

# SHAKESPEARE SURVEY

AN ANNUAL SURVEY OF  
SHAKESPEARIAN STUDY & PRODUCTION

6

EDITED BY  
ALLARDYCE NICOLL

*Issued under the Sponsorship of*

THE UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM  
THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER  
THE SHAKESPEARE MEMORIAL THEATRE  
THE SHAKESPEARE BIRTHPLACE TRUST



CAMBRIDGE  
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS

1953

PUBLISHED BY  
THE SYNDICS OF THE CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

London Office: Bentley House, N.W. 1  
American Branch: New York

Agents for Canada, India, and Pakistan: Macmillan

*Printed in Great Britain at the University Press, Cambridge  
(Brooke Crutchley, University Printer)*

# CONTENTS

[Notes are placed at the end of each contribution. All line references are to the 'Globe' edition, and, unless for special reasons, quotations are from this text]

<i>List of Plates</i> . . . . .	page viii
Shakespeare's History Plays: 1900-1951 by HAROLD JENKINS . . . . .	I
The Unity of 2 <i>Henry IV</i> by CLIFFORD LEECH . . . . .	16
Anticipation and Foreboding in Shakespeare's Early Histories by WOLFGANG H. CLEMEN . . . . .	25
Middle-Class Attitudes in Shakespeare's Histories by KARL BRUNNER . . . . .	36
A Reconsideration of <i>Edward III</i> by KENNETH MUIR . . . . .	39
On Producing <i>Henry VI</i> by Sir BARRY JACKSON . . . . .	49
The Huntington Library by GODFREY DAVIES . . . . .	53
An Early Elizabethan Playhouse by CHARLES TYLER PROUTY . . . . .	64
Shakespeare Learns the Value of Money: The Dramatist at Work on <i>Timon of Athens</i> by TERENCE SPENCER . . . . .	75
Shakespeare's French Fruits by J. W. LEVER . . . . .	79
An Elizabethan Eyewitness of <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> ? by JOAN REES . . . . .	91
Othello's "It is the cause. . .": An Analysis by JOHN MONEY . . . . .	94
On Translating <i>Hamlet</i> by SALVADOR DE MADARIAGA . . . . .	106
Shakespeare in China by CHANG CHEN-HSIEN . . . . .	112
<i>International Notes</i> . . . . .	117
<i>Shakespeare Productions in the United Kingdom: 1951</i> . . . . .	126
Shakespeare's History Plays—Epic or Drama? by RICHARD DAVID . . . . .	129
Festival Shakespeare in the West End by GEORGE RYLANDS . . . . .	140
The Year's Contributions to Shakespearian Study	
1. Critical Studies reviewed by M. C. BRADBROOK . . . . .	147
2. Shakespeare's Life, Times and Stage reviewed by CLIFFORD LEECH . . . . .	154
3. Textual Studies reviewed by JAMES G. MCMANAWAY . . . . .	163
<i>Books Received</i> . . . . .	173
<i>Index</i> . . . . .	175

## LIST OF PLATES

PLS. I AND II ARE BETWEEN PP. 50 AND 51

- I. A. *Henry VI, Part III*, Birmingham Repertory Theatre, 1952. Production by Douglas Seale; setting by Finlay James. "Why whisper you, my lords, and answer not?"  
(Lisel Haas)
- B. The Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery
- II. Plan and Elevation of Trinity Hall, Aldersgate-street, London

PLS. III-V ARE BETWEEN PP. 136 AND 137

- III. A. *Richard II*, Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, 1951. Production by Anthony Quayle; costumes and unit setting for the history plays by Tanya Moiseiwitsch. The Opening Scene  
(Angus McBean)
- B. *Henry IV, Part I*, Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, 1951. Production by John Kidd. Glendower and his Allies  
(Angus McBean)
- IV. *Henry IV, Part II*, Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, 1951. Production by Michael Redgrave. In Shallow's Orchard  
(Angus McBean)
- V. A. *Henry IV, Part II*. The Rejection of Falstaff  
(Angus McBean)
- B. *Henry V*, Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, 1951. Production by Anthony Quayle. The Conspirators Unmasked  
(Angus McBean)

