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Other Englands: Regionalism in Shakespeare's first historical tetralogy

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**OTHER ENGLANDS: REGIONALISM IN
SHAKESPEARE'S FIRST HISTORICAL TETRALOGY**

BY

GRAHAM CATTLE B.A. (HONS)

**A Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Award of**

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USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

OTHER ENGLANDS: REGIONALISM IN SHAKESPEARE'S FIRST HISTORICAL TETRALOGY

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the representation of England in the plays of the first tetralogy. Arguing that a large number of studies of Shakespearian drama have tended to gloss over the inherent differences within the English nation, I suggest that regionalism and regional identity play a pivotal role in Shakespeare's dramatisation of English history from the accession of Henry VI to the death of Richard III.

In this thesis I propose that the first tetralogy is not only a representation of the past, but an expression of the political, cultural and geographical divisions within England during the period of the plays' first production. While Shakespeare's first tetralogy forms part of an interconnecting discourse of nationhood -- contributing to what has been termed the discovery of England -- I explore how the plays also serve to highlight the extent to which regionalism and regional diversity remained powerful factors within English society.

By drawing attention to the proliferation of geographical references in the tetralogy, I discuss how the localisation of scenes and the identification of characters with specific places represents an encounter with the kingdom beyond the confines of the theatre. In a series of plays that appear to be principally concerned with the struggle between rival dynasties for control of the realm, the various regional references can be read as the site of competing voices and sectional interests: an acknowledgment of not one England, but various other *Englands*.

While the image of the regional world in these plays is largely informed by the chronicle sources, this study considers how Shakespeare's fashioning of regional identity was governed by the need for Elizabethan acting companies to secure and maintain the protection of powerful and influential patrons, by censorship, company rivalry, and the demands placed on theatre companies by touring. With this in mind, I argue that the manner in which certain characters and regions are presented in the tetralogy is an indication that these plays may have been performed throughout England.

After a theoretical overview, chapter one presents an examination of regionalism as a social, cultural, political and economic phenomenon in early modern England. It is followed by a discussion of the various ways in which a sense of place was projected on the Elizabethan stage. Appropriating William Harrison's division of the late Tudor kingdom into four distinct provinces, this dissertation interrogates the role and representation in the first tetralogy of the area south of the Thames (chapter two), the midlands (chapter three), Wales and the English border counties (chapter four), and northern England (chapter five).

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

(i) incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;

(ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or

(iii) contain any defamatory material.

Acknowledgments

My deepest thanks goes to Dr Charles Edelman for his ongoing support and belief in this topic. I am particularly grateful to Professor Greg Walker, who read through a draft of this thesis and suggested a number of improvements. I wish also to record my debt to Professor Michael Hattaway and Professor Andrew Gurr for their expert advice and encouragement, and a thank-you to the staff at the library and English department, Edith Cowan University.

Special thanks to my wife Susan, for without her devotion and understanding over many years this project would never have seen the light of day.

To Hull City. A.F.C. and the English Cricket team that toured Australia in 1998/99, for demonstrating that all things are possible.

Not forgetting a plague of lighthouse keepers!

Note on the text

Unless otherwise stated all quotations from Shakespeare are drawn from *The Riverside Shakespeare*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston:1974. All maps are taken from John Speed's *Pocket Atlas* of 1627, apart from map six which is reproduced from Geoffrey Holmes' *The Making of a Great Power Late Stuart and Early Georgian Britain 1660-1722*. Longman: London, 1993.

In line with current practice I have silently modernised u, v and the long f. Where possible I retain the original spelling when quoting from primary source material.

Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract	I
Declaration	III
Acknowledgments	IV
Note on the text	IV
Map 1 - The Kingdom of England	VI
Map 2 - The County of Kent	VII
Map 3 - The County of Suffolk	VIII
Map 4 - Late Tudor Wales	IX
Map 5 - The County of Northumberland	X
Map 6 - The Counties of England and Wales prior to government reorganisation of 1974.	XI
Introduction	1
Chapter 1 Regionalism in early modern England and the projection of place on the Shakespearian stage.	8
2 Kent and Southern England	47
3 Middle England	89
4 Westwards towards Wales and Wales	122
5 Northern England	140
6 Conclusion	183
Bibliography	188



MAP 1

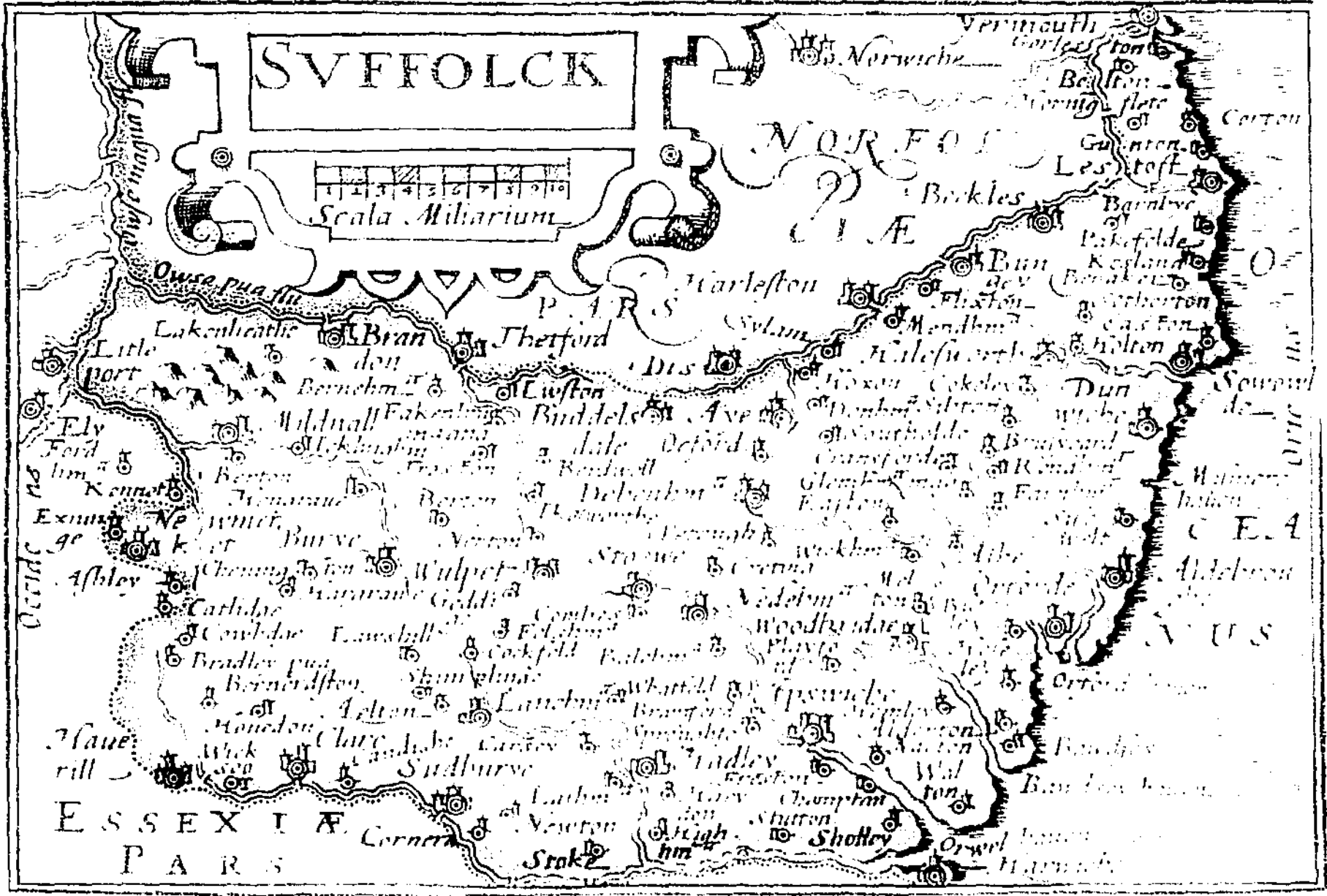


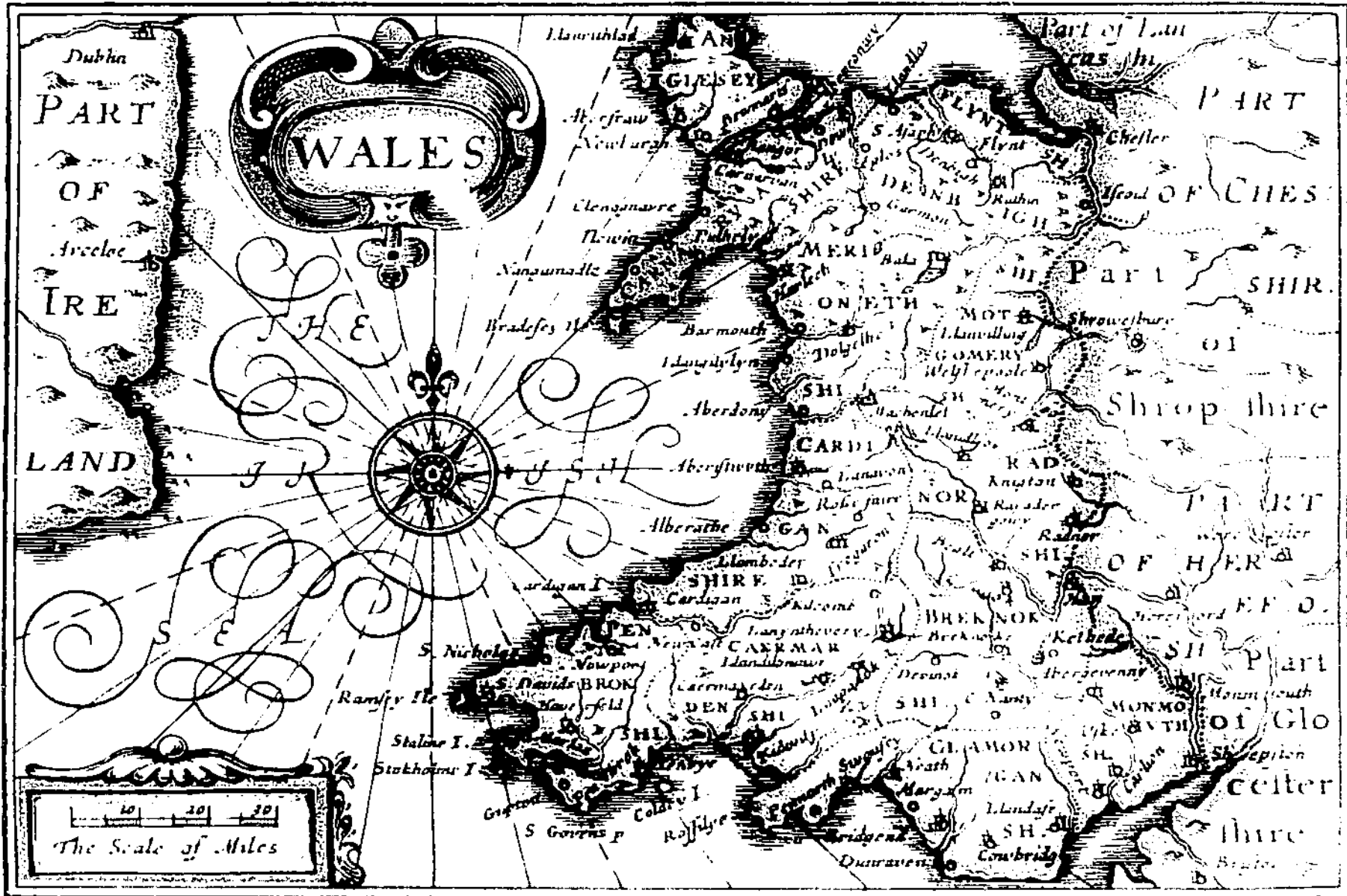
MAP 2

The Scale of Miles

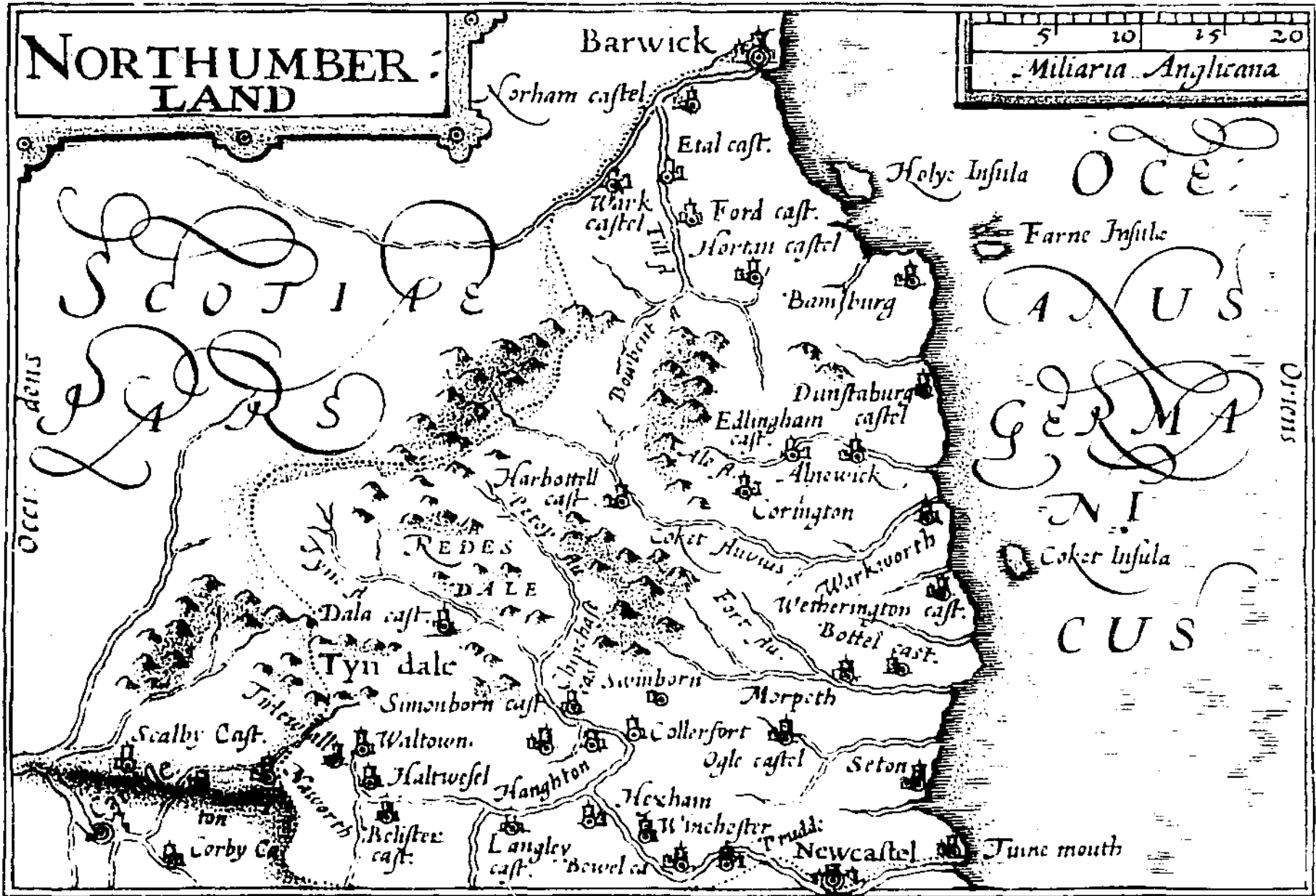
SUSSEX

KENT

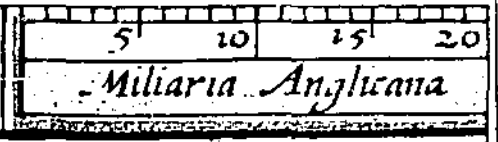




MAP 4



NORTHUMBERLAND

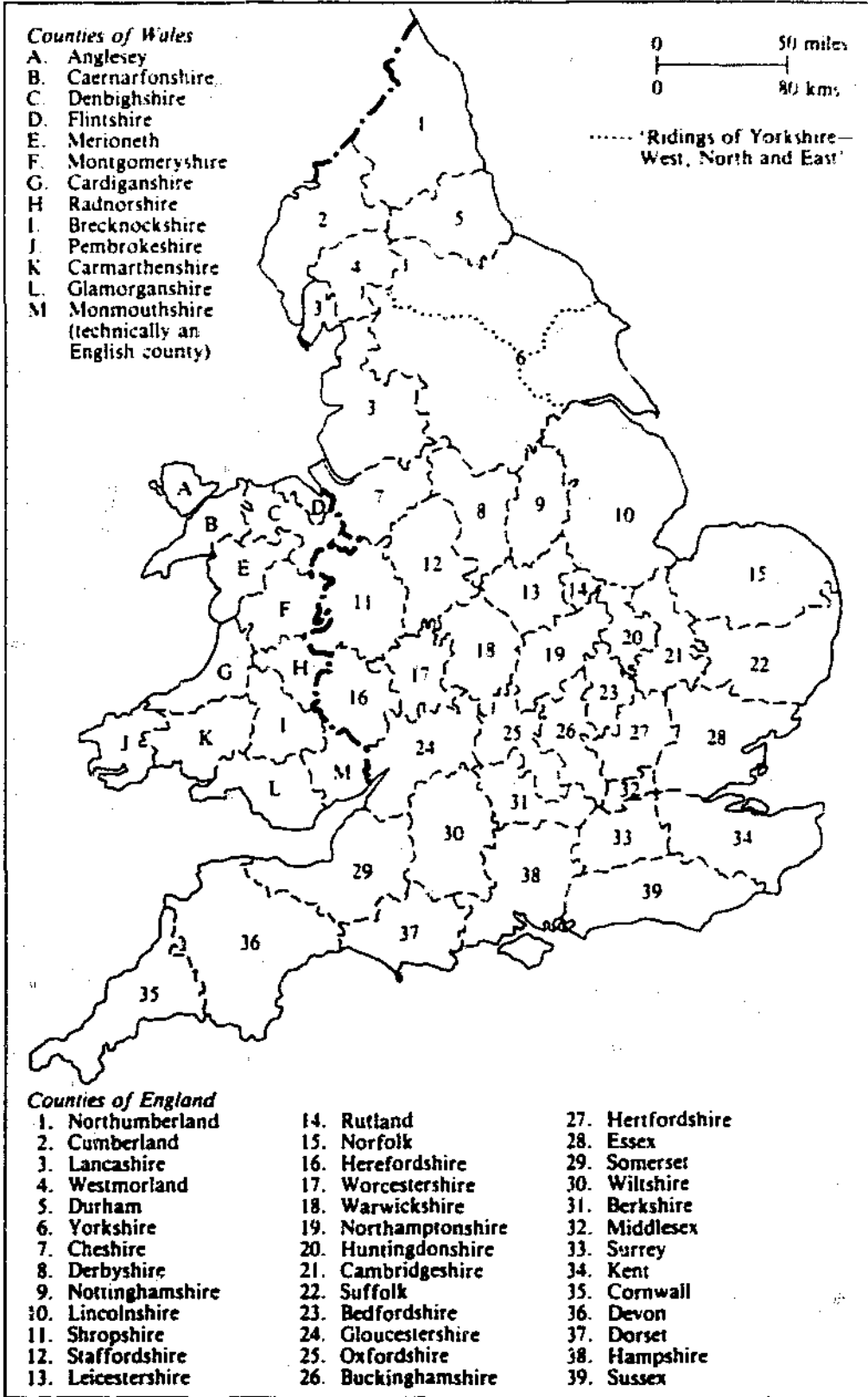


SCOTIAE
 OCCIDENTALIS

OCCIDENTALIS
 GERMANIA
 ORIENTALIS
 CUS

MAP 5

MAP 6



INTRODUCTION

O now let Richmond and Elizabeth,
The true succeeders of each royal house,
By God's fair ordinance conjoin together!
And let their heirs God, if thy will be so
Enrich the time to come with smooth-faced peace,
With smiling plenty, and fair prosperous days!
Abate the edge of traitors, gracious Lord,
That would reduce these bloody days again,
And make poor England weep in streams of blood!
Let them not live to taste this land's increase
That would with treason wound this fair land's peace!
Now civil wounds are stopped, peace lives again;
That she may long live here, God say Amen!

Spoken at the close of *Richard III*, Richmond's victory address looks forward to the onset of the Tudor dynasty. Anticipating a world that for theatre audiences of the 1590s had come to fruition, the final speech of Shakespeare's first historical tetralogy presents an image of the past that is consciously fashioned from the perspective of the present. As Catherine Belsey notes,

History is always in practice a reading of the past. We make a narrative out of the available documents ... we interpret in order to produce a knowledge of the world which is no longer present. And yet it is always from the present that we produce this knowledge from the present in the sense that it is only from what is still ... available ... and from the present in the sense that we make it out of an understanding formed by the present.¹

Consequently, historicist criticism that has identified the tetralogy's exploration of monarchical power, hereditary right, factionalism, foreign and civil war and popular unrest in medieval England as representative of the problems facing Elizabethan society in the 1590s, is not misplaced.² Nevertheless, the danger remains that in viewing these plays simply as reflections of the contemporary Tudor world we disregard the extent to which as 'history' plays the three parts of *Henry VI* and *Richard III* are, as Graham Holderness argues, 'chronicles of

¹ Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity & Difference In Renaissance Drama* (London:1985) 1.

² See, for example, Leah S. Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and its Discontents* (Berkeley:1988). Annabel Patterson, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice* (Oxford:1989).

feudalism [that] as conscious and deliberate acts of historiography' portray an image of England 'visibly different in fundamental ways from the society of the late sixteenth century.'³

The image of the nation Shakespeare fashions in these plays is neither exclusively that of the historical past nor, for dramatist and audience alike, that of the present. Rather in combining and contrasting two historical periods -- the Elizabethan present and the medieval world of the Wars of the Roses -- the first tetralogy is located in both time frames. This parallel discourse has, in part, been recognised by a number of critics. In *The Long Revolution*, Raymond Williams argues that it was valid to view certain characters of Shakespeare's plays as 'historical figures who are also, in certain radical ways, Elizabethans, alive in the drama's own time.'⁴ Similarly, Michael Hattaway suggests that the *Henry VI* plays should be regarded as 'a set of complex essays on the politics of the mid-fifteenth century -- essays which, of course, also offer reflections on Shakespeare's own times.'⁵

In dramatising the loss of England's possessions in France and the catastrophe brought about by the Wars of the Roses it is not surprising that one of the central themes of Shakespeare's *Henry VI* plays and *Richard III* is the nation itself. While it has become something of a fashion to denigrate the pioneering work of E.M.W. Tillyard, and in particular the idea that Shakespeare's chronicle history plays supported the so called Tudor Myth, Tillyard perceptively argues that it is England or Respublica, rather than any protagonist, that is the 'hero' of these plays.⁶ In a similar vein A.R. Humphreys, in an address to the British Academy, suggested that the 'real hero of the plays is England -- not because it is England's story the plays tell, but because England's quality and identity never escape Shakespeare's imagination.'⁷ For Philip Brockbank the early history plays are 'addressed to the audience's heroic sense of community, to its readiness to belong to an England represented by its court

³ Graham Holderness, *Shakespeare's History* (New York:1985) 14, 31, 45-51.

⁴ Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (London:1975) 275.

⁵ Michael Hattaway, *The Second Part of King Henry VI* (Cambridge:1991) 2.

⁶ E.M.W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays* (Harmondsworth:1962) 160, 262.

⁷ A.R. Humphreys, 'Shakespeare's Histories And "The Emotion Of Multitude".' *Proceedings of the British Academy*, Vol. LIV (1968) 272.

and army'.⁸ In a series of plays that appear to be largely concerned with the politics of the ruling elite and the struggle between rival dynasties for control of the kingdom, Brockbank's point is valid. Nevertheless, the court is not the only locale in which events unfold; neither are the various kings, princes or nobles who inhabit the world of the court and lead the armies into battle the sole representatives of the nation in the first tetralogy. As Alexander Leggatt remarks, within this world of political intrigue 'England is still there, and there are people in it'.⁹

This study seeks to interrogate the representation of the English nation in the first tetralogy. While attention has been given to the theatrical representation of gender, religion, social status, and race, the issue of regionalism as a cultural, social, economic and political phenomenon, and how it operates in Shakespeare's chronicle history plays, has not to date been thoroughly pursued. Taking the view that in early modern England regionalism was a powerful factor in society, one to which the theatre was not immune, I suggest the panoramic scope of these plays represents an encounter with not one England, but a number of competing and potentially destabilising *other Englands* each, in the words of Stephen Greenblatt, constructed by Shakespeare as a number of 'diversely shaped spaces that elicit and echo different tones, energies and even realities'.¹⁰

This examination of English regional identity in the first tetralogy will also include a discussion on the representation of Wales. My reasons are three-fold. Firstly, the history of England and Wales is inextricably linked, particularly in regard to the Anglo-Welsh border region during the historical period dramatised in these plays. Secondly, with its conquest by Edward I, completed in 1283, Wales had ceased to be an independent nation and was, as John Speed's map indicates, politically part of the English kingdom. This leads directly to my third point: while political and administrative reforms succeeded in absorbing Wales into the 'Imperial crown of this realm', to paraphrase part of the preamble to the *Act of Union* (1536), it had not extinguished the cultural differences between the two countries.

⁸ J.P. Brockbank, 'The Frame of Disorder - Henry VI' in *Early Shakespeare*, ed., John R. Brown & Bernard Harris (London:1967) 75.

⁹ Alexander Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Political Drama: The history plays and the Roman Plays*. (London:1988) 16.

¹⁰ Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*. (Chicago:1980) 195.

Without reducing this discussion to the level of economic determinism, one should not overlook the fact that the Elizabethan theatre was a commercial enterprise whose major revenue base included the royal court and the public playhouses of the London suburbs. Bearing this in mind, recent studies on the Elizabethan theatre have argued that Shakespeare, along with his contemporaries, catered increasingly for the London market and the demands of the playhouse audience.¹¹ While this is no doubt true, evidence collected by Andrew Gurr suggests that the theatres of Elizabethan London attracted a diverse audience, both in terms of social stratification and geographical origins.¹² Indeed, by the last decade of the sixteenth century London was attracting an ever increasing number of migrants from all over the kingdom -- a situation that may have prompted John Norden in his *Speculum Britanniae* (1593) to note that 'Myddlesex, which above all other shyres is graced, with that chiefe and head citie London: which as an adamant draweth unto it all other parts of the land.'¹³ The result is, the play-going public who originally attended these plays was not a homogeneous entity consisting solely of Londoners. In a situation where, as Ralph Berry suggests, 'for each single allusion to a place ... some member or members of the audience will know it, or have some connection there',¹⁴ the image of the regional world projected in the tetralogy often exploits widely accepted cultural and social differences between the various parts of the kingdom.

Equally the Elizabethan theatrical enterprise was not simply restricted to the playhouses of London's suburbs. Rather, as is becoming increasingly apparent through the ongoing work of the REED project, touring by acting companies was both regular and

¹¹ On the importance of London for the Elizabethan theatre companies see Philip Edwards, *Threshold of a Nation: a Study in English and Irish Drama* (New York:1979) 66-68. Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge:1992) 6-7. On London generally see David Morse, *England's Time of Crisis: From Shakespeare to Milton: A Cultural History* (London:1979). Peter Womack, 'Imagining Communities: Theatres and the English nation in the Sixteenth century', in David Aers *Culture and History 1500-1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writings* (New York:1992).

¹² See the appendixes in *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (Cambridge:1987).

¹³ John Norden, *Speculum Britanniae, Description of Middlesex* (1593).

¹⁴ Ralph Berry, *Shakespeare and the Awareness of the Audience*, 26, in J.C. Gray, ed., *Mirror up to Shakespeare* (Toronto:1984).

widespread.¹⁵ Clearly, this has a number of implications for the present study, not least the extent to which Shakespeare's construction of regional identity in the first tetralogy might have been influenced by the necessities of touring the plays to regional England. Similarly, the degree to which a number of other external factors, such as the need to appease patrons and the sensibilities of provincial audiences, may have affected the image of the regional world portrayed in the first tetralogy will be pursued throughout this study.

Crucial here is the status of the so called 'bad quartos' of both *2 and 3 Henry VI*, respectively *The First part of the Contention betwixt the two famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster* (1594), and *The True Tragedie of Richard Duke of York* (1595), and the various quartos of *Richard III*.¹⁶ Suffice to say the complex textual problems surrounding these texts have been explored by those editing the plays and need not be repeated here. Despite the work by Andrew S. Cairncross, Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, and Michael Hattaway, the actual status of these texts is far from settled, although there is a general consensus accepting the position first argued by Peter Alexander and Madeleine Doran that these plays are memorial reconstructions recalling performances of the plays known in *F* as *2 and 3 Henry VI*, a fact that helps explain the myriad of differences between the texts.¹⁷

An alternative view does exist, first postulated by Edmund Malone, and recently developed by Steven Urkowitz. It argues that the quartos may represent earlier drafts of the plays as they appear in *F*.¹⁸ Although the theory of revision has found little support it cannot be discounted. Certainly the identical nature of many of the passages in both *Q* and *F* is not satisfactorily explained by either Alexander's suggestion that the reporters had access to

¹⁵ REED is the acronym for the Records of Early English Drama, a project coordinated by University of Toronto

¹⁶ Although *The True Tragedy* is an Octavo, throughout this study I follow Cairncross in referring to this text as a quarto. See the note in *King Henry VI, part 3*, xiii.

¹⁷ See the introductions to the Arden editions of *King Henry VI, Part 1*, (London:1984), *King Henry VI, part 2*, reprint (London:1985) and *King Henry, Part 3*, reprint (London:1989). ed., Andrew S. Cairncross. Michael Hattaway's introduction to the New Cambridge editions of *The First Part of King Henry VI* (Cambridge:1990), *The Second Part of King Henry VI* (Cambridge:1991) and *The Third Part of King Henry VI* (Cambridge:1993). *William Shakespeare, A Textual Companion* ed., Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor et al (Oxford:1987) 175-208, 217-227.

¹⁸ Steven Urkowitz, "If I mistake in these foundations which I build upon": Alexander's analysis of Henry VI parts 2 and 3'. *English Literary Renaissance* 18 (1988) 230-56.

fragments of the original manuscript, or by Doran's arguments that *Q* reports an abridged version of *F*. Moreover, the revision of plays was not unknown. Recent scholarship has demonstrated that *F*'s *Othello* represents a revised version of the quarto that first appeared in 1622. Nevertheless it may well be, as Hattaway suggests, that in both instances *F* was set up from an authorial copy with some reference to the earlier quarto texts.

In a discussion on the Thump - Horner episode in *2 Henry VI*, Craig A. Berthnal argues that, for his purposes,

it makes very little difference whether the Quarto is 'authoritative', its existence as a text is a fact, whether pirated, plagiarised, or otherwise mauled version of an original text by Shakespeare. The Quarto must be considered in any attempt to judge the effect of the play on contemporary audiences.¹⁹

It is a valid point, and as performance texts the often geographically more specific quartos do offer another insight as to the role of regional identity and regionalism in the Elizabethan theatre. Unfortunately Berthnal's position leaves unanswered the central question as to whether or not alternative passages found in *Q* are Shakespearian in origin. Clearly, as memorial reconstructions one expects a degree of contamination in these plays, but I accept the position recently argued by Jonathan Bate that a number of the differences between *F* and *Q* may well be authorial and, reflecting Shakespeare's own thoughts, should not be disregarded.²⁰

The standing of the quartos is not the only controversy surrounding the three parts of *Henry VI*. Scholars continue to raise doubts over Shakespeare's hand in these plays and their actual date and order of composition. Although there is a compelling case that *1 Henry VI* was written after *2* and *3 Henry VI*, I follow both Cairncross and Hattaway and assume that all three parts are by Shakespeare and that the plays can be reasonably dated as being written, if not performed, around 1590-91.²¹

Textually *Richard III* also remains problematical, in part because of the number of quartos published before *F* (as indicated by the substantial textual notes often accompanying

¹⁹ Berthnal, 'The Trial of Thump V. Homer', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 42 Spring (1991) 47.

²⁰ Jonathan Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare* (London:1997) 106-07.

²¹ Cairncross, *King Henry VI, Part 2*, Xiv- Xivi. Hattaway, *The Third Part of Henry VI*, 52-60.

modern editions of the play). Again much has been written in theorising the reasons for the differences between the various quartos and the play as it appears in *F*, but despite of a number of challenges D.L. Patrick's suggestion that *Q1* represents a memorial reconstruction of the play in performance remains widely accepted.²² Offering possible insights into the plays as staged in the Elizabethan theatre, the construction of regional identity in *Q1* of *Richard III*, the quartos of *2 Henry VI* and *3 Henry VI* will be discussed at length throughout this study.

Before turning to the image of the regional world in the plays, the following chapter will address a number of related issues. First, by drawing on material such as travel itineraries, maps, county surveys, state papers, anecdotal evidence and written histories (both Elizabethan and modern) it will attempt to determine the degree to which regionalism as a cultural and social phenomena existed within early modern England. Second, attention will be given to the various ways in which a concept of place, in this case regional England, might have been projected on the Elizabethan stage. Although dialogue remains the central means of localising scenes and associating characters with various parts of the kingdom in these plays, consideration will be given to the manner in which costume, stage properties and the possible use of variant forms of English speech by the actors helped to communicate a sense of regional identity to the audience. Finally I will propose a framework around which to discuss Shakespeare's theatrical representation of the regional world that is not only relevant to the plays themselves, but to the society in which they were first performed.

²² See D.L. Patrick, *The Textual History of Richard III* (Stanford:1936). Detailed textual analysis of *Richard III* can be found in the Arden edition of *King Richard III*, reprint (London:1985) ed., Anthony Hammond. Wells and Taylor, *Textual Companion*, 228-263.

CHAPTER ONE

The Tudor Perception of England

Performed in the public playhouses of London and in various halls and inns throughout the realm, the chronicle history play was part of what Richard Helgerson has termed the 'Elizabethan writing of England' which, along with other discursive forms circulating in the period, would present a 'discourse of nation-hood.'¹ Although the idea of what constituted England was often personified in the figure of Elizabeth herself, by 1590 many of the factors considered essential to the development of a nation-state had emerged, including, as Carlton Hayes notes, the

invention and spread of printing, the rise of national vernaculars as literary languages, the decline of Latin and other international languages; the revolutionary growth of capitalism and the middle classes, the role of aggressive divine right monarchs in suppressing feudalism and in consolidating and secularising their realms on a national basis, [and] the religious upheavals which eventuated in the disruption of Christendom and the establishment of state churches.²

In the light of such developments a number of historians have argued that one of the major achievements of the Tudors was the creation of a nation-state.³ While the question as to whether late sixteenth-century England could be considered as such remains problematical, the degree to which most Elizabethans did recognise themselves as Englishmen and Englishwomen distinct from other nationalities is surely not in doubt.⁴

This growing interest in England itself and the popularisation of the nation's past, of which the chronicle history play was one manifestation, has often been seen as an attempt to

¹ Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago:1994) 295. The role of cartographers and chorographers in formulating an image of Elizabethan England was earlier identified by A.L. Rowse as the 'discovery of England' see *The England of Elizabeth: The Structure of Society* (London:1964) 31-65.

² Quoted in *Nationalism: The Nature and Evolution of an Idea*, ed. Eugene Kamenka (Canberra:1973) 7.

³ On this point see S.T. Bindoff, *Tudor England*, (Harmondsworth:1950) 24. John Guy, *Tudor England* (Oxford:1990) 353-378.

⁴ For a discussion on nationalism and state-hood in the sixteenth century see Hans Kohn, *Nationalism: Its Meaning and History* (New York:1965). Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States: An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism* (London:1977).

articulate a sense of national identity, an agenda that was a response to an upsurge of national patriotism. Paradoxically England's history, in whatever form, revealed a past in which, as M.M. Reese argues, there was 'little to arouse patriotic sentiment.'⁵ On one level the upheavals of the fifteenth century did serve as a potential warning for the present; in describing the period of 'intestine devisions' chroniclers such as Edward Hall aimed 'to enduce vertue, and repress vice.'⁶ And what R.L. Smallwood has identified as this 'educative potential of history' was not restricted to chronicle histories, it was a role that could be equally applied to stage plays whose subject matter was England's troubled past.⁷ At least that was the view of Thomas Nashe who, in a famous and often quoted passage from *Pierce Penniless*, writes that plays

borrowed out of our English Chronicles ... shew the ill successe of treason, the fall of hastie climbers, the wretched ende of usurpers, the miserie of civill dissension.⁸

Yet, while the various county surveys, travellers' reports, maps, chronicle histories, stage plays and poetry helped foster and forge a sense of nationhood and 'Englishness', this writing of England would also undermine itself by presenting what can be regarded as a counter discourse. Despite the early unification of the kingdom and the increasing centralisation of power under the Yorkist and Tudor monarchies, the study of England's past and present during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries revealed a diverse society in which a sense of regionalism and localism had not been effaced. While the linguistic, social, fiscal and legal uniformity existing within the borders of the kingdom should not be underestimated, historians have demonstrated that Tudor England was not a 'wholly integrated national community but a

⁵ M.M. Reese. *The Cease of Majesty* (London:1961) 168.

⁶ Edward Hall, *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre and Yorke*. ed., Henry Ellis (London:1809) 1-2. All subsequent references are taken from this 1965 reprint of this edition.

