THE LOOK OF THE PLAY: DRAMATIC FOCUS IN SHAKESPEARE'S EARLY HISTORY PLAYS

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THE LOOK OF THE PLAY:
DRAMATIC FOCUS IN SHAKESPEARE'S EARLY HISTORY PLAYS

by

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B.A., Wellesley College, 1953
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A THESIS

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To Hodge

For every reason
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ABSTRACT

THE LOOK OF THE PLAY:

DRAMATIC FOCUS IN SHAKESPEARE'S EARLY HISTORY PLAYS

by

BARBARA HODGDON

Shakespeare controls not only what we hear but what we see, either at a live performance of one of his plays or at the performances we stage in our imaginations. He is, in other words, his own director. This study examines Shakespeare's use of dramatic focus in the early history plays (1, 2, and 3 Henry VI and Richard III), charts the various changes in focus Shakespeare chooses to direct an audience's sight and insight, traces his skill in using them (especially his increasing interest in an intense focus on a central character), and explores their thematic implications and other contributions to the works in which they appear.

Beyond tracing how Shakespeare achieves explicit effects through manipulating changes in focus, the main purpose of this study is a close examination of the plays,
attempting to do justice both to the comprehensive and specific effects of the plays as performed without limiting the investigation to the imagined realization of these effects in the Elizabethan theater, through Elizabethan stagecraft.

Shakespeare's early directorial techniques are unusually specific; he exercises rather strict controls over dramatic focus. Consequently, audience response is often directly channeled and/or limited in a particular moment, scene, or scenic sequence by what Shakespeare chooses to show and by how these dramatic facts and impressions are presented. Shakespeare experiments with techniques which give each play an individualized vision—a particular look that reflects his dramatic and thematic concerns. In 1 Henry VI, these techniques emphasize exterior action and narrative progression and expectation. Shakespeare relies on heavily patterned stage images to convey the scope and movement, the dissension, and the alternations of action implied by his chronicle sources, drawing, as he does for each of these plays, a controlling subtext from the chronicles. These narrative techniques are modified in 2 Henry VI to reveal the opposed attitudes of persons and the differences between public and private behavior. 2 Henry VI also experiments with the dramatic patterning of strong characters by exploiting contrasts and by focusing firmly upon individual as well as group responses to an event. There is more flexibility to the
look of the play; both actors and audience are freed, through increasingly expressive language and scenic sequences, to see in a greater variety of ways. Shakespeare controls both narrative and characterization in 3 Henry VI by an expressive design, heightened by a strong presentational imagery of blood, that focuses audience awareness on the ironies arising from sudden reversals of characters' expectations and from the close juxtaposition of contradictory events. Richard III is unique, not only among these early plays but among Shakespeare's later plays as well. Shakespeare exaggerates many of his earlier directorial techniques by building the play around a single, self-dramatizing character who directs the drama by copying or adapting Shakespeare's earlier directorial techniques when they suit his purposes and by inventing improvisational techniques of his own.

Shakespeare's general trend moves away from the strict pattern (except where that is a useful formalism) and the exterior narrative emphasis and toward structures that commingle action with reaction, carrying the thrust of the drama through narrative movement which emphasizes interior thought and feeling.

Finally, this study looks at a recent adaptation of the plays by John Barton and Peter Hall for the Royal Shakespeare Company. This production represents a form of scholarly and critical commentary on these early histories.
The *Henry VI* plays and *Richard III* are not simply unwieldy trial essays in playwrighting. These plays are not only extremely viable on the stage, they show considered, deliberate experimentation with the sophisticated use of dramatic focus and with the look of each play.
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CHAPTER I

SHAKESPEARE'S DIRECTORIAL EYE

Shakespeare is his own director. If these words were spoken to an Elizabethan actor or spectator, he might puzzle over the concept expressed, for the idea of the director and of directorial control over a play's meanings is contemporary. Today, we acknowledge the director's role in molding a Shakespearean performance: we speak of Peter Brook's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, of Laurence Olivier's *Henry V*. We refer to some film directors as auteurs, a term which recognizes that the director is more than a technician hired to do a job, that he brings to his work a controlling creative activity and a discernible style. The Elizabethan would be familiar with the technical roles involved in bringing a play to the stage: the functions of the book-keeper, the prompter, and the stage manager were known and recognized. He might recall Hamlet, the collaborator and adapter, fitting a play to an occasion, and the harassed yet positive Peter Quince, anxious to cast his *Pyramus and Thisbe* correctly. Each of these roles is vital to the performed play; but none gives us any clue as to whether there was, in our modern sense of the word, a director who was responsible for translating the dramatic text to the stage.
Did Shakespeare direct his own plays? We simply do not know; our best guess is that performances grew from ensemble efforts. We know that Shakespeare was probably never as troubled as Quince, since he conceived his plays with specific actors in mind; and we do know that his actors were serious craftsmen, men who were "instructed daily," often by the playwright, in the matter and manner of their art.\(^1\) Further, any study of the plays shows that they are extraordinarily rich dramatic vehicles with long performance histories. Most of the plays continue to tempt contemporary directors to bring them to life on a stage. Why?

One answer is obvious: the plays work on stage. They are well-structured and well-written; but then so are plays by many other playwrights, old and new. Shakespeare, however, has a heightened awareness of the elementary conditions governing dramatic presentation, and it is this awareness that directors (and actors) respond to in working with his plays. Like Prospero, he accepts the difficulties of shaping events within a few hours' time and turns it to his advantage. He accounts himself totally responsible for all that happens, although he also realizes that he cannot, nor does he finally wish to, control everything. He guides both actors and spectators, often sensing where they want to go, learning the route himself as he transforms the harmonies.

\(^1\)Johannes Rhenanus, in his Preface to Speculum Aestheticum (1613), reports that English actors believed in constant rehearsal—that they were "instructed daily." Quoted in Dennis Bartholomeusz, Macbeth and the Players (Cambridge: The University Press, 1969), p. 1.
and discords of individual responses into a structure which has meaning both for the players and the audience.

Stated more broadly, Shakespeare approaches playwrighting with a directorial eye: he selects and shapes the images he places on his stage, choosing a context and sequence which will enrich the meaning of each image, making the sights and sounds of his play respond to his wishes so that he may evoke a response from his audience. He has the same kind of overall vision that a director must maintain as he transfers a text to the stage and then to the audience. Shakespeare directs the director who chooses to work with his plays; and he is particularly concerned with the contextual and sequential values of his stage images, and with the manipulation of his spectators' awarenesses and responses. Although this shaping activity is not precisely equivalent to our contemporary idea of a director's role, looking at Shakespeare as a directing playwright can illuminate our view of Shakespeare as a man of the theater, for it preserves and stresses his vision of the whole play.

Fortunately, it is not necessary to argue for a study of Shakespeare in the theater. We no longer think of Shakespeare's plays only as poetic texts which may, upon occasion, be performed in theaters. Although some may still be suspicious of the shifting perspectives of theatrical presentation, the steady growth of a body of performance-oriented criticism reflects an opened, active outlook which calls for a closer examination of all that we see on the
stage. But it does seem necessary to argue for an approach to Shakespeare as a directing playwright; and perhaps the best way to define my argument is through an account of some other critical attitudes.

We are used to thinking of Shakespeare as a playwright and plot-maker: criticism which discloses this level of Shakespeare's dramatic intention is the traditional method of approach to the whole play as a structured action. The dramatic shapings described by critics like Richard G. Moulton and George Pierce Baker are just and thorough; they provide a sound basis for further responsive thinking. So, too, do Gordon Craig's mercurial attitudes toward performed Shakespeare, as when he postulated three stages in the development of a Shakespearean play: a rough outline; an acted version for which the actors are largely responsible, improvising their own parts; and a piece polished for

Richard G. Moulton's "scientific" criticism of the drama still has much to tell us about "looking for the laws of art in the practice of artists," and his studies of individual plays suggest how Shakespeare manipulates the structuring of stage events to catch points of what he calls "dramatic effect" and "dramatic force." Clearly, Moulton sees the whole play as a structured action; he implies much about actors' attitudes from moment to moment simply by describing story elements, much as any finely omniscient narrator might do. *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885).

George Pierce Baker treats all the plays, measuring and emphasizing Shakespeare's increasing development from a pure story-teller to a dramatist capable of developing states of mind in some central figure or figures. Baker sees this ability to present subtle characterization, to picture states of mind in action, as a step leading to the differentiation of dramatic forms in Shakespeare's work. *The Development of Shakespeare as a Dramatist* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1923).
publication by Shakespeare. Craig dismissed the polisher, whom he called the "non-theatrical Shakespeare," but what is significant about his remarks is that they focus on the idea of the play's growth through an active process in the theater. From Craig, too, comes the concept of total theater, one we must keep in mind if we are to approach the plays in performance.  

In doing so, we are immediately indebted to Harley Granville-Barker, who revolutionized our attitudes toward Shakespeare as a man of the theater. Marveling at the ability of the Elizabethan stage to resolve from "'anywhere' to 'anywhere' or to 'nowhere'," he opened a new point of view on the convention of fluid space, asking us to consider a Shakespearean play as a continuous, interwoven process which concentrates, inevitably, upon opportunity for the actor. What other critics viewed as problems of Shakespearean production—the boy actors, the conventions of time and place, the soliloquy, the shifting styles of poetic expression—Granville-Barker accepted as harmonizing parts of a whole which should be seen in action, in the theater. Granville-Barker's detailed studies of construction, of individual moments, and of structural and theatrical values firmly demonstrate not only how exhaustive a producer's intensive

reading can and must be but how much of the text is revealed only in performance.\(^4\)

Every critic who would look at Shakespeare in the theater depends upon Granville-Barker's idea of interwoven process; but most give only brief recognition to an overall design, limiting their vision of the whole play in order to isolate various aspects of Shakespeare's stagecraft for intensive study.\(^5\) Separating parts of the play from the whole is convenient, but it is also dangerously un-Shakespearean, for it can free the critic from the necessity to see the full life of the play, a necessity that Shakespeare himself never forgets. At its best, however, the natural readiness to examine individual elements of the plays confirms and supplements my emphasis on Shakespeare's directorial eye.

The great acting traditions and individual actors' performances, as A.C. Sprague shows, are in themselves a


\(^5\)For example, Francis Berry's study of what he calls "insets"—episodes "where the imagined spectacle is at odds with the actual spectacle"—suffers from this separating tendency. Although Berry obviously recognizes the interdependence of word and action, his emphasis on the differences between spatial, pictorial compositions and those created by language overlooks the whole experience of a Shakespearean play in order to examine some parts within a fairly rigid framework. *The Shakespeare Inset* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965).
critical commentary on Shakespeare the character-depictor; and the recent Brechtian concern for gesture study further illuminates Shakespeare's directorial intentions for his characters. Even more recently, Emrys Jones, among others, has established Shakespeare's skill as a "scenic poet" by analyzing single scenes and scene sequences, paying


G. Wilson Knight's *Shakespearian Production* is also over-committed to describing striking moments of blocking, costume, scenery and light design—in Knight's own productions and those of others. Knight approaches a Shakespearean play as "an aural time-sequence...of impressions, thoughts and images, carried across mainly by audible words"; but this right-mindedness dissipates into a concern for the enhancing visual qualities of production. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964).

particular attention to how Shakespeare restructures and 
perfects scenes from his early plays in his later work. 8

These techniques and the shaping they give to 
Shakespeare's dramatic intentions undoubtedly have their 
place; but although each provides insight into Shakespeare's 
methods, none reflects the full scope of the performed play.

The problem that presents itself is: how are we to 
define and describe the specific and comprehensive effects 
of a Shakespearean play so that readers and audiences can 
assess the genuine virtues and failures of the play in 
performance? A part of the problem lies with our critical 
vocabulary, which tends to categorize the dramatic experience, 
separating one meaning from another rather than attempting 
to describe the various experiences a Shakespearean play 
offers in a sequence or manner which will reveal the sim­
ultaneous structures of their meaning. Although some 
commentators do suggest labels for certain isolated elements 
of the staged play, no standard vocabulary, like that which 
describes poetic diction, rhythms, and imagery, exists. 
Yet all feel the need for a common language—perhaps not 
for a system of notation as rigid as Rudolf Laban's

8 Emrys Jones, Scenic Form in Shakespeare (Oxford: The 
Clarendon Press, 1971). See also Mark Rose, Shakespearean 
Press, 1972). Rose approaches Shakespeare's dramatic 
structure through a study of the spatial form of the single 
scene and of units or "panels" of scenes. He uses the term 
"design" with great flexibility, suggesting that the 
symmetry of scenes and groups of scenes gives Shakespearean 
drama a form which is inseparable from meaning.
Labanotation— but for new ways of describing the structures and sequences of the performed play. The problem is further magnified by the arbitrary, often conflicting evidence of actual performances, for the changing tastes and talents of each age have always influenced the way we see Shakespeare, both on the page and in the realized performance. Bradley's King Lear differs from Jan Kott's Lear; Booth's Hamlet bears little resemblance to Nicol Williamson's. D'Avenant, Tate, Charles Lamb, Bowdler, Beerbohm Tree, F.R. Benson: each has seen, in Shakespeare's texts, ways to reinforce the form and pressure of his own time.¹⁰

What we are looking for is a kind of evaluative approach which will reduce the difficulties offered by seeing Shakespeare only in relation to the forms and pressures of his own time, or, for that matter, of any time. It is not completely satisfactory to come to the discovery of Shakespeare's methods of stagecraft as an Elizabethan

¹⁰For a full explanation, see Rudolf Laban, Labanotation; or Kinetography Laban; The System of Analyzing and Recording Movement (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1970).
director, although Ronald Watkins does just this, strengthening William Poel's earlier insistence on a return to Elizabethan stage conditions if we are to see Shakespeare correctly. The virtue of Watkins' approach cannot be ignored, but he seems to me to confine Shakespeare's sensibility by placing restrictions and limitations upon performance conditions. In part, these limits are a measure of our comparative ignorance, in spite of recent speculative work, of the working details of Shakespeare's stage. But surely, as Stanley Wells suggests, the significant problem for directors and actors is to discover Shakespeare's intentions through what we do know of his stage, and then to "articulate them to a contemporary audience so as to produce an effect comparable to that made upon their first audience." In other words, as Rudolf


12 J.L. Styan's study of Shakespeare's Stagecraft (Cambridge: The University Press, 1967) restricts Shakespeare's sensibility in another way. Styan's approach to the total theater experience is right-minded, but his strict separation of Shakespeare's effects into visual craft and aural craft tends to deny his more general remarks; and his discussion of individual moments is neither subtle nor profound.

Stamm notes, the inquiry must be an aesthetic as well as an historical one.\textsuperscript{14}

This search for ways to talk about Shakespearean staging must help us to understand both what we see and hear on stage and how we perceive its meaning. Here, the languages of both film and art criticism offer approaches, descriptions, and distinctions which are extremely useful; for a theatrical performance is a perceptual experience which may be read, just as the art critic or the film critic reads a painting or a film.\textsuperscript{15} Montage, cutting, subjective

\textsuperscript{14}Stamm, "Theatrical Physiognomy," p. 12.


Andre Bazin has defined some aspects of the language of film and made useful comparisons between film and theater. His analyses of cinematic images offer suggestions about how to describe stage images. What is Cinema? (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967). See also Peter Wollen, Signs and Meaning in the Cinema (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969) and Roland Barthes, Mythologies (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972). Both writers take the search for a cinematic language into semiology, producing a strictly codified terminology for both visual and verbal images and limiting perception to a rigid system of signification. Stanley Cavell's The World Viewed (New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1971) is more descriptive: he examines the differences between a film and a staged play in terms of the spectator's relationship to what he sees.
and objective images, pictorial or non-pictorial compositions, spatial and temporal unity, analysis of attention, depth of focus—all are concepts that suggest theatrical as well as cinematic techniques, techniques of sight and sound which fall within the realm of the director's provenance. My purpose in using these terms is two-fold: they support and broaden my emphasis on Shakespeare's use of dramatic focus as a directorial technique for manipulating audience awareness, and they extend the invention of a language which strives to convey a sense of the full stage life of a Shakespearean play.

The present study attempts to consider Shakespeare's early history plays—1, 2 and 3 Henry VI and Richard III—in performance. The approach is chiefly through the directorial techniques of these plays, both verbal and non-verbal, but the main purpose is a close examination of the plays themselves. I try to do justice both to the comprehensive and specific effects of the plays as performed, but I have not limited my investigation to the imagined realization of these effects in the Elizabethan theater,

16 I assume Shakespeare's authorship of all three Henry VI plays; and I share the opinion that the plays (1, 2 and 3 Henry VI and Richard III) were written in natural sequence. Andrew Cairncross, the Arden editor, summarizes arguments for and against Shakespeare's authorship and the sequential composition of the plays. 1 Henry VI (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1962), pp. xxviii-xxxvii; 2 Henry VI (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1965), pp. xlxi-xliv; and 3 Henry VI (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1964), pp. xli-xlili.
through Elizabethan stagecraft. My orientation is similar to that outlined by John Russell Brown's *Shakespeare's Plays in Performance*. Brown approaches Shakespeare as an arm-chair director does, touching on all aspects of the full theatrical experience Shakespeare offers us, seeking clues to the stage reality of the text. His work concerns some techniques in a group of plays, mostly from the "early middle" period; but here and elsewhere he gives only a suggestive treatment to complete plays.\(^{17}\)

I make explicit what Brown's work implies: that Shakespeare is his own director. To be sure, the texts, as they come to us, are not clear prompt copies, but we can easily distinguish Shakespeare's directorial techniques for both sight and sound. I have chosen to study these techniques within whole plays, and to explore a group of plays covering the period of Shakespeare's early dramatic career. There are several reasons for my choice. The early history plays form a group; they are drawn together by strong external similarities—their common sources in English history, their use of political and social ideas and ideals which vividly inform Shakespeare's dramatic

conception. There are also internal similarities, the most obvious of which is Shakespeare's consistent use of large court scenes as an organizing feature. But the plays also differ from one another, and here the polar contrast is between 1 Henry VI—Shakespeare's first experiment in broadly conceived historical drama—and Richard III, his first use of a single central character. It would be convenient to see 2 and 3 Henry VI as plays which experiment with mediations between these extremes; but this would imply that Shakespeare's end point in view was the creation of character, something he was capable of from the first. Shakespeare is working toward much more: he is laying the foundations of his future theatrical practices, learning to control an entire dramatic fabric. The early histories are a training ground for his use of dramatic focus as a directorial technique, and although some consider these plays as merely experimental, this very quality serves my purposes. Shakespeare's early directions for manipulating audience awareness are not only explicit and controlled, but relatively simple and overt; and because of this control and simplicity, it is easy to separate techniques or effects, examine their meaning, and evaluate their contributions to the plays, and to Shakespeare's style.

The function of Shakespeare's directorial techniques in his drama is neither a question of words nor of stage effects alone, for Shakespeare's verbal and visual languages occur simultaneously, altering what appears on stage through
a varying interplay of meanings. Most of us in seeing Shakespeare probably come away with relatively little idea of the structure of these meanings. Rather, we retain a general sense of the total action or story, and within that narrative frame our understanding rests on certain moments: Talbot with the body of his dead son, York's death on the molehill, Richard "aloft" between two bishops. At these moments of performance, all seems clear: each presents us with a stage image which translates thought into visible models. Talbot with his son reveals the separations of war and death; York's idea of himself and of his mockers is made essential and particular at his death; the strengths and weaknesses of Richard's idea of himself are reinforced by his staged election. In each instance, we find dramatic meaning not only in what we see through direct sensory observation—the grouping and movement of the characters in a particular stage picture—but also in those pictures as they are further evoked and enriched by Shakespeare's language in the mind's eye. Both seeing and hearing are part of the stage image perceived by the audience.

I use the phrase "stage image" in this study to include the verbal and nonverbal perceptions which Shakespeare offers to his spectators. Shakespeare's language, and the gestures and actions stated or implied in the text, work together, in various combinations, to produce dramatic meaning within any single stage image. Although each stage image has an inherent stability, any image may also dissolve into a multiplicity of aspects, each of which commands a
different kind of attention. A part of this study examines these aspects—setting, composition, the grouping and movement of characters, the contribution of Shakespeare's dramatic language. But I am more especially concerned with describing the visual and sequential values of these stage images, with charting the shifting perspectives of dramatic focus, and with defining their contributions to the performed play.

The examination of these visual and sequential values and perspectives is particularly appropriate in a study of Shakespeare's directorial techniques, since these perceptions offer the most direct appeal to what Francis Fergusson calls the "histrionic sensibility," and to what the Elizabethans saw as a "lively picture" or an "imitation of life." These are critical commonplaces;

18 For other approaches to Shakespeare's stage imagery, see R.A. Foakes, "A New Approach to Shakespeare's Imagery," Shakespeare Survey, 5 (1952), 81-92; and Clifford Lyons, "Stage Imagery," in Essays on Shakespeare and Elizabethan Drama in Honor of Hardin Craig, ed. Richard Hosley (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1962), pp. 261-74. One important study which follows Foakes' suggestion is Maurice Charney's Shakespeare's Roman Plays (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963). Charney's use of the term "image" covers verbal images, the repetitious "leading" or "iterative" imagery that makes references to a significant subject matter, and the nonverbal or "presentational" imagery that, although not a part of the spoken words of the text, arises from direct presentation in the theater.


20 Mark Rose reviews the matter of the pictorial sensibility of the Elizabethans, the notion of ut pictura poesis, and the Renaissance concern for proportion in all forms of art in Shakespearean Design. For further references, see R.W. Lee, Ut Pictura Poesis: The Humanistic Theory of Painting (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1967);
and however true they may be, we must also redefine them in terms of Shakespeare's directorial choices, for a Shakespearean play is not a complete imitation of life: the world is not totally recreated as it may be on film—it is evoked by means of men. On the stage the actor's visibility is primary: human beings are favored, by the very conditions of the stage, over the rest of nature. This is particularly true of Shakespeare's stage, which gives us a central focus on man's actions and words within certain limited areas, without the distraction of non-human scenery. As a directing playwright, Shakespeare chooses fragments of the world and reconstructs those fragments, which we call scenes or groups of scenes, in such a way that a continuous reality is captured between the first and last stage images of a play. We recognize, in the particular ways in which Shakespeare fragments reality, the direct process of visual contact with the event or action which reveals his ability to show that event or action in ways which may invoke the emotional or symbolic experience associated with it: it is a matter of approach, of beginning not with abstractions or ideas, but with the thing itself. Shakespeare's "idea of a theater"21 has a unique aesthetic richness which lies in


21 See Fergusson, The Idea of a Theater. Fergusson reconstructs the "idea of a theater" in Aristotelian terms to promote an understanding of the life and form of the play itself.
combining many kinds of perception; as spectators, we are not forced to see things on only one level of reality, but are continually placed in different perspectives and given varying degrees of awareness that increase the opportunities for a full, dense expression of reality. Even in these early plays, Shakespeare shows not only the surface or narrative images in a context, but introduces into the direct narrative other kinds of reality—surreal or outside references, contrasts between public and private behavior, super-theatrical moments—that require our constant adjustment to the quality and pace of the impressions we receive. This shifting focus increases our feeling that the stage is the world: we gain a relation with the stage image different from but perhaps closer to that which we have with reality; we approach Shakespeare's particular imitation of life.

Bertrand Evans discusses the relationship between the play-world and the audience in terms of Shakespeare's exploitation of the discrepancy of awareness between participants on the stage and participants in the audience. On our side, Shakespeare gives us a more complete vision, but the vision of individual on-stage performers may cross and recross, never wholly coinciding with our vision until the denouement of the play. Evans confines his very thorough study to the comedies; the investigation bears extending to other types of drama as well. Shakespeare's Comedies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).

Although we cannot fully ascertain the step-by-step process of Shakespeare's directorial vision, we can attempt to describe the results. Some things we may be sure of, even if we do not know which of them came first and foremost in his mind. Shakespeare the directing playwright wants his plays to be seen and heard. He seeks ways for his own feelings to fuse with those of an audience, and he does so by enlivening its visual and verbal sensibilities through his conscious presentation of a sequence of stage images.

Not all of Shakespeare's stage images have the full and striking effect of moments like York on the molehill or Richard surrounded by his bishops, where word and picture combine to clarify a particular situation or to universalize it; but each stage image does contribute to our vision of the total action. Shakespeare manipulates and directs that vision by showing us a sequence of stage images very like a sequence of sentences: some may carry only a single meaning, others may contain complexities, ambiguities, choices of meaning. By allowing our glance to roam, directed by language which focuses our range of vision now on this, now on that aspect of an action, Shakespeare provides us with an eminently active performance. He may quicken us only through sight, or he may allow the impact of words alone to

metaphors in Shakespeare in relation to sixteenth century ideas of the drama. These play metaphors, she notes, not only express the depth of the play-world but define the play-world's relationship with the reality represented by the audience, reminding us that illusions are present in everyday life, and of the resemblances between drama and life.
create a space on the stage; he may refer us to a single
gesture or to the whole arrangement of his stage. He
influences how events are seen—from a distance or from
close-up—and whose point of view dominates that vision.
Shakespeare may direct our attention to the whole context
of a scene, to the significance of forming and re-forming
groups, to one-to-one relationships, or to the single charac-
ter. He may maintain focus on action, on narrative, on
silence, on rhetoric, on verbal imagery, or on nothing. The
meaning emerging from these perceptions, like the meaning of
each sentence in a sequence, is not immediately given. Some
of its aspects build up fast, some slowly, and all of them
are subject to continued confirmation, reappraisal, change,
completion, correction, and deepening of understanding.
Throughout a Shakespearean play, stage images answer one
another in a variety of ways, fulfilling or frustrating
audience expectations, building suspense, making it seem that
one event follows directly from another in logical succession,
pointing deliberate thematic shifts, continuing narrative
drive; now stopping to focus in on an intimate moment which
asks for close attention, now moving back to an overall
view of the action. By examining Shakespeare's language of
stage images, we can come to some grammar of looking, and
by doing so, understand more about what we are being shown
and about how it carries meaning. Our judgments may not
encompass total meaning (is it possible to define "total
meaning" for any Shakespearean play?); but the ideas
behind a Shakespearean play are disclosed, in part, through the immediate and explicit effect of what Shakespeare chooses to show us, supporting what is said by action or by additional language. The sequence of these stage images forms a path for the spectator's journey through the play—an approach prescribed by the work itself. Reading the sequence of stage images will give us a fundamental understanding of Shakespeare's directorial vision as he controls and shapes the meaning of his plays.
CHAPTER II

SIGHT AND INSIGHT

Early Shakespeare is not "as you like it": Shakespeare the directing playwright gives his audience definite guide lines as to how his plays should be seen and heard. But this is not to say that Shakespeare is a dictator, demanding specific reactions, for no dramatist who seeks a lively response from both actors and spectators can afford such didactic rigidity. Rather, Shakespeare commands attention for his drama by carefully directing the size, shape, significance and sequence of each image he chooses to place upon his stage. Certain effects are explicitly controlled and limited, and it will be one purpose of this chapter to indicate Shakespeare's selection of and emphasis upon these effects. But other moments freely acknowledge both actors and audience: Shakespeare does not try to do for the actor what the actor can do as well, or perhaps better, for himself; nor does he ever forget that his audience can help to direct the play, too. Within Shakespeare's guide lines, a performance may come alive for both actors and audience in direct proportion to the spontaneity and inventiveness each brings to the play. This is what gives each play resourcefulness and flexibility within Shakespeare's directions: he is aware from the very first that what he presents must make actors and audience
feel linked to a common event, that his appeal is to life.

One of the strongest impressions of the early histories is of Shakespeare's ability to stage enormous amounts of information; and this ability is as much controlled by visual techniques as by verbal ones. Particularly in these early plays, the specific effects of Shakespeare's verbal drama are easily separable from those which are physical and visual. I do not mean to imply that Shakespeare conceives of each technique as working in isolation, for these plays contain much evidence to the contrary, but simply to suggest that his early dramatic practice does not achieve the consistently full integration of verbal and visual drama which he perfects in his later work.

For this reason, it is appropriate here to distinguish physical vision, or sight, from imaginative vision, or insight, even though the distinction falsifies our experience of the play by separating effects Shakespeare means us to see as a whole. But the restricting structures of language prevent discussion of the complex, rapidly changing impressions of a play at one and the same time. We might approximate the multiplicity of each moment in a play by constructing a series of overlapping, across-the-page diagrammatic paragraphs: one which defines the impressions of physical vision; one which sets forth our state of mind, our expectations and tensions, and what is held in our imaginative vision; one which notes the rhythmic movement; and one which describes the patterns of the language as it modifies and is modified by the other dramatic facts. And
then, assuming this approximation to be successful, we should have to find a similar means to acknowledge the dissolution of one stage image into another one of equal intricacy.

So, although separating sight and insight—looking at and looking into the play—implies a somewhat restricted vision, the restriction does permit anatomization of the shape and sound of these early plays. I have chosen to look at the play first; and although this approach does not totally exclude language, the following sections of my discussion treat the effects Shakespeare achieves simply through presenting visual facts and impressions.

**Literal Stage Imagery**

Shakespeare's texts are filled with indications of what he means us to see. The visual, physical, and gestural features of his drama confirm and support a sense of reality, appealing to an elementary perceptual level. In the early histories, these techniques of physical presentation—visual information, stage directions, deictic gestures, and deliberately staged spectacle or ceremony—are boldly visual, often dependent upon iconographic or emblematic meanings to give immediacy to our understanding of the whole stage image. Yet however symbolic these techniques may appear to be, Shakespeare never settles for the symbol as a defense or curtain which hides the event itself. The detail is always related to a larger structure: Shakespeare never chooses one aspect of stagecraft and allows that to force his play into
a rigid style. From the beginning, he avoids systematization; he directs an increasingly rich variety of contradictory elements into his work. His use of literal stage imagery reflects only one aspect of his balance as a director.

Visual Information

Shakespeare may relay visual information simply through indicating the color and shape of costumes and properties: the blue and tawny coats of Winchester's and Gloucester's men in 1 Henry VI.I.iii clearly distinguish many figures on a crowded stage; a cardinal's habit calls attention to his office; Richard's and Buckingham's "rotten armour, marvellous ill-favored" signifies their disguising natures; crossbows, halberds or drum and colours display the trappings of war; the red and white roses of Lancaster and York, plucked or thrown down, stress allegiance. Or, in the single scene, the whole stage may assume direct, iconographic meaning. In Richard III.III.ii, when a pursuivant and a priest, representing the affairs of the world and the affairs of heaven, enter to Hastings, who is preparing to go to London and into Gloucester's trap, Shakespeare barely identifies the two new characters: they are meaningful as soon as they are seen.¹

Stage Directions

At times, the physical facts of performance rest on unusually explicit stage directions, on moments when it is clear that the drama carries meaning through sight alone. When, in *Henry VI. II. i*, the French are directed to "leap over the walls in their shirts" and the Bastard, Alencon and Reignier to enter "half ready, and half unready," the contrast between their appearance here and in earlier, more triumphant postures registers their humiliation in defeat more clearly than words.

More characteristically, Shakespeare's stage directions are open-ended: "Enter" and "Exit" require an actor to choose a pace and manner which will reflect characterization or mood. Shakespeare may explain about where a person comes from—"Sad tidings bring I to you out of France"—or where he may be going: to prison, to battle, to sanctuary, or, more simply, "Come, away!" Such narrative instructions will suggest details of physical bearing which may particularize dramatic meaning, and moments so directed will provide information and insure changing stage pictures, perhaps prompting new arrangements of persons on the stage, perhaps simply aiding the easy dissolve of one stage image into another. But beyond these necessities of stage presentation, "Enter" and "Exit" may offer more important moments for the spectator, directing and challenging his vision. Here, Shakespeare's directions for his actor are embedded in the sense of the situation: the actor must draw on both text and
subtext in order to interpret Shakespeare's "Enter."

For an example, how should King Henry enter to York and his sons in 3 Henry VI.1.i? York is seated on the throne; his movement there has been deliberate. Twice, he urges the others to stay by him: he is depending upon their presence—although apprehensive, he claims to be resolute. Will Henry and his faction sweep in, quickly filling the stage, perhaps half-expecting to find York already there? Or will he enter slowly and ceremoniously, followed by his train, to find his progress stopped by what he sees? Will he register shock, anger, disgust, helplessness? However the actor portraying Henry chooses to play this moment will influence the way we see him and the way we see what follows: the balance and meaning of the relationship between Henry and York is set in motion by this entrance. The beats or timing of this stage movement—whether the entrance is quick or slow—will affect our first impressions of how Henry bears his kingship. His entry draws immediate attention: momentarily Shakespeare permits the drama of a confrontation between Henry and York to rest first upon sight, before language develops and clarifies the situation further.

"Exit" may particularize dramatic meaning as forcibly as "Enter," channelling the narrative drive of the action, emphasizing the pressure of events. In these early histories, Shakespeare directs patterned exits which effectively support the growing separation among the nobles, as in the opening scenes of 1 and 2 Henry VI, where rapid
changes in the stage image reflect shifts of allegiance and temper. Exits may not only be effective in themselves; they may also increase attention for those who remain on stage. When, in 2 Henry VI.I.iii, Suffolk, Winchester, Somerset, Buckingham and the Queen challenge Gloucester's protectorate, he exits without answering their attack, his anger inarticulate except through this gesture revealing his desire to maintain decorum. As Gloucester exits, Margaret drops her fan and strikes Eleanor, prompting a bitter reply in contrast to her husband's silence. By juxtaposing two incidents dependent upon strong gestural presentation, Shakespeare increases our sense of the Gloucesters' danger and imminent destruction. Later, in 2 Henry VI.III.i, after Gloucester's arrest and removal, King Henry speaks his grief and withdraws, ineffectual in the face of disaster. Shakespeare allows this exit to bear a double weight: it stresses Henry's avoidance of the situation and it underlines a pause in the rhetoric, allowing Margaret's "Free lords, cold snow melts with the sun's hot beams" to introduce a clear tonal change, initiating discussion of the plot against Gloucester's life.

Deictic Gestures

Certain of Shakespeare's instructions indicate more specific physical presentation: "He rises," "They descend," "He kneels." Precise directions like these occur at moments where no other physical movement would completely explicate meaning, when the look of the scene can be fulfilled only by that particular gesture, movement, or posture.
Often this kind of stage direction underlines a character's own vision of himself, or points to his movement within the play-world. So do York and his sons move toward the throne in *3 Henry VI*.I.i, so does York die, raised and isolated upon a dunghill, and so does King Henry appear later, isolated and raised, in the symbolic scene on the Towton battlefield. At each of these moments, text and stage image fully complement each other, and the situation reveals its true significance. The audience is directed to look at a specific area of the stage composition, and the presence of the stage direction in the text calls attention to a special, precisely measured perspective of dramatic meaning.

Beyond the directions which point to the broad deictic gestures of these plays, Shakespeare's texts are rich in smaller gestures, often as definitive as or more articulate than those which indicate larger movements. Gestures associated with specific props, for example, may provide deliberate measurement of a moment. In *2 Henry VI*.II.iii, when the Queen asks Gloucester to give up his staff, the symbol of his protectorate, Shakespeare stresses the moment of the transference of power through a demonstrative prop-associated gesture. Or, in *3 Henry VI*.I.iv, Margaret taunts York with a napkin stained with Rutland's blood: here, the prop acts as a narrative reminder, recalling the previous scene of Rutland's death at the same time that York learns of it. In a sense, the bloody napkin allows us to see Rutland's death twice. Both instances show purposeful use of a prop, an actorly preoccupation with its
precise value. By the time Shakespeare plans Richard III, his use of properties takes on a new dimension of characterization. Richard, the consummate actor, needs little to support him, but Shakespeare is well aware of the value of the props he gives Richard: a sword as he woos, a prayer book as he nears the crown—symbols of true majesty transformed, in Richard's hands, to perversions of kingship.

Prop-associated gestures are easy to see, no matter how far we are from the stage. Facial expressions are a more subtle register of tension and feeling; these may not show from a distance. Whenever facial expressions are especially significant, however, Shakespeare draws our attention to them, providing clues that will bring us, through his actors, closer to the emotional tenor of a moment. In 1 Henry VI. V. iii, for example, York directs us to notice La Pucelle: "See, how the ugly witch doth bend her brows, / As if with Circe she would change my shape!" And in 2 Henry VI. I. i, Gloucester asks pardon for his reaction to the peace treaty: "Some sudden qualm hath struck me at the heart / And dimm'd mine eyes, that I can read no further." Expanding the use of this technique, Shakespeare often asks his spectators to measure their own vision of a character or a situation against that of another character. In 2 Henry VI. III. i, Margaret remarks on

2 This and all subsequent references to Shakespeare's plays are from The Complete Works of Shakespeare, ed. Hardin Craig (Glenview: Scott, Foresman, 1951).
Gloucester's "alter'd countenance," and on the difference between his earlier "mild and affable" expressions of submission and what she sees as his present insolence:

He knits his brow and shows an angry eye
And passeth by with stiff unbowed knee,
Disdaining duty that to us belongs.

2 Henry VI.III.i.15-17

Shakespeare shows us the Gloucester Margaret chooses to see, an impression that, if we respond to Shakespeare's suggestions, we will measure against our own view of him in previous and later situations. Margaret's way of seeing Gloucester underlines her vision of what she wants—Gloucester's removal—and we can recognize its relative truth.

Hastings' idea of how Richard III looks is, ironically, even more mistaken:

His grace looks cheerfully and smooth to-day;
...I think there's never a man in Christendom
That can less hide his love or hate than he;
For by his face straight shall you know his heart.

Richard III.III.iv.50, 53-55

Briefly, Shakespeare lets us look at Richard with Hastings' eyes: the moment shows Hastings trying to convince himself that all is well. Richard, of course, can hide or show at will, as Hastings soon discovers; and the fact that we have seen previous evidence of this sharply increases our awareness of Hastings' situation.

Some gestures, such as those mentioned above, are confined to a single moment, or to a scene. Other gestures may reverberate throughout an entire play, reinforcing, counterstating or further developing the thematic impulses which help to define the play-world. In the early histories,
these gestures clearly reflect the balances between amity and hatred in the plays. Kneeling; kissing; the giving and taking or laying on of hands, as in knighting or crowning, make up a civilizing, life-giving perspective of the action; and these are directly opposed by the gestures of death: plucking; sword-drawing; stabbing; falling.

Ceremony and Spectacle: A Syntax of Stage Images

In an even broader view, the pageantry and spectacle of Shakespeare's stage introduce more complexities of physical presentation. Here, there is a clear relationship between Shakespeare's visual vocabulary and the dramatic heritage of his predecessors and contemporaries—the pageantry of the mystery plays and of court ceremonies, triumphs, royal progresses and processionals; the battles; and the so-called Senecan scenes of violence; the stylized court scenes resembling (in setting and bare structure only) those in Gorboduc. The Henry VI plays and Richard III rely heavily upon this inherited "vocabulary of motif" which indicates at once the broad scope of the historical action and the social significance of that action through easily recognizable, visually engrossing pictorial images. Some commentators on these plays (and on this type of scene, wherever it occurs in the canon) treat the pageantry—the battles, ceremonies and murders—as concessions to novelty

and popular taste, and claim that Shakespeare is giving his audience what they want to see, regardless of his own artistic integrity. To be sure, these techniques are obviously theatrical: large or spectacular situations strike the eye first of all, sustaining interest and attention through presenting a wealth of sheer visual display. But Shakespeare does not see these scenes as diversionary tactics or as masks for insufficient stagecraft. Rather, he exploits the use of broadly conceived scenes of ceremonial or social occasion intuitively, recognizing that they will give organizational integrity to his drama. His use of spectacle grows from spectacular ideas: there is nothing mean, small, or taste-pleasing about these plays. Shakespeare is simply using the expressive means at his disposal to heighten the sense that we are being shown something extraordinary.

In all three Henry VI plays, Shakespeare depends upon panoramic opening stage images to bring his audience into the play, giving us immediate sight of and insight into the world at court. Each image is organic, urgent, and direct, theatrically viable as spectacle alone. Structurally, each play spreads away from these scenes into smaller fragments of the action, returning to the large scene for explicit reinforcement of the public perspectives of that action. Moreover, each of these stage images defines a situation which is repeated, with variations, throughout each play of which it is a part: in 1 Henry VI,
for example, the opening scene of Henry V's funeral is echoed by Bedford's brief funeral homage (III.ii) and by the deaths of Salisbury (I.iv), Mortimer (II.v), and the Talbots (IV.vii). Such repetitions of situations, or quotation scenes, reinforce and extend the visual metaphor of a play, establishing contextual patterns which form a basis for more abstract judgments about the meaning of a play. Through this type of repetition, the weight of broad meanings accumulates. In 1 Henry VI, for example, Shakespeare emphasizes the staging of war and funeral ceremonies, using these situations as expressively concrete dramatic images which channel and direct men's responses.

Consistently, Shakespeare's use of processionals, court scenes, and battles helps to build a strongly repetitive syntax of stage images which illuminate his presentational intentions. The images which recur in the Henry VI plays, their variations blending into an overall, primarily visual impression, show a king surrounded by groups of nobles; panoramic views of the court; messengers entering with news, good or bad; battles, either individualized or presented as mass action; and the dead or dying, with the stillness that ensues. Throughout these plays, Shakespeare's tendency to repeat large, simple effects for their gathering power forms a strong unifying and ordering

device; but the plays as a group are also less unified than they seem, for each has a distinctive directorial vision, which later chapters will explore.

**Dramatic Focus**

So far, we have seen how Shakespeare directs dramatic expression to individual moments of physical presentation, modifying the purely textual impression by what we see. But our experience of the performed play depends upon more than a series of isolated moments. Looking beyond such moments, Shakespeare also sees his drama in terms of comprehensive effects, as a composition existing in space and time, directed by shifting perspectives of dramatic focus. As John Russell Brown suggests, it is "not sufficient to list the contents of the stage picture and their relationships. We must try to describe how an audience sees that picture." Brown draws a useful comparison between looking at stage pictures and looking at paintings in a gallery: some paintings require intense scrutiny in order for their effects to be felt and appreciated; with others, a viewer must step back in order to become aware of the entire canvas. So it is with stage pictures. As we watch a play performed, we are at times primarily aware of the whole stage: no one element in the composition dominates the overall impression we receive. This is a wide focus. At other times, we are intent upon single areas of the

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5Brown, *Shakespeare's Plays*, p. 129.
composition: we look at a particular person, we catch the meaning of the smallest gesture, phrase, or pause. Sometimes this intensification is achieved by visual means—a lone figure on stage, for example—but more often a single area of the composition seems dominant because of what we hear, as when one character or another draws our attention by speaking. However the effect is achieved, this kind of focus is narrow, concentrated. By marking these two extremes, we can become aware of a changing dramatic focus.

These changing impressions are also modified by shifts from movement to stasis, and by variations in tempo: the stage image is always developing from one grouping to another. By discovering the appropriate focus Shakespeare chooses for each particular moment, we can read the dramatic text more clearly. Although there is some ambiguity in the term "focus," in that it can suggest both what the playwright envisions and what the audience sees, once Shakespeare's manipulation of the effects resulting from changes in focus is understood, the transition from text to stage may be more faithfully achieved. For the kind of structural shaping resulting from an understanding of dramatic focus builds meaningful performance sequences by controlling the impressions projected to the audience, impressions which not only function as part of the narrative, but which influence how we perceive that narrative.

