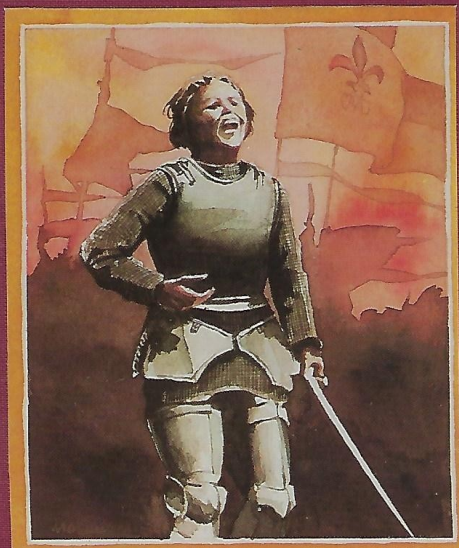


THE GUILD  
*Shakespeare*



THE GUILD

*Shakespeare*

HENRY VI, PART 1

HENRY VI, PART 2

BY

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

EDITED BY

JOHN F. ANDREWS

Foreword by Jane Howell

GuildAmerica Books™  
Doubleday Book & Music Clubs, Inc.  
Garden City, New York

CONTENTS

Foreword to <i>Henry VI, Part 1</i> and <i>Henry VI, Part 2</i> by Jane Howell	vii
Editor's Introduction to <i>Henry VI, Part 1</i> and <i>Henry VI, Part 2</i>	xix
<i>HENRY VI, PART 1</i>	1
<i>HENRY VI, PART 2</i>	253

Copyright © 1990 by Doubleday Book & Music Clubs, Inc.  
All Rights Reserved  
Printed in the United States of America

Cover Painting: Joan de Pucell, from *Henry VI, Part 1*.  
Painting, frontispiece, endpapers, and book design by Barry Moser.  
Text is in Baskerville, with display calligraphy by  
Reassurance Wunder. Binding design by Barry Moser  
and Hideo Ietaka.

Art Director: Diana Klemm, with Rhea Braunstein.  
Project Editor: Mary Sherwin Jatlow.

The Guild Shakespeare™  
GuildAmerica Books™  
Trademark registration pending on behalf of Doubleday Book &  
Music Clubs, Inc.

Quality Printing and Binding by  
Horowitz/Rae Book Manufacturers, Inc.  
300 Fairfield Road  
Fairfield, NJ 07006 U.S.A.



Foreword to  
*HENRY VI, PART 1*  
and  
*HENRY VI, PART 2*  
by Jane Howell



My admiration for the plays of *Henry VI* began when I was asked to direct the tetralogy for the BBC Television series. Although I had never read them, I was under the impression that they were unimportant plays, second-rate, and probably not written by Shakespeare. In my work I always start from the premise that the author is more intelligent than I am; however as I began to read the plays I was confronted by a series of seemingly inadequate

---

JANE HOWELL has directed a wide range of theatre productions in England, including *The Winter's Tale* at the Old Vic in Bristol, *Twelfth Night* for the English Stage Company at the Royal Court Theatre, and *Saint Joan* and *The Dybbuk* for television. She has also twice directed Edward Bond's *Bingo*, an unusual play about the life—and suicide—of Shakespeare.

vii

---

THE GUILD SHAKESPEARE

scenes, written in simple verse, and I began to wonder if I had been well advised in undertaking to direct them.

For me the enigma of the tetralogy was whether the plays charted the development of Shakespeare from his first stumbling steps as an author to the assured maturity of *Richard III*, or whether the naive style of the opening acts was part of the author's conscious design. Directors learn to welcome the scene which will not readily yield its meaning, for once it is understood then the intellectual spine of the whole play will be clarified. As I read I began to be aware of similarities with our present-day pantomimes. This is an enjoyable but corrupt form of theatre, distantly related to the medieval Mystery Plays, with their invigorating mixture of farce, comedy, and seriousness. I began to realise that the seeming absurdities of *Henry VI, Part 1* were deliberate comic statements, written in a style which echoed the older theatrical tradition. The next question, one of only two questions the theatre has to ask, was why? Why this particular style?

