

The Date of 2, 3 *Henry VI*

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ALTHOUGH the conjectural dates of most early Shakespearean plays remain subject to unabating controversy, contention, ironically, yields to union when it comes to dating the second and third parts of *Henry VI*. General consensus has it that these two closely-linked plays were composed in 1590/1. The awesome chorus of authorities postulating a 1590/1 date comprises the voices of E. K. Chambers, P. Alexander, G. L. Kittredge, F. E. Halliday, the Shakespeare Encyclopaedia, of investigators into problems of chronology such as J. G. McManaway, K. Wentersdorf, and M. Mincoff, and the most recent editors of the plays. Even the editors of the *Henry VI* trilogy in the Cambridge (J. Dover Wilson) and in the Arden (A. Cairncross), however rarely they see eye to eye, find themselves broadly in agreement over the date of *Parts 2* and *3*. Cairncross suggests 1590 for *2 Henry VI*, 1591 for *3 Henry VI*; Dover Wilson believes that *Part 2* was first produced in the earlier half of 1591 and *Part 3* later in the same year. It is with reluctance that one proposes to introduce a jarring note into so harmonious a concert. Yet, there are various indications that the premises on which the dating of *Henry VI, Parts 2* and *3* has been based are questionable and that a thorough re-examination of the problem may challenge assumptions that up to now have been taken for granted.

The discussion of the date of the *Henry VI* trilogy may conveniently set out from Nashe's well-known passage in *Pierce Penilesse* (Stationer's Register, August 8th, 1592). Defending the stage against "shallow-braind censurers," Nashe pleads the educational value of plays which offer moral lessons and foster patriotism. One play in particular is held up as a resplendent example:

How would it have joyed brave Talbot (the terror of the French) to thinke that after he had lync two hundred yeares in his Tombe, hee should triumphe againe on the Stage, and have his bones embalmed with the teares of ten thousand spectators at least (at severall times), who, in the Tragedian that represents his person, imagine they behold him fresh from bleeding.¹

The allusion fits exactly Shakespeare's *1 Henry VI* with its use of Hall's epithet for Talbot ("Terror of the French") and with its scenes depicting

¹R. B. McKerrow, ed., *The Works of Thomas Nashe* (London, 1904-10; repr. 1958), Vol. I, p. 212.

Talbot's triumphs and his melodramatic death.² Today nobody contests that Nashe indeed refers to Shakespeare's play. What is still in dispute, however, is whether *1 Henry IV* (identical with Nashe's Talbot play) is also one and the same as the "hary the vj" mentioned by Henslowe as a "ne" play, first performed by Lord Strange's men at the Rose on 3 March 1592. The trouble arises from another external allusion, the reference to *3 Henry VI* made by Greene in his *Groatsworth* (published shortly after the author's death on September 3rd). It is generally understood that if *1 Henry VI* were a new play on March 3rd, there was simply not sufficient time for two sequels to be written, rehearsed, and played between that date and June 23rd, when the Privy Council decreed the closure of the theaters. Various solutions have been proposed to disentangle the conflicting evidence. Critics who see the *Henry VI* trilogy as an organic whole either reject the identification of Henslowe's play with *1 Henry VI* or they claim that Henslowe's entry records the revival of a play at least two years old and taken over from another company. Those who remain convinced that Henslowe's play can have been no other than *1 Henry VI* and that it was new in March 1592 see themselves obliged to assume that the first part was written after Parts 2 and 3.

Is it at all possible to decide whether *1 Henry VI* is the play mentioned by Henslowe and whether it was new in 1592? I believe it is, and I believe that a detached look at the evidence yields a positive answer to both questions. Nashe relates that *1 Henry VI* was seen by ten thousand spectators at least, which means that it was a notable popular success. The same popularity was enjoyed by "hary the vj," which surpassed all the other Rose plays in gate money as well as in number of performances. It seems altogether an unlikely coincidence that in 1592 there should have been two rival plays on the reign of *Henry VI*, one at the Rose by an author other than Shakespeare and one by Shakespeare acted elsewhere, which both drew huge crowds. It also seems strange that Henslowe's fabulously successful play should have been lost without a trace. Finally, perhaps the strongest objection against the theory that *1 Henry VI* and "hary the vj" are different plays has not hitherto been taken into account: Nashe's *Pierce Penilesse*, the tract containing the allusion to *1 Henry VI*, is dedicated to Lord Strange³ and lavishes flattery on Edward Alleyn, who in 1592 was the leading actor of the Strange company. It is quite incredible that Nashe should have sung the praises of a *Henry VI* play performed by a rival company and at the same time have totally ignored the showpiece of the company whose leading actor he glorifies and to whose patron he wished to ingratiate himself. The case for *1 Henry VI* being identical with Henslowe's play is a strong one.