PLS. VI-VIII ARE BETWEEN PP. 144 AND 145

- VI. A. *The Winter's Tale*, Phoenix Theatre, London, 1951. Production by Peter Brook; costumes and settings by Sophie Fedorovitch. "Chide me, dear stone"  
(Angus McBean)
- B. *The Winter's Tale*. "What you do still betters what is done"  
(Angus McBean)
- VII. A. *Antony and Cleopatra*. "The Soldier's pole is fallen". St James's Theatre, London, 1951. Production by Michael Benthall; costumes by Audrey Cruddas; settings by Roger Furse  
(Angus McBean)
- B. *Antony and Cleopatra*. "You that will fight, follow me close"  
(Angus McBean)
- VIII. A. *Othello*, St James's Theatre, London, 1951. Production by Orson Welles; decor by Motley. "Soft you, a word or two before you go"  
(Angus McBean)
- B. *Othello*, Theatre of Olomouc, Czechoslovakia, 1951

# SHAKESPEARE'S HISTORY PLAYS: 1900-1951

BY

HAROLD JENKINS

## SOME NINETEENTH-CENTURY VIEWS

In contemplating the masterpieces of the past, each age imparts to them something of itself. In few fields of literary criticism is there a more striking contrast between the last century and this than in their interpretation of Shakespeare's history plays. Although we no doubt add some different alloy from our own prejudice, it is easy for us now to see that the nineteenth century's conception of them was in some measure the result of its predilection. For an age of industrial and commercial progress, of growing nationalisms and imperialist expansion, the most obvious thing about Shakespeare's history plays was their expression of a national spirit. Together they formed an 'immortal epic' of which England was the true protagonist. It would be foolish to look for a single originator of this common view, but it can be traced back especially to A. W. Schlegel's *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*, delivered in 1808 and translated into English in 1815. Most of the German and many of the English critics followed Schlegel in regarding the ten histories as one great work of which *King John* was the prologue and *Henry VIII* the epilogue. An occasional sceptic found difficulty in accepting as a prologue something which gives no hint of the work to follow or of reconciling such a scheme with the belief, then usual, in the composite authorship of the first three or four plays. Nevertheless, it was the large vision of the romantic critics that showed us the broad historical pattern into which the plays fall. Schlegel himself strikingly anticipated recent critics when he saw that the dethronement of Richard II begins a cycle of revolts which continue until the curse is finally expiated in the overthrow of Richard III. What is more, in this pattern he discerned a "mirror for kings", reflecting the universal consequences of bad or weak rule. Later in the century Richard Simpson's essay on 'The Politics of Shakspeare's Historical Plays' (*Transactions of the New Shakspeare Society*, 1874) attempted to direct the mirror towards the political situations of Shakespeare's own day, but the parallels he drew between Prince Arthur and Mary Queen of Scots or Henry V and Essex were ill received. More congenial to his age, with its interest in character-portraits and its quest for a 'criticism of life', were those discussions of Shakespeare's kings as exemplars of royal strength and weakness which Dowden (*Shakspeare: His Mind and Art*, 1875) garnished with quotations from Newman or analogies with George Eliot.