How naive seem the antics of the great barons of England in the opening scene, how childish their arguments; but then their "father" is dead. As the coffin of Henry V, the hero King, the father of his people, the representative of God on Earth, leaves the stage, the shouts of messengers are heard. Three soldiers arrive with realistic appraisals of the defeats suffered by England in the French wars. The seriousness of the soldiers' purpose throws the petty squabbles of the brothers and cousins of Henry V into sharp focus. England is "fatherless," a child rules, and politics are conducted in the language of the playground. This is especially apparent in the quarrel between Winchester and Gloucester before the Tower, where it falls to the Lord

viii

---

FOREWORD BY JANE HOWELL

Mayor of London to control the barons, scolding them like an irate schoolmaster:

Fie, Lords, that you, being supreme Magistrates,  
Thus contumeliously should break the Peace!

The protectors of the young King Henry VI continue to behave like children released from the over-watchful eye of their parents. The naiveté of the verse, the childishness of the arguments, the behaviour of the nobles, reveals the political reality of England. The hero is dead and the mantle of his authority divided between lesser men.

These were some of the reasons I gave to a company of actors to justify the style of *Henry VI, Part 1*; but who of us can say with certainty whether the style is a happy accident or Shakespeare's conscious choice? As a director I, thankfully, have only to concern myself with the second question posed by the theatre; does it work? The actors felt that it was a possible solution, and we continued to examine the plays with this approach in mind.

When the tetralogy begins, the orphaned state still adheres to the precepts of the "father," obedience to the rule of law, respect for God and King. The plays begin in an age of innocence, an age of chivalry. Talbot, Henry V's general, embodies the chivalric code, both in his concept of honour and in the dedication of his life to the service of King and Commonwealth. Chivalry is depicted as a game with a mutually agreed set of rules to be observed by both camps. To depict the battles, Shakespeare employs the theatrical techniques we associate with farce. For example, during the siege of Orleans, the French, surprised by

ix



Talbot, leap from the walls in their nightshirts; then, instead of seeking safety, they bicker among themselves, making suggestive jokes about Joan and the Dauphin. The use of an older theatrical style indicates accurately Talbot's political position; for when a child lights a cannon and kills old Salisbury (who trained Henry V in arms), the code of chivalry is destroyed forever, and the old general is left clinging to the values of a vanishing age.

By virtue of both her youth and her sex, Joan is an affront to Talbot. In the course of the play she too becomes expendable, and sees in Talbot's death the true face of war, perhaps even senses her own inevitable betrayal.

JOAN Him that thou magnifi'st with all these Titles  
Stinking and Fly-blown lies here at our Feet.

Joan's talents, however dubious their source, can only flourish in a heroic age. When Burgundy betrays the English and returns to the French camp, new policies born of self-interest become the *modus vivendi*. For Joan and Talbot "the Time is out of joint," though it is not until the play moves into the darker mood of the fourth act that the characters realise the vulnerability of their position.

There is a significant shift of mood in the fourth acts of each of the three parts of *Henry VI*. In *Part 1* a new seriousness underlies the action, for the "revels now are ended." Talbot, caught in a trap where death is inevitable, entrapped by the self-interested intrigues of the coming generation led by York and Somerset, tries to persuade his son to leave the battlefield. John Talbot is a mirror reflecting his father's values; Talbot urges expediency,

x

but point by point the boy destroys his arguments in a series of deceptively simple rhyming couplets.

TALBOT Upon my Blessing, I command thee go.  
JOHN To fight I will, but not to fly the Foe.  
TALBOT Part of thy Father may be sav'd in thee.  
JOHN No Part of him but will be Shame in me.  
TALBOT Thou never hadst Renown, nor canst not  
lose it.  
JOHN Yes, your renowned Name: shall Flight  
abuse it?