The extremes of dramatic focus may be indicated in

terms of the stage composition: on the one hand, a full stage, crowded with many figures; and on the other, a stage occupied by a single figure, speaking to himself or directly to the audience. There is, for example, a great visual difference between the full sight and show of the opening scene of 1 Henry VI:

Dead March. Enter the Funeral of King Henry the Fifth, attended on by the Duke of Bedford, Regent of France; the Duke of Gloucester, Protector; the Duke of Exeter, the Earl of Warwick, the Bishop of Winchester, Heralds, &c.

and that of Richard III:

Enter Richard, Duke of Gloucester, solus.

One requires our visual attention to relax, spreading objectively over a number of figures, presented as in a narrative frieze: we see the overall picture and patterning until movement or language signals a narrowed perspective on a particular figure or group of figures. The other shows us a subjective portrait which demands close attention. The opening of 1 Henry VI contributes to our understanding of the social relevance of the action, concentrating on exterior or public perspectives, thus initiating one context of future actions. The recurrence of similar perspectives on ceremony throughout the play will draw audience attention to the importance of such occasions as narrative markers. At the other extreme, Shakespeare shows us

Brown, Shakespeare's Plays, p. 176.
Richard alone, beginning his play with an interior, private point of view which he will continue throughout the stage action, focusing on Richard's singleness and difference in order that he may reveal the emotional and intellectual strength of his character. Even the widely focused scenes stress Richard's primary visibility, energy, and control over the play-world.

From such examples it is arguable that Shakespeare uses, in both 1 Henry VI and Richard III, an extreme of dramatic focus in order to reveal, at the outset, a significant perspective on the play-world. These first stage images bring the spectator into the play, partially fulfilling his immediate expectations, striking a keynote which directs attention to a specific point of view and establishing a visual signature upon which Shakespeare can build dramatic meaning. The procedure is swift and precise, and it is a hallmark of Shakespeare's directorial style in the early histories. Shakespeare relies heavily on his opening stage images to give us a reference point in stage space which controls or balances other ways of seeing, and to which we may refer.

**Qualities of the Composition**

These opening stage images are immediate, various, and ingenious: each communicates instantly, before any changes, either through speech or movement, occur. We know where we are: at Henry V's funeral in the opening scene of
1 Henry VI, as spectators at a state occasion in 2 Henry VI.I.i.
But when we look beyond their immediate impact, other more intricate qualities of the stage composition engage our attention. For example, symmetrically arranged groupings of sequences of actions will intensify the effects of regularity and simplicity within a stage image. Though seeming to be on the surface, and hence a purely ornamental device, such symmetry implies dramatic ordering. As the opening scene of 1 Henry VI develops, groupings shift and change, revealing dramatic meaning: the patterned entries of messengers bring news of the French disasters and interrupt the funeral ceremony; the nobles' separate exits stress the forming dissension. Or, in the first scene of 2 Henry VI, as actors fill the stage to group around the throne for Margaret's welcome and the reading of the articles of peace, it may seem that no other spatial arrangement is possible, producing an effect of lifelessness in life, as though we were seeing statues. But once this patterning is broken by the group exit of Henry, Margaret, and Suffolk, the ordered symmetry gradually dissolves through a series of exits which reflect the beginnings of disorderly rule. In both instances, Shakespeare invites and directs our vision far beyond the literal visual facts of stage grouping and movement: he gives pervasive reinforcement to the themes of his drama by supporting their meaning explicitly through an active design.

Other equally overt visual circumstances will also influence our perception of the stage image. Some stage
images may appear to be closed—apparently limited and self-contained; others remain open, "limitless and flowing, suggesting continuations beyond the bounds of the stage." In the closed composition, vision may seem restricted, channeled toward a single perspective, underlining only one possible meaning. In contrast, the open form introduces ambiguity, producing expectation and uncertainty in the spectator, who is given no key to the interpretation of the scene. Vision remains free; the spectator is given some choice of where to look. Interior scenes stressing privacy, direct confrontations between several characters, and scenes which are strongly formal, ceremonial, or stylized offer the most restrictions to vision. Exterior scenes, and those offering opportunities for free movement within the scene and for free entry and exit, are more informal in feeling, open to both visual variety and choice.

These qualities of the stage composition will profoundly affect our experience of the performed play. The first four scenes of 2 Henry VI present action within the enclosed perspective of the court, Gloucester's house, the palace, and Gloucester's garden. Shakespeare relieves these interior views only slightly in the falconing scene which opens Act II, returning us to rooms of state and more private encounters in the next six scenes before action moves outside to Suffolk's death, the activity and movement of the Cade scenes, and the final battle. The early, restricted

Brown, Shakespeare's Plays, p. 149.
vision will reinforce our impressions of formal ceremony, of secrecy and private intent; the increased visual opportunities of the later scenes will offer relief, gathering the early plotting toward stage-wide action.

Shakespeare's use of the extremes of dramatic focus, symmetry, and open and closed compositions might be documented with many more examples, further demonstrating his intuitive awareness of the theatrical effect of requiring different visual energies from his spectators. But the interplay and variation of these extremes is more significant, for it is through changes in focus that Shakespeare assures our response to what he shows. The more complex effects of focus depend upon collisions between stage images, creating spatial and temporal rhythms which further affect dramatic meaning. Shakespeare not only devises carefully arranged "speaking pictures"; he plans pictures which move and change. His directorial vision depends upon image relationships comparable to those which exist in film, extending and limiting the visible associations between stage images.9 Further, Shakespeare's drama shares another quality with film: an absolute immediacy of transition. Shakespeare's

insistent changes of focus prevent us from assessing the experience while it is in progress, for we are taken from one temporal and spatial emphasis to the next with the actors, sharing their effort in adjusting and juxtaposing moments. The suddenness of these transitions, the melting from scene to scene, contributes to the effect: we may find dread, excitement, and fascination increased by the rapid succession of images.

Consecutive Directions and Cutting

Shakespeare's free use of his stage to pass from time to time and place to place is a basic characteristic of his drama and hardly needs extended comment. In these early plays, spatial and temporal movement is unusually free: from court to battlefield, from England to France; decades of English history telescoped to the "two hours' traffic" of his stage. The framing scenes at court place the action decisively; at other times, where we are does not matter. Although Shakespeare often gives us precise details—"These are the city gates, the gates of Rouen" (1 Henry VI, II, ii, 1)—his most frequent dramatic practice allows time and place to develop from the situation shown to us. He stresses the passage of time for specific effect, moving the scene by verbal suggestions from Richard's dark

nigh to the morning of the battle (Richard III.V.iii), a contrast which stresses different ways of seeing and which arouses anticipation in his audience. Always, however, what is happening has more significance than where it is happening: meaning unfolds within a framework of time which performance conditions create. Whether or not we are familiar with the history, the compression is an asset: it serves as a memory-capsuling technique which gives added pressure to the swift succession of events, to developing characterization, and to themes. Shakespeare is more concerned with controlling an overall impression—the alternations of warfare in 1 Henry VI, the closed court world in 2 Henry VI, the balances of power in 3 Henry VI, the sequence of Richard's actions in Richard III—than he is with reproducing "true" time. Some stage images stabilize time and space, linking the drama to specific speeches or events, but any image also draws meaning from its placement within the temporal and rhythmic structure of which it forms a part.

Just as movement from speech to speech or event to event binds separate speeches and events into broader contexts of meaning, the movement of stage images, one following upon another, builds a continuity of tensions, reinforcing purely textual impressions of haste, slowness, boredom, or expectation. As any single stage image unfolds before us, we are always influenced by our angle of approach, and by the irony of cuts from moment to moment. As Bertrand Evans suggests in his study of Shakespeare's comedies, our
vision, at any one time, is more complete than that of the characters. We know more and anticipate what may follow in ways that differ from those who occupy the stage. So, in 3 Henry VI. I.iv, are we aware of Rutland's death before York learns of it; our knowledge permits us to focus on York's response to the news. And in Richard III. I.iv, because we know of Gloucester's plot against Clarence's life, the actualities of Clarence's dream carry an increased irony. Consistently, Shakespeare exploits this discrepancy of awarenesses by ironies of cutting which are as much a part of the performed play as the more obvious gestures of action and language.

At any point of transition between scenes or groups of scenes, the confrontation between two scenes may re-form each one in the spectator's perception, throwing one particular element into clear relief. The element may be one common to both scenes, as when, in 3 Henry VI, Shakespeare shows us York's death (I.iv) immediately following Rutland's death (I.iii); or, in 2 Henry VI, when Gloucester's death is reported in II.iii and followed by Beaufort's death in II.iv, which we witness. In both instances, the pairing of stage images concerned with a single concept accomplishes a perceptual abstraction of that concept: not only is our sense of causal relationship between the deaths heightened, but each death gains significant meaning from the other,

articulating conditions central to the play.

Within the time and rhythm structure of a play, certain moments or scenes appear as transitions between significant actions. In the early histories, Shakespeare's usual practice gives us a brief choral overview which comments on a previous action, channeling our point of view. Bridging scenes—moments in which a character or a group of characters reflect or comment on other parts of the action—are rare; Shakespeare most often depends upon direct juxtapositions to carry his spectator from one scene to the next. But he does place some scenes that offer deliberate pauses, allowing the audience time to recover from and to assess, in a new perspective, a fast-moving sequence of actions. These scenes usually embody a "how-goes-the-world" impression, as when, in Richard III, II.iii, a few citizens meet to discuss the state of the nation. The brief scene not only provides us with an objective viewpoint on an action we have seen largely from Richard's point of view, but it bridges a gap in time and mood from Richard's early, dangerous court appearances to our sight of the women gathered together in fearful anticipation of the future. Shakespeare uses the cut to reinforce our sense of Richard's fast-growing power, which moves so quickly that the stagecraft is hard-pressed to support it. This type of cutting also has psychological as well as dramatic significance, for the widely separate tones will detach one moment from the next, crossing narrative movement with other dimensions of speech and feeling.
**Expanding Focus**

Shakespeare senses that a moment of narrow focus immediately followed by a full scene will release intensity and expand audience interest to include a broader perspective, often qualified by the narrow view which precedes it. Such a change occurs in *2 Henry VI* as Shakespeare juxtaposes II.iv, which focuses on Gloucester's reactions to Eleanor's "pageant of shame," to a full court scene (III.i), the King and nobles awaiting Gloucester's presence, only to condemn him for treason. The intensity and sympathy built during the encounter between husband and wife is balanced and relaxed by the large public scene; once Gloucester enters, tension builds again toward his arrest, and our view of him at that moment is conditioned and enriched by the earlier, more private scene. Here, the technique reveals dimensions of both character and theme. Together, the two scenes show Duke Humphrey and his Duchess brought low; Shakespeare uses the extremity of their situations ironically, reinforcing earlier impressions of Humphrey's justice and Eleanor's foolish ambition.

Paradoxically, an expanded focus may deepen the portrayal of character. Because we see a character's development chiefly through his relationships with other characters, his appearance on a crowded stage together with a character we have seen him with in private will set up dramatic perspectives. Relationships established between several characters in private will continue to operate,
drawing them together in the mind of the audience when the scene shifts to one of public occasion. In 2 Henry VI we observe Margaret and Suffolk more closely in public because we have seen them in private; the same is true of York, Warwick, and Salisbury.

**Narrowing Focus**

Quickly narrowed focus draws attention to one character or to a group of characters, either by speech or movement within a full scene or by following a full scene with one of intense focus. This technique stresses separateness, either of the individual or the group: our attention moves with one or several figures from one scene or part of a scene to another. Particularly in 2 Henry VI, Shakespeare makes use of this following focus to increase our awareness of the discrepancy between public and private behavior. In the first large court scene, the ceremony of Margaret's welcome requires speech which rises to meet the occasion: we tend to see and hear what happens as a total phenomenon which intersects and influences each speaker's private experience. But as Shakespeare moves our attention away from the ceremony, still within this scene, the private responses of the nobles come to the surface, culminating in direct discourse—angry words and accusations. By the time the scene finally narrows to York's solo figure, our sense of his separation from the others is affirmed, and Shakespeare seizes the opportunity to reveal York's private
thoughts, allowing us to share his point of view. York dwells on the need for silence and secrecy, deciding to "make a show of love to proud Duke Humphrey" and eventually to claim the crown. The private quality of the following scene, where Gloucester chides Eleanor for her ambition, has been prepared for by the narrowing focus on York and his thoughts; and we will see their behavior to each other through the shadow of York's view of his own situation. When we next see York (I.iii), his regency of France is questioned in public, his anger erupts against Suffolk, and he is accused as a traitor; these impressions yield to a view of York, again in public, as an officer of the King, arresting the Duchess of Gloucester for witchcraft (I.iv). At the end of this scene, Shakespeare provides a speech clue which hints toward a future private meeting with Salisbury and Warwick, where York asks for, and receives, support for his claim to the title (II.i). In the following scene, York is again in public, vindicated by the Horner-Peter combat; later he is a relatively silent party to Gloucester's arrest, and plots further against Gloucester's life. Called to Ireland, he again reveals his thoughts in private (III.i). These alternating views of York's public and private faces further reinforce textual impressions of his political nature; the two impressions are joined in Act V when York publicly reveals his claim to the throne just before the final battle at St. Albans. As we follow a single character through a play in this manner, variations in
focus contribute to our sense that Shakespeare is presenting a continuous reality: he reassures us that we are seeing more than one dimension of the action by unfolding his characters' identities in a multitude of appearances. Within these varying perspectives, we can also watch characters moving to meet the action, moving with the action, or moving away from the action.

**Movement**

Movement arises from dynamic patterns suggested by words; it changes relationships within a scene. The quality of that movement—what Rudolf Laban calls the "motion factors" of a scene—may be either static or dynamic, and variations between these "effort qualities" will determine focus: flows of motion, weight, space, and time influence our perception of a stage image, and often these considerations are the primary dramatic fact. Since active selectivity is a basic trait of vision, as spectators we are more interested in change than in immobility. If a scene is rich in physical change—groups forming and reforming, actors crossing back and forth, stage-wide gestures of battle—we will have little attention left to spare for the language, which can fulfill its own movements more surely

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when heard against a visually stable background. Shakespeare is well aware that, at times, hearing and clearly understanding the words of his drama becomes secondary to our involvement in action for its own sake. Some rhythms of a play, such as the recurring battle scenes in *1 Henry VI*, or the sequence of scenes in *2 Henry VI* showing Cade's mob in action, contribute to a sense of endless, on-going activity. In general, this technique broadens the audience view; significance lies in the scope of movement, in the recurrent variations of the activities of war, so that the battle scenes form a central visual context, holding the attention of the spectator by the swift succession of a number of pictorial images.

The early battle scenes in *1 Henry VI* are particularly interesting, for they convey the form of the action and produce a sense of its continuing pressure by means of brief alternating scenes. These represent Talbot surprised and Salisbury killed (I.iv), Talbot and Joan in single combat (I.v), the victorious French (I.vi), the French surprised and Talbot winning (II.i), and then, Talbot after the battle with Salisbury's body (II.ii). The audience's sense of war is thus constructed for the most part by its impressions of Talbot and Joan. There is a comparison between this sequence and the structure of images that Sergei Eisenstein speaks of in film. The visual sequence is edited like film footage for accelerated or contrasting action, at times achieving several of these
effects of montage simultaneously.\textsuperscript{14} Rapid cutting between poles of the action builds suspense and affirms impressions of discontinuity and flux as conditions central to the battle itself.

2 Henry VI uses battle scenes to another purpose. They do not provide a central visual context, but they do furnish a necessary visual release from the sustained, predominantly interior view of the plotting and revenge surrounding the struggle for the crown. Here, the images of war take life from much that has gone before, reinforcing, clarifying and refocusing more intense perspectives by means of broad stage movement. Rather than hearing private threats and seeing hypocritical shows of love and duty, we see the sides clearly drawn: York and his sons are joined to Warwick; the Cliffords stand against them. Insults and arming are followed by the on-stage deaths of Old Clifford and Somerset, clearly giving the victory, and the last emphasis, to York (V.i—iii).

Similarly, the final action of Richard III is sustained by impressions of stage-wide action. But Shakespeare has a purpose beyond creating a short, exciting moment. Our image of Richard as a fascinating, determined manipulator is now replaced by that of a professional soldier who has set his life "upon a cast": the portrait is Shakespeare's final challenge to our feelings for Richard. The fact of

\textsuperscript{14}See Peter Wollen, Signs and Meaning in the Cinema (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969), pp. 32-53 for a fuller explanation of Eisenstein's theories.
Richard's death carries the end of the play; Richmond's verbal overview stabilizes and summarizes the previous visual excitement, leading away from the continuing perspective on Richard toward a future without him.

Stasis

When movement controls the stage and the spectator is momentarilry intent upon action, its significance may not be immediately apparent. There are obvious limits to the visual information which can be absorbed at a single glance: we cannot see all, and see it clearly—we cannot be ideal spectators. One stage technique, however, does allow this perfected vision—the tableau, which suggests frozen motion rather than an absence of motion by evoking movement without showing it. Static scenes have, like the still photograph, an inherent theatricality; they are likely to be among those moments which remain in the spectator's memory, like snapshots mounted in an album. Visually, the stage is at rest, the audience freed from narrative necessity, and reflective vision is possible. We may concentrate on verbal images or on the pictures rising from a narrative speech.

Shakespeare directs a striking internal tableau in 3 Henry VI: King Henry on the molehill, surrounded by the mourning fathers and sons (II.v). Through the look of this scene, audience attention goes beyond the immediate moment to focus on broad thematic concerns—the ironies of war and
the particular irony of a King who pities himself and all mankind, but does nothing about it.

Because they interrupt narrative flow, such static moments have a limited effectiveness; seldom is a picture held for the length of this scene. A slight hold may occur at a play's ending, as in the final image of 3 Henry VI, which contrasts Edward, formally crowned and enthroned for the first time, and Richard, mocking and hypocritical in the face of Edward's resolve for "lasting joy." At such times, the stage image gathers our perceptions much like a choral overview, and this perception is particularized by the sense of the language, which asks for remembrance of the preceding action within a controlled visual perspective. Similarly, Shakespeare may establish a tableau-like overview at a clear break in the action: as the third act of 2 Henry VI closes, we witness Winchester's death, and Shakespeare gives us, as Henry prays, a few moments in which to assess the significance of what we see, perhaps contemplating, with Henry, both sin and judgment.

The tableau-like moments within a scene have a different visual effect, and most often turn on a single gesture, sometimes set forth by stage directions, but more often indicated simply by the text: "I will pluck this red rose," "Kneel again," and "Give me your hands" are examples drawn from the Henry VI plays. When an action is reinforced or insisted upon by words in this way, attention is drawn to its significance. Both actor and audience become equally
aware of what is to come: change and response are premeditated, and all waits upon the fulfillment of a precise movement. The time involved in the gesture may be minimal, but the confluence of expectation and action may have the effect of drawing out the instant of time, isolating its meaning in momentary stasis.

**Constancy Through Change**

Impressions of physical change may seem to be absent even when the stage is active: stage images which repeat the same action, or variations of it, over and over, are perceived as an essentially unchanging aspect of the given world of a play. The sequence of murders for revenge in *3 Henry VI*, regardless of how actively and with what variety each is presented, may produce this sensation of constancy. Or, in another example, the repetitious full court scenes in all the early histories create a similar, overall impression. In both instances, although the stage images may differ in composition, their intent and meaning are similar. The acts of physical violence are the customary blood rituals of *3 Henry VI*; the court scenes signal formalized attempts at reconciliation and reorganization. Each type of iterative patterning gathers our perceptions around stage images which demonstrate the consistent presence of a certain mode of action. Again, Shakespeare's technique finds an analogue in film: the meaning of one image is reinforced by association with another image not necessarily
a part of the same episode, producing an echoing effect. In each example, the sense of meaning is not that sense proper only to the images themselves; their final significance lies more in the ordering and reoccurrence of the elements than in their objective content.\textsuperscript{15} Shakespeare uses this technique as a powerful unifying device, characterizing his play-worlds in part by indicating variations of a basic situation.

\textbf{From Motion to Stasis}

Motion which precedes a static image will reinforce impressions of stillness arising from the fixed view so that the stillness may be perceived as a visual resolution. Shakespeare often uses this type of alternating focus to underscore a textual resolution, such as a single or mixed choral overview of a busy scene. For example, in \textit{1 Henry VI.} II. i Exeter, following a general exit, comments on the growing dissension between the peers, visualized earlier in terms of the quarrel between Gloucester's and Winchester's men. Or, as suggested above, by tracing Shakespeare's varying presentation of York's public and private behavior, a character's intimate thoughts may be revealed within the still perspective of a soliloquy which follows a more active stage picture. In each case, the steady focus forces complete attention to a single point

of view which may influence how we review what we have seen or how we look forward to what we are about to see.

**From Stasis to Motion**

When moving compositions follow a visual rest, we will feel released both from the limited action and the limited point of view, often with an accompanying sense of strengthened cause and effect between the two stage images. So do Richard's quiet moments with the two murderers in Richard III.I.iii proceed to an expanded view of Clarence's murder, first visualized through Clarence's own imagination, then shown through active physical presentation. Here, Shakespeare demonstrates the power of juxtaposing the still, primarily verbal focus with a quickly changing image which supports it, so that each alternative mirrors the other and may seem tentative, fragmentary, always ready to dissolve into its opposite.

**Developing Focus: Contrasting Visual Rhythms**

Aside from the effects of extremes, Shakespeare uses the contrast between stage activity and stasis to help define developing focus within a scene. Within any stage image, persons draw our attention either through speech or through gestures or both, and we are likely to observe most closely those who demonstrate involvement in the stage situation, often ignoring the presence of those who make no display. Yet these persons may give an added significance
to those who speak and move. In the large court scenes, for example, those who do not actively engage in the scene still serve to flesh out the pictorial quality of the composition, and their presence will increase our sense of seeing a cross-section of the society. Like us, these persons are observers, reacting to what they see and hear, and our visual attention may be drawn almost unconsciously to follow the shifting or steady direction of their lines of sight.

Persons who speak or move will reinforce the stillness of those who remain static or silent, and this kind of contrast may contribute to strong impressions of a character's isolation or difference. Shakespeare reinforces our view of King Henry's passivity through showing him relatively silent during 2 Henry VI.I.iii, where Gloucester sets forth the terms of the Horner-Peter combat. Repeatedly, the life and decisions of the court are activated by those around him; Henry remains, in both gesture and language, removed from active involvement, so that our attention for the moments when he achieves action, such as Suffolk's decisive banishment (2 Henry VI.III.ii), is immediately intensified and accompanied by a sense of abrupt disturbance.

Charting the variation of active and static images will help to establish the predominant visual rhythms and pace of a play—1 Henry VI is busier than most of 2 Henry VI, for example. Once we discern this central rhythm, we can more readily describe the effect of abrupt changes in focus.
which may disturb the dominant surface of the work, making a scene stand out from the surrounding dramatic texture. In this way, we can recognize why a scene may seem intrusive: the meeting of Talbot and the Countess of Auvergne in 1 Henry VI.II.iii, for instance, shows a concern for private behavior in private surroundings, which contrasts with and goes against the broadly conceived scenes of battle and court ceremony which form a large part of the visual experience of that play.

Shakespeare also uses an abrupt change in focus to signal a striking or surreal scene, one which may accentuate, extend or deny the overall thematic concerns of a play. The carefully arranged tableau of King Henry and the mourning fathers and sons (2 Henry VI.II.v) stands out from the rest of the play, speaking more clearly for the separations of war than any other moment. Here, the visual circumstances underscore and exaggerate other perspectives of the action, widening their significance. So, too, in Richard III, does the tableau of the mourning queens (IV.iv) at once extend our view of Richard's crimes and place limitations upon our pleasure in his conquest of the throne. The men have no place here, and Shakespeare purposefully excludes their point of view, permitting the women alone to overstate the separations Richard causes. The surreal appearance of the Ghosts on Bosworth Field (V.iii) makes a similar overstatement, exaggerating previous moments of the play. By showing the Ghosts of men whom Richard had murdered clustered
around him, speaking their approval to Richmond and denying Richard, Shakespeare summarizes Richard's past, freshening the horrors in our minds, preparing us both for the contrasting perspective on Richard which his soliloquy introduces and for the final moments of the play. Although the symmetrical qualities of this stage image may seem unrealistic and stiff, such visual and verbal stylization helps to detach these moments from everyday reality, raising them to a higher level of meaning.

Shakespeare's visual directions for the early history plays give us an unusually broad experience: by simply looking at the plays, we see concrete dramatic images of the political, spiritual, and social shape of the action described, sustaining our impressions of a framing reality. On one level, these elements alone narrate the story—what Brecht calls the "gest of showing." Shakespeare recognizes that what he shows and how he shows it gives his drama emphasis; and in 1 Henry VI, his primary interest lies with purely narrative show, with the kind of dramatic world where what a man does defines him as much as what he says, and where the images of men in action are referred to an iconography of broad social occasion which helps to define themes and, ultimately, meaning. In any dramatic work, an interaction exists between this narrative intent—the need

to keep the story moving—and pictorial realism—the need to represent moments in the narrative chain as completely as possible. The problem involves not only balance, but perspective as well: ideally, conceptual narrative drive, working through the stage image as a medium, should yield a visual evocation of a moment. In *Henry VI*, Shakespeare attempts to show all events; but in the following plays, a process of visual selection has taken place which evokes rather than displays a stage world. The difference between the two ways of showing reveals, in one perspective, Shakespeare's growth as an artist.

In terms borrowed from the visual arts, *Henry VI* may be compared to a bas-relief frieze where the figures, though seen to be in harmonious movement, are captured by the stone and only partially emerge from the rigidity of a background which provides context and continuity. This kind of art form is controlled and limited—not only by the material of its composition, but in the ways it may be approached by a spectator. At the other extreme, Shakespeare's working-out of the balance between pictorial realism and conceptual narrative drive in *Richard III* suggests comparison with a free-standing sculpture seen against a background of impressionistic views, some sculptured, some flat. The spectator may see the single figure from many angles, but each point of view is qualified in some way by additional impressions of background, so that

the complete vision is neither rigidly controlled nor limited, but left open to a variety of possible interpretations, dependent equally upon the artist's creation and the viewer's response. Gradually, Shakespeare discards a tightly controlled presentation which limits human response, retaining it only when he wishes to give explicit bounds to a moment or to a scene. Increasingly, his directions imply an open-ended response, allowing us more freedom of choice about how we see his plays.

Verbal Drama: Insight

Shakespeare's verbal drama may trap us: it can so engage our minds that we may prevent ourselves from inquiring further and simply stop to admire its complexity, allusiveness, and attractiveness. But this is not the place to examine the vocabularies, "gestic poetry," or verbal imagery specific to each character or to each play; these have been studied elsewhere in some detail. My

18 Brown, Shakespeare's Plays, p. 19.
purpose here is to describe how Shakespeare's verbal directions inform and command our perceptions of his stage images.

Shakespeare often makes choices between stressing physical or imaginative vision, but most characteristically he asks us to measure sight by sound. Physical vision or sight offers only one description of Shakespeare's stage worlds, providing signs that guide the spectator, triggering further insights, giving a boldly structural outline to the further illuminations of living detail supplied by language. The moment we begin to search Shakespeare's stage images for dramatic meaning which includes the experiences offered by language, we are no longer looking at the play, but into the play—seeing it "in the mind's eye," with insight. Once speech begins, our vision is qualified. Through speech our attention is drawn to one character or another: we watch for the effect of his words on himself and on others, and for the acts or events which speech, as a new event, engenders. Since all speech results from an active process which began as thought or feeling, it is thought and feeling that finally define the spatial arrangements and tensions of the figures on the stage. Shakespeare's verbal drama is a specific register of thought and feeling which selectively directs both our physical and imaginative vision, varying our initial insights into situation, character, and action, deepening and arranging our perspectives of the stage image.
For an example, as we look at the first scene of 3 Henry VI, we see York and his sons around the throne; then York ascends to "take the regal seat," and is found there by Henry and his nobles. A wrangle ensues, followed by the group exits so common in these plays: York and his sons "come down." Looking into the scene, we are aware that verbal activity further defines the developing signification of the visual facts. The brevity and drive of the nobles' speeches carry excitement and energy; the quickening rhythms of the language play against the more deliberate physical movements of York's going up and coming down, and of Henry's entrance and exit. In addition, the quarrel is clarified and given direction by the sense of what we hear; and this sense is supported by all components of the stage image, drawing our attention firmly to the opposition of Henry and York and at the same time surrounding us with verbal reminders of past oppositions and suggestions of future actions and counteractions. Here, language not only affects our overall perception of the scene, but its proportion and distribution stabilizes large areas of meaning, distinguishing among characters or indicating their relative importance.

In Shakespeare's early histories, language offers specific directives for focus: it may call attention to itself, to other language, and to developing relationships between characters. It may imply and invite gestures, or make those gestures more meaningful; it may draw us to
notice silent presences. The words spoken may refer us to the whole stage picture, or to a single part of it; what we hear may articulate a thematic concern, give us a choral overview, or introduce us to the thought processes of one or several characters, asking that we measure our own vision by that of the persons on the stage. And, at the same time that our attention is drawn in any one or several of these ways, Shakespeare's words offer units of description which may support, alter, assess, dominate or give images beyond the stage picture: talk, especially talk in images, expands the possible ways of seeing. His language supplies us with new and extended perceptions of the play-world, further arousing our sensations and ordering the more responsive, emotional elements of the total design so that we have the feeling that we have been and are being constantly revealed to ourselves.

**Perceptive Modes: Objectivity**

Shakespeare directs this revelation within two perceptive modes—objectivity and subjectivity—reproducing, on the stage, the kinds of perceptual activity normal to everyday life. We feel Shakespeare's sense of comprehensive objectivity most acutely in scenes or groups of scenes which supply multiple variations of perspective or point of view. When speeches are split among many voices, as in the frequent stage-wide wrangles in *3 Henry VI* (I.i and the second half of II.i are good examples), our attention shifts with
the focusing rhythms of speech, increasing our sense of being omniscient observers. As spectators, we may become part of the crowd, participating in the changes of feeling realized on the stage, anticipating who will answer whom, what will be said, and how much will be said or left unsaid. We are involved, but we cannot participate directly, nor can we anticipate perfectly. And when we hear many tones of voice, each contributing to the general sense and impression of a moment, we are drawn to hearing, and hence to seeing, an overall perspective rather than a single point of view.

Character Differentiation

We will differentiate characters by what they say, and also by consistencies of vocabulary, tones of voice, and responsive attitudes. Our view of the whole play also gains objectivity through seeing and hearing the actions and attitudes of major characters mirrored or echoed by minor characters. Shakespeare uses this technique in single scenes: the confrontation between Gloucester's and Winchester's servingmen on a clearly divided stage in 1 Henry VI.I.iii visualizes the verbal quarrel of their masters; the St. Albans "miracle" in 2 Henry VI.II.i clarifies, through speech more direct than that of the nobles and through an emblematic action, the blindness of the King and Gloucester's true sight. Or Shakespeare may direct a group of scenes toward contrast: the entire Cade action in 2 Henry VI reflects York's desires to take over the kingdom,
opposing Cade's direct, physical speech to York's silent, more abstracted secrecy, inviting us to examine both perspectives.

We will recognize major and minor characters, to some extent, by how much each says, although the number of words is not a perfect guide to importance: Henry VI, in each of the plays given his name, is more often a silent presence than an active participant. But the plays' titles are not misnomers: Henry's particular presence—pensive, meditative, detached—motivates the extravagant actions which flow around his silence. Here, Shakespeare deliberately points the contrast, in terms of the proportions of dialogue and action, between the significance of those actions and the relative effectiveness of speech.

Narrative Focus

Seldom does Shakespeare's language serve as a single focusing device, qualifying our vision in only one way. But when language specifically emphasizes narrative, we are directed more to the overall movement of the story and to the differentiations and relationships between characters than we are to more complex insights offered by the play. We are, in other words, commanded more by sense than by sound or images. 1 Henry VI.IV.i is a good example of Shakespeare's narrative skill. As the scene opens, King Henry is crowned, and this formal moment gives way to a quick succession of events: Sir John Fastolfe's condemnation,
the consequences of Burgundy's letter, a quarrel between Vernon and Basset, which the King attempts to heal by putting on a red rose, an action which further stimulates dissension among the Yorkists. A brief speech by Exeter, commenting upon what has happened, closes the scene. Throughout, Shakespeare directs us toward each action in turn; we see them objectively, as part of the progressive surface of the story. The major purpose of the language here is to identify, demonstrate, and explain, supporting the stage picture as it does so. Through such narrative images, Shakespeare may introduce and further identify characters and develop their relationships with each other; audience attention will follow the story as it unfolds before them. In 1 Henry VI, narrative stage images predominate; Shakespeare's interest is in what is happening more than in how or why events occur. As subjective focus on Talbot and Joan increases, and as the Suffolk–Margaret material is introduced, the purely narrative function of the stage images gives way to brief illuminations of character which, though they are still part of the narrative in that they help to tell the story, seem to stand out from the other parts of the play to announce their difference. In performance, we welcome that difference; just telling the story is never enough. We feel the dependence of 1 Henry VI on narrative as a weakness in the play, largely because the concentration of narrative images presents us with too much of the same kind of reality. Much like narrative painting or sculpture,
one or two figures may stand out from the whole composition, but our general impression is of the story itself; few moments are presented in high relief.

In 2 and 3 Henry VI Shakespeare varies the rhythm, pace, and placement of narrative images much more than he does in 1 Henry VI. From the very beginning, the opening scenes of both later plays represent an advance in style over the deliberately patterned speech and action rhythms of the earlier 1 Henry VI. In each, an initial situation—in 2 Henry VI the marriage with Margaret, in 3 Henry VI York's usurpation of the throne—not only introduces us to the central characters but gives us insight into the context of the action central to the narrative. The situation is developed through speeches of varying length; and this is a definite dramatic virtue, since it allows for a wider differentiation of tones, attitudes, and attention spans. Thus, as verbal statement is sustained within this general narrative progression, we may gain more subjective and deeper insights into character, motive, and theme.

Narrative Beyond the Stage Image: Reports

Shakespeare gives us a great deal of verbal information rapidly; often this supplies us with sights and sounds beyond the immediate stage image, as in the repeated messenger speeches in the early histories. Although reports are seldom as directly dramatic as the on-stage fact, they
do help to create the sense of a reality which extends beyond the stage, conveying dramatic fullness, deepening our sense of completeness. Here, for example, is Talbot in the midst of battle:

No leisure had he to enrank his men;  
He wanted pikes to set before his archers;  
Instead whereof sharp stakes pluck'd out of hedges  
They pitched in the ground confusedly,  
To keep the horsemen off from breaking in.  
More than three hours the fight continued;  
Where valiant Talbot above human thought  
Enacted wonders with his sword and lance:  
Hundreds he sent to hell, and none durst stand him;  
Here, there, and every where, enraged he flew:  
The French exclaim'd, the devil was in arms;  
All the whole army stood agazed on him:  
His soldiers spying his undaunted spirit  
A Talbot! a Talbot! cried out amain  
And rush'd into the bowels of the battle.

1 Henry VI. I.i. 115-29

The details are specific, and they suggest urgency and pressure, in direct contrast to the earlier ceremonial language of the nobles. Shakespeare means us to see Talbot's situation vividly, through a subjective view which gives us a passionately recorded insight into the past. The moment is not only narrative but retrospective as well, giving us illuminations of both action and character. And when seen within the framing context of Henry V's funeral, the words may also recall the bravery and spirit of the dead king. The messenger's speech shows how Shakespeare uses sustained verbal statement, formally narrative in organization, to expand the stage image, inducing a momentary subjective shifting of our objective perceptions.
Shakespeare may also increase objectivity by using a reaction scene to repeat a narrative image. In 3 Henry VI. II. i, a messenger recounts York's death, an event we have just seen, to Richard and Edward. Because the information is old to us, we are free to watch for the emotional reactions of York's sons. Distanced from the event, we see its effect widening to include other parts of the action.

Sound Effects

Noise, "alarums," or music will also widen our perceptions of a stage situation. In 2 Henry VI. III. ii, at the point following Henry's reactions to Gloucester's death, Shakespeare directs: "Noise within. Enter Warwick and many Commons." Immediately, we are aware that offstage events are within reach of the stage, that outside pressures may change what we are about to see. The fact of Gloucester's death has significance both on and beyond the stage, and our view widens to include the possibility of far-reaching effects.

Actions may be isolated on the stage, but Shakespeare is careful to supplement the dramatic facts with other perspectives, particularly at times when he is anxious to multiply the reality of a few figures in action. Throughout the early histories, the continuing battle "alarums" and the sound of guns going off, with the lingering smell and smoke of gunpowder, make us aware of a comprehensive
reality which extends beyond the stage. Repeated sounds may frame our awareness in other ways as well. The trumpet flourishes and sennets introducing royal processionals anticipate the appearance of the king and his court, aiding us in adjusting our perceptions to a broadened point of view.

Arranging Points of View

Dialogue, sound effects, and music do not simply add to the stage image but multiply it, creating, maintaining, and changing areas of tension within a stage picture. Indeed, as suggested above, our perceptions of a stage situation may offer so many points of view, each presented with such equal passion, that the meaning of the event as a whole may not be clear. On such occasions, Shakespeare often gives us some measure for the event, through a summary or choral statement which may be both retrospective and anticipatory. This may be a simple lead-in to further action, as in King Henry's "Away with them to prison; and the day of combat shall be the last of the next month. Come, Somerset, we'll see thee sent away" at the close of 2 Henry VI.I.iii, after the terms of the Horner-Peter combat have been set forth. Or Shakespeare may direct a more specific measurement: Warwick's prophecy near the conclusion of the Temple Garden meeting in 1 Henry VI.II.iv underlines the significance of what we have seen:

And here I prophesy: this brawl today, Grown to this faction in the Temple-Garden,
Shall send between the red rose and the white
A thousand souls to death and deadly night.

1 Henry VI. II. iv. 124-27

Warwick's statement is particularly useful here, for throughout the scene, the text has seemed to support the balanced stage image while the subtext—dissension—runs counter to it. Although such statements are usually part of the passionate involvement of the character, they offer, for the spectator, the additional possibility of providing a dispassionate perspective on the action, allowing him to release his hold on one stage image and to move to the one which follows with a firmer overall understanding.

Speech Rhythms: "Naturalism"

Distinctions between passionate language and dispassionate understanding become increasingly difficult to make as we move deeper into the kinds of insight language affords a particular moment in a Shakespearean play. All speech is passionate, in that it arises from thought and feeling, but Shakespeare clearly indicates degrees of passion and involvement for both his actors and his audience. When the organizational tension of the language is low, as in brief informal conversational speeches which narrate, question, or comment on the action following natural speech rhythms, we will be drawn to see the moment objectively, aware of each point of view expressed. Looking at the stage image, we will perceive a sustaining "naturalism,"
supporting our feeling that the stage is the world we know. Such, for example, is one effect of the dialogue in *Richard III*.III.i, when Gloucester and Buckingham welcome the young Prince; or of the brief exchanges between the nobles in *3 Henry VI*.I.i. Such language directs our attention to various parts of the stage, or it may move our vision easily from foreground to background, as in *3 Henry VI*.III.i, where the asides of Gloucester and Clarence form one center of verbal interest which also points out the importance of Edward's wooing. Here, Shakespeare allows for the possibilities of a more comprehensive, simultaneous understanding by creating a tension between our perceptions of the two given perspectives.

**Speech Rhythms: Rhetoric**

When characters speak in heavily rhetorical or stylized speech rhythms, even though these may have a high organizational tension filled with a sense of passionate involvement, the formal quality of the language will exercise a distancing effect, both for those on stage and for those in the audience. So, in *3 Henry VI*.I.iv, does Shakespeare remove us from immediate involvement with York's situation just before his death on the molehill; our view is made dispassionate by the length and tonal shifts between Margaret's *vituperatio* and York's rhetorically patterned answer. Or, in *Richard III*, the chorus of mourning queens in IV.iv ritualizes all the "English woes" so that
they become a significant background effect; we understand them, through the recounting, as conditions of history.

The set speech, such as Mortimer's genealogy (1 Henry VI.II.v), will also have the effect of momentarily removing us from the action by articulating and explaining events and attitudes which lie behind the plays and which form a background for broader thematic concerns. In each occurrence of this kind of language which surveys the past or future course of the action, focus softens to a visual resolution that connotes distance and uninvolvment and tends to be elegiac. Although this perception of rhetorical, ritualized, or sustained speech may seem to rest on a modern judgment which grows impatient with the length and stylization of such speech, I believe it represents a distinction in focus through which Shakespeare directs our degree of involvement in the stage image at any one time.

Perceptive Modes: Subjectivity

Shakespeare's facility in expanding his theatrical substance by widening our view of dramatic facts and allowing the free play of multiple perspectives or points of view reveals the lively objectivity of his stage imagination. Had he been content to show us only these aspects of an action, never isolating the individual or subjective point of view for further analysis, he would have flattened our perceptions considerably. He would have lost the effect of a penetrating look at the single character, at the single
gesture, at the overall action. His imagination would have appeared generalized, not particularized and strengthened by the unique vision of an individual or individuals.

Shakespeare focuses on individuals and on special points of view through any sustained verbal statement, a device which commands our attention for the speaker, emphasizing his concerns. Any contrast between short speeches and long ones will alert audience attention to the extended expression of one character, as in 2 Henry VI. III. i, when Queen Margaret attacks Gloucester at length (38 lines) following Henry's musing (3 lines) about why Gloucester has not come. Margaret's position in the scene is made more central by her sustained speech, even though she has little to say once Gloucester comes before the King and is accused of treason. The force of her insinuations gains dramatic meaning through this speech, and that force and its opposing responses control the developing sense of the rest of the scene.

Although sustained speech will direct close attention to an individual, we may, at the same time, watch for on-stage response to the sense, length, or rhythms of a speech. In particular, compelling rhyme or patterning will command an aural awareness: we may hear the speech as a background effect while our attention is drawn to one or more of the listeners. So, in Richard III. I. iii, during Margaret's extended curses, will we hear Margaret and watch
Richard, anticipating his response. Whether we are drawn to the speaker or to the listener, focus narrows, channeling our perceptions within the stage image.

Aside

A more complex type of focus interprets actions we see on stage through the asides of one or more characters. Sprague considers the aside as a device which develops contrast and irony; more specifically, it is an isolating device, giving us insight into one facet of the situation through another's eyes. When used by two characters to each other, speaking outside the general occasion, the aside produces a split focus, and gives an added sense of depth to the overall stage image. Such is the effect of Richard's and Clarence's comments on Edward's wooing of Lady Grey in 3 Henry VI. III. ii: we are forced to examine the significance of what we see more closely—Edward's behavior is made to seem exaggerated and ridiculous by Richard's and Clarence's remarks, and we are invited to look beyond the immediate situation to its effect on the overall action. When the aside is used directly to the audience, it becomes an

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invitation to see the action through a single character's eyes. In either case, through asides Shakespeare may draw attention not only to a single speech or gesture, as when Dick Butcher's asides in 2 Henry VI. IV. ii point the extravagances of Cade's self-styled genealogy; but to a sequence of gestures, as the exchange of asides between Gloucester and Cardinal Winchester in 2 Henry VI. II. i, which brings their quarrel to our attention so that it influences our view of the general occasion. Here, two actions share the stage; each demands attention, thus creating visual tension between two dramatic zones, heightening our sense of simultaneousness.

Asides increase and direct our awareness: we are given the opportunity of a kind of double vision permitting us to see twice, once through our own eyes, and once through the eyes of one or more involved spectators. The most elaborate example of this perspective is the play-within-the-play situation, which Shakespeare conceives, in these early histories, as an emblematic action: the Simpcox miracle (II. i) and the Horner–Peter combat (II. iii) in 2 Henry VI are scenes where some of the characters on stage share the spectator's role with the audience. The situation requires unusual attentiveness, and Shakespeare directs that attention by having several persons comment, either together or separately, on the action. One voice may top the others, rising to demand attention, but major focus rests on the action which joins actors and audience as spectators. On
the one hand, the stage expands; on the other, the distance between the stage world and the audience contracts the moment we feel ourselves represented on stage—we are asked to become part of the picture, penetrating the image.

**Soliloquy**

Whenever the abundance of visual elements is simplified, the playing space becomes pure, granting language full control. Shakespeare emphasizes an individual most clearly by showing him visually isolated, alone on the stage. At such times, both the actor's presence and his speech will carry an increased significance. Some of these moments, such as Plantagenet's concluding speech in *Henry VI*.II.v, bridge or summarize narrative; but these are single choral speeches, not true soliloquies. Both visually and verbally, the true soliloquy is a high point, and the actor who delivers it is in a commanding position: the close focus insists on thoughtful speech, and the audience will clearly identify, and may adopt, the point of view of the actor who most often faces the audience and presents a subjective revelation or evaluation of the action. True soliloquy provides a feeling-link between audience and character. Its intensity sharpens vision, and, consequently, feeling: as the visual reference point comes closer, the narrow focus acts as a formal gesture which makes us feel. We become involved in interior perspectives, and gain a subjective insight. Thus Richard III links himself to his
audience as he reveals his plans, building up a wider vision by sharing his own imaginative vision with the audience. We enjoy him in proportion to his enjoyment of himself, and his ability to entertain us controls a large part of our experience of his play. In a sense, our vision is his; for the duration of the play, we see through his eyes.

Verbal Focus

Normally, what we see on stage accords with what we hear. Although irony appears otherwise, usually words echo what we see, prompting our feelings toward an action, as when Warwick describes Gloucester's body:

But see, his face is black and full of blood,  
His eye-balls further out than when he lived;  
Staring full ghastly like a strangled man;  
His hair uprear'd, his nostrils stretched with struggling;  
His hands abroad display'd, as one that grasp'd  
And tugg'd for life and was by strength subdued;  
Look, on the sheets his hair, you see, is sticking;  
His well-proportion'd beard made rough and rugged,  
Like to the summer's corn by tempest lodged.  

2 Henry VI.III.ii.168-76

Through specific details, we are given a close-up view; we "see it feelingly." Verbal expansions like this one affect the entire stage picture, making the surface more visible; movement within a scene is often stopped so that audience attention may settle either on the meaning of the words or beyond them toward broader thematic concerns. Many moments of clearly verbal focus, such as the soliloquy or the long speech within a scene, stress the state of being of the speaker, so that even if interest in the content
of a speech flags, it is upheld by the speaker's own interest in himself and by the visual lines of attention created by the glances of the other actors on the stage.

**Visual and Verbal Integration: The Single Speech**

In performance, visual and verbal integration may give a single speech a position of central importance to the action. In the *Henry VI* plays, King Henry's speech on the molehill (3 Henry VI.II.v) occupies such a position. The language is full of formal pressures: the first thirteen lines debate "the equal poise of this fell war," echoing that balance in the rhetoric, with its repetitive "now's" which direct our attention, with Henry's, to the surrounding situation of the battle. Seven lines of transition follow, in which Henry contemplates "grief and woe"; this gives way to the central spaces of the speech, eighteen lines of paralleled meditation on the shepherd's life. Here, both rhythms and sense express the passing of time; the pace slows, drawing out the "hours, days, months, and years" to bring Henry "unto a quiet grave." The sense of the concluding thirteen lines continues Henry's meditation, comparing the joys of a shepherd's life to that of a prince; their self-comforting tone resolves the earlier tone of despair somewhat, finally returning Henry to the thought that "care, mistrust, and treason" await him. Although we may not perceive these "literary" divisions in performance, this analysis illustrates how the language
progressively articulates a world which lies beyond the stage. Spatially, the central paralleled lines give the speech a still center; the task for the actor, as is often the case when the principal ideas are located in the center of a long speech, is to lead us to Henry's imaginative vision and then to draw us half-way out again. The images of this speech, seen against the quiet stage picture, are the strongest statement of character Shakespeare gives to the meditative King Henry, and Shakespeare multiplies the effect of this statement by additional patterning in the father-son speeches—through repetition, the weight of the idea accumulates. The slow, insistent rhythms are antiphonal to the surrounding battle, forming what Mark Rose calls a "central emblematic panel" supported on either side by pictures of the Yorkists fleeing and the Lancastrians fleeing—as though all, like Henry, sought escape.\(^{22}\) Shakespeare's careful grouping of these scenes imitates the central action of the play—the movements and separations of the war, the possibility of a still center in the midst of chaos.

The molehill scene is special in every sense; each part of the stage image is expressive, and Shakespeare has increased the possibilities of insight through images which lie beyond the stage picture. Shakespeare may also direct language that generates its own stage space:

Clarence's dream in *Richard III*.I.iv fills the stage image with a rich vision:

What ugly sights of death within mine eyes!
Methought I saw a thousand fearful wrecks;
Ten thousand men that fishes gnaw'd upon;
Wedges of gold, great anchors, heaps of pearl,
Inestimable stones, unvalued jewels,
All scatter'd in the bottom of the sea:
Some lay in dead men's skulls; and, in those holes
Where eyes did once inhabit, there were crept,
As 'twere in scorn of eyes, reflecting gems,
Which woo'd the slimy bottom of the deep,
And mock'd the dead bones that lay scatter'd by.

*Richard III*.I.iv.23-33

The "thousand fearful times" of the Wars of Lancaster and York rise before Clarence and Brakenbury, the watcher. Our perception of these verbal images is illuminated by their neutral background—the prison cell (again, a verbal construct)—and by our knowledge that Clarence's vision is more real than he knows. The images of the dream are made even more vivid by the flatness of the surrounding verbal texture: Richard's abrupt exchanges with the murderers just before we see Clarence and Brakenbury, and the movement to prose speeches once the murderers enter to Clarence.

**Language and the Actor**

In Shakespeare's early histories, a large proportion of the language is purely narrative: it presents necessary information, identifies persons and their attitudes, or describes a situation. In speaking this language, the actor must rely on these straightforward qualities of narrative thrust; getting the sense across is the main
thing. Although there are few passages of sustained imagery in these plays, there are shifts of style within a single speech or a group of speeches, from purely narrative language to the language of rhetorical flourish or metaphor. For the actor, these shifts offer important clues for maintaining or changing tone, for initiating pauses, for expanding or contracting vocal volume. Peter Brook suggests a rehearsal technique for disentangling Shakespeare's different styles of writing by selecting only those words playable in a realistic situation, without self-consciousness. The moment he chose, Romeo and Juliet's farewell aubade (III.v.1-25) is paralleled by a similar situation in 2 Henry VI.III.i, Margaret's parting with Suffolk after his banishment. The sequence reads:

Suffolk. Cease, gentle queen, these execrations
And let thy Suffolk take his heavy leave.

Queen. Fie, coward woman and soft-hearted wretch!
Hast thou not spirit to curse thine enemy?

Suffolk. A plague upon them! wherefore should I curse them?
Would curses kill, as doth the mandrake's groan,
I would invent as bitter-searching terms,
As curst, as harsh and horrible to hear,
Deliver'd strongly through my fixed teeth,
With full as many signs of deadly hate,
As lean-faced Envy in her loathsome cave:
My tongue should stumble in mine earnest words;
Mine eyes should sparkle like the beaten flint;
Mine hair be fix'd on end, as one distract;
Ay, every joint should seem to curse and ban:
And even now my burthen'd heart would break,
Should I not curse them. Poison be their drink!

Gall, worse than gall, the daintiest that they taste!

Their sweetest shade a grove of cypress trees!
Their chiepest prospect murdering basilisks!
Their softest touch as smart as lizards' stings!
Their music frightful as the serpent's hiss,
And boding screech-owls make the concert full!
All the foul terrors in dark-seated hell—

Queen. Enough, sweet Suffolk, thou torment'st thyself; And these dread curses, like the sun 'gainst glass,
Or like an overcharged gun, recoil,
And turn the force of them upon thyself.

Suffolk. You bade me ban, and will you bid me leave? Now, by the ground that I am banish'd from,
Well could I curse away a winter's night,
Though standing naked on a mountain top,
Where biting cold would never let grass grow,
And think it but a minute spent in sport.

Queen. O, let me entreat thee cease. Give me thy hand,
That I may dew it with my mournful tears; Nor let the rain of heaven wet this place,
To wash away my woful monuments.
O, could this kiss be printed in thy hand,
That thou mightst think upon these by the seal,
Through whom a thousand sighs are breathed for thee!
So, get thee gone, that I may know my grief; 'Tis but surmised whiles thou art standing by, As one that surfeits thinking on a want. I will repeal thee, or, be well assured, Adventure to be banished myself: And banished I am, if but from thee. Go; speak not to me; even now be gone. O, go not yet! Even thus two friends condemn'd Embrace and kiss and take ten thousand leaves, Loather a hundred times to part than die. Yet now farewell; and farewell life with thee!

Suffolk. Thus is poor Suffolk ten times banished; Once by the king, and three times thrice by thee,
'Tis not the land I care for, wert thou thence; A wilderness is populous enough, So Suffolk had thy heavenly company: For where thou art, there is the world itself, With every several pleasure in the world, And where thou art not, desolation. I can no more: live thou to joy thy life; Myself no joy in nought but that thou livest.

2 Henry VI.III.ii.305-66
Using Brook's exercise as a model, the speeches are reduced thus:

**Suffolk.** Cease, gentle queen, these execrations
   And let thy Suffolk take his heavy leave.

**Queen.** Fie, coward woman and soft-hearted wretch!
   Hast thou not spirit to curse thine enemy?

**Suffolk.** A plague upon them! wherefore should I curse them?

   Would curses kill, **[pause]**
   I would invent as bitter-searching terms,
   **[pause]** Poison be their drink! **[pause]**

**Queen.** Enough, sweet Suffolk; thou torment'st thyself;
   And these dread curses, **[pause]** recoil,
   And turn the force of them upon thyself.

**Suffolk.** You bade me ban, and will you bid me leave?
   **[pause]**

**Queen.** O, let me entreat thee cease. Give me thy hand,
   **[pause]**
   O, could this kiss be printed in thy hand,
   **[pause]**

   So, get thee gone, that I may know my grief;
   'Tis but surmised whiles thou art standing by,**[pause]**
   I will repeal thee, or, be well assured,
   Adventure to be banished myself;
   And banished I am, if but from thee.
   Go; speak not to me; **[pause]**
   O, go not yet! **[pause]**
   Yet now farewell; and farewell life with thee!

**Suffolk.** Thus is poor Suffolk ten times banished;
   **[pause]**
   'Tis not the land I care for,**[pause]**
   For where thou art, there is the world itself,**[pause]**
   And where thou art not, desolation.
   I can no more:**[pause]**

Once the lines are separated in this way, the sound and movement of the omitted lines may be explored with the full recognition that they have nothing to do with normal speech. The pauses indicated are not the same as the junctures, normally represented by commas, semicolons, periods and the like, within regular speech patterns. These pauses are "Pinter pauses"—indications that intense thought processes
are continuing, that tensions and feelings are mounting, or, in the case of Suffolk's extended cursing, that these are being released. They allow the actors time for developing and constructing emotional response. If this language is cut, and if no attention is given to such pauses, action-reaction time may speed up, reaching a level which demands such instantaneous shifts of response from the actor that the building rhythms of emotional meaning are lost. Quite apart from the enriched insight which metaphor, hyperbole, and images provide for the spectator, they give the actor time to construct, as they provide additional shaping for, his response to the purely narrative messages of a speech. Each kind of perception—the narrative thrust and the deeper thought and feeling represented by metaphor and images—belongs to a different world of presentation: for the actor, each has a different intent. In 1 Henry VI, the two modes of presentation are often given a linear separation; it is relatively easy to cut this verse for the stage. For one thing, the language reflects Shakespeare's concentration on outward behavior, often manifest as bombast or rhodomontade. But once Shakespeare begins to emphasize inward behavior and response, as in 2 Henry VI, the fusion of narrative and metaphor or images within the line and within a speech becomes more organic, the verse more difficult to cut. In these plays,

24 See Appendix for cutting techniques in a recent production of the histories.
Shakespeare learns to widen and deepen the awareness of both actors and audience by fusing narrative intent with emotional perceptions: it is a step which will lead him to the reaches of his later craft, where emotional perceptions carry the narrative intentions of his drama more surely than the movement from event to event.

Shakespeare seldom attempts to deceive our vision in these early plays, either through sight or insight. If he does so, the deception is momentary—showing one character's prejudiced view of another person or of a situation—and it exists to make us, or his persons, see more clearly. But, even if in little, the deception is there, and it raises a question pertinent to our experience as spectators: do we see only what we wish to see?

If we refer to everyday reality, we must answer yes; each one of us develops filters for both sight and insight which channel the variety of experience into comfortable understanding. But Shakespeare, speaking for his plays, would be more cunning. He challenges and controls a spectator's perceptions at every turn; his stage images never give us a comfortable understanding—they ask for our constant attention. At times, what speaks on the stage is the situation itself; at other times, the stage image gains meaning only when sound is added to sight. And certain moments may be particularly loaded, signifying more than one thing, speaking in any number of ways. A
performance may emphasize one meaning and miss another, or give it secondary importance and value, but this may not necessarily diminish our experience of the play. Shakespeare's dramatic substance is so rich that when we look at the play with sight and insight, we reach meanings which always communicate directly with the senses: persons, shapes, objects, and events display their natures before us through varying impressions of focus and movement, extending or limiting the form and pressure of the time, rewarding us for our roles as spectators.
CHAPTER III

THE NARRATIVE VISION: 1 HENRY VI

Shakespeare's command over the effects of movement and shifts of focus and interest within the performance sequences of a play has already drawn our attention. Now one hallmark of his theatrical sensibility--strong narrative presentation--comes to the forefront. In 1 Henry VI, although Shakespeare's dramaturgy often falls far short of the achievements he attains in later plays, there is a clear mastery of the movement of narrative progression and expectation. Shakespeare's greatest asset, as he begins his dramatic career, is his sure control over the changing images he places on the stage.

1 Henry VI is more a picture play than an idea play. Yet much significant scholarship concerned with the play centers upon ideas, an approach which tends to deny it any immediate effect upon an audience. Criticism has seen the play as a broadly conceived panorama or pageant of historical events; theatricality, battle, and episodic structure have been emphasized as parts of an immature drama held together by moral and political themes derived from English history as conceived by the Tudors.¹ This point of

¹E.M.W. Tillyard's comments are representative. He views Respublica as the hero of the play, sees plot pattern
view seems to explain the ties of this play to *2 Henry VI*, *3 Henry VI*, and *Richard III*, to account for the so-called imperfections of its text, and to acknowledge the play as an experiment that did not quite work. But even commentary which focuses upon political and historical doctrines and purposes mentions its theatricality, sensuousness and impact. What we see is of primary importance; physical vision often carries the entire weight of the drama, and Shakespeare seldom calls upon the imaginative vision of either the characters or the spectators of his play to further enrich the expansive pictorial qualities of the narrative. Shakespeare's interest in these qualities suggests a theatrical vision conceived with the senses strongly in mind. In later plays, this sensuousness is more fully absorbed and integrated with poetic functions; but here Shakespeare seems anxious to stage all relevant events in the narrative chain with complete pictorial realism. The effort does not seek to develop a consistent style for the presentation of history so much as it searches for means to show anything and everything on stage.

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as the main structural force, and finds "a pageantlike stylized execution" and the ironic comparison of event with event as more important than the richness of either happening. Shakespeare's *History Plays* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1946), p. 173.

J.P. Brockbank's point of view is the exception to the others. He argues that Shakespeare made the best possible use of his chronicle sources and although he may "betray chronicle detail in order to enforce one of its generalizations," Brockbank finds that Shakespeare maintains "a high sense of responsibility to the chronicle vision." "The Frame of Disorder—Henry VI," *Early Shakespeare, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies* 3, ed. John Russell Brown and Bernard Harris (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1962), pp. 76-78.
In *1 Henry VI*, Shakespeare displays a stage world through pictures of conflict and opposition which cover a wide narrative scope and are seen from varying points of view. The most comprehensive effects of the play derive from spatial change, from broad, outward, public action. And the look of the play reflects this breadth and scope: the movement from England to France and back again, the outdoor perspectives, the feelings of space—even if it is only linear space—evoked by the massed groupings of the nobles. These effects suggest a vocabulary of visual motifs that attempts to reproduce a sense of the narrative drive of English history. Many pictures came ready-made from Shakespeare's sources, the chronicles of Hall and Holinshed. And even when no parallel event is noted in the chronicles, we may still consider the chronicles as a pre-text: "civil dissension," "intestine division," "separate factions," "domestic discord" and "unnatural controversy" are all chronicle phrases—Hall's themes. What Shakespeare does here, and elsewhere, is show these abstractions as pictures in action, creating a dramatic moment which goes beyond the sometimes restricting limits of chronicle event. Ideas are there, but they are not an immediate focus; what we see is a series of stage images that clarify the ideas behind their creation. Shakespeare never surrenders to ideas of things; he always shows us the thing itself.
The play begins with a formal ceremonial occasion, the funeral of Henry V. The nobles, led by Bedford, process onto the stage to a "Dead March." Initially, Shakespeare focuses attention upon a pictorial composition, immediately signifying, by means of a direct image, death and aftermath: the collective spectacle transmits narrative drive. The play is established first by means of illustration, seen almost at a standstill; the picture is steadily reordered by speech and action. The nobles speak in turn, eulogizing Henry V in formal speeches of varying length, until a quarrel between Gloucester and Winchester erupts into short, bitter exchanges and is temporarily resolved by Bedford, the first

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2 Brockbank stresses the civic pageant elements here and in III.ii and IV.vii, noting their presentation both as "events" and "occasions," and their "elementary power to move large audiences." "The Frame of Disorder—Henry VI," p. 75. The evidence of performances—sparse as it is—supports Brockbank's view. A review of a production at Ellesmere College, marking the quincentenary of Joan of Arc, states: "A notable innovation was the impressive processions at the beginning and end of the play through the body of the hall, the funeral cortège of Henry V, and the passing of the Maid to her Martyrdom." Daily Telegraph, 20 December 1929. But the reviewer from the Shrewsbury Chronicle of the same date disagrees: the processions, he states, are suitable to a pageant and unnecessary to a play, "for which the proper place is the stage." For both reviews, see Newspaper Cuttings—Shakespeare's Plays, Birmingham Public Library, Birmingham, England, n.d. No consciousness of total theater here; one has the feeling that this reviewer would have been disturbed by the "surroundingness" and immediacy of performances at the Globe.

3 Tillyard sees such stylized, formal scenes as "having a contemporary vitality" which "must make them the norm of the play"; he refers them to the morality play. Shakespeare's History Plays, pp. 159-60.
speaker, who returns the tones of eulogy to the stage. He is interrupted by a messenger, bringing news from France "of loss, of slaughter and discomfiture." Bedford, Gloucester and Exeter react to his words; Winchester remains silent. A second messenger continues the interruptive pattern; Winchester speaks only when a third messenger brings news of Talbot's defeat. The messengers enter to a situation already changed by the first interruption, thus they inherit as well as enhance stage excitement and audience expectancy. After the messengers are questioned, Exeter reminds the lords of their oaths to Henry, and Bedford, Gloucester, and Exeter exit severally, each to his own duty. As the stage empties, Winchester is left alone; he declares his intention to "steal" the king "And sit at chiefest stern of public weal." Audience attention has expanded to include the broad scope of the pageant, and then narrowed to focus on the perspective of a single character. On the one hand, the scene has fulfilled audience expectation: both situation and characters are established. On the other, the scene is inconclusive, frustrating: the funeral rites incomplete, a multiplicity of future events suggested. Thus the scene would appear to be simply a lead-in to further

"A.C. Hamilton comments that the language here has an "anonymity and facelessness"; and suggests that Bedford and the others are indulging themselves. The Early Shakespeare (San Marino, Calif.: The Huntington Library, 1967), pp. 12-13. However self-conscious, the speeches are good vehicles for actors; and Shakespeare's audience expected such rhetoric, welcoming it as a mode of expressing both feeling and acting ability."
action, giving necessary information. But a great deal more is happening here. If the audience has any knowledge of English history, and if the actors attempt consistent portrayals of their roles, there will be further and conflicting impressions: a sense of a significant moment in history relived—something of the same feeling Americans have today when seeing films of John F. Kennedy's assassination and funeral—the sights and sounds gain a significance beyond our original understanding of them. But even if these impressions are missed, an overall vocabulary of visual and verbal motif is initiated by the broad gestures of interrupted ceremonial occasion and the verbal gestures of battle, establishing patterns which will reverberate throughout the scenes to come.

The second scene, which may appear episodic because of space and time differences and the presentation of five new characters, visualizes textual suggestions made in the opening scene. We are brought to the battlefield mentioned by the three messengers: the narrative point of view shifts from England to France. Such quick cutting not only


6 G. Osmond Tearle's 1889 production at Stratford reordered the movement from England to France. His Act I was made from Shakespeare's I.i, Henry V's funeral; II.iv,
suggests the reordering of our perspective on the ceremonial events of the first scene, but contrasts, through an opened stage composition, the motion and effort qualities of an active battlefield and Joan's personalized challenge to the Dauphin with the first, more restful scene. boastful martial language, fighting, Joan's triumph over the Dauphin in single combat—these values alone are adequate attention holders. But beyond this excitement, Joan takes the stage easily with "high terms" and self-conscious actions arising more from inner motivation than from occasional requirements. Even the silent Joan singles out audience attention, as Alençon and Reignier exchange comments on Charles' immoderate advances, thus stressing the dramatic importance of Charles' response to Joan.

For the third scene, Shakespeare returns us to England. Before the Tower, the Gloucester-Winchester rivalry flares up: Winchester's entrance, following the rush at the Tower Gates, expands the stage excitement, carrying the verbal argument in the first scene toward action. The stage is clearly divided: Gloucester's men "in blue coats" the Temple Garden scene; and III.i, the Gloucester-Winchester quarrel before King Henry. Act II, made from I.ii, I.iv, I.v, I.vi, II.i, II.ii and II.iii, concerns French victories, and Salisbury's death was seen as a central incident. The alternation continued, by Acts, throughout Tearle's adaptation, ending with York's conclusion of the peace in V.iv. Although the adaptation clarifies the broad shifts of perspective and fixes significant moments of shift through tableau scene endings, it loses the rhythm of quick alternation central to Shakespeare's narrative method in this play. G. Osmond Tearle, 1889 Stratford-upon-Avon promptbook, Nuffield Library, Shakespeare Centre, Stratford-upon-Avon, England.
on the one side, Winchester's tawny coats on the other, Woodville and the Warders within. The Mayor's entrance brings a third force to the stage, enlarging and then quenching the battle momentarily, yet the quarrel breaks out again in spite of attempted resolution. Gloucester and Winchester exit severally with their men, and the Mayor's choric comment directs the audience to an overview of the scene, establishing an even wider focus for individual and group action rather than focusing attention on audience perception of subtextual motivation. Interest in the quarrel is clarified by both visual and verbal presentation; the difficulty of reconciliation is balanced between Winchester and Gloucester, and audience expectation will await a further, more private, expression of their antagonism.

These immediate expectations are denied, although we are moved away from a full-stage view to a smaller picture of the action. To some degree, audience attention lends integrity and continuity to what might otherwise be separable brief episodes. Not only are our visual and emotional perspectives shifted, but these changes may be equated with historical perspective. The quick movement from the English to the French side confuses the audience as to who is winning, thus creating suspense. By presenting English and French events through the eyes of those involved, Shakespeare asks that sympathies shift from one side to the other. The focus is never didactic, but suggests, through multiplicity, the developing and on-going
qualities of the war. An initial intense focus on the Master Gunner and his boy not only sets locale, but provides a brief visual rest from an action-filled stage and arouses anticipation for the battle that follows. As Salisbury, Talbot and the others enter "on the turrets," attention is drawn to a new stage level. Our first glimpse of Talbot shows him raised and welcomed, a visual point of view that strengthens textual impressions of his worth and his relationship to others in the play. At first, audience attention will remain on his figure, but perspective quickly widens, focusing on a series of swiftly occurring events: the deaths of Salisbury and Gargrave, a messenger entering to Talbot with news of the "holy prophetess" Joan, and Talbot's resolution to move into battle.

As the next scene unfolds, following a battle over the stage, Talbot and Joan meet amidst continuing battle. Joan is the clear victor, fulfilling, in action, earlier verbal suggestions of her strength. But it is important to note that the focus on stage-wide gestures of battle has been resolved into an interest in the two central figures, and that the dramaturgy preparatory to this interest has been supplied by the previous scenes. Some audience curiosity has been satisfied: in action, Talbot at Orleans provides both a clarified view of the seriousness of the English position and a center for audience sympathy and identification. Though clearly presented, both visually and verbally, as an underdog, his rhetoric matches Joan's:
he seems her potential equal in terms of fulfilling audience interest in one character.

Following Talbot's retreat, another scene with Joan and the French relieves the wide-stage interest in a point of visual rest by providing a triumphant overlook at the battle sequence begun in scene iv. Joan and the others appear "on the walls," a strong visual stress on the French victory, and on her own triumph. Attention does not rest on any one character, but moves over the preceding action in a brief verbal review, further complicated by the self-congratulatory excesses of the French.

So far, the visual effects of the play may be partially summarized in M.C. Bradbrook's words: "a battle play par excellence." But what she and other critics of the play miss is the great variety with which Shakespeare presents these events, continually requiring his audience to shift point of view, so that all stage events are seen objectively. The short scenes build their effect upon a succession of small surprises, and the technique helps to focus audience attention on change. Although shifts of focus create a superficial impression of movement and discontinuity, dialogue within each scene confirms audience concentration on what is happening at the moment. Even if we


miss continuous transition between these scenes, we must acknowledge their spontaneity and vigor as illustrations to narrative, suggesting a continuous flow of action which seems to expand beyond the immediate boundaries of the stage. The significance of these battle scenes derives from the ordering and juxtaposition of a variety of images, as in cinematic montage. If Shakespeare had isolated the scenes from each other, interposing large court scenes or moments of private discourse, he would have lost the powerful panoramic impression of battle occurring at all levels of the action. Here, the meaning of one scene reinforces scenes of similar meaning by association. As spectators, we attempt to unify multiple dramatic events seen in sequence into a continuous reality. Granville-Barker describes the result: "We have been ideal spectators, we know what happened, and why; and just such an impression has been made on us as the reality would leave behind. It is a great technical achievement, and one of great artistry too." 9

Other moments in the first act bring a closer scrutiny of a single character who, by his words, may suggest developing relationships and responses. And while the broad gestures of battle give integrity to the unfolding stage pictures, Joan, Talbot, Winchester and Gloucester engage close audience interest, and the focus is potentially intense

on each figure. But wider issues—the English succession, the reconciliation of the nobles, and the outcome of the war—arouse most anticipation of further development; the picture is not complete from any one point of view. Overall, the stage views are comprehensive, intent upon showing a series of snapshots through a total action.

Act II begins with a scene that resolves the alternative focus on one side and then the other by combining several points of view. A quiet exchange between two soldiers sets scene and time; Talbot's forces expand the stage view, entering with scaling-ladders, their drums beating a dead march. Audience interest centers on the action building toward their assault, climaxed by battle cries of "St. George!" and "A Talbot!" The cries not only increase the feeling of space on the stage, but point a moment of visual excitement. The stage empties, and is immediately full as the French "leap over the walls in their shirts." "Half ready, and half unready," Orleans, Alençon and Reignier enter "several ways," soon followed by Charles and La Pucelle. Audience attention is directed not to actual battle, but to preparation and results. The French accuse Joan of treachery, and a second alarum interrupts her answer as an entering English soldier forces the French to fly. The soldier remains, a pillager, pointing the moment toward one broad dramatic issue—the results of war. The scene will play on the merits of construction and contrast. Much of its effect comes from opposing tones of voice: the English are stealthy
at first, the voices build toward the sentinel's alarmed cry, and the loud shouts that punctuate the middle of the scene fade into the rueful speeches of the French, moving toward accusation and resolution, followed by more cries, and a quiet single voice on stage. Visually, the developing stage picture echoes and reinforces these contrasts: the still moment erupting into action, with gradual reordering of the stage, and a final focus on the solitary figure, gathering the spoils of war.

The aftermath of battle continues in the next scene, seen from the English point of view. Salisbury’s body is brought forth, and the battle reviewed. The stage picture is familiar: we will recall Henry V's funeral and mark the abbreviated ceremony here, in spite of Talbot's eulogy. Audience interest centers on Talbot as a messenger brings an invitation from the Countess of Auvergne, beginning a new complication that extends to the third scene, a controversial one for many commentators. The patterned quality of previous scenes gives way here to a more relaxed focus; audience expectation is aroused by Talbot's whispering with the Captain, and point of view is extended toward a new area, still with little coordination of the individual, though cumulative, impressions made by the short battle scenes.

Narrative development halts at Talbot's scene with the Countess. For this reason some critics have found the
scene an unnecessary intrusion. But the domestic interior counterpoints the exterior battlefield action, showing that Talbot's strength extends beyond his military valor. The language, full of specific references to appearances, makes the audience aware of the necessity for close scrutiny. Focus settles on the opposition of one known main figure with a new stage personality; interest divides between Talbot and the Countess. At first, she seems to have the stronger position, but Talbot quickly takes the stage with self-conscious language backed up by an impressive martial show of men and arms.

Abruptly, the action moves to England, and remains there for the next three scenes. Ceremony returns to the stage, and speech predominates, clarifying the broad dramatic issues of reconciliation and the succession. In the Temple Garden scene, as in the battles and in Talbot's

10 Sigurd Burckhardt, for example, calls the scene "seemingly episodic," an "odd ceremony" which the Countess is rehearsing, and in which Talbot refuses to play his part. Shakespearean Meanings (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), pp. 49-50.

Clifford Leech is more damning; he calls the play "fairly shapeless" and anecdotal, and finds that "incidents are presented in turn for the sake of immediate dramatic effect rather than for their contribution to a total pattern," citing Talbot's scene with the Countess as one which lies outside any possible pattern. Shakespeare: The Chronicles, Writers and Their Work, No. 146 (London: Green and Co., Ltd., 1962), p. 14.

Obviously, the scene stands out, largely because of its focus on personal, self-conscious behavior in a play constructed, for the most part, around public behavior.
moment with the Countess, attention settles on the opposition of forces, but here opposition becomes ritualized. The scene begins in silence; we see the whole stage before Plantagenet speaks. Of the six speakers, only Warwick has appeared before (I.i) and he was silent then; the introduction of new characters arouses expectation of further complications in narrative movement. At first, interest is divided among the speakers, and then held by the suspense of choosing red and white roses. The action of plucking roses, reinforced by words, draws audience attention both to the self-consciousness of the gesture and to the significance of the action. As reaction builds, the audience will turn, with those on stage, to watch Suffolk and Somerset exit; finally, focus narrows to the four Yorkists, and Warwick gives the overview:

And here I prophesy: this brawl to-day,  
Grown to this faction in the Temple-garden,  
Shall send between the red rose and the white  
A thousand souls to death and deadly night.

_1 Henry VI. II.iv.124-27_

If the language seems premeditated and the characters aware of the theatricality of their plucking gestures, this measured quality lends a seeming assurance and order to the

11 J.L. Styan, in his discussion of what he calls "Two-Fold Grouping," points out that the histories are "not without scenes of double grouping, but these lack the symmetry of the comedies." _Shakespeare's Stagecraft_ (Cambridge: The University Press, 1967), pp. 123-27. Yet what could be more symmetrical than the divisions of sensibility indicated by the structure of this scene? Note, also, the symmetrical nature of the grouping in I.iii, the Winchester-Gloucester quarrel, and in III.ii, the battle at Rouen.
stage picture, providing a deliberate contrast to its meaning. The composition is stable—closed and at rest—yet the textual and subtextual focus is on discord. The visual-verbal contrast makes this a moment of intense audience interest; but because of the stylized language and gestures, we see what happens at a distance: attention focuses on the event and its meaning more than on individuals.

In a later style of construction (e.g. Richard II), Shakespeare might have dissolved the Temple Garden scene into private discourse in order to provide a narrowly focused point of view on the event, channeling its implications and intensifying cause and effect relationships. Here, attention shifts to a different, perhaps more primitive, form of private revelation—a character seen at the point of death, delivering a set speech filled with information.12

The static composition of the stage picture will focus attention on the rhetoric, allowing the fact of death to speak for itself. What may appear as verbal exaggeration beside the visual fact multiplies audience reaction to the moment by reinforcing what we see and prompting our feelings toward that sight.13 We will recall the other pictures of

12 Tillyard justifies the lengthy genealogies: "There seems to have been a genuine popular demand for...sheer information." Shakespeare's History Plays, p. 158.

death, of which this is a variation. Throughout, the
question-answer exchange between Plantagenet and Mortimer
remains secondary; but finally narrative purpose is regained,
and focus rests on Plantagenet, leaving for Parliament,
ready, with new resolve, to claim his title to the throne.

While no real feeling-link connects Mortimer's
death with the court scene that follows, the audience will
recognize Plantagenet in the entering procession, and will
wait for him to speak. The stage is now fully and formally
set: for the first time (and the play is nearly half over),
we see King Henry in relation to his subjects. Audience
attention moves toward his figure as the procession fills the
stage, and is quickly turned toward a fresh eruption of the
Gloucester-Winchester quarrel; the King remains silent for
sixty-four lines. While active interest remains with the
Gloucester-Winchester argument, here clarified verbally to
a greater degree than before, interest also falls to the
silent King, and to Plantagenet, whose aside singles him
out for attention. The clean verbal contrast between Win­
chester's self-declared "sudden and extemporal speech" and
the King's measured, ceremonial tones, as he endeavors "to
join your hearts in love and amity," points the visual
contrast between action and inaction. Quickly, the scene
is interrupted by offstage cries, the Mayor's onstage pleas
for peace, and a skirmish between Gloucester's and
Winchester's servingmen, resolved by Warwick and agreed to
in false ceremonial language by the two principals. At
first, then, the stage picture bespeaks ceremony, and the sequence of interruptions develops a visual signification that counterpoints the language: focus is uneasy over a broadly varied stage picture. Through 149 lines of the scene, only the King has kept ceremony. Finally, initial expectations are fulfilled: Plantagenet's rights recognized, he is created Duke of York and welcomed by all save Somerset, whose reaction singles him out for attention. Narrative development moves forward—the King will go to be crowned in France—and the stage empties, again in procession, narrowing the focus to Exeter's prophetic choral over-view. Rather than taking the audience in his confidence, including them within the experience of the scene, Exeter's speech has the tone of reminder, directing the audience toward the broad theme of dissension by specific reference to the chronicles.

14 M.M. Reese finds such "choric intrusions" indications of Shakespeare's technical immaturity. The Cease of Majesty (London: E. Arnold, 1961), p. 178. J.L. Styan argues that too much choric commentary relieves the audience of any judgments about character or event. Shakespeare's Stagecraft, p. 102. Yet in a play in which narrative unfolds rapidly and shifts suddenly, the choric over-view becomes vital in settling audience point of view, bringing it to visual rest, often providing a momentary insight into the motives and social roles of a single character and pointing toward a way the action may be seen. The choric commentator may, indeed, be seen as Shakespeare's earliest use of an included spectator.

15 And, incidentally, to what was probably a very quotable quote: "Henrie, borne at Monmouth, shall small time reigne, & much get; and Henrie, borne at Windsore, shall long reigne, and all loose: but, as God will, so be it." Quoted from Hol. iii. 581/1/68. Halle, 108 in W.G. Boswell-Stone, Shakespeare's Holinshed, The Chronicle and the Plays Compared (1907; rpt. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1968), p. 224.
Repeating earlier shifts in scene from court to battle, the action now moves to France. The scenes that center on the battle of Rouen are the busiest in the play; Shakespeare engages the alertness of his audience in the same way that he requires it of his characters. All available stage space is used, but the central dramatic exchange expands over the main stage. Two brief, stealthy episodes show Joan, and then Charles and his forces, preparing to enter the city. These are brief moments that build toward the thrusting-out of the torch "on the top." Talbot and Burgundy with their forces, and Bedford "sick in a chair" seem already vanquished, since Joan, as spokeswoman for the French, clearly takes the scene from her position "on the walls." The reversal that occurs is all the more striking. The dying Bedford, left onstage as witness to Fastolfe's cowardice and Joan's rout, provides a point of visual rest in a confused and varied composition that may be compared to the cinematic technique of accelerated montage, involving audience attention with the multiple sights and sounds of war. Again, the dying figure repeats a familiar stage picture; and here, as in Mortimer's death (II.v) and in the eulogies of Henry V (I.i), the verbal stress on the death underlines the disappearance of a previous, more orderly, ethic. Focus narrows to Talbot and Burgundy, who give the closing over-view of the battle and on Bedford's death before the stage fills again with the French, intent on winning Burgundy to their cause. An
"English march" suggests Talbot's passage over the stage at a distance; following a "French march," Burgundy appears. The parley shows Joan's "haughty words" victorious; audience attention remains with her, the interest in Burgundy is minimal. This time the battle is won by words, not action; this contrast with the previous activity not only provides essential information but has a recovery function, allowing audience tension to relax gradually with the establishment of a more stable stage picture.

Moving from exterior to interior, focus rests momentarily on Talbot, as he is created Earl of Shrewsbury in an abbreviated ceremony. The stage empties, Vernon and Basset quarrel briefly, engaging audience attention as a kind of preview for the major focal point of the next ceremonial scene. By establishing a brief intense focus on their quarrel at this time, Shakespeare permits further attention for Vernon and Basset to relax, allowing audience interest to move toward the responses of other characters, and most particularly to rest on King Henry's attempted resolution of their disagreement.

As Henry is crowned in another broadly conceived, formal scene, the interrupted ceremony shares the stage with Talbot's plucking of Fastolfe's garter, and with the news and judgment of Burgundy's treason. Winchester has only a single line, and remains a spectator; the audience will not expect his interference, since Gloucester has always played provocateur. Attention spreads over these events, seen in
public not private view, and as before, the events them­selves, rather than the figure of the King, dominate the stage. The visual effect is of multiple active centers of interest, occasionally involving the central static figure of Henry, to whom Shakespeare finally draws full attention by giving him a forty line speech favoring peace. Henry's choice of the red rose recalls and repeats the gestures of the Temple Garden scene, now seen in reference to new and broader perspectives. This long, still moment of intense interest gives way to a flourish and exit; as the large spectacle draws away, two verbal over-views remain. Warwick and York reveal their feelings uneasily in private dis­course; Exeter's comment again points toward the broad issues of division and confusion. Both points of view not only summarize but direct attention toward narrative de­velopment in another area.

These expectations are fulfilled. A leap in time and space returns attention to the French battlefield and to Talbot: the next six scenes focus on the interest in Talbot that has already been developed.16 The first (IV.ii) is a static moment before the battle of Bordeaux, its pace set by the long speeches of Talbot and the General. Talbot's situation against overwhelming odds is verbally clarified; his position is comparable to the King's in the

16 Ronald Watkins suggests a "Homeric" pattern in these battle incidents, that of the one hero singled out to stand for many. *On Producing Shakespeare*, p. 91.
previous scene, and his response, like Henry's, serves the occasion by drawing attention to English valor.

The two scenes that follow complicate the audience view of Talbot's situation. Both are informally conceived; one shows York's point of view, the other Somerset's. Sir William Lucy appears in both scenes, giving them the integrity of a single illustration, contrasting the behavior of the true man and the traitor. Again, audience attention is drawn to antithetical perspectives, opposing sides.17

The sights and sounds of former battlefields are stilled; focus becomes increasingly static as audience expectation moves toward a visual resting point, Talbot's death. Talbot and his son John appear in close-up, their formal language drawing attention to their function as symbols of both patriotic English pride and family pride. In spite of the patterned language, the feeling generated by these scenes is new to the play. Since the visual isolation of a character on the stage automatically calls attention to that character's interior concerns, audience interest will be close, drawn to sympathetic involvement, particularly as Young Talbot's body is brought on stage and placed in Talbot's arms just before his death. Up to this point, the battle scenes, by focusing almost exclusively on action, have permitted no sense of emotional engagement, except for the brief excitements generated by self-conscious

17Emrys Jones views these scenes as "scenic paradigms" for Timon of Athens, III.1--iii. Scenic Form in Shakespeare, p. 96.
rhetoric and pageant-like qualities. Distanced from the action, the audience will view the wasteful drift of war with ironic detachment, until the focus on Talbot sharpens in the momentary tableau of father and son which recalls, in little, the separation that war and death brings to families and kingdoms alike. Consistently, Shakespeare does not permit his audience to dwell on the fact of death; the stage fills quickly with the French, whose talk of the Talbots' death widens audience perspective on the moment just seen. Lucy claims the bodies, and as the dead are carried off the stage, narrative movement toward the French side seems to be suggested.

Throughout the last two acts of the play, focus narrows, intensifying interest, both visually and verbally, for the figures of Talbot and Joan. Overall, tone shifts from public, occasional speech toward a growing interest in personal private response, still seen, however, within the wider perspectives of public occasion. Action no longer seems to be developing, but winding down toward the conclusion of an uneasy peace. Shakespeare introduces a new interest, Henry's marriage, and we again see the King at a distance, courteous yet uninvolved, while the central visual interest in a brief court scene focuses on Winchester, newly created Cardinal. Expectations of a further quarrel

18 Jones notes that a mature Shakespearean play splits into two unequal movements, the first three Acts forming one rhythm, the last two another. Scenic Form in Shakespeare, p. 68. 1 Henry VI follows the pattern Jones suggests, at least in terms of changing focus.
between Gloucester and Winchester are not fulfilled, in spite of Winchester's vow to make Gloucester "stoop and bend thy knee, / Or sack this country with a mutiny." The scene stands as an information bridge, as does the informal exchange among the French, about to enter Paris (V.ii). Both moments place events within broad perspectives, directing attention to the issues of the succession and the war.

Because of these moments of broadened focus, the deliberate theatricality of Joan's encounter with her Fiends is all the more striking. The appearance of the supernatural heightens stage tension, intensifying focus in a new perspective. A brief flurry of action gives way to Joan's capture, but an expected resolution is cut short; the scene splits in two. Even if the audience has become alerted to the quickly shifting dramatic method of this play, the abrupt appearance of Margaret and Suffolk, and particularly the new tones brought to the stage, will come as a shock. Not only is focus sharpened by the introduction of a new, unprepared-for, character, but the transition of thought and feeling required from the audience seems enormous. Visually, however, one female figure seems to be replaced by another, providing a strong theatrical justification for such close juxtaposition of two moments so widely varied in tone. The scene repeats and points Shakespeare's use of other women in the play: Margaret, like Joan and the Countess of Auvergne, is first seen in close-up, without the broad focus of a situation that might place her within the context of
wider dramatic issues. This would suggest that women have no place in the ceremonial pictures of council and battle, opposition and division, and in a sense this is true. Joan is the major exception, yet all are intimately connected with the war, and with witchcraft: Joan is the termagant warrior; the Countess, who would practice witchcraft on Talbot's picture, wages private battles; Margaret, who bewitches Suffolk, is part of the spoils of war. The women reflect, in narrow, more private focus, the overall concerns of the play.

The moment between Suffolk and Margaret demands special attention. Although they are alone on stage, the opposition and reconciliation of the earlier broader stage pictures appears here as a duet: perhaps they will move apart during the asides, finally joining as Suffolk's words take effect. Reignier's entrance on the walls and his exchange with Suffolk provide Margaret with a widened focus of social context; visual interest includes two stage levels, and then both actions are joined "below." Interest shifts to Suffolk and Margaret, and then to Suffolk alone, speaking the kind of choral over-view that signals entry to further narrative development.

19 Anne Barton finds Margaret and Suffolk characters who, by their word-play, are "strangely sealed off from other people." "Shakespeare and the Limits of Language," Shakespeare Survey, 24 (1971), p. 29. The comment indicates a special focus on their relationship, as do other moments in Acts IV and V, pointing toward Shakespeare's increasing stress on private behavior.
These narrative expectations are thwarted by a return to Joan's story. Shakespeare sustains audience interest in Joan's fate by interrupting the narrative at the point of her capture; and by showing Suffolk and Margaret playing love games, he points a variation in mood and focus that forces the audience to consider the possibility of a cause and effect relationship between this moment and Joan's death. Since no logical relationship exists, both scenes are put in ironic perspective. Joan's death plays on the kind of grim humor and jesting in the face of death reminiscent of the scourging and crucifixion in the mystery plays, yet it goes beyond the narrow formalism of those scenes. The moment is clearly theatrical, with rhetorical resonances that echo the themes of deeds, fame, and family line, and subtextual suggestions of York's emerging strength. Although Joan may seem to dominate the stage, York's taciturn one-line rebuttals to her pleas demand an equally strong interest, and attention shifts easily to his responses as Joan exits, guarded.

David Riggs reads the histories as plays that pursue the theme of "the gradual deterioration of heroic idealism between the Hundred Years War and the Yorkist accession," and sees 1 Henry VI as an exercise in "parallel lives" with an emphasis on the ideal of heroic conduct. He mentions that the commonplace of heroic virtue, parentage, and deeds are given a "public" interpretation. Shakespeare's Heroical Histories, Henry VI and Its Literary Tradition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 41-47, 64.

J.L. Styan, in his discussions of the effects of varieties of dramatic speech, does not mention this type, the brief response to eloquence, which undercuts and contrasts, often ironically, with rhetorical outbursts.
Now Winchester enters to York, imploring peace. Charles and the French enter next, and the terms are laid out. York moves quickly from dejection to anger, silence, and then outburst, before he finally speaks of dismissing the army to "entertain a solemn peace." Interest is drawn to the situation through a focus, established earlier in his exchanges with Joan, on York's responses, so the scene is visualized in two perspectives, one distanced, aware of the whole stage, the other intense, narrowing to York. With audience attention returned to statements concerning and seeming to summarize the wider dramatic issues of the play, the broadest narrative element stops. Shakespeare does not use this scene to argue issues of statecraft or kingship, but resolves the uneasy focus by returning the appearance of order and ceremony to the stage.

The final scene returns to London, yet wide focus is missing; this is not a familiarly set court scene, but a fairly intimate exchange, a verbal, non-visual focus. Audience interest rests more on the King's response to Suffolk's persuasions to marriage with Margaret than on the larger social occasion, and the stage picture has neither the formal assurance of even the brief informational court scenes nor does it repeat the interesting variants of battle patterns, either of which we might expect as fitting visual conclusions to the play, rounding out overall meaning, completing the picture. Instead, the ending seems marred by Henry's broken vow, and complicated,
implying a continuing action and a deepening intrigue by
the intense final focus on Suffolk, who not only answers
all protests for Henry, but proclaims that:

Margaret shall now be queen, and rule the king;
But I will rule both her, the king and realm.

*1 Henry VI.* V.v.107-108

Shakespeare relies on this same kind of verbal ending in
3 *Henry VI.*, but there the stage picture is more comprehen­
sive: we hear varied tones of voice, and the whole has the
effect of broad, ironic commentary. Here, a break in
social occasion, however narrowly conceived, echoes other
interrupted occasions, and the sense of continuing narrative
progression repeats the endings of other scenes.

If the central action and narrative drive seem
complete as York concludes the peace in V.iv, then this
last scene will appear as a coda to the main action; and
the critics who view the Suffolk–Margaret interest as a
later addition to the play, attempting to link it to
2 *Henry VI.*, may be upheld. If, however, the broad
gestures of the play have not been completely satisfying to
the audience, they will welcome the closer look at Talbot,
Joan, York, Suffolk, Margaret and the King that the last

22 Clifford Leech feels that V.iv.173-75 is the end of
1 *Henry VI.*, and that the Margaret–Suffolk material repre­
sents a "makeshift association" of non–Shakespearean
material with a two part Henry VI play. "The Two–Part Play:
Marlowe and the Early Shakespeare," *Deutsche Shakespeare–
Gesellschaft West Jahrbuch* 1958, pp. 90-106. Tillyard, on
the other hand, views the Margaret–Suffolk scene not as an
afterthought, but as a link which points to the organic
nature of the tetralogy. *Shakespeare's History Plays*,
p. 162.
two acts of the play provide, and will accept this scene as a continuation of Shakespeare's growing interest in intimate focus. In general, this interest shows Shakespeare experimenting with new forms: he is becoming aware that public behavior is seldom as dramatic as private behavior, and that while the large social occasion may satisfy audience expectation of spectacle and action, the dramatic center of an action lies in response and exchange between individuals. Through these moments of natural feeling the play retains a sense of proportion: they form a standard which measures the larger actions—the pageantry, pomp and circumstance of the scenes too big for private life, but of the right shape and size for the audience. Even if completely detailed scrutiny of private behavior is lacking here, the construction of these final scenes argues that Shakespeare's growing interest lies in this kind of dramatic development—away from the broad theatrical moments of pageantry and battle toward subtler variations of both verbal and visual pictures.

The study of stage pictures reveals a play conceived largely in terms of public occasions, with a fixed iconography based on recurrent patterns of court pageantry, 

Venezky remarks that the spectacular scene was the "big" scene in the theater of the 1580's, and calls attention to the civic and national importance of ceremonies which dictate standards of behavior for both sovereign and spectator. Pageantry on the Shakespearean Stage, pp. 20-21, 62.
battles, funerals, and death. This public focus seems a natural shape for a first experiment in the writing of history as drama, for from the chroniclers' point of view, history recorded men's actions in easily recognizable, universally understood, civil and public ceremonies. Time and space, in general, did not admit anecdotal glimpses of history; interest lay in the completed pattern. Overall, focus is both broad and deep, so that the spatial unity of a scene is maintained, and episodes are presented in their physical entirety; our expectations of the larger gestures of history are fulfilled.

Most scenes have an anticipatory movement, fulfilling audience expectations by indicating narrative progression. Of twenty-seven scenes, all but one (II.iii: Talbot with the Countess) end in a forward reference, pointing toward the future event, either in terms of language—"I will do" or "I prophesy"—or more broadly, through using the scene as a way to place future events. Retrospective movement occurs only briefly: there are few static moments, or points of visual rest. Inaction is not a complementary mode in any of these early plays; the major focus is on active process—on history being made. Choric commentary and set speeches have the effect of not only distancing the audience but of framing historical episodes, giving a clear indication that what is presented is the imitation of an action, within stage-time, not the action itself. Visually and verbally, the choral moments serve as a series of single
points of view; taken together, they unify the presentation of episodic material by pointing toward wider dramatic continuity.

Consequently, transitions of thought and feeling remain secondary to transitions from action to action, event to event. The broad visual rhythms of the play dictate this focus on event: an action may be seen from varying points of view, but the intimate glimpse rarely modifies or qualifies the larger actions. Although the choice of Talbot and Joan as personages who reveal history has an effect of urgency and confirmation not given by the chronicles, the overall focus on both stresses their active roles, not their private moments, and their deaths are conceived as narrative, structural markers of the total action of war rather than being seen only as personal crises.

The major gestures of the play involve opposition and attempted reconciliation. We see these gestures frequently visualized: quarrels, battles, or oppositions of will, single combats where martial show may be replaced by words or where words lead to future opposition, as in Mortimer's death (II.v) and the wooing scene between Margaret and Suffolk (V.iii). Even though I.vi--where the French praise Joan outlandishly--is a rest from conflict,

\[24\] Robert Ornstein states: "Hall's great theme...was reconciliation, not retribution." Retribution, which Jan Kott finds so central to the plays, Ornstein sees as a negative human and dramatic value that denies the force of personality in politics. A Kingdom For a Stage. The Achievement of Shakespeare's History Plays (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), pp. 19, 224.
the praise strengthens Joan's powers as an opposing force. And in IV.v, where no direct conflict is present, the encounter is still one of opposing wills: John Talbot argues with his father over who is to fly, who to fight. Yet the oppositions are balanced by scenes of attempted reconciliation—I.i, I.iii, III.i, IV.i, V.i, V.iv—all represent occasions that should end in peace. The last scene, Suffolk urging Henry's marriage to Margaret, qualifies this peace both visually and verbally, just as other events and other commentary have qualified earlier perspectives of the broad dramatic issues.

The picture is not complete. But Shakespeare recognizes that there is no end to his play, just as he recognizes the theatrical value of an uneasy focus, and just as he finds it increasingly necessary to tell part of his story by showing Talbot and Joan in relation to larger perspectives of action. And while it is true that 1 Henry VI moves toward climaxes of event more than toward climaxes of feeling, the events shown are not seen first as mirrors of Tudor policy or the chivalric ideal but are controlled by a broad narrative vision that fulfills audience expectations of being witness to history recreated upon the stage.
CHAPTER IV

DIRECTING THE DESIGN: 2 HENRY VI

Shakespeare's 1 Henry VI was, in all probability, the "harey vi" which Henslowe's diary records as first performed by Lord Strange's men at the Rose Theatre on 3 March 1592. The gallery receipts showed excellent returns—1,840d—and in the next three months, the play saw thirteen more performances, and it was repeated twice in January 1593. Beside this record-breaking evidence of a sure theatrical triumph, Nashe in Pierce Pennilesse speaks of another kind of success:

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 that they behold him fresh bleeding.

Shakespeare, ever the practical man of the theater, must have listened to his "reviews": Talbot, the character to


2 Thomas Nashe, Pierce Pennilesse, His Supplication to the Divell (1592), Elizabethan and Jacobean Quartos, ed. G.B. Harrison (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1966), p. 87. For this and for all subsequent references to the chronicles throughout, variations in spelling and punctuation are ignored unless they affect meaning. The use of i–j and of u–v conforms here to modern practice.
whom he had given the most complete and most sympathetic
dramatic life, was clearly one source of the popularity of
his play. Writing 1 Henry VI, he had learned how to give
his characters increasing strength and freedom within a
broad narrative frame, and 2 Henry VI builds upon this
achievement. Here, Shakespeare opposes character to charac-
ter with new and heightened effectiveness, shifting the
comprehensive, even-distanced perspective of the chronicle
vision to focus on the close private responses as well as
on the public postures of his persons, establishing ways
to perceive public actions by standards of private reaction.3
The new concentrated focus on individuals and on interior
vision vitalizes Shakespeare's entire design; but there is
also much that is familiar: many stage images—public
occasion, council, ceremony, battle, death—repeat the
situations of 1 Henry VI, and eight characters from the
earlier play appear again. Here, though, both situation
and character reveal their tensions with greater force and
variety. We notice transformation by enrichment. Moments
of complete characterization do not stand out from the
overall texture as they did in 1 Henry VI; Shakespeare has
made character design (and the designing intentions of his
characters) fundamental to the shape of his play, so that
the movement of the play grows outward from within its
characters.

The new play clearly experiments with some known dramatic values; but Shakespeare is not setting out to write the second part of a tetralogy. Rather, he is following one well-received play with another which capitalizes on his previous success, drawing on the same sources and repeating similar themes; and, with direction new to this play, creating a more intricate design which helps to give his characters an even richer stage life than the admired Talbot. The result, in A.C. Hamilton's words, explores the possibilities of play to control history, with the stress on play.\(^4\) Shakespeare's characters no longer simply rise to meet the occasions of history—their actions are informed by passion, and because of this, their language seems more able to express that passion. The vision is new, and it is double. In *2 Henry VI*, Shakespeare reaches toward and begins to capitalize on two ways of seeing: he shows us public men—their social roles, their shells—and he also examines men's private thoughts, actions, and responses. And each way of seeing has a further control: a private ear and eye—Shakespeare's own—which tells us where to look and how to see, what is real and what is show.

The Design

According to his habit, Shakespeare adapts his material from the ready-made chronicle events. In 2 Henry VI, as in 1 Henry VI, he not only raises specific incidents to full dramatic life but he finds, in the chronicles, a pre-text which informs his overall design:

...For their bodies were joyned by hand in hand, whose hartes were farre a sonder: their mouthes lovingly smiled, whose corages were inflamed with malice: their tongues spake lyke suger, and their thoughtes were all invenemed: but all these dissimulinge persons, tasted the vessel of woo, as the Wyseman said: and few or none of this company were unblotted, or undestroied by this dolorous drink of dissimulacion.

The human designs behind these phrases must have attracted Shakespeare: an actor himself, he would recognize the inherently dramatic nature of such "dissimulinge" behavior as something he might transform into increased opportunities for his actors.

Consequently, in 2 Henry VI Shakespeare conceives and constructs a play of political hunting, of watchfulness, plotting and trapping, and these are the keys to its interpretation in performance. To embed these abstractions into his characterization, Shakespeare exploits the difference

5Halle, Edward, Hall's Chronicle, containing the History of England during the reign of Henry the Fourth, and the succeeding Monarchs, to the end of the reign of Henry the Eighth; in which are particularly described the manners and customs of those periods..., ed. Sir Henry Ellis (1809; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1965), p. 238.
between "shows"—false behavior, pretense, or the self-conscious demands of a role—and true feelings or responses by presenting public, cosmetic gestures of love and duty qualified by private revelations of contrasting, often malicious, intent. Except for King Henry and Duke Humphrey, true speech and action are reserved for private, not public contexts: public behavior in the King's presence assumes an ordered look; private behavior is based not on appearances but on passion. The method reinforces an irony central to the play, and, indeed, to all human behavior: what the characters say may differ from what they mean, except when they are alone or surrounded by those they trust. The metaphor, what York calls making a "show of love," is markedly appropriate to a play where the departure point of the action, as Cairncross notes, is Henry's doomed marriage, based upon a breach of trust. Shakespeare is careful to reveal the difference between "shows" and true behavior to his audience, so that we see and understand more clearly than those on stage. And one thing Shakespeare means us to see most clearly is the contrast between Gloucester's honor, honesty and decency and the apparent lack of these qualities in the surrounding fabric of the play—everyone else, save King Henry, is tainted.

The first few moments of the play show the only semblance of well-being; after this, there are only degrees

of worst, with no healing gestures except those that are seen ironically: abbreviated or spoiled knightings (Suffolk, Iden, Cade); love seen within the context of separation (Gloucester and Eleanor; Margaret and Suffolk; and later, Margaret with Suffolk's head); demonstrations of honor or duty which end in death and division. There is no place for the palliative or exorcising effects of ritual. Death occurs, but is celebrated only by violence; there is no resolution of grief in funerals: instead we see the heads and bodies of the dead used as props. Although Shakespeare enables his audience to see these ironies more clearly than his characters do, no real secrets, other than an early sure knowledge of York's designing mind, are revealed to us. And this revelation is a limited privilege; the others suspect York's intentions: Gloucester prophesies his future moves, and Margaret guesses them. As for what we know of the others, we anticipate Gloucester's murder, but he senses it as well: accused in III.i, he learns that none of his actions has been seen truly; and Suffolk at his death is as aware of the fulfilled prophecy as we are. Only Henry remains blind, his vision dimmed to all the plots and prophecies. Thus Shakespeare gives us an advantage over Henry which not only isolates his reactions to events from those of the others in the play but from the reactions of the audience as well. This central irony of vision controls our experience of the play; the other ironies are then seen as accompanying effects, not as ends in themselves. It is
not a hopeful picture of England, and the picture is not of Shakespeare's making, but comes from his sources, Hall and Holinshed.

From the intricate back-and-forthings of the wide chronicle vision, Shakespeare simplifies his story: Henry's marriage to Margaret leads to the loss of France; the nobles begin to plot publicly against Gloucester, and York reveals his private plot to claim the throne. Gloucester, as protector, tries to save Henry from his weakness, but as a result of Henry's weakness and his inability to see the plots, loses his life. The Cade rebellion, a clear physical realization of the secretive interior rebellions of the nobles, ensues; and finally, York strengthens his claim to the crown in a final battle. This brief outline, however, does not tell the whole story. Shakespeare's theme—the machinations of dissension and inward malice—is intricate and difficult to follow: to clarify the whole, Shakespeare deliberately sets up a play between exterior and interior and public and private perspectives, creating sequences of stage images through which his theme may gain dramatic simplicity.

The early scenes move slowly through a controlled design: Shakespeare allows audience attention to linger over the plotting and the detailed private behavior of certain characters, acknowledging visual and verbal comparisons of both incidental behavior and the larger event. The broad values of the play are underlined visually: intestine division
and separation are integral to many scenes, built into the stage grouping; changes in allegiance are heralded by changed stage pictures. The accelerated tempo of Acts IV and V becomes almost dangerous; here Shakespeare focuses audience attention on the results of the carefully designed early scenes. Theatrically, our expectations are fulfilled by these Acts where the gestures of war's conventional violence appear as cruelty or treachery; physical violence is not spaced throughout the play but massed here, and seen in wider focus than the moments which concentrate on intrigue and detachment. The last scenes are a bustle of disordered stage images, as though the length and control which the earlier, more patterned action sought were no longer possible. Attention is released from a series of close views toward a comprehensive vision which includes the wider stage action, but without any loss of the earlier stress on single individuals.

In 1 Henry VI, Shakespeare had learned to simplify and direct the broad narrative vision; it would always serve him well. Now, in 2 Henry VI, although the narrative still falls into a linear pattern, lacking the multiple diagonal complexities of the later plays, where several threads of independent narrative are caught and held together at the end, Shakespeare does turn his attention to the smaller units of his drama, tracing the simplified narrative through a rich design which serves as an irritant to the imposed simplicity by playing against it. In
particular, he shows increased control over the organic shaping and building rhythms of the large court scenes; here he has clearly arrived at multiple variations of a form which reflects the developing range of his dramaturgy. Disruption and interruption remain central to the style he established in *Henry VI*, but here each is more structurally related to the total design, appearing not as irrelevances or as devices to change stage pictures, but as dramatic tools revealing theme. For an example, the opening scene of Act II shows the court at hawking. Their sport is disrupted not by messengers, following Shakespeare's earlier manner, but by the pointed quarrel of Gloucester and Winchester, individualized evidence of the generalized unrest and dissension. As Gloucester's self-control disappears, his emotions rise to the surface, threatening exposure before the King. Quickly, Shakespeare introduces the Simpcox incident, changing the direction of the scene to reveal Gloucester's justice at work. Through this scene, Shakespeare opposes wrong dissent to right justice: we see both more clearly. There is a new sense of plastic composition in Shakespeare's handling of building rhythms, tones of speech and movement within a scene; and this patterning is heightened by a growing musical awareness of the duration of scenes and the articulations between them. The alternation of public and private scenes especially illuminates social appearances and public decorum, escaping the earlier monotony of a continuous wide view; and the
elastic form of Shakespeare's theater allows for this alternation, which also encourages the playwright to think more deeply into his characters.

Shakespeare's new kind of concentration on the individual, and in particular, on an individual character's vision or point of view, allows us to become more involved in each scene, requiring our attention for something other than the narrative patterning of events; and the alternation of public and private scenes permits us to keep our distance from the characters while recognizing our own behavior in them. Although the well-observed court scenes still stand as devices for attempting to secure well-being and as moments which focus attention on large issues and on cosmic grouping, the privately conceived scenes throw doubts back to the previous court scenes, and ahead on the ones to come. The most striking changes of focus occur as the wide public occasion dissolves to a private glimpse that reviews the large actions, extending audience understanding through showing moments of intimate reaction and revelation. Consistently, 2 Henry VI demonstrates an expository ease and a grace and economy of narration, chiefly through this strengthened scenic articulation which reconciles broad iconographic presentation with naturalistic discourse, providing us with a widened view of Gloucester, and, by varying dramatic perspectives, with a similar view of the importance of York, and also of Margaret and Henry.
Shakespeare directs emphasis to two characters in particular—Gloucester and York—but *2 Henry VI* is neither a Gloucester play nor a York play. Rather, it is Henry's play: Shakespeare turns his weakness to full dramatic purpose, designing the action so that it revolves about Henry's central stillness, showing Margaret as a direct antithesis to his every thought and action. Henry's misuse and denial of his kingship motivate the power struggles in the play: *2 Henry VI* charts the fall of one character and the rise of another, each seen within the framing reference of a figure who should represent right government. York begs for a central position through his soliloquy relationship with the audience; our view of Gloucester's fall from power is partly revealed through York's eyes (like Brutus' vision of Caesar),

7Production backs up this notion. Past adaptations of the *Henry VI* materials have sought to make both York and Gloucester central to the play, and in neither case has this been successful. J.H. Merivale's 1817 compilation, called *Richard, Duke of York or The Contention of York and Lancaster* and starring Edmund Kean, had, according to Leigh Hunt, "...very little in it to arrest the attention.... In this piece...the compiler has made a strange feeble compound out of scenes and characters, which are excellent in their own places, and where they are heightened with those entire specimens, either of great strength or of great weakness, with which Shakespeare has set them off. But the hero of this piece is a middle character;...and the compiler, in abridging the part of Henry himself, did not see that a character of great and remarkable weakness had better have been made the prominent one at once...." Lawrence H. Houtchens and Carolyn W. Houtchens, ed., *Leigh Hunt's Dramatic Criticism 1808-1831* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), pp. 180-82. Also, see "The Stage History of King Henry VI, Parts II and III," in J. Dover Wilson, ed. *2 Henry VI* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), pp. xxxix-xliv for mention of an "original" Gloucester play, acted only once.
and the play's ending is clearly focused on York—facts which would argue that the play belongs more to York than to Gloucester. But Gloucester's characterization is more complete than York's: Gloucester engages our sympathies for his situation and draws our attention to the themes of justice and injustice in the play. His passion and his motivations are close to the surface in the public scenes; and in the private moments with Eleanor, Shakespeare shows us other manners, and we see him even more deeply. We have a privileged knowledge of York's thoughts and intentions, but since he is committed to secrecy in public, our view of him does not overbalance the play in his favor. Shakespeare gives him only one full private scene—the garden genealogy: this scene and his soliloquies do not define him as fully as Gloucester is defined, scene by scene, in public and in private. In the final moments at St. Albans, York's take-over seems mechanistic, even though we see him briefly with his sons, and with Warwick and Salisbury.

Shakespeare gives both York and Gloucester strong roles, but neither dominates the play. Shakespeare has taken care to design the action around Henry's presence; and he has strengthened the contrasts between action and contemplation and rule and misrule by surrounding Henry with a number of fully fleshed personages. Several characters ask to dominate Henry, but this is part of Shakespeare's design: he uses their contesting dramatic strength to reinforce and reveal his chronicle subtexts of dissimulation,
dissension, and the ways of political domination.

The Characters

This is, in part, a play about vision. Much depends upon what or how much the characters see of themselves, and of the others, and on how these often contending points of view are revealed to us. Shakespeare is handling a wide cast—ten more speaking parts than in 1 Henry VI—and he is able now, through his enriched conception of design, to develop meaningful character contrasts and to command well-drawn portrayals for many of his persons. At their best, they are very good indeed. To some, Shakespeare gives the explicit advantages he knows will immediately enrich their stage life: the soliloquy, now given an increased effectiveness by strong placement; the contrasting gradual revelation, scene by scene; the sudden rhythms of quick, enlivening prose; the occasional moment or exchange which reaches beyond the play world to suggest real life. Still, though, much is implicit, resting on the actor and his individualizing presence; these roles lack the explicit subtleties of behavior and language that characterize Shakespeare's later persons. But they do come to life, and that is the salient thing.

King Henry

With King Henry, Shakespeare faces a challenging dramatic problem: a silent, meditative, weak man at the
center of his play. But human excess in all its forms attracts the dramatist, and Shakespeare directs Henry's extraordinary political weakness firmly into the structure of his design.

Throughout the first part of the play, Henry's presence is accompanied by supportive wide views of state: he is constantly surrounded by his court, and trumpet flourishes or sennets announce his entrances, and often his exits as well. In the first scene we see him in relation to his nobles, and he seems in control of the occasion, yet eager to have it over with; we may interpret his impatience as uneasiness, an impression which Shakespeare carefully sustains in Henry's future public appearances. We never see him as himself, in private: Shakespeare shows us his public poses, and these are filled with formalized rhetoric, and, upon most occasions, with prayers, proverbs, and remorse. The greatest part of Henry's speech attempts to heal within the court; he proffers welcome, thanks, and gently chiding reminders to those around him, and he performs, with ceremony and order, the duties of state. His more meditative assertions draw us briefly to his thoughts and imagination, away from the world at court, so that he seems distantly active. These are his moments of assurance; the rest is a rather embarrassed physical and verbal silence which separates him from the others and makes him remarkable.

Henry is a reflector for all the others in the play, and much of what we know about him unfolds through the
opinions of others. He is under constant criticism. At first, he "gives away his own" in the marriage with Margaret; and her bitterness and crippling dissatisfaction are the tones which most often define him for us. She is complaining, here, to Suffolk:

I thought King Henry had resembled thee
In courage, courtship and proportion;
But all his mind is bent to holiness,
To number Ave-Maries on his beads;
His champions are the prophets and apostles,
His weapons holy saws of sacred writ,
His study is his tilt-yard, and his loves
Are brazen images of canonized saints.
I would the college of the cardinals
Would choose him pope and carry him to Rome,
And set the triple crown upon his head:
That were a state fit for his holiness.

\[2\text{ Henry VI.I.iii.56-67}\]

Although the others have not heard Margaret's words, they reinforce her caustic opinion by never saying otherwise; York makes the only other specific reference to Henry's weakness, "whose bookish rule hath pull'd fair England down."

Most of the time, what the others say and do is more directly dramatic than Henry's distanced behavior; it is almost as though he were present against his will. The central Act III, involving the separations and deaths resulting from the various traps, is the rhythm which most reinforces Henry, in which his particular kind of stillness and meditative activity is the most striking, and Shakespeare is fully aware of the dramatic possibilities.

After Gloucester's arrest, Shakespeare expertly highlights Henry's weakness, the cause of Gloucester's tragedy, first by a simple direct speech:
My lords, what to your wisdoms seemeth best,
Do or undo, as if ourself were here.

2 Henry VI.III.i.195-96

and then by a sustained statement of remorse, filled with
long vowels and slowed, often alliterative, consonants, a
sure indication of Shakespeare's growing mastery over verse
as a medium for revealing state of mind.

Ay, Margaret; my heart is drown'd with grief,
Whose flood begins to flow within mine eyes,
My body round engirt with misery,
For what's more miserable than discontent?
Ah, uncle Humphrey! in thy face I see
The map of honour, truth and loyalty:
And yet, good Humphrey, is the hour to come
That e'er I proved thee false or fear'd thy faith.
What louring star now envies thy estate,
That these great lords and Margaret our queen
Do seek subversion of thy harmless life?

2 Henry VI.III.i.198-208

After Henry's exit, the intention of the dialogue heightens
again; this is a structural variation of the moments at
the play's beginning after Henry's first exit, but here all
is keyed to an entirely different level of malevolence.

In the next scene, as Henry attempts to begin
Gloucester's trial with ceremony, we see his expectations
isolating his point of view, a vision stressed by his faint,
and by his reawakening with true vision. He sees Suffolk
clearly for the first time:

Thou baleful messenger, out of my sight!...
Look not upon me, for thine eyes are wounding:
Yet do not go away: come, basilisk,
And kill the innocent gazer with thy sight;
For in the shade of death I shall find joy;
In life but double death, now Gloucester's dead.

2 Henry VI.III.ii.48, 51-55
Later, Henry has a single moment of sudden impulse—Suffolk's banishment. Briefly, Shakespeare draws a new dimension of character: we are aware of a breaking patience, and see the man behind the crown. This is what he might have been, and Shakespeare develops the possibility no further, but permits the incident to strengthen the returning rhetoric of self-pity, chastisement and prayer which accompanies the sight of Gloucester's body, the Suffolk-Warwick quarrel, and Beaufort's death.

In the last two Acts, Henry appears only four times, once in a scene disordered by Margaret cradling Suffolk's head and interrupted by messengers (IV.iv); and a second time, accompanied by the broken remnants of ceremony, when we see him trapped between the verbal threat of York's oncoming power and the sight of Cade's dispersed army. As before, Shakespeare surrounds Henry by situations requiring decisions, and shows him unable to act effectively. In the final battle, Henry asks, almost desperately, for a showing-forth of duty from Warwick and Salisbury (V.i) and later leaves reluctantly, urged out by Margaret and Young Clifford (V.ii).

By showing Henry's virtue as the cause of his weakness, Shakespeare gives that virtue greater dramatic life: we see Henry's inadequate insight into himself and his kingdom in strong contrast to the pretenses and plots of the more experienced predators. Although Henry may seem to be only a symbol of kingship, filled with empty gestures, these
gestures are ineffectual only in these particular situations, in this particular man. Shakespeare is not saying that kingship is an empty symbol: it is still something desired by another, and the broken vision we see of it is central to the play.

**Queen Margaret**

Shakespeare's Queen Margaret is not a feminine orchestration; in *2 Henry VI* she moves steadily toward the single-minded utterance and gesture of embittered disappointment which most motivates her later warrior-like behavior in *3 Henry VI*. Her tragedy, which Shakespeare never reveals as specifically tragic, lies in the opposition between her strength and purpose and Henry's weakness. Even in the opening moments, Shakespeare draws her presence large: she is the center of the occasion, formally presented, with graceful speeches, as "England's happiness." But the next time she appears there is bitterness, jealousy, and castigation for every member of the court: she is vexed and limited, reassured only by Suffolk's promises of traps to be sprung. This preliminary view of Margaret with Suffolk will influence the way we see the large court scene which follows, increasing our attention for these two figures in particular. But Shakespeare minimizes Margaret's role: although she cannot resist a word or two against Gloucester, except for striking the Duchess of Gloucester she is relatively quiet, her presence seething and impatient beneath
the pretense of ceremony. In public, she seems to desire power for Henry; her early role is made from intruded commentary, from brief warnings and caustic remarks. But once Eleanor is banished and Gloucester's staff given up, it is she who feels restored, and her speech smoothly reflects a widened concern for Henry's new-got power:

Why, now is Henry king, and Margaret queen;
And Humphrey Duke of Gloucester scarce himself,
That bears so shrewd a maim; two pulls at once;
His lady banish'd, and a limb lopp'd off.
This staff of honour raught, there let it stand
Where it best fits to be, in Henry's hand.

2 Henry VI.II.iii.59-^4

All may still go well. Yet in the next large scene, she rails out against Gloucester, impatient, extreme, dangerous. And then there is little more to say: the others take up her cue and help her do the work, condemning Gloucester, arresting him. By the time Henry leaves the court in sorrow, King and Queen are far apart, and Margaret is a free agent, now prompting the others to arrange that "Gloucester should be quickly rid the world."

But things must seem to be outwardly normal, and now it is Margaret's turn to veil her acts: her entrance to Gloucester's "trial" reflects a deep hypocrisy:

God forbid any malice should prevail,
That faultless may condemn a nobleman!
Pray God he may acquit him of suspicion!

2 Henry VI.III.ii.23-26

Upon hearing of Gloucester's death, her concern appears conventional, apparently genuine, making a strong contrast to her outbursts at Suffolk's banishment. Suddenly, her
self-pity and anger explode, and Shakespeare has no way, yet, to handle it except through length and building rhetoric—a speech "to tear a cat in." Throughout the speech, though, both the phrasing and the extended image of the sea reveal something of Margaret's shattered dream; it is not simply rhetoric for its own sake. And later, when she parts from Suffolk, we hear a new tone of excess, echoing her sorrow in another key, augmenting our previous view of her extremes by showing us yet another. The parting, which follows the sight of Gloucester's body, represents the only way love is seen—through filters of hatred, misplaced duty, ambition, and death.

Shakespeare develops Margaret a bit further before letting her slip back into the machinery of the play. She appears with Henry, cradling Suffolk's head in her arms, her speech regularized and subdued, far wide of Buckingham's concerns for the Cade rebellion and escape. In another woman, the moment might be given over to madness, but Margaret is made of different stuff. Shakespeare gives her softened rhythms here, and one single, masterful stroke:

King. How now, Madam!
Still lamenting and mourning for Suffolk's death?
I fear me, love, if that I had been dead,
Thou wouldest not have mourn'd so much for me.
Queen. No, my love, I should not mourn, but die for thee.

2 Henry VI. IV. iv. 21-25

Margaret answers Suffolk, not Henry, echoing Henry's "dead" and "mourn" in a grief that speaks only to the past. During her last ceremonial appearance several scenes later she is
silent, perhaps still distracted; the news of Cade's rout and York's approach do not seem to reach her. In the later Acts, her earlier chiding returns seemingly unchanged, first when York claims his title and again as she urges Henry to leave the battle. With her old purpose returned, Henry now seems to be more than ever controlled by her advice.

The private moments Margaret shares with Suffolk are the most revealing ones, but Shakespeare also relies on the court situations to explicate her character. She rarely hides her thoughts on these occasions; something of the privately seen enmity always comes through in her short speeches. From the beginning, her position has a security which the others lack; the elaborate poses of the plotters are exaggerations of her relatively open stand. No one speaks against her save York, toward the end of the play:

O blood-bespotted Neapolitan,
Outcast of Naples, England's bloody scourge!

2 Henry VI.V.i.117-18

Margaret ignores him. She must seem, now, to be bent upon another design. She does not shape these situations to her liking, but she is never defensive, and always moves toward encounters, testing her strength, justifying herself as the Queen of England and also, if briefly, as a woman.

Suffolk and Some of the Nobles

Suffolk is, perhaps, the most unsympathetic and self-seeking of all the minor plotters, the one who deliberately covers up the most: his attachment for Margaret,
his dream to rule the realm (although this suggestion comes from the last lines of 1 Henry VI and is reinforced, but never mentioned explicitly here), his arrangements to have Gloucester murdered. No one except Margaret speaks well of him—"image of pride," "unworthy," and "false" are a few of the kinder comments. Shakespeare draws him clearly: it is his nature to be a shadow, present on the fringes of the action—a word here, a word there, always to the purpose. His speech copies the interruptive, remarking quality that characterizes Margaret's; much of the time he seems to be her second voice, following her patterns of behavior, even to concealing his knowledge of Gloucester's death, just as she does. He is trapped by his actions, and Shakespeare allows us little sympathy for his death, the "barbarous and bloody spectacle" which looks forward to Cade's acts of violence.⁸ We anticipate Suffolk's death, as he does, and Shakespeare exploits both awarenesses by reversing the usual focus on Suffolk. Previously seen as the tormentor and inciter of others, his position is reversed: interest rests

first on his deathsmen, and then on Suffolk's last proud words. The role ends later in a mute reminder—his bloody head in Margaret's arms.

Suffolk is individualized, but this distinction comes as much from the characters and situations surrounding him as from more sharply directed touches. So, to a greater degree, with Salisbury, Warwick, Buckingham, Somerset, and the Cliffords: they reflect the tones and wills of the major characters, filling out the scenes of argument, amplifying our sense of opposing sides. The individualized presence which each actor brings to his role must be enough to complete its dramatic life. Shakespeare writes these roles in outline, one voice exchanging easily with another. He gives sustaining parts to Salisbury and Warwick, but in each case it is the sense and situation of the scene rather than the manner which defines the speaker. Salisbury and Warwick are set in early opposition to Suffolk, and Shakespeare does show them supporting York's claim to the throne; but their roles reach peaks only as Gloucester is killed, and so much is happening there that we may forget their earlier praise of the dead man and hence miss the reasons behind their passion. After this, both disappear until the very end of the play, where their presence does little except solidify their allegiance to York. As for Young Clifford, his speech upon discovering his father's body might belong to Talbot.

Cardinal Beaufort

Cardinal Beaufort is much like these other nobles. A wolf in priest's clothing, he is set off by his robes and by his continuing quarrel with Gloucester. He is the first to plant the fear of Duke Humphrey's "smoothing words" in the others' minds, the first to draw conspirators to his side, and to make us question what we see. From the first, he is Gloucester's avowed enemy, and Shakespeare traces this dimension of his character most clearly. But for the most part he remains a public personage, necessary to the court life and to the machinery of the play, echoing the others' hypocrisy. At his death, he suddenly comes alive within the space of seventeen lines, and Shakespeare gives to his last speech the abrupt separations of sense which will help, later, to characterize Lear's madness.

Jack Cade

Shakespeare gives Cade an early verbal introduction: York calls him "headstrong" and "stubborn," a "devil" who can and will oppose many, spying on them at will, obeying orders, and emerging victorious. His reputation is imposing,
but York's words occur so long before we see Cade that when he does come on stage, he is immediately surprising. He demands urgency from all actions and response, and this, coupled to his comic behavior, ensures that we will see him with some detachment.

Cade's extraordinary vitality—actions uncannily fused to speech—controls our perceptions. His own view is practical and single-minded—he never admits but always rejects qualifying perspectives—and this single-mindedness is stressed visually by his stage presence. In each of the scenes given to him, Cade is never just part of the action: what we see literally depends upon what he does and says; he seems to body forth his "infinite numbers" alone. His role offers a single, strident tone until his downfall, which comes, ironically, through words: his multitude is swayed from him by the name of Henry V; and he dies a victim of famine, not valor, with only the word "sallet" to feed upon. Our final view of Cade is sympathetic, even though we recognize the poetic justice of Iden's death-blow, largely because, as Cade is driven off the stage toward Iden's garden, we have the strong impression that he, like Gloucester, is victimized.  

9Brockbank sees Iden as "a formal symbol, mechanically put together out of the chronicle." Further, he states that Iden "can only appear as a 'representative figure' to King Henry himself in a scene which Shakespeare is careful not to put last." "The Frame of Disorder—Henry VI," pp. 89-90
Thematically, Shakespeare uses Cade to give us a perspective on the limitations of a world where justice operates in black and white contrasts, where if a man writes, he is arrested and if a man pleads for his life, he dies. The angle of vision is very foreign to Gloucester's paradigm for justice, but not so far removed from the ways of the plotters. Shakespeare measures, here, our vision of all that has gone before by placing it in Cade's exaggerated frame: "in order we are most out of order." Although Cade's straightforward behavior does give us an active metaphor for how the kingdom might be set right, Shakespeare sees Cade's way not as a solution for the injustices of the realm but rather as a necessary diversion, an unalterable addition to and commentary on the major action of the play.

**Gloucester**

Gloucester is central to Shakespeare's design; the Folio title—The Second Part of Henry Sixt, with the Death of the Good Duke Humphrey—makes this explicit. From the beginning, he is very much himself, and Shakespeare maneuvers him easily from scene to scene, so that he explains himself through the situations in which he appears rather than through the more dramatic self-revelation of soliloquy, which Shakespeare reserves for York.

The first speeches are essential; in them, Shakespeare gives us two sides of his character—the trusted counsellor, self-conscious but aware that he must control
himself, and the angered man—an immediate contrast. He is eloquent in his anger; it is not a personal matter but one which concerns "the common grief of all the land."

Gloucester is not impassive, but all too movable, exiting upon a general mood of gathering dissent to avoid bickering with the Cardinal. The Cardinal comments on his rage, and claims Gloucester is his enemy; both Somerset and York call him proud. Salisbury, though, thinks otherwise: "I never saw but Duke Humphrey / Did bear him like a gentleman."

Salisbury praises his deeds as well. But these are the only charitable remarks: throughout, pride is the word the others use most often to characterize the man—"insolent," "proud and peremptory," "surly," "haughty," "a lofty pine," the "pernicious protector" and "dangerous peer," ambitious, "unsounded yet and full of deep deceit." Are we meant to see a flawed Gloucester, possessed by pride?

Shakespeare directs the first scene between Gloucester and his Duchess so that all the accusations are questioned. Both Eleanor and Gloucester are characterized, as Calderwood notes, in terms of their differing angles of vision.10 Gloucester's eyes are "fix'd to the sullen earth," but Eleanor desires that:

We'll both together lift our heads to heaven,
And never more abase our sight so low
As to vouchsafe one glance unto the ground.

2 Henry VI. I. ii. 14-16

Gloucester's fatidic dream—his staff broken, the heads of Somerset and Suffolk impaled on the parts (a prophecy which becomes more generalized later)—offers some proof of his primarily public concern: he does not, like Eleanor, have dreams of private glory. His chiding of Eleanor reinforces this: Gloucester's principles are firmly held, even to the point where he leaves his private life to take care of itself while he concentrates on public cares. Husband and wife may be separate in ambition, but Shakespeare directs a single moment which brings them together: Gloucester's "Nay, be not angry; I am pleased again" offers an opportunity for the actors to reconcile their momentary outbursts, and shows us a small, intimate revelation of tenderness unique in the play. Brutus will reveal himself to us in a similar vein as Portia pleads with him. Once Gloucester has gone, Eleanor refers to his "base and humble mind," but this is in comparison to her own soaring ambition. For her, he is not proud enough; for the others, his pride seems overwhelming. The truth lies somewhere between the extremes. Gloucester is certainly aware of his importance: he often speaks of himself as protector of the realm, and of his wife's position, with "worldly pleasure at command." As protector, Gloucester is forced to expose himself continually to the public eye: what shows as pride to the others comes from this deep sense of his political importance. In private and in public, he suppresses the emotions which might lead to over-weening pride of place; and the events of the play, aimed toward his
humiliation, gradually expose this suppression. Often, he fights natural reactions—outbursts of anger or tears—in order to maintain his decorum. His deepest feelings are never visualized on stage, but remain painfully private, for he leaves, or asks to leave, on occasions when his emotions near the surface (I.i, I.iii, II.iii, II.iv). Because Gloucester does leave, his view of a situation is often incomplete, and this contributes to our feeling that he is deceived. We expect some deeper revelation, but Shakespeare's broad themes do not allow for it: too much tragic involvement with Gloucester will overbalance his design.

Still, our sympathy does lie with Gloucester, and we are in harmony with his position largely because he is the most complete figure, exposed to the untiring surveillance and ruthlessness of the others in every situation in which we see him. In his exchange of asides with the Cardinal, for example, he is defined verbally by hawking metaphors which suggest that he is being preyed upon. His only real triumph is his judgment of Simpcox; ironically, the man who lies about his sight is trapped by Gloucester's true vision. Here, all changes in the stage picture are caused by Gloucester; Shakespeare clearly visualizes the strength of the Duke's judgment only to undercut and temper that strength by the news of Eleanor's arrest and Gloucester's vow to banish her. At this moment, Gloucester is caught, but Shakespeare sustains suspense for the final trapping over the next three and a half scenes. Yet again, Shakespeare
directs Gloucester to the center of a scene: the resignation of the protector's staff of office carries broad thematic significance, and Shakespeare follows it directly by the emblematic Horner–Peter combat which shows a servant beating his master and the death of a traitor, embodying warnings to both Henry and York.

Even within the context of seeing Eleanor's ambition brought low, Shakespeare maintains a steady perspective on Gloucester, and the visual and verbal metaphors of sight and trapping defining both Gloucester and Eleanor not only separate the trappers from the trapped, but call attention to Gloucester's virtue:

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.

2 Henry VI. II. iv. 59-63

Gloucester remains immune to ambitious pride; although his honor may be indirectly assaulted through Eleanor, the plotters must, in the end, resort to violence to lure Humphrey—as Beaufort admits in III.i, they "want a colour for his death."

Again, Shakespeare stresses Gloucester's presence by moving the intention of the next large court scene toward his entry, and we are expecting Gloucester when Somerset enters instead, with the news of France's loss. Shakespeare postpones the significant moment and makes double use of the interruption to present information which York will use
later in his claims against Gloucester. When Gloucester does enter, claiming "All happiness unto my lord the King!" the tones of his voice should reflect a control which the others have already lost. All eyes are on Gloucester as he is accused by Suffolk and the others, and none see clearly other than those of the audience. Only after Gloucester's arrest and exit does Henry "With sad unhelpful tears, and with dimm'd eyes / Look after him and cannot do him good."

Shakespeare has directed Gloucester's exposure to build gradually, one stroke adding to the next until it is suddenly over. Gloucester knows it, and his last speeches are filled with prophecy, emotion, and accusations against them all, including Henry. It is his last opportunity to protect each from the other, to protect himself, to protect England. We next see his body as a significant prop on the stage. There is some mention of his ghost, and Cardinal Beaufort's death-bed vision re-invokes Warwick's grisly description of his corpse; then no one mentions Gloucester except the Captain who controls Suffolk's death.

Now the action gains impetus, and there are many new voices, urging away this tragedy. But we do not forget Gloucester easily: though the complexities of the living man are sometimes lost in the self-consciousness of his rhetoric, this is the best Shakespeare can do, now, to show us the Good Duke Humphrey.
Eleanor

From the first, Eleanor is set in some opposition to Gloucester: her ambition overmatches his, her temper is hotter than her husband's. She is silly, perhaps bored, seeking oracles from spirits to strengthen her wishes. She resents her husband's order of preference: the state and his duty and honor first, his wife later. In many ways, Eleanor is more completely drawn than Margaret; her tonal range, certainly, is much wider. We see her first and last in private, and this intimate view is offset only a little by her two public appearances—once when Margaret humiliates her and forces her angry exit and again when she is sentenced, her anger now changed to a single statement of brave shame. Shakespeare's contrasting method of revelation compares Eleanor to Margaret; both are women of masculine ambition, quick, intemperate, seemingly dutiful, both seek power for their husbands which will transfer authority to their own positions. Henry and Gloucester refuse to contend against the others; Shakespeare sets their wives against each other instead. What is the difference between them? Eleanor is softer than Margaret, and there is, perhaps, a touch of masochism urging her to court disaster.

Ironically, her processional pageant mocks the more royal one she wished for. "Dressed in a white sheet, and a taper burning in her hand," Eleanor is a strange, theatrical
figure on the stage, surrounded by persons of authority, watched by the mourning Gloucester and members of his household. The excess in her self-abuse rings more true than much of the other language of excess in the play. Throughout her ordeal, she remains loyal to Gloucester: bitter at one instant, in the next she warns him of the others' plots. Shakespeare emphasizes her distance and despair by her last words to her husband: "Art thou gone too? all comfort go with thee!" Our final impressions are of her shame, her hopelessness, and her determination for death.

York

York is dangerous, passionate, difficult, demanding and egotistical—a clever opportunist. And unfortunately, Shakespeare does not yet have the skills to animate these combined qualities perfectly, right from the start. They are revealed only in bits and pieces, and the opportunism outweighs the others. But Shakespeare also realizes that while York must stand out from the others, he must not eclipse them, particularly in the first parts of the play, where Gloucester's story figures as boldly, although through different means of presentation.

So the first time we see York he is one of the others, objecting to the royal marriage and to Suffolk's increasing importance in tones which match the others'; it might be any one of them who speaks:
For Suffolk's duke, may he be suffocate,
That dims the honour of this warlike isle!
France should have torn and rent my very heart,
Before I would have yielded to this league.
I never read but England's kings have had
Large sums of gold and dowries with their wives;
And our King Henry gives away his own,
To match with her that brings no vantages.

_2 Henry VI._I.i.124-31

But Shakespeare does not wait long to reveal York's special qualities. A bit later, an aside gives us the first suspicion that he desires the crown, and this is quickly followed by a long soliloquy which reviews and generalizes upon the previous action, advancing our perceptions and understanding of the sudden fullness of the opening events. Next, York formally sets forth his politic will and creates intense attention for his motivations and future actions. Here and elsewhere, in the private genealogy and in his second soliloquy, York's self-searching follows a single-minded line—his claim for the crown, which he associates with glory and with war-like deeds. He stresses the need for secrecy and stillness, and sets a tone of covered impatience and prevented speech which automatically draws us to listen for the subtext of his future public utterances. With this first soliloquy, too, York initiates our awareness of the difference between true speech and "shows" of false behavior, so that we will also be alert for these moments and will watch the others' behavior with opened eyes. The soliloquy is the most self-dramatizing vein that Shakespeare has at his command for explaining his character; here it has not been fully developed into a truly interior view, but strikes
on one note only. For the actor, the effect of this first long speech must sustain York's role through a number of scenes in which he figures, much like the others, as a minor voice. Until he leaves for Ireland, York's claim to the crown is purely a mental movement; the private and public scenes give us narrowed and widened views of the man, but our overall impression remains consistent with his first soliloquy.

For us, and for most of the others, there is nothing incompatible in the two ways of seeing York. When he appears next, in public, he again rails against Suffolk, and his position verges on danger as Horner is accused of echoing York's claim to the crown. He passes this off stiffly, advocating "all the rigor of the law," but we will not miss his anxious apprehension, a few scenes later, to start the combat and dismiss the question of his treason. The private scenes—his capture of Eleanor and his meeting with Warwick and Salisbury—do not reveal York as much as we might wish, although Eleanor's arrest does hint at an impartial and ironic cruelty, and the genealogy reinforces his determination and shows that there are others on his side.

Suffolk finds him "unmeet" for the regency of France, Margaret calls him "grumbling York," and Gloucester, condemning the lot, speaks of "dogged York, that reaches at the moon." These are clues for the actor: apparently York cannot hide his ambition as well as he imagines. Although these slips of secrecy and interior security are not
specifically supported in the text, they may be easily indicated by tone of voice and physical demeanor.

Shakespeare does not point the contrast between Gloucester the idealist and York the dangerous opportunist. In fact, York becomes less and less involved with the actual process of condemning Gloucester; he only plays his part, supporting and channeling the other voices in the development. Here, the speech itself suffices: the accord of heart, tongue and hands seems witness to a deed already done—"And now we three have spoke it," says York, "It skills not greatly who impugns our doom." Smooth, dangerous words. Shakespeare spotlights, a bit later, York's new resolve:

Be that thou hopest to be, or what thou art 
Resign to death; it is not worth the enjoying: 
Let pale-faced fear keep with the mean-born man, 
And find no harbour in a royal heart.

2 Henry VI.III.i.333-36

York has revealed himself to us more than once. But until now he has measured his opportunism in terms of broad future goals: "A day will come..."; "I'll make him yield the crown"; "But I am not your king / Till I be crown'd...." Now that has changed. He has men, arms, Jack Cade as a "minister," and the crown seems nearly within reach. He sees himself strengthened, and we will sense his purpose. His speech throws light forward to the Cade scenes, and to the final battle. York is now "weaving tedious snares" alone, out of sight. We have seen him as actor-spectator-commentator in six of the nine scenes so far, yet we do not see or hear
his point of view again (except through his surrogate, Cade) until the play is nearly over. In a sense, York's presence has given us an advantage, a perspective on the action which we no longer have.

As York returns to the play in Act V, he takes up some of Cade's outspoken attitudes as he asserts his claim to the crown. He seems sharpened by activity, and we see his opportunism, until now an interiorized action, seemingly independent of the rest of the play, yielding first to suggestions, and then to the full realization, of a group action through which York is joined firmly to Warwick and Salisbury, and to his sons.

The Language

The verse which Shakespeare gives his characters does not differ widely from that of 1 Henry VI in vocabulary or syntax, but it is very noticeably more dramatic. Brief exchanges relieve long rhetorical balancing, and there is a great deal of plain talk, not only in the verse rhythms but in the 448 lines of prose. Rhetoric is reserved for special occasions; Shakespeare is becoming aware, here, of the prevailing distinctions in rhythm between public and private speech and of the dramatic effectiveness of variations in verse texture, slowing down or distancing some moments, speeding up others. This is not to say that he reserves rhetoric for public occasions alone—he does not—but he has learned to modify rhetoric so that it reveals
characteristic angles of view, and more specifically, the angle from which a character views himself. The verse has solidity and strength; it is more compact than that of 1 Henry VI, but it is still marked by indulgence in allusions, by hyperbole, and by classical formalities. Most lines suggest, if they do not actually force, a pause at the end.

Overall, the rhetoric serves a dramatic purpose, hiding true reactions underneath formal speeches, protecting individual passions by poses. Useful in one way, this is also a fault. The speech is not syntactically evocative, and tends to restrict, by its length and end-stopped quality, the strength of individual characterization; no one character has, as yet, a personally dominant metaphor or speech rhythm. But in some part, the very limitations of this early verse usefully suggest the restrictions binding Shakespeare's characters. Rivalry, plotting, egoism, and deception are not suited to a soaring verse style. Although Marlowe handles the egoism of his overreachers in "high astounding terms," this is not Shakespeare's way. Not only does he see that his characters and their ideas are tightly controlled by interior perceptions, but he is limited both by an imperfect mastery over his verse and by his wide sustaining themes from revealing these abstractions within freely flowing images. Much of the play, because of the necessities of narrative flow, must rest on fairly direct discourse.

The scenes of public life offer dramatically legitimate occasions for eloquence; and Shakespeare takes
full advantage of these, offsetting this eloquence with brief, simple exchanges which keep a full stage picture alive. Although both kinds of speech may not express a speaker's individualized rhythms of thought as much as they reflect the occasion or the quality of the person spoken to, they are made immediately idiosyncratic by their sense, and in performance the tones may become even more individualized, offering a challenge to ensemble playing.

Reaction and response tend to hit on a single tone: outrage. There are differences for each character, but the music is a peculiar one: varying tones of discord expressed through récitatif, with few arias. The language must bear the wide narrative scope which many characters and incidents suggest; there is little, yet, between the lines. Still, Shakespeare can be explicit: Henry's calculated ceremony and meditative postures keep him in dignified retreat from the action, and Margaret's and Gloucester's tones and York's particular way of speaking are well-defined. But again the effectiveness of these variations comes more from the sense than from the quality of the verse. Margaret and Suffolk share a language of excess and hyperbole, a device which Shakespeare will remember and improve upon when Romeo and Juliet share a sonnet, but here, genuine emotion and image are incompletely fused.

Speaking this verse is not simply a matter of keeping up the pace, moving quickly from cue to cue in an over-reaction to normal speech patterns. The actor must work
within the frame of the verse, alert to its sense rhythms, which will provide clues for changes of tempo that can affect the atmosphere, clarity and force of a moment. Broadly, Shakespeare directs tempo changes by alternating moments of intense focus with the larger court scenes, which organize the tones and responses of the rest of the play. The court sustains impressions of ceremony and formality, but more urgent thoughts and impulses always attempt to break through. Of these urgencies, there are two extremes—Henry's slow, reflective rhythms and York's impatience, echoed by the others. Although York's secrecy may seem to slow him down, his abrupt distinctive revelations in soliloquy will seem hasty when contrasted to the prevailing tones of the court. Developing quickness comes with the last several Acts, particularly in the prose-verse alternations in the Cade material, although we have heard the quickened, heterogeneous rhythms of Shakespeare's "prose underlings" in earlier scenes too, lessening emotional pressure, setting forth timely contrasts. Although Shakespeare's handling of the verse does not cover a particularly wide range, it does suggest a growing freedom in its ability to express and direct a variety of response.

The Two-Part Structure

The Folio text reveals Shakespeare's stagecraft as one continuous movement, which may or may not reflect its original conditions of performance. Certainly, though, a
single, sweeping action interprets the play more clearly than the five Act divisions of Shakespeare's modern editors, which impose a regulation structuring that does not accurately reflect the broadest shapes of *2 Henry VI*. Although the five-Act division does articulate some part of Shakespeare's patterning, these minor rhythms are best seen in relation to two large units, or movements, of dramatic action. The first, encompassing Acts I-III, concentrates on the plots of the nobles and Gloucester's tragedy; here Shakespeare establishes a deliberate design which reinforces his thematic ordering. Gloucester refers to his story as the "prologue" to the rest of the play, yet this is something of a misnomer: Shakespeare gives his most careful attention to this first movement. But he does not slight the rest of the play: Acts IV and V focus on the civil war, returning the play to history, capitalizing on the narrative technique.

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11 Emrys Jones discusses the two-part structure of Shakespearean plays thoroughly in *Scenic Form in Shakespeare* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 68-88. The latest productions of the play have tried to reproduce these larger units. Sir Barry Jackson's production for the Birmingham Repertory Theatre (1953) placed intervals after III.iii and, regretfully, after IV.i. Sir Barry speaks, as do reviewers of his production, of the overwhelming impact of Shakespeare's drama when seen in an intimate house. "On Producing Henry VI," *Shakespeare Survey*, 6 (1953), pp. 49-52. The break at the end of Act III is supported, too, by a 1933 Norwich Players' production at the Maddermarket Theatre, directed by Nugent Monck. The first three Acts of *2 Henry VI* were presented on one night; the Cade material and *3 Henry VI* on the following night. *Eastern Evening News*, 20 May 1933, Newspaper Cuttings—Shakespeare's Plays, Birmingham Public Library, Birmingham, England, n.d. See also: Appendix, for John Barton's restructuring of the three *Henry VI* plays into two.
of *1 Henry VI*—the use of many short scenes which solidify an overall impression.

Throughout, the play clearly moves to some form beyond the incidental, and this is patently clear from the outset. Tension between words and actions is integral to the dramaturgy: the first movement of the play is largely verbal, the last, active. To further emphasize this distinction, Shakespeare divides his characters between those who would change the course of English events with words and those trying to change history with actions: the most outstanding contrast is between King Henry and York-Cade. Through these conflicts between words and actions, disension is clarified: we see the plotters draw together or stay apart, and as the stage grouping gathers to a significant picture and then dissolves, each forming and re-forming group contributes to a constantly mounting tension.

**A First Movement**

Shakespeare commands a strong shape for the first half of his play, communicated by an increased control and variation of both stage grouping and dramatic language. The first three Acts are given unity by the metaphor of the hunt—watchfulness (I), sport and trapping (II), the traps sprung and the deaths or separations which ensue (III). Shakespeare gives each of these Acts a significant and striking beginning—a large court scene conceived as a public showing-forth of love and duty. Language and gesture focus
on attempts to resolve dissent and division, but within each scene our view of the expected ceremonial gestures is modified by private responses which anticipate further faction. All except Act III move to an ending which suggests crisis on a private level; our attention is heightened by the public scenes, and sustained by the varied focus on the reactions of individuals.

For the large moments of his drama, Shakespeare chooses the disciplined framing reference of the court interiors. These spaces allow little imaginative freedom, and will give a closed feeling to the stage compositions. The strong trapping image, and the craft and sport associated with it, reinforce the controlled feeling of these interiors, and the characters' talk of watching, or seeing into, one another adds a variable resonance. In production, suggestions of architectural background must seem to enclose our perspectives, forming a neutral foil for the more interesting machinations and inward visions of the persons. His view concentrates on the persons of the court, and the constricted spaces in which they are pictured aids him in the quick creation of character, especially since these scenes are unified by an overall patterning, alternating public and

private glimpses. Here, incidents will seem most concentrated and will show to best advantage, given a natural counterpointing by the verbal atmosphere of conflicting feelings and sides. Here, Gloucester's controlled anger will show clearly; here, his justice will be seen at work, and the injustice of the others will gain dramatic meaning through contrast. Within this frame, Shakespeare's social and political concerns may be pictured. Within this frame, too, Shakespeare can most clearly show York's self-interest and isolation, and Henry's ineffectualness, again through contrast, will be most obvious.

At court, as elsewhere in the play, time is not accurately measured, but the repeated processionals will increase our sense of time passing, of the leisurely meeting and re-meeting of the court to hold ceremonies. Shakespeare no longer makes use of frequent messenger speeches to introduce new interests and close gaps in time and space; this first movement is characterized by an evenness of presentation which allows new and striking incidents—Eleanor's conjuring, the Simpcox "miracle," the Horner-Peter combat, Eleanor's pageant of same—to emerge from the regular texture almost casually. Since the dramatic space is confined to the court and its immediate environs, time may be easily evoked not only in the present but in the up-building of the past, bringing an even more specific sense of leisure, of the present reaching back into the past for its meaning. This deepens our sense of the continuity of historical actions,
and creates and recalls dimensions of character—the Gloucester-Winchester quarrel; York's past, involving his claim to the throne—which Shakespeare does not have the dramatic time to create in any other way. And when the story depends specifically upon time, Shakespeare shows this as a movement from public to private or from private to public responses. The tempo and pressure of events building toward a pervading sense of distrust is much more significant for his drama than the actual spaces of time. We see mistrust and watchfulness extend to all areas of court life, and the bonds between characters and sides are further clarified by the private scenes, so that when the large scenes gather all together again, we experience a many-leveled sense of the whole design of deceit.

Shakespeare still counts on a grand opening to define the beginning of his play—a full and formal statement of theme, and a show of the characters who are to develop it, seen within the boundaries of a social occasion which will heighten the significance of both theme and character, setting up broad perspectives which will be re-evaluated in later scenes. But from the outset, 2 Henry VI is more carefully directed than 1 Henry VI: we focus not only on the broad surfaces of the composition but on smaller, intensely active, parts of the whole, and both kinds of vision are presented simultaneously. The public state occasion—Margaret's welcome and the ratification of the articles of peace—is abbreviated, and the rest of the scene comments upon the
moment in a variety of carefully orchestrated revelations, establishing the contrast between ceremonial rhetoric and more impassioned speech, and highlighting Gloucester's behavior, as well as York's, within this context. Shakespeare directs the pace of the exchanges among the nobles by variations of tempo which depend more upon the sense, length and the contrasting tempers of their speeches than upon variations in the verse. In the middle section of the scene (136 lines altogether) between the state occasion and York's soliloquy, the weight of verbal interest rests on Gloucester. Shakespeare gives 71 lines to his speeches and the others' direct answers to him. From the first, Shakespeare commands this attention for Gloucester, and the rest of the scene shows the others moving away from him, their own contending desires stressed by their abrupt decisions, by the phrasing and tempo of their exits, and by the amount of stage time given to them: twenty-four lines to Winchester, seven lines to Buckingham and Somerset, and thirty-four lines to the exchange between York, Warwick, and Salisbury.

Shakespeare seems to be feeling his way through this first scene for a sure grip on his audience, and he achieves it as York breaks through the others' speeches with a sustained outline of his desires, combining and tightening the tones and tensions of the action thus far. Even this early, Shakespeare is making multiple use of the soliloquy: like Iago's revelations of private plotting, York's speech reinforces the design of watchfulness and plotting, so that
we are given a private, self-justified paradigm of the other power-plays in 2 Henry VI.

Clearly, the opening scene is expository, much of its interruptive movement similar to the opening scene of 1 Henry VI. But this scene shows a more mature dramaturgy: the deliberate design of the stage grouping clarifies the conflicts so that our attention may rest on the more elaborate interior designs of the nobles themselves. Shakespeare impresses a great deal of information on us quickly, resulting in a large concerted effect: the impression of dissent, of dissimulation, of wrong moves made before the play began. Yet Shakespeare does not use the scene exclusively to argue the political exposition which lies behind the play; he also demonstrates the thrusting purpose of several characters. By the end of this scene, the lines of faction are clearly drawn, and dissension is emphatically pictured in dramaturgy and language: the distribution of gestures and the varying length and passion of the speeches give us immediate insights into the dramatic environment. The robust organization of this first view establishes, in synopsis, verbal, thematic, and visual oppositions which set forth ways of seeing crucial to the play. Here, and in the scenes to follow, Shakespeare is making use of more than one perceptual vocabulary to reinforce his central design.

The repeated references to sight, which form verbal patterns noted by Calderwood, call attention to the meaning of glances and appearances, making the audience more
Not only do these moments help to engender a mood of conspiracy, duplicity and tension, but they include the audience by focusing its attention on the particular viewpoints of the characters. Thus the play-world, like the audience, takes up a deliberate focus on vision. The audience, however, has a more privileged awareness than the characters, whose vision is colored by private feelings and concerns, and necessarily limited by what they see. No one on stage shares with the audience the possibility of seeing things as they are, with the exception of Gloucester, who gives us the first clue to his true vision when he cannot read the articles of peace because "some sudden qualm hath struck me at the heart / And dimm'd mine eyes."

Consistently, Shakespeare complicates our view of the play-world, varying and extending our responses beyond a simple, single-distanced point of view. We see Gloucester and Eleanor alone (I.ii), and are reassured of Gloucester's virtue through seeing it revealed in private. In structure, this scene parallels the first: a situation is established, responded to, and exited upon; secret watchfulness continues. The tone and sense of Hume's brief soliloquy parallels and parodies York's earlier concluding speech: Shakespeare is using the same structural patterning in both large and small scenes, intentionally stressing design as he contrasts several ways of seeing.

From here on, though, he will vary the design. The second large court scene (I.iii) builds from a prose prelude, detaching us from our emotional involvement with Eleanor and Gloucester, re-establishing the scene at court by brisk exchanges, speeding up the tempo. Full understanding of the scene depends upon our recollection of earlier points of view, and whenever such recollection is necessary, Shakespeare indulges his audience. The brief cross-stage wrangles renew and clarify the oppositions and factions suggested in the earlier large scene, particularly the accusations against Gloucester, which are now made more explicit. In the first scene, the forming of factions acted as expository and structural markers, separating private and public behavior, but here a tone change, as private rhetoric and feeling are made public, deepens the intestine division. The rhythm is very quick; one-line exchanges suggest informality and haste within the formal occasion: in sixteen lines, we hear nine tones of voice. Gloucester's tempered exit, Margaret's cruelty to Eleanor, and the Horner-Peter accusations are the central incidents in the scene, and each reflects the accusatory atmosphere. ¹⁴ Shakespeare's quick juxtaposition of these moments shows an eagerness to use incident to reveal theme and character.

¹⁴Leech speaks of the Horner-Peter quarrel as a mirror-image of the warring nobles, a "parody of chivalric encounter" that implies a critical attitude toward the nobles. Shakespeare: The Chronicles, p. 17.
simultaneously, almost as though he has first visualized the scene as dumb-show. But Shakespeare no longer relies exclusively on the iconography of an event to carry dramatic meaning forward; he is more interested in revealing private, naturalistic response to a situation, and in directing transitions from scene to scene so that they depend upon the extension and continuity of these responses, carrying expectation forward, multiplying the possibilities of dramatic involvement.

The next scene, Eleanor's conjuring (I.iv), plays on the unrest created by the previous scene, intensifying that feeling through further perspectives. Here, as in 1 Henry VI, the supernatural has a source in chronicle tradition, and is not simply a facile effect introduced for its own sake. Shakespeare demonstrates sure control over his effects: the introductory voices are spare, and the pitch builds quickly toward the witchcraft itself. Physical presentation is barely indicated by the stage directions, yet we may assume a sustained visual effect, intensified by "thunder and lightning" and varied tones of voice, for Shakespeare further assures our response to the sense of what has happened by repeating the spiritual prophecies. Notice that Shakespeare avoids a self-contained ending for this scene. York is given a few forceful exit lines, stressing narrative progress, initiating future action:

At your pleasure, my good lord. Who's within there, ho! Enter a Servingman.
Invite my Lords of Salisbury and Warwick
To sup with me tomorrow night. Away!

2 Henry VI.I.iv.82-84
Shakespeare now visualizes his drama not in terms of broken episodes but as a series of connected events which synthesize more easily toward a central design. He has shown us different perspectives on the kingdom as seen by its inhabitants, yet each of these separate watchful ways of seeing stresses the thematic "civil dissension and domestic discord" central to the play. The significance of what happens in the large court scenes is made more deliberate by the intervening small scenes, so that we are aware of several kinds of vision before our eyes at once, and Shakespeare keeps the various strands of his drama alive by alternation. Gloucester is the central figure under observation: Shakespeare directs our attention to him by showing him watched by the others.

Shakespeare continues the broad structural rhythms of these first four scenes in the second group of scenes, alternating between public and private focus, presenting partial results of events initiated in the first group of scenes. Justice, or the images and workings of the death of justice, is the wide issue governing these scenes: here, Gloucester is trapped both by his own view of justice and by the others' plots. We see him first as the judge, and then, once he renounces Eleanor (II.i) and resigns his staff of office (II.iii), we see the results of his earlier judgment in Eleanor's penance. Overall, both large and small scenes are designed around visual and verbal metaphors of sport and trapping, and there is a sense of tightened
stage pictures: the large scenes contain as many actors as before, but points of focus are more intense within these scenes, and in three of the four scenes (II. i, II. iii and II. iv), characters on stage share the spectator's role with the audience, furthering audience involvement with the stage action. The key of the whole action is changed from the earlier watchfulness and spying to the closing-in of the hunters on their quarry, and the contrasts of emotional range in this group of scenes come much more abruptly. Scenes are never static, always vital; several are varied by interruptions—the asides of the Gloucester-Winchester quarrel and the Simpcox "miracle" (II. i); the Horner-Peter combat (II. iii)—which give Shakespeare the opportunity to enrich the portrayal of one or more of his characters.

Eleanor's penance begins the separation which characterizes the third minor rhythm of the first movement. Now, in quick succession, Shakespeare sets forth Gloucester's arrest, York's quarrel with Somerset and departure for Ireland, Gloucester's murder, Suffolk's banishment, Beaufort's death. Beginning with the Queen's harangue directed at Gloucester (III. i) and climaxing with her pleas for "gentle Suffolk" in III. ii, Henry and Margaret draw farther apart, until our last view of Margaret defines her in terms of her love for Suffolk, and we see Henry committed to other-worldly love and meditation.

For the fifth time, the court meets together (III. i), but the "sennet" and the on-stage processional are the only
signs of ceremony.Appearances and requests for demonstrations of love and duty still act as framing controls over these scenes, but now they are shortened or nullified by the growing rancor of the participants. The stage actions, though disparate, flow into one another through transfers of feeling rather than dissolving into a continuum of action in which one event tops another in a sort of obstacle course, as in 1 Henry VI. Shakespeare exploits these qualities of feeling to underline the violated order of this complex world of secrecy, policy, and separateness, so that the audience senses the experience of a wide variety of small islands of behavior and response, all contributing to reinforce the central theme—intestine division. Although many events seem completed—York gone to Ireland, Suffolk banished, Gloucester murdered—the design is still uneasy. There is no time, now, for the reflective private interval; the alternating rhythms are broken, stilled by parting and death.

Beaufort's death is a coda. We have anticipated Gloucester's death, but Shakespeare rejects the expected sight. Instead he gives significance to the Cardinal's death by showing it happen, and the contrast between the ways these deaths are shown again illustrates Shakespeare's new direction over the dramatic formation of his materials. The major focus, in Gloucester's murder, rests on the variety of response to his death, not on the moment itself. The fact of his death has been prepared for: we have seen
and heard the plotting, we have heard Gloucester prophesy his death, we have imagined the horror from its inception. But we anticipate neither Henry's changed vision nor Suffolk's banishment: both surprise. So does the Cardinal's sudden illness and death. Shakespeare directs the moment with great intensity, giving the Cardinal a speech which relives Gloucester's death and summarizes the interior state of all the evil in the play, stressing the iterative metaphor of sight and trapping:

Alive again? then show me where he is:
I'll give a thousand pound to look upon him.
He hath no eyes, the dust hath blinded them.
Comb down his hair; look, look! it stands upright,
Like lime-twigs set to catch my winged soul.

2 Henry VI.III.iii.12-16

Gloucester's death, viewed now through Beaufort's guilty conscience, introduces a tonal change which Shakespeare points in Henry's simple speech:

Forebear to judge, for we are sinners all.
Close up his eyes and draw the curtain close;
And let us all to meditation.

2 Henry VI.III.iii.31-33

The familiar choral overview no longer detaches us from the scene itself. Shakespeare has learned to make the generalization a part of the whole. He will not return us to the especially intense kinds of sight given by this first movement.
An Interval

All movement, in one way or another, goes away from the court, and from the sham and pretense that characterize it; the one broad leap toward exterior views exaggerates this perspective. Here, action dominates the stage, and time seems speeded up and telescoped—the Cade rebellion is a single continuous rush, connected to the York scenes by an earlier verbal association between York and Cade. Except for York's long absence from the action, there is no "no-man's land" between scenes; complex as the plotters and the plots may be, Shakespeare allows no real confusions in the story. Granville-Barker's word for it was "frictionless," this easy passage from here to there, from time to time. 15

There is one problem, one moment of friction: the placement of Suffolk's death. 16 Does the incident belong with the double deaths which end the first movement? Arguably, Suffolk's death is linked to the sequence which began in III.i, and if an interval were placed after Suffolk's


16F. Hawley's promptbook note serves the convenience of the localized stage: "This scene is not required. Suffolk is bannished [sic] and there is no reason for a whole scene and fresh characters to show the manner of his death." F. Hawley, 1883. Stratford-upon-Avon promptbook, Nuffield Library, Shakespeare Centre, Stratford-upon-Avon, England. Hawley avoids a ship and an ocean, but his cut falsifies Shakespeare's play.
death, the second movement of the play would open with the fresh interest in Cade. But Shakespeare's directorial hand gives us several indications that Suffolk's death initiates a new movement. The scene opens with the only bit of "word-scenery" in the play:

The gaudy, blabbing and remorseful day
Is crept into the bosom of the sea;
And now loud-howling wolves arouse the jades
That drag the tragic melancholy night;
Who, with their drowsy, slow and flagging wings,
Clip dead men's graves and from their misty jaws
Breathe foul contagious darkness in the air.

2 Henry VI. IV.i.1-7

The presence of lines which reinforce a sense of new spaces and indicate a clear perception of time passing suggests that this is a significant transition. These lines also recall the deaths at the end of the first movement, and a bit later, the Captain's long speech (IV.i.70-103) reviews and recalls past history. Shakespeare means us to remember Suffolk's involvement in Gloucester's death, and the reviewed history will increase our sense of a cause and effect structure, deepening the import of the event beyond the incidental death of a proud man.

On other grounds, Suffolk's death initiates the violent brutality which characterizes the second movement of the play, exaggerating the postures of death and trapping

17 Jones, Scenic Form in Shakespeare, p. 75.

we have already seen, and placement at the beginning of the second movement links the incident more closely to the moment when Margaret appears with Suffolk's head (IV.iv). Thematically, the well-designed climax which combines Gloucester's murder and Beaufort's death stands as a sure conclusion to the first part of Shakespeare's intentional design. Suffolk's death begins something new.

**A Second Movement**

The keynote here is vigorous action in process, resolving the tensions created by the interior images of faction, trapping, and parting—all forms of separation—by establishing a view which, though never secure, allows a clarity and strength of feeling for a unified overall event which the first movement, with its shifting impressions of personal intrigue, did not permit. It is as though the viewer were suddenly released from the necessity to examine small areas of the composition closely and allowed to step back, taking in the whole at a glance.

Following Suffolk's death at sea, Shakespeare further accentuates changed perspectives by introducing new figures—Cade and his army. The Cade material is unusually full, containing the rebellion within a single rhythm and revealing its process through the vision of a central figure—Cade himself—whose language and actions exaggerate or parody the characteristics and styles of the disorderly world of the court. As in the earlier scenes with under-
lings—the Horner-Peter and Simpcox incidents—the Cade scenes give us clarified visual and verbal statements of the underlying themes of deceit, blinded vision, justice, and dissension. Cade, and the incidents in which he figures, have a dramatic style all their own: both the prose and the events move too swiftly for us to achieve deep feeling for or identification with any one character, and impressions of continuing active speed, of extroverted sport and trapping, account for much of our experience of this minor movement of the play. Secrecy no longer veils action or language—all is in the open—resulting in a lightened tone. We are no longer restricted by enclosure: the strung-out sequence of events—taut, tense, quick—shows us the true process of rebellion in capsule form. There are brief returns of the court, but Shakespeare's focus on these confused, self-contained moments is widened, since the Cade action infringes, now, upon the actions of the court.

There is a quality of visual arrhythmia in the Cade scenes: the marching mob provides continuity, acting as a narrative frieze against which Cade's acts of violence are shown in rapid succession. The earlier deaths, including Suffolk's, arise from politic secrecy and plotting, and our view of death includes the events leading to it; here, deaths occur without warning or comment, as further and final manifestations of Cade's shows of disorder. The quickness of the killings robs them of any poignancy: when Say and Cromer are beheaded, we do not see the killings; their heads are...
brought on stage, placed on poles, and made to kiss and part at every corner, a grisly visual emblem of all the previous shows of love and duty.

The Cade action is a masterful whole; its energy threatens us and brings us relief at one and the same time. Shakespeare makes bold use of the mobility of his stage, and of a strong verse-prose contrast to synthesize the action into a lively texture. But it does not stand completely alone: Shakespeare means this quick emptying and filling of the stage to build a sense of comprehensive focus which prepares us for the final Act, where the Cade disorders and the earlier dissension are made complete and are re-formalized by York's battle at St. Albans.

In these final moves, there are now only brief echoes of the internal formalities and secrecy of the scenes at court. York's dissembling turns to forthright behavior, and we will welcome his erupting anger and ambition as he declares Henry's unworthiness to be King as we remark the others' violations of the expected shows of love and duty. The stage crackles with faction, brought, for the first time among these men, from the interior private rooms and places of power onto the open field. At last, as though repeating and clarifying the rhythms of the opening of the first movement, the rigid sidings of the battle show love and duty on trial in several perspectives—in the realm, among the nobles, in the family.  

E.M.W. Tillyard calls the battle a "physical ratification of the process" of the motives, links, and
Shakespeare directs a varied series of events into the battle itself. First, York kills Clifford in a combat unusually chivalric for this play, where Clifford gives "soul and body on the action both," a supreme achievement within the world of 2 Henry VI. Then Young Clifford's speech sounds broad dramatic issues, touching on war, death, separation, and wounding disorder, and these thoughts are visualized by the sight of Old Clifford's body, by Richard's killing of Somerset, and by the hurried flight of the King and Queen. The effect is imperfectly realized, but Shakespeare is attempting, here, a staging which will succeed in later plays—filling the stage with verbal and visual reminders of past, present, and future actions.

The play ends with a pause—the stage filled with soldiers, following an alarum and retreat. The balancing and widening effects of the final stage images articulate some effects of the play's ending, but the event itself carries the essential meaning: York has won. Briefly, the martial show recalls the battle: Richard and Salisbury praise each other's valor, Warwick and York anticipate the future. The hesitant, undeveloped ending acknowledges the fact of historical process, but there is little sense of a new and forthright patterning established from the old. Rather, the ending is ironic, reinforcing, through abbreviated aftermath, the loveless world of the play, where honor and praise are possible only after death, a view

qualified by Warwick's promise of glory: "And more such
days to us befall."

But the ending does not bring true resolution; it
is better suited as a prelude to 3 Henry VI than as a climax
to the multiple perspectives of this play. Shakespeare
focuses briefly on valorous action and on the great ones,
but the moments pass quickly, without emphasis: one of the
total impressions is of a lack of commentary on the signifi­
cance of this event. The absence of comment does not re­
fect Shakespeare's later method; but the ending, insecure
as it is, does suggest a comprehensive focus that assesses
our experience of 2 Henry VI in terms of the political con­
sequences following earlier intrigues and factions. In
itself, this is a trenchant comment on the facts, effects,
and impressions Shakespeare has brought before our mind's
eye. In 1 Henry VI, he is fascinated by the spectacle of
history, by unfolding a sequence of events before our eyes.
Here, he has directed his vision to men and their motives.
Paradoxically, the narrowed viewpoint expands his drama;
history has become his frame for evoking and communicating
the designs he sees in the behavior of men.

Northrop Frye suggests that both the "emphasis and
characteristic resolution of the history play are in terms
of continuity and the closing up both of tragic catastrophe
and (as in the case of Falstaff) of the comic festival."
Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton: Princeton University Press,
Shakespeare's directorial treatment of the events prior to the most intense struggles of the Wars of the Roses is firmly based on a dramatically pragmatic reading of the chroniclers, Hall and Holinshed. In *1 and 2 Henry VI*, he mastered the narrative shaping of enormous amounts of material in order to reveal a generalized tragedy—England's own. In *3 Henry VI*, he again transforms large areas of material to a comprehensive action which reflects and amplifies the central struggles of the Lancaster-York civil war. The chroniclers describe a lengthy, often confusing, process of battles and fluctuating fortunes in "the troubelous season of kynge Henry the vi":¹ this disintegrative action, with its multiple, conflicting centers of dramatic interest, seems to defy theatrical presentation. But Shakespeare's overall directorial conception gives this action structural integrity by dramatizing those events and impressions of character that will highlight the times when decisions might have been reversed had persons behaved differently. This

technique not only focuses on the characters and on their reactions to events, it also heightens, for the audience, the incongruity between the characters' expectations and actual occurrences.

By introducing ironic intensification into his dramatization of the Lancaster-York struggle, Shakespeare complicates the contrasting alternations of the back-and-forth method he had used in 1 Henry VI. 3 Henry VI represents a definite advance in stagecraft: here, Shakespeare capitalizes and improves upon his earlier techniques of scenic and sequential construction. To highlight even further the ironies of contrast and alternation, he draws, as before, a shaping pre-text from a specific moment in the chronicles. Clifford speaks to Margaret, offering her York's head, but it is Hall's comments that inform Shakespeare's conception:

...Madame, your warre is done, here is your kings ransom, of which present, was much joy, and great rejoysing, but many laughed then, that sore lamented after, as the quene her self, and her sonne: And many were glad then of other mens deaths, not knowing that their owne were nere at hande, as the lord Clifford, and other. But surely, mans nature is so frayle, that thinges passed by sone forgotten, and mischiefes to come, be not forsene. After this victory by y Quene and her parte obteyned, [she sent] the dukes head of Yorke, to be set upon poles, over the gate of the citie of Yorke, in despite of them, and their lignon [sic]: whose chyldren shortly revenged their fathers querell, both to the Quenes extreme perdicion, and the utter undoynge of her husband and sonne.2

Here, Shakespeare finds suggested the central irony which shapes his design: remember and revenge are controlling

2Halle, Hall's Chronicle, p. 251. The emphasis is mine.
ideas which animate the play from the start. Shakespeare keeps each before his audience constantly and consistently, working out a visual and verbal integration of both concepts within an ordered narrative framework which focuses on disorderly actions. The entire play moves from the initial disorder of York's usurpation (I.i), apparently ordered by Henry's agreement to disinherit his son, through the middle Acts, which offer a detailed catalogue of visible disorderings, to an apparent order, as Edward ascends the throne with hopes of "lasting joy." The "seeming" qualities of the ordering impulses are thrown into relief by the irony accompanying the attitudes of those who claim the crown. Richard, speaking for the Yorkists (in I.ii.29-30), sees the crown as an object "Within whose circuit is Elysium / And all that poets feign of bliss and joy." Yet the entire action of the play denies his words; and the crown is seen in a ceremonial context only at the beginning and ending. Both moments, as well as several others—most specifically York's paper crowning (I.iv), King Henry's molehill speech (II.v), his conversation with the keepers (III.i), and his murder (V.vi)—stress the emptiness of its possession by men who cannot successfully assert their claims.

Further, Shakespeare's chronicle sources imply other explicit disorders: revenge, perjury and oath-breaking, separation, kindness and justice perverted by power, and the destruction of close family ties. A sampling from Hall gives some idea of the paradoxes involved:
...their hartes were knitte and coupled in one, never forgetting, but dayly studyeng, both how to be revenged of the olde dispites and malicious attemptes, against them committed and imagened....

...amongst men of warre, faith or othe, syldome is perfourmed....

This conflict was in maner unnaturall, for in it the sonne faught against the father, the brother against the brother, the nephew against the uncle, and the tenaunt against his lord....

...for kyndnes they shew unkindnes & for great benefites receyued, with great displeasure they do recompense....

...I would desire of God, that all men would in egall balance, ponder & indifferently consider the causes, of these misfortunes and evil chaunces, the whiche beyng elevate in auctorities, doe mete and measure, Justice and injury, right and wrong, by high power, blynd auctorities, and unbridled will....

...because they had now no enemies risen, on whom they might revenge themself,...they exercised their cruelties, against their awne selves: and with their proper bloud, embrued and polluted their awne handes and membres.3

Shakespeare takes up Hall's repeated stress on paradox for the thematic skeleton of his drama, exaggerating disorder into a sometimes ritualized ceremony of the play, thus deepening the irony of the design. There are moments of saner ceremony, but they are incidental: the knightings of Prince Edward (II.ii) and of Clarence and Richard (II.vi), the proper formality of the French court (III.iii); and the praise of young Harry Richmond (IV.vi) and Edward's child (V.vii) briefly suggest the enduring nature of family and kingship. But the major allegiances are transitory; and ^Halle, Hall's Chronicle, pp. 236, 253, 256, 265, 298, 303.
Shakespeare's design reveals their instability. The play is essentially a blood history; Shakespeare sees the overall action as one perplexed or shadowed by deeds completed at definite points in the past which demand retributive action at indefinite points in the future. It is an early perspective on Hamlet's world.

Shakespeare relies heavily on three major directorial techniques in developing the ironic design of 3 Henry VI. He consciously promotes ironic contrasts as he constructs the sequence of stage images; he characterizes his persons so that they help to define the development of irony; and he controls an iterative image theme of blood by elaborate repetition in all elements of the stagecraft, particularly in the presentational imagery of the play. I should like to outline these features of the play in general terms before examining the supporting elements found in specific moments or sequences and in the language throughout.

As a primary means of reinforcing his ironic vision, Shakespeare repeatedly shows his persons unaware of events that intimately concern them. They act and speak in ignorance of what the audience and the others on stage already know. We do not see these characters in the process of finding lines of action, as Hamlet does. Rather, their actions seem predetermined; and this sense of the inevitable destiny of events contributes to the ironic conception. The effectiveness of these ironies is increased by the scenic articulation: Shakespeare shows his audience an event
and then follows that event with a scene or scenes showing an action that points the discrepancy of awarenesses between characters and spectators. York, for example, is unaware of Rutland's murder; his murderers use it to mock and torment him at his own death (I.iv). Edward and Richard, ignorant of their father's death, await the future with confidence until the news, coupled with that of Warwick's defeat, comes to spoil their success (II.i). Several brief battle scenes preface King Henry's moment on the molehill, the father and son unaware that each has killed his kin (II.v). Warwick believes Clifford dead, and Edward asks that the groaning man "be gentle us'd": both are unaware of Clifford's death beside them (II.vi). In France, Margaret imagines Henry still in Scotland and is unaware of his capture; both she and Warwick are ignorant of Edward's marriage until the news comes in letters (III.i). Throughout Act IV, the reversals of fortune come fast: Edward lacks knowledge of Warwick's changed allegiance and of his alliance with Margaret (IV.i); when Edward is uncrowned by Warwick he never suspects Clarence's move to the Lancastrian side (IV.iii). In a moment of liberty, Henry is unaware that Edward has been freed (IV.vi); later he praises his own rule just before he is captured by the Yorkists (IV.viii). In the next scene (V.i), Warwick is ignorant of Clarence's intent to desert him; and Edward is given a hero's sense of success just before this switch of allegiance. Warwick dies, lacking the knowledge that Margaret's forces are near
by (V.ii). A bit later, Edward marks the end of the battle (V.v); but the murder of Prince Edward follows in minutes, with Henry's murder after it. And finally, Edward proclaims a new reign of peace and joy in the face of Richard's hypocritical kiss (V.vii).

Shakespeare's conception of his characters magnifies the effects of these ironies. As Cairncross puts it:

...Each is marked by some distinctive feature, which is generally preserved and elaborated throughout the action and emphasized in the dialogue, and sometimes reflected in their own style. They are almost Morality types—the lustful Edward, perjured Clarence, the unscrupulously ambitious Richard, holy Henry, the revengeful Clifford, the she-wolf Margaret. Some have the simplicity of the obsessed, like Clifford with his 'Thy father killed my father'; Richard with his fixation on the crown; and Margaret in her attachment to her son. The very narrowness of their aims—revenge, ambition, pleasure—lends itself to the pervading irony. They are so many fragments in the chaos, ignorant and heedless of the general course of events as the wheel of Fortune turns and of the consequences of their own actions, the victims of the chain of revenge they have set in motion and which, though they cannot see it, will eventually overwhelm them. They play holds the pattern together, but they are unaware of anything but their own limited section of it.\(^4\)

The dramatic effectiveness of this conception depends, in large part, upon retrospection—upon remembering who killed whom and who said what under which circumstances to whom. To support and enhance this retrospection, Shakespeare makes a directorial choice in favor of a strong visual presentation of these ironies: the play has a very fast, active surface, punctuated by a heightened presentational

imagery of blood and bloody deeds, and this is supported by language that focuses on prophecy and recollection.

The image theme of blood allows Shakespeare a wide range of association, allusion and metaphor through its various meanings; but blood has its most striking theatrical expression in the presentational imagery of the play. As in Artaud's *Second Manifesto of the Theater of Cruelty*, Shakespeare's criterion for spectacle is sensory violence, made manifest through simple, obvious, universally understood gestures of war. But this violence is not gratuitous, nor is it simply an overwhelming need to project a meaning. Rather, Shakespeare gives violence a human landscape, reflecting the mental bloodiness of his characters in their deeds. The paradoxes of the play—unity and reconciliation or division; the pastoral life or civil war; order, truth and faith or disorder, perjury and faithlessness—are most forcefully and vividly raised through the presentational imagery of physical violence and bloodshed. Shakespeare patterns the physical gestures of blood so that they echo the broader rise-fall pattern of the ascending and descending blood lines of York and Lancaster. Thus the visual facts of violence are integral to the structural mechanics

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5 Susanne K. Langer uses the term "presentational imagery" in *Feeling and Form* (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1953). See also Chapter I for Maurice Charney's use of the phrase.

of the play both as points of dramatic tension and theatrical climax which block out the action and as moments that direct audience awareness to the shifting perspectives of broader thematic issues—the succession, kinship, kingship. The violence makes its own pictorial effects; and against this background, focus both on groups and on the single figure is intense and telling.

In tracing Shakespeare's dramatization of the ironies suggested by the chronicles, some scenes merit more attention than others. But each contributes something to the design, particularly in Acts I and II, where the visual presentation of ironies is most explicit.

According to his established practice in these early histories, Shakespeare conceives the opening scene as a strongly structured explication of his themes and of the characters who are to develop them. But the actual direction of the scene differs from the openings of 1 and 2 Henry VI, and this has significant bearing on the general development of the ironic design. Structurally, the scene is a paradigm of others to follow (I.iv, II.i, II.iii and II.iv, for examples): an initial focus on one or several figures who introduce and develop an action or point of view; a forming or re-forming group filling the stage through a long middle development followed by patterned exits, pointing individual concerns, and a closing overview, one or two characters speaking. The shaping anticipates that in the opening scene of King Lear, a play which also concerns division within
families and kingdoms. But here there is no formal pictorial description of court life, no state occasion to focus audience perception upon ordering events. We hear no sennet nor trumpet flourish: the first sound is an "Alarum." The fact of blood is immediately evident on the stage as Edward and Montague enter to the "bloody parliament" with blood-stained swords, and Richard throws down Somerset's head: "Speak thou for me, and tell them what I did." The scene moves from this informal, passionate beginning toward a full, complexly patterned verbal exposition of the issues of blood ties and the succession. Focus often splits between information—the facts necessary for understanding the situation—and feeling, the dramatic response to that information; this is consistent with Shakespeare's developing interest in individual responses as shaping elements in his drama. The dialogue shows a new simplicity and vigor. At first, we hear the Yorkists' victorious self-praise (lines 1-32); and this is followed by York's uneasy resolve, prompted by Warwick's vow to make him king. Once Henry and the nobles enter, the tonal variety increases: threats of revenge, accusations of treason, whispering, and expressions of unrest create an overall impression of the tensions and divisions in the kingdom. Titles, names, and name-calling in relation to titles, particularly those that involve blood ties, the succession to the crown, and revenge, are the central focus of the cross-stage wrangle (lines 50-173). Warwick's vow to "write up [York's] title with usurping
blood," backed up by a show of armed men, visibly reinforces the dramatic significance of these blood ties. Usurpation and disinheretance follow. Henry's words and actions seem effective only insofar as they are self-defeating: blood, confusion, anarchy, treason and revenge echo through the language of all participants like a leit-motif. In spite of Henry's impulses toward reconciliation, all blood ties—the succession, allegiance, family relationships—are put in question.

The scene initiates subsequent patterns of language, action, and stage feeling and movement. For example, York's ascent to the throne is his highest moment, and it is ironically paralleled by his position on the molehill at his death (I.iv); and Henry's descent, suggested here in his hesitancy and his expectations of possible reconciliation, contrasts with the abruptness and preparedness of the Yorkists. Margaret—whose tirades against Henry (lines 222-32 and lines 237-63) are the only sustained speeches in the scene—receives ironic emphasis in that she, rather than Henry, emerges as the force working against the Yorkist rise and the Lancastrian fall. Subsidiary roles in the pattern are defined almost to the point of caricature: Edward and Richard are seen as loyal sons, Warwick as king-maker, and Clifford as urgent revenger, while the other lords offer supporting voices to the quarrel. Shakespeare's one-dimensional presentation of these characters enhances the effect of later ironic reversals. Although Edward and
Richard remain loyal to their father, his death changes that loyalty first to revenge and then to self-seeking for them both; Warwick's support for the Yorkists results in the "wind-changing" that ensures his death at their hands (V.ii); and Clifford's strong, taunting insistence on revenge contrasts ironically with his corpse, first ignored and then mocked by the Yorkists (II.vi).

The central irony of the scene—that both York and Henry seem to believe that York's take-over can be bloodless—will be clearly apparent only in retrospect; but if their expectations are given performance value here, this can strengthen Shakespeare's conception of both characters and contribute to the later moments (I.iv and V.vi) when each is finally victimized. Throughout this first scene, Shakespeare focuses audience awareness on the impossibility of reconciliation by stressing its absence. The most effective gestures—York's move to the throne and refusal to descend; Warwick's army brought on stage; the verbal quarrel; Henry's weakness, prompting some Lancastrians to leave—are negative, disorganizing, and destructive. Shakespeare first reveals these actions within a context that focuses attention on significant changes in the unifying bonds of kinship, allegiance, and kingship. Although both principals seem aware of each other's position and of these bonds, the end of the scene shows Henry acknowledging disaster, with no illusions left:
Poor Queen! how love to me and to her son
Hath made her break out into terms of rage.
Revenge'd may she be on that hateful Duke,
Whose haughty spirit, winged with desire,
Will cost my crown, and like an empty eagle
Tire on the flesh of me and of my son!

3 Henry VI. I.i. 271-76

Shakespeare's earlier method would have given such prophecy
to a choral character; here, the narrowed focus on a principal character particularizes the irony of Henry's situation by showing both his foreknowledge and his inability to act.

As in many sequences in 2 Henry VI, Shakespeare carries the movement from I.i to I.ii by following several figures from the large public scene into private conversation. York's sons are shown in the midst of a verbal quarrel; and York's first speeches reveal his willingness to rest his claim to the crown until Henry's death. This intent, closely juxtaposed to Henry's prophecy of his own fall, seems to deny that prophecy; but within the next twenty-five lines, York is convinced by Richard that his oath is "vain and frivolous" and he begins to give orders for battle, concluding:

...I will be king, or die.
...what resteth more
But that I seek occasion how to rise,
And yet the King not privy to my drift,
Nor any of the house of Lancaster?

3 Henry VI. I.ii. 35, 44-47

But the words are barely spoken before a messenger enters with news of the Queen's army; it seems that as soon as a character speaks, what he says is proven untrue. Still, York rises to the occasion, his resolve for victory reinforced
by the entry of the Mortimers and by his sons. Although York seems most concerned with strategy and policy, he allows himself to be pushed to a foolhardy statement of assured success in the face of overwhelming odds—five men to twenty.

This brief scene, stressing York's faithlessness and his limited vision, prepares for the ironies of the two incidents which follow: Rutland's murder and York's own death. Shakespeare concentrates the verbal exposition carefully, highlighting the attitudes of several characters, and then shows these attitudes reversed or destroyed—usually by violent gestures—in the succeeding events.

The presentational imagery of blood, displayed in the opening scene only in brief, shocking gestures, although broadly suggested by allusions and references in the language and in other gestures, is taken up in I.iii in extraordinarily close focus: Clifford's murder of Rutland, which initiates the feud of blood revenge. "Thy father slew my father, therefore die," says Clifford, justifying his deed (as do many of the others) by reference to the past. As in I.i, the effectiveness of the moment is reinforced by verbal suggestions of blood, slaughter, and death. Rutland's killing is the single act of bloodshed which demands extra-dramatic connection to events in 2 Henry VI; and Shakespeare carefully reminds his audience, both in the opening of the play and again in this scene, of the old quarrel between York and Clifford and of Clifford's sworn revenge.
Nevertheless, the abruptness shocks, and Shakespeare capitalizes on the shock, using the sudden, unremarked manner of Rutland's death to work against sustaining both pity and horror, heightening the impression that such acts simply occur as they occur, without commentary, without significance. From this moment until the end of the play, Shakespeare keeps the physical fact of blood almost constantly before his audience. The rituals of bloodshed in *3 Henry VI* replace the court scenes of earlier plays as stage images which gather our perceptions of the action around single events, channeling and redirecting dramatic intentions and character relationships toward both the past and the future. This technique both intensifies each situation and adds an expanded time dimension to the entire action. Making ready for war, and the blood-letting which follows, are the major "festivities" of the play, and Shakespeare strengthens the resonant ironies of this conception and of the chain of random events by carefully directing sequences which show immediate movement from the words that suggest an action to the action itself (often seen as a reversal of the words prompting it) and then to its aftermath. By choosing to dramatize both the situations which breed violence and the violence itself, Shakespeare gives his audience the widest possible look at a linked sequence of action and response. Thus the multiple acts of revenge and retribution form a network which is given direction in two ways: by the major dramatic issues of the succession and the struggle for the
crown, and by the agency of single individuals. Shakespeare shows Clifford, York, Warwick, Prince Edward, Margaret, and Henry first as agents—witting or unwitting—and then as victims of the retributive nemesis, balancing our view of the York-Lancaster conflict by an alternating emphasis on revenger and revenged. In each case, Shakespeare uses the sensation produced by one act of revenge as a means to introduce, connect with, and increase the effect of the next act; and since the moments are seen as individualized rather than generalized combat, this focuses audience awareness on the ironies of the play as they are revealed for (and in) each character. These ironies are often reinforced by the careful placement of recollections, prophecies, and renewed vows toward future violence. Here, for example, Rutland prays that his death will be the height of Clifford's glory (this actually comes with his murder of York); and Clifford hurries offstage with a vow:

    Plantagenet, I come, Plantagenet!
    And this thy son's blood cleaving to my blade
    Shall rust upon my weapon, till thy blood,
    Congeal'd with this, do make me wipe off both.

3 Henry VI.I.iii.48-51

While one of the striking effects of Rutland's death is its suddenness, York's murder (I.iv) is deliberately theatricalized by rhetoric and by Margaret's gestures with the bloody napkin (Shakespeare repeats this effect in Julius Caesar) and the paper crown, and is carried out as a ritual slaughter. By carefully increasing the tempo of the action during Rutland's death, Shakespeare gives added contrast
and significance to the slowed, steadily building effect of both the exuberant rhetoric and the deliberative physical violence surrounding York's death. He avoids the melodramatic chronicle comparison to Christ and lets much rest on the formalizing and distancing effects of heavily patterned speeches which contrast directly with the kinds of events he chooses to dramatize, suggesting ordering impulses amid disorderly intent and violence. The audience anticipates the event itself: York reports the defeat of his forces in vivid detail and prophesies his own end: "The sands are number'd that makes up my life; / Here must I stay, and here my life must end." Since Rutland's death has dulled the edge of surprise for physical brutality, Shakespeare sustains audience attention by heightened verbal exchanges, extending the range and varying the tones of revengeful passion before York's inevitable death. Margaret's entrance with Clifford, Northumberland, and the young Prince and soldiers initiates the verbal battle, in which the balancing of mockery and curses seems particularly stagey. This impression is strengthened by young Edward's presence as a silent, on-stage audience and by the deliberately ironic treatment of the crown, seen here as an empty symbol, parodied and cursed.

This is the first great climactic scene in the play; and it is one of Shakespeare's bravest structural touches to kill a purposeful central character—even though the audience has been forewarned—four scenes into the action. In a sense, the opening of the play ends here; and the audience may feel returned to a new beginning. Seemingly, expectation of clear opposition between York and Lancaster has been both fulfilled and cut short. But Shakespeare carefully avoids a sense of finality at this point. The impressions of York's death do not end with the dramatic fact: each future incident of physical bloodshed recalls, in some way, this special, powerfully conceived image. It stands out from the surrounding visual and verbal texture as a reference point, ironically marking the height of fortune for the Lancastrians.

The unusual strength of this scene presents Shakespeare with a basic dramatic problem: the striking quality of the scene can easily flatten the surrounding moments; a strong climax often leaves after-impressions of weakness. Shakespeare avoids anti-climax in several ways, and each offers explicit reinforcement both to the presentational imagery and to his ironic design. York's death does not slow the play; Shakespeare sustains and varies the pervading sense of battle throughout Act II by showing marching armies or individuals engaged in combat, and these martial figures are supported by alarums and fanfares. More specifically, the significance of York's death reverberates visually,
verbally, and thematically, qualifying other moments and providing further motivation for future acts of revenge. Shakespeare achieves an immediate echo by repeating York's death through verbal reports: Edward and Richard, seen at the height of their confidence, receive the news twice, once from a messenger and once from Warwick (II.i). The moments are put to double use: Shakespeare promotes fresh interest in the living by elevating York's sons to first rank importance; and he draws a sharp contrast between them in single-line responses to the news. Edward's words hit on tragedy: "0, speak no more, for I have heard too much"; but Richard shows no comprehension of loss: "Say how he died, for I will hear it all." The repeated narration of York's death heightens its irony within a new context; and Shakespeare, in Richard's response, carefully prevents the full release of tragic emotion, so that the impetus of the continuing action is strengthened by the new resolve for revenge which also draws Warwick into the close family grouping. Three entries stress the deliberateness of this allegiance: the first messenger's news prompts Richard's vow toward revenge (line 86), Warwick's news solidifies the vow (lines 202-203), and the third messenger's news of the Queen's army (lines 206-208) allows the moment to dissolve, providing transition to the activities of the other side. Very deliberately, too, Shakespeare draws attention to Edward's trust in Warwick:
Lord Warwick, on thy shoulder will I lean;  
And when thou fall'st—as God forbid the hour!—  
Must Edward fall, which peril heaven forfend!  

3 Henry VI. II. i. 189-91

Since much of this scene focuses on report or boasting, the moments when stage tension narrows to Warwick, Richard and Edward are particularly intense, climaxing in Edward's words. Like most speeches of their kind in this play, they will be denied; Shakespeare places such declarations close to the ending of the scene for maximal effect, just before the action broadens with new re-grouping. By building the scene toward recapitulation and realignment, Shakespeare simplifies the problems of following several central characters through the complex, constantly varied ebb and flow of the changes in power and allegiance.

Now, Margaret briefly reminds us of York's death again, calling attention to York's head on the city gates: "Doth not the object cheer your heart, my Lord?" As in the previous scene, Shakespeare puts the recollection to double purpose, pointing the character contrast between King Henry and his Queen: Henry is irked, and prays for revenge to be withheld. The contrast is further developed throughout the scene: Clifford, Margaret, and Prince Edward oppose Henry's grief and moralizing; Henry is silent once the Yorkists enter with their insults and demands.

Shakespeare develops Henry's attitude and silence here in preparation for his next appearance. What Clifford calls Henry's "too much lenity / And harmful pity," demanding
that it "must be laid aside," is the only opposition to the revenge principle in the play. Shakespeare stresses Henry's unique attitude in one strong speech:

But Clifford, tell me, didst thou never hear
That things evil got had ever bad success?
And happy always was it for that son
Whose father for his hoarding went to hell?
I'll leave my son my virtuous deeds behind;
And would my father had left me no more!
For all the rest is held at such a rate
As brings a thousand-fold more care to keep
Than in possession any jot of pleasure.
Ah, cousin York, would thy best friends did know
How it doth grieve me that thy head stands here!

3 Henry VI.II.ii.45-55

No one gives him any respect or attention. Again, as he knights his son (at Margaret's request), Henry is contrasted with the others, even Prince Edward. When the Yorkists are known to be approaching, Clifford asks him to leave, but Henry refuses. He permits Margaret to answer Edward's taunts; and during the bitter, heightened accusations between Margaret and Clifford and the Yorkists, although he twice asks to be heard, he is finally silenced by Clifford's "My liege, the wound that bred this meeting here / Cannot be cur'd by words; therefore be still."

In each scene where he appears (after I.i, where, ironically, he is the first to bring up the idea of revenge), Henry speaks of unity and order, truth and faith—and he does little or nothing. Young Edward's knighting here and his later praise of Richmond (IV.vi) are his only positively straightforward gestures. He does meet capture (III.i) and death (V.vi) with resigned bravery; but these attitudes
never compensate for the weakness displayed in I.i, where he gave away the kingdom to York. By showing Henry's ineffectiveness, Shakespeare underlines the emptiness of reconciliation, suggesting its value by negation and absence; and this impression is again reinforced by Shakespeare's presentation of Henry in the later symbolic scene on the molehill (II.v).

The continuing battle, which occupies the next sequence of scenes, deepens the ironic perspective on both civil war and peace. II.iii and II.iv show the Yorkists in flight, II.v stops the action to comment upon it, and in II.vi the Lancastrians are routed. The language in this group of scenes states or reflects upon the alternatives of war—"Smile, gentle heaven, or strike, ungentle death"; "Our hap is loss, our hope but sad despair"—and these balances are echoed in the stage action. II.iii shows Warwick, Edward and George entering, exhausted and pursued; Richard follows them on stage and turns their despair toward new revenge and victory. All are self-conscious in the renewal of their vows, as Warwick notes:

Why stand we like soft-hearted women here,
Wailing our losses, whiles the foe doth rage;
And look upon, as if the tragedy
Were play'd in jest by counterfeiting actors?

They kneel, clasp hands and embrace; and the mechanical quality of these loving gestures heightens their irony in this context. Again, Edward puts himself into Warwick's hands, and Shakespeare gives his trust a further twist by
having him address God in words later used to describe Warwick—"Thou setter up and plucker down of kings."\(^8\)

Briefly, Richard meets Clifford on the field (II.iv). They exchange threats, and the paralleled quality of their language reflects the mechanistic nature of revenge. The moment introduces the next scene, where Shakespeare exposes the mechanism completely in a strong presentational image.

Shakespeare achieves a striking contrast now by showing Henry, aloof from and commenting upon the battle, contemplating a pastoral life. His comparison of the battle to the forces of nature, and the contrasting meditation on time and the shepherd's life deepen audience awareness of war's totality and its more peaceful alternative. The scene becomes more formal and choric with the entry of the father and son and with their mourning speeches, echoed by Henry. Both language and situation are filled with irony; and these extremes are further stressed because the audience realizes the ironies of the situation at the moment of their discovery by those on stage. Although Shakespeare shows aftermath rather than active bloodshed, the moment contributes to the image theme of blood, for the stage picture generalizes the particular horrors of the earlier violence. Stage time is stopped in order to permit feeling, and the irony essential to the play—that bloodshed, separation and death secure reconciliation, even though that reconciliation is

\(^8\) Compare Margaret's "Proud setter up and puller down of kings!" \(^5\) Henry VI.III.iii.157.
accompanied by death—is sharply defined. Commentators on this scene describe it as a symbolic speaking picture or as a "moral painting": such commentary is itself a comment on the way we see things, and on the limitations of our vision. We are able to recognize the visual effects of abstraction or symbolism easily while we ignore the means through which they are achieved. Shakespeare has carefully prepared his "symbolic" effect by establishing, through particularized variations, a continuous milieu of battle and bloodshed. We sense this particular image as a visual climax because it is a moment when the act of vision clarifies our perceptions, when we have elicited the universal from seeing. Shakespeare places this deliberately theatrical, extraordinarily resonant scene at a point in the total action where it can become a cross-reference, uniting the acts of remembrance and revenge: the effects of the early violence are subdued and placed in ironic perspective, and the ironies of the later deaths, occurring after the alternating power plays between Lancaster and York in Acts III and IV, are made to seem inevitable.


11 So, too, in Hamlet, does Shakespeare use deliberately theatrical means—the play within the play—to bring together and emphasize both remembrance and revenge.
This is the most static break in the otherwise active surface of the play so far; but Shakespeare allows its modulating effect only as a pause. War breaks in with the entrance of Margaret, the Prince, and Exeter; they take Henry with them and hurry from the stage, escaping vengeance.

Now we see the first sure recollective parallel to York's slaughter, the death of "bloody Clifford" (II.vi). Clifford's opening set speech restates the ironies of war, echoing the feeling established in the earlier speeches of the fathers and sons. This is a new tone for Clifford, qualified, however, by his final return to the idea of revenge: "I stabb'd your fathers' bosoms: split my breast." Edward, Richard, George and Warwick enter; Clifford, the man most sought after by the Yorkists, lies dying at their feet while they speak of their good fortune. When he is discovered, they taunt his corpse; and their cruel mockery turns death to a bloody joke, to a situation where heads are placed and replaced on the city gates at will. Again, the mechanism prevails: revenge "measure for measure must be answered"; and the chain seems complete with this stroke of irony. The moment dissolves toward a further re-grouping and consolidation of the Yorkist power; but there are also wider patterns at work, for here Shakespeare establishes the ground for developing further ironies. Warwick's mission to France, Edward's marriage, the joining of France and England, Richard's creation as Gloucester—these concerns redirect dramatic involvement away from war and physical
violence toward expectations of a new rule. Again, Edward affirms his dependence upon Warwick. In retrospect, these words carry the most immediate irony:

Even as thou wilt, sweet Warwick, let it be;  
For in thy shoulder do I build my seat,  
And never will I undertake the thing  
Wherein thy counsel and consent is wanting.

3 Henry VI. II. vi. 99-102

This point marks a clear structural break in the action: the first part of the play is characterized by one broad surge of movement and by an extraordinary density of presentation, reinforced by the strong presentational imagery of blood. Acts III and IV contain no actual bloodshed, even though there are scenes of preparation for battle. Shakespeare traces a long middle development in the course of the York-Lancaster war where blood ties in relation to the crown assume more importance than blood revenge. Overall, this movement of the play focuses on transitory allegiances; and these seem to be the direct result of the earlier mechanisms of revenge. Shakespeare gives the pattern of oaths and oath-breaking a new context: Edward's surprise marriage to Lady Grey and his broken pledge to the Princess Bona which provokes Warwick, and later, Clarence, to join with the Lancastrians. The characters demonstrate no lasting allegiance to each other, in spite of blood ties. Their only allegiance is to the power of the crown, not even

to the crown itself; and this attitude is most sharply
defined and isolated by Gloucester's soliloquy in III.ii.
During these quick reversals of kingship, the crown itself
is never seen surrounded by proper ceremonial, although
moving directly or indirectly toward it governs most
gestures. Shakespeare relies heavily on his well-developed
expository technique of alternating the action between two
sides; this structured patterning both heightens narrative
suspense and surprise and makes verbal and situational
ironies more explicit. Throughout, the threat of bloodshed
is kept alive by broad-based verbal implications and by
continuing references to revenge.

There is a practical quality about this language.
Much of it concentrates upon narrative: it is full of
questions and answers, vows and oaths, insults, accusations,
and occasionally, laments. The verbal expansions of a moment
yield to rhetoric or to momentary blazes of thought and
passion reinforcing resolve toward revenge or battle. There
is a new economy in the language, too, and this quality
reinforces the direct movements of the dramaturgy; it is
particularly effective in the cross-stage wrangles and in
the scenes that must carry direct narrative flow, especially
those in Acts III and IV which point the alternation of
fortune in the houses of York and Lancaster. Shakespeare
is also beginning to achieve the expression of individual
and idiosyncratic speech patterns; and this is most obvious
in the contrast between Henry's slowed, regular speeches and
Richard's abrupt, incisive, proverbial tones. But Shake­
speare reveals the minds of most of his characters only in
one dimension—their bloodiness. Although often incompletely
conceived as metaphor, the iterative mention of the word
"blood" builds associations which echo in the imagination.
Shakespeare's use of various contexts for the word—blood
as guilt, blood as revenge, blood lines and titles—suggest
that the threat of blood spilling is a condition of the past
and an omen for the future. Blood is on everyone's lips;
it is even used as a characterizing device: York's "usurping
blood," Henry's "lukewarm blood," the "bloody-minded Queen."  
Swords are "painted to the hilt" in blood. "My blood upon
your heads," York's death cry, is taken up by Richard as he
pursues Clifford (II.ii); Warwick swears to "let the earth
be drunken with our blood " (II.iii). Grief attempts to
stop the blood: when Margaret gives York a bloody napkin
to dry his tears, York's "tears do wash the blood away"
(I.iv); the son who has killed his father prays that his
"tears shall wipe away these bloody marks" (II.v); tears
must "stop the rising of blood-sucking sighs" (IV.iva); and
Montague's tears "would wash this cold congealed blood"
from Warwick's wounds (V.ii). After Henry's murder, Richard's
sword weeps "purple tears," (V.vi) an image which combines
blood and tears in a brief omen of Richard's world. But
these expressions of grief, whether real of seeming, and
Henry's protestations and laments offer only a temporary
consolation: Clifford's remark that wounds "cannot be
cured with words" speaks unwittingly for them all.

These suggestions of an iterative imagery through significant physical and verbal detail create a pervading atmosphere of steel, blood, death, and of grief and tears; but the effect falls short of the integration Shakespeare achieves in later work. These details have a strongly negative tone, and each reflects the inhumane and violent activities of the play-world; but the imagery here is schematic rather than completely organic: Shakespeare uses similar image themes, particularly those of blood and the disorderly changes of nature, to more sophisticated and fulfilling effect in *Macbeth* and *King Lear*. If we as readers, however, feel the lack of a continuing, completely unified imagery, performance turns this lack to dramatic advantage, for the sensual nature of Shakespeare's various image themes is strengthened in the presentational imagery. In performance, weaponry and costumes may also suggest the continuing war, and these dramatic facts will help, particularly during Acts III and IV, when there are no strong presentational images of blood, to reinforce the developing metaphor of the realm as a "slaughter-house."

Act III begins on a quiet, subdued note, echoing the pastoral atmosphere of II.v. Like that scene, III.i is primarily thematic. The situation—keepers hunting deer—turns quickly into the capture of a king; and Henry's exchanges with the keepers suggest further generalizations
of broad themes—the meaning of the crown and of kingship, the perjury and "lightness" of men. Henry's references to Margaret's sorrow, especially "The tiger will be mild whiles she doth mourn," strike a particularly ironic note. Ironic, too, is this further evidence of Henry's inward self-awareness, for he is again shown as incapable of acting on that awareness. Finally, his knowledge of Edward's proposed marriage and his partial prophecy of Margaret's and Warwick's behavior at the French court set up the reversals of the following scenes.

Edward's wooing contrasts to the distanced and aloof mood of inevitability generated by the scene that opens this movement of the play. The dialogue is unusually lively, as though the earlier physical activity of the Yorkists were now transformed to words. Richard and George, an on-stage audience for the wooing, comment upon the developing situation, stressing Edward's wantonness; their asides deepen focus on Edward and Lady Grey, alerting the audience for possible double-entendre. Shakespeare highlights Edward's weakness by showing it as ridiculous through his brothers' eyes: this initiates the break-down of brotherly respect. Although Edward's weakness has a different dimension from Henry's, it is still ironic that the new king, like Henry, makes a mistake in the matter of his marriage. There is retrospective irony, too, in Richard's self-declaring soliloquy, for it is the second sustained "ambition speech" in the play, contrasting to Henry's
meditation on the shepherd's life (II.v): Richard's cynical opportunism and his self-confessed dramatic talents suggest comparison with Henry's rather artificial self-dramatizing. Shakespeare develops this contrast even further in his treatment of the two characters. Repeatedly, he shows the discrepancy between Henry's expectations and the actual situation; and he gives to Henry the strongest thematic commentary on the paradoxes of war. Henry is consistently associated with reconciliatory impulses, and when he speaks and acts for all that is patently absent from the play, he becomes the subject of this irony. Richard, on the other hand, is the ironist rather than the subject of irony; and by heightening his role, Shakespeare emphasizes his effectiveness as an agent who brings wide dramatic issues toward a climax.

Throughout Acts I and II, Shakespeare shows Richard in the dominant role of revenger, only hinting at his later versatility. But his presence alone—simply because it is visually arresting—is a powerful repetitive device; and Shakespeare develops both his clear-sightedness and his calculating nature within contexts—revenge, the succession, kingship—that force broader meanings to the surface. His genius is that he understands men's weaknesses. But he does not sympathize with them. Rather, he is contemptuous, laughing at Edward's wooing manner, and like a schoolboy unable to have the lady himself, he cheapens Edward's lust still further with bawdry. His bitter-comic comments are
double-edged: they direct us to see the others through Richard's eyes and they reveal Richard himself. Shakespeare capitalizes on the revelation in the soliloquy charting Richard's "soul's desire"—the crown.

The marriage with Lady Grey is a turning point in the action, and Shakespeare takes full advantage of it to bring Richard out of one role and into another, disguised from all except the audience, with whom he has a special relationship. There is nothing incompatible in what we already know of Richard and in this new guise as Nestor, Ulysses, Sinon, Proteus, and Machiavel. We have seen the "hell" of his world; we have seen him murder and smile. From these moments alone with the audience, he takes new life. He asks leading questions: "Now tell me, brother Clarence, what think you / Of this new marriage with the Lady Grey?" (IV.i). His proverbs take on new significance: "Yet hasty marriage seldom proveth well" (IV.i), "And fearless minds climb soonest unto crown" (IV.vii); and he tells us later how the battle goes: "The gates made fast! Brother, I like not this" (IV.vii); "See how the surly Warwick mans the walls!" (V.i) and "Come, Warwick, take the time: kneel down, kneel down" (V.i). In all of this, Shakespeare shows us a character whose view of the action directs our awareness through his own insight into men and situations.

Richard's opportunism is echoed in the next scene, but in a different key. Shakespeare gives the familiar
gathering scene—a widely focused moment which reveals the concerns of the society, develops those concerns through exposition, and provides narrative impetus—a strict formal patterning. Margaret comes to the French court, asking for help so that Henry may regain the throne. She is unusually humble, a contrast to her "she-wolf" manner; her ignorance (and later, Warwick's) of Henry's capture makes her petition ironic. She pleads her cause with eloquence, but Lewis delays; and at this moment Warwick enters. He comes "in kindness and unfeigned love" to ask for Bona's hand; like Margaret's humility, this is a new posture. But both attitudes change abruptly as Margaret prompts a cross-stage wrangle between Warwick and Oxford which reviews the past, and then focuses on the issue of succession. Both Warwick and Margaret set claims before Lewis; and he is carefully opportunistic. He questions Warwick: "Is Edward your true king?...But is he gracious in the people's eye?" Finally, he asks that dissembling be put aside; and Warwick speaks a pretty (and ironic) piece on Edward's love:

Myself have often heard him say, and swear,
That this his love was an eternal plant,
Whereof the root was fix'd in Virtue's ground,
The leaves and fruit maintain'd with Beauty's sun,
Exempt from envy, but not from disdain,
Unless the Lady Bona quite his pain.

3 Henry VI.III.iii.123-28

From what we know of Edward, it is clear that this is more of Warwick's subtle oratory. But the marriage is agreed upon, and Margaret, helpless except for her eloquent language, is asked to stand as witness. Lewis and Warwick
are joined; yet Lewis makes it clear that he will still be kind to Margaret, reinforcing the impression that he seeks alliance with the side in power.

The entry of the post with letters, and the pause as these are read, brings a deepened focus to the stage, reinforced by Oxford's and Young Edward's comments. As in II.v, the multiple ironies here are more deeply felt because the audience sees them at the moment of discovery. Shakespeare develops the consequent reversals quickly: Lewis' indignation, Margaret's self-satisfaction, Warwick's protest and change of allegiance, and Margaret's willingness to "forgive and quite forget old faults." The ability of these persons to affirm any convenient cause exposes their self-seeking, which is glossed over with patterned protests, boasts, and pledges of unity. The "constant loyalty" offered by Warwick, assured with a marriage between Prince Edward and Warwick's oldest daughter, seals a bond unexpected by both characters and audience; and these moments dissolve to suggestions of gathering forces and to Warwick's overview, summarizing the reversals of the scene:

I came from Edward as ambassador,
But I return his sworn and mortal foe:
Matter of marriage was the charge he gave me,
But dreadful war shall answer his demand.
Had he none else to make a stale but me?
Then none but I shall turn his jest to sorrow.
I was the chief that rais'd him to the crown,  
And I'll be the chief to bring him down again:
Not that I pity Henry's misery, 
But seek revenge on Edward's mockery.

3 Henry VI. III. iii. 257-65
Warwick's speech gives the audience insight into his dissembling: his professed loyalty and the arranged marriage are motivated by revenge. The theme of mockery is integral to the scene, recalling Margaret's mockery of York (I.iv) and the Yorkists' taunting of Clifford's corpse (II.vi), and looking forward to Margaret's own mocking (V.v) and to Henry's prophetic mocking of Richard (V.vi). Princess Bona is the most innocent of the mocked victims in the play: she speaks little, and then in acquiescence or support of Lewis. Yet hers is an important position in this scene, for through her silent presence and her reactions, the speeches and reactions of the others are reflected, and she is seen to be simply a pawn in the game.

After the long, rather static scene at the French court, enlivened primarily by the punctuating ironies, pace picks up slightly. Edward asks for comments on his marriage, expecting approval, and finds his action criticized by all. When reminded of Lewis and Warwick, he reacts with characteristic self-centeredness:

> Suppose they take offence without a cause; They are but Lewis and Warwick: I am Edward, Your King and Warwick's, and must have my will. 3 Henry VI.IV.i.14-16

Shakespeare develops the discontent of Richard and George in order to highlight Edward's fatuity just before he receives Lewis' reply to his letters. Yet the news of Warwick's vow to "uncrown" him and Clarence's move to Warwick's side seem to disturb Edward only slightly; and having broken his
own vows, he asks for the others' allegiance "with some friendly vow" and assumes his victory.

As the movements of battle resume, Shakespeare's directorial emphasis on the alternations of power only partially fulfills audience expectation of decisive, large-scale activity. He directs suggestions of battle around individual responses rather than capitalizing upon the larger effects of stage-wide movement. Throughout this background action, the flourishes and marches are important elements of the stagecraft, signalling abrupt changes in tempo and feeling.

At first, Warwick welcomes Clarence and Somerset, and reveals his intent to surprise Edward (IV.ii). The event follows immediately. Briefly, the speeches of three watchmen distance audience perspective; then the stage fills with silent figures, and a challenge rings out, followed by cries and martial alarums and action. Edward's uncrowning echoes the humiliation of York's paper crowning; ironically, Warwick repeatedly calls him "Duke." Warwick's "Ay, but the case is alter'd," spoken in response to Edward's query about why he was not called "King," describes the situation in this as well as in most of the following scenes.

Now, events and reports of events proceed quickly; Shakespeare increases our sense of immediacy and emergency through brief glimpses of the gathering action. Queen Elizabeth acknowledges Edward's capture and her change of fortune and hurries to sanctuary, commenting on Warwick's
tyranny: "trust not him that once hath broken faith" (IV.iv). Eddard is freed by Richard, accompanied by Hastings and Stanley; and the Huntsman's capitulation comments on the ease with which men transfer allegiance in order to save their skins (IV.v). Next we see Henry freed from captivity, resigning his government to Warwick and Clarence to "lead a private life / And in devotion spend my latter days" (IV.vi). Henry asks for the end of dissension and blesses young Richmond; these are rather static, information-filled moments, with little of the self-conscious ceremonial sometimes associated with such declarations of love. News of Edward's escape breaks up the gathering, and a last thoughtful forward look juxtaposes new conflicts and the necessity for Richmond's escape to Brittany.

As the Yorkists gather to proclaim Edward king (IV.vii), we are given further insight into Edward's weakness, now seen as hesitancy: ironically, he seeks to recover the crown safely. By threatening to leave him, Montgomery prompts his resolve, aided by Richard. There are now two proclaimed kings of England; and Shakespeare shows each as apprehensive, needing the support of stronger men. This knowledge supports the irony of the following brief council scene between Henry and the Lancastrians, when Henry apparently feels secure in his power and his fame just before he is again captured by Edward (IV.viii).

V.i, where the opposing forces mass before battle, is a variant of the gathering court scene which includes a
cross-stage wrangle that divides the stage, clarifying the concerns on each side. Shakespeare modifies this patterning by focusing on unexpected events (as in III.iii): Warwick expects "unlook'd for friends" when he hears the drum, but Richard and Edward enter, mocking the Lancastrian right and Warwick's high position by informing him that Henry is a prisoner. Although the continuous entries of troops, all declaring for Lancaster, are challenged by Edward and Richard, Warwick still seems assured of victory by numbers alone. But Clarence quickly defects (Shakespeare draws attention to this moment through the whispered exchange between Richard and Clarence.), throws his red rose at Warwick, and swears to "be no more unconstant."

Shakespeare draws the first two Acts and the last together through shared gestic dominants—violent death, abrupt power moves toward battle or toward the crown—and by the ironies of retribution that link deed with deed, oath with oath, murder with murder. He introduces no bloodshed until he narrows the scale of battle to focus on Warwick's "glory smear'd with dust and blood" (V.ii). Edward's opening words—"So, lie thou there: die thou, and die our fear; / For Warwick was a bug that fear'd us all"—reveal only the necessity for Warwick's death; the familiar context of death by revenge is absent. Shakespeare shows Warwick unaware of who is winning; his speech on the inevitability of death echoes Henry's meditation on the molehill. Because this moment follows Clarence's changed allegiance, it seems
to be a swift reprisal. Yet Warwick asks for his brother at the end, reportedly just as Montague had asked for him. As in the molehill scene (II.v), death secures reconciliation; and again, Shakespeare permits the situation to evoke sympathy: there is little sense of serenity or praise for the dead.

Shakespeare shows Edward and Richard in triumph, anticipating the battle (V.iii); and this is directly followed by a further "historical" widening and distancing of the action to focus on Margaret's speech to her army. She, too, looks for success, and is in "valiant spirit" (V.iv). In retrospect, Oxford's prayer for Prince Edward's long life carries deep irony, for he is killed at the end of the battle.

Shakespeare does not show the battle itself, but its aftermath, deliberately climaxing the war in a miniature action that intensifies the broad issues of revenge and succession by showing these recurrent themes within the intimate perspectives of family loyalty, love, and duty. The audience might expect tension to relax, providing points of rest and resolution for the action: "Now here a period of tumultuous broils," says Edward (V.v). For some moments, there are attempts at balance, ordering and calm; but Shakespeare thwarts any expectation of ordering perspectives by showing two final deaths, ironically marking the fall of Lancaster by explicit echoes of the paired deaths of Rutland and York. The triple stabbing of Prince Edward
by Edward, Richard and George, the "bloody cannibals,"
recalls York's ritual slaughter on the molehill. Although
revenge is no longer identified as a motive for killing—it
is transformed to personal insult or to sheer annoyance—the
audience will surely sense that this moment continues the
pattern of revenge and retribution. The killing happens as
quick confusion; there is no Northumberland on stage here
to offer sympathetic comment or to act as audience surrogate.
Richard offers to kill Margaret, and then hurries out, on
his way to the Tower. In the remainder of the scene,
Shakespeare gives Margaret a posture equivalent to York's
on the molehill, varying it with a twist: she asks Clarence
to kill her, and then calls for Richard, "that devil's
butcher."

Once the Queen is led out, tension relaxes, and
Shakespeare directs attention to Edward's own concerns.
Edward's summary treatment of individual agony not only
makes a chilling comment on his character but prevents
responsive audience attention: action is continuing, directed
away from both sympathy and horror.

Shakespeare's final presentational images of blood—
the last "family" murders—are more closely observed than
the others, seen as private rather than public executions,

Shakespeare surely remembered this scene in Macbeth,
where the Macduff murders echo the action (IV.ii), and
where Macduff's later reaction (IV.iii) echoes, in tone
as well as in the specifics of language, Margaret's bitter
speeches of aftermath.
foreshadowing his treatment of politic death in Richard III. Shakespeare proportions his drama by placing King Henry's murder as a clear structural rhyme to York's slaughter; and just as in the sequence tracing Rutland's and York's murders, he again uses a changed tempo to sustain focus on the most important death, the murder of a king. Shakespeare intensifies the effect through further contrasts of opposed characterizations: Henry's bookishness and piety plays against the excitement and tension Richard brings on stage, fresh from a murder we have witnessed. Ironically, Henry—who has handed over his kingdom willingly to impulsive, ambitious men—loses his life at the hands of the most impulsive and ambitious of them all—Richard.

The end of the play shows Richard at the peak of his development, single-mindedly bent upon the crown. His last self-declaring soliloquy sets the rising Richard III before the audience:

I have no brother, I am like no brother;  
And this word 'love,' which greybeards call divine,  
Be resident in men like one another  
And not in me: I am myself alone.  

3 Henry VI.V.vi-80-84

Both Henry's dying prophecy and Richard's speech obviously anticipate Richard III; and Tillyard's view that Shakespeare, impatient with his broad chronicle creations, shows more interest in Richard as a central character than in his

14 The quarto title, The true Tragedie of Richard Duke of York, and the death of good King Henrie the Sixt..., underlines this balancing and significance.
historical themes, stresses this anticipation. Yet Shakespeare does not concentrate exclusively on Richard's personal metamorphosis: his is not a controlling role. The dramatic techniques which make him fascinating—keeping him before the audience and giving him a close relationship to that audience—develop from those Shakespeare uses in 2 Henry VI to present York as a strong character. And there are many moments in 3 Henry VI when others—Henry, York, Edward, Warwick, and Margaret—demand and receive equal or more compelling attention than Richard does. Rather than criticizing Shakespeare for letting Richard take the stage occasionally, we could as easily complain that 3 Henry VI if not more of a "Richard play"—if it were, Acts III and IV might focus on his development. Yet Shakespeare chooses to trace Edward's rise and the ironic reversals of the crown: these more objective perspectives take precedence over characterization, which remains incidental. It is a measure of Shakespeare's recognition of his wider design that he does not abandon a broad focus for the narrowed point of view that central character development imposes. Richard is there, but he is not the whole play: Shakespeare reconceives and exaggerates his character in Richard III to achieve that impression. In 3 Henry VI, Richard's development reflects and concentrates the prevailing attitudes of the play. His brutality and mockery exceed that of the

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others; his opportunism is the most self-seeking; his final rejections of love and brotherhood are the most telling ironic comment on the struggle for peace.

The final court scene, which attempts to return the look and tones of ceremonial occasion to the stage, deliberately reinforces both remembrance and the impetus toward newly revengeful action. For the first time, Edward is formally enthroned; and Shakespeare shows Richard outside the action, observing the ceremony. Richard's asides underline his difference and isolation, and Shakespeare also gives him a final touch of irony: his "loving kiss" for Edward's child, a gesture absent in kind, but not in intent, from the rest of the play. Edward's expectations of "stately triumphs, mirthful comic shows, / Such as befits the pleasure of the court" not only reflect Henry's earlier expectations, but contrast directly with the expectations of the audience at this point in the action. The stage picture bespeaks order and ease, but stage feeling reverses these perspectives, leaving the audience uneasy, questioning, anticipating further action. The possibility of renewal and purification, seen in Edward's child, exist; but the audience is fully aware that the old issues are incompletely resolved, in spite of and also because of the seemingly definitive gestures of blood and death.

In spite of the uneasiness here, this is the firmest, most fitting conclusion Shakespeare has yet given to one of his historical plays. The final questioning of the truth of
what is seen which plays beside the truth of what is said
and felt gives the previous moments of physical violence
and bloodshed their full measure of irony.  

Irony gives an audience a heightened awareness of
their own privileged position as observers; but it also
increases their involvement with the drama, for ironic
reversals are frequent everyday occurrences, not just staged
dramatics. By informing the look of this play with an ironic
vision, Shakespeare reaches for and achieves a new level
of audience response. The vision here remains broad, and
individuals' responses are keyed both to punctuate with
climax and allow for the comprehensive pattern; but this
patterning depends more than the earlier histories do upon
a calculated manipulation of audience response. History is
thus not simply a narrative vehicle, as in 1 Henry VI, nor
a means to focus on the nature and behavior of men, as in
2 Henry VI. It is also a way to mold men's responses to
the past, the present, and the future; and Shakespeare, in
Richard III, takes full advantage of this knowledge.

16 Compare the ending of King Lear, especially Edgar's
closing words:
The weight of this sad time we must obey;
Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.
The oldest hath borne most: we that are young
Shall never see so much, nor live so long.

King Lear V.iii.323-26
CHAPTER VI

KINGS' GAMES: RICHARD III

Richard III is Shakespeare's second longest single plot play, and the length is only one indication that the play is the most ambitious combination of chronicle and dramatically inventive elements that he had yet undertaken. The key to the play is exaggeration; and this principle—which does not necessarily imply theatricality, although heightened theatricality is often the result of Shakespeare's exaggerations in Richard III—is largely responsible for both the achievements and failures of the play. It is unlike anything Shakespeare has done so far, and unlike anything he does again, although Macbeth approaches it more closely than any of the other plays.¹

Just as the breadth of the chroniclers' vision had invited Shakespeare, in the Henry VI plays, to transform some sense of its scope to the stage, so does the concentrated chronicle account of the rise and fall of Richard III suggest a more selective dramatic focus. Here, Shakespeare is no longer a history painter who, in Reynolds' words,

"paints man in general"; rather, Shakespeare, in Richard III, paints the portrait of a particular man, and therefore, again in Reynolds' words, "a defective model."2 Although Shakespeare, after creating "brave John Talbot," had rarely idealized his persons, his Richard is certainly more defective than most men.

This defectiveness is first emphasized and half-theatricalized by Sir Thomas More, working with facts that had historical currency if not accuracy, and then taken up verbatim by the chroniclers, Hall and Holinshed. Shakespeare's further emphasis begins with an exaggeration of More's controlling metaphor—the world is a stage—most obviously stated in the pre-text he chooses to control and shape his play:

...these matters be kynges games, as it were staige playes, and for the most part plaied upon scaffoldes, in which poore menne be but lookers on, and they that wise be, will medle no ferther, for they that steppe up with them when they cannot play their partes, they disorder the plaie and do them selves no good.3

Here, the ironic historian reveals his double vision by distinguishing between the smooth surface of events and the


3Halle, Edward, Hall's Chronicle, containing the History of England during the reign of Henry the Fourth, and the succeeding Monarchs, to the end of the reign of Henry the Eighth; in which are particularly described the manners and customs of those periods.... ed. Sir Henry Ellis (1809; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1965), p. 374.
moral vacuum that lies beneath them. For the dramatist, practiced in the presentation of ironies, the game metaphor offers possibilities of further exaggerating Richard's immensely cunning dissimulation, already given stress by More and the chroniclers. By presenting Richard as a games-player intent upon winning his own King's Game, Shakespeare reveals dramatically the speciousness of Richard's claims to power and virtue. And the framework Shakespeare chooses builds upon the emphasis already given in the chronicles to a commanding central character whose virtuous pretensions are the subtle masquerade of a powerful politician.

In the early scenes the audience is quickly given more immediate contact with Richard than with any other of Shakespeare's creations, and from this forthright, theatricalized presentation of the hero the whole play takes its contradictory moods of danger and delight. From the start, Shakespeare locates the shaping principles of the play in Richard's intelligence, effectively permitting Richard to direct a part of his own play. Richard's directorial control begins with masterful abruptness, and his developing expertise in the following scenes overwhelms the audience into assuming an attitude of fascinated complicity with him which nothing in the later action can wholly destroy, not even the murder of the little princes. No account of the play can ignore this extraordinarily close, intense relationship between audience and hero as
it is established in a theatrical performance: Richard is clearly and obviously a star role. 4 His presence is so much a part of the play's effect that it can seem to be the whole play; and most performances as well as most criticisms of the play, by concentrating on Richard's melodramatizing dominance and on his character and motivation, overlook the other elements of Shakespeare's exaggerated design.

Although Richard III retains some of the developmental and structural virtues of Shakespeare's earlier methods of construction, most directorial techniques are reconceived and adapted through exaggerations which heighten Richard's already amplified central position. This method has two effects: the exaggerations (1) seem to derive from Richard's hyperbolic imagination, deepening the impression that he controls the play; and (2) balance Richard's extravagances with other exaggerations which may either complement or offset Richard's own.

Shakespeare's exaggerations begin with the larger structures of the play and extend into each element of the stagecraft. A five-act structure is clearly discernible (and, in contrast to the Henry VI plays, is marked out in the Folio text); but what comes across in performance is a sharpened two-part division, in which part one (Richard's

4Richard G. Moulton was the first of the critics to recognize in Richard "the full intellectual warmth of an artist's enthusiasm." Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1901), p. 103. See also, in the same source, Moulton's conception of an "enveloping nemesis action" in the plot; pp. 106-24.
King Game) occupies Acts I, II and III, and part two (Richard's Fall) Acts IV and V. Thus, although the play conforms to the two-part structure evident in the Henry VI plays, the clear Miroir rise-fall pattern emphasizes this structure.

There is further evidence of unusual handling within these two major divisions. The first three Acts lack the cinematic flow from scene to scene that gave the Henry VI plays a peculiar sweep and power, and this has a direct effect on the sequential values of the stage images. In the first Act, for example, the concentrated use of soliloquy and aside reaches its furthest development so far in Shakespeare's hands, and two of the four scenes (I.ii and I.iv) are self-sustaining, complete almost to the point where they may be lifted out of context and played as set pieces. Because Act II focuses entirely on the effects of and reactions to the events of Act I, it forms a separate rhythmic unit; and Act III builds to a deliberate climaxing and theatricalizing of Richard's gamesmanship. The pause marking Richard's change from usurpation in process to usurpation achieved is hardly felt; but once Richard is crowned, Acts IV and V recapture the rhythmic flow of the Henry VI plays, returning to Shakespeare's earlier narrative patterns of construction. But there are exaggerations here as well: Act IV parallels Act II by again concentrating focus on reactions; and only in Act V, at the very last moment, does Shakespeare direct a new, more symmetrical
focus: action against Richard and his reactions to Richmond's opposition.

The scenic forms of Richard III capitalize on theatrical conventions: Shakespeare gives fresh purpose to the use of morality figures, choral devices, Senecan elements, the play within the play, simultaneous staging, and stylized language. He supports these elements with carefully built miniature plays and portrait scenes, and with re-inventions of scenic constructions he had used in the Henry VI plays. He misses no opportunity for further exaggeration within the design: several characters other than Richard—Clarence, Margaret, Buckingham, Hastings, and Richmond—receive special kinds of emphasis; broad themes are embodied in Margaret, who appears only twice; the stage directions are unusually full; the social background is flattened and subdued; and the language reflects a new flexibility in the use of both structure and tone.

Although some of these exaggerations may not appear as such in performance, those which make the play belong to Richard on the page are even more obvious in the theater. Richard III is the only one of the early histories with a long and consistent performance record. And whether it is Colley Cibber's version or Shakespeare's play, Richard III is nearly always played for one purpose—to give some actor the chance to try out the magnified opportunities of the leading role. Shakespeare draws these opportunities generously in the first Act; and here, also, other exaggerations
of directorial techniques appear or are suggested. For these reasons, I should like to look closely at the techniques and development of this Act, focusing my analysis on Richard's games and on Shakespeare's concomitant strategy.

**Showmanship I.i.1-41**

The situation is Richard himself, and Shakespeare permits him to take the play in his own hands and to show his shaping imagination immediately. His character is first defined by his on-stage presence, and this is striking. However the actor playing Richard chooses to respond to the catalogued deformities—"crook-back prodigy," "Foul mis-shapen stigmatic," "legs of an unequal size," like an "unlicked bear-whelp" with a shrunken arm and a "grumbling voice"—Richard's presence must announce his difference. 5

Alone on the stage, Richard begins his chronicle with general observations, giving way to an incisive personal commentary that directs attention to his appearance ("deformed, unfinished"), to his thoughts ("I am determined to prove a villain"), to his qualities ("subtle, false and treacherous"), and to his strategy: "Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous / By drunken prophecies, libels and dreams." Method and man suit perfectly together: both are direct and intensified,

5These details are taken passim from 3 Henry VI. In Richard III, the epithets are even more metaphorical: Margaret, in I.iii, calls him an "elvish-marked, abortive, rooting hog," a "bottled spider," and a "poisonous bunch-backed toad," and her wording is echoed by the others.
so that all dramatic energy concentrates in this single self-dramatizing figure. Because Richard observes himself closely, so does the audience; and this first glimpse is so sharp and complete that its further use is a known element: Richard becomes the convention of the play, and the close-up focus dictates the unconventional look of the play, a method which effectively eliminates space. By narrowing and concentrating our initial vision on him and on his point of view, Richard ensures his own space whenever he appears; and whenever he speaks directly to the audience, either in soliloquy or aside, he presses us even closer. Recognize the audience and it vanishes: this exaggeration both includes the audience within the play and allows Richard's presence to substitute for the ordinary processional narrative framework. Richard leads his audience from scene to scene, deliberately arranging and controlling the action through his overwhelming impulse to show himself and to prove himself a villain. This permits further exaggerations, not the least of which is the freedom for Richard's audience to enjoy his luxuries of pure style.

The Question Game: We Speak No Treason I.i.42–62

The games are primarily language games: Richard III is an unusually talky play, and its psychological pace is carried by the bustling activity of Richard's speech. Having acknowledged the presence of an audience and secured their attention, Richard now illustrates his shaping control
by questioning first Clarence and then Hastings, each of whom is brought mechanically on stage by Richard's introductory cues. His questions (six to Clarence; three to Hastings) seek to confirm information vital to his plots and furnish proof that Richard is exactly what he says he is—a villainous dissembler. The questions and answers require close attention, for clues, comments, and changes in vocal postures come quickly. Within the next 100 lines, the tonal range widens considerably: Richard tries on at least nine different manners—questioning, probing at motivation and causes as though he were directing the other actors, commenting, planting suggestions, offering sympathy and brotherly love, making jokes, putting himself in the same position as Clarence and Hastings. He is by turns abrupt and ingratiating, full of gossip and double-entendre; and at all times his is the voice of the event, his thinking sharpened by emergency. These two conversations establish an atmosphere of insecurity and change, seemingly governed by petty concerns. Clarence and Hastings, seen here as little more than gullible reflectors of Richard's intent, increase his psychological size in the minds of the audience: by the time Richard tells precisely what he will do next, his exit leaves an empty stage filled with anticipation for his next appearance.
Shakespeare's Strategy: I.i

In this first scene, Shakespeare and Richard conspire in character-revelation, exposition, stage-management, and the creation of atmosphere, and most of this is in Richard's hands. It is as though Shakespeare had outlined the form and structure of the scene and then allowed Richard to improvise. But Richard's determination to prove a villain and his tell and show method (which should eliminate anticipation and excitement but which enhances both) imply that Richard, like Shakespeare, carefully plans what he says and does. There is nothing gradual about Richard's character development: he bursts forth; and in one way this is disappointing, for the slower revelation of character, scene by scene, is more dramatically satisfactory, affording greater opportunities for audience involvement. Richard, however, requires admiration rather than involvement; and Shakespeare carefully compensates for what became in Marlowe's hands seeing a character only "as such" by stressing Richard's improvisational dissembling and games-playing, so that the audience sees a variety of masks, ploys, and "acts." But the effect of Richard's improvising presence is tightly controlled by Shakespeare's imposed symmetry. The scene begins and ends with soliloquy: the first very deliberately rehearsed in tone and content, rich in specific images and information; the second a quick rush of statements of future intent. The intermediate exchanges divide into two unequal sections (Clarence,
Brakenbury and Richard: 78 lines; Hastings and Richard: 24 lines), indicating the relative importance of each characterization at this point in the action. Compared to the opening scenes in the Henry VI plays, the differences here are startling. Shakespeare does not rely on a boldly structured gathering scene to convey social background, political significance, character introduction, and themes through the stage action, using dialogue to reinforce and clarify the basic conflicts of his drama. What he does retain of the earlier method—symmetrical patterning and immediate contact with a great deal of necessary information—is here adapted to Richard's character and functions both as a device to reveal his nature and as a strong organizing principle that stabilizes as well as counters Richard's flexibility.

This same organizational symmetry—a set-speech soliloquy, a central conversational section, and a closing soliloquy of comment and intent—governs the next illustration of Richard's abilities. Focus now expands to admit the processions of Henry VI's guarded coffin with Lady Anne in attendance. The ordered visual spectacle makes a strong

*Most productions follow Cibber's suggestions for an elaborately ceremonial procession here. There are arguments for and against such pageantry. The absence of healing ceremonial rituals will heighten Richard's grotesqueries: Shakespeare's stage directions support this view. But on the other hand, full social and religious rituals could help to counteract Richard's effect on the kingdom; and this would be useful in a production that sought to subdue Richard's dominating role.*
contrast to Richard's solo performance, and Shakespeare exploits this contrast further in the rhythms of Anne's first speech, which strike a tone widely separate from that of Richard's last words. Anne's rhetoric of lament, retrospection, curse, and prophecy speaks for the occasion, and the effects of this speech within the stage picture dignify her position. Here is a second introductory portrait, contrasting to Richard's portrait and demanding a newly widened and distanced attention.

Woomanship: The Anne Game or the Bed Chamber-Sword-Ring Trick

I.ii.33-226

Richard now proves that he can do all that he promises. This is the first of his habitual interruptory mid-scene entrances, and at once he commands a change in the stage picture: "Stay, you that bear the corse, and set it down." His order prompts Anne's accusations of deviltry and cries for revenge. With privileged knowledge of Richard's methods and intent, the audience will watch what follows extremely closely, particularly since what Richard proposes to do seems, with this beginning, to have little chance of success. The situation is both emotionally and psychologically extravagant, and the property coffin with its silent attendants offers, throughout, an ironic and prophetic visual commentary on the action.

At first, Richard simply comments, protesting Anne's words, provoking her passion, clearly playing along
with her: in this preface to his wooing (lines 34-114) Richard speaks 28 lines to Anne's 50. Here he plays the lawyer, asking leave "but to acquit myself," forcing Anne to a "keen encounter of our wits." He then directs speech "into a slower method," and, using effrontery, flattery, and innocent avowal, turns Anne's every objection to his own advantage by meeting her rhetoric of hatred and revenge with responses of what passes, in Anne's aroused state, for love. Richard's command of the situation is reflected in the reversed proportions of the dialogue: in lines 115-225 he speaks 82 lines to Anne's 28, and the thrust of these speeches focuses Anne's interest on himself. As her attention for him grows, seen first as she spits at him (line 145), Richard compares his present weeping to his past inability to cry. At this, Anne "looks scornfully at him" (line 171). These gestures, and the proffered sword (lines 175), indicate that the two figures are close together (perhaps on either side of the coffin?), a movement resulting from Richard's manipulative speech. After Anne's refusal to kill Richard (line 183), the dialogue takes on a different, softer tone. Except for the visual reminders of extremes—Richard's appearance, the coffin—the exchange is almost tender: lines 193-224 give the audience a picture of Richard through Anne's eyes, a powerful contrast to her first epithets—"black magician," and "dreadful minister of hell." Anne's conversion is reinforced as she turns over the disposition of the coffin to Richard, so that he finally
controls both the physical and emotional ordering of the stage image.

Richard's Critique of His Performance I.ii.227-263

Richard is his own spectator as well as his own director. His self-congratulatory soliloquy expressing both his delight in himself and his contempt for Anne's behavior magnifies, for the audience, his primary visibility and his abilities as a games-player—as always, on his own terms. But his stress on theatrics and disguising helps the audience to accept these terms, for it allows them to disengage, at least temporarily, their moral sensibilities. Clearly, Richard does not recognize human relationships except insofar as he can manipulate his understanding of them; and if the world is filled with fools and scapegoats, as it must seem to him (and to the audience) to be, no one except himself is fit to applaud his genius. When Richard can no longer stand back and admire his performances, he will be on his way down. Here, with his confidence in his impersonation at its height, his manifest personal charm destroys Anne's ability to see him as he is, even though she recognizes that he is dissembling all the while. Because he parades himself before the audience, inviting reactions, we share his delight in his greatest triumph—we will probably laugh with him—and these responses commit us to what we are seeing, strengthening our impression that, for Richard, the games are amusing, diversionary, actorly
comedy. For the others in the play, however, Richard's power games either bring or deepen tragedy; and the tension between the widely separated impulses, reversed at the play's ending, accounts for one of the most comprehensive effects of the play, inviting a double vision. Richard's woomanship illustrates, in little, that double vision, for he woos Anne away from her tragic self-concentration with promises of devotion and happiness; and then, in the self-congratulatory soliloquy, destroys those promises immediately: "I'll have her; but I will not keep her long."

Richard's Words: Language and the Actor

Richard speaks 1,161 lines, a greater number than any one of Shakespeare's characters except Hamlet. Here, and for the first time, Shakespeare uses language patterns to characterize his Richard; and for this reason, there is a new concentration on language as a focusing device. Whenever Richard himself is the voice of the event, his speech reflects his bustling and his sense of opportunism: the time is now, and each instant holds the future. At times, as in the first soliloquy, his speech is studied, but his usual manner is a colloquially brilliant, witty, bitter-comic, proverbial style, yielding in soliloquy to near-lyrical self-praise. Also, he may choose either to

conform his own language patterns to those of the others
(for his own convenience, and often out-doing them, as in
I.ii with Anne or in II.i with Edward) or to transform the
more conventional, balanced qualities of the others'
rhetorical responses to his conversational smoothness. Both
methods highlight his hypocrisy, illustrate his manipulative
use of language, and show his own eloquence and the others'
dependence upon him.

Richard's characterization through language requires
that an audience be alert not only for the sense and meaning
of any single utterance but for tone changes; and these
are often startling. Richard's tones change as he moves
from showing himself as he is (direct) to dissembling; and
each dissembling game has its own characteristic tone or
tones. I have already noted his vocal variety in I.i as
he directs Clarence and Hastings; with Anne in I.ii he is
lawyer, historian, out-doer, and lover; and these are
discarded in I.iii for the manner of a wronged man, edging
his voice with complaint and accusation. Always, the change
in tone is cleverly calculated to ensure a specific response,
and Richard drives this dramatic point home by explicit
remarks in the second of his critical commentaries:

I do the wrong, and first begin to brawl.
The secret mischiefs that I set abroach
I lay unto the grievous charge of others.
Clarence, whom I, indeed, have cast in darkness,
I do beweep to many simple gulls;
Namely to Derby, Hastings, Buckingham;
And tell them 'tis the queen and her allies
That stir the king against the duke my brother.
Now, they believe it, and whithal whet me
To be revenged on Rivers, Dorset, Grey:  
But then I sigh; and, with a piece of Scripture,  
Tell them that God bids us do good for evil:  
And thus I clothe my naked villany  
With odd old ends stol'n forth of Holy Writ;  
And seem a saint, when most I play the devil.  

Richard III.I.iii.324-38

Richard's postures can also change from line to line, even within a very short speech. Here, he responds to Clarence, who has just told Richard that he is being conveyed to the Tower because his name is George:

Alack, my lord, that fault is none of yours;  
[straightforward; sympathetic]  
He should, for that, commit your godfathers:  
[sympathy mixed with wit]  
Belike his majesty hath some intent  
That you should be new-christ'ned in the Tower.  
[wit exploited; Richard's own plot for Clarence forming?]  
But what's the matter, Clarence? may I know?  
[direct, interested, purposefully seeking for information he can use]

Richard III.I.i.47-51

Shakespeare exploits the projection of conflicts and contrasts achieved through an actor's control over tone for the first time in Richard III, bringing a whole new dimension to the drama by revealing thought and channeling response in new, more subtle ways.

Richard is not the only person characterized by language patterns: Shakespeare also creates other self-conscious characters who insist upon themselves through exaggerations of one kind or another. Although Richard's particular style is unique, the rhetoric of curse and lament also calls attention to itself, balancing, in elaborate counterpoint, Richard's colloquialism and defiance of
dramatic conventions with formalized, distance speeches which embellish the set stage pictures of the others' helplessness. Shakespeare makes no attempt to weld the extremes of theatrical effect and tone: his recognition of and emphasis on their contrast both heightens and stabilizes Richard's monumental conception. Each extreme of verbal style asks for a different kind of attention, and for the greater part of the play (Acts I–IV, especially in the later laments, IV.i and IV.iv), excesses of language are the only recourse against Richard. The balanced tones create a paradox: they widen and distance focus away from Richard, but they also increase audience delight in Richard's language.

The language is filled with implied gestures; and Shakespeare exaggerates this dimension of the play by again drawing bold contrasts. "Love" and "hate" echo throughout everyone's speech, and both concepts are treated not only within the broad scope of gestures—kisses, handclasps, atonement, reconciliation; drawn swords, murder or execution, curses—but also in the smaller gestures with props and language that belong to Richard alone. In 3 Henry VI, Shakespeare had used gestures of killing and mocking to unify, by their very force and violence, his conception of a blood-history; but in Richard III, these gestures take on a new particularity. For Edward and his court, the gestures of love are true gestures, however stilted and ineffective they may appear. Their hatred is expressed weakly, in complaints against injury, such as Elizabeth's
in I.iii, in lament, and in fear, as they remind themselves of prophecies or curses or attempt escape from Richard's power. In contrast, Richard's gestures are neither ineffective nor weak. Most, however, are false: his personal pageantry often perverts gestures of hate to seeming love, and vice versa. He offers Anne a sword (I.ii) and young York a dagger (III.i), both in "love"; his ring given to Anne becomes her death warrant; and he flaunts his contempt for the citizens' weakness in their faces by using "two props of virtue" and a prayer book to convince them of his Christian love (III.vii). Both the ineffective true gestures of the court and Richard III's effective ones are finally overruled by Margaret, who speaks only of hatred in her curses (I.iii and IV.iv, and their mention passim); by the Duchess of York's "most grievous curse" for her son (IV.iv); by the vengeful ghosts (V.iii); and, finally, by Richmond's sword. This last active gesture returns Richard's violence upon himself. Compared to the horror of Richard's extravagances, the gesture seems spare and controlled. The moment is simply inevitable; and Shakespeare does not stress it theatrically, but simply allows it to happen. Throughout the play, however, the language of retrospection, curse, and lament has anticipated Richard's death: the eloquent words protesting Richard's life seem, in some sense, to be responsible for his death. If we recall these words at the moment of Richard's death, the stage image at that moment may be clarified and extended by our memory.
Now the action moves to an interior location and focus widens to include the English body politic, revealing the broader social context. The scene opens in the midst of a conversation which has two centers—the King's health and Richard Gloucester's proposed protectorate—and the tones suggest a family gathering rather than a court presentation. The stage fills gradually, producing an impression of people coming together naturally at a time of crisis. Richard's second mid-scene entry commands attention first for his physical presence in contrast to the others, and then for the tones of his speech—a monologue to no one in particular—which run against the conciliatory mood of the others. His impatient complaint, questioning and exclamation prompt a cross-stage wrangle during which Richard's cynicism counters Elizabeth's pleas against injury. For the first time, the audience sees more deeply into the society and its weaknesses. In Richard's mind, the Queen and her kindred are little more than obstacles, and Shakespeare accentuates this by showing Richard as a virtuoso performer against a background of personages who cannot compete with his dramatic talents, and by presenting, through the spoken thoughts of Richard's victims, a consistent, composite reflection and revelation of Richard. This method reverses that of the Henry VI plays, where the characters mirrored their society. With background and
social setting played down, stress falls on character rather than on event, so that the outward sequence of events seems closely directed by Richard's clarity of purpose. But there are also moments when the others maintain (or regain) a vision of themselves, and these mitigate Richard's overwhelming presence. Nevertheless, Richard is able to re-form the meeting of the Queen and her kindred into a faction, so that audience attention rests on the accusatory exchanges between Elizabeth and Richard as opposing forces.

With interest concentrated on the downstage area, Margaret's entry "behind" may pass unobserved; but her commentary on Richard's speech will force attention to her, and these moments are marked by a new and extraordinary depth of focus in the stage image. Because her position upstages the others, the audience will hear Richard and watch her figure, giving special attention to her punctuating remarks. For the first time, focus draws away from Richard; and the moments show Margaret as a strong potential rival for attention in the center of an uneasy composition.

8A.C. Hamilton senses Margaret's complete takeover here: "...within the play, the entire action becomes a play directed by her"; he sees Richard as her "chief actor." The Early Shakespeare (San Marino, Calif.: The Huntington Library, 1967), pp. 193-94. Margaret asks for (and receives) more concentrated attention than any of the other characters except Richard. In retrospect, she does control the play thematically; but in the theater, at the moment of performance, Richard's own shaping demands a greater interest. Hamilton's position thus seems an extreme one.
Her downstage advance, bringing her inside the first group action, parallels Richard's own interruptive entry, and this, as well as the tones of her first speech, forces further comparison to Richard. Their confrontation gives the scene a static center; Shakespeare exaggerates the opposition of two strong forces through contrasting Richard's comments with Margaret's rhetorical speech patterns. Margaret's curses expand in a carefully prepared space, invoking past, present, and future. At first, she focuses her imprecations on the others in turn, and the audience may watch for their reactions; but her final, most savage words explicitly reinforce Richard's nature and single out his reaction, so that once more the audience sees Richard as an agent capable of changing the design by drawing attention to himself, and this impression is emphasized as he suspends the action momentarily and reverses Margaret's curse.

The change in tone at this moment is abrupt, for Margaret's passion has reached the point where she is spitting out a string of epithets. Richard's one word—"Margaret"—is surely spoken quietly, perhaps even sotto voce, while Margaret ends her curse with Richard's name. He pretends that she has called him, and his calm, unexpected response (which Margaret remarks on) breaks her concentration momentarily, so that she is confused, broken at the height of her rage. This reversal confirms, for the audience, Richard's manipulative abilities; and if he
can seem to ignore these words, he can, at least in his own eyes, be deaf to all judgments. The concluding section of the scene widens briefly to include all present in Margaret's abuse, with Buckingham singled out for special attention; but her exit lines specify Richard's deviltry and his hatred for the others. The uneasy responses of the others following Margaret's exit will echo and extend audience sentiment; but we are drawn immediately to Richard's hypocritical point of view, and then, with Catesby's entry, to intimations of offstage crisis, so any final ordering of what Rivers unaptly calls "A virtuous and a Christian-like conclusion" is prevented.

Richard's Critique: Gulls and Naked Villany I.iii.324–338

During the long preceding scene, Richard played, for the first time, to a full on-stage audience as well as to his offstage audience. If we have momentarily included ourselves as part of the listening court or taken up their opposing point of view, Richard's summary soliloquy reclarifies our position as privileged observers by setting us aside and reminding us that he is the man to watch. As before, Richard expresses his cynicism and admires his successful methods; but we may notice (although the lines pass quickly) that, while he mentions all the others, he ignores Margaret, whom we have seen as a strong adversary.
The Portrait of Margaret

Rather than endowing Margaret with specific character traits through scene-by-scene revelation, Shakespeare concentrates on presenting her as a strongly theatricalized force coming from the past to comment upon and to influence the present. Her upstage entrance in I.iii makes this literal; and her isolation and her frequent references to herself as a spectator—"A dire induction am I witness to" (IV.iv)—echo Richard's situation. Like Richard, too, her presence has a stagey quality; and although her formal verbal manners are directly antiphonal to Richard's, she judges her fellows and exploits her own suffering just as he does. The difference between the two, in the audience mind, is one of distance: we are in Margaret's presence; but she never demands, as Richard does by taking us into his confidence, that we enjoy her present. In her way, though, she is as extravagant as Richard; she, too, can prompt the deliberate ordering of the stage image. The solemn, surreal mourning scene (IV.iv), equal in symmetrical, exaggerated patterning to the later Ghost scene (V.iii), belongs, appropriately, to Margaret. It recalls a moment from 3 Henry VI, when Shakespeare achieved a similar effect with the tableau of King Henry on the molehill surrounded

9 For a pertinent discussion of Heidegger's distinction between presence and present, see Stanley Cavell, Must We Mean What We Say? (New York: Scribners', 1969), p. 325 and footnote.
by the mourning fathers and sons. In both instances, the static stage picture, permitting the dialogue to occupy a central space, stabilizes and completes moments thematically related to the stilled, clarified perceptions arising from the tableau. Here, Margaret's extravagant lament prompts critical comments from both Elizabeth and the Duchess (themselves skilled at lamentation: see II.ii, II.iv and IV.i), and motivates the Duchess to mold anger to intent: "...let's smother / My damned son, that thy two sweet sons smothered." Incidentally, both the critique and the speech of intent are modes which echo Richard's own.

Whenever they appear, the heavily stylized laments seem outrageously exaggerated. In both II.i and IV.iv, the women are well aware of this exaggeration; they draw attention to it, aping Richard's style of outdoing:

Richard III.II.ii.38-39

Q. Marg. I called thee then poor shadow, painted queen, The presentation of but what I was; The flattering index of a direful pageant; ...A Queen in jest, only to fill the scene.  
Richard III.IV.iv.83-85, 91

Since Shakespeare knew how to create the effects of grief more naturally through a few spontaneous words and silence (See 2 Henry VI.III.ii and IV.iii for examples), the exaggerations here are purposefully artificial. The purely verbal movement of the women gives the moments distance and pause, direct antitheses to Richard's bustling presence. And Margaret, as a choric and thematic figure who enriches
audience awareness of retribution and revenge, is the strongest antithesis to Richard. Yet her prophecies and curses, which protest his life, give the established interest in Richard new scope and depth. Because Margaret's words (and the others' reactions to them) show her fiercely against everything we know of Richard, this heightens audience anticipation for further clashes between Richard and an opposing force—even though that force may be ideological.

The Clarence Game: Richard's Prelude I.iii.339-355

Richard's relaxed conversation with the hired murderers both eases attention away from the static, formal court situation toward further action, and serves as a further illustration of Richard's Protean nature, of his ability to influence others and to change his manner to suit those around him. Once before (I.i—I.ii), Shakespeare increased the sense of effective speed in Richard's actions by moving directly from Richard telling about what will happen toward showing it in progress; this interlude varies the earlier pattern. Richard, now directing two agents who enjoy his confidence, outlines the course of the following scene as he sees it:

But sirs, be sudden in the execution,  
Withal obdurate, do not hear him plead;  
For Clarence is well-spoken, and perhaps  
May move your hearts to pity, if you mark him.

Richard III.I.iii.346-349

But Richard does not anticipate Clarence's dream; and
consequently it surprises the audience with one of the few moments of unexpected vision that looks beyond the play.

The Clarence Game I.iv

Richard's absence from the stage is one of the most noticeable features of this scene; but knowledge that he planned this first act of physical violence keeps his figure firmly before the audience and adds a new dimension to his gamesmanship. What occurs on stage for the next moments—both in Clarence's references to him within the dream and in the murderers' discussion with Clarence, where all echo Richard's vocal postures—suggests that Richard has a supernatural presence, and this equates him, in part, with Margaret. But, although Richard's planning is evident from the prelude (this scene is one of his plays within the play), so is Shakespeare's. In this last of the portraiture scenes, Shakespeare structures a miniature, self-contained play: Clarence's reflective dream vision; the contrast of the murderers' coarse prose dialogue; their responsive exchange with Clarence; their withdrawal. Two significant themes—dream and conscience, and their linking together within a framework of violent death—lift the episode into the wider design of the play; but this comes clear only in

retrospect, by comparison with Richard's later dream, and with his death. Clarence's richly textured vision images forth past, present, and future brutalities, echoing and extending Margaret's curses in another key; and his guilty conscience (as well as those of the murderers) and his punishment receive equally strong expression in both language and action on the stage. The murder itself may appear as a gratuitous act if compared with the energetic mental violence of the murderers; and the second murderer's hesitation and his later repentance reinforces this impression.

Act I: Inductions Dangerous

Perhaps the most striking difference between this first Act of Richard III and those of the Henry VI plays is the anecdotal, theatricalized quality of each scene. The effect created by the first soliloquy sends the play on a course that is admittedly fantastic—as though we were witness to the violent fantasy of an exhibitionist. Shakespeare no longer shows his audience the intrigues of the whole court, but focuses only on Richard's part in them. Each of these scenes is a magnified character portrait, exploiting Richard's superbly entertaining star role by presenting, in italicized, unhurried detail, glimpses of a larger, background world. But we are not allowed to relax or to suspend our vision on this background, for Richard's successive tours de force demand riveted attention.
These four scenes are filled with visual and verbal impressions of danger and violence; and to reinforce these, Shakespeare draws sharp contrasts in both language and action. Richard's visual and verbal bustling opposes the others' rhetoric and stasis, so that the struggle is defined and exaggerated by presenting its two polar attitudes. When focus does fall away from Richard onto the others, their ineffectiveness underlines the fact that the struggle against Richard is at stalemate. Anne wavers and gives in to him; Elizabeth and her kinsmen, by stopping their protests against his accusations, yield unwittingly; and Margaret's curses and warnings, though noted, are momentarily ignored. Clarence's dream and subsequent murder climax the illustrations of Richard's violence and the society's ineffectiveness against it. Although all except Clarence are, if only subtextually, prescient of Richard's intent, when they try to "steppe up" with him, "they cannot play their partes, they disorder the plaie and do theim selves no good." These scenes show both sides of Shakespeare's theatrical game metaphor at work, reaffirming its control on the play.

**Shakespeare's Strategy: II**

Economy governs the whole dramaturgy of Act II. The predominance of tightly controlled and balanced stage groupings (especially II.i, which adapts and abbreviates the gathering scene or show of love familiar from the
Henry VI plays), an emphasis on formal rhetorical forms contrasted briefly with more lively or colloquial speech, and the introduction of moments of more informal commentary (II.iii and II.iv) clarifying and intensifying the atmosphere of danger contribute to what we sense, in comparison with Act I, as extremely cautious stagecraft. Shakespeare subdues Richard Gloucester's actorly preoccupation, and shows the effects of and reactions to Richard's well-laid plans working in this group of scenes; and he deliberately pulls close focus away from Richard in order to do so. But reminders of Richard's influence are, as in Clarence's murder, expressed both verbally and subtextually, so that Richard's presence is still felt in those scenes where he is absent. And Richard does prepare his audience, in two brief ploys, for his future games.

The Family Game: Offered Love II.i.47-141

Richard comes in, almost mechanically at cue, upon the reconciliatory show of love between King Edward and the others at court; and he contributes a further artificiality to an already stylized situation. As usual, he first adapts himself and his language to the situation, outdoing the others in his protestations of true peace and humility, pretending injury to himself when Clarence is mentioned. The turning point of the scene—"Who knows not that the gentle Duke is dead?"—reverses the situation, and this is reflected in abbreviated speeches and altered
facial expressions, which are noted in the stage-directionful language. Derby's entrance, a further interruption, sets forth a situation emphasizing Edward's failure to pardon Clarence and provides the motivation for Edward's final self-accusation. The silence of the others would seem to reveal their collective guilt, and Richard exploits this immediately by using the choral overview to draw attention to "the guilty kindred of the queen." The ending offers a bold contrast to the resolute, if over-professed tones of the reconciliation: the king's collapse and the final effects of hopelessness are, indirectly, Richard's doing. From now on, the realm will be kingless, and the situation extremely dangerous.

For the first time following one of his coups, Richard does not stop the action and turn to the audience with self-applause and revelations of further plots. Rather, he leaves us to direct ourselves in following his plots, which have become those of the play.

The Family Game: And the Compact is Firm and True in Me
(Buckingham Will Play My Game) II.ii.101-154

There has been a pause filled with lament. Now Richard's mid-scene entry again exhibits perfect timing; and his show of sympathy, followed by his flippant aside, topping his mother's blessing, marks his hypocrisy and re-establishes his bond with the audience swiftly and economically. He takes a position in the background,
allowing Buckingham (whom he has included with the "many simple gulls" in I.iii.329) to act as his agent here, pompously suggesting a course of action convenient to Richard's maneuvering. Richard remains on the stage, this time joined by Buckingham, who is clearly his creature. We have not been shown the process of Buckingham's conversion, and these first moments which demonstrate his complicity with Richard heighten our sense of activity beyond the stage picture. Buckingham is the perfect choice: his language forms a bridge of understanding between Richard's dissembling and the others' conventional expectations. Richard's praise for Buckingham's initiative and his references to himself as a "child" are Richard's expedient cover for his manipulative use of another man.

**Shakespeare's Strategy: III**

In Act III, Shakespeare permits Richard to theatricalize the quick, consistent growth of his political power with one ploy and two major games.

At first, focus widens to rest on young Prince Edward's arrival in London, but the pageantry usually accompanying such an occasion is missing, and this lack of both visual and verbal ceremony helps to establish a sense of ominousness, of things done quickly and improperly.11

Richard's welcome, suggestively ambiguous as to his plans for the Prince's future, prompts the prince's complaint—"I want more uncles here"—a perfect cue for Richard's accusations: "Those uncles which you want were dangerous." His warnings against himself follow; and until his asides at lines 79, 81, and 94, he takes his own cue, keeping to the "outward show" he himself has condemned as "the world's deceit." Thus the initial focus on Richard as a dissembler is heightened, reminding us of his malicious intent and of his abilities to deceive; and then this focus is dropped, for Buckingham takes over Richard's stage-managing role throughout this scene, announcing those who enter, abruptly converting the Cardinal to the sanctity of his motives in violating the sanctuary privilege for young York. He seems here a pattern of Richard, moulding others to his will; Richard registers his approval in the ease with which he ignores Buckingham and conforms to the occasion. He cannot resist some comment, however, and his first aside—"So wise so young, they say, do ne'er live long"—almost betrays him. His quick recovery, together with the success of his next asides, re-establish his control; but we will watch for indications of further overplaying, and this will keep the focus on Richard intense. Richard's mistake serves a definite dramatic purpose, reminding us once again of the risks he is taking, and of the precariously fine line between acting and truth.
During the conversation with young York, Richard and Buckingham reverse roles: Buckingham takes up the commentary while Richard rises to York's wit. The exchange narrows focus to Richard and his victim; here he seems hard-pressed to keep his temper, for he draws the boys' attention away from seeing his reaction to York's taunts by hastening their exit. Although there are eight characters on the stage, the construction is such that only pairs speak; this speeds the characterization of both the Prince and young York and quickly establishes the irony of their situation. Balancing this, York's mockery highlights the instability of Richard's situation.

But as the overview narrows to the conspirators, Richard dismisses "little prating York." He is again in the background, strengthening Buckingham's idea that he is in charge, intervening only to add incisive point to Buckingham's instructions to Catesby. For the first time, Richard's usurpation is made explicit (lines 163-64); and Catesby's responses reveal the difficulty of converting Hastings and Stanley to Richard's side. Narrative intensity quickens throughout this scene, and Shakespeare does not allow the scene to tail off into a single point of view, as in the Henry VI plays. Rather, he requires our strict attention for informative details—the alternatives to Hastings' refusal, Richard's promise of Hereford's lands and title to Buckingham—until the two conspirators leave the stage.
The Hastings Game

III.ii and III.iv follow the Hastings episode to a conclusion; and III.iii, III.v, and III.vi connect closely with these scenes, displaying the effects of Richard's plot. Hastings is characterized by his qualities alone: these—open­ness, credulousness, a sense of hearty well-being, of a man who makes easy friendships and who is attractive to women—contrast directly to Richard's known qualities, and thus highlight them. Hastings is much more than an exemplum or illustration: Shakespeare takes great care to exaggerate him and so to make his fall climactic. The scene-to-scene linkage here depends upon the presence or mention of Hastings for its forward rush; and this speedy demise of Hastings demonstrates Richard's efficiency at removing stubborn, though gullible, obstacles to his goal. Because many of the following effects are achieved through theatrical exaggerations, we sense that Richard himself is controlling the dramatic method.

The first of these scenes opens with the entry of a messenger: we expect Catesby rather than this objective report. The incident contrasts to Catesby's revelation of Richard's plans for the accession, in which he echoes Richard's direct, near-proverbial speech and his use of asides. Both messengers highlight Hastings' naivete and misplaced trust, qualities that the rest of the scene seeks to establish further by showing Hastings' blustery assurance
as he meets the morality figures—a pursuivant and a priest. His encounter with Buckingham affords both a specific lead-in to the next scene and also an opportunity for a conclusively ironic aside from Buckingham.

III.iii, showing Rivers, Grey and Vaughan led to death, comments ironically on Hastings' assertive self-confidence when he hears of their execution. The abbreviated spectacle speaks for itself. The speeches give only the prisoners' point of view, echoing, in little, the earlier pattern of lament and recalling Margaret's curses, which the audience now sees near the point of fulfillment. We may note the reminder that Margaret cursed Richard too; but this passes quickly.

The two preceding scenes, both necessary, both utilitarian in form and composition, give the impression of impatient, hasty construction. Although each provides opportunities for movement on the stage, their overall effect is static, and this heightens anticipation for Richard's next appearance. The artificiality of the foregoing speech and blocking contrasts with the more fluid rhythms of the following scene with its lively speech and fairly free passage to and from the stage.

The Hastings Game: By His Face...Shall You Know His Heart

III.iv

Hastings' surety is again expressed in the casualness of the opening; his expectations of the outcome of the
council play directly against what follows. He ignores Buckingham's warning that the face does not show the heart and presumes to answer for Richard, who appears on cue. Buckingham stresses the theatrical metaphor—"Had you not come upon your cue, my lord, / William Lord Hastings had pronounced your part"—which has by now become, for the audience, an inside joke. More than any other scene since Lady Anne's "conversion," these moments call up Richard's full theatrical powers. His first performance here—courteous excuses, professed love for Hastings, an ingratiating request for strawberries—is for Hastings' eyes. Next, Richard's aside with Buckingham draws focus to the two conspirators, who speak the subtext underlying the scene. Their exit is covered by Stanley's speech, returning to the occasion; and when the Bishop, entering with the strawberries, comments on Richard's absence, Hastings remarks on Richard's cheerful smoothness, heightening the tension toward Richard's re-entry, with changed countenance. There are many opportunities for business here, and Shakespeare's stage directions underline the reversal of Richard's behavior with an explicitness which closely matches the chronicle source: "He returned into the chamber...with a woonderfull soure angrie countenance, knitting the browes, frowning and fretting, and gnawing on his lips."¹² Richard's

second performance calls for his full passion, perfectly supported by gesture and tone changes. Everyone else is silent and unprotesting, an audience for Richard's consummate skill; Richard cuts Hastings' defense short and exits. His energy and the speed with which he achieves success form a strong contrast to Hastings' stunned figure. Lament and comment—both general and specific—close the scene, widening and distorting the focus on Richard's victim. This scene shows some of the most careful choreography in the play.

The Acting Lesson III.v

Richard's appearance with Buckingham "in rotten armour, marvellous ill-favoured," reinforces his disguising nature. Again, Shakespeare draws the stage direction details directly from the chronicles, and their specificity underlines the importance of what the audience is to see. The opening dialogue recalls Richard's earlier delight in and appreciation of his dramatic talents; this looks back to his performance in the preceding scene and prepares for the two following scenes. Although these moments of rehearsal pass very quickly, they heighten the impression that what follows is consciously staged. The actions in and around lines 14-21 duplicate exactly those asked for by Richard in the four opening lines, and confirmed in Buckingham's subsequent speech:
Glou. Come, cousin, canst thou quake, and change thy colour,
Murder thy breath in middle of a word,
And then again begin, and stop again,
As if thou wert distraught and mad with terror?

Buckingham. Tut, I can counterfeit the deep tragedian,
Speak and look back, and pry on every side,
Tremble and start at wagging of a straw,
Intending deep suspicion: ghastly looks
Are at my service, like enforced smiles;
And both are ready in their offices,
At any time, to grace my stratagems.

Richard III. III.v.1-11

Thus the impression is intensified by repetition, and the self-consciousness of the actors lends a sense of extravagant play-acting to this little scene, the purpose of which is to convince the Mayor of the necessity for Hastings' death. Director and pupil give one of their most conclusively rehearsed performances.

After it is over, focus narrows once more to the conspirators; Richard's long speech of instruction to Buckingham asks for close attention, its tones a contrast to the earlier rehearsal directions: that was play, this is business. We never see the scene that Richard projects here except in a report; and this both strengthens our impressions of Richard's skill as his own director and ensures that focus narrows to Richard alone. He has shared the stage with Buckingham while it suited his purposes; but now he must again establish his centrality, which is further enforced by his closing speech of intent, revealing that he has plans apart from those he shares with Buckingham.

Shakespeare maintains focus on a single figure in
the brief interlude which follows, so that audience attention is not allowed to dissipate. The scene functions in several ways: it fills a time-gap; it prepares for the attitude of the citizenry in the following scene, and it shows only a single figure speaking out in recognition of Richard's "palpable device." The impartial observations here remind the audience of how they should view the events just passed. Again, we see the principle of exaggeration at work: although focus remains close, intensity is momentarily relaxed before Richard's presence again fills the stage.

The King Game: The Maid's Part, Containing a Holy Exercise

III.vii

III.vii shows the achievement of Richard's goal—the crown. Length is still an indicator of importance (the scene is longer than any in Acts II and III); and the structure of this scene repeats and capitalizes upon the patterning used in earlier scenes. Since Richard has been planning and rehearsing for this moment all along, the repetition of the familiar pattern of conversion accounts for part of the scene's effect upon the audience. This is Richard's most stunning performance in a scene he has arranged, and it is also his most difficult, for he is not only consciously playing to a double audience, as before; he is also playing to an on-stage audience less credulous—at least at the outset—than his previous ones.

From the beginning, Richard involves us with his own point of view, although the weight of speech falls to
Buckingham's report. Richard's interest in this report, and his reactions and assessment of the audience mood, focus our interest; his questions and expressed contempt indicate that the situation presents a challenge. Momentarily, Buckingham takes over the director's role, suggesting Richard's motivations and attitudes and blocking his movements:

...intend some fear;
Be not you spoke with, but by mighty suit:
And look you get a prayer-book in your hand,
And stand between two churchmen, good my lord;
For on that ground I'll make a holy descant:
And be not easily won to our requests;
Play the maid's part, still answer nay, and take it.

Richard III.III.vii.45-51
Given the outline of the proposed spectacle beforehand, our attention is freed for Richard's mastery of his craft (Cf. I.iii.346-49).

The flurry of Catesby's repeated exits and entrances enlivens the next section of the action, building suspense as Buckingham prepares the audience for Richard's studied appearance. The Mayor and citizens, silent except for the Mayor's single deferential comment, increase the sense of apprehensive uneasiness preparatory to Richard's entry "aloft, between two Bishops." His entry is spotlighted by both the Mayor and Buckingham; and the lengthy speeches that follow, in spite of their static quality, command our close attention for both Richard and Buckingham, and divide our interest dramatically between two stage levels. With such blocking, the language can take on a seemingly natural
expansiveness; the placement of opposed figures on two levels also reinforces Buckingham's position as pleader and pre­figures Richard's goal as the highest authority in the realm. (His physical position here is the highest he holds in the play.) For the first time, Richard displays his abilities for extended rhetoric. The viewpoint, however, is not distanced, as with the others; we are drawn closer to Richard's rhetoric by the tension between what we know of his true nature and his magnificent dissembling at work on the stage. The swift ending, shared among several voices, dissipates the concentrated stage energy, leaving room for the widening effects of the next moments, or for an interval. This is the last time Richard plays to the on-stage audience with success; after this, he is locked into the play.

_shakespeare's strategy: IV_

Like Act II, this is an Act of aftermath—effects and reactions. These scenes balance those in Act II, but with this significant difference: the audience is now made aware of Richard's reactions as well as his actions, and the gathering of an opposing force against him gains emphasis as Richard tries to counteract the signs of his downfall.

_policy: "i say i would be king" IV.ii_

Attention lingers only briefly on "Richard, in pomp, crowned"; and the abbreviated ceremony reinforces the
quickened animation of Richard's presence, his isolation magnified by the lack of pageantry and by the compression of what might have been a full court scene to six speaking parts.

With the crown on his head, Richard no longer dissembles to his on-stage audience; once the games are won, playing stops. Yet Richard's "bustling" is nowhere more apparent: the activity provided by entries, exits and re-entries into the scene widens its scope, providing a sense of Richard's active control over the kingdom. But his agitated manner (Catesby remarks his anger at line 27 and his inward disturbance surfaces later in his broken reflections on murder and marriage) grows, and is punctuated by quick tone changes— from conversational, confidential persuasion with Buckingham to contempt for him; and then, asides; orders; reflection; and a whispered exchange with Tyrrel (the giving of a token may recall the ring Richard gives to Anne). Finally, he attempts three conversations at once— one with Buckingham, one with Stanley, one with himself. In particular, we will remark on Richard's apparent dismissal of Stanley's news that Dorset has fled to Richmond; but Richard notes it later (line 82), reflecting on the news in order to ignore Buckingham's requests for preference. These moments of broken communication climax the scene; Buckingham's brief overview forwards anticipation toward the future. In retrospect, the single moment of Richard's entry here represents the first and
last glimpse of a self-assured monarch; and the changes which structure this scene outline the skeleton of the final catastrophe, for already that self-assurance is seen to be breaking down.

Tyrrel's lyric description of the murder of the two princes (IV.iii) solidifies focus once again on a single figure; the situation is paralleled only once before, in Clarence's dream. Again, inward rather than outward vision expands the stage picture. Then, with a quick contrast, Shakespeare shifts our point of view as Tyrrel's emotions vanish in Richard's presence. Now alone, Richard reviews some of his past successes, one by one, and reveals his fresh intentions to become a "jolly thriving wooer"; but this direct speech lacks his earlier verbal energy and delight and seems mechanistic, further conveying the impression that Richard is somewhat dulled by kingship. Yet a moment later he reacts with blunt force and with intimations of his usual activity to Ratcliffe's news of Morton's move to Richmond and Buckingham's growing power.

Woomanship: Reprise IV.iv.199-432

From this point until his death, Richard appears associated with a martial train. If he has seemed weakened before, he will appear more so now, for this is the first time he has needed flourishes and alarums to support his self-image.

Largely because of its extreme length, the wooing scene between Richard and Queen Elizabeth assumes a wider
focus than the earlier scene with Anne; and the greater psychological improbabilities of Richard's success here make these moments difficult for both actors and audience. The audience need not know the details of this meeting in order to follow Richard's story—almost invariably, this scene is cut from modern productions. Shakespeare's elaboration here deliberately counters narrative flow; but these moments can reveal, in performance, the difference between Richard's first triumph and his failure here. Although Richard assumes his success, we are given proof of his defeat in IV.v: Queen Elizabeth never gives in. Rather, she seems to beat Richard at his own game, thus making the audience doubly aware of the waning power of Richard's language and presence and of his sister-in-law's strengthened resolve and ability to resist him. This affects the dramatic focus, and prepares for the widening impressions of Richard's insecurity which follow as he reacts to the messengers' news with confused commands and a growing lack of control.

Shakespeare's Strategy: V

The narrative thrust of the last moments of IV.iv encourages the audience to expect an immediate opposition between Richard and the forces against him, led by Richmond. But first there are several short, rather mechanically conceived scenes of "historical" focus, one of which confirms a newly distanced perspective on Richard.
Buckingham's oration before his death (V.i) reviews and reclarifies the fulfillment of earlier prophecies—Margaret's and Buckingham's own—just as the similar scene with Rivers, Grey and Vaughan (III.iii) had done. Here, too, the static quality of that earlier scene is repeated; but most significantly, this quiet, objectively self-judging figure represents the last expansion of Richard's power and influence. The moments are a critical commentary on Richard, isolating him even further from all his fellow players.

Although we have had previous hints of Shakespeare's reliance upon the formulaic modes of the Henry VI plays, the scene introducing Richmond (V.ii) confirms our impression of a steadily broadening focus. Compared to the more fully dramatized character portrayals elsewhere in the play (especially Richard's dominant one), Richmond remains little more than a convention. We never see him wrestling with a decision or facing problems: the actor playing Richmond must capitalize on the effects of presence alone. His is probably the most difficult role in the play, yet one of the most important, for a large part of the play's conclusion rests on his performance; and whether he appears weak or strong in this introductory scene will greatly influence our perceptions of the battle now forming.

In the earlier Henry VI plays, battles formed one clearly building narrative rhythm; but here in the scenes at Bosworth Field (V.iii—V.v) Shakespeare's emphasis on
the prelude to the actual battle effectively denies narrative thrust in order to explore the contrast between Richard and Richmond further. First Shakespeare directs attention to a lively exchange between Richard, Norfolk and Surrey which speaks for the occasion and allows Richard to order the stage picture with instructions to pitch the tent. The activity of these figures and the sense of immediacy arising from their short speeches contrasts to Richmond's formal, rather lengthy and conservatively ordered speeches with his nobles. Distanced reserve and his dependence upon his captains receives continuing emphasis in the later exchange with Stanley (lines 79-107), again in contrast to Richard's abrupt, disjointed and energetic questions and commands (lines 47-78). Richard's self-emphasis and his isolation intensify our attention for him; Richmond's distanced, widened expressions of concern set the two even farther apart. But it is not with language and manner alone that Shakespeare emphasizes the difference: the clearly divided stage also confirms the opposition of the two forces, and the shifts in focus from Richard to Richmond stress the simultaneity of these events. The episodes with Richmond, particularly that with Stanley and the prayer that follows, are more consistently ceremonial than Richard's; Stanley, remarking on the shortened ceremony—"...the fearful time / Cuts off the ceremonious vows of love"—underlines the contrast to Richard's improvisational speech and action.
During the Ghosts' appearance, the shifts of focus between Richard and Richmond are both ritualized and quickened; but the major effect of this episode, aside from its obviously spectacular quality, is to intensify focus on Richard by stimulating his conscience. Now he dominates the stage, describing his disordered thoughts, as his old first person narration becomes confession. He acknowledges his villany explicitly for the second time—in a different key from I.i—and this leads him to self-condemnation, despair, and to the further acknowledgment that he lacks feeling. Since Shakespeare never shows his audience the possibility of a virtuous Richard, these moments lack tragic effect. While the expression of these thoughts seeks for control over them, this comes only with the action that accompanies the orations of both Richmond and Richard to their armies. Richard hurries from the stage, and Richmond's report of his "fairest-boding dreams" and his oration distance attention away from Richard, framing the ideas of God's justice and victory over Richard.

But Richard's return breaks the deep, necessarily static focus with a direct vigorous exchange—his old questioning manner restores his "bustling." The self-tortured Richard disappears; and his oration, strongly negative in tone, is the last verbal contrast to Richmond. Then the stage erupts with quick violence: Catesby's description of Richard's situation, his desperate gamble to "stand the hazard of the die," and his final call—"A
horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!" Richard's authority and physical strength carry his last moments; there is a struggle and then defeat. His body and his crown are the end of the role. There is a brief formal return to order: Richmond's crowning is kept minimal, and these moments pass quickly, without emphasis, to Richmond's explicit statements of unity and peace, distancing our comprehension, returning us to history.

But the ending is less assured than it seems. In these moments on a stage crowded with those who have fought, silent and intent upon their new king, the audience's response will not necessarily take up Richmond's focus on the future. Rather, for those who have been spectators at these kings' games, the tensions beneath the formal on-stage poses further reveal Richard Gloucester. The most comprehensive effects of the conclusion are carried by the uneasy focus of this final stage picture: Richmond's presence and his pat, conciliatory words beside Richard's corpse, an eloquent reminder of his versatile dominance over his audiences. The moments can awaken a response that re-invokes Richard's presence, and this is not limited by Richmond's conclusion. The audience may be told how they are to see Richard now---"the bloody dog is dead"---but much that has gone before denies agreement with this asked-for response.

What results from the theatricalities and exaggerations of Richard III? It seems to me that they offer, by example,
some very specific critical commentary on the directorial
techniques of Shakespeare's predecessors and contemporaries,
especially Marlowe, and on his own earlier methods as well.

In Richard III, Shakespeare puts the most
theatricalizing conventions of what he might call "the old
drama"—a morality play, stylized and simultaneous staging,
Senecan Ghosts and revenge, heavily rhetorical language
patterns—into a structure that makes them part of a new
convention, his own—unique to this play. He demonstrates
his ability to use these conventions as techniques only,
not as the structural mechanics of the whole play. By doing
this, he not only pays tribute to their usefulness but
qualifies their effectiveness as controls over an entire
play. Each of the old conventions is used to distort
Shakespeare's subject—Richard—even further; and this
distortion makes an explicit comment on Marlowe's creation—the
outrageous central character who exhibits himself in a
variety of episodes. Like Tamburlaine and Faustus, Richard
is an overreacher, but Richard is not simply a magnificent
puppet, as they are. Although his centrality approximates
Marlovian proportions, Shakespeare presents Richard's
overreaching as a far richer hyperbole: that of an entertainer-
actor-playwright who shapes a variety of episodes for his
own delight. Here, Shakespeare surpasses Marlowe at his
own game; but here, too, Shakespeare finds the limits of
the self-dramatizing central character and of narrow, close-
up focus. Acknowledging these limits helps him to discover
new forms in which focus shifts easily between action and reaction in patterns more inconsistent and less apparent than those of a game or play. Approaching playmaking through the metaphor of play and players is not, in the end, completely satisfactory. There are always hints of characters' self-conscious theatricalizing play in Shakespeare's work, but they are never so exaggerated as they are in Richard III. 13

The experimentation, though, does lead Shakespeare to reject or modify some earlier directorial techniques. His general trend moves away from the strict pattern (except where that is a useful formalism) and the exterior narrative emphasis and toward structures that commingle action with reaction, carrying the thrust of the drama through narrative movement which emphasizes interior thought and feeling. In this trend, Shakespeare as a director is like Richard as a director. Because of Shakespeare's emphasis on Richard's manipulative abilities, there is a strong sense throughout Richard III that Richard is evaluating, interrupting, and modifying what might have been an otherwise utilitarian (though always carefully constructed) scene, enlivening it by his own presence and directions. What this implies is that Shakespeare exaggerates, in Richard's person, the necessity

for a play to remain, ultimately, in the hands of the actors. And while this is something Shakespeare realized from the beginning in many of his directorial techniques, Richard III does seem to comment on his rediscovery of its significance.

There is one further critique implied by Shakespeare's exaggerations of Richard's person in Richard III, and it is a telling commentary on kingship, on the idea of play, and on men in general: though the king may be a man who becomes a hypocritical actor in order to play the king, the role of king itself has the power both to destroy the hypocrite and to reveal his humanity beneath the crown.
The Wars of the Roses, John Barton and Peter Hall's trilogy of plays adapted from the three parts of Shakespeare's Henry VI and Richard III for the Royal Shakespeare Company, is one of the most important theatrical achievements of the last decade. First performed in the summer of 1963 at Stratford, the immensely successful adaptation was repeated the following year, beside new productions of Richard II, 1 and 2 Henry IV and Henry V, for Shakespeare's 400th anniversary. A later television version of The Wars, filmed by the BBC at Stratford, reached even wider audiences throughout Britain, Canada and the United States.

For Barton and Hall, collaboration on a definitive production of the Henry VI plays grew from a long-term interest. Both saw the plays as undervalued, although not viable as they stood; and since Barton viewed the Folio texts as Shakespeare's adaptation and partial revision of earlier texts in order to make a cycle completed by Richard III, this thinking formed the groundwork for a

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1 This material has appeared, under this title, in Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft West Jahrbuch, 1972, pp. 170-84.
further revision including all four plays. Richard III needed little rehandling, but the three parts of Henry VI had to be reshaped into two self-sufficient plays, called Henry VI and Edward IV, so that the cycle might be played on a single day. More than 12,350 lines were reduced to 7,450 in the final playing version. Of these, 6,006 lines are from the original texts, and 1,444 lines are "first Folio Barton."²

Designed in decorated steel surfaces, the production avoided the obvious theatricality of royal pageantry and emphasized instead individual action and moments of savage violence. For John Russell Brown, this exaggeration seemed indulgent. The plays, he felt, became a "relentless horror-comic" in which oversimplified, often comic characterization and a vocal style which sacrificed affectiveness to effectiveness "obscured deeply observed and imaginative elements of Shakespeare's art."³ Dissatisfied with what other critics saw as innovative approaches to the roles of Richard III and Henry VI by Ian Holm and David Warner, Brown joined them in praising Dame Peggy Ashcroft for her virtuoso performance as Queen Margaret.

²Information about the history and conception of the production is taken from John Barton and Peter Hall, The Wars of the Roses (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1970). Page numbers in later scene references are also from this volume.

Overall, the critics applauded. Bernard Levin speaks of the production as "one of the mightiest stage projects of our time";\(^4\) and the Tribune's Mervyn Jones concurs: "We are given a true understanding of history as Shakespeare saw it. Little imagination is needed to apply this vision to all history anywhere."\(^5\) Even those who commented that the Barton-Hall interpretation, derived from Jan Kott's view of the histories as a staircase of power, resulted in "six and a half hours of unrelenting gangsterdom," praised the atmosphere and sweep of the production, its "refusal to duck away from the worst of the horror."\(^6\) Harold Hobson, writing in The Sunday Times, states: "I doubt if anything as valuable has ever been done for Shakespeare in the whole previous history of the world's stage."\(^7\)

The text of the adaptation, published in late 1970 by the BBC as The Wars of the Roses, includes a scholarly


\(^7\) Harold Hobson in The Sunday Times, reprinted in the Royal Shakespeare Company program for Richard III.
apparatus which clearly indicates cuts, rearrangements, new verse and changes in stage directions. Straightforward accounts by both Mr. Barton and Mr. Hall tell of what led them to "perpetuate the ultimate literary heresy"—not only to adapt, but rewrite and make additions to Shakespeare. John Bury's brief description of his set, photographs of the production, an essay by Michael Bakewell on the television production, and a cast list for that version complete the book's contents. Seldom do we have so complete a record of play-doctoring for a twentieth century drama, let alone such alterations of a play which is part of a semi-sacred literary canon.

Any adaptation has a rationale, and Hall explains his own case in the introduction to The Wars, with comments on Shakespeare's view of history and on the theatrical interpretation of broad themes of power politics. Much of what Hall says reads like clichés: power corrupts, blood will have blood, life as a principle goes on; yet he goes beyond the obvious by trying to reveal, in theatrical terms, the meanings behind these clichés. Like Hall, Barton does not defend the adaptation; he approaches the drastic rehandling of the texts as a theatrical rather than an artistic or literary endeavour, and the changes which he supports are informed by a working knowledge of both traditional scholarship and the theatre. Throughout, Barton's tone is thoughtful and self-critical; he distinguishes

8Barton and Hall, The Wars, p. vii.
interpretive from adaptive reworking, and points to the
difficulty in finally separating the two methods as critical
approaches to any Shakespearean production.\(^9\)

Because of these introductory comments and the
clearly presented text, the book's importance as an his­
torical record of a specific Shakespearean production is
obvious. Its unique value, however, is that it offers
proof that the shared attitudes of Barton, the scholar, and
Hall, the theatrical director, brought about a working
adaptation which not only reveals some of the qualities of
Shakespeare's early dramatic style, but suggests that these
early plays contain more skillful stagecraft than some have
supposed.

Initially, an interest in political and social
images, both Renaissance and modern, lay behind the
Barton-Hall adaptation. They felt that the plays, if per­
formed as a tetralogy, would reveal "an intricate pattern
of retributions" culminating in **Richard III**, which would
then emerge as a different, richer play, with Richard him­
self not a clever Machiavel but "a judgment on the country
he rules."\(^10\) With this in mind, Hall's deepening under­
standing of Shakespeare's philosophy of natural order as
a "workable human pragmatism," and his interest in modern
and Shakespearean sanctions—justifications like "I shall


\(^{10}\)Barton and Hall, *The Wars*, pp. xii and xvi.
do my duty, if the country needs me" and "For God and St. George" became thematic controls over the material.  

Broad restructuring attempted to eliminate the artificial episodic quality of the Henry VI plays by focusing the narrative development of both revised plays on a central action. In Barton's Henry VI, this action is Henry's relationship with Gloucester and their failure to help one another. Gloucester becomes the principal character of the play, forcing Henry to his destiny as king by setting up a machinery of government which, because of Henry's weakness, is finally used against him. Thus the central irony of Shakespeare's first two plays, the fact that Henry's Christian goodness leads to evil, is established.  

Edward IV seems a more subtle play, with a different texture; the whole axis of the York-Warwick conspiracy is exposed, and the play moves toward the close examination of character in Richard III. Even the public council and battle scenes in Edward IV have a more private tone than their parallels in Henry VI, where stage groupings are blocked with similar, stylized patterns of movement.  

11 Barton and Hall, The Wars, pp. x-xi.  
12 Barton and Hall, The Wars, pp. xiii and xvii.  
13 These conclusions are based on the promptbooks for the production, obtained on microfilm from Stratford through the Library of the University of New Hampshire.
on smaller, more intimate groups suggests that Barton and Hall have prepared for a narrowing look at one individual by shaping Edward IV toward the character analysis of Richard III: all the soliloquies, for instance, are retained and given important stage placement.  

The firmer overall structure of the revised plays outlined above makes them seem modern, but this is a reflection of condensation and of production emphasis rather than of a programmatic rearrangement of plot details. The Brechtian (though not Marxist) appearance of the production—particularly in the focus on action for its own sake, but also in the place given to a Mother Courage-like "cart of war" in the French and English battle scenes of Henry VI—added to the modern feeling of the adaptation. Yet to call the plays Brechtian is a misnomer, for the unemotional, neutral playing style associated with Brecht was offset by sensual and exaggerated visual effects.  

Peter Hall, in an interview with Charles Marowitz in 1966, expressed doubt about including Richard III in the Cycle. Because the narrow concentration on a single character represents a different attitude toward playwriting than the broadly conceived Henry VI plays, the play does have a different focus: England and history become only a background for Richard's personal intrigues. "The Director and the Permanent Company," Theatre at Work, Charles Marowitz and Simon Trussler, eds. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), pp. 148-59. Since production stressed the moments equating Richard with the villains in the preceding plays, much of his detailed complexity was lost; but any neglect of Richard's psychological subtleties seemed balanced by the strengthened portrait of Queen Margaret, who does not appear as a "left over" from an earlier action, but as the embodiment of the Lancastrian curse, haunting Richard's tragedy.
reminiscent of Elizabethan theatre at its bloodiest. The brutal depiction of violence, cruelty and pain, suggestive of the current experimentation with Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty, does, however, present a more truthful representation of war for a post World War II audience than the artificial pageantry of Shakespeare's own world of personal glory and clear winning. As in Genet's theatre, there are no characters, only situations; and the situations, here, are always the same ones—council, battle, treachery, violence and death. The name of the man who is killed ceases to matter; only the number and variation of the postures of death are significant. Visually, the first stage picture in Barton and Hall's Henry VI shows Henry V's body, lying in state, and this picture of death continues as a representative image throughout the plays. In Henry VI, death is ceremonial and staged, except for Suffolk's killing; but in Edward IV, there is an obvious show of blood-letting: ten killings occur on stage. These dead bodies gradually enforce a central image of separation—between individuals and kingdoms, and between God and man. Then, with an abrupt shift in the pattern, Richard III focuses on the deathsman himself, not the dying. Twenty years after a major war, as part of a Shakespeare celebration, it would seem that such a series of theatrical events was didactically conceived and celebrated; as though Barton and Hall were saying, "This is what we now see, and what Shakespeare knew even then, about war, about power, and about the men who play both games."
In general, Barton and Hall, like Shakespeare, have focused on the most striking actions in the history, and these are isolated for effect by textual alterations and production details. The plot emphasis stresses the main action as a series of encounters between nobles; these events are strengthened and given narrative continuity by a sharpened text, through which history, rather than a single individual, emerges as the major protagonist. Because the focus is on active narrative confrontation rather than on developmental, indulgent characterization, long speeches become significant moments which stand out, much like soliloquies, from the rest of the play. Thus the progress of some characters, like Warwick and Suffolk, and particularly of their characteristic actions, is writ large. Structurally, this technique approximates Shakespeare's later style; Barton seems to be hearing the large structural rhythms of the later plays and translating these early pieces to the more mature mode.

Examined in detail, how do the adapted and restructured plays reveal mature Shakespearean theatrical values? In the broad process of revision, both collaborators felt that clarification would eliminate the diffuse unevenness of the Henry VI plays and link them to Richard III. More specifically, Barton and Hall's introductions itemize their deepening involvement with these particular textual alterations. Some specific means may be quickly summarized. Connections between cut and uncut material are smoothed over
by adding kinship epithets, conjunctions, and adverbs of time and place, and by changing pronouns and possessive adjectives to make all references more specific and more easily understood by an audience not necessarily familiar with history or with the complexly interwoven relationships of the nobility. Other links, such as tense changes which focus both language and action in the present; lines which point to comings and goings, and to future meetings; and transitional introductions and "wrap-up" lines clarify the general movement of the plays for their audience. To provide general coherence, the political and economic heritage left by Henry V was given new emphasis, so that the French scenes in Henry VI might relate more firmly to the Lancastrian curse which underlies the plays. The York-Warwick plot was carefully established as preparatory to the Wars, and young Elizabeth's importance in Richard III was underlined, since her marriage defined the reconciliation between York and Lancaster, bringing the Wars of the Roses to an end.15

Aside from increased clarity and coherence, even a surface comparison of texts reveals that Barton's adaptation reflects a playing style which emphasizes the direct confrontation, not only through visual effects of physical stage business, but also through an increased overall pace. Excess, either in the artificiality of the rhetoric or the number of scenes, is omitted whenever it

impedes the on-going mechanism of history as an active process. Several specific techniques are used: a scene is cut if its length is not playable, or if the focus of a scene is split by attempting to convey too much information. The confusion of many battles is telescoped into several scenes which represent the idea of continuing battle; and private battles are made more direct by the elimination of asides, of set speeches, and of language which debates an action in heavily rhetorical verse. In the Temple Garden scene, for example (1 Henry VI.II.iv; 16 Scene 3, Barton and Hall, pp. 8-10), cuts produce two or three line speeches which emphasize the strict division between York and Lancaster and eliminate Shakespeare's genealogical details and decorative phrasing. The ritualized self-conscious tones of men aware that they are speaking history echo beside the impatient anger rising from the staccato rhythms of brief speeches. Originally, the scene peters out; focus on the quarrel is broken after a build toward Warwick's long mid-point speech; and the nobles exchange courtesies and exit after the passion and poetry are over. As handled by Barton, these individual exchanges motivate a general exit, leaving Warwick and Plantagenet alone on stage, where Warwick's first clear "king-making" speech gains added weight as both a summary of the preceding action and as a prophecy of coming events.

16 All references to Shakespeare's plays are from The Complete Works of Shakespeare, Hardin Craig, ed. (Glenview: Scott, Foresman, 1951).
But this kind of reshaping is the exception, not the rule; the shape of most scenes is kept intact. Scenes essentially like in structure, action and stage picture, such as councils and battles, are combined, and, through cuts, most lesser matters give way to the larger, more significant moment. When the order of events within a scene is changed, Barton's focus often justifies and strengthens thematic concerns, and reworking moves toward a climactic moment of either poetic or frankly theatrical effect which is typical of the adaptation as a whole.

Scene 24, for example (pp. 75-76), incorporates material from 2 Henry VI. IV. i, Suffolk's death at sea. The Captain's original forty-four line speech, clearly a vehicle for the review of history, is cut and split among three citizens, giving the lines different tones of voice as well as widening the focus of the scene by including more characters with speaking parts. The result, a series of swift accusations, ends with Suffolk's death, not announced, but seen. And there is no delay until Suffolk's head is brought on stage, for the Cade material, which, in the original, came between Suffolk's killing and Margaret's appearance with his head, is carried over to the next play. Barton then shifts quickly to the final scene of his Henry VI, Winchester's death. Henry is in attendance, and added material underlines his weakness at this moment. Following Winchester's death, Margaret now makes an entrance cradling Suffolk's head. This "barbarous and bloody
spectacle" is no longer lost at the beginning of a court scene, sharing the stage with the news of Cade's invasion of London. Transposed, the event counts, theatrically; and the two deaths, seen together, produce a double focus which anticipates the structuring of Edward IV around two central facts: Margaret's acts of war, partially motivated by this moment, and Henry's withdrawal from war, decisions, and kingship.

If the structure of the adaptation resembles Shakespeare's mature style in its clarity and in its broad rhythms of pace and climax, the adapted verse deliberately does not. Hall, speaking of Barton's skill at writing early Shakespearean verse, quotes a line created for Winchester's death scene:

A man's a dog, and dogs do crave a master...

The passage, included by the publicity department in a proof copy of the program as a fine piece of early Shakespearean verse, was quickly removed. Shakespeare scholars, Barton and Hall felt, needed no additional purple passages for explication, and in the final rewrites, Barton attempted to present factual rather than evocative material based, whenever possible, on the chronicles, Shakespeare's own source. As Barton puts it, "We did not attempt to ape Shakespeare's style, but to fill out what we took to be his thematic thinking."17

17 Barton and Hall, The Wars, pp. xi and xxv.
Obviously, however, both cutting and revision are reflected in the overall structure and quantity of the verse. As excess is removed, there is a consequent loss of certain passages within a speech where the language moves from a statement about the real world in which a character finds himself to an analogy within his consciousness. Indeed, Shakespeare's early verse lends itself easily to such cutting, and often benefits by it. See, for example, Lucy's speech in 1 Henry VI.IV.vii, 77-86:

Is Talbot slain, the Frenchman's only scourge,
Your kingdom's terror and black Nemesis?
0, were mine eye-balls into bullets turn'd,
That I in rage might shoot them at your faces!
0, that I could but call these dead to life!
It were enough to fright the realm of France:
Were but his picture left amongst you here,
It would amaze the proudest of you all.
Give me their bodies, that I may bear them hence
And give them burial as beseems their worth.

Here, there is a directly linear separation between the interior and exterior perspectives of the character: the verse is digressive, and divides easily into direct and indirect statement. Barton's revision, Scene 12, Henry VI (p. 32), the speech now given to Exeter, removes both the baroque metaphor and four lines of repetitive and anti-climactic comment:

Is Talbot slain, the Frenchman's only scourge,
Your kingdom's terror and black Nemesis?
0, that I could but call these dead to life!
It were enough to fright the realm of France.
Give me their bodies, that I may bear them hence
And give them burial as beseems their worth.

The omissions bring a more compact quality to the verse, although it still lacks the tight control of physical-
metaphysical balance which Shakespeare later perfects.

But the revision does not attempt to simulate mature Shakespearean verse; rather, alterations produce a plain expository style in which nouns and verbs supply vigor to the line. Because qualifying phrases are eliminated or cut to a minimum, the adapted verse focuses directly on people, things, and actions, and seems well-suited to a concern with history as a series of direct encounters.

This same focus and texture is reflected in Barton's new verse. And even though the abrupt "cut style" may not reproduce the exact quality of the original text, the bases for Barton's language practices seem to follow Shakespeare's own. More specifically, the introduced vocabulary does not impose any new concerns on the text, nor does Barton substitute modern equivalents for Early Modern English words. Generally, except for those discussed below, Barton uses words which appear in the vocabulary of one of the three parts of Henry VI. Fewer than twenty words used by Barton are found only in Richard III, though there is nothing to suggest that he selected these words to stress discernible patterns of theme, structure, language, or imagery peculiar to Richard III.

Of some 1,000 different form words in the newly written verse, sixty-three roots do not occur in the vocabularies of either the Henry VI plays or Richard III, though twenty-four appear in Shakespeare's vocabulary before 1595, and twenty-two find regular usage in the later
plays. Only seventeen roots never occur in Shakespeare's vocabulary. Of these, four words found current usage in English vocabulary before 1595, according to The Oxford English Dictionary: beleaguer'd, countercheck, hoes and hooks (other than fishing hooks); and most of the remaining words were in use by 1616, with the following exceptions: complicit (1656), crucifix (1660), grandad (1819), reassert (1665), sanction (v. and n., 1728), savag'd (1880) and stomach (v. 1677). Sanction is the only word which reflects the Barton-Hall emphasis on the hypocrisy of political rhetoric; and even so, it labels values which are present, if not explicitly defined by this word, in Shakespeare's text. See, for instance, Suffolk's use of "authority" as a sanction for urging York to Ireland in King Henry's name, 2 Henry VI.III.i.316-17: "Why, our authority is his consent, / And what we do establish he confirms."

Fifty-five words appear in Barton's vocabulary which do occur in Shakespeare's though not in the same form. There are several categories, all of which reflect types of word-formation used by Shakespeare in these plays: variant verbal forms prompted by rhythmic demand: debas'd, lacketh, devised; verbs formed by prefixing to "Shakespearean" roots: disaffected, predetermin'd, regain, uproot; variant adjectival and adverbial forms: ashen, furiously, wolfish, insufficient; and adjectives formed by prefixing: ungoodly, unopen. One noun, re-grafture, and one verb, generall'd,
occur through verbal and nominal transformations. Of a wide variety of new compound forms, such as all-potent, giddy-high, hard-won, ill-starr'd, still-lamented and well-attested, both elements are present in the vocabulary of either the three Henry VI plays or Richard III. Except for the verbal and most adjectival variants, all new forms reflect a deliberate specificity, a tendency toward the most concrete expression of thought in the fewest possible words.18

Though words added by Barton may not be consistent with a particular character's original vocabulary, the additions never represent concerns which alter the meaning of a speech. Characters may be given a stronger structural dramatic position, but this stress results from cuts and from replaced speeches rather than from a new or enriched vocabulary. Even in the original, no distinctively personalized vocabulary exists, except in the Cade scenes of 2 Henry VI. In the adaptation, though some lines are cut, the Cade material remains intact; Barton's additions represent eighteen lines of prose which reinforce Cade's wit and the abruptness of his actions. Fifteen lines of the new prose, during which Strafford is killed on stage, provide continuity between the original 2 Henry VI.IV.ii and the very short scene which follows Strafford's original offstage death. But even including the Cade prose, the

18 For the vocabulary study: Marvin Spevack, A Complete and Systematic Concordance to the Works of Shakespeare (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1968).
central questions of the plays—power struggles, war, death, the nature of kingship—as well as more private matters such as Henry's holiness, Gloucester's ambition and Margaret's alliance with Suffolk, are shared by nearly all the characters. Vocabulary is not a differentiating factor; only by their actions or frequency of appearance are characters recognized as individuals.

Barton's sensitivity to and simulation of Shakespeare's language extends beyond vocabulary choice to other qualities of the verse. It is apparent in little in certain echoes of original textual qualities: Latin tags and quotes such as "Ave Caesar" and "In terram Salicam mulieres ne succedant," examples of classical allusion ("River Styx," "siren's song"), and alliterative lines ("Thou hast hew'd a Hercules today"). Since the new verse is largely expository, imagery occurs rarely, and then only as "enriched speech," decorating rather than forming an architectural basis for the line. Further, Barton's choice of images parallels Shakespeare's. Of twenty-six "Bartonian" images, the major concerns—fortune's wheel, the phoenix, gardening, traps, hawking, cruelty, the summer sun, shipwreck—repeat and vary figures of speech common to the basic texts.

Metrics is the one area where Barton's verse differs from early Shakespeare. Barton uses a larger proportion of feminine endings and run-on lines; and more speeches where the line is split between two or more speakers.
occur than is common in Shakespeare's originals. Barton uses some light and weak endings, but not with a noticeably greater frequency than Shakespeare. Placement of the caesura, however, varies widely in the new verse, and a large proportion of the lines are not in regular iambic pentameter. Of the rimed lines, twelve mark exits, and four emphasize the formal argumentative qualities of speech; both kinds of usage conform to Shakespeare's own. These features are more characteristic of Shakespeare's mature verse than of that in these early plays. Barton's cutting of the originals, however, eliminates many regular, end-stopped lines, thus increasing the proportion of irregular to regular lines in the remaining "old" verse. Because of these cuts, the new verse, though differing from the original texts, closely resembles the "cut style." But even if metrical analysis suggests that the new verse is perhaps more like late Shakespeare than Barton intended, no abrupt changes in tempo or tone mark the transition from "old" to new verse. This is largely because Barton's use of Early Modern English grammatical constructions, as well as the free arrangement of parts of speech within a verse sentence, reproduces the texture of Shakespeare's language. Since Barton's intention was to create a playing text, how the speech conveys meaning and how it sounds were undoubtedly more important than how it might look later, for the linguist, on the page.
Meaning, while dependent upon verse structure, is a more elusive factor. But even though the content of Barton's verse is often more explicitly and directly informative than Shakespeare's, note the following passage, a Richard-like speech given to Hume after his meeting with Eleanor to confirm a rendezvous with the witch, Margery Jourdain (Scene 18, pp. 52-53):

...Methinks these naughty times
Do breed a kind of honesty in knaves:
I that betray her grace betray a trator;
And yet I yield her to a pair of traitors
Whose gold's more treacherous than the other's gilt.
And yet again these lofty traitors tell me
They do their treasons on the King's behalf:
They swear 'tis so; should I suspect their oaths?
I dare not do't. What, I, that serve the crown,
And am well serv'd with crowns for my good service?
Then let this business go what way it will:
What an her wreck should prove Duke Humphrey's fall?
What an she speed? I shall have gold for all.

This is a fine sample of Barton at his best. The play on "gilt" as "guilt," and on "crowns," "serve" and "service," reminiscent of Poins in 1 Henry IV.I.ii—which ties the whole speech to the underlying theme of treachery—argues a careful attention to and respect for his Shakespearean examples.

Overall, The Wars of the Roses has eliminated the predominant qualities of artificiality from Shakespeare's early language and dramatic structure. By retaining the richness of that language, exaggerating certain of its qualities, and sharpening its effect through restructuring action, Barton and Hall have given their audience an
optimum point of view on early Shakespeare. Because of their concentrated focus on the narrative virtues of clarity, pace, and climax, we are no longer confused by an array of nobles speaking, fighting, and moving toward the throne all at once, but we see instead certain irregularly heroic moments that represent peaks in the pattern of stresses which history places on the individual. Barton himself applies the phrase "directorial interference" to the text of *The Wars of the Roses*. Further, he explains:

...When a director handles a play, he tries to focus on what seems to him most important in it. In doing so, he is surely engaged in an act of critical interpretation analogous to that undertaken by the literary critic in his study. [Both the critic and the director try] to communicate what is implicit in the text as well as what lies on the surface. This is what Peter Hall did with the *Henry VI* plays, and the playing text I provided was devised to support his attempt. ¹⁹

The attempt worked. What spoke on the stage, on television, and now in the published text, represents a form of scholarly and critical commentary on the early history plays. Largely because of Barton and Hall's adaptation, we can no longer dismiss these plays simply as trial essays. Adapted, they clearly reveal their Shakespearean qualities: varied and poetic dramatic language, exposition which immediately establishes plot, many events combined in a single short scene, and great and small conflicts

¹⁹Barton and Hall, *The Wars*, p. xxv.
presented at once. Both major and minor characters come full-bodied to the stage, and continue to develop throughout the action. Some, like Henry VI, Margaret, and Richard III, are central to the original plays. The adaptation, through the focus on individuals in action, points to the solidity and strength of others—Gloucester, Exeter, Edward, York, Suffolk and Warwick in particular. The sharpened focus which reveals character also illuminates themes. Man, both as an instinctive animal and as a moral actor, is Shakespeare's center of attention in these plays. As Hall says, "Can a man be 'good' and politic? Do you have to be a bad man to make a good king?" When an individual works out his destiny, and that of his nation, the tension between animal man and ethical man provides the basis for his drama: What will he do? What will he say? Shakespeare, and Barton and Hall, show man in action, and give him words to speak. And as the drama takes shape, it does so within a deliberately realistic structure which includes the kinds of contradictions and digressions we can recognize as necessary to life, and to its viable presentation on the stage.

20 Barton and Hall, The Wars, p. xii.
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Promptbooks: **Henry VI plays**


Promptbooks: **Richard III**


Promptbooks: Richard III


Promptbook: All four plays


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<table>
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<tr>
<td>Wellesley College</td>
<td>1949-1953</td>
<td>B.A. Zoology</td>
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