Shx's Hist. Plays. EMW Tillyard.

each ghost as it passes? But to object to this scene on these grounds is as stupid as to blame the *Eumenides* of Aeschylus for being deficient in the realistic psychology of the *Electra* of Euripides. When this principle has been grasped and accepted the tetralogy comes out a much more assured and solid affair than it is generally thought to be.

But if the Morality Play prompted the formality of Shakespeare's first tetralogy it also supplied a single pervasive theme; one which overrides but in no way interferes with the theme he derived from Hall. In none of the plays is there a hero: and one of the reasons is that there is an unnamed protagonist dominating all four. It is England, or in Morality terms Respublica. Just as London, which appears only in the prologue, is the hero of Wilson's *Three Lords and three Ladies of London* (itself more a Morality Play than a developed Elizabethan drama), so England, though she is now quite excluded as a character, is the true hero of Shakespeare's first tetralogy. She is brought near ruin through not being true to herself; yielding to French witchcraft and being divided in mind. But God, though he punishes her, pities her and in the end through his grace allows the suppressed good in her to assert itself and restore her to health. I reserve the details of this scheme till the sections on the separate plays. How in the first three plays of his second tetralogy Shakespeare developed and enriched the Respublica theme will be described in due course.

Finally Shakespeare reinforces the structural unity which the themes of the Morality and of Hall create, by sowing in one play the seeds that are to germinate in the next and by constant references back from a later play to an earlier. In *1 Henry VI* he gives us modestly but with sufficient emphasis the first clash of York and Lancaster and the rivalry of Cardinal Beaufort with the good Protector, Humphrey Duke of Gloucester, which are to be a prevailing theme of the second play. In *2 Henry VI* Margaret of Anjou is important, yet she is kept subordinate to other characters in readiness to develop into a major character in the third play. Again, York begins faintly in the first play, gathers force in the second, and is cut off in the third, while the ruthlessness and hypocrisy of Richard Crookback begin faintly in the second play, grow big in the third, and overreach themselves to destruction in the last.

For all the inequality of execution, the vast crowding in of historical incident (some of it inorganic), Shakespeare planned

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his first historical tetralogy greatly, reminding one of Hardy in the *Dynasts*. When we consider how deficient his fellow-dramatists were in the architectonic power, we can only conclude that this was one of the things with which he was conspicuously endowed by nature. Far from being the untidy genius, Shakespeare was in one respect a born classicist.

I will treat the details of structure along with the other qualities of the separate plays.

2. THE FIRST PART OF HENRY VI

I am fully in accord with a growing trend of belief that Shakespeare wrote this play. It is not in the least surprising if the style is hesitant and varied. If a young man attempts a big thing, a thing beyond his years, he will imitate others when his own invention flags. Some of the verse in this play, as in the rest of the tetralogy, is in the common, little differentiated dramatic idiom of the age: it is the sort of thing that just was being written. That Shakespeare should have had recourse to it was perfectly natural. Why should he, more than another poet, be expected to find himself instantaneously? No one disputes the authorship of Pope's *Pastorals* because they do not show the author's achieved and unmistakable genius throughout, or collects the truly Popean lines and conjectures that he added just these to a lost original. Such treatment is kept for Shakespeare. One cannot of course be sure that a manuscript which waited over thirty years for publication remained in every word or sentence as the poet penned it. But the editors of the First Folio thought the play to be Shakespeare's; and this is evidence that only something very solid on the other side should be allowed to gainsay. The evidence, apart from the First Folio, that is overwhelmingly on the side of Shakespeare's being the author is the masterly structure. None of his contemporary dramatists was capable of this. The steady political earnestness is further proof.

I cannot believe either that this part was written after the other two parts of *Henry VI*. The evidence for a later date is the entry in Henslowe's Diary for 3 March 1591-2 of *Henry VI* as "ne" or new. Alexander has argued that the entry probably refers to another play altogether. Quite apart from the greater immaturity of its style, in itself a strong argument for earlier

date, the first part is a portion of a larger organism. The very difference of its structure from that of the second part is an essential and deliberate contrast within a total scheme, while characters, embryonic in the first part, develop in the second in full congruity with their embryonic character.

