shortened; a few are relocated to England from Hall's place for them in France, while others take the opposite route. The incidence of such occurrences is high in the opening scene, particularly with regard to dates. A person casually familiar with English history would be startled by the sudden jump of events from Henry's death in 1422 to the lifting of the siege of Orleans seven years later, with Gloucester's feud with Winchester, the scramble among them and Exeter for control over the infant King, Charles' investiture at Rheims, and a few military setbacks haphazardly squeezed in between. Anyone thoroughly familiar with the period would be even more startled by the number of opening-scene events, particularly military events, which fall outside this seven-year span of time. The first

messenger, in a single breath, accounts for seven military defeats spanning in Hall over a full score of years, from the 1429 fall of Orleans to the 1451 loss of Guienne. Also, Talbot's capture is announced in the play after the French King's coronation at Rheims when in fact the opposite sequence of events took place. Furthermore, many of the details associated with Talbot's capture are fabricated. The stakes plucked out of hedges used by his men in place of pikes, the period of time spent on the battlefield, the hundreds slain by Talbot singlehandedly, the "base Walloon" (I.i.137) credited with wounding Talbot--all these are pure figments of Shakespeare's imagination, albeit artfully interwoven with hard-core facts and details from Hall such as the 6,000 troops under Talbot compared to 20,000 French, John Fastolfe's cowardly escape and the capture of Lord Hungerford and Lord Scales along with Talbot.

What is perhaps most reassuring about Shakespeare's tamperings with history, both here and elsewhere, is his refusal to go against the grain of Hall's facts without having good reason for doing so. Thus the lumping together of the loss of Guienne with that of Orleans heightens the effect of Gloucester's squabble with Winchester; the interweaving of fact and fiction in the description of Talbot's capture adds detail to an otherwise sketchy scene; the reordering of the Dauphin's coronation and Talbot's capture adds much upward movement to what in Hall is a singularly flat progression of events. As for his telescoping of

events over a seven-year period into a single scene, it is difficult to imagine any other way for a dramatist to come to terms with Hall's maxims, illustrated as they are in Hall by events separated by huge stretches of time. One such illustration, related to Hall's maxim on leadership, commences with Henry V's death in 1422 but the resulting catastrophes do not begin to occur with force and clarity until the fall of Orleans a full seven years later. Events illustrating Hall's maxim on discord are no more cooperative, with Gloucester's 1426 Parliament squabble with Winchester followed by two full years of events relatively free of catastrophe--for the historian a mere flash in the pan of time but for the playwright an interminable stretch of time. Even longer stretches of time separate events illustrating Hall's maxim on destiny. Henry's confirmation of York's rights in 1429 is separated by over twenty years from York's first public act of betrayal against his sovereign. Likewise, Hall's list of the major consequences of Henry's marriage to Margaret--Henry's deposition, Margaret's exile, their son's death, the ruination of their Lancastrian supporters--are separated from that event by as much as twenty-five years. Shakespeare perceived in the telescoping device a solution to the problem of reducing years of history into hours of drama. It is to his credit, moreover, that through this device he not only retained but refined as well the wisdom of Hall's maxims.

In addition to falsifying history, Shakespeare went

against the grain of his source materials in yet another way: he omitted Hall's Almighty. That he did this I have already indicated in my introduction. But now I would like to explore his motives for doing so. One obvious reason is that it freed him to substitute for Hall's grey and dreary Almighty (the ever-present backstage meddler) supernatural forces more likely to stir the imagination--Bedford's bad revolting stars and comets brandishing their crystal tresses in the sky; Exeter's subtle-witted French conjurers and sorcerers mumbling their magic verses; Gloucester's diabolical churchmen plotting Henry's death. A showman in the literal sense of the word, Shakespeare chose for his opening action the colorful over the invisible, the moving object over the unseen and unmoved mover. What motivated Shakespeare to omit Hall's Almighty is thus not all that different from what motivated him to change his source materials in other respects. Always, he places dramatic requirements over historical or ideological considerations.

Having accounted for Shakespeare's transference of Hall's three maxims into the play's opening scene, I plan now to do the same for the rest of the play. First, I will deal with Shakespeare's transference of Hall's maxims on leadership and discord, showing how the play's architecture develops out of them. Then, backing away from the play, I will attempt to present an anatomical overview. Lastly, I will show how Shakespeare infused this structure with Hall's

maxim on destiny.

With regard to Shakespeare's transference of Hall's maxim on leadership into the rest of the play, he took a cue from Hall's preoccupation with the deaths of Salisbury, Bedford and Talbot, and used these events as the basis for further examples of catastrophe following in the wake of a great leader. Monotony is forestalled by providing each doomed character with a few death-scene touches all his own. Salisbury is the only one of the three to be wounded onstage and rendered speechless ("Speak Salisbury; at least, if thou canst speak" [I.iv.73]) and mutilated ("One of thy eyes and thy cheek's side struck off!" [75]). Death by natural causes along with his position at death--he dies in a chair--set Bedford apart from the rest. As for Talbot, he dies with his son.

The catastrophic effects developing out of each death also differ markedly from one another. An onstage English rout by the French under Pucelle follows Salisbury's death at Orleans, Burgundy's defection to the French follows close on the heels of Bedford's death, while Talbot's results in a reinvigorated Dauphin regaining Paris.

Though Hall deals explicitly with only negative aspects in his maxim on leadership, pointing out that loss and defeat follow in the wakes of the deaths of Henry, Salisbury and Bedford, Shakespeare employs a corollary maxim, with Talbot and Joan used to show victory following in the wake of sound and effective leadership. In the concluding Orleans

scene, the charismatic Talbot illustrates this maxim by winning back Orleans against insurmountable odds. His troops demoralized by Salisbury's death and the ensuing conquest of Orleans by the Dauphin and Joan, Talbot rallies himself and his men with the following speech:

> And here will Talbot mount, or make his grave.
> Now, Salisbury, for thee, and for the right
> Of English Henry, shall this night appear
> How much in duty I am bound to both.
>
> (II.i.37)

The effects of this speech are as sudden as they are impressive. Caught off guard, the French "leap o'er the walls in their shirts" (s.d.38), abandoning Orleans to Talbot and his troops. So feared is Talbot that the mere mention of his name sends the remaining Frenchmen scurrying for safety. Talbot pulls off a similar feat before the dying Bedford. Eager to score one more victory for his chair-ridden leader, he sets upon the French, causing them to abandon Rouen.

Joan illustrates the same positive corollary to Hall's leadership maxim, but from a French perspective. Introduced to the Dauphin at a low point in his career, she rallies him with the following inspirational call to arms:

> Assigned am I to be the English scourge.
> This night the siege assuredly I'll raise;
> Expect Saint Martin's summer, halcyon's days,
> Since I have entered into these wars.
> Glory is like a circle in the water,
> Which never ceaseth to enlarge itself
> Till by broad spreading it disperse to nought.
> With Henry's death the English circle ends;
> Dispersed are the glories it included;
> Now am I like that proud insulting ship
> Which Caesar and his fortune bare at once.
>
> (I.ii.139)

The effects of her exhortation, though not as impressive to be sure as Talbot's, are nevertheless significant. Joan is shown a few scenes later "driving Englishmen before her" (s.d. I.v.2), fighting Talbot to a standoff, and finally tipping the scales of victory at Orleans to the French side, as she enters Orleans in spite of Talbot's attempts to keep her out of the city.

Though her victory at Orleans is short-lived, she has an opportunity later to exhibit yet another side of her controlling nature. Not above resorting to deception to achieve her ends, she gains control over Rouen by entering the city disguised with four soldiers with sacks upon their backs. Thus is victory shown resulting from craft and guile as handled by an effective leader. Joan is even craftier in winning Burgundy to her side. Her timing perfect, she makes her appeal to him shortly after Bedford's death, thereby capitalizing on the strain it has put on Burgundy's sense of loyalty to England. Gaining his attention for a moment, she suggests that the English are taking advantage of him; in an appeal to self-interest, she then warns him that "English Henry will be lord, / And thou be thrust out like a fugitive" (III.iii.67); for good measure she also sounds a note of patriotism, reminding him that as England's ally he, a Frenchman, is fighting against his own countrymen. Unable to resist such a battery of arguments, Burgundy announces, "I am vanquished," and joins the French cause.

Thus is Pucelle shown as mistress of France's destiny.

But not for long. Her victories at Orleans and Rouen are soon clouded by the return of both cities to English rule, while her victory over Burgundy, though longer lasting, does not prevent her own disastrous defeat. Abandoned by the fiends that have helped her secretly in her climb to the heights of victory, she falls into the hands of York and is soon led away to be executed at the stake. With the sudden and tragic death of Talbot in the same act, Shakespeare appears to be telling us that even the best of all possible leaders is apt to stumble in troubled times, and fall under the crushing weight of his nation's destinies.

In raising Joan and Talbot to positions of such importance in the play, Shakespeare had to take a number of liberties with source materials wherein neither character dominates the action for very long periods of time. Joan plays an important role in Hall's plot for the briefest of periods, from her discovery by the Dauphin in 1428 to her death at Rouen three short years later. Though Talbot's lifespan is longer, extending through his fatal expedition into the Acquitaine in 1453, he is neglected by Hall for long stretches of time. Between his capture at Patay in 1429 and his death at Castillon thirty-four years later, Hall rewards him with only a passing reference or two--his presence at an insignificant battle one year, his failure to achieve an equally insignificant objective another year. To rectify these "shortcomings" Shakespeare goes to Holinshed for more details on Joan--background information for the most

part--and then extends Pucelle's life over a longer period of time while shortening Talbot's. Thus, Pucelle's 1431 capture occurs in the play after Burgundy's 1435 defection to the French while Talbot's 1453 death at Bordeaux occurs before Henry's 1444 decision to marry Margaret. Thanks to this adjustment, both characters are free to do in the play what in real life was denied them. Their confrontation at Rouen, Joan's meeting with Burgundy, Joan's wonderful speech over pompous Talbot's windswept and flyblown corpse--all are fringe benefits resulting from their readjusted lifespans.

In yet another corollary to Hall's maxim on leadership, Shakespeare shows weak and ineffective leadership contributing to the catastrophes precipitated by the sudden removal of great leaders. He does this through the actions of two characters, Sir John Falstaff and Henry VI. Both have serious character flaws. Sir John is a coward, his king a fool. Sir John shows his true colors at the battle of Rouen. "Whither away, Sir John Falstaff, in such haste?" (III.ii.104) asks a captain at the siege. But a dim outline of his boisterous self in Henry IV, Sir John replies, "Whither away? To save myself by flight; / We are like to have the overthrow again" (106). Thanks to Falstaff's cowardice, his prediction almost comes true. Only the courage of Talbot in the face of Falstaff's desertion saves the day for the English. The unfortunate actions of the King, far more serious than Falstaff's, lead directly to catastrophe. In 1 Henry VI he commits two major blunders. By dividing his

forces between two sworn enemies, York and Somerset, he precipitates Talbot's downfall at Bordeaux, and by choosing Margaret over the Earl of Armagnac's daughter for his wife he precipitates the downfall of the house of Lancaster.

In Hall, Henry VI is shown in a very different light. A mere babe of nine months when his father dies, he is too young to take part in the governing process until well into the 1430s, long after many of the major events in his reign have come to pass. And even when he does come of age, he is never shown as a decision-maker by Hall. Instead, his advisors make decisions for him. Even the decision to marry Margaret is in Hall taken completely out of Henry's hands and dropped into the lap of the King's Council. In a play, however, the King's Council simply won't do to represent the foolish side of government. It is too faceless, too impersonal, too bureaucratic. Instead, individuals are needed. Shakespeare could have chosen any of a number of characters for this role. Somerset, Winchester, Suffolk, Gloucester, Exeter--all are close enough to the seat of government and dumb enough to represent its foolish side. Yet each is assigned a different role. Somerset plays a cantankerous and stiff-necked Lancastrian, Suffolk a self-centered lady's man, Winchester a conventional villain, Exeter a chorus, and Gloucester a superpatriot. That it is the King who plays the fool is yet another sign of Shakespeare's unerring dramatic sense. It makes the King, who is after all the titular character, come to life. Though in Hall a mere figurehead

lending his name and little else to the proceedings, in 1 Henry VI the King is precisely where he belongs in a play bearing his name--first in line, in the front, up ahead, illustrating all too well one of the play's central ideas.

So much for the transference of Hall's maxim on leadership into the play. With regard to Hall's maxim on discord, it is worked most efficiently into the body of the play by portraying three sets of death and military setback (already used to illustrate Hall's maxim on leadership) as the effects of acts of divisiveness among Henry V's survivors. The first such act takes place before the Tower of London and involves Gloucester with his servingmen attired in blue and Winchester with his men in yellow. This clash is followed immediately by Salisbury's death and the English loss of Orleans. The next outbreak of discord is a doubleheader, the first part involving York and his Lancastrian adversary Somerset in the Temple garden and the next a rematch between Gloucester and Winchester at Parliament-house in London. These are followed by Bedford's death and the loss of Rouen. The final set, growing out of the discord already established between York and Somerset, begins with a dispute between York's man Vernon and Somerset's man Basset before King Henry in Paris, and ends in Talbot's defeat and death on the plains of Gascony a few scenes later.

In dramatizing these events of discord, Shakespeare shows great intelligence in making the right selections from Hall. Shakespeare had five entries in Hall to choose from--

Winchester's 1426 Parliament squabble with Gloucester, Winchester's insistence in 1431 that Bedford give up the title of Regent, Bedford's military disagreements with Burgundy, Somerset's refusal to cooperate with York after he replaces Bedford as French Regent in 1435, and Gloucester's second series of squabbles with Winchester culminating at the Parliament of 1441. From this range of possibilities Shakespeare wisely decided to concentrate on the two most important combinations of discord--among Lancastrians and between Lancastrians and Yorkists. Thus, Bedford's disagreement with Burgundy falls by the wayside. Also, he featured a single pair of nobles in illustrating each combination. Thus, in establishing discord among Lancastrians Winchester's disputes with Gloucester are used to the exclusion of Winchester's far less important feud with Bedford while the establishment of discord between Yorkists and Lancastrians is based largely on interchanges between York, Somerset and their followers.

Having gone this far, Shakespeare still had to choose appropriate settings and details for each dramatization of discord. Hall provided him with a plethora of both for the feuds between Winchester and Gloucester, and Shakespeare used many of them in dramatizing their fight before the Tower of London and their subsequent clash in Parliament. Here everything from Gloucester's accusation that Winchester is a "Presumptuous priest . . . / . . . / . . . a most pernicious usurer, / Froward by nature, enemy to peace, /

Lascivious, wanton more than well beseems" (III.i.19) to Winchester's rejoinder that Gloucester wants no one but himself to be about the King comes directly from Hall.

Hall is not as cooperative, however, in providing Shakespeare with material to dramatize Somerset's discordant relationship with York. No mention of their dislike for one another is made until Somerset's objection to York's 1435 appointment to the French regentship. And even here an appropriate setting for the stage is lacking. Hall provides Shakespeare with no focal event, no direct confrontation between the two parties--nothing more than the following brief note:

> Although the duke of Yorke, bothe for birthe and corage, was worthy of this honor and preferment, yet he was so disdained of Edmund duke of Somerset, beyng cosin to the kyng, that he was promoted to so high an office, (whiche he in verie deede, gaped and loked for) that by all waies and meanes possible, he bothe hindered and detracted hym, glad of his losse, and sory of his well dooyng, causyng hym to linger in Englande, without dispatche, till Paris and the floure of Fraunce, were gotten by the Frenche kyng. The duke of Yorke, perceiuyng his euill will, openly dissimuled that, which he inwardly thought priuely, eche workyng thynges, to the others displeasure [p. 179].

Answering the need to spread out their discordant relationship over a wider stretch of time, Shakespeare simply invented the Temple garden dispute and placed it in an early part of the play. The problem of what to do afterward, however, could not be solved so easily. Staying close to Hall would mean working with static and diffuse material--both of the participants hanging around in England, one preventing the other from leaving for France where all the action is

unfolding.

