

THE CONCEPT OF HERITAGE IN SHAKESPEARE'S HENRY VI PLAYS

by

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RÉSUMÉ

This thesis is a study of the theme of heritage in Shakespeare's Henry VI plays. There are two kinds of heritage in these plays, one noble, the other ignoble. Nobility involves the confirmation of an honourable heritage through deeds of merit. Those Yorkists and Lancastrians who choose the path of ignobility commit themselves to the heritage of revenge and rebellion. In the name of a just title to the crown, both factions confirm not the nobility but the treasonous activities of their forefathers. This commitment to rebellion in turn annuls both houses' claims to legitimacy.

That confirmation of ignobility brings chaos to England. Escalations of personal ambition interfere with natural patterns of inheritance, so that a king disinherits his son and the brother of a king intrigues against his own nearest kin. The greater family of England suffers the incursions of civil war as well. This intestine conflict leads a nameless father and a nameless son to inadvertently murder their own beloved son and father.

These plays have often been interpreted in terms of the working out of a divine pattern of expiation for an original sin. Whether or not God prefigures the ignoble end of Lancaster and York, Shakespeare dramatizes not a providential pattern but rather the individual misdeeds which result in the death without issue of England's noble heritage.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a study of the concept of heritage in Shakespeare's Henry VI plays. These works dramatize the deterioration of this concept as it is embodied in John Talbot in 1 Henry VI. Young Talbot recognizes two components to nobility, noble birth and noble deeds; the legacy left by one's forebears must be confirmed through individual acts of virtue. This heritage may become converted into ignobility if instead of honour there is a commitment to sinfulness.

When Richard of York assumes the Mortimer and Cambridge legacies of revenge and rebellion, he denies the noble blood of King Richard II which had justified a Yorkist assertion of title to the crown. Ironically York's very challenge to Henry VI rests upon the Lancastrian heritage of rebellion and illegitimate title to the throne seized by Henry Bolingbroke. Thus York's bid for the monarchy guarantees that both houses shall suffer the same stigma of rebellion. The bonds of honourable heritage have been severed by the Yorkist faction through York's commitment to rebellion. Henry's dilemma, on the other hand, has been determined by Bolingbroke's seizure of the throne; it concerns his duty to rule in the face of questionable legitimacy to govern. What must ultimately determine nobility in these plays is the confirmation of an honourable heritage through noble deeds. Its abandonment, through obsession with revenge, through personal ambition, or even through weakness and vacillation, constitutes a commitment to

ignobility. Consequently Shakespeare focuses attention upon the deeds which define each character's title to nobility rather than upon his lineage, good or bad.

I have chosen to examine the concept of heritage because of its relevance to the issue of providentiality in the Henry VI plays. This issue has been the subject of some critical debate concerning the degree to which Shakespeare meant these plays to be understood as part of what Andrew Cairncross, in the context of 3 Henry VI, calls "a great all-embracing conception of a pageant in which England and man himself work out the expiation of an original crime towards the final reassertion of a divinely controlled universal order."¹ The most influential proponent of this providential view since the 1940's has been E. M. W. Tillyard. It is Tillyard's view that Shakespeare's two tetralogies comprise a single unit and that "throughout the Henry VI's and Richard III Shakespeare links the present happenings with the past. We are never allowed to forget that, as Hall said in his preface, 'King Henry the Fourth was the beginning and root of the great discord and division.'"²

There is adequate support for Tillyard's view in Tudor thought, particularly in relation to pervasive contemporary influences of the Tudor Myth.³ Hall, for example, reports of Henry VI that some people "ascribe his infortunitie, onely to the stroke & punishment of God, afferming that the kyngdome, whiche Henry the. iiii. hys grandfather wrongfully gat, and vniustly possessed agaynst kyng Rychard the.ii. & his heyres could not by very diuine iustice, longe contynew in that iniurious stocke: And that therefore God by his diuine prouidence, punished the offence of the grandfather, in the sonnes sonne."⁴ But there is a fallacy in assigning this providential view to Shakespeare in the Henry VI plays.

Critics such as J. P. Brockbank, Geoffrey Bullough, and Robert Ornstein⁵ in varying degrees discount Tillyard's emphasis upon the providential unity of the two tetralogies.⁶ Like Brockbank,⁷ Ornstein finds in 1 Henry VI that "what happens happens because the characters are what they are and do what they do. If England is 'doomed' to calamity, it is because the Englishmen we see are careless of their principles and untrue to their traditions. There is not the slightest hint that present ills are a retribution for earlier guilts, nor is there any intimation that England is cursed because three generations ago its people deposed their king."⁸

Whether there is a unity linking the two tetralogies or not, there are evident ironies which characterize the concept of heritage in Henry VI. There is especial irony in implications for the noble lineage of Lancaster and York in both the questionable legacies of their forebears and their own apparent confirmation of ignobility.⁹ Critical attention to the service of the rebellious Lancastrian heritage to a greater scheme embracing eight works may detract from the role which ironies concerning this issue of heritage assume in the Henry VI plays. That these early histories are the more imperfect of the two tetralogies too may contribute to their relative neglect. Like patterns of irony in the Henry VI plays, the revenge motif, which is particularly appropriate to events following from the death of old Clifford, is sometimes viewed largely extrinsically, in the broader providential framework of the Richard II to Richard III cycle. But I shall endeavor to demonstrate that the relationship of this revenge pattern to the dual concept of heritage developed in the Henry VI plays serves to de-emphasize providentiality.

Within the Henry VI plays as a whole, even partial abandonment of

nobility in favour of rebellion or revenge alters natural patterns of inheritance at all levels of society. Shakespeare necessarily emphasizes the deterioration in patterns of inheritance by constant associations of past, present, and future, within which the original Bolingbroke crime is influential. W. Clemen notes of Shakespeare's histories that "the audience is expected to look beyond the end of the play, just as it is taught to glance far back to earlier times."¹⁰ But the influences of retrospect and prognostication, and any sense of a providential pattern for the larger context of the histories, remain subsidiary to and serve the interest of this lost heritage. In the Henry VI plays the reason why we are not allowed to forget the Lancastrian legacy concerns the irony not that the grandson is punished for his grandfather's sins but that the heirs of both Lancaster and York repeatedly commit identical sins in the hollow name of nobility. We shall see that even the obtrusive providentiality of Henry's vatic "divining thoughts" that young Richmond's "peaceful majesty" might prove "England's hope" (3 Henry VI.IV.vi.68-76)¹¹ subserves Shakespeare's more immediate concerns here.

This sameness of the sins of both factions within the Henry IV to Henry VI framework has been used in recent criticism to counter providential interpretation of the Henry VI plays.¹² James Winny, who considers that "no character of Henry VI attempts to attribute the confusion and misery of civil war to the sins perpetrated by Bolingbroke,"¹³ also draws attention to the ironies in the Yorkist resort to the same moral casuistry which condemns their enemies.¹⁴ Winny's differentiation between the role of Richard II in these and later plays leads him in the direction of Ornstein's conclusions: "Nothing in Henry VI encourages an assumption that this three-part play was written to show the terrible consequences

of deposing God's deputy-elect."

It is excessively political interpretations of Shakespeare's histories to which Winny objects, stressing that "their fullest significance is creative, and lies in the particular imaginative experience which they enact."¹⁵ S. C. Sen Gupta too distinguishes politics from drama, for example, in Shakespeare's treatment of Richard II. "It is reasonable to think that Shakespeare, who presents Bolingbroke as a savior in Richard II and as a usurper with a stricken conscience in 2 Henry IV, who does not mention the Mortimer claim in Henry V but dilates on it in Henry IV and Henry VI, interpreted history aesthetically rather than philosophically and presented every point of view for its dramatic significance rather than for its doctrinal value."¹⁶

The critical debate over the Lancastrian legacy essentially concerns whether or not Shakespeare's purposes in his histories were propagandistic. Sen Gupta considers that "even in the episodes which are directly connected with the theme of civil faction, Shakespeare transcends the purely didactic significance of the incidents in order to bring out their dramatic appeal."¹⁷ Shakespeare "never suggests a clear answer to the basic questions which lay behind the carnage of the Wars of the Roses: Who had the better right to the throne--Henry VI or the Duke of York? Does Henry VI suffer for his grandfather's sin? Or does he deserve to be cashiered on account of his own incompetence? And do not these two concepts contradict each other?"¹⁸

Sen Gupta and A. P. Rossiter consider naïve the idea that Shakespeare embraces the Tudor Myth in his drama.¹⁹ Hardin Craig finds that Shakespeare reflects the Elizabethan characteristic which "suspends truth, not between hypothesis and verification, but between the affirmative and the negative

in debate."²⁰ The result of this suspension is that Shakespeare in Sen Gupta's words "re-creates the past as a story of human passion, in which all that is intricate or baffling is to be traced to the enigma of human character."²¹

It is for this reason that Rossiter suggests, "the Tudor myth system of Order, Degree, etc. was too rigid, too black-and-white, too doctrinaire and narrowly moral for Shakespeare's mind: it falsified his fuller experience of men. Consequently, while employing it as FRAME, he had to undermine it, to qualify it with equivocations: to vex its applications with sly or subtle ambiguities: to cast doubts on its ultimate human validity, even in situations where its principles seemed most completely applicable."²² L. C. Knights too stresses the oversimplification which results from belief in a historical nemesis. He also suggests that Shakespeare was preoccupied with the distortion and falsification in political and public life that goes with excessive simplification of issues, with "abstracting from the rich complexity of the actual in the interest of an abstract notion such as 'honour' or 'policy'." Ultimately, says Knights, politics and morals cannot be separated without falsification and disaster.²³

This is the direction in which analysis of the concept of heritage carries us, toward Shakespeare's focus upon ambiguities and equivocations, and away from attaching an exclusively political or moral-political interpretation to the Henry VI plays which confines their rich complexity even to such an abstraction as providentiality. There is a consistent pattern to the moral-political assumptions of ignobility in these plays. ***Ironic association of ignobility and issues of legitimate title to monarchy*** may be traced throughout the trilogy, from the first eruptions of political

ambition to the claiming of a final victim of vengeance. But nowhere does irony lead away from the action, in the direction of a divinely imposed scheme, and nowhere need one resort to a providential interpretation in order to evaluate what happens to the characters in the plays. Indeed, their very commitment to ignobility determines their destinies; examination of that commitment reveals the slight significance of providentiality to either their actions or their fates.

The personalities which emerge from the York-Lancaster conflict overwhelm influences of the divine providence whose presence throughout remains essentially unobtrusive. Whether or not God prefigures the pervasive malevolence, whether or not the punishment for Bolingbroke's sin is visited upon the child king his grandson, it is Henry VI's sensibilities and political inadequacies which Shakespeare dramatizes.

This pre-eminence of individual weaknesses or sinfulness is reinforced by the sameness of the sins of both Lancaster and York. In the political climate of the Henry VI plays, Richard of York's Mortimer heritage of revenge and Cambridge heritage of rebellion translate into ruthless personal ambition. The pervasive threads of irony enforce the lack of coincidence in legacies of these two noble houses; both have known rebellion, both have known monarchy. Both, indeed, share the same ancestor, King Edward III. Edward's descendants distinguish themselves by their susceptibility to political intrigue and their blindness to the sins of their own faction. This sinfulness escalates from the vituperatio of petty squabbling to the slaughter of innocent children; but Shakespeare's focus remains upon the coincidence of sinfulness and upon the recurrent delusions of nobility rather than upon his characters' roles as human agents in God's greater design for the Richard II to Richard III cycle

of history. In fact there is a further dimension to the irony here, in Henry's ineffectual acceding to providence. Henry, as God's deputy elect, should be enforcing God's design through his own kingly actions. But Henry's withdrawal in deference to God's will merely leaves a vacuum. Shakespeare fills this vacuum not with supernatural influences but with the machinations of political opportunists.

This emphasis upon human failings is further highlighted by the abandonment of natural relationships which accompanies the disintegration of individual morality. Similarly, familial relationships are a barometer for the moral climate during these wars. The unnatural wranglings of an uncle and nephew in 1 Henry VI deteriorate into the ritual sacrifice of the nephew to political intrigue and the deathbed torment of the conspiratorial uncle in 2 Henry VI. As the momentum builds, history is transmuted into a revenge drama whose outcome ultimately will revolve about a figure of pure evil.

There is a natural evolution to Richard of Gloucester in Henry VI. Richard epitomizes the shift from chivalry on the battlefields of France to the metaphoric cannibalism of all-consuming ambition within the family of York. This movement is symbolic of the nature of civil war; Shakespeare shows us its ramifications throughout the family of England. Henry Bolingbroke's original sin necessarily provides the point of departure for this tradition of treasonous activity. I have intimated that Henry's influence is felt throughout. This is because of the nature of the criminality which he shares with his successors as well as because of the cycle of sin and retribution which he initiates. And part of the interest for the Henry VI plays of that first crime derives from its recurrence. Typical of Shakespeare's characters here is their obliviousness to this shared

sinfulness, as I have suggested, and thus to the inevitable futility of waging ignoble warfare in the name of honour.

The moral and legalistic framework for the introduction of the Richard II/Bolingbroke legacies into 1 Henry VI devolves into the transmission of a heritage of vengeance and personal ambition. Inheritance can no longer be defined in moralistic or legalistic terms, for the heritage of evil needs no semblance or excuse of legitimacy. Within the chivalric world of the Talbots, the garter is plucked from the leg of cowardly Falstaff (1 Henry VI.IV.i.15), and an earldom is granted to Talbot as a reward for his valour and patriotism (III.iv.26). Falstaff loses his knighthood and is banished because he performs ignobly in battle; noble, heroic Talbot does not inherit but gains by merit his title.

There is thus an appropriate balance to the components of lineage and merit in 1 Henry VI. In the diminished empire which survives Talbot, masters of duplicity label one another "wind-changing" (3 Henry VI.V.i.57) and solemnly undertake vows of a moment's duration. Everywhere in that world lurks the irony that York's confirmation of the legacy of his forebears in seeking Henry's crown through rebellion is necessarily coextensive with his denial of both honour and family. The result, then, is the paradox that York's nominal awakening to his noble ancestry is succeeded by the disavowal of nobility.

Shakespeare symbolizes that disavowal in further assaults upon the bonds of family throughout. For the two concepts, heritage and family, are interconnected. Shakespeare's play on the two senses of "blood"²⁴ and "right" underscore this relationship. The denial of family, whether in the bickerings of Winchester and his nephew Gloucester, loss of Talbot to rivalries of York and Somerset, disinheritance of Prince Edward,

inadvertent murder of one's own father or son in dubious battle, complots of Richard Crookback against his own brothers and nephews, or deposition and murder of King Henry, also symbolizes the turning of England's weapons of war upon her own sons in the Wars of the Roses. The pattern of irony which relates claims of nobility to the denial of family necessities recurrent references to past and future in the family chaos theme, and provides further justification for periodic intrusions of the original York-Lancaster legacies.

Natural legacies are not only denied but diverted: England's crown passes from Lancaster to York; gold crowns pass from a dead son at Towton to his father-murderer. Thus, on a symbolic level, the culpability of all classes in these wars implies a downward movement of responsibility both from one generation to another and from one class to another. Sometimes these inter-class relationships border on the familial, as in the actions of the father figure Gloucester's serving-men on their master's behalf and in the Mortimer-Cade connection.

Although this interrelationship might support interpretation of the Henry VI plays as illustrative of the collective guilt occasioned by the deposition and murder of Richard II for which England must atone, there are two factors which one might consider here. The first is Shakespeare's consistent focus upon the intricacies of human motivation and the sameness of the sins committed. The second is the fate which Henry unhistorically meets at Richard's hands. Might Shakespeare wish us to consider the deposition and murder of Richard II atoned for by the deposition and murder of the grandson of his murderer? That is, an eye for an eye? Rather than providing a solution to the paradox of the Bolingbroke legacy, this murder portends further acts of evil and greater disaster for England.

It is another like sin, but on a greater scale; moreover we have the examples of Clifford, Somerset, Suffolk, York, Winchester, and Warwick to reinforce the implication that nothing but greater evil results from such encroachments upon God's domain in the Henry VI plays.

Shakespeare has Henry slain by the future King Richard III, who historically did not rush off from the murder of Prince Edward "to make a bloody supper in the Tower" (3 Henry VI.V.v.83). Then he has Richard, in the next play, pay mightily for his sins. The projection of this pattern into the future, by means of Henry's prophecy, illustrates the conformity of Richard's end to that of the previous sinners who all conspicuously fail to gain their objectives.

The Henry VI plays end with a Yorkist repetition of the original Lancastrian crime. Despite the techniques of retrospect and prognostication which characterize these plays, the significance of this cycle within a cycle must be found in the Henry VI plays rather than in what follows. Moreover we must have good reasons for finding God's hand influential in Henry's murder. The evidence indicates otherwise. In an Old Testament sentiment, Rutland cautions Clifford that God might avenge his murder with the murder of Clifford's own son. This warning, which does not deter Clifford, who too will die with much blood on his hands and unsatiated, goes unheeded. What is important is that the untainted Rutland does not bring God's curse upon Clifford. He stops short of asking divine retribution because his mention of Clifford's son was an effort to gain sympathy and to score a point of logical relationship. This approach is characteristic of Rutland's behavior throughout Act I, Scene iii.

York assumes rebellious means to attain the end of avenging a treasonous crime and dies, ignobly, unfulfilled. His disregard of heritage

and inattention to providence, even for his own propaganda purposes, is conspicuous throughout. Thus Shakespeare neglects to make use of providence both in a powerful and poignant murder scene which ultimately relates to Clifford's own murder and in the longer history of York's rebellion. Each of these examples would easily lend itself to ~~providential~~ influences.

The final scene of the Henry VI trilogy superimposes the asides of a lurking Judas upon the dual lineaments of noble heritage, ironically echoed in Edward's "royal throne,/Repurchas'd with the blood of enemies" (3 Henry VI.V.vii.1-2) so that young Ned "might'st repossess the crown in peace" (V.vii.19). Edward's "lasting joy" (V.vii.46) will be sought not in noble deeds but in "mirthful comic shows/Such as befits the pleasure of the court" (V.vii.43-44).²⁵

Recollections of "England's hope" are absent from these episodes. The irony of Edward's final diminished monarchy, family, and honour, is highlighted by the ever-present obliviousness to the ignobility closest to hand. Absent also are any eye for an eye or "vengeance is mine" (Romans 12:19) sentiments which might have displaced this irony. Although the wickedness of the fathers would seem to be visited upon the children and upon succeeding generations, more relevant even to the Henry VI plays as a whole is the related sentiment that the Lord does not make the wicked innocent (Numbers 14:18), or perhaps Christ's own admonition that "it must needs be that offences shall come, but woe be to that man by whome the offence commeth" (Matthew 18:7).²⁶ Whatever there may be of these influences upon the final scene or upon the trilogy as a whole, they remain largely implicit.

In the Henry VI plays we see Lancaster and York stray from nobility, but they seem to do so essentially unabatted. The nominal assumption of

a supposed noble heritage of monarchy does not remove the taint of individual acts of sinfulness, even from sanguine Edward IV. Again there is the paradox that unjust means nullify a just claim to nobility. When this nobility has been permanently tarnished, it is meaningless to disclaim responsibility for one's thirst for revenge or for personal power. The same bonds of heritage one has severed cannot then be held accountable for one's ignobility. Besides, those early Yorks and Lancasters, having committed like crimes, had no legacy of nobility to pass on. Similarly Clifford becomes a monster who can no longer use his father's murder as an excuse for endless acts of revenge. York, Edward, Richard, and George do not even bother with the pretense of nobility; when their claims to "right" surface, they are merely peremptory. Even Henry, by forfeiting a kingly role, forfeits the claim to his forefathers' contested throne.

In this context of past and present Yorkist and Lancastrian misdeeds, the Talbots' noble sentiments are something of an aberration. The obtrusive formalism of those final Talbot scenes reinforces this impression, and the deaths of both father and only son confirm not just their own obsolete nobility but also the death without issue of England's heritage of honour.

