INTRODUCTION

Henry VI: the reign and the plays

> If men did know what shining fetters, gilded miseries, and painted happiness thrones and sceptres were, there would not be so frequent strife about the getting or holding of them.
> Ben Jonson, '*Character principis*' in *Discoveries*[1]

Henry VI Part 2 is a fine, important, and undervalued play. Its scope is ambitious in that it attends to the large and public concerns of dynastic wars, and yet it is able to uncover, by exposing the very theatricality of those at the centre of the political stage, the most complex web of petty jealousies and private agonies. This human interest, however, depends upon a clarity of historical analysis that can be understood only if a reader or spectator attends closely to the play's particular analytic techniques and does not interpret it in terms of any grand design. This introduction will therefore begin by arguing that Shakespeare, unlike Edmund Spenser, for example,[2] did not slavishly endorse 'the Tudor Myth': this play and the group of plays to which it belongs do *not* propose simply that God had led England through the troubled times of dissension between Lancastrian and Yorkist dynasties to fulfil her destiny with the enthronement of Henry Tudor as Henry VII. If there is a grand design it is only dimly glimpsed, for the emphasis of Shakespeare, if not always of his characters, rests firmly upon efficient and not final causes. He had, at the opening of the sequence, laid down a challenge to all those who linked historical change to the mysteries of divine retribution by having a Messenger respond unequivocally to the suggestion that it was the sin of treachery that caused the loss of France. 'No treachery', he retorts tersely, 'but want of men and money' (*1 Henry VI* 1.1.69).[3] The political thrust of *Part 2* is likewise a demonstration that it is internal dissension, in particular seditious squabbling among the nobility, that damaged England's power and authority abroad. We are reminded of Kyd's report of Marlowe's table talk: 'That things esteemed to be done by divine power might have as well been done by observation of [i.e. what is observed in] men'.[4] Moreover, it can be argued, the variety of styles found throughout the sequence contributes to the analysis and need not be taken as evidence of multiple authorship or revision, but rather of perspectivism, a dramatic cross-examination from differing points of view, embodied in different dramatic styles, of the issues raised and events enacted on the stage. From the

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[1] Jonson, VIII, 62.
[2] *FQ*, III, iii, 48–9.
[3] See Michael Hattaway (ed.), *1H6*, 1990, pp. 13–16.
[4] Harleian MS 6849, fol. 218.

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theatrical shorthand techniques Shakespeare used to depict the battles between England and France in *Part 1*, through the developing complexities of character in the events of *Part 2* – which is centred around the death of good Duke Humphrey of Gloucester and the rebellion of York – to the opposition of tormented Henry VI and murderous Richard of Gloucester[1] under Edward IV in *Part 3*, Shakespeare demonstrated a quite extraordinary capacity to 'set a form upon that indigest'.[2] The heroical idioms and scenical strutting of *1 Henry VI* disappear from the stage to be replaced by more workaday theatrical registers as Shakespeare traces the wane of England's glory and the mounting ferment of political intrigue.[3]

Rather than beginning, therefore, with a description of the 'transgressions against history'[4] that Shakespeare was guilty of in his *Henry VI* plays – his account, that is, of the period from the funeral of Henry V in 1422 to the battle of Tewkesbury in 1471 – or a rehearsal of arguments over what parts of the plays Shakespeare may or may not have written,[5] let us consider what might have drawn him to this complicated chapter in the history of fifteenth-century England. Complicated it is, and so it was inevitable that its very wealth of incident led the dramatist to begin his career as a writer of history plays by concentrating as much on actions and their outcomes as on personalities and their motives: he could not avoid investigating politics and the secular as well as morality and the theological.