Shakespeare solves this problem both imaginatively and efficiently. York and Somerset are relocated in France, where the action is. Also, they are made a part of that action. Henry VI places Somerset in charge of "troops of horsemen" (V.i.165), gives York "his bands of foot" (165), and sends them out to fight the enemy on the Gascon plains. Talbot is then brought in to serve as a suitable "effect" for their discordant behavior. Both refuse to come to Talbot's aid, York placing the blame on Somerset's refusal to supply him with his "promised supply / Of horsemen that were levied for this siege" (IV.iii.11), and Somerset placing the blame on York's desire to liquidate Talbot so that "Talbot dead, great York might bear the name" (IV.iv.9). With Talbot's death dramatized shortly thereafter, Shakespeare concludes yet another dramatized maxim on discord--albeit at the price of hastening Talbot's end by close to a score of years.

Having traced the development of Hall's maxims on leadership and discord into the play, I will now describe the overall architecture of the play by relating what has already been described to whatever remains outstanding. The maxims with which we have been dealing thus far in the play form a motif of repeated configurations in which the notes of discord, death and defeat are sounded. There are four such configurations in the play--the Henry V configuration

in which his death is followed by squabbles among his survivors and ensuing announcements of defeat; the Salisbury configuration beginning with the Tower of London squabble and followed by Salisbury's death and the loss of Orleans; then the Bedford configuration commencing with the Temple garden and Parliament-house squabbles and followed by the loss of Rouen, Bedford's death and Burgundy's defection; and finally the Talbot configuration with Vernon and Basset's squabble before King Henry VI in Paris followed by Talbot's defeat and death on the plains of Gascony.

The play moves smoothly from the cacophonous notes of defeat ending one configuration to the equally cacophonous notes of discord announcing the next by advancing across high notes of victory sounded in between. There are four such bridges in the play. The first, in which the French at Orleans are beaten back by the English, occurs in Act I, Scene ii, between the Henry V and Salisbury configurations. The next, comprising England's Act II, Scene i, recapture of Orleans and Talbot's subsequent victory over the Countess of Auvergne, is placed between the Salisbury and Bedford configurations; the next, occurring between the Bedford and Talbot configurations, is constructed out of Henry's triumphant Paris coronation; and the last, separating the Talbot configuration from the notes of discord between Gloucester and Suffolk ending the play, comprises Joan's capture and execution by the English. In order to adhere to so demanding a pattern, Shakespeare was forced to introduce a number of

startling inventions. The English victories at Orleans and Rouen, Talbot's confrontation with the Countess of Auvergne, Henry's arrival in Paris after Bedford's death, Joan's capture after Talbot's death--all are either made up or, even worse, in direct contradiction with what is presented in Hall. What they point to, however, is not so much Shakespeare's lack of interest in accuracy as his compulsion to construct a harmonious work of art out of the shrillness of raw fact. That he did create something analogous to a decent piece of music is, at the very least, a testament to his craftsmanship.

Now that I have accounted for the play's overall architecture, I am ready to show how Shakespeare infused this structure with Hall's maxim on destiny. As you will recall, I have already pointed out that Hall, in his maxim on destiny, gives as a reason for man's failure to control his destiny his inability to foresee the consequences of his actions, and that Shakespeare, in the opening scene of 1 Henry VI, illustrates this maxim by showing Henry V's surviving relatives both unable to foresee the consequences of their actions before they take place as well as unable to recognize them as consequences once they take place. A number of characters continue to act along the same lines throughout the play. Before the Tower of London and in the House of Parliament neither Winchester nor Gloucester shows the slightest awareness that their quarrels are hastening

England's loss of its French possessions. Instead, they repeat past actions while remaining utterly oblivious to future consequences. The same holds true for a number of less important characters in the play--Somerset, Sir John Falstaff, Vernon and Basset, the servingmen of Winchester and Gloucester. All are far too impulsive to reflect on the consequences of their actions. Shakespeare underlines such shortcomings by having Exeter point out, in a lengthy soliloquy delivered at the conclusion of the House of Parliament squabble between Winchester and Gloucester, precisely what Winchester and Gloucester are unable to perceive:

> Ay, we march in England or in France
> Not seeing what is likely to ensue.
> This late dissension grown betwixt the peers
> Burns under feigned ashes of forged love
> And will at last break out into a flame;
> As festered members rot but by degree
> Till bones and flesh and sinews fall away,
> So will this base and envious discord breed.
> And now I fear that fatal prophesy
> Which in the time of Henry named the Fifth
> Was in the mouth of every sucking babe,
> That Henry born at Monmouth should win all
> And Henry born at Windsor lose all:
> Which is so plain that Exeter doth wish
> His days may finish ere that hapless time.
>
> (III.ii.202)

Exeter performs the same service at the conclusion of Vernon's squabble with Basset in Paris. Here in a second soliloquy he views future ruin and confusion as the fruits of an "unkind division" between Yorkists and Lancastrians:

> Well didst thou, Richard, to suppress voice:
> For, had the passions of thy heart burst out,
> I fear we should have seen deciphered there
> More rancorous spite, more furious raging broils,
> Than yet can be imagined or supposed.
> But howsoe'er, no simple man that sees

> This jarring discord of nobility,
> This shouldering of each other in the court,
> This factious bandying of their favorites,
> But that it doth presage some ill event.
> 'Tis much when scepters are in children's hands,
> But more when envy breeds unkind division;
> There comes the ruin, there begins confusion.
> (IV.ii.194)

Again, after Winchester's installation as Cardinal, Exeter is brought in to mouth Henry V's prophesy, "If once he comes to be a cardinal, / He'll make his cap co-equal with the crown." Thus once more is a meaningful wedge of awareness established between audience and characters. It is as a result of such wedges that Shakespeare's audience is directed into viewing man's inability to control his destiny as resulting from his inability either to foresee the consequences of his actions or to recognize them as such once they come to pass. For never in the play does anyone but Exeter foresee or recognize internal divisiveness as a consequence of Winchester's installation as Cardinal.

In a corollary to this proposition, Shakespeare portrays York as a character who <u>controls</u> his destiny because of his ability to foresee and recognize the consequences of his actions. His mentor is his kinsman Mortimer who, on his deathbed, suggests to York that people in weak positions must size up situations lest they suffer the fatal consequences of foolhardy actions:

> With silence, nephew, be thou politic:
> Strong-fixed is the house of Lancaster,
> And like a mountain, not to be removed.
> (II.iv.103)

Following his kinsman's advice, in the following scene

York opts for silence during Winchester's House of Parliament broil with Gloucester, reasoning (in an aside) that he is not yet powerful enough to enter into affairs of state with his Lancastrian countrymen. Rewarded for his silence with the restoration of his ancestral rights by Henry in the same scene, York again weighs the consequences of his actions before delivering a suitable speech of thanks. "And so thrive Richard as thy foes may fall," says York in one of the play's few purposefully ambiguous lines ("thy" refers to either the King or "Richard"), "And as my duty springs, so perish they / That grudge one thought against your majesty" (III.i.177). York's ability to predict the consequences of his actions is crowned by his success in liquidating Talbot, one of the strongest members of the Lancastrian forces. Using Somerset's unwillingness to provide him with troops of horsemen as a convenient smokescreen, York drags his heels on the plains of Gascony while Talbot, Henry's last great general, succumbs without his much-needed aid. Thus does York remove his first great stumbling block on his way to the English throne. As long as he continues along these lines, moreover, he remains master of his destiny.

Though Hall views York in a similar light, he fails to provide him in the early years of his career with actions which serve to illustrate his ability both to predict and determine consequences. In the chronicle he is shown neither sensibly silent nor diplomatically polite before his Lancastrian adversaries at sessions of Parliament. Nor is he

provided with one occasion as French Regent to show his true Machiavellian colors. In Hall he remains very much in the background throughout this somewhat monochromatic period of English history. Only in the play is he provided with suitable silences, words and acts to establish him, in a world largely bereft of effective leaders, as a person with strong leadership abilities. It is thanks to this innovation that the play is saved, in part, from becoming a wall-to-wall illustration of Hall's very grey and dreary maxim on destiny.

Moving even further away from Hall, Shakespeare points to man's ignorance of impending doom as a determining factor in the control he exercizes over his destiny. This is the point of much of the action in Act I, Scene iv, beginning with the announcement by the master gunner of Orleans to his son that unbeknownst to the English within a tower overpeering the city, "a piece of ordnance 'gainst it have I placed, / And even these three days have I watched / If I could see them" (I.iv.17). With the audience thus clued in, the boy exits so that the action may switch abruptly to the turret above where Salisbury, Talbot and others, without the slightest knowledge of impending doom, make small talk--Salisbury welcomes Talbot back from his imprisonment, Talbot describes prison conditions, Salisbury shows appropriate concern. During their talk the master gunner's son re-enters below with a linstock or staff to hold the match for lighting a cannon and fires away, scoring a fatal hit on poor Salisbury. Thus are we shown in graphic detail Salisbury's

inability, out of ignorance, to control his destiny.

Shakespeare again points to ignorance in explaining man's inability to control his destiny by providing his audience with knowledge of York's intense dislike for his Lancastrian countrymen in Mortimer's deathbed scene and then withholding this important piece of information in the next scene from those Lancastrians who recommend restoring York to his ancestral rights. Thus are we again shown decision-makers prevented by ignorance from controlling their destinies.

A similar situation is set up later in the play as we witness Suffolk's love scene with Margaret. We learn here that Suffolk wants Margaret to become Henry's queen only so that she may thereby serve also as his mistress. This input is withheld from the King and his advisor Gloucester in a subsequent scene, however, as the King weighs Suffolk's recommendation that he marry Margaret against Gloucester's to ignore Suffolk's proprosal. Minus our input, Henry makes the wrong decision, and thus sets into motion a chain of events which eventually leads to his deposition and death.

Man's inability to control his destiny is further objectified through the shrouding of future events in a cloak of inevitability by characters with a gift for prophecy. Exeter, as has already been noted, is particularly adept in this role. So is Warwick, who makes the following prophecy at the conclusion of the Temple garden dispute between York and Somerset:

> And here I prophesy: this brawl today,
> Grown to this faction in the Temple garden,
> Shall send, between the red rose and the white,
> A thousand souls to death and deadly night.
> (II.iv.127)

Another character with similar powers is the French general at Bordeaux, who adds a note of inevitability to Talbot's approaching death with the following grim forecast:

> For ere the glass that now begins to run
> Finish the process of his sandy hour,
> These eyes, that see thee now well colored,
> Shall see thee withered, bloody, pale and dead.
> (IV.ii.38)

Slightly later, Sir William Lucy establishes a similar mood in his vivid picture of loss springing inevitably from "sleeping neglection":

> Thus, while the vulture of sedition
> Feeds in the bosom of such great commanders,
> Sleeping neglection doth betray to loss
> The conquest of our scarce-cold conqueror,
> That ever living man of memory,
> Henry the Fifth. Whiles they each other cross,
> Lives, honors, lands, and all hurry to loss.
> (IV.iv.53)

Sudden and startling announcements of changes in fortune are also used in the play to objectify man's inability to control his destiny. The announcements of the three messengers in the opening scene are used to create this effect, as is Falstaff's announcement to Henry of the Duke of Burgundy's unexpected defection to the French. Dramatizations of sudden and unpredictable changes in fortune are also used to create similar effects. The rushings offstage of the pursued who quickly return as pursuers, the sudden and unexpected death of Salisbury, Joan's capture following so

soon after the French defeat of Talbot's forces--these are but a few examples of such occurrences.

As has been pointed out earlier, Hall employs an all-seeing, all-knowing, all-controlling Almighty to express his belief in man's inability to control his destiny, while Shakespeare's characters in the play's opening scene use different metaphors--wicked Frenchmen, free-flying comets, plotting churchmen--to express the same belief. Later in the play, however, Hall's metaphorical bag is dipped into by Joan who, from her very first entrance, talks obsessively about her intimate relations with members of the Holy family. During their initial confrontation, she provides the Dauphin with the following tidbits regarding her contacts with the Holy Mother:

> Lo, whilst I waited on my tender lambs,
> And to sun's parching heat displayed my cheeks,
> God's mother deigned to appear to me
> And in a vision full of majesty
> Willed me to leave my base vocation
> And free my country from calamity.
> Her aid she promised and assured success;
> In complete glory she revealed herself;
> And whereas I was black and swart before,
> With those clear rays which she infused on me
> That beauty am I blessed with which you may see.
> (I.ii.86)

Much later in the action Joan shows herself to be a liar by addressing an appeal for help to evil spirits, "you speedy helpers, that are substitutes under the lordly monarch of the north." Foul fiends enter, every bit as powerful as Hall's Almighty, but ignore each of her four appeals before departing, thereby insuring Joan's doom--as well as dramatizing

once more man's inability to control his destiny.

On the basis of the foregoing analysis one can say indisputably that 1 Henry VI is a play with a very complex structure. To say more would be, perhaps, to say too much. A play is not necessarily better because it is complex. In fact, in the case of 1 Henry VI complexity contributes to a number of shortcomings. The play is so busy hopping from country to country and character to character that there is not time to develop anything resembling an artistic achievement. The touches of genius that can be found elsewhere in the early Shakespeare canon are simply not present in 1 Henry VI. Henry VI is hardly Richard II. He has all of the weakness of his forebear but not a jot of his poetic temperament. Likewise York, though as much a machiavel as his grandson Richard III, lacks all of his progeny's wit. It is the language spoken by the characters in 1 Henry VI that is perhaps what is most disappointing about the play. Throughout, it lacks style and distinction. Also, aside from the way they speak the characters are not very interesting. Even in their ignorance they fail to impress. Henry's mere ignorance of facts can hardly compare with Hamlet's ignorance of sanity, Lear's of humility, Macbeth's of restraint, Othello's of judgment. Everything pales in comparison. Suffolk's love scene with Margaret is, at best, a parody of Romeo's with Juliet. Exeter the Chorus would be, thank God, superfluous in a play that speaks as well for itself as Richard II.

Henry's "wrong" actions are far less interesting than Brutus' "right" actions. One could go on and on and on. Clearly, the play is but a fuzzy impression of things to come. Still, that it <u>is</u> the play of so promising a beginner is reason enough for inspecting it so closely.

CHAPTER II

FOOTNOTES

[1]Edward Hall, The Union of the Two Noble and Illustrous Families of Lancaster and York, ed. by H. Ellis (London, 1809). All quotations from Hall's Chronicle are taken from this edition.

CHAPTER III

GLOUCESTER'S FALL AND YORK'S RISE: 2 HENRY VI

A significantly smaller period of history is covered in 2 Henry VI than in 1 Henry VI. The events in 1 Henry VI, from Henry V's death in 1422 to Henry VI's marriage in 1444, cover close to one hundred folio pages in Hall, while those in 2 Henry VI, from Margaret's arrival in London in 1444 to the first Battle of St. Albans eleven years later, are packed into less than thirty folio pages.

Out of these thirty pages evolved a play comprising a step-by-step account of Gloucester's downfall and York's rise to power. It is Shakespeare's development of a play out of this simple outline which I hope to retrace in this chapter by means of the following method. Initially, I summarize a passage in Hall which corresponds to the opening action in 2 Henry VI, after which I trace its transformation into drama. Next, I deal with Shakespeare's problem of advancing the play's action to Gloucester's death. This I do through a careful study of the development of appropriate sections of the play (the remainder of Act I and much of the following two acts) from its narrative sources, with special attention paid to source materials outside the chronicles. I use essentially the same method for retracing Shakespeare's

development of York's rise to power; that is, I view it as developing from a raw narrative state in Hall and other source materials.

The passage in Hall corresponding to the play's opening action begins with Suffolk's arrival from the continent both with Margaret (who has already been married by proxy to Henry) and with a French truce. In a summary of his actions before Parliament, Hall's Suffolk omits nothing "that might sounde to his glory," nor does he open up anything "which might redound to his dispraise." Having frightened, cajoled and enticed Parliament to stand behind him, Suffolk persuades the King to "accepte and take the saied Marques [i.e., Suffolk] to his benigne grace, and especiall fauoure, as a persone, which had dooen bothe true, faithefull, and notable seruice to hym and to his Realme." Moving ever closer to England's highest seat of power, Suffolk next enlists the cooperation of the Queen in raising his "estate and degree" to that of a duke, so that he may better rule the King "at his pleasure" (p. 206).