CHAPTER II

1 HENRY VI

In 1 Henry VI rivalries among the child king's counsellors deprive Talbot of the troops necessary to sustain the French wars. Talbot himself is sacrificed to political intrigue bred of personal ambition, and that sacrifice presages an end to empire and the intensification of intestine rivalries in London. Shakespeare takes great liberties with chronology by including in this play what J. Dover Wilson calls the self-contained dramatic incident of Talbot's death.¹ Talbot in fact died in 1453, three years after Dade's Rebellion, and the French campaigns were more or less contemporary with events of the end of 2 Henry VI.²

Moreover, Hall, the probable source for young Talbot's participation in his father's last campaign, gives no indication that John Talbot is a child.³ Shakespeare conveys the impression that young John is approaching manhood through numerous references to John's youth (eg. IV.iii.35, 40; IV.v.1; IV.v.47; IV.vi.39; IV.vii.4, 32)⁴ and through Talbot's statement that he intends to "tutor" his son in stratagems of war (IV.v.2). John Talbot's youth would account for his not having seen his father for seven years (IV.iii.37) and for Talbot's sending for him for the first time now. The mention of this lengthy separation emphasizes both the poignancy of their lost years of companionship and the bitter irony that the boy arrives just at this fatal moment. Moreover there are

profound implications for the concept of heritage in their shared nobility despite the son's long absence from his father's influence.

The nobility of the Talbots is in explicit contrast to those who surround them. The first mention of young Talbot occurs in the fictitious interview⁵ in which Sir William Lucy entreats York⁶ to

Spur to the rescue of the noble Talbot,
Who now is girdled with a waist of iron,
And hemm'd about with grim destruction. (IV.iii.19-21)

But York cannot send aid:

A plague upon that villain Somerset
That thus delays my promised supply
Of horsemen that were levied for this siege!
Renowned Talbot doth expect my aid,
And I am louted by a traitor villain
And cannot help the noble chevalier.
God comfort him in this necessity!
If he miscarry, farewell wars in France. (IV.iii.9-16)

York thus reveals his awareness that Talbot's defeat will mean England's defeat in the French wars.. He also knows that Talbot and his son will die if help is not forthcoming (IV.iii.39-40).

It is noteworthy that, although York attributes his inability to aid Talbot to Somerset's delayed supply of horsemen which had ostensibly been levied for this siege (IV.iii.9-11) and although in the space of twenty lines (IV.iii.13-33) York manages to call Somerset a traitor four times, Lucy does not acquit York of responsibility for Talbot's loss (IV.iii.47-50).. Lucy may have noticed that, upon learning of Talbot's predicament and the immediate threat to the empire, York unnaturally dwells upon the Somerset rivalry and upon his wish that Somerset be sacrificed in Talbot's stead. Although York no doubt will be genuinely grieved at England's losses (V.iv.111-112), he appears to be so blinded by the Somerset quarrel that he cannot appreciate the significance of his

part in the imminent English defeat.

The second half of this rather carefully balanced⁷ Lucy episode sees Somerset shift the blame back on to York:

This expedition was by York and Talbot
Too rashly plotted: all our general force
Might with a sally of the very town
Be buckled with: the over-daring Talbot
Hath sullied all his gloss of former honour
By this unheedful, desperate, wild adventure:
York set ~~him~~ on to fight and die in shame
That, Talbot dead, great York might bear the name. (IV.iv.2-9)

There may be some justice in his accusation, but in making it Somerset includes Talbot among the guilty. Even more ominously, he attacks England's hero at the moment of Talbot's sacrifice. Whereas York's protestations are perhaps unnaturally excessive, Somerset's accusation confirms his own weighty portion of infamy.. "Noble York and Somerset," "the trust of England's honour," are indeed Talbot's "false hopes" (IV.iv.15-20). Their unworthy rivalry, whether by design or as a result of obsessions with personal enmity at the expense of duty, makes them England's false hopes as well.

1 Henry VI begins with the funeral of the great conqueror Henry V. But ceremony soon gives way to an outbreak of the hostility between Winchester and Gloucester, closely followed by the bad news from France (I.i.57). These events are given a darker undercurrent by the first in a long series of asides betraying the ruthless power politics which will eventually culminate in the aspirations of Richard of Gloucester.

Exeter asks "why mourn we not in blood?" (I.i.17) for the loss of Henry V, perhaps thinking of waging war upon the French to counter "our glory's overthrow" (I.i.24). But the irony of these words comes home in Talbot's sacrifice, although the blood spilled in France will be England's

own when Talbot falls. Moreover, well before the Wars begin, York's and Somerset's roles in this conflict symbolize England's impending war upon her own.⁸

Among the victims to fall in France is Talbot's only son. His death recalls the play's opening scene in which Bedford asks that England be spared "civil broils" (I.i.53) which would leave "none but women left to wail the dead" (I.i.51). Talbot asks "shall all thy mother's hopes lie in one tomb?" (IV.v.34) and later cautions, "in thee thy mother dies, our household's name, / My death's revenge, thy youth, and England's fame" (IV.vi.38-39). Thus, before the play's end, this mourning will have already begun. Moreover England's loss of Talbot makes concrete the threat of sterility implicit in the image of England as "a nourish of salt tears" (I.i.50), in which babes must languish and England's fertile soil turn to dust.

The fictitious Auvergne episode⁹ illustrates the marked contrast between Talbot's behavior towards his captive and his own and John's brutal death at the hands of enemies both English and French. Talbot's diplomatic play upon the Countess' shadow metaphor ("Long time thy shadow hath been thrall to me" (II.iii.35)) turns the tables on his captor. But the more profound significance of Talbot's shadow-substance symbolism (II.iii.49-55) will emerge when the tables turn yet again and Talbot is slain. In this interesting but apparently incongruous scene Shakespeare plays upon opposites and contrives a curious dramatic inversion. Such an obtrusive episode, one which Wilson mentions is at most suggested by a brief passage historically unrelated to Talbot,¹⁰ nevertheless bears considerable thematic interest.¹¹ Talbot's substance is the force of

England's power; yet with Talbot's death another inversion occurs.

The substance which is Talbot's nobility is severed from what then becomes a shadow of its former self, an empire degenerated and racked with civil broils in which the greater self or substance of England turns to feed upon its own "sinews, arms, and strength" (II.iii.62).

Talbot will experience a reversal as complete as the Countess' when his cries for "noble York and Somerset" (IV.iv.15) become an enlightened acknowledgement of their duplicity (IV.vi.2). This Auvergne scene, although amusing, illustrates Talbot's foresight and unwavering attention to duty, his humour and humanity in even such a small victory. The contrast to Somerset's and York's inverted priorities is implicitly accentuated here, as even the juxtaposition of this scene with the succeeding Temple Garden episode emphasizes.

The Temple Garden and Mortimer scenes (II.iii and II.iv) find intestine division assuming a new dimension. Talbot's substance in fact depends upon the troops diverted because of the petty wranglings of Gloucester, Winchester, Somerset, and York. Although Talbot himself is the last to fully appreciate this, the audience had been made aware of the connection even in the play's opening scene (I.i.69-81).

The heritage of honour so carelessly sacrificed in France becomes the justification for York's bid to regain the lands and titles forfeited upon his father's execution for treason.¹² Somerset claims that York's blood is tainted by his father's act of treason:

And by his treason stand'st not thou attainted,
Corrupted, and exempt from ancient gentry?
His trespass yet lives guilty in thy blood;
And, till thou be restor'd, thou art a yeoman. (II.iv.91-95)

York then draws a distinction between being attached and attainted, with

what Cairncross considers to be an apparent play on the word attainted:¹³

My father was attached, not attainted,
Condemn'd to die for treason, but no traitor; (II.iv.96-7)

But York does not otherwise address himself to the more profound accusation of corruption in the blood, a taint which Somerset does not clearly concede as being purged with his inheritance of a dukedom. The question remains, if York is "restored to his blood,"¹⁴ does he gain not only the York heritage of wealth and title but also the restitution of his good name? The imaginary Temple Garden setting, the fiction of York and his fellows as law students in the Temple, and the pervasive legal imagery of this scene, provide a symbolically fertile and hallowed soil for the seed of York's ambition. His "case of truth" (II.iv.2) is couched in the jargon of legitimacy, but Suffolk demonstrates that the authority of England's legal institutions, as that of her monarchy, is vulnerable to erosion by ambitious peers (II.iv.7-9).

In the Temple Garden scene there is a clear relationship between England's deteriorating nobility and the wrongdoings or the depravity of specific individuals. Some critics also find the inheritance theme here, although without giving consideration to those rather critical ambiguities left by "restor'd" (II.iv.95). Ronald Berman, for example, says in the context of the Temple Garden scene that York is stigmatized by his father's treason. He also finds in associations between the rights and guilt of kindred and civil war indications that the spiritual chaos of rebellion, rather than being static, descends in blood and affects the entire nation.¹⁵

Bullough, however, points out that there is no "sense of guilt" in the Temple Garden scene. He specifically discounts Tillyard's concern

with inherent guilt and an inherited curse in the context of this play.¹⁶ Although recognizing that the quarrel in the Temple Garden concerns the narrow issue of York's title and not the succession itself, Tillyard finds in 1 Henry VI that upon Talbot's death "the first stage of England's ruin and of the fulfilment of the curse is accomplished. Respublica has suffered the first terrible wound."¹⁷ Bullough does not deny that Shakespeare conformed his history of Richard II to the Tudor myth,¹⁸ but he distinguishes between Shakespeare's motivations in writing the Henry VI plays and Richard II.¹⁹ I have noted that Tillyard found a unity in Shakespeare's two tetralogies and suggested that "throughout the Henry VI's and Richard III Shakespeare links the present happenings with the past."²⁰ So he does, but only a close examination of the Henry VI plays themselves can determine the degree of emphasis there is upon that heritage of guilt in the works themselves.²¹

In the context of the Temple Garden Bullough focuses upon Warwick's words (II.iv.82-85) and upon other references to Cambridge. But he does not take note of the ambiguity in "restor'd" (II.iv.95), nor does he bring into his argument York's chilling vow:

And, by my soul, this pale and angry rose,
As cognizance of my blood-drinking hate,
Will I for ever, and my faction, wear,
Until it wither with me to my grave,
Or flourish to the height of my degree. (II.iv.107-111)

In these lines there are apparent equal portions of ambition and vengeance and few traces of nobility. York's intensity here, as in the Lucy episode concerning Somerset's denial of horsemen (IV.iii), betrays more meaning than his words themselves convey. If one asks what the ultimate height of York's degree is, the answer must be, the crown. Warwick's prophecy

(II.iv.124-127), spoken in York's presence, further highlights the larger context of this encounter and its eventual cost to England in blood.. Whether or not York's thoughts are on the crown, his tone suggests, if not the taint of treason against a third generation de facto ruler, at least the lesser taint of hatred and a willingness to see blood spilled. But is this taint inherited, and will it in turn be purged with his inheritance of a dukedom?

In the following scene the Mortimer heritage passes to York. Bullough considers that "there is little assertion here of any but private wrongs to be redressed. The play indeed contains no brooding sense of doom and punishment resulting from Richard II's deposition and death... . This is a play about dynastic squabbles, the 'jarring discord of nobility,' and the influence of bad policies, not about a cosmic process."²² Berman, however, relates the Mortimer episode to the extended context of kinship, recalling York's and Henry's shared blood lines: "The Mortimer interview and gradual moral hardening of York are meant, I believe, to show that justification of the inheritance really implies the denial of kindred."²³ This familial relationship may be further enlarged to encompass the greater family of England whose welfare civil war is to threaten.²⁴ In this context the idea of England's inheritance of collective guilt can be seen to intrude upon the narrower context of York's double heritage of treason and legitimate title to the throne.

The Mortimer scene draws together the twin Plantagenet legacies of legitimacy, from Edward III to York, and of usurpation from Henry IV to Henry VI.. It superimposes upon them their contemporary counterparts in

which the Mortimer legitimacy supplants Cambridge's traitorous heritage and Henry IV's rebellion and regicide undermine Henry VI's third generation legitimacy. York's legitimacy would appear to be the greater. His father's imputation of Lancastrian illegitimacy is as just as the legal pretender Mortimer's imprisonment is unjust. On a more remote level, the original wrongs committed against England's rightful ruler Richard II and his rightful successor, Mortimer,²⁵ have not been righted. It is thus ironic that the Mortimer legacy carries with it a greater taint of corruption than does the Cambridge legacy; Henry enjoys the tactical and psychological advantage of an inherited monarchy.

In asking that York be restored to his blood (III.i.152-156) Gloucester emphasizes York's own accomplishments which render him worthy of the Yorkist inheritance in his own right. Henry responds:

And those occasions, uncle, were of force;
Therefore, my loving lords, our pleasure is
That Richard be restored to his blood. (III.i.157-159)

"Therefore" implies that Henry's decision is motivated by considerations of merit above those of heritage. York thus gains his title by virtue of loyal service to England, as did Talbot. The consideration given to merit in this decision masks the greater implications for the Yorkist claim in granting York the legacy of his forebears. Henry weakens his own position when he strengthens York's title; he also renders more ambiguous the significance of York's being restored to his blood (II.iv.95). Moreover, on the opposing front, if York accepts the legally sound Mortimer legacy, he commits himself to having to do something about Henry. Noble deeds have earned him the Dukedom of York; what kind of deeds must be undertaken now to redress the wrong done to Mortimer?

Mortimer leaves the essence of his legacy to York unspoken (II.v.84-103).. Although he details Cambridge's involvement in plans to place Mortimer on the throne, he does not explain "the rest" which he wishes York to gather: "Thou art my heir; the rest I wish thee gather" (II.v.96). There is also a certain ambiguity in his warning that the house of Lancaster is "not to be remov'd." His acknowledgement earlier in the scene that "the arbitrator of despairs," the "kind umpire of men's miseries," is Death (II.v.28, 29) reinforces the ambiguity of his legacy to York. Does he on the one hand assert divine prerogative in righting wrongs and in almost the same breath reveal that "I would his [York's] troubles likewise were expir'd,/That so he might recover what was lost" (II.v.31-32)?

The loss of York's "honour and inheritance" (II.v.27) is the loss of his father's dukedom, but is Mortimer's own legacy vengeance against the house of Lancaster for his imprisonment, or does he confer upon York the obligation of regaining the honour and inheritance of a kingdom? Mortimer personally passes to York the burden of his own family history and sequestration, as well as the story of Cambridge's rebellion; thus the implication remains that he would have York fully redress these wrongs. That he wishes York prosperity in peace and war shows his realization that York's days, whether in continental wars or at home, may not continue peaceful. That he meets with York at all suggests his disinclination to let the matter die in the greater interest of a peaceful England. His legacy, whether of vengeance or rebellion, must necessarily involve political upheaval, whatever the justice of his cause.

If York accepts that legacy, he then must endanger England's well-

being.. But York's last words commit him only to the continued quarrel with Somerset and to the quest for a dukedom. Even his most energetic reaction to Mortimer's story, the exclamation that his father's execution amounted to bloody tyranny (II.v.99-100), does not carry any suggestion that he intends to seize the crown.

The suggestiveness of these two scenes allows for the continued interplay of individual crimes committed against a backdrop of the heritage of sin. But it also provides for an elaboration of that heritage. There are two strains of corruption at work, that of York's father who, with the Percies, sought the king's overthrow, and that of Henry's grandfather who successfully engineered the overthrow and eventual murder of a king. Moreover, the ambiguities Shakespeare seems to introduce into concepts of corruption and retribution, rather than limiting the significance of these concepts to the Tudor view, actually serve to extend them into other areas of the inheritance theme.

It is a commonplace of criticism of the Henry VI plays to emphasize the doom both houses bring upon themselves by engaging in the evils of civil war. It will also be recalled, however, that even here, before the Wars begin, the disease of corruption, whether inherited or acquired, has infected their respective nobilities. Henry is young and perhaps still personally free of wrong-doing. Numerous references to Henry V's reign (I.i; I.iv.78; III.ii.81; IV.i.148; IV.iii.49-52) and the fact that Henry VI does not appear until Act III, Scene i, emphasize not only Henry VI's youth and political insignificance but also the lingering heritage of his forebears which continues to influence events.

One such influence is upon the seed of York's ambition, at first

confined to the Somerset rivalry and the dukedom, but finally, and perhaps fed by the fuel of revenge for ancient wrongs, extending to the crown itself. A second influence, one which contributes to the gathering storm of rivalries and ambitions, is the crime of Henry's grandfather itself, possibly but not necessarily carrying with it a curse upon Henry's reign (III.i.195-199). Henry's minority rule, his political naïveté, and his disastrous marriage will compound the repercussions of his relatively minor sins and effectively implicate his house as deeply as that of York in responsibility for the Wars of the Roses.

Berman finds in the Henry VI plays an interesting reflection of Aeschylus' and Sophocles' perception that the most tragic act is that emanating from guilt of the past, and affecting the family and the state.²⁶ But what is the relationship of present acts of sinfulness, such as those committed by York and Somerset in France, to that inherited guilt?

Hall's Chronicle most probably was the source for the York-Somerset rivalry. Hall stresses Somerset's jealousy of York's appointment to the regency in France as beginning the feud.²⁷ It is evident in Hall that immediate causal factors are instrumental in the division and bloodshed which ensue. There is no suggestion of cosmic forces at work; there is rather a meticulous explanation of the specific source of enmity and its relationship to the Wars.

Shakespeare stays close to Hall in his presentation of the feud, but he places the rivalry, albeit ambiguously, within the framework of York's dual heritage of treason and legitimate pretensions to the throne. He further qualifies both inherited causal relations and present feuding with examples of Henry's unwise political decisions. More generally, Clemen

suggests that "as the heroes in Shakespeare's histories are kings, princes, and statesmen, they must necessarily act as agents of their country's history; they are carried along by the current of history that flows from the past towards the future and to some extent it is they who guide this current."²⁸ This is what happens in the instance of King Henry VI. He appoints York regent in France and Somerset commander of the cavalry (IV.i.162-168).. Thus Henry must bear some responsibility for the amplification of this feud. He naïvely expects such animosity to be quelled in the French wars, not having understood the depths of its bitterness or the heights of the men's ambitions..

Henry is too virtuous to appreciate such duplicity, and his action provides an early example of what will become typical of Henry's few tentative forays into the political arena. His decisions, emanating from political naïveté and personal misjudgments of sinful individuals, effect the opposite of what he intends and, often at crucial moments, make matters worse.²⁹ Here he permits Somerset and York to unite in destroying Talbot and the empire by making the French campaign dependent upon the combination of York's infantry and Somerset's horsemen. He also provides them with vast armies which might easily turn their weapons inward upon England. Henry's words abound in dramatic irony: "true subjects," "sons of your progenitors," "go cheerfully together," "digest your angry choler on your enemies"--which, of course, is just what they will do.

There is similar irony in Henry's political ineptitude in pinning on himself the red rose (IV.i.134-155). He clearly does not take the York-Somerset problem seriously enough. His mention of their familial relationship and choice of a red rose contain considerable dramatic irony,

for the Wars of course will find Henry the focal figure in a conflict characterized by family chaos. The irony is highly evident in references to French fickleness (138) and provocation to rebellion (141-142), self destruction (147), and loss of empire (149-150). But the most brutal irony is in the words:

O, think upon the conquest of my father,
My tender years, and let us not forgo
That for a trifle that was bought with blood! (IV.i.148-150)

Henry himself will eventually forego Anjou and Maine without a second thought; in naming York heir he will deny his son a heritage bought with the blood of Richard II and kept with the blood of Richard of Cambridge. Following Henry's remarks Warwick says to York, "blame him not;/I dare presume, sweet Prince, he thought no harm" (IV.i.178-179). York replies, "And if I wist he did--but let it rest" (180). The juxtaposition of Warwick's and York's words against Henry's arbitration of the quarrel emphasizes Henry's good intentions and bad judgment. York's words, containing a hint that he now seeks an excuse to turn his animosities upon Henry, reveal the possible extent of the future harm this action will cause. This episode implicates Henry in the increasingly multidimensional realm of causal responsibility for the Wars. Exeter's choric response reinforces this multiplicity of relationships (IV.i.182-194).

The Temple Garden episode, as I have noted, is most probably imaginary. The Mortimer scene cannot have taken place either, as Mortimer was thirty-two when he died.³⁰ Moreover Hall makes no mention of such a meeting or exchange with a member of the house of York. Mortimer died in 1425, York in 1460; thus Shakespeare has again disregarded chronology for the dramatic advantage of bringing uncle and heir together. Shakespeare's

introduction of Mortimer's advanced age and long imprisonment increases his suffering at Lancaster hands and makes his appearance both more dramatic and more ominous in terms of the sins committed and the vengeance necessary to redress those sins.