Separate studies of the history group were rather rare. The biggest, Courtney's *Commentaries on the Historical Plays of Shakspeare* (1840), had the pedestrian aim of discovering how far they were "properly historical". Yet in its lucid statement of Shakespeare's deviations from fact and its incidental demonstration of Shakespeare's dependence on his sources this proved useful pioneering work. More detailed research on the chronicles was done in the second half of the century, which closed on the landmark of Boswell-Stone's *Shakspeare's Holinshed* (1896). At the same time B. E. Warner's *English History in Shakspeare's Plays* (1894) illustrated only too well some characteristic defects of its period. It regularly confused the dramatic hero with his

## SHAKESPEARE SURVEY

historical original, had no doubt that when Shakespeare deviated from the letter he was faithful to the spirit of the past, and supposed him to interpret it in the manner of J. R. Green, who was appropriately quoted in the conclusion. The theme of Shakespeare's histories was "the passing of feudalism and the rise of the common people". More detached critics were, however, beginning to perceive that Shakespeare looked at history with the interests of *his* age, and that it was natural for him to see in John's reign, for example, not Magna Carta, but the King's struggle with the Pope.

### THE FIRST QUARTER OF THE CENTURY

The most perceptive writing on the histories round about 1900 was probably contained in the introductions to the single plays in a number of critical editions—in Herford's 'Eversley Shakespeare' (1899), for example, or such an excellent little 'Warwick' volume as Moore Smith's *King John* (1900). But though often freshly presented, most of the criticism was traditional. Furness's 'Variorum' *Richard III* (1908) and *King John* (1919) had little new to report. With the 'Arden' volumes, which sprinkled the first two decades of the century, it is perhaps significant that the histories were not usually allocated to the most distinguished editors. The exceptions were the *Henry VI* volumes of H. C. Hart (1909–10), which presented an unsifted mass of material on possible literary echoes and some complicated theories of collaboration and revision resting on a basis since shown to be fallacious. For the rest, the 'Arden' introductions weighed learned opinion on date or authorship, outlined Shakespeare's deviations from the chronicles, analysed—or at least described—the principal characters, and added perhaps a little on style or structure while avoiding spectacular conclusions. Monographs on Shakespeare in this period usually echoed the opinion that the histories were Shakespeare's national epic and some found room for character-portraits of at least the two Richards and Henry V. Occasionally the plays were combed for their expressions of patriotic sentiment or their references to the common people. Otherwise there was little disposition to isolate the problems of the histories or assess their collective importance. An exception here is G. P. Baker's *The Development of Shakespeare as a Dramatist* (1907), which, at the cost of some undervaluation and some violence to chronology, contrived to see them as a stage in the progress towards tragedy or the comedy of manners. Criticism was not yet ready to attempt the equivalent of Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904) or MacCallum's *Shakespeare's Roman Plays* (1910).

In the criticism of these years there are two questions which come fitfully into prominence. The first is that of genre. While some, like Baker, Raleigh, and Gregory Smith, denied that there was a genre of the history play at all, others were seeking to determine its distinguishing characteristics, and Schelling, in *The English Chronicle Play* (1902), had made the first elaborate attempt to trace the development of the type. Influenced by the nineteenth-century notion of a grand *épopée*, he found the essence of Shakespeare's histories in their "assertion of the national consciousness"; and, looking for a relation between form and content, he defended a structure—best exhibited, he thought, in *Henry IV*—which represented historical events with epic comprehensiveness instead of with dramatic concentration upon individual personalities. Epic unity was easier to assert than to demonstrate, but Courthope (1903) saw Shakespeare's histories to be animated by a "central poetical idea" based upon great moral laws. An important chapter

## SHAKESPEARE'S HISTORY PLAYS: 1900-1951

in Tucker Brooke's *The Tudor Drama* (1912) showed Shakespeare moving away from the facile plan of the earliest chronicle plays towards a structure dependent less on particular events than on the historical process; and a similar concern with the development of an organic historical drama out of the chronicle-history informs W. D. Briggs's long introduction to his edition of Marlowe's *Edward II* (1914). A more theoretical 'Note on the History Play' by C. S. Baldwin (*Shaksperian Studies*, ed. Matthews and Thorndike, 1916) explained how historical drama grows out of history by giving to historical events and personages an ideal or archetypal quality.

