Contrast in Shakespeare's Historical Plays

BY

BROTHER LEO

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty of Letters of the Catholic University of America in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Letters

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National Capital Press, Inc.
Book Manufacturers
Washington, D. C.

This dissertation is an investigation of Shakespeare's English Historical Plays in an effort to discover to what extent the dramatist shaped his materials according to the principles of dramatic contrast. The last ten chapters contain the detailed study and the results thereof. The second chapter is an attempt to amplify the theory of dramatic contrast as set forth by Mr. Hamilton and to test its applicability to typical plays of the past and of the present. Since the theory of contrast cannot be rightly estimated without some consideration of other theories of the drama, there is presented in the first chapter a brief survey of the theory of the so-called "classical" unities, and of the theories of dramatic construction identified with Freytag, Brunetière, and Mr. Archer.

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I.

THEORIES OF THE DRAMA

The office of the dramatist is to construct plays; the office of the critic of the drama is to follow in the wake of the dramatist, to observe his work, to classify his technical devices, to compare him with his predecessors in the field of playwriting, and to seek to find and to formulate the principles upon which the art of play construction is based. From another point of view, it is a part of the critic's duty to test the worth of a given drama by comparing it with the human life it tacitly professes to depict; to examine it in the light of the artistic principles of the true, the good, the beautiful; to strive, tentatively at least, to assign it a rank among productions of its genre and to set forth his reasons for so assigning it: But with those functions of criticism we are not here concerned. Our purpose is rather to investigate some of the more formal aspects of the theory of the drama.

More or less consciously and explicitly every critic, every student, every member of an audience must ask himself such questions as: What is it that makes a play a play? Is this, in the correct sense of the word, a drama? What constitutes the grounds of its appeal to me—or its lack of appeal? Is this truly a play, and not a narrative poem, or a series of illustrations for a novel, or a sermon in disguise? Are its subject matter and its manner of treatment suitable for stage presentation? Intelligent and illuminating answers to these and similar questions depend entirely upon the critic's answer to one basic question which implies them all. That fundamental question is: *What is the underlying and essential constituent of the dramatic?*

The history of dramatic criticism is the record of answers made by critics to that searching and all-embracing question. Some of those critics have been more dogmatic than others, some have been inductive in their method and limited in their scope, some have devised definitions of the drama singularly lacking in either definiteness or plasticity. Each of them lived in his own day, was influenced by a distinct set of precedents, saw in the theater a definite type of play, wrote for readers of a given grade of appreciation; to that extent they differed each from each. But in at least one respect they met on common ground. They agreed in recog-

nizing the need of some fundamental principle in the drama, a vivifying and distinctive constituent that distinguishes the play from the dramatic poem, from the novel, from the epic, from the romance. Though they were not always at one in their conclusions, they were at one in their endeavor to answer the question: *What is the underlying and essential constituent of the dramatic?*

One such endeavor that for centuries served to explain the properties of the drama and that exercised immeasurable sway over generations of playwrights and critics, is embodied in the theory of the so-called "Classical Unities." This theory, as it now comes to us, holds that the basis of the drama is a trinity of unities. First, there is the unity of time, which requires that all the events of the play take place in the course of a single day; secondly, there is the unity of place, which requires that the scene or location of the play remain unchanged; thirdly, there is the unity of action, which requires that the play concern itself with the representation of but one set of events.

The theory of the unities was dubbed "classical" because it was held to inhere in the drama of Greece and to have been first set forth by Aristotle. There is more justification for the former of these statements than for the latter. While it is possible for us to point to instances in the Attic plays—the *Agamemnon* of Æschylus and the *Antigone* of Sophocles, for instance—where at least one of the unities is violated, the fact remains that the Greek drama as a whole conforms to the dictates of the unities. But the statement that the theory of the three unities was enunciated by Aristotle is today discredited. The facts, briefly, are as follows.

Aristotle did clearly and specifically set forth the unity of action. In the sixth chapter of the *Poetics* we read: "Every tragedy has scenic apparatus, manners, and a fable, and, in a similar manner, sentiment. But the greatest of these is the combination of incidents. Men are persons of a certain character, according to their manners; but according to their actions, they are happy or the contrary. The end of tragedy, therefore, does not consist in imitating manners, but it embraces manners on account of actions; so that the action and the fable are the end of tragedy. But the end is the greatest of all things. Moreover, without action, tragedy cannot exist; but it may exist without manners. . . . The fable, therefore, is the principal part, and as it were the soul of tragedy." And in the seventh chapter, on

the unity of the fable, we read: "It is requisite, therefore, that as in other imitative arts one imitation is the imitation of one thing, thus also, the fable, since it is an imitation of action, should be the imitation of one action, and of the whole of this, and that the parts of the transactions should be so arranged, that any one of them being transposed or taken away, the whole would become different and changed. For that which when present or not present produces no sensible difference, is not a part of the fable."

Here we have enunciated the theory of the unity of action, a theory that almost up to our own day has been accepted as forming the basis of intelligent and constructive dramatic criticism. In practice, at least, succeeding dramatists did not always agree with Aristotle in laying the principal emphasis on action or plot and making the characters subordinate and even incidental—certainly Molière did not in his comedies of manners like *Tartuffe* and *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*—but critics have been all but unanimous in accepting the unity of action as a matter of course, as a postulate essential to any well ordered and well advised appreciation of any sort of dramatic offering.

But what of the other unities, those of time and place? They were "educed" from the *Poetics* by writers on the drama in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. One of Aristotle's apparently casual statements of fact—that tragedy endeavors as far as possible to confine itself to a single revolution of the sun (*Poetics*, chap. v)—was elaborated into a rule by certain Italian critics. Giraldi Cinthio (1504-1573) held that the action of a play should not extend over a greater period than twenty-four hours, Francesco Robortelli (1516-1567) reduced Cinthio's time limit by one half, and Gian-Giorgio Trissino (1478-1550) held the unity of time to be accepted by all save unlearned writers.

Learned writers were supposed to be aware that the unity of time was observed in the Greek drama. For the most part it was; perhaps, as Lessing suggests,[1] because the members of the chorus who impersonated Athenian citizens or Argive maidens could hardly be expected to remain out of their houses for more than several consecutive hours; but there are several instances where the time represented in a Greek play occupies more than a single revolution of the sun. As Butcher points out:

[1] *Hamburgische Dramaturgie.*

"In the *Eumenides* months or years elapse between the opening of the play and the next scene. The *Trachiniae* of Sophocles and the *Supplices* of Euripides afford other and striking instances of the violation of the so-called rule. In the *Agamemnon*, even if a definite interval of days cannot be assumed between the fire-signals announcing the fall of Troy and the return of Agamemnon, at any rate the conditions of time are disregarded and the march of events is imaginatively accelerated."[2]

The unity of place was first suggested by Joseph Caesar Scaliger (1484-1558). The most doughty champion of the unities in Italy was Lodovico Castelvetro (1505-1571), who, in his commentary on the *Poetics* of Aristotle (1561), not only insists upon the necessity of the unity of time and the unity of place, but even subordinates to them the unity of action. All three unities are necessary, he says, but the unity of action is made necessary by the unity of time and the unity of place. "And so," as Professor Saintsbury picturesquely remarks, "the Fatal Three, the Weird Sisters of dramatic criticism, the vampires that sucked the blood out of nearly all European tragedy, save in England and Spain, for three centuries, make their appearance."

Just when "the Fatal Three" crossed over into France, we do not know; but we do know that they were unsightly hags in the eyes of at least one playwright and critic—François Ogier, of whose personality we know little but of whose attitude toward the unities there can be no doubt. As early as 1628—and the date has a special importance in view of the fact that Chapelain is commonly credited with having introduced the theory of the unities into France—there appeared a play entitled *Tyr et Sidon* by an obscure writer whose name was de Schélandre or d'Anchères, with a preface by Ogier. That preface, antedating the production of Corneille's *Cid* by eight years, is written in a key of revolt against the unities. Ogier recognizes their sway—"cette règle que nos critiques veulent nous faire guarder si religieusement à cette heure"—but chafes under the yoke. He is rabidly anti-classical. He shows that the alleged unity of time is violated by Sophocles in the *Antigone*. He protests against the extraordinary conicidences whereby, "comme par art de magie," the characters in the Greek drama appear at the psychological moment. He

[2] *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry*, ch. vii, p. 291.

concedes that the Greek theater and its rules may have served well enough for its time and its people, but he insists that with other times and climes and folks should come other rules of dramaturgy.

We have given François Ogier more attention than at first sight he might seem to deserve; but he is worth while, first, because his preface shows that the theory of the unities had found favor in France earlier than has been hitherto supposed; and secondly, because he is an example in the literary world of one born out of due time, a premature advocate of a reaction that had not as yet set in—"sports" botanists would call such—somewhat as Chatterton prematurely sensed the spirit of the Romantic revolt in English poetry. It need hardly be added, in the light of the classical tendencies of the seventeenth century in France, that Ogier's protests had little if any influence; he was verily the voice of one crying in the wilderness. In the very next year appeared *Sophonisbe*, the first "classical" French tragedy, from the pen of Jean de Mairet (1604-1686).

When, under the patronage of the great Cardinal Richelieu, the formation of the French Academy and the influence of artistic coteries typified by the Hotel Rambouillet, literary criticism became a favorite mode of expression on the part of scholars and writers, adherence to the unities was the touchstone of good form. Of course, it was Richelieu himself who was mainly responsible for bringing this about. We are told[3] that the cardinal first heard of the unities in a conversation with Jean Chapelain (1595-1674), his dependent and faithful henchman, in 1632. A quarter of a century later that man of many parts, François Hédelin, Abbé d'Aubignac, the preceptor of the cardinal's nephew, the Duc de Fronsac, made a plea in favor of the unities in his *Practique du Théâtre*. It is interesting in this connection to observe that when the Abbé wrote plays to exemplify his conceptions of the classical rules he failed to achieve even so much as a *succès d'estime*. An unkind but succulent bit of criticism—sometimes attributed to the great Condé, sometimes to the Prince de Rohan-Guémené—was elicited by d'Aubignac's tragedy, *Zénobie*, in 1647. The author boasted that the play had been written in the light of principles derived from Aristotle. "I cannot excuse Aristotle," the critic said, "for having made the Abbé write such a tragedy."

[3] Pellisson et d'Olivet, *Histoire de l'Académie française*.

The production of *Le Cid* in 1636, a play from the pen of one of Richelieu's "five poets," Pierre Corneille (1606-1687), who in that moment sprang into the front rank among the dramatists of France and of the world, focused attention more than ever upon the question of the unities. We cannot here enter upon any details concerning the controversy that then arose regarding a drama which some of the learned professed to sneer at but to which the masses were quick to testify their admiration. Richelieu and the Academy condemned *Le Cid*, and Chapelain had thrust upon the task of condemning, in the name of the Academy, one of the dramatic masterpieces of the world because it did not conform to the "classical" unities.[4] The bitterness engendered by Corneille's sin against the unities was not mollified by the fact that he had sinned with wide open eyes. Professor Matthews, when he tells us that "when he [Corneille] wrote this play [*Le Cid*], he had never even heard of the doctrine of the unities," overlooks the preface to *Clitandre*, where Corneille says: "Si j'ai renfermé cette pièce dans la règle d'un jour, ce n'est pas que je me repente de n'y avoir point mis *Mélite*, ou que je me sois résolu à m'y attacher dorénavant. Aujourd'hui, quelques-uns adorent cette règle, beaucoup la méprisent; pour moi, j'ai voulu seulement montrer que si je m'en éloigne, ce n'est pas faute de la connaître." That was in 1630, six years before the *Le Cid*. But some twenty years later, Corneille, in his *Discours du poëme dramatique, de la tragédie, des trois unités*, professed himself, with reservations, a convert to the classical view of the dramatic art. It is to be feared that his poverty rather than his will consented to this change of literary faith, that his conversion was little more spontaneous than was the conversion of Shylock.

The most succinct and inclusive presentation of the French conception of the unities is given us in the *Art Poétique* (1674) of Boileau (1636-1711):

> "Qu'en un lieu, qu'en un jour, un seul fait accompli
> Tienne jusqu'à la fin le théâtre rempli."

There the devotees of the "classical" unities found their inspiration and their text; and there too they found their ideal:

> "Mais nous, que la raison à ses règles engage,
> Nous voulons qu'avec art l'action se ménage."

[4] *Sentiments de l'Académie sur le Cid*, 1638.

There Racine (1639-1699) found a medium of expression which fitted admirably his dramatic genius; there Molière (1621-1673) found a Procrustean bed, comfortable for the most part, perhaps, but which proved inadequate to support *Don Juan*; there, for two hundred years, the writers for the French stage found a strange god to worship until Romanticism asserted itself and Victor Hugo, in the preface to *Cromwell* (1827) and the premier of *Hernani* (1830) blasted the "classical" shrine.

Though in Spain the theory of the unities of time, place, and action was not carried into practice, it was known to Spanish writers years before it had caused a battle of the books in France. Here, for instance, is Cervantes (1547-1616)—a neo-classicist in theory though a romanticist in practice—protesting, through the mouth of the curate in *Don Quixote* (part I, chap. xlviii), against the violation of the unities on the part of dramatic writers—including Cervantes himself. It is unfortunate, he contends, for foreigners who with great precision observe the laws of the drama "nos tienen por bárbaros é ignorantes." The impropriety of babes in arms raising whiskers, which later on was to shock Boileau and scandalize burly Ben Jonson, meets with the curate's spirited censure:

"Qué mayor disparate puede ser en el sujeto que tratamos, que salir un niño en mantillas en primera escena del primer acto, y en la segunda salir ya hecho hombre barbado? . . . Qué diré pues de la observancia que guardan en los tiempos en que puedan ó podian suceder las acciones que representan, sino que he visto comedia que la primera jornada comenzó en Europa, la segunda en Asia, la tercera se acabó en Africa, y aun si fuera de cuatro jornades, la cuarta acabara en America . . . ?"

Thus wrote Cervantes—we may venture to suspect with his tongue in his cheek—a good quarter of a century prior to the quarrel concerning *Le Cid*. Breitinger[5] cites numerous other proofs that the unities, before they had been generally recognized in France, were in Spain knowingly honored in the breach. The sprightly Tirso de Molina (1571-1648) includes in his *Cigarrales de Toledo* a discussion of one of his own dramas, *El Vergonzoza en Palacio*. In the course of the discussion one character castigates Tirso for his insolence in overstopping "the salutary limits assigned

[5] *Unités d'Aristote avant le Cid de Corneille.*

to the dramatic form by its originators," for exceeding the period of twenty-four hours, and for ignoring the unity of place. Then arises another character, the mighty Don Alejo, who vigorously defends Tirso's procedure and points to the great Lope de Vega (1562-1635) as a conscious sinner against the canons of the ancients and as "el reformador de la commedia nueva." This was twelve years prior to the quarrel concerning *Le Cid*. Lope himself, whose critical acumen was in inverse ratio to his dramatic fertility, protested his admiration of the Aristotelian unities, but he continued to write plays that flouted them. And as for Calderón de la Barca (1600-1681), in the very year, 1636, in which Corneille's masterpiece was produced and traduced in France, the Spanish genius presented at the Boun Retiro a play called *Los tres mayores Prodigios*, of which the three acts were each produced on a separate stage and by a distinct company of players. It approximated to the "classical" unities about as closely as would a present day three-ringed circus.

The first recognition of the unities we meet with in English criticism occurs in the dedication of a play by George Whetstone (1544?-1587?). The work bore the title: *The right excellent and famous Historye of Promos and Cassandra: divided into two Commicall Discourses*, and was published in London in 1578. The plot, taken fron Giraldi Cinthio's *Hecatommithi*, was utilized by Shakespeare in *Measure for Measure*. The author, about to depart on a voyage of discovery with Sir Humphrey Gilbert, dedicates his play "To his worshipful Friende and Kinseman, William Fleetewoode, Esquier, Recorder of London." Like all the scholars of his time, Whetstone worships at classical shrines. He paraphrases Plato and eulogizes Menander, Plautus, and Terence; but he falls decidedly foul of the contemporary drama which he dismisses as consisting of "tryfels of yonge, unadvised, and rashe witted wryters." He condemns the French, Italian, and Spanish drama for being lascivious, and the German for being "too holye;" then he takes his own countrymen to task for their sins against the unities:

"The Englishman in this qualitie, is most vaine, indiscreete, and out of order: he first groundes his worke on impossibilities: then, in three howers ronnes he throwe the world: marryes, gets children, makes children men, men to conquer kingdomes, murder

monsters, and bringeth Gods from Heaven, and fetcheth divels from Hel."

"The right noble, vertuous, and learned Sir Phillip Sidney Knight," as he was described, not fulsomely, by Olney, the publisher of the *Apologie* in 1595, is commonly regarded as the first English writer to advocate the unities. The fact that Whetstone preceded him in recognizing the unities does not take from the interest of Sidney's reference to the classical rules, written about 1580. Sidney (1554-1586) complains that the drama of his day observes the rules "neyther of honest ciuilitie, nor of skilful Poetrie." He pays a tribute to the excellence of *Gorboduc*, but grieves that Sackville's is not a model tragedy. "For it is faulty both in place, and time, the two necessary companions of all corporall actions. For where the stage should alwaies represent but one place, and the vttermost time presupposed in it, should be, both by Aristotle's precept, and common reason, but one day: there is both many dayes, and many places, inartificially imagined." And he further protests against the violations of the unity of place by pointing to other dramas wherein are depicted "Asia of the one side, and Africk of the other, and so many other under-kingdoms, that the Player, when he cometh in, must ever begin with telling where he is."

The most distinguished defender of the unities in England was Ben Jonson (1573-1637) whose reverence for classical precedents so influenced him both in theory and practice as to set him against the English genre of drama as exemplified by Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Beaumont and Fletcher. Thus, in the Prologue to *Every Man in His Humour* (the prologue did not appear until 1616, though the play had been presented as early as 1598), he indulges in a fling at violations of the unity of time that half a century later was to find an echo in Boileau:

> "To make a child, now swaddled, to proceed
> Man, and then shoot up, in one beard, and weed,
> Past threescore years."

Such absurdities, we are told, the author of the present play will not be guilty of, but

> "He rather prays you will be pleased to see
> One such to-day as other plays should be;
> Where neither chorus wafts you o'er the seas;
> Nor creaking throne comes down, the boys to please;
> . . . . . .

> But deed, and language, such as men do use:
> And persons, such as comedy would choose,
> When she would show an image of the times."

Jonson defended the unities; but in England as in Spain the unities were beyond defence. *Alaham* and *Mustafa*, by Sidney's friend, Fulke Greville Lord Brooke, were stillborn. It but remained for John Dryden (1631-1700), at a time when the unities were revered in France, to cast the last stone at them in England; "It is not enough that Aristotle has said so, for Aristotle drew his models of tragedy from Sophocles and Euripides; and, if he had seen ours, might have changed his mind."

Thus, the procedure of playwrights and the findings of critics are agreed in regarding the so-called "classical" unities as not essential to the notion of the dramatic. All three unities may, indeed, exist in a play, but a play may exist without the unities. This applies especially to the un-Aristotelian unities of time and place. Dryden, in his *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, has in his usual straightforward and common-sense fashion set down the elastic limits under which the unity of time can be practically effective: "In few words, my opinion is this . . . that the imaginary time of every play ought to be contrived in as narrow a compass as the nature of the plot, the quality of the persons, and variety of accidents will allow." This is something very different from the cast-iron conception of dramatic unity entertained by Cinthio and Castelvetro and Boileau; it is merely a tentative application of the general principle of economy to the art of playwriting, the principle which Shakespeare, despite his indifference to the unities, employed frequently—for instance, in *Julius Caesar* where he marks no appreciable interval between the two battles of Philippi and where he has Caesar assasinated, buried, and twice eulogized all in one day.

And so it is with the unity of place. There are plays in which it can with profit be introduced—in Ibsen's *Pillars of Society*, for example, and Mr. John Galsworthy's *The Pigeon*—but there are other plays which have flouted it, with manifest advantage. Thus, an ignoring of the unity of place in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* gives us in the first half of the play those remarkably effective alternations of Venice and Belmont, each place representing a distinct strand of the plot, the strands being twisted together

about the middle of the play. Calderon employs the same device in an almost similar way in *La Vida es Sueño.*

Though more nearly essential than the satellite unities of time and place, the unity of action has been at times—though by no means at all times—disregarded by successful dramatists. A modern instance is afforded in *Milestones*, a drama of exceptional force and charm by Mr. Arnold Bennett and Mr. Edward Knoblauch. It has no appreciable plot, but furnishes instead three pictures of the same family, each picture representing a different generation. The lover and his lass of the first act are the grandparents sitting by the fire in the last act. Each act yields a completeness of impression and constitutes in reality a one-act drama. Here there is not one dramatic action, but three, all equally prominent.

And so, while the so-called "classical" unities of action, place, and time warrant the attention of both playwright and critic, while they possess for us more than a mere historic interest, while they find acceptance in certain species of the drama, they are far from constituting the fundamental laws of the dramatic art. As Dryden has well said: "If by these rules (to omit many others drawn from the precepts and practice of the ancients) we should judge our modern plays, 'tis probable that few of them would endure the trial: that which should be the business of a day, takes up in some of them an age; instead of one action, they are the epitomes of a man's life; and for one spot of ground, which the stage should represent, we are sometimes in more countries than the map can show us."

We must perforce admit that the drama cannot be confined within the boundaries of the unities, unless we adopt the ultra-Aristotelian attitude of the diverting critic, Mr. Trotter, in Bernard Shaw's *Fanny's First Play*, and dismiss all the dramatic masterpieces not in conformity with the unities by dogmatically damning them: "They are not plays."

Let us now consider three other attempts to answer the question: *What is the underlying and essential constituent of the dramatic?*

One answer comes out of Germany. After Lessing (1729–1781), by means of his own plays and by means of his commentaries on the plays of others in the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, had in a measure succeeded in the dual task of restoring the German stage to power and delivering it from the thraldom of "classical"

precepts, there came the famous and fertile "Sturm und Drang" period—which gave us Goethe and Schiller—in the second half of the eighteenth century. We have called the "Sturm und Drang" period fertile; in the fact of its fertility lay its strength and its weakness. Early in the nineteenth century its strength was evident; some years later thoughtful critics were aware of its weakness. Among them was Gustav Freytag (1816–1895), a successful playwright whose many-sided mind and manifold activities as editor, novelist, critic, soldier, philologist, and statesman enabled him to unite to his knowledge of stagecraft an outlook upon the course of dramatic history in his own and in other countries.

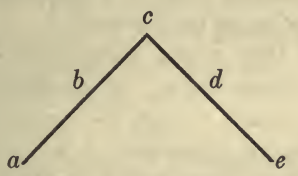
Freytag was not long in perceiving that while at one time the German drama had been crippled by excessive formality, it was now ailing for lack of definite constructive rules. "We suffer," he writes in the introduction to his *Technik des Dramas* (1863), "from the opposite of narrow limitations; we lack salutary restraint, form, a popular style, sureness of touch, a definite range of dramatic material; our work has become at all points haphazard and uncertain. And so it is that today, eighty years after Schiller, the young poet finds it difficult to make himself at home on the stage."

Accordingly, Freytag sought to formulate certain rules whereby the art of playwriting might be subjected to salutary limitations both as regards choice of subject and treatment of material. He did this with full knowledge that his work must necessarily be both tentative and temporary; and furthermore he strove, not to spin theories a priori and apply them in a dogmatic way, but to examine the great plays of the world and seek to find in them those principles of sound construction which the dramatists of his own time so sorely needed to apply in their work. The result is his book, *Die Technik des Dramas*.

First of all, Freytag asks himself, What is the dramatic? He replies that the dramatic includes those emotions of the soul which manifest themselves by means of external action. "Action, in itself, is not dramatic; passionate feeling, in itself, is not dramatic. Not the presentation of a passion for itself, but of a passion which leads to action, is the business of dramatic art." (" . . . der Leidenschaft, welche zu einen Thun leitet, ist die Aufgabe der dramatischen Kunst.") Action he defines as

an event dominated by an idea and interpreted by characters. (" . . . einer Idee angeordnete Begebenheit, deren Inhalt durch die Charaktere vorgeführt wird.")