Out of this threadbare account, Shakespeare constructed an opening scene in which Gloucester's downfall begins to unfold. This Shakespeare accomplished by reworking the chronicle account of Suffolk's victories so that they are viewed as won at Gloucester's expense. Thus, in Suffolk's initial dramatized victory, he is shown replacing Gloucester as Henry's personal advisor by causing Henry to view in a favorable light his, Suffolk's, choice of a bride for Henry.

In the play, Suffolk begins working toward this objective by painting a pretty picture of the marriage ceremony in France ("In presence of the Kings of France and Sicil, / The Dukes of Orleans, Calaber, Bretagne and Alencon, / Seven earls, twelve barons, and twenty reverend bishops" [I.i.8]), and an even prettier picture of the bride ("The happiest gift that ever marquess gave, / The fairest queen that ever king received" [16]). With one foregoing buildup, Suffolk more than succeeds in moving the King to view Margaret in a favorable light. But not to take any chances, Margaret, working in conjunction with Suffolk, responds to the King's welcome with such flowery words ("Great King of England and my gracious lord, / The mutual conference that my mind hath had / By day, by night, waking, and in my dreams, / In courtly company or at my beads, / With you mine alderliefest sovereign . . . " [28]) that the King becomes even more enchanted with her.

Having placed his sovereign in a good mood, Shakespeare has Suffolk now turn to the bad news--the loss of the duchies of Anjou and Maine. But rather than making the presentation himself, in the play he hands Gloucester the "articles of contracted peace" (I.i.40). Gloucester reads them aloud, and by doing so he himself becomes the agent of bad news. Taken unawares, Gloucester is unable to point out to the King the folly in giving up Anjou and Maine. Instead, he stutters and lets the articles fall. After Winchester finishes reading the terms of peace, the King replies, "They

please us well" (63), and rewards Suffolk with a dukedom (in actuality, conferred three years after Margaret's arrival) before exiting with the Queen and Suffolk. With Suffolk's achievement thus viewed as won at Gloucester's expense, the play's first dramatization draws to a close.

The rest of the opening scene throws light on Gloucester's plight as Protector of the Realm in the wake of these disastrous events. Hall provides very little illumination in this area--merely the observation that "good . . . noble . . . politique" Gloucester is surrounded at this crucial moment in English history by "venemous serpentes and malicious Tygers . . . as of long tyme had borne malice" (209) toward him. Out of this flicker of facts, Shakespeare constructed a complex situation in which Gloucester's vulnerability is fully realized. I plan to retrace the development of this dramatized situation from its narrative sources in two stages. First I will summarize what happens in the rest of the opening scene. Then I will attempt to view what happens as an outgrowth of its source materials.

With regard to what happens in the rest of the opening scene, initially Shakespeare has Gloucester react in rage to the remaining nobles over the fait accompli of Queen Margaret's presence and the loss of Anjou and Maine. In a passionate outburst, Gloucester bemoans the almost certain loss of territories held onto so long through his efforts along with those of his listeners--"Somerset, Buckingham, / Brave York, Salisbury . . . victorious Warwick . . . uncle

Beaufort" (I.i.88). The purport of his actions in the play is to show the politic Gloucester, even in rage, attempting to unify his peers around a common cause, England's welfare. His efforts, however, are sabotaged by his enemy of long standing, proud Winchester, who downplays England's danger of losing France--"For France, 'tis ours; and we will keep it still" (106). With two moods to choose from, Winchester's cheerfulness and Gloucester's gloom, those who speak up mirror Gloucester's mood: Salisbury calls the lost duchies "the keys of Normandy" (114); his son Warwick bemoans the loss of Anjou and Maine personally because "myself did win them both" (119); their kinswoman's husband York curses Suffolk for dimming "the honor of this warlike isle" (125).

In the play Gloucester's attempt to reinforce this mood with an allusion to the "costs and charges" (I.i.133) demanded by Suffolk for transporting Margaret from France is interrupted by Winchester who once more tries to undermine his mortal enemy, this time by casting aspersions on Gloucester's fidelity to the King--"My lord of Gloucester, now ye grow too hot: / It was the pleasure of my lord the King" (138). Once Winchester succeeds in making Gloucester lose his temper and leave the room, he works his wiles on the remaining peers. His argument that Gloucester as "next of blood, / And heir apparent to the English crown" (152) is out to seize the crown for himself provides the ambitious Buckingham and Somerset with a convenient rationale for plotting against Gloucester. After the three agree to work

"altogether with the Duke of Suffolk" (168) to "hoise Duke Humphrey from his seat" (169), Winchester leaves and Buckingham and Somerset follow, but not before agreeing among themselves to work together to keep Winchester from becoming Protector.

Left onstage are those who are not members of the House of Lancaster: Salisbury, Warwick and York. Salisbury proves to be as much an enemy to proud Winchester and ambitious Somerset and Buckingham as he is a friend to the noble Gloucester. A selfless do-gooder, he makes the following declaration:

> Join we together for the public good
> In what we can, to bridle and suppress
> The pride of Suffolk and the Cardinal
> With Somerset's and Buckingham's ambition;
> And, as we may, cherish Duke Humphrey's deeds,
> While they do tend the profit of the land.
> (I.i.204)

Echoing his father's call to patriotism, Warwick joins him in a pledge to work toward the "common profit" (206) of the country. After receiving York's promise to join them ("And so says York" [200]), father and son retire, leaving York to brood over his fate in a long soliloquy.

Alone, York reveals himself to be a very different person from Gloucester. Gloucester is "passionate," he is "cold." Gloucester works for the "public good," York only for what's good for the House of York; Gloucester operates aboveboard, York below deck, keeping his plan to seize the crown to himself for the time being. As a result York knows all there is to know about Gloucester--his patriotism, his

passionate nature, his disagreements with his Lancastrian kinsmen, his respect for York--while Gloucester knows next to nothing about York--his hatred for the House of Lancaster, his contempt for Henry's "bookish rule," his willingness to have Gloucester crushed by his enemies, his plan to strike with the surprise of a serpent and the strength of a tiger, and wrest the crown from bookish Henry's head. It is on this threatening note that the play's first scene draws to a close.

Having thus outlined Shakespeare's dramatization of Gloucester's plight, we are now in a position to better view it as an outgrowth of its sources. It is, first of all, utterly true to Hall's contention that Gloucester was a "good . . . noble and pollitique" official whose misfortune it was to be opposed by a jealous hoard of "venemous serpentes, and malicous Tygers." These attributes are carried over into the play in a number of key actions and statements. Gloucester's politic nature is revealed in his call for support under a banner of national welfare and shared inconvenience; his goodness and nobility are established by the support he elicits from the selfless Salisbury, while the serpentine and tigerish aspects of his enemies' natures are revealed in Winchester's attempts to undermine his position, Buckingham's willingness to work with Somerset to hoist him from his seat of power, York's plan to strike after the others have worn themselves out.

Shakespeare adds to this picture a few touches of his

own which, though absent from Hall, are in no way in contradiction with what is there. In Hall Gloucester's enemies are barely distinguished one from the other, but in Shakespeare they are. Winchester is too proud; blinded by too high an opinion of himself, he fails to realize that those around him see through his flimsy attempts to paint a noble picture of himself at Gloucester's expense. Somerset and Buckingham are too ambitious; so hungry are they for Gloucester's protectorship that they are willing to plot against their co-conspirator to achieve their objective. Proud but not blinded by pride, ambitious but not to the point of turning on members of his own family, York is distinguished by a superior intelligence, a more controlled and self-knowing nature. Thus does Shakespeare introduce into his plot three very distinct enemy types who, throughout, remain very different from one another.

Where Shakespeare does diverge markedly from Hall is in his introduction of York so early in the plot. In Hall York does not commence to plot against the House of Lancaster until after the "destruccion of the good duke Gloucester." But in Shakespeare his machinations are in full swing long before Gloucester's untimely death. In making this change, Shakespeare may have been guided by The Mirror for Magistrates, wherein York's references to his activities against the House of Lancaster are not confined to any particular period of time:

Yet at the last in Henreyes dayes the sixt,

> I was restored to my fathers landes,
> Made duke of Yorke, wherthrough my minde I fixt,
> To get the crowne and kingdome in my handes.
> For ayde wherein I knit assured bandes
> With Nevels stocke, whose doughter was my mate
> Who for no wo would ever me forsake. 1

The following remarks, presented in Gloucester's voice, are even closer to Shakespeare's treatment of York as an early conspirator:

> The Duke of Yorke, our cousin most unkinde,
> Who keeping close a tytle to the crowne,
> Lancasters house did labour to pul downe.
> The stay whereof he tooke to stand in mee,
> Seeing the king of courage nothing stout,
> Neither of wit great peril to foresee,
> So for purpose, if he could bring about
> Mee to displace, then did he little doubt
> To gayne to Goale, for which he droue the ball,
> The crowne I meane to catch ere it should fall. 2

The benefits Shakespeare derived from differing with Hall in this matter are reflected already in this early dramatization, particularly in the contrasting pictures of Gloucester and York, each illuminating the other. It is, as we shall see, a readjustment that crucially affects the rest of the play's action.

On the basis of our close reading of the play's opening scene, it is now possible to make out an emerging pattern used by Shakespeare in dramatizing Gloucester's downfall. Simply stated, it comprises a series of events centering on threats to and reductions of Gloucester's governing powers. This process is initially set into motion by Suffolk, who succeeds in reducing the importance of Gloucester's role as advisor to the King. It is followed by threats to Gloucester's already weakened position, ranging from

Winchester's overt threats, to Somerset and Buckingham's less open pressures, to York's hidden intentions.

The rest of the play covering Gloucester's downfall comprises dramatizations of further threats and setbacks. In what follows, I show how Shakespeare both sustains and advances a view of Gloucester as an object of threat and setback. I do so by dealing first with Shakespeare's dramatization of incidents of threat, and then with those of setback.

In sustaining his picture of Gloucester as an object of threat, Shakespeare introduces additional threateners in subsequent scenes of the play. Most are assigned actions developed out of incidents in Hall. The actions of Gloucester's wife Eleanor are a case in point. Described in Hall as a woman accused of harboring "thentent to advance and to promote her husbande to the crowne" (p. 202), in the play, where her actions are moved forward a few years, she is portrayed as someone all too eager to play dangerously for the very highest political stakes, and it is in her overzealousness that she comes across as a threat to her husband's position as Protector of the realm:

> Why droops my lord, like over-ripened corn
> Hanging thy head at Ceres' plenteous load?
> Why doth the great Duke Humphrey knit his brows,
> As frowning at the favors of the world?
> Why are thine eyes fixed to the sullen dearth,
> Gazing on that which seems to dim thy sight?
> What seest thou there? King Henry's diadem
> Encased with all the honors of the world?
> If so, gaze on and grovel on thy face,
> Until thy head be circled with the same.
>
> (I.ii.10)

By rejecting her advice and begging her to "banish the canker of ambitious thoughts" (I.ii.18) from her mind, Shakespeare's Gloucester behaves in agreement with the "good duke" and "noble prince" of Hall. Thus rebuffed by her husband, Shakespeare's Eleanor resorts to black magic to further her own ambitious designs. This too is in agreement with Hall:

> For first this yere, dame Elyanour Cobham, wyfe to the sayd duke, was accused of treason, for that she, by sorcery and enchauntment, entended to destroy the king . . . . At the same season, were arrested as ayders and counsailers to the sayde Duchesse, Thomas Southwel, prieste and canon of saincte Stephens in Westmynster, Ihon Hum priest, Roger Bolyngbroke, a conyng nycromancier, and Margerie Iourdayne, surnamed the witche of Eye, to whose charge it was laied, that thei, at the request of the duchesse, had deuised an image of waxe, representing the kynge, which by their sorcery, a litle and litle consumed, entendyng therby in conclusion to waist, and destroy the kynges person, and so to bryng hym death . . . [p. 202].

These lines form the basis for situations in which Eleanor in her overzealousness continues to threaten her husband's welfare. In Act I, Scene ii, she arranges with Sir John Hum to meet "with Margery Jourdain, the cunning witch" (I.ii.75) and "Roger Bolingbroke, the conjurer" (76) who have agreed "to show your Highness / A spirit raised from depth of underground, / That shall make answer to such questions / As by your Grace shall be propounded him" (81); in Act I, Scene iv, with Southwell, Jourdain, Hum and Bolingbroke, Eleanor takes part in a magic rite. Our sense of Gloucester as an object of threat is heightened by Hum who, in a soliloquy concluding the earlier scene, reveals his involvement in a plot to embarrass Gloucester through exposing his wife as a sorceress.

In an intervening scene, Margaret's hostility toward Gloucester works to sustain this effect. It is, moreover, an attitude in complete agreement with Hall's description of her as a Queen with "neither wit nor stomacke, whiche would permit & suffre her husband, beyng of perfect age & mans estate, like a yong scholer or innocent pupille to be gouerned by the disposicion of another man" (p. 200). Where Shakespeare differs from Hall is in providing Margaret with yet another motive for disliking the Protector--her jealousy toward Eleanor. In Hall, the Queen is oblivious to Eleanor--hardly surprising since Eleanor's banishment occurs less than a year after Margaret's arrival in England. But in the play her jealous attitude toward Eleanor is used as fuel to stoke the Queen into action. Here she is just as jealous of the Duchess sweeping "it through the court with troops of ladies, / More like an empress than Duke Humphrey's wife" (I.iii.80) as she is upset that her husband is "a pupil still / Under the surly Gloucester's governance" (50). In adding this detail to his portrait of Margaret, Shakespeare may have taken another cue from The Mirror for Magistrates where Eleanor, in her narrative, makes the following reference to Margaret:

> Thus of a Damsel a Duchesse I became
> My state and place aduanced next the Quene
>
> Grudge who so would, to him I was most deere
> Aboue all Ladyes aduanced in degree
> (The Quene except) no Princesse was my peere
> But gaue me place 3

Gloucester's welfare is further threatened by elements

within his own nature which, also, are in agreement with Hall's description of him as someone who "thought neither of death, nor of condempnacion to dye: suche affaunce had he in in his strong truthe, and suche confidence had he in indifferent justice" (p. 209). This threat is realized in the play in an invented scene between Gloucester and Eleanor in which a warning from Eleanor that his life is in jeopardy elicits the following reply:

> Ah, Nell, forbear! Thou aimest all awry.
> I must offend before I be attainted;
> And had I twenty times so many foes,
> And each of them had twenty times their power,
> All these could not procure me any scathe,
> So long as I am loyal, true and crimeless.
> Wuldst have me rescue thee from this reproach?
> Why yet thy scandal were not wiped away,
> But I in danger from the breach of law.
>
> (II.iv.66)

Thus is Gloucester's own name added to the already long list of characters threatening his welfare.

Unwilling to protect himself from his enemies' plots, Shakespeare's Gloucester is further incapacitated by a King incapable of coming to his defense. In portraying the King in this light, Shakespeare is utterly true to Hall's description of him as a "man of meke spirite, and of a simple witte, preferryng peace before warre, reste before businesse, honestie before profite, and quietnesse before laboure" (p. 208). As true to his craft as to his sources, Shakespeare introduces these traits into the play through Henry's responses to key events--his joyful acceptance of Suffolk's unfavorable terms of peace; his indifference in appointing

either York or Somerset to the French regency ("For my part, noble lords, I care not which: or Somerset or York, all's one to me" [I.iii.104]); his overwillingness in the Simpcox scene to accept what people say at face value. Viewed in this light, Henry is established as a ruler prevented by his own weaknesses from preventing his Protector's downfall.