Unlike the reigns of Henry V and Richard III, that of Henry VI was not dominated by the personality of its monarch – Edward IV's rule during the last years of Henry's 'reign' is stark evidence of this. Rather it was a period of war between nations (the Hundred Years War) and within the kingdom (the Wars of the Roses). It was also a time of dynastic strife which manifested itself in both aristocratic factionalism and popular insurrection, a sequence of contests between allegiance to the monarchy and alliance between peers. Shakespeare offered to the playhouse audiences of sixteenth-century London a deliberate rearrangement of historical events into dramatic themes. For this reason, therefore, the plays are best regarded not simply as 'adapted history' or as vehicles for dramatic biography, but as a set of complex essays on the *politics* of the mid fifteenth century – essays which, of course, also offer reflections on Shakespeare's own times. For it was only after he had in this way learned to convert chronicle into political analysis that he turned to the kind of history that thrusts personality out into the foreground of the action: *Richard II*, *Henry IV*, and *Henry V* were written after the *Henry VI* plays and *Richard III*. The great sequence of studies of the history and politics of England was not composed in the order of the chronology of her Plantagenet rulers.

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[1] Youngest son of York, and later Richard III.

[2] *John* 5.7.26; see Larry Champion, 'The search for dramatic from: *1, 2, 3 Henry VI*', in *Perspective in Shakespeare's English Histories*, 1980, pp. 12–53.

[3] For a general analysis of the style of the play see David Riggs, *Shakespeare's Heroical Histories: 'Henry VI' and its Literary Tradition*, 1971; L. C. Knights, 'Rhetoric and insincerity' and Wolfgang Clemen, 'Some aspects of style in the *Henry VI* plays', in P. Edwards, I.-S. Ewbank, G. K. Hunter (eds.), *Shakespeare's Styles: Essays in Honour of Kenneth Muir*, 1980, pp. 1–8 and 9–24; James C. Bulman, *The Heroic Idiom of Shakespearean Tragedy*, 1985, pp. 26–44.

[4] Theobald, IV, p. 390 n.

[5] See below, p. 59 n. 5, and M. Hattaway (ed.), *1H6*, 1990, pp. 41–3.

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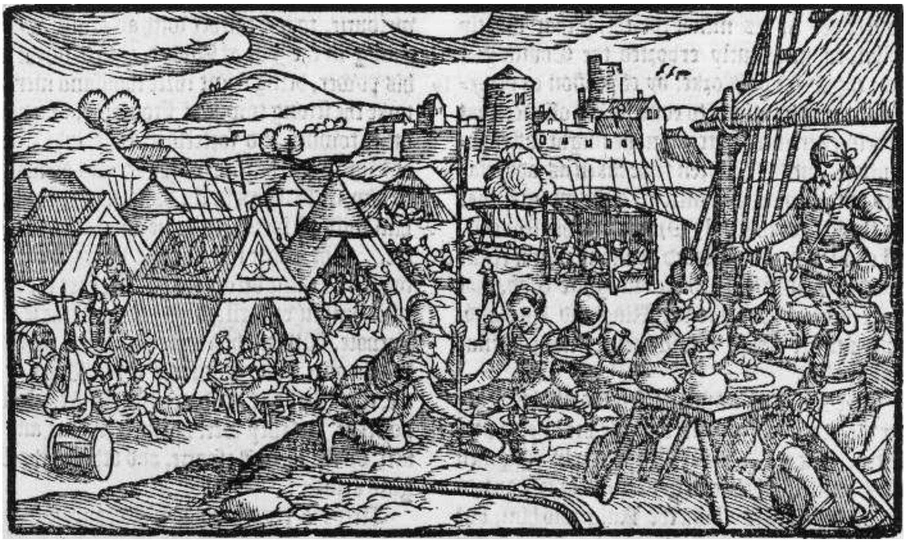

1 An army camp. A cut from Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, 1577

THE LOSS OF FRANCE AND THE WARS OF THE ROSES

Henry VI came to the throne as a nine-month-old infant in 1422,[1] and while he was a minor England was ruled through a council, his uncle 'good' Duke Humphrey of Gloucester being Protector. During Henry's reign, despite the heroism on the field of battle of John Talbot, first Earl of Shrewsbury, and the overthrow and capture of the champion of the French, Joan, la Pucelle (see *1 Henry VI* 5.3–4), the French territory won back for England by virtue of his heroic father Henry V's victory at Agincourt in 1415 (*Henry V* 4.1–8) had been, by 1453, recovered by his maternal uncle, Charles VII of France.

In *1 Henry VI*, Shakespeare moved from the funeral of Henry V through to the marriage of his son. He took us through a sequence of battles at Orléans (*1 Henry VI* 1.2ff.), Rouen, and Bordeaux (3.2ff. and 4.2ff.),[2] leading to a truce which was called at Tours in 1444 (5.4) and which centred on a politic marriage for Henry (arranged with an eye to his own benefit by the Earl of Suffolk) with Margaret of Anjou, a cousin to King Charles. Although *1 Henry VI* thus ended, unhistorically, with an English triumph, Shakespeare demonstrated *en route* that the empire had been irremediably weakened and that this was principally caused by internal sedition.

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[1] Ralph Griffiths, *The Reign of King Henry VI*, 1981, offers a modern history of the reign; see also K. B. McFarlane, *England in the Fifteenth Century*, 1982. W. G. Boswell-Stone, *Shakespeare's Holinshed, the Chronicle and the Historical Plays Compared*, 1896, reprints passages from the sources in the order Shakespeare deployed them; Peter Saccio, *Shakespeare's English Kings*, 1977, offers a modern account of the dramatic chronicle provided by Shakespeare.

[2] Rouen in fact was not taken by the French until 1449–50, and the fighting at Bordeaux took place nine years *after* the truce of Tours in 1444.

Part 1, therefore, constituted a historical prologue, a demonstration of the way in which the Hundred Years War affected the Wars of the Roses, which are dramatised in *Parts 2* and *3*. The title of the 'bad Quarto' of *Part 2, The First Part of the Contention betwixt the two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster*, therefore, need not suggest that Shakespeare might have begun writing his sequence with the second play,[1] but simply that he was following Holinshed, who clearly announced his intention of attending to happenings in England after he had completed his account of the Treaty of Tours:

> Whilst the wars between the two nations of England and France ceased . . . the minds of men were not so quiet, but that such as were bent to malicious revenge sought to compass their prepensed purpose, not against foreign foes and enemies of their country, but against their own countrymen and those that had deserved very well of the commonwealth.[2]

Margaret's coronation in 1445 marks the beginning of *2 Henry VI*. This play concentrates largely on the conspiracy of Buckingham, Somerset, and Cardinal Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester, to take power from Humphrey of Gloucester, Protector of the kingdom and father figure to the king, and on civil tumult, the Wars of the Roses. These had begun when Henry's cousin Richard, third Duke of York, laid claim to the throne. The claim was based on the grounds that York was the maternal great-great-grandson of Lionel Duke of Clarence, third son of Edward III (1327–77), whereas Henry was great-grandson of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, the fourth son (see Appendix 1, pp. 225–6). York chose as his badge a white rose, while the Lancastrians, led by York's enemy Somerset, wore red roses (*1 Henry VI* 2.4). (Henry VI's claim was further weakened by the fact that his grandfather Henry IV – 'Bullingbrook' – was commonly held to have usurped the throne and murdered the childless Richard II in 1400.) Moreover, rebellion broke out in Ireland, and York, who was assigned to put it down, took the opportunity to make his army serve his own ambition (*2 Henry VI* 3.1), winning the first battle of St Albans on 22 May 1455. This is depicted in the final sequence of *2 Henry VI*.

Henry was compelled to acknowledge York as heir apparent to the crown in 1460 (*3 Henry VI* 1.1), but York was defeated and savagely killed at the battle of Wakefield at the end of that year (*3 Henry VI* 1.3–4), a battle in which the barbarous Cliffords played a prominent part on the Lancastrian side. The Yorkists were defeated again at the second battle of St Albans in February 1461 (*3 Henry VI* 2.1), but the Lancastrians then withdrew north while York's eldest son Edward was proclaimed as King Edward IV in London. The next month Edward marched northwards and won the battle of Towton, which established him on the throne (*3 Henry* 2.3–6),[3] and Henry took refuge in Scotland (his wife and son going into exile in France) until he was captured (*3 Henry VI* 3.1). He was imprisoned in the

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[1] See pp. 56–68.

[2] Holinshed, p. 210.

[3] The famous scene (*3H6* 2.5) in which the king sees a father who has killed his son and a son who has killed his father is fictitious.