This, his generic and foundation principle, Freytag applies to the constructive side of the dramatic art by indicating five successive stages or sections in the development of a play. These are: the Exposition, the Rise, the Climax, the Fall, and the Catastrophe. He illustrates the theory by means of the familiar pyramidal diagram in which the five stages are represented by successive letters of the alphabet, thus:



According to Freytag's theory, the Exposition or Introduction (Einleitung) states conditions, gives explanations and starts the action; the Rise (Steigerung) introduces the exciting forces or complications and carries the action on to the Climax (Höhenpunkt) where the action takes a definite set toward the final and inevitable Catastrophe which it reaches by way of the Fall (Umkehr). He finds, likewise, in every well constructed drama three dramatic forces or crises: one (das erregende Moment) between the Exposition and the Rise, the second (das tragische Moment) between the Climax and the Fall, the third (das Moment der letzten Spannung) between the Fall and the Catastrophe. Thus he finds eight component parts in the drama, all of which, save the second and third crises, he regards as essential.

Freytag, of course, did not originate the notion of a five-fold division of the drama. Corneille (*Des trois unités*) reminds us that Horace favored the plan, and Voltaire, in his commentary on Corneille, elaborates the idea thus: "Cinq actes nous paraissent nécessaires: le premier expose le lieu de la scène, la situation des héros de la pièce, leurs intérêts, leurs moeurs, leurs desseins; le second commence l'intrigue; elle noue au troisième: le quatrième prépare le dénouement, qui se fait au cinquième. Moins de temps précipiterait trop l'action; plus d'étendue l'énerverait.

Il en est comme d'un repas d'appareil; s'il dure trop peu, c'est une halte; s'il est trop long, il ennuie et dégoûte."[6] The division into five stages was suggested to Freytag by the five acts into which the Shakespearean plays have been divided by editors. The German playwright was not in a position to know that Shakespeare himself used no such scheme of division, but contended himself with splitting his plays into an indeterminate number of scenes. But taking the plays of Shakespeare as he found them, Freytag had no great difficulty in using them to illustrate his theory; and Professor Moulton has carried the application much further with a wealth of detail and with an astonishing outlay of analytic ingenuity.[7]

It is undeniable that many great plays—including some by Sophocles and Calderón—may be analyzed according to the pyramid diagram, and it is not less undeniable that the rules formulated by Freytag constitute a serviceable scaffolding for the aspirant who would learn how to write a drama; but it must be admitted that many more great plays are not susceptible of the pyramid analysis and that many dramatists have learned their trade without the assistance of Freytag's five stages and three crises. To take but a few instances of many, the *Œdipus Coloneus*, *El Gran Teatro del Mundo*, the First Part of *King Henry Fourth*, *Chanticler*, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *Man and Superman* and *The Pigeon* are all dramas that have stood the crucial test of presentation on the stage and that are recognized by everybody who knows as being in the true sense dramas; yet not one of them will be found to square at all points with the elaborate theory of Freytag. Thus, the Greek play has no exposition, the Spanish play has no climax, the Galsworthy play has no conclusion. And how could the Freytag theory be applied to Sardou's *Cleopatre* with its six acts, each of which is so self-sufficing as to be practially independent of the others, a play with no climax, with six crises and with a conclusion—the death of the protagonists—which finds its motives and dramatic preparation only in the final act in which it occurs?

So much for the applicability of Freytag's rules of construction. What of his fundamental principles, of his conception of the nature of the dramatic? According to him, the essential of the drama is

[6] Quoted in *Œuvres des deux Corneille*, tome second, p. 387.
[7] *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist.*

passion manifesting itself in external action. This holds good for many, perhaps most, of the great plays of all countries and of all times; but it by no means holds good for all, especially for many of the plays which in France and Germany and England and the United States have been born in our own day and generation. Passion that leads to action may, without undue stretching, be made a concomitant of the tragedy in Greece, of the "capa y espada" theater in the golden age of Spanish literature, of the drama of blood and intrigue which was so conspicuous in the Elizabethan epoch; but it cannot be held to be representative of the twentieth century drama in America and Europe. It accorded well enough with the plays in which Richard Burbage acted; it does not accord with the plays in which Mr. John Drew appears. Passion leading to action would seem to be an essential ingredient in one form of the drama, namely, melodrama—a form which, dispite the ill repute in which it is sometimes held, is found in many of the great plays of the world, and which will to some extent always be with us, whether in the cavortings of Herod in the moralities or the launching of the curse of Rome in *Richelieu* or the flight of sixteen horses in *Ben-Hur*. But there are many plays which are not in the least melodramatic; and there are many plays which, though they include certain melodramatic episodes, depend on non-melodramatic elements for their dramatic effectiveness. Thus, in *Hamlet*, though we have several decidedly melodramatic scenes, such as the visitation of the Ghost, the play within the play, and the passage at foils between Hamlet and Laertes, the play as a whole certainly cannot be consistently summarized as an example of passion leading to action; rather it is a demonstration of intellect resulting in inaction,—where "enterprises of great pith and moment . . . lose the name of action." And so, too, passion leading to action does not strike the keynote of Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* nor of Wilde's sparkling farce, *The Importance of Being Earnest*; in both there is action but no passion; and does not Freytag plainly tell us that action alone does not constitue the dramatic? ("Nicht dramatisch ist die Action an sich.")

Another and even more noteworthy endeavor to formulate the underlying principle of the dramatic is that which was fathered by the distinguished critic and unapproachable prosateur, the late Ferdinand Brunetière (1849-1906). In the first and the fifteenth

conférence of his Odeon course on *Les Époques du Théâtre Français (1636-1850)*, given during the winter of 1891-1892, Burnetière first set forth his theory. In his conférence on Corneille's masterpiece, he is led into a distinction between two kinds of hero typified by the leading characters in *Gil Blas* and *Le Mariage de Figaro*. He says:

"Les ressemblances y sont nombreuses: la différence en est profonde. Et en quoi consiste-t-elle? Essentiellement en ceci, qu'il n'arrive à Gil Blas aucune aventure, heureuse ou malheureuse, dont il soit proprement l'artisan, rien qu'il ait prévu, ni délibéré, ni voulu; tandis qu'au contraire il n'arrive rien à Figaro qui ne soit finalement le fruit ou la récompense de son activité, de sa ruse, et de son habileté . . . Et ce n'est, si vous le voulez, qu'une différence de procédés, en un certain sens, mais, en un autre sens, vous verrez qu'elle va jusqu'au fond des choses, parce qu'elle résulte effectivement d'une différence de conception du monde et de la vie." (Page 19.)

Here is the basis, founded on actualities of literature and life, upon which Brunetière was later on to construct his famous theory of the drama, and it is a classification which the student of literature and life cannot afford to ignore. In books and in life we have two sorts of characters—the active and the passive, the conquerors and the conquered, the dynamic and the static, the developing and the stationary, the biters and the bitten, the eaters and the eaten, the doers and the done. The former have glimpsed the practical significance of Don Quixote's aphorism, "The strong man carves out his fortune, and every man is the son of his own works"; the world is their oyster, which they with sword must open; they shape, mold, modify their environment, bending it by force of will. The latter are chameleons, taking their color from their surroungings; sensitive souls, influenced by every passing cloud; free lances, flinging the bridle over their horse's head and caring not which road they take; drifters—though often extremely charming persons—following always the shimmering and fragrant path of least resistance.

This classification of human beings received its application to the dramatist's art in the last conférence of the series on Scribe and Musset. The critic lays down two "lois essentielles du théâtre," the first of which—and one that need not detain us here—being that a plot, to be truly dramatic, must deal with

some topic of general interest, a moral problem, or a social question. Then he proceeds (page 369):

"Une autre loi n'est pas moins essentielle: [Later Brunetière came to consider it as far more essential] c'est elle qui veut qu'une action de théâtre soit conduite par des volontés, sinon toujours libres, mais toujours au moins conscientes d'elles mêmes; . . . mais ce qui fait à travers les littératures, depuis les Grecs jusqu'à nous, l'unité permanente et continue de l'espèce dramatique, c'est le spectacle d'une volonté qui se déploie;—et voilà d'abord pourquoi l'action et l'action ainsi définie, sera toujours la loi du théâtre."

Here we have in a brief form the theory which later on its author was more amply to develop. There are two kinds of characters, those who will and those who do not will; those who will, and who manifest their will in action, are the dramatic characters. Hence the drama represents will in action.

The complete and perfected presentation of this theory of the will in the drama we get from Brunetière in the preface which he wrote for *Les Annales du Théâtre et de la Musique* for 1893. The preface, entitled *La Loi du Théâtre*, begins in the form of a delightfully familiar epistle to Edouard Noël, one of the authors of *Les Annales*, but as it proceeds it loses something of its informality and becomes a severe, though sprightly, academic essay. Brunetière assures us that there is a difference between the laws of the drama and the rules of the drama, and that he for one does not believe in the "pouvoir mystérieux des règles," for conditions change from age to age and therefore rules of dramatic writing based on those conditions—such as the celebrated unities—must change with them. But it is different with the laws of the drama, and he proposes to formulate the theory—or at least a theory—which embodies a recognition of the fundamental law of the theater: "Drame ou vaudeville, ce que nous demandons au théâtre, c'est le spectacle d'une volonté qui se déploie en tendant vers un but, et qui a conscience de la nature des moyens qu'elle y fait servir." Furthermore since the will in action implies conflict, we have the basis of classification of the species of the drama according to the nature of the obstacle which the will is seeking to surmount. Thus, if the obstacle is serious and unsurmountable, we have tragedy; if the obstacle takes the form of prejudice or social convention, we have the romantic play or else the bourgeois drama; if the obstacle is less serious, we have comedy.

In the course of the numerous examples from French literature which Brunetière cites to elucidate his views, he turns once more to *Gil Blas* and *Le Mariage de Figaro*. He shows that Le Sage's hero, being a man who does not exercise his volition but trusts to a beneficent chance and takes things as they come, would not make a suitable character for a play, while Beaumarchais' hero —a doer of things, a captain of destiny, a shaper of environment, and a molder of men—because he does exercise his volition, is an eminently dramatic character.

Such is the volitional theory of the drama as set forth by Brunetière. It is less than a quarter of a century old, yet already it has attained a wide vogue, and deservedly so, for unquestionably it serves to explain very many of the great plays of all literatures and of all times. The attempt has been made to show that it is old as Arsitotle and that earlier writers, including Goethe, Hegel, and Coleridge, had enunciated it prior to the French critic; but the fact remains that, whatever his debt may have been to preceding thinkers—and I am strongly of the opinion that it was a very light debt indeed— to Brunetière belongs the distinction of developing and clarifying the theory and of putting it into a form that makes it accessible to all who run and read.

Brunetière's theory deserves our respect and has a practical application to the drama and to life. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of the rôle played by the will in the book world, the stage world, and the workaday world. Brunetière rightly says:[8]

"L'intelligence est maîtresse dans le domaine de la spéculation, mais la volonté est reine dans l'ordre de l'action, et par conséquent dans l'historie. C'est la volonté qui donne le pouvoir; et on ne le perd guère que par une defaillance ou une démission de la volonté."

There is, indeed, so much of the volitional element in human life, and so much of its manifestation by means of external action, that literature, the drama, music, painting, and sculpture have gladly accepted it as something characteristic of much of the life of many men, as something in which most men at most times are certain to feel an interest. It is not a differentia of the drama; it is present likewise in other forms of art. It is even present in journalism. In an address at the first session of the annual

[8] *Annales*, p. xiv.

conference of teachers of journalism, held at Columbia University on December 29, 1914, Mr. Chester S. Lord, formerly managing editor of the New York *Sun*, is reported to have said: "But were you to ask me to name the kind of news for which the people surge and struggle—the most popular kind of news printed—I surely must reply that it is the details of a contest—a fight, whether between men or dogs or armies."[9]

The theory of volition, then, is searching and stimulating; but is it at all points adequate? It will, as we have already said, serve to explain very many of the great plays of the world; but will it serve to explain every successful play? We concede that the volition theory brings out what is a frequent concomitant of the drama; but does it touch upon what is absolutely essential to the drama? Mamy true dramas have been written in which the element of volitional conflict is a very prominent element; is it possible to write a play in which the element of volitional conflict is not in evidence?

For answer we have two Greek tragedies, both of them regarded as among the supreme dramatic pieces of the world. In the *Agamemnon* of Æschylus where do we find a conflict of wills? A trap is set, and the victim unwittingly walks into it—something dramatic unquestionably, but something not dependent on the volitional element. Clytemnestra manifests fixity of purpose, and fixity of purpose is sometimes mistaken for exercise of will; but even so, it is precisely here that we have the weakest and least dramatic element in the play. Clytemnestra's fixity of purpose does not thrill us; but we are deeply moved by the approach of the conquering hero who goes unknowingly to his death. And in the *Œdipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles—sometimes held to be from the technical point of view the supreme drama of all time—there is actually an even more notable absence of the element of volition. True, Œdipus has striven to flee from the rulings of fate that prophesied so sternly against him; but that was years ago, and before the drama begins. During the play itself, there is no manifestation of volition, no conflict of wills; there is merely the agonized writhing of a despairing victim bound irrevocably to the wheel of fate.

Nor, in our endeavor to find a play devoid of the element of volition, are we compelled to restrict ourselves to the ancient

[9] New York *Times*, December 30, 1914.

classical drama. Everybody, I presume—except the late Count Tolstoy and Mr. Bernard Shaw—will admit that Shakespeare's *As You Like It* is a true play. It is, to say the very least about it, a dramatic classic; yet we find in it nothing—except in detached episodes like the wrestling match—of the volitional element, nothing of the overcoming of obstacles, nothing of the conflict of wills which Brunetière insists upon as essential to a conception and a realization of the dramatic. The characters in whom we admit the greatest interest—Rosalind, the banished Duke, Jacques, and Touchstone—are precisely the characters who refrain from any perceptible assertion of will power. Every one of them unresisting floats—smilingly or frowningly according to his disposition—adown the stream of circumstance. The Forest of Arden is a veritable land of aboulia; who enters there leaves will behind. It is idle and infantile to object that there *is* will in the play—that Orlando wants Rosalind and that Rosalind wants him to want her. Even if the interest which the hero and the heroine feel in each other can be classified under the head of volition—and Shakespeare himself is rather careful to give us to understand that here is a case of love at first sight where the lovers love willy nilly—it is a decidedly sterile sort of volition and does not, as Brunetière says it must do, manifest itself in some kind of conflict.

Again, I am quite sure that Brunetière would promptly admit that Calderón is a great dramatist and *La Vida es Sueño* a great play. Yet here is obviously a drama which, though it contains plenty of action in an incidental way, has for its protagonist the pathetic figure of a young man whose tragedy is that he absolutely cannot exercise volition. And what would Brunetière say to that diverting picture of life, drawn by Mr. Arnold Bennett, which makes a good novel as *Buried Alive* and a better play as *The Great Adventure?* Here, both in the novel and in the drama, the central character is a man who is utterly incapable of making up his mind about anything, and therefore doesn't try, and therefore lives happily amid all sorts of circumstances. And what, in the light of the volition theory, are we to think of one of the most successful and searching plays of our day, *Chains*, by Miss Elizabeth Baker? *Chains* has been happily described by Mr. Hamilton as, "not an assertion, but a negation, of human wills. It presents, at most, a struggle of wills with a minus sign in front of them. The entire point of the play is that nothing can happen to the characters.

Their wills are paralyzed by an environment which renders them incapable of self-assertion." The same play is thus briefly analyzed by Mr. William Archer: "There is absolutely no 'story' in it, no complication of incidents, not even any emotional tension worth speaking of. . . . A city clerk, oppressed by the deadly monotony and narrowness of his life, thinks of going to Australia—and doesn't go: that is the sum and substance of the action. Also, by way of underplot, a shopgirl, oppressed by the deadly monotony and narrowness of her life, thinks of escaping from it by marrying a middle-aged widower—and doesn't do it."

This list of examples of dramas wherein the conflict of wills does not figure, though not typical of the majority of successful plays, might easily be lengthened; but as it stands it is sufficient to disprove the claims of the volition formula as an essential and fundamental law of the drama. We have undeniable dramas to which it does not apply.

Again, the volition theory, is not distinctive of the dramatist's art. It serves to explain, as has been conceded, many of the great plays of the world; but is might also serve to explain many of the great narrative poems and many of the great prose novels. It is not a true differentia of the drama. There is more of a conflict of wills in the *Iliad* than there is in *Hamlet*, there are more obstacles to overcome in *Vanity Fair* than there are in the *Œdipus Tyrannus*. And Brunetière's assumption that LeSage's *Gil Blas* would not make a successful play is gratuitous. How does he know? The thing might be done tomorrow, and the success of the play would be dependent on factors other than the hero's volitional status.

A similar objection may be urged against a theory of the drama diffidently set forth by Mr. William Archer in his book, *Play-Making: a Manual of Craftsmanship*, where, after taking issue with the volitional theory, he suggests one of his own. Though Mr. Archer fears dogmatism with a great fear, he finds the necessity of formulating some definition of the drama. While admitting, therefore, that "the only really valid definition of the dramatic is: Any representation of imaginary personages which is capable of interesting an average audience assembled in a theater," he is constrained to be more specific and definitive, and accordingly we have the presentation of his theory, as follows:

"What, then, is the essence of the drama . . . ? What is the common quality of themes, scenes, and incidents, which we

recognize as specifically dramatic? Perhaps we shall scarcely come nearer to a helpful definition than if we say that the essence of drama is *crisis*. A play is a more or less rapidly developing crisis in destiny or circumstance, and a dramatic scene is a crisis within a crisis, clearly furthering the ultimate event. The drama may be called the art of crises. . . . The Greek drama 'subjected to the faithful eyes,' as Horace phrases it, the culminating points of the Greek epic; the modern drama places under the lens of theatrical presentment the culminating points of modern experience." (*Play-Making*, bk. i, chap. iii.) Mr. Archer, foreseeing the objection that his alleged differentia of the drama applies with equal force to the novel, explains further that the fundamental difference between the novel and the play is that while the former embraces "considerable segments of many lives," the latter gives "only the culminating points, or shall we say the interesting culminations? —two or three destinies."

But are we not justified in demanding grounds more relative than this? Is the drama nothing more than a novel or an epic purged of unessentials? Unquestionably, the dramatist—especially the dramatist who has not at all points mastered his craft—does well when he concerns himself with the portraying of interesting culminations; but so does the novelist and the narrative poet; so, for that matter, does the artist generally. If art be the purgation of superfluities—and to a very large extent it is just that—it must perforce squeeze out the unessentials of life and retain what remains, and what remains is likely enough to prove the culminating points. Thus, the painter who wishes to transfer St. Augustine to canvas acts wisely when he takes some interesting culmination in the saint's life—the "tolle, lege" scene in the garden, for instance—and focuses attention on that; such was the procedure of Ary Scheffer when he represented St. Augustine and St. Monica discoursing of things heavenly at Mantua shortly before the mother's demise. The Discobolus of Myron illustrates the same principle in sculpture; and a casual survey of Scott's *Lady of the Lake* will show the importance of culminating points in the structure of the narrative poem.

The value of the crisis is undeniably very great in the drama generally; but it is by no means indispensable. We have admittedly dramatic scenes—such as the conversation between Lorenzo and Jessica in the last act of *The Merchant of Venice*—in

which no crisis is reached; and we have admittedly good plays—such as Mr. Louis N. Parker's *Pomander Walk* and Mr. Granville Barker's *The Madras House*—which present no especially interesting culminations. Where the element of crisis appears most nearly necessary is in the short story and in the one-act play. Both of these forms have been sometimes defined as cross-section views of life; but that definition, if it is to be accepted at all, depends entirely on the character of the section selected for representation. The dramatist has yet to be born who would dream of putting Mr. Kipling's story, *The Taking of Lungtungpen* into a play; yet it is a remarkable example of interesting culminations. Crisis explains, as nothing else can explain, Bret Harte's *Luck of Roaring Camp* and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Markheim*, neither of which would seem to offer much inducement to one on dramatization bent. One-act plays—ranging all the way from *Box and Cox* to Mr. Alfred Sutro's *The Man in the Stalls* and Mr. James M. Barrie's *Twelve Pound Look*—apparently need to utilize the element of crisis, for they lose their point if in their brief traffic on the stage—usually less than half an hour—they fail to bring out some interesting culmination of the life they depict. But what is ture of the short story and of the one-act play is not necessarily true of the full length novel and the complete drama.

Mr. Archer's views are stimulating and illuminating; but they prove too much. At any rate, we cannot consistently accept the element of crisis as the differentia of the drama; it has closer applicability to the short story and to a specific dramatic form, the one-act play. Besides, it does not carry us very far from Freytag. Instead of the five definite stages and the three definite moments insisted upon by the German critic, Mr. Archer would give us an indefinite number of stages or high places or interesting culminations.

Yet Mr. Archer has brought us very near to the truth. There is very much of crisis in the drama. And why? Because crisis, or the culminating point, or the interesting culmination is dependent upon and frequently associated with something else—something that has its roots very deep in the life of man and that has a claim to be considered the true differentia of the dramatic form. What that something is we shall presently see.

II.

THE ELEMENT OF CONTRAST

In his review article entitled, "Contrast in the Drama," published in *The Bookman* of New York City for January, 1914, Mr. Clayton Hamilton set forth the theory of dramatic art and dramatic construction that bids fair to answer with complete satisfaction the fundamental question: *What is the underlying and essential constituent of the dramatic?* After showing, in view of the existence of such dramas as Lady Gregory's *Workhouse Ward*, Mr. Arnold Bennett's *Great Adventure*, and Mr. John Galsworthy's *The Pigeon*, that the theories of conflict and of crisis do not apply to all specimens of dramatic art, Mr. Hamilton proceeds:

"Is there, after all, such a thing as an *essential* element of drama? Is there a single narrative element without which a dramatic scene cannot succeed? I think that there is; but I am willing to revoke this decision so soon as any writer shall show me an exception to the rule. It seems to me at present that the one indispensable element to success upon the stage is the element of *contrast*, and that a play becomes more and more dramatic in proportion to the multiplicity of contrasts that it contains within itself.

"The sole reason why *The Workhouse Ward* produces a dramatic effect is that the two beggars are emphatically different from each other. The moonlight scene in *The Merchant of Venice* is interesting on the stage because of the contrast between the contributions of the two lovers to their lyrical duet. Both *The Pigeon* and *The Madras House* derive their value from the fact that they exhibit a series of contrasts between characters. *The Great Adventure* is dramatic because the drifting hero is wonderfully contrasted with the practical and sensible heroine and every scene of the play reveals some minor contrast between antithetic minds. What is the dramatic element in the soliloquies of Hamlet? Do they not derive their theatrical effectiveness from the fact that they present a constant contrast between very different human qualities which, in this case, happen to have been incorporated in a single person? Such a play as *Every Man in His Humour* stands outside of the formula of Brunetière, because it exhibits no struggle of contending wills; it also stands outside the formula of Mr. Archer, because it exhibits neither a crisis nor a series of

crises; but it is a great comedy, because it exhibits an unintermitted series of contrasts between mutually foiling personalities."

Perhaps the readiest way of appreciating the bearing and the significance of Mr. Hamilton's theory of the drama is to find the degree of its applicability to everyday life. There are certain moments, certain events, certain combinations of circumstances in the lives of even the most prosaic of us that we designate dramatic. Even though the frequent use of the word has worn away something of its pristine sharpness of contour, the milling has not been entirely effaced. When persons speak of a dramatic scene or a dramatic experience or a dramatic meeting or a dramatic enterprise, they indubitably mean something. What do they mean?

Clearly, I think, they mean contrast. If, morning after morning, a college instructor enters his classroom after a given fashion under given conditions and with his students calmly awaiting his appearance, no one would think of designating any such entrance as dramatic; but should the students, not anticipating his approach, engage in a more or less unacademic display of activity—one of them, let us say, even essaying to give a grotesque imitation of the instructor—and should the instructor, considerably flustered and out of breath and obviously indignant, suddenly fling open the door—that certainly would be a dramatic situation. And it would be so because it involves a very obvious contrast, external and internal. Again, there is so little of the dramatic in the ordinary sermon preached by the ordinary preacher in the presence of the ordinary congregation that it unfortunately possesses a pronounced soporific quality; but should the preacher, in the midst of his discourse, point a long finger at a certain smooth and nodding head and solemnly declare: "I am certain that that man, sitting there in the aisle seat of the fourth pew on my left, deserves to be hanged by the neck until he is dead," then a dramatic element, farcial or tragic, would be injected into the sermon. We have learned not to expect personalities, especially harrowing personalities, in sermons; their presence would constitute a disconcerting contrast. To take a more serious example, a little drama never staged in the theater but played with pathetic verisimilitude in a city street: A mother one morning had a dispute with her grown son. As he left the breakfast table to go to his work she called after him in a paroxysm of rage: "I hope I'll

never see you alive again!" A few hours later she was summoned by a strange man who told her that her son needed her. She burst through a ring of idle spectators and fell down in the dust beside the lifeless body of her son, the victim of an accident, and cried repeatedly, "Is it possible that you're dead!" The tragedy here is a drama of contrast upon contrast.

So, too, when we say of a man that he has a dramatic view of life, we really mean that he has formed the habit of noting the contrasts underlying even the simplest events of the workaday world. He may be a pessimist or a cynic or a humorist, according to the temperamental spectacles through which he regards the contrasts, but the recognition of the contrasts themselves justifies us in calling his a dramatic outlook. This is plainly the explanation of the so-called dramatic note in Browning. Browning was not a dramatist, and yet there is a very pronounced dramatic element in almost everything he wrote; it is more than mere visualization, more than intuitive perception of the state of mind of others, more than ability to put character into action, for many of his most dramatic poems—*My Last Duchess*, for example—have no action at all. It is an almost uncanny perception of layer upon layer of contrasts in life and character and environment. Browning's dramatic vision is a vision of contrasts.

Or, let us turn to history, to the story of the past, where we find a multitude of persons and events, of times and motives and circumstances and causes and results. Which of those numerous episodes do we style dramatic? Assuredly, those that involve contrast. What is the glamour of war if not the dramatic quality of contrast? Why is it that historians from the very beginning have slurred over such racial and national pursuits as agriculture, building, sanitation, and cooking, and devoted page after page to such topics as personal adornment, athletic carnivals, slavery, and carnage? The contrasts afforded in the latter group give a sufficient answer. Many a farmer has followed the plough, but the only farmer who forms promising dramatic material is the Cincinnatus who runs off from his plough to follow the flag; many a cook has moved poets to song, but the only cook who has succeeded in getting before the footlights is the old woman who slapped King Alfred's face.[10]

[10] For a study of the plays in which this legend figures see *King Alfred in Literature*, by L. W. Miles. Baltimore, 1902.

To reach the same conclusion in a slightly different way, let us suppose that upon us devolved the task of writing the great American play—a drama that would embody the true American spirit and tell in a dramatic way the story of America's past. What episode in American history should we select as the focal point of our intended play? Whatever our ultimate choice might be—the War of the Revolution or the Civil War, territorial expansion or the romance of business, the period of the pioneer or the period of the skyscraper—one thing is certain: Our topic of predelection would be a topic involving the element of contrast.

So much for what we call the dramatic element in life and its foundation on the underlying or apparent contrasts in the career of the individual and the story of the nation and the race. Let us now examine some of the admittedly great dramas of the world in the light of this theory of contrast.

The basic dramatic motif of the Sophoclean masterpiece, the *Œdipus Tyrannus*, is the helplessness of a man in the coils of fate. Here we have on the one side impotence and on the other side omnipotence. When the drama opens, Œdipus has ceased to rebel against the decrees of fate; he has ceased even to seek to evade their consequences. The play shows him struggling, indeed, but struggling with no prospect of freeing himself from that which is ordained. It is the contrast of a passive victim and an active fate. The contrast is heightened by the fact that the protagonist is no ordinary man. He is a king, a man of prowess and prestige, a man who by reason of his training, his experience of life, and his regal station might be looked upon as among the mighty ones of earth; yet we find him bowed down in unwilling but impotent submission before the rulings of something invisible, impalpable, yet infinitely more powerful than he. And still more force is given the contrast in that Œdipus has been a good man; he has not knowingly transgressed either the laws of man or the laws of nature; he has striven to be a pious son, a faithful husband, a devoted father, a benevolent ruler. His sins have been unwitting sins. Yet he is punished, punished in mind and body, punished in the full light of day and in the eyes of the world. The *Œdipus Tyrannus* is thus a tragedy of contrasts.

In another type of tragedy, best exemplified in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, we find a similar dependence for dramatic force and intensity on the element of contrast. The contrast centers in the

personality of the murderer before and after the commission of his crime. The Macbeth who stalks on murder bent into the sleeping king's chamber, bidding the sure and firm set earth hear not his steps, is a very different being from the Macbeth who staggers into the courtyard a few moments later, his face haggard, his limbs atremble, his hands gilded with the royal blood that all great Neptune's oceans cannot wash away. Before the murder of Duncan, Macbeth saw in the possession of the golden round of sovereignty the greatest happiness that earth can give; afterward, the crown sears his guilty brow and he longs to be with the dead whom he to gain his peace has sent to peace. Formerly a noble man, he now hires murderers and slays helpless women and unoffending babes; formerly a brave man, he now quails alike before a witch's prophecy, a spirit's apparition and a subject's sword. And this fundamental contrast is set off by a group of minor contrasts in character and situation and events. DeQuincey's superb analysis of the knocking at the gate in the second act brings out the involved contrast between the world of crime within the castle walls and the world of retribution that clamors for admittance.

When Calderón conceived the idea of his admitted masterpiece, *La Vida es Sueño*, he did so in the spirit of contrast. The unhappy Segismundo leads two contrasting lives in two contrasting environments; and the forces playing upon him are so compelling in each case that he appears alternately two contrasting personalities. Now he is a grimed and famished prisoner chained like another Prometheus to the barren rock; now he is a prince with regal sway surrounded by subservient courtiers and illimitable possibilities of enjoyment. Now he is a humble suppliant, begging the prayers of passers by; now he is master of his princely sword, able to threaten and command. Now, bowed down beneath the yoke of sorrow and chastened by affliction, he is soft and gentle as a woman; now, raised to courtly pomp and intoxicated with power, he is as a wild beast uncaged. Minor contrasts cross and recross through the play and give significance to the other characters from the *gracioso* to the king; but the supreme contrast, from which the drama receives both its power and its name, is found in the personality and circumstances of Segismundo.

Another type of tragedy, depending upon another type of contrast, is furnished in the social dramas of more recent years,

notably in the most representative work of Ibsen. In this species of drama the individual is arrayed against the social order and is ultimately crushed beneath the weight of heredity or of environment. Many such plays fall within the bearing of Brunetière's formula, for they often involve a conflict; but in others of them there is no conflict, the victim, as in *Ghosts*, drifting along with the irresistible current. But whether conflict exists or not, the grip of the drama is due to cleverly conceived contrasts. Such is the case in *Hedda Gabler*. From the opening of the play even to its somber close we are confronted with the contrast between a woman and a pistol. She fires at the bric-a-brac, she fires at her visitors, she fires at herself. The pistol in the hands of Hedda is typical of the contrasts that are involved in the woman's attitude to her environment. A creature of impulse, the daughter of old General Gabler finds herself wedded to the most negative, inefficient, and colorless specimen of manhood conceivable—the conventional college professor. She, with her splendid body, her aggressive soul, and her constant need of excitement, is set off against the weak, watery, old womanish Tesman. And—a contrast within a contrast—she sees her husband measured on the same scale with such men as Brack and Loveberg. The contrasts thicken as the play proceeds. When Hedda thrusts the pistol into the hands of Loveberg she directs him to "do it beautifully": and he does—by shooting himself, in the bowels. And the element of contrast is carried to the heights—or to the depths—of tragic irony when, just after Hedda has shot herself with one hand while playing the piano with the other, Brack exclaims: "Nonsense! Women don't do such things!"

Turning to one of the supreme comedies of manners, Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, we find that here again the element of contrast is responsible for the dramatic values of the play. Complications involve contrasts; and humorous complications are the stuff of which comedy is made. And so, in the story of Monsieur Jourdain as unfolded by Molière. we find a series of contrasts in situation, in character, and in fundamental ideas. There, for instance, is the contrast afforded by the uneducated educators whom the leading character brings in to instruct him. Each of them is an admitted master in his own field, be it philosophy or fencing; yet all of them manifest a most unacademic impatience of subjects other than their own and present some of the lamentable

consequences of an evil that was not by any means confined to Molière's generation, the evil of narrow specialization. Another contrast is that of unprincipled gentility. The scions of the nobility, of whom we are led to expect honor and probity, are singularly lacking in both. But the dominant contrast, and one which gives point and pertinence to the delicious satire, is the contrast of clothes and caste. Monsieur Jourdain is convinced that it is the clothes that make the man; he has money and leisure and the material surroundings of aristocracy; but he cannot live down his shopkeeping origin. He is an embodiment of contrast—*a bourgeois gentilhomme.*

A form of dramatic composition which must of necessity be included in this survey is the artificial comedy, the conventional society play, the drama of epigram. Its most successful exponent is Oscar Wilde. The keynote of contrast in *Lady Windermere's Fan* is struck by "dear Agatha," the Duchess's "little chatterbox," who on every occasion and under all manner of provocation has nothing to say but, "Yes, mamma," and who thus by her "clever talk" elicits the maternal rapture: "My dear one! You always say the right thing." There, with perfectly absurd simplicity, we have the very bones of contrast—and of the dramatic—laid bare. The speaker is a nonentity, as is her mother before her; and as, indeed, are all the characters in the play—with one exception. That exception is Mrs. Erlynne, the one dramatic character, and the one character in whom we find contrast. And the one contrast in character—the woman who, though far from being a model mother, elects to become a social pariah to secure her daughter's social salvation—alligns herself with the underlying dramatic idea of the play, that of a daughter being rabidly jealous of her own mother. The merest reflection on the construction of the drama will serve to remind us that the climacteric scene, where the presentation fan is found by Lord Windermere in Lord Darlington's rooms, is a scene which depends entirely for its effectiveness on the contrast inherent in it. Some critics have been unkind enough to say that plays like *Lady Windermere's Fan* live by reason of their epigrams alone. Be it so; contrast is the essence of epigram. It may very possibly be that the plays of Oscar Wilde are true dramas because they exploit paradoxes in evening dress.

If contrast is at the bottom of the comedy of manners and the comedy of epigram, it is not less in evidence in the comedy of

situation. Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, Sheridan's *School for Scandal*, Hoyt's *A Texas Steer*—all three, like *Are You a Mason?* and *Charley's Aunt* and *Little Miss Brown* and ever so many others including several made in France that must not be so much as named among us—win the tribute of our smiles and our laughter essentially by reason of the humorous contrasts they depict. They may incidentally show a conflict of wills and they may be arranged in a series of crises; but they could get along very well without either. The comic scenes that live in our memory are scenes depending for their efficiency on contrast. Thus, the famous screen scene in *The School for Scandal* has no volitional element in it whatever; but it has a delightfully bewildering collection of contrasts in both character and situation. So, too, in the farce that a few years ago set the United States in a roar, *Seven Days*, there is a scene consuming several minutes—not of stage time but of standard time—in which a burglar repeatedly slides up and down in a dumb waiter while a policeman repeatedly rushes down and up a parallel pair of stairs. Possibly there may be a conflict of wills in it, but the audience does not laugh on that account. The scene is funny because of the contrast, a contrast heightened in this case by reason of the fact that the burglar wears orthodox felt slippers and the policeman wears squeaking number twelves.

We should have to look far for a better example of the romantic drama than Mr. Justin Huntley McCarthy's colorful *If I Were King*; and in this genuinely entertaining story of François Villon we have yet another manifestation of contrast constituting the foundation of the dramatic art. Villon himself—sufficiently so in history and excessively so in legend—is a veritable child of contrast. He is a master of arts and a pickpocket, a cavalier and a tippler, a poet and a brawler, a lover and a rowdy. Tattered and tipsy, this scholar, poet, and housebreaker takes his stand in a disreputable tavern and recites his ballade, "If Villon were the King of France," while the actual King of France, Louis XI, lends an unsuspected ear. Louis—likewise in both fact and fiction—is a monarch of contrasts; and he so manages matters that the next morning Villon comes forth splendidly attired, like another Christopher Sly, and finds himself, by royal grace and favor, actually the shaper of France's destinies—for a few brief days. And so the stage pictures succeed one another, each

throwing into prominence some special phase of the general contrast of the scapgrace poet who, acting in the name of the King, is more kingly than he in diplomacy and love and war.

Melodrama is just now a term of reproach and literature professes to have nothing to do with it. We might urge that melodrama finds a place in some of the great plays of the world—including the *Prometheus Bound* and *Hamlet*—and that, whatever its literary status may be, its dramatic status is assured. The popular theater has generally been the stamping ground of melodrama, and we can hardly afford to leave out the popular theater in any adequate discussion of dramatic values. Such being the case, can we find any melodramatic scene—ranging all the way from the medieval miracle plays to the dramas of Lope de Vega and thence to *In Old Kentucky* and *Nellie, the Beautiful Cloak Model*—in which the element of contrast has not been the dominant element? The characters in the most beloved species of melodrama are paired off to emphasize contrast—the hero and the villain, the heroine and the adventuress, the defaulting banker and the honest policeman. In scene the melodrama is unsparing of resources to secure contrast, breaking the heart of Boileau and the letter of the unities of time and place by ranging from the peaceful village at noon to Brooklyn Bridge at midnight and the White Mountains three years later. And as for the plot of melodrama—the type of plot that led the fourteenth century crowds agape after the pageant through the winding streets of Coventry, that fifty years ago set the gallery gods stamping, hissing, and whistling in London and New York, and that even today, though carefully disguised, affords surcease to the frazzled nerves of the commiserable tired business man—what manner of plot is it if not one of incessant, bewildering, breath-taking contrasts?

But, admitted that the element of contrast is found in every species of dramatic composition and that it appears to be essential to every piece of organic narrative acted on a stage before an audience, it is a true differentia of the dramatic form? Do we not find the element of contrast likewise in the epic, the novel, and the short story? Is there not a pronounced element of contrast in all forms of art? Is contrast a distinctive characteristic of the drama?

Certainly, contrast exists in all forms of art. For contrast exists in life; and if we accept art, in the broadest sense of the word, as a representation and interpretation of life, we must naturally expect to find in art a reproduction of characteristics which are prominent in life itself. The painter acts wisely when he masters the principles of contrast; so does the orator, the poet, the sculptor, the architect, the novelist. The dramatist is by no means alone in his dependence upon the element of contrast. But he is alone in his essential and fundamental dependence upon it. Contrast is often found in the novel, but it is not essential to the novel; contrast is often found in the narrative poem, but it is not essential to the narrative poem; contrast is often found in the musical composition, but it is not essential to the musical composition. But contrast is always found in the drama, and it is absolutely essential to the drama. Retaining the form while altering the substance of the shibboleth evolved from Brunetière's theory of dramatic art, we may truly say: *No contrast, no drama.*

In this connection it is profitable for us to consider for a moment a hybrid form of art which undoubtedly has its place in the world and which has its respectable minority of defenders and advocates. I refer to what is known as the closet drama. The closet drama might be roughly defined as a poem that looks like a play. Some eminent poets—Browning and Tennyson, for example—wrote excellent closet dramas; *Stafford* is one, *Becket* is another. Both poems, as it happens, were intended by their authors to be plays; but neither Browning nor Tennyson, though achieving clear-cut characterization and recognizing the principles of proportion, was capable of sustained dramatic effort. The poet in both of them was constantly coming to the fore; and though *Stafford* came near to being presented on the stage and though *Becket*—entirely on account of the prestige of the late Sir Henry Irving—really got before the footlights, both poems remain poems in substance though dramatic in form. And should we go into the matter more thoroughly and seek to discover the why of it, we should find that the closet drama is not a true play because in it there is not sufficient importance given to the element of contrast.

On the other hand, it is by no means an uncommon experience to come across a novel—or rather a considerable portion of a novel—that would obviously lend itself to dramatic representa-

tion. Thus, the unforgettable scene in *Henry Esmond* where Esmond breaks his sword in the presence of the Young Pretender is recognized as intensely dramatic; and it is so because of the group of contrasts underlying it. The scene is dramatic in substance though not dramatic in form. Often, indeed, the novelist, when writing a scene of dramatic substance and scope, finds himself approximating to the conventionalities of dramatic dialogue. Such was the case with the late Frank Norris in one of the most impressive chapters of *The Octopus*. He had conceived a forceful, symbolical contrast; side by side, he shows us one group of characters feasting sumptuously in the glow of a gorgeously appointed dining room and another group of characters starving to death in the streets of San Francisco. It is significant that in presenting the contrasting scenes, so eminently dramatic in substance, Norris seized upon a distinctively dramatic form of expression. Those few pages picked up at random would lead the reader to believe that both in form and substance *The Octopus* is not a novel but a play.

The process of looking into the seeds of time and telling which will grow and which will not finds its analogue in determining which novels will and which will not successfully undergo the operation of dramatization. But of one thing we can at least be sure: No novel which is scant in the element of contrast will make a satisfactory play. This is by no means the only consideration, but it is the vital and fundamental consideration. An impartial survey of the many poor novels that have made at least passable plays and of the several passable novels that have made atrocious plays will bring us back to the insistent formula: *No contrast, no drama.*

The theory of contrast, though it displaces the theories set forth by Freytag, Brunetière, and Archer, by no means negatives them. Many an excellent piece of dramatic composition is arranged according to the *Theile und Stellen* urged by the German playwright and critic; in fact it may be said that, were some of our present day dramatists to drill themselves more rigidly in the processes of dramatic construction set forth in *Die Technik des Dramas*, audiences would suffer less and art would profit more. So much of conflict is there in life that necessarily we look for it in the drama; and just as most of the great plays of the past turn on some phase of the human will, so in all probability will most

of the great plays of the future. And so with the crises, the interesting culminations underscored by Mr. Archer; there are critical moments in life and therefore in art, and the dramatist does well when he grasps them.

Nor are the theories of Freytag, Brunetière, and Archer in blank and utter opposition to the theory of contrast; in them we may see the truth, as in a glass darkly. The elaborate technical devices for which Freytag pleaded derive their undoubted value from the fact that they serve to frame and set off the underlying contrasts assumed to be existing in the material of the drama. Given a group of contrasts of sufficient variety and magnitude, they are in many cases shown forth to best advantage in some such scheme of arrangement as Freytag laid down. If we probe behind the fact of volitional conflict or volitional action generally, we are fairly certain to come upon a contrast or a series of contrasts which, as Hamlet put it, puzzles the will; hence the dramatic value of Brunetière's conflict of wills lies in its indication of contrasts. And as for the crises in life and in art, what are they after all but bursts of spray produced by the counterflow of contrasts? They have their place in the drama; but that which makes a play a play, that which furnishes the essential and underlying constituent of the dramatic, is contrast.[11]

[11] Though Mr. Clayton Hamilton is, to my best knowledge, the first writer to set forth the theory of contrast as a true differentia of the drama, he is by no means alone in the recognition of contrast as a desideratum of the dramatic form. Thus Dr. Albert Vögele in his masterly study, *Der Pessimismus und das Tragische in Kunst und Leben* brings out the importance of discord in the drama and calls attention to its existence in ancient and modern plays. Contrast in the drama likewise received some recognition from A. W. Schlegel in his commentary on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet.*

III.

THE ENGLISH HISTORICAL PLAYS

The aim of the present monograph is to examine, with reference to the theory of dramatic contrast, Shakespeare's use of his sources in the English historical plays. Our purpose is not to compare Shakespeare's dramas with the actual facts of history, but to study his sources on the one hand and his plays on the other, to note the more important instances in which he diverged from those sources and to discover to what extent the theory of contrast offers an explanation of such divergences.

The English historical plays have been selected for this investigation for three reasons. In the first place, the sources are accessible and the fact of their being sources is universally admitted. Secondly, in the historical plays Shakespeare employed for the most part definite historical material rather than plot ideas that had previously been cast in fictional form, so that his manipulation of it represents his own choice and shaping of the material. Thirdly, the historical plays were written during a period (1591-1612) which roughly covers his entire career as a dramatist, and hence this study should afford some valuable suggestions bearing upon the genesis of Shakespeare's artistic ideals. The ten historical plays are taken, therefore, not in the order in which they correspond to the facts of English history, but in the order in which they were written.

Dates of Composition

King Henry VI, Parts I, II, and *III.*—Shakespearean scholars are all but unanimous in giving 1591 and 1592 as the approximate dates of authorship. Shakespeare, in the Epilogue to *King Henry V,* makes it clear that the plays commemorating the reign of Henry VI antedated that play:

> Henry the Sixth, in infant bands crowned King
> Of France and England, did this King succeed;
> Whose state so many had the managing,
> That they lost France and made his England bleed:
> Which oft our stage hath shown.

Greene's posthumous essay, *The Groatsworth of Wit bought with a Million of Repentence,* published late in 1592, contains an obvious

parody on the line in *III Henry VI*, "O tiger's heart wrapt in a woman's hide." (I. iv. 137.) Published in the same year was Nash's *Pierce Penniless*, in which we have a distinct reference to the Talbot scenes in *I Henry VI.!*

"How would it have joyed brave Talbot, the terror of the French, to think that after he had been two hundred years in his tomb he should triumph again on the stage, and have his bones embalmed with the tears of ten thousand spectators (at least at several times), who, in the tragedian that represents his person, behold him fresh bleeding."

An entry in Henslowe's diary informs us that *Henry VI* was performed as a new play in March, 1591; and, of course, the admittedly Shakespearean passages in the three plays reveal their emanation from a very early stage in his career as a dramatist.

King Richard II.—The composition of this play is assigned to 1593. Scholars find in it the influence of Marlowe's *Edward II*, which dates from about 1590, and the source of parallel and supposedly plagiarized passages in Daniel's *Civil Wars* (1595). Two quartos of *King Richard II*, one of them with Shakespeare's name on the title-page, were published in 1597. In this, as in numerous other instances, the presentation of the play preceded by several years its first appearance in print.

King Richard III.—The date of composition is set about 1594. In this play Shakespeare shows himself most strongly under the influence of Marlowe, Richard in his unrelieved villainy being in conception closely akin to the "ideal villain" beloved of Marlowe. The play first appeared in print in 1597.

King John.—This is one of the plays mentioned by Francis Meres in the *Palladis Tamia* of 1598. Relying solely on internal evidence, critics place its date of composition about 1595.

I Henry IV.—The date of composition is assigned to 1596 or 1597. Among the pieces of external evidence cited in support of that generally accepted view are: A mention in the *Palladis Tamia*; a reference to Falstaff in Jonson's *Every Man Out of His Humour*, staged in 1599; a reference to the drawer Francis in the *Pilgrimage to Parnassus*, the Cambridge Christmas play of 1598; two allusions in the play to current events—the Spanish expedition in 1596 (I. 1.) and the corn famine of the same year (II. 1.).

II Henry IV.—This play, "at once the supplement and epilogue of the first part, and the preparation for the ensuing dramatic

history of Henry V," was written about two years later. Jonson has a reference to Justice Silence in *Every Man Out of His Humour.*

King Henry V.—Sufficient evidence of the date of composition is furnished in the Prologue to the fifth act.

> . . . . . The general of our gracious empress,
> As in good time he may, from Ireland coming,
> Bringing rebellion broached on his sword,

is an unmistakable allusion to the famous expedition of the Earl of Essex; so the play must have been acted some time between March 27 and September 28, in 1599.

King Henry VIII.—The Shakespearean portions of this play bear out the critics in their contention that *Henry VIII* came very late in the dramatist's career. The eulogy of King James in the fifth act points to a date of composition subsequent to the death of Queen Elizabeth. We have an unusual piece of external evidence in the destruction by fire of the Globe Theater on June 29, 1613, while this play was being enacted for the first time. The assigned date of composition is therefore 1612.