Out of such discussions emerged a second question—that of the political significance of Shakespeare's histories, which earlier critics had minimized. Dowden of course had distinguished history from tragedy by its concern with man in his practical life rather than in his universal aspect, and Schelling noted in passing that the achievement of *Henry IV* was to represent "the whole range of human life...in its political and social relations". More specifically Tucker Brooke found that Shakespeare's histories set forth a philosophy of statecraft based upon a principle of kingly responsibility which was finally expressed in the ideal figure of Henry V. Among historians the orthodox view of A. F. Pollard that Shakespeare's plays were quite divorced from politics was presently challenged in Sir J. A. R. Marriott's *English History in Shakespeare* (1918) and by F. J. C. Hearnshaw (especially in the *Contemporary Review*, cxxiv, 1923). Marriott indeed, writing in the middle of a world war, found in the history cycle political messages for our age which he thought Shakespeare must have intended for his own. The need for national unity was the dominant theme and lesson. Judging therefore by non-literary criteria, he over-simplified the plays and begged some questions of first importance in criticism. But in compensation the historian's vision showed more clearly than had been done before the links Shakespeare had made between the "crooked ways" of usurpation in one play and the nemesis of fear and strife in those which followed. He also knew that the historical pattern came to Shakespeare from Hall. These were matters which would be explored in the following decades but of which the ordinary critic—if we may judge him from John Bailey's essay on 'Shakespeare's Histories' (*The Continuity of Letters*, 1923)—as yet suspected nothing.

There was in this period insufficient inquiry into the precise sources of the history plays. Malone's old notion that Shakespeare rarely went outside Holinshed was still commonly repeated; and though Boswell-Stone's *Shakspere's Holinshed* was a collection of illustrative passages more than an investigation of sources, it led many scholars, perhaps through some confusion in its title and plan, to assume that a task had been completed which in reality was just begun. Churton Collins's *Studies in Shakespeare* (1904) contained an essay based on Boswell-Stone explaining how Shakespeare "simply dramatized" Holinshed, and H. R. D. Anders, examining *Shakespeare's Books* (1904), thought the history plays had been "exhaustively investigated" already. Although the sounder scholars, including Boswell-Stone himself, referred to other chroniclers, an adequate examination of Shakespeare's debt to these, and especially to Hall, was postponed for thirty years. Ebisch and Schücking's standard *Shakespeare Bibliography* (1931) still described Boswell-Stone as a reprint of what "Shakespeare used".

There were, however, at the beginning of the century (particularly in the German *Palaestra* series) several useful studies of the legends which lay behind the Elizabethan chronicles. They included an excellent one by G. B. Churchill on the evolution of the Richard III saga (1900)

## SHAKESPEARE SURVEY

and W. Baeske's discussion (1905) of the Oldcastle legends which Gairdner had shown to be part of the heredity of Falstaff. Further suggestions about Falstaff's historical origin were made by Alfred Ainger (*Lectures and Essays*, 1905), D. W. Duthie (*The Case of Sir John Fastolf*, 1907), and L. W. V. Harcourt (*Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 3rd series, IV, 1910). More valuably, the last of these contested the nineteenth-century disbelief in the tales of Prince Hal's wild youth. That they have some foundation in fact appeared probable from C. L. Kingsford's account of them prefixed to *The First English Life of King Henry the Fifth* (1911), and is now generally believed.

Something was also added to our knowledge of Shakespeare's subsidiary sources. Daniel's *Civil Wars*, long known to have resemblances with Shakespeare, was established as a source for *Henry IV* by F. W. Moorman (*Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, XL, 1904) and, after Hardin Craig's 'Tudor' *Richard II* (1912), for that play also. The relation of *Richard II* to Froissart and to the anonymous play of *Woodstock* attracted some attention, and finally P. Reyher, in some important 'Notes sur les Sources de "Richard II"' (*Revue de l'Enseignement des Langues Vivantes*, XLI, 1924), gave evidence for at least six authorities and thus changed our notions of how Shakespeare went to work. The study of his opposite practice in *King John*, with its single source in *The Troublesome Reign of King John*, was facilitated when this old play was again reprinted in Gollancz's 'Shakespeare Library' (1913) and in the 'Variorum' *King John*. This matter was well treated by F. Liebermann (*Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, CXLII, 1921, and CXLIII, 1922); but the more complicated problem of Shakespeare's debt to *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth* could not be satisfactorily investigated until bibliographical scholarship had thrown more light upon its text.