⁷ R.L. Smallwood, 'Shakespeare's use of History', *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare Studies* ed. Stanley Wells (Cambridge:1986) 146.

⁸ Thomas Nashe, *Pierce Penniless* (1592) H3r-H3v.

complex conglomerate of fairly independent county societies'.⁹ The same point is taken up by Helgerson, who notes that if

unity is one mark of the early modern nation-state, diversity is another. The different discursive forms and communities in and by which the nation-state was written provided competing and even contradictory ways of being English, a repertory of parts rather than a single role.¹⁰

The image of the kingdom as presented in Shakespeare's first tetralogy is no exception. In these early plays Shakespeare did not need to go beyond the borders of the English kingdom in order to 'map the other' -- to paraphrase a title of a chapter in John Gillies' *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference*.¹¹ Hence, while these plays can be considered as an expression of an emerging nation at the close of the century, they also provide an image that contradicts the concept of the English nation as a homogeneous whole.

The three parts of *Henry VI* and *Richard III* explore a past in which Henry VI, the two Edwards and Richard III may be kings *in* England, but they are never kings *of* England. Rather, these Lancastrian and Yorkist monarchs are the rulers of those areas in which they control directly or those which their supporters hold. The English state as presented in these plays is little more than a collection of independent fiefdoms under the control of a regional magnate supporting either the house of Lancaster or the house of York. In a world of shifting alliances the unified vision has no role; it either lies in the past, exemplified by the figure of the dead Henry V, or in the future, promised by Richmond after his victory at Bosworth. It is never actually seen on the stage.

Perhaps symptomatic of how far things fell apart in the mid-fifteenth century, even England's patron saint is no longer evoked as a symbol of unification, but rather is appropriated by each faction in support of its cause. Thus, while before the gates of Harflew, Henry V will cry, "God for Harry, England, and Saint George!" (*H5* 3.1.34) in *3 Henry VI*, after his defection to the Lancastrians, Warwick rallies his troops with a call of 'For Warwick and his friends, God and Saint George!' (4.2.29). In the same play, on the eve of the battle of Barnet,

⁹ Peter Clark, *English Provincial Society from the Reformation to the Revolution: Religion, Politics and Society in Kent 1500-1640* (Sussex:1977) 120.

¹⁰ Helgerson, *Elizabethan Writing*, 300.

¹¹ John Gillies, *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference* (Cambridge:1994).

Edward in turn rallies the Yorkists with a cry of 'Lords to the field! Saint George and Victory!' (5.1.114). In such instances, England is not mentioned. Only once in the first tetralogy is the memory of England's patron saint explicitly associated with the realm he represents and that, as in *Henry V*, occurs in France when, in a scene dramatised before the city of Bordeaux, Talbot appeals to his beleaguered army to fight for 'God, and Saint George, Talbot and England's right' (*1H6* 4.2.55). This point is noted by Hattaway who suggests that while in *1 Henry VI* Talbot is fighting for his country, the nobility in the following plays will increasingly fight for a faction: a situation he reads as an 'exposition of the difference between patriotism and nationalism, the former an individual's love of country, place or race, his loyalty to kin and language, the latter a desire to serve something far more artificial, the state or, as it was termed in the Renaissance, the nation.'¹²

Paradoxically it is in *1 Henry VI*, a play largely set in France, that we find an expression of national unity that is largely absent elsewhere in the tetralogy. The character who exemplifies the 'ideal' is not the King but

... the great Alcides of the field,
 Valiant Lord Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury,
 Created, for his rare success in arms,
 Great Earl of Washford, Waterford, and Valence,
 Lord Talbot of Goodrig and Urchinfield,
 Lord Strange of Blackmere, Lord Verdon of Alton,
 Lord Cromwell of Wingfield, Lord Furnival of Sheffield,
 The thrice-victorious Lord of Falconbridge,
 Knight of the noble Order of Saint George,
 Worthy Saint Michael, and the Golden Fleece,
 Great marshall of Henry the Sixt
 Of all his wars within the realm of France (4.7.60-71).

The fallen Talbot is identified through his titles with Ireland, the Welsh Marches and northern England -- regions from which in *2* and *3 Henry VI* and *Richard III* the disaffected nobility will threaten the stability of the kingdom, and the very areas from which the major rebellions against the Tudors would also be launched.

The heroics of Talbot and his son represent the last flickering of the chivalric age, and as the nationalistic enterprise centred on the re-conquest of France unravels,

¹² Michael Hattaway, 'Blood is their argument: men of war and soldiers in Shakespeare and others.' in *Religion, culture and society in early modern Britain, Essays in honour of Patrick Collinson* ed. Anthony Fletcher & Peter Roberts (Cambridge:1994) 91.

the shift in geographical focus, from France to England, is accompanied by a change in the ethics and the codes of conduct on which society operates. As Joan soberly reminds Sir William Lucy, even this lament for the dead hero represents

... a silly stately style indeed!
The Turk, that two and fifty kingdoms hath,
Writes not so tedious a style as this.
Him that thou magnifi'st with all these titles
Stinking and fly-blown lies here at our feet (4.7.72-76).

This particular speech has been seen as a parody of the inflated claims of Callapine in Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*;¹³ what has not been recognised is how the number of 'kingdoms' to which Joan refers equates exactly to the number of English and Welsh counties in the Tudor period, the very areas of the realm in which many of the events in *2 and 3 Henry VI* and *Richard III* will be dramatised.

Regionalism in Early Modern England

OED (sb 1, b) defines 'region' as 'a large tract of land: a country: a more or less defined portion of the earth's surface', but as Alan Everitt notes, in a wide ranging discussion on the problems surrounding regional studies,

regions vary greatly in kind. There is a clear distinction between what one might call a 'conscious' region, on one hand, an area with a sense of its own identity, a sense of belonging together, and, on the other hand, a region which is rather a perception of historians or geographers, and which probably had no conscious significance for contemporaries.¹⁴

In his quest for an adequate spatial concept on which to base the study of English local history, Charles Phythian-Adams writes that any definable area needs to be

greater in compass than that occupied by any one local society, yet is of sufficiently limited geographical extent as still to represent a meaningful context for its inhabitants, and with which may be associated a set of distinguishable cultural traits.¹⁵

¹³ See Hattaway, *The First Part of King Henry VI*, 161.

¹⁴ Alan Everitt, *Landscape and Community in England* (London:1985) 12.

¹⁵ Charles Phythian-Adams, *Societies, Cultures and Kinship, 1580-1850: Cultural Provinces and English Local History* (Leicester:1993) 9.

In response to this challenge various models have been proposed. Phythian-Adams himself has suggested that the series of cultural provinces or *pays* formed by the various river-drainage basins in England fulfil the criteria listed above. In a similar vein, Everitt has proposed that the variations in landscape, classified as eight different types, form a useful basis for a study of historical change in regional England.¹⁶ Certainly the existence of various regions or *pays* within England is a point I acknowledge in the following chapters, but evidence does suggest that in the period under discussion the county or shire was recognised as the 'most relevant named entity above the level of township to which an individual could feel some real sense of belonging.'¹⁷

Basically an administrative unit, the county had a long history. Its origins can be traced back to the old Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and the political unification of England in the ninth and tenth centuries by Alfred the Great and his successors. More than simply lines drawn upon a map, the county would evolve to become an important element in the social, cultural, political and economic life of English society. For example, Cockburn describes the ritual surrounding the twice yearly visit of the Assizes to a particular county in the following manner:

At the border of the first county of each circuit the judges were met by trumpeters and the sheriff's bailiff and, several miles from the assize town, by the sheriff himself, other local officials, and representatives of the county gentry. The ensuing cavalcade, throughout this [Elizabethan] period and, indeed, well into the nineteenth century, was one of some magnificence, attended by pike and liverymen, specially clothed for the occasion. Welcomed into the town with bells, music, and occasionally, a Latin oration, the judges went first to their lodgings. There they received leading members of the local gentry who probably reported on the state of the county.¹⁸

¹⁶ Everitt, *Landscape and Community*, 13-15. See also E.W. Gilbert, 'The Idea of the Region', *Geography: Journal of the Geographical Association* Vol. XLV (1960). David Underdown's chapter 'Regional Cultures? Local Variations in Popular Culture during the Early Modern Period' in *Popular Culture in England c.1500-1850* ed., Tim Harris (Basingstoke:1995). The counties known to Shakespeare and his contemporaries largely disappeared as a result of government reorganisation in 1974. However, they continue to survive in various forms. For example, sporting competitions are still run on a county-wide basis. Moreover, demands to restore the former counties have been successful. My own county, the East Riding of Yorkshire, which became part of what was called Humberside in 1974, was restored a few years ago after a long public campaign. Similarly, England's smallest county, Rutland, absorbed into Leicestershire in 1974, has recently been re-established.

¹⁷ Phythian-Adams, *Societies, Cultures and Kinship*, 19.

¹⁸ J. Cockburn, *A History of English Assizes 1558-1714*, quoted by Philip Corrigan et al, in *The Great Arch: English State Formation as Cultural Revolution*, (Oxford:1985) 62.

William Lambarde, himself one of these leading members of the county community, gives currency to the idea that county borders were regarded and recognised almost as national boundaries, when in his *Perambulation of Kent* (1576) he records how his journey through the county took him past 'the frontiers of [the counties] Sussex and Surrey'.¹⁹ In his *Description of England* published in the following year, William Harrison would reiterate the importance of the county borders by devoting a chapter specifically to describing 'The Partition of England into Shires and Counties'.²⁰

The idea of the county as a self-conscious region engendering a sense of pride and loyalty is nowhere better demonstrated than in the various county surveys published during the last quarter of the sixteenth century. The work of Lambarde in Kent, Samson Erdeswicke in Staffordshire, John Norden in Hertfordshire and Middlesex, Richard Carew in Cornwall, George Owen in Pembrokeshire, Robert Reyce in Suffolk and William Burton in Leicestershire presented to the Elizabethan and Jacobean public a 'Description, Hystorie and Customs' (to quote from the title page of Lambarde's *Perambulation*) of their own 'countries' -- a term used to describe their native shire rather than England itself. Peter Clark, in his study of provincial society in Kent, has drawn attention to the significance of this term in early modern England by noting how it

provides some insight into the contemporary perception of the local community. Let us take the word 'country' ... By the early seventeenth century it was increasingly synonymous in gentle speech with the county (only later with the national unit).²¹

Thus we find Lambarde dedicating his *Perambulation* to his fellow 'Countryman, the Gentleman of the countie of Kent',²² Camden in his *Britannia* (1586) introducing his chapter on

¹⁹ William Lambarde, *A Perambulation of Kent* (1570), with an introduction by Richard Church (Bath:1970) 311.

²⁰ Holinshed, *Chronicle*, 257-263. In this study all subsequent references to Harrison's *The Description of England* are drawn from the first volume of 1811 reprint edition of Holinshed's *Chronicle*.

²¹ Clark, *Provincial Society in Kent*, 120.

²² Lambarde, *Perambulation of Kent*, 4.

Kent with the following line 'I am now come to Kent; a country, which William Lambarde, a person eminent for Learning and piety, has describ'd'²³ and in the preamble to his *Particular Description of England* (1588) William Smith remarking how 'I ffind to be 53 shyres, or countries, to say, 40 in England, & 13 in Wales.'²⁴

The image of individual counties as distinct entities was also acknowledged by foreign visitors to England. In an account of his journey through England in 1584-85, the German visitor Lupold Von Wedel writes 'England is, like other kingdoms, divided into different districts and provinces, thirty-six in number'.²⁵ In the *State Papers Spanish* an intelligence report (c.1586) entitled a 'Statement of the Provinces of England and their present conditions', lists the strength of Catholic support in each county.²⁶ The Italian Giovanni Botero, whose *Travellers Breviat* was published in London in 1601, describes the 'kingdome of England' as consisting of 'three great provinces: England, Cornwall, and Wales ... divided into two and fiftie shires'.²⁷

The image of the English counties as 'countries' distinguishable from each other was disseminated among the Elizabethan public in a variety of forms. Both Camden and Smith arranged their narrative descriptions of the realm on a county wide basis; Christopher Saxton and John Speed produced maps of individual counties. In what is popularly known as the 'Ditchley' portrait, attributed to the Flemish painter Marcus Gheeraerts, Queen Elizabeth I stands on a reproduction of Saxton's *Atlas of England and Wales*, her feet planted on the southern counties of Berkshire and Wiltshire. As Harley suggests in his discussion on Saxton's *Atlas*, to an

Elizabethan who had lived all his life in Surrey, but was entirely ignorant of the geography of Northumberland, the fact that the latter county was depicted in the

²³ William Camden, *Britannia*, 185. All references to this volume are drawn from the facsimile edition published by Edmund Gibson in 1695.

²⁴ William Smith, *Particular Description of England 1588* eds., Henry B. Wheatley & Edmund W. Ashbee (London:1879) 2.

²⁵ 'Journey Through England And Scotland Made By Lupold Von Wedel in The Years 1584-1585, Translated from the original manuscript by Dr Gottfried Von Bulow'. *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society Series 11*, 9-10 (1895-1896) 229.

²⁶ *CSPS*, Vol. III, 608.

²⁷ Giovanni Botero, *The Travellers Breviat* (1601) 13,17.

atlas of 1579 by means of hills, forests, rivers, towns, churches and parks ... made it a credible landscape. The image ... mediated the features of the unknown county with the viewer's own experience of the English landscape. Places were transformed from a state of separation to one of proximity; and this viewer was placed 'inside' a countryside which would have otherwise been invisible.²⁸

The significance of the actual number of English and Welsh counties being fifty-two was not lost on the manufacturer who, in 1590, produced a set of playing cards depicting on one side a map of a county copied from Saxton's *Atlas of England and Wales*. Arranged into suits comprising the eastern, southern, northern and Welsh counties each card contained a brief description of the individual county. To take three examples, we find Lincolnshire, the queen of Clubs, described as a county of 'plentye of corne, fruite and cattell,' the Welsh county of Glamorgan, the ten of Hearts, is summarised as being to 'the north full of mountaines, the other parte lesse mountaines and better soil', whereas Cornwall, the eight of spades, is all 'sea coste full of townes, well shipped. Full of mettall, especialli tynne.'²⁹ Clearly, as Everitt notes, by the late sixteenth century the counties had 'ceased to be simply administrative units and in many cases became genuine self-conscious regions, with a life of their own, and an obviously growing authority in provincial England.'³⁰

Not surprisingly the use of the word country to describe one's county surfaces in Shakespeare's first tetralogy. It occurs in *2 Henry VI* when the King dismisses Cade's followers to their 'several countries' (4.9.21). In *3 Henry VI* a similar use of the term is implied in the following exchange between the King and his captors

King Henry. Where did you dwell when I was King of England?

2 Keep. Here in this country where we now remain (3.1.74-75).

The idea that one's county was regarded as a country is not only found in these early chronicle history plays. In *The Merry Wives of Windsor* Master Slender speaks of his cousin Shallow as

²⁸ J.B. Harley, 'Meaning and Ambiguity in Tudor Cartography' in *English Map-Making 1500-1650*. ed., Sarah Tyacke (London:1973) 25.

²⁹ Sylvia Mann & David Kingsley, 'Playing Cards, Depicting maps of the British isles, and of English and Welsh Counties', *Map Collectors Circle*, ix, no.87 (1972). Victor Morgan, 'Lasting Image of Elizabethan England', in *The Geographical Magazine*, (March:1980) 401-8.

³⁰ Everitt, *Landscape and Community*, 21.

a 'Justice of the Peace in his country' (1.1.218), earlier identified as 'the county of Gloucester' (1.1.6).

Specialisation in certain manufactured goods, agricultural produce and long-standing cultural traditions also contributed to the perception of the county as a distinct entity. At Theobalds (Lord Burghley's home in Hertfordshire), the German traveller Walderstein found that one of the rooms was decorated with a mural displaying

... the coat of arms of the earls and barons of England: all round the walls are trees painted in green, one tree for every county in England, and from their boughs hang the arms of those earls, barons and nobles who live in that particular county. The specialties of any county are included, so if one of them is outstandingly rich in flocks and herds it has them painted here also, and if some fruit or other is particularly abundant, then it is recorded in the same way.³¹

In an often-quoted anecdote attributed to Sir Henry Peacham, better known for his drawing of a scene purportedly from a performance of *Titus Andronicus*, it is said that applicants seeking leave to travel abroad would be examined by Burghley on their knowledge of England, and if found ignorant he would 'bid him stay at home, and know his country first.'³² Perhaps in response Robert Beale, in his *Treatise of the office of Councillor and principal Secretary to her Majesty* (1592) recommends that those wishing to attain high office should acquaint themselves with Thomas Smith's *Discourse of the Commonweal of this Realm of England*, maps of the world and a

booke of mappes of England with a particular note of the divisions of the Shires into Hundreds, Lathes, Wappen-toes, and what Noblemen, Gentleman and others be residing in ... them.³³

As Beale's comments suggest it would be a mistake to believe that the idea of what constituted the county community was simply restricted to those holding an office of the Crown

³¹ Extract from *The Diary of Baron Walderstein: A Traveller in Elizabethan England*, Translated and Annotated by G.W.Gross (London:1981) 86.

³² D.M. Palliser, *The Age of Elizabeth: England under the later Tudors 1547-1603* (London:1983) 8-9.

³³ Cited by Ifor M. Evans & Heather Lawrence, *Christopher Saxton: Elizabethan Map-Maker* (Wakefield:1979) Xi.

or those of 'gentle speech'. True, the county community celebrated by the various chorographers was largely that of the gentry and landholding elite, and certainly by the 1590s, as Everitt remarks, 'the idea of the county came to have a meaning and a coherence for the gentry of the time which it can rarely have had for Husbandman, craftsman and labourers.' Nevertheless, evidence does suggest that those of 'non-gentle status' were also identified as countymen, Everitt himself concedes that 'in times of crisis the shire tended to act together.'³⁴ In light of the focus of this study a particularly apt example is to be found in the levies raised by York and Lancaster during the Wars of the Roses.

A.J. Pollard notes that the troops that fought in the Wars of the Roses were raised in three principal ways:

by deploying the professional soldiers retained for garrison service by the Crown; by calling out household servants and indentured retainers; and by raising the tenantry. Commissions of array, although frequently issued do not seem often to have contributed to the ranks of actual fighting men in civil war ... [t]he tenants of lords and their retainers formed the bulk of the armies ... Wider participation was rare.³⁵

But it is clear that these armies, at least in Shakespeare's sources, were considered as county levies. Hall notes how during the battle of Blore Heath (1459) the 'greatest plague lighted on the Cheshire men because one halfe of the shire, was on the one part, the other on the other part.' Regarding the battle of Northampton (1460), the same chronicler records how the Yorkist earls were supported by 'a great number of men, which came out of Essex, Kent, Surrey and Sussex', and in a later passage one finds references to armies of 'yorkeshire merne', 'Northamptonshiremen' and 'Lyncolnshyre men.'³⁶ In his study on the Wars of the Roses, Anthony Goodman has remarked that 'the terms in which armies are often described [in the contemporary sources] make it clear that they might be distinguished as the levies of a particular shire or group of shires.'³⁷ Turning to the sixteenth century one finds that for both

³⁴ Everitt, *Landscape and Community*, 12.

³⁵ A.J. Pollard, *The Wars of the Roses* (London:1988) 81, 85.

³⁶ Hall, *Union*, 240, 244, 273, 274.

³⁷ Anthony Goodman, *The Wars of the Roses: Military Activity and English Society 1452-97* (London:1981) 224.

the internal defence of the kingdom and overseas campaigns, the Elizabethan militia were organised on a county-wide basis. Indeed as C.G. Cruickshank notes, the demand placed on England's defences by the Spanish Armada had set the precedent of 'regimentation by county'.³⁸

Regional Diversity Within Early Modern England

The degree to which the county could have a meaning and coherence for all sections of the community extended far beyond military service. One such example, cited by Andrew Gurr, indicates that the skills of dancers were associated with the part of England they came from, hence,

the courts of kings' were known for 'stately measures: the Citee for light-heeles, and nimble footing: the Country for shuffling dances: Western-men for gambouls: Middlesex-men for tricks above ground: Essex-men for the Hey: Lancashire for Horne-pipes: Worcester-shire for Bagpipes: but Hereford-shire for a Morris-daunce.³⁹

Indeed, as Alan Brissenden notes, even the Morris dance, that most English of traditions, varied greatly according to which part of the kingdom it was performed.⁴⁰ The discovery of England, in all its forms, drew attention to the regional diversity within the Tudor kingdom, a world in which, as Joel Hurtsfield writes,

local loyalties could be intense, regional differences profound, counties such as Lancashire and Kent differed from each other in their climate, their economy, the balance between the old faith and the new, their culture. Somerset differed from Cornwall and how both these counties differed from Cumberland ... The impressive thing about this small realm was its immense regional diversity.⁴¹

³⁸ C.G. Cruickshank, *Elizabeth's Army* (Oxford:1966) 243. Under the command of the Lord Lieutenants and their deputies the trained bands of a county were supposedly not liable for service beyond their borders, except in the case of invasion -- that rather dubious privilege was reserved for professional soldiers, opportunists and pressed men.

³⁹ Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* (Oxford:1996) 25.

⁴⁰ Alan Brissenden, *Shakespeare and the Dance* (Newark:1981) 19.

⁴¹ Joel Hurtsfield, *The Elizabethan Nation* (London:1964)16-18.

This diversity is nowhere better expressed than in Michael Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*, the first part published in 1612, the second in 1622, an immense chorographical poem in which we find a majority of the thirty 'Songs' dedicated to the 'rarities, Pleasures and Commodities' of the English counties. At one point Drayton interrupts his 'Song' on the county of Northamptonshire with 'A description of the Surface of the sundrie Tracts of England' followed by 'the Blazons of the Shires', which is worth quoting at length:

Kent first in our account, doth to it selfe apply,
 (Quoth he) this Blazon first, *Long Tayles and Liberite.*
Sussex with *Surrey* say, *Then let us lead home Logs.*
 As *Hamshire* long for her, hath had the tearme of *Hogs.*
 So *Dorsetshire* of long, they *Dorsers* usd to call.
Cornwall and *Devonshire* crie. *Weele wrastle for a Fall.*
 Then *Somerset* sayes, *Set the Bandog on the Bull.*
 And *Glostershire* againe is blazon'd, *Weigh thy Wooll.*
 As *Barkshire* hath for hers, *Lets to't and tosse the Ball.*
 And *Wiltshire* will for her, *Get home and pay for all.*
 Rich *Buckingham* doth beare the terme of *Bread and Beefe,*
Where if you beat a Bush, tis ods you start a Theefe.
 So *Hartford* blazon'd is, *The Club, and clowted Shoone,*
 Thereto, *Ile rise betime, and sleepe againe at Noone.*
 When *Middlesex* bids, *Up to London let us goe,*
And when our Markets done, weele have a pot or two.
 As *Essex* hath of old beene named, *Calves and Styles,*
Fayre Suffolke, Mayds and Milke, and Norfolke, Many Wyles.
 So *Cambridge* hath been call'd, *Hold Nets, and let us winne;*
 And *Huntingdon,* With *Stills weele stalke though thick and thinne.*
Northamptonshire of long hath had this Blazon, *Love,*
Below the girdle all, but little else above.
 An outcrie *Oxford* makes, *The Schollers have been heere,*
And little though they payd, yet have they good cheere.
 Quoth warlike *Warwickshire,* *Ile binde the sturdy Beare.*
 Quoth *Worstershire* againe, *And I will squirt the Peare.*
 Then *Staffordshire* bids *Stay, and I will Beet the Fire,*
And nothing will I aske, but good will for my hire.
Beane-belly Lestershire, her attribute doth beare.
 And *Bells and Bag-pipes* next, belong to *Lincolneshire.*
 Of *Malt-horse, Bedfordshire* long since the Blazon wan.
 And little *Rutlandshire* is tearmed *Raddleman.*
 To *Darby* is assign'd the name of *Wooll and Lead.*
 As *Nottinghams,* of old (is common) *Ale and Bread.*
 So *Hereford* for her sayes, *Give me Woofe and Warpe.*
 And *Shropshire* saith in her, *That Shinnes be ever sharpe,*
Lay wood upon the fire, reach hither mee my Harpe,
And whilst the blacke Bowle walks, we merily will carpe.
 Old *Cheshire* is well knowne to be the *Chief of Men.*
Faire Women doth belong to *Lancashire* agen.
 The lands that over *Ouze* to *Berwicke* foorth doe beare,
 Have for their Blazon had the *Snaffle, Spurre, and Speare* (Song XXIII 237-278).⁴²

⁴² Michael Drayton, *Poly-Olbion* (1613).

Though at times quibbling on the 'Clownish' (XXIII. 230) nature of the counties' coats of Arms, Drayton's verse highlights the degree to which each was in its own way recognised as unique.

The same situation could be readily applied to the thirteen counties that in Shakespeare's day made up Wales. In his *Anglica Historia*, Polydore Vergil describes Wales as the 'thirde parte of Englonde', even though he devotes several pages to explaining the differences between the Welsh and English. A similar acknowledgment to the rather ambiguous status of Wales, as part of the English Kingdom, but a recognisably distinct region, is expressed by the aforementioned Wilson who, describing the divisions within the English realm writes of 'that part of England which is called Wales.' In Edward Aston's 1611 translation of Joannes Boernus' 1542 description of Wales we find the observation that

The inhabitants of Wales, though they bee much improved, yet they do not equall the English in civilty, nor soile in fertility ... They have a language peculiar to themselves, yet do live under the self same lawes the Englishmen do, but because that part of the Island is far remote from London, the Kings seat and chiefe tribunal of judgement, where the lawes are executed and pleas heard for all the Realme, and by reason of their different language, the King by commission maketh one of his nobles his deputy or lieutenant under him, to rule in those parts and to see the peace maintained, and justice ministered, indifferently unto all. This governor is called the Lord president of Wales, who for the ease and good of the country, officiates with one judge and divers justices, holdeth there his Termes and Sessions for the hearing and determining of causes within Wales and the Marches.⁴³

As Penry Williams notes, in Elizabethan society the Welsh were regarded in many quarters as 'slightly more strange than provincials, slightly more familiar than foreigners.'⁴⁴ Culturally and ethnically different, in both the fifteenth and sixteenth century, Wales was quite literally another England.

But while collectively Wales was recognised as a distinct region markedly different from other parts of the kingdom, Rowse's summary of George Owen's *Description of Wales* (1603) not only alerts one to the differences among the Welsh counties, but provides a valuable insight into contemporary perceptions of the Welsh themselves:

⁴³ Polydore Vergil, *Anglica Historia* (1534) ed., Henry Ellis (London:1846). Camden's *Britannia*, Smith's, *Particular Description of England* (1588), Thomas Wilson, *The State of England Anno Dom. 1600*, ed., F.J. Fisher, *Camden Miscellany* Vol. XVI (London:1936). Botero, *Travellers Breviat* (1601).

⁴⁴ Penry Williams, 'The Welsh Borderland under Elizabeth' *Welsh History Review* 1 (1960) 35.

In Pembroke, Anglesea, Caernavon, Merioneth ... theft abounded. Monmouth was very fertile, though the ways were foul; it was well governed, but there were many thefts. Glamorgan was mostly fertile and had the greatest number of prosperous gentry, with troops of retainers following them. Glamorgan people were given to feuds and frequent outrages. In Brecon there were too many retainers. Radnor people were given to idle lives and excessive gaming ... Carmarthen was a great shire with good land; but there was much brawling and disorder. Pembroke and Cardigan were largely barren, unenclosed champion country: both were quiet in government, but Cardigan abounded in theft. Denbigh was good, but given to quarrelling and lawsuits; Flint very civil and the gentry discreet ... Montgomery was unruly and there was much trouble among themselves.⁴⁵

The proliferation of maps, surveys, perambulations and non-dramatic literature served to place before the Elizabethan public an image of what constituted the realm of England. For a percentage of Shakespeare's contemporaries the various maps and perambulations published in the latter third of the sixteenth century saved the

labour of travaile, by transporting other countryes to us ... making remotest Kingdomes as domestick and cheape as mappes ... and our furthest journey to Paules churchyard.⁴⁶

Indeed, one such figure was Harrison, who in the preface to his *Description of England* conceded that

until now of late, except it were from the parish where I was born unto Oxford or Cambridge where I have been brought up, I never travelled forty miles in my reports of these things I use the authorities who either have performed in their persons or left in writing.⁴⁷

In this study I argue that a journey to the Rose, Swan, Fortune, Globe or one of a host of provincial venues regularly visited by touring companies would have provided a similar experience. Tracing the fluctuating fortunes of the Lancastrians and the Yorkists during the Wars of the Roses, the plays of the first tetralogy (from a geographical perspective) traverse the whole realm. In doing so, they operate as a kind of travelogue, producing what is in effect a theatrical mapping of the English kingdom.

⁴⁵ A.L. Rowse, *The Expansion of Elizabethan England* (London:1955) 70-71.

⁴⁶ Cited by Ruth Kelso, *The Doctrine of the English Gentleman in the Sixteenth Century* (Gloucester Mass.:1964) 138-139.

⁴⁷ Harrison, *Description of England*, Xlviii.

Localisation on the Shakespearian Stage

As Andrew Hadfield notes, any construct of regional or national identity remains an 'imagined community which includes some people and excludes others ... [that] must constantly be re-imagined and renegotiated'.⁴⁸ In his discussion of nationalism, Benedict Anderson argues that the nation is always imagined

because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or hear them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.⁴⁹

Likewise, any theatrical representation is, by implication, an 'imagined community', a particular fashioning of those it endeavours to portray. Yet the image of the regional world Shakespeare presents in the first tetralogy was also grounded in the real. This duality has been recognised by Agostino Lombardo who, in a wide-ranging study on the function of Italian locations in Renaissance drama, writes that

Shakespeare's Italy is a country in which the 'real' features - social, historical, geographical, political, cultural - are inextricably inter-twined with the imaginary. His Italy is a product of the written and oral traditions, and of the imagination, and its itself a mask behind which are hidden the features and problems of London and England. Italy is an Elizabethan myth fed by a thousand sources, not least by the travellers who narrate it.⁵⁰

Permeated with allusions to actual places within regional England, the fictional world of the first tetralogy is, like Italy, a product of the imagination and the 'real'. References to St Albans, Towton, Tewkesbury, are more than simply places where battles are fought. Loaded

⁴⁸ Andrew Hadfield, *Literature, Politics And National Identity: Reformation to Renaissance* (Cambridge:1994) 2.

⁴⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London:1983) 20.

⁵⁰ Michele Marrapodi, et al, *Shakespeare's Italy: Functions of Italian Locations in Renaissance Drama* (Manchester:1993) 8.

with a 'spectrum of associations that extend beyond the words',⁵¹ they represent what Kathleen M. Graney identifies as the 'cultural material' of the theatre audience.⁵²

Hattaway's remark that 'all scenes in the drama of the English Renaissance "take place" on the stage, not in "the Palace of Westminster" or "Near Bordeaux", and that localisation encourages readers at least to impose expectations appropriate only to naturalist drama' remains a valid and important point.⁵³ Certainly the neutrality of the performance space was one of the conventions, and advantages, of an Elizabethan theatre in which many scenes were not localised. For instance, Gloucester's opening soliloquy in *Richard III* is a speech for which no locale is required (although many editors since Capell designate it as occurring in 'London: A street', despite such scene headings having no basis in either *F* or *Q*).

Despite this, in Shakespearian drama a vast number of scenes are located somewhere, and in *2* and *3 Henry VI* and *Richard III* they are placed in regional England. As Dorothy E. Litt points out the *Henry VI* plays contain a 'profusion of topographical references' to locations within England.⁵⁴ Similarly, in his discussion on *Richard III*, Ralph Berry has noted how

no play of Shakespeare's is so strongly imbued with a sense of place, of national identity as the sum of so many locations. Counting indifferently together names of places and titles ... I find some 50 English locations mentioned... All the major regions of the country are covered. The cumulative effect is of a massive impregnation of the text with a sense of England, the full extent of the land.⁵⁵

As the plays traverse the length and breadth of the realm Shakespeare is often quite specific in arresting the often breathless movement of these plays in order to localise a scene. Indeed, one is often confronted with what Clifford Leech terms a 'wandering kind of

⁵¹ Rawdon Wilson, *Shakespearean Narrative* (Newark:1995) 140.

⁵² Kathleen M. Graney, *New Maps for Old: A Topographical Approach to 'The Faerie Queene' and Shakespeare's History Plays*, diss, U Auburn 1994, 252.

⁵³ Hattaway, *The First part of King Henry VI*, 59.

⁵⁴ Dorothy E. Litt, 'Place-Names in Shakespeare's Grand Design for the Henry VI Plays', *Institute for Research in History* (New York: n.d.) 111.

⁵⁵ Berry, *Shakespeare and the Awareness of Audience*, 26.

dramaturgy'. whereby location can fluctuate at will.⁵⁶ For example, one can cite the situation that arises in *Richard III* at the end of 3.3., where, after supervising the execution of the Woodvilles at Pomfret castle, Ratcliffe is named in a stage direction among those assembled in a London council chamber to 'determine of the coronation' (3.4.2). Consequently, in the space of one line Ratcliffe has 'travelled' from south Yorkshire to London. Intriguingly, at this point *Q* offers an alternative reading by placing Catesby at the council rather than Ratcliffe. It is a change that Hammond suggests was possibly made by 'book-keeper, or some other individual associated with the company' alleviating a situation that represents an 'affront to verisimilitude' -- although surprisingly, considering the degree to which he debates the point, Hammond himself does not make use of *Q*'s variant in his edition.⁵⁷ The point is taken up by the Oxford editors who adopt *Q*'s change on the grounds that 'it has numerous dramatic advantages (not least its elimination of Ratcliffe's magical journey from Pomfret to London in the time it takes Hastings and Buckingham to walk to the Tower).'⁵⁸ Nevertheless, it can be argued that in this instance *F* is not incorrect, for any 'affront', if it exists, may be more applicable to nineteenth-century and twentieth-century audiences rather than their Elizabethan counterparts. What needs to be recognised here is that one is dealing with a different type of drama in which both time and space are fluid, and it is perfectly acceptable for Ratcliffe, as in *F*, to be in one place one moment and somewhere else in the next scene.

This sense of place is created primarily by dialogue; the episode of the false miracle in *2 Henry VI* (2.1) is an excellent example. Prior to the scene a messenger informs Gloucester that

... 'tis the highness' pleasure
 You do prepare to ride unto St Albons
 Where as the King and Queen do mean to hawk (1.2.56-58).

⁵⁶ Clifford Leech, The Function of Locality in the Plays of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries, in *The Elizabethan Theatre papers given at the International Conference on Elizabethan Theatre held at the University of Waterloo, Ontario*. July 1968, 109. On the idea of 'place' in the Elizabethan theatre see Charles R. Lyons, 'Character and theatrical space', *Themes in Drama* 4 ed., James Redmond (Cambridge:1982). Numerous examples of this type of dramaturgy are to be found in Shakespeare's plays; one such example occurs in *King Lear*, in which location alternates between court, heath and the Dover cliffs.

⁵⁷ Hammond, *Richard III*, 16-17.

⁵⁸ Wells and Taylor, *Textual Companion*, 241.

Later the Duke of York's remark that 'the King is now in progress towards St Albons' (1.4.72) provides a further cue as to the location of the coming scene. Any remaining doubt that the scene is localised in this part of England is dispelled when a minor character enters the stage to announce that

... a blind man at St Albon's shrine
Within this half hour, hath received his sight (2.1.61-62).

Q is particularly helpful in this respect, as there is often a greater emphasis placed on both the locale of a scene and the identification of a character with an actual place in England. Hence, while in *F Simpcox* is quizzed in the following manner,

King. Where wert thou born?
Simp. At Berwick in the North, and't like your Grace.
King. Poor soul, God's goodness hath been great to thee (2.1.80-82),

the corresponding lines in Q read

Humphrey. Where wast thou borne?
Poore man. At Barwicke Sir, in the North.
Humph. At Barwicke, and come thus far for helpe.
Poore man. I Sir, it was told me in my sleepe,
That Sweet Saint Albones, should give me my sight againe (C2v).

Such repetition serves to further amplify the regional origins of the Poore man (*Simpcox*) and the location of the scene for the playhouse audience.

While on the non-illusionary stage of the Elizabethan outdoor playhouses the sense of place was, as Alan Dessen writes, 'largely a product of the spectator's imagination'⁵⁹ it is also possible that stage properties may have also been used as a means of enhancing this concept of locale. One such occasion occurs in the final moments of *2 Henry VI* when Richard, fulfilling the prophecy that Somerset should 'shun castles' (1.4.67), slays Somerset

⁵⁹ Alan C. Dessen, *Recovering Shakespeare's Theatrical Vocabulary* (Cambridge:1995) 151.

... underneath an alehouse' paltry sign,
The Castle in Saint Albons (5.2.67-68).

While the dialogue serves to localise this incident at St Albans, both Gurr and Hattaway suggest that an inn sign may have been used at this point in the play.⁶⁰ Drawing attention to the corresponding scene in *Q*, they cite as evidence a stage direction which reads 'Enter the Duke of Somerset, and Richard fighting, and Richard kills him under the signe of the Castle in saint Albones' (H2r), and an additional line spoken by Richard, 'Whats here, the signe of the Castle?' (H2r), which appears to draw attention to an actual sign upon the stage.