Talbot's appeals to common sense are defeated by the values which he himself has instilled in the boy; he is defeated by the code of chivalry, and he dies cradling his son in his arms. In performance the rhyming verse which encloses this argument reveals its power; the game is serious now, the stakes are life or death.

York, Somerset, Warwick, and Suffolk are the leaders of the coming age, and their first scene is deftly placed. Talbot, having temporarily defeated the French, is invited to visit a French Countess. Anticipating her plan to capture him, he turns the situation to his own advantage, charms her, and retires to taste her cakes and dainties! This may seem a slight scene, but it is a timely reminder of the beginning of chivalry, the Arthurian age, where, once upon a time, fair damsels lived in castles, knights adventured forth, and always treated their defeated enemies with courtesy. There is little courtesy to be found in the Rose Garden where the young Lords, initially arguing a trivial point of law,

xi

suddenly find themselves in a serious conflict, and begin to reveal the divisions that lie buried in the soil of England. Old wounds, hastily patched over in Henry V's time, begin to bleed afresh, and we start to question the integrity of his reign. Visiting Mortimer in the Tower, York learns that he has a claim to the English Crown, that Henry V executed his father. The secrets of history, whispered into his ear by a dying man, inflame York's anger and ambition, yet he says little:

—Well, I will lock his Counsel in my Breast,  
And what I do imagine, let that rest.

Above all else, York is politic. He will wait until he is in a position of power, until the time is advantageous; then, and only then, will he claim the Crown.

Henry VI is an ineffectual King, weak when he should show courage, often obdurate and willful when he should be politic, but he does offer a tentative alternative to the values of York and Somerset. In *Henry VI, Part 3* a huntsman asks him, "But if thou be King, where is thy Crown?", to which the King replies:

My Crown is in my Heart, not on my Head;  
Not deck'd with Diamonds and Indian Stones,  
Nor to be seen. My Crown is call'd Content:  
A Crown it is that seldom Kings enjoy.

It is not surprising that Henry, growing up in the shadow of the hero of Agincourt, should be the antithesis of his father. By nature unsuited to martial life, he longs instead for a life of

xii

harmony, a life at one with the rhythm of the passing seasons, a life of quiet simplicity, while all around him strive for "Supremacy and Sway." Henry is as anxious to rid himself of the responsibilities of Kingship as York is to claim them.

No sooner was I crept out of my Cradle  
But I was made a King, at nine Months old.  
Was never Subject long'd to be a King  
As I do long and wish to be a Subject.

In *Henry VI, Part 2*, three factions form an uneasy alliance; Suffolk seeks to rule through his influence with the Queen; Somerset and his allies wear red roses as a sign of their hatred for York; while Warwick seeks to be a Kingmaker, and is active on York's behalf. Only Gloucester, the Lord Protector, the brother of the late Henry V, stands between these parties and their conflicting desires. Gloucester believes that the rule of Law is the foundation stone of good government. The young Lords despise both the law and its crusty, schoolmasterly guardian; expediency is their watchword, governed as they are by ambition and self-interest. Even Gloucester's young wife Eleanor dreams of power:

Me thought I sate in Seat of Majesty  
In the Cathedral Church of Westminster,  
And in that Chair where Kings and Queens were  
crown'd,  
Where Henry and Dame Marg'ret kneel'd to me,  
And on my Head did set the Diadem.

xiii



Eleanor is easily lured into a meeting with a witch, where she asks indiscreet questions about the succession, and is promptly arrested by York. Talbot's generosity to a French Countess, who also dabbled in witchcraft, is like a memory from a forgotten age.