Gloucester is portrayed as an object of threat through much of the first act and in scenes directly preceding his Act III, Scene ii, murder. In intervening dramatizations, also largely in agreement with key lines and phrases from Hall, he progresses from an object of threat to a victim of setback, thus repeating the pattern established in the play's opening scene. It is Shakespeare's dramatization of this progression to which I now turn my attention. Crucial to it is the following passage in Hall, focusing on Margaret:

> . . . venemous serpentes, and malicious Tygers, perswaded, incensed and exhorted the quene, to loke well upon the expenses and reuenues of the realme, and therof to call an accompt: affirmyng plainly that she should euidently perceiue, that the Duke of Gloucester, had not so muche aduanced & preferred the commonwealth and publique vtilitie, as his awne priute thinges & peculier. . . . The quene perswaded and encouraged by these meanes took upon her and her husbande, the high power and authorities over the poeple and subiectes. And although she ioyned her husbande with hir in name, for a countenaunce, yet she did all, she saied all, and she bare the whole swynge, as the strong oxe doth when he is yoked in the plough with a pore silly asse: and firste of all she excluded the duke of Gloucester, from all rule and gouernaunce, not prohibityng suche as she knewe to be his mortal enemies, to inuent and imagyne, causes and griefes, anainst hym. . . . Diurse articles, bothe heynous and odious, were laied to his charge in open counsaill, and in especiall one, that he had caused men adiudged to dye, to be put to other execucion, then the law of the land had ordered or assigned. . . . Although the duke (not without great laude and praise) sufficiently

> answered to all thynges to hym obiected, yet because his death was determined, his wisedome litle helped . . . his capitall enemies and mortal foes, fearyng that some tumulte of commocion might arise, if a prince so well beloued of the people, should bee openly executed, and put to death, determined to trappe & undoo hym, nor he therof should have knowledge or warnyng. So for the furtheraunce of their purpose, a parliament was somoned to be kept at Bery, whether resorted all the peres of the realme. . . . [There] the duke of Gloucester was by the lorde Beaumond, then high Constable of Englande, accompanied by the duke of Buckyngham and other, arrested, apprehended, and put in warde. . . . The duke the night after his emprisonment, was found dedde in his bed . . . [p. 209].

Out of the events recorded in this passage Shakespeare constructed three climactic scenes: the Act I, Scene iii, confrontation between Gloucester and his enemies, Gloucester's Act II, Scene iii, removal from office, and his Act III, Scene i, arrest. Each in its own way establishes Gloucester as a victim of setback. The Act I, Scene iii, confrontation produces this effect by providing each of Gloucester's beraters with a different accusation to throw in his face. Hall's reference to Gloucester's enemies' looking well "upon the expenses and reuenues of the realm" for evidence that "Gloucester had not so muche aduanced & referred the commonwealth and publique vtilitie, as his awne priute thinges & peculier" forms the basis for two accusations: Beaufort's contention that "the clergy's bags / Are lank and lean with thy extortions" (I.iii.131), and Somerset's that "thy sumptuous buildings and thy wife's attire / Have cost a mass of public treasury" (133). To Buckingham, who accuses Gloucester of cruelty "in execution / Upon offenders that exceeded law" (135), Shakespeare assigns from

the same passage the "heynous and odious" accusation that Gloucester "had caused men adiudged to dye, to be put to other execution then the law of the land had ordered or assigned."

Gloucester's two remaining enemies, Suffolk and the Queen, move in their accusations from the domestic front to the area of foreign affairs, with Suffolk assigning responsibility to Gloucester for the English debacle in France and Margaret referring to his "sale of offices and towns in France" (I.iii.137). Neither of these accusations is contained in the passage quoted above. Instead they are reworkings of the accusations in Hall made by Gloucester against Winchester in their 1441 Parliament squabble, specifically Gloucester's charge that Beaufort sold offices in the "realme of Fraunce, and the duchy of Normandy" (p. 201), and his further charge that "thesaied Cardinall . . . hath caused greate parte, of thesaied Duchie of Normandy, aswell as of your realme of Fraunce to be lost" (p. 201). By combining these references with those from the passage focusing on Margaret, Shakespeare succeeded in assigning a different accusation to every one of Gloucester's accusers. Moreover, by presenting them in rapid succession, an effect is produced of people working cooperatively to bring about the downfall of a common enemy. With the dramatic exit of Gloucester in their wake, a final effect is produced of a great leader badly shaken by a surprise attack.

In Hall Gloucester's downfall follows in the wake of

these accusations. Sensing a need for more of a buildup to so momentous an event, Shakespeare ingeniously added a series of transitional crises, some from other sections in Hall, others from The Mirror for Magistrates and John Foxe's Actes and Monuments of Martyrs. The first in this series is derived from a cryptic reference in Hall prior to Margaret's story to a dispute between a London servant and his master: "this yere, an Armerors seruaunt of London, appeled his master of treason" (p. 207). From these few words Shakespeare constructed a complicated sequence of events culminating in a crisis out of which Gloucester emerges the loser and his Lancastrian adversaries the winners. The crisis is precipitated in Act I, Scene iii, by a chance meeting between Suffolk and Margaret and an armorer's man, Peter Thump, who, mistaking Suffolk for Gloucester, presents him with a petition "against my master, Thomas Horner, for saying that the Duke of York was rightful heir to the crown" (I.iii.28). After pledging to use "this late complaint" (99) to embarrass York, Suffolk and Margaret are upstaged by the arrival of King Henry, the Dukes of York, Somerset, Buckingham and Gloucester, the Earl of Warwick, Cardinal Beaufort, and Dame Eleanor. Having assembled his subjects for the purpose of electing either Somerset or York to the French regency, the King defers to his Protector who recommends York as the "meetest man / To be your regent in the realm of France" (163). Gloucester gains the support of powerful Warwick, but before he can obtain the King's approval, Suffolk signals for Horner

the Armorer and Peter Thump to be brought forth so that Thump's accusation may be aired before the King. "Here is a man accused of treason" (179), declares Suffolk. "His words were these: that Richard Duke of York / Was rightful heir unto the English crown, / And that your Majesty was an usurper" (187). In the light of so damaging an accusation, Gloucester is unable to carry out his original plan, but instead is forced to "Let Somerset be regent o'er the French, / Because in York this breeds suspicion" (209). With Suffolk's success in embarrassing York thus subordinated to Gloucester's failure to place his man in charge of foreign affairs, Gloucester is moved one step closer toward his climactic resignation from office.

The next step toward that grim point is precipitated by the arrest of Gloucester's wife in the following scene, an incident corresponding to Hall's reference in his story of Dame Eleanor to her trial for practicing witchcraft. Much in the scene is pure invention--the location ("a garden outside Gloucester's house, before a tower" [s.d.I.iv.2]); the raising of a spirit; its cryptic references of things to come; the discovery of the Duchess and her accomplices by Buckingham and York. Only the names of the accomplices--Margarie Jourdain, Hum, Southwell and Bolingbroke--and Eleanor's use of them to control her destiny are taken from history. Together, both borrowed and invented details work toward moving Gloucester to a critical point yet closer to the fateful pitfalls awaiting him. That point is underlined

in the very next scene through Gloucester's shocked reaction at hearing the news of his wife's arrest. Utterly unprepared for it, Gloucester confesses in an aside pregnant with emotion that "Sorrow and Grief have vanquished all my powers; / And vanquished as I am, I yield / . . . to the meanest groom" (II.i.184). Thus is Gloucester's plight heightened by portraying his helplessness in the face of growing danger.

In a move to add a further note of irony to Gloucester's predicament, Shakespeare prefaces Gloucester's admission of helplessness with a dramatization of an incident from John Foxe's Actes and Monuments of Martyrs wherein Gloucester, "a man no les wise, then also well learned," is confronted by a "certayne begger" who professes that his sight has been restored at St. Alban's shrine. After getting the begger to admit that "he could see nothing at al, in al his life before," Gloucester tricks him into identifying the color of his gown. Reasoning that "though he could have seene sodenly by miracle the difference betwene divers colours, yet could he not by the sight so sodeinly tell the names of al these coulours, except he had known them before," Gloucester proves the claim fraudulent and orders the begger "to be set openly in the stockes."[4] Essentially the same story is acted out in the Act II, Scene i, St. Albans scene, ostensibly for the purpose of showing the intelligent and wise side of Gloucester's nature, a side largely unobjectified in other historical sources. In this respect this incident functions like another outside of the chronicles, the

Countess of Auvergne incident in 1 Henry VI wherein Talbot's intelligence and wisdom are objectified. Unlike this earlier incident, however, which functions merely as a diversion, the St. Albans incident builds up Gloucester for his pathetic breakdown into "sorrow and grief" at the conclusion of the scene.

At this point in the action, but one scene separates Gloucester from that fateful moment in his life when his staff of office is taken away. In it, York convences Salisbury and Warwick, hitherto loyal supporters of Gloucester, of his rightful title to the English crown. He does this by tracing his inheritance back to Edward III's second son, the Duke of Clarence, and Henry's to John of Gaunt, Edward's third son. His history lesson completed, York is declared England's rightful king by these two powerful nobles. Having accomplished this much, he exacts one more pledge from them:

> Do you as I do in these dangerous days:
> Wink at the Duke of Suffolk's insolence,
> At Beaufort's pride, at Somerset's ambition,
> At Buckingham and all the crew of them,
> Till they have snared the shepherd of the flock,
> That virtuous prince, the good Duke Humphrey:
> 'Tis that they seek, and they in seeking that
> Shall find their deaths, if York can prophesy.
> (II.ii.77)

Thus does Shakespeare have removed from Gloucester's side his only remaining supports. It is an incident lacking an historical basis in the chronicles. Only in The Mirror for Magistrates is there to be found a specific reference to the Nevils' complicity in Gloucester's downfall. But whatever

its origins, it is a carryover which more than pays for itself in dramatic terms. For it makes of Gloucester an even more pitiful creature--plotted against, berated into option-less corners, tripped up by his wife's folly, and now abandoned by his only remaining supports. With the establishment of these climactic buildups, Shakespeare has paved the way to Gloucester's fatal fall from office.

This incident is merely recorded in Hall, with Margaret singled out as the party mainly responsible for "excluding the duke of Cloucester, from all rule and Gouernaunce" (p. 209). In The Mirror for Magistrates, however, it is viewed more in the context of Eleanor's downfall, particularly in the following passage from Humphrey's monologue:

> This haynous crime and open worldly shame,
> With such rigour shewed vnto my wife,
> Was a fyne fetch further thinges to frame,
> And nothing else, but a preparatiue
> First from office, and fynally from lyfe,
> Me to depriue, and so passing further,
> What law could not, to execute my murther.[5]

Precisely the same format is followed in Shakespeare's version of Hymphrey's fall from office. First the King declares Eleanor guilty and banishes her to the Isle of Man. Then he turns to her husband and presents him with the following vote of no confidence:

> Stay, Humphrey Duke of Gloucester: ere thou go,
> Give up thy staff: Henry will to himself
> Protectore be; and God shall be my hope,
> My stay, my guide and lanthorn to my feet.
> And go in peace, Humphrey, no less beloved
> Than when thou wert Protectore to thy King.
> (II.iii.27)

Shakespeare's version of this incident differs from both Hall

and The Mirror for Magistrates by making Henry into a decision-maker. Only in the play does Henry banish Eleanor and ask Humphrey for his staff. Moreover, he is not nagged or cajoled into taking these steps. Instead, he commits them of his own volition. The audience, already programmed by the preceding St. Albans scene to find fault with Henry's actions, views his removal of Gloucester from the Protectorship as both foolish and unnecessary. It is by means of such awareness discrepancies that Shakespeare brings his audience closer to the play, changing mere observers into involved reactors who question Henry's every move.

Rather than advancing directly from Gloucester's removal from office to his arrest and assassination, as is the case in the chronicles and The Mirror for Magistrates, Shakespeare paves the way to this momentous event with a few evocative dramatizations. In the first, Horner the Armorer and his servant Thump are brought before the King to carry out the duel to which Gloucester sentenced them in Act I, Scene iii. Egged on by Salisbury ("Thump! then see thou thump thy master well" [II.iii.86]) and York, Thump strikes down his master who, before expiring, confesses his guilt: his treasonous statement that Henry is a usurper and York England's rightful king. This incident produces a cluster of effects. First, it shows Henry and his Lancastrian relations oblivious to the Yorkist threat, even after it is underlined by Horner's dying words. Also, it hints of things to come--Horner the master, representing the establishment,

mastered by Thump the apprentice, representing the opposition.

Following the duel between Horner and Thump, Gloucester, in a touching scene with his wife, refuses to heed her warning to "seek prevention of thy foes" (II.iv.57). Having thus established Gloucester's unpreparedness, Shakespeare is now ready to dramatize Gloucester's last steps to his doom, his Act III arrest and assassination. In Hall he is arrested by "the High Constable of Englande, accompanied by the duke of Buckyngham, and others" (p. 209). In The Mirror for Magistrates the Queen plays a more active role, with the following peers singled out as her accomplices:

> The Duke of Yorke, and other of his bloud,
> With Neuils all, knyt were then together,
> And Delapoole, frend afore to neither:
> The Cardinal also, came within this list,
> As Herode and Pylate, to iudge Iesu Christ.[6]

Using essentially the same cast of characters as are mentioned in The Mirror for Magistrates, Shakespeare brings them together in the play by giving them a common task: poisoning the King's mind against Gloucester. The Queen initiates matters by pointing out to the King "how insolent of late [Gloucester] is become, / How proud, how peremptory, and unlike himself" (III.i.9). Then, reminding Henry that Gloucester is "near you in descent, / And should you fall, he is the next will mount" (22), she attempts to establish him in the King's mind as a threat to his "royal person" (26). The rest of the conspirators back her up, each seizing on a different line of attack, much as they do in their Act I,

Scene iii, direct confrontation with Gloucester. Suffolk accuses Gloucester of instigating "the bedlam brain-sick Duchess / By wicked means to frame our sovereign's fall" (52). Beaufort accuses him of meting out heavy punishments for minor offenses. Buckingham refers to even worse "faults unknown" (64), York to his misappropriation of funds intended "for soldiers' pay in France" (62).

Shakespeare interrupts this diatribe with the arrival from France of the Duke of Somerset who announces to the King "That all your interest in those territories / Is utterly bereft you: all is lost" (II.i.85). Although the loss of France did not occur until well after Gloucester's death, Shakespeare brings it in here for two reasons: 1) to bring Somerset back into the action in time for his Act V death, and 2) to provide Gloucester's enemies with a good reason for arresting Gloucester, the reason being his supposed responsibility for the loss of France. Shortly after Somerset's announcement Gloucester is arrested by Suffolk for high treason but before he is led away he makes an eloquent plea of innocence to his sovereign. This provides Shakespeare with an opportunity to dramatize a side of Henry's nature that is merely mentioned in the source materials--his goodness of heart. It is this quality which like a beacon leads the King to find both "the map of honor, truth, and loyalty" (203) on Gloucester's face as well as remorselessness in the actions of his enemies. Though Henry proves wiser here than at St. Albans, it is too late for him to

benefit. So mighty have Gloucester's enemies become that the King is now powerless to intervene on Gloucester's behalf. He can only instruct his lords to "do or undo . . . what to your wisdoms seemeth best" (195) before leaving them for the privacy of his chambers.

What follows is a cleverly imagined discussion of how best to bring about Gloucester's death. Winchester suggests that the best way is "by course of law" (II.i.237), but Suffolk, fearing that the commons might "haply rise to save his life" (240), vetoes this course of action. Fearing at this point that his co-conspirators may be backing down, York provides them with a rationale for their act. Gloucester, he reasons, is an "empty eagle" set to guard Henry "the chicken" from "a hungry kite" (249)--presumably other conspirators. If so, concludes the Queen, "the poor chicken should be sure of death" (251) under present conditions. Thus provided with a convenient rationale--the protection of the King from an enemy even worse than themselves--the conspirators move quickly to carry out the deed. The Cardinal offers to "provide his executioner" (276) while Suffolk, the Queen and York agree to back him up.

With Gloucester's fate thus determined, the play's focus of attention shifts from him to York. In a lengthy soliloquy delivered at the conclusion of the foregoing dramatization and in agreement with Hall, York reveals his plan for seizing the throne from Henry. While he is in Ireland putting down a rebellion, in England John Cade, "a headstrong

Kentishman," will "make commotion, as full well he can" (III. i.358) by posing as John Mortimer "which now is dead" (372) who, were he living, would be the Yorkist closest in line to England's crown. "By this," reasons York, "I shall perceive the commons' mind, / How they affect the house and claim of York" (375). If Cade should thrive, York will return from Ireland "with my strength / And reap the harvest which that rascal sowed" (381).

The rest of the play establishes York's growth in power in terms of the deaths of key members of the Lancastrian opposition. Viewing these deaths as stepping stones, as it were, I plan now to retrace Shakespeare's dramatic reconstruction of York's growth in power in two stages, initially by dealing simply with the transference of actions from a narrative to a dramatic state, and then by comparing the moral thrust in both sets of materials.