## TEXT AND CANON

This is not the place to discuss the new bibliographical criticism which has been the most striking feature of Shakespeare scholarship in this century. Yet reference must be made to its most important findings on the histories, and for this purpose the chronological survey here breaks off. *Henry V* was prominent from the first in the discussions of 'bad' Quartos, which reached a climax of interest in the 1920's. In spite of H. T. Price's argument for shorthand (*The Text of Henry V*, 1920), scholars accepted the view that the Quarto text is an abridgement in a memorized version supplied by pirate actors. Conclusions reached about the nature of bad Quartos in general helped to suggest that *The Famous Victories* is probably only a degenerate version of Shakespeare's actual source. They also illuminated the long-debated problem of the widely divergent Folio and Quarto texts of *Richard III*: for the theory that this Quarto too was an abridged version with actors' corruptions, though not necessarily a piracy, was ultimately established in the admirable study by D. L. Patrick (1936). The relation between Folio and Quarto for *2 Henry IV* was discussed at length in the 'Variorum' edition by M. A. Shaaber (1940). Some of the omissions in the Quarto, formerly regarded as theatrical cuts, are now, following the arguments of Schücking (*Times Literary Supplement*, 1930) and Alfred Hart (*Shakespeare and the Homilies*, 1934), more generally thought to have had a political motive.

A far more vital matter is the relation of *2* and *3 Henry VI* to the Quartos called *The Contention of York and Lancaster* and *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York*. Malone's view that Shake-

## SHAKESPEARE'S HISTORY PLAYS: 1900-1951

spere was here revising two old plays so firmly held the field throughout the nineteenth century that when Halliwell-Phillipps asserted that these *Contention* plays, as it is convenient to call them, were "vamped. . . versions of the poet's own original dramas", Furnivall dismissed this as "a refuge for the brain-destitute"; and Thomas Kenny's demonstration of it (*The Life and Genius of Shakespeare*, 1864) was ignored. Yet when this view was put by Peter Alexander, first in the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1924 and then more elaborately in his book of 1929, so thoroughly had the way now been prepared by the new knowledge of bad Quartos that it won almost immediate acceptance. An independent investigation by Madeleine Doran (1928) gave confirmation, and that the *Contention* plays are in fact bad Quartos of 2 and 3 *Henry VI* has been the scholarly opinion for the last twenty years. A promised study by C. T. Prouty, however, is understood to be reopening the matter.

The new textual theory about *Henry VI* demolished most older theories about its authorship. In the early years of this century most scholars, accepting Shakespeare as mainly a reviser, were still debating the respective shares of Marlowe, Greene and other supposed collaborators. Courthope was almost alone in attributing the whole trilogy to Shakespeare on the grounds of its single "comprehensive grasp". But the demonstration of the derivative character of the *Contention* plays removed the chief argument against Shakespeare's authorship of *Henry VI* at the same time as the whole trend of bibliographical scholarship, by vindicating the Folio editors, was strengthening the case in favour of it. Since about 1930 it has been usually accepted for Parts II and III; and, the tide now setting against the disintegrators, a growing belief in Shakespeare as the effective, if not the sole, author of all three parts has contributed immensely to the reorientation in the criticism of the histories as a whole. It has also, incidentally, changed the probabilities for the sequel, *Richard III*: whereas the 'Arden' editor (1907) showed considerable uncertainty before deciding this play to be "substantially Shakespeare's", it has not since the 1920's been seriously suspected. Yet 1 *Henry VI*, which Malone long ago dismissed from the canon, has proved something of a stumbling-block. J. B. Henneman's theory that it is Shakespeare's adaptation of an older play on Talbot (*PMLA*, xv, 1900) was only the first of numerous excavations seeking to reveal different strata in its composition. But the full swing of the pendulum now finds H. T. Price praising its "severely controlled design" (*Construction in Shakespeare*, 1951) and L. Kirschbaum appealing to this in defence of Shakespeare's single authorship (Stratford Conference, 1951, in a paper since printed in *PMLA*, lxvii, 1952). This is still an undecided question; and Dover Wilson gives warning that his edition of *Henry VI*, now in the press, will maintain the presence of more than one hand in all three parts.<sup>1</sup>