Gloucester is forced to sit in judgment on his own wife. His life has been dedicated to the rule of law and now, perhaps for the first time, he feels its cutting edge as he upholds the King's sentence of banishment. The pack have him by the throat, for Eleanor's disgrace inevitably stains his reputation. Gloucester's faith in the law, however, and his love for his King prevent him from fully realising the danger of his situation.

I must offend before I be attainted;  
And had I twenty times so many Foes,  
And each of them had twenty times their Power,  
All these could not procure me any Scathe  
So long as I am Loyal, True, and Crimeless.

Gloucester is arraigned on charges that are insultingly trivial, for the young Lords cynically use the law as a servant to their desires. At last Gloucester sees his situation, and the future, with clarity:

I know their Complot is to have my Life,  
And if my Death might make this Island happy  
And prove the Period of their Tyranny,  
I would expend it with all willingness.  
But mine is made the Prologue to their Play:

xiv

For thousands more, that yet suspect no Peril,  
Will not conclude their plotted Tragedy.

Gloucester's murder follows fast upon his arrest. Chivalry has been eclipsed, a mockery made of the law; and now with Gloucester's death a dam breaks, for he alone held back the forces of anarchy which flood forth, threatening to drown the kingdom.

The consequences of Gloucester's arrest are immediately apparent, for had he been in power York would never have been allowed to put down a rebellion in Ireland, never have been given men and arms. Obsessed with the destruction of the Lord Protector, Queen Margaret and Suffolk carelessly empower their enemy. The alliance has served its purpose; now it is each man for himself. With a political instinct sharpened by years of waiting, York lays his plans.

And for a Minister of my Intent,  
I have seduc'd a Head-strong Kentishman,  
John Cade of Ashford,  
To make Commotion, as full well he can,  
Under the Title of John Mortimer. . . .  
Say that he thrive, as 'tis great like he will:  
Why then from Ireland come I with my Strength,  
And reap the Harvest which that Rascal sow'd.

The basic causes of the revolt led by Jack Cade were rising prices and a corrupt legal system.

xv

CADE . . . For I did but seal once to a  
thing, and I was never mine own Man since.

The inequalities inherent in a hierarchical system are also challenged. Confronted by the Lords of England, Cade's followers are over-awed, so he takes a sword and knights himself, questioning by a simple action the premise of government. As the revolt progresses it becomes more anarchic. Cade orders the destruction of the records of the realm, the destruction of history, saying,

my Mouth shall be the Parliament of England.

When the Lords weakened the law by abusing it, and murdered the Protector, they made it possible for any demagogue to be a judge, and he who shouts loudest to rule; and for awhile Cade sits in the judgment seat as the Lord of Misrule.

As the last cries of revolt die away, York's drum is heard, and Henry VI despairs,

Thus stands my State, 'twixt Cade and York distress'd,  
Like to a Ship that, having scap'd a Tempest,  
Is straightway calm and boarded with a Pirate.

With a disciplined force of soldiers, matured by command, York comes "to claim his own," and the Wars of the Roses begin.

The tetralogy begins with the funeral of a hero King and will end with the murder of his successor. Between these two events

xvi

we are observers of a collapsing society. As we enter the world of *Henry VI, Part 3*, Talbot's age seems like a dream, a memory of childhood. By the time we reach the world of *Richard III* the dream has passed beyond recall.

xvii



Editor's Introduction to

*HENRY VI, PART 1*

and

*HENRY VI, PART 2*



"Does history repeat itself?" "Only if you flunk." This exchange occurred recently in a comic strip about the tribulations of modern schoolchildren. The answer, of course, is a joke, but the anxiety it parodies is one that Shakespeare and his contemporaries regarded as anything but a laughing matter.

For the Elizabethans, history was one of the "mirrors" by which God disclosed His purposes to anyone with a conscientious desire to understand how the world works. For them history was the study of a fallen humanity that faced essentially the same quandaries from one generation to the next. For them history was a repository of patterns to emulate and perils to escape. For them, in other words, history was anything but the dunghill an American industrialist was later to imply when he dismissed it as bunk. Because if any truth seemed self-evident to the average playgoer of Shakespeare's day, it was the time-honored observa-

xix

THE GUILD SHAKESPEARE

tion that the precepts of the past are pertinent to the problems and priorities of the present.