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Tower (*3 Henry VI* 3.1) from 1465 until 1470, when he was restored to the throne by the 'Kingmaker', Earl of Warwick (*3 Henry VI* 4.2 and 4.6). Warwick had been enraged by the news that Edward, 'taking counsel of his own desire',[1] had made an impolitic marriage with the widow Elizabeth, Lady Grey (*3 Henry VI* 3.2) while Warwick was abroad negotiating for the hand of a French princess for the new king. In April 1471, after losing the battle of Barnet, in which Warwick was killed (*3 Henry VI* 5.2–3), Henry fell into the hands of Edward again, and Queen Margaret was defeated by Edward's younger brother Richard of Gloucester at the battle of Tewkesbury the next month (*3 Henry VI* 5.4–5). Henry was recommitted to the Tower, where, on the night of Edward's return, he was murdered (*3 Henry VI* 5.6) – it is supposed by Gloucester. The sequence ends with a brief appearance by Edward's twelve-year-old son, later Edward V, who also was to be murdered in the Tower by Gloucester, along with his brother Richard.[2]

The reign, then, was a pattern of disorder, a mirror for Shakespeare's contemporaries of the disasters of the type of dynastic strife, centred on personal ambition rather than any desire for reform, which could so easily have broken out upon the death of Elizabeth. Francis Bacon was to rejoice at the succession of King James, fearing that without it:

> after Queen Elizabeth's decease, there must follow in England nothing but confusions, interreigns, and perturbations of estate, likely far to exceed the ancient calamities of Lancaster and York.[3]

Not only were there 'vertical' divisions between the noble factions: the reign witnessed division between the populace and the élite in the Jack Cade rebellion.[4] In his handling of this event, Shakespeare defined a distinct group or even class consciousness[5] for his rebels, although the text also demonstrates the way in which political conflagration occurred when the horizontal divisions manifest in popular discontent were exacerbated by aristocratic dissension.[6]

To dramatise all this was massively ambitious, innovative – there were no popular plays on English history before the Armada in 1588 – and potentially radical (see pp. 6–8). A dramatic sequence as long as this must also have created distinctive theatrical conventions – as modern revivals have demonstrated. It would have been expensive to perform in sequence without recourse to a standardised repertory style with some uniformity in costumes and with doubling – which may

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[1] Hall, p. 366.

[2] See *Richard III* 4.3; Richard III, of course, was to be defeated and killed by Queen Elizabeth's Tudor grandfather, Henry VII, at the battle of Bosworth in 1485, so uniting the white rose with the red.

[3] *The Beginning of the History of Great Britain*, in *Works*, Spedding, Ellis and Heath (eds.), 15 vols., 1857–74, VI, pp. 276–7.

[4] See 2 *H6* 4.2–3, 5–9.

[5] On this notion in the period, see J. A. Sharpe, *Early Modern England: A Social History, 1550–1760*, 1987, p. 121; see also Michael Hattaway, 'Rebellion, class consciousness, and Shakespeare's *2 Henry VI*', *Cahiers élisabéthains* 33 (1988), 13–22.

[6] For an account of the military power of aristocratic magnates in the 1590s see Sharpe, p. 160.

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itself have made telling political comments on the action. These plays are not vehicles for star performers, although modern actors have amassed great reputations from playing in them.

Political plays fell out of favour in the Jacobean period, and in the eighteenth century the plays disappeared almost completely from the canon of performed works. Perhaps they were too radical and anti-establishment; the female characters, moreover, were not objects of sentiment but seekers after power.[1] For the nineteenth century, they were unsuited for performance on naturalistic stages – and perhaps their anatomy of empire was too critical. In our own times literary critics have found them disappointingly based on narrative rather than significant structure, lacking both psychologically complex characters and the kinds of verbal density that Shakespeare was to attain in his later plays. But this is to ignore the particular theatrical qualities that modern directors have found in them and their tough-minded anatomy of the political nation of England.