I have suggested that in the Temple Garden and Mortimer scenes Shakespeare interweaves into material found in the sources his own imputations of hereditary ill and has reinforced accounts of York's awakening to ambition with imagined encounters. These encounters are in part motivated by the lingering influence of past iniquities of both Lancaster and York. But Shakespeare does not discard the kind of immediate causal relationships Hall recognized in Somerset's and York's role in Talbot's defeat. Rather, he places the two influences together in an almost overlapping but ambiguous manner.³¹ The theme of hereditary corruption is superimposed upon that of personal ambition which in turn is superimposed upon that of the French wars, ultimately leaving one in doubt as to where Shakespeare intends primal responsibility to rest.

A further component to these civil broils emerges in the pebble incident, in which Gloucester's and Winchester's men clash. The probable source for this incident is Fabyan³² who gives his reader a straightforward account of Gloucester's and Winchester's men's seizing upon any implement at hand with which to go at their enemies. Shakespeare's use of the material is similar to Fabyan's, although there appear in Shakespeare two striking unhistoric lines spoken by one of Gloucester's men: "We and our wives and ~~children~~ all will fight/And have our bodies slaughter'd by thy foes" (III.i.100-101). These lines provide but one example among many in the Henry VI plays of the complicity of all levels of society in respon-

sibility and guilt for the Wars; it is also a curious early reflection upon the theme of family heritage. These men serve the most influential peers in the realm, and their quarrel, a petty one, is their masters' quarrel. That these serving-men would sacrifice themselves, their wives, and their children to such contention bodes ill for the land.

Although the molehill scene (3 Henry VI. II.v) is perhaps the most poignant of the trilogy and demonstrates the heavy burden of ~~tragedy~~ common soldiers bear, this pebble incident suggests the commons' burden of complicity in civil strife.³³ The pebble incident turns the focus away from personal ambition and loss of empire and reveals the unnatural consequences of such strife to the nation as a whole. The soldiers fighting in remote France betray a political insight into implications of retaining private armies in England for motives of personal ambition (I.i.70-81). Such insights are nowhere evident here among their counterparts in these private armies.

Winchester's hostility, like Somerset's, stems from his jealousy of Gloucester's political influence. Gloucester is both Protector and next in succession; ironically, once again, the issue of inheritance aggravates the personal antagonisms which bring the country closer to chaos. Despite Winchester's belief that Gloucester yearns to be king, Gloucester in fact does not succumb to the ambitions which will ensnare York. His serving-man calls Gloucester a kind "father to the commonweal" (III.i.98), and indeed he is much beloved by the commons. Berman goes so far as to suggest that Gloucester "will be the father for whom the sons of the nation will atone."³⁴ If indeed these are plays of atonement, Richard II, Richard of Cambridge, Mortimer, and later Gloucester leave England with much

to atone for.

These episodes, prefatory to civil war, preview the atrocities which will occur in the course of the Wars and culminate in the reign of Richard III. Surprising numbers of incidents and insights into the already advanced disintegration of morality appear in 1 Henry VI. The asides of Winchester and Somerset (III.i.141, 178) are suggestive of Richard of Gloucester's later asides; Somerset's aside, moreover, carries feuding one step closer to bloodshed. Warwick's admonition to Winchester and Gloucester nearly hits the mark twice:

My Lord Protector, yield; yield, Winchester;
Except you mean with obstinate repulse
To slay your sovereign and destroy the realm.
You see what mischief, and what murder too,
Hath been enacted through your enmity;
Then be at peace, except ye thirst for blood. (III.i.112-117)

Blood will be spilled, and it will flow because of the wrongs done to and by brothers, fathers, uncles, nephews, and sons. But whether the wrongs which bring civil war to England concern the heritage of evil and atonement or the individual misdeeds of her citizens is another question.

Shakespeare interweaves the motifs of hereditary ill, individual sins, atonement, and usurpation, and then further confounds them with the interplay of heritage and oath taking. Henry restores York to his blood, but for a price:

If Richard will be true, not that alone
But all the whole inheritance I give
That doth belong unto the house of York,
From whence you spring by lineal descent. (III.i.163-166)

That Henry must ask this of York recalls York's dual heritage and Henry's own vulnerability. York agrees to Henry's request: "Thy humble servant vows obedience/And humble service till the point of death" (167-168).

Henry of course makes York's dukedom and his restoration to nobility contingent upon this vow. York's vow theoretically denies him the Mortimer heritage. But by later breaking the oath in his bid for the crown York in a sense confirms the Yorkist taint of treason as well as his own personal commitment to ignobility.

Warwick's request that York be restored to his blood is as ambiguous as the earlier exchange between Somerset and York in the Temple Garden Scene (II.iv): "Let Richard be restored to his blood;/So shall his father's wrongs be recompens'd" (190-161). If York is properly restored to the Mortimer and Cambridge legacies, both the wrong done to Cambridge and by Cambridge to the Lancastrian monarchy will be recompensed. There are ambiguities in York's last words as well:

And so thrive Richard as thy foes may fall!
And as my duty springs, so perish they
That grudge one thought against your Majesty! (174-176)

Although possibly qualified by York's true sense of "duty," the import of this declaration is that, as do so many characters in the later plays, York brings a curse upon himself.

York's inherited propensity to treason is thus once again redefined by a present action, that of an avowal of allegiance which bears implications of a future misdeed should he be foresworn. The avowal episode illustrates that York's own words may render him accountable for what ensues. Moreover this symbolic action resembles many later episodes in which antagonisms and animosities may be seen to be clearly motivated within the immediate context. But these distinctions may be modified by the more nebulous influence of predestination. This influence is so elusive

as to have occasioned much of the critical disagreement concerning patterns of cause and effect in both Hall and Shakespeare. John Danby, for example, asserts of Shakespeare's fidelity to Hall that this pattern might ultimately derive from such biblical texts as I have cited in which the sins of the fathers are visited upon succeeding generations. Danby writes that "limited, however, as the scheme is Shakespeare consciously adopted it. With equal deliberacy he schooled himself in devising a Chronicle matter to fit it."³⁵ One might cite York's ambition, his growing disregard for duty, and his eager assumption of hatred as examples of the primacy of immediate rather than inherited responsibility for his criminal acts in 1 Henry VI. Riggs gives yet further evidence in support of such individual responsibility. He suggests that the humanistic approach came intuitively to the Elizabethans and that the providentialism of the chroniclers, with its tendency to minimize individual achievement, was more the exception than the rule.³⁶

Berman sees in Mortimer's attempt to justify his own birthright an indication that the original deposition of Richard II engendered evil among the kindred of the next generation.³⁷ But I have suggested that Shakespeare has thus far in 1 Henry VI left the influence of inherited evil ambiguous.. Even ~~Exeter's~~ ominous choric statement (III.i.187-201) gives equal weight to dissension and duplicity among the peers and to prophecy and predestination. This and other echoes of Henry's heritage, too, are a reminder once again that the balance of inheritance and individual crime involves both houses.

There is also the related issue of collective guilt implicit especially in the theme of family chaos developed throughout the trilogy.

Whether that guilt too is inherited or engendered by the numerous misdeeds committed in England during this age remains problematical. The "bought and sold Lord Talbot" (IV.iv.13) falls prey to the "fraud of England" (36) in which the Winchester-Gloucester quarrel deprives Henry of the wise counsel necessary to stave off disaster in France. But Talbot's nobility would seem to exempt him from the stigma of collective guilt. His self-sacrifice is certainly noteworthy in such company as Gloucester, Winchester, Somerset, and York. But England still has her heroes and honourable men in this play: Talbot, Exeter, Bedford, Salisbury, Lucy, the Mayor, and young John.

Thus far issues of inheritance have revolved about relationships of the dead to the living. But in the young Talbot scenes a living heritage of honour emerges only to be extinguished. The Talbots' motivations and actions are noble, and yet they die. As part of the greater family of England and tainted with the collective guilt of past generations, perhaps they too must be accounted blameworthy. Shakespeare's focus, however, remains upon the immediate situation; like the inter-class relationships I have discussed in the Introduction, these scenes cannot themselves support a collective guilt theory. Alternatively, the Talbots' sacrifice to political intrigue may be seen as initiating yet another pattern of sin and atonement to which the Wars may partially be attributed. Such a theory, however, would demand considerable substantiation, a substantiation which the Talbot scenes themselves do not provide.

The dramatic advantage in having Talbot's son a child may have motivated Shakespeare's departure from his sources, but he does more than derive pathos from this meeting. He previews John's refusal to fly in Lucy's words to Somerset that Talbot would never take flight (IV.iv.42-44). Not only do these words prepare the audience for Talbot's death and

contrast his honour with Somerset's duplicity, but also they reinforce the later mirroring of Talbot's virtues in John (IV.v.12-17) when John too refuses to fly.

Talbot's first words to John recall Mortimer's sending for York (II.v). Talbot too passes his legacy of honour to his heir, but the profusion of ironic references to and abuses of nobility and honour in this play crystalizes in the distinction between these two legacies. That the Talbot heritage dies in France and the Mortimer heritage helps to annihilate three generations of Yorks reinforces the larger sense of the "feast of death,/A terrible and unavowed danger" (IV.v.7-8) into which John has fallen and England too must soon fall. But John's references to his mother (13), the Talbot name (14), bastardy, and slavery (15) strengthen the links being forged between honour and legitimate heritage, particularly as illustrated in line fourteen.. For should John fly, he would forever live enslaved to this dishonourable deed.

The relationship of inferences of a possible taint or curse in this scene to the overall pattern of inherited crimes is unmistakable. But John distinguishes himself by realizing in advance the long-term effect of flight and resisting it. He does not become a Henry IV or an Earl of Cambridge whose misdeeds live--at least in thought--to plague succeeding generations. But neither does his honour live.

John's urging that Talbot fly betrays his selflessness and the wit and intelligence with which he makes his case, just as it demonstrates his love. (IV.v.21-33). The stichomythia of lines thirty-four to forty-three reinforces the formal and more poetic style of this episode also evident in its imagery and rhymed couplets. It highlights, too, the Talbots'

dignity, their elevation above the other characters in these plays, and the importance to the drama of their meeting and their deaths. John is a match for his father in nobility and in wit. This exchange both literally and figuratively plays upon the relationship between father and son:

Tal. Shall all thy mother's hopes lie in one tomb?
John. Ay, rather than I'll shame my mother's womb.
Tal. Upon my blessing, I command thee go.
John. To fight I will, but not to fly the foe.
Tal. Part of thy father may be sav'd in thee.
John. No part of him but will be sham'd in me.
Tal. Thou never hadst renown, nor canst not lose it.
John. Yes, your renowned name: shall flight abuse it?
Tal. Thy father's charge shall clear thee from that stain. (34-42)

Talbot appeals to John's emotions in this second reference to his mother; there is also another implicit reference here to the death of the Talbot heritage. John's response emphasizes the pre-eminence of honour over survival by linking honour, in the womb image, to heritage. John's awareness of heritage involves his duty toward his forebears. Talbot too has spoken of the son's duty to his father, mentioning the pregnant word "revenge" (IVy.18-21). York, along with so many Lancastrians and Yorkists in the plays to come, rises to the bait at this word "revenge," and in the name of honour and heritage they all commit dreadful crimes. John, who might have great reason to pick a quarrel with Englishmen and Frenchmen alike to avenge his father's betrayal and death, is not tempted. His logical reaction is that vengeance can never bring his father back from the grave. This lucid thought, like those of a later innocent child, Rutland, bears upon the entire issue of hereditary and acquired moral ill.³⁸ Not only do York and Lancaster delude themselves and others about their own and others' motivations, but they also abandon common sense.

In the course of 1 Henry VI we see York carried away with emotion and Henry with wishful thinking. Their actions are tainted, if not with the blight of corruption in the blood, with the simple sin of unreasonableness. In these three plays the choric commentaries of Exeter, Lucy, and others, which become less evident as the action proceeds, inject a measure of both wisdom and reason into the proceedings. So do the words of innocent children. John sees no advantage in fleeing the battle in order to revenge his father's death; he doesn't even mention the word honour in this context. If anyone might be forgiven the temptation to seize the excuse of revenge, it would be John, who would thereby save face, "honour," and his life. Lancaster and York, on the other hand, do opt for revenge, and one realizes that the final outcome is their own and England's greater loss of honour.

Talbot appeals to John's sense of heritage and his love of family by framing John's escape in terms of the survival of a part of his father (38). But John still keeps his priorities straight and is not tempted (39). In this fifty-five-line scene the words shame(d) and name each appear three times. In seeing only shame in whatever of Talbot might live on if his son should fly, John recognizes again the interrelated realms of individual action and heritage. Talbot's honourable name will live on if he dies as he has lived. But although John bears Talbot's blood, the stigma of his own shameful flight would predominate over the Talbot inheritance of honour. Whether or not John Talbot speaks for Shakespeare, his words carry the weight of reason, dignity, and wisdom. If that reason were extended to the Lancaster and York heritages of honour and shame, it would weigh heavily against heritage and in favour of the misdeeds we witness in these plays. In the context of John's reasoning, York's judgment would be

seen to be faulty if he permits the logic of inherited legitimacy to obscure the inherent sinfulness of his actions. In this context, too, the sins which York commits in the name of family honour must necessarily tarnish his family name (IV.v.40-43).

John adroitly reverses the pattern of the exchange with his father, eliciting the same nobility from Talbot (IV.v.44-55). Talbot's sense of responsibility for his men is notably absent in the other leaders, even the protector of the realm. He says "My age was never tainted with such shame" (46). This remark emphasizes that his concern, like John's, is with individual accountability for one's actions and for the fame or shame which might ensue.³⁹ They go into battle as one, bearing the same heritage of honour because they both have consciously chosen this course, regardless of the personal price they shall certainly pay.

Talbot's rescue of his son in Scene vi reinforces the kinship theme. It also makes possible a reiteration of the strains developed in the previous scene. But now John has acquitted himself admirably in battle and thus symbolically confirms another aspect to his heritage, that of personal bravery. He has been given a second birth by his father, his initiation into the "stratagems of war" (IV.v.2) in which Talbot had intended to instruct him. But significantly that inheritance has been earned, not gratuitously given at birth. A related undercurrent may be found in Talbot's intemperate remarks about Orleans:

The ireful Bastard Orleans, that drew blood
From thee, my boy, and had the maidenhood
Of thy first fight, I soon encountered,
And, interchanging blows, I quickly shed
Some of his bastard blood, and in disgrace
Bespoke him thus: 'Contaminated, base,
And misbegotten blood I spill of thine,
Mean and right poor, for that pure blood of mine
Which thou didst force from Talbot, my brave boy'. (IV.vi.16-24)

There are implications for the heritage theme in the Bastard's taint of bad blood, of course.. It will be recalled, too, that John has spoken of bastardy, having suggested that flight would disprove his paternity. The symbolism of a double birth and that of the taint of corruption associated with illegitimacy emphasize inheritance; there is at the same time an **acknowledgement** that the heritage of dishonour contaminates the blood.⁴⁰

Thus not only does John reject the legitimacy of an inherited nobility which he himself has not tried and been found worthy of, but also the association of illegitimacy and bad blood emphasizes the taint passed to a son born of sin. In the same way, had John fled and lived to bear an heir, his son would have borne the weight of the taint of his father's sin.. There is no mention of a curse associated with such a taint; however John's insistence upon the heir's need to prove himself worthy of the heritage of honour would indicate that even a bastard might be judged on the basis of his own efforts and merits, just as John's blood is pure only because of his proven nobility:

Is my name Talbot? and am I your son?
And shall I fly? O, if you love my mother,,
Dishonour not her honourable name,
To make a bastard and a slave of me!
The world will say, he is not Talbot's blood
That basely fled when noble Talbot stood. (IV.v.12-17)

Talbot adds to the arguments in favour of John's flight the meaningful lines "In thee thy mother dies,.our household's name,/My death's revenge, thy youth, and England's fame" (IV.vi.38-39). If John dies the blood of his parents dies with him. Still, young Talbot's valour enables Talbot to smile at Death (IV.vii.4, 18) because that valour has guaranteed that the Talbots' fame now will live in perpetuity. "England's fame" (IV.vi.39), however, is to suffer an immeasurable loss.

CHAPTER III

2 HENRY VI

1 Henry VI opens with the portentous funeral of Henry V.

2 Henry VI begins with the casual exchange of "two dukedoms for a French duke's fair daughter" (I.i.220). Gloucester falters over the articles of peace attending Henry VI's marital alliance with Margaret of Anjou when he arrives at the terms committing Anjou and Maine to Reigner (I.i.50-52). But only after the king's departure is the full import of this loss given expression:

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? (I.i.77-81)

Henry V's heritage of empire, it is now evident, has also succumbed. There is thus a symbolic parallel to the first scene of 1 Henry VI in this first scene of 2 Henry VI. The French territories are also linked to the issue of inheritance which pervades the trilogy. However it is not just Henry's heritage but England's which is now in jeopardy.

The chivalric sacrifice and accomplishments of Talbot are implicit in Gloucester's next words (82-94).. In his grief Gloucester asks, "Shall Henry's conquest, Bedford's vigilance, / Your deeds of war, and all our counsel die?" (95-96). Henry's marriage cancels out England's chivalric heritage:

O peers of England! shameful is this league,
 Fatal this marriage, cancelling your fame,
 Blotting your names from books of memory,
 Razing the characters of your renown,
 Defacing monuments of conquer'd France,
 Undoing all, as all had never been! (97-102)

The monuments not merely of France but of an heroic age shall be undone, and Gloucester, the eloquent early spokesman for this loss, will symbolize in his own fall the depths to which England has already fallen. Riggs says that "Gloucester is a type of the Renaissance governor whom humanists like Ascham and Eloyt [sic] saw as supplanting such medieval chevaliers as Talbot. . . . It would be impossible to find, among the earlier histories, a more balanced portrayal of the ideal ruler through humanistic topics."¹ Gloucester's legacy of nobility passes to Suffolk and York. But the nobility which survives is only a parody of that which Gloucester and Talbot had embodied. Suffolk and York assume the rhetoric of Gloucester's nobility without its actuality; their nobility is merely empty words.

Memory of John Talbot's emphasis upon the merits of heroism is evoked in these anguished thoughts which Gloucester expresses. Although Henry V's true inheritance, France was conquered amid great struggle and hardship by Henry V, kept by Bedford, defended by England's noble warriors, and maintained by skillful counselors. That those hard won accomplishments made good Henry's "true inheritance" suggests the Talbots' sensitivity to legitimacy both by birthright and by merit (1 Henry VI.IV.v). Henry VI's failure to show such an awareness deeply implicates him in the decay which must follow. Moreover Gloucester's recollection of cancelled fame casts an ironic light on Talbot's final words of optimism in 1 Henry VI

in which he had discovered victory over death "coupled in bonds of perpetuity" (IV.vii.20) with young John. That Gloucester's grief perhaps more accurately reflects reality may be perceived in the rapid disappearance of his and the Talbots' influence and renown from the later world of the Henry VI plays; no one in 2 Henry VI and 3 Henry VI mentions Talbot. In 2 Henry VI aspersions are cast even upon Gloucester's own respect for legitimate patterns of inheritance, as in Winchester's implication that the protector has designs on the throne (I.i.150-154; II.i.20). Berman suggests, in the context of Margaret's similar accusation (III.i), that "Gloucester is feared precisely because he is close in blood to the king. Kinship itself is conceived of in inimical terms."² Berman concludes that "the new 'ideal' of kinship expounded by Margaret in this scene results in the murder of Gloucester."³ In this changed England there is no longer any place for Gloucester.

But as Pride, followed by Ambition (Buckingham and Somerset, I.i.179), withdraws, the voice of reason and nobility briefly re-emerges in Salisbury (180-181; 189-205). Again there are suggestions of the Talbots in another father's concern for the land and in the apparent mirror of his virtues in his son. Warwick, whose anguish over the loss of Anjou and Maine is expressed in imagery of amorous conquest (119), childbirth (120), and a final deliverance (121), also provides the comfort of Salisbury's age. Further, there is the implication that only together can they counteract such inimical intrigues and ambitions. Salisbury's age and heritage are powerless without the force of youth to sustain them. Warwick's words reflect his father's nobility and convey hope (206-207). But York's aside renders that hope tenuous (208), and Warwick's further words of

martial energy are again followed by a reminder of York's ominous ambition (240-248). The Nevils' expressions of hope for empire, as for England herself, are tempered by the tones of York's soliloquy, by recollections of his role in Talbot's and France's loss, and by speculations upon the means by which the sceptre might be shifted from Lancastrian hands.

