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Nicholas Grene  
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## SHAKESPEARE'S SERIAL HISTORY PLAYS

*Shakespeare's Serial History Plays* provides a re-reading of the two sequences of English history plays, *Henry VI – Richard III* and *Richard II – Henry V*. Reconsidering the chronicle sources and the staging practices of Shakespeare's time, Grene argues that the history plays were originally designed for serial performance. He charts the cultural and theatrical conditions that led to serial productions of the histories, in Europe as well as in the English-speaking world, and looks at their original creation in the 1590s and at modern productions or adaptations, from famous stagings such as the Royal Shakespeare Company's 1960s *Wars of the Roses* through to the present day. Grene focuses on the issues raised by the plays' seriality: the imagination of war, the emergence of character, and the uses of prophecies and curses through the first four; techniques of retrospection, hybrid dramatic forms, and questions of irony and agency in the second.

NICHOLAS GRENE is Professor of English Literature at Trinity College, Dublin. He is an authority on both Renaissance and Irish drama and his books include *Synge: a Critical Study of the Plays* (1975), *Shakespeare, Jonson, Molière: the Comic Contract* (1980), *Bernard Shaw: a Critical View* (1984), *Shakespeare's Tragic Imagination* (1992), and *The Politics of Irish Drama* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).

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*For Philip Edwards*

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*Chronology of major serial productions/adaptations*

Date	Plays/title	Company/theatre	Director/producer
1864	<i>Richard II – Richard III</i>	Weimar Court Theatre	Franz von Dingelstedt
1906	<i>Richard II – Richard III</i> (without <i>1 Henry IV</i> )	Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford	F. R. Benson
1935	'The Ten Chronicle Plays of William Shakespeare'	Pasadena Playhouse	Gilmor Brown and others
1951	<i>Richard II – Henry V</i>	Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford	Anthony Quayle, John Kidd, Michael Redgrave
1951–3	<i>1–3 Henry VI</i>	Birmingham Repertory Theatre	Douglas Seale
1960	<i>An Age of Kings</i>	BBC Television	Michael Hays, Peter Dews
1963	<i>Wars of the Roses</i>	Royal Shakespeare Company, Stratford	Peter Hall and John Barton
1964	<i>Richard II – Henry V</i>	RSC, Stratford	Peter Hall, John Barton, Clifford Williams
1965	<i>Il gioco dei polenti</i>	Teatro Lirico, Milan	Giorgio Strehler
1975	<i>Henry IV – Henry V, Merry Wives</i>	RSC, Stratford	Terry Hands
1977	<i>Henry V, 1–3 Henry V</i>	RSC, Stratford	Terry Hands
1978	<i>Kings</i>	Carcassonne	Denis Llorca
1978–9	<i>Richard II – Henry V</i>	BBC TV Shakespeare	David Giles, Cedric Messina
1982–3	<i>Henry VI – Richard III</i>	BBC TV Shakespeare	Jane Howell, Jonathan Miller
1986–7	<i>Henry IV – Henry V</i>	English Shakespeare Company	Michael Bogdanov
1987–8	<i>Wars of the Roses</i>	English Shakespeare Company	Michael Bogdanov
1988	<i>The Plantagenets</i>	RSC, Stratford	Adrian Noble
1999	<i>Schlachten!</i>	Deutsches Schauspielhaus, Hamburg; Salzburg	Luk Perceval
2000–1	<i>This England: the Histories</i>	RSC, Stratford	Steven Pimlott, Michael Attenborough, Edward Hall, Michael Boyd

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### *Note on the texts*

For the eight history plays with which this book is concerned, I have used the New Cambridge Shakespeare editions as follows:

- King Richard II*, edited by Andrew Gurr  
 (Cambridge University Press, 1984).  
*The First Part of King Henry IV*, edited by Herbert Weil and Judith Weil  
 (Cambridge University Press, 1997).  
*The Second Part of King Henry IV*, edited by Giorgio Melchiori  
 (Cambridge University Press, 1989).  
*Henry V*, edited by Andrew Gurr (Cambridge University Press, 1992).  
*The First Part of King Henry VI*, edited by Michael Hattaway  
 (Cambridge University Press, 1990).  
*The Second Part of King Henry VI*, edited by Michael Hattaway  
 (Cambridge University Press, 1991).  
*The Third Part of King Henry VI*, edited by Michael Hattaway  
 (Cambridge University Press, 1993).  
*King Richard III*, edited by Janis Lull  
 (Cambridge University Press, 1999).

For other plays of Shakespeare cited in the text, except where otherwise stated, I have used the Peter Alexander text of the *Complete Works* (London and Glasgow: Collins, 1951).

Quotations from the First Folio are taken from:

Charlton Hinman (ed.), *The Norton Facsimile of the First Folio of Shakespeare*  
 (New York: Norton, 1968).

I have quoted source materials wherever possible from:

Geoffrey Bullough (ed.), *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*  
 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960–2), vols. III–IV.

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*Note on the texts*

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For chronicle passages that Bullough does not include I quote from:

Edward Hall, *The union of the two noble and illustre famelies of Lancastre & Yorke* (London: Richard Grafton, 1548).

Raphael Holinshed, *The third volume of Chronicles*, 2nd edn (London, 1587).