The play: a political documentary

FROM *1 HENRY VI TO 2 HENRY VI*

1 Henry VI may well have been written written to show how the history of a nation is never to be understood in isolation. The Wars of the Roses, which form the subject of the second two parts of the sequence, can be fully understood only in the context of the Hundred Years War, dramatised incidents from which formed the substance of the first play. *1 Henry VI* portrayed the decline of England's empire over France and the accompanying decay of the ideals of feudalism that had sustained the order of the realm. That play also established themes – the deaths of the old Titans from the reign of Henry V, the attacks on Duke Humphrey the Protector, the origins of the York–Lancaster quarrel, and Suffolk's bid for power through his intimate relationship with Queen Margaret – but all the events of the play were presented as much for their potential as for their actual significance so that the end was no conclusion. Just as *1 Henry VI* began with a funeral, the traditional end of tragedy, so *2 Henry VI* begins with a marriage, the traditional end of comedy. These inverted dramatic patterns help create a new and 'open' form, the political play – perhaps in fact all Shakespeare's history plays ought to be redesignated 'political plays'.

In *Part 2* the political focus is on the way the loss of empire breeds further insurrection: by the colonised, by the nobles, and by the people. In this play France is, to all intents and purposes, finally lost (3.1.83–5), Ireland erupts in revolt

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[1] So we read in the introduction to Bell's *Edition of Shakespeare's Plays*, 1774: 'National transactions, however important they may be in their nature and consequences, are not likely to have a very popular effect, as they tend cheifly to indulge political reflection, but have very little to gratify taste. Such pieces as this are alos very barren of female characters and affecting circumstances, without which the drama is too defective. Shakespeare has herein adhered to facts, and maintained just preservation of character, without producing one striking scene: it is not therefore to be recommended for representation' (VII, 89).

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(3.1.282–4), and York is laying claim to the throne and not just jostling for authority. To further their cause, the Yorkist party have fomented a popular revolt led by York's creature, Jack Cade. No republican freedom, however, will emerge from the decay of empire, but merely the loosing upon the kingdom of the wars of the barons. These events conspire to undermine the power of the king and even the monarchy: Shakespeare, after writing the long prelude of *Part 1* in which he sketched out the swelling acts of his imperial themes, now turns to a closer examination of how, as the Lieutenant interrogating Suffolk puts it, 'reproach and beggary / Is crept into the palace of our king' (4.1.101–2).

RADICAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

Shakespeare, in fact, while seeming in this text to be both anti-aristocratic and, on occasion, anti-plebeian, can still be radical. His radicalism comes not just from allegiance to one estate in the realm, but is to be understood in its literal sense: it derives from an ability to root out the causes of political dilemmas, to demonstrate the partiality of contesting explanations of particular events – while showing that there is no easy way of discriminating between one set of values and another – and from a tendency to demolish myth through demystification. Shakespeare's history serves as an art of demonstration, rather than, as it had been in the hands of medieval chroniclers, an art of interpretation. Interpretation, wrote Walter Benjamin, 'is not concerned with an accurate concatenation of definite events, but with the way these are embedded in the great inscrutable course of the world'.[1]

Such enquiry could appear 'oppositional': on 12 November 1589 the Privy Council had written to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Mayor of London, and the Master of the Revels asking them each to appoint someone to scrutinise all plays performed in and about the City of London because the players had taken 'upon themselves to handle in their plays certain matters of divinity and state unfit to be suffered'.[2] There is no sign in the Folio version of the play of certain passages found in the Quarto, and this may well be the result of censorship consequent upon this instruction.[3] The sequence which shows Cade at the height of his power (4.5.0 SD – 4.6.5) may equally have been censored.[4] This suggests that not only were *playhouses* seen as centres of disorder and riot but that the *plays* performed in them could appear subversive.

The writing of history, as we have seen, entails the making of political statements. At the end of *Henry V*, Shakespeare, looking back to his earlier work, has the Chorus say of the hero of that play:

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[1] Walter Benjamin, 'The storyteller', in his *Illuminations*, trans. H. Zohn, 1970, p. 96.

[2] Chambers, IV, 306; several cancelled pages in the 1587 edition of Holinshed dealing with the Babington plot and recent events in Scotland and Ireland indicate that his *Chronicles* were in fact censored; see Janet Clare, "Greater themes for insurrection's arguing": political censorship of the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage', *RES* 38 (1987), 169–183.

[3] See Appendix 2, pp. 230–3; Cairncross, pp. XXV–XXIX; Clare, 'Greater themes'.

[4] See Textual Analysis, pp. 219–20.

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Fortune made his sword,
By which the world's best garden he achieved,
And of it left his son imperial lord.
Henry the Sixth, in infant bands crowned King
Of France and England, did this king succeed,
Whose state *so many had the managing*
That they lost France and made his England bleed.
(Epilogue, 6–12, emphasis added)

With its stress on the way man 'manages his own state', makes his own history, *2* and *3 Henry VI* share with Marlowe's *Edward II* the quality of documentary.[1] Moreover, Shakespeare refuses to glamorise any of the events which precipitated change. After dramatising emblematically in *Part 1* the origin in the Temple Garden of the Wars of the Roses, he now shows us, with a gesture towards the Genesis myth perhaps, a world 'after the garden' in which political deals are struck as individuals compete for power. Shakespeare's reading of the troublesome reign of Henry VI, accordingly, takes its nature *not* from the visitation of divine vengeance for an original sin (the deposition and murder of Richard II) committed two generations before but from the aspirations of particular estates.[2] Even Edward Hall, one of Shakespeare's principal sources for the sequence, sardonically offers in the course of his chronicle a secular alternative to the model of providentially ordered history he had earlier set out in the 'Introduction into the History of King Henry the Fourth', with which his chronicle began:[3]

> For many of the nobility, and more of the mean estate, wisely pondering the estate and condition of the realm, perceiving more loss than increase, more ruin than advancement, daily to ensue; remembering also that France was conquered, and Normandy was gained by the French people in short space, thought with themselves and imagined that the fault of all these miserable chances happened either because the king was not the true inheritor to the crown, or that he or his council were not able of wit, policy, and circumspection to rule and govern so noble a realm, or so famous a region.[4]

King Henry might invoke the idea of divine judgement, as for example when he hears of Gloucester's death (3.2.136–40), but Shakespeare's laying out of motive, event, and consequence offers spectators no real demonstration that the troubles of the kingdom are the *consequence* of divine displeasure or retribution. God's purposes are in no way to be deduced from the play.

In this fallen world no political value is left untested – and in performance the text may have been coloured even more with populism. Early in the play Gloucester invokes the old military values that informed *Part 1*. When he realises that Suffolk has given away many of the remaining French provinces his outburst reads thus in the Folio text:

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[1] See Hattaway, chap. 6.

[2] Holinshed (p. 208) does ascribe to God displeasure at the marriage of Henry with Margaret of Anjou and relates the events of reign to this (see Appendix 1, p. 221); Hall (p. 205) calls the marriage 'infortunate and unprofitable'.

[3] Hall, pp. 1–2; E. M. W. Tillyard took this part of Hall's text as the key to the whole 'cycle' of history plays and let it inform his reading of *2H6* – see *Shakespeare's History Plays*, 1944, pp. 147ff.; compare J. P. Brockbank, who argues that Shakespeare reproduces a scheme of retributive justice he finds in the chronicles, but recoils from it by investing scenes of retribution with an atmosphere of horror. See 'The frame of disorder – *Henry VI*' in J. R. Brown and B. Harris (eds.), *Early Shakespeare*, 1961, p. 90.

[4] Hall, p. 219.

> What, did my brother Henry spend his youth,
> His valour, coin, and people in the wars?
> Did he so often lodge in open field,
> In winter's cold and summer's parching heat,
> To conquer France, his true inheritance?
> And did my brother Bedford toil his wits
> To keep by policy what Henry got? (1.1.75–81)

Q1's version of the text, which may contain material the gist of which was censored, or which may record what a player, himself sceptical of the court's version of honour, thought of Suffolk's betrayal, reads like this:

> What, did my brother Henry toil himself
> And waste his subjects for to conquer France?
> And did my brother Bedford spend his time
> To keep in awe that stout unruly realm? (TLN 101–4)

The emphasis changes from a focus on the heroism and honour of the English champions to the *cost* of their wasteful struggle to conquer and control. Later Lord Say will pay with his life because Cade's rebels hold him responsible not only for the actual loss of Normandy but for high subsidies they had to pay to prosecute these wars (see 4.7.17–18).