Nor can I agree with Alexander that the scenes at the end of the play of Suffolk fetching Margaret of Anjou are an afterthought designed to link the play closely with the next. They have the same function as the last scenes in the next two plays, which suggest the opening scenes of their successors. They *all* argue the organic nature of the whole tetralogy.

Apart from the queer reluctance to allow Shakespeare to have written ill or like other dramatists when he was immature, the chief reason why people have been hostile to Shakespeare's authorship is the way he treats Joan of Arc. That the gentle Shakespeare could have been so ungentlemanly as to make his Joan other than a saint was intolerable. This is precisely like arguing that Shakespeare could not have written *King John* because he does not mention Magna Carta. That England adopted the French opinion of Joan of Arc and saw the beginnings of our liberties in Magna Carta may have been excellent things; but these acts are comparatively recent, belonging to the "1066 and All That" phase of history, about which the Elizabethans knew nothing. To an Elizabethan, France did not mean saints, but instability, wars of religion, political intrigue, with the Massacre of St. Bartholomew the outstanding event. Not that moderns can enjoy the way Shakespeare treats the French, Joan of Arc included. But he is just as bad (and with less excuse because older) in *Henry V*; and any argument, based on Joan of Arc, against the Shakespearean authorship of *1 Henry VI* is just as pertinent to the later play. It is some comfort to reflect that in his contribution to *Sir Thomas More* Shakespeare treated the alien like an ordinary human being. George Betts has said that expelling the London aliens will be good for trade, and More replies:

> Grant them remov'd and grant that this your noise
> Had chid down all the majesty of England.
> Imagine that you see the wretched strangers,
> Their babies at their backs and their poor luggage,
> Plodding to th' ports and coasts for transportation—

But these were aliens who could be seen and heard, and taken

as individuals. Frenchmen in the mass were judged by other standards.

The *First Part of Henry VI* is the work of an ambitious and reflective young man who has the power to plan but not worthily to execute something great. His style of writing lags behind the powerful imagination that arranged the inchoate mass of historical material into a highly significant order. The characters are well thought out and consistent but they are the correct pieces in a game moved by an external hand rather than self-moving. Yet they come to life now and then and, in promise, are quite up to what we have any right to expect from Shakespeare in his youth.

If this play had been called the *Tragedy of Talbot* it would stand a much better chance of being heeded by a public which very naturally finds it hard to remember which part of *Henry VI* is which, and where Joan of Arc or Jack Cade, or Margaret crowning York with a paper crown, occur. And if we want something by which to distinguish the play, let us by all means give it that title. It is one that contains much truth, but not all. The whole truth in this matter is that though the action revolves round Talbot, though he stands pre-eminently for loyalty and order in a world threatened by chaos, he is not the hero. For there is no regular hero either in this or in any of the other three plays; its true hero being England or Respublica after the fashion of the Morality Play, as pointed out in the last section. It is therefore truer to the nature of the separate plays that they should be given colourless regal titles than that they should be named after the seemingly most important characters or events.

Along with the Morality hero goes the assumption of divine interference. The theme of the play is the testing of England, already guilty and under a sort of curse, by French witchcraft. England is championed by a great and pious soldier, Talbot, and the witchcraft is directed principally at him. If the other chief men of England had all been like him, he could have resisted and saved England. But they are divided against each other, and through this division Talbot dies and the first stage in England's ruin and of the fulfilment of the curse is accomplished. Respublica has suffered the first terrible wound.

As so often happens in literature the things which initially are the most troublesome prove to be the most enlightening. The Joan episodes, unpleasant and hence denied Shakespeare,

are the clue to the whole plot. They are hinted at right in the front of the play. In the first scene Exeter, commenting on the funeral of Henry V, 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?