In his rising political ambition York omits the gruesome details of rebellion which may be envisaged in Scene ii. In this scene a brutal vision of beheading (34) gives way to the chilling image of the duchess' casual revelation:

Were I a man, a duke,,and next of blood,
I would remove these tedious stumbling-blocks
And smooth my way upon their headless necks; (63-65)

Although Gloucester retains his loyalty to sovereign and family (20) such values are short-lived, as Gloucester's destiny, like Talbot's, is determined within the circles of political intrigue. That fate grows near as the antagonisms intensify in Act I, Scene iii, involving Warwick in the taint of partisanship fed by ambition for power. Talbot's memory, though not his name, is evoked in York's calculated reminder of the French losses (I.iii.171-176). The taint of treason also extends to the commons in this scene. The association of master and servant, like that of Gloucester and Henry VI--to whom he is both uncle and subject--and the other closely linked or extended familial relationships, symbolizes the family chaos theme in which such dissension severs the bonds of tradition. When Margaret deliberately confounds the roles of York and Horner (25-30), she merely accentuates questions of heritage and the sometimes unnatural interrelationships of responsibility and sinfulness in the dynastic struggle. This situation leaves the curious result that York's more understandable

motivation for such a claim both logically emerges from the exchange and is unjustly implied in an attempt to disparage him, while the still ambiguous motivation of Horner is rendered the more so.

Margaret has shown herself to be painfully aware of both lineage and position in earlier remarks to Suffolk concerning her rival, Eleanor Cobham (I.iii.75-87). Shakespeare invented this unhistorical rivalry;⁴ in fact the Duchess met her disgrace three years before Margaret's arrival in England. Its association with Margaret here emphasizes and reinforces Margaret's animosity towards Gloucester. It also highlights the irony of Eleanor's jealousy of the regal position of one who so envies her own power and wealth. Moreover both characters are psychologically interesting, in the clash of their two prides and ambitions.. The effect of Margaret's eclipse in court by her supposed inferior may also aggravate her frustrations at being poor Henry's wife. There are parallels between the king's political impotence to which Margaret is sensitive, her resentment at his childlike qualities and pieties, and her consequent desire to rid Henry's court of both the Duke and his Duchess.

This early indication of Margaret's callous pursuit of vengeance illustrates her seminal influence in the bloody consequences of court intrigue. In complicity with Suffolk, Winchester, and York, Margaret sets in motion events which will deprive England of a second virtuous leader at a critical moment in her history.. The irony in Margaret's criticism of Eleanor (75-87) is reinforced by implicit inferences of Margaret's own questionable heritage, the poverty which accompanies Reignier's empty titles, the lack of dowry, and the impoverishment of England's honour and wealth as a result of Henry's gift of Anjou and Maine. Margaret's mention

of her father's lands and the two dukedoms strengthens the parallel between the Duchess and the Queen.

The family chaos theme gains another component as Suffolk's words indicate: "So, one by one, we'll weed them all at last,/And you yourself shall steer the happy helm" (I.iii.99-100). The inversion of relationships, which places Margaret at the helm and establishes Suffolk as her guiding spirit, denies Henry his titular role as husband and lover just as he is denied his role as father of the family of England. The irony of Henry's obliviousness to his Queen's designs and to his own inadvertent role in England's decline is apparent in his words

I prithee, peace,
Good queen, and whet not on these furious peers;
For blessed are the peacemakers on earth. (II.i.33-3)

The following exchange emphasizes the degree of bitterness which has alienated England's peers from their noble heritage (35-44). Henry is not totally unaware of the dangers of such factionalism (56-59), but he misjudges its intensity.

The sequel to the Temple Garden episode occurs in Act II, Scene ii, in York's garden. The necessary iteration in this second play of Edward III's too many sons⁵ serves also to heighten the audience's awareness of the interrelationships not only of York and Lancaster but of contentious courtiers as well. This royal family is a microcosm of the macrocosm of England at war with itself. For the moment York's sons remain "fair slips of such a stock" (II.ii.57), and the value of such offspring, both York and Lancaster, is that they ensure the survival of claims to legitimacy in quests to gain and to keep a crown.

There is a component of bastardy which stigmatizes both French and

English society, from Joan and Orleans in the first play to Winchester and the York sons in the second. The Talbots' sensitivity to this issue of illegitimacy will be recalled. In part the issue of illegitimacy in this play⁶ symbolizes the interrelationships of legitimate pretensions upon which to build a political power base, the complications of disputed royal heritage, and the resulting necessity of waging war upon one's own blood in order to prevail or to overcome. Warwick in reiterating the York and Lancaster lineages emphasizes York's legitimate title. But York's own emphasis is on blood lust, and his lack of attention to the issue of Henry IV's legacy of treason is also apparent. Warwick refers to the honour of York's "birthright to the crown" (II.ii.61), as does York at the outset (II.ii.5). But York does not take full advantage of the argument which would make him God's agent of retribution for Lancastrian sins (17-26).

Atonement does not enter into the discussion, which drones on in a tone reminiscent of the legalism of the Temple Garden. Here there is a mock legalism in the mechanical setting out of the Plantagenet lineage. This mock legalism masks York's overriding ambition and once again fails to clarify the brutal consequences of challenging Henry VI. The realities of rebellion are further obfuscated by the Yorkists' semblance of dignity and noble purpose here. York amply proves the fact of his better claim; this fact elicits the Nevils' support for his cause. But when York's thirst for blood becomes apparent, Salisbury cuts short his talk of death (76), perhaps in oneness and sympathy, perhaps because of a reluctance to be reminded that civil war must ensue. But Warwick is already caught up in the role of kingmaker, and ambition blinds him to the human costs of such a struggle (79-81). The impression left by York's declaration of

legitimacy is thus superseded not by that of Bolingbroke's exiguous claim to sovereignty but by that of York's hunger for power and his first convert to blood lust. A. L. French calls attention to the absence of ancestral justice in this scene, and rightly so. He suggests that if Shakespeare believed in the requirements of ancestral justice which might be evoked here, "it seems extremely odd that he did not allow York to add a moral (as opposed to a purely legal) colour to his claims. And if Shakespeare did not himself believe it, he was still a competent dramatist; so that we wonder why he did not allow his dramatic persona, York, to take such a very obvious line."⁷ By not giving York that obvious line, however, Shakespeare emphasizes York's limited nobility.

Thus just as Shakespeare's elaboration of Margaret's motivation to evil emphasizes the immediate causal relationships which lead to criminality in 2 Henry VI, his inattention to overt indications of divine vengeance visited upon Henry VI for the criminality of his grandfather supports Riggs' belief that citations of providence in popular histories often are flat and perfunctory, that "they cannot compete imaginatively with the celebration of human capabilities that establishes our main angle of vision on the events being presented." Riggs further elaborates: "If the reader is to credit explicit assertions of providential intervention, he must be persuaded that the final configuration of events is beyond the capabilities of any human 'agent' and yet meaningful in itself." He later suggests that "in the earlier tetralogy the workings of Providence are at least faintly implied wherever dreams, prophecies, curses, omens, astrology, ironic coincidence, and similar devices are used to show part of the truth about history. But these usually convey nothing more than a dim apprehension

of retributive justice working through individual malefactors."⁸ Shakespeare's ability to interweave past, present, and future⁹ into these plays perhaps contributes to the temptation to define actions in providential terms, whereas the events themselves reveal that the motivations of their earthly agents are adequately, indeed elaborately, delineated.

Such brief episodes as the pebble incident in 1 Henry VI reinforce our awareness of vertical societal relationships of responsibility, as I have suggested, and these also de-emphasize providentiality. A fleeting sequel to the pebble incident occurs in 2 Henry VI as the duchess in her ignominy is passing and a serving-man to Gloucester suggests, "So please your Grace, we'll take her from the sheriff" (II.iv.17).. His readiness to contravene both law and justice in the supposed interest of Gloucester's honour recalls the fragile fabric of order which has been rent in 1 Henry VI and will soon suffer the societal extremes of a Cade-York onslaught. The dramatic impact of this interlude is heightened by its occurrence at a moment of intense humiliation for Gloucester, a moment which presages his imminent downfall. The attack upon Eleanor, however merited, has been upon the sacred marriage bond; Gloucester never will recover from the blow to that familial bond which carries with it both Gloucester's affection for his wife and the shame to his good name. However, Gloucester again reacts nobly (II.iv.18), and his virtue is exceeded only by his naïveté (59-63).

York's complicity in Gloucester's character assassination (III.i.104-106; III.i.280-281) is more ominous than his role in the Duchess' fall, in that Humphrey is not guilty of the crimes he is accused of committing. York's reference to Gloucester's loss of France (106) is ironic in that, as we have seen, York bears some measure of responsibility therein. But

York's accountability for events in France is never entirely clear. Though it is certainly in his propaganda interest for Henry to misrule England, any loss of territory is the loss of his own legitimate heritage of empire (III.i.87-92). I have suggested that his preoccupations with personal ambition sometimes may blind York to more enduring values and to his own misdeeds; hence there is a possibility that on the one hand he may have effectively conspired against the empire and, on the other, now find himself legitimately bemoaning its loss.

His preoccupation with ambition contrasts sharply with the wisdom Gloucester displays in numerous adjudications, concerning the servant Peter (I.iii), the French regency (I.iii), the miracle of Simcox's sight (II.i), and concerning his own personal crises, with Eleanor (II.i; II.iii; II.iv) and with his enemies at Bury St. Edmunds (III.i). Although Gloucester lacks the political wisdom necessary to extricate himself from intrigue, York's constant preoccupation with intrigue implies his own lack of concern or skill in matters of state which would require of a king the kind of expertise Gloucester amply demonstrates. This implication leaves one with grave doubts as to York's personal suitability for monarchy.. It also recalls John Talbot's distinction between nobility of heritage and of action; again, only in combination with noble acts does noble heritage ensure the transmission of that nobility to one who claims it. Riggs notes of York that "his principal strategies, the alliance with the Nevilles and the manipulation of Jack Cade, exhibit a valor that has ceased to find expression in the open trial of warfare, while it seeks out the privacy of schemes and soliloquies."¹⁰ This new valour is unrelated to that of English chivalry.

Henry knows Gloucester is innocent: "Who's a traitor? Gloucester he

is none" (III.i.222). That he phrases a question here may indicate his ineffectual acknowledgement of the architects of Gloucester's fall. That he does nothing further implicates him in their guilt. He only betrays a full awareness of what is happening, however, when it is too late:

That is to see how deep my grave is made;
For with his soul fled all my worldly solace,
For, seeing him, I see my life in death. (III.ii.149-151)

These words reveal not only suggestions of his own death of innocence in Gloucester's murder but also the depths of his affection for and reliance upon Gloucester. As with Talbot's death, Gloucester's too leaves England bereft of her heritage of honour, a heritage Henry recognizes his own inadequacy to replace. Henry's life henceforth will be a kind of living death, replete with remorse, isolation, and the agonizing burden of misplaced monarchy.

Henry's immediate role continues to be one of irrelevance to the unfolding action, the irrelevance both of his presence and of his commentary upon the vicious quarrels which incessantly erupt (III.ii.231-234). Henry does manage to take a stand on the issue of Suffolk's banishment (278-286), but only in the face of overwhelming pressure such as that which he later encounters in the instance of Prince Edward's disinheritance. Here the decision is sound, but it is made and enforced by the commons as a result of Gloucester's murder (244) and not by the King¹¹ who in the face of such a crime and its aftermath is left no other option. Henry's insistence upon the worth of his word and his irrevocable vow (290-293) carries dramatic irony, of course, in view of his future vacillations, such as the similar episode with Somerset in which the King's pledge to York is broken and Somerset is not committed to the Tower (IV.ix; V.i).

York's vows are no more reliable. Even his references to dishonour (III.i.298) ring false, especially in the context of French losses. His lengthy soliloquy at Bury St. Edmunds (III.i.331-383) immediately dispels any suggestions of honour, for York's battle plan betrays a deviousness the meticulous warrior Talbot would never countenance. Such sentiments at the very least reveal York's future heritage to Richard Crookback; moreover they solidify impressions of York's unconcern for lost lives (348-350) and cement the heritage of disintegration passed from Mortimer to York and symbolically to Cade (356-359). York himself bastardizes the legitimacy of his cause in Cade (371-375). It is ironical that he chooses Cade's agency to gauge the commons' reception of his newly tainted name and his no longer viable claim to legitimacy. This soliloquy confirms the tenor in which York has thus far seemed to take Mortimer's legacy. There is no reference to Richard II in these remarks. Shakespeare's purpose in not placing the moral argument for atonement in York's hands, however the drama might have been enhanced thereby, may thus have been to convey York's (and perhaps Mortimer's) pre-eminent concern not with honour but with ambition.

There is a momentary inversion of the irony which finds York enlisting Cade in the cause of Mortimer, when Suffolk is threatened by the lieutenant and replies,

Obscure and lowly swain, King Henry's blood,
The honourable blood of Lancaster,
Must not be shed by such a jaded groom. (IV.i.50-52)

Suffolk appeals to the distinction between their blood lines in a vain effort to escape death; York engages the blood lusts and ambitions of the base born Cade, under a grotesque Mortimer guise, in his design to "blow ten thousand souls to heaven or hell" (III.i.350). The inversion is maintained and expanded when references to England's ills and to the Richard II legacy of

vengeance finally emerge out of the mouth of this pirate captain (IV.i.70-96).

By thee Anjou and Maine were sold to France,
 The false revolting Normans thorough thee
 Disdain to call us lord, and Picardy
 Hath slain their governors, surpris'd our forts,
 And sent the ragged soldiers wounded home.
 The princely Warwick, and the Nevils all,
 Whose dreadful swords were never drawn in vain,
 As hating thee, are rising up in arms:
 And now the house of York, thrust from the crown
 By shameful murder of a guiltless king,
 And lofty proud encroaching tyranny,
 Burns with revenging fire; (85-96)

This pirate's words may help to elucidate Shakespeare's motivation for so frequently passing over opportunities to invest York's rhetoric with the dramatic impact and moral implications of Richard II's shameful murder. It would appear curious that Shakespeare makes mention of the Bolingbroke sin at this particular moment.¹² But this remark appropriately accentuates how incongruous are the holier-than-thou sentiments of the almost unexceptionally sinful characters in 2 Henry VI and 3 Henry VI. The irony of this episode is intensified by recollections of York's recent soliloquy in which no such moral fervour is to be found. There is also an inversion in the relationships of power here, not merely because Suffolk is the lieutenant's captive but also because of the strength of his rhetoric and the ineptitude of Suffolk's feeble rejoinder, in which he merely repeats his ineffectual accusations of the lieutenant's baseness.

The lieutenant's words have clearly demonstrated that delineations of social hierarchies are irrelevant to the recognition of responsibility for lost nobility. Because the actuality of Suffolk's nobility is the abandonment of Talbot in France and the cuckolding of his king, his insulting remarks to the commoners at III.ii.270-276 are most ironic, as is his stance here. The lieutenant's words too betray a Talbot-like realization

of the relationship between nobility and one's actions, and a consequent disrespect for empty rhetoric.. The irony thus further serves as a technique in Shakespeare's amplification of present events with reminders of past analogues, intensifying the tragedy that this pirate is the nearest semblance of a noble Talbot England now can proffer. The lieutenant of course also functions as a barometer for the success of York's Cade plan with the commons, and his espousal of the York legitimacy reflects this indoctrination. References to Gloucester, Margaret, the dukedoms, and French losses, however, emphasize the lieutenant's essential grasp of Suffolk's role in England's decline..

Suffolk's remark that "Thy words move rage and not remorse in me" (111) conveys an implicit acknowledgement of the justice of the lieutenant's accusations. Suffolk's final words accentuate his empty nobility. His death scene is a parody of Talbot's rich sentiments upon command, refusal to seek escape, humility, his God, and his sovereign (IV.i.121-130). Suffolk's pale reference to eternal fame (133) is unenhanced by classical allusion, while his last remarks hit home with a turn of the tables appropriate to this episode characterized by numerous inversions of tone and situation. The very last word is the First Gentleman's, however, and his comment recalls the pressing realities of court intrigue and impending chain reactions of revenge and retribution (144-147).

Cade's Mortimer heritage is declared with punning asides (IV.ii.37-50); his inherited and acquired nobility are as legitimate as is the ceremony of dubbing himself a knight. (113-115). One might recall in this context the Talbot earldom and Falstaff's disgrace in 1 Henry VI. Cade indeed proves himself York's "substitute" when he asserts "I am rightful heir unto the

crown" (125). A grotesque parody of York's proclamation of his lineage follows (129-139). The humour of this scene derives both from Cade's antics and from the relief it affords from, while at the same time it recollects, York's intense ambitions and the lesser but equally intense ambitions of his fellow courtiers. Shakespeare does not place idle words in his mouth, however, and the much noted social commentary of Cade, and of this play in particular in the trilogy, is not without political significance for the Lancaster-York rivalry. His claim that "Lord Say hath gelded the commonwealth and made it an eunuch," and the association of speaking French with traitorous activities (155-160), both suggest the loss of noble heritage with Talbot's death in France and the immediate dangers in England's war upon her own which will leave her bereft of her sons and her honour. Cade's descent upon London previews York's own assault upon the king (IV.iv.27-30).

Escalation of Cade's hostility to any who call him other than Mortimer (IV.vi.4-6) introduces even greater senselessness into the brutality of his rebellion as a first victim of such treason falls (IV.vi.8). The innocent Lord Say's reasoned eloquence nearly awakens Cade's remorse, and Cade's excuse for his death is in Say's skillful plea for life (IV.vii.92-99). Rutland too will plead thus of young Clifford, but even though he is an innocent child his words will elicit not even this measure of remorse. The mounting of Say's and his son-in-law Cromer's heads on poles where they are made to kiss is a hideous commentary upon the defilement of familial bonds which will have its sequel in the molehill scene in which the momentum of civil war will have become self-perpetuating to the degree that active agents of evil are no longer necessary to effect such devastations of father and son relationships.

Clifford plays upon the regal pretensions of Cade in addressing the

multitude: "Is Cade the son of Henry the Fifth,/That thus you do exclaim
 "You'll go with him?" (IV.viii.34-35); but the more profound import of his
 words recollects the fundamental issue of conflicting claims to kingship.
 The energetic eloquence and chivalric tones Clifford musters in his desperate
 attempt to stave off anarchy are otherwise noticeably absent from the
 moribund chivalric heritage which had won France for Henry V and his brave
 generals. The to-and-fro of this scene and of Henry's remark at IV.ix.31
 provides an oblique commentary upon the tenuous relationship between
 theoretical legitimacy and de facto exercise of power and the vulnerability
 even of a ruling monarch to whims of the multitude (55-56). Such discrepancies,
 as in Clifford's words here, between noble bearing and ignoble thoughts, will
 be frequently encountered in the Lancaster-York struggles; their effective
 impact upon the transfer of power serves to further reduce the influence of
 legitimacy in the Henry VI plays. Such discrepancies contribute to the
 demise of the heritage of honour, in that it is no longer merit or noble
 lineage which necessarily either qualify one for or guarantee the exercise
 of authority. On the other hand Clifford's claim that Cade "hath no home,
 no place to fly to" (IV.viii.38) emphasizes his total absence of heritage,
 either in familial ties, or even such identity as county or village might
 afford. Cade in renouncing his own parentage has renounced both family and,
 at a further remove, nationality; that renunciation is reflected in his
 assault upon the body proper of the nation.

Cade's natural opposite is Iden, and the Iden interlude injects an
 element of degree into the evolving chaos of 2 Henry VI (IV.x.16-23). The
 key words here are, "This small inheritance my father left me/Contenteth me,
 and worth a monarchy" (18-19)--a concept surviving only in the remote domain

of Iden. Like the Talbots Iden rests his values upon an acknowledgement of heritage and a realization of virtue. That Iden is a relic of another age is evident in his appearance among Henry and his courtiers. His modest and respectful tones, sensitivity to position, profession of love for his sovereign, merited knighthood and monetary reward, and vow to live true unto his liege (V.i.64-82) merely call attention to the broils and intrigues of the nobles who surround the diminished Henry. Iden's continued presence throughout the remainder of this scene is perhaps not accidental, as his figure provides poignant contrast to the eruptions of ambition in this crucial encounter of Lancaster and York.