Peter Alexander, who originally denied this identification, was constrained to revise his position, and in his latest pronouncement on the matter admitted that Henslowe's play may have been *1 Henry VI*, but that the performance

² Nashe was so impressed by the play that in February 1593, when he wrote *The Terrors of the Night*, he consciously or unconsciously borrowed a number of expressions and images from it. See C. G. Harlow, "A Source for Nashe's *Terrors of the Night* and the Authorship of *1 Henry VI*," *SEL*, V (1965), 31-47, 269-81.

³ To be precise, the pamphlet is dedicated to "Amynthas," who has been identified as Lord Strange. See F. P. Wilson, *A Supplement to McKerrow's Edition of Nashe* (Oxford, 1958), pp. 15-16.

on March 3rd would then have been a revival of a play originally written in 1590 at the latest.⁴ Again, this hypothesis does not hold. There are a number of convincing arguments for *1 Henry VI* having been new on March 3rd:

1. One strong pointer is Henslowe's "ne" and it will not do to simply disregard it. Greg thought:

The letters are used, with few exceptions, to mark the first occurrence of a play, and the exceptions themselves are easily explained by the supposition that the play so designated was new to the particular company, though not to the stage in general, or that it was new in the sense that it was a revival with alterations.⁵

In this context it must be emphasized that the few exceptions mentioned by Greg (of a "ne" play being not entirely new) date from a later period in Henslowe's management, by which time the public had grown accustomed to the presentation of a "ne" play well-nigh every week. As opposed to the practice of the later Admiral's men, Lord Strange's company put on only five "ne" plays in a season lasting from February to June. The first entry of a play in Henslowe's diary, where "ne" presumably stands for "a revival with alterations," occurs on the 29th of August 1595. Under that date Henslowe entered as "ne" "longe shancke," generally held to be a vamped up version of Peele's *Edward I*. Before then Henslowe had entered 28 plays as "ne," and there is no evidence (with the debatable exception of *Titus Andronicus*) that any of these plays was not in fact new.

2. The exceptional profits brought in by "harey the vj"—unequalled throughout Henslowe's long management—suggest that the play was new. The revival of a rehashed old play, however popular, would hardly have drawn record crowds to the Rose.

3. The theory that "harey the vj" was bought by Strange's from another company has been refuted. Allison Gaw discovered that, of the 26 plays produced by Strange's men from February to June 1592 and in the winter of 1592/3, every play that is traceable to previous ownership by another company goes back either to the Queen's or to the Admiral's men. Later all the successful plays of the company were transferred to the Admiral's men, when Alleyn rejoined them in the spring 1594. All that is except "harey the vj." Gaw thinks that the absence of "harey the vj" in the later repertory of the Admiral's men proves that it was *not* bought by Alleyn from another company, but that it was the "original property of Strange's men, who naturally would not part with it."⁶

4. The strong external evidence in favor of *1 Henry VI* being new in March 1592 is corroborated by internal evidence. In his introduction to the play J. Dover Wilson argues persuasively that the play closely reflected the political and military events in late 1591 and early 1592.⁷ He calls the play "almost a

⁴ Peter Alexander, *Shakespeare* (London, 1964), p. 80.

⁵ W. W. Greg, *Henslowe's Diary, Part I* (London, 1904), p. 148.

⁶ Allison Gaw, *The Origin and Development of 1 Henry VI: In Relation to Shakespeare, Marlowe, Peele and Greene* (Los Angeles, 1926), p. 22.

⁷ J. Dover Wilson, ed., *The First Part of Henry VI* (Cambridge, 1952), pp. xi-xiii.

newsreel" of Essex's gallant but frustrated expedition to Normandy and stresses the actuality of the play by comparing certain of its scenes with eye-witness reports of the siege of Rouen. Wilson's view is shared by G. Bullough (who, however, does not exclude the possibility that the 1592 version of the play was a revision):

A play recalling the gallant deeds of the English in France at an earlier period when that country was divided against itself, a play containing two major sieges (Orleans and Rouen) and one threatened (Bordeaux), would be topical between August, 1591 and April, 1592, and likely to be especially popular before Essex's recall . . . It may be, therefore, that the play was shaped into its present form in autumn 1591 or in winter 1591/2 . . .⁸

Essex set off for France in August 1591, the spectacular sieges took place late in the autumn, and only by January did Essex relinquish his command.⁹ If we allow for the time it must have taken to write and rehearse, March 3rd fits neatly as the date for the first performance of a play mirroring the war in France.

5. A striking feature of *1 Henry VI* is the substantial number of scenes which call for acting on levels higher than the platform stage. In six scenes players appear both on the platform stage and on the upper stage. One scene (III.ii) even introduces action on a third level, when La Pucelle triumphantly thrusts out a burning torch from "the top" to signal to her troops and a dozen lines later reappears "on the walls." Gaw proposed the theater's loft or hut as the location for La Pucelle's signaling with the torch.¹⁰ If his interpretation is correct, it would almost certainly mean that this spectacular scene could not have been staged before the winter 1591/2, when important building alterations gave the Rose an elaborate superstructure with a loft. According to Glynne Wickham, the older theaters (Curtain, Theatre, and Rose until early 1592) had open tiring houses with no ceiling and consequently no loft.¹¹ It therefore seems possible that scene III.ii was written specifically for the modernized Rose.

It would appear that the available evidence—in particular Henslowe's "ne," the play's overwhelming popular success, the disappearance of the play from Henslowe's books after 1594, its reflection of the contemporary military and political situation—is massive enough to uphold the hypothesis that *1 Henry VI* was a new play on March 3rd, 1592 and that it was written in the last months of 1591 and the first weeks of 1592.

The recognition that *1 Henry VI* is identical with Henslowe's "ne" play has led E. K. Chambers and J. Dover Wilson to propose a theory according to which *1 Henry VI* was written after 2 and 3 *Henry VI*. Wilson contends that

⁸ Geoffrey Bullough, ed., *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, Vol. III (London, 1960), pp. 24-25.

⁹ It is not impossible that the lines "But from their ashes shall be rear'd / A phoenix that shall make all France afeard" (*1H6*, IV. vii. 92-93) imply a compliment to Essex. See John Munro, "Some Matters Shakespearean—III," *TLS*, 11 Oct. 1947, 528.

¹⁰ Gaw, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-63.

¹¹ Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages: 1300-1660* (London, 1963), Vol. II, p. 309.

2 and 3 *Henry VI* "display complete ignorance of the drama which ostensibly precedes them. There are many signs of this."¹² Three of these signs serve Wilson as arguments:

The first argument is that 2, 3 *Henry VI* three times inform the audience that Henry was only nine months old when he ascended the throne, while in 1 *Henry VI* the King is old enough at the end of the play to fall in love. This argument has been answered by T. W. Baldwin:

The fact is that arguments here are in different planes. Whatever the represented age of Henry in Part I, that age was dictated by stage presentation. The references in 2 and 3 *Henry VI* and *Richard III* are to the actual historical fact, without any consideration to stage presentation. The stage presentation of Part I would have no meaning in their context.¹³

The second argument is that the character of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester is inconsistent. This argument cuts both ways and shall be dealt with later. It has also been cogently refuted by Baldwin.¹⁴

Finally Wilson asks how it comes that Talbot, the hero of *Part 1*, is never once mentioned in *Part 2* and goes on:

But in the first scene of Part II Gloucester gives a list of those who had shed their blood in France to preserve what Henry V had won, and overlooks the name of Talbot altogether. Is that not very strange? And is it not still stranger—quite incomprehensible indeed if the three parts were written in Folio order—that among the names he does cite are those of Somerset and 'brave York', who are represented in Part I as factious traitors responsible for Talbot's death.¹⁵

The answer to Wilson's questions is simple: Shakespeare did not mention Talbot in *Part 2* because the character is dead and mentioning it would be dramatically distracting. In *Part 3* there is similarly no mention of Duke Humphrey, the hero of *Part 2*. As to the omission of Talbot's name from the "list of those who have shed their blood in France," the answer is that the names cited by Duke Humphrey are not on such a list but occur in a speech of persuasion, in which Duke Humphrey refers to the example of his dead brothers and to the efforts of the peers he is addressing at this very moment.¹⁶

Wilson's three points fail to establish that *Part 1* was written after *Parts 2* and *3*. The theory crumbles altogether if subjected to closer scrutiny. Critical

¹² J. Dover Wilson, ed., *The Second Part of Henry VI* (Cambridge, 1952), pp. xi, xii.

¹³ T. W. Baldwin, *On the Literary Genetics of Shakespeare's Plays 1592-1594* (Urbana, 1959), p. 335.

¹⁴ Baldwin, *op. cit.*, p. 335.

¹⁵ Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. xiii.

¹⁶ Baldwin, *op. cit.*, pp. 335-36.

He makes no flourish of allusion to the glorious dead, where many more than Talbot would have had to be included. Also Somerset and 'brave York' were very much alive and present. So they needed to be persuaded, however grand rascals Gloucester may have considered them to be.

examination of the plays shows the trilogy to be a naturally-grown organism and not a compilation. Through the three plays Shakespeare's artistic development can be traced. As far as grasp of subject matter, construction, characterization, and language are concerned, there is steady technical progress from *Part 1* to *Part 3*. Or in Hazelton Spencer's words:

It can scarcely be maintained that *Part 3* is among the wonderful works of the creative imagination, but the poetic level sometimes rises higher than in *Part 1* and *Part 2*, and the structural unity is better planned. The artist's powers are waxing; he learns how to write by writing.¹⁷

The later parts are less wooden in their verse and have a higher percentage of feminine endings. Stichomythia is used with far more assurance in *Part 3* than in *Part 1*. The plays' general tone and imagery also argue for their having been written in the Folio order. There is a clear crescendo from *Part 1* to *Part 3*, with the tone becoming progressively more strident, the imagery more violent. A recent student of the imagery in the trilogy writes:

Appearing uniformly throughout the trilogy, garden images emphasize the dangers of death and decay faced by plant and man alike and thus serve as a poetic context in which the drama of civil war may unfold. The other two main images—animal and water—undergo a change as the trilogy progresses: in *Part I* the many types of imagistic animals are constantly threatened by man-made traps or enclosures, symbolic of civilized man's desire for order, and the water images are peaceful. *Part II* reveals the beast of prey images becoming dominant and the threat by traps gives way to butchery and slaughter, while the water images become increasingly violent and unpleasant. In *Part III* animal images continue to emphasize slaughter and the water images are of storms and tempests.¹⁸

Characterization is another strong argument for the priority of *Part 1*. In *Part 1* the method of presenting character is elementary: Principal characters (Talbot, La Pucelle) are described before they enter, describe themselves, and then act in accordance with these descriptions. As yet Shakespeare shows no interest in psychological motivation. Characterization in the trilogy has been examined by Turner, who observes:

Shakespeare followed Hall by thinking of character as a general category to be illustrated by behavior. In *1 Henry VI* he translated this relationship directly onto the stage, first by a description of character and then by a presentation of the character in action.¹⁹

However, Shakespeare learned quickly and:

By the time he composed *2 Henry VI*, Shakespeare must have sensed that the static presentation of character by statement was redundant and abandoned the awkward pause in action.²⁰

¹⁷ Hazelton Spencer, *The Art and Life of William Shakespeare* (New York, 1940), p. 160.

¹⁸ Carol Ruth McGinnis, "Such Fictitious Emulations': Dramatic Imagery in Shakespeare's *Henry VI* Trilogy," abstracted in *DA*, XXIV (1968), 223-A.

¹⁹ Robert Y. Turner, "Characterization in Shakespeare's Early History Plays," *ELH*, XXXI (1964), 245.

²⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 246.

Turner notes further improvement in 3 *Henry VI*, where “. . . artful additions to character contrast strongly with the single consistency of character in 1 *Henry VI*.”²¹ Another point is made by Tillyard: “. . . characters, embryonic in the first part, develop in the second in full congruity with their embryonic character.”²² Even when they do not develop in full congruity as is the case with Duke Humphrey, this can be used as an argument for the priority of *Part 1*. At the beginning of *Part 1* Duke Humphrey is a “loud-mouthed brawler pursuing a feckless quarrel with Cardinal Beaufort.”²³ In scene V. v of the same play he has become the “good Duke” of *Part 2*, “pledged to maintain firm and honest government.” Surely if Shakespeare had first written *Part 2* with Duke Humphrey a spotless hero, he would not have drawn him as a “loud-mouthed brawler” when tagging on *Part 1*. Is it not far more likely that Shakespeare, following the chronicles, started out with Duke Humphrey as one of the factious noblemen and, as he proceeded in his composition of the play, became aware that he would need him as the unfortunate hero of *Part 2*?