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. 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 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. For not only the first scene of the play, but the second scene (where Joan first appears) begins with a reference to the heavens. The first passage was quoted above; the Dauphin Charles begins the second scene:

> Mars his true moving, even as in the heavens
> So in the earth, to this day is not known:
> Late did he shine upon the English side;
> Now we are victors; upon us he smiles.

Not only do these words contrast significantly with Bedford's opening speech about the "bad revolted stars"; they combine with it in presenting the whole world order with God, the unmoved mover, directing it. And the full context of witchcraft is implied when Talbot before Orleans, already harassed by Joan's supernatural power, exclaims of the French:

> Well, let them practise and converse with spirits:
> God is our fortress, in whose conquering name
> Let us resolve to scale their flinty bulwarks.

A modern, who needs much working up to pay any real heed to witchcraft, is apt not to notice such a passage and to pass on faintly disgusted with Talbot for being not only a butcher but a prig: an Elizabethan, granted a generally serious context, would find Talbot's defiance apt and noble.

What were the sins God sought to punish? There had been a number, but the pre-eminent one was the murder of Richard II, the shedding of the blood of God's deputy on earth. Henry IV had been punished by an uneasy reign but had not fully expiated the crime; Henry V, for his piety, had been allowed a brilliant reign. But the curse was there; and first England suffers through Henry V's early death and secondly she is tried by the witchcraft of Joan.

Into the struggle between Talbot and Joan, which is the main motive of the play, is introduced the theme of order and dissension. The first scene presents the funeral of Henry V and declares the disaster of his death. Dissension appears through the high words between the bad ambitious Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester, and Humphrey Duke of Gloucester, honest but hot-tempered, the regent of England. Bad news from France follows. But the case of England is not hopeless. Bedford sets off at once for France, Gloucester takes charge at home.

The next scene is before Orleans. The French are in a mood of facile triumph. They will relieve the town, still besieged by Salisbury and the English. Though ten to one they are beaten back with loss and confusion. That, the poet makes us feel, is the natural order, God's order, provided England is true to herself. Then Joan enters, a dazzling blonde, claiming her beauty to be from the Virgin—

> And, whereas I was black and swart before,
> With those clear rays which she infus'd on me
> That beauty am I bless'd with which you see—

but of course owing it to the Devil. She fascinates Charles and ends by imposing on the French a discipline and an order which by nature is not theirs. That this order is bogus, a devilish not a divine one, is evident by the single combat Charles the Dauphin has with Joan to test her pretensions. He is beaten;

and for a man to yield to a woman was a fundamental upsetting of degree.

Then, before a background of dissension in England, the struggle between Talbot and Joan is worked out. There are three episodes: Orleans, Rouen, Bordeaux. Before Orleans Talbot's men melt before Joan's attack, and, though he is dauntless, she relieves the town. The French triumph. But now Bedford has arrived with Burgundian allies: there is a new union on the English side, and the town (quite unhistorically) is captured. Talbot has kept up his heart and with united supporters he triumphs. The pattern is repeated at Rouen. Through a trick Joan wins the town for the French. Again Talbot does not lose heart. He gets Burgundy to swear to capture the town or die. Bedford, brought in on a litter and near his death, insists on taking his share:

> Here will I sit before the walls of Roan [1]
> And will be partner of your weal or woe.

Union once more and it succeeds. The town is captured, and Talbot emerges more strongly than ever the symbol of true and virtuous order:

> Now will we take some order in the town,
> Placing therein some expert officers,
> And then depart to Paris to the king,
> For there young Henry with his nobles lie.

To which Burgundy, again showing the natural relation of French to English, replies,

> What wills Lord Talbot pleaseth Burgundy.

Talbot then goes on to more proprieties:

> But yet, before we go, let's not forget
> The noble Duke of Bedford late deceas'd
> But see his exequies fulfill'd in Roan.

But Joan had not yet ceased to be the English scourge, and Talbot was wrong in saying just before the above lines,

> I think her old familiar is asleep.

In the next scene, outside Rouen, Joan cheers the dispirited

[1] A monosyllable: the Elizabethan form of Rouen (now, alas, given up).