The effect of crediting Shakespeare with the *Henry VI* plays was enhanced by the addition to the canon at the same time of the insurrection scene in the play of *Sir Thomas More*. First claimed for Shakespeare by Simpson and Spedding eighty years ago, this scene attracted intense interest only after Maunde Thompson's examination of *Shakespeare's Handwriting* (1916) had favoured Shakespeare's authorship. A. W. Pollard and a group of other scholars presented a strong case in *Shakespeare's Hand in the Play of Sir Thomas More* (1923); and R. W. Chambers afterwards developed further—especially in *Man's Unconquerable Mind* (1939)—his powerful argument from the presence in More's great speeches of characteristic Shakespearian sequences of thought. Most scholars, like R. C. Bald in the most recent review of the matter (*Shakespeare Survey*, 2, 1949), are now disposed to accept the scene as Shakespeare's.

## SHAKESPEARE SURVEY

The biggest problem in the canon now is *Henry VIII*. This, since a famous paper by Spedding in 1850, has usually been held to be partly Fletcher's work; but after Baldwin Maxwell had questioned the stylistic evidence (*Manly Anniversary Studies*, 1923), Shakespeare's undivided authorship was asserted by Alexander (*Essays and Studies*, xvi, 1931) and Wilson Knight (*Criterion*, xv, 1936). Knight's subsequent profound study of the play in *The Crown of Life* (1947) demonstrated its spiritual unity with Shakespeare's other work. It is true that a recent essay by A. C. Partridge (1949) reassembles the linguistic evidence for Fletcher, but there is now more willingness to ascribe the whole play to Shakespeare than there has been for a century.

### THE NEW ORIENTATION

The changed perspective of the canon has thus had the effect of bringing the history plays into much greater prominence. But it did not so much initiate as accelerate the new development in their study. Signs have been noted of a willingness, already before 1920, to discover in Shakespeare's histories some political significance; and it may be that this loomed larger for a generation which had witnessed a world war and great social revolutions. Marriott again affirmed Shakespeare's faith in "order and degree; national unity; social solidarity and selfless patriotism" (*Cornhill*, new series, lxxiii, 1927). Yet he still expected his mere title, 'Shakespeare and Politics', to provoke objections from idealistic critics. And indeed Tucker Brooke, notwithstanding his earlier insight on the history genre, was describing Shakespeare as an unworldly dunce in "politics, or religion...or current affairs" (*Shakespeare of Stratford*, 1926); while even Stoll, who had so firmly linked Shakespeare with the theatrical traditions of his time, believed him to express no "convictions or principles" that one can easily make out (*Shakespeare Studies*, 1927). Charlton showed the newer trend in a lecture on *Shakespeare, Politics, and Politicians* (1929), which, in a searching, if slightly contrived, attempt to clarify the old critical problem of their genre, maintained that the histories were political plays. He traced Shakespeare's progress from the chronicle drama of *Henry VI* and the tragedies of the Richards, through the crucial experiment of *King John*, where the political interest was dominant over the dramatic, to the later histories, in which political issues were built into the dramatic structure. About this time a group of articles in the *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* (W. Keller, lxxiii, 1927; Agnes Henneke, lxxvi, 1930; W. Clemen, lxxviii, 1932) discussed Shakespeare's conception of kingship; and his expression of Elizabethan doctrines on allegiance and rebellion was among the topics covered by R. V. Lindabury's *Patriotism in the Elizabethan Drama* (1931). Belief was growing that the histories drew vitality from the political convictions of their author and his age. Most critics thought them concerned only with the more general principles of political conduct; but it was perhaps inevitable that there should be attempts to demonstrate specific correspondences with Elizabethan happenings. G. B. Harrison (*Times Literary Supplement*, 1930) plausibly discovered topical significances in the relations between English and French depicted in *King John*: others less plausibly identified Shakespearian characters with Elizabethan personalities. Extreme examples occur in the articles by Evelyn M. Albright (*PMLA*, xlii, 1927; xliii, 1928; xlvi, 1931; xlvii, 1932), who saw Elizabeth's actions reflected on in those of Richard II and John, and took *Henry V* to be the climax of Shakespeare's persistent propaganda on behalf of Essex. Such theories were easily rejected; but they showed the prevailing wind, and a comparable