Through the trilogy we find not only development in language and characterization but also progress in construction. *Part 1*, for instance, contains no single scene that can hope to match the fine architecture of Beaufort's Death Scene in *Part 2*.²⁴ Quarrel scenes (important components of plays that have civil strife as one of their main themes), which are simple slanging matches in *Part 1*, are woven into a far more sophisticated pattern in *Part 2*.²⁵ Clumsy choric intrusions that stand out in *Part 1* (the speeches of Lucy and Exeter) are progressively eliminated. Scenes, simply juxtaposed in *Part 1*, become better integrated. Calderwood notes:

The action of 1 *Henry VI* is sluggish . . . actions separately focused upon are in themselves static and repetitive. . . . In 2 *Henry VI*, on the other hand, chaos does not simply come about, it is brought about, and even on occasion dragged forth.²⁶

This analysis agrees with the findings of a recent dissertation on the structure of the three plays:

There are marked contrasts between the plays . . . which suggest a general evolution in structural technique. . . . It would seem . . . that in 1 *Henry VI* Shakespeare concentrated primarily upon design, in 2 *Henry VI* he took comparatively more pain with plotting, and in 3 *Henry VI* he synthesized both, constructing a play in which sequential action and a shaping pattern approach a kind of balance.²⁷

²¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 248.

²² E. M. W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays* (London, 1948), p. 162.

²³ M. M. Reese, *The Cease of Majesty: A Study of Shakespeare's History Plays* (London, 1961), p. 175.

²⁴ See Horst Oppel, “Der Tod Beauforts” in *Festschrift zum 75. Geburtstag von Theodor Spira* (H. Viebrock and W. Erzgräber, eds., Heidelberg, 1961), pp. 113-24.

²⁵ See Karl Otto Braun, *Die Szenenführung in den Shakespeare'schen Historien. Ein Vergleich mit Holinshed und Hall* (Wüzburg, 1935), pp. 20-22.

²⁶ J. L. Calderwood, “Shakespeare's Evolving Imagery: 2 *Henry VI*,” *ES*, XLVIII (1967), 482.

²⁷ Don M. Ricks, “A Study of the Structure of Shakespeare's Three Parts of *Henry VI*,” abstracted in *DA*, XXVI (1966), 5443-A.

M. M. Reese observes a shift in Shakespeare's interest and a growing concern for character in 3 *Henry VI*:

As the play proceeds Shakespeare begins to tire of the chronicle form, with its mechanical motivation, and to concern himself rather with the human problems of kingship.²⁸

He found it superficial and inadequate to go on seeking the causes of events in men's outward actions, since their actions are only a consequence of the sort of men they are, their response or resistance to the forces working on them.²⁹

Those who conjecture that Shakespeare after finishing *Part 3* returned to write (or rewrite) *Part 1* will have to face the question why Shakespeare, after having reached new insights and achieved remarkable progress in dramatic craftsmanship, should then have forgotten all he had learned and reverted to a more primitive stage of technical development.

Another argument for the priority of *Part 1* is H. T. Price's lucid demonstration that the whole tetralogy beginning with *Part 1* and ending with *Richard III* is shaped by a guiding idea and has a firm design imposed on it.³⁰ Each play is in Tillyard's words "a portion of a larger organism."³¹ The earlier plays contain the germs of the later plays and the later plays presuppose the earlier as already known. Alexander finds:

From the first part of *Henry VI* Shakespeare had a clear idea of the theme he intended to develop; and in the second and third parts dealing with the affairs of that reign the dramatist had obviously in mind the sequel that was to take shape in *Richard III*.³²

A final argument for the priority of 1 *Henry VI* is Shakespeare's use of the sources. To J. P. Brockbank the "equable division of the source material"³³ strongly suggests that the plays were written in the Folio order. Also, from 1 *Henry VI* through 2, 3 *Henry VI* to *Richard III* Shakespeare grows increasingly more respectful towards the historical facts narrated in the chronicles. He continues to compress and arrange facts to a dramatic purpose but he becomes more economical in inventing scenes out of the blue. 1 *Henry VI* is very rich in purely fictional episodes (10 scenes are fictional altogether) that have no historical foundation whatever. In 2, 3 *Henry VI* imagination is

²⁸ Reese, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

²⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 205.

³⁰ H. T. Price, *Construction in Shakespeare* (Ann Arbor, 1951).

³¹ Tillyard, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

³² Alexander, *op. cit.*, p. 178. Also H. Spencer, *op. cit.*, p. 155:

Since so much of [*Part 1*] is devoted to stating themes that involve little action till *Part 2*, it seems reasonable to suppose that Shakespeare wrote the three parts in the natural order, that of their chronology.

Anselm Schlösser, "Shakespeare erste Tetralogie," *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* 102 (1966), 178:

Ahnungen nahenden Unheils bestimmen das Stück, das sich, wiewohl nur Auftakt, schon dadurch als fester Bestandteil einer vom ersten Teil von *Heinrich VI.* bis zu *Richard III.* reichenden, zusammenhängenden Gesamtkomposition darbietet.

³³ J. P. Brockbank, "The Frame of Disorder: *Henry VI*" in *Early Shakespeare* (*Stratford-upon-Avon Studies*, III, J. R. Brown and B. Harris eds. [1961]), p. 72.

kept on a tighter rein.³⁴ That Shakespeare's tendency was towards greater historical fidelity is underlined by *Richard III*, where fantasy is almost entirely banished.

In view of all these compelling arguments there can be little doubt that the trilogy was written in the Folio order. As we have seen earlier, it is equally certain that *1 Henry VI* was a new play on March 3rd 1592. How are we to reconcile these findings with the following undeniable facts:

1. *3 Henry VI* was in existence by August 1592, when Greene alluded to it.
2. Henslowe's records show no trace of *Parts 2* and *3*.³⁵
3. *Parts 2* and *3* were in the repertory of Pembroke's men (as attested by the title page of the 1595 bad quarto of *3 Henry VI*).

I can see only one hypothesis which accounts for all these facts and findings. It may be outlined as follows:

In the spring of 1592 Shakespeare, after having finished *1 Henry VI* and perhaps encouraged by the play's success, set about writing a sequel (which he may well have planned from the very beginning). He found the material for this planned second part to be so copious that he was forced to split it up into two plays, *2* and *3 Henry VI*. It has been noted that these two parts are linked far more closely than any of the two-part plays in the Tamburlaine tradition. Clifford Leech points out: "The rise/fall structure is replaced here by a continuous action running through two parts."³⁶ As another commentator thinks:

Undoubtedly the second and third parts of *Henry VI* are the two

³⁴ Bullough, *op. cit.*, p. 25:

[*1 Henry VI*] does not follow the sequence of events in the chronicles but darts about the period in a bewildering way . . . fact and fiction blend, . . . incidents are transposed or altered, until it seems that *1 Henry VI* is not so much a chronicle play as a fantasia on historical themes.

Op. cit., p. 99:

2 Henry VI is a well ordered-play which departs from history much less than *1 Henry VI* and interweaves the several motifs which it takes over in brilliant fashion, sketching the main characters in broad outline and presenting a wonderful diversity of material . . .

Shakespeare's progressively increasing fidelity towards the chronicles is demonstrated by Robert Adger Law, "*The Chronicles and the Three Parts of Henry VI*," *University of Texas Studies in English*, XXXIII (1954), 1-32. Law finds about *3 Henry VI*: "Part 3 more faithfully follows the succession of events related by Holinshed than does either of the other plays."

³⁵ Baldwin, *op. cit.*, p. 329, believes:

We may take it as certain that in March, 1592, Strange's company was acting in two and possibly all three parts of *1, 2, 3 Henry VI* in approximately the form they bear in the First Folio.

He assumes that Henslowe's references to "harye the vj" are to two, perhaps even three plays. He justifies this assumption from the takings jotted down by Henslowe and from his own theory that three scales of prices were charged, dependent on the relative novelty and drawing-power of a play. However, this theory is not substantiated. Henslowe, as far as we know, was punctilious about his "ne" and, if a play had a sequel, he always made it clear in his entry, whether the first or second part was meant. There is no "the second parte of harye the vj" to be found in the diary.

³⁶ Clifford Leech, "The Two-Part Play: Marlowe and the Early Shakespeare," *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* 94 (1958), 100.

which are bound together most closely, so much so that they could hardly be performed separately.³⁷

It would have been unsatisfactory to put on *Part 2* without having it followed almost immediately by *Part 3*. Consequently, Shakespeare was forced to finish the whole trilogy before *Part 2* could be performed. It is therefore not surprising that we look in vain in Henslowe's diary for "the second parte of harye the vj." Less than four months separated the first performance of *1 Henry VI* from the closure of the theaters on June 23. This time was too brief for Shakespeare to complete *2* and *3 Henry VI* and for the actors to learn their parts. However, it is not unreasonable to suppose that Shakespeare finished the two sequels by late July or early August, particularly as he was free from acting after June 23. It must be kept in mind that the inhibition on acting was originally only to last till Michaelmas. It would have been only natural for the players to put the weeks of enforced inactivity to good use by preparing the new season, discussing and rehearsing new plays. At one of these readings or rehearsals Greene could easily have picked up the "Tygers heart" line, which he was to fling at Shakespeare in *Groatsworth*.³⁸ It has been held that Greene would not have quoted from *3 Henry VI* if the play had not already been familiar to the London public. This view is in no way confirmed by what we know about Greene. On the contrary, quoting from a play that would be brand-new on the stage at the very time when his pamphlet left the printer's shop would be typical of Greene's journalistic flair. When Greene penned his famous attack (some time during his fatal illness in August), he could expect the theaters to reopen in September. *3 Henry VI* would then be put on for the first time and he would achieve the sharpest possible impact. It must be kept in mind that in 1592 none of Shakespeare's works were in print and that if Greene wanted to place a quotation he could not allude to a play that was old and forgotten.

Notoriously, Greene was forever striving to be *à jour* or preferably just a step head of time. His quoting from a play not yet publicly performed has a precedent in his reference to Nashe's *Pierce Penilesse* some months before its actual publication.³⁹

³⁷ Laszlo Nemeth, "A Translator's Report," *New Hungarian Quarterly*, V (1964), 25. Schlosser, *op. cit.*, p. 187:

Zwischen dem zweiten und dritten Teil liegt nur eine Pause, kein Einschnitt. Fugenlos schliesst sich die erste Szene an das Vorhergegangene an.

In its 1963 season the Royal Shakespeare Company produced the second and third parts of *Henry VI* as one play (performed on one evening) under the title *Edward IV*.

³⁸ In 1592, three of Greene's plays were in the repertory of Strange's (*Friar Bacon, Orlando, Looking Glass for London and England*). He may also have had a major hand in *A Knack to Know a Knave*, which was "ne" in June. (See P. E. Bennett, *A Critical Edition of A Knack to Know a Knave*, Univ. Microfilms [Ann Arbor, 1952]). His contact with the company must have been a close one.

³⁹ See McKerrow, *op. cit.*, IV, 80. In Greene's *Disputation between a He-conycatcher and a She-conycatcher* there is the following passage:

Faire Nan well me, what newes . . . hath your smooth looks linckt in some yong Nouice to sweate for a favour all the byte in his Bounge, and to leave himselfe

The hypothesis that 2, 3 *Henry VI* were written for Strange's in the summer of 1592 also tallies with the later appearance of the two plays in the repertory of Pembroke's men. E. K. Chambers explained the sudden emergence of Pembroke's men in the records after October 1592 (before that date there is no trace of them, two months later they had already achieved the distinction of playing twice at Court) by the supposition that they were an offshoot of Strange's.⁴⁰ In summer 1592, Strange's were an exceptionally large company and they could only afford such numerical size while playing to large audiences in London. The inhibition must have hit them very badly. An undated petition by the company to the Privy Council refers to the great size of the company and to their need of having to split up, if the ban on playing continued. When in the late summer the plague grew worse and playing could not be resumed, the split happened and Pembroke's men branched off as a separate company. Under these circumstances some of the new plays (among them apparently 2, 3 *Henry VI*) would be allotted to the new company. This, incidentally, explains why the plays underwent a change of title. Pembroke's could not very well have gone to the provinces and there presented the sequels of a trilogy without showing *Part 1*. So they dubbed the two plays *The First part of the Contention* and *The true Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke*, giving them the appearance of a self-contained two-part play.

The hypothesis that Pembroke's men were an offshoot of Strange's and that Shakespeare wrote the trilogy originally for the latter company explains some other puzzling problems. For instance, it accounts for the recollections from 1 *Henry VI* in the reported texts of *Parts 2* and 3.⁴¹ Also, our theory explains the presence of the names of two actors who belonged to Strange's in the speech prefixes of 2 and 3 *Henry VI*. Holland and Sincler (Sincklo), whose names appear in these speech prefixes, are known to have belonged to Strange's, because their names also appear in *Seven Deadly Sins* (i.e., in the "plot" of the play), which was in the company's repertory at the time of its alliance with Alleyn. As the actor names are probably authorial,⁴² this is another strong argument for the plays having originally been written for Strange's. Finally, the large cast required to put on 2 and 3 *Henry VI* suggests that Shakespeare

as many Crownes as thou hast got good conditions, and then he shall be one of Pierce penillesse fraternitic.

(*The Life and Complete Works in Prose and Verse of Robert Greene*, A. P. Grosart, ed. (London, 1881-86), Vol. X, p. 203). McKerrow comments:

If the name "Pierce Penillesse" was the invention of Nashe—and I have failed to find an earlier example of it—it is evident that this is a reference to the book, which Greene probably saw in manuscript.

⁴⁰ E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems* (London, 1930), Vol. 1, p. 49.

⁴¹ G. Blakemore Evans in his review of Wilson's edition of the trilogy (in *SQ*, IX (1953), 84-92) speaks of 15 recollections but does not specify them. Cairncross lists some of them in his edition of 2 *Henry VI* (London, 1962), pp. 182-83.

⁴² See Wilson, 3*H6*, pp. 118-20 and Cairncross, 3*H6*, p. xlvi. For a different view see W. W. Greg, *The Shakespeare First Folio* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 182-83.

wrote the plays for a large company, such as was Strange's during their association with Alleyn.⁴³

From whatever angle we approach the problem of dating 2, 3 *Henry VI*, the hypothesis of a 1592 date is corroborated, while the traditional view that Shakespeare wrote the two plays in 1590/1 does not withstand critical investigation. The general acceptance of the 1590/1 date can be traced to a red herring—the seeming incompatibility of Greene's allusion to 3 *Henry VI* in August 1592 and Henslowe's testimony that 1 *Henry VI* was new in March of the same year.⁴⁴ Having recognized the red herring as such and having realized that the two pieces of evidence need not be contradictory, it is easy to rectify the error. According to all the (considerable) external and internal evidence, therefore, we can conclude that Shakespeare wrote 2, 3 *Henry VI* between March and August 1592.

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⁴³ F. P. Wilson, *Marlowe and the Early Shakespeare* (Oxford, 1952), p. 125, remarks:

In the despised 3 *Henry VI* how few are the lay figures, and how sharply the chief characters are placed before us: the two kings, Clifford, Warwick, Clarence, Queen Margaret, and, above all, Gloucester. The scene is almost too crowded. We may wonder at the strength of the unknown company which had the honour of giving the first performance, for not one of these parts may be doubled.

⁴⁴ Another red herring is the supposed dependence of the *Troublesome Raigne* (printed in 1591) on 2, 3 *Henry VI*. In his edition of 3 *Henry VI* Cairncross prints an appendix juxtaposing parallel phrases from *Troublesome Raigne* and 3 *Henry VI*. From these lines it is obvious that one play borrows from the other. But surely the fact that in the *Troublesome Raigne* the parallel words and phrases occur within 26 lines (scene vi, 26-52), whilst in 3 *Henry VI* they are scattered over three different scenes in three different acts (I. vi. 3-6; II. i. 50-204; V. vi. 24-58) points to Shakespeare as the borrower. No playwright while composing a short speech would collect bits and pieces from various places in a play that was not even available in print. On the other hand it is reasonable to assume that Shakespeare, when writing 3 *Henry VI*, recalled certain expressions from the speech in *Troublesome Raigne*, particularly if he had previously acted in the play or knew it well from careful perusal. It may also be noted that the simple expressions in *Troublesome Raigne* are transmuted into more sophisticated ones in 3 *Henry VI*.