French leaders and says she has another plan: she will detach Burgundy from the English alliance. Then, in what must have been a most effective scene on the Elizabethan stage, the English forces pass across in triumph with colours spread, headed by Talbot, on their way to Paris. The Burgundians follow and Joan waylays them. She addresses to their Duke those commonplaces about avoiding civil war of which, ironically, England was even then in such desperate need, for between the episodes of Orleans and Rouen had come the quarrel between Lancastrians and Yorkists in the Temple Garden and Richard Plantagenet's resolve to claim the Duchy of York:

> See, see the pining malady of France;
> Behold the wounds, the most unnatural wounds,
> Which thou thyself hast given her woeful breast.
> O, turn thy edged sword another way;
> Strike those that hurt and hurt not those that help.
> One drop of blood drawn from thy country's bosom
> Should grieve thee more than streams of foreign gore.

Excellent advice when applied to England; but to France, where Massacres of St. Bartholomew were endemic, quite perverse. With a speed, familiar to readers of contemporary Elizabethan drama or of *Savonarola Brown*, Burgundy acquiesces and joins with the French. Joan, with a cynicism that anticipates the Bastard Falconbridge, exclaims:

> Done like a Frenchman: turn, and turn again!

Meanwhile Talbot, ignorant of Burgundy's defection, arrives in Paris and does homage to Henry in the scene I have already pointed to (p. 151) as epitomising the principle of degree and the way a kingdom should be ordered. Henry is crowned, and immediately after comes the news of Burgundy's defection. Talbot leaves at once to renew the wars. But the court he leaves, that should have been his base and his certainty, shows itself divided and weak. Yorkist and Lancastrian refer their quarrels to the king, who quite fails to grasp the ugliness of the situation, frivolously chooses a red rose for himself with the words,

> I see no reason, if I wear this rose,
> That anyone should therefore be suspicious
> I more incline to Somerset than York,

and sets out to return to England, leaving Somerset and York in divided command of all the forces except the few that accompany Talbot. English division is now acutely contrasted with French reconciliation. Exeter pronounces the choric comment that prepares for the culminating catastrophe:

> No simple man that sees
> This jarring discord of nobility,
> This shouldering of each other in the court,
> This factious bandying of their favourites,
> But that it doth presage some ill event.
> 'Tis much when sceptres are in children's hands,
> But more when envy breeds unkind division:
> There comes the ruin, there begins confusion.

From this there follows inevitably the final tragedy of Talbot near Bordeaux. Twice he had resisted the machinations of Joan and triumphed; but then he was supported by his own people. The third time, though he does all he can, he perishes; for York and Somerset, to whom he had sent for help, each refuses it for envy of the other. Joan is not allowed to kill Talbot; that would be unseemly: he must die on heaps of French dead. After his death she reports how his son had refused to fight her ("to be the pillage of a giglot wench") and insults over his body. Lucy, who has come to learn the news, recites the full list of Talbot's great titles; at which Joan exclaims:

> Here is a silly stately style indeed!
> The Turk, who two and fifty kingdoms hath,
> Writes not so tedious a style as this.
> Him that thou magnifi'st with all these titles
> Stinking and fly-blown lies here at our feet.

Joan, by God's permission and through the general collapse of order among the English nobility, has dealt England a great blow. Having dealt it, and ceasing to be God's tool, she loses her power. Her evil spirits desert her, and she is captured and burnt for the wicked woman she is. It is possible that we are meant to think that her evil spells are transferred to another Frenchwoman, Margaret of Anjou, who, at the end of the play, is allowed through the machinations of her would-be paramour, the unscrupulous Suffolk, to supplant the daughter

of the Earl of Armagnac, already affianced, in the affections of Henry VI. On the ominous note of this royal perjury the play ends.

Such is the play's outline. There is no scene or episode not mentioned above that does not reinforce one or other of the main themes. Even the episode of Talbot and the Countess of Auvergne serves to exalt the hero as well as creating a legitimate diversion at a pause in the action.