## SHAKESPEARE'S HISTORY PLAYS: 1900-1951

Essex theory was incorporated in Dover Wilson's "biographical adventure", *The Essential Shakespeare* (1932).

The belief that Shakespeare's histories reflected contemporary political thinking was but one aspect of that newer scholarship which sought illumination on his work from the intellectual background of his time. In particular it was shown that Shakespeare held the traditional view of earlier English history. Previous hints about the crucial influence of Hall's Chronicle were now elaborated by Kingsford in an important essay on 'Fifteenth-Century History in Shakespeare's Plays' (*Prejudice and Promise in XVth Century England*, 1925), which led in turn to a pregnant passage in E. A. Greenlaw's *Studies in Spenser's Historical Allegory* (1932). It became customary to interpret Shakespeare's cycle of plays according to the pattern imposed on history by Hall: the tragic story of York and Lancaster was a consequence of Bolingbroke's crime and a warning to England of the dangers of civil strife, which the accession of the Tudors had blissfully terminated. Alfred Hart drew attention to the surprisingly neglected influence of the Tudor homilies (1934), showing how they asserted political order to be an aspect of universal order and how they preached, with historical illustrations, the iniquity of rebellion as a crime against God to be punished by a curse on generations to come. Shakespeare's debt to Hall was now explored in some detail. Its importance for *Richard III* was shown by Edleen Begg (*Studies in Philology*, xxxii, 1935), and for *Henry VI* in some notable articles by Lucille King (*Philological Quarterly*, xiii, 1934; *PMLA*, l, 1935 and li, 1936). And the whole matter was well brought into focus by W. G. Zeefeld (*E.L.H.* iii, 1936), who not only discussed Hall as a source for particular passages but showed Shakespeare's dramatic power building on the interest in character and conduct which Hall derived from Polydore Vergil and the habit of Renaissance thought.

When scholarship had once demonstrated that the historical material reached Shakespeare already shaped into a large cyclic unity, embracing cause and effect, connecting political crime with retributive civil war, it was easier for literary criticism to detect in the sequence of the plays themselves a unity more organic than was inherent in the old idea of a national epic. And although this unity was latent in the material, the feeling grew that its realization in the plays was to be attributed to a single capacious imagination. This chimed with the new textual theory which established Shakespeare as the responsible author of *Henry VI*, and in these early plays, formerly dismissed as prentice patchwork, there came to be recognized, however fumbling in execution, a dramatic undertaking on the grand scale. This had various important consequences. First, enthusiasts leapt to the notion of a master planner projecting two historical 'tetralogies'; and even on the more reasonable assumption that the finally emergent pattern gradually evolved as one play succeeded another, the history sequence now appeared as the major achievement of the first half of Shakespeare's career. Secondly, the long-repeated theory of Shakespeare's debt to Marlowe was now revised. Charlton and Waller, editing *Edward II* (1933), made the almost revolutionary suggestion that Marlowe's history play was influenced by Shakespeare; and by 1940 Hazelton Spencer, in *The Art and Life of William Shakespeare*, could say that the notion of Shakespeare "stumbling along at Marlowe's heels is, though still orthodox, in process of being discarded". Finally, *Henry VI* was examined with new gravity and itself revealed an unsuspected gravity of tone. In a British Academy lecture (1937) R. W. Chambers emphasized its vital portraiture of evil men and its powerful sense of doom, and accordingly attacked the popular theory of a gay Elizabethan Shakespeare unanticipatory of mature Jacobean glooms. The new