In 1592, in a treatise bearing the title *Piers Penniless*, Thomas Nashe defended the theatre against those who thought it pernicious by pointing out that in dramatic works based on history "all cozenage, all cunning drifts overgilded with outward holiness, all stratagems of war, all the cankerworms that breed on the rust of peace, are most lively anatomized." Responsible playwrights "show the ill success of treason," Nashe maintained, "the fall of hasty climbers, the wretched end of usurpers, the misery of civil dissension, and how just God is evermore in punishing of murder." Meanwhile, and of equal importance according to Nashe, plays drawing on history keep alive "our forefathers' valiant acts" and thereby rebuke by noble example the vices of "these degenerate effeminate days of ours." Brave knights who "have long lain buried in rusty brass and worm-eaten books are revived, and they themselves raised from the grave of oblivion and brought to plead their aged honors in open presence."

To illustrate his point, Nashe alluded to the most heroic figure in the drama we now refer to as *Henry VI, Part 1*. How it would have "joyed brave Talbot, the terror of the French, to think that after he had lain two hundred years in his tomb, he should triumph again on the stage, and have his bones new embalmed with the tears of ten thousand spectators at least (at several times) who, in the tragedian that represents his person, imagine they behold him fresh bleeding."

For Nashe and for the hordes of others who crowded into Philip Henslowe's Rose playhouse on the south bank of the Thames in the early 1590s, it must have been thrilling indeed to

xx

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

see "brave Talbot" re-enact his famous victories over a host of treacherous adversaries. At the same time, however, it must have been sobering to observe the disputes at Court and the mismanagement of military affairs in France that eventually doomed this magnificent warrior to offer up his life as a martyr to the irresponsibility of England's leaders. For if Shakespeare's three plays about the ill-fated reign of Henry VI do nothing else, they remind us that even a battlefield prodigy like Talbot is powerless to surmount the effects of corrupt counsel and political disunity when those who should be augmenting a soldier's endeavors are undermining them instead.

Just when Shakespeare wrote his trilogy on *Henry VI* is uncertain. The earliest of the plays must have been completed sometime after 1587, when a revised edition of Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* appeared in print. Shakespeare drew on this compilation, along with such earlier treatments of his subject matter as Edward Hall's *Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancaster and York* (1548 edition), Richard Grafton's *Chronicle at Large* (1569), John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments of the Church* (1563), Robert Fabyan's *New Chronicles of England and France* (1516), John Stow's *Chronicles of England* (1580), and the multi-author *Mirror for Magistrates* (published in various editions from 1559 to 1587). Meanwhile, at the other end of the spectrum, the last of the *Henry VI* plays must have been completed by 1592, when there are references to them not only in Nashe and in the account books of theatre impresario Philip Henslowe but also in Robert Greene's *Groatsworth of Wit*, a posthumous pamphlet in which a dissipated poet on his deathbed attacks "the only Shakescene in a country" as "an upstart Crow," a brash newcomer—a

xxi



mere actor who has had the effrontery to turn his hand to playwrighting and who now "supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best" of the realm's established dramatists.

The dates usually assigned to the *Henry VI* sequence are 1589–92, but there has been considerable debate about the order in which the plays were composed and the degree to which they represent the work of a single author. What now appear to have been corrupt versions of *Parts 2* and *3* were issued in small, unbound editions in 1594 (*The First Part of the Contention betwixt the two famous Houses of York and Lancaster*) and 1595 (*The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York*). Later, when the copyright for *Part 1* was registered with the Stationers' Company before its initial publication in the 1623 First Folio, the work was listed as "the third part of Henry the Sixt." These circumstances have led some to infer that *Part 1* was actually the third play to be written; they have also encouraged speculation that certain portions of the trilogy were Shakespearean adaptations of earlier treatments by previous playwrights (with Robert Greene, Thomas Nashe, and George Peele among those who have been hypothesized as prior authors). The most widely accepted view at present is (a) that the plays in the form that has come down to us are substantially, if not totally, the work of William Shakespeare, and (b) that there is no compelling reason why they could not have been written in the order in which they eventually appeared, with their present titles, in the authoritative versions that were published in the First Folio.

What also seems likely is that the *Henry VI* plays were among the earliest, if not indeed the very first, of Shakespeare's achieve-

ments as a dramatist. Whether the playwright knew when he began that he would eventually produce three plays on the strife-torn reign of an ineffectual monarch, and that he would then go on to produce a fourth play on the bloodbath that climaxed that period of internecine struggle, is more than we can say. He may have, but the only thing that seems clear in retrospect is that once he completed his four-play cycle on the roots of a Tudor dynasty that was now drawing to a close with a childless, aging Queen on the throne, Shakespeare must have realized that he had developed, if not invented, a new dramatic mode that offered Elizabethan audiences a deeper insight into the factors that had brought their nation to its present position in the world.

Why he chose as his subject the period of decline and disintegration that began with the death of the legendary King Henry V is a question of considerable interest. One might have expected an eager young playwright to focus instead on the reign of Henry VI's father, a monarch notable for his triumphs over adversity—particularly when one considers that Shakespeare may well have begun the earliest of his *Henry VI* plays in the immediate aftermath of England's stunning 1588 victory over the "invincible Armada" of a Catholic Spain that seemed determined to undo the Anglican "Reformation" and return Albion to the one true Faith. We certainly find a good deal of English jingoism in *1 Henry VI*, a hyper-patriotism reflected in the contrast between the play's celebration of brave, chivalrous Talbot and its ridicule for the effeminate, cowardly French and the craft to which they must constantly resort in order to even the odds. But the dominant note, even in this the least downbeat of the *Henry VI* plays, is a preoccupation with those self-destructive tendencies that will

mere actor who has had the effrontery to turn his hand to playwrighting and who now "supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best" of the realm's established dramatists.

The dates usually assigned to the *Henry VI* sequence are 1589–92, but there has been considerable debate about the order in which the plays were composed and the degree to which they represent the work of a single author. What now appear to have been corrupt versions of *Parts 2* and *3* were issued in small, unbound editions in 1594 (*The First Part of the Contention betwixt the two famous Houses of York and Lancaster*) and 1595 (*The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York*). Later, when the copyright for *Part 1* was registered with the Stationers' Company before its initial publication in the 1623 First Folio, the work was listed as "the third part of Henry the Sixt." These circumstances have led some to infer that *Part 1* was actually the third play to be written; they have also encouraged speculation that certain portions of the trilogy were Shakespearean adaptations of earlier treatments by previous playwrights (with Robert Greene, Thomas Nashe, and George Peele among those who have been hypothesized as prior authors). The most widely accepted view at present is (a) that the plays in the form that has come down to us are substantially, if not totally, the work of William Shakespeare, and (b) that there is no compelling reason why they could not have been written in the order in which they eventually appeared, with their present titles, in the authoritative versions that were published in the First Folio.

What also seems likely is that the *Henry VI* plays were among the earliest, if not indeed the very first, of Shakespeare's achieve-

ments as a dramatist. Whether the playwright knew when he began that he would eventually produce three plays on the strife-torn reign of an ineffectual monarch, and that he would then go on to produce a fourth play on the bloodbath that climaxed that period of internecine struggle, is more than we can say. He may have, but the only thing that seems clear in retrospect is that once he completed his four-play cycle on the roots of a Tudor dynasty that was now drawing to a close with a childless, aging Queen on the throne, Shakespeare must have realized that he had developed, if not invented, a new dramatic mode that offered Elizabethan audiences a deeper insight into the factors that had brought their nation to its present position in the world.

Why he chose as his subject the period of decline and disintegration that began with the death of the legendary King Henry V is a question of considerable interest. One might have expected an eager young playwright to focus instead on the reign of Henry VI's father, a monarch notable for his triumphs over adversity—particularly when one considers that Shakespeare may well have begun the earliest of his *Henry VI* plays in the immediate aftermath of England's stunning 1588 victory over the "invincible Armada" of a Catholic Spain that seemed determined to undo the Anglican "Reformation" and return Albion to the one true Faith. We certainly find a good deal of English jingoism in *1 Henry VI*, a hyper-patriotism reflected in the contrast between the play's celebration of brave, chivalrous Talbot and its ridicule for the effeminate, cowardly French and the craft to which they must constantly resort in order to even the odds. But the dominant note, even in this the least downbeat of the *Henry VI* plays, is a preoccupation with those self-destructive tendencies that will



became Henry IV a quarter of a century earlier had done no more than reassert his right to the dukedom of Lancaster.

By the end of *2 Henry VI* we witness the first battle of what will become the Wars of the Roses. Having defined the terms of the conflict in the Temple Garden scene (II.iv) of *1 Henry VI*, the Duke of York and his forces march under the banner of the White Rose while the Duke of Somerset and his allies enter the fray bearing the Red Rose of the house of Lancaster. By now it is 1455, more than three decades after the death of Henry V in 1422, and it will be another three decades before the two houses become reconciled again in the wake of the Battle of Bosworth Field.

If *1 Henry VI* was in fact the earliest of Shakespeare's dramatic accomplishments, a work he completed before he turned twenty-seven, it is all the more remarkable for the self-assurance of its artistry. Among other things, the play is astonishing for the confidence with which the youthful dramatist adapts material from his sources and adjusts the historical chronology to produce a sequence of occurrences that will compel conviction in the theatre.

In the opening scene, for example, Shakespeare combines and relates events that took place in 1422 (Henry V's funeral), 1426 (the quarrel between the Lord Protector and the Bishop of Winchester), 1429 (the capture of the Earl of Talbot), and the period from 1429 to 1451 (the loss of the French towns cited in lines 57-61). In the second scene the playwright invents the incident (the defeat of the Dolphin in a hand combat) that highlights the French leader's introduction to Joan de Pucell (Joan of Arc) in 1429. In the third scene Shakespeare dramatizes a con-

frontation between Gloster and Winchester that actually preceded by two years the quarrel depicted in I.i. In the fourth scene the playwright conflates an event that occurred in 1431 (the release of Talbot) with one that took place in 1428 (the death of Salisbury).

In Act II Shakespeare becomes even bolder. When he shows us Talbot's recapture of Orleanse (Orleans), he echoes an incident that actually occurred at Le Mans in 1428. He then draws solely on his own imagination for Talbot's encounter with the Countess of Auvergne (II.iii), the confrontation between Plantagenet and Somerset in the Temple Garden (II.iv), and the visit that Plantagenet pays to his dying uncle in the Tower of London (II.v).

In the opening scene of Act III the playwright alters history to have the young Henry VI, rather than his uncle the Duke of Bedford, intervene as the peacemaker between Gloster and Winchester. In III.ii, the recapture of Roan (Rouen), Shakespeare combines details from the siege of Cornhill (1441) and the battle of Le Mans (1428); he also works in an incident, the death of Bedford, that occurred in another setting in 1435. In III.iii the playwright depicts Joan de Pucell as the cause of the Duke of Burgundy's decision to shift his allegiance from England to France. Burgundy's defection actually took place in 1434, four years after Joan's death, but Shakespeare devises the incident to emphasize the Maid's dazzling powers of persuasion. In III.iv and IV.i Shakespeare deploys two characters of his own concocting, Vernon and Basset, and lets their quarrel illustrate the ripple effect of the earlier rift between Somerset and Plantagenet.

To open Act IV Shakespeare telescopes four events that

transpired at different times: Henry VI's coronation in Paris (1431), the unknighting of the cowardly Falstaff (1429), the arrival of Burgundy's letter about his decision to rejoin the French (1435), and the appointment of York as Regent of France (1441). In the scenes that conclude Act IV Shakespeare forges a thematic connection between the York-Somerset feud and the deaths of Talbot and his son near Bordeaux. The Talbots actually died a number of years later, in 1453, at Castillon, and in historical fact their defeat was not a direct consequence of the divisions between the Yorkist and Lancastrian factions of the nobility.

In Act V Shakespeare portrays the capture and trial of Joan de Pucell as if it occurred at roughly the same time as another incident entirely of the playwright's invention: Suffolk's apprehension of the bewitching Margaret of Anjou. In fact Joan's execution took place in 1431, some thirteen years before the negotiations that led to Henry VI's betrothal to Margaret (1443-44).

The net result of all these liberties with chronology is a sequence that imitates the flow of history and conveys the forces that compel events, but at the same time a drama that organizes a great mass of material into a form that proves amenable to contemplation and interpretation.

Thus we have the play's emphasis on Talbot and Joan as the two champions of their respective nations. At first both appear invincible, and in their two major encounters they fight to a draw. On both occasions (at Orleanse in I.v, and at Roan in III.ii) Joan uses the witchcraft and cunning that define her and achieves a temporary victory; almost immediately, however, Talbot returns with the courage and chivalric honor that are the hallmarks of his nature and wins back what the French lack the character to gari-

son successfully. A third confrontation seems inevitable, but before that can occur the seeds of destruction are sown for both champions. Joan manages a decisive triumph when she charms Burgundy and his forces back to the French side; but in time she is forsaken by the spirits that make her a saint to the French and a witch to the English, and at the end she stands condemned and completely discredited. Talbot proves himself more than equal to his first three challenges, with the fortitude and tactical skill to win back Orleanse and Roan from Joan's forces, and with the wisdom and self-control to evade the seductive trap (II.iii) that would have enabled the Countess of Auvergne to snare a less vigilant hero. Eventually, however, he too is abandoned, and by the same leaders who have urged him to venture further than discretion would have counseled him to do.

By the end of the play Talbot establishes himself as the ideal against which virtually everyone else in *1 Henry VI* is measured. He stands for an unyielding commitment to valor, for example, that gives him the authority to disgrace a cowardly knight who eventually comes to share a name with a later dramatic figure originally conceived as Sir John Oldcastle. The Falstaff of Shakespeare's first cycle of history plays is more of a caricature than a character; his primary function is to exemplify a dastardliness that sets off one of Talbot's principal attributes by contrast.

In comparable fashion, Suffolk emerges at the end of *1 Henry VI* as a second antithesis to Talbot. Whereas Talbot has proven capable of evading the wiles of two French charmers, Suffolk surrenders himself with complete abandon to the beauty of a French maiden who doesn't even appear to be luring him. As with the Dolphin's first encounter with Joan de Pucell, Suffolk's initial



younger Richard who will turn out to be even more ominous than the brooding father who brought him here. By the time Shakespeare completes his cycle of the Wars of the Roses two plays later, this hunchbacked figure will have hewn his way to the throne, mounted a two-year reign of terror, and immortalized himself as the most notorious villain in the history of the theatre.

The control texts for both *1* and *2 Henry VI* are those to be found in the 1623 First Folio. In a few isolated instances, however, the *Guild* edition has supplemented the Folio text of *2 Henry VI* with, or emended it by reference to, readings in the 1594 Quarto of *The First Part of the Contention betwixt the two famous Houses of York and Lancaster*. Those Quarto readings are discussed in the accompanying notes.

*HENRY VI, PART 1*