Shakespeare took great trouble over his plot, but his emotions too were deeply stirred in his task. The gradual but sure stages in Talbot's destruction express the painful seriousness with which Shakespeare took the historical theme. He also took trouble over the characters, but he felt far less strongly about them. At least he made them consistent, even if he did not give them a great deal of life. For instance, Suffolk at his first appearance in the Temple Garden (II. 4) shows himself both diplomatic and unscrupulous. It is he who has brought the dispute between Somerset and York from the hall into the privacy of the garden:

> Within the Temple Hall we were too loud;
> The garden here is more convenient.

And, when asked his opinion on the legal point, he coolly says,

> Faith, I have been a truant in the law
> And never yet could frame my will to it;
> And therefore frame the law unto my will.

York is the true anticipation of the

> dogged York, that reaches at the moon

of the second part. He is violently ambitious, yet not rashly but obstinately and persistently: strong in all the regal qualities but goodness of heart. Gloucester is simply but sufficiently shown as the opposite of York: good-hearted but free-spoken to a fault. The contrast of their characters already prepares for the main motive of the next play.

Talbot and Joan are the most alive, for they both have a touch of breeziness, or hearty coarseness with which Shakespeare liked to furnish his most successfully practical characters. Joan's remarks on Burgundy's change of mind and on Talbot's

dead body, quoted above, are examples. And this is Talbot's comment on Salisbury's dying wounds received before Orleans:

> Hear, hear how dying Salisbury doth groan!
> It irks his heart he cannot be reveng'd.
> Frenchmen, I'll be a Salisbury to you:
> Pucelle or puzzle, Dolphin or dogfish,
> Your hearts I'll stamp out with my horse's heels
> And make a quagmire of your mingled brains.
> Convey me Salisbury into his tent.

In Henry VI's character Shakespeare shows little interest. There is a strong religious feeling throughout the tetralogy that culminates in *Richard III*, but it is religion applied to the workings of history not the religious feelings in the mind of a poor king and a saint. Shakespeare stops short at the poor king, who is also pathetic; he omits the more interesting self-questionings of the same character in the *Mirror for Magistrates*.

For style, much of the play is a competent example of the dramatic norm of the period. As this:

> Crossing the sea from England into France,
> This fellow here with envious carping tongue
> Upbraided me about the rose I wear;
> Saying, the sanguine colour of the leaves
> Did represent my master's blushing cheeks,
> When stubbornly he did repugn the truth
> About a certain question in the law
> Argu'd betwixt the Duke of York and him,
> With other vile and ignominious terms.
> In confutation of which rude reproach
> And in defence of my lord's worthiness
> I crave the benefit of law of arms.

But this is not the only way of writing. Once or twice the rhythm is unpleasantly lame, as when Joan says to Charles, about to try her in single combat,

> I am prepar'd. Here is my keen-edg'd sword,
> Deck'd with five flower-de-luces on each side,
> The which at Touraine, in Saint Katharine's churchyard,
> Out of a great deal of old iron I chose forth.

Such lameness is not so surprising when we refer the passage to its original in Holinshed:

> Then at the Dolphin's sending, by her assignment, from Saint Katharine's Church of Fierbois in Touraine (where she never had been and knew not) in a secret place there, among old iron, appointed she her sword to be sought out and brought her, that with five flower-delices was graven on both sides.

Shakespeare much later in his career was apt to be careless of rhythms when he paraphrased Holinshed. Besides, Holinshed is here reporting the French version of Joan's inspiration, and Shakespeare may be deliberately making it ridiculous; just as, in general, he made the French talk foolishly. Then sometimes there are outbursts of the turgid or dulcet writing dear to the University Wits, to vary the more sober norm of the play. The classical references, profuse for a play on a historical theme, are in keeping with these and form yet another link with *Titus Andronicus*. Here is Talbot's account of how the French treated him in captivity:

> In open market-place produc'd they me,
> To be a public spectacle to all.
> Here, said they, is the terror of the French,
> The scarecrow that affrights our children so.
> Then broke I from the officers that led me
> And with my nails digg'd stones out of the ground
> To hurl at the beholders of my shame.
> My grisly countenance made others fly;
> None durst come near for fear of sudden death.
> In iron walls they deem'd me not secure.
> So great fear of my name 'mongst them was spread
> That they suppos'd I could rend bars of steel
> And spurn in pieces posts of adamant.

And for the dulcet style Suffolk's words to Margaret of Anjou when he has captured her will do as illustration:

> Be not offended, nature's miracle,
> Thou art allotted to be ta'en by me:
> So doth the swan her downy cygnets save,
> Keeping them prisoner underneath her wings.
> Yet, if this servile usage once offend,
> Go and be free again as Suffolk's friend.
> O, stay! I have no power to let her pass;
> My hand would free her, but my heart says no.
> As plays the sun upon the glassy streams,

Twinkling another counterfeited beam,
So seems this gorgeous beauty to mine eyes.

When Shakespeare has to deal with his climax, the death of Talbot, he wisely adds the formality of rhyme to the heightened style of the University Wits. This is how Talbot describes his son's death:

Triumphant Death, smear'd with captivity,
Young Talbot's valour makes me smile at thee.
When he perceiv'd me shrink and on my knee,
His bloody sword he brandish'd over me,
And like a hungry lion did commence
Rough deeds of rage and stern impatience:
But when my angry guardant stood alone,
Tendering my ruin and assail'd of none,
Dizzy-eyed fury and great rage of heart
Suddenly made him from my side to start
Into the clustering battle of the French;
And in that sea of blood my boy did drench
His over-mounting spirit and there died,
My Icarus, my blossom, in his pride.

Shakespeare seems to have known that his power over words did not match the grandeur of conception contained in Talbot's death. So he resorted to the conventional, the formal, the stylised, as the best way out.

But in compensation, bits of imaginative writing show themselves at intervals throughout the play; and as much in the less dignified scenes as in the rest. That they are thus scattered is a strong argument for the whole play being Shakespeare's. Thus Reignier, commenting on English valour, uses the metaphor of the artificial figure of a man striking the hours of a clock with a hammer, as Shakespeare was to use it again with superb effect in *Richard III*:

I think by some odd gimmers or device
Their arms are set like clocks, still to strike on;
Else ne'er could they hold out so as they do.

Again, Talbot, deserted by his men in front of Orleans, exclaims,

My thoughts are whirled like a potter's wheel.

Shakespeare knows exactly what to make the servingmen of Gloucester and Winchester say, when they quarrel:

First Serv. Nay, if we be forbidden stones, we'll fall to it with our teeth.
Second Serv. Do what ye dare, we are as resolute.

Talbot, offering terms to the French commanders in Bordeaux, gets beyond good melodrama and touches true grandeur:

But, if you frown upon this proffer'd peace,
You tempt the fury of my three attendants,
Lean famine, quartering steel, and climbing fire;
Who in a moment even with the earth
Shall lay your stately and air-braving towers,
If you forsake the offer of their love.

But it is rare for Shakespeare's execution to be thus equal to his theme; and the chief virtue of the play must reside in the vehement energy with which Shakespeare both shaped this single play and conceived it as an organic part of a vast design.

3. THE SECOND PART OF HENRY VI

In the first part there had been disaster abroad. Respublica had lost most of her foreign possessions, and with the death of her greatest captain, Talbot, and of her soldier-administrator, Bedford, had no chance of regaining them. There had also been dissensions among the English, but though these had ruined Talbot they had not ruined the actual land of England. Here the good Duke Humphrey of Gloucester is in charge and has kept going the due administration of justice. In the second part the dissensions, which in the first part had been the background, are developed at home as the main theme, with the Duke of York the emergent figure. They cause Duke Humphrey's fall and at the end bring the country to the edge of chaos. The play pictures the second stage in the country's ruin, in the working out of the inherited curse.

In many ways the second part is contrasted with the first. The plot-pattern is the main thing in the first part, and with this emphasis goes a pageantlike, stylised execution. One happening is contrasted ironically with another, the irony being