## SHAKESPEARE SURVEY

estimate of Shakespeare's early work was clearly apparent here and in Alexander's *Shakespeare's Mind and Art* (1939), where the awful significance of the early histories was illuminated by the famous image, from the Shakespearian scene of *Sir Thomas More*, of men without ordered government as ravenous fishes feeding on one another.

### RECENT ACTIVITY

The last fifteen years or so have seen more attention given to Shakespeare's history plays than ever before. At the beginning of this period came the important 'Variorum' editions of *Henry IV* by S. B. Hemingway (Part I, 1936) and M. A. Shaaber (Part II, 1940), while *Richard II* is presently to follow. By a happy chance the progress of his 'New Cambridge' edition brought Dover Wilson to the histories just when scholarship on them was at a crucial stage. Accepting the view that they were firmly rooted in the political concepts of their day, he had the acumen to see the need for that thorough reconsideration of them which his vigorous prefaces and commentaries are carrying out. After examining in *King John* (1936) Shakespeare's handling of the conflict between monarchy and papacy, he turned to the disruption of the political order which is shown beginning in *Richard II* (1939) and causing instability and rebellion in *Henry IV* (1946). The excellent study of *Richard II* explained how the play, while drawing strength from the traditional medieval themes of the fall of a prince and the helplessness of man on Fortune's wheel, has its centre in the conflict between two Elizabethan political principles—the preference for the good ruler and the sacredness of a God-appointed king. A similarly large view praised in *Henry V* (1947) the delineation in speech and action of an Elizabethan ideal of heroic virtue. And this ideal was shown as integrally related to that moral and dramatic pattern in *Henry IV* which was so skilfully analysed in *The Fortunes of Falstaff* (1943).

By this time the history plays were seen to draw their inspiration from a wider sphere than history and politics. Middleton Murry, for example (*Shakespeare*, 1936), perceived how Shakespeare's interest in these things led him to a grand conception of order transcending the political and expressive of the aspirations of a people united in a spiritual bond. To the belief in order as a principle of creation increasing significance was attached. Research continued active on Elizabethan ideas, of which an able synthesis was made by Hardin Craig in *The Enchanted Glass* (1936). For our purpose the most important discoveries were those which showed the Elizabethan conception of the state, with its divinely appointed ruler and its hierarchic structure, to be part of a philosophic system embracing all things from the vegetable kingdom to the planetary universe. Interest in this system was immensely stimulated by such a work as Lovejoy's *The Great Chain of Being* (1936), and the application to Shakespeare was specifically made in *Shakespeare and the Nature of Man* (1942), by Theodore Spencer, who suggested that the action of the history plays always involved the violation and restoration of the "vast inclusive pattern of order" which governed throughout nature. His sense of their profound reverberations led him to regard the histories as Shakespeare's most significant work before the great tragedies. A similar awareness of the correspondence between the state and the cosmos led Tillyard to expound *The Elizabethan World Picture* (1943) as a prelude to the study of the history plays themselves. In Wilson Knight's *The Olive and the Sword* (1944) Shakespeare's faith in order, manifest alike in his "royalistic doctrine" and in his sense of man as a part of