Already Iden's appearance has presented a marked contrast to York's earlier expressed sentiments on legitimacy and the price of monarchy (V.i.4-5). These in turn may be contrasted with Henry's preview of the molehill scene (IV.ix.1-6). Legitimacy is not the issue here; the issue is rather human happiness, a rare commodity in these plays. The irony is in Henry's wish for escape from the mantle of monarchy and York's lust for the crown at any cost in human happiness; the link between these two speeches is forged by Henry's reflection that no subject ever longed for kingship as he himself longs to be a subject. One did, and, of course, does.

York's broken oath further entrenches him within the ranks of the disinherited. Buckingham's reference to York's troops and his broken oath (V.i.17-22) merely brings together the rising implications of a possible Yorkist challenge to Henry. York's ostensible motives are enunciated at lines thirty-five to thirty-seven, after which Henry's broken pledge to remove Somerset to the Tower serves to "unloose" York's "long-imprison'd thoughts" (V.i.88) of monarchy. The attempt to let his tongue be equal to

his heart (89) is a novel one for York, and his accusations of Henry's broken faith (91) are a transparent hypocrisy. Again (105) York does not take advantage of the propaganda value in Henry's need to atone for his grandfather's sins. Rather, he remains so caught up in the image of his own majesty that such considerations are forgotten (93-105). There are no indications here of Shakespeare's own preoccupation either with Henry's inherited sinfulness or with York's Mortimer heritage of honour.

York's offer of his sons as pledges of his fealty¹³ and love (50, 111) would tend to implicate future rather than past generations in a pattern of retribution. Margaret's accusation of bastardy (115) further reinforces the dual themes of lost heritage and lost virtue. The echo of Iden's vow to ever live true unto his liege (82) resounds all the more hollowly in this world of power politics, and again the anachronistic Iden's silent presence here emphasizes the loss of nobility at court. The legacy of father to son is also evoked by Henry in this scene (163), but Salisbury's response is to openly espouse York's cause and to attempt to justify his broken oath of fealty (182-190).

York declares that the Lancastrians will curse this fatal hour (194), and the further image of conjuring up a storm (199-200) maintains the undercurrent of supernaturalism in which past, present, and future are fused, and which provides a vague ambience within which intimations of inherited sinfulness might develop. The earlier Margaret-Suffolk exchanges on vengeance (III.i.303) and curses (307, 308), and Margaret's reference to curses turning against oneself (331) followed by Warwick's recollection of "that dread king that took our state upon Him/To free us from his Father's wrathful curse" (III.ii.153-154), further extend the pattern of inherited evil beyond the framework of the Richard II to Richard III cycle, to encom-

pass all of mankind. These references remain more atmospheric than thematic, however. They cannot compete with the actions and interactions of York, Cade, Suffolk, Margaret, Warwick, and Henry for responsibility in England's increasing difficulties; nor can they compete with the conspicuous integrities of Gloucester and Iden. Even the weighty concept of revenge is given ironic and ignoble associations devoid of the higher virtues of noble heritage and power politics of this play, as the Suffolk piracy scene (IV.i.26, 39-40) exemplifies.

Apart from Margaret's early indications even in this scene (V.i) of a growing resemblance to Nemesis, there are few instances to suggest that this play embodies the kind of thematic foundation in curses, prophecy, and the intrusions of the supernatural which are to invest Richard III with its powerful influences. In 2 Henry VI the predominant influence is rather of words than of any inherited sinfulness or obligations of atonement. Oaths too easily made (V.i.136-141), too lightly broken, but fundamentally resulting from present sins rather than those of a distant past, presage the disintegration of honour. The intimate association here of York's sons--hence his own future legacy--with the acquired virtue of fealty to a sworn vow, further suggests the interrelationship between the themes of heritage and honour.

The play of past and future upon the present is illustrated in the influence of this father's broken vow on his children's present and future lives. The relationships of fathers and sons within this highly charged environment of noble births and aspirations to monarchy necessarily carry with them an atmosphere of inherited obligations and established patterns of nobility. Shakespeare's treatment of ancestral legacies and relationships

falls within this more general framework rather than that of the heritage of evil or a legacy of retribution. Henry's emphasis upon the irrevocability of his oath may be recalled in the context of York's broken vow (III.ii.292). Both broken oaths convey a dramatic irony attendant upon future events which will involve both Henry and York in patterns of retribution for their own specific human failings, just as they both bear implications for their sons' future heritage.

The turning point in England's abandonment of her chivalric heritage occurs at Saint Albans (V.ii.19-27). The vestige of chivalry introduced into this incident serves to inextricably link England's lost heritage to the pattern of sin and retribution initiated by young Clifford in his avowed vengeance even upon the Yorkist babes. Clifford's words following his father's murder are conspicuous for their poetry and power (V.ii.40-65). There are far-reaching implications for the Lancaster-York struggle in Clifford's commitment to vengeance. This moment signals a turning point following which sin becomes in a sense self-perpetuating, just as the young Talbot scenes presage an end to English chivalry. Hence, perhaps, the lofty tones and superior poetry of these lines. But unlike the highly formal and even somewhat stilted poetry which accompanies the Talbots' final moments, the poetry here is less constrained, freer, and fired with flames of anguish and hatred. Young Clifford's interrupted academic analysis of war (31-39) is seared by this tragedy into a stony embodiment of war's most relentless and pitiless destruction. The fame prized by the Talbots and parodied in Suffolk, Clifford will carve for himself in cruelty to innocent children (52).

Richard of Gloucester pithily reinforces one counterpoint to this new theme of wholesale destruction symbolized in Clifford's words, "Hence-

forth I will not have to do with pity" (56) and which now is extended to princes battling on behalf of both Lancaster and York: "Priests pray for enemies, but princes kill" (71). Clifford enunciates the mentality of the warriors who engage in civil war. The juxtaposition of Richard's priests and princes sentiment with Henry's remark, "Can we outrun the heavens?" (73) gives great weight to this rhetorical question. At the moment of York's murder of old Clifford, the die is cast, and Richard's later expression that "sin will pluck on sin" (Richard III.IV.ii.66) also becomes apt here in the larger context of the early moments of civil war.

York's and old Clifford's pause to contemplate one another's noble bearing before they do battle (V.ii.19-25) is both an anachronistic survival of England's age of chivalry and a moment's respite from the intense antagonisms already formulated before this conflict moves to the battlefield. York's pause, too, is his last chance to set aside aspirations to majesty in the greater interest of the family of England. But York does not profit from that unaccustomed moment of contemplation, and the heritage of honour swiftly subsides beneath a clash of armour.

Thus the pattern of individual acts of sinfulness established in 1 Henry VI and elaborated in exchanges between Talbot and John continues in 2 Henry VI. But the actualization of those pitfalls recognized by young John has been further realized in young Clifford's stony personification of insatiable revenge. Young Talbot's reaction to his father's mention of revenge (1 Henry VI.IV.v.18-21) had been a reminder that acts of vengeance could never return Talbot to life. The importance of Clifford's vow of revenge, more potent even than that of an eye for an eye, will only

be apparent in 3 Henry VI, but the pattern of its significance is set down in 1 Henry VI and 2 Henry VI. And if there is any overriding impression which emerges from Shakespeare's elaboration of this issue, it is in the words of enlightenment coming as it were from the mouths of babes in the first and third plays. Such an emphasis upon the taking of vengeance on innocent children does not encourage interpretation of the Henry VI plays in terms of inherited sins, although Shakespeare certainly allowed the impact of providentiality upon the Lancaster-York tragedy to enrich his drama. Nor does the preponderance of clearly defined elusions of nobility within the ranks of both Lancaster and York encourage this interpretation.

York consistently ignores the relationship of individual actions to the heritage delineated by young Talbot and embodied by both Talbots and by Humphrey of Gloucester in his final commitment to nobility. This neglect illustrates his immediate, personal accountability both for what may befall his house and for the limitations of his nobility. The question of York's particular inherited taint is integral to Shakespeare's portrayal of York, but his portraiture is not determined by it.

The paradox that the assertion of one's birthright involves a denial of kinship, a paradox which emerged in 1 Henry VI, continues its process of expansion into the ranks of all levels of society and into the greater--and now very obviously diseased--family of England in 2 Henry VI, as the sequel to the pebble scene and Cade's rebellion illustrate. Terman expresses a corollary to this paradox in suggesting that "in order to demonstrate devotion and filial piety man must change the moral standards of loyalty to those of the vendetta."¹⁴ Even Henry in a sense renounces

kinship through the denial of heritage, a denial symbolized in the purchase of Margaret with Anjou and Maine; for these French dukedoms also symbolize his father's legacy of empire. This renunciation of kinship is further reinforced with his abandonment of Gloucester. Both actions effectively deny Henry crucial political support. The taint which he personally carries into the Wars concerns this renunciation and its impact upon his command of the loyalties of courtiers and commons alike.

Similarly, York's blood lust directed against Lancaster is simultaneously directed at his own family heritage, as Lancaster and York are of the same stock. This effective attack upon the house of York itself corresponds to the moral implications of his advocacy of rebellion, in that the adoption of evil means, whether the end be noble or not, denies him the heritage of honour and nobility. This pattern will attain another level of meaning in 3 Henry VI when it assumes a literal significance in Richard of Gloucester's assaults upon his own house of York. Again, these inter-relationships concerning York's lost heritage demonstrate Shakespeare's implication of the past and the future in present events. The past begins, as Cairncross maintains,¹⁵ with the original sin of Henry Bolingbroke. But perhaps it begins even earlier with man's first original sin, as Warwick's words upon Gloucester's murder have reminded us (III.ii.152-156). And the future belongs to the disease which has now infected on the one hand the sons of York and the son of Salisbury, and on the other the son of Clifford.

Thus I would take exception to Cairncross's implicit assumption of the Tillyard-myth-school premise in the context of this play¹⁶ as I have also done in my discussion of 1 Henry VI. I would cite, rather, the

comments of Riggs on the exemplary truths disclosed in the Henry VI plays:

There is little basis . . . for supposing that these truths will always conform to orthodox Tudor doctrine, and still less to indicate that they point to a stable, didactic allegory of "moral history" underwritten by a providential guidance. One may begin simply by postulating that the trilogy encompasses Shakespeare's presentation of the "agents" that gave the reign of Henry VI its distinctive contours. Like any good humanist historian, he is concerned to produce moral judgments, but these will involve a wide spectrum of ethical standards. As a humanist discipline, exemplary history was an extremely broad and flexible instrument for interpreting the past. The working assumption is that any historical narrative will yield "lessons" of all sorts. . . . In reading this kind of literature, then, one must be modest in his demands for continuity and plot while remaining attentive to those small constellations of exemplary episodes that emerge in every play. More particularly, it should be stressed at the outset that in no one of these plays--to say nothing of the entire trilogy--is there some unifying idea that will enable the reader to place every episode (except the "extraneous" ones) in its proper context.¹⁷

CHAPTER IV

3 HENRY VI

York's heritage of crime is embraced in blood by his sons in the first scene of 3 Henry VI. Edward's sword is bathed in Buckingham's blood, and Richard holds in his hands the head of Somerset. York's responsibility for the transmission of this criminality is evident in his praise of Richard, who "hath best deserv'd of all my sons" (I.i.17). Already, at line twenty, Richard's murder of Henry is foreshadowed, and Warwick's vow to relentlessly pursue the Yorkist claim (21-24) sets the tone and establishes the momentum of the play. It is interesting that Warwick proclaims the throne to be York's "and not King Henry's heirs" (26-27). The mention of Henry's heirs shifts the emphasis from Henry to his offspring, both reinforcing the impression that sinfulness is passed to York's sons in this scene and foreshadowing Henry's later disinheritance of Prince Edward. The result is that this final commitment to warfare is linked to the themes of criminality and retribution through blood relationships.

York still remains nervously aware of his reliance upon force in this first commitment to battle and in his entrance into parliament (29); he has not yet abandoned the option of words rather than blows to gain his right (37). Nevertheless, his reiterated resolution to win

his right (44) (and Warwick's remark, "The bloody parliament shall this be call'd" (39), make clear their commitment to civil war. Henry's reminder of Northumberland's and Clifford's vows of revenge, and those two men's responses (57,58), illustrate that there are equal degrees of entrenchment in both factions. Warwick's remark at lines eighty-nine to ninety-two illustrates the pervasive role revenge will play; Warwick will not let the embittered mourners forget the source of their bereavement. This mental cruelty is to become a consistent component of the revenge pattern, for both Lancastrians and Yorkists, and its culminating horror will come in Margaret's offer to York of a handkerchief steeped in Rutland's blood.

Clifford's statement, "Let us assail the family of York" continues the emphasis in this scene on both fathers and sons, and it also recalls Clifford's vow of revenge against the Yorkist infants. Clifford's enemy is the entire family of York, and he will not rest until he sees its every branch cut away. Shakespeare's preparations for the Lancastrian disinheritance find the themes of inheritance and revenge so intimately interrelated that Henry's adoption of York as his heir cannot interrupt the momentum. That adoption will merely underscore Henry's political ineptitude, his underdeveloped appreciation of heritage, and his misjudgments of personality, for which the first two plays have amply prepared. Henry is alert enough to recognize York's popularity among Londoners and the numbers of troops whose support he commands (67-68), yet he still harbours the delusion that his majestic bearing alone can persuade to loyalty the man who so often has ridiculed his unkingliness (72-76).

Exchanged accusations of "traitor to the crown" (79-80) recall the shared heritage of dishonour of both Lancaster and York, just as they illustrate the futility of name-calling in this conflict in which everyone by now well deserves the epithets applied by his many enemies. York's words recall his inheritance of twin legacies, from Cambridge and Mortimer, and Henry's inadequacy to determine York's title: "'Twas mine inheritance, as the earldom was" (78). But Exeter's rejoinder is a reminder of the interrelationships of the earldom and dukedom, reinforcing earlier implications that both legacies are tainted with a treasonous history: "Thy father was a traitor to the crown" (79). That York returns the accusation to Exeter for following a member of the usurping house of Lancaster suggests that York is not averse to evoking the memory of Henry IV's original crime.

But Shakespeare carefully surrounds this recollection with a web of interrelationships which leaves neither Lancaster nor York a victor in the war of words. We are left with the impression that such arguments accomplish nothing. Both Lancastrian and Yorkist claims to a respectful hearing are marred by past histories of disrespect for legal and moral conventions. Thus the stigma of revenge upon this first scene emerges predominantly as an inheritance from the earlier plays rather than from the Lancastrian first crime and the Yorkist first commitment to retribution, for these two legacies are introduced into the debate and then dropped as futile reminders of the irrelevance of justice to this dispute. This irrelevance is further illustrated with Clifford's mention of "his

natural king" (82).. Warwick turns Clifford's argument upon Henry, and once again the impasse is revealing. The following to-and-fro of kingdoms and dukedoms merely provides a forum for the flexing of muscles on both sides (84-101), and a reiteration of the commitment to warfare. Neither faction, however, credits the power of the other, as is especially evident in Warwick's exclamation, "Poor Clifford, how I scorn his worthless threats!" (101), a remark whose irony will be apparent when Clifford murders both Rutland and York.

Henry's feeble attempt to play a commanding role (104-109), as usual finds him bringing up just the matters which most condemn his own situation, York's lineage and Henry V's French conquests. He then tries to blame Humphrey of Gloucester for the loss of France. Just as did Somerset's similar accusations against Talbot, this attack upon England's noble hero merely accentuates Henry's involvement in responsibility for England's ills and contrasts ironically with his mournful words at Gloucester's death which presaged this very death of honour he now embraces.. Richard seizes upon the perfect opportunity to take advantage of Henry's ignobility: "Father, tear the crown from the usurper's head" (114). But the alternative he advances is of course equally corrupt. The brief interchange in lines 113 to 124 also suggests that the Yorkist unity soon will be undermined by infestations of personal ambition.

The shared Lancaster-York heritage of royal blood and treasonous forebears emerges again in Henry's defence of his monarchy (125-126, 136). The specious parallel he draws between Richard II's adoption of Bolingbroke as heir and his own adoption of York further strengthens

the pattern of interrelationships implicating Lancastrians and Yorkists in this shared heritage. Henry's willingness to submit his subjects to civil war (130) rather than accede to York's stronger claim, and his request to remain king (175), are of course inconsistent with his desire to live a shepherd's idyll, a desire which will re-emerge in the molehill scene. Henry cannot even entirely be excused on the basis of not wishing to disrupt the divine plan for England's rule, for he disinherits his son whose de facto title would be as strong as his own.

Henry's decision is in fact a purely political one, necessitated by a realization of the erosion from within the ranks of his adherents in parliament. But as usual Henry takes the decision which would most exacerbate the situation, predictably not placating York who is ten years his senior and predictably committing Margaret to the eradication of the Yorkists. Henry himself has already discovered the fallacy in disinheriting a rightful heir in his reference to the Richard II to Henry IV succession. By naming York heir Henry implies the justice of York's claim, and by rights he himself should resign the throne. But he does not; instead he compounds his errors by remaining as king, even when it becomes clear that his political solution has failed and that war will result, and by committing the unnatural act of disinheritance. Thus rightful claims are no longer relevant to Henry; nor are they to Clifford, who vows to fight in Henry's defence, right or wrong (163). Warwick's and Clifford's hunger for revenge, the actual thirst for blood and power of York's sons, and the potential involvement of Prince Edward in bloodshed

in efforts to regain his inheritance, so broaden the perspective upon these events that past, present, and future effectively meld into one self-perpetuating pattern of sinfulness. This effect might be said to encourage interpretations of Henry VI's reign as a long-term working out of the expiation of Henry IV's original sin, but the carefully delineated movement¹ away from Lancastrian and Yorkist heritages towards individual patterns of sinfulness commits responsibility for the further crime of civil war to those, including Henry, who consciously choose personal ambition over England's well being.

Winny notes in this regard that "the situation is accountable by circumstances which the action makes plain, and Shakespeare doesn't look towards the reading of historical events outlined by Carlisle in a play not yet written, and with which Henry VI would bear very little imaginative relationship." Winny considers that Shakespeare's attention is on the ironies of a situation in which the Yorkists, professing respect for justice, resort to the same moral casuistry as they condemn in their enemies and that therefore the importance of Richard II is merely nominal.² But it is more than nominal in that it indicates the weakness of personal ambition to which at least four generations of nobility have fallen prey; the revenge motif which is also prevalent in this scene again reinforces this chain of sin and retribution.

But it is a pattern carefully established in 2 Henry VI with the murder of old Clifford and not in evocations of ancient curses or through providential intervention. The recurring leit-motif of

Clifford's vow to avenge upon York and his sons York's murder of Clifford's father focuses our attention first upon this immediate causal chain of bloodshed and only secondarily upon the larger context of the Richard II to Richard III sequence. It is Clifford's stony resolve which gives Henry the heart to resist York's demand that he resign his crown (165-166), a decision which leads to the Prince's disinheritance and to all that follows.

Warwick has nearly grown into his role as kingmaker, and his words here bring together in one image the ironic dual significance of blood as lineage and as the lifeblood of the two royal houses which will be left on the battlefield of England in nominal quests for legitimacy:

Do right unto this princely Duke of York,
Or I will fill the house with armed men,
And o'er the chair of state, where now he sits,
Write up his title with usurping blood. (I.i.170-173)

Implicit here is the price to be paid for confirmation of York's title--the lifeblood of the usurping house of Lancaster. There is now a further erosion in the concept of heritage as John Talbot had once understood it, in that neither merit nor lineage but rather the taking of another life is what will confirm York in his title to the highest heritage of nobility. Moreover the implications for Henry's Lancastrian heritage would indicate that it too has so deteriorated that it can no longer be passed on to the next generation: either it will be unnaturally transferred by force of arms to York or it will die with Henry at the hands of York. And in naming York heir Henry becomes a pawn in the hands of the Yorkists and an object

of hatred and derision to the Lancastrians (189-194), further dragging the monarchy down in esteem and eroding the structures of government. Clifford's curse will of course be realized in Henry's defeat and deposition, and Exeter's remark, "They seek revenge and therefore will not yield" (196), will exactly characterize the future actions of Margaret and Clifford and, subsequently, of the sons and brothers of their victims.

Henry's sigh at disinheriting his son (197) is more remorse than he evidenced when he discarded Henry V's legacy of the dukedoms of Anjou and Maine. Both actions render Henry accountable in part for England's ills, and both illustrate his unfitness for the responsibility of such a noble heritage. Henry has brought the monarchy to a low ebb in two respects, first, in the lack of respect he himself commands as king and, secondly, in the diminution to the monarchy itself, as France is no longer under his rule, nor are his Yorkist subjects, nor even, now, the Lancastrians.

Henry's request that York swear an oath, "To cease this civil war and, whilst I live, / To honour me as thy king and sovereign" (203-204), is typical. First, it does not cancel out his previous resolution to civil war (130), since although, like Stanley at Bosworth Field, he places his country ahead of his son, he still places himself ahead of his country in not acceding to York's stronger claim to legitimacy. Secondly, he again commits the error of trusting in York's oath, but this time with the example of York's previous broken vow still fresh in his memory. (Edward, as king, will do likewise in returning Clarence to the fold.) Henry might

possibly be excused these lapses under the pressures of present circumstances. But his words, "And long live thou and these thy forward sons!" following on the heels of his sigh for his own disinherited son, are most ill-chosen. Both he and York (210) labour under grave delusions that they have been reconciled and that the Lancastrian faction has conveniently disappeared. Exeter inadvertently again injects irony into the future outbreak of hostility, and his curse of course will fall upon them all: "Accurs'd be he that seeks to make them foes!" (211).

Margaret too accuses Henry of being an unnatural father (225), and her accusation illustrates Henry's unnatural inversion of circumstances:

Hadst thou but lov'd him half so well as I,
Or felt that pain which I did for him once,
Or nourish'd him as I did with my blood,
Thou would'st have left thy dearest heart-blood there,
Rather than made that savage duke thine heir,
And disinherited thine only son. (227-232)

Henry's words at Gloucester's death, which forecast his own living death, are echoed in Margaret's question,

To entail him and his heirs unto the crown,
What is it but to make thy sepulchre,
And creep into it far before thy time? (242-244)

But the significance here is very different from that following Henry's last dereliction of duty. Margaret focuses a logic upon the situation that Henry has failed to apply: either figuratively or literally Henry has signed his own premature death warrant, and he has done so, ironically, because he prefers life to honour (253).

Henry's unnatural act has also made it possible for Margaret once again to assume the man's role and carry on the struggle against

York (251-252, 262-263). Prince Edward's remarks to his father here (268-269) indicate that the Prince tends towards Margaret's militancy rather than Henry's meekness and piety. Henry briefly mirrors a pale reflection of Margaret's warnings and antagonisms (271-276). Before York has given indications of breaking his oath to Henry, Henry is already asking that Margaret be revenged on York. Similarly, his broken oath to have Somerset committed to the Tower occurred independently of and almost simultaneously with York's broken vow. Henry vacillates with the wind, York with the tide of opportunism.

But Shakespeare carefully illustrates that neither has the other to blame for his own untrustworthiness. The emphasis, once again, is upon individual deeds of sinfulness rather than influences either of past misdeeds or present political justifications for these sins. Indeed, York's disregard for the higher motivations involving his country's good, and Henry's inevitable ineptitude in political affairs, both emphasize the personal nature of this struggle which bears so little relation to honourable motivations. Even Henry's recognition of the awesome prospect of civil war alters within the context of this scene; reminded of the danger to England, Henry still cannot rise to the occasion.

In Act I, Scene II, York's sons seize upon the fallacious logic of the Lancaster-York compromise in urging that their father break his pledge. Richard makes the valid point that York's right does not depend upon Henry's life or death (11), and Edward follows with a kind of carpe diem sentiment which perfectly illustrates his inheritance of York's weakness of character (12). The exchange of

broken oaths (15-17) emphasizes that Henry has been the first to turn against York. It also forecasts both York's and Edward's imminent end even though York does challenge Henry ("It will outrun you, father, in the end" [14]). It also forecasts Edward's future broken oath at York, for which he too merits the York inheritance of sinfulness. Richard's judicial quibbling again illustrates his subtle command of logic and his thoughtfulness. However Richard's words (28-31, 18) too carry dramatic irony, in view of his own later unquiet reign.

Shakespeare calls to our minds in this scene the heritage of evil which York's sons consciously adopt. The irony constantly playing upon Edward's and Richard's later flawed monarchies concentrates our attention upon the inversion here of the Talbot heritage of honour. The York legacy of ruthless ambition is passed from father to sons, confirmed in the sons' present sin of encouraging York to evil, and reinforced with foreshadowings of their later assumption and intensification of this legacy in their own right.

Just as the timing of Henry's wish that Margaret be revenged on York is important to York's subsequent decision to forswear himself, the timing of York's decision is important to the announcement of Margaret's arrival (49-52). Again Shakespeare meticulously commits his character to evil in isolation from any political event which might justify his change of course. Had the messenger arrived moments earlier, York could have blamed Margaret's movement of troops for his broken oath. But Shakespeare has York break his vow first; the emphasis thus remains on York's choice of rebellion. The larger issues of Margaret's militancy and, especially,

the Mortimer heritage, which is given only nominal mention (11, 25), clearly do not decisively influence York's decision. Rather than exemplifying that larger context, then, this scene too concentrates upon the heritage of evil consciously assumed and confirmed in the misdeeds of Henry and of the York father and sons alike.

The constant ability of these characters to view their own sins as just deeds and identical sins in their adversaries as evil is epitomized in York's words, "And trust not simple Henry nor his oaths" (59), tellingly juxtaposed against his own broken vow. The York sons' complicity in crime is further emphasized in their enthusiastic urging to meet Margaret's forces with only five thousand men. York hesitates but allows himself to be overruled; thus the fruits of Yorkist excess already will have contributed to the decimation within their own ranks when Rutland and York are lost.

Clifford fulfills his vow to slaughter the Yorkist babes in Act I, Scene ^{iv}iii. That Clifford is unswayed by Rutland's youth and innocence recalls the chivalric consciousness which died in the York-old Clifford encounter. Nor is he swayed by the force of Rutland's reason (19-20), Clifford's sympathy and reason having been a casualty of his grief (21-22). The gathering momentum of this revenge tragedy foreshadowed by Clifford's vow to slay the Yorkist babes, is symbolized in his all-consuming hatred, focused not only upon living Yorks but on the rotten coffins of their dead as well (25-33). If one old man's death in battle can engender this reaction, then the implications for the civil war as a whole are staggering. Similarly, King Edward's murder of Henry's son will be followed by that of his two sons, until

at last the houses of both Lancaster and York are nearly extinct.

Rutland, like John Talbot, remains untainted by the antagonisms and animosities of civil strife, and at the moment of death he displays courage, nobility, and wisdom. He exposes the fallacy of Clifford's attempt to shift responsibility for his own misdeeds on to York (37-39) and thereby gives an insight into the attraction the revenge motif holds for these characters, both Lancaster and York, for whom evil is something done only by others and who consistently maintain their illusory nobility to be genuine. Although aware enough of the political climate to recognize his danger at Clifford's hands (1-2), Rutland is yet a child, and his childhood innocence, symbolized by the presence of his tutor-priest, permits him the vision his elders lack. He does not ask God to bring vengeance upon Clifford's son for his own death, but he does warn Clifford of the consequences of his action within an exclusively Old Testament eye-for-an-eye context which still does not implicate him in the revenge tragedy.³

Rutland revives the long-dormant issue of personal accountability which for John Talbot confirmed one's heritage of honour (43-45). But Clifford's only response is to reiterate his desire for revenge and to thrust his sword into Rutland. Delusions of nobility cultivated by the characters who inhabit the world of the Henry VI plays cannot coexist with innocence. The children must share the commitments of their parents, as Richard and Edward do and as Prince Edward seems to be doing, or be eliminated, lest their reason disrupt this tenuous illusion of righteousness. Yorkist and

Lancastrian logic holds no threat for their adversaries because both houses are equally deluded, and a master of deceit such as Richard can come to manipulate everyone in this tainted world at will. But the logic characteristic of true innocence and true nobility must be stifled. The dual significance of "blood" thus finds its parallel in the two senses of "right," one enunciated by Richard, the master of deceit (I.ii.11), in reference to York's just claim by blood to the throne, and the other exemplified in the "right" recognized by innocent children whose blood must be spilled because they discern true justice.

Shakespeare follows Hall in lowering Rutland's age. Shakespeare makes Rutland twelve rather than seventeen years old,⁴ so that he might take advantage of this theme of innocence and so that the drama might also benefit from the pathos of a child's death.⁵ The altered chronology--Rutland was in fact the eldest of York's sons--allows Shakespeare the opportunity to reinforce the heritage theme in Scene ii as well. The Mortimer incident is recalled, too, by Rutland's brief mention of a preference for lifelong imprisonment over death. But present circumstances are harsher than those of the past, and Rutland must die.

York too must die, and there are ironic echoes of the Talbets' exploits in his recounting of his sons' heroism in battle (I.iv.1-26). The Phoenix simile too recalls Talbot (35)⁶ although York's vengeance will be transmitted through his surviving sons: the heritage of evil, unlike that of honour, is to survive yet another generation. An echo of Talbot's Auvergne adventure accom-

panies Margaret's mocking words (67-72), although it too is quickly submerged in the horrible spectacle of the napkin stained with Rutland's blood. These wars have now surpassed any previous horrors.

The murder of Rutland and the mental torture of York underline the loss of England's age of chivalry. Margaret's ruthlessness (84-95) matches Clifford's, and henceforth it will be difficult to summon very much sympathy for her, even at Prince Edward's death. Even Northumberland can hardly check his tears at York's sorrow (150-151, 169-171), and Northumberland's words reflect Margaret's and Clifford's inhumanity. Margaret's unhistoric presence at York's death⁷ permits her to play a dominant role in taunting York (51 ff.) and to actually participate in his murder. Shakespeare's amplification of Hall's reference to the unnatural conflict in which "the sonne fought against the father, the brother against the brother, the nephew against the uncle, and the tenaunt against his lord"⁸ in the molehill scene (II.v) may have been motivated by its ironic parallel in this closely adapted scene (I.iv) from Holinshed.⁹

Henry will wish himself a shepherd as his abandoned flock kill each other over the crown to which he has tenaciously clung, while the regal York had been made to wear a paper crown on the very same molehill, and then was murdered in the name of Henry's Lancastrian monarchy (II.v.69). Just as York dwelled upon Somerset's traitorous nature rather than rising to the tragedy of the occasion by trying to prevent the loss of Talbot and France, here too York's words are devoted to Margaret's tiger's heart and ignoble heritage rather than to his own noble mission or the eternal fame which even

Suffolk saw as his enduring legacy to this world. York has not a word for such noble sentiments, nor does he evoke the memory of Richard II or the Mortimer legacy. York's legacy is plainly that of personal vindictiveness,¹⁰ and his final vituperatio reflects only intense hatred of his personal Nemeses Clifford and Margaret and his wish that Rutland's death be avenged, presumably by that "mess of sons" (73) which, like the Phoenix, will spring from his ashes. Nor does York betray any awareness of his own sinfulness; "Open thy gates of mercy" (177) is as close as he comes to asking God's forgiveness.¹¹

The union of York's three glorious sons in a league inviolable (II.i.30) is illusory. This scene, along with those in which Warwick's role as kingmaker is further elaborated (II.iii.37), and later confirmed (II.vi.99-102), witnesses their fleeting oneness with Warwick before individual ambitions make them enemies. The weakness which will stigmatize Edward's reign is forecast here (41-42) as is the irony of Edward's declared dependence on Warwick (189-191). Moreover Warwick's chilling vow that "he that throws not up his cap for joy/Shall for the fault make forfeit of his head" (196-197) bodes ill for England's citizens in this new chapter of civil dissension. Nowhere in this scene do there remain remnants of that former claim to a noble Yorkist heritage, except in Edward's hollow claim that York had been "The flower of Europe for his chivalry" (71). There are simply Richard's familiar echoes of the revenge motif (86, 87, 164, 203). Only Henry senses his own vulnerability to divine vengeance: "Withheld revenge, dear God! 'tis not my fault" (II.ii.7). Everyone

else considers himself not only guiltless but immune from the retributions of an outraged deity. Clifford, typically caught up in the blind quest for revenge, can call Henry's pity harmful (10) because it lacks kingly resolution.

But it is consistent with Shakespeare's ironic inversions in these plays that stony child killer Clifford also calls attention to the unnatural quality of a king's disinheritance of his son while a duke--the Duke Clifford has also murdered--would have his son a king.(19-25). Henry's unnatural act is appropriately attacked in the comparison of meek Henry, backed by the power and legitimacy of a monarchy, to a defenceless bird who would fight to the death for its young. Shakespeare here turns the animal imagery away from the beast of prey-victim pattern and from the likening of wicked characters and the objects of their invective to the baser beasts of the animal kingdom, to a recollection that Henry's unnatural action is less than animal-like.

Clifford's words and Margaret's earlier remarks (I.i.223-232, 237-261) illustrate the unnaturalness of Edward's disinheritance; but their logic is faulty according to the concept of true heritage developed in these plays.

Were it not pity that this goodly boy
Should lose his birthright by his father's fault,
And long hereafter say unto his child,
'What my great-grandfather and grandsire got
My careless father fondly gave away'? (II.ii.34-38)

Clifford here recognizes only the monarchy as Prince Edward's inheritance,, and not the honourable deeds which must confirm the transmission of nobility. It is ironic that even the component of heritage whose

legitimacy Clifford recognizes is tainted by the Lancastrian deposition of Richard II. Clifford's references to Henry's father and grandfather merely accentuate these flawed foundations for Edward's claim to nobility. The irony of Clifford's request that Henry "hold thine own and leave thine own with him" (42) comes not merely from this imperfect legacy but also from Henry's rejoinder, in which Bolingbroke's sin is alluded to: "But, Clifford, tell me, didst thou never hear/That things evil got had ever bad success?" (45-46). Henry has only one true legacy to leave behind: "I'll leave my son my virtuous deeds behind;/And would my father had left me no more!" (49-50).

Henry's oblique allusion to the shepherd motif (51-53) illustrates in this context the cruel reality that Henry's crown has actually impeded his virtuous motivation.¹² As we have seen, Henry's forced incursions into the political arena have resulted in his most sinful actions (apart, perhaps, from the ignoble choice of a bride for her beauty), actions which are necessarily unnatural as they are alien to his naïveté and unworldly piety just as they hinder his virtue from being translated into good deeds. Henry's inheritance of a monarchy has intruded upon both his natural nobility and whatever legacy of honour he might pass on to his son.

Edward's commitment in Act II, Scene ii, to Margaret's militancy is not yet complete, but there is trenchant irony in his elevation to knighthood. This symbolic and chivalric ceremony is dictated and directed by Margaret and carried out ~~before~~ ^{before} an inglorious battle by an unkingly monarch whose very curse resides in the crown

which legitimizes its performance, a crown illegitimately and more or less unwillingly possessed in an unchivalric age in which knight-hoods are deserved by indications of a fall from the inherent nobility of youthful innocence. This irony is accentuated by Margaret's mention of "our forward son" (58) whose precocity she has masterminded and by the implicit comparison of this comment with Henry's most unnatural remark to York, "And long live thou and these thy forward sons!" (I.i.209).

Henry could no more pass his gentle nobility to the Yorkist line than to Prince Edward. His only hope is to salvage his own virtue by withdrawing from this diseased political domain, an action which he cannot bring himself to undertake but which, when it is imposed on him, will result in a display of the nobility his role as king never permitted him fully to realize. Henry's attempts to influence Edward (61-62) continue to fall upon deaf ears, and although Margaret's mad bloodlust has not yet infected her son, he remains unaware of the distinction between noble warfare in a just cause and war upon one's own in a hopeless cause. On using his sword, he says:

My gracious father, by your kingly leave,
I'll draw it as apparent to the crown,
And in that quarrel use it to the death. (II.ii.63-65)

Clifford's observation (66) carries the same irony as Margaret's earlier remark (58), an irony reinforced by Shakespeare's use of retrospect and prognostication involving Edward's immediate past disinheritance and his imminent death. Margaret's and Henry's mention of their fortunes (75,76) is a reminder of their final destinies, which will be under a Yorkist monarchy.

This association is interwoven here with Henry's past

abandonment of the Lancastrian inheritance. This scene, then, conveys poignant suggestions of Henry's blighted reign from its inception as an accursed child monarchy to its momentarily more fortunate conclusion in obscurity. Clifford's request that Henry leave the field also underlines the futility and the unnaturalness of the Lancastrian venture, qualities unrecognized by one whose obsession with revenge blinds him to political as well as moral truths. The episode ends in a ludicrous postscript to the enforced mock chivalry of Prince Edward's knighthood, as the Prince now assumes Margaret's role of manipulator, exhorting Henry to act the valiant warrior. This movement from manipulated (60) to manipulator (78-80) also symbolizes Edward's further induction into intrigue, and his increasing assumption of Margaret's legacy.

The irony built up within the undercurrents developed here is maintained throughout the following exchanges (81,86,89,90,94, 97,99), and the momentum of the revenge tragedy gathers further force (110-116). Henry's unsuccessful efforts to make himself heard (116-120), his long silence (77-116), and especially his silence following lines 101, 126, and 129, are representative both of this irony and the disrespect for ceremony and for the monarchy which has characterized the Henry VI plays even from the first jars which disrupted Henry V's funeral procession (1 Henry VI.I.i).

York's legacy to Edward is fully confirmed in this scene which also indicates that the legacies of unlawful rebellion will pass to the offspring of both houses. The Prince, however, still can descry the Yorkist inversions of right and justice (130-132),

although his intrusion into the heated invective of this exchange in Scene ii merely implicates him the more deeply in the others' guilt. His resort to reason, however, is still a hopeful sign that the disease evidenced by the surrounding vituperation might not yet have made him its victim. Again, however, the Prince shares with his fellows the weakness of seeing in his own position only justice and nobility, whereas in fact the greater rightness or wrongness of either faction has long been subsumed by their use of ignoble means to gain or maintain the monarchy.

Richard's rejoinder revives the bastardy accusations which did have their historical counterpart in this instance:¹³ "Whoever got thee, there thy mother stands;/For well I wot thou hast thy mother's tongue" (133-134). This remark also serves to put into words earlier indications of the heritage of intrigue which seems to be passing from mother to son. Richard's footnote to the heritage theme here strikes a four-fold propaganda blow, first, against the Prince whom he is calling a bastard; secondly, against Margaret's character; thirdly, with reference also to the Suffolk incident, against Henry's role as husband and his ability to even sire an heir; and, fourthly, against the Lancastrian cause, as a bastard would automatically be disinherited and the title pass to York in view of Henry's lack of issue. Both Edward and Richard carry on with Margaret where their father's vituperatio left off, (especially at lines 139 to 143). There can be little doubt as to the implications of this scene for the concept of heritage in the Henry VI plays. Everyone has disavowed claims to legitimacy, if only by calling

everyone else a bastard.

Moreover, Edward's reminder of Margaret's degree of responsibility in the Yorkist bid for the crown (152-162) supports interpretation of these wars in terms of immediate and personal rather than remote and inherited causal relationships. But the very use to which George puts the ever-present garden imagery (163-'69) underscores the inevitability that Lancastrian-Yorkist interrelationships will guarantee their eventual mutual destruction. For the presumption of both houses, as exemplified in Edward's words at lines eighty-eight to ninety-two, that the designation of God's deputy is to be determined by men, and in such a manner, is its own curse. Such incursions into God's domain guarantee only chaos and the threat of destruction to the realm. Not only do the characters in the Henry VI plays overlook the significance of ceremony, lay to rest chivalry and nobility, and disregard respect for their monarch, but their presumption also extends to a denial of God's legitimate management of their affairs and, through their curses and meaningless sworn vows, a perversion of His purposes to their own. As usual the last "sake" invoked is God's (100; compare also 124) and, typically, it is the godless Richard who adds this ironic touch, and in the context of the impending bloodbath. Similarly there is great irony in having Richard, the soon-to-be consummate butcher and child killer, call Clifford butcher (95) and child killer (112).

There is visual symbolism in this molehill scene as well, just as there is in Henry's retreat to the molehill. The scene is a literal representation of Henry's empty monarchy. Henry is king in name, but not in reality, for his title is flawed; nor is he king in

character, for he neither makes the decisions nor carries them out. His ceremonial duties are dictated by a Margaret or a Clifford or a Prince Edward, or sometimes even a York (I.i). Henry lives an illusion of monarchy (120), and his privilege to speak is no greater than is his kingliness. The contention over a crown is only peripheral to this visual image of Henry's impotence. Inherent in this scene is the irony that all Henry possesses of his title is the name of king, whereas it is just that title which reflects the greater issue of his heritage of legitimacy, a heritage as illusory as is his kingliness.

What Cairncross calls the "Morality tableau" of the molehill scene¹⁴ epitomizes Henry's position as the calm eye in the centre of the metaphorical storm of 3 Henry VI. Moreover the memory of every father and son relationship in these plays is evoked when Shakespeare leaves the bereaved father and son unnamed. More importantly, as Riggs indicates, "the tragic perception of the Son and Father depends, of course, upon the unique irony of their situation. Had father met father, the episode might have become a simple restatement of the main plot, in which the sons find their revenges by destroying one another. Hence, the spirit of lucidity in which they can acknowledge that a father and a son have been 'murder'd' (not simply 'kill'd'), and still forswear war for lamentation, necessarily is unavailable to the principal antagonists in this

conflict."¹⁵

The implication of this tableau for the concept of revenge is one which John Talbot had taught long before, and the mention of the wife's and mother's endless grief (103-106) recalls John's realization (1 Henry VI.IV.v) of the futility of revenge. The father and son here recognize that nothing they or anyone else can do will eradicate the grief of this loss, right the wrong, or return the murdered loved one to life.

Henry's renewed wish to be a shepherd is bitterly ironic here, in view of the carnage which these deaths of the innocent father and the innocent son symbolize. His exclamation, "To whom God will, there be the victory!" (II.v.15) accentuates the futility of blood lost in the Lancastrian cause. Henry still has not recognized that remaining king entails responsibility to take the decisions which will arrest this bloodshed. As Ornstein notes, Henry "pleads when he should demand, and his appeal is to men's sympathies, not to their allegiances. He would rather command his subjects' pity than their obedience."¹⁶ He whom Humphrey envisioned as the lamb environed by wolves (1 Henry VI.III.i.191-192) while the shepherd was led to the slaughter, and who saw himself as the helpless dam lowing up and down while her harmless young one was carried off (214-216), now seeks an excuse for inaction in his own enforced impotence. In 2 Henry VI, Henry turns tail and runs rather than fight to save Humphrey. Now he runs again at Margaret's and Clifford's bidding rather than attempt to save his flock from the slaughter at Towton. The irony of his wishing himself a shepherd, when he has

consistently proven himself so obviously unsuited to such a role, is intense, and it is reinforced by the lamb imagery in Henry's words, "Poor harmless lambs abide their enmity" (75).

His description of the tidal sway of battle (1-12) is fittingly encapsulated by the remark, "So is the equal poise of this fell war," (13) immediately followed by Henry's sitting down upon the molehill where York met his death. This ironic parallel with York's death carries forward the "equal poise" later applicable, as well, to Henry's relationship to the fathers and sons who join him on stage. The pathos of Henry's metaphorical position is qualified by his disregard for, and complicity in, the sufferings of civil war and by the tenacity with which he has kept his crown.

The son who intends to steal his victim's crowns in fact is taking possession of his own inheritance, and his realization that this booty may pass to another before the day has ended (56-60) emphasizes the war's interruption of the natural pattern of inheritance. However, the fact that he has committed the horrifying and unnatural crime of parricide ironically converts the theft itself into the transfer of a natural legacy. Talbot's dual heritage too is evoked by the words, "And I, who at his hands receiv'd my life,/Have by my hands of life bereaved him" (67-68). Talbot was able twice to give his son life in legitimate heritage and warfare (1 Henry VI.IV.vi), whereas in this war upon one's own a son inadvertently takes his father's life. These two unnatural legacies also emerge in the father's speech, for the son's death leaves his father without issue and thus turns the search for gold into a repossession of what would

have been this father's natural legacy to his surviving son. The father who gave his son life too soon and bereft him of it too late (92-93) is an unnatural inversion of Talbot's situation when he remarks, "I gave thee life and rescu'd thee from death" (1 Henry VI.IV.vi.5).

Moreover, the son's "I knew not what I did" (69), with its biblical overtones, is suggestive of the Crucifixion.¹⁷ These words underline the distinction between these men and the truly evil architects of civil war, none of whom recognize the magnitude of their crimes against England's sons. Henry only now comes to understand civil war's horrifying reality, which underlies the symbolism of this emblematic episode (73-78). His exclamation, "O that my death would stay these ruthless deeds!" (95) suggests an awakening also to his own responsibility therein, and the following lines would bring some measure of relief to the audience (96-102, 111-112) were they not so tragically overdue. Again there are echoes of Talbot's words, "lay him in his father's arms" (1 Henry VI.IV.vii.29), as the grieving father says, "These arms of mine shall be thy winding-sheet;/ My heart, sweet boy, shall be thy sepulchre" (114-115). And his final words poignantly reflect the futility of civil war just as they epitomize its horror: "I'll bear thee hence; and let them fight that will,/For I have murder'd where I should not kill" (121-122).

The Folio edition of this play has the father enter from one door and the son from another.¹⁸ Henry's position on the molehill with his two grieving subjects on either side of him¹⁹ provides a visual representation of the emblematic quality of this highly stylized episode, as I have earlier noted. We see here the effect

which these wars have had on such ordinary citizens, now become both murderers and eternal mourners of their own dearest ones.

The namelessness of these men, the stylized presentation, and the choric nature of this scene shield us from the emotional impact of their too coincidental personal agonies. But the thrust of the larger message is nevertheless powerful, as these human vehicles for that message do not let us forget that this awareness cannot and should not be divested of its foundation in human misery. Our recognition of this human component coincides with Henry's own, and this parallel both is reinforced by and makes appropriate Henry's position on the molehill.

Moreover the symbolism of this visual image, consistent with the formalism of the scene, positions Henry, the murderers-mourners, and their victims-loved ones, both symmetrically placed and diametrically opposed, within a unified pattern of interrelationships. That the surviving son fought for Henry and his father for Warwick, and that their father-son counterparts also fought on opposite sides, draws the lines of their "political" alliances from one side of the stage to the other, while the family bonds and the molehill separate the two sides and isolate each father and son from Henry. The political relationships have severed familial bonds, and the lines of political alliance are centred in Henry, both in his position between the two fathers and sons and in his position as focal point of the Lancaster-York struggle. This scene thus defines the father's and son's partial responsibility for murder while it heightens Henry's responsibility as the source of contention and as the would-

be shepherd, installed upon his not-so-remote molehill amid dead and aggrieved sheep.

The pacific pastoral environment also reinforces the brutal irony of this most unnatural tragedy. Each of these men, although linked to the others, is alone with his grief, isolated in this natural setting from his fellow mourners and from the irrelevant animosities by which the rest of the land is infested. Moreover the interweaving of relationships both of loyalty and of responsibility emphasizes the movement away from such simple linear patterns of criminality as once characterized the Gloucester-Winchester and York-Somerset rivalries which revolved about the young King Henry. The molehill scene renders visual the ever-expanding circle of ignobility of the Henry VI plays.²⁰

The always curious patterns of responsibility within the Lancastrian ranks, bringing Yorkists to defend Henry and his forebears (II.ii.150-159) and Margaret to play father, king, and commander-in-chief, make Henry guilty of not acting his part and thus of encouraging first petty rivalries and then York's vision of monarchy, make Margaret guilty of the intrigue which effectively forces York to seek the crown, and make Clifford guilty of the first York murders which must be expiated. Clifford's death (II.vi.41) cannot arrest the momentum of sin and retribution, for his hunger for revenge has brought too many Yorkist deaths, for which Lancastrian blood would have to flow endlessly in retribution.

Henry's exchanges with the keepers (III.i) recall the delicate relationships of responsibility which unite subject and

king (see also IV.vi.1-15). In the same way that the sacred bond of family is broken by the almost haphazard conscriptions (II.v), the solemn vows of simple hunters in the remote north are inadvertently broken (III.i) as a result of the conflict. There is irony in the logic which the keepers carry into the discussion of this matter of the deposition of a king whose name they either do not remember or consider too insignificant to mention. That they manage to apply this logic to a dispute devoid of reasonable justification also heightens the remoteness from political intrigue of these men who naturally expect questions to have answers.

These keepers' sins (89) are inextricable from issues of natural and unnatural heritage. In the same way King Edward's fatal misdeed of marrying the less nobly born Elizabeth Woodville cannot be dissociated from the broken contract over the Lady Bona, or from the consequences of unnaturally favouring her relations over his own (IV.i.54) for his eventual legacy of factionalism and disorder (IV.i). Shakespeare exposes the ironies of Edward's error in relation to Henry's disastrous marriage and to the recurring complications of inheritance in Edward's acquisition of an abundance of in-laws (III.ii.101-105).

The irony that in several respects history will repeat itself under a Yorkist monarchy does not rest upon an assumption of inherited patterns of revenge and expiation. As we have seen, relationships are much more complex, responsibilities much more ambiguous. Such also is the situation in the next discussion of genealogy and usurpation (III.iii.74-94) in which, as Winny notes,

"the moral issues of Richard's deposition figure only as a political debating-point."²¹ They do that, but more important is their overall consistency with 1 Henry VI and 2 Henry VI, in which the focus is not upon those earlier circumstances surrounding Richard II. and Henry IV..

Henry VI's own history as king does not entirely repeat itself. His handing the reigns of government to Warwick and Clarence confirms an element of wisdom in Henry (IV.vi.16-44).. He now knows that withdrawal is essential to his spiritual well-being. However his choice of governors typifies Henry's disastrous political judgment. Although he now appreciates the relationship between his "thwarting stars" and the well being of his people (19-22, 75-76), still his final request that Margaret and Prince Edward be returned to England from France (60-61) suggests his lingering illusion that he can end these wars without consideration for the claims of Margaret for her son's inheritance. In this respect he has not learned from the past experience of disinheriting his son.

Moreover, there is great irony in his words here, especially, "For till I see them here, by doubtful fear/My joy of liberty is half eclips'd" (62-63), as they are juxtaposed against Warwick's and Clarence's tendency to relive the injustice to York (54-55) and once again to intrude upon the natural course of succession (56-57). This irony is especially acute in view of the likelihood that Margaret's return might further eclipse his liberty to withdraw himself from the rekindled animosities that her presence would occasion. So, in a sense, he, and certainly they, do repeat former errors. For

instance, Henry undoubtedly continues to misread Margaret. Does he also expect that the Yorkists would abandon their claims because the former Yorkists Warwick and Clarence now hold the reins of power? And what does he expect that Warwick and Clarence plan to do about Margaret and Prince Edward this time around? As usual, Henry's decision reflects a total misconception of political realities. Yet despite his continued political ineptitude, Henry has moved towards personal wisdom, and this movement is symbolized by his brief choric role, in his prophetic "divining thoughts" concerning the end of the cycle of chaos and young Henry Richmond's role therein (65-76). What emerges from this scene in which the King takes his leave of the public domain, then, is Henry's evolution towards a kind of saintliness, while at the same time his and his counsellors' actions clearly point towards repetition of past errors.

Thus the Cambridge legacy of treason and the Prince's disinherittance are echoed in Scene vi, while the prophecy concerning "England's hope," Richmond, contains a first hint of the final outcome. The cycle of past, present, and future, until now part of the same pattern of ignobility regenerating itself through the repetition in different individuals of the same sins--as in the plan to bring accusations of treason against Edward--or similar sins with the same consequences--as in the disastrous marriages of two successive monarchs--suddenly expands to include a glimpse of light at the end of the tunnel. But nowhere are there indications that these patterns of sinfulness necessarily revolve about the events of 1399. Even when Henry prophesies Richmond's destiny, the emphasis rests on the

irony that these men, over four generations, have not learned from the past, that they remain oblivious to their own and their forebears' sins, and that they persist in their intrusions into God's domain.

Wind-changing Warwick's final days exemplify this presumptuousness (V.i.57). Ironies in his words, "unlook'd for friends" (V.i.14), his kingmaker's stance (26-39), and his confidence in Clarence (76-109), are echoed in his last speech (V.ii.5-28). Although aware at death that his less-than-divine power and glory are evanescent, he still does not acknowledge his own grievous sins of presumption, disloyalty, rebellion, and murder, sins which guarantee that the legacy he will leave behind is nought:

My parks, my walks, my manors that I had,
Even now forsake me; and of all my lands
Is nothing left me but my body's length. (V.ii.24-26)

To Warwick, Clarence's "upright zeal to right prevails/More than the nature of a brother's love" (V.i.78-79).

But good Clarence "will not ruin my father's house/Who gave his blood to lime the stones together" (V.i.86-87). His protestation of the impiety of "my holy oath" (92-94), recalls Salisbury's similar equivocation (2 Henry VI.V.i.182-190). Clarence offers the rare spectacle in these plays of an acknowledgment and apology for his trespass (95, 102-105), but not without condemning Warwick for having misled him (100). Richard's response resounds with the irony of brotherliness (108), including that of Clarence towards Warwick and Richard towards Clarence and Edward. The meaninglessness of everyone's word in these plays is symbolized here

in Clarence's words, "For I will henceforth be no more unconstant" (105), Edward's avowal of love returned (106-107), which should otherwise make us admiring, merely becomes symptomatic of the lack of self knowledge shared by so many of the characters in these plays.

The noble strains of Margaret's and Prince Edward's sentiments at Tewkesbury (V.iv.1-49), better suited to chivalric than civil warfare, do not obscure their import, to keep the troops from fleeing in the face of Warwick's heavy loss. The Prince betrays a refreshing insight reminiscent of the wise counsellor Gloucester here (44-49), and the tone is muted by his yet imperfect commitment to Margaret's bloodlust. Oxford's words (52-54) might be uplifting here if not for one's realization of the path of ignobility which Prince Edward would have to tread en route to that glory. Edward remarks to his supporters, "And take his thanks that yet hath nothing else" (59). His "nothing else" is money to pay them; it is also the succession, with reminders of the interrupted natural relationship with King Henry whom one would almost guess to be dead from Oxford's previous words (50-54).

Typical of both Lancastrians and Yorkists is the self-delusion which Margaret evidences concerning her commanding role throughout the Wars.(V.iv.19-20), and the responsibility which she bears in "this troublous world" (V.v.7). This responsibility, however, is uncovered by Richard (23-24) as the vituperatio resumes. The Prince also has become more bellicose, and along with his growing commitment to ignobility there is developed here a parallel with the parliament scene (I.i), thus doubly reinforcing the recurrent

cyclical pattern. Links with the past are maintained (22), as always, and these are characteristically juxtaposed with implications for a flawed future monarchy. But his courage and command of the situation, which lead Edward, in his pique, to kill him, also suggest that, were Margaret's faction to win, Prince Edward might be able to hold the courtly antagonisms which plagued Henry's reign in check.

Certainly Edward's judgment of York's sons is sound; he is their better because unlike them he has not engaged in traitorous activities, nor has he yet committed himself to the revenge tragedy by spilling Yorkist blood. But his position is hopeless because he does not recognize the unforgivable sin of waging war upon one's own. Prince Edward's evolution from innocence to intransigence confirms his growing commitment to ignobility, as the double-edged irony of the words "I know my duty" suggests. This movement into complicity also illustrates the pattern of individual accountability for the criminality in these plays, for though Prince Edward is exposed to the Lancastrian taint, his initial innocence reveals that this inheritance must be confirmed by ignoble deeds, just as John Talbot's commitment to nobility had to be confirmed. Rutland did not live to make this commitment, nor will Edward's sons; but glimpses into their characters reveal the necessity for confirming the corruption of their blood through rebellious activity. That these Yorkist children remain innocent at their deaths discourages interpretations of the playwright's grand design in terms of the expiation of an inherited sin. Everyone, innocent and guilty, does suffer, but if Shakespeare wished the

causes of their suffering to be primarily related to Richard II's deposition, he need not have troubled over the intricacies of the Henry VI plays.

"Butchers and villains! bloody cannibals!" (59) these Yorkists are. But Margaret consistently proves herself no less averse than they to sacrificing England's sons. She can only wish them in return the same agony she suffers in Prince Edward's death (80).. More chilling than her reiteration of the revenge motif, however, is Edward's matter-of-factness; he has murdered a young man in cold blood, and he is able to turn his thoughts from this distraction to the hoped-for arrival of his own son and heir (85-88). Certainly it is this murder and this nonchalance more than the Mortimer legacy which we recall when Edward's sons meet a similar fate in Richard III.

What Winny calls the moral polarity between kindness and ferocity²² makes Henry's death at Richard's hand not only appropriate but almost inevitable. Prince Edward is now dead. With Henry's death the house of Lancaster will be eradicated, and then there will be opportunities to ensnare the Yorkists who stand between him and the throne (V.vi.84-91).. The two ritual sacrifices at Towton and the murders of York, Rutland, and Prince Edward prepare for the discovery, as Riggs suggests, that the concepts king, prince, peer, and now "brother," have all ceased to matter. "Richard appears, finally, less as a quirk of 'dissembling nature' and more as a choric spokesman for the loss of those communal pieties that make social and political life possible at all."²³

Wilbur Sanders shares a similar view of the natural evolution to Richard in this trilogy: "Richard releases a sense of incipient absurdity about the very postures that he hypocritically adopts. In the world of cut-throat intrigue and bloody reprisals (the world of the Henry VI plays, as well as the specific creation of Richard himself) there is something faintly absurd about a lofty motive. It is this dormant sense of incongruity which Richard exploits to comic effect. He even succeeds in insinuating that the moral structure of Christianity is some sort of intrusive irrelevance."²⁴

The incongruity of Henry in these plays is only fully crystallized when the mature Richard begins to assert his influence. As Sanders suggests in the context of Richard III, "the energetic vigour of his contempt leaves 'Peace' somewhat shrunken as a term of approbation. In short, we are presented with a world where the 'gentle, mild and virtuous' Henry VI is most appropriately housed in heaven, 'for he was fitter for that place than earth' (I.ii.104-108)." Consistent with his retreat from the world of political intrigue, Henry is probably reading the Bible when Richard enters. In the flowering of his wisdom Henry at last has discovered the pastoral metaphor appropriate to his present situation:

So flies the reckless shepherd from the wolf;
So first the harmless ~~sheep~~ doth yield his fleece
And next his throat unto the butcher's knife. (V.vi.7-9)

His succeeding bird metaphor too is apt (13-17), but it also recalls Clifford's "unreasonable creatures" speech (II.ii.26-42); Henry's grave political and personal misdeeds are thus implicitly weighed

against his present wisdom. These are both highlighted in the irony of Henry's carrying the bird metaphor into the accusations against Richard concerning Prince Edward's murder.

Henry's neglected obligations to family and country make him partially responsible for his own son's death, as this coincidence of imagery underlines. The young bird which "was lim'd, was caught, and kill'd" by Richard and his brothers (17) had been abandoned by Henry who refused to "Make war with him that clim'd unto their nest" (II.ii.31). The irony deepens when one considers the paradox that Henry's refusal to commit himself to the revenge obsession (for example, at II.ii.7) whose sinfulness and awesome consequences he alone in his piety is able to discern, has contributed to his abandonment of responsibility. The emphasis is thus upon the interrelationship between his misplaced personal virtues and his failure to govern and to shelter his young.²⁵

Associations of bird imagery with Henry reinforce his culpability in passivity, as the exchange with the Lieutenant of the Tower illustrates (IV.vi.10-15). Henry is too easily made oblivious (IV.vi.15), at the eye of the storm, to what harm will ensue from the death of a Gloucester or the animosities of a Suffolk, York, Somerset, Clifford, Margaret, Warwick, or Clarence. When Henry resigns his government, Warwick of all people remarks:

Your Grace hath still been fam'd for virtuous,
And now may seem as wise as virtuous
By spying and avoiding Fortune's malice,
For few men rightly temper with the stars; (IV.vi.26-29)

The greatest irony of Henry's existence is the harm this

virtue has brought England, and the impact of this irony lies in our realization that the sinfulness of these thousands who bicker, intrigue, and battle about him, resides in their very neglect of fortune, their very tempering with the stars. Shakespeare links this irony with the further interrelationship of Henry's dilemma with lost innocence and the death of chivalry (1 Henry VI.IV.vi.55; IV.vii.16, 21), as the Icarus metaphor illustrates (V.vi.18-28). There are oblique references to this interrelationship in the Dedalus-Icarus metaphor earlier in this play (II.i.170-1; II.vi.8-10; III.ii.51, and possibly at III.ii.135-139). The recurrent image of York as sun, and the imagery of eclipse, light and shadow, the Phoenix, and flight, recall the earlier emphasis on flight in Henry's powerful rhetorical question, "Can we outrun the heavens?" (2 Henry VI.V.ii.73). For just as York is outrun (I.ii.14), so are all who soar too close to the true sun, which lies in God's domain. Richard's murder of Henry and later of the Princes both epitomizes and far surpasses his forefathers' obstructions of God's design.

Henry's sins are recalled by indirection in his death scene, for there is an appropriate symbolic remoteness to him now which is underlined in his choric prophecy (37-56) and which renders the ritual of his murder, along with Edward's stance in Scene vii, more meaningful as an ending to the Henry VI plays and as a necessary preface to Richard III. But the irony still lingers, even in Henry's prophecy for England. Every episode of the Henry VI plays has enforced an awareness of the sameness of the sins throughout. Henry's chilling vision, whose implications are typically unrecognized by the speaker,

is in fact the description of the sorrowful world of the Henry VI plays:

And thus I prophesy: that many a thousand
Which now mistrust no parcel of my fear,
And many an old man's sigh, and many a widow's,
And many an orphan's water-standing eye--
Men for their sons', wives for their husbands',
Orphans for their parents' timeless death--
Shall rue the hour that ever thou wast born. (37-43)

Thus Richard has indeed come to personify the accumulated evils of the Henry VI plays. And, while Henry has already begun his ascent heavenward in saintliness, still his habitual obliviousness to decay even in the eye of the storm imbues this prophecy with a measure of vituperatio and with a significance both choric and ironic. And so it must do, for these plays embrace much more than the ritual expiation of an original sin, unless that sin be Adam's even earlier misdeed.

The original sins in the Henry VI plays are committed by the characters Shakespeare dramatizes. These characters first threaten, then finally destroy, the delicate balance between inherited nobility and virtuous deeds. The heritage of honour cannot survive on the legacy of destruction alone. When her honour is lost, England also is lost.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

I have mentioned that some critics interpret Shakespeare's Henry VI plays as the dramatization of a cycle whose unity may be found in the working out of a divine pattern of expiation for an original sin committed by Henry Bolingbroke against King Richard II. Others, I believe more correctly, have found ample justification for the sins which befall the Yorkist and Lancastrian factions in their own misdeeds. For both houses confirm a commitment to rebellion which annuls their claims to legitimacy. This confirmation may be seen in the perversion of the concept of noble heritage in these plays.

Two kinds of heritage appear in the Henry VI plays. First, there is John Talbot's association of inheritance with virtuous deeds. Secondly, there are the Yorkist and Lancastrian commitments to their forefathers' legacies of revenge and rebellion. John Talbot confirms his inherited nobility through valour. But the Lancastrians and Yorkists abandon virtue, and this severing of inheritance from personal nobility results in the disappearance of noble heritage. The ultimate outcome of this severance is that both inherited and acquired nobility must perish.

The second component to the concept of heritage is that of natural relationships. Throughout the Henry VI plays escalations of

personal ambition interfere with natural patterns of inheritance, as in King Henry's disinheritance of Prince Edward and Richard of Gloucester's eventual assault on his own house of York. The extended family of England, too, experiences the rendings of civil war. The Cade rebellion and the pebble incident carry this family chaos pattern into the class structure of English society as well. When Humphrey is murdered, the commons in a sense lose their father, just as do so many more "noble" sons of England. The inheritance of that crown so prized by Lancaster and York ceases to be a natural process. Neither noble house now bears a right to reign, so neither Lancaster nor York can naturally claim the succession. For both families confirm a commitment to rebellion which cancels out their claims to legitimacy.

The characters in the Henry VI plays choose the path of ignobility, and it is that choice which brings chaos to England.. Although Bolingbroke's first sin influences events, and although Richard's bloody reign and its fortunate outcome are prophesied, Shakespeare focuses on present misdeeds. The seeds of the revenge motif are sewn in an atmosphere of petty wrangling to which the Talbots are sacrificed; they flower in York's adaption of the Mortimer and Cambridge legacies of revenge and rebellion long before Clifford vows vengeance on the sons of York. Even Henry contributes to England's devastation, for he commits the crime of misrule. The characters who sever virtue from their claims to nobility pay the price. Whether or not God prefigures their ignoble end, Shakespeare dramatizes not a providential pattern but the death without issue of England's noble heritage.

NOTES

Chapter I

¹ William Shakespeare, The Third Part of King Henry VI, ed. Andrew Cairncross, 3rd ed. (London: Methuen, 1964), p. lxvi.

² E. M. W. Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays (London: Chatto & Windus, 1944), p. 147.

³ See also Lily B. Campbell, Shakespeare's Histories: Mirrors of Elizabethan Policy (San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1947), M. M. Reese, The Cease of Majesty: A Study of Shakespeare's History Plays (London: Edward Arnold, 1961), Irving Ribner, The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare (Princeton, N. J: Princeton University Press, 1957), Michael Quinn, "Providence in Shakespeare's Yorkist Plays," Shakespeare Quarterly, X (1959), and David Riggs, Shakespeare's Heroical Histories: Henry VI and Its Literary Tradition (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1971), for discussions of these contemporary views.

⁴ Edward Hall, Hall's Chronicle; Containing the History of England . . . (New York: AMS Press, 1965), p. 286.

⁵ J. P. Brockbank, "The Frame of Disorder," Early Shakespeare, Ed. John R. Brown and Bernard Harris, (London: Edward Arnold, 1961, pp. 82-86, 98; Geoffrey Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare, Vol. III, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960), pp. 36-37, 355; Robert Ornstein, A Kingdom for a Stage: The Achievement of Shakespeare's History Plays (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 31.

⁶ See also Reese, Felix Schelling, The English Chronicle Play: A Study in the Popular Historical Literature Environing Shakespeare (1902; rpt. New York: Haskell House, 1964), Ribner, and Campbell in this regard.

⁷ Brockbank, p. 98.

⁸ Ornstein, p. 38; see also pp. 81-82.

⁹ This "apparent" ignobility will be confirmed as the action progresses.

¹⁰ Wolfgang Clemen, Shakespeare's Dramatic Art: Collected Essays (London: Methuen, 1972), p. 127; Donald M. Ricks, "A Study of the

Structure of Shakespeare's Three Parts of Henry VI," Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Missouri, 1965, relates this and other dramatic techniques in Henry VI to the argument against the unifying influence of Tudor ideas in these plays.

11 This and all subsequent textual references will be to the Third Arden Editions of Henry VI, Ed. Andrew Cairncross (London: Methuen, 1962, 1957, & 1964, respectively). All footnote references will be to these editions unless otherwise specified.

12 See also Quinn.

13 James Winny, The Player King: A Theme of Shakespeare's Histories (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1968), p. 21.

14 Winny, p. 23. Compare also p. 20. See my Chapter IV, p. 68. For other views see Virgil K. Whitaker, Shakespeare's Use of Learning: An Inquiry into the Growth of His Mind and Art (San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1953), p. 58, and Ribner, pp. 107 and 109.

15 Winny, pp. 24 and 42, respectively.

16 S. C. Sen Gupta, Shakespeare's Historical Plays (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 18.

17 Sen Gupta, p. 24. See also Lionel C. Knights, Poetry, Politics, and the English Tradition (London: Chatto & Windus, 1954), p. 15, his book Shakespeare: The Histories (London: Longman's Green, 1962), p. 17, and Riggs, p. 97.

18 Sen Gupta, pp. 26-27.

19 Sen Gupta, p. 26; A. P. Rossiter, Angel with Horns, Ed. Graham Storey, (London: Longmans Green, 1961), p. 44.

20 Hardin Craig, The Enchanted Glass: The Elizabethan Mind in Literature (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1952), p. 157. Rossiter also expresses this view, p. 22.

21 Sen Gupta, p. 58. See also Lionel C. Knights, Some Shakespearean Themes (London: Chatto & Windus, 1959), p. 29.

22 Rossiter, p. 59.

23 Knights, Histories, pp. 14-15, Poetry, pp. 10-11, Histories, p. 15, respectively. Knights, however, leaves a suggestion, in his Histories, p. 17, that the Henry VI's are a dramatic presentation of the Tudor view of history; compare this, however, to Themes, p. 29. See also M. C. Bradbrook, Shakespeare and Elizabethan Poetry: A

Study of his Earlier Work in Relation to the Poetry of the Time (London: Chatto & Windus, 1951), p. 124, on the pattern of "moral history" fitfully discerned in Henry VI.

²⁴ G. Wilson Knight, The Sovereign Flower (London: Methuen, 1958), notes in the context of blood imagery in the histories that man's brutality flows all too naturally from a universe patterned of blood, p. 17. See also Carol McGinnis Kay, "Traps, Slaughter, and Chaos: A Study of Shakespeare's Henry VI Plays," Studies in the Literary Imagination, V, 1 (April, 1972), pp. 1-26, p. 15.

²⁵ See Ribner, p. 102, on Edward's lechery; more generally, see Reese, p. 101, on the relationship between a good ruler and a good man.

²⁶ See Campbell, p. 122, on biblical sources for Elizabethan concepts of the cycles in history.

Chapter II

¹ William Shakespeare, The First Part of King Henry VI, Ed. J. Dover Wilson, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), p. xliii.

² Wilson, 1 Henry VI, p. xi.

³ Hall, pp. 228-229.

⁴ I have presumed that he has just finished his formal education.

⁵ See 1 Henry VI, n 94.

⁶ I have called Richard Plantagenet "York" throughout the discussion of this play for the sake of simplicity; strictly speaking, he should not be referred to as York before he is granted his dukedom.

⁷ Cairncross notes this balance, 1 Henry VI, pp. 96-97.

⁸ My thesis concerns Shakespeare's rather than history's Wars, but for historical perspective see J. R. Lander, The Wars of the Roses (1965; rpt. London: Secker & Warburg, 1966), and R. L. Storey The End of the House of Lancaster (London: Barrie & Rockliff, 1966).

⁹ See Bullough, p. 27.

¹⁰ Wilson, 1 Henry VI, xix.

¹¹ Kay finds the imagery of entrapment predominant throughout 1 Henry VI. This general pattern has interesting applications to the Auvergne episode. Her comments concerning the choice of these boundaries and enclosures, p. 11, are also interesting in view of the relevance of free will to my thesis.

¹² See 1 Henry VI, n 50.

¹³ See I Henry VI, n 51.

¹⁴ These are Cairncross' words, n 51; see III.i.159 ff.

¹⁵ See Ronald S. Berman, "Fathers and Sons in the Henry VI Plays," Shakespeare Quarterly, XIII (1962), pp. 487-497, pp. 487-489. On the native element of evil, see R. W. Chambers, Man's Unconquerable Mind (Hammondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1963); compare E. E. Stoll, Shakespeare Studies: Historical and Comparative in Method (1927; rpt. with corrections New York: G. E. Stechert & Co., 1942), p. 341, on the relationship of the individual's embodiment of evil to convulsions in the order of society; see also Arthur Sewall, Character and Society in Shakespeare (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1951), especially his chapter on Shakespeare's concept of order, p. 35 ff.

¹⁶ See Bullough, pp. 36-37; see also C. B. Watson, Shakespeare and the Renaissance Concept of Honor (Princeton, N. J: Princeton University Press, 1960), p. 398, on the Renaissance revenge tradition.

¹⁷ Tillyard, 163.

¹⁸ See Ribner's appendix A, p. 305 ff., on Tudor political doctrine.

¹⁹ Bullough, p. 355.

²⁰ Tillyard, p. 147.

²¹ Compare Knights' admonition to study the plays, Histories, p. 14.

²² Bullough, p. 37.

²³ Berman, p. 489.

²⁴ Compare Whitaker, p. 76; Whitaker suggests that Shakespeare seems to concentrate on civil war as a kind of family strife; compare also Wilbur Sanders, The Dramatist and the Revealed Idea: Studies in the Plays of Marlowe and Shakespeare (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1968, p. 100, on primary values of generation.

²⁵ Historically, Mortimer was not Richard II's direct heir. Shakespeare perhaps confuses him with his uncle, Sir Edmund Mortimer, as Cairncross suggests, 1 Henry VI, pp. n 53 and n 56. We might give benefit of the doubt to Shakespeare, however; he may simply have combined the two historical figures for dramatic purposes.

²⁶ Berman, p. 487.

²⁷ Hall, 179.

²⁸ Clemen, p. 126. See also Tom F. Driver, The Sense of History in Greek and Shakespearean Drama (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), p. 97.

²⁹ Michael Manheim, The Weak King Dilemma in the Shakespearean History Play (Syracuse, N. Y: Syracuse University Press, 1973), p. 192, considers that the present trend in criticism of the Henry VI's is to judge Henry VI too harshly; his assessment of both Henry's motivations and his burden of responsibility in the Wars differs from my own. Compare Reese, p. 126, on the necessity for authority to assert itself.

³⁰ 1 Henry VI, n 53.

³¹ Compare Ribner 101-102 on Shakespeare's use of morality devices and chronicle materials and also Knights, Histories, p. 8.

³² See Bullough, n 48-49.

³³ J. R. Marriott, English History in Shakespeare (1918; rpt. N. Y: Haskell House, 1971), unaccountably writes (p. 13) that, to Shakespeare and to the chroniclers, history is a record of the deeds, good and bad, of eminent individuals. Compare also, on the commons, Sen Gupta, p. 41.

³⁴ Berman, p. 489.

³⁵ John F. Danby, Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature: A Study of King Lear (London: Faber & Faber, 1949), p. 58; on the controversy over interpreting Hall, see Ornstein, 14 ff.

³⁶ Riggs, p. 33; Riggs, however, goes on to elucidate development of the particular didactic framework which would later characterize Richard III. See also Ribner, p. 18, on the degree of Renaissance man's control over his own destiny.

³⁷ See Berman, pp. 488-489.

³⁸ Compare Alfred Harbage, As They Liked It: A Study of Shakespeare's Moral Artistry (New York: Macmillan, 1947), p. 197, who writes that "children form the single category of Shakespearean characters uniformly untainted. Some of them are pert, and most of them seem to know 'the facts of life,' but they are never guilty or furtive, never evil themselves or the effective instruments of evil." See also, in the context of providentiality, Ornstein, p. 51, on innocent children.

³⁹ Talbot is not without concern for rank, however; compare 1 Henry VI.I.iv.26-33. There is also an interesting subject for reflection in Kay's comment that Shakespeare associates no military imagery with Talbot.

⁴⁰ See also Riggs on bastardy, p. 22, and on Talbot's family name and personal honour, pp. 73 and 83, respectively. For a more general study of chivalry, see Arthur Ferguson, The Indian Summer of English Chivalry: Studies in the Decline and Transformation of Chivalric Idealism (Durham, N. C: Duke University Press, 1960).

Chapter III

¹ Riggs, p. 119.

² Berman, p. 491. Compare my comments on the two senses of blood, p. 9.

³ Berman, p. 492.

⁴ 2 Henry VI, n 25.

⁵ There will be a parallel in later complications arising out of York's "mess of sons" (Margaret's words at 3 Henry VI. I.iv.73).

⁶ See references to bastardy at 2 Henry VI.III.ii.210-214, 222).

⁷ A. L. French, "Henry VI and the Ghost of Richard II," English Studies, L, Anglo-American Supplement, pp. xxxvii-xliii, p. xli.

⁸ Riggs, 47, 48.

⁹ See the chapter on past and future in Shakespeare's drama, Clemen, 124 ff, his essay "Anticipation and Foreboding in Shakespeare's Early Histories," Shakespeare Survey, VI (1953), pp. 25-35 and especially p. 26. See also Mable Buland, The Presentation of Time in the Elizabethan Drama (New York: Haskell House, 1966).

¹⁰ Riggs, p. 116. For an interesting discussion of Humphrey, Eleanor, and York, and Shakespeare's sources, see Samuel M. Pratt, "Shakespeare and Humphrey Duke of Gloucester: A Study in Myth," Shakespeare Quarterly, XVI (1965), pp. 201-216.

¹¹ Cairncross, however, calls it Henry's decision; see 2 Henry VI, n 92.

¹² This historically contentious issue of Richard II's guilt or innocence (IV.i.94) is of some relevance to the Lancaster-York heritage of nobility in the greater framework of the two tetralogies.

¹³ This event is echoed with irony in the later yet more depraved England of Richard III when Stanley is forced to relinquish his son George to Richard before Bosworth Field, IV.iv.494-496. This and all subsequent references to Richard III will be to The Pelican Shakespeare Edition, Ed. G. Blakemore Evans (1959; rpt. (Baltimore, Md: Penguin Books Inc., 1965).

¹⁴ Berman, p. 490.

¹⁵ 2 Henry VI, 1.

¹⁶ For further commentary on the Tudor myth in the particular context of the imagery in these plays, see Kay, p. 25.

¹⁷ Riggs, p. 97.

Chapter IV

¹ A movement downward in royal lineage and in social strata, and outward. Joan of Arc says that "Glory is like a circle in the

water,/Which never ceaseth to enlarge itself/Till by broad spreading it disperse to nought" (1 Henry VI.I.ii.133-135). In these plays the circle of ignobility radiates in all directions, and in Richard III it disperses to nought.

² Winny, pp. 21 and 23, respectively. See also my Introduction, p. 4.

³ Reginald A. Saner, "Shakespeare and the Shape of Civil Strife: 'Myself upon Myself,'" Western Humanities Review, XXV (1971), pp. 243-251, p. 249, considers that Rutland died because York tried for the crown. This is true, of course, and in this sense he is implicated in the larger pattern of sin and retribution. Rutland himself, however, remains personally uncommitted to the revenge tragedy. Saner suggests that Shakespeare makes the evil doer his own hell-on-earth and that his life therefore ceases to be worth living long before death. I am not certain that this situation quite fits Henry VI. More crucial here is a characteristic self delusion, a potent side effect of which is the unawareness of one's own depravity. If their lives cease to be worth living, then these characters in Henry VI do not know it.

⁴ 3 Henry VI, n 21.

⁵ For further comment on Shakespeare's dramatic use of children, see Arlin J. Hiken, "Shakespeare's Use of Children," Educational Theatre Journal, XV (1963), pp. 241-248.

⁶ See 1 Henry VI.IV.vii.94.

⁷ 3 Henry VI, n 32.

⁸ Hall, p. 256; see also 3 Henry VI, p. 155.

⁹ 3 Henry VI, n 27. Hall, p. 251, mentions the paper crown as having been put on York's body after his death; see 3 Henry VI, n 28.

¹⁰ Ornstein, however, says of York in 1 Henry VI that he is "a patriot who identifies his cause with England's," pp. 39-40. I have not, even in those early squabbles, seen York in that light. Wayne L. Billings, "Ironie Lapses: Plotting in Henry VI," Studies in the Literary Imagination, V, 1 (April, 1972), pp. 27-49, suggests in the context of Henry VI that England's reverses most often result from "a failure in the heroic stance," p. 27.

¹¹ Compare Ribner, p. 102, on York's death, in the context of divine punishment.

- 12 See Kay, p. 13, on the shepherd imagery and King Henry.
- 13 3 Henry VI, n 48.
- 14 3 Henry VI, liii.
- 15 Riggs, pp. 132-133.
- 16 Ornstein, pp. 38-39. See also Sen Gupta, p. 37.
- 17 Such biblical overtones are not infrequent; see also I.iv.94, I.vii.33-34. Often Shakespeare enhances the irony by making such associations highly incongruous.
- 18 3 Henry VI, n 57.
- 19 Kay remarks upon this symmetry and relates the staging here to the pervasive ebb and flow pattern, p. 20.
- 20 Compare Ribner on the molehill scene, p. 101, and Bradbrook, p. 127.
- 21 Winny, p. 24.
- 22 Winny, p. 35.
- 23 Riggs, p. 91.
- 24 Sanders, pp. 90-91; compare, on Richard's character in 3 Henry VI, Bernard Spivack, Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil: The History of a Metaphor in Relation to His Major Villains (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), p. 400.
- 25 See Brockbank's comments on Henry's death and appeasing "the appetite of providence," p. 98. Brockbank, however, speaks of the "martyrdom of an innocent king" [emphasis mine].

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