With regard to dramatizing York's rise to power in terms of the deaths of members of the Lancastrian opposition, Hall provided Shakespeare with a lengthy list of candidates. Gloucester's death in 1447 is followed soon afterwards by Beaufort's. Two years later Suffolk is banished and beheaded, and in the same year Cade's men kill two of the King's lieutenants, Sir Humphrey Stafford and his brother, plus the King's treasurer Lord Say and his son-in-law, and Matthew Gough, "an often named captain in Normandy" (p. 221). Five years later, at the Battle of St. Albans, the Lords of Northumberland and Clifford are slain along with the Duke of

Somerset.

Omitting or minimizing all other incidents recorded in the chronicles during this period--the loss of Normandy and the Acquitaine, York's Irish campaigns, the Queen's futile attempts to save Suffolk from banishment, the Bishop of Salisbury's untimely death at the hands of his tenants, York's intricate plots against Somerset's life and Somerset's against York's--Shakespeare is all the freer to concentrate on the downfalls of those obstructing York's path to the throne. In Hall, Suffolk's death, the first after Gloucester's, is precipitated by actions taken against him by the "commons of the Realme" (p. 207) who, after the loss of Normandy,

> . . . began to make exclamacion against the Duke of Suffolke, affirming him, to be the onely cause of the deliuery of Anjow & Mayne, the chief procurer of the death of the good duke of Gloucester, the verie occasion of the losse of Normandy, the moste swallower up and consumer of the kynges treasure, (by reason wherof, the warres in Fraunce wer not maintained,) the expeller from the kyng, of all good verteous counsailors, and the bringer in and auauncer ov vicious persones, common enemies and apparaunt aduersaries to the publique wealthe [p. 217].

In Shakespeare's version of Suffolk's downfall, the commons are downgraded from instigators to puppets manipulated by York's allies, Warwick and Salisbury, into pressing for Suffolk's exile. The first hint of this approach is established shortly after the announcement of Gloucester's death with the arrival of "Warwick, Salisbury and many Commons." "It is reported, mighty sovereign," says the wily Warwick,

> That good Duke Humphrey traitorously is murdered
> By Suffolk and the Cardinal Beaufort's means.
> The commons, like an angry hive of bees
> That want their leader, scatter up and down,
> And care not who they sting in his revenge.
> Myself have calmed their spleenful mutiny,
> Until they hear the order of his death.
>
> (III.ii.129)

Following this announcement Salisbury retires offstage with the commons while Warwick convinces the King that Gloucester has been murdered. Then, after isolating Suffolk from his co-conspirators, Warwick tricks him into confronting the commons offstage who, under Salisbury's supervision, are stirred into demanding Suffolk's death or banishment from "fair England's territories" (245). "An answere from the King, my Lord of Salisbury!" (270) demand the unruly commons. Fearing violence, the King quickly capitulates to their demands by announcing that Suffolk "shall not breathe infection in this air but three days longer, on the pain of death" (288).

The rest of the play comprises three stages in York's rise to power. First, Shakespeare has him benefit from the deaths by chance of Winchester and Suffolk--Winchester dies from natural causes; Suffolk is killed in a chance encounter with a pirate. Next, he benefits from deaths resulting from the actions of his "substitute" John Cade. And finally he benefits from deaths resulting directly from his own and his son's actions--he kills Clifford, his son kills Somerset. With the transference of these actions from a narrative to a dramatic state, Shakespeare completed his portrayal of York's

rise to power.

With regard to the moral attitudes conveyed in both sets of materials, in dramatizing the earlier stages of York's rise to power Shakespeare captures the spirit of the chronicles by providing each bloody dramatization with a moral spokesman. The spokesman in Beaufort's deathbed scene is Warwick who reminds us that so "bad a death" argues "a monstrous life" (III.iii.30). In Suffolk's death scene, the lieutenant of the pirate ship produces a similar effect by speaking out against Suffolk's evil acts--"Now will I dam up this thy yawning mouth / For swallowing the treasure of the realm; / Thy lips that kissed the Queen, shall sweep the ground; / And thou that smil'dst at good Duke Humphrey's death . . ." (IV.i.76).

In the Cade scenes a proper moral tone is introduced initially by undercutting Cade's disestablishmentarian posture with asides voiced by a pair of disrespectful onlookers, Dick Bevis and John Holland. Reacting to Cade's claim that his wife is "descended of the Lacies" (IV.ii.44), Bevis whispers to his friend, "She was indeed a pedlar's daughter, and sold many laces" (46). Cade's boast that he is "able to endure much" (55) elicits a similar remark: "No question of that; for I have seen him whipped three market-days together" (57). A proper moral tone is established in later actions through Stafford's references to the rebels--"rebellious hinds, the filth and scum of Kent" (IV.ii.119); in Lord Say's eloquent plea for reason over Cade's lawlessness--"These

hands are free from guiltless blood-shedding, / This breast from harboring foul deceitful thoughts" (IV.vii.105); and finally in the scornful remarks Sir Alexander Iden delivers after he slays Cade:

> Is't Cade that I have slain, that monstrous traitor?
> . . . . . .
> Die, damned wretch, the curse of her that bare thee:
> And as I thrust thy body in with my sword,
> So wish I I might thrust thy soul to hell.
> Hence will I drag thee headlong by the heels
> Unto a dunghill which shall be thy grave,
> And there cut off thy most ungracious head,
> Which I will bear in triumph to the King,
> Leaving thy trunk for crows to feed upon.
> (IV.x.87)

It is significant that though York's rebellious acts are far more serious than Cade's, and his complicity in Gloucester's death every bit as great as Suffolk's and Beaufort's, Shakespeare does not put him in his place by means of a moral spokesman. Instead, he and his principal adversary, Henry, are placed on an equal moral footing. His de jure claim to the throne is every bit as impressive as Henry's de facto presence on it. His supporters Warwick and Salisbury appear as upright and selfless as the Cliffords. His natural ability to rule is balanced by Henry's purity of spirit, his ambition by Henry's modesty, his deception by Henry's ineptness. This approach is in agreement with Hall wherein the Yorkists' ambition and avarice are balanced with their adversaries' corruption and insensitivity to the needs of the state. But what results in Hall is simply a dispassionate view of two conflicting positions, with little attempt made to pull the reader toward either side. In the

play, however, the same view is exploited by pulling the audience first to one side and then to the other.

This is particularly the case in the play's concluding act. It begins with our sympathies on the side of York who impresses us with his army of Irish coupled with his fearless threat to "pluck the crown from feeble Henry's head" (V.i.2). With these words York makes a strong appeal to the brute in us, the desire harbored in the heart of every man to knock aside what is both weak and in his way. With the entry of Buckingham, we are pulled to the other side, however, by being reminded of less brutish considerations--York has sworn his "true allegiance" (20) to Henry: an oath is an oath. Thus is York's Dionysian will to power placed in a less flattering light. Throughout the rest of the scene we move like helpless bits of flotsam and jetsam from one side to the other. York's passionate aside, "I am far better born than is the King, / More like a king, more kingly in my thoughts" (29), is washed away moments later by Alexander Iden's moving declaration to poor Henry: "Alexander Iden, that's my name; / A poor esquire of Kent, that loves his King" (75). The entrance of the Queen and Somerset at the conclusion of Iden's speech elicits the following response from Henry: "Somerset comes with the Queen: / Go bid her hide him quickly from the Duke" (84). Sensing cowardice in Henry's response, we can no longer share Iden's position of total loyalty. Instead, we are left with the nagging suspicion that Iden has chosen a thoroughly unworthy object for

his affections.

And so it goes. Moments later we are moved in opposite directions once more by an argument between Henry and Salisbury. Shocked that he has been deserted by Salisbury, Henry responds eloquently:

> O, where is faith? O, where is loyalty?
> If it be banished from thy frosty head,
> Where shall it find a harbor in the earth?
> (168)

Every bit as persuasive, however, is Salisbury's reply:

> It is great sin to swear unto a sin,
> But greater sin to keep a sinful oath.
> Who can be found by any solemn vow
> To do a murd'rous deed, to rob a man
> . . . . . .
> And have no other reason for this wrong
> But that he was bound by a solemn oath.
> (190)

Shakespeare shows signs here of coming into his own by dramatizing two opposing views, Henry's and Salisbury's, merely for the sake of pitting one against the other. No more, like Hall, a mere maximizer (Dissension at home leads to disaster abroad) or patriotic trumpet-tooter (The English are admirable, the French despicable), Shakespeare at last places dramatic idea above dogmatic ideology.

Undoubtedly, Shakespeare shows himself here to be a skillful manipulator of ideas; however, it would not be fair to close this discussion without pointing out a few accompanying weaknesses which, though restricted to the closing scene, apply to the play as a whole. For one thing, the sounds in the scene are hollow (particularly the O's in "O, where is faith? O, where is loyalty?"), the metaphors shopworn

(frosty head, harbor, bound), and the meter monotonous ("And have no other reason for this wrong"). Worst of all, the characterization is embarrassingly thin. Salisbury is not so much a flesh-and-blood character in this scene as he is a bodyless expression of an idea. And as for Henry, while he is both pious and cowardly, good-hearted and weak-headed, these various threads never fulfill their promise of combining into a rich tapestry. Here and elsewhere, Henry is interesting only in the abstract: at best a sketch of things to come, a dim precursor of Richard II--the charming weakling unsuited for a job thrust upon him by fate.

As precursor, Henry arouses mixed feelings in sensitive onlookers who care about Shakespeare. We can see behind Henry his struggling creator--a budding genius in the early stages of his career, sewing together with the roughest of materials a human being. This spectacle fascinates us to be sure. For though no better constructed than a Frankenstein monster, Henry is the work of a great dramatist. Still, because the work is so rough, so inferior, so utterly worthless in and of itself, we cannot help but feel at the same time that we are guilty of looking at what should have been destroyed: a department-store dummy, a colorless manikin, an embarrassment to one who would do so much better in but a few short years.

Since Henry VI is a character in a play which is very much a part of the Shakespeare canon, it would be unjust to ignore him, as did so many in the nineteenth century, or even

worse to find in him redeeming features which are really not there. Perhaps it is best to look at him as both fascinating and embarrassing, and let it go at that.

CHAPTER III

FOOTNOTES

[1]The Mirror for Magistrates, ed. by Lily B. Campbell (New York, 1938), p. 185.

[2]Ibid., p. 456.

[3]Ibid., p. 433.

[4]Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare, III, p. 127.

[5]The Mirror for Magistrates, p. 455.

[6]Ibid., p. 457.

CHAPTER IV

YORKIST RISES AND FALLS: 3 HENRY VI

Having condluded 2 Henry VI with the 1455 Battle of St. Albans, Shakespeare was obliged to carry the story of the feud between the houses of York and Lancaster to its logical conclusion--their final clashes in 1471, culminating in the murder of Henry VI. As a result of this commitment, Shakespeare was faced with the problem of coming to terms with sixteen long years of English history. Looking for guidance in the chronicles, Shakespeare detected there a wavelike movement of events on which Yorkist fortunes are continually rising and falling. Particularly memorable are York's elevation to the Protectorship in 1460 followed by his defeat and death in the same year, his son Edward's rapid rise and recovery of power climaxed by his ascension to the throne in the following year, and Edward's startling loss and recovery of the throne ten years later. Treating these events as a sequence of alternating successes and failures, Shakespeare constructed a play in which each movement is re-expressed in dramatic terms.

It is to this development that I now turn my attention, wherein I hope to retrace the steps Shakespeare took in turning each of these movements in Hall into a continuous flow of dynamic action. I intend to carry out this task by

summarizing the reasons for each movement offered in Hall, and then accounting for their transmutation in the play.

With regard to Shakespeare's dramatization of the first of these movements in Hall, York's rise to the Protectorship, Shakespeare singled out a number of reasons for this achievement, not the least of them being the fact that a true Yorkist will let no moral restraint get in the way of his climb to the top of the political heap. Pity, fear of God or man, honor, love of countrymen, humanity, conscience, compassion--a true Yorkist is never deterred by such obstacles. Instead, he liquidates, has liquidated or does nothing to prevent the liquidation of whoever stands in his way to political advancement. In his portrayal of the Yorkists in this light, Shakespeare took a cue from the following chronicle account by Hall of the Battle of St. Albans:

> The duke of Yorke sent euer freshe men, to succor the wery, & put new men in the places of the hurt persons, by whiche onely pollicie, the kynges armie was profligate and dispersed, & all the chieftaines of the field almoste slain and brought to confusion. For there died vnder the signe of the Castle, Edmond duke of Somerset . . . and beside hym, lay Henry the second erle of Northumberland, Hufrey erle of Stafford, sonne to the duke of Buckingham, Ihon lorde Clifford, and viij. M. men and more. Humfrey duke of Buckyngham, beyng wounded, & Iames Butler erle of Wiltshire & Ormond, seyng fortunes loweryng chaunce, left the kyng poste a lone & with a greate numbre fled away [p. 233].

Out of this account, Shakespeare constructed an opening scene action in which the Yorkist faction exhibits a side of their collective nature utterly free of moral restraint. Set in London's Parliament House, the scene opens with York and his supporters arriving fresh from the battle-

field. Eschewing the usual chivalric amenities, York talks about his victims without exhibiting an ounce of respect for their memories:

> . . . the great Lord of Northumberland,
> Whose warlike ears could never brook retreat,
> Cheered up the drooping army; and himself,
> Lord Clifford, and Lord Stafford all abreast
> Charged our main battle's front, and, breaking in,
> Were by the swords of common soldiers slain.
> (I.i.9)

Not to be outdone by his father, Edward proudly displays a bloody sword as proof that "Lord Stafford's father, Duke of Buckingham, / Is either slain or wounded dangerous" (I.i.11). Sharing Edward's animalistic pleasure at the sight of his victim's blood is Montague, who points to the "Earl of Wiltshire's blood, / Whom I encountered as the battles joined" (15). The final touch is reserved for Richard, who throws down the Duke of Somerset's head as proof of his dedication to the Yorkist cause.

An additional factor contributing to York's elevation to the Protectorship as noted by Hall is the support he can count on from a clique of powerful noblemen committed to seeing York on the throne. In the Hall chronicle the Earl of Warwick (the kingmaker) is by far the most important individual in this category--a powerful man in his own right and a lifesaving source of strength to York, particularly in times of adversity. In 1460, during York's exile in Ireland, when the Lancastrians seemed pretty much in control of English affairs, Warwick revived Yorkist spirits by defeating King Henry's troops at Northampton, capturing the King, and

bringing him to London where, but "fayntely receyed, & febly welcomed" (p. 238) by his subjects, he remained a virtual prisoner in the Bishop of London's palace. It was this sudden turn of events which paved the way for York's return to England in the same year where, through an act of Parliament, he was granted both the Protectorship and the right to succeed Henry on the throne.

In Shakespeare's brief opening scene confrontation between Warwick and York, Warwick's importance in Yorkist affairs is re-expressed in purely dramatic terms. Bolstered by the recent liquidation of so many Lancastrians--Northumberland, Stafford, Buckingham, Wiltshire, Somerset--Warwick instructs York to occupy Parliament's "royal seat," declaring that it is "thine and not King Henry's heirs" (I.i.27). Like an obedient schoolboy York replies, "Assist me then sweet Warwick, and I will" (28). York's reliance on the support of his allies is further underlined in the play by his instruction to Norfolk to "stay by me," and his plea, moments later, for his lords to "leave me not."

In the chronicles another reason singled out for York's rise to the throne is the help he receives from members of his immediate family. His son Edward the Earl of March is a case in point. Described by Hall as "lusty and in the flower of his yought" (p. 251), Edward plays an instrumental part in capturing King Henry at Northampton, bringing him to London and gaining popular support for his father's cause. In the play Edward shares the limelight

with his younger brother Richard, even though in real life Richard was too young to help his father win the Protectorship. The advantage Shakespeare gained in expanding Richard's career into this earlier period in history is reflected in the play in those moments when each vies with the other for their father's affection. Edward presents York with a bloody sword; Richard upstages him with a bloody head. Richard begs his father to "tear the crown" from Henry's head; Edward begs him to do even more, to "set it on your head" (I.i.115). In a later scene, before Sandal Castle, their rivalry is far more overt. York enters to find his sons, together with Warwick's brother Montague, arguing over who is to gain his ear first. "Brother, though I be the youngest give me leave" (I.ii.1), pleads Richard. "No, I can better play the orator" (2), replies Edward. Utterly devoted to their father, they will do anything--kill, dissemble, conquer, argue--to make him proud of them. Model sons in their own peculiar way, they represent two of York's principal trailblazers to the throne.

In addition to the support he receives from his allies, York's advance in Hall is hastened by his legal claim to the throne. In the chronicles the claim is made by York himself in a lengthy oration (invented by Hall and carried over into Holinshed) delivered in the fall of 1460 to a Parliament convened in Westminster in response to the Lancastrian defeat at Northampton. In his argument York traces his own title back to Edward III's older son, Lionel Duke of

Clarence, and Henry's back to a younger son, John Duke of Lancaster. Because of his closer relationship to Edward III, York argues, he has the right to sit "in the place to me by very iustice lawfully belongyng" (p. 245). "And here I rest," he continues in Hall's dramatic reconstruction, "as he to whome this chayre of righte apperteineth, not as he which requireth of you fauor, parcialities, or bearyng, but egall right, frendly indifference, and trew administracion of iustice" (p. 245).

Next, York reinforces his claim by viewing Henry's unfortunate reign as a divine punishment for his grandfather Henry IV's "ungodly usurpation" of the throne from Richard II. York follows this indictment with a lengthy account of the fruits of that punishment:

> Is not Normandy, whiche his father gat, regayned, and conquered agayn, by the insolencie of him, and his coueteous counsail? Is not the whole duchye of Aquitayn by. iiC. and od yeres, peaceable possessed by the kynges of this realme, in one yere and a little more, gotten out of our handes and seignorie? What should I speake of Angeow and Mayne or the losse, of the Isle of Frauce, with the riche citie of Parys. Alas, my hart sobbeth, myne eyes water, and my toungue foltereth, either to speake or thinke of the losses and misfortunes, that this our natiue coutrey, hath of late susteined. But as y Preachers say: euill gotten gooddes, do not long continue, nor vsurped power, hath no prosperous successe [p. 247].

In a conclusion as climactic as it is self-serving, York offers himself as a solution to England's woes. "God," he assures his audience, has sent him "in the middes of this affliction . . . to restore again this decayed kyngdom, to his auncient fame & olde renoume" (p. 247).

Far from being swept off their feet by York's oration, the peers of the realm respond "like Images grauen in the wall, or dome Gods, neither whisperyng nor spekyng, as though their mouthes had been sewed vp" (p. 248). Unwilling to vote a de facto king out of office, even one with legal rights to the throne as tenuous as Henry's, Parliament enacts a compromise solution: Henry will enjoy the name and title of king during his lifetime, and upon his death the crown will pass to the Duke of York or to his heir. In the meantime the Duke of York will serve as Protector of the realm and heir apparent to the English throne.

The middle section of the opening scene of 3 Henry VI, from King Henry's entrance on line 49 to York's exit roughly 150 lines later, is a dramatic reconstruction of the foregoing parliamentary exchange. I will now trace its development from Hall, first by viewing the action in this section of the play in relation to Hall's account, and then by comparing the reasons offered therein for York's rise with those offered in Hall.

With regard to the action in this section of the play, it differs from Hall's account in one major respect: Henry, far from being a Yorkist prisoner, enters a free man. Under these changed circumstances Hall's static monologue gives way to a dramatic showdown between equally balanced Yorkist and Lancastrian forces. The stage is set as Henry enters with his supporters, Clifford, Westmoreland, Northumberland and his cousin Exeter, to discover York seated on the royal

throne. Ironically, Henry himself opens the door to his own downfall by choosing "frowns, words and threats" instead of swords as a means toward getting York to "descend my throne, / And kneel for grace and mercy at my feet" (I.i.75). Their first exchange ends in a draw, with the Yorkists matching every one of their opponents' verbal brickbats with another of equal force. Henry announces to York, "I am thy sovereign" (76); York responds, "I am thine" (76). Exeter labels York "a traitor to the crown" (79); in turn, Warwick labels Exeter "a traitor to the crown / In following this usurping Henry" (81). Clifford asks whom he should follow "but the natural king" (82); pointing to York, Warwick agrees.

In the next round of verbal exchanges, Warwick moves from invective to threat by reminding his opponents that "we are those which chased you from the field / And slew your fathers, and with colors spread / Marched through the city to the palace" (I.i.92). Checked, however, by Clifford's promise to "send thee, Warwick, such a messenger / As shall revenge [my father's] death before I stir" (100), Warwick can only reply, "Poor Clifford; how I scorn his worthless threats!" (101).

Moving next from threat to recrimination, the Yorkists seize on Henry's loss of France (much as York does in the chronicle account) as a reason for tearing the crown from his head. Henry is visibly shaken by this grim reminder. He becomes defensive--"The Lord Protector lost it, and not I" (I.i.111); he loses his temper--"Peace, thou! and give King

Henry leave to speak" (120); he retreats behind his legal claim to the throne--"My title's good, and better far than his" (130). His claim, however, proves woefully weak. He can trace it back only as far as Henry the Fourth who won it "by rebellion against his king" (133). Of Henry's four supporters only Exeter is moved by legal considerations into switching his support from Henry to York. The rest, though in perfect agreement with Exeter's interpretation of the law, stick like glue to Henry's side. "Tis not thy Southern power / . . . / Can set the Duke up in despite of me" (158), proclaims Northumberland, while Clifford pledges his support for "King Henry, be thy title right or wrong" (159).

The support of his barons notwithstanding, Henry gives way to a cowardly compromise. "Let me for this my lifetime reign as king" (I.i.171), he pleads to Warwick. "Confirm the crown to me and to mine heirs, / And thou shalt reign in quiet while thou liv'st" (173), demands York. With the words "I am content" (174) Henry capitulates to their demands. His erstwhile supporters react with disgust. Westmoreland calls him a "faint-hearted and degenerate king" (183). "Die in hands for this unmanly deed. / In dreadful war mayst thou be overcome, / Or live in peace abandoned and despised" (188), curse Northumberland and Clifford before departing to "tell the Queen these news" (182). On this note Shakespeare's version of Hall's parliamentary exchange comes to a close.

Having summarized the action in Shakespeare's

dramatization of York's parliamentary confrontation, I will now focus on the reasons offered in this section of the play for York's elevation to the protectorship. They comprise, interestingly enough, a highly concentrated recapitulation of all of the reasons suggested in Hall. The Yorkist freedom from moral restraint is captured in their arrogant disregard for legal scruples once they cease to suit their purposes. Warwick's importance in the Yorkist cause is expressed in the active role he plays in changing Henry's mind. York's superior legal claim to the throne is conveyed by Exeter's change of heart while the past failures of the Lancastrian regime are summed up in Warwick's telling remark to Henry, "Talk not of France, sith thou hast lost it all" (I. i.110).

What is even more interesting is the burden of responsibility Shakespeare places on Henry's shoulders. In the chronicles, Henry is merely a victim of circumstance--a captured king, a helpless pawn. But in the play he makes the final move. Moreover, it is not a move directed by necessity. No one is forcing him to capitulate to York's demands; three of his four supporters are still perfectly willing to stick by him in spite of the shaky legal foundations on which his claim to the throne rests. Yet Henry gives in, and by doing so he renders himself a betrayer to his own son's claim to the throne, a coward hiding behind a mask of legal technicalities, a traitor to his own people. Thus does Shakespeare convey, through Henry's actions, a further reason

for York's rise which is not present in Hall. Not entirely blind to his own folly, Shakespeare's poor Henry turns with "grief and sorrow to the court" as his queen "whose looks bewray her anger" (I.i.212) approaches.

Having concluded my analysis of the development in the play of the initial movement in Yorkist fortunes, York's advancement to the Protectorship, I will now trace the dramatic development of the next movement in Yorkist fortunes, York's downfall and destruction at Wakefield, according to the following format. First, I summarize this movement as presented in Hall. Then I trace its development into the play.

With regard to the presentation of York's downfall in Hall, it is precipitated by York's first act as Protector. Foreseeing an attempt on the part of the Queen to "spurne and impugne the conclusions agreed and taken in this parliament" (p. 249), York tries to lure her back to London by having the King send for her and their son Prince Edward. Counseled by the Dukes of Exeter and Somerset to do nothing of the kind, she assembles instead "a great army, intending to take the kyng by fine force, out of the lordes handes, and to set theim to a new skoole" (p. 250). Forced into responding, York leaves the Duke of Norfolk and the Earl of Warwick "to be with the kyng" and advises his son the Earl of March to follow him "with all his power" before departing northward with a small company of men. On Christmas Eve he arrives at his castle at Sandall near Wakefield. The Queen

is nearby with a force of 18,000 but York can only muster 5,000. Disregarding an advisor's prudent recommendation to wait for the Earl of March's arrival before facing Margaret's forces, York rushes out from his castle with whatever forces are at hand. He and his men put up a strong fight but the odds weigh too heavily against them. Within half an hour he and over half his troops are slain.

In accounting for the overwhelming victory of Margaret's forces, Hall underlines the Lancastrian thirst for vengeance as epitomized in the following account of Clifford's cruel acts:

> The yong erle of Rutland ii. sonne to the aboue named duke of Yorke, scace of y age of xii. yeres . . . was by the sayd lord Clifford espied, folowed, and taken. . . . The yong gentelman . . . kneled on his knees imploryng mercy, and desiryng grace, both with holding vp his hades and making dolorous countinance, for his speache was gone for feare. Saue him sayde his Chappelein, for he is a princes sonne, and peraduenture may do you good hereafter. With that word, the lord Clifford marked him and sayde: by Gods blode, thy father slew myne, and so wil I do the and all thy kyn, and with that woord, stacke the erle to y hart with his dagger, and bad his Chappeleyn bere the erles mother & brother worde what he had done, and sayde. . . . Yet this cruell Clifforde, & deadly bloudsupper not content with this homicyde, or dhyldkillyng, came to y place wher the dead coprs of the duke of Yorke lay, and caused his head to be stryken of, and set on it a croune of paper, & so fixed it on a pole, & presented it to the Quene [p. 251].

Shakespeare, in his account of York's downfall, incorporates all of the contributing factors suggested in the chronicles. Margaret's superior military strength is clearly spelled out by York in a speech delivered just before he enters the battlefield:

Five men to twenty! Though the odds be great,

> I doubt not, uncle, of our victory.
> Many a battle have I won in France,
> When as the enemy hath been ten to one.
> Why should I not now have the like success?
> (I.iii.75)

Also suggested in these lines is an excess of self-confidence, an overwillingness to rush into battle regardless of the risks involved. This too is suggested in the chronicles. The Lancastrian thirst for vengeance, a strong motivating force so vividly objectified in the chronicles, is also carried over into the play, first by portraying York's men as the murderers of Clifford's father and then by portraying Clifford as the vengeance-hungry murderer of Rutland and York.

In his account of York's downfall, Shakespeare adds a few interesting touches of his own, such as his portrayal of Margaret as a mother who reacts with maternal rage to Henry's act of disinheritance. He also adds a longwinded exchange of insults between York and his captors in which Clifford calls York a coward, and York responds by branding his tormentors thieves and robbers. He saves his best invectives for Margaret. In a lengthy denunciation he brands her a "she-wolf of France" (I.iv.111), an "Amazonian trull" (114), a "tiger's heart wrapped in woman's hide" (137), a woman who belies her sex by being "stern, obdurate, flinty, rough, remorseless" instead of "soft, mild, pitiful, and flexible" (141). Though these insults make for refreshing reading up to a point, they also reflect what is most disturbing about 3 Henry VI--its bombastic style. One is often

left with the nagging suspicion that Shakespeare resorts to such devices whenever the chronicles fail to provide him with better ideas.

Having dramatized York's death at Wakefield, Shakespeare turned his attention next to the rapid Yorkist recovery of power in the following year, climaxed by Edward's ascension to the throne in the spring of 1461. I will now summarize this movement as presented in Hall before tracing its development in the play. In accounting for this extraordinary period in English history, the chroniclers point toward Edward's magnetic personality and sterling character traits. Both are heavily underlined in Hall's account of his role in avenging his father's death at Mortimer's Cross:

> The people on the marches of Wales, which aboue measure fauored y lynage of the lord Mortimer . . . more gladly offered [Edward] their ayd & assistence, then he it either instantly requyred, or hartely desired, soo that he had a puyssant army, to the number of. xxiii. M. redy to go agaynst the quene, and the murderers of his father. . . . The duke of Yorke, called erle of Marche . . . mett with his enemies in a faire playne, nere to Mortimers crosse, not farre from Herford east, on Candelmas day in the mornyng, at whiche tyme the sunne (as some write) appered to the erle of March, like iii. sunnes, and sodainly ioined all together in one, and that vpo the sight therof, he toke suche courage, y he fiercely set on his enemies, & the shortly discofited: for which cause, men imagined, that he gaue the sunne in his full brightnes for his cognisauce or badge [p. 251].

Shortly after Edward's victory at Mortimer's Cross the Queen wins a decisive victory at St. Albans which she celebrates by having Henry knight their son and restore his rights to the throne. Her victory notwithstanding, the people in and around London according to Hall show even more

loyalty toward Edward. This reaction provided Hall with yet another opportunity to sing Edward's praises:

> What should I declare how the Kentishmen resorted: how the people of Essex swarmed, & how the counties adioyning to Londo dayly repaired to se, ayd, & comfort, this lusty prince and flower of chiualry, as he in whome the hope, of their ioy, and the trust of their quietnes onely then consisted [p. 253].

In response to this groundswell of public support, Edward calls a "grate counsaill both of lordes spirituall and temporall" (p. 253) and to them repeats his title to the throne. Deciding in his favor, the Council declares Edward England's lawful king. And when the people are asked to respond, they do so by answering "yea, yea, crieng Edward, with many great showtes and clappyng of handes" (p. 254). In his account of Edward's popularity, Hall concludes with following remarks:

> This kyng Edward the. iiij. . . . was so beloued and fauoured of the people, that no man was spoke of, no person was remebered, but only he: for he was so much estemed, bothe of the nobilitie and commonaltie, for his liberalitie, clemencie, integritie, and corage, that aboue, all other, he was extolled and praysed to the very heave. By reason wherof men of al ages & of all degrees to him dayly repaired, some offering theym selfes and their men to ieopard their lifes with him, and other plenteously gaue him money, to support his charges and mayntayne his warre. By reason wherof, he assembled together a puyssant army to thentent to gyue to his enemies a fierce and sharpe battayle, & so in one day to obtyen his purpose and make an ende of all his troble [p. 254].

Edward does not have long to wait. At the end of March Clifford is slain in a conflict at Ferrybridge, and a few days later at Towton, Edward wins a decisive victory over Henry's forces, sending him scurrying for protection into

Scotland. In accounting for the Yorkist victory, Edward is again singled out for special commendation by the chroniclers. The following comment by Hall is typical:

> This deadly battayle and bloudy conflicte, continued. x. houres in doubtfull victorie. The one parte some time flowyng, and sometime ebbyng, but inconclusio, kyng Edward so coragiously comforted his me, refreshyng the wery, and helping the wounded, that the other part was discomfited and overcome [p. 256].

With Edward's replacement of Henry on the English throne within the same year, Hall's presentation of Edward's rise to power is completed.

Shakespeare's treatment of these events differs from Hall in one startling respect. Though from beginning to end Edward is singled out in Hall as by far the single most important factor leading to the Yorkist recovery of strength, Shakespeare awards him no such place in 3 Henry VI. The rallying of people to his side after his father's death, his courageous show of strength at Mortimer's Cross, his popularity among the citizens of London, his decision to call together a council to appoint him King, the lasting impression he makes on his subjects, his role in turning the tide to the Yorkist side at Towton--everything that contributes to making Edward a charismatic man of action in the chronicles is omitted in the play. Instead we are presented with a future king given to attacks of intense depression and despair. Thus, when Shakespeare's Edward learns of his father's death, instead of reacting with a courageous pledge of vengeance, he becomes utterly inactivated in a paralysis

of grief. His father, he laments, was "our prop to lean upon," and his death has left poor Edward with "no staff, no stay." Like Hamlet, his father's death moves him to hope for his own:

> Now, my soul's palace is become a prison.
> Ah, would she break from hence, that this my body
> Might in the ground be closed up in rest!
> For never henceforth shall I joy again;
> Never, O never, shall I see more joy.
> II.i.78)

In sharp contrast to Edward in Shakespeare is his younger brother Richard who, though unmentioned at this point in Hall, reacts in anger to his father's death in the play. Far from dwelling on morbid thoughts, he complains that he cannot weep as long as the fires of vengeance burn up his body's moisture. "Tears, then, for babes, blows and revenge for me," declares Richard in a moment of self-revelation. "Richard, I bear thy name; I'll venge thy death, / Or die renowned by attempting it" (II.i.88).

In subsequent actions dramatizing the Yorkist return to power, Richard plays the active role assigned to Edward in the chronicles while Edward remains in the background. It is Richard who urges Edward to reach for Henry's crown: "For chair and dukedom, throne and kingdom say, / Either that is thine, or else thou wert not [York's son]" (II.i.94). It is also Richard who lifts Warwick out of the doldrums, after his disastrous defeat at St. Albans, with these stirring words:

> Shall we go throw away our coats of steel,
> Numb'ring our Ave-Maries with our beads?

> Or shall we on the helmets of our foes
> Tell our devotion with revengeful arms?
> If for the last, say ay, and to it, lords.
> (164)

Thus is it Richard instead of Edward who takes the initiative in rallying support for the Yorkist cause. Moreover, instead of picking up where his brother leaves off, Edward leans on the revitalized Warwick for support. "Lord Warwick," he declares, "on thy shoulder will I lean, / And when thou fail'st--as God forbid the hour!-- / Must Edward fall, which peril heaven forfend" (191). A similar response is elicited a few scenes later when Edward, in a further outbreak of obsequiousness, turns again to a revitalized Warwick and exclaims:

> O Warwick, I do bend my knee with thine
> And in this vow do chain my soul to thine!
> And ere my knee rise from the earth's cold face
> I throw my hands, mine eyes, my heart to thee,
> Thou setter up and plucker down of kings,
> Beseeching thee (if with thy will it stands)
> That to my foes this body must be prey,
> Yet that thy brazen gates of heaven may ope,
> And give sweet passage to my sinful soul!
> (II.iii.41)

In his dramatization of the decisive Yorkist victory at Towton, Shakespeare continues to explain the improvement in Yorkist fortunes in terms of Richard's character and personality. The scene is set on a field of battle between Towton and Saxton in Yorkshire. Warwick enters "Forspent with toil, as runners with a race" (II.iii.1). Close on his heels Edward enters, also exhausted, ready to declare defeat. "Edward's sun is clouded," he laments, just before his brother Clarence enters with the sad news that the Yorkist

"hap is loss, our hope but sad despair: / Our ranks are broke, and ruin follows us" (10). At this lowest point in Yorkist fortunes, Richard enters to save the day. Still full of life, he stirs Warwick into a mood of vengeance with the news that "thy brother's blood the thirsty earth hath drunk, / Broached with the steely point of Clifford's lance" (16). In a later scene it is Richard whom we see fighting hand to hand with Clifford and driving him offstage. "I myself will hunt this wolf to death," he declares to Warwick (II.iv.12). Wanting all the glory for himself, he rushes offstage in pursuit of Clifford, with his brother Edward nowhere in sight. Though in the chronicles Edward is his own trailblazer, in the play it is as a direct result of Richard's efforts that Edward advances to the throne.

Aside from making Edward's subsequent betrayal of Warwick more dramatic, why, one wonders, did Shakespeare so willfully distort history by giving Richard (in fact, a mere seven years of age at the time of his father's death at Wakefield) Edward's heroic qualities and recasting Edward in a decidedly unfavorable light. One can only speculate concerning his motives, but perhaps he was intrigued with the idea of humanizing Edward by portraying him as an older brother, an easily recognizable type, to Richard's younger brother. Also, working out of such a situation, Shakespeare solved the problem of preparing for subsequent events in the play. For with Edward cast early in the play as a weak-willed and melancholy type and his younger brother portrayed

as a forceful leader hungering for glory and renown, the seeds of King Edward's downfall are subtly suggested.

In accounting for that downfall, the chroniclers single out for special attention Edward's sudden marriage to Lady Elizabeth Grey. I will now summarize this as well as other reasons offered in Hall for Edward's fall from power before tracing its development in the play. "But for this marriage," notes Hall in his most solemn of voices, "kyng Edward was expulsed the Realm, & durst not abide" (p. 265). Hall's statement is supported by a chain of ineluctable events commencing with Edward's seemingly harmless decision to employ Warwick as his official marriage broker. In that capacity, Warwick travels to France to arrange a marriage between Edward and King Lewis of France's sister-in-law. In the meantime, Edward on a hunting expedition "in the forest of Wychwood besyde Stonnystratforde" is approached for a favor by "dame Elizabeth Greye, wydow of syr Ihon Grey knight, slayn at the last batell of saincte Albons, by the power of kyng Edward" (p. 264). Though "a woman more of formal countenaunce, then of excellent beautie," she captivates Edward with her "sober demeanure, louely likyng, and femynyne smyling (neither to wanton nor to humble) besyde her toungue so eloquent, and her wit so pregnant." Under her spell Edward begs her to become his mistress, an honor which she wisely declines by pointing out to Edward "that as she was for his honor farre vnable to be hys spouse and bedfelow: so for her awne poore honestie, she was to good to

be either hys concubyne, or soueregne lady." "Set on a hote burnyng fyre" by this reply, Edward makes up his mind on the spot to marry her, and does so at Westminster in "the next yere after" (p. 264).

Though Edward's marriage gains him some support from his wife's relatives, it is viewed in Hall as a step toward his downfall insofar as it is bought at the price of placing a permanent wedge between himself and King Lewis and his Queen who, Hall notes, "were not a littell discontent (as I can not blame them) to haue their sister, first demanded and then graunted, and in conclusion reiected, and apparantly mocked without any cause reasonable" (p. 265). Equally offended is Warwick who learns not from his sovereign but "by the letters of his trusty friendes" that all his work "with kyng Lewes in his ambassade for the coioyning of this new affinitie [is] frustrate & vayn" (p. 265). His appetite for vengeance piqued by Edward's rude behavior, Warwick vows to depose Edward from "his croune and royal dignitie, as an inconstant prince, not worthy of such a kyngly office" (p. 265). But for the moment Warwick keeps his feelings to himself and returns to England fully prepared "to suffer all such wronges & iniuries, as were to hym done, til he might spye a time coneuenient, & a world after his awn appetite, for the setting furth of his enterprise" (p. 266).

Four years after his return from France, as Hall describes it, to act secretly against Edward by enlisting the support of his brothers Montague and the Archbishop of York

to restore Henry to the throne. Next, he approaches Edward's brother the Duke of Clarence and offers him a heavily dowried daughter in exchange for his support. Provoked by Edward's generosity toward his wife's relatives at his own expense, Clarence joins the conspiracy.

With Clarence on his side, Warwick sets his plan to unseat Edward into motion. First, he has his brothers stir up a revolt in York while he and Clarence wait at Calais for the right moment to cross the English Channel. That moment comes when Warwick learns of a group of rebels marching from York to London. He and Clarence arrive from Calais and in the city of Warwick are joined by a large army of Northern Lancastrians who have recently won a major victory over Edward's troops headed by the Earls of Pembroke and Stafford. Edward, "sore thirsting to recouer his losse late susteyned, and desirous to be reuenged of the deathes and murders of hys lordes and fredes," is already advancing "toward Warwick with a great army" (p. 275). Once the King is within his reach, Warwick is at last in a position to play his last move. Taking no chances, he learns of "all the kynges doynges" from his spies before setting his final plan into motion:

> Lyke a wyse and politique Capitayne entendyng not to lese so great an auauntage to hym geuen, but trustyng to brynge all his purposes to a fynall ende and determinacion, by onely obteyning this enterprise: in the dead of the nyght, with an elect company of men of warre, as secretly as was possible [he] set on the kynges felde, kylling them that kept the watche, and or the kynge were ware (for he thought of nothynge lesse then of that chaunce that happened) at a place called Wolney. iiij.

> myle from Warwycke, he was take prysoner, and brought to the Castell of Warwicke [p. 275].

So ends Hall's presentation of Edward's downfall.

With regard to its development in the play, Shakespeare divided the foregoing chronicle account into roughly three sections. The first section is devoted to dramatizing Edward's fatal mistake--his decision to marry Lady Grey. In the next section the political realignments resulting from that marriage are established, and in a final section the military confrontations resulting in Edward's capture are quickly summed up. Though much in these sections is merely a straightforward dramatic restatement of the chronicle story of Edward's downfall, there are a few touches and refinements here and there which merit brief comment. To begin with, Shakespeare's version of Edward's initial confrontation with Lady Grey is a burlesque of Hall's soupy account, with Clarence and Richard brought in to ridicule Hall's romantic lovers in an exchange of highly disrespectful asides. Typical is the following exchange:

> King Edward: Widow, we will consider of your suit;
> And come some other time to know our mind.
>
> Lady Grey: Right gracious Lord, I cannot brook delay:
> May it please your Highness to resolve me now,
> And what your pleasure is shall satisfy me.
>
> Richard: (Aside to Clarence) Ay, widow? Then I'll warrant you all your lands,
> And if what pleases him shall pleasure you.
> Fight closer, or, good faith, you'll catch a blow.
>
> Clarence: (Aside to Richard) I fear her not, unless she chance to fall.

Richard: (Aside to Clarence) God forbid that! for he'll take vantages.

King Edward: How many children hast thou, widow? tell me.

Clarence: (Aside to Richard) I think he means to beg a child of her.

Richard: (Aside to Clarence) Nay then, whip me; he'll rather give her two.

Lady Grey: Three, my most gracious lord.

Richard: (Aside to Clarence) You shall have four, if you'll be ruled by him.

King Edward: 'Twere pity they should lose their father's lands.

Lady Grey: Be pitiful, dread lord, and grant it them.

King Edward: Lords, give us leave: I'll try this widow's wit.

Richard: (Aside to Clarence) Ay, good leave have you; for you will have leave,
Till youth take leave and leave you to the crutch.

(III.ii.35)

Edward's decision to marry Lady Grey is followed in the play by a long soliloquy in which Richard is revealed without his comic mask. Some of the best moments in the play occur here, especially when Richard tells us precisely what he is prepared to do to seize the crown:

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

(III.ii.195)

As Shakespeare in earlier scenes gives Richard the courage and charisma which are given to Edward in the chronicles, so here does he provide him with chronicle Warwick's duplicity, in particular his knack for keeping to himself his hatred of Edward "til he might spye a time coneueniet, & a world after his appetite, for the setting furth of his enterprise" to depose Edward. One gets the feeling throughout 3 Henry VI that Shakespeare is constructing Richard out of bits and pieces taken from other chronicle characters--a courageous arm from Edward, a false face from Warwick, Margaret's spleen, York's ambitious eye. Richard's mode of expression, however, is pure Shakespeare, particularly his abrasive tone of voice--"tut," "rent with the thorns," "I'll cut the causes off"; his metaphors and similes--"my misshaped trunk," "To shrink mine arm up like a withered shrub," "To make an envious mountain on my back"; his poetic outbursts--"Why, Love forswore me in my mother's womb." These are the qualities which distinguish Richard from his peers in both chronicle and play.

The next scene in the play concentrates on the political realignments resulting from Edward's marriage to Lady Grey. Involved are Queen Margaret, King Lewis of France and Warwick. Though the three did not actually meet until a full five years after Edward's marriage, Shakespeare rearranges history so that Margaret and Lewis are together when Warwick arrives to present Edward's proposal of marriage to Lewis's sister-in-law, the Lady Bona. Though Lewis has

already promised aid and comfort to Margaret, he is persuaded by Warwick into ratifying Warwick's proposal and the alliance that goes with it. However, just at this point a messenger arrives to announce Edward's marriage to the Lady Grey. Angered by Edward's betrayal, Warwick and Lewis agree with Margaret to form an alliance to unseat Edward and replace him with Henry. The scene ends with Warwick's pledge to "seek revenge on Edward's mockery" (III.iii.265).

Within the widened scope of so radical a rearrangement of history Shakespeare offers three interesting examples of a subject not touched upon in Hall--the insignificance of the issue of legitimacy in choosing sides between Edward and Henry. In the first example, Margaret's ally Oxford freely criticizes Warwick for not recognizing Henry as England's legitimate monarch but then justifies his own support of Henry on quite different grounds:

> Call [Edward] my king by whose injurious doom
> My older brother, the Lord Aubrey Vere,
> Was done to death? and more than so, my father,
> Even in the downfall of his mellowed years,
> When nature brought him to the door of death?
> No, Warwick, no; while life upholds this arm,
> This arm upholds the house of Lancaster.
> (III.iii.107)

Even less influenced in his predilections by the issue of legitimacy is King Lewis. It plays no part in his initial decision to aid Margaret, nor does it really influence him in his decision to switch from Henry's side to Edward's. To be sure, he asks Warwick if Edward is a "true King, for I were loath / To link with him that were not lawful

chosen" (III.iii.115). However, he quickly moves on to far more important political considerations--Edward's popularity among his subjects and the measure of his love "unto our sister Bona" (121). Only after he is reassured by Warwick on these matters does he change over to Edward's side. Moreover, he justifies this action to Margaret by declaring that Henry's "title to the crown be weak, / As may appear by Edward's good success" (146). Thus does Lewis, to suit his own political needs, replace the whole issue of lawfulness in his mind with the far more pragmatic question of Edward's popularity. In his final changeover, even pragmatic considerations are subsumed in a sea of wrath. Angered by Edward's shameful treatment of Bona, Lewis is now motivated by one consideration and one consideration only--his thirst for revenge.

Even less influenced by the issue of legitimacy is Warwick. Though he too starts off by paying lip service to Edward's greater legal claim to the throne, once he receives news of Edward's marriage to the Lady Grey, all of his old feelings of resentment toward Edward subsume previous considerations:

> Did I forget that by the house of York
> My father came untimely to his death?
> Did I let pass th' abuse done to my niece?
> Did I impale him with the regal crown?
> Did I put Henry from his native right?
> And am I guerdoned at the last with shame?
> Shame on himself! for my desert is honor:
> And to repair my honor lost for him,
> I here renounce him and return to Henry.
>
> (194)

Thus does Warwick join Oxford and Lewis in placing a far higher value on revenge than on the legal claim of either king to the throne. Together they illustrate a doctrine of political nature but dimly suggested in the chronicles: the law that no head of state has a right to rule in the eyes of those whom he deeply offends.

It is a law which Edward pays no mind to in the next scene by behaving as though he can do no wrong as king. Suspecting that Lewis and Warwick are offended by his marriage, he comforts himself with the observation that they are "but Lewis and Warwick," while he is none other than "Edward, your King and Warwick's" (IV.i.16). It is at this point that we learn that Edward, like his chronicle counterpart, has been running the risk of making further enemies among members of his own family by dispensing favors to his wife's relatives without taking into consideration their material needs. Richard reminds him that he has given "the heir and daughter of Lord Scales / Unto the brother of your loving bride" (54) even though she might better have fitted Richard or Clarence. "But in your bride you bury brotherhood" (55), complains Richard. "Or else," interjects Clarence, "you would not have bestowed the heir / Of the Lord Bonville on your new wife's son" (57).

Deaf to their protests, Edward continues to inhabit a fool's paradise. "Leave me or tarry," he replies to Clarence. "Edward will be King, / And not be tied unto his brother's will" (IV.i.66). Taking his brother's advice,

Clarence marches offstage to join Warwick. Although he is followed by Somerset, Edward's confidence is not at all shaken. Instead he takes comfort in the observation that he is armed "against the worst can happen" (128). Yet the worst does happen. Two scenes later he is captured by Warwick. Brought out "in his gown, sitting on a chair," he still continues to live in his fool's paradise. "Here is the Duke," observes Warwick the Kingmaker with more than a note of sarcasm to his voice. "The Duke," replies poor Edward, still clinging to mere titles. "Why, Warwick, when we parted, / Thou call'dst me King" (IV.iii.31). Thus is the detailed chronicle description of Edward's downfall captured in a few well-chosen sketches.