While scholars differ somewhat as to the exact years in which the historical plays were written, they are practically unanimous in assigning them to the order of composition just indicated. Here and there is raised a dissenting voice, as when Sir Sidney Lee holds that *King Richard III* was written earlier than *King Richard II*; but, in general it is agreed that Shakespeare served his apprenticeship in writing the three parts of *King Henry VI*, that he was strongly influenced by Marlowe in *King Richard II* and *King Richard III*, that he tentatively struck an epic note in *King John* and carried it, through the two parts of *King Henry IV*, to a glorious fulness in *King Henry V*, and that very late in his career as a dramatist he collaborated in writing *King Henry VIII*. All in all, we are warranted in accepting the approximate dates and the general order of composition as a sufficient chronological basis for our proposed inquiry into Shakespeare's manipulation of his material.

IV.

THE THREE PLAYS OF KING HENRY VI

Our investigation of the three parts of *King Henry VI* is entered upon with the assumption that, though it is more than likely that they are the work of several hands, Shakespeare had a considerable part in their composition. Not all critics take the extreme view of Malone (*Dissertation on the Three Parts of King Henry VI*): "My hypothesis then is, that the first part of *King Henry VI* as it now appears (of which no quarto copy is extant), was the entire or nearly the entire production of some ancient dramatist; that *The Whole Contention of the Two Houses of York and Lancaster*, etc., written probably before the year 1590, and printed in quarto in 1600, was also the composition of some writer who preceded Shakspeare; and that from this piece, which is in two parts (the former of which is entitled, *The first part of the Contention of the two famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster, with the death of the good duke Humphrey*, etc., and the latter, *The true Tragedie of Richard duke of Yorke, and the death of the good King Henrie the Sixt*), our poet formed two plays, entitled the Second and Third Parts of *King Henry VI* as they appear in the first folio edition of his works."

Owing to dearth of external evidence, any attempt to decide more definitely on the authorship of these plays is necessarily futile; and tests made solely on data furnished by internal evidence are quite as useless, since the Shakespeare who here tries his 'prentice hand is far from being the Shakespeare who later is to limn for us the heroic figure of King Henry V and search out the secrets of Iago's heart. The common denominator of Shakespearean criticism seems to be the assumption that, though it is very possible that Shakespeare revamped older plays and had collaborators in writing these three dramas, there is enough of his work in them to warrant us in including them among his complete works. Be that as it may, the question of authorship is not a vital one in this study. Courtenay's attitude, as expressed in his *Commentaries* (vol. 1, p. 213) is deserving of emulation: "Since, however, these plays are included in all editions of Shakspeare's works, and are read with the rest, . . . it is equally my business to examine them, whether he wrote them or not.

And let it not be supposed that I decide the question when I speak of the author as *Shakspeare.*" All that we insist upon is, that to whatever extent Shakespeare was indebted to earlier dramatic versions of the stories circling about the Wars of the Roses and other events in the reign of Henry VI, he exercised the final decision as to what form the material would take in the three plays directly associated with his name.

The material employed by Shakespeare, either or both directly and indirectly, in the three plays of *King Henry VI* we find in Holinshed's *Chronicles.* In general, the plays follow the chronicles closely; but they necessarily make a selection of material, follow a different principle of proportion, indulge in numerous anachronisms and in places introduce incidents which are not warranted in the historical sources of the dramas. Shakespeare's anachronisms, which are characteristic of all the historical plays, we shall reserve for further discussion; our purpose here is to investigate his manipulation of his material and in particular to find out to what extent his deviations from Holinshed may be accounted for on the hypothesis of dramatic contrast.

In reviewing the loosely constructed plays of *King Henry VI* we find ourselves impressed with four sets or series of contrasts, which we may conveniently label as follows: The War of the Roses, the Winchester-Gloucester Feud, the Pucelle-Talbot Episodes and the Queen Margaret Scenes. Each of these will, on analysis, reveal an effort—perhaps unconcious—on the part of the dramatist to present contrasting characters in action; and examination of the plays in reference to the corresponding passages in Holinshed will show that it was very largely by the principle of dramatic contrast that the dramatist was governed in selecting his material and in inventing episodes.

The War of the Roses has its inception in the Temple Garden (*I Henry VI*, II, iv.), where the partisans of the rival houses of York and Lancaster discuss the right of Henry's succession to the crown of England. In the midst of the peaceful garden are heard the first ominous growlings of civil strife. The other participants in the scene group themselves about the two central figures, Richard Plantagenet and the Earl of Somerset. The plucking of the roses with its inherent contrast is emphasized with a reserve and a simplicity that makes this scene easily the most artistic in the three plays. Says Plantagenet:

Let him that is a true-born gentleman,
And stands upon the honour of his birth,
If he suppose that I have pleaded truth,
From off this briar pluck a white rose with me.

Whereupon pleads Somerset:

Let him that is no coward nor no flatterer,
But dare maintain the party of the truth,
Pluck a red rose from off this thorn with me.

And a little later, after the noblemen present have definitely taken sides by plucking roses red and white, the following dialogue takes place between Somerset and Plantagenet:

Plan. Now, Somerset, where is your argument?
Som. Here in my scabbard, mediating that
Shall dye your white rose in a bloody red.
Plan. Meantime your cheeks do counterfeit our roses;
For pale they look with fear, as witnessing
The truth of our side.
Som. No, Plantagenet,
'Tis not for fear but anger that my cheeks
Blush for pure shame to counterfeit our roses,
And yet thy tongue will not confess thy error.
Plan. Hath not thy rose a canker, Somerset?
Som. Hath not thy rose a thorn, Plantagenet?
Plan. Ay, sharp and piercing, to maintain his truth;
Whiles thy consuming canker eats his falsehood.
Som. Well, I'll find friends to wear my bleeding roses,
That shall maintain what I have said is true,
Where false Plantagenet dare not be seen.

This passage illustrates, among other things, the sometimes irritating fondness of the young Shakespeare to play upon words and to indulge freely in verbal antitheses—characteristics which he never entirely lost but which are very pronounced in the English historical plays. It may be well at this point to call attention to the fact that antithesis is essentially founded upon contrast and that many a scene of undeniable dramatic force, both in Shakespeare's plays and out of them, is simply an extended antithesis, an antithesis cast into narrative sequence. The episode of the plucking of the roses in the Temple Garden has no mention in Holinshed and no warrant in history; it is a delightful invention of the dramatist to typify an element of contrast.

In succeeding scenes (*I Henry VI*, III. iv. and IV. i.), we find a further visualization of the contrast involved in the War of the Roses in the quarrel between two members of the rival factions, Vernon and Basset. Both are historical personages who took opposite sides in the civil strife, but Shakespeare invented their personal quarrel.

The War of the Roses reaches its culmination in the second act of *III Henry VI* when the white rose blooms, though drenched in blood, and the red rose hangs limp in defeat. A notable variation of Shakespeare from his sources occurs in II. ii. 81 ff. where he introduces the leaders of the two houses and allows them to engage in a spirited and unseemly wrangle. The scene does not perceptibly advance the dramatic action of the play, it does not serve to elucidate character, it does not by any means contribute to what students of the drama sometimes designate "relief"; but it most emphatically does bring out and sustain the contrast of the War of the Roses, and in such capacity it has its dramaturgical justification.

A similar explanation must account for two contrasting episodes in II. v. where a son discovers that he has killed his own father, and a father discovers that he has killed his own son. If Shakespeare had any historical basis for this dual scene, it is to be found only in the general remarks made by Hall concerning the Battle of Towton (256):

"This conflict was in manner unnatural, for in it the son fought against the father, the brother against the brother, the nephew against the uncle, and the tenant against his lord."

Here we have the antithesis of civil war formulated by the chronicler and visualized by the dramatist. And the contrast is enhanced by the presence of King Henry, who laments the unhappy occurrences of which he himself has been the unwitting occasion.

The War of the Roses shows mainly Shakespeare's invention of episodes to illustrate dramatic contrast; the Winchester-Gloucester Feud affords an excellent example of his modification and shaping of existing material for the same purpose. Here, as in so many other instances throughout the historical plays, though Shakespeare distorts isolated facts, he succeeds in bringing out the general truth. Henry Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester and later Cardinal, the grand uncle of King Henry VI, is described by Holinshed as "haughty in stomach, high in countenance, disdainful to his kin,"

and strong "in malice and mischief" (212); Humphrey Plantagenet, Duke of Gloucester and uncle of the King, was indeed "the good Duke Humphrey."[12] The enmity between these two eminent men is one of the scandals of English history. And it is true that the churchman, by devious ways, succeeded in driving his nephew into disgrace. Shakespeare puts the two noblemen in striking contrast.

Thus, he gives Winchester an occasion which did not exist in fact for increased resentment against Gloucester. Soliloquizes the Bishop (*I Henry VI.* I. i.):

> Each hath his place and function to attend.
> I am left out; for me nothing remains.
> But long I will not be Jack out of office.

In both Hall (115) and Holinshed (III, 585) it is expressly stated that the custody of the youthful Henry VI was appointed to Henry Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester. He was not, therefore, "Jack out of office."

In the second act of *II Henry VI* (scene i) the dramatist brings the Winchester-Gloucester Feud to focus. In the royal presence the lords protectors bandy words and both so far forget their dignity that they arrange for a duel. A contrast within a contrast is furnished in the Cardinal's readiness to take the sword and the Duke's fluency in quoting churchly Latin. A careful reading of the entire scene, which is considerably above the level of the play in dramatic effectiveness, will show that its success is conditioned by the contrast pointed out between the rival nobles.

To make the ultimate defeat of the Duke in the Winchester-Gloucester Feud more apparent, Shakespeare juggles his dates and has Winchester deposed from the protectorship on the occasion of his wife's trial for witchcraft (*II Henry VI.* II. iii.). And in the scene (III. i.) in which the unfortunate Duke is arrested on a charge of high treason, Shakespeare has builded upon Holinshed's material with the obvious purpose of setting the nobility of the defeated man in effective contrast with the malice of his arch-enemy, the Cardinal.

We now come to a consideration of what we have termed the Pucelle-Talbot Episodes. The character of the Blessed Jeanne

[12] For a succinct account of his practical interest in schools and scholars see Einstein's *Italian Renaissance in England*, chap. I. Gloucester's private life was by no means flawless.

d'Arc as depicted in *I Henry VI* has been justly described as a libel upon the truth of history, and efforts have been made time and again to show either that Shakespeare did not write the objectionable play or else that in writing it he fell a victim to national prejudice. I here venture to suggest an interpretation of the Pucelle scenes which is deduced from Mr. Hamilton's theory of contrast in the drama.

In the Pucelle-Talbot Episodes (*I Henry VI* I. ii., I. iv., I. v., I. vi., II. i., II. ii., III. ii., IV. i., IV. v. vi. vii., V. iii. V. iv.) we find a more or less conscious effort on the part of the dramatist to personify a contrast that runs through the play. The general contrast is England versus France. The English King is set over against Charles the Dauphin, but that contrast of personality—owing largely to the weak character of Henry—is not sufficient to symbolize the international antithesis; at least, not from the English point of view, which is openly the point of view of the dramatist. Therefore, he makes the contrast take the form of conflict and to emphasize and sustain the contrast he singles out a champion on either side. For England he selects Lord Talbot, for France la Pucelle.

Shakespeare here faced a problem that a superficial reading of *I Henry VI* will not reveal; one must have had some actual experience in the construction of plays and some practical knowledge of what is and what is not theatrically effective to be in a position to understand the dramaturgic necessity, in view of the facts in the case, of Shakespeare's doing what he did. King Henry, after whom the play is named, should be the hero of the drama and the champion of England; but he is neither. Therefore Talbot, who fills both rôles in lieu of the King, must be as nearly as possible an ideal hero and warrior and man; and one way to make him such is to have his adversary on the French side assume the proportions of an ideal villain. Talbot, the real hero of the play, must be painted white; and to intensify his whiteness, la Pucelle must be painted black. The result may not be pretty and it may not be true; but to the audience for whom Shakespeare wrote—and in matters pertaining to the drama we cannot afford to ignore the audience—it was rattling good English drama.

And so we find Shakespeare (I. iv.) early enlisting our sympathy for Talbot by having that hero relate to Lord Salisbury and a

group of English knights at Orleans the details of his sufferings and humiliations while in the enemy's hands, of the "scoffs and scorns and contumelious taunts." And that we may not fall into the mistake, however remote the possibility, of mistaking this hero for a weakling like unto his King, the dramatist has him give details of his prowess, too:

> Then broke I from the officers that led me,
> And with my nails digg'd stones out of the ground,
> To hurl at the beholders of my shame:
> My grisly countenance made others fly;
> None durst come near for fear of sudden death.

Both champions being introduced, Shakespeare has them meet in an indecisive duel (I. v.), in the course of which Talbot takes pains to remind the audience that Jeanne is a "witch" and a "strumpet." And in order to bring out properly the unworthy character of the French adversaries, Shakespeare immediately afterward (I. vi.) shows us Charles the Dauphin and the French leaders threatening to confer all but divine honors on the same Pucelle. Says Charles:

> 'Tis Joan, not we, by whom the day is won;
> For which I will divide my crown with her,
> And all the priests and friars in my realm
> Shall in procession sing her endless praise.
> A statlier pyramis to her I'll rear
> Than Rhodope's or Memphis' ever was:
> In memory of her when she is dead,
> Her ashes, in an urn more precious
> Than the rich-jewel'd coffer of Darius,
> Transported shall be at high festivals
> Before the kings and queens of France.
> No longer on Saint Denis will we cry,
> But Joan la Pucelle shall be France's saint.

It need hardly be stated that there is, neither in Holinshed nor elsewhere, any warrant for this scene.

Having seen that the hero Talbot has suffered and is brave, the audience must now have evidence of his cleverness; and so, out of the whole cloth, Shakespeare manufactures that scene (II. iii.) in which the English champion outwits the mythical Countess of Auvergne and so impresses that lady with his sterling qualities that she, who intended to make him her prisoner, expresses her delight at having an opportunity of feasting so great

a warrior in her house. And that still another angle of the hero's character may be seen, Talbot must, not without some very theatrical rhetoric, in presence of the King and court, tear the knightly garter from the recreant leg of Fastolfe (IV. i.). To what extent Shakespeare in this instance stretched his sources may be seen from Holinshed's statement (III. 601.) that not Talbot, but Bedford, took from Sir John Fastolfe "the image of St. George and his garter; though afterward, by means of friends and apparent causes of good excuse, the same were to him again delivered, *against the mind of the Lord Talbot.*" Finally, accepting a truthful but inadequate historical basis in Holinshed, Shakespeare paints in warm tones the closing scenes of his hero's life (IV. v., vi., vii.), beautifully mingling love and pathos and introducing a minor contrast in the person of the old warrior's stripling son. His boy's dead body held close to his breast, Talbot dies with a verbal contrast on his lips:

Now my old arms are young John Talbot's grave.

In contrast with Talbot's noble strategy in the castle at Auvergne is the ignoble strategy whereby la Pucelle succeeds in getting her soldiers into Rouen (III. ii.). In contrast with Talbot's greatness in stripping the cowardly Fastolfe of the insignia of knighthood is la Pucelle's smallness in winning Burgundy over to the side of the Dauphin (III. iii.). Here is another of Shakespeare's deliberate anachronisms, since Jeanne d'Arc's death preceded by four years Burgundy's reconciliation with Charles. The scene (V. iii.) wherein la Pucelle holds converse with her fiends serves to make her assume an even darker hue than formerly; and as for the unspeakably revolting episode of her examination before Warwick and the Duke of York, it is undeniably in gruesome contrast with the death scene of the good Talbot.

In his contrast between Talbot and la Pucelle Shakespeare clearly showed two tricks of the amateur: He put his colors on too thick, and he was more free with his black paint than with his white paint. Talbot, though something of a monstrosity of goodness, is more nearly human than la Pucelle. Deeper was his knowledge of life and more skilled his craftsman's hand when later on Shakespeare had recourse to the same sort of dramatic contrast in *Julius Caesar*. There he uses his white paint on the Brutus of history, and on the Caesar of history his black paint—or is it an

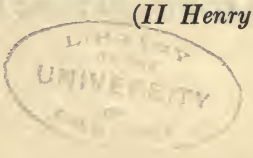
inoffensive drab? At all events in the case of *Julius Caesar* he presented his contrast of character with more of artistic reserve.

A further instance of Shakespeare's manipulation of his materials with a view to dramatic contrast is found in the Queen Margaret Scenes. This gifted, beautiful, and masculine woman he makes the center of a series of dramatic events, including her amour with the Duke of Suffolk, her personal spite against the Duchess of Gloucester, and her sharply defined contrast in personality with her royal husband.

For the attachment existing between the Queen and Suffolk the dramatist found in Holinshed some slight foundation, but certainly one not sufficient to justify the lengths to which he carries it in these plays. Suffolk did indeed arrange for Henry's marriage with Margaret of Anjou, but he certainly did not carry out his commission with the wealth of amorous details given in *I Henry VI* (V. iii.). Shakespeare has the impressionable Duke fall precipitately in love with the lady who is destined to be England's Queen, and in *II Henry VI* he gives us rather definitely to understand that Suffolk's love was not unrequited. We find no account taken in the plays of the historical facts that Suffolk was some years older than Margaret's father, King Regnier of Provence, and that his wife, Alice Chaucer, accompanied the English nobleman on the occasion of his visit to France as the proxy of King Henry. In the scenes devoted to the relations of Margaret and Suffolk (notably *I Henry VI*, V. iii. and *II Henry VI*, III. ii.), Shakespeare, like so many other dramatists, has sensed the underlying contrasts existing in love—especially in illicit love; and the dramatic value is in this case considerably enhanced by the fact that Margaret in her softer moods is in striking contrast with the vigorous virago she shows herself in other parts of the plays.

With a skill worthy of a better cause, Shakespeare brings out the personal animus existing between the Queen and the Duchess of Gloucester and makes of it the unfailing dramatic theme of woman against woman. Eleanor dreams—her dream as often the offspring of desire—that she is seated

> In the cathedral church of Westminster,
> And in that chair where kings and queens are crown'd:
> Where Henry and dame Margaret kneel'd to me,
> And on my head did set the diadem.
>
> (*II Henry VI*, I. ii.)



And Margaret admits to Suffolk:

> Not all these lords do vex me half so much
> As that proud dame, the lord protector's wife.
> She sweeps it through the court with troops of ladies,
> More like an empress than Duke Humphrey's wife:
> Strangers in court do take her for the queen:
> She bears a duke's revenues on her back,
> And in her heart she scorns our poverty:
> Shall I not live to be avenged on her?
> Contemptuous base-born callet as she is,
> She vaunted 'mongst her minions t'other day,
> The very train of her worst wearing gown
> Was better worth than all my father's lands.
>
> (*II Henry VI*, I. iii.)

This ladies' battle reaches its climax when in the presence of the King and court Queen Margaret gives the Duchess a box on the ear. Shakespeare shows the Queen and Suffolk taking steps to discover the Duchess in the midst of the evil practices which brought her to disgrace. Dates are badly twisted to bring about this dramatic contrivance. In point of fact, Eleanor of Gloucester had been arraigned and sentenced in 1441, four years previous to Margaret's coronation in May, 1445. So the woman-against-woman strand of plot is a manifest fabrication.

Another and contrasting aspect of the character of the Queen Margaret of the plays is furnished in the scene wherein she manifests her vindictiveness and warlike mettle. Holinshed gives two versions of the fall of York—one that he died on the field of battle, the other that he became the Queen's prisoner and as such suffered the molehill coronation and other indignities. It is significant that the latter version Shakespeare selected as better suited for dramatic presentation; and he failed not to embellish it freely the more decisively to bring out the contrast between the fallen standard bearer of the House of York and the triumphant heroine of the House of Lancaster (*III Henry VI*, I. iv.). No historical foundation exists for York's lengthy reply to Margaret's gibes and taunts; but from the dramaturgic point of view it serves to stress the contrast.

The same thing may be said of Margaret's intrepid battle speech before the fatal fight at Tewksbury (*III Henry VI*, V. iv.), a speech which prompts the young Prince Edward to exclaim:

Methinks a woman of this valiant spirit
Should, if a coward heard her speak these words,
Infuse his breast with magnanimity,
And make him, naked, foil a man at arms.

According to Hall (297), Margaret's attitude on this occasion was far otherwise. "She, like a woman all dismayed for fear, fell to the ground; her heart was pierced with sorrow, her speech was in manner passed; all her spirits were tormented with melancholy."

To have portrayed Margaret thus before Tewksbury would have been dramatic inasmuch as it would contrast with her ordinary bold and unquenchable spirit; but it would not have been in harmony with the larger contrast upon which the Queen Margaret Scenes are based—the contrast of the mannish Queen with the womanish King. There can be no doubt that Henry is a dramatic figure—a fact which no theory of the drama but that of contrast can sufficiently explain. The formula of "passion in action" will not serve, for in Henry there is neither one nor the other. Mr. Archer's suggestion of "crises" is as little to the purpose, for the King is least dramatic in "culminating moments" and most dramatic when the action of the play is temporarily suspended—when, for example, disguised and bearing a prayer-book in his weakling hand, he strolls soliloquizing in the north woods (*III Henry VI*, III. 1.). Nor does the explanation, "conflict of wills," explain King Henry, for obviously it takes two to make a fight. No; King Henry is dramatic for the same reason that Prince Hamlet is dramatic—because he is in contrast with every one about him and is the tragic victim of contrasts within himself.

In the royal personage after whom these three plays are, almost ironically, named, Shakespeare presents to us a type of the conventional "good, pious soul" who means pathetically well, who is irritatingly addicted to devotional ejaculations, who is profoundly impressed by the conviction that this earth is a vale of tears, but who is utterly incapable of judging men, prone to do injury from pious motives, and in general altogether unsuited for the work in the world that circumstances call upon him to do. It is characteristic that on an occasion necessitating action, King Henry very consistently faints away (*II Henry VI*, III. ii.); and there is a certain grim humor in a very modern interpretation of Somerset's remedial suggestion:

Rear up his body; wring him by the nose.

Such is the man who is placed in contrast with Margaret of Anjou; and just as Shakespeare tampered with his sources in etching the Queen, so did he likewise in portraying the King. In these words he makes Margaret describe her lord and master:

> 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.
>
> (*II Henry VI*, I. iii.)

Kindlier far is Holinshed (III. 691.): "He was plain, upright, far from fraud, wholly given to prayer, reading of scriptures, and alms-deeds." And Hall (303) supplies several softening details missing from Shakespeare's lines both in letter and in spirit: "King Henry was of stature goodly, of body slender, to which proportion all other members were correspondent; his face beautiful, in the which continually was resident the bounty of mind with which he was inwardly endowed. He did abhor of his own nature all the vices, as well of the body as of the soul; and, from his very infancy, he was of honest conversation and pure integrity; no knower of evil, and a keeper of all goodness; a despiser of all things which were wont to cause the minds of mortal men to slide or appair. Besides this, patience was so radicate in his heart that of all the injuries to him committed (which were no small number) he never asked vengeance nor punishment, but for that rendered to Almighty God, his Creator, hearty thanks, thinking that by this trouble and adversity his sins were to him forgotten and forgiven."

This is not the Henry of Shakespeare, but the Henry of whom Sharon Turner has said: "No sovereign seems to have possessed purer feelings, or more upright intentions than the meek and gentle Henry."[13] But it is a Henry who, under the circumstances set forth in the plays and in view of the characters swirling about the throne, would be immeasurably less dramatic than the feeble

[13] Quoted in French's *Shakespearana Genealogica*, p. 178.

warrior who after the battle of St. Alban's "slily stole away and left his men" (*III Henry VI*, I. i.), and whose watery character gives bitter irony to the words of the leering Gloucester who has just driven his blade into Henry's heart:

> What, will the aspiring blood of Lancaster
> Sink in the ground? I thought it would have mounted.
> (*III Henry VI*, V. vi.)

Before leaving the three plays of *King Henry VI* we must briefly call attention to a few of the numerous minor contrasts scattered through the scenes, most of them with no historical warrant. For example, there is the Mayor of London's whimsical comment on the Winchester-Gloucester Feud:

> Good God, these nobles should such stomachs bear!
> I myself fight not once in forty year.
> (*I Henry VI*, I. iii.)

Likewise it is in the spirit of contrast that Hume's soliloquy is devised (*II Henry VI*, I. ii.). He has been playing a part with the Duchess of Gloucester; now he removes the mask and shows his shrewd, scornful countenance. Again, in the "miracle" scene (*II Henry VI*, II. i.) Shakespeare brings out the absurd contrast more clearly by having the fakir feign not only blindness but lameness. Sir Thomas More tells the story in a *Dialogue* that was accessible to Shakespeare, but has no reference to the assumed lameness of the imposter. So too, in the second and third scenes in the fifth act of *II Henry VI*, there is no historical matter except the bare fact that Somerset and the elder Clifford are killed. Shakespeare has Clifford fall by the hand of the Duke of York, thus preparing for the retribution to be wreaked by young Clifford on York and the young Duke of Rutland.

Contrast was likewise the principle upon which the dramatist shaped his material in constructing the Jack scenes (*II Henry VI*, IV.). This accounts for the humorous effect of the episode (scene ii.) where the inflated Cade sings his glories and Dick Butcher and Smith the weaver act as an ironic chorus:

Cade. My father was a Mortimer,—
Dick. (aside). He was an honest man and a good bricklayer.
Cade. My mother a Plantagenet,—
Dick (aside). I knew her well; she was a midwife.
Cade. My wife descended of the Lacies,—

Dick (aside). She was, indeed, a pedler's daughter, and sold many laces.

Smith (aside). But now of late, not able to travel with her furred pack, she washes bucks here at home.

Cade. Therefore am I of an honourable house.

Dick (aside). Ay, by my faith, the field is honourable; and there was he born, under a hedge, for his father had never a house but the cage.

In general, the Cade band in Holinshed is not composed of the "crazy Calibans" depicted by Shakespeare.

V.

KING RICHARD II

Time and again it has been asserted that *King Richard II* is not an acting play, which means not a play at all. Thus, Dr. Johnson complains that "it is not finished at least with the happy force of some of his other tragedies, nor can be said much to affect the passions or enlarge the understanding"—in the face of which dogmatic condemnation we must perforce stand silent if unconvinced. And Coleridge, sadly wagging his head, admits that "this tragedy is ill suited to our present large theatres. But, "he hastens to add, "in itself, and for the closet, I feel no hesitation in placing it as the first and most admirable of all Shakespeare's purely historical plays." In our own day Professor Matthews accepts the undramatic quality of *King Richard II* as a matter of course. It "lacks action, it is barren in striking situations; events merely happen and are not brought about by deliberate intent. The movement is sluggish, and it is epic or eligiac rather than dramatic. . . . In other words, the play as a play is weakened by a dearth of dramatic motive, of that assertion of the human will which is ever the most potent force in the theatre. . . . The central figure of this tragic history is fundamentally undramatic."[14]

Are not these and similar strictures based upon too narrow a conception of what constitutes the dramatic? If we insist upon action—action with a beginning, a middle and an end—as essential to the drama, then certainly the play of *King Richard II* is not dramatic. And the conviction that the play is not dramatic and the leading character is not dramatic will readily lead us to believe that here we have a piece of artistic work not suited for presentation on a stage before an audience. In proof of his assertion that the play is unactable, Professor Matthews quotes the actor, Macready. But is an actor, even a Macready, the best judge of the dramatic character of a play? And is it not possible that with the elimination of the large theatres of Coleridge's time and the ranting style of acting of Macready's time, the play of *King Richard II*, competently and sympathetically staged, might grip

[14] *Shakespeare as a Playwright*, pp. 92–94.

an audience far more than at all times it has gripped the reader? Certainly readers who visualize as they read, who read always with an eye to theatrical effect and dramatic force and stage conditions and the existence of an imaginary audience, sense in this play strong acting possibilities. Let us fling aside, for the moment at least, traditional opinions concerning the drama in general and this drama in particular and investigate King Richard II from the point of view of dramatic contrast.

What has the theory of contrast to tell us in regard to the dramatic or undramatic character of the pensive King in Shakespeare's play? For one thing, the theory of contrast will prevent us from saying that any character is in himself dramatic or undramatic. Hamlet is not dramatic in himself; Iago is not dramatic in himself; Lear is not dramatic in himself. All three are dramatic, not because their personalities are shown to be such and so, but because they are contrasted with other personalities. Hence we miss the point when we take it for granted that Richard II, because he is passive, or because he is inconsistent, or because he is weak, is an undramatic figure. Such was the case with Henry VI, and such, in a somewhat different way, is the case with Richard II.

In painting the character of Richard, both in the self-revealing speeches he puts into the mouth of the King and the sayings he attributes to the other characters, Shakespeare flew quite free of his sources—mainly Holinshed—and conceived a Richard II far more likable and far more sinned against than the Richard of the chronicler. The play gives us no hint that Richard was "prodigal, ambitious, and much given to the pleasure of the body," that furthermore "there reigned abundantly the filthy sin of lechery and fornication, with abominable adultery, especially in the King" (Holinshed III. 507–8). There is no doubt that Richard is the hero of the drama and that as such he has the sympathy of the audience. In this respect Shakespeare achieved a greater success than in the preceding historical plays, in none of which is Henry VI the hero. And the sympathy of the audience is a growing sympathy; there is little of it in the first act where the King is colorless, and little of it in the interview with the old Gaunt (II. i.); but here the young, active King, thrown into contrast with the old, dying subject, wins our understanding, though not our approval, and we fear for his future. This scene,

so rich in contrasts, is another of Shakespeare's invention. It has no foundation in Holinshed who simply records the fact of Gaunt's death (III. 496.). Following Holinshed but in the barest outline, Shakespeare makes of the third scene of the third act a brilliant and impressive exposition of contrasts—not merely between Richard and his external foes but between Richard and his internal self. He, formerly so peremptory, so proud, so despotic, faces the prospect of his deposition with almost slavish submission, and the dreamer in him idly paints an impossible future:

> I'll give my jewels for a set of beads,
> My gorgeous palace for a hermitage,
> My gay apparel for an almsman's gown,
> My figured goblets for a dish of wood,
> My sceptre for a palmer's walking-staff,
> My subjects for a pair of carved saints,
> And my large kingdom for a little grave.

All this and much more of the same tenor while his active enemies have driven him to the wall and are waiting impatiently to despoil him of his regal estate.

In order to sustain Richard as a dramatic figure, the dramatist places him in contrast with two characters widely different in themselves and in the reactions they produce in the King—the Queen and Bolingbroke. In the case of the Queen we have on the part of Shakespeare a deliberate deviation from his sources, a deviation that only the theory of contrast can render significant. The historical facts concerning Richard's wife are briefly as follows:

Anne of Bohemia, Richard's first wife, died in 1394, after twelve years of married life. Two years later Richard married the Lady Isabel of France—the Queen of the drama—who was of very tender years. Most authorities maintain that she was only twelve years of age at the time of her husband's deposition in 1399; at any rate, she could not have been much beyond that age when she became the child-wife of the English monarch. Naturally, the scenes in which she figures in *King Richard II* have no historical warrant, especially the first scene of Act V wherein Richard bids her adieu. He never saw her again after leaving on his Irish expedition which is over and done with earlier in the play.

No child-wife is the gentle, loving, and sweetly sagacious Queen of the drama. Whether she laments the absence of her royal husband and senses impending disasters (II. ii), or whether she listens to the conversation of the gardeners and finally breaks upon them in the throes of that noble indignation that makes the woman forget she is a queen, she is ever in striking contrast with Richard. The garden scene (III. iv.) is conceived in a fine spirit of contrast with the scenes of war and intrigue which precede and follow it. And a genuine dramatic charm inheres in the dialogue between the sorrowing Queen and her attendant (lines 1-23).

Contrasting in another way with the King is his rival and supplanter, Bolingbroke. And it is in his exposition of this contrast that Shakespeare has done his least effective work in the play. He adhered more closely than was his wont to the conception of Bolingbroke given by the chroniclers, with the result that Bolingbroke secures the crown not so much because he is strong as because Richard is weak. The King and his successor are like blades that clash but strike out no sparks. Bolingbroke does not stand out in bold relief as a champion, even of an unjust cause; he has rather the appearance of an individual in a crowd who is thrust forward and by force of circumstances assumes a role of prominence. In short, the relations of Richard and Bolingbroke are less dramatic than they might have been had the dramatist made of the future Henry IV a more commanding, decisive, aggressive figure, thereby putting him in gripping contrast with the pliant, inconsistent, and passive Richard.

An inkling of what Shakespeare might have done with Bolingbroke were he so disposed is given us in the fourth scene of Act I where mention is made of Bolingbroke's "courtship of the common people." Here is a suggestion of the wily politician and diplomat who makes to him friends on all sides by his kindness, his affability, his paternal solicitude, and who fights against the man he aims to overthrow with the powerful weapon of slantwise suggestion. Had this trait been developed, it would have been in impressive contrast with the inconsiderateness and lack of tact displayed by Richard prior to his reverses of fortune.

Bolingbroke's "courtship of the common people" is not mentioned in Holinshed, but note is made of the interest the common people took in the Duke's personality and how they testified their

devotion to him on the occasion of his departure from England as a result of his dispute with Mowbray:

"A wonder it was to see what number of people ran after him in every town and street where he came, before he took the sea; lamenting and bewailing his departure, as who would say that when he departed the only shield, defense, and comfort of the commonwealth was faded and gone." (III. 494.)

The most successful presentation of the contrast between Richard and Bolingbroke we find in the deservedly famous passage wherein the Duke of York describes to his wife the entrance of the rivals into London,

> Where rude misgovern'd hands from windows' tops
> Throw dust and rubbish on King Richard's head.

Thus the Duke proceeds:

> Then, as I said, the duke, great Bolingbroke,
> Mounted upon a hot and fiery steed,
> Which his aspiring rider seem'd to know,
> With slow but stately pace kept on his course,
> Whilst all tongues cried "God save thee, Bolingbroke!"
> You would have thought the very windows spake,
> So many greedy looks of young and old
> Through casements darted their desiring eyes
> Upon his visage, and that all the walls
> With painted imagery had said at once
> "Jesu preserve thee! welcome, Bolingbroke!"
> Whilst he, from the one side to the other turning,
> Bareheaded, lower than his proud steed's neck,
> Bespake them thus: "I thank you, countrymen":
> And thus still doing, thus he passed along.
> . . . . . .
> As in a theatre the eyes of men,
> After a well-graced actor leaves the stage,
> Are idly bent on him that enters next,
> Thinking his prattle to be tedious;
> Even so, or with much more contempt, men's eyes
> Did scowl on gentle Richard; no man cried "God save him!"
> No joyful tongue gave him his welcome home:
> But dust was thrown upon his sacred head;
> Which with such gentle sorrow he shook off,
> His face still combating with tears and smiles,
> The badges of his grief and patience,
> That had not God, for some strong purpose, steel'd
> The hearts of men, they must perforce have melted,
> And barbarism itself have pitied him.
>
> (V. ii.)

Let us now turn to a consideration of a scene which is not only the most dramatic in this play but which ranks very high indeed among the dramatic scenes in the whole of Shakespeare—the abdication scene. Its theatrical possibilities are so vast and its appeal to the audience so tense and searching that we have difficulty in understanding how, in view of the existence of that one scene, the myth that *King Richard II* is not an acting play still finds credence.

In this truly remarkable fourth act we are introduced to the somber and lofty hall of Westminster, where are gathered the princes and prelates of the realm, their many-hued fourteenth century costumes in contrast with the place and with the occasion, for they have come to witness the abdication—or deposition—of a king. Not only the hush of expectancy but likewise the stir of conflict is in the air. Hardly have the proceedings begun when eyes flash fire and gages are exchanged. Then, like the beating of unseen wings, comes mention of the dead; and all heads are bowed as a churchman tells of how the Duke of Norfolk, having fought

> For Jesu Christ in glorious Christian field,
> Streaming the ensign of the Christian cross
> Against black pagans, Turks, and Saracens
> . . . . . .
> at Venice gave
> His body to that pleasant country's earth,
> And his pure soul unto his captain Christ,
> Under whose colours he had fought so long.

Comes mention next of "plume-pluck'd Richard;" and Bolingbroke stands forth and cries:

In God's name I'll ascend the regal throne.

But in God's name he is forbidden. The Bishop of Carlyle boldly flings defiance in the teeth of the usurper and his supporters, and threatens the vengeance of heaven upon those who raise their hands against the anointed king.

Then King Richard enters, and throughout the scene his pensive thoughts uttered aloud prick sharply into the consciences of his persecutors. He is a marvelously dramatic figure to the end. "God save the king!" he prays; then adds, "Will no man say Amen?" He takes the golden band of royalty and extends it to the aspiring Bolingbroke.

Here cousin;
On this side my hand, and on that side yours.
Now is this golden crown like a deep well
That owes two buckets, filling one another,
The emptier ever dancing in the air,
The other down, unseen and full of water:
That bucket down and full of tears am I,
Drinking my griefs, whilst you mount up on high.
. . . . . .
I give this heavy weight from off my head
And this unwieldy sceptre from my hand,
The pride of kingly sway from out my heart;
With mine own tears I wash away my balm,
With mine own hands I give away my crown,
With mine own tongue deny my sacred state,
With mine own breath release all duty's rites.

But the contrasts of character in the unhappy King come once more to the surface; all is not sad-eyed submission. He calls his enemies traitors; and when Northumberland seeks to interrupt him with, "My Lord," the King answers in anger:

No lord of thine, thou haught, insulting man,
Nor no man's lord;

And straightway he is once more the melancholy dreamer of dreams of fallen greatness. He calls for a mirror wherein to look upon the Richard that is, to contrast him with the Richard that was; then he dashes the glass to the ground where it lies,

crack'd in a hundred shivers.
Mark, silent king, the moral of this sport,
How soon my sorrow hath destroyed my face.

At the end Richard begs a boon of his successor.

Bolingbroke. Yet ask.
King Richard. And I shall have?
Boling. You shall.
K. Rich. Then give me leave to go.
Boling. Whither?
K. Rich. Whither you will, so I were from your sights.
Boling. Go, some of you convey him to the Tower.
K. Rich. O, good! Convey? Conveyers are you all,
That rise thus nimbly by a true king's fall.

Truly, as an exit speech and as a "curtain" episode, this is not badly conceived! And, truly, he who reads that abdication scene

with mind active and imagination alert must perforce concede that he has reached an appreciation of one of the supreme scenes in the English drama. And if he is curious enough to go over the scene in an analytic mood and probe for the causes of its dramatic effectiveness, he will find that it is wrought of contrast upon contrast.

In the composition of the abdication scene, to what extent has Shakespeare departed from his sources? In the first place, the abdication of Richard took place privately in the Tower, not publicly in the hall at Westminster. Then, too, the literal surrender of the crown by Richard into the hands of Bolingbroke has no mention in Holinshed. The merest outline of the event is given in Froissart which, if Shakespeare used it, he amplified wondrously and made of it the most impressive and typical episode in the entire scene. In both these instances it is evident that the deviation from historic fact was made in the interests of dramatic contrast.

And so, too, with certain minor episodes. The dispute of Aumerle with the lords is sharpened and vivified from Holinshed's prosaic recital. In Holinshed the account (III. 505) of Bolingbroke's assuming the kingship is detailed and reflects creditably on him. We are told that Bolingbroke, "rising from the place where before he sat, and standing where all those in the house might behold him, in reverent manner made the sign of the cross on his forehead and likewise on his breast," modestly made open his claims to the crown; after which "he returned and sat him down in the place where before he had sitten." In stronger contrast with Richard is Shakespeare's Bolingbroke who briefly says:

> In God's name I'll ascend the regal throne.

In Holinshed he does not ascend the regal throne unaided. The Archbishop of Canterbury "going to the duke, and kneeling down before him on his knee addressed to him all his purpose in few words. The which when he had ended, he rose, and, taking the duke by the right hand, led him into the king's seat (the Archbishop of York assisting him), and with great reverence set him therein, after that the duke had first upon his knees made his prayer in devout manner unto Almighty God."

Before leaving the play of *King Richard II*, it will not be amiss to call attention to the Aumerle conspiracy as therein set forth,

an episode undeniably dramatic and eminently susceptible of interpretation from the point of view of dramatic contrast. The facts themselves were dramatic facts, and Holinshed in his account caught something of the spirit of them, and gave Shakespeare material already worthy of dramatic presentation. And Shakespeare followed Holinshed closely, visualizing and detailing whenever necessary and making only one addition to the characters, that of the Duchess of York. That that is a notable addition can be perceived by fancying what the conspiracy scenes (V. ii., iii.) would be without the contrasts afforded by the mother who pleads for her guilty son to her husband and to her king. It is an addition that supplements the contrast of Prince Hal and Aumerle with the contrast of the Duke pleading for justice and the Duchess pleading for mercy. In inventing the Duchess of York, Shakespeare had to do violence to the facts of history. Aumerle's mother was dead years before the events commemorated in the play, the Duchess of Shakespeare being only his step-mother.[15] The Duke of Aumerle was in reality a despicable character, who was implicated in the murder of his uncle, Gloucester, who shifted repeatedly in his allegiance to Richard, and who was informed by the latter that he was unworthy of nobility.[15]

[15] French, *Shaks. Gen.*, p. 28.

VI.

KING RICHARD III

A distinction is advisedly drawn between the theatrical and the dramatic. Both are based on the fundamental principle of contrast manifesting itself in volitional conflict or incongruity or emotional stress or variety of viewpoint or some other form of presentation in which the underlying antithesis in character or plot is developed and explained; and both carry conviction to the audience. But after that they break away from each other; for while the dramatic continues to impress a member of the audience as true and natural and inevitable when, to recall Wordsworth's fine phrase, it is recollected in tranquility, the theatrical on subsequent analysis proves to be unreal and strained and forced—thrilling rather than emotional, laugh-provoking rather than humorous, clever rather than great. The scene in *King Lear* in which Lear curses his daughter, Goneril, is dramatic; the scene in *Richelieu* in which the Cardinal invokes the curse of Rome is theatrical. The scene in *Twelfth Night* in which Malvolio appears before Olivia wearing cross-garters and yellow stockings is dramatic; the scene in *Are You a Mason?* in which the supposed grand master reluctantly discovers his long lost daughter is theatrical. Similarly, Hamlet and Falstaff, as presented in the setting and with the characters selected for them by Shakespeare, are dramatic characters, while Claude Melnotte in *The Lady of Lyons* and the chocolate soldier in *Arms and the Man* are theatrical characters. What is dramatic is coin that rings true; what is theatrical is stage money.

It can be readily seen from this brief exposition that a scene or a character conceived in the true dramatic spirit may promptly degenerate into theatricalism; in other words, the dramatic often tends to fall into the melodramatic. Should the dramatist, in his endeavor to illustrate and set forth the underlying contrast, give it undue accentuation or carry it beyond the bounds of probability as those bounds are determined in actual life, he constructs a scene or portrays a character that will possibly be impressive and successful on the stage and for the moment but which will be recognized ultimately as untrue to life. Thus the adapters of Robert Louis Stevenson's story, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr.*

Hyde, took an eminently artistic novel and made of it a notoriously inartistic play; they were wise in recognizing in the obvious contrast of the two personalities suitable material for stage presentation, but they were unwise in manipulating that material in such a way as to make of it, not an impressive dramatic work, but a piece of cheap and tawdry theatrical claptrap.

Unquestionably the most melodramatic play that Shakespeare wrote and the most theatrical character that Shakespeare created are *King Richard III* and its ranting protagonist. Having limned a theatrically ideal villainess in La Pucelle, he now seeks to present a theatrically ideal villain; and he succeeds. He gives his Richard the center of the stage; he makes him tell the audience, repeatedly and unequivocally, that he is a bold, bad man; he gives him a most uncanny and inexplicable power over women; he makes him physically hideous; he robs him of every tender human feeling; he sends him horrible dreams. We need no knowledge of history to assure ourselves that the Richard of Shakespeare is the caricature of an English king, for we clearly discern that he is the caricature of a human being.

When Shakespeare set himself the task of creating the Duke of Gloucester and building around him the play of *King Richard III*, Horace Walpole had not written his *Historic Doubts* and more recent writers like Sir Clements Markham had not continued the difficult task of whitewashing the man whom Sir Thomas More had blackened, rightly or wrongly, for all time; but he found in Holinshed a curtailed version of More ready to hand, and doubtless in legends and traditions coming to him by word of mouth he discovered a singular unanimity of opinion as regards Richard's moral obliquity. He had but to select his material and shape it according to desire.

It is interesting to conjecture what manner of play he would have made out of the material had he approached the task some ten years later—let us say about the time that he was writing *Othello*. Richard would still be a villain, but it is safe to say that he would not be ideal in his villainy. The influence of Marlowe and *Tamburlaine* would have had waned, the hand of the dramatic craftsman would be surer in its touch, into Shakespeare's unformulated principles of composition would have come the saving grace and suggestive potency of artistic reserve. His perception of underlying contrasts would be as keen, but his presentation of them

would be more finely shaded, his coordination of them more skilled. The result would be less theatrical and more dramatic.

But Shakespeare, fresh from his apprentice work with the tragedy of blood and still under the spell of the titanic genius of Marlowe, wrought his material into a fabric which, slight in its artistic value and shallow and distorted in its truth to life, lives even today because of its compelling theatricalism. The play is especially worth while as a contribution to the theory of dramatic contrast; in it we have not contrast merely, but contrast in the raw.

One reason why this play, despite its inherent weaknesses—to say nothing of the added ills foisted upon it in the stage version perpetrated by Colley Cibber—still holds the stage, is because prominent actors favor it; and prominent actors favor it because it is a one-man play. The author may have erred when he named *Julius Caesar*; he sinned not against the fitness of things when he named *Richard III*. Gloucester is the dominant, the eye-arresting, the ear-compelling, the all-absorbing figure. The other characters are but so many foils who set him off by contrast. The plot—would Brunetière call it a conflict of wills?—is the projection of Richard's personality. The play is, indeed, the thing; but Richard is the play.

To make and to keep Gloucester blackly, unrelievedly, and consistently wicked, to hold him unintermittently before the attention of the audience, to intensify his wickedness by making him so deep a villain that the other characters, if they are good, shine by contrast, and, if they are evil, must in his presence pale their ineffectual fires—such was the direct dramatic purpose of Shakespeare in *King Richard III*, and such was the view toward which he manipulated his material. There was no finesse, no complexity, no tangled skein of motives in his deviation from Holinshed; he was intent simply on contrast—any contrast and all contrasts that would at all serve to make and keep the protagonist an ideal villain.

And so we have, quite early in the play, a characteristic instance of Shakespeare's compression of time. In point of fact the funeral of King Henry VI was held in 1471; the arrest of Clarence took place six years later. It is to the interest of Shakespeare to synchronize the events, and he does so. The dramatic effect of his procedure is the impression that flows out to the audience of

Gloucester's double-dyed duplicity and callousness in crime. After witnessing those two scenes, we are already convinced that Gloucester is a very villain and also a resourceful and dangerous villain. His brother Clarence, by Gloucester's contrivance, is being conducted to the Tower; here is one of Gloucester's prospective victims. The remains of Henry VI, slain by Gloucester's hand, are being borne to the tomb; here is one of Gloucester's actual victims. Thus far the scene is dramatic as distinguished from theatrical; but straightway Gloucester stops the funeral procession, crosses wits with the mourning Lady Anne, woos and wins the daughter-in-law of the king he had murdered, and concludes by soliloquizing for the express benefit of the audience:

> Was ever woman in this humour woo'd?
> Was ever woman in this humour won?
> I'll have her; but I will not keep her long.
> What! I, that killed her husband and his father,
> To take her in her heart's extremest hate,
> With curses in her mouth, tears in her eyes,
> The bleeding witness of her hatred by.

This is not human passion; it is rather akin to the amours and assassinations of the late Mr. Punch. The contrasts are obvious and gripping; and to make then doubly so Shakespeare has his protagonist explicitly call attention to them in a lengthy soliloquy. That soliloquy, of course, Shakespeare did not find in Holinshed; and neither did he find there or elsewhere the contrast-teeming dialogue in which Richard proposes marriage and is tacitly accepted. Seemingly, indeed, Shakespeare cannot give us too much of this sort of thing. Later on (IV. iv.) he must needs halt Richard on the way to the war and have him conduct a proxy wooing, and successfully. The fact he found in Holinshed; the details—more contrasts similar to those found in the courtship of the Lady Anne—are Shakespeare's own, as is Richard's brief but pointed soliloquy:

> Relenting fool, and shallow, changing woman!

On the other hand, Shakespeare was prompt to utilize every hint afforded by Holinshed regarding Gloucester's assumed devotional spirit and his palpably artificial reluctance to accept the crown. Holinshed (III. 727-731) follows More, and Shakespeare (III. vii.) follows Holinshed, omitting numerous trivial incidents connected with Buckingham's speech but focusing attention on

the dissembling scoundrel who, having waded riotously in the blood of his kindred, now smirks hypocritically as he finds footing on the steps of the throne. The prayer book and the bishops are effective stage properties and Shakespeare would by no means leave them out.

More and Holinshed made Richard an unmistakably evil character. Shakespeare took their portrait, intensified the blacks and blackened the neutrals, and wrote in large characters beneath the effigy, "This is a villain!" His sources expressed at least some doubt regarding Richard's responsibility for the murders of Clarence, the Lady Anne, and the two princes; Shakespeare paints out the doubts with a few vigorous strokes of his brush. His sources indulged in occasional conjectures concerning the details of Richard's villainy; Shakespeare renders that villainy unmistakable and self-confessed. Holinshed has Richard say; "I have with strict penance and salt tears expiated and clearly purged my offenses;" but Shakespeare has Richard say: "Conscience is but a word that cowards use." And, on the eve of Richard's day of retribution, that the audience might be once again reminded of the King's murderous career, Shakespeare contrives a procession of ghostly victims who ban Richard and bless his rival, Richmond.

A hint, and a hint only, of the visit of the victims, Shakespeare got from Holinshed. We read in the chronicle (III. 755.): "The fame went, that he had the same night a dreadful and terrible dream; for it seemed to him, being asleep, that he did see divers images like terrible devils, which pulled and haled him, not suffering him to take any quiet or rest. The which strange vision not so suddenly struck his heart with a sudden fear, but it stuffed his head and troubled his mind with many busy and dreadful imaginations."

Note how Shakespeare, accepting the hint, makes of it one of the most effective contrasts in the play. Instead of the "divers images like terrible devils," he introduces the ghosts of Prince Edward, King Henry VI, Clarence, Rivers, Grey, Vaughan, Hasting, the two princes, Lady Anne, and Buckingham. The contrast is furthered by the simple device—of which no hint is given in Holinshed—of having each of the ghosts, after cursing Richard, turn toward the tent of Richmond and bless his emprise.

The portrait of Richard is so malignly black that it might be supposed to defeat its own purpose; a massing of shadows unrelieved

by lights hardly conveys the desired impression of blackness, unless it be hung in the midst of pictures less sombre. And therefore—though Richard is never out of our minds and rarely out of the minds of the persons in the play—we find scenes of considerable length in which he is not physically present but in which his blackness is set off by comparison with other characters in varying degrees less black than he. Thus, the scene in the Tower (I. iv.) which describes the dream of Clarence, the conversation of the murderers, and the killing of the Duke, finds its explanation in the theory of contrast. The murderers are the conventional stage murderers, so indispensable in the tragedy of blood, and utilized so effectively by Shakespeare in *Macbeth*—supposedly hardened criminals, professional burkers who nonchalantly kill people for a consideration; yet, in a few revealing strokes, Shakespeare here institutes a contrast between the two assassins themselves and another between them and Gloucester who has hired them. The audience witnessing this scene gets the specific impression that Clarence is bad, the second murderer worse, the first murderer worse yet; but that Gloucester is bad in the superlative. The very slender foundation for this scene of contrast within contrast is found in Holinshed's statement (III. 703.) that Clarence "was cast into the Tower, and therewith adjudged for a traitor, and privily drowned in a butt of malmesie, the eleventh of March, in the beginning of the seventeenth year of the king's reign."

From other scenes in which Richard does not appear in person we derive a similar impression of his sinister character and motives; we do not see the spider, but we do see the tightening of his web and the fruitless squirmings of the snared flies. Thus Stanley, dreaming that "the boar had razed his helm," is by Hastings ridiculed for his fears (III. ii.); and presently the tusks of the boar have searched the scoffer's vitals. And then, in contrast with the male victims of the King, we have the futile curses and reproaches and lamentations of his women victims—Queen Margaret and Queen Elizabeth; the Lady Anne, his doomed wife; the Duchess of York, the sad-eyed mother who bore him. The contrast (IV. iv.) between the mother of the murderer and the mother of two of his victims, and the further contrast occasioned by the increasing bruit of Richard's warlike approach are entirely of Shakespeare's invention.

A refreshing relief from the prevailing theatricality of the play is Shakespeare's presentation of the little princes—the youth who for so brief a time bore the title of King Edward V and his brother, the Duke of York. The latter Shakespeare conceives as a precocious youngster, perhaps rather too pert to suit every taste, but withal an amiable boy (II. ii.). And the young King, more winsome even than his brother, enlists the deepest sympathy of the audience as he rides so unsuspectingly to the Tower and his doom (III. i.). Some of Shakespeare's happiest touches bring out with dramatic, as distinguished from theatrical, clarity the contrast between the guileless princes and their guilty uncle. The sallies of wit engaged in by the Duke of York at Gloucester's expense evoke tears rather than smiles, for we anticipate the thoroughness of Richard's pending retaliation; and a deeply dramatic significance attaches to Richard's comment on the young King's juvenile philosophy:

So wise, so young, they say, do never live long.

VII.

KING JOHN

For once, at least, in the course of this investigation, we may dispense with Holinshed. In his *Life and Death of King John* Shakespeare gives no evidence—save in one or two immaterial instances—of his having made direct use of the chronicle. His materials were supplied by a play, the identity of whose author remains conjectural, entitled *The Troublesome Raigne of John, King of England*, which was first printed in 1591. This older drama is—not two plays, as has been sometimes stated—but a double-length play; and the most obvious task that Shakespeare faced when he set about fashioning a new version of *The Troublesome Raigne*, was to condense the play by half. He had, necessarily, to make a selection of material; and he did, in fact, modify the material selected. Let us now examine his manipulation of the older play in the light of the theory of dramatic contrast.

Selection implies rejection. Shakespeare, in his elimination of numerous episodes that found place in *The Troublesome Raigne* cleared the way for an intelligent treatment of the episodes that remained. The older play, which begins with John's seizure of the English throne and ends with the acceptance of Prince Henry as King and the making of peace with the Dauphin of France, he wisely decapitated and curtailed. Episodes in the older play which did not find their way into *King John* are: The capture of Queen Elinor by the French and her subsequent rescue, briefly recounted by Shakespeare (III. ii.); a scene in which Peter of Pomfret figures conspicuously but needlessly and irrelevantly; the temporary conversion of the barons, through the pleadings of Faulconbridge, to their allegiance to John; a call for papal aid sent by the King to Cardinal Pandulph, and Faulconbridge's protest against John's subserviency to the Pope; the solemn oath sworn by the barons, before the altar of Edmundsbury, to renounce their allegiance to John. Of such episodes Shakespeare was unquestionably well rid; in one way or another each of them would have clogged and not clarified the audience's perception of the major contrasts upon which the dramatic value of the play depends.

Two scenes, both of which figure in the older play, Shakespeare entirely ignored; and while his procedure must win the hearty approval of all good monks as monks, from the point of view of dramatic efficiency it is open to question. One of those scenes has reference to the poisoning of King John, to which Shakespeare causes Hubert to advert (V. vi.):

> The king, I fear, is poison'd by a monk.

There is no "I fear" in the older play. One of the monks, because John contemned the Pope and never loved a friar, takes a solemn oath to administer poison to the King. The other scene—undeniably in bad taste, but undeniably good drama to an Elizabethan audience, wherein are depicted, with horseplay comedy effect, certain alleged irregularities in English monasteries—has left not even a trace in Shakespeare's play. We know, indeed, that Faulconbridge goes on an extorting tour among the monasteries, but we do not follow him in his travels or share in his discoveries.

Shakespeare manifests a finer sense of proportion than the unknown author of the older play, by giving less attention to Queen Elinor and more attention to the Lady Constance. I know that many critics do not consider the Lady Constance a womanly woman, and that many actors—and actresses—regard hers as an impossible rôle; but there can be no doubt as to the dramatic value of the scenes in which she appears, whether they be her scolding match with the English Queen or her reproaches leveled at the inconstant King of France or her lamentations over the capture of her son. Throughout she is in clearly defined contrast with the two kings, with Elinor, with the Cardinal, with all the world; much of her impressiveness is due to her splendid isolation. Shakespeare might have minimized Constance in the play and given more prominence to the English Queen; but his dramatic intuition—this time sure—led him to select for special attention not the woman who shared the throne of England, but the woman who, absolutely alone, could crouch upon the cold earth and cry:

> Here I and sorrow sit;
> Here is my throne, bid kings come bow to it.

Less felicitous was Shakespeare's adoption of Faulconbridge, a character who in *The Troublesome Raigne* is "a hardy wild head,

tough and venturous," who aspires to the hand of the Lady Blanch of Spain, and who, when Austria declines to fight with him because of their unequal rank, is instanter created Duke of Normandy by King John. Here Shakespeare had a character as isolated, though in a vastly different fashion, as the Lady Constance, a character eminently fitted to play Talbot to John's Henry VI, a character who could be easily employed to prevent this play from being what it actually is, a drama without a hero. Some such design was evidently in the author's mind while writing the first act, for there Faulconbridge holds the center of the stage while grave affairs of state are thrust aside by King, Queen, and court that the audience may learn all the details of Faulconbridge's edifying family history. But Shakespeare changed his mind, and we have Faulconbridge not as hero but as chorus; though his wit is nimble and his sword arm strong, he is employed mainly to talk at the audience, to call their attention to the existence of the contrasts which form the foundation and the texture of the play. Shakespeare when he employs the soliloquy is at his best and at his worst; in *Othello* and *Hamlet* the soliloquies are eminently dramatic because they embody contrasts; in *King Richard III* and *King John* they are eminently undramatic, because they stand entirely outside the play and merely point to contrasts that exist within the play. No hint of Faulconbridge's soliloquies (I. i.; II. i.; IV. iii.) is found in the earlier drama.

Certain individual scenes which Shakespeare took bodily from *The Troublesome Raigne* he nevertheless so reshaped and modified that the process inevitably recalls the hackneyed but illustrative brick-and-marble metaphor. Thus, what is in Shakespeare the first scene of the third act was essentially contained in the old play, but in a form stilted, lifeless, mechanical; the cogs of contrasts did not grip; there was no setting off of character against character, motive against motive, mood against mood. How different is all this in Shakespeare! He sets the two kings side by side, he pairs off Austria and Faulconbridge, Elinor and Constance, the Dauphin and his betrothed, from whose side he leaps at war's alarms. He stages, too, that magnificent verbal duel between the Cardinal and the King—an episode that not even the most bedraggled barn-stormers can enact without eliciting from the audience a responsive thrill, when the red robed figure representing

the might of Rome launches, swift and unerring, the bolt of the Church's ban.

Another scene wherein Shakespeare showed his mastery—this time mastery evidenced by reserve and delicacy in etching an obvious contrast that might easily have degenerated into rank theatricalism—is given us in the King's incitement of Hubert to murder Prince Arthur. The Hubert of history—the illustrious de Burgh, a descendant of Charlemagne and the most serviceable man in the kingdom during the days of John and Henry III—Shakespeare probably did not know; at all events, his Hubert is not a nobleman and seems devoid of courtly arts and graces. This sinister, laconic, shaggy henchman is in contrast at all points with the fawning, garrulous, and polished King, who deftly suggest his wishes and promises liberal and vague rewards.

Again does Shakespeare show his mastery in the justly popular scene between Hubert and the boy Arthur (IV. i.). If Hubert has been in contrast with King John, he is now in even keener contrast with this child whom—not warranted at all points either by his source play or by history—Shakespeare makes young and gentle and patient and thoroughly amiable. Numerous touches in the scene accentuate the underlying contrast between the innocent, helpless youth and the guilty, all sufficient man. Arthur has a genuine affection for Hubert:

> I would to heaven
> I were your son, so you would love me, Hubert.
> . . . . . .
> In sooth, I would you were a little sick,
> That I might sit all night and watch with you.

Tensely dramatic in its impressive reserve is Arthur's reception of the cruel news:

Arthur. Must you with hot irons burn out both mine eyes?
Hubert. Young boy, I must.
Arthur. And will you?
Hubert. And I will.

After begging that the executioners be sent away, the anguished boy, hearing a sympathetic comment made by one of them, sighs for having chid away an unsuspected friend:

> He hath a stern look, but a gentle heart.

And when the burning iron cools:

There is no malice in this burning coal;
The breath of heaven hath blown his spirit out
And strewed repentent ashes on his head.

The material employed by Shakespeare in the second scene of the fourth act he made over from *The Troublesome Raigne*, shifting and stressing in accordance with the principle of contrast. He makes much, compared with his predecessor, of John's change of heart concerning the slaying of Arthur, and devotes more space to his reproaches to Hubert, thus placing the episode in contrast, point for point, with the third scene of Act III; he sounds in an impressive crescendo the rising bruit of civil strife in the protests of the barons, the prophecies of Peter of Pomfret, the reports brought in by Faulconbridge and Hubert, and the rumor

of a many thousand warlike French
That were embattailed and rank'd in Kent;

and he shows the King already the antithesis of the bluff monarch who earlier in the play sent back Chatillon to be the trumpet of his wrath and lightning in the eyes of France.

Shakespeare, then, unquestionably improved on his sources, and unquestionably his deviations therefrom may be accounted for on the principle of dramatic contrast; but the play of *The Life and Death of King John* remains nevertheless a play of shreds and patches—shoddy shreds and purple patches—a play not well articulated, extremely uneven in structure, and characterized by a notable lack of central theme. As we have seen, several individual characters are placed in an environment that renders them indubitably dramatic and several individual scenes are arranged with an alert eye to contrast; but the play, as a whole, lacks a fundamental contrast that would supply the needful central theme and introduce a salutary proportion.

The need of some such "big" idea is not my discovery. Most of Shakespeare's critics and commentators have called attention to the same deficiency; and one of them, no less a person than Colley Cibber, Esquire, attempted to supply the lack. In 1745, during one of those periodic outbreaks of anti-Catholic feeling that we have come to regard as characteristic of London, Cibber brought out at Covent Garden a freely revised version of Shakespeare's *King John* which had a successful run of ten nights. The play was entitled *Papal Tyranny in the Reign of King John.*

I should hesitate to say that the play—though Cibber modestly claimed it to be superior to Shakespeare's—is a good play; but the title is an excellent title. It conveys an idea of contrast—which might or might not take the form of conflict—and suggests that underlying anthithesis which Shakespeare's play needs, but has not. In his dedication of the play to the Earl of Chesterfield, Cibber tells why he was moved to the undertaking, and his words are well worth quoting:

"In all the historical plays of Shakespear there is scarcely any fact that might better have employed his genius than the flaming contest between his insolent Holiness and King John. This is so remarkable a passage in our histories, that it seems surprising that our Shakespear should have taken no more fire at it; especially when we find from how much less a spark of contention in his first act of *Harry the Fourth* he has thrown his Hotspur into a more naturally fomented rage than ever ancient or modern author has come up to, and has maintained that character throughout the play with the same inimitable spirit. How then shall we account for his being so cold upon a so much higher provocation? Shall we suppose, that in those days, almost in the infancy of the Reformation, when Shakespear wrote, when the influence of the papal power had a stronger party left than we have reason to believe is now subsisting among us; that this, I say, might make him cautious of offending? Or shall we go so far for an excuse as to conclude that Shakespear was himself a Catholic? . . . If then he was under no restraint from his religion, it will require a nicer criticism than I am master of to excuse his being so cold upon so warm an occasion."

Cibber here makes it plain that, though he was at a loss to account for Shakespeare's failure to conceive and develop a central theme, he recognized what is without doubt the organic weakness of the play. And so, in his version, Cibber proceeded to "inspirit his King John with a resentment that justly might become an English monarch, and to paint the intoxicated tyranny of Rome in its proper colours." "Intoxicated tyranny," however its absurdity might today provoke a smile, was taken seriously enough by the Covent Garden audiences who gave the play, says Cibber, their "honest, cordial applauses"; and there can be no doubt that the implied contrast between Church and State would have furnished Shakespeare a basic idea susceptible, indeed, of

an interpretation other than that elected by Cibber, but in any case an idea eminently dramatic.

To attempt to discover Shakespeare's reasons for not utilizing some such idea is beyond the scope of this study[16] and besides, to borrow Cibber's words, would "require a nicer criticism than I am master of." It may have been Catholic sympathies; or again it may have been Protestant sympathies, for the dramatist who would set forth the relations between King John and the Holy See must, however reluctantly, admit that the English monarch was worsted in the conflict which he himself had begun. It may have been a lapse of insight, due perhaps to carelessness and haste in composition and to too exclusive an absorption in the work of condensing *The Troublesome Raigne*. At all events, the fact remains that, in manipulating the older play, Shakespeare, by means of contrast, rendered more dramatic individual scenes and individual characters, and that, by neglecting to bring out a pervading and fundamental contrast, he failed to impart a unified dramatic quality to the play as a whole.

[16] Some unique and, at times, diverting views on this subject are presented by Wilkes in *Shakespeare from an American Point of View*.

VIII.

THE FIRST PART OF KING HENRY IV

The two plays of *King Henry IV* and the play of *King Henry V* might be appropriately styled the Prince Hal Trilogy, for Harry of Monmouth, Prince of Wales and afterward King of England, is their undisputed hero. The story they tell—a story made up of many strands and sometimes, as in the second drama of the trilogy, told haltingly enough—is the story of Prince Henry's life and fame and fortunes, of his relatives and companions and servants and enemies and friends. Prince Hal does not dominate the plays as compellingly and insistently as Gloucester dominates *King Richard III*, nor does he achieve and maintain his place as protagonist invested with the constantly growing pathos which appears in the figure of King Richard II; in the two plays of *King Henry IV* he shares his prominence with Hotspur and Falstaff, but the dramas are so contrived that both Hotspur and Falstaff are closely bound up with the interests of the leading figure.

These three plays are further remarkable for embodying the only notable instances in the English historical dramas where Shakespeare from time to time bids the deep browed muse of history wait in the wings while he summons the muse of comedy to disport herself on the stage. The alternation of scenes grave and gay, which so deeply offended Voltaire and other continental critics, seems to be one of the heritages bequeathed to the English drama from the religious plays of the Middle Ages, wherein a laugh-provoking devil and a blustering Herod were wont to follow hard upon the heels of saints and virtuous abstractions, and a shepherd to engage in horseplay immediately before the angels announce the glad tidings on the hillside at Bethlehem. In those plays Shakespeare took a perceptible stride in his development as a dramatist; while continuing to follow his sources with a fair measure of closeness in the strictly historical scenes, he gave himself more latitude in the introduction and elaboration of humorous episodes.

For his historical scenes in *I Henry IV* Shakespeare continued to draw freely upon Holinshed and derived a few unimportant

details from the chronicle of Stowe; for his comic scenes he is himself almost entirely responsible. True, he undoubtedly found some material for his Eastcheap and Gadshill episodes in an old play entitled *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*, which was acted as early as 1588 and which found its way into print in 1594; but his indebtedness to this drama is by no means so great as was his indebtedness to *The Troublesome Raigne* in *King John*. He did not follow *The Famous Victories* in detail; most of it he wisely ignored, and what he did take from it he thoroughly revised, expanded, and transmuted.

The First Part of *King Henry IV* gives us a wealth of material for a discussion of Shakespeare's manipulation of his scenes and characters in the light of the theory of contrast—the theory, by the way, that comes nearest to explaining the dramatic value of alternating tragedy and comedy in the one play. The theory of contrast, applied to *I Henry IV*, furnishes adequate reasons for Shakespeare's selections and rejections from Holinshed and for his very considerable expansion and remolding of the suggestions he adopted from *The Famous Victories*.

In the person of the young Prince of Wales Shakespeare was supplied, ready-to-hand, with a character who involved contrasts within himself. It is pretty generally agreed upon by scholars that the stories of the Prince's youthful follies—stories that held their ground largely because of their inherent dramatic quality—had but a slender basis in actuality; but this Shakespeare was obviously not in a position to know. The chroniclers stressed young Henry's wild oats era and so did the old play, and Shakespeare eagerly accepted a version that involved the striking contrast of a man who, leading a wild and tumultuous life as the son of the King, forthwith becomes a model man and a brilliant ruler when he ascends the throne.

Shakespeare accepted this version, but he did so with a difference. Throughout the play he takes pains to impress us with the belief that Henry is in the slums but not of them, that he associates with the scum and riffraff of London society and yet keeps himself unspotted of the mad world in which he takes his pleasure. Into the mouth of the Prince he puts a clear and explicit declaration of motives (I. ii.):

I know you all, and will a while uphold
The unyoked humour of your idleness:
Yet herein will I imitate the sun,
Who doth permit the base contagious clouds
To smother up his beauty from the world,
That when he pleases again to be himself,
Being wanted, he may be more wonder'd at,
By breaking through the foul and ugly mists
Of vapors that did seem to strangle him.
. . . . . .
My reformation, glittering o'er my fault,
Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes
Than that which hath no foil to set it off.
I'll so offend, to make offence a skill;
Redeeming time when men think least I will.

A conventional criticism of these lines is that in them Prince Hal shows himself to be a good deal of a prig and a hypocrite, that he has not the mettle to face his faults like a man but gives himself specious reasons for doing the things he should not do. That criticism rests upon a misconception of the function of the soliloquy in which the lines appear. As has been suggested in our study of *King John*, we find two distinct classes of soliloquies in Shakespeare—those which reveal the character and motives of the person thus thinking aloud and those which really constitute a direct statement of things to the audience. Now, in the soliloquy just quoted, Prince Hal seems to be revealing his own character and motives, he seems to be thinking aloud; but the soliloquy is in fact one of the other type, and the Prince is forced by his creator to engage in the ungrateful task of acting as his own chorus. Shakespeare, rather than the Prince, speaks to the audience; and he tells them, plainly enough, to expect the unexpected, to be on the lookout for contrasts in the career of this scion of royalty. The device is crude and inartistic and as little dramatic here as it is when employed in the soliloquies of Faulconbridge in *King John*; but it does serve to call attention to the contrasts which, inhering in the life of the future King Henry V, make him a dramatic figure.

Note, too, that Shakespeare takes pains, in that soliloquy and elsewhere, to tone down the contrasts in Prince Hal's life; he is extremely careful to make of him an experimenter with vice, a taster rather than a thirster for the cup of iniquity. Had he,

following his sources blindly, given us a Prince Hal who is a thoroughly bad lot, who is a brawler, a drunkard, a lecher, and a thief, and suddenly changed such a one into an ideal king, there would assuredly be contrast, but contrast that overleaps the bounds of probability. Theatrical often, but dramatic never, is the sudden conversion of villains. Some such contrast in the raw Shakespeare might have accepted in his apprentice days, the days that brought forth Talbot and la Pucelle; but now he was surer of himself and had learned the value of artistic repression. The numerous contrasts in *I Henry IV* are not the blinding and unconvincing contrasts of black and white; the master has by this time learned somewhat the significance of shades and tones.

This is brought home to us by reflection on an omission that Shakespeare made when writing the second scene of Act III, an omission trivial enough in itself but suggestive as bearing on the development of the dramatist and on his manipulation of his sources. According to Holinshed (III. 539.), when the Prince went to the court, "apparelled in a gown of blue satin, full of small eyelet holes, at every hole the needle hanging by a silk thread, with which it was sewed," he was accompanied "with such a number of noblemen and other his friends that wished him well, as the like train had seldom been seen repairing to the court at any one time in those days." Going in alone to his father, "then grievously diseased," he knelt down and pleaded his affection and loyalty. He concluded by drawing his dagger after the fashion of Cassius in the tent at Sardis—extending it to the King and exclaiming: "I beseech you, most redoubted lord and dear father, for the honour of God, to ease your heart of all such suspicion as you have of me, to despatch me here before your knees, with this same dagger." Verily, here was something to feast the eyes and split the ears of the groundlings; but Shakespeare left it out. He saw in it a contrast that would be dramatic in *Julius Caesar* but theatrical here. Instead, he constructed a scene stately in tempo and devoid of movement and yet which is absorbingly dramatic—the Bolingbroke, now King, who drove Richard from the throne, makes his peace with the son who has caused him grief. Beautifully does the King point out the contrast between his own youth and that of his wayward son:

Had I so lavish of my presence been,
So common hackney'd in the eyes of men,
So stale and cheap to vulgar company,
Opinion, that did help me to the crown,
Had still kept loyal to possession,
And left me in reputeless banishment,
A fellow of no mark nor likelihood.
. . . . . .
Thus did I keep my person fresh and new;
My presence, like a robe pontifical,
Ne'er seen but wonder'd at: and so my state,
Seldom but sumptious, showed like a feast,
And won by rareness such solemnity.

The dominant contrast in *I Henry IV* is that between Prince Hal and Hotspur, a contrast which affords an excellent illustration of Shakespeare's selection from the material at his disposal and of his process of piecing out that material the better to subserve his ends. The Hotspur of history was a gallant soldier, and that is substantially all that is known of his personal traits. He was called Hotspur, according to one account, "from his much pricking"; according to another (Knighton), "because, in the silence of the night, and while others reposed in sleep, he would labor indefatigably against his enemy, as if heating his spurs." But, historically, as Courtenay[17] explains, "the surname of Hotspur had no reference to his disposition of temper," which was a brilliant invention of the dramatist.

Admirable is the manner in which Shakespeare brings out the contrasting characters of the two Harrys. Though they do not meet face to face until the decisive day at Shrewsbury, all through the play the audience is forced to keep them in mind and to institute a detailed comparison. The difference between them is much in the King's thoughts, and elements in the comparison are being furnished by remarks put into the mouths of the other characters; the two Harrys, indeed, speak of each other, and in eminently characteristic style. As the "madcap Prince of Wales" is brought into relief by contrasts with his father, his brother, and his companions of the tavern, so "the Hotspur of the north; he that kills me some six or seven dozen of Scots at a breakfast, washes his hands, and says to his wife 'Fie upon this quiet life! I want work,' " is made distinct and clear cut by a series of con-

[17] *Commentaries*, II. 89.

trasts with his slow going father, his foxy uncle, the perfumed lordling, the wearisome Glendower, the winsome Lady Percy. No historical warrant exists for Shakespeare's presentation of Glendower as a bore against whom the practical, impatient Hotspur protests (III. i.):

> O he is as tedious
> As a tired horse, a railing wife;
> Worse than a smoky house: I had rather live
> With cheese and garlick in a windmill, far,
> Than feed on cates and have him talk to me
> In any summer house in Christendom.

And the contrast between Hotspur and his wife—a contrast which so finely sets in relief the abruptness and stubbornness of the man—is likewise Shakespeare's invention; history records nothing more than the bare fact of Lady Percy's existence.

With consummate art Shakespeare brings the contrasts of the two Harrys to a splendid culmination on the field of Shrewsbury. For the first time the rivals meet face to face. Ignoring the fact that the Hotspur of history was at the very least as old as Prince Hal's father, Shakespeare heightens and points the contrast by making them of the one age. Brief and brilliant is their conversation; they fight, and Harry Percy falls. "Adieu," cries the chivalrous victor, never more a prince than now, "and take thy praise with thee to heaven!" Here once more Shakespeare deviated from his sources; Hotspur fell by an unknown hand.

If *I Henry IV* is rich in contrasts of character, it is not less so in contrasts of scene. The tavern scenes, wherein the Prince appears often and Hotspur never, are set off against the home scenes, wherein Percy dominates and the Prince never intrudes. A further contrast exists between the court scenes and the battle scenes, in the former of which the two Harrys are flitting visitants, in the latter meeting for the only time in life. This is something more than the mere alternation of scenes grave and gay; it is the contrast, exquisitely shaded and blended, of four varying environments, each a background shaped and adapted for throwing into relief the people in the play. Two scenes in *I Henry IV*, in both of which Shakespeare transcended his sources, merit special attention. One of them, the fourth scene in the fifth act, is as fine a presentation of the ironic contrasts of life as Shakespeare ever conceived. The two Harrys have fought, and Percy lies

dead, "food for worms." Near by lies Sir John Falstaff, feigning death. The hero of the north and the braggart of Eastcheap—he who had thought

> it were an easy leap,
> To pluck bright honour from the pale-faced moon,

and he who had declared that same honor to be "a mere scutcheon" —lie side by side; and the rigid body of the fiery Hotspur is presently borne off on the back of the chuckling knight. The spectacle recalls the words but a moment before uttered by the Prince:

> Ill-weaved ambition, how much art thou shrunk!
> When that this body did contain a spirit,
> A kingdom for it was too small a bound.

The other scene (II. iv.) has been declared, and apparently with justice, the most comical stage picture in Shakespeare. Through it contrasts, singly and in battalions, play back and forth; and while Mistress Quickly screams her admiration and Bardolph's nose shines beaconlike through the foetid air, Sir John Falstaff explains how it is that he was a coward on compulsion. And then, the same Sir John, the uncrowned king of Eastcheap, assumes for the nonce the trappings of mock royalty: "This chair shall be my state, this dagger my sceptre, and this cushion my crown"; and forthwith he plays the Prince's father "in King Cambyses' vein." Nor is that all. Conditions are speedily reversed; the madcap Prince impersonates the King, Falstaff plays the Prince; and in that rôle saves the scene from anticlimax and carries it to a glorious fulness by his mock heroic plea—for himself: "Banish plump Jack, and banish all the world."

IX.

THE SECOND PART OF KING HENRY IV

Mr. Herford, in The Eversley Shakespeare, writes: "The political movements of Henry IV's reign, as told by Shakespeare's standard authorities, Holinshed and Hall, offered little salient matter for the dramatist. Nevertheless it is here that he most decisively abandons the boldly reconstructive methods of Marlowe; here that he unfolds with consummate power his own method of creating character and detail within the limits of a general fidelity to recorded fact. His most direct divergences from the tale of the chroniclers amount to little more than compressions of isolated and scattered events. But he supplements their tale and interprets their silence with a prodigal magnificence of invention unapproached in the other Histories. Hence *Henry IV* presents analogies to the group of brilliant Comedies with which it was nearly contemporary, not only in its obvious wealth of comic genius, but in the points at which this is exercised. The historic matter, like the serious story of *Twelfth Night* or *Much Ado*, is taken over without substantial change; while within its meshes plays a lambent humour which, ostensibly subordinate and by the way, in reality reveals the finer significance of the derived story itself, and forms, as literature, the crowning glory of the whole."

In both plays of *King Henry IV* it is needful that we draw this distinction between the historical and the humorous elements; but while in the First Part the two classes of scenes stand in vivid contrast and each admirably sets off the other, in the Second Part the contrast perceptibly weakens and the result is a vastly inferior play. Justice Shallow and Master Silence—both, of course, of the dramatist's own invention—are well defined and enjoyable characters; yet, somehow, the scenes in which they figure do not fit into the scheme of the play as a whole. Shakespeare does somewhat better with the tavern and street scenes, but even here the contrast with the court scenes is less gripping, and therefore less effective, than in the First Part. Should we strive to reach the wherefore of the generally admitted fact that the keystone play of the Prince Hal trilogy is, taken by and large, a drama inferior to its predecessor, we shall not go astray if we apply to it

the theory of contrast and in the light of the theory discover the real secret of its weakness.

And conversely, the structure of this play throws additional light on dramatic contrast itself. It helps to clarify our conception of what is and what is not contrast. Nobody would think of saying, for example, that a contrast exists between Lucullus and the fourth dimension, for the all sufficient reason that, in so far as normal mind can probe, Lucullus and the fourth dimension have nothing in common; but it is quite possible to establish a contrast between Lucullus and Robert Herrick, between the fourth dimension and, let us say, thickness, because in these cases we have some underlying similarity or some other than wholly arbitrary association upon which our comparison, to result in contrast, must rest.

Contrast in the drama, therefore, is something more than taking two persons or two events or two environments and placing them opposite each other and saying with Hamlet, "Look here upon this picture and on this." We may indeed look, but we perceive nothing dramatic if we fail to sense the underlying something in common. Hamlet did in fact call his mother's attention to a contrast—that is, to the points of difference in two things fundamentally similar—in "the counterfeit presentment of two brothers"; there would have been no contrast had he presented to the lady's attention, not two kings, but Claudius and the front elevation of the battlements of Elsinore. Shakespeare set forth a true contrast when in *I King Henry IV* he showed side by side the royal court at Westminster and the mock court in Eastcheap; his procedure was less felicitous when, in *II Henry IV*, he showed on the one hand the last moments of King Henry IV and on the other the visit of Falstaff to the home of Justice Shallow.

In *II Henry IV*, Shakespeare's adherence to his authorities in the historical scenes of the play is especially noteworthy. True, he continues to flout chronology; true, he modifies several of the characters with subtle touches of delineation; true, he senses the spirit of the truth of history behind the reputed facts of history and not infrequently is false to the letter that he may be true to the spirit. But, in the main, he continues to take his Holinshed unprotestingly and occasionally accepts a touch or two from Stowe.

This closeness is well exemplified in a comparison that might readily be made between the impression of Henry IV we receive from this play and the summary of his character furnished by Holinshed (III. 541.): "The king was . . . quick and lively and of a stout courage. In his latter days he showed himself so gentle that he got more love amongst the nobles and people of this realm than he had purchased malice and evil will in the beginning. But yet, to speak a truth, by his proceedings . . . he was himself more hated than in all his lifetime (if it had been longer by many years than it was) had been possible for him to have weeded out and removed."

Shakespeare certainly drew his portrait of the last days of Henry Bolingbroke in the light of that brief description. Henry grows upon us in this play, and he really enlists our sympathies. His noted apostrophe to sleep (III. i.) is Shakespeare's own invention—a dramatic bit filled with minor contrasts and embodying the doleful thoughts of a man who had for the sake of prospective happiness usurped the throne. But it is in the crown scene (IV. v.) that Shakespeare's manipulation of his material is shown to unusual advantage—a manipulation which, while not outraging the spirit of truth, yet deals freely with the body of fact. Here is the story as related by Holinshed (III. 541):

"During this his last sickness, he caused his crown (as some write) to be set on a pillow at his bed's head. And suddenly his pangs so sore troubled him that he lay as though all his vital spirits had been from him departed. Such as were about him, thinking verily that he had been departed, covered his face with a linen cloth. The prince, his son, being hereof advertised, entered into the chamber, took away the crown, and departed. The father, being suddenly revived out of that trance, quickly perceived the lack of his crown; and, having knowledge that the prince his son had taken it away, caused him to come before his presence, requiring of him what he meant so to misuse himself. The prince, with a good audacity, answered: 'Sir, to mine and all men's judgments you seemed dead in this world; wherefore I, as your next heir apparent, took that as mine own, and not as yours.' 'Well, fair son,' said the king with a great sigh, 'what right I had to it, God knoweth.' 'Well,' said the prince, 'if you die king, I will have the garland, and trust to keep it with the sword against all mine enemies, as you have done.' Then said the

king, 'I commit all to God, and remember you to do well.' With that he turned himself in his bed, and shortly after departed to God in a chamber of the abbot's of Westminster called Jerusalem."

The conduct of the Prince of Wales, as set forth in Holinshed, could be variously interpreted. His "good audacity" Shakespeare accepted in the most favorable sense, and set him in contrast with his dying father. The most difficult part of the dramatist's task was to give a reason for Prince Hal's taking the crown that would not in some way reflect on his filial devotion and that would not violate inherent probability. He solved the problem by having the Prince estimate the true worth of the crown as a troublesome bedfellow, "polished perturbation, golden care," and by having him thus express himself when he fancied his father to be dead:

> Thy due from me
> Is tears and heavy sorrows of the blood,
> Which nature, love, and filial tenderness,
> Shall, O dear father, pay thee plenteously:
> My due from thee is this imperial crown,
> Which, as immediate from thy place and blood,
> Derive itself to me. Lo, here it sits,
> Which God shall guard.

Warwick, having summoned the Prince a little later at the King's command, tells how he

> found the prince in the next room,
> Washing with kindly tears his gentle cheeks,
> With such a deep demeanor in great sorrow,
> That tyranny, which never quaff'd but blood,
> Would, by beholding him, have wash'd his knife
> With gentle eye-drops.

The King, sending away all the others, reproaches Prince Hal for his unseemly haste; whereupon Shakespeare, who knew the psychological importance of repetition, has the son explain his motives:

> Coming to look on you, thinking you dead,
> And dead almost, my liege, to think you were,
> I spake unto this crown as having sense,
> And thus upbraided it: "The care on thee depending
> Hath fed upon the body of my father;
> Therefore, thou best of gold art worst of gold:
> Other, less fine in caret, is more precious,

Preserving life in medicine potable;
But thou, most fine, most honour'd, most renown'd,
Hast eat thy bearer up." Thus, my most royal liege,
Accusing it, I put it on my head,
To try with it, as with an enemy
That had before my face murdered my father,
The quarrel of a true inheritor.
But if it did infect my blood with joy,
Or swell my thoughts to any strain of pride;
If any rebel or vain spirit of mine
Did with the least affection of a welcome
Give entertainment to the might of it,
Let God forever keep it from my head,
And make me as the poorest vassal is,
That doth with awe and terror kneel to it.

But why is the dramatist so insistent on making it trebly clear that Prince Hal acted worthily in taking away the crown? Because Prince Hal, the hero of the trilogy, must not be found doing anything that would lessen his heroicity. That heroicity is in this instance made to shine by contrast—the contrast symbolized by the speeches of the King before and after his son's explanation, the contrast found in the lives of all heroes who are forced to embrace the appearance of evil while refraining themselves from the evil itself. Among the braggarts, blades, and brawlers of Eastcheap, Prince Hal is in the world but not of it; among the thieves of royal crowns—his own father being one—Prince Hal is in motive sui generis.

As in the First Part, so here, Shakespeare continues to paint the hero's portrait by means of contrasting pictures. We observe the comparison implied between Hal and his brother John. Falstaff, is at pains to tell us that John, "this same young sober-blooded boy doth not love me, nor a man cannot make him laugh, but that's no marvel, he drinks no wine"—truly a deadly indictment drawn against a total abstainer, though coming possibly from a prejudiced source. This same "sober-blooded" John of Lancaster plays a decidedly shabby trick on Archbishop Scroop and the rebels (IV. ii.), a ruse that is unworthy of him. It was surely in the interests of the contrast between John and his elder brother that Shakespeare here painted in a few unjustified strokes. For it was not Prince John of Lancaster, but the Earl of Westmoreland, whom Holinshed holds responsible for the strategic deception in Gaultree Forest. Furthermore, John can hardly merit Falstaff's

censure in regard to wine drinking. Stowe recounts the story of an affray that took place in 1410 between some citizens and two of the King's sons in Eastcheap, one very early morning, "after supper"; and not Henry, but John and Thomas, were the royal revelers.

The contrast between Prince Hal and Falstaff, begun in the First Part, is in this play effectively set forth in the guise of two kinds of development. The Prince develops upward; the knight develops downward. The Falstaff we meet and laugh with in *I Henry IV* is a lovable old rascal, his wit shrewd and piercing, his humour abundant and contagious. His famous "catechism of honor" is like the bottle of sack which he draws in lieu of a pistol on Shrewsbury field—a property designed mainly for humorous effect. He is not repulsive, even in the flights of merriment that do not readily lend themselves to quotation; vulgar he may be at times, but he is never crass or revolting. Were we to see no more of old Jack Falstaff after he puts his tongue in his cheek and makes one more promise to "leave sack, and live cleanly as a nobleman should do," we should be justified in styling him, as Brandes has done, "one of the most glorious creations that ever sprang from a poet's brain."

But we meet Falstaff again; and in *II Henry IV* we find him a less amiable and a less keen-witted Falstaff. We still laugh with him, it is true; but we find ourselves also laughing at him. Is it because his humour cloys upon us? Rather is it because his humour is thinner and grosser and less spontaneous. His tongue continues to run on and on—witness his chuckling outbreak to his page concerning the Prince's smooth cheek (I. ii.)—but there is here less substance to his wit. His cleverness is on the wane. Now and again it flashes out in its old time brilliancy, as when, with the same astounding self-sufficiency with which he once narrated his heroism at Gadshill, he now loftily tells the Chief Justice that he had not obeyed the summons of the court because he was so advised by his "learned council in the laws of this land service," and shortly afterward, having escaped prison and disgrace, has the impudence to ask the magistrate for the loan of a thousand pounds; but the general impression we get from the play is that the gout which afflicts his great toe is exerting a subtle influence on his florid fancy and his stock of verbal pyrotechnics. Old Jack Falstaff is hard pressed indeed when he has to admit:

"A good wit will make use of anything: I will turn diseases to commodity."

It is evident that in this play the degeneration of Falstaff, mentally and morally, is well advanced. But once do we find him in company with his former boon companion the Prince of Wales; and that rather disgusting scene (II. iv.) does not in any way redound to Falstaff's advantage. Sir John finds it difficult to explain the scurrilous language he has used in speaking of the heir apparent, and his explanation, in comparison with his immortal coward-on-instinct argument (*I Henry IV*, II. iv.) comes off haltingly. It is significant that the foils of his wit in *II Henry IV* are not the agile Prince and the clever Poins, but the Hostess and Mistress Doll, the blustering Pistol and the silly Justice Shallow. A verbal swordsman inevitably gravitates to foemen worthy of his steel.

And, just as plainly as we see Falstaff's degeneration, do we see the Prince's regeneration. He is more rarely than formerly in the Boarshead tavern, and less in harmony with the environment of Eastcheap. In the First Part emphasis was laid on his external commonness; in the Second Part stress is laid rather on his internal nobility. Hal's upward development is perceptibly advancing; in this play he stands midway between the madcap Prince of *I King Henry IV* and the ideal monarch and man of action of *King Henry V*.

The continued contrast between Prince Henry and Sir John Falstaff Shakespeare brings to focus in the fifth scene of Act V, where, for the last time, the young King and his old companion meet face to face. Foul and travel-stained, out at knees and elbows, the fat knight and his frowsy friends, Bardolph and Pistol, take their stand near Westminster Abbey. The coronation procession approaches, and Falstaff recognizes the familiar face of Prince Hal. But, with an unwonted sinking of the heart, he sees that the madcap Prince is strangely altered; dignity and grace have set their stamp upon the youthful brow. Unaccustomed forebodings tugging at his heart, Falstaff shouts his salutation: "God save thy grace, King Hal! My royal Hal! . . . My king! My Jove! I speak to thee, my heart!" A sudden silence falls upon the crowded street; and then the young King speaks:

> I know thee not, old man: fall to thy prayers;
> How ill white hairs become a fool and jester!

To what extent Shakespeare has here transmuted the material at hand may be seen from this excerpt from Holinshed (III. 543.):

"But this king even at first appointing with himself, to show that in his person princely honors should change public manners, he determined to put on him the shape of a new man. For whereas aforetime he had made himself a companion unto misruly mates of dissolute order and life, he now banished them all from his presence (but not unrewarded, or else unpreferred); inhibiting them, upon a great pain, not to approach, lodge, or sojourn within ten miles of his court or presence."

Minor contrasts, for which Shakespeare is entirely responsible, abound in the play. He invents the third scene of Act III and the pleadings of Northumberland's wife and daughter-in-law, the better to show the hedging father of the impetuous Hotspur in contrast with the daring and self denying Archbishop Scroop. That prelate's speech in the council of war (I. iii.) embodies a brief presentation of some of the contrasts running through the historical plays:

> What trust is in these times?
> They that, when Richard lived, would have him die,
> Are now become enamour'd on his grave:
> Thou, that threw'st dust upon his goodly head
> When through proud London he came sighing on
> After the admired heels of Bolingbroke,
> Criest now "O earth, yield us that king again,
> And take thou this!" O thoughts of men accursed!
> Past and to come seems best; things present, worst.

The contrast of a bishop faring forth to war, above all to civil war, is thus indicated in the lines Shakespeare gives to Westmoreland (IV. i.):

> You, lord Archbishop,
> Whose see is by a civil peace maintain'd,
> Whose beard the silver hand of peace hath touch'd,
> Whose learning and good letters peace hath tutor'd,
> Whose white investments figure innocence,
> The dove and very blessed spirit of peace,
> Wherefore do you so ill translate yourself
> Out of the speech of peace that bears such grace,
> Into the harsh and boisterous tongue of war;
> Turning your books to graves, your ink to blood,
> Your pens to lances, and your tongue divine
> To a loud trumpet and a point of war?

Finally, Shakespeare had no warrant for Falstaff's comic opera exploit in the capture of Coleville of the Dale (IV. iii.), which is faintly reminiscent of the contrast secured in the final act of the First Part between the heroic Hotspur and the craven knight. Coleville is simply mentioned by Holinshed (III. 530.) as one of the conspirators beheaded at Durham.

X.

KING HENRY V

In *King Henry V* we have the crowning play of the Prince Hal trilogy; and, as is eminently fitting, the dominant figure is the King. Previously we have received our dramatic impressions of Henry from seeing him form with Hotspur a contrast of rivalry and with Falstaff a contrast of development. But now the method of presentation is changed. The former Eastcheap reveller has become not only a good man and a wise and warlike monarch, but a national hero whose praises must be sung on every anniversary of Agincourt, a superman whose daring and indomitable spirit flung the English yoemen over the walls of Harfleur. In this play he is presented to us, not by means of the contrast of conflict or the contrast of character, but by means of the contrast inhering in supremacy. He dominates; therefore he contrasts.

At the same time we cannot afford to forget that an adequate comprehension of the dramatic contrast afforded in *King Henry V* depends greatly on an intimate knowledge of the other plays of the trilogy. Nobody ever got a fair conception of Falstaff solely by watching his cavortings in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*; to be appreciated rightly in that drama, Falstaff must be followed through both parts of *King Henry IV*. Similarly, we do not grasp the full force of the drama of *King Henry V* until we see it against the background of its predecessors in the Prince Hal trilogy. At every turn the pious King is in contrast with the seeming-impious Prince.

This contrast with the King that is with the Prince that was is stressed by Shakespeare in the opening scene of the play. The Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Ely praise him at length as "full of grace and fair regard," "a true lover of the holy church." Says Canterbury:

> The courses of his youth promised it not.
> The breath no sooner left his father's body,
> But that his wildness, mortified in him,
> Seem'd to die, too; yea, at that very moment,
> Consideration like an angel came
> And whipp'd the offending Adam out of him,
> Leaving his body as a paradise,
> To envelope and contain celestial spirits.

The prelate, after paying a glowing tribute to the King's learning and piety and valor and sagacity, marvels thereat—

> Since his addiction was to courses vain,
> His companies unletter'd, rude and shallow,
> His hours fill'd up with riots, banquets, sports,
> And never noted in him any study,
> Any retirement, any sequestration
> From open haunts and popularity.

Whereupon moralizes his lordship of Ely:

> The strawberry grows underneath the nettle,
> And wholesome berries thrive and ripen best
> Neighbour'd by fruit of baser quality:
> And so the prince obscured his contemplation
> Under the veil of wildness, which, no doubt,
> Grew like the summer grass, fastest by night,
> Unseen, yet crescive in his faculty.

The device here employed by Shakespeare has since become a stock dramaturgic procedure. A group of village maidens in the *Way Down East* type of play of two decades ago took up a considerable portion of the first act discussing the beauty, the intelligence, and the general desirability of the heroine. The result was that, when one of the group ran to the wobbly white picket fence near the back drop and shouted excitedly, "Here she comes now," the audience—unless it happened to be extremely sophisticated—sat up in breathless expectation. The entrance of the heroine at that point is undeniably dramatic—seriously so if she squares with the picture of her drawn by her admirers, comically so should she prove at all points its antithesis. In the case of *King Henry V* the device has a thorough justification, for the audience may be reasonably expected not to form their conception of the young King solely from what the bishops say but from previous knowledge of the Prince and his upward development. The prelates in that first scene really supplement the work of the chorus; they tell us that which we ourselves do know.

For the remainder of the first act of *King Henry V* Shakespeare thumbs his Holinshed. The chronicle he follows closely, not omitting the fine contrast afforded in the episode of the tennis balls. But in the second scene of Act II he adds to the dramatic effectiveness of the conspirators' condemnation by having them unwittingly name their own doom. Almost entirely original is

Henry's condemnation speech, as may be seen on comparing it with Holinshed's version (III. 548):

"Having thus conspired the death and destruction of me, which am the head of the realm and governor of the people, it may be, no doubt, but that you likewise have sworn the confusion of all that are here with me, and also the desolation of your own country. To what horror, O Lord, for any true English heart to consider, that such an execrable iniquity should ever so bewrap you, as for pleasing of a foreign enemy to imbrue your hands in our blood, and to ruin your own native soil. Revenge herein touching my person though I seek not, yet for the safeguard of you, my dear friends, and for due preservation of all sorts, I am by office to cause example to be showed. Get ye hence, therefore, ye poor miserable wretches, to the receiving of your just reward, wherein God's majesty give you grace of his mercy and repentance of your heinous offenses."

This pedestrian prose Shakespeare transmutes into a speech bristling with contrasts:

> You would have sold your king to slaughter,
> His princes and his peers to servitude,
> His subjects to oppression and contempt,
> And his whole kingdom into desolation.

Throughout the play Shakespeare thus takes the baser metal of the chronicler and, without falsifying the underlying truth, shapes it anew in the alembic of his own personality. Here, for instance, is the basis he found in Holinshed (III. 552.) for Henry's reply to Montjoy's demand to surrender (III. vi.):

"Mine intent is to do as it pleaseth God. I will not seek your master at this time; but, if he or his seek me, I will meet them, God willing. If any of your nation attempt once to stop me in my journey towards Calais, at their jeopardy be it; and yet wish I not any of you so unadvised as to be the occasion that I dye your tawny ground with your red blood."

The tawny ground and the red blood Shakespeare incorporated into the spirited reply he has the English King fling into the herald's teeth; for naught else here was he indebted to Holinshed. The speech he makes lengthy—lengthy, that is, as compared with the speech cited by Holinshed—and therefore important. He permits Henry frankly to admit to his enemies,

My people are with sickness much enfeebled,
My numbers lessen'd, and those few I have
Almost no better than so many French.

The King begs God's forgiveness for that playful bragging: "This your air of France," he explains whimsically to Montjoy, "hath blown that vice in me." Then he continues:

Go, therefore, tell thy master here I am;
My ransom is this frail and worthless trunk,
My army but a weak and sickly guard;
Yet, God before, tell him we will come on,
Though France himself and such another neighbour
Stand in our way.

And—in a way the most typical contrast of all—this tattered leader of an army of scarecrows, never forgetting that he is a king, tosses a purse to the gaily attired herald: "There's for thy labor, Montjoy."

The fourth act opens with an indication on the part of the chorus of the contrast between the two camps, where

Fire answers fire, and through their paly flames
Each battle sees the other's umber'd face.

Then follows "a little touch of Harry in the night," and we have that wonderfully dramatic scene wherein the King, disguised as a common soldier, passes here and there through the camp, listens to the conversation of his soldiers, and good humoredly picks a quarrel with the stolid Williams. For this scene, as well as for the soliloquy that follows it, when the King, never so awfully alone as now, thinks royal thoughts aloud, there is no warrant in Holinshed.

Again, we have Holinshed's prosaic statements concerning Montjoy's second embassy to the English King (III. 554.):

"Here we may not forget how the French, thus in their jollity, sent an herald to King Henry to inquire what ransom he would offer. Whereunto he answered that within two or three hours he hoped it would so happen that the Frenchmen should be glad to common rather with the Englishmen for their ransoms than the English to take thought for their deliverance, promising for his own part that his dead carcass should rather be a prize to the Frenchmen than that his living body should pay any ransom."

Shakespeare scented the dramatic possibilities of this passage, and the result is the contrast-teeming speech (IV. iii.) beginning with

Bid them achieve me and then sell my bones.

One remarkable variation rung on his sources by Shakespeare deals with the speech made by Henry before the battle of Agincourt. "The fewer men, the greater share of honour" is a sentiment taken almost bodily from Holinshed (III. 553.); but Shakespeare carefully avoided anything like the following passages:

"If God of his clemency do favor us and our just cause, as I trust he will, we shall speed well enough. But let no man ascribe victory to our own strength and might, but only to God's assistance; to whom I have no doubt we shall worthily have cause to give thanks therefore . . . but if we should fight in trust of multitude of men, and so get the victory (our minds being prone to pride), we should thereupon peradventure ascribe the victory not so much to the gift of God as to our own puissance, and thereby provoke his high indignation and displeasure against us."

In the great St. Crispin's eve speech (IV. iii.) all this expression of humility and resignation is curtailed into a bluff "God's will!" and a curt "God's peace!" Why did Shakespeare make the omission? Certainly not because he considered pious sentiments in the mouth of Henry out of character; his King Henry V is depicted as a whole-souled and reverential monarch, with prayers coming hot from the heart often on his lips. Manly piety, the devotional spirit that makes a strong man stronger, Shakespeare understood, and such a spirit he bestowed upon this his highest type of royalty. But on this particular occasion, just before the battle of Agincourt, he deliberately eliminates the pious speeches put into the King's mouth by the chronicler. Why?

I think the only satisfactory explanation is to be found in the theory of dramatic contrast. An ordinary man in the King's place would undoubtedly have prayed, and prayed out loud. The prospective battle looked like a slaughter with the English enacting the rôle of victims. The odds were unmistakably against them. If they were not to receive the help of heaven, they were certain to lose the day. Such is what an ordinary man would have thought, such is what Henry's fellows in arms did actually think; but Shakespeare's superman is made of sterner stuff. Alone, in the silence of the night, the King has indeed raised his

hands to heaven; but now—he buckles on his sword. The ordinary man would have thought much of God before the conflict and would have forgotten all about Him after the victory. Shakespeare's heroic monarch reserves his piety and his devotion for use after the battle:

> O God, thy arm was here;
> And not to us, but to thy arm alone,
> Ascribe we all . . . . Take it, God,
> For it is none but thine!
> . . . . . .
> Come go we in procession to the village:
> And be it death proclaimed through our host
> To boast of this or take that praise from God
> Which is his only.
> . . . . . .
> Do we all holy rites;
> Let there be sung *Non nobis* and *Te Deum*.

Dr. Johnson maintains that the great defect of *King Henry V* is "the emptiness and narrowness of the last act." In a way the great lexicographer is right. That last act is narrow and is empty—in itself. And, again, if we were to assume that the theme of the play is the *victories* of Henry V, then indeed the fifth act shows a decided falling off in dramatic efficiency. But that act must be considered in the first place as an integral part of the play, and secondly the play must be considered as a dramatic glorification of an English King. As we have already said, King Henry dominates the play; he must perforce dominate the last act of it.

The greater part of the fifth act of *King Henry V* is taken up with the courtship of the Princess Katharine by the English monarch. That scene was conceived in the spirit of contrast. To begin with, we have the never-failing theatricalism of a blundering use of language—the Princess talking absurdly inelegant English and the King talking desperately improper French. Again, we have the comical complication that the course of true love does not run smooth without the aid of an interpreter. Then there is the contrast between the courtly and very young princess—for in point of fact Henry had already unsuccessfully tried to marry two of her elder sisters—and the bluff, war-grimed monarch. Those contrasts would lend the scene sufficient dramatic importance to hold an audience.

But the major contrast in the courtship scene centers in the King. Here we have still another side of his varied character. This man, last seen falling devoutly on his knees after gaining a brilliant victory, now perplexedly scratches his head and sweats for it in his effort to surmount a linguistic obstacle and tell a princess that he loves her. And this is the Prince Hal of Eastcheap, the "Harry Le Roy" who accepted Williams' gage, the King Henry who won the field of Agincourt. "We see him," says Gervinus,[18] "in a short time alternate between the most different emotions and positions, ever the same master over himself, or we may rather say, over the opportunity and the matter which lie for the moment before him."

Because King Henry thus dominates the play, the minor contrasts are here relatively few. We have a fleeting, second-hand vision of the dying Falstaff plucking at the sheets and babbling of green fields; we have the episode of Pistol's ridiculous capture of the French soldier (IV. iv.) which Shakespeare found in *The Famous Victories of Henry Fifth*, and materially bettered in his conveyance thereof; we have our old acquaintances, Bardolph and Mistress Quickly, and Corporal Nym and the boy—a boy whose preternatural wisdom sets off the stupidity of the other members of the group. Most distinctively, however, we have Fluellen the Welshman, Macmorris the Irishman, and Jamy the Scotsman, each of them contrasting deliciously with the others. The obvious purpose of the few scenes which lead us within the enemy's lines is to enable us to form more vividly and in greater detail the contrast between the two camps.

[18] *Shakespeare Commentaries*, vol. I.

XI.

KING HENRY VIII

On entering upon a study of *King Henry VIII* we must remember that we have here a drama for which Shakespeare alone does not stand responsible. In 1758 the question of the Shakespearean authorship of the play was raised by Roderick (in Edward's *Canons of Criticism*), who called attention to three metrical peculiarities in portions of *King Henry VIII* that are not found in other Shakespearean plays. Almost a century later James Spedding in his article on *Who Wrote Shakespeare's Henry VIII?* [19] presented a careful and scholarly discussion of the problem; and his views are today accepted almost without cavil. His study is really one of the high water marks of English literary criticism, for it is neither merely impressionistic nor solely scientific, but represents a happy union of the two styles of analysis. The impression made upon him by an alert reading of portions of the play is thus described by Spedding:

"The opening of the play seemed to have the full stamp of Shakespeare, in his latest manner: the same close-packed expression; the same life, and reality, and freshness; the same rapid and abrupt turnings of thought, so quick that language can hardly follow fast enough; the same impatient activity of intellect and fancy, which having once disclosed an idea cannot wait to work it orderly out; the same daring confidence in the resources of language, which plunges headlong into a sentence without knowing how it is to come forth; the same careless metre which disdains to produce its harmonious effects by the ordinary devices, yet is evidently subject to a master of harmony; the same entire freedom from book-language and commonplace; all the qualities, in short, which distinguish the magical hand which has never yet been successfully imitated."

But, Spedding goes on to say, in other portions of the play the Shakespearean characteristics he found markedly absent; and, profiting by a hint from Tennyson, "a man of first rate judgment on such a point," he concluded that the non-Shakespearean portions of *King Henry VIII* are decidedly in the manner of

[19] *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1850.

John Fletcher. The same conclusion was almost simultaneously reached by Hickson,[20] and was subsequently confirmed after two series of metrical tests by Fleay and Abbott (*Shakespearean Grammar*). Robert Boyle[21] urged the possibility of Massinger's being in part responsible for the play, and some recent critics have professed to discover therein the work of a third hand; but—excepting some eminent heretics, including Singer, Knight, Ward, and Ulrici—the mass of critical opinion does not materially deviate from the views set forth nearly three quarters of a century ago by Spedding.

We are justified, therefore, in assuming the fact of collaboration in *King Henry VIII*. And such being the case, to what extent are we warranted in including the play in a study of Shakespeare's dramaturgic procedure? We shall find our bearings more readily by recalling that there are two sorts of collaboration, for a splendid differentiation between which we are indebted to Professor Matthews:

"First of all, there is the true collaboration, that of Erckmann-Chatrian and of Augier and Sandeau, in which the pair of authors really labor in common, inventing and creating in consultation. They make the plot together, they develop the characters, and they assign to one another the more mechanical task of the actual writing. Then there is a second kind of collaboration, falsely so called, in which the two writers do not consult, and may not even meet for consultation, but in which one of them merely revises or amplifies or modifies what the other has already written, and in this case there is not a genuine partnership. And under these circumstances it is sometimes possible to separate the respective shares of the two writers and to identify what the reviser has added to the work of the inventor. He may have made it better or he may have made it worse, but in neither case did he create it originally. There has been only a mechanical mixture of their several contributions and not a chemical union. But in true collaboration there is a chemical union of the several contributions, and this forbids any successful effort to identify the respective shares of the several collaborators."[22]

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[20] *Notes and Queries*, II. 198; III. 33.
[21] *Transactions of the New Shakespeare Society*, 1880–1885.
[22] *Shakespeare as a Playright*, pp. 347–8.

Professor Matthews finds in *King Henry VIII* such a "chemical union" of Shakespeare and Fletcher and is therefore incapacitated from identifying their respective portions. But in this realm of conjecture the opposite view seems to me more credible; and it has the weight of Spedding's investigation behind it. Therefore the problem of collaboration is an important problem in any discussion of *King Henry VIII*. It was a relatively unimportant issue in our investigation of *King Henry VI*, for in those three plays Shakespeare, to whatever extent he borrowed from and was influenced by *The True Contention* and older plays, had the last word in defining the ultimate form which the plays would take; his "collaborators" were certainly not at his elbow suggesting elisions and protesting against alterations. But in the case of *King Henry VIII* we have a play which was obviously begun by Shakespeare and finished by Fletcher—the Shakespearean portions not extending beyond the third act. Here, therefore, Fletcher, and not Shakespeare, had the last word; and here, if we wish to examine the play with reference to Shakespeare's use of his historical material, we must confine ourselves to the admittedly Shakespearean portions.

A reading of the first half of the play must convince us that here Shakespeare designed to set three characters in effective contrast—the King, Queen Katharine, and Cardinal Wolsey. This he could have done without sacrificing historic truth as that truth was embodied in the leading sources which he employed—again Hall and Holinshed, possibly George Cavendish's *Life of Wolsey* which was circulated in manuscript form in Shakespeare's day, and possibly also Fox's *Acts and Monuments of the Church*, a work which was utilized by Fletcher for the fifth act. This, indeed, he did do, until that point is reached where the original mood of the play changes, and what started out as a condemnation of Henry, a beatification of Katharine, and a swift and pagent-like display of Wolsey's greatness and fall, becomes a vague, weak, uncertain succession of shifting scenes and a glorification of the infant Queen Elizabeth. *King Henry VIII* is not the finest of the English historical plays, not, as is sometimes said, because it has too much pageantry, but because it has too little of sustained contrast.

Certainly, the play begins impressively. We hear the story of the Field of the Cloth of Gold; then comes a natural transition

to the subject of the Cardinal; and then appears the lordly Wolsey himself. Here is one of Shakespeare's greatest dramaturgical triumphs. Wolsey appears but for a moment, he says scarcely anything; yet he dominates the scene. In such stage pictures Shakespeare truly dramatized history; that is, without being false to the story of the past, he shredded that story of its superfluous men and events and set its essentials in contrast one with another. The characters in the first scene of the play he found in Holinshed; he found, too, many of the sentiments he puts into their mouths; but the essentially dramatic situation, secured by the simple device of having the much talked of Wolsey pass across the stage and a little later the ominous net fall upon Buckingham, is his own invention—an egg easy enough to make stand upright once the thing has been done.

The three-cornered contrast in *King Henry VIII* would not be complete without Queen Katharine, so Shakespeare introduces her in the second scene of Act I, where she intercedes for the people against the exactions being made by Wolsey in the King's name. Thus the three contrasting characters are set in one compact group. This is a clear deviation from Hall and Holinshed who, while taking account of the exactions, have absolutely nothing to say concerning any interference on the part of the Queen. The device is a felicitous stroke made solely in the interests of dramatic contrast.

Another palpably invented scene we have in the third scene of Act II wherein Anne Bullen converses with an old lady of the court. Ann Bullen is in contrast, naturally enough, with Queen Katharine; and that we may see what manner of person Anne Bullen is, Shakespeare puts her in contrast with a fictitious character—an old lady who contrasts with Anne's youth and beauty. The scene, for all its brevity, is a subtle bit of character portraiture. "How you do talk!" exclaims the demure maid of honor. "I swear again I would not be a queen for all the world." Subsequent events showed that here the lady protests too much.

Building prodigally upon the meager details afforded him by his sources, Shakespeare constructed that splendid scene, shimmering with contrasts, in which the King reveals his knowledge of Wolsey's great possessions (III. ii.). This, for the Cardinal, is the beginning of the end, and the contrast of the prelate's perturbation with the monarch's studious composure is graphically

outlined in the conversation of the attendants, in the brief, over-devoted protestations of Wolsey, in the envenomed reminiscences of Henry who concludes with:

> Read o'er this;
> And after, this: and then to breakfast with
> What appetite you have.

In describing (II. iv.) the Queen's appeal and her repudiation of Wolsey, Shakespeare found little to change in Holinshed. The scene was waiting for him, ready made. And yet we have here a striking instance of Shakespeare's method, observable throughout the English historical plays, of adopting his sources. His method took generally two forms: He followed his original closely, sometimes taking entire clauses word for word, leaving out no important idea and introducing no innovation; and again he regarded the text of the chronicle as a fit subject freely to paraphrase and expand, producing a result very different in form from the original but singularly true to its spirit.

Both these phases of the dramatist's method we have in this scene. How closely he could, on occasion, adhere to his source we see by a comparison with the appeal of Katharine as given by Shakespeare with the following account of it from Holinshed (III. 907.):

"I desire you to do me justice and right, and take some pity upon me, for I am a poor woman, and a stranger, born out of your dominion, having here no indifferent counsel and no assurance of friendship. Alas, sir, in what have I offended you, or what occasion of displeasure have I showed you, intending thus to put me from you after this sort? I take God to my judge, I have been to you a true and humble wife, ever conformable to your will and pleasure; that never contraried or gainsaid anything thereof, and, being always contented with all things wherein you had any delight, whether little or much, without grudge or displeasure, I loved for your sake all them whom you loved, whether they were my friends or enemies. I have been your wife these twenty years and more, and you have had by me divers children. . . . The King, your father, was in his time of excellent wit, and the king of Spain, my father, Ferdinando, was reckoned one of the wisest princes that reigned in Spain many years before. It is not to be doubted but that they had gathered as wise counsellors unto them of every realm as to their wisdoms they thought

meet, who deemed the marriage between you and me good and lawful. Wherefore, I humbly desire you to spare me until I may know what counsel my friends in Spain will advertise me to take, and, if you will not, then your pleasure be fulfilled."

On the other hand, the second phase of Shakespeare's method of adopting his sources—that of bringing into clearer light the contrasts of character—is to be observed by comparing Queen Katharine's speech beginning, "I will, when you are humble," with Holinshed's account told in the third person:

"Here is to be noted that the queen in the presence of the whole court most grievously accused the cardinal of untruth, deceit, wickedness, and malice; which had sown dissention between her and the king, her husband: and therefore openly protested that she did utterly abhor, refuse, and forsake such a judge as was not only a most malicious enemy to her but also a manifest adversary to all right and justice; and therewith she did appeal unto the Pope, committing her whole cause to be judged of him."

In his deviation from as well as in his adherence to his sources in *King Henry VIII* Shakespeare continues to carry into execution the principles of dramatic contrast. Had he succeeded in handing over to Fletcher, not only the unfinished manuscript of the play, but likewise his conception of the underlying contrast, and withal something of his masterly command of his resources, there is little doubt that *King Henry VIII* would dominate the entire group of English historical plays. As it stands it is splendid in its promises—promises unfulfilled.

XII.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the course of this monograph we have investigated, as briefly as is consonant with our general purpose, the principal theories of dramatic construction which have been suggested by critics of the theater as expositions of what constitutes the essence and fundamental notion of the dramatic. The theory of the "classical" unities, concerned with the external forms of the drama; the volitional conflict theory, concerned with the psychology of the drama; the theories of passion in action and crises, which touch upon both the internals and the externals of the drama, have all been examined in their relation to representative plays of the past and of the present, and all of them have been found inadequate. The theory of Mr. Hamilton, which suggests internal contrast embodied in external contrast as the true and adequate differentia of the drama, has been applied to a large variety of the plays, and has not been found wanting.

A specific and detailed application of the theory of contrast to a group of ten Shakespearean plays seems to warrant us in assuming that, certainly in so far as those ten plays are concerned, the notion of contrast was the guiding principle of the dramatist in selecting and shaping this material. We have seen that Shakespeare, in composing the English historical plays, in many instances deviated from his sources; and the result of our study is the impression, growing stronger and stronger as the investigation progressed, that the theory of contrast offers the only reasonable and consistent explanation of Shakespeare's manipulation of his materials; that he sensed the dramatic value of contrast early in his career as a dramatist and that he used it more and more effectively as he grew in knowledge of life, mastery of expression, and command of his technical resources.

One group of variations, in number very considerable, has been instanced but rarely in the course of our investigations. That group consists of chronological divergences. Shakespeare juggled dates ruthlessly. After making a liberal allowance for such chronological variations as are due to carelessness or misconception on the part of the dramatist, it is evident that for the most part when Shakespeare disagreed with his sources regarding dates, he

was prompted by a sense of the dramatic value of contrast. The operation known in the moving picture art as "speeding the film" —compressing into an hour the events of a day and into a day the events of a year—has the sanction of the usage of many other dramatists besides Shakespeare; and the reason for its vogue seems to be that it affords unparalleled opportunities for the setting forth of contrasts. Instead of showing things as they ordinarily happen in life, in succession measured by the passing of time, the dramatist endeavors to show things happening either synchronously or in unmeasured succession. Instead of showing his pictures of men and manners in a series of dissolving views, he strives, whenever practicable, to exhibit his pictures side by side and at the same time, or else in a succession so quick and abrupt as to convey the impression of their being almost coincident.

It may be well to add here, the better to preclude the possibility of misconception, that our study of Shakespeare's manipulation of his sources in the English historical plays has not been designed to support the contention that the dramatist had a conscious and clearly defined theory of dramatic contrast or that, when he departed from his sources, he said to himself, "Go to, I shall now build a scene founded on the contrasts existing between men and men and things and things." To what extent Shakespeare wrought consciously in building up his contrasts in the historical plays is a question that must perforce remain untouched; it may be an interesting field for conjecture, but as such is quite outside the scope of the present study. He may have aimed at contrast consciously; he may have achieved contrast intuitively; he may have sensed contrast sometimes deliberately and sometimes subconsciously. We must be content with the fact that, quite irrespective of the subjective attitude of the dramatist, contrast was the guiding principle of Shakespeare in his variations from his sources in the English historical plays.

Furthermore, while finding in the course of this investigation the inadequacy of certain theories of the theater—some of them truly luminous and all of them worthy of respect—we are very far from implying that such theories have ceased to be, within certain set limits, true and vital. All that we insist upon is that those theories do not give a satisfying answer to the fundamental question: What constitutes the essence of the dramatic? Contrast, as we have discovered, is the only adequate answer; but

often it is contrast presented in action, or contrast shown through the medium of human passion, or contrast suggested by a series of crises, or contrast taking the form of a volitional conflict. Not one of those theories has the same depth and scope as the theory of contrast; but, on the other hand, not one of them can the student of the drama afford to ignore. Even the unities of time and place represent a suggestive principle to the budding dramatist, a principle which often he will find it helpful to embrace; all he need remember is that good plays have been constructed in the past in defiance of the "classical" unities, and good plays of today may or may not ignore them and yet be none the less—and none the more—good plays.

BIBLIOGRAPHIES

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LIFE

Brother Zachary Leo (Francis Gallagher Meehan) was born in San Francisco, California, in 1881. After completing the courses prescribed in the Novitiate and Normal School of the Brothers of the Christian Schools at Martinez, California, he made his collegiate studies and received from St. Mary's College, Oakland, California, the degrees of A. B. in 1903 and M. A. in 1908.

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