Without the monarch's imperial control, all of these conflicting political and economic forces serve to lay bare the nature of the rest of the institutional fabric of the kingdom. One of the central events of the play, the murder of good Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, symbolises the extinction of equity, the final term of Saturnian rule incarnate in Henry V, just as the death of Talbot in *1 Henry VI* stood for the end of feudal valour. Hall describes Gloucester thus: 'the duke, being very well learned in the law civil, detesting malefactors and punishing their offences, got great malice and hatred of such as feared to have condign reward for their ungracious acts and mischievous doings'.[1] The murder of such a figure marks a change in the nature of the state: the play seems to embody Machiavelli's model of political degradation, as illustrated in the *Discorsi*:

> I must . . . observe that some of the writers on politics distinguished three kinds of government, viz. the monarchical, the aristocratic, and the democratic; and maintain that the legislators of a people must choose from these three the one that seems to them most suitable. Other authors, wiser according to the opinion of many, count six kinds of governments, three of which are very bad, and three good in themselves, but so liable to be corrupted that they become absolutely bad. The three good ones are those which we have

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[1] Hall, p. 209; Humphrey became proverbial as an exemplary statesman: in a work by Thomas Dekker, a character is described as being so depraved that 'he would revolt from Duke Humphrey' (*The Meeting of Gallants at an Ordinarie*, 1604, sig. B2^r).

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just named; the three bad ones result from the degradation of the other three, and each of them resembles its corresponding original, so that the transition from the one to the other is very easy. Thus monarchy becomes tyranny; aristocracy degenerates into oligarchy; and the popular government lapses readily into licentiousness.[1]

In *2 Henry VI*, in the absence of a strong monarchy, we see what is, in effect, an oligarchy. Popular rule under Cade collapses into anarchy. The decline into tyranny will be complete when Richard III mounts the throne. In such a world men revert to their atavistic states:[2] Clifford's evocation of Medea's archaic savagery at the end of the play is a measure of how family bonds – the *pietas* of the ancients emblematized in his second figure of Aeneas – are swept aside by the will to power and revenge:

> Meet I an infant of the house of York,
> Into as many gobbets will I cut it
> As wild Medea young Absyrtis did;
> In cruelty will I seek out my fame.
> [*He takes his father's body up on his back.*]
> Come, thou new ruin of old Clifford's house:
> As did Aeneas old Anchises bear,
> So bear I thee upon my manly shoulders;
> But then Aeneas bare a living load,
> Nothing so heavy as these woes of mine. (5.2.57–65)

Henry VI too was haunted by his father, and in *Part 3*, at the battle of Towton, he will see a son who has killed his father and a father who has killed his son. Thus are brought home to him the evils he has created by failing to control the peers of England.

The radical nature of Shakespeare's historical analysis can be seen from another perspective by comparing the trilogy with 'history' plays on similar themes written about a decade later, in 1599: *Sir John Oldcastle*, for example, a collaboration by Drayton, Hathway, Munday, and Wilson, or Thomas Heywood's *Edward IV*. These were produced when Queen Elizabeth was confronting the crisis posed by the insubordinate but popular Earl of Essex.[3] The former deals in part with the rebellion of the Earl of Cambridge, York's father, and treats it as a simple case of treachery,[4] and the latter takes the absolute power of the monarchy for granted: the institution is revered by the populace and the sensual failings of the hero happily condoned. Neither play attempts the great confrontations of authority with power which are the true subjects of Shakespeare's histories.

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[1] Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, 1.ii., trans. L. Ricci, 1950 edn, pp. 111–12.
[2] See Robinson, pp. 16–19.
[3] See J. E. Neale, *Queen Elizabeth I*, 1952 edn., chap. 21.
[4] Drayton, *Works*, 1, 420–6; compare his 'Duke Humphrey to Eleanor Cobham', 90–110, in *England's Heroical Epistles*, 1619 (*Works*, II, 226).