Both the chronicles and Shakespeare explain Edward's return to the throne in terms of a series of increments to Edward's strength beginning with Burgundy's generous provision of ships and money. I will now describe these increments as dramatic developments based on source materials in Hall. In the play, Act IV, Scene vii, marks the beginning of this process. Set before the gates of York, the scene opens with Edward announcing to Richard and Hastings his plans once more "to interchange / My wanted state for Henry's regal crown" (IV.vii.4). What follows in the play is based on the following chronicle account: "With lowly wordes, and gentel entreatynges" York assures the peace-loving citizens of York that he will commit no further civil disturbances, "that he came neither to demaunde the reamle of Englande

nor the superioritie of the same, but onely the duchie of Yorke his olde enheritance, the which duchie, if he might by their meanes readept and recouer he would never passe out of hys memorie so great a benefite, and so frendly a gratuite to hym exhibited" (p. 291). Won over by his "fayre wordes, and partly by hope of hys large promises," the citizens of York let Edward enter their city with his troops, but not before exacting from him a pledge "to be obedient, and faythfull to all kyng Henreyes commandements and preceptes" (p. 292). Once inside, however, Edward "clerely forgettinge his othe" sets "a garrison of Souldiers in the towne, to the entent y nothyng should be moved aganyst hym by the citezens, & after he gathered a great host, by reason of his money" (p. 292). Thus does Edward succeed in the all-important task of establishing a base of operations for his return to power.

Though the chroniclers take considerable pains in accounting for what happened at York, the same cannot be said for Shakespeare. The "fayre wordes" which win over the citizens of York are nowhere to be found in Shakespeare's account. And as for Edward's "large promises," they are reduced by the Bard to one brief sentence: "Why, and I challenge nothing but my dukedom, / As being well content with that alone" (IV.vii.24). Likewise, York's all-important pledge "to be obedient, and faythfull to all kyng Henryes commandements and precepts" is rendered in the play by Hasting's trite reassurance, "We are King Henry's friends" (28). What results is a dramatization in which the citizens of

York open the gates of their city to enemies of the state without sufficient provocation. It is, alas, an almost certain sign that Shakespeare's interest in his subject matter was fast on the wane.

Further signs appear in Shakespeare's handling of practically every other chronicle event dealing with Edward's return to power. Sir Thomas Montgomery's insistence that he "would surve no man but a kynge" (p. 292) is conveyed in such shallow lines as "Ay, now my sovereign speaketh like himself: / And now will I be Edward's champion" (IV.vii.68). Even more galling is the lack of conviction in Clarence's announcement of his return to Edward's side. "I am so sorry for my trespass made," he declares to Edward before being welcomed back "ten times more beloved" (V.ii.103). Perhaps the most telling sign of Shakespeare's waning interest in his material is conveyed in Margaret's mechanical use of metaphor in her Act V, Scene iv, speech to her soldiers at Tewksbury:

> Great lords, wise men ne'er sit and wail their loss
> But cheerly seek how to redress their harms.
> What though the mast be now blown overboard,
> The cable broke, the holding-anchor lost,
> And half our sailors swallowed in the flood?
> Yet lives our pilot still. Is't meet that he
> Should leave the helm, and like a fearful lad
> With Tearful eyes add water to the sea,
> And give more strength to that which hat too much,
> Whiles, in his moan, the ship splits on the rock,
> Which industry and courage might have saved?
> Ah, what a shame! ah, what a fault were this!
> Say Warwick was our anchor. What of that?
> And Montague our topmast. What of him?
> Our slaughtered friends the tackles: what of these?
> Why, is not Oxford here another anchor?
> And Somerset another goodly mast?

> The friends of France our shrouds and tacklings?
> And, though unskilful, why not Ned and I
> for once allowed the skilful pilot's charge?
> We will not from the helm to set and weep,
> But keep our course (though the rough wind say no)
> From shelves and rocks that threaten us with wrack.
> (V.iv.23)

Though Shakespeare committed many such transgressions, it is to his credit that he managed to fit every important chronicle event into the play involving Edward's final return to power. Edward's entry into the city of York, Montgomery's pledge of aid, Henry's imprisonment and murder, Clarence's return to his side, Warwick's defeat at Barnet, Montague's death, Margaret's return from France and subsequent defeat at Tewksbury, the deaths of Somerset, Oxford and Prince Edward--all are accounted for. Moreover, many are staged quite effectively, especially the deaths of Prince Edward and King Henry. All three sons of York stab the defenseless prince, much as their own brother Rutland was stabbed by Clifford, while Richard takes care of King Henry singlehandedly in a subsequent scene. Another encouraging sign is reflected in the stirring speech given by Richard after he kills King Henry. "I have no brother, I am like no brother," he points out as he wrenches himself away from his family ties and peers into the future to provide us with the following summary of coming attractions:

> Clarence, beware. Thou keep'st me from the light;
> But I will sort a pitchy day for thee;
> For I will buzz abroad such prophesies
> That Edward shall be fearful of his life,
> And then, to purge his fear, I'll be thy death.
> (V.vi.88)

Surely many Elizabethans, primed by their familiarity with the chronicle story of Richard's dramatic rise and fall from power, must have waited eagerly for Shakespeare's next installment in his ongoing account of fifteenth-century English history.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

One may infer from the foregoing studies of the Henry VI plays that while Shakespeare often deals with moral issues and problems in these plays, it is often difficult to determine which side, if any, he favors. To illustrate this point, I will take a closer look at Shakespeare's position with regard to three morally charged problems in the play: legitimacy, order and honor.

With regard to legitimacy, Shakespeare focuses on this issue in three separate scenes. It is the subject of a debate at the conclusion of 2 Henry VI between Yorkists and Lancastrians over who, Henry or York, should serve as England's rightful ruler. This debate is carried over into the opening Parliament House scene in 3 Henry VI. Legitimacy is once more the subject of debate in Act III of the same play, at the court of King Lewis of France.

What is most interesting about these three debates is that they offer us not the slightest hint of who Shakespeare thinks is right or wrong. Instead, the characters on either side of an issue are allowed to state their positions as best they can, with no attempt by Shakespeare, either through a chorus or some other "loading" device, to pull his audience permanently to either side. What Shakespeare seems

most concerned with in these scenes is not with deciding for or against either side, but with creating a dramatic tension between both sides. Thus, he balances each with an equal supply of moral ammunition--the Lancastrians have a de facto king, the Yorkists propose to replace him with a de jure king--in order, as it would appear, to create nothing more than a situation in which tension between two opposing forces can be maintained. To read any more into these plays, as moralistic readers tend to do, is to see them not as they were intended to be seen--as plays merely playing with issues.

The same may be said on the subject of Shakespeare's position with regard to many of his characters' less than honorable acts. A case in point is Shakespeare's dramatization in 3 Henry VI of Edward's disavowal of his promise to the citizens of York not to mount an attack against Henry. Tillyard argues that there is a moral point to this dramatization--that oathbreaking is wrong. Yet nothing in the play affirms such a position. In fact, aside from advancing Edward closer to his retrieval of the crown, there is no discernible motive or point to this incident that I have been able to locate.

It is equally difficult to determine Shakespeare's position in the plays with regard to the problem of order. It has been claimed often enough that Shakespeare is pro-order and anti-disorder. This may very well be the case, but nothing in the Henry VI plays proves it. In fact, were

we to judge the plays in terms of Shakespeare taking a stand against disorder, they wouldn't deserve a very high rating. The colorful manner in which Shakespeare portrays Cade, an arch enemy of order if there ever was one, is diametrically opposed to such a stand, as is so much else in the play--York's persuasive arguments for replacing Henry on the throne and Shakespeare's portrayal of Henry as a thoroughly incompetent reigning head of state, which excite us to want his subjects to rebel against his regime; the stodgy colors with which Shakespeare portrays Gloucester, a symbol of order in the plays; the thoroughly ridiculous pose of yet another symbol of order, Lord Say.

Yet one must not infer from the foregoing remarks that Shakespeare is advocating disorder in these plays. Far from it. For it is just as easy to cite instances to the contrary--the charmingly pure colors with which Shakespeare portrays Sir Alexander Iden, Cade's nemesis, and his penchant for viewing many disorderly types in the play in an unflattering light are but a few examples. Obviously, Shakespeare is not concerned with taking a position on this issue, or else he would have done a better job of it. He is concerned instead merely with dramatizing people taking sides--a very different matter.

It is in the light of these representative examples that I reiterate my contention that it is an error to ascribe to the author of these plays any fixed moral position. For rarely in the Henry VI plays does Shakespeare tell us

what to do or what to think, what is right and what is wrong. On the contrary, as a dramatist, he is concerned mainly with involving us in what his characters do and think, and in what they think is right and wrong. Were he to do more, he would cease being Shakespeare.

On the basis of the foregoing studies of the plays, we are now in a better position to view from a greater distance the early Shakespeare in relation to his sources. Far from being a capricious dramatizer of history, Shakespeare in the Henry VI plays captured the essence of the chronicles wherever possible, and altered history only when he had good reason for doing so. This is particularly well illustrated in his treatment of historical characters whose personalities remain true to Hall. Take Winchester, for example. In Hall he is described as "haut in stomacke, and hygh in coutenaunce, ryche aboue measure of all men, & to fewe liberal . . . preferrynge money before frendshippe . . . his couetous insaciable" (p. 210). In all of his appearances in the Henry VI plays, he remains true to this historical profile. Moreover, because enough dramatizable events are provided in Hall to illustrate his historical profile--his broils with Gloucester, his elevation to Cardinal, the part he plays in bringing about Gloucester's downfall, his deathbed words of regret--Shakespeare abstains by and large from resorting to "inventions" in dramatizing these qualities. The same holds true for a host of other characters. Sir John Falstaff, the

Duke of Burgundy, Warwick, Salisbury, the Duchess of Gloucester, the Cliffords, the Earl of Rutland, the Duke of Clarence--all remain largely true to their historical profiles in actions equally faithful to history.

Only when history fails to provide Shakespeare with suitable events for illustrating historical character does Shakespeare resort to inventions. Henry is a case in point. Hall notes, after an account of his death, that those "mischefes and miseries" which plagued England under his rule "partly came to hym for his awne offence," yet he fails to provide dramatizable incidents illustrating this aspect of Henry's character. Every one of Shakespeare's major inventions involving Henry--his division of English forces between Somerset and York in 1 Henry VI, his refusal to intervene on Gloucester's behalf in 2 Henry VI, his fatal confrontation with York in 3 Henry VI--are designed to make up for this shortcoming.

Another character who falls into this category is York. In Hall he is described as a man well versed in the art of politics, a leader whose plans to seize the throne are so "politiquely handeled" and "secretly kept" that they remain unknown to his enemies until the very eve of his rebellion against Henry's forces. Responding to the absence of illustrative incidents in Hall, Shakespeare invented a number of actions in which York is shown keeping secrets and handling affairs and people "politiquely." Among them are his shrewd defense of Gloucester in front of Gloucester's

Lancastrian adversaries in the opening scene of 2 Henry VI, his conversion of Salisbury and Warwick to his side a few scenes later, and his skillful manipulation of Gloucester's enemies into murdering Gloucester later in the same play.

Occasionally Shakespeare is presented with an overabundance of historical riches. This is especially the case in the historical material coinciding with 1 Henry VI, the least sophisticated play in the trilogy. Take for example an historical figure who has exhibited in Hall a side to his nature in conflict with the way Shakespeare wishes him to function onstage. Such is the case with Gloucester who is meant to represent the selfless and spotless public official in the plays, as he does in most of Hall, but whose early career in Hall is anything but unblemished.

"Either blynded with ambicion or doting on love" (p. 116), Hall's Humphrey of Gloucester in 1423 concludes a marriage agreement with Jacqueline, Duchess of Holland and sole heir to her father the Duke of Holland's vast holdings north of France. Though the marriage is obviously advantageous to Humphrey, Hall shows us that it proves embarrassing to England for at least two reasons. First, Jacqueline is still lawfully married to the Duke of Brabant. In addition, England's chief continental ally at the time, the Duke of Burgundy, is far from a disinterested party. Rather, he takes the side of the Duke of Brabant with whom he has enjoyed many years of peaceful relations. Thus, in addition to antagonizing the European moral community, Gloucester's head-

strong marriage also needlessly alienates England's most valuable ally. Ignoring the Duke of Burgundy's protestations, Gloucester invades Brabant's lands in 1425. Quickly assembling an army to oppose Gloucester, Burgundy calls off his plans only after Gloucester, in response to a papal decree in the Duke of Brabant's favor, returns to England. To be sure, Burgundy's alliance with England did not disintegrate as a result of Gloucester's impetuous actions. Nevertheless, it was subjected to needless stress which, under less favorable circumstances, might have resulted in far more serious consequences.

Bedford is another historical figure who confounds Shakespeare's commitment in 1 Henry VI to uncomplicated characters in uncomplicated situations. In Hall he is portrayed during the seige of Orleans as a man faced with a dilemma as interesting as it is perplexing. Wishing fervently to avoid a bloody massacre in the event of defeat by the English, the people of Orleans communicate to the Duke of Burgundy their desire to be placed under his authority and protection. Burgundy, reacting most favorably to this proposal, turns to Bedford for his approval. Thus is Bedford placed in a peculiarly embarrassing position. For if on the one hand he gives in to Burgundy's request he runs the risk of establishing a precedent extremely unfavorable to English interests, while if on the other hand he turns down Burgundy's request he faces the equally unpleasant risk of alienating his strongest ally. According to Hall, he

chose the latter course of action, a step which led ultimately to Burgundy's fatal defection from England's side.

Shakespeare's solution to this kind of problem was simply to ignore historical complications. Thus, no reference in the plays is made either to Gloucester's affair with Jacqueline or to Bedford's Orleans dilemma. In the case of Gloucester, Shakespeare merely paid the price of offending those members of his audience who might notice his tamperings with history. But with regard to his simplification of Bedford's historical profile, he paid a much higher price. Having removed from the play one of Burgundy's chief reasons for defecting from England, the dramatization of that defection later in the play fails to appear convincing. It is a sign that Shakespeare had not yet learned how to translate complicated situations and ideas into dramatic terms.

Though this is often the case with characters in earlier actions within the trilogy, characters who appear in later actions tend to be better developed than they are in Hall. This is particularly the case with Margaret who in Hall is nothing more than a headstrong monster set on a one-way course to self-destruction. She is, to be sure, all that in the Henry VI plays, but in addition Shakespeare makes her more mimetic by portraying her as a flirt initially, and later as a maternal monarch interested as much in wresting the reins of power from her enemies as she is in passing on those reins to her son Prince Edward. It is in her role as mother, a role totally ignored in Hall, that

Margaret comes most to life. Take for example her maternal reaction to the news that Henry has disinherited their son from his royal inheritance:

> Ah, wretched man! Would I had died a maid,
> And never seen thee, never borne thee son,
> Seeing thou hast proved so unnatural a father!
> Hath he deserved to lose his birthright thus?
> Hadst thou but loved him half so well as I,
> Or felt that pain w'ich I did for him once,
> Or nourished him as I did with my blood,
> Thou wouldst have left thy dearest heart-blood there,
> Rather than have made that savage duke thine heir
> And disinherited thine only son.
>
> (I.i.225)

It is Shakespeare's skill here in painting Margaret in life-like colors--as a mother furious over the disinheritance of her child--that raises her in dramatic stature head and shoulders above lifeless Bedford and wooden Gloucester.

Shakespeare produces similar effects with other characters, notably with Henry, who is viewed in 3 Henry VI far more as a father than he is in Hall, and with York's sons, Richard and Edward, who are portrayed in a multitude of familiar roles unsuggested in Hall--as siblings involved in an intense rivalry for their father's affection, as loyal sons fighting side by side to avenge their father's death, and finally as older brother and younger brother: the one the beneficiary of his father's inheritance, the other the jealous have-not.

What is most impressive toward the end of the trilogy is Shakespeare's ability to transfer historical figures from an unrecognizable world to the realm of the immediate and familiar. That Shakespeare occasionally tampers with history

to bring off such feats is, certainly, a small enough price for a dramatist to pay.

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