The representation of regional England and the construction of regional identity in these plays is not only reliant upon explicit mention in the text or stage props. It is also created by the identification of a range of characters with actual places. Although an individual's identity and how it is projected appears, at times, to be dependent upon social status, in Shakespeare's first tetralogy characters are often identified with the regional community. Cutting across the social spectrum we find frauds from Berwick, clothing workers and artisans from villages and towns in Kent, Mayors from York and Coventry and a host of nobles whose titles identify them with English and Welsh counties. The frequent naming of titles throughout the plays has prompted Humphreys to suggest that such allusions

subconsciously .. affects our sense that these great figures identify themselves with the territories of Britain ... something more imaginatively representative is going on than mere citing of persons.⁶¹

I suggest what is 'going on' is that these territorial titles not only identify their holder with a county or region from which the title is drawn, but provide an indication as to the allegiance of a particular region. As Berry notes, such titles were based on 'the possession of land; they were not empty honorifics. A name signified a reality.' The point Berry makes, and one that is central to this study, is that these territorial titles operate as a form of cipher whereby it is not

⁶⁰ Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, 271. See also Hattaway, *The Second Part of King Henry VI*, 211.

⁶¹ Humphreys, *Proceedings*, 275.

only the particular earl or duke who is seen to support one side or another, but by implication the community of the county from which the title is derived.⁶²

Hence in these plays 'Salisbury and Warwick are no simple peers' (2*H6* 1.3.74), but representatives of regional magnates who, along with the majority of the Yorkist lords, are identified through their titles with the southern and midland counties of England, historically a part of the realm in which Yorkist sentiment was particularly strong (although the obvious exception is the Duke of York himself, whose title associates him with the northern city of York and the county of Yorkshire).⁶³ In contrast, the majority of the Lancastrian supporters are identified as northern Lords. To illustrate this point further the following passage from *3 Henry VI* is particularly useful,

York. Farewell my gracious lord, I'll to my castle.
Warwick. And I'll keep London with my soldiers.
Norfolk. And I to Norfolk with my followers (1.1.207-09).

Moreover, not only are the various nobles supporters of the Yorkist claim, but so too are their followers, a view reiterated when the soldier who has killed his father laments

From London by the King was I pressed forth;
My Father, being the Earl of Warwick's man,
Came on the part of York, pressed by his master (2.5.64-66).

The identification of the various protagonists with specific regions was also transmitted to the audience through the use of visual cues, in the form of emblems, badges and heraldic devices. In an age when such insignia would have been more widely recognisable, it seems more than likely they were worn on stage. One example occurs during the following exchange between Clifford and Warwick in the final moments of *2 Henry VI*

⁶² Berry, *Shakespeare and the Awareness of Audience*, 28.

⁶³ Historically, the duke of York did hold lands in Yorkshire, including Sandal castle at Wakefield where he was slain, although his power was based on his Marcher lordships situated along the Anglo-Welsh border and his lands in Ireland. Indeed, the appellation Duke of York was not strictly speaking a territorial title, at least in the same manner as the dukedom of Northumberland. It was often bestowed on members of the royal family, such as occurs in *Richard III* when one of Edward IV's sons is identified as the duke of York.

Clifford. I am resolved to bear a greater storm
Than any thou canst conjure up to-day,
And that I'll write upon thy burgonet,
Might I but know thee by thy household badge.

Warwick. Now, by my father's badge, old Nevil's crest,
This rampant bear chained to the ragged staff,
This day I'll wear aloft my burgonet,
As on a mountain top the cedar shows
That keeps his leaves in spite of any storm,
Even to affright thee with the view thereof (5.1.198-207).

I suggest here we have a clear indication that the actor playing Warwick was indeed wearing a 'household badge' (5.1.201) on the stage, a point reiterated in the following speech when Clifford resolves to remove

... from thy burgonet I'll rend thy bear,
And tread it under foot with all contempt (5.1.208-09)

a threat that would be rendered meaningless and nonsensical if there was no such badge on Warwick's burgonet (which was in fact a steel helmet covering the head, and adorned with a badge or crest⁶⁴). Furthermore, apart from the pun on 'bear', the various references to the rampant bear chained to a ragged staff not only serve to identify Warwick with the earldom of Warwick, but also the county of Warwickshire, a point recognised by Drayton in the *Poly-Olbion* when he writes 'Quoth warlike Warwickshire, Ile binde the sturdy Beare' (Song XXIII:261).

The regional identity of the various protagonists in the plays may have been announced by the use of 'standards or colours' which, according to Guy Cadogan Rothery in his study of heraldry in Shakespeare's plays, can be seen as a 'synonym for flags ... sometimes adapted to exemplify an alliance or feudal possessions.'⁶⁵ Throughout the tetralogy numerous examples are to be found. In *3 Henry VI* Margaret refers to the 'colours' (1.1.251) of her supporters the earls of Northumberland, Westmorland and Cumberland. In the same play, in a later scene laid before the walls of Coventry, a number of stage directions have various nobles entering with 'Drum and Colours' (5.1.67.72.76). In the final battle of the

⁶⁴ Guy Cadogan Rothery, *The Heraldry of Shakespeare: A Commentary with Annotations* (London:1930) 47-8.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 65.

tetralogy an order is given by Richard to 'advance [his] Standards' (5.1.348). On such occasions it is arguable that the various colours and banners would have appeared on stage decorated with the relevant heraldic insignia identifying the protagonists with not only the house of York, Lancaster or Tudor, but acting as a further signal as to which part of the realm this support originates from.

The Use of Regional Accents on the Elizabethan Stage

In the first tetralogy the identification of certain characters as regional Englishmen and women may not have been reliant simply upon what the actors said or wore, but how they delivered their lines. In order to explain this point it is first necessary to acknowledge the existence of many different forms of spoken English within the kingdom; Goodman has suggested that the

frequent clashes between levies from unfamiliar shires are likely to have hardened natural antipathies. So was the passage of strangers through communities, not only Welshmen, Cornishmen and others whose native tongue was not English, but Englishmen whose speech seemed thick to the inhabitants.⁶⁶

Goodman draws attention to how variations in speech were a mark of regional identity and cultural diversity within fifteenth-century England, a phenomenon which was equally true of society in the late sixteenth century, and remains the case today. However, it is important to recognise that both Wales and Cornwall were special cases. Cornwall had been one of the last areas of England to fall to the Anglo-Saxons, only succumbing around the year A.D. 930. This fact, coupled with the county's isolation from the rest of the kingdom, perhaps explains why even in the late sixteenth century Cornwall's Celtic heritage and traditions remained strong.⁶⁷ But if, as Goodman suggests, fifteenth-century Cornishmen spoke 'thick', so too did

⁶⁶ Goodman, *The Wars of the Roses*, 225.

⁶⁷ The county of Cornwall is a particularly good example of regional diversity with Elizabethan England. It was described by Vergil as the 'fourth' part of the Isle. In 1497, in response to the levying of taxation for the Scottish campaigns, and again in 1549 against the introduction of the new Prayer book, Cornwall had risen in an attempt to maintain their own unique traditions. Although both uprisings were defeated, the Crown had not completely succeeded in extinguishing Cornish resistance to the imposition of English customs and standards. In his *Survey of Cornwall* (1602) Carew noted how, 'In measures the Shire varieth, not only from

their seventeenth-century descendants. For although the Cornish language had been driven almost to extinction, surviving only in the far western parts of the shire, Carew writes

Most of the Inhabitants can no word of Cornish, but very few are ignorant of the English: and yet some to affect their owne, as to a stranger they will not speake it: for if meeting them by chance, you will inquire the way or any such matter, your answere shalbe, *Meea nauidua cowzasawzneck*, I can speake no Saxononage. The English which they speake, is good and pure, as receyving it from the best hands of their owne gentry, and the Easterne Marchants: but they disgrace it, in part, with a broad and rude accent, and eclipsing (somewhat like the Somersetshire men) specially in pronouncing the names.⁶⁸

As we have seen, Wales was another region that was markedly different from other parts of the realm. In similar fashion to Cornwall, the origins of this difference lay in the ethnicity of the Welsh themselves (descendants of the Britons forced westwards by the Anglo-Saxon invasions). Their culture, including the Welsh language, had managed to survive the conquest of the Principality under Edward I and the absorption of the Welsh marcher lordships into the English kingdom during the reforms implemented under Henry VIII between 1536 and 1543.

The linguistic diversity to be found within early modern England was not confined to the surviving Celtic zones located on the periphery of the kingdom. The speech of those dwelling in the 'remnant northward lying off from Trent' (1H4.3.1.78), in the counties of Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmorland, Durham, Lancashire and Yorkshire, was noticeably different from other forms of spoken English. According to the fourteenth-century chronicler Ranulf Higden 'Alle the language of men of Northumbrelonde, and specially in Yorke[shire], sowndethe so that men of the sowthe cuntre may nne the undersonde the language of theyme',⁶⁹ and in his study on the history of the English language Richard W. Bailey cites a southern writer who, in 1450, complained that the 'common maner of spekyng in

others, but also in it selfe ... [and] that the Cornish miles are much longer then those about London.' He also drew attention to the manner in which some women still rode 'astride, as all other English folke used to before R.the 2. wife brought in the side saddle fashion of straw.' See *The Survey of Cornwall* (1602) 54, 66. On the distinctiveness of Cornwall in Shakespeare's day see Rowse, *The Expansion of Elizabethan England* and Mark Stoyles, *Cornish Rebellions, 1497-1648*, in *History Today* (May 1997).

⁶⁸ Carew, *Survey of Cornwall*, 56.

⁶⁹ *Polychronicon Ranuphi Higden Monachi Cestrensis*, English translation ed., Churchill Babington Vol. II (London:1869) 163.

Englysshe of some contre [county] can skante be understoded in some other contre of the same londe.⁷⁰ A hundred or so years later the situation was little better. In 1560 Thomas Wilson would write that northern speakers 'barke[d] out' their English,⁷¹ and in a study on English nationhood Clare McEachern draws attention to a sermon preached to Queen Anne in 1605, part of which contained the following statement; 'to see a poore Northerne man with his gaping and wide mouth using his broad and flat speech, brought upon the stage, heer is a subject of laughter for the multitude'⁷² (Shakespeare brings to the stage a similar figure in the guise of Simpcox in *2 Henry VI*).

Evidence suggests that the speech of those in the south of the kingdom was little better. William Caxton, in the preface to his 1476 English translation of *Le Recueil des Histories de Troyes* by Raoul le Fevre, notes how those living in the Kentish Weald spoke 'as brode and rude englissh as in ony place of england.'⁷³ The 'brode' nature of English speech in parts of Kent appears to have survived well into the sixteenth century for in 1588 the educationalist William Kempe, commenting on the difficulty of teaching children a national vernacular, noted that 'together in one town, yea, in one house, we hear one speak Northernly, and another Westernly, another Kentishly.'⁷⁴ An oft-quoted passage from George Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie*, published a year later, although indicating the beginning of the standardisation of the written word, appears to support Kempe's observation regarding the diverse nature of spoken English:

neither shall he take the termes of Northernmen ... nor in effect any speach used beyond the river of Trent ... it is not so Courtly nor so currant as our Southerne English is, no more is the far Westerne mans speach: ye shall therefore take the usual speach of the Court, and that of London and the shires lying about London within lx myles, and not much above. I say not this but that in every shyre of England there be gentlemen and others that speake but specially write as good

⁷⁰ Richard W. Bailey, *Images of English: A Cultural History of the Language* (Cambridge, Mass.:1992) 26.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 25.

⁷² Godfrey Goodman *The Fall of Man*, X1v. Cited by Clare McEachern, *The Poetics of English nationhood, 1590-1612* (Cambridge:1996) 117.

⁷³ W.J.B. Crotch, *The Prologues and Epilogues of W. Caxton* (London:1928) 4.

⁷⁴ Cited by Margaret Schlauch, 'The Social Background of Shakespeare's Malapropisms' in Vivian Salmon and Edwina Burgess, *A Reader in the Language of Shakespearean Drama*, (Amsterdam:1987) 83.

Southerne as we of Middlesex or Surrey do, but not the common people of every shire, to whom the gentlemen, and their learned clarkes for the most part condescend.⁷⁵

The movement towards some form of linguistic uniformity may have been gaining ground, but it did not eradicate regional accents. Nor should we interpret Puttenham's observations as suggesting that types of speech were becoming associated with certain social classes.

Richard Carew, whose less than flattering observations on his fellow Cornishmen I have already cited, celebrates the diversity of spoken English when he writes

for wee have Court and we have Countrey English, wee have Northerne and Southerne, grosse and ordinarie, which differ each from other, not onely in the terminations, but also in many words, termes, and phrases, and express the same things in divers sorts, yet all right [write] English alike.⁷⁶

Richard Verstegan, in his *A Restitution of Decayed Intelligence* (1605), also draws attention to the diversity of the spoken word in early modern England when he writes how

in some several partes of *England* it self, both the names of things, and pronouciations of woords are somewhat different ... and of this different pronouciation one example in steed of many shal suffice, as this: for pronouciung according as one would say at *London*, *I would eat more cheese yf I had it* / the northern man saith, *Ay sud eat mare cheese gin ay hadet* / and the western man saith: *Chud eat more cheese an chad it*. Lo heer three different pronouciations in our owne countrey in one thing and heerof many the lyke examples might be alleaged.⁷⁷

Verstegan's example of the 'western man's' speech is particularly interesting as it clearly parallels the form of English that Shakespeare employs in *King Lear* when Edgar confronts Oswald;

Edgar. Chill not let go zir, without vurther cagion.

Oswald. Let go, slave, or thou di'st!

Edgar. Good gentleman, go your gait, and let poor voke pass. And Chud ha' bin zwaggered out of my life, 'twould not ha' bin zo long as 'tis by a vortnight. Nay, come not near th' old man; keep out, che vor' ye, or Ice

⁷⁵ Quoted by Bailey, *Images of English*, 33.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 44.

⁷⁷ Cited by Charles Barber, *Early Modern English* (London:1964) 25.

try whither your costard or my ballow be the harder. Chill be plain with you.

Oswald. Out, dunghill!

Edgar. Chill pick your teeth, zir. Come, no matter vor your foins. (4.6.231-5)⁷⁸

While one can never fully replicate an Elizabethan performance of the plays, nor be completely certain how the actors delivered their lines, modern productions of Shakespeare's chronicle plays have sought to emphasise the regional origins of certain characters by the use of accent. Michael Pennington has suggested

If an actor has a regional accent, a virtue should be made of it. Nothing is more deadly than to hear someone struggling for a received accent because it's Shakespeare and posh: nothing could be less like Shakespeare's theatre or our intentions; and since the plays echo and re-echo with the sounds of Bangor, Northumberland and Southwark, those actors should if possible come from there. Or close by.⁷⁹

This is a view supported by Michael Bogdanov who argues it is 'inconceivable that Shakespeare's company was not made up of a rich tapestry of voices sounding from the far corners of the green and pleasant land.'⁸⁰ Not surprising then, that in the English Shakespeare Company's *Wars of the Roses* Jack Cade and his supporters appeared at times as little more than hooligans, complete with distinct southern working class accents. The result was that these characters were differentiated from the world they sought to destroy not only by wealth and birth, but by language. In the same production, Andrew Jarvis' portrayal of Gloucester was contrasted with the smooth sophistication of Edward's court by the use of a strong Yorkshire accent. Certainly the playing of Richard with a northern accent has become something of a dramatic tradition in recent productions of *Richard III* and the *Henry VI* plays. In a 1994 production of *3 Henry VI* directed by Kate Mitchell, Tom Smith's Richard was described by one critic as a 'shaven-headed, one-armed, Northern accented ... Richard III in

⁷⁸ Barber points out Edgar's speech contains a mixture of regional idioms. He notes how 'Ice' (4.6.241) = I shall, was 'typical of northern speech rather than the south-east.' See *Early Modern English*, 24-25. Furthermore, the word 'Ballow', meaning cudgel, has been identified as of Warwickshire origin. However, the degree to which Edgar's lines here are an accurate representation of a specific accent is perhaps not the point, rather interest lies in the way this speech identifies its speaker with regional England, which in this case seems to be Kent.

⁷⁹ Michael Bogdanov & Michael Pennington, *The English Shakespeare Co. The Story of 'The Wars of the Roses' 1986-1989* (London:1990) 18.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*

embryo.⁸¹ Another reviewer of the same production noted how this 'future Richard III bumped about with the accent of a bully boy from Bootle' (a suburb of Liverpool).⁸²

Richard is not the only character to have been identified with the north of England in modern productions of the history plays. Seemingly in reference to Hotspur, a commentator on the productions of Shakespeare's *Henry IV* performed at Stratford in the early 1950s observed that

... rebellions are launched against the central power by traditionally-minded Northerners speaking with unaffected regional accents.⁸³

In the modern theatre the use of regional accents has not only served to identify the origins of characters, but rather as a means of further characterising and highlighting differences between court and country, noble and citizen, loyal subject and rebel. The question arises then, if modern productions have seen fit to exploit regional accents, can one discount the idea that their Elizabethan counterparts did not do the same? Evidence would suggest they did.

The cultural and social diversity of Elizabethan society in which the popular theatre operated suggests regional accents could have been heard on the Elizabethan stage. As Bogdanov has recently written, sixteenth-century England was, in a similar manner to its twentieth-century counterpart, a multi-cultural society in which

⁸¹ Michael Billington, *The Guardian*, 11 August 1994.

⁸² Richard Edmonds, *The Birmingham Post*, 12 August 1994. Although Sir Ian McKellan's Richard lacked such an accent, he was thoroughly identified in both the stage play and film as a 'professional fighting soldier' an outsider more at home with the military world rather than the effete realm of the court.

⁸³ J. Dover Wilson & T. C. Worsley. *Shakespeare's Histories at Stratford* (London:1952) 35, cited by P. Sahel, 'Some Versions of the Coup D'Etat: Rebellion and Revolution', *Shakespeare Survey* (1991) 44. 28. In a recent Bell Shakespeare Company production of the *Henry VI* plays in Perth, Western Australia, there was a rather unsuccessful attempt to play Hotspur with a northern English accent.

POSTSCRIPT, in early 1997 a much publicised report appeared in Britain highlighting how those with strong regional accents, particular those identified with the Birmingham and Liverpool areas, were least likely to find employment than speakers from the southern parts of England.

the courtyards ... teemed with masterless men, the tongues of a hundred regions grappling with the sound of a language comprised of the scraps and leftovers of a dozen other languages.⁸⁴

As a microcosm of Elizabethan society there is no reason to imagine that the theatre was any different. Indeed, in a number of plays one finds textual indicators that varieties of spoken English may have been used by the actors. Primarily employed for comic effect, such speech is often distinguished within a text by a variation of spelling, the most recognisable examples being that found in the lines attributed to Welsh, Scots and Irish characters. While the Welsh were the most frequently parodied regional characters in the theatre, the substitution of the initial 'p' for 'b' being just one example of a variant spelling designed to imitate Welsh pronunciation, phonetic spelling was also used as a means of identifying Scotsmen.⁸⁵ The lines spoken by Jamy, the Scots captain in *Henry V*; 'It sall be vary gud, gud feith, gud captens bath, and I sall quit you with gud leve, as I may pick occasion; that sall I, mary' (3.2.102-04) would appear to represent an attempt to imitate a Scottish accent. In his *Topographical Dictionary* on the works of Shakespeare, E.H. Sugden notes how in at least four other plays of the period, including Robert Greene's *James IV*, a similar form of spelling, meant to indicate a Scottish form of English speech, exists.⁸⁶

The way in which Irishmen pronounced English was also exploited by various dramatists of the period. In rather stereotypical style the Irishman Macshane in *Sir John Oldcastle* (a play collaboratively written by Drayton, Munday, Wilson and Hathaway) is depicted as a murderer of his 'poe mester, Sir Rishard Lee; be Saint Patrick, I's rob and cut thy t'roat for dee shain, and dy money, and dy gold ring' (16.21-22).⁸⁷ Ben Jonson's Captain Whit, a character in *Bartholomew Fair*, is identified as an 'Irish bawd' by a form of speech which is an amalgam of both Drayton and Shakespeare's 'Irish' form of English, 'Nay, 'tish all

⁸⁴ Michael Bogdanov. 'The place of Shakespeare in a multi-cultural society' *R.S.A. Journal*, (October:1994), Nos. 5, 453, 67.

⁸⁵ See E.J. Miller, 'Wales and the Tudor Drama', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1949) 170-183.

⁸⁶ E.H. Sugden, *A Topographical Dictionary to the works of Shakespeare and his fellow dramatists* (Manchester:1925) 457.

⁸⁷ All subsequent references to *Sir John Oldcastle* are drawn from the text as appears in *The Oldcastle Controversy*, ed. Peter Corbin & Douglas Sedge (Manchester:1991).

gone now!, Dish 'tish phen tou wilt not to phitin call, Master Offisher! Phat ish a man te better lishen out noishes for tee an tou art in anoder 'orld' (3.1.1-3).⁸⁸ In an accompanying note to these lines G. R. Hibbard points out that the

curious and outlandish spellings Jonson resorts to for Whit's speeches are intended to represent an Irish brogue, which Elizabethan Englishmen, like their modern counterparts, evidently found extremely funny. Jonson, understandably, is not consistent in his attempts to reproduce it phonetically. Every now and again he forgets about it and allows Whit to lapse into standard English forms.⁸⁹

Jonson's use of phonetic spelling may be inconsistent, but as there seems to be no occasion in the play that calls for Whit to hide his status as an Irishman, one can reasonably assume that the actor playing Captain Whit would have maintained his 'Irish brogue' throughout the course of the play.

At certain times variant forms of spelling found within a text provide clear evidence that specific English regional accents were used on the stage. As noted the most obvious example is to be found in *King Lear* -- characterised by the use of 'z' for 's', 'ch' for 'w' and 'v' for 'f', Edgar is not the only example found in plays of the period of a character who makes use of what Verstegan considered to be 'Western man's' speech (see above). In *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, printed in 1575 but possibly written and performed sometime between 1553-1562, the rustic character Hodge complains

So cham arayed with dablynge in the durt
She that set me to ditchinge, ich wold she had the squirt
Was never poore soule that such a life had.⁹⁰

In Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* the 'zirs' (4.4.10) and 'zuds' (4.4.11) uttered by Puppy closely parallel that of Edgar in *Lear*. The same idiom is attributed to 'Oliver, the Deven shyre lad' (B1r) a character in the *London Prodigal* (1605), a play the title page attributes to Shakespeare. Significantly this form of spoken English was singled out for particular attention

⁸⁸ Ben Jonson, *Bartholmew Fair*, ed., G.R. Hibbard (London:1977).

⁸⁹ Ibid, 70.

⁹⁰ *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, Tudor Facsimile Edition (London:1910).

by the headmaster of St Paul's, Alexander Gill, who in 1621 suggested that among the six distinct accents existing within England

none is so flavoured with barbarism as the western; among the country folk in the rural parts of Somerset, one can readily question whether they are even speaking English or some foreign idiom.⁹¹

This western form of English speech is not the only type of regional accent to appear in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. In *Oldcastle* the lines attributed to the Club, a Lancashire carrier, and Kate Oldham, his companion, whose surname is that of an actual town in Lancashire, are a case in point. On their arrival at The Bell, a tavern in St Albans, Kate complains of being 'very cawd' (17.14), this being the northern form of the word 'cold.' In a later scene, Club's complaint to the Constable seems clearly designed to replicate a northern form of speech:

Who comes here? A plague 'found o' me. You bawl, quoth a' od's hat, I'll forswear your house; you lodged a fellow and his wife by us that 'ha run away with our 'parel and left us such gewgews here. Come, Kate, come to me; thou's dizened i'faith (19.80-83).

In Kate's final speech a similar mix of variant spellings and contraction of words indicated by the use of the apostrophe, serves to highlight her status as a northerner; 'I'faith, neam Club, I's wot ne'er to do: I's be so flouted and so shouted at; but by th' mass I's cry' (19.98-99). An attempt to reproduce a northern type of English speech is also found in *Bartholomew Fair*, a play in which the appropriately named Northern claims that 'the eale's too meehty' (4.4.3), which, considering northern beer was supposedly stronger than its southern counterpart makes his drunkenness even more comic.⁹² Some form of northern speech may have been used in Robert Greene's *The Pleasant Comedie of George a Greene, the Pinner of Wakefield* (c.1592) performed at Henslowe's Rose in the winter of 1593-94. In this play the inhabitants of a northern town, which turns out to be Bradford in the West Riding of Yorkshire, admit that

⁹¹ Cited by Bailey, *Images of English*, 46.

⁹² In her study of food and drink, Wilson writes how 'Yorkshire ale was drunk stale and strong, and was often called stingo. The best was said to come from Northallerton. Hull had a particularly powerful brew known to travellers as 'Hull cheese'. See C. Anne Wilson, *Food & Drink In Britain from the Stone Age to recent times* (London:1973) 305-6.

... we Yorkshiremen be blunt in speech,
And little skild in court, or such quaint fashions (F3r).⁹³

Significantly these very attributes are to be found in Shakespeare's characterisation of another northerner, Harry Hotspur, who dismisses courtiers as 'popinjays' (1H4.1.3.49), hates 'mincing poetry' (3.1.132) and speaks what Lady Percy refers to as 'thick' (2H4 2.3.24), which on one level can be considered as an allusion to Hotspur's northern accent.

In the few examples where Elizabethan and Jacobean texts show phonetic spelling to reproduce a specific form of English regional speech, it is confined to either prose speaking artisans and peasants, or various nobles appropriating the speech of their social inferiors in order to hide their true identity and provide, as Rochester in *Oldcastle* complains an 'intricate confusion' (21.1). Still, as suggested earlier, the absence of any recognisable phonetic spelling in a play text does not in itself preclude the use of regional accents on the stage. In *King Lear* Kent, disguised as a servant, relates how;

If but as well I other accents borrow
That can my speech defuse, my good intent
May carry through itself to that full issue
For which I razed my likeness (1.4.1-4).

From this point in the play Kent presumably speaks with an accent in order to complement his disguise, and even though there is no phonetic spelling to indicate a particular accent has been employed, dramatic convention would seem to demand that Kent having 'borrow[ed]' (1.4.1) an accent actually uses one, a point reiterated when he momentarily goes 'out of [his] dialect' after having 'beguiled' Cornwall 'in a plain accent [of] a plain knave' (2.2.109-11).⁹⁴

A similar situation arises in *The Reign of King Edward III* (c1592), a play recent scholarship at least partly attributes to Shakespeare. Despite the inclusion of a number of

⁹³ *The Comedy of George A Green* (1599) Malone Society Reprints (Oxford:1911).

⁹⁴ Although at one point during Kent's speech at 2.2. modern editions often gloss Q's 'smoyle' and F's 'smoile' to 'smile' (2.2.82), the two variant spellings may be an indication of regional speech. A similar claim might be made when Kent, in reply to Oswald, utters the rather curious line 'Thou whoreson zed, thou unnecessary letter' (2.2.64), particular if, as the editors of the *Riverside Shakespeare* in an accompanying note claim 'the letter z, unnecessary because the its sound could usually be represented by s' which is of course exactly what Edgar does later in the play. In Richard Eyre's recent National Theatre production of *King Lear* the accent of the plain knave appropriated by Kent was that of the north-east, popularly known in England as 'Geordie'.

words described by Eric Sams as 'Scottisms' in the lines attributed to the Scottish messenger and King David, there is no phonetic spelling, but a close examination of the play does indicate that the actors playing these parts may well have expected to speak in something approaching a Scottish accent. The clue lies when King Edward, praising the Countess of Warwick, remarks how;

She is grown more fairer far since I came hither,
Her voice more silver every word then other,
Her wit more fluent - what a strange discourse
Unfolded she, of David and his Scots?
'Even thus' quoth she, 'he spake' - and then spoke broad,
With epithets and accents of the Scot,
But somewhat better than the Scot could speak (2.1.25-31).⁹⁵

Another text in which accents seem to be called for, despite the absence of any clear textual indicators to this end, is the aforementioned *Oldcastle*. At one point in the play both Oldcastle and his wife successfully evade capture by disguising themselves in the 'carrier and wench's apparel' (19.55.SD)

Oldcastle. What, will these ostlers sleep all day?
Good-morrow, good-morrow. Come, wench, come.
Saddle, saddle! Now, afore God, too ford-days, ha!

Constable. Who comes there?

Mayor. Oh, 'tis Lancashire carrier, let him pass.

Oldcastle. What, will nobody open the gates here?
Come let's int' stable to look at our capons (19.56-62).

In this particular instance, the disguise of Oldcastle and his wife is successful. But as the Lancashire Carrier and his companion are already known to the Mayor and Constable, Oldcastle's reply to the Mayor would have to be given in the same northern accent already used by the carrier and his companion in the preceding scene. The possibility that such an accent was employed here by the actor playing Oldcastle might be suggested by the

⁹⁵ Eric Sams in his edition of *Edward III* (Yale:1996) points to such words as 'Bonny', 'Snaffles' and 'Whinyards', see the textual notes on pages 86-87. Quotations from the play are drawn from *King Edward III*, ed., Giorgio Melchiori (Cambridge:1998).

occurrence of 'int' (19.62), which can be classed as a variation of 'into' -- a form that remains a characteristic of northern English speakers today.

The problem of identifying what might well represent regional speech is compounded in the plays of the first tetralogy because of the myriad of variations that exist between the quartos and the Folio. Still, it would be unwise to dismiss all variations as the result of the fluid nature of English spelling during the period or evidence of textual corruption. To take *Q* of 2 *Henry VI* as an example, we find a number of words which, according to Vivian Salmon, 'the modern and Elizabethan pronunciation is approximately the same, but where the earlier spelling is more a representation of the sound.'⁹⁶ Among the many examples that can be cited, the stage directions in which the Bishop of Winchester (Cardinal Beaufort) is mentioned and when his name is spoken in the text are particularly illuminating. In the opening stage direction in *F* we find this character's name spelled as Beauford, while in *Q* it appears throughout as Bewford; a variation the editors of the *Riverside Shakespeare* suggest depicts the pronunciation of this character's name. Likewise the executioner of Suffolk appears in *F* (apart from two instances) as *Walter Whitmore*, while in *Q* he is consistently named *Water Whickmore*, a spelling that may be phonetic because in Elizabethan England the 'L' in *Walter* was often silent -- a characteristic that highlights the pun in Suffolk's lament 'that by water I should die' (4.1.35).⁹⁷

Applying the same criteria to the quarto of 3 *Henry VI*, the appearance of words such as 'seduste' (E1r) and 'Satisfide' (B8r), in *F* 'Seduced' (TLN 889) and 'Satisfied' (TLN 972), could also be suggestive of some form of regional pronunciation. Extending this discussion to *Richard III* is slightly more problematical primarily because we are faced with literally hundreds of variations between *Q1* and *F*. Still, once again we cannot totally discount the idea that such differences are simply a matter of idiosyncratic spelling or textual corruption.

⁹⁶ Salmon et al, *A Reader in the Language of Shakespearean Drama*, 83. The same point is made by Thomas Tyler who, in the textual notes accompanying Charles Praetorius' facsimile edition of *The True Tragedy*, notes how in comparison to *Q1* the text of *Q3* is 'less phonetic, and closer to modern usage.'

⁹⁷ C. J. Sisson, *New Readings in Shakespeare, Vol. 2, The Histories and The Tragedies*, (Cambridge: 1956) 78.

Clearly, the idea that regional accents were used on the Elizabethan stage is not just reliant on textual evidence as found in *King Lear*. As Wilhelm Creizenach points out, the actors playing 'peasants or bumpkins may have made far more extensive use of dialect than can be viewed from the text.⁹⁸ To return to *2 Henry VI*, in presenting Cade, Simpcox, and the regional commons as 'base drudges' (*2H6* 4.2.151), it is certainly possible to suggest that the actors did exploit the opportunity to further distinguish such characters by their speech, particularly as the Petitioners from Long Melford in Suffolk, the fraud from Berwick upon Tweed in Northumberland and the rebels from Kent are characters drawn from three distinct areas of England, regions that in the late sixteenth century remained distinguishable as three of the 'main speech areas', namely the East midlands (the area that would evolve into standard English), the North and Kent.⁹⁹

By the 1590s speech that deviated from the English of London and its environs was beginning to be seen as 'rustic, boorish and often comic'.¹⁰⁰ In staging an uprising of the Kentish commons the actors were impersonating not kings or queens, but members of the same social strata from which they, the playwrights, and the theatre managers were often drawn. However, it needs to be recognised that there is no reason to suppose that regional accents were employed solely by those impersonating prose-speaking commoners; it is possible that those playing the nobility could have made use of either their own inflections or affected some other form of English regional speech where appropriate. To return to an earlier point, in an era in which there was no received pronunciation the presence of a strong regional accent was not somehow indicative of one's social status, but rather geographical origins. As Puttenham implies, regional accents continued to be used by Elizabethan 'gentlemen and ...their learned clarkes,' and one such gentlemen -- Sir Walter Raleigh -- is renowned to have spoken with a strong Devonshire 'burr.'¹⁰¹

While biographical information on the origins of Elizabethan actors remains virtually

⁹⁸ *The English Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (London: 1916) 79.

⁹⁹ Robert McCrum, et al. *The Story of English* (London:1986) 79.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 105.

¹⁰¹ Gladys D. Willcock, 'Shakespeare and Elizabethan English', *Shakespeare Survey* 7 (1954) 20.

non-existent -- the result being we have no idea as to the traces of regional English speech they may have carried with them throughout their careers, drawn from a society in which variations in speech were possibly more pronounced than now -- common sense dictates that Elizabethan actors did not all speak the same. Nor, if evidence from the plays themselves is any indication, were they expected to. But the various textual strategies Shakespeare employs in order to identify his characters with actual places in the kingdom is only one level in which the plays communicate a sense of regional identity. At a time when the spoken word, according to Ronald Watkins, 'was the chief means of creating dramatic illusion', the regional associations of these characters would have been greatly enhanced by the use of an appropriate regional accent.¹⁰² With this in mind, the mention of local and regional associations in the text can be seen as a cue for the actors to employ such speech. In other words, the announcement that 'the commons here in Kent are up in arms' (2H6 4.1.100) not only serves to localise the following scenes in Kent, it acts as a direction for those playing Cade and his followers to speak in something approaching a Kentish regional accent. Similarly, Margaret's naming of Northumberland, Clifford and Westmorland as 'northern lords' (3H6 1.1.251) not only reiterates the regional origins of these characters, it is a cue for the actors to adopt a form of speech appropriate to that part of the kingdom. To do otherwise would surely have appeared strange to an audience who themselves may have been drawn from all parts of the kingdom, particularly if we accept that the plays may have been first performed in a playhouse located on the outskirts of London, a city whose population had doubled in thirty years, due (in part) to an influx of migrants from all areas of the British Isles. Hence, while the manner in which the written text constructs an image of regional England remains the main subject of this current study, it remains the case that a character's regional affinity would have been constantly reinforced in the minds of the audience by the use of the appropriate form of regional speech.

¹⁰² Ronald Watkins, 'The Only Shake-Scene', in *Philological Quarterly*, Vol. 54, (1975) 60. Although I recognise that accent is different from dialect, the latter referring to differences in the grammatical construction, in this study I am concerned with the way forms of regional speech identify their speakers with specific areas in England.

The Regional Divisions in the First Tetralogy

Having discussed the degree to which regionalism was a powerful factor in early modern England and how the sense of place and regional identity may have been represented on the stage, there is a need to provide a coherent, relevant and manageable framework around which to discuss Shakespeare's representation of the regional world in the first tetralogy. Here I turn once again to Vergil who, in his *Anglica Historia* (C.1514), describes the kingdom in the following manner:

The whole countrie of Britaine (which at this daie, as it were in dowble name, is called Englande and Scotlande) ... is divided into iiij partes whereof ... Englonde, so called of Englishmen the inhabitauntes beinge farre the greateste parte, is divided into xxxix Sheirs, which commonlie men call cownties: of the which x., contene the firste parte of the ilond, which enclininge towarde the sowthe liethe betwene the Sea and the river Thames; then even unto the river of Trente, which ronnethe throughe the middeste of Englonde, there are sixtene other counties ... behinde these are vj., which bownde towardes Walles and the weste partes ... About the middell, as it were the navell of the riolme followethe [northern counties] declininge towards the northe.¹⁰³

While recognising the primacy of the county as a focal point of allegiance and loyalty, Vergil's description also represents an acknowledgment that an individual county was not simply an autonomous unit, but part of a larger cultural province. The same regional grouping would not only be reproduced by Harrison in his *Description of England*, but would surface in *Woodstock* (c.1592-95) as Richard divides the 'sheeres and counties' (TLN 1953) of his realm among his favourites in the following manner:

- King. ... Baggott thy lott. betwixt the Theames & sea thus lyes, kent, Surry, Sussex, hamshe [Hampshire] barkeshire, wiltshire, dorsett sheire somersett- shere devenshere. cornewall, those parts are thyne as Ample Baggott as the crowne is myne.
- Bag. all thanks, love duety to my princly soveraigne.
- King. Busshy; from thee shall stretch his goverment over these that lye in Walles. to gether with the countes of Gloster. Wo [Worcester] heriford, shropshire. stafford shere, and chess[s]here. thers thy lott.
- Bush. thanks to my king that thus have honored mee:

¹⁰³ Vergil, *Anglica Historia*, 1-2. This description is also cited by J.D. Mackie, *The Early Tudors 1485-1558* (Oxford:1952) 27-28.

- King. Sir Thomas Scroope. ffrom trent to tweed thy lott is parted thus. All
yorkeshere. darbesheire lancashire Comberland westmerland &
northumberland receave thy lott thy state & government.
- Scrop. with faith and duety to your highnes throne.
- King. now my Greene, what have I left for thee.
- Green. sfoot and youle give me nothing then goodnight landlord, sence ye
have servd me last, and I be not the last shall pay yor rent nere trust
me.
- King. I kept thee last, to make thy part the greatest, see heere sweete
Greene these sheres are thine, evene from the Theames to trent thou
heere shall lye, ith midle of my land.
- Green. that best ith winter, is ther any pretty wenches in my goverment.
- King. guess that by this thou hast london, middlesex essex suffolke norfolke
Cambridgeshere harford shere, bedford shere buckingham shere,
oxford shere northampton shere. Rutland shere lestershere
warwickshere huntington shere & lyncolne shere
(TLN 1954-1978).¹⁰⁴

Although Nottinghamshire and Durham are missing from this list of counties (the latter understandably, as technically Durham was not a shire but a county palatine), the division of Richard's realm in *Woodstock* mirrors the partition of the English kingdom formulated by Vergil and Harrison. Indeed, the terms both writers use to describe the various regions surface in the play. Hence, while Harrison and Vergil write of the 'first ten [counties] that lie betweene the British sea and the Thames', in *Woodstock* Richard speaks of the 'lott, betwixt the Thames & sea' (1954). In similar fashion, Harrison's 'middest' counties from the 'northside of the Thames, and betweene the same and the river Trent' are identified in the play as those from 'the Theames to trent ... [that] lye in the midle' (1972). As the manner in which Richard partitions the realm in *Woodstock* has no basis in the chronicle sources, it appears that the anonymous playwright was either familiar with Harrison's *Description of England* or the division of the realm into what is ostensibly four regions had widespread currency in the 1590s. A similar image surfaces in Shakespeare's *1 Henry IV* when Mortimer relates how

The Archdeacon hath divided it.
Into three limits very equally:
England, from trent to Severn hitherto,

¹⁰⁴ All quotations from this play are drawn from *The First part of the Reign of King Richard Second or Thomas of Woodstock*, Malone Society Reprints (Oxford:1929).

By south and east is to my part assigned;
All westward, Wales beyond the Severn shore,
And all the fertile land within that bound,
To Owen Glendower; and, dear coz, to you
The remnant northward lying off from Trent (3.1.71-78).

In both *Woodstock* and *1 Henry IV* the theatre audience is confronted with an image of England as a number of distinct provinces, a division of the kingdom that applies equally, if less overtly, to the three parts of *Henry VI* and *Richard III*. Appropriating Harrison's four-fold 'Partition of England into Shires and Counties' the following chapter considers the construction of regional identity and the role in the first tetralogy of that part of England which, according to Harrison, 'lie between the British sea and the Thames.' Chapter three focuses on the area to the 'northside of the Thames, and between the same and the river Trent, which passeth through the middest of England.' In chapter four attention turns to the role of the English counties bordering Wales and Wales itself. Chapter five will complete the 'perambulation' around the kingdom by considering the region 'beyond' the river Trent, the north of England.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Harrison, *Description of England*, 260.

CHAPTER TWO

'The names of the shires in England are these, wherof the first ten that lie between the British sea and the Thames, as Polydore also dooth set them downe, Kent, Sussex, Surreie, Hampshire, Barkeshire, Wilshire, Dorsetshire, Summerset, Devon and Cornewall.'

William Harrison (1577)

South of the Thames

In my examination of the role and representation of southern England in Shakespeare's first tetralogy, the initial focus will be on Kent. A royal palace located in the north-western corner of a county provides the first reference in the plays to a specific place within regional England; during the opening scene of *1 Henry VI* the Duke of Exeter, stung into action by the loss of territories in France, announces that

To Eltam will I, where the young King is,
Being ordained his special governor,
And for his safety there I'll best devise (1.1.170-72).

In the following speech Winchester complains,

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.
The King from Eltam I intend to send,
And sit at chiefest stern of public weal (1.1.173-77).¹

Pointing to the rivalry between Gloucester and Winchester which acts as the catalyst for the 'envious discord' (3.1.193) that will sweep the kingdom, this incident also serves as a portent of the county's function in *2 Henry VI* when another 'Jack-out-of-office' (1.1.175) becomes a source of instability within the realm.

It is in Kent that Shakespeare locates the most sustained example of regional presence in the whole tetralogy, the Jack Cade rebellion. The extent to which Shakespeare's rebels articulate a radical manifesto that would abolish money, social inequality and overhaul the justice system in order to create a realm where 'all ... shall be in common' (4.2.68) has

¹ The *Riverside Shakespeare* follows *F* here in having Winchester say 'intend to send' (1.1.176). The alteration of this line to read 'intend to steal' is attractive, as it completes the couplet. See Hattaway, *The First Part of Henry VI*, 74.

been well documented.² Considerably less attention has been given to the manner in which the Cade rebellion is dramatised as a specifically regional insurrection, and how this episode, in both the play's Medieval and Tudor contexts, fashions a complex and multi-faceted image of Kent and the Kentish community.

Cade and the Critics

Critical response to Shakespeare's dramatisation of the Cade rebellion has tended to sit between an outright condemnation of Cade and his supporters as a barbarous manifestation of 'rebellious hinds' (4.2.122) bent on destruction, and an acceptance that the political, social and economic grievances forwarded by the 'commons do come to stand for values that are worth taking seriously.'³ This critical fence-sitting has a long history. In his *Historical Tales from Shakespeare*, A.T.Quiller-Couch writes that the rebels are a 'rough, incoherent crew' whose 'dull sense of injustice' is expressed as a 'brute rage against the governing class', but he also notes how a number of their complaints are 'shrewd and practical.'⁴ Similarly, Tillyard considers Cade and his fellow rebels to be 'an impious spectacle of the proper order reversed', yet he also concedes that 'Jack Cade's fellows are admirable studies of simple people.'⁵ In the introduction to his Arden edition, Cairncross writes of the 'popular humour and indecency of the Cade scenes.'⁶

² See, for instance, Richard Wilson, "A Mingled Yarn": Shakespeare and the Cloth workers', *Literature and History*, Vol. 12, (1986) 164-80. Michael Hattaway, 'Rebellion, Class Consciousness, and Shakespeare's 2 Henry VI', *Cahiers Elizabethans* 33 (1988) 13-22. Patterson, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice*. Francios Laroque, 'The Jack Cade Scenes Reconsidered: Popular Rebellion, Utopia, or Carnival?' in *Shakespeare and Cultural Tradition: The Selected Proceedings of the International Shakespeare Association World Congress*, Tokyo, 1991 ed., Tetsuo Kishi, 76-89. Paola Pugliatti, 'More than history can pattern: the Jack Cade rebellion in Shakespeare's 2 Henry VI'. *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 22:3 (Fall 1992) 451-478. Ellen C. Caldwell, 'Jack Cade and Shakespeare's Henry VI, Part 2', *Studies in Philology* (Winter 1995)18-62. William C.Carroll, *Fat King, Lean Beggar: Representations of Poverty in the Age of Shakespeare* (Ithaca:1996)127-157.

³ Hattaway, *The Second Part of King Henry VI*, 20.

⁴ A.T. Quiller-Couch, *Historical Tales from Shakespeare* (London:1910) 240.

⁵ Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays*, 183-185.

⁶ Cairncross, *King Henry VI, Part 2*, liii.

This seemingly ambivalent view of Shakespeare's dramatisation of the Cade rebellion has continued to surface. In a recent article Ellen C. Caldwell suggests the play

can support a negative view of the rebellion and the inclination of recent British productions has been to do so; they range from emphasising its dark comedy to exploiting what is seen to be the play's tendency to 'orgiastic violence.' At worst, the play presents Cade as a self-serving pretender, a nihilist, a threat to law, literacy and order, a murderer of innocents, a scourge. His followers are easily swayed, his programme farcical, his methods cruel and illogical. In short, he is cartoonized and his rebellion, carried out by a disorganised and buffoonish rabble, is inevitably suppressed in top-down comic violence. At best, Cade's appeals for social, economic, and political reforms are couched in language and accompanied by actions which, if ambiguous or polyvalent ... also manage to suggest the enormity of the social and political problems he and Henry must confront.⁷

Both the condemnation and the respect that Shakespeare's dramatisation of the Cade rebellion provokes stems from the play's sources. In his account of the rebellion, Hall initially describes Jack Cade as a 'certayn yougma[n] of a goodely stature, and pregraunt wit' supported by a 'great company of Talle personages' who later become 'a multitude of evil rude and rusticall personages'; an image modern productions of the play have often exploited.⁸ But the significance of this double perspective, what amounts to a recognition of both the negative and positive aspects of the Cade rebellion, lies in the manner in which it contributes to the production of Kentish regional identity in *2 Henry VI*.

Kent as a Centre of Instability

The reputation of Kent as a volatile county was not only based on the Cade rebellion. As Lambarde writes in his *Perambulation of Kent*, the area in the extreme west of the county overlooking London, known as Blackheath,

⁷ Caldwell, *Jack Cade and Shakespeare*, 50. In this article Caldwell also draws attention to the response of literary critics to Shakespeare's Cade; I am indebted to her discussion.

⁸ Hall, *Union*, 220. Here I am specifically thinking of the English Shakespeare's Company's *Wars of the Roses* directed by Michael Bogdanov. Although the same would seem to apply to the RSC's 1977 production of *2 Henry VI*. As John Barber, whose following review appeared in *The Times* on the 14 July 1977 notes, 'in a vast panorama... Shakespeare interweaves these high doings with the yelling intrusion of Jack Cade's rebels from Kent, who (prompted by York) stick knives into anyone with education or a title ... Shakespeare, a true conservative, writes viciously of these unpolished hinds with their battle cry about England never being merry "since gentlemen came up", but he gives James Laurensen a great role as Cade, a bully boy ... a Hyde Park Orator.'

hath borne three severall rebellious assemblies: One in the time of King Richard the second, moved (as it shall appear anon in Dartford) by Wat Tylar ... Jack Cade (that counterfiet Mortimer) and his fellowes, were leaders of the second: who passing from hence to London, did to death the Lord Say, and other, in the time of King Henrie the sixt ... The thirde insurrection was assembled by Michaell Joseph (the black Smith) and the Lord Audely, under the reigne of King Henrie the seventh.⁹

In a modern study of the Wat Tyler revolt the same point is made by R.B. Dobson, who notes how 'the long walk from eastern Kent via Blackheath to London [of Tyler's followers in 1381] established a precedent to be followed ... by Jack Cade in 1450, the Bastard Fauconberge in 1471 and Sir Thomas Wyatt in 1554'¹⁰, the last of these Kentish rebellions being within living memory of Shakespeare's audience.

In light of such a colourful past it is no surprise that these events were dramatised by Elizabethan playwrights. Theatre audiences in the 1590s could have seen at least three other plays in which the realm was threatened by a serious rebellion involving the population of this county. In the anonymous *Life and Death of Jack Strawe* there is no doubt as to the origins of the leader of the rebellion:

King. I pray thee fellow what countryman art thou?
Wat Tyler. It skills not much, I am a Englishman,
Ball. Marrie Sir he is a Kentishman (TLN 721-728).¹¹

Later in the same play the Lord Mayor of London informs Richard II that

... the Essex men,
With far more better mindes have parted companie,
And everie man be tane him to his home.
The chiefest of these Rebels be of Kent,
Of base degree and worse conditions all,
And vowd as I am given to understand,
To nothing but to havecke and to spoile (TLN. 890-86).

⁹ Lambarde, *Perambulation*, 391. The insurrection against Henry VII referred to by Lambarde was the 1497 Cornish uprising. See also Stoyles's 'Cornish Rebellions'.

¹⁰ R.B. Dobson, *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381* (London:1970) 23-24.

¹¹ All quotations from the anonymous *The Life and Death of Jack Strawe* (1594) are drawn from the Malone Society reprint series edition.

In *Thomas of Woodstock*, a play that A.P. Rossiter has argued is closely related to *2 Henry VI*, the county is depicted as one of the centres of civil dissension as 'the men of kent and Essex doe rebell' (TLN. 592).¹² Likewise Thomas Heywood, in *1 King Edward IV*, portrays the county as a centre of rebellion, even though the Bastard Faulconbridge and his followers attempt to distinguish themselves from

... Tyler, Cade, and Straw,
Bluebeard, and others of that rascal rout (1.2.28-29).¹³

Shakespeare's dramatisation of a fifteenth-century insurrection centred on the county of Kent is not unique, but unlike his fellow dramatists of the period, whose plays acknowledge the role of those from other counties in these rebellions, Shakespeare's Jack Cade rebellion remains a distinctly Kentish affair. This represents a major departure from Hall, who notes that after Jack Cade had 'slayne the two valeaunt Staffordes ... divers idle and vacabonde persons, resorted to him from Sussex and Surrey, and other parts in a great number', a point that is repeated in Holinshed's account of the rebellion.¹⁴ It is the first of a number of substantial alterations and additions that Shakespeare makes to his source material in order to fashion a particular image of both the county and its inhabitants in *2 Henry VI*.

Perhaps elaborating on Hall's comment that the historical Cade was joined at Blackheath by 'Kentishe people',¹⁵ a series of allusions make it abundantly clear that Shakespeare's Cade leads an insurrection of Kentishmen. The Lieutenant, who captures Suffolk, reports that 'the commons here in Kent are up in arms' (4.1.100). Two of Shakespeare's rebels are identified as 'Best's son, the tanner of Wingham' (4.2.21-22) and 'Dick, the Butcher of Ashford' (4.3.1). Since both Wingham and Ashford are in Kent, the overall effect is to leave an audience in no doubt that this will be an uprising involving a rebel host composed entirely of Kentish artisans. The capture and execution of the Clerk of

¹² On the parallels between this play and *2 Henry VI* see A.P. Rossiter's critical edition, *Woodstock: A Moral History* (London:1946) 66-72.

¹³ Thomas Heywood, *The First and Second Parts of King Edward IV*, ed., Barron Field (London:1842).

¹⁴ Hall, *Union*, 220. Holinshed, *Chronicles*, 224.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Chartam who 'can write and read and cast accownt' (4.2.85-6), helps to further localise the early scenes of the Cade rebellion in Kent as it identifies the unfortunate clerk as native of an actual place within the county.

These two matters are reported differently in *Q*. Here the geographical origin of Cade's support is made even more apparent when the rebels are joined by 'a great sort more ... come from Rochester, and from Maydstone, and Canterbury' (F3r), three of the major urban centres in Kent -- towns that would have been more recognisable to audiences than small villages such as Wingham (see map). Similarly in *Q* the Clerk is identified as being from 'Chattam' (F3v), rather than *F*'s Chartam. Both places are in Kent, but Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor point out that in regard to the rebels' perambulation of the county the variation is significant:

There is a small place, near Canterbury, called Chartham, but it seems more likely that Chatham near Rochester is meant ... Cade's party already has in it the Tanner of Wingham (to the east of Canterbury) and the Butcher of Ashford (to the south-east of Canterbury). If we suppose that Cade is meant to have accumulated his rabble following as he moved through Kent, roughly towards London, we are led to conclude that he has already passed along a west-south-westerly path through Wingham and Ashford. Chatham is roughly between Ashford and London, lying north-west of Ashford: Chartham lies between Ashford and Canterbury, to the north-east of Ashford. So to suppose that *F* is correct is to suppose that that the rebels retrace their path after Ashford, while to suppose 'Chattam' is the correct reading is to suppose them following a London-bound course from Ashford.¹⁶

Furthermore, in *Q*, prior to the battle with the Staffords, we find Cade rallying his supporters by appropriating England's patron saint when he cries 'Come sirs, St George for us and Kent' (F4r), a call that once again serves to identify this rebellion as specifically Kentish.

Even after the death of the Staffords, as Cade and his supporters transcend the borders of Kent and 'march towards London' (4.3.16-17), the rebellion remains Kentish in nature. Although it is now staged as a conflict between the 'rebels ... in Southwark' (4.4.27) who constitute

... a ragged multitude
Of hinds and peasants, rude and merciless (4.4.32-33)

¹⁶ Wells and Taylor, *A Textual Companion*, 188.

and the 'scholars, lawyers, courtiers, gentlemen' (4.4.36) of London and Westminster -- two separate communities each occupying a distinct geographical space -- the Queen still identifies the insurgents as 'Kentish rebels' (4.4.42). Similarly, even after it is reported that

The rascal people, thirsting after prey,
Join with the traitor; and they jointly swear
To spoil the city and your royal court (4.4.51-53),

implying the Kentishmen have now been joined by the urban mob, the 'rascal people' continue to be distinguished solely as 'Kentish rebels' (4.4.57). This polarisation of the Cade rebellion as a conflict between Kent and the urban community is also found in the following scene when a citizen reports 'The Lord Mayor craves aid to defend the city' (4.5.4-5).¹⁷ In *2 Henry VI*, the world within the walls is fashioned as the loyal centre, populated by those who 'Fight for ... King, [and] Country' (4.5.11), thus presenting the city as a privileged *locus* whose population valiantly defends London from the Kentishmen. While the attempts of Lord Scales and the citizens do not prevent Jack Cade from (if somewhat symbolically) taking possession of the city by 'sitting upon London stone' (4.6.2), the burning of the Savoy and the Inns of Court (details taken from the 1381 Peasants' Revolt) certainly serve to contradict Lambarde's claim that 'nowhere in all of this realme, is the common people more willingly governed' than in Kent.¹⁸

Ashford: The Significance of Place.

At the close of 3.1. in *2 Henry VI* the duke of York reveals that his attempt to gain the crown will be based around suborning

... a headstrong Kentishman,
John Cade of Ashford,
To make commotion, as full well he can (3.1.356-58).

¹⁷ Thomas Cartelli has also drawn attention to distinction made by Shakespeare between the rebels and the citizens in this particular scene, however, Cartelli's discussion centres on the concept of class conflict and not regional conflict, see his 'Jack Cade in the Garden' in *Enclosure Acts: Sexuality, Property and Culture in Early Modern England*, ed., Richard Burt & John Michael Archer (Ithaca:1994) 57.

¹⁸ Lambarde, *Perambulation*, 2.

York's identification of Cade with the small Kentish town of Ashford, located in the south-east of the county, is a detail added by Shakespeare.¹⁹ The fifteenth-century chroniclers and their Tudor counterparts all express a degree of uncertainty as to the precise origins of the historical Jack Cade; in a continuation of the English chronicle known as the *Brut* the historical Cade is described as 'an Irisshe man', but not a Kentishman.²⁰ Hall does not place Cade at all, and while Holinshed, taking his lead from the *Polychronicon*, includes in his narrative the suggestion that Cade may have been Irish, providing the connection between Ireland and Cade alluded to by York, there is no evidence in this source to establish Cade as either a resident or native of Ashford.²¹

Jack Cade is not the only Kentish rebel identified with this town: as already noted, Shakespeare identifies one of them as 'Dick, the butcher of Ashford' (4.3.1). During the initial stages of the rebellion the butcher appears as one of those ridiculing the pretensions of their leader:

Cade. My father was a Mortimer

Dick. He was an honest man, and a good bricklayer

Cade. My mother a Plantagenet

Dick. I knew her well, she was a midwife.

Cade. My wife was descended of the Lacies.

Dick. She was indeed a pedlar's daughter, and sold many laces.

Smith. But now of late, not able to travel with her furred pack,
she washes bucks here at home (4.2.39-48).

As the Kentish insurrection becomes a more menacing affair Dick is no longer portrayed simply as one of the crowd, but emerges as Cade's right hand man; a sycophant increasingly responsible for the slaughter and mayhem carried out by the rebels. Punning on

¹⁹ In 1590 Ashford had a population estimated to have been no more than seven hundred inhabitants. It lay on one of the main routes linking London with the channel ports and Europe.

²⁰ *An English chronicle of the reigns of Richard II, Henry IV, Henry V and Henry VI, written before the year 1471*, ed., Rev. John Silvester Davies (London:1856).

²¹ In Holinshed we find the following line 'his name was John Cade, or of some John Mend-all [an Irishman as Polychronicon saith].' *Chronicles*, 220.

his trade as a butcher, it is Dick who slays the opponents of the Kentish rebels 'like sheep and oxen' (4.3.3), and is rewarded by Cade with a 'license to kill for a hundred, lacking one' (4.3.6-7) during Lent (a period when sales of animal flesh were limited). Moreover, in contrast to his earlier snide remarks about Cade's lineage, this character is the only one to address the leader of the rebels as 'My Lord' (4.6.11), and rather than deflating Cade's outrageous claim of 'lordship' (4.7.4) asserts 'that only the laws of England may come out of [Cade's] mouth' (4.7.6-7). In an additional passage in *Q* this character is rewarded even further when he is knighted by Cade (F4r).

The question remains: why did Shakespeare identify both Cade and Dick with the town of Ashford? It can be argued that Shakespeare simply chose Ashford in an effort to add a touch of local colour, to what is identified in the chronicles as a predominantly Kentish revolt. However, the identification of Shakespeare's characters with Ashford cannot be dismissed so lightly. Associating the rebels with this town evokes a series of social, economic and cultural resonances that, more readily available to the play's first audiences, are central to the fashioning of Kentish regional identity in this play.

In his *Perambulation* Lambarde notes how 'wood occupieth the greatest portion ... except it bee towards the east, which coast is more champaigne than the residue.'²² What Lambarde is articulating here is the distinction between the large swath of woodland, commonly known as the Kentish Weald, and the more fertile the arable districts of the north-eastern coastal plains largely given over to arable farming. In his recent study of Kentish provincial society during the sixteenth century, Clark proposes that Kent could be divided into six 'portions' including an area 'encircling the High Weald ridge, where the Wealden vales were poorish soils, deep woodlands and backward farms still generally held sway'.²³ Located in these 'Wealden vales' lay Ashford, a town whose hinterland was characterised by wastes and heaths, largely given over to the pasturing of livestock.

Ashford was situated in an area where manorial control was weak, due in part to the scattered nature of settlement, a situation whereby, as the chorographer John Norden

²² Lambarde, *Perambulation*, 3.

²³ Clark, *English Provincial Society*, 4. On the complexities of the Kentish landscape and its effect on settlement patterns and economic activity see Everitt's 'The Making of the Agrarian Landscape of Kent', chapter four in *Landscape and Community in England*.

remarked, those 'bred amongst woods are naturally more stubborn and uncivil than in the champion countries.'²⁴ It is hard not to suggest that the representation of Cade and Dick as the blood-thirsty leaders of a rebellion that causes the death of lawyers and nobles, and ransacks the city of London, lends support to Norden's perception that those associated with the woodland areas of the kingdom were uncivil. It is a point I will return to later.

Kentish Clothiers

In early modern England the unfavourable reputation of the wood pasture districts of Kent was inextricably linked to the fact that this part of the county was a centre for cloth manufacture -- an industry with which Cade and his fellow rebels in *2 Henry VI* are clearly identified. Intriguingly, the representation of Jack Cade as a clothing worker has no basis in the chronicle sources, yet he is portrayed as such when Bevis states how 'Jack Cade the clothier means to dress up the commonwealth, and turn it, and set a new nap upon it' (4.2.4-5).²⁵ Identified as a 'Shearman' (4.2.133), glossed as in the *Riverside Shakespeare* as a shearer of woollen cloth, Cade is not the only Kentish artisan to be identified with this industry: among their number the rebels also have 'Smith the weaver' (4.2.28). Indeed throughout the rebellion we find constant allusions to cloth manufacture and type. During the opening scene the lines attributed to both Bevis and Holland, in what is almost a comic routine -- a double act -- contain a number of puns and quibbles about cloth and cloth workers. In addition to the idea that Cade will 'dress up the commonwealth, and turn it, and set a new nap upon it', we find England described as being 'threadbare' (4.2.7), and for those who resist the rebels a promise that 'their thread of life [will be] spun' (4.2.29). Moreover, Cade himself gets in on the act when he addresses the Stafford's as 'Silken-coated slaves' (4.2.128), and in a later scene he refers to the captured Lord Say as 'thou serge, nay buckram lord!' (4.7.25) -- once again references to specific types of cloth. But these allusions are more than simply clever wordplay; by portraying Cade and his supporters as artisans and craftsmen, Shakespeare reproduces the social composition of the historical rebels in the theatre. In addition, his

²⁴ John Norden, *The Surveyor's dialogue* (1618) 4.

²⁵ A similar conclusion can be drawn from *Q* where Cade is identified as 'the Diar of Ashford' (F3r).

characters are identified with an industry whose workers were often at the forefront of the civil unrest that periodically broke out in Kent.

Hence, Shakespeare's dramatisation of the Cade rebellion brings to the London stage a proportion of Kentish society practically absent from the various county surveys of the period. As Nashe observed, Tudor chorographers wrote of 'nothing but of Mayors and Sheriefs, and the deare yeres and the great frost.'²⁶ Lambarde's *Perambulation* is no exception, for after devoting several paragraphs extolling the virtues of the Knights, Gentlemen and Yeoman of Kent we find a rather grudging acknowledgment:

As touching the artificers of this shire, they be either such as travell at the sea, or labour in the artes that be handmaidens to husbandry, or else do worke in stone, iron and woodfuel, or be makers of coloured woollen clothes; in which last feat they excell.²⁷

Although the centre of the Kentish cloth industry was located further west in the High Weald (around the town of Cranbrook) many of those eventually pardoned for their role in the Cade rebellion were employed in the cloth making villages near Ashford.²⁸ As R. A. Griffiths suggests, the names that appear on the pardon roll need to be viewed with some caution, since the amnesty offered by the authorities in the aftermath of the Cade rebellion provided an opportunity for those who had not been directly involved, but nevertheless had been guilty of other offences, to take advantage of the situation.²⁹ Whatever the potential drawbacks of relying on the pardon roll to provide an accurate assessment regarding the occupations of those implicated in the Kentish insurrection of 1450, by the time Cade led his rebellion the Kentish cloth industry had faced a two year period of decline, exacerbated by the loss of the France and increased competition from European producers. Yet, surprisingly the distress caused by the contraction of the clothing industry in Kent during the late 1440s does not feature in the list of demands forwarded by Cade at Blackheath in 1450. Still, as I.M.W. Harvey notes, a 'tradition of religious unorthodoxy and fluctuating economic fortunes made the Weald the most precipitant region of a more than usually rousable county', a part of the county

²⁶ Nashe, *Pierce Penniless* (F2r).

²⁷ Lambarde, *Perambulation*, 8.

²⁸ I.M.W. Harvey, *Jack Cade's Rebellion of 1450* (Oxford:1991) 19.

²⁹ R.A. Griffiths, *The Reign of King Henry VI* (London:1981) 619.

where cloth workers, in contrast to the 'solid yeomanry of Kent', continued long after the Cade rebellion had been defeated to be implicated in 'un-focused and uncoordinated local uprisings that preached lurid violence and unworkable solutions.'³⁰

Considered from this perspective there are a number of clear parallels with the image of the Kentishmen in *2 Henry VI*. First, Cade and his supporters are portrayed as cloth workers. Second, Shakespeare's Kentish rebellion is marked by lurid violence. Along with the summary execution of the Clerk of Chattam, Cade determines that the bodies of the Staffords 'shall be dragged at [his] horse's heels' (4.3.13) as far as London. In a later scene the same character directs his followers to 'strike off' the head of Lord Say 'and then break into his son-in-law's house, Sir James Cromer, and strike off his head, and bring them both upon poles' (4.7.109-112). In addition, the rebels are clearly guilty of proposing unworkable solutions. Cade himself proposes that 'All the realm shall be in common, and in Cheapside shall my palfry go to grass' (4.2.68-69), in other words all private property shall be abolished and London's main commercial thoroughfare is to be turned over to pasture for the grazing for horses.

Shakespeare's centering of the rebellion around clothing workers would have been clearly topical for those attending the playhouses of the 1590s. In his 1986 article, Richard Wilson provides a convincing argument that the identification of the rebels in *2 Henry VI* as clothiers alludes to the problems facing the industry, particularly in and around London, during this period. As Wilson notes, in 1592 the clothing workers of the capital 'were fighting a rearguard action against long-term structural changes in their industry.'³¹ However, it is also clear that Shakespeare's identification of his fifteenth-century rebels as Kentish cloth workers is also allusive to the problems facing the industry in Kent as early as the 1560s. In a memorandum regarding the export of cloth (c.1564) Burghley wrote 'the people that depend uppon makying of cloth ar of worss condition to be quyetly governed than the husband man.'³² In 1566 an Act was passed limiting the export of certain types of cloth. While exemptions

³⁰ Harvey, *Jack Cade's Rebellion*, 174-75.

³¹ Wilson, 'A Mingled Yam', 171.

³² Cited by R.H.Tawney and Eileen Power, *Tudor Economic Documents Vol. Two* (London:1965) 45.

were granted to the producers of undressed cloth in other counties (which were defined in the legislation as cloth that was not rowed, barbed, first coursed or shorn), no such privilege was extended to the Kentish manufacturers. The nineteenth-century Kentish historian Robert Furley cites a petition circulating in Kent sometime between 1568 and 1575 in which we find the following complaint

*Item, the said places in the said county where clothing is commonly used, is so populous, that the soil thereof is not able by any increase thereof to maintain and find one-half of the inhabitants, except clothing is maintained.*³³

Re-affirming the connection between the less fertile pastoral areas of the Weald and cloth manufacture, the petition goes on to state that

clothing in the said Wyld of Kent is the nurse of the people, so that in maintaining clothing, the people are maintained: decay the clothing, and the people decay.³⁴

By 1590 the Wealden cloth industry, due to falling continental and domestic demand, was in trouble. So serious was the situation in this part of Kent that in 1593 there was an attempt to pass an 'Act for the Maintenance of Clothing within the Parish of Cranbrook in the County of Kent and within eight miles of the same Parish.'³⁵ Its failure to become law was met with a wave of disturbances in the county, culminating, according to one report cited by Clark, in a proposal by the clothiers to 'go to Court with humble supplication to her majesty'³⁶ -- a form of protest that in 1450 had resulted in the sack of London and in the early 1590s was being dramatised in *2 Henry VI*, a play in which the audience is left in no doubt that those 'most out of order' (4.2.189) are Kentish cloth workers.

³³ Richard Furley, *A History of The Weald of Kent, with an outline of the History of the County to the Present Time*. (Ashford:1874) Vol. II, part II, 481-82.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 482.

³⁶ Peter Clark, 'Popular Protest and Disturbance in Kent, 1558-1640', *The Economic History Review*, Second series, Vol. XXIX, No. 3 1976, 372.

Kentish Non-Conformity

While there is no hint in the chronicles of any religious motive behind the Cade rebellion, a number of lines attributed to the Kentish rebels in *2 Henry VI* are suggestive of such an agenda. Bevis and Holland speak of 'labor in thy vocation' (4.2.16), of 'sin struck down like an ox' (4.2.26) and Cade himself proposes that 'our enemies shall fall before us, inspired with the spirit of putting down kings and princes' (4.2.35-36). The resonances here to a number of biblical passages have prompted Helgerson to argue that these lines are 'cant phrases of radical religious dissent'.³⁷ The same point is made by Hattaway who notes how Cade's proposal that 'there shall be no money' (4.2.72) can be seen as a direct allusion to one of the main planks of the reformist agenda of the Anabaptists -- a radical sixteenth-century Protestant sect that had been at the forefront of the rebellions that swept Germany in the 1530s -- the abolition of money.³⁸ Certainly when viewed in an Elizabethan context the suggestion that the rebels in *2 Henry VI* are 'puritanically inclined' is persuasive, although if I read Helgerson's discussion correctly, the degree to which this association of Cade and his rebels with the Puritans makes them somehow representative of the Elizabethan popular theatre's 'most vociferous enemies' remains open to conjecture.

When placed in their historical context these 'cant phrases of radical religious dissent' spoken by Holland and Bevis identify the rebels with the heretical teachings of John Wyclif, commonly known as Lollardy. As far as any summary can be made about what Lollardy was and what it stood for, two points relevant to this present study need to be made. First, with its emphasis on the primacy of the Scriptures there appears to have been a desire for a return to a simpler form of Christianity free from such practices as the veneration of saints, pilgrimages, the payment of tithes, and clerical endowments. Second and more importantly, the translation of the Bible into English, thus making the word of God more accessible, had meant that Lollardy found favour among the more literate sections of society. Although, since the failure of Sir John Oldcastle's uprising in 1414, support for Lollardy had all but vanished among the

³⁷ Helgerson suggests these 'cant phrases of radical religious dissent' associate Cade and his followers with the enemies of the theatre. For a fuller discussion on this point see *Forms of Nationhood*, 213.

³⁸ *Ibid.* See also, Hattaway, *Second Part of King Henry VI*, 174.

ruling elite, in Kent the movement remained particularly strong among artisans and craftsmen such as cloth workers and butchers in the Wealden clothing towns and villages, including those on the edge of the clothing district around Ashford.³⁹

The tradition of religious non-conformity among the clothing workers of Weald and south-west Kent would continue to flourish throughout the Tudor period. It has been argued that the long standing unorthodoxy found amongst the communities in the clothing townships of Kent was a major contributor to the rise of Protestantism in the county during the period before the Reformation.⁴⁰ Kent itself, providing a disproportionate number of those burnt during the reign of Mary is, not surprisingly, well represented in one of the most popular and widely disseminated books of the sixteenth century, John Foxe's *Act and Monuments*. By the last decade of the sixteenth century the town of Ashford was recognised as one of the many centres of extreme Protestantism and Sabbatarianism in the county. Clark cites the case of Thomas Harrison of Petham who claimed to have walked ten miles to Ashford market in order to 'hear a good sermon.'⁴¹ In an essay on the religious environment of Shakespeare's England, Patrick Collinson writes,

local differences of environment and occupation influenced, perhaps even determined, the response to Protestant evangelism of parishes and of individuals and groups within parishes. Just as literacy was very unevenly distributed through social hierarchies (for example, thatchers and fishermen were almost generally illiterate; tailors and yeomen, partially literate; and printing workers, wholly literate), so it appears likely that skilled craftsmen and cloth workers responded more readily to a religion of Bible-reading and sermons than peasants and agricultural labourers. And woodland and highland zones, with their patterns of scattered settlements, diverse livelihoods, and absence of close social surveillance, provided a more fertile soil for forms of religious independence than

³⁹ On the Lollards see M.H. Keen, *England in the Later Middle Ages* (London:1973) 226-47. C.S.L. Davies, *Peace, Print and Protestantism 1450-1558*, (London:1976) 146-48. Harvey, *The Jack Cade Rebellion*, 23-30.

⁴⁰ Clark, *English Provincial Society*, 30. This tradition of Kent as a centre of Protestantism surfaces in two other plays of the period. In *Sir John Oldcastle* (1599), the character of the same name (possibly in response to Shakespeare's un-flattering portrait of Falstaff/Oldcastle) appears as a proto-type Protestant martyr. Wyatt's ill-fated 1554 rebellion against the marriage of the Catholic Queen Mary to Philip of Spain was dramatised by Thomas Dekker in *The Famous History of Sir Thomas Wyatt* (1607); a play which features another 'rising [of] kentishmen' (E2r).

⁴¹ Clark, *English Provincial Society*, 176.

corn growing villages, which lived under the watchful eye of the squire and parson.⁴²

There are a number of correlations here with the image of the Kentish rebels brought to the stage by Shakespeare in *2 Henry VI*, a play in which 'Jack Cade the clothier' (4.2.4) from Ashford (a town located in the Wealden vales) strives to reshape the 'commonwealth' (4.2.5), and vowing 'reformation' (4.2.65) is supported by a 'butcher' (4.2.25), a 'weaver' (4.2.28) and two other rebels who paraphrase passages from the Bible.

This leads us back to Helgerson's suggestion that the rebels in *2 Henry VI* are somehow representative of the Puritan elements within Elizabethan society. Certainly one has to concede that as representative of the literate God-fearing community Shakespeare's Kentishmen are not particularly good role models. Their message is often confused or simply idiotic. Cade himself can be seen as a comic inversion of the more radical preachers, a fiery demagogue and zealot who launches an attack on literacy, paper mills and those who 'hast caused printing to be used' (4.7.36), the very factors that lay at the core of the Protestant mission to attain a more Godly society.⁴³ It is also noteworthy that in a departure from the sources Shakespeare's Kentish rebels are skilled craftsmen and artisans, the very people, according to Collinson, who tended to be more literate than peasants and as such were more responsive to a 'religion of Bible-reading and sermons' (see above). If one accepts the point that the portrayal of Cade and his supporters was designed to parody the more extreme religious elements in Elizabethan society, I suggest that the target here may well be the Separatists and Presbyteries who were particularly active in Kent, a county that after all was one of the areas 'most thoroughly effected by Evangelical Protestantism'⁴⁴ -- a movement 'contrary to the King [read the Queen] ... crown and dignity' (4.7.36-37) whose levelling message no 'Christian ear' (4.7.40), in the guise of the established Anglican church could

⁴² Patrick Collinson, *Elizabethan Essays* (London:1994) 227. On the many differences within rural England see Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (London:1982). Joan Thirsk, *The Farming Regions of England in The Agrarian History of England and Wales IV 1500-1600*. ed., H.P.D. Finberg (Cambridge:1967) 110-112.

⁴³ A mission which, as Peter Womack suggests, was dependent on the distribution of a limited number of books including the Bible, the Book of Common Prayer and the Homilies. See his 'Imagining Communities', in Aers, *Culture and History*, 105.

⁴⁴ Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: the ritual year 1400-1700* (Oxford:1994) 120.

'endure to hear' (4.7.40). Once again we are confronted with a series of images that need to be seen as inextricably linked to the rebels' regional origins.

'The supplication' : Jack Cade's Social and Political Agenda

During his account of the Cade rebellion Hall suggests that 'because Kentishmen be impatient in wronges disdayning of to much oppression' they were 'ever desirous of new chaung, and new fangelnes.'⁴⁵ Certainly the reputation of Jack Cade the Kentishman, despite the passing of time, remained a powerful reminder of the dangers of regional insurrection. In 1598, possibly in response to an upsurge in local disturbances over the enclosure of land, Robert Cecil, the second Lord Burghley, told the Privy Council that he

had no fear of men of worth [for] when has England felt any harm by soldiers or gentlemen of worth? The state has found them the truest. Some Jack Cade and Jack Straw and such rascals are those who have endangered the kingdom. ⁴⁶

The famous and oft-quoted couplet

But when Adam delved, and Eve span
Who was then a gentleman

uttered by another Kentishman, Parson Ball, one of the leaders of the 1381 Peasants' Revolt, had also become a standard catch-cry of those seeking to overturn authority and the existing social order.⁴⁷ Ball's slogan, reproduced on the stage in the anonymous play *The Life and Death of Jack Strawe*, is echoed twice by Shakespeare's Kentish artisans. It first appears when Holland suggests 'it was never a merry world since gentleman came up' (4.2.9-10). The second occasion occurs when Cade replies to Stafford that 'Adam was a gardener' (4.2.134).

Through stage plays and other forms of cultural exchange Cade's Kentish rebellion had become, as Patterson argues, part of a 'popular tradition' of protest.⁴⁸ In an era when, as

⁴⁵ Hall, *Union*, 219.

⁴⁶ *C.S.P.D.*, 1598-1601, Vol. 5. 352. Cecil's remark is also cited by William C. Carroll, "The Nursery of Beggary: Enclosure, Vagrancy, and Sedition in the Tudor and Stuart Period" in *Enclosure Acts*, 44.

⁴⁷ See Charles Hobday, 'Clouted Shoon And Leather Aprons: Shakespeare and the Egalitarian Tradition', *Renaissance and Modern Studies*, Vol. xxiii (1979).

⁴⁸ Patterson, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice*, 34.

A.G.R. Smith notes, 'popular protest was endemic in Kent', the dramatisation of civil insurrection in Kent and many of the sentiments expressed by the stage rebels in the various plays were certainly topical.⁴⁹ With its social agenda drawn primarily from the 1381 Peasants' Revolt, its political manifesto drawn from the rebellion in 1450, and its parallels with disturbances in and around London during the 1590s, Shakespeare's Cade rebellion had, according to Paola Pugliatti, 'acquired the status of an exemplum.'⁵⁰ Nevertheless, a point often overlooked is the degree to which the motivation behind the rebellion and the agenda presented by Cade and his supporters in the play specifically relates to the situation in Kent during the fifteenth century.⁵¹

Although Hall does not provide specific details of the demands of the Kentish rebels presented to the King at Blackheath in 1450, the description of the rebellion in the 1587 edition of *Holinshed's Chronicles* includes two documents: 'The complaint of the commons of Kent, and causes of their assemblie on the Blackheath' and 'The requests by the capteine of the great assemblie in Kent.'⁵² In his study on the reign of Henry VI, Griffiths summarises the manifesto presented by the rebels at Blackheath in 1450 in the following manner,

an outpouring of currently-felt and easily identified oppressions, especially in Kent ... a Kentish document, drawn up by Kentishmen and directed at fellow Kentishmen.⁵³

It is an observation that can be readily applied to the agenda forwarded by Cade and his

⁴⁹ A.G.R. Smith, *The Emergence of the Nation State: 1529-1660* (London:1983) 191.

⁵⁰ Pugliatti, *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 472.

⁵¹ The same point is made by Caldwell in her study of the Shakespeare's Cade rebellion. See Note 2.

⁵² Hall does include the rebels' demand that 'neither fiftenes should hereafter be demanded, nor any impositions, or tax should be spoken of'. Furthermore, he records how the rebels sent a 'humble supplicacion, with louyng woordes, but with malicious entent, affirmyng his comyng, not to be against him, but against divers of his counsail, lovers of them selves, and oppressers of the pore comonallie, flatterers to the kyng and enemyes to his honor, suckers of his purse, and robbers of his subiectes, perciall to their frendes, and extreme to their enemies, for rewardes corrupted, and for indifferencie, nothyng doyng.' *Union*, 220. Holinshed, *Chronicles*, 222-24. The documents in question appear to have been first published by John Stow in his *Chronicles of England* (1580). The surviving versions of this document are also reproduced by Harvey in Appendix A of his *Jack Cade Rebellion*, and by Caldwell, see note 2.

⁵³ Griffiths, *The Reign of King Henry VI*, 629.

supporters in *2 Henry VI*. For example, the claim made by Cade that when he is king 'all shall eat and drink on my score' (4.2.72-73), a promise that is perhaps designed to win favour among his followers, and one might add with a degree of confidence to the play's original audience, is allusive to the fourth item listed in the complaint:

people of this realme be not paid of debts owing for stufte and purueiance taken to the use of the kings houshold, in undoing of the said people, and the poore commons of the realme.⁵⁴

This specific complaint over purveyance (the right of the Crown to obtain supplies at prices below the prevailing market rate) is reiterated in the list of requests;

And [the] taking of wheat and other graines, beefe, mutton, & all other vittels, the which is importable to the said commons, without the breefe provision of our said sovereigne lord and his true councell, they maie no longer beare it.⁵⁵

In 1450 abuses over the purveyance of foodstuffs for the royal household was a serious issue, and, as Harvey notes, the tendency of Henry VI to remain in the south of England, coupled with Kent's proximity to London, made the county particularly vulnerable to the rapacious demands of royal officials.⁵⁶

Cade's questioning as to whether or not it is a

lamentable thing, that of the skin of an innocent lamb should be made parchment? that parchment, being scribbled over, should undo a man? Some say the bee stings, but I say, 'tis the bee's wax; for I did but seal once to a thing, and I was never mine own man since (4.2.77-83),

can once again be read as relating specifically to the situation in Kent during the mid-fifteenth century. The ending of abuses under the guise of the so-called summons of the 'Green Wax', described by Harvey as 'mandates issued to county officers under the exchequer seal authorising the taking of fines', was one of the requests the rebels of 1450 forwarded to Henry

⁵⁴ Holinshed, *Chronicles*, 222.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 224.

⁵⁶ Harvey, *Jack Cade Rebellion*, 43.

VI at Blackheath.⁵⁷ Shakespeare would have found a direct reference to this complaint in Holinshed:

*Item, they returne in names of inquests in writing into diverse courts of the king not summoned nor warned, where through the people daillie leese great summes of monie, well nigh to the uttermost of their undoing: and make leuie of ameracements called the greene wax more in summes of monie than can be found due of record in the kings books.*⁵⁸

In another context, Cade's attack on legal documents, which once sealed restrict an individual's rights, echoes the concern of the rebels over the Statute of Labourers (1445). Updating earlier legislation the Statute sought to restrict the movement of labour, regulate wage levels and bond workers to their employers. That such a complaint should be uttered by a character identified as a Kentishman is significant, for as Griffiths notes, 'by the middle of the fifteenth century, Kent was a shire in which few labour services were still being demanded from an unfree peasantry; rather it was a shire supporting prosperous and independent -- if small -- peasant proprietors', a section of the county community who were in fact free from the customary dues placed on labour.⁵⁹

Certainly there was a tradition that the population of this county had retained certain rights lost to the rest of England after the Norman conquest. Writing over a century later than the events portrayed in the play, Lambarde refers to this convention in his *Perambulation* when he notes how

The yeomanarie, or common people ... is no where more free, or jolly, then in this shyre: for besides that they themselves say in a clayme ... that the communalitie of Kent was never vanquished by the conqueror, but yielded itself by composition, and besides that Gervasius affirmeth that the forward in all battles belongeth to them ... in right of their manhood, it is agreed by all men, that there were never any bondmen (or Villaines as the law calleth them) in Kent.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Ibid, 42.

⁵⁸ Holinshed, *Chronicles*, 222.

⁵⁹ Griffiths, *King Henry VI*, 630, 638. There may also be an allusion here to the 1563 Statute of Artificers, an Elizabethan attempt to force people to remain in the locality which they were born by enforcing more stringent apprenticeships and fixing wages levels, a series of measures designed to prevent the movement of labour that did have some limited success.

⁶⁰ Lambarde, *Perambulation*, 7.

The suggestion that the community of Kent had retained ancient rights denied to others seems to have had a widespread currency beyond the county's border. The tradition is mentioned by Smith in his *Description of England* (1588), where he records how Kent 'holdeth the old privileges' because the Duke of Normandy, on his way to Dover after securing London, was confronted by the

Kentishmen being armed, mett hym by the way, every man carrying a bowgh of a greene tree in their handes, and cominge nere the Duke, sent enbassadors to hym, to shew hym that they were come to mett hym as their liege lord, on condition they might enjoy their antient liberties; otherwise they were redy to geve hym bataille. The Duke, perceyving how he was entrapped, did graunt them the same, which they enjoy even to this day.⁶¹

In light of such a tradition Jack Cade's seemingly spurious claim to be fighting for 'liberty' (4.2.183) and the protection of 'ancient freedom[s]' (4.8.27) clearly has some substance. Indeed, the same sentiment is expressed by a Kentish character in *Woodstock*, a play in which we find the Sheriff of Kent pleading for

...our Antient libertyes
recorded and in Rowld in the kings crowne office,
Wher in the men of kent are cleere discharged
Of fynes fifteenes or any other taxes
For ever given them by the Conqueror (TLN. 2230-34).

Allusions to Kent's ancient liberties would continue to surface in the theatre well over twenty years after the first performances of *2 Henry VI*. In Middleton and Dekker's *The Roaring Girl*, Moll speaks of 'the purity of your wench I would fain try, she seems like Kent unconquered' (2.1.289), a line that on another level contains a pun which, I venture to suggest, requires no explanation.⁶²

In *Woodstock*, the Sheriff's call to protect 'Antient libertyes' is accompanied by the demand to be discharged from the levy 'Of fynes fifteenes or any other taxes' (TLN 2233). Representing a direct reference to the parliamentary tax of a Fifteenth and Tenth levied on all movable property, rural and urban respectively, it is not surprising that a call to be exempt from tax should appear in stage plays dramatising popular rebellion. Shakespeare's *2 Henry*

⁶¹ Smith, *The Particular Description of England*, 8-9.

⁶² *The Roaring Girl*, ed., Andor Gomme (London:1976) 40.

VI is no exception, as a messenger alleges that his 'prize' (4.7.20), Lord Say, is responsible for making the Kentishmen pay a subsidy of 'one-and-twenty fifteenths and one shilling in the pound' (4.7.22-23). While it is a level of taxation that is clearly ridiculous (as Hattaway notes this amounts to a rate of 140%), once again this universally popular call is a complaint that draws directly on the Kentish manifesto forwarded in 1450, namely that 'neither fifteens should hereafter be demanded, nor once any impositions, or tax should be spoken of', and the 'collectors of the fifteenth penie in Kent be greatlie vexed and hurt, in paying great summes of monie in the exchequer.'⁶³

Cade's aim to be 'the besom [broom] that will sweep the court clean of such filth' (4.7.31-32), levelled at the unfortunate Lord Say, is also reminiscent of another of the goals of the Kentishmen in 1450, namely, the overthrow of the 'gentles', and the king's meniall servants ... shiriffes, undersheriffes, baliffes' responsible for the governance of the county.⁶⁴ The targeting of Say by Cade and his followers in 1450 was a direct consequence of his role in Kentish affairs. As a member of Suffolk's circle, Say had risen to prominence in the 1440s to become by 1450 one of the most influential and corrupt figures in the county. There is evidence to suggest that both Say and his wife obtained land in the Kentish parish of Seal by fraud and deception; it also appears that once in possession of such estates their usual practice was to increase the dues payable by the tenants, often by as much as fifty per cent. To make matters worse Say and his immediate circle were responsible for the administration of justice and the collection of taxes in the county.⁶⁵ Hence, when in the play Cade alleges that Say has

appointed justices of the peace who call men poor men before them about matters they were not able to answer ... put them in prison ... and hanged them (4.7.42-44),

he is again articulating one of the principal complaints of 1450.

⁶³ Hall, *Union*, 220. Holinshed, *Chronicles*, 221.

⁶⁴ Holinshed, *Chronicles*, 222.

⁶⁵ Griffiths, *The Reign of King Henry VI*, 630-633. For a full discussion on the corrupt behaviour of those who held offices in Kent see Harvey, *Jack Cade*, 36-47.

Nonetheless, it is also the case that we are presented here with a speech that operates on a multiplicity of levels. Echoing the earlier criticism against 'Magistrates' (4.2.17) these lines represent an attack on the Justices of the Peace who, drawn from the minor gentry, were (by the 1590s) responsible for an ever expanding range of administrative tasks in regional England, including the regulation of wages, the supervision of the poor laws, control of vagrancy, the enforcement of religious conformity, law and order and military recruitment -- a role Shakespeare would portray so vividly in *2 Henry IV*. Hence, while Cade's protest against the JPs can certainly be seen as universal, the fact that it is uttered by a character identified as a Kentishman is significant on a number of counts. By the latter third of the sixteenth century the county of Kent seems to have been particularly well served by this august body of crown appointees for, as Elton notes, while the average number of Justices 'was forty or fifty to a shire there were eighty in Kent.'⁶⁶ Moreover, it was another Kentishman, none other than William Lambard himself who would provide, with his *Eirenarcha* (1581), the standard treatise on the powers and responsibilities of Elizabethan JPs.

In *2 Henry VI* Lord Say may be held accountable for the widespread corruption and abuse of power prevalent in the county, but he is not the sole culprit. During the sack of London, Cade, after condemning Say to death, directs the rebels to 'then break into his son-in-law's house, Sir James Cromer, and strike off his head, and bring them both upon two poles hither' (4.7.109-12). The naming of Cromer again stems from the sources. In the petition of 1450 this figure, as the Sheriff of Kent, was named as one of the 'great extortioners ... and false traitors' responsible for abuses within Kent.⁶⁷ Significantly, Cromer was not the only member of the family to hold this position. His Elizabethan descendant Sir William Cromer twice held the office of Sheriff in Kent (in 1567 and 1595), and in 1588 led forty 'light horse' as a part of the Kentish levies raised against the Spanish Armada. Once again, in the political climate of the 1590s, the targeting of Cromer in the play has a contemporary significance as

⁶⁶ G.R. Elton, *The Tudor Constitution: Documents and Commentary* (Cambridge:1962) 453.

⁶⁷ Both Hall and Holinshed record that the victim of the Kentishmen was Sir James Cromer. See Hall, *Union*, 221, Holinshed, *Chronicles*, 225. In fact it was William and not James. Originally from the town of the same name in the county Norfolk, the family were relative newcomers in the county. Nonetheless, as a client and relation of Lord Say Cromer's rise was swift: appointed sheriff of Kent in 1450 he also represented the county in Parliament before his death.

this represents an attack on an appointee of the Crown. Although Cromer's influence and duties had been diminished by the office of the Lord-Lieutenant, as Sheriff of Kent he remained one of the key figures in the day-to-day administration of the county -- including the levying of troops for overseas service.⁶⁸

The office of Sheriff in the Elizabethan period may have no longer held the prestige it once did; nevertheless this yearly appointment was keenly sought and only bestowed upon the more exalted members of the county community whose credentials, in the eye of the government, were beyond reproach. Indeed Cromer had been nominated by no lesser figure than Lord Cobham, Privy Councillor and Lord-Lieutenant of the county, a man powerful enough to insist that the name Oldcastle, an indirect ancestor, be removed from Shakespeare's *1 Henry IV* (see below).⁶⁹ While I concede that unlike Cobham, William Cromer may have been unaware that one of his ancestors was being portrayed as a victim of a Kentish rebellion in *2 Henry VI*, ostensibly for his fraudulent behaviour in the day-to-day administration of the county, a tantalising anecdote suggests in some quarters this loyal servant of the Crown, diligently carrying out his duties as Sheriff and Justice of the Peace of Kent, was regarded as little better than his ancestor. In 1574, perhaps for his role in the Wyatt rebellion, this pillar of the county community was named as that 'naughty and wicked Cromer, rebel and traitor.'⁷⁰ It is tempting to speculate that the allusion to Cromer in the play may be in some way related to this view of his Elizabethan descendant.

⁶⁸ See Cruickshank, *Elizabeth's Army*, 20, 62.

⁶⁹ On this point see page XXII in the introduction to Cairncross's edition of *King Henry VI, Part 3*, reprint (London:1989) and the introduction to Corbin and Sedge's *Oldcastle controversy*. Biographical details regarding the 7th Lord Cobham are drawn from Penry Williams, *The Later Tudors 1547-1603* (Oxford:1995) 325.

⁷⁰ Clark, *Provincial Society in Kent*, 97. It appears that this Cromer played a role in Thomas Wyatt's Kentish rebellion against Queen Mary in 1554. In a diary written by a prisoner in the Tower of London we find the following note, '[t]he same daie cam in also as prysoners two of the Culpepers, one Cromer, and Thomas Ramplon the duke of Suffolkes secretarie.' See *The Chronicle of Queen Jane and of Two Years of Mary*, ed., John Gough Nichols (London: 1850) 54. A character named Cromer also appears in *Sir John Oldcastle* when 'Master Cromer, Shriev of Kent' (XIII.14) is issued with a warrant to arrest Lady Cobham and seize the goods of her husband Oldcastle. Though the allusion to Cromer as a sheriff of Kent in 1414 is an anachronism (only in 1443 was a member of the Cromer family appointed to the office) it is worth noting here that in this play, despite the task of having to arrest the play's hero, Cromer is portrayed in a sympathetic light, saving Lady Cobham from imprisonment and successfully pleading a 'suit' (XIII.120) in order to allow a serving-man to attend Oldcastle while he is lodged in the Tower, an action that contributes to Oldcastle's escape from captivity.

'To France, To France': Kent and England's European Wars.

While localism was an important element in English regional society during both the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries it was, as Keith Wrightson maintains, always contained within 'a strong framework of national integration.'⁷¹ It is from this perspective that we need to consider the final moments of the Cade rebellion when Clifford addresses the rebels as 'countrymen' (4.8.11) who should forsake their leader:

The fearful French, whom you late vanquished
Should make a start o'er seas and vanquish you?
Methinks already in this civil broil
I see them lording it in London Streets,
Crying "Villago!" unto all they meet
Better ten thousand base-born Cades miscarry
Than you should stoop unto a Frenchman's mercy.
To France, to France, and get what you have lost!
Spare England, for it is your native coast.
Henry hath money, you are strong and manly;
God on our side, doubt not of victory (4.8.42-53).

Both Clifford's call to arms and his presence in this scene represents a departure from the sources. In 1450 the pardon allowing the rebels to return home was delivered by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Winchester, not Clifford and Buckingham as we find in *2 Henry VI*, nor was any appeal made to the Kentishmen to desert Cade and fight in France. As a consequence Clifford's jingoistic appeal operates on two levels; in the context of the play it relates to the threat to England's eastern counties, particularly Kent, posed by the loss of Henry VI's French possessions in 1450, but it also is allusive to an issue of contemporary relevance -- the war fought against the Spanish backed Catholic league in northern France during the 1590s.

The appearance of Clifford in this scene has a number of resonances to the situation in Kent; in 1589 the then Captain Conyers Clifford was placed in charge of the Kentish levies bound for France. This native of Kent, knighted in 1591, served under the Earl of Essex and distinguished himself by retrieving the body of the earl's brother during the siege of Rouen.⁷²

⁷¹ Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (London:1982), 40. A similar point is made by Stephen Greenblatt in *Representing the English Renaissance* (Berkeley:1988) where he notes how the rebels are 'reabsorbed into the ranks of loyal Englishmen' 24.

⁷² *Acts of the Privy Council in the reign of Elizabeth* Vol. XVIII, 118. *Dictionary National Biography*, Vol. 4, 515.

Moreover, Clifford's appeal is addressed to the artisans of the county whom John Leland described as the 'key to al Englonde',⁷³ the very place which lay the 'Cape of Margate', targeted by the Spanish as the landing place for Parma's troops in 1588. A note in the *State Papers*, dated 22 June 1588, suggests; 'flat bottomed boats are not to be ventured upon the seas, but in the shortest of passages, and in fair weather, and therefore most likely for Kent.'⁷⁴ The claim that England's enemies will be

... lording it in London streets
Crying "Villiago!" unto all they meet (4.8.45-46)

has also been recognised as probably allusive to the contemporary situation. As Cairncross has pointed out, the word 'Villiago', Italian for villain or rascal, could well be derived from 'Fuora Villiacco', a phrase reputed to have been the watchword of the Spanish during the sack of Antwerp in 1574.⁷⁵

This call for Kentishmen to serve in France occurs in a play written and first performed in approximately 1590, when English troops were engaged in the European wars of religion in which both sides sought to claim, with 'God on our side, doubt not of victory' (4.8.54). Elizabeth's decision to aid the Protestant Henry IV of France resulted in the raising of three armies. The first under the command of Lord Willoughby in 1589/90 served in Normandy, a second under Sir John Norris in 1590 fought in Brittany, and a third under the command of the Earl of Essex saw service at the siege of Rouen the following year. In all three armies there were substantial contingents of Kentishmen; in 1589 a letter from the Privy Council to Lord Cobham, Lord-Lieutenant of Kent, directs him to raise 1,000 Kentishmen for service in Normandy.⁷⁶ In Kent the proportion of conscripted men per head of population far exceeded that of other counties, thus contributing further to the stresses on economic and social life

⁷³ *The Itinerary of John Leland in or about the years 1535-1543*, ed. Lucy Toulmin Smith (London:1964) Vol. 4, 57.

⁷⁴ *CSPF* (1588), Vol. 21 part IV. See also Guy, *Tudor England*, 339.

⁷⁵ Cairncross, *King Henry VI, Part 2*, 131.

⁷⁶ *APC*, Vol. XVIII, 87.

caused by the price inflation of the period.⁷⁷ As Clark notes, the economic stresses of the 1590s not only affected the poor in Kent, but 'the bottom tier of respectable society: the husbandmen and substantial craftsman'⁷⁸ -- the counterparts of those who join Jack Cade on his march to London in *2 Henry VI*.

Whether through conscription or the quartering of troops before embarkation for service in France or the Netherlands, the population of the south-east had to bear a large part of the cost of England's involvement in European wars. The situation in Kent was particularly acute, a point referred to in a letter from the commissioners for purveyance to the Privy Council, dated August 1593, in which they note how

Kent is a maritime country, compelled to watch the beacons, and keep watch and ward on the coast, and put every approach or show of the enemy, driven to put on arms and keep the field, oftener than any other shire of the realm. The Royal Navy continually lies in harbcur within that shire, and the storehouses ... are chiefly served by the shire by commission, as well with victuals as timber, labourers, carriages, &c for building and repairing ships. Within the shire are the castle and blockhouses at Gravesend, Upnor, Quinborough, Sandown, Deal, Walmer and Dover ... The shire, being the only high street or way by which all comers and goers into and out of the realm pass, is greatly charged with provisions, horses, and carriages ... It has lately borne, and during the war is likely to bear, a great burden of the soldiers of other shires, who lie for wind and shipping, and are often billeted in towns and villages, and many times not paid for.⁷⁹

In 1590 the methods employed in raising troops to fight overseas was a pertinent issue, particularly in Kent. There was an important difference between defending 'England's native coast' (4.8.52) and serving overseas in France; by statute, levies raised to fight overseas were meant to consist of volunteers, a law flagrantly disregarded. In fact, the levying of troops provided an opportunity to empty the jails, round up vagabonds and masterless men -- the very people considered by Clifford to have

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* It has been estimated that between 1591 and 1602 about 6,000 Kentishmen were impressed at a time when the county's total population was no more than 130,000. See John Guy, *Tudor England* (Oxford:1990) 338. On the recruitment of troops see Cruickshank, *Elizabeth's Army* a volume in which he suggests that in *2 Henry IV* Shakespeare 'has left a vivid picture of a typical levy.'

⁷⁸ Clark, *English Provincial Society*, 244.

⁷⁹ *CSPD* Vol. 3, 1591-94, 365.

... no home, no place to fly to:
Nor knows he how to live but by the spoil,
Unless by robbing of your friends and us (4.8.38-40).

Indeed, earlier in the play there is an allusion to Cade's own status as a masterless man when Dick recalls that he has 'seen him whipt three market-days together' (4.2.58), a punishment that under the provisions of the 1572 *Poor Law Act* was meted out to vagrants and rogues, and unauthorised strolling players.

To serve overseas in the 1590s was virtually akin to a death sentence as casualties, more by disease than actual fighting were huge: Guy cites figures that suggest out of eleven thousand men lost in France between 1589-1591 only 10% were actually killed in action, the rest succumbing to either disease or starvation.⁸⁰ Besides the dangers of death and maiming, fraud was rife. Those unlucky enough to be conscripted were simply not paid. In 1587 it was reported that soldiers 'pressed out of Kent' and serving in the Low Countries 'had not received such allowance and paie for their service as was due';⁸¹ having survived the battles and the conditions of service, prospects in England were marginally better. With little or no money the best one could hope for was either an allowance or a passport enabling one to return to their own county and a licence to beg. In this context the call by Clifford for the Kentishmen to desert Cade and fight in France would surely have been met with a fair amount of derision by an Elizabethan audience.

Returned Soldiers

If Kent's geographical position made it an ideal recruiting ground and embarkation point, the county's proximity to France and the Low Countries also made it particularly vulnerable to those returning servicemen who were abandoned in a state of destitution and left to fend for themselves. The frequent references to the loss of France throughout the Cade rebellion and the accusation levelled at Suffolk that his policies have resulted in sending 'ragged soldiers wounded home' (4.1.90) bear more than a passing resemblance to the situation in Kent during the 1450s. According to Bale's *Chronicle*, the loss of Normandy in

⁸⁰ Guy, *Tudor England*, 347.

⁸¹ *APC*, Vol. 15, 334.

1450 was followed by an influx of returning servicemen into Kent in a state of 'greate mysery and poverté ... many of them drawne to theft and misrule and noyed sore the cominalte of this land.'⁸² It was a situation repeated in the 1590s when destitute soldiers and sailors, either maimed or unable to find employment, turned to crime to support themselves -- the notorious reputation of 'Gads Hill' near Rochester, later immortalised in Shakespeare's *1 Henry IV*, is frequently referred to in the surviving diaries of visitors to England during the last decade of the sixteenth century. While it is not directly attributable to a returning serviceman, one can cite the experience of the secretary to the Duke of Wittenberg who, visiting England in 1592, records that on the road between Gravesend and Rochester

an Englishman, with a drawn sword in his hand came upon us unawares and ran after us as fast as he could; perhaps he expected to find other persons, for it is very probable that he had an ambush, as that particular part of the road is not most safe.⁸³

This image of unsafe roads in Kent is vividly reproduced in *2 Henry VI* when Cade and his rebels slay the Clerk of Chattam and the Staffords before their 'march on London' (4.3.18). Moreover, in the final moments of the rebellion it is none other than the Kentishman Cade, a veteran of York's Irish campaign, who flees into Kent armed with a sword and eventually ambushes Iden.

Men of Kent and Kentishmen

Throughout this chapter my use of the term 'Kentishmen' to describe Shakespeare's rebels has glossed over a cultural division within the county. Often applied in a generic sense, 'Kentishmen' traditionally refers to those born in the part of the county west of the river Medway, while 'men of Kent' identifies the population who are native to the area lying to the east of the river. The origin of this division remains vague, but appears to have its roots in the early Anglo-Saxon period and the establishment of the Jutish kingdom of Kent, a period when, according to Camden, the Britons (the original inhabitants of the area that would later form the

⁸² Cited by Harvey, *Jack Cade*, 68.

⁸³ Quoted by William B. Rye, *England as Seen by Foreigners in the Days of Elizabeth and James 1* (New York:1971) 49.

bulk of the county) were driven into the *Andredswald*, the wooded area of the Kentish Weald.⁸⁴

The same point is made by F.W Jessup who writes in his *History of Kent*:

In Saxon times the population of Kent was probably well under 50,000, so there must have been ample room for two races to dwell in the region without coming into perpetual conflict, especially if, as seems not unlikely, the Britons for the most part kept to the hills and the Jutes to the valleys.⁸⁵

Camden's and Jessup's accounts of the struggle for control of Kent in the fifth and sixth centuries supports what Richard Church regards as the 'faint element of difference' between 'Kentishmen' and 'men of Kent' in which, according to the same writer, the former retained 'a strain of dark wildness, of fantasy perhaps, in the south and west, where a streak of Celtic British blood persists'.⁸⁶

The inference here is that the 'men of Kent' were identified with the more civilised portion of the county. Certainly the mission to convert Anglo-Saxon England to Christianity, undertaken on behalf of Pope Gregory by Augustine in 597, had its initial success in the eastern half of the county. As Clark notes, during the sixteenth century the 'ancient rivalry' between the men of Kent and Kentishmen was still 'faintly preserved', and a symptom of this tradition was that

Landholding in the east was considered more prestigious because of the greater antiquity of the settlements there and parts of the area retained a distinct dialect until fairly late - though it is not known when the notion disappeared among Thanet folk that 'going into England' meant crossing the few yards of the Wantsum river on to the Kentish mainland.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Camden, *Britannia*, 211.

⁸⁵ F.W. Jessup, *History of Kent* (London:1971) 30. Cited by Everitt, *Landscape and Community in England*, 83.

⁸⁶ Richard Church, *The County Books: Kent* (London:1948) 2.

⁸⁷ Clark, *English Provincial Society*, 120. This tradition seems to have spread all around the globe. In the *Perth Gazette*, 8 February 1841 the following appeared: *A Man of Kent* - 'All the inhabitants in Kent east of the River Medway are called "men of Kent," from having retained their ancient privileges, particularly those of gavel-kind, by meeting the conqueror at Swancomb Bottom, each man, besides his arrows, carrying a green bough, and thus concealing their numbers under the appearance of a moving wood. the rest of the inhabitants of the county are called "Kentish men".' On page 158 of the Old Arden edition of *2 Henry VI*, edited by H.C.Hart, the following note appears, "Men of Kent", Grosse says this title belongs 'to those east of the Medway, the rest are called Kentishmen.' In the preface to his full length study of the Jack Cade rebellion Harvey provides another allusion to the tradition when he writes 'The expressions "men of Kent" and "Kentishmen" are employed loosely, meaning no more than simply the inhabitants of the county, without any suggestion that those referred to come from one particular side of the river Medway.' *Jack Cade Rebellion*, viii.

Typified by small nucleated villages, living under what Collinson terms the 'watchful eye' of the squire or magistrate, the eastern half of the county represented one of those areas regarded by a number of Shakespeare's contemporaries as one of the more ordered and settled districts of regional England.⁸⁸

But to return to Church's suggestion, whether fantasy or not the role and actions of Jack Cade seem to support the belief that in certain parts of the county a strain of what he terms a 'dark wildness' remained. York's initial description of Cade as a 'headstrong Kentishman' (3.1.356) is suggestive of this 'dark wildness', a reputation which, incidentally, is created in the one region of the British Isles that despite the best efforts of the Plantagenets and the Tudors remained a predominantly Celtic land,

In Ireland have I seen this stubborn Cade
Oppose himself against a troop of kerns,
And fought so long, till that his thighs with darts
Were almost like a sharp-quilled porpentine;
And in the end being rescued, I have seen
Him caper upright like a wild Morisco,
Shaking the bloody darts as he his bells.
Full often, like a shag-haired crafty kern
Hath he conversed with the enemy
And undiscovered come to me again
And given me notice of their villainies.
This devil here shall be my substitute (3.1.360-71).

As alluded to already, Cade's actions during his perambulation of Kent and London do nothing to deflect from the image of a 'devil' (3.1.71). Moreover, the streak of 'dark wildness' is not the sole preserve of the rebel leader, the trait can be equally applied to the actions of his fellow 'Kentish rebels' (4.4.42), particularly the character identified as Dick the butcher.

However, while Cade and Dick's actions serve to associate them with wilder parts of the county, it is a role that remains problematical because Shakespeare identifies the leaders of the rebellion with Ashford, a town that lying east of the river Medway was situated in the more civilised portion. Moreover, the only other member of Cade's entourage identified with the east of the county is 'Best's son, the tanner of Wingham' (4.2.21-22) -- a village near Canterbury -- a character who Bevis rather gruesomely claims 'shall have the skins of our

⁸⁸ See note 42.

enemies, to make dog's leather of' (4.2.23-24). Therefore, Say's appeal to his tormentors as 'You men of Kent' (4.7.54), while geographically accurate, represents a fatal misjudgment. More than simply a pun, Dick's reply 'What say you of Kent?' (4.7.55) alludes to the serious nature of the insurrection as it suggests that *all* of Kent is now in revolt. In other words, according to the long standing tradition cited above, the population of the supposedly more civilised and settled parts of the county are acting in a similar fashion to their wilder compatriots from the west. The point is made more forcibly in the corresponding scene in *Q*:

Say. You men of Kent.

All. Kent, what of Kent? (G2r)

when 'All' the rebels reject Say's attempt to distinguish them as men of Kent -- a significant factor in a text which earlier identifies the rebel host with 'Rochester, ... Maydstone, and Canterbury' (F3r), three major Kentish towns which in Shakespeare's day lay in the supposedly more civilised area east of the river Medway (see map 2).

The Garden of Iden

While the rebels' actions justify Say's use of the proverbial Latin term 'bona terra, mala gens' (4.7.57) to describe the community of Kent, the idea of the county as a good land also rings true.⁸⁹ The utopian paradise that Cade advocates when he vows 'there shall be in England seven halfpenny loaves sold for a penny, the three hooped pot shall have ten hoops' (4.2.65-67) could, to some degree, have been found in Kent itself, particularly if we accept contemporary accounts as to the prosperity and abundance to be found within certain parts of the county. A fifteenth-century jingle, which reads

A knight of Cales
A gentleman of Wales,
A laird of the North Countree,
A yeoman of Kent
With his yearly rent
Will buy them out all three⁹⁰

⁸⁹ See Cairncross, *Henry VI, part 2*, 125. Hattaway, *The Second Part of King Henry VI*, 186.

⁹⁰ Everitt, *Landscape and Community*, 63.

implies that in Kent even the Yeoman who rents his land is richer than his social 'betters' in other parts of the kingdom. To a certain extent this would be the image projected in the descriptions of the county, as the perambulations of those involved in the discovery of England tended to take them through the more fertile districts of Kentish countryside rather than the poorer areas of the scarplands and the Weald. In the mid-sixteenth century John Leland noted how the Isle of Thanet was 'the cherie gardein and Apple orcharde of Kent ... where Hercules founde the golden apples.'⁹¹ While in his *Perambulation* Lambarde could accept that the corn and pasture areas of the county had much in 'common with other shyres of the realm', he eulogises on the abundance of Kentish produce noting the presence of

ortchards of aples, and gardeins of cherries, and those of the most delicious and exquisite kindes that can be, no part of the realme (that I know) hath them, either in such quantitie and number, or with such arte and industrie, set and planted.⁹²

In a following paragraph this pride in the county and its difference to other areas of the kingdom surfaces again when the same writer turns his attention to 'domesticall cattel, as horses, mares, oxen, kine and sheepe', suggesting that the Kentish variety are reckoned to be 'the largest stature in eche kinde of them', an accolade that is even afforded to the county's poultry.⁹³ A similar view is presented by Camden who, in his *Britannia*, describes Kent as consisting of

good meadows, pastures, and corn-fields [that] abounds with apples to a miracle; as also with cherries ...making a very pleasant show... it is very thick set with villages and towns, has pretty safe harbours.⁹⁴

The perception of Kent as a veritable paradise is a theme reiterated by Drayton in the first part of *Poly-Olbion*, when he writes

Saluting the deare soyle, O famous Kent ...
What Country hath this Ile that can compare with thee,

⁹¹ Cited by Josephine Waters Bennett, 'Britain Among the Fortunate Isles', *Studies in Philology* (1956), 120.

⁹² Lambarde, *Perambulation*, 4-5.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Camden, *Britannia*, 185.

Which hast within thy selfe as much as thou cants wish?
Thy Conyes, Venison, Fruit; thy sorts of Fowle and Fish:
As what with strength comports, thy Hay, Thy Corne, thy Wood (Song XVIII, 659-664).

Located in the south-eastern corner of the kingdom, the prosperity of the county was, in part, based on its geographical position. The spectacular growth of England's capital city during the last decades of the sixteenth century provided a stimulus to Kentish agriculture as the county became a major supplier of London's wheat, meat, fruit and hops. Moreover, Kent's proximity to England's largest city made it particularly attractive to those wealthy courtiers and merchants seeking country estates. The number of royal palaces located in the county is a case in point: Smith in his *Description* provides a list of eight such 'Manor places' including Greenwich, Eltham and Knole.⁹⁵ Once again Lambarde provides a valuable insight into this aspect of the Kentish county community as he comments on how

the gentlemen be not heere (throughout) of so ancient stockes as elsewhere, especially in the partes neere to London, from which citie (as it were from a certeine riche and wealthy seed plot) courtiers, lawyers, and marchants be constantly translated,⁹⁶

the very people who, such as Lord Say, are the targets of Cade and his supporters in *2 Henry VI*.

The image that Kent is inhabited by 'mala gens' (4.7.57) may well be supported by Shakespeare's representation of the Kentish artisans; however, it is only one facet of Kentish regional identity constructed in the first tetralogy. Even during the Cade rebellion we begin to witness a shift in the portrayal of Kent and its population when we hear how

Kent, in the Commentaries Caesar writ,
Is termed the civill'st place of all this isle;
Sweet is the country, because full of riches,
The people liberal, valiant, active, wealthy (4.7.60-63).

As many commentators have noted, in this speech Lord Say is paraphrasing the view of Kent recorded by Caesar in his *De Bello Gallico*:

⁹⁵ Smith, *Description*, 9.

⁹⁶ Lambarde, *Perambulation*, 6.

of all the inhabitantes of thys lse the civilest are the kentyshfolke, the which country marcheth altogether upon the sea, and differeth not greatly from the maner of Frauce ... Those that dwell in the heart of the realm, for most part sow no Corne, but live by milk and flesh, and clothe themselves in leather.⁹⁷

What amounts to an alternative construction of the Kentish regional identity surfaces during the final moments of the Cade rebellion. Drawn from the following line in Hall's chronicle 'one Alexander Iden, esquire of Kent found hym in a garden, and there in his defence, manfully slewe the caitife Cade',⁹⁸ Shakespeare's Iden epitomises the benevolent landowner seeking

... not to wax great by others' waning,
Or gather wealth, I care not with what envy.
Sufficeth that I have maintains my state
And sends the poor well pleased from my gate (4.10.20-23).⁹⁹

As a retreat for the 'turmoiled' (4.10.16) world of the court, Iden's Kent represents a feudal world of mutual obligation between rich and poor -- an ideal landscape, suggested by the possible word play on Iden/Eden, a point made even more plausible by *Q*'s spelling of Iden as Eyden (a form found in Holinshed's account of the closing moments of the Cade rebellion). Shakespeare's description of Iden's property as a 'small inheritance' (4.10.18), which in *Q* is expressed as 'the little land my father left me' (G4r), is consistent with forms of landholding in Kent, a county where the survival of partible inheritance or 'Gavelkind' (whereby

⁹⁷ Julius Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, Translated by A. Golding (1565) reprint Da Capo Press (New York:1968) Fol. 116r-117v. The nearest part of England to the continent of Europe, Kent had long been the conduit through which new ideas had been introduced into England. It was in this county that the Romans gained the foothold from which they would eventually conquer Britain, an event alluded to, if rather fancifully for the benefit of English sensibilities, in *Cymbeline* when the Queen tells how

... With shame
The first that ever touched him he was carried
From off our poor coast, twice beaten (3.1.24-26)

⁹⁸ Hall, *Union*, 222. Confusion exists in the chronicles as to where Cade was captured, and as to whether Iden was an esquire of Kent or the neighbouring county of Sussex. Holinshed reports how Iden 'took Cade in a garden in Sussex' *Chronicles*, 227. Furley, in his *History of the Kentish Weald* devotes several pages to the various accounts of this episode in Kentish history, see Vol. II, part one, 378-98.

⁹⁹ The absence of certain lines in *Q*, most noticeably those quoted here, have the effect of portraying Iden as a far more mercenary figure than in *F*. On this point and other differences between the two texts see James R. Siemon 'Landlord not King: Agrarian Change and Interarticulation' in *Enclosure Acts*, 26.

land was divided equally among surviving sons) had led, in part, to a county with a large proportion of small independent landholders. Similarly, the identification of Iden's tenure as a 'fee simple' (4.10.25) -- his freehold property belonging to him and his descendants forever -- conforms to the situation in Kent where, as Lambarde notes, 'every man is a freeholder.'¹⁰⁰ Even the pun on the word 'sallet' (4.10.10) and the description of Iden's estate as a 'garden' (4.10.33) may be significant here as in parts of Kent, particularly in the west of the county around Greenwich, market gardening was beginning to flourish in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. Indeed, the map of Kent that accompanies Drayton's 'song' to the county in the *Poly-Olbion* includes a sketch of market gardens being tended in the north-west corner of the county.

Reluctant to fight the 'poor famished man' (4.10.44) who has broken into his garden, this 'esquire of Kent' (4.10.43) is a symbol of stability, the loyal subject defending law and order on behalf of the crown in Kent. After discovering that he has slain the 'monstrous traitor' (4.10.65) Iden will guarantee his place in history in the following manner:

Sword, I will hallow thee for this thy deed,
And hang thee over my tomb when I am dead.
Never shall this blood be wiped from thy point,
But thou shalt wear it as a herald's coat
To emblaze the honour that my master got (4.10.67-71)

It is an image that serves to further associate Iden with Kent. For, as Rothery points out, Iden's pledge replicates the imagery on the tomb of Edward, the Black Prince, in Canterbury Cathedral, a monument that is decorated with the Princes' shield, helm, shirt of mail, gauntlets, and sword.¹⁰¹

Kent and the Contention between York and Lancaster

The death of the 'monstrous rebel Cade' (5.1.62) may signify the end of the rebellion, but it does not witness the end of Kent's population as a factor in the unfolding drama. As Shakespeare turns his attention to the Wars of the Roses, Kent and its neighbouring counties

¹⁰⁰ Lambarde, *Perambulation*, 7.

¹⁰¹ Rothery, *The Heraldry of Shakespeare*, 24.

will consistently be identified as a centre of Yorkist support. Even before the dramatisation of the first battle of St Albans, in Act 5 of *2 Henry VI*, York's successful stirring 'up [of] some black storm' (3.1.349) in the shape of the Cade rebellion has established a link between Kent and the house of York. As we move to *3 Henry VI* one can speculate that it is commoners such as 'Best's son the Tanner of Wingham' (4.2.21-22), 'Dick, the butcher of Ashford' (4.3.1) who now form part of Warwick's

... Southern power
Of Essex, Norfolk, Suffolk ...Kent (*3H6* 1.1.155-56),

raised in support of the White Rose. Their control of this part of the kingdom is seemingly complete with Warwick holding Calais, and Falconbridge controlling the Straits of Dover, a point alluded to by Margaret when she remarks

Warwick is Chancellor and the Lord of Callice,
Stern Falconbridge commands the narrow seas (1.1.238-39).

Kentish support for the Yorkist cause is reiterated prior to York's defeat at Wakefield when he despatches his son Edward

...unto my Lord Cobham
With whom the Kentishmen will willingly rise;
In them I trust, for they are soldiers
Witty, courteous, liberal, full of spirit (1.2.40-44).

Recalling the sentiments of Lord Say in the previous play, no distinction is made between Kentishmen and Men of Kent. The county is now united under the command of Lord Cobham. In *Q* the reference to the Brooke family is made even more specific as York directs

Edward thou shalt to Edmund Brooke Lord Cobham,
With whom the Kentishmen will willingly rise (*A7r*).

The naming of Lord Cobham has attracted the attention of numerous commentators, not least because of the Elizabethan Cobham's objection to having his ancestors represented on the stage. While prompted by a passage in the chronicles describing Sir Edward Brooke as one of York's 'especiall friends', the absence of the direct reference to the Brooke family in *F*

has been attributed to censorship.¹⁰² Intriguing as this no doubt is, the allusion to Cobham as the leader of the Kentish levies in both texts may be nothing more sinister than Shakespeare and the reporters responsible for *Q* recalling what was widespread knowledge. After all, in both the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the title of Lord Cobham was held by the Brooke family who, with substantial land holdings in Kent, were in many ways the 'natural' leaders of the county (although Kent was unique in that no single family dominated the county to the same extent as the Percys in Northumberland or the Stanleys in Lancashire). For those well versed in the politics of the 1590s, the naming of Cobham in *Q* and *F* as the leader of the Kentish soldiers would serve to recall a figure who, in his capacity of Lord-Lieutenant of Kent and Warden of the Cinque Ports (the towns of Hastings, Romney, Hythe, Dover and Sandwich granted political privileges by the Crown in return for defending the English Channel), was responsible for the levying of troops in the county.

Despite the frequent changing of sides in the battles raging around the kingdom, nothing is presented in *2* and *3 Henry VI* to disturb this sense of Kentish solidarity with the house of York. Consequently, despite Warwick's call for Clarence to support the Lancastrian cause by stirring up the 'knights and gentleman' of 'Kent' (4.8.12), the defection of Clarence means that the county remains a Yorkist stronghold. Similarly, Shakespeare omits from *3 Henry VI* the sacking of London by a Kentish army led by Faulconbridge that followed Edward's exile in 1470. Surprisingly, Lambard in his *Perambulation* displays a similar reluctance to discuss this blot on the reputation of Kent when he writes,

I had almost forgotten to tell you here, of that adoe which Thomas Fawconbridge (the Earle of Kents bastarde, and viceadmirall to the Earle of Warwicke) made in london with a handfull of rakehells which he had scummed together in this our shire.¹⁰³

The actions of his historical counterpart may not be the only reason as to why this character is only fleetingly mentioned in *3 Henry VI* as the custodian of the English Channel. A number of editors have suggested that Falconbridge did appear in an earlier version of the play, but was

¹⁰² Hall, *Union*, 232. See also Cairncross, *King Henry VI Part 3*, 19. Hattaway, *The Third Part of King Henry VI*, 86.

¹⁰³ *Perambulation*, 219.

later merged with Montague.¹⁰⁴ The reason as to why this may have occurred need not concern us here, but it is significant that Falconbridge is one of the titles given to Talbot in *1 Henry VI*, a character who is known as 'Lord Strange of Blackmere' (4.7.66), an ancestor of the Elizabethan Lord Strange -- a point that has led Cairncross to speculate that the omission of Falconbridge might have been due to the influence of Strange himself.¹⁰⁵ If this is indeed the case, then once again the construction of regional identity in the first tetralogy has been influenced by external factors.

Elsewhere in England's Southern Region

So far my discussion has centred on the representation and the role of Kent in the three *Henry VI* plays. There are, however, a number of references to other places within England's southern province in the tetralogy which, contributing to the image of the region as fashioned in these plays, need to be acknowledged. In *3 Henry VI* there is a sense of events occurring in England's southern counties when during the battle of Barnet Edward remarks how

... those powers that the Queen
Hath raised in Gallia have arrived our coast (5.3.7-8).

The more geographically specific *Q* text makes the point even more apparent, when Oxford informs his allies that

Our warlike Queene with troops is come from France,
And at South-hampton landed all hir traine (E2v).

This final attempt by Margaret and her allies to regain the throne represents a Lancastrian invasion of southern England, a region that has been consistently portrayed in the *Henry VI* plays as a Yorkist stronghold. It is an image that is destined to change in *Richard III*. With the focus now on the conflict between the house of York and the house of Tudor the

¹⁰⁴ On this point see Cairncross *King Henry VI Part 3*, xxi, and his earlier note in *Modern Language Review* (1955) 492-94. See also Wells and Taylor, *Textual Companion*, 200.

¹⁰⁵ Cairncross, *King Henry VI Part 3*, xxi.

south is no longer a centre of Yorkist support. Closely following the chronicle sources, the region as a whole (and here I include the county of Kent) appears to rise against Richard's rule when in quick succession it is reported that

... now in Devonshire
As I by friends am well advertised,
Sir Edward Courtney and the haughty prelate,
Bishop of Exeter, his elder brother,
With many moe confederates, are in arms (4.4.498-02).

Immediately following we learn that

In Kent, my liege, the Guilfords are in arms,
And every hour more competitors
Flock to the rebels, and their power grows strong (4.4.503-05).¹⁰⁶

In contrast to the uprising of the commons in 2 *Henry VI*, this insurrection is given a unique place in history. Kent now plays a role in the defeat of Richard and the accession of Henry Tudor. Consequently in *Richard III*, Kent once tainted as a *locus* of popular rebellion is no longer problematical; rather the county and its community are positioned as being among the first to challenge Richard's tyrannical rule.

In the same scene another messenger reports that Richmond's attempt to land in the county of 'Dorsetshire' (4.4.522) has failed. It is quickly followed by Catesby informing Richard that Richmond has returned and 'with a mighty power landed at Milford Haven' (4.4.533). By telescoping time to dramatise events which occurred in 1483 as unfolding on the eve of the battle of Bosworth in 1485, Shakespeare presents southern England as a centre of resistance against the last Yorkist king.

In the guise of the Earl of Dorset the south of the kingdom even plays a role in the final victory over Richard. Having earlier fled 'to Richmond, in the parts where he abides' (4.2.49), the Earl of Dorset is named as one of those 'in arms' (4.4.519) against Richard's tyrannical rule. On the eve of Bosworth a stage direction in *F*, which reads 'Enter Richmond,

¹⁰⁶ The 'Guildfords' (4.4.503) of *Richard III* are the family of the Gulderfords who were leaders of a Kentish rebellion against Richard in 1483, a decision which in the light of subsequent events would prove to be a prudent move, as two of Gulderfords' sons would later gain office under Henry VIII, one in the capacity of Master of the Horse, another as Lord Warden. See Clark, *English Provincial Society*, 16. Although the family's power and influence had greatly diminished by the 1590s, they were still important enough to be listed by Lambarde as a member of the county's gentry.

Sir William Brandon, Ox[ford] and Dorset' (TLN 3065), serves to identify the earl as a member of Richmond's army. Not surprisingly, the absence of any reference to Dorset in the corresponding stage direction in *Q*, and the fact that historically Dorset did not return to England until 1486 (having been left in France as a hostage) has attracted the attention of various editors. Hammond explains the inclusion of Dorset prior to Bosworth in *F* as 'a copyist's error for Herbert', on the grounds that 'Richmond speaks to Herbert but makes no mention of Dorset, who appears nowhere in the Act.'¹⁰⁷ It is a claim rejected by Wells and Taylor who suggest that Dorset, the queen's eldest son by her first marriage, provides a 'valuable dramatic function [in] linking Richmond to Elizabeth's family.'¹⁰⁸ But Dorset's presence at Bosworth provides another valuable function for, as Berry notes, 'Dorset may be a cipher, but Dorsetshire matters. The titles, hence the land, ... in arms against the king' -- it is a device that in *F*, at least, allows the south-west a conspicuous role in the demise of a figure whose reputation, as I shall presently discuss, was inextricably linked with his regional origins.¹⁰⁹

SUMMARY

Mediating between both the medieval and late Tudor worlds, the often contradictory image of the southern counties of England projected in the three parts of *Henry VI* and *Richard III* demonstrates the complex nature of regional English society. It is a point exemplified by Shakespeare's portrayal of Kent in which the county community is represented by a range of characters from across the social spectrum. Often allusive to surviving cultural customs, the dramatisation of the Cade rebellion operates in a similar fashion to the various surveys and descriptions of the county by bringing to the attention of the wider public the diversity prevalent within early modern England. In bringing to the stage a host of characters who are recognisably Kentish, Shakespeare was not foregrounding a county community drawn from one of the so-called dark corners of the realm, but one which literally existed on

¹⁰⁷ *King Richard III*, 308. The implication of having Herbert on stage as part of Richmond's retinue is discussed in a later chapter.

¹⁰⁸ Wells and Taylor, *Textual Companion*, 246-47.

¹⁰⁹ Berry, *Awareness of Audience*, 28.

London's doorstep. When considered from this perspective the representation of Cade and his followers in the popular theatre serves to subvert the idea of early modern England as a homogeneous society. And yet while Kent could be regarded as a 'country' in its own right it was also part of the larger province 'lying between the British sea and the Thames,' and only one of the many 'Englands' constructed by Shakespeare in these plays. In one sense this is the image we encounter in *3 Henry VI*, as Kent becomes part of Warwick's 'southern power', a process that is complete in *Richard III* when in the final moments of the play the county and the southern half of the kingdom rise up against Richard. My focus now shifts to the representation of an area described by Harrison as the 'middest' part of England; the counties north of the Thames.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Harrison, *Description*, 259.

CHAPTER THREE

'northside of the Thames, and between the same and the river Trent, which passeth through the middest of England (as Polydor said) sixteene other shires ... Essex ... Middlesex, Hartfordshire, Suffolke, Norfolke, Cambrideshire ... Bedford, Huntingdon ... Buckingham, Oxford, Northampton, Rutland, Leircesteshire, Notinghamshire, Wawicke, Lincolne.'

William Harrison (1577)

The Tudor Image of 'Middest' England

Throughout the first tetralogy events that occur in 'middest' England, a region that was not only familiar to the dramatist himself, but which in many respects represented the core of Elizabethan England, play an important role in Shakespeare's dramatisation of the Wars of the Roses. Predominantly low lying, which made travel slightly less arduous than in the highland zones, middle England was regularly visited by theatrical touring companies, courtiers, secretaries of State, and Elizabeth herself during the royal progresses. True, the counties that formed 'middest England' were not immune to disputes over food shortages, enclosures, local riots caused by over zealous ministers or the actions of corrupt officials, but in Camden's *Britannia*, apart from Lincolnshire's 'filthy bogs and impassable marshes', these counties are variously described as 'very rich', 'fruitful', mighty pleasant'; a region of 'verdant pastures' whose air and soil is 'propitious ... for health and plenty.'¹

Similarly, when writing about this part of England, local chorographers were equally fulsome in their praise. Middlesex was described by Norden in 1593 as a county in which

the soyle is excellent, fat and fertile and full of profite; it yeeldeth come and graine, not onlie in aboundance, but most excellent good wheate ...with such comfortable aboundaunce ... that the husbandman which wanteth for all the fruits of his labours, cannot but clap his hands, for joy.²

In *The Description of Hartfordshire* (Hertfordshire) published in 1598, Norden writes glowingly of a rural idyll, a county littered with

¹ These attributes are to be found in Camden's descriptions of the counties that make up this part of England. See the relevant entries in *Britannia*.

² Norden, *Speculum Britanniae*, C2v.

many sweete and pleasant dwellinges, heathfull by nature and profitable by arte and industrie ... well furnished with market townes, the most part of them plentifull of all things necessarie for the peoples reliefe.³

Turning to the *Breviary of Suffolk*, a county survey penned in the last years of Elizabeth's reign but published in 1618, Robert Reyce describes his native shire as a

... country delighting in a continuall evenes and plainnes is void of any great hills, high mountaines, or steep rocks, notwithstanding the which it is nott alwayes so low, or flatt, butt that in every place, it is severed and devided with little hills easy for ascent, and pleasant Ryvers watering the low valleys, with a most beautifull prospect which ministreth unto the inhabitants a full choyce of healthfull and pleasant situations for their seemly houses.⁴

Even allowing for the usual enthusiasm for one's own 'countrie' expressed in such volumes (a trait noticeable in Lambarde's *Perambulation of Kent*), this is high praise indeed. Significantly, Reyce goes on to note that 'the poor in other shires do exceed ours ... the Husbandman thriveth ordinarily well' and the 'Townes-men' are renowned for their 'smooth speech, and civill conversation.'⁵ What amounts to a rather benign image of the counties and communities of both Hertfordshire and Suffolk not only provides an insight into contemporary perceptions of the region, more importantly, it has a number of resonances to the image of this part of the world as fashioned by Shakespeare in *2 Henry VI*.

Popular Protest and the Community of Suffolk in *2 Henry VI*

During the sixteenth century the county of Suffolk had been plagued by outright rebellion and civil disobedience. The furore caused by the attempt to levy the Amicable Grant was only the first of a series of disturbances affecting the county. It was followed in 1549 by the Kett rebellion. In 1553 the region rose again in support of Mary Tudor, after the duke of Northumberland had proclaimed Lady Jane Grey as queen, in an attempt to maintain the Protestant reformation and his own position. A number of critics have drawn attention to the parallels between the aforementioned Kett rebellion and the dramatisation of popular protest in *2 Henry VI*. In a wide ranging discussion, Patterson considers the Kett rebellion, along with

³ John Norden, *Speculi Britanniae: The Description of Hartfordshire* (1598) 2-3.

⁴ Robert Reyce, *The Breviary of Suffolk* (1618) 25.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 56-58.

the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 and Jack Cade's rebellion of 1450, as part of 'an ideological chain' which surfaces in *2 Henry VI*.⁶ Supported by artisans, townsmen and yeomen from across the region, the Kett rebellion was an attempt to restore justice and good governance within the counties of Suffolk and Norfolk by advocating what was, in one sense, an attempt to return to a largely mythical past in which, as Guy notes,

landlords paid certain rents and dues, kept their beasts off the commons, make fishing rights freely available ... feudal taxes restricted to the gentry; priests barred as landowners or officers of the gentry; lords of manors prevented from serving as bailiffs to other lords; and royal officials to avoid other men's service.⁷

While the agenda forwarded by Kett and his supporters was very similar to that proposed by Cade in 1450, this East Anglian rebellion was in many ways unique. Orderly and well controlled by their leaders, Kett's followers did not march across the county looting and pillaging, but rather set up 'camps' in a number of towns, including Bury St Edmunds. Quite clearly, with its absence of violence and the involvement of characters identified as Suffolkmen, the call to halt enclosure, and abuses by the nobility, Shakespeare's representation of popular protest involving the county community of Suffolk in *2 Henry VI* shares a number of characteristics with the East Anglian rebellion of 1549.

When the Duke of Suffolk and the Queen are confronted by commoners delivering 'supplications' (1.3.3), one of the petitioners (mistaking the duke for the Lord Protector) unwittingly presents a complaint 'Against the Duke of Suffolk for enclosing the commons of Long Melford' (1.3.21-22).⁸ Although it is a marginal issue in the context of the play, the petitioner is articulating one of the central issues confronting many communities in this part of the kingdom -- the enclosure of land.⁹ That it is uttered by a representative of Long Melford, a

⁶ Patterson, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice*, 38-42. See also Hattaway, *Second part of King Henry VI*, 25.

⁷ Guy, *Tudor England*, 210. On the Kett Rebellion see Diarmaid MacCulloch's 'Kett's Rebellion in Context', *Past & Present*. Number 84 (August:1979).

⁸ In *F* the petitioner is identified with 'Melford', in *Q* with 'Long Melford' (B2v). In the following paragraphs I have followed the *Riverside Shakespeare* and silently adopted *Q*'s reading.

⁹ On the problems facing rural society during the fifteenth century see E.F. Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century 1399-1485* (Oxford:1969) 369-372. George Holmes, *The Later Middle Ages 1272-1485* (London:1974)140-141. The issue of enclosure in the Petitioners' scene is also

Suffolk village lying to the north of Sudbury, is particularly pertinent, for as Leland observed, the county consisted of 'two several conditions of soil, the one champion which yields for the most part sheep and some corn, the other enclosed for pasture grounds, employed most to grazing and diary' -- the very area in which lay Long Melford.¹⁰

With no basis in the chronicle sources, this specific complaint is one of those moments when Shakespeare's 'chronicles of feudalism' can be recognised as being allusive to the situation in the last decade of the sixteenth century.¹¹ Throughout Elizabeth's reign complaints against the enclosure of land continually reached the government, but by 1590 the problems created by the practice were particularly acute, and when a series of harvest failures led to grain shortages and rising prices, the converting of arable land to pasture was increasingly seen as counter-productive. By 1597 anti-enclosure legislation, originally repealed in 1593, was brought before the Parliament. During one of the debates over the re-introduction of restraints on enclosure, Francis Bacon declared that the

inclosures of groundes bringes depopulacion, ... Idlenes ... decay of Tillage ...
Subversion of howses and decrease of Charitie, and charges to the poores
mayntenance and the improvishing of the State of the Realme,

a situation he went on to argue that, if not checked, would result in a countryside being 'nought but greenfeilds a Shepheard and his dogg.'¹² Such dislocation did result in migration to urban centres including, of course, London. It is very possible that many in Shakespeare's original audience may have been victims of this very process: demographic evidence indicates that

discussed by William C. Carroll, in his recently published *Fat King, Lean Beggar: Representations Of Poverty In The Age Of Shakespeare* (Ithaca:1996).

¹⁰ Leland, *Itinerary*, 1.64.

¹¹ Holderness, *Shakespeare's History*, 14, 45-51. The charge against the duke may have been prompted by a passage in Hall which reads, 'the Duke of Suffolk, only for lucre of money, vexed, oppressed and molested the poor people', Hall, *Union*, 212. The issue of enclosure and the reference to Long Melford are Shakespeare's invention.

¹² Cited by Andrew McRae, *God Speed the Plough: The representation of Agrarian England, 1500-1660* (Cambridge:1996) 9.

the spectacular growth of London's population between 1580-1620 was largely the result of migration from all parts of the kingdom.¹³

Voiced from below, the complaint by the petitioner of Long Melford represents a conservative reaction to changing agricultural practices which, in early modern England, were seen in certain quarters as destroying the very fabric of rural society.¹⁴ Thus, Shakespeare's play joins what might be described as the chorus of complaint against enclosure, one that had a long tradition in England -- perhaps the most famous of such tracts being Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) and Sir Thomas Smith's *Discourse of the Commonwealth of This Realm of England* (1549). It was a practice that Harrison would describe as 'evil',¹⁵ and Phillip Stubbes in his *Anatomie of Abuses*, an author more commonly cited for his attacks on the stage, would suggest that enclosure 'be the causes why rich men eat up poore men, as beasts doo eat grasse'.¹⁶

Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to suggest that the enclosure of land always met with opposition, or had a negative effect on England's rural community. Enclosure was often carried out with the consent of all concerned and it did lead to improved productivity and increased profit for some. Thomas Tusser's experience of land conversion in both Essex and Suffolk prompted him to compose the following lines

More Plenty of mutton and beef
Corn, butter, and cheese of the best
More wealth anywhere (to be brief),
More people more handsome and great
Where find ye (go search any coast)
Than there where enclosures is most.¹⁷

By the time Shakespeare came to write *2 Henry VI*, the county of Suffolk had long been enclosed and was one of the most intensively farmed and prosperous counties in

¹³ Palliser, *England under the Later Tudors*, 213.

¹⁴ On the issue of enclosure during the sixteenth century see Thirsk, *The Agrarian History of England and Wales Vol. IV*, 6-7.

¹⁵ Harrison, *Description*, 344.

¹⁶ Cited by McRae, *God Speed the Plough*, 66.

¹⁷ Thomas Tusser, *Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandary* (1577), cited in the *Victoria County History of Suffolk*, Vol. I, 66.

England.¹⁸ However, Suffolk was not only known for its agricultural produce: in the south of the county, along the border with Essex, lay an important cloth manufacturing district centred on the villages of Lavenham and Long Melford. This area had been one of the main centres of the resistance against the imposition of the aforementioned Amicable Grant in 1525, an event referred to in Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* when Norfolk reports how

... upon all these taxations,
The clothiers all, not able to maintain
The many to then longing, have put off
The spinners, carders, fullers, weavers who,
Unfit for other life, compelled by hunger
And lack of other means, in desperate manner
Daring the event to the teeth, are all in uproar (2.1.29-35).¹⁹

Paradoxically, for the 'township' (1.3.24) of Long Melford, the enclosure of land (a practice that often meant the conversion of arable land to sheep pasture) had been beneficial. By 1560 the cloth industry was enjoying a renaissance due to the production of 'new draperies' introduced into England by Dutch and Walloon weavers escaping religious persecution in Europe. It was a revival noted by Harrison:

In time past the use of the commodity [wool] consisteth (for the most part) in cloth and woolsteds; but now, by means of strangers succoured here from domestic persecution, the same hath been employed unto sundry other uses, as mockados, bays, vellures, grograines, etc., whereby the makers have reaped no small commodity.²⁰

Against such a background the complaint against enclosure in *2 Henry VI* seems misplaced, if not ironic, particularly as it is uttered by a character from a Suffolk village that had benefited from the revival of an industry on which its wealth was based, but as Shakespeare's petitioner reminds the enclosure of land only benefited a few.

Another scene localised in the county of Suffolk occurs during Shakespeare's dramatisation of the death of Gloucester and the impeachment of the Duke of Suffolk at

¹⁸ Indeed, according to Drayton, the county was renowned for its 'myyds and milke' (*Poly-Olbion*, Song XXIII. 255).

¹⁹ For a historical account of the effects of the attempt to levy the Amicable grant in Suffolk see Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors: Politics and Religion in an English County 1500-1600*, (Oxford:1986) 291-297.

²⁰ Harrison, *Description*, 155. On the history of textile production in the area around Long Melford see David Dymond & Alac Betterton, *Lavenham 700 Years of Textile Making*. (Suffolk:1982).

...his Majesty's Parliament,
Holden at Bury (2.4.70-71).

Although Gloucester died in mysterious circumstances during the Parliament summoned to the Suffolk town of Bury St Edmunds in 1447, at this point in the play we find a number of departures from the chronicle sources. Firstly, Shakespeare telescopes time in order to present the banishment of Suffolk (which actually occurred in 1450) as immediately following the murder of Gloucester. Secondly, as no change of locale is called for in the text, the impeachment of the Duke of Suffolk occurs at Bury St Edmunds rather than, as Hall reports, at the Parliament held at Leicester.²¹

Possibly prompted by Hall's suggestion that the 'commons in sundry places of the realm wer ... stomacked and bent, against the Quenes dearynge William Duke of Suffolke',²² in Shakespeare's version of events, the 'many commons' (3.2.122.SD) who clamour for the duke's removal are identified as the 'men of Bury' (3.2.240). Playing a pivotal role in Suffolk's banishment, these regional characters are never actually seen on stage; their demand is largely spoken through Salisbury who, after the death of the good Duke Humphrey, takes on the mantle of what Patterson terms 'the people's sincere advocate'.²³ Here we are confronted with the only moment in the play where the nobility clearly side with the 'commons', and while there is a threat of violence

Unless Lord Suffolk straight away be done to death,
Or banished ... (3.2.244-45),

it never materialises. The Duke of Suffolk may dismiss his accusers as 'rude unpolished hinds' (3.2.271) and 'a sort of tinkers' (3.2.277) but, unlike their Kentish counterparts, the commons of Bury are never actually shown as a rampaging mob driven by the promise of personal gain.

²¹ Hall, *Union*, 219. The Duke of Suffolk referred to in this play was a descendent of William de la Pole, an upwardly mobile merchant from the Yorkshire city of Hull who had risen to prominence in the reign of Edward III. By the 1440s the power of the 'new-made duke' had eclipsed even that of the Duke of Norfolk, the natural leader of the region. On this point see Harvey, *Jack Cade*, 44.

²² Hall, *Union*, 219.

²³ Patterson, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice*, 48.

Rather, this Suffolk rising is motivated by the death of Humphrey and the 'tender loving care' (3.2.280) of the commons for a king who is ill-advised, a familiar refrain of rebels in early modern England, and one that in this play has some validity.

The role of Suffolk's community in *2 Henry VI* may not only be based solely on historical precedent, but might well be a response to performances of the play in East Anglia.²⁴ In order to explore this point further, it is first necessary to consider the textual history of the *Henry VI* plays and particularly the status of the quarto of *2 Henry VI*, a text which includes a number of local details absent in *F*. The case for the *Henry VI* plays being originally composed for Lord Strange's Men is certainly strong and has been championed by a number of critics.²⁵ The appearance of actors' names in the speech prefixes at 4.2. in *F* of *2 Henry VI* and 3.1 in *F* of *3 Henry VI*, who also appear in the plot of *2 Seven Deadly Sins*, a play associated with Strange's company, is often cited as evidence to this end. Recent scholarship leaves little doubt as to Shakespeare's 'Lancashire connection' or his close association with the Stanleys. I am not the first to put my faith in the possibility that Henslowe's record of the play *harey vj*, performed by Strange's men at the Theatre in 1592, was Shakespeare's *1 Henry VI*. Evidence from the plays themselves, in particular the role afforded to one of Strange's ancestors Lord Talbot in *1 Henry VI*, and the alterations to history in *Richard III* (see below) also suggest that sometime between 1590-1594 Shakespeare was involved with Lord Strange's men.

This scenario does not exclude the likelihood that *2* and *3 Henry VI* were in some way originally connected with Pembroke's Men. As Scott McMillin writes, 'it is virtually certain that Pembroke's men performed the Quarto versions of the history plays,'²⁶ a point clearly supported by the attribution on *Qs* title page of *3 Henry VI* stating that the play was *sundrie times acted by the Right Honourable the Earle of Pembroke his servants*. The close thematic

²⁴ East Anglia is the name commonly used to describe the area comprising the counties of Suffolk, Norfolk and parts of Essex and Cambridgeshire.

²⁵ On this point see Hattaway, *Second part of King Henry VI*, 65-68.

²⁶ Scott McMillin, 'Casting For Pembroke's Men: The *Henry VI* Quartos and *The Taming of A Shrew*', *Shakespeare Quarterly* Vol. 23 (1972). See also Sir E.K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage* (Oxford:1923) II, 130. Cairncross, *King Henry VI, Part 2*. xlv. David George, 'Shakespeare and Pembroke's Men', *Shakespeare Quarterly* Vol. 32 (1981). Hattaway, *Second part of King Henry VI*, 67. Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, 268-69.

links between this play and *Q* of *2 Henry VI* also make it likely that the latter play also belonged to Pembroke's Men (although no company's name is included on the title page of *Q*). In addition, *Q* of *2 Henry VI* contains a number of lines that echo those in other plays known to have belonged to Pembroke's Men who, after getting into difficulty during a provincial tour, returned to London in 1593 and sold their playbooks.

Leah S. Marcus has raised the possibility that local details which appear in one version of a play, but not in another, might point to an attempt to adapt a play in order to appeal to a specific audience. Drawing attention to *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, a play widely believed to have been first performed during the Garter ceremonies of 1597, Marcus notes how the 1602 Quarto has an

urban setting strongly suggesting London or some provincial city, and the standard copy text, the 1623 Folio version ... sets the play in and around the town of Windsor and includes numerous topographical references to the area, its palace, park, and surrounding villages.²⁷

The suggestion that *Q* was revised is shared by the play's most recent editor David Crane, who argues that the 'highly topical and localised nature of the supposed first performance would encourage early revision either by Shakespeare, or another hand, of those parts which would not make sense on the public stage in London.'²⁸ As the title page of *Q* states, the play was 'divers times acted ... elsewhere', it remains possible that changes to the text of *The Merry Wives* were not only made in order to make the play more accessible for London theatre-goers, but for audiences throughout England.

In a detailed study of the Shakespearian quartos, Kathleen O. Irace has raised the possibility that the quartos of both *2* and *3 Henry VI* might have been adapted for provincial tours.²⁹ Admittedly, a number of scholars are still divided as to whether *Q* of *2 Henry VI*

²⁷ Leah S. Marcus, 'Levelling Shakespeare: Local Customs and Local Texts', *Shakespeare Quarterly* Vol. 42 (Summer 1991) 2. 173.

²⁸ *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, ed., David Crane (Cambridge:1997) 152-153.

²⁹ See *Reforming the "Bad" Quartos: Performance and Provenance of Six Shakespearean First Editions*, (Newark:1994) 160-165. As Irace notes, the idea of adapting a text for certain needs while on tour surfaces in one of Shakespeare's plays when Hamlet requests that during a performance of the *Murder of Gonzago* the 'players ... study a speech of some dozen, or sixteen lines, which I would set down and insert' (2.2.540-42). It is tempting to suggest that in

represents a version of the play performed in the provinces. The elaborate stage directions have often been cited as evidence that this text represents a version of the play designed for the purpose-built theatres of London.³⁰ This objection is particularly relevant when considering the conjuring scene where the stage directions 'she goes up to the Tower' (B4v), 'It thunders and lightens, and then the spirit riseth up' (C1r), and 'exet Elnor above' (C1r) indicate the need for a trapdoor and an upper acting area. Nevertheless, as Alan Somerset has demonstrated, various Guildhalls, inns and halls located throughout regional England, including East Anglia, could adequately fulfil those criteria.³¹ One such instance is to be found in the archives of the corporation of Nottingham where an entry, dated 1572, records a payment of forty pence to 'William Marshall for bordes that was borrowed for to make a skaffold to the Halle when the Queen's Maistyes players dyd play.'³²

Those involved in tracing the movements of Elizabethan acting companies have demonstrated that Suffolk was frequently visited. As McMillin remarks in his study on the early history of the Queen's Men, with its 'flat terrain and prosperous towns', East Anglia had a long tradition of sponsoring amateur and professional drama, and places such as Saffron Walden, Sudbury and Ipswich, all within the vicinity of Long Melford, were regular stopping points on the eastern circuit. Pembroke's Men, the company now widely credited with originally owning *Q*, were active in the region, playing at Kings Lynn and Ipswich in 1592-93 -- presumably as part of a longer tour of Suffolk and Norfolk.³³

a scene which has often been considered to represent a commentary on the theatre itself Shakespeare might be alluding to a widespread practice.

³⁰ See the discussion on this point in Hattaway's edition of the play, where he suggests that *Q* may have been 'planned but not performed for London, or planned and performed in the provinces.' 68. See also William Montgomery, 'The Original Staging of the First Part of the Contention (1594)', *Shakespeare Survey* 41 (1989).

³¹ Alan Somerset, "How Chances It They Travel?" Provincial Touring, Playing Places, And the King's Men.' *Shakespeare Survey* 47 (1994).

³² *Records of the Borough of Nottingham Being a Series of Extracts from the Archives of the Corporation of Nottingham Vol. IV. King Edward VI. to King James I. 1547-1625* (London: 1889) 143.

³³ Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, 258-77. References to acting companies in East Anglia can also be found in *Records of Plays and Players in Norfolk and Suffolk 1330-1642*, Malone Society Collections, Volume XI 1980-81. Sally-Beth Maclean, 'Tour Routes: "Provincial Wanderings" or Traditional Circuits?', *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England* Vol. 6 (1993) provides a summary of both past and present work on touring theatrical companies during the period.

The question then arises: does *Q* of *2 Henry VI* preserve a memorial version of the play adapted or revised for performance in the region by Pembroke's Men? Evidence from the text suggests it well might. *Q*'s more geographically specific Long Melford (a village that does not appear on Speed's detailed map of the county), serves to inject a degree of comedy into the proceedings -- largely at the expense of the 'fool' (1.3.8) of Long Melford who delivers his petition to the Duke of Suffolk, the very person the complaint is levelled against. By providing a moment of comic relief, the allusion to the townsmen of Long Melford would have gone down well with those from neighbouring towns and villages in East Anglia.

The same might well explain the presence of an additional local detail in *Q*, when Margery Jordan (one of those responsible for Eleanor Cobham's downfall) is named as 'the cunning witch of Ely' (B1v). In *F* the corresponding lines, printed in verse, read

... hast thou as yet conferred
With Margery Jordan, the cunning witch,
With Roger Bolingbroke, the conjurer (TLN 332-34/1.2.74-76).

Pointing out that this character is named by Hall as 'the witche of Eye' and in the *Mirror for Magistrates* as 'the witch of Ey', Cairncross's suggestion that the absence of 'Ely' in *F* is the result of 'either an erroneous deletion ... a typical compositor's error or ... an attempt to normalise the metre' is certainly feasible and might well explain why Eleanor's speech appears in *Q* as prose.³⁴ Wells and Taylor suggest that in this instance *Q* 'preserves a corrupt version of a historical detail added to the text in the preparation of the prompt-book, but absent from the foul papers upon which *F* is based.' Equally though, the reference to Ely is the type of local detail one might expect to find in a text that recalls the play as performed in the provinces, in this case East Anglia.³⁵ Indeed, as the 'witch of Ely' (B1v), Shakespeare's Jordan is identified with a small town in Cambridgeshire whose inhabitants, in a rare moment of negativity, Camden describes as 'of brutish uncivilis'd tempers, envious of all others.'³⁶

The reference to Long Melford, the identification of Jordan with Ely, and the allusion to

³⁴ Cairncross, *King Henry VI, Part 2*, 19-20.

³⁵ Wells and Taylor, *Textual Companion*, 180.

³⁶ Camden, *Britannia*, 480.

the 'men of berry' (E3v) are local details one might perceive as marginal, but would have held more significance for late Tudor audiences in East Anglia. Whether resisting enclosure or demanding the removal of the Queen's favourite, when seen collectively the role of those identified in the play as natives of Suffolk may be an indication that *O* was performed in East Anglia, particularly as touring companies had to contend with local authorities. It is worth recalling that possession of a valid patent and the approval of a playscript for performance by the Master of Revels was no guarantee of being allowed to play. Indeed, on entering a town the company was expected to contact the Mayor or Corporation and seek approval to perform.³⁷ While we might question the argument that stage plays promoted vice and sedition by providing an 'example of imitation' [of] ... lewd offences',³⁸ local authorities were surely justified in their fear of the large crowds, such as those who were attracted to plays. As Gurr has suggested, the following contemporary account appears to have become a more or less standard procedure by the 1580s;

In the city of Gloucester the manner is (as I think it is in other like corporations) that when Players of Enterludes come to towne, they first attend the Mayor to enforme him what noble-mans servants they are, and so to get licence for their publike playing; and if the Mayor like the Actors, or shew respect to their Lord and Master, he appoints them to play their first play before himself and the Aldermen and common Counsell of the City; and that is called the Mayors pl. r, and where every one that will comes without money, the Mayor giving the players a reward as hee thinks fit to shew respect unto them.³⁹

³⁷ This raises the issue of censorship, or possibly lack of it, and the role of Edmund Tilney. As Master of the Revels, Tilney was responsible for the licensing of plays and the overseeing of playbooks, but not playtexts. The difference is vital. The licensing of playtexts, as all printed matter, was the responsibility of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London, or perhaps more accurately their deputies. It was a system that was far from foolproof, as the case of Hayward's controversial *The First Part of the life and reign of King Henry IV* would prove -- a book which Samuel Harsnett had 'passed' for publication without first reading. For a more detailed account on the furore surrounding Hayward's book see Richard Dutton, *Mastering the Revels: The Regulation and Censorship of English Renaissance Drama*, (Basingstoke:1991) 121.

³⁸ The complaint that plays promoted vice was a familiar refrain from those opposed to the theatre. The sentiments expressed here are contained in a letter to Burghley from the Lord Mayor of London dated Nov. 3, 1594 and is quoted by Chambers in *The Elizabethan Stage*, Vol. IV, 317.

³⁹ Gurr, *Shakespearian Playing Companies*, 39.

The advantage of such a system is that it gave a degree of control to local authorities over what was performed, a situation that had the added bonus of stopping anything deemed unsuitable or liable to give offence before it reached the wider public. An alternative form of regulation, and one that seems to have been occasionally employed by the authorities of the East Anglian city of Norwich, was simply to pay a company not to perform.⁴⁰

Returning to the image of the region presented in *2 Henry VI*, one can suggest that if Pembroke's Men had presented this play for performance in East Anglia during the last decade of the sixteenth century it is hard to imagine anything that would have given offence to the Mayor, Corporation or Alderman (or those responsible for allowing plays to be performed) in Kings Lynn, Ipswich, and one can presume a number of other towns in Suffolk and Norfolk. The appearance of the petitioners of Long Melford (no matter how fleeting) is not marked by violence or mayhem, but is motivated by what can be construed as a concern for the good of the commonwealth, an image that is not sustained when complaints over enclosure are uttered by Kentishmen later in the play. A concern for good government and the end of abuses characterises the actions of the 'men of berry' (E3v). The identification of Margery Jordan with Ely might be seen as prudent, particularly as the Suffolk village of Eye (created a parliamentary borough in 1571) was controlled by the powerful and influential Bacon family.⁴¹ For those concerned with the licensing or regulating of plays at the local level, even singling out 'the Duke of Suffolke, William de la Poull' (F2r) as being held responsible for the loss of France and the enclosure of land would not have been problematical as, by the 1590s, the de la Poles had long passed into oblivion. Nor would evoking the territorial title represent an affront to anyone's dignity, as it had been extinct since 1554 and was only revived in 1603.

Localisation at Saint Albans

Early in *2 Henry VI* our attention is momentarily deflected from the ongoing 'strife' (2.1.56) between Gloucester and Cardinal Beaufort by the entrance of 'the Mayor of St Albans

⁴⁰ See Philip V. Thomas, 'Itinerant, Roguish Entertainers in Elizabethan And Early Stuart Norwich', *Theatre Notebook* 1988, Vol. LII, Number 3, 123.

⁴¹ Sir Nicholas Bacon held the office of Lord Keeper of the Great Seal until his death in 1579. This figure was remembered by Nashe who, in *Pierce Penniless* (1592), wrote 'What age will not prayse immortall Sir Philip Sidney ... together with Sir Nicholas Bacon, Lord Keeper, and merry Sir Thomas Moore, for the cheife pillars of our english speech' (F1v). Nicholas Bacon was a friend and intimate of Burghley, and father of the aforementioned Francis Bacon.

and his Brethren, with music, bearing the man, Simpcox, between two in a chair. Simpcox's wife and others following' (2.1.65.SD).⁴² Commonly known as the episode of the false miracle, this scene is the first of three occasions during the *Henry VI* plays when events are either localised or reported in the Hertfordshire town of St Albans. The role of Simpcox (identified with Berwick upon Tweed) is discussed at length in a later chapter. The focus here is on those characters who are described throughout the scene as the 'brethren', 'townsmen' and 'beadles' of St Albans.

When Gloucester addresses the townsmen as 'my Masters of St Albans' (2.1.133), we can detect a clear difference in tone and attitude to that previously expressed towards the commoners by the Duke of Suffolk. Of course, the manner in which both nobles address their 'inferiors' is indicative of the way Shakespeare consistently demonises the Duke of Suffolk, while highlighting the role of the 'virtuous prince, the good Duke Humphrey' (2.2.74).⁴³ Nevertheless, this scene is more than simply a vehicle for Humphrey to demonstrate his wisdom, or an excuse for some knockabout comedy. At St Albans the play momentarily foregrounds the parish officers, a section of the county community below that of the gentry, often absent from contemporary accounts, who played a vital role in maintaining law and order in the provinces.⁴⁴ In doing so, Shakespeare presents us with an image of a law abiding community whose 'beadles' (2.1.134) are ready and willing to purge the town, county and region of characters (Simpcox and his wife), identified as outsiders, who are classified as disruptive and dangerous. When considered alongside those identified with the county of Suffolk in *2 Henry VI*, the townsmen of St Albans represent another facet of the regional experience.

⁴² There is a degree of anachronism here as the town of St Albans was not incorporated until 1552, and as such was not entitled to elect a Mayor until that date.

⁴³ On the reputation and representation of this character in *1* and *2 Henry VI* see Samuel M. Pratt, 'Shakespeare and Humphrey Duke of Gloucester: A Study in Myth.' *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. XVI, Spring (1965) 201-217.

⁴⁴ There is a clear difference here in the portrayal of these characters and those minor Parish officials that Shakespeare, in the guise of Dogberry and Verges, would later lampoon in *Much Ado about Nothing*.

Shakespeare's Wars of the Roses and the Allegiance of 'Middest' England

In the closing scenes of *2 Henry VI* the contention between the houses of York and Lancaster (first witnessed during the Temple Garden scene in *1 Henry VI*) finally descends into outright civil war. While in an article on the Wars of the Roses the historian K. B. McFarlane warns,

these were neither wars between north and south or between lowland south-east and the dark corners of north and west. The sides had no frontier to defend,⁴⁵

the Tudor chroniclers and, more importantly, Shakespeare's dramatisation of the Wars in *2* and *3 Henry VI* present the conflict in precisely these terms.

The polarisation of the kingdom into a Yorkist south and a Lancastrian north has its origins in the closing moments of *2 Henry VI*. On the eve of the first battle of St Albans, Warwick's support for the house of York binds the midland shires to the cause of the white rose. Similarly, when it is proclaimed that

Saint Albons battle won by famous York
Shall be eternalised in all age to come
Sound drum and trumpets, and to London all:
And more such days as these to us befall! (5.3.30-33)

the counties north of the Thames, including Hertfordshire, have been secured as a Yorkist stronghold. This is made even more apparent in the opening scene of *3 Henry VI* when King Henry remarks how

... the city favours them
And they have troops of soldiers at their beck (1.1.67-68).

In other words, London has rallied to the house of York. The perception that the Midland counties are firmly aligned to the Yorkist cause surfaces when Northumberland taunts Warwick about his

...Southern power
Of Essex, Norfolk, Suffolk ... of Kent (1.1.155-56).

⁴⁵ Keith B. McFarlane 'The Wars of the Roses', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 50 (1964) 88, 87-119

The point is reiterated when 'York and Lancaster are reconciled' (1.1.204), temporarily at least, as Warwick exits with the promise to 'keep London with my soldiers' (1.1.207) and Norfolk departs 'to Norfolk with [his] followers' (1.1.208).⁴⁶

As *3 Henry VI* dramatises the fluctuating fortunes of both sides during the Wars of the Roses, the Yorkist ascendancy gained at St Albans is short lived. York is killed at the battle of Wakefield and his allies are defeated at the second battle of St Albans. Although not dramatised, an account of the battle is supplied by Warwick in a speech addressed to Edward and Richard,

I, then in London, keeper of the king,
Mustered my soldiers, gathered flocks of friends,
And very well appointed, as I thought,
Marched toward St Albons to intercept the Queen

.....
Short tale to make, we at St Albons met,
Our battles joined, and both sides fiercely fought;

.....
But all in vain, they had no heart to fight,
And we, in them, no hope to win the day,
So that we fled (2.1.111-136).

The same battle is mentioned later in the play when, on the eve of Towton, Margaret taunts Warwick with the claim that

When you and I met at Saint Albons last,
Your legs did better service than your hands (2.2.103-04).

The Yorkist setback at St Albans is alluded to in a later scene when Edward, introducing his future Queen to Richard, tells how

... at St Albon's field
This Lady's husband, Sir Richard Grey, was slain (3.2.1.2).

⁴⁶ The image of England's eastern counties as centres of Yorkist support is also found in Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte D' Arthur*, where Mordred's army raised against King Arthur comprises 'they of Kente, Southsex and Surrey, Esax, Suffolke and Northfolke.' As Eugene Vinaver writes 'the fact that [Malory] connects the counties of Kent, Sussex, Surrey, Essex and Norfolk with the traitors cause would seem to suggest that he had in mind a situation similar to that which obtained at the time of the Wars of the Roses when the strength of the Yorkists lay to an extent in the south-eastern counties.' *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory* ed., Eugene Vinaver in Three Volumes (Oxford:1947) Vol. III, endnote 1233, 1633.

These lines are echoed in *Richard III* when Gloucester reminds Edward's Queen that both she and her

... husband Grey
Were factious for the house of Lancaster;
And, Rivers, so were you. Was not your husband
In Margaret's battle at Saint Albons slain?
Let me put in your minds, if you forgot (1.3.126-30).

What had not been forgotten, certainly by the chroniclers and contemporary writers, is that the defeat of the Yorkist army by Margaret and her northern troops at St Albans in 1461 was met with alarm in this part of England. The fifteenth-century *Croyland Chronicle*, composed by various hands at an abbey situated in the fens of south Lincolnshire, reported that the country would be despoiled by 'a whirlwind from the north.'⁴⁷ The same anxiety is expressed by Clement Paston, a member of the Norfolk family whose surviving papers give a valuable insight into life during the period in question, when in a letter written to his brother dated January 1461, he warns how 'the pepill in the northe robbe and styl, and ben apoyntyed to pill all thys countre [Norfolk], and gyffe a way menys goods and luffiodes in all the southe countre.'⁴⁸ In the continuation of the chronicle known as the *Brut*, an anonymous writer goes even further by identifying the northerners literally as heathens;

And they of the Northe ... came downe sodeynly to the towne of Dunstaple, robbing alle the cuntre and peple as they came; and spoylyng abbeyes and howses of relygyone and churches, and bare away chalyces, bookes and other ornamentes, as thay had be paynems or Sarracenes, and no Crysten menne.⁴⁹

This fifteenth-century attitude to the north and those associated with it is (not surprisingly) found among the Tudor chroniclers. According to Hall, after the victory at Wakefield Margaret and

the lordes of the North country with a great multitude of Northre [sic] people ... marched toward London, of whose approche the Londoners were nothing glad:

⁴⁷ *Ingulph's Chronicle of the Abbey of Croyland with the Continuations by Peter of Blois and Anonymous Writers*, translated by Henry T. Riley (London:1864) 422.

⁴⁸ *The Paston Letters*, ed., James Gardiner (Westminster:1900) 158.

⁴⁹ *An English Chronicle of the Reigns of Richard II, Henry IV, Henry V and Henry VI written before the year 1471*. ed, Rev. John Silvester Davies (London:1846) 107.

for some affirmed, that she brought that rusty company, to spoile and robbe the citie.⁵⁰

In the second edition of *Holinshed's Chronicle* we find a similar sentiment, as a passage attributed to the fifteenth-century chronicler John Wethamstede, Abbot of St Albans, reads 'These northerne people, after they were once passed the river of Trent, spoiled and wasted the countrie afore them, in the manner as if they had beene in the land of forren enimies.'⁵¹ That the actions of Margaret's northern army in 1461 should have attracted so much attention is explained by the military historian Sir Charles Oman, who points out that this was the only recorded incident of misbehaviour by an army during the Wars of the Roses.⁵²

The Lancastrian victory at St. Albans in 1461 caused hysteria among sections of London's population, yet perceiving the hostility to their cause in and around the capital (a point expressed in *3 Henry VI*) provided an opportunity for the Earl of March, the future Edward IV, to present himself as the saviour of this part of England. At least that is the view of the anonymous author of *The Rose of Rouen*, a contemporary political poem celebrating Edward's achievements,

The northe[r]n men made her bost, whan they had done the dede,
'We wol dwelle in the southe cuntrey, and take all that we nede;
These wifes and hur doughters, oure purpose shal we spede,
Then seid the Rose of Rone, 'Nay, that werk shal I for-bede.'
Blessid be the tyme, that ever God sprad that floure!

For to save al Englund the Rose did his entent
With Calays and with London, with Essex and with Kent:
And al the south of Englund, unto the w[ate]r of Trent,
And whan he saw the tyme best, the Rose from London went.
Blessid be the tyme, that ever God sprad that floure!⁵³

It is a perception shared by Hall as he remarks 'how the people of Essex swarmed, & how the counties adioyning to London dayly repaired to se, ayd, & comfort, this lusty prince and flower

⁵⁰ Hall, *Union*, 252.

⁵¹ Holinshed, *Chronicles*, 270.

⁵² Oman, *History of the Art of War in the Middle Ages*, Vol. 2 (London:1937) 410-11.

⁵³ 'Political Poems of the reigns of Henry VI and Edward IV' ed., Sir Fredric Madden *Archaeologia* Vol. XXIX (1842) 345.

of chivalry, as in whome the hope, of their joy, and the trust of their quietness onely then consisted'.⁵⁴

The same image surfaces in *3 Henry VI*. Shakespeare may depart somewhat from the chronicle sources by having the revitalised Yorks march straight to Towton, but not before a speech attributed to Warwick has alluded to the Lancastrian threat to London and the efforts of York's allies to save the capital from

... the proud insulting Queen,
With Clifford and the haught Northumberland,
.....
And now to London all the crew beside
May make against the house of Lancaster.
Their power, I think, is thirty thousand strong.
Now, if with the help of Norfolk and myself
With all the friends that thou, brave Earl of March,
Amongst the loving Welshmen canst procure,
Will but amount to five and twenty thousand,
Why, *via!* to London will we march
And once again bestride our foaming steeds
And once again cry 'Charge!' upon our foes (2.1.168-84).

Margaret's retreat northwards in 1461, in effect, surrendered the southern half of the kingdom to the Yorks. As the author of the aforementioned *Croyland Chronicle* would remark

the nobles of the realm, and all the people who inhabited the midland counties of England, as well as those who were situate in the eastern and western parts thereof, or in any way bordered the midland districts, seeing that they were dispised and abandoned by king Henry, who, at the instigation of the queen, had betaken himself to the north, utterly forsook him.⁵⁵

This is precicely what occurs in *3 Henry VI* when, leading up to the battle of Towton, Shakespeare has Henry VI join Margaret and her allies at the 'brave town of York' (2.2.1). It is followed later in the same scene by a report that

... with a band of thirty thousand men
Comes Warwick, backing of the Duke of York,
And in the towns, as they do march along,
Proclaims him king, and many fly to him (2.2.67-71).

⁵⁴ Hall, *Union*, 253.

⁵⁵ *Croyland Chronicle*, 424.

Hence, on the eve of Towton the division of the kingdom along geographical lines is complete; providing the opportunity for Shakespeare to dramatise one of the most decisive battles of the entire period as a conflict in which the characters identified through their titles with the counties of 'middest' England are aligned with the Yorkist cause.

The Battle for 'Middest' England

In *3 Henry VI* Edward's victory at Towton signals the end of Margaret's northern army. From this point on, the focus of the play switches to the Yorks themselves and the divisions within their ranks as Richard's ambition to 'catch the English crown' (3.2.179) begins to surface, Clarence deserts his brothers and Warwick's embassy to France is upstaged by Edward's marriage to Lady Grey. As the Wars of the Roses degenerate into a conflict in which loyalty to a particular cause is only guaranteed by the promise of 'large pay' (4.7.88), geographically speaking the contention between York and Lancaster is now fought across the more familiar territory of middle England. As Warwick suggests, 'the case is altered' (4.3.32), the regional alliances forged at St Albans, Wakefield and Towton no longer hold.

In similar fashion to his historical counterpart, Shakespeare's Warwick is very much the kingmaker, whose regional power in both *2* and *3 Henry VI* makes him the 'setter-up and plucker-down of kings' (2.3.37) -- a phrase repeated verbatim by Margaret at 3.3. Instrumental in the Yorkist victory over Henry VI and his northern allies, the threat posed by Warwick to the new regime first manifests itself when, after hearing of Edward's marriage to Lady Grey, the Earl, along with Oxford, returns from France with five thousand men (3.3.233-34) in support of the house of Lancaster. Joined by 'Clarence and Somerset' (4.2.127) this most mighty of over-mighty subjects does unseat Edward IV and place Henry VI on 'the regal throne' (4.3.64). Hence by the time the play arrives at Coventry, Warwick truly is 'the greatest man in England but the king' (*2H6* 2.2.82), a regional magnate who can rely on the support of levies drawn from seven Midland shires:

In Warwickshire I have true-hearted friends,
Not mutinous in peace, yet bold in war;
Those will I muster up; and thou, son Clarence,
Shalt stir in Suffolk, Norfolk, and in Kent,
The knights and gentlemen to come with thee.
Thou, brother Montague, in Buckingham,
Northampton, and in Leicestershire, shalt find
Men well inclined to hear what thou command'st.

And thou, brave Oxford, wondrous well beloved
In Oxfordshire shall muster up thy friends (4.8.9-18).

Edward's challenge to Warwick outside Coventry may be based on the chronicles, but Shakespeare embellishes this scene with a host of topographical references. Displaying a familiarity with this part of the kingdom, which in light of Shakespeare's own regional origins is not surprising, Warwick's allies are reported to be at Dunsmore, Daintry (Daventry), Southam and Warwick, actual towns and villages near Coventry in the English midlands. It is a device which, as the following lines indicate, adds to the perception that the audience is below 'the walls' (5.1.0SD) of Coventry watching the events unfold:

Warwick. Where is the post that came from valiant Oxford?
How far hence is thy lord, mine honest fellow?

1. Mess. By this at Dunsmore, marching hitherward.

Warwick. How far off is our brother Montague?
Where is the post that came from Montague?

2. Mess. By this at Daintry, with a puissant troop.

Warwick. Say Somerville, what says my loving son?
And, by thy guess, how nigh is Clarence now?

Somerville. At Southam I did leave him with his forces,
And do expect him here some two hours hence.

Warwick. Then Clarence is at hand, I hear his drum.

Somerville. It is not his, my lord, here Southam lies;
The drum your honor hears marcheth from Warwick (5.1.1-13).⁵⁶

The degree of local knowledge that pervades this scene is further highlighted by the inclusion of Somerville, a character not mentioned in any of the play's sources. In *Shakespeare's Characters: A Historical Dictionary*, W.H.Thompson proposes that the Somerville of *3 Henry VI* recalls Sir Thomas Somerville of Arden, a minor Warwickshire knight

⁵⁶ In the accompanying notes to this scene Hattaway raises the possibility that when Oxford, Montague, Clarence appear before Coventry, presumably with their retinues, they may have entered from the yard and 'passed over' the stage to enter the 'city' through the stage doors. Although such a scenario raises the question as to how the actors would have mounted the stage - as evidence from the reconstruction of the Globe demonstrates the height of the stage presents a formidable barrier - Hattaway's suggestion, if correct, would have added to the sense that in this particular instance the non-illusionistic Elizabethan stage does represent that part of Warwickshire before the walls of Coventry. See *Third part of King Henry VI*, 179.

who died in 1500.⁵⁷ Without dismissing Thompson's view out of hand, I suggest that the appearance of Somervile alludes to someone possibly far better known to Shakespeare and members of the play's original audiences. In 1583 John Somerville, another Warwickshire man, was tried and convicted for planning to assassinate Elizabeth with a pistol. Committing suicide, Somerville escaped the horrors of a traitor's death, but not before he had confessed and implicated his father-in-law Sir Robert Arden who, subsequently executed, was a member of Shakespeare's 'extended family'.⁵⁸

Entering the stage in quick succession, Oxford, Montague, Somerset, and Clarence declare 'for Lancaster' (5.1.59), demonstrating the degree to which previous alliances have now shifted. While Oxford has remained true to the Lancastrian cause throughout the play, the same cannot be said of his fellow nobles. At 1.2 we recall that Montague was with York at Sandal Castle and later, before his defection, had given 'assurance with some friendly vow' (4.1.140) of his continuing loyalty to the Yorkist cause. But by far the most interesting development is Clarence's appearance with the levies of 'Suffolk, Norfolk and Kent' (4.8.11) as part of the Lancastrian force converging on Coventry. Here we not only witness the desertion of one of Edward's brothers, but are confronted with an image that runs counter to the early portrayal of England's eastern counties of 'Essex, Norfolk, Suffolk ... of Kent' (1.1.155-56) as centres of Yorkist support. However, Clarence's return to the Yorkist fold, presumably with his 'knights and gentlemen' (4.8.12), graphically demonstrated by the stage direction in *Q* which reads 'Clarence takes his red rose out of his hat, and throwes it at Warwick' (E2r), ensures the counties of England's eastern seaboard remain loyal to the cause of the white rose.

This posturing before Coventry is a prelude to the battle of Barnet and the play's return to Hertfordshire, a county in which the Simpcox episode was localised and the two battles of St Albans have been fought (the first dramatised at the close of *2 Henry VI*, the second reported in both *3 Henry VI* and *Richard III*). With the death of Warwick and the defeat of the Lancastrians, Shakespeare's Barnet finally secures the Midlands for the Yorkists

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 177.

⁵⁸ Collinson, *Elizabethan Essays*, 250.

and prepares the ground for what will be the final showdown between the house of York and the remnant of the Lancastrian forces at the battle of Tewkesbury in Gloucestershire.

Shakespeare's Wars of the Roses and Late Tudor England

Shakespeare's dramatisation of the movement of armies across the length and breadth of middle England is clearly allusive to the political situation of the late 1580s. One such example occurs when Shakespeare identifies the counties of 'Essex, Norfolk, Suffolk ... of Kent' (1.1.155-56) as forming part of Warwick's southern power, an image that, as already noted above, surfaces later in the play when the Earl directs Clarence to

...stir up in Suffolk, Norfolk, and in Kent
The knights and gentlemen to come with thee (4.8.11-12).

While in this instance the county of Essex is omitted, it is included in the corresponding line in *Q*, which reads 'In Essex, Suffolke, Norfolke and in Kent' (D8v). In a recent article, Dorothy E. Litt has suggested that the omission of the reference to Essex in *F* was a response to political pressure caused by the Essex revolt of 1601. Litt goes on to suggest that the county's absence means that this scene is

topographically flawed [because] a glance at the outline of England shows that the counties lie adjacent in the east, from north to south: Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, and Kent; by omitting Essex a gap is left in the coastline. A muster of forces travelling from Suffolk to Kent would have to pass through Essex.⁵⁹

Litt is correct in her observation that geographically the omission of Essex does leave a gap in the coastline, but she overlooks the fact that in this instance Warwick is not stirring up a muster of forces to travel from Suffolk to Kent, rather he is marshalling his forces for the battle of Coventry in the county of Warwickshire -- a location that would not have required passing through Essex (see map).

Whether the absence of Essex in *F* is evidence of censorship or textual corruption remains open to conjecture. For theatregoers of the early 1590s the image of one of the

⁵⁹ See Dorothy E. Litt, 'The Power of the Name Essex in 3 Henry VI', in *The Journal of the American Name Society*, 41.4 (December 1993) 300.

kingdom's most powerful nobles stirring up the levies of England's eastern seaboard counties to defend the realm against an army partly composed of foreign troops might well have been seen as allusive to recent events, namely, the threat posed to Elizabethan England by the Spanish in 1588. One recalls that in this particular scene Warwick raises troops in order to defend the kingdom from an army drawn from 'Belgia' (4.8.2) made up of 'hasty Germans and blunt Hollanders' (4.8.2) who passing with

safety through the Narrow Seas,
.... march amain to London (4.8.3-4).

The disparaging remarks aimed at the Germans and Dutch might well be seen as being somewhat jingoistic, but it is important to recognise that the 'Narrow seas' is a term that the Elizabethans used to describe the English channel, particularly the Straits of Dover, and not the stretch of sea between Europe and Ravenspurgh (now submerged) at the mouth of the river Humber in Yorkshire, the port where at 4.7. Edward lands (which Camden on the frontispiece of his *Britannia* and Speed on his map of England and Wales both identify as the German Ocean). Two examples from the period of the Armada will suffice: in his *Description of England*, Smith describes how the county of Kent is 'next to France, where the narrow seas are but 24 myles broad',⁶⁰ and in the State Papers a note from Burghley, dated 20th May 1593, directs that 'forces to be got in readiness for the succour of Boulogne: viz the Rainbow, with 250 men, and the Dreadnought with 200, to be sent to the narrow seas.'⁶¹ What was usually understood to constitute the 'Narrow Seas' appears in a number of Shakespeare's plays. The chorus in *Henry V* speaks of conveying the audience across the 'Narrow seas' (2 Cho 38) and in the *Merchant of Venice* Salerio reports 'that Antonio hath a ship of rich lading wrack'd on the Narrow Seas: the Goodwins I think they call the place, a very dangerous flat, and fatal, where the carcasses of many a tall ship lie buried' (3.1.2-6). In other words, Antonio's ship has floundered on the sand bars lying on the Kentish side of the Thames estuary.

⁶⁰ Smith, *Description*, 6.

⁶¹ This is only one of a number of examples to be found in the *CSPD* Vol. 3 1591-94, 368. Prior to the end of the First World War the North Sea was known as the German Ocean. On Ravenspur, see Gilles Monsarrat's article in *Notes And Queries*, Vol. 243 (September 1998).

By evoking the image of foreign troops crossing the 'Narrow Seas', Warwick's speech appears to echo one of the fears expressed by the English during the time of the Spanish Armada, namely, that the defeat of the English fleet would pave the way for the armies assembled in Flanders (modern day Belgium) to cross the channel and march on London. In an effort to avert such a catastrophe, levies from the very counties listed in *Q* as forming part of Warwick's 'true-hearted friends' (4.8.9) were mustered at Tilbury in August 1588, as a letter allegedly sent to Bernardino de Mendoza the Spanish Ambassador in France and published in London states:

The maritime countreys from Cornwall, all along the southside of England, to Kent: and from *Kent* eastward, by *Essex, Suffolfe, and Norfolk* to Lincolnshire were so furnished to of men of warre (emphasis added).⁶²

Moreover, command of the forces at Tilbury was entrusted to the Earl of Leicester, a figure whose alleged power and influence over Elizabeth, particularly in the early part of her reign, was compared to that of Warwick over Edward VI. In a widely circulated 'letter' commonly known as *Leicester's Commonwealth*, which first appeared in 1584, we find the following comment:

This then is the Hector, this is the Ajax, appointed for the enterprise when the time shall come. This must be (forsooth) another Richard of Warwick, to gain the crown for Henry IX of the house of York, as the other Richard did put down Henry VI of the house of Lancaster and placed Edward IV, from whom Huntingdon deriveth his title.⁶³

⁶² *The Copie of a Letter Sent out of England to Don Bernardin* Imprinted at London by I. Vautrollier for Richard Field, 1588. This letter was a forgery, possibly composed by no lesser a figure than Burghley.

⁶³ *Leicester's Commonwealth: The Copy of a Letter Written by a Master of Arts of Cambridge (1584) and Related Documents.* ed., D.C. Peck (Ohio:1985) 104. This is not the only charge levelled at Leicester by the anonymous writers of the *Commonwealth* which surfaces in the first tetralogy. Richard Simpson argues that the portrayal of the close relationship between Margaret and Suffolk in *2 Henry VI* is allusive to that of Elizabeth and Leicester. He also notes that the complaint of enclosure levelled against Suffolk by the Petitioners (at 1.3.) recalls the allegation made against the earl in the *Commonwealth* stating that the Queen's former favourite had appropriated 'whole forests, woods and pastures for himself', in the process hanging those who petitioned against his actions. See 'The Political use of the Stage' in *New Shakespeare Society Transactions*, Series 1, No. 1 1874, 420-21. What might be conceived as another veiled allusion to Leicester occurs during the height of the Cadz rebellion when the king is urged to 'retire to Killingworth (4.4.39) which, as Richard Dutton suggests, one should read Kenilworth, the royal castle in Warwickshire that Elizabeth granted to the earl. See Dutton, 'Shakespeare and Lancaster' *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 49 (1998) 12 .

The specific allegation lodged here is that in regard to a possible successor to Elizabeth, Leicester was 'guilty' of promoting the claim to the English throne of his brother-in-law Henry Hastings, the third earl of Huntingdon.

Topical allusions relevant to the political and cultural climate of the late 1580s and early 1590s continue to surface throughout this scene. For example, Warwick's promise to defend his 'sovereign' (4.9.19) and the

... island girt in with the ocean
Or modest Dian circled with her nymphs (4.9.20-21)

presents an image of the sea forming a protective shield around England and echoes the sentiments found in celebratory verses published in the period following the defeat of the Armada. In Samuel Daniel's 1592 sonnet sequence titled *Delia* we find a similar image;

Flourish faire Albion, glory of the North,
Neptunes darling helde betweene his armes:
Devided from the world as better worth,
Kept for himselfe, defended from all harmes.⁶⁴

The idea of England 'girt in with ocean' (4.9.20) is, of course, expressed most famously by John of Gaunt in Shakespeare's *Richard II*. In addition, Warwick's allusion to 'Dian' (4.9.21) the moon-goddess, evokes one of the many images of Elizabeth I found in various plays, poetry and ballads of the 1590s, including Shakespeare's own *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Despite his claims, Warwick's defeat at Barnet provides a salutary reminder that when it came to challenging the Crown regional power alone was no guarantee of success. As many would learn to their cost (from a late Tudor perspective the fate of the Earl of Essex is perhaps the most notably example) access to, and the continued support of, the monarch was vital.

York, Tudor and Bosworth Field

Richard III represents a change from the panoramic scope of *3 Henry VI* as it focuses largely on events within the confines of the royal palaces of London and Westminster. Only in

⁶⁴ Cited by Clayton M. Mackenzie, 'Paradise and Paradise Lost in Richard II', *Shakespeare Quarterly* Vol. 37 (1986) 329. See also *King Richard II* ed., by Peter Ure (London:1966), 49-54, 206-207.

the final scenes, leading up to and including the battle of Bosworth, will the play be localised in the 'middest part' of England. Secured at Barnet, the Yorkist grip on this part of England will be lost in the final moments of *Richard III* when their last king is defeated during a battle located in

... the centry of [the] isle
near to the town of Leicester, as we learn,
From Tamworth tither is but one day's march (5.2.11-13).

Before this, however, there is an event that takes place in this part of the kingdom which has a major bearing on the fortunes of the Yorkist dynasty. The Archbishop of York's report to the Queen that her son the Prince and his escort

Last night ... they lay at Stony Stratford,
And at Northampton they do rest to-night (2.4.1-2)⁶⁵

is a prelude to Richard's usurpation of the throne. When a messenger arrives with the news that the dukes have intercepted the royal party and

Lord Rivers and Lord Grey are sent to Pomfret,
And with them Sir Thomas Vaughan, prisoners (2.4.42-43),

Elizabeth correctly predicts 'the ruin of [her] House' (2.4.49). But Richard and Buckingham's seizure of the royal party in the English midlands is an action that will not only subvert family bonds, it will destroy the regional allegiances mapped out in the previous plays.

⁶⁵ The ordering of these lines is significant, for those knowledgeable of the actual events of spring and early summer of 1483 the report that the royal party is at Northampton geographically represented a retrograde step (Stony Stratford is nearer to London than Northampton), and was the direct result of Richard and Buckingham's securing of the Prince. The *Riverside Shakespeare* is the only modern edition that follows *F* here. In *Q* these lines, now spoken by the Cardinal, are transposed to read

Last night I heare they lay at Northampton,
At Stonistratford will they be to night (E3v).

As Hammond notes, while *Q* is geographically correct it is historically wrong. Despite this a number of editors since Pope have adopted *Q*'s reading on the grounds that in *F* the Archbishop reports that the royal party is now at Northampton, but does not comment why. The same point is made by the Oxford editors in the note accompanying these lines, yet perversely they employ *Q*'s version in their edition of *Richard III*. For a further discussion on this point see Hammond, *Richard III*, 18. Wells and Taylor, *Textual Companion*, 237.

As the last play in the tetralogy moves to its climax at Bosworth Field, former allies of the Yorks are now united behind Richmond and the house of Tudor. In addition, there seems to be an attempt by Shakespeare to provide the ancestors of Elizabethan nobles, patrons of theatrical companies, and the minor gentry associated with the midland shires a role on the winning side at Bosworth.⁶⁶ Thus, we find 'Sir William Stanley' (4.5.13) who, in the previous play, was a supporter of Edward VI. Alongside him is 'Sir James Blunt' (4.5.14), later identified by Richmond as his 'good captain' (5.3.40), a character who appears to have been included in the play in order to compliment one of the leading families of Strafford.⁶⁷

Perhaps we should not be surprised at the alterations Shakespeare makes to his source material in the final moments of *Richard III*. By 1590 Bosworth had become a revered place in Tudor mythology. In *The valiant actes And victorious Battailles of the English nation* (1585), John Sharrock celebrated the battle in the following manner;

So many dreadfull foughten fieldes, the faction of two kings,
 Did cause, which mightie loue at last vnto conclusion brings.
 Here Bosworth bloody warres, and others moe, I will omit,
 By which king Henry seuenth eternall fame, which will not flit
 From age to age continued still, in memorie attaynd,
 Who first but Earle of Richmond, then king Edwards daughter gaynd.
 In wedlocke linked fast, and with her Britaine crowne possest.
 That did the lawes require, and English Primates chiefe request.
 This God th' almightie guide, as authour chiefe, did bring to passe,
 And thus at length the rage, of ciuill hatred ended was (1837-46).⁶⁸

For the minor poet Sir John Beaumont, the site of Richmond's victory was 'a Glorious stage' (395),⁶⁹ and in Camden's *Britannia* we find the following note,

⁶⁶ In the *Famous Victories* Henry V is unhistorically joined at Agincourt by the earls of Derby, Kent, Nottingham, Huntingdon and Northumberland. A similar situation occurs in *Edward III*, a play now partly attributed to Shakespeare, where Derby is given a prominent role at Crecy, one imagines to flatter Shakespeare's patron. Although the title did not pass to the family until 1485, by 1590 it was synonymous with the Stanleys. See Melchiori's introductory notes in the New Cambridge edition of the play.

⁶⁷ Sidney Shanker has drawn attention to the fact that the Blunts owned land in Strafford, and the family was not knighted until 1588. See 'Shakespeare Pays some Compliments', *Modern Language Notes* 63 (1948) 540-41.

⁶⁸ John Sharrock, *The valiant actes And victorious Battailles of the English nation* (1585).

⁶⁹ Sir John Beaumont, *Bosworth Field* (1629). Although this poem was published after Beaumont's death, it has been suggested that it was written in 1603 to celebrate the accession of James and the union of the two crowns.

Bosworth, near this town, within the memory of our grandfathers, the right of the crown of *England* happen'd to be finally determined by a battel. For there Henry Earl of Richmond, with a small body of men, gave battel to Richard the third, who in a most wicked manner had usurp'd the Crown; and in the midst of blood and slaughter, was with joyful acclamations saluted King, having by his valour deliver'd England from the dominion of a tyrant, and by his prudence eas'd the nation from the disquiet of civil dissension.⁷⁰

In Speed's *Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain* (1611), the site of the battle is marked on the map of Leicestershire as 'King Richard's field', and an inscription in the right hand margin reads,

Nere Bosworth upon Redemere the last battail betwixt the families of York and Lancaster was fought, whose civil discentions had spent England more blode than twice had done the winning of Fraunce. There Richard the tyrant & usurper by Henry Earl of Richmond with 4000 men were slaine.⁷¹

In 1485 Richard may well have been deserted by a large number of nobles, but he did have some support -- a point acknowledged in the final moments of *Richard III*. Although 'bought and sold' (5.3.304), both John Howard, Duke of Norfolk, and his son Thomas, Earl of Surrey, remain loyal until the end. The result is, as Berry notes, Shakespeare dramatises Bosworth as a battle between the 'forces of the South and West, united with the symbolic representatives of London and the Midlands (Richmond and Oxford)', who defeat a king 'let down by the North and inadequately defended by his own South East.'⁷² This is very much in keeping with the image fostered throughout the tetralogy in which Norfolk and Surrey (East Anglia and the south) have been portrayed as solidly Yorkist.

Even allowing for the fact that events dramatised in the final moments of *Richard III* were well-known, the foregrounding of the Duke of Norfolk's unswerving loyalty to Richard requires further comment. Writing in 1548, Hall might have felt reasonably safe in drawing attention to Norfolk as the main ally of Richard, particularly as the second duke, a direct relation of the figure who fell at Bosworth was, at the time, languishing in the Tower. Still, it is

⁷⁰ Camden, *Britannia*, 444.

⁷¹ Speed, *The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain* (1611). It is noticeable how in both passages Camden and Speed reiterate the view that the last Yorkist king was a tyrant.

⁷² Berry, *Shakespeare and the Awareness*, 28-9.

also clear that Hall was having it both ways, for Norfolk's role at Bosworth is qualified somewhat by the following statement:

Yet all this notwithstandinge he regarded more his othe his honour and promyse made to king Richard, lyke a gentleman and a faythfull subjecte to his prince absented not him selfe from hys mayster, but as he faythfully tyved under hym, so he manfully dyed with hym li hys greate fame and lawde.⁷³

It is an image that conveniently glosses over the fact that Norfolk had been one of the main beneficiaries of Richard's usurpation and had carried the crown at Richard's coronation. However, in Shakespeare's *Richard III* the role of Norfolk is not qualified. Norfolk's first appearance in the play is alongside Richard:

K. Rich. Here pitch our tent, even here in Bosworth field.
My Lord of Surrey, why look so sad?

Sur. My heart is ten times lighter than my looks.

K. Rich. My Lord of Norfolk -

Nor. Here most gracious liege (5.3.1-3).

Q differs markedly at this point by replacing Surrey with Catesby:

King. Here pitch our tentes, even here in Bosworth field,
Whie, how now Catesbie, whie lookst thou so bad.

Cat. My hart is ten times lighter then my lookes.

King. Norfolke, come hether. Norfolke, we must have knockes,
ha, must we not?

Norff. We must both give, and take, my gracious Lord (L2r).

As Hammond suggests, the need to reduce the number of actors appearing in this scene may lie behind the elimination of Surrey.⁷⁴ But there is more at stake here than economy; the omission of Surrey serves to emphasise the role of Norfolk as Richard's principal ally among

⁷³ Hall, *Union*, 419.

⁷⁴ Hammond, *Richard III*, 15.

the nobility throughout the closing scenes.⁷⁵ As to why in 1591 Shakespeare was perhaps willing to present this regional magnate in such a manner may not be entirely based on historical precedent, but an issue of contemporary significance, namely, theatrical patronage.

Pertinent here is the biographical history of the Howard family following the events dramatised in the play. While Norfolk was killed at Bosworth, his son the Earl of Surrey was captured. Later rehabilitated by Henry VII, he succeeded to his father's title after commanding the English forces at Flodden in 1513. Still, the Howards remained rather adept at falling foul of Tudor monarchs -- Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, scholar and poet, was executed by Henry VIII in 1547, a fate Howard's father, the second Duke of Norfolk, narrowly missed, when the day before his scheduled execution Henry VIII died. The family's troubles did not end there: the fourth Duke of Norfolk was put to death in 1572 for his involvement in the Ridolfi plot. As a result, the title lay dormant until well after *Richard III* was written.

But the fall of the fourth duke did not witness the demise of the Howards. The grandson of the second duke was none other than Charles Howard, Lord Effingham, made Lord Admiral in 1585, and patron of the Admiral's men -- the company that would emerge as the main rivals to the Lord Chamberlain's men after the re-organisation of 1594 led to the creation of the duopoly within London.⁷⁶ In an immensely popular play, if the number of quartos printed before 1623 is any indication, and one that would surely have come to the attention of the Admiral's men, it is perplexing as to why such a powerful figure seems not to have objected to the portrayal of his ancestors as allies of Richard III on the popular stage. Of course, the Lord Admiral may have been less sensitive to the representation of his ancestors on the stage than his fellow peer Lord Cobham, but as Edmund Tilney was both a cousin and client of Howard, one might have expected some disapproval from the Master of Revels. It remains possible that the portrayal of the Lord Admiral's ancestor as a loyal supporter of the last Yorkist King might represent an early example of inter-company rivalry, as would surface later in the decade when, in answer to the controversy surrounding Shakespeare's

⁷⁵ The only question is when does Norfolk leave the stage, as both *F* and *Q* make no provision for his exit, although it is clearly required before the single combat between Richmond and Richard at 5.5. On this point see Hammond, *Richard III*, 328, and Wells and Taylor, *Textual Companion*, 249.

⁷⁶ Gurr, *Shakespearian Companies*, 77-8.

Falstaff/Oldcastle in *Henry IV*, the Admiral's men responded by presenting a more favourable portrayal of Cobham's ancestor in their *Sir John Oldcastle*. Although we can only speculate as to the role of Norfolk in the lost Henslowe play *Richard Crookback*, in writing *Richard III* for either Strange's, Derby's or Pembroke's Men (one cannot be certain due to the confused and fragmentary records pertaining to the years 1590-94) Shakespeare may have been under no obligation to alter or gloss the role of the patron of a rival company.

Summary

Is it then possible to summarise the image of middest England as presented in the first tetralogy? Certainly, the petitioners, commons and townsmen of both Suffolk and Hertfordshire are never identified as frauds, cheats or murderers. In this respect, they fare better than their counterparts in Kent. But it is not simply a question of behaviour. Taken as a collective, the role of those identified with various villages and towns in this part of the world offers another perspective on the regional world. The momentary foregrounding of a complaint against enclosure represents an acknowledgment of one of the central issues facing the communities in this part of England during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Racked by civil war, invaded by disgruntled nobles or exiled kings at the head of armies consisting of French soldiers or 'Hollanders' (4.8.2), one of the recurring images in the *Henry VI* plays is the attempt to counter invasions of this region by outsiders. This is particularly the case during the scenes localised at St Albans. As I have previously outlined it first surfaces in *2 Henry VI* when frauds from Berwick attempt to trick both the King and the townsmen of St Albans. In both *2* and *3 Henry VI* it is the proud northern lord, Clifford of Cumberland, who is the scourge of the Yorks, the earl of Warwick and his 'southern power' (3H6 1.1.155). In *Richard III* events in this part of England determine the fortunes of royal dynasties. Reversing what occurred in the *Henry VI* plays, an army drawn almost entirely from outside this part of the world march across middle England and rescue the kingdom from tyranny.

Understandably what is (and what is not) dramatised throughout the tetralogy is dictated by Shakespeare's chronicle sources and the amount of material that could be included in 'two hours' traffic'. Nevertheless, it is clear that it is not just 'history' that informs the image of 'middest' England as presented in these plays. External factors such as the

political climate of the 1590s, theatrical patronage and the possibility that plays were adapted for regional touring may well account for the way Shakespeare characterises those nobles and commoners who, by various devices, are identified with this part of the kingdom.

CHAPTER FOUR

We have six also that have their place westward towards Wales, whose names insue, Gloucester, Hereford, Worcester, Shropshire, Stafford and Chestershire... In Wales furthermore are thirteene.

William Harrison (1577)

The Status of Wales and the English Border Shires

William Harrison's partition of the western parts of the Tudor kingdom into what is essentially two regions, the six English counties 'westwards towards Wales' and the 'thirteene' of Wales, represents an acknowledgment of the cultural and ethnic differences that existed between the two nations. Yet politically speaking, by the time that the first tetralogy appeared, Wales had long been a part of the English kingdom. In 1536 the Principality of Wales was fully absorbed into what the preamble to the Act of Union termed the 'Imperial crown of this realm', and since 1543 the Council for the Marches, from their permanent headquarters at Ludlow, had been granted jurisdiction over the whole of Wales and the English border counties of Gloucester, Hereford, Worcester, Shropshire and, until 1569, Cheshire.¹ By the last decade of the sixteenth century, the Shropshire towns of Ludlow, Shrewsbury and Oswestry were respectively the administrative capital of Wales, the educational centre of the region and the staple through which the majority of Welsh cloth was sold.² As R.E. Ham suggests, in Shakespeare's day these English 'border shires belonged to the same geographical region as Wales.'³

Interaction between the Welsh and their English neighbours was not confined to the border shires. In his *Description of Pembroke* (1603) George Owen writes how this most westerly of Welsh counties was

¹ Elton, *The Tudor Constitution*, 37. See also Williams, *The Welsh History Review*, 19-36.

² *Ibid.*, 32. The same point is made by Rowse, who notes that by the late sixteenth century the English town of Ludlow had become 'the political and social capital of Wales'. See *The Expansion of Elizabethan England*, 64.

³ R.E. Ham, 'The Four Shire Controversy', *Welsh Historical Review* Vol. 6 (1976-77) 381.

divided into two parts, that is the Englishry and the Welshry ... The upper part of the shire which I call the Welshry is inhabited with Welshmen ... But the countries of Roose, Castlemartin, Narberth and most of Daugleddu hundred (the bishop's lordships excepted) were wholly put to the fire and sword by Normans, Flemings and Englishmen, and utterly expelled the inhabitants thereof and peopled the country themselves, whose posterity remain there to this day, as may appear by their names, manners and language, speaking altogether the English and differing in manners, diet, building and tilling of the land from the Welshmen.⁴

In recognition of the close connections between Wales and English border counties during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, I intend to treat both areas as one in this chapter.

By the 1590s the Anglo-Welsh border lands and Wales no longer posed a serious problem for Tudor governments, the days of the over-mighty marcher lords (those possessing lands in the border area between England and Wales), having passed.⁵ It would be misleading, however, to suggest that the border counties and Wales were completely subdued; disorder and violence continued to plague this part of the kingdom, but no more so than in parts of regional England and it was with some justification that Thomas Churchyard, in his *Worthines of Wales* (1587), could write

The Scots seeke bloud, and beare a cruell mynd,
Ireland growes nought, the people waxe unkynd:
England God wot, hath learnde such leawdnesse late,
That Wales methinks, is now the soundest state.

Largely responsible for this change had been the work of the aforementioned Council of the Marches, whose president between 1586 till his death in 1601 was Henry Herbert, second Earl of Pembroke, descendant of the Herbert who appears with Richmond at Milford Haven in *Richard III*, and patron of the theatrical company whose name appears on the title page of the quarto of *3 Henry VI* and other plays. Indeed so successful had this body been in promoting 'good quiet' in Wales and the borderlands that the administration of other outlying regions in the Elizabethan kingdom was modelled on the Welsh Council.⁶

But the area familiar to Harrison and his contemporaries as 'westwards towards Wales' and the 'thirteene' counties of late Tudor Wales is not that described by Hall and

⁴ George Owen, *The Description of Pembrokeshire* (1603) 41-42.

⁵ See Rowse, *Expansion*, 77. Williams, *The Welsh History Review*, 26.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

Holinshed in their chronicle histories. Nor is it that portrayed by Shakespeare in the first tetralogy. Put simply, Harrison's two-fold division did not exist before 1536. Prior to that date, large areas of the English counties of Gloucester, Hereford and Shropshire were marcher land. As the Welsh historian Glanmor Williams notes, 'from 1284 to 1536 there was no political unit known as Wales. The country was divided between Principality and the March.'⁷

While the origins of this division need not concern us here, it is necessary to note that the area which formed the Principality, being the counties of Anglesey, Caernavon, and Merioneth in the north-west and Cardigan and Carmarthen in the south, was a feudal demesne of the crown, ruled directly either by the King of England, the Prince of Wales or royal officials from the town of Ludlow. In contrast, the marcher lands, lying between the Principality and England were, in effect, independent fiefdoms in which the particular lord held semi-regal powers, including the right to raise armies. This two-fold division had far reaching consequences during the Wars of the Roses. According to Williams,

Broadly speaking the position appeared to be that Lancastrian support was strongest in west Wales, in the Principality shires - north and south - where the Crown had hitherto been able to manipulate official appointments in its own interest, and in the Duchy of Lancaster lordships of the south-west, where most of the local gentry also looked to it for patronage. The Yorkists, thanks to the vast Mortimer inheritance, largely dominated the eastern and central Marches.⁸

This polarisation of the English border lands and Wales into Lancastrian and Yorkist zones is crucial to our understanding of Shakespeare's portrayal of this region in the first tetralogy. So too is the importance of the Mortimer inheritance. Centred on the Welsh Marches, it would provide the legitimacy and the power base that enabled the Yorkists to seize the throne in 1461. Straddling both sides of what the Elizabethans would recognise as the Anglo-Welsh border, the role of the Mortimer inheritance in the three parts of *Henry VI* and *Richard III* forms the first part of this discussion. It is followed by an examination of the

⁷ Glanmor Williams, *Recovery Reorientation and Reformation: Wales c. 1415-1642*, Clarendon Press, (Oxford:1987), 31. The division of Wales had its origins in the Treaty of Ruthin imposed by Edward I in 1283. The governance of Wales was further complicated by the existence of the two county palatinates of Pembroke and Glamorgan.

⁸ *Ibid*, 183.

representation of those characters who are identified in various ways throughout the plays with Wales and the borderlands.

'the ... torch of Mortimer' (1 Henry VI 2.5.122)

First alluded to by the 'dying Mortimer' (1H6 2.5.2) as he recounts how, following the deposition of Richard II,

... the Mortimers,
In whom the title rested, were suppressed (2.5.90-1),

the Mortimer inheritance reverberates throughout the *Henry VI* plays. Providing the basis of the Yorkist claim to the throne, it is evoked again in *2 Henry VI* when, during a long passage in 2.2., the Duke of York persuades Warwick as to the legitimacy of his right to wear the Crown of England.⁹ In *3 Henry VI* the outlining of York's descent from 'Roger Mortimer, Earl of March' (1.1.106) is one of the factors that forces Henry to admit that his 'title's weak' (1.1.134) and to adopt York as his heir.

As Leggatt argues, while the Duke of York's claim to the throne is legally 'strong', his actions are often questionable.¹⁰ Hence, while York is praised for his 'late exploits done in the heart of France' (1.1.196), in many respects, this over-mighty subject is characterised as a powerful thug who will play a central role in the destruction of 'good duke Humphrey' (1.1.193), stir up popular rebellion in England in order to further his own ambition, and use his power to overawe Parliament.

The Mortimer inheritance may make York the greatest marcher lord in the play; it also makes him a potential threat to his rivals, Suffolk and Somerset. With his sights set firmly on the throne, York's 'far-fet policy' (2H6 3.1.293) is stifled somewhat when the impeachment of Gloucester is interrupted by a Post who announces,

⁹ The garbled version of this speech that appears in *Q* is cited by both Peter Alexander and Madeleine Doran as evidence that this text is a memorial reconstruction put together by various actors. On this point see Hattaway, *The Second Part of King Henry VI*, 215-217. The constant foregrounding of one of the principal causes of the Wars of the Roses serves to highlight the degree to which these plays, although part of a tetralogy, can stand alone.

¹⁰ Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Political Drama*, 14.

Great Lords, from Ireland am I come again,
To signify that rebels there are up
And put the Englishmen unto the sword (3.1.282-84).

In response York is commanded by Winchester to

... lead a band of men,
Collected choicely, from each county some,
And try your hap against the Irishman (3.1.310-13).¹¹

Although temporarily removed from the centre of power, this powerful and dangerous figure continues to pose a danger to the stability of the realm by using his time in Ireland to

... nourish a mighty band,
I will stir up in England some black storm
Shall blow ten thousand souls to heaven or hell (3.1.348-50).

York's role in the Jack Cade rebellion is made abundantly clear a few lines later as he describes how Cade will 'make commotion' (3.1.358) in England in order to

... perceive the commons' mind,
How they affect the house and claim of York (3.1.371-72).

With the death of York at Wakefield, the Mortimer inheritance passes to his son Edward, the 'Earl of March' (2.1.179); a title that derived from his status as a Marcher Lord in turn serves to identify this character as a major landholder in the Anglo-Welsh borders -- a point alluded to earlier in the scene when he is joined by his allies 'in the marches' (2.1.140). One should not doubt that such an association could have been made by the play's original audience. Although the reforms of the mid-sixteenth century had effaced the distinction between the Marches and the Principality, according to Ham, the word 'marchers' was still used by the Elizabethans as a means of describing both the 'defunct marcher lordships' and the border region.¹²

¹¹ In 1447 York was appointed Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. As a sizable landholder, primarily through his inheritance of the Mortimer estates and descent from Lionel, duke of Clarence (as detailed earlier in the play), his popularity ensured that in contrast to many, both before and after, York did have some success in restoring a semblance of order to Ireland. York's role in Ireland is discussed at some length by Art Cosgrove in chapter XIX of his *A New History of Ireland Vol. 2, Medieval Ireland 1169-1534* (Oxford:1987).

¹² Ham, *Welsh History Review*, 389. In correspondence found in the state papers and in the preambles to acts of Parliament the term Marchers of Wales is often used to describe the border region.

Proclaimed as 'England's royal king' (3.1.88), Edward will succeed where his father failed, but while as Edward IV he replaces an incompetent king, the promise of a new order is undermined somewhat by his role at the battle of Tewkesbury. Dramatised as a conflict between Margaret's 'powers ... raised in Gallia' (5.3.7-8), supplemented by 'Somerset and Oxford' (5.3.15) and a Yorkist army whose

... strength will be augmented
In every county as we go along (5.3.23-4),

Tewkesbury represents the one scene in the tetralogy localised in the area 'Westwards towards Wales' (although early in *3 Henry VI* an allusion to the appearance of the three suns at 2.1 has prompted modern editors to locate the scene on 'A plain near Mortimer's Cross in Hertfordshire').¹³ The Yorkist victory at Tewkesbury does signal the end of the period of tumultuous broils' (5.5.1), at least in this play, yet Shakespeare departs from the chronicles by having Edward 'stab' (5.5.38.SD) the Prince of Wales, an act that mirrors the murder of Rutland by the Lancastrians at Towton earlier in the play and serves to confirm that the Yorks are little better than those they have replaced.¹⁴

The Representation of the Welsh

While the identification of the York's lineal decent from the Mortimers in these plays is historically accurate, the same cannot be said when another character, the Kentish rebel Jack Cade, 'proclaims himself Lord Mortimer' (*2H6* 4.4.28). Cade's appropriation of such a title is reported by the chroniclers, who also imply that the Cade rebellion was instigated, in part, by the Duke of York in order to destabilise the Lancastrian regime and further his own aims (see above). Cade's guise as his alter ego 'Lord Mortimer' (4.6.6), an attempt to pass himself off

¹³ See *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 678. In *3 Henry VI* the failure to dramatise the Yorkist victory at the battle of Mortimer's Cross, fought in Herefordshire in 1461, is described by Cairncross as 'a substantial omission', but one which, as the same writer suggests, has the effect of giving the impression of a run of Lancastrian victories before the tide turns in favour of the Yorks. See *King Henry VI, Part 3*, 33.

¹⁴ In *Richard III* it is Richard himself who is held responsible for Edward's stabbing, a charge he appears to gladly accept during his wooing of Anne at 1. 2.

as a member of one of the principal families of the Welsh Marches, is ridiculed by Dick the butcher and his companions:

- Dick. Only that the laws of England may come out of [Cade's] mouth,
- Holland. Mass, 'twill be sore law then, for he was thrust in the mouth with a spear, and 'tis not whole yet.
- Smith. Nay, John, it will be stinking law, for his breath stinks with eating toasted cheese (4.7.6-11).

Along with leeks, goats and Metheglin, a form of herb flavoured Mead, a fondness for 'eating toasted cheese' (a dish when served on bread commonly known as Welsh rarebit or 'rabbit') was considered by many in Shakespeare's day to be a characteristic unique to the Welsh. Indeed, this alleged propensity for eating cheese was used by Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights as a means of satirising the Welsh in the popular theatre, and occurs in many plays of the period.¹⁵ In Shakespeare's own *The Merry Wives of Windsor* we find the character Ford remarking that he would rather 'trust Parson Hugh the Welshman with my cheese ... than my wife with herself' (2.2.302-05). The deflation of Jack Cade's pretensions, who as Mortimer appropriates an identity beyond that of his social and geographical status, is not only a moment of comedy. Smith's allusion to Cade's lack of personal hygiene represents the only occasion in the whole tetralogy that we find any ridiculing of Welsh mannerisms or idiosyncrasies.

Writing in the early part of this century, Frederick Harries drew attention to Shakespeare's 'singularly friendly attitude towards the Welsh nation', a perception that can be equally applied to the construction of Welsh regional identity in the first tetralogy.¹⁶ What could

¹⁵ In his *Topographical Dictionary*, Sugden provides an extensive list of such plays under his entry for Wales. On the presentation of the Welsh generally in the popular theatre see E.J. Miller, 'Wales and the Tudor Drama', *The Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1949), 170-183.

¹⁶ *Shakespeare and the Welsh*, (London:1919) 5. While there is some gentle satirising of the Welsh in *Henry V*, the only occasion in the history plays we find a negative portrayal is in *Henry IV* when it is reported that

... noble Mortimer,
Leading the men of Hertfordshire to fight

be considered the plays' pro-Welsh sentiment is established early in *1 Henry VI* when Exeter, repeating a prophecy found in the chronicles, predicts

That Henry born at Monmouth should win all,
And Henry born at Windsor should lose all (3.1.197-98).

As an exemplar of ideal kingship, an image his son Henry VI can never emulate, the reputation of Henry V is a recurring motif in the *Henry VI* plays. In *2 Henry VI* the 'name of Henry the Fifth' (4.8.34) is still powerful enough to make the Kentish rebels desert Jack Cade and seek pardons from the king. Later in *3 Henry VI*, Oxford recalls how

... Henry the Fift,
Who by his prowess conquered all France (3.3. 85-6).

In the final play of the tetralogy Richard's plea that

If we be conquered, let men conquer us,
And not these bastard Britains, whom our fathers
Have in their own land beaten, bobb'd and thumped,
And in record left them the heirs of shame (5.3.332-35),

spoken during his 'oration to his army' before Bosworth, represents a further allusion to Henry V's victories in France.¹⁷

But while Henry V did 'win all', the claim of his Welsh descent, expressed more overtly in the second tetralogy, was in many respects a fiction and a propaganda exercise.¹⁸ Henry's title of Prince of Wales was only reliant upon his status as the king's eldest son. Although Henry was born at Monmouth, this part of the kingdom was Marcher land belonging to the Duchy of Lancaster. Coming into possession of the crown with the accession of Henry IV in

Against the irregular and wild Glendower,
Was by the rude hands of that Welshman taken,
A thousand of his people butchered,
Upon whose dead corpse' there was such misuse,
Such beastly shameless transformation
By those Welshwomen done as may not be
Without much shame retold or spoken of (1.1.38-46).

¹⁷ The same point is made by Hammond, *Richard III*, 326.

¹⁸ See 4.7 in *Henry V*.

1399, the various lands that formed the Duchy remained a 'constitutional anomaly' -- a detail alluded to early in *3 Henry VI* when Westmorland identifies Henry as 'both King and Duke of Lancaster' (1.1.87).¹⁹

Even after the abolition of the marches in 1536 and the subsequent creation of Monmouthshire, the status of the area remained ambiguous. Part of the Welsh diocese of Llandruff, and subject to the Council in the Marches, Monmouthshire lay outside the administrative boundary of Wales. As J.D. Mackie notes, the county was placed under the 'jurisdiction of the English courts, and was treated as an English shire and given two knights and two burgesses.'²⁰ While a number of Shakespeare's contemporaries (including Harrison) would consider Monmouthshire as one of the thirteen shires of Wales, the idea was not universally shared. Thomas Wilson in his *State of England* (1600) records only 12 shires in that 'part of England which is called Wales', a list which omits Monmouthshire.²¹ According to the modern editor of Speed's *The Theatre of Great Britain*, the author 'prevaricated over including Monmouthshire in Wales', before eventually deciding 'to include the county in the regional map, but exclude the town of Monmouth from his description of Welsh shire towns in the borders'²² -- a situation reflected on Speed's map of Wales where Monmouth is clearly shown as lying on the English side of the river Wye.

Less problematical is the origin or the claims of the character described in *3 Henry VI* as 'England's hope' (4.6.68), a figure whose presence will increasingly dominate the closing moments of the tetralogy; Henry, Earl of Richmond. Born at Pembroke castle in 1457, Richmond used his Welsh roots to galvanise and maintain support both before and after his accession to the throne. Surprisingly though, while Shakespeare foregrounds the 'Welshness' of those who support Richard's rival, a point I will return to presently, only once is Richmond identified as a 'Welshman' (*RIII* 4.4.476). One might suggest that by the 1590s reiterating the

¹⁹ For a detailed discussion on the status of the Duchy of Lancaster and its role in Shakespeare's history plays see Dutton, *Shakespeare Quarterly*.

²⁰ Mackie, *The Early Tudors*, 367. Philip Jenkins in his *History of Modern Wales 1536-1990*, (London:1992) refers to Monmouthshire as the 'English county' 82-83.

²¹ Smith, *State of England*, 11.

²² *The Counties of Britain: A Tudor Atlas by John Speed*, ed., Nigel Nicolson (London:1988) 215-16.

Tudor's Welsh origins was unnecessary, perhaps more pressing was the need to restate his Lancastrian heritage, a point made when the ghost of Clarence addresses Richmond as 'Thou offspring of the House of Lancaster' (5.3.136). This claim, which Hammond describes as 'a conventional Tudor piety, but of course an untruth',²³ again surfaces in the final speech of the play as Richmond identifies both himself and Elizabeth as 'the true succeeders of each royal House' (5.5.30).

Turning to Richmond's role in the play, Shakespeare's one significant alteration to his source material is illuminating. It is the Stanleys who prior to Bosworth seek out Richmond and not, as the chroniclers clearly state, the other way round (the role of the Stanley family in these plays is discussed at length in the following chapter).²⁴ Although at one point in *Richard III* Richmond

... strive[s] with troubled thoughts to take a nap,
Lest leaden slumber peize me down to-morrow (5.3.104-05),

as Bullough notes, gone is the despondent and nervous Henry as found in Hall.²⁵ In his place, Shakespeare presents a more decisive and dynamic Richmond, a characterisation that in some measure serves to offset what is a largely unattractive portrayal of the first Tudor king.

The Earls of Pembroke

The role of the earls of Pembroke also helps fashion a particular image of the Welsh in the tetralogy. It first must be stated, however, that the earl who appears in *3 Henry VI* is not the same character who later surfaces in *Richard III*. The Pembroke of *3 Henry VI* is William Herbert, one of the principal supporters of the Yorkist cause in Wales, who was described in one fifteenth-century English chronicle as a 'cruel man ... prepared for any crime' who along with his followers would 'subdue the realm of England and totally plunder it'.²⁶ Raised to the

²³ *Richard III*, 331.

²⁴ See Hall, *Union*, 413.

²⁵ Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (London:1975) Vol. III, 247. This point is also noted by Hammond in his edition of *Richard III*, see the textual note at 313.

²⁶ Williams, *Recovery, Reorientation and Reformation* 198.

title by Edward VI in 1468, Herbert would be executed after being taken prisoner at the battle of Edgecote (also known as Banbury) the following year -- the battle to which Warwick refers when he promises to restore the crown to Henry VI once he has 'fought with Pembroke and his followers' (4.3.54).

Pembroke's one appearance occurs when he enters with Edward at 4.1.7.SD, before being despatched to 'levy men, and make prepare for War' (4.2.131). Such a minor figure would hardly warrant our attention if it were not for the fact that his namesake and direct descendant was none other than Henry Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, Lord-Lieutenant of Wales, President of the Council of the Marches and patron of theatrical companies.²⁷ With Pembroke's Men owning *Q* of *3 Henry VI*, it should come as no surprise that the role of his namesake and direct ancestor during the Wars of the Roses is glossed somewhat in the play, particularly as the company is recorded as playing at Ludlow and Shrewsbury in Shropshire, and Bewdley in Worcestershire in 1592-93, both counties in which the earl was very influential.²⁸

In *Richard III* the 'redoubled Pembroke' (4.5.14), who lands with Richmond at Milford Haven, is the Lancastrian holder of the title, Jasper Tudor, uncle of Richmond. Portrayed as a loyal supporter of the future Henry VII, the need to alter or suppress the role of this Earl of Pembroke does not arise. However, Pembroke is not the only character who needs to be considered here; playing a prominent role in the closing moments of the play is 'Sir Walter Herbert' (4.5.12), a character who shares the same surname as the Elizabethan earl. In *F*, the stage direction -- 'enter Richmond, Oxford, Blunt, Herbert and others, with drum and colours' (TLN 3023/5.3.18) -- indicates that Herbert, in contrast to Pembroke, appears on stage

²⁷ The ancestry of the Herberts, Earls of Pembroke, requires some explanation. The son of the first Yorkist earl was 'persuaded' to renounce the earldom by Edward IV in 1479 and take the lesser title of earl of Huntingdon. The Lancastrian Earl of Pembroke retained the title until his death in 1495. It was revived in 1551 when Sir William Herbert, a grandson of an illegitimate son of the first Yorkist earl, was granted the title. It was from this line the Elizabethan earl was descended.

²⁸ As Somerset notes, of the surviving records alluding to Pembroke's Men 'eighteen out of thirty ... place them in the Marches or parts of the country over which he exercised powers as Lord-Lieutenant.' See 'The Lords President, Their Activities and Companies: Evidence From Shropshire'. *Elizabethan Theatre* Vol.10, 1988, 110.

alongside Richmond. Perhaps leaving nothing to chance, Shakespeare reiterates that Herbert and Pembroke are on the 'right' side when, on the eve of Bosworth, Richmond commands

My Lord of Oxford - you, Sir William Brandon -
And you, Sir Walter Herbert - stay with me,
The Earl of Pembroke keeps his regiment;
Good Captain Blunt, bear my good-night to him,
And by the second hour in the morning
Desire the Earl to see me in my tent (5.3.27-32).

Interestingly, *Q* omits the first two lines of Richmond's speech, thus dropping the reference to Herbert, a variation that read alongside *Q*'s earlier stage direction 'Enter Richmond with the Lordes' (L2v), has led the Oxford editors to suggest that Herbert did not appear in this scene.²⁹ This may well be the case, yet the omission of Oxford and Herbert serves to amplify the image of Pembroke as one of Richmond's main allies.

While those who form the backbone of Richmond's army in the play may be drawn directly from Hall's account, Shakespeare's foregrounding of the role of the Welsh in the demise of the last Yorkist king, particularly Pembroke and Herbert, reveals how more immediate concerns such as theatrical patronage and regional touring may inform the way in which the role in history of one of the most powerful families in Wales and the border region is presented in these plays.

The Role of the Welsh Marcher Levies

Created by Anglo-Norman barons in the eleventh century, the Marches functioned as a buffer zone protecting lowland England from what many contemporary writers saw as the barbarity of the Welsh. At least, that is how it seemed to the author of *The Libelle of Englyshe Polycye* who, in or around 1430, was moved to write the following lines;

Beware of Walys, Criste Ihesu mutt us kepe,
That it make not oure childe childe to wepe,
Ne us also, if so it go his waye
By unawarennesse; sethen that many a day
Men have be ferde of here rebellione
By grete tokenes and ostentacione.³⁰

²⁹ Wells and Taylor, *Textual Companion*, 246.

³⁰ Cited by R.A. Griffiths in *Fifteenth Century England 1399-1509: Studies in politics and society*. ed., R.L Storey (Manchester:1974) 145.

In 1470, the English Lord Berkeley complained that Thomas Talbot's Welsh levies would 'destroy and hunt my own nation and country.'³¹ Hall provides a similar view of the region's population when he reports how Edward V

... at the deathe of his father kepte householde at Ludlowe, for his father had sente hym thether for justice to be dooen in the Marches of Wales, to the end that by the autoritee of his presence, the wilde Welshmenne and eivell disposed personnes should refrain from their accustomed murthers and outrages.³²

Little wonder that during the fifteenth century the Welsh seemed more of a threat than the northern English who, as Williams suggests, 'ranked with English southerners much as barbaric highlanders did with eighteenth century Lowland Scots.'³³

In the plays' fifteenth-century world no such fear is expressed. This is nowhere better demonstrated than in the closing moments of the Cade rebellion as a messenger reports that

The Duke of York is newly come from Ireland,
And with a puissant and a mighty power
Of galloglasses and stout kerns
Is marching hitherward in proud array,
And still proclaimeth, as he comes along,
His arms are only to remove from thee
The Duke of Somerset, whom he terms a traitor (2H6 4.9.24-30).³⁴

³¹ Williams, *Recovery, Reorientation and Reformation*, 198.

³² Hall *Union*, 347. Shakespeare seems to draw on this passage in *Richard III*, when on the death of Edward IV it is decided that

Forthwith from Ludlow the young prince be fet
Hither to London, to be crowned our King (2.2.121-22).

³³ Williams, *Recovery, Reorientation and Reformation*, 198.

³⁴ In *Q* the corresponding scene is substantially different. Here the messenger brings

... newes from Ireland,
The wilde Onele my Lords, is up in Armes,
With troupes of Irish Kernes that uncontrolled,
Doth plant themselves within the English pale (E 1r)

In 1447 York was ordered to Ireland to deal with the rebellion of the O'Neills. Yet, as Hattaway notes, as it appears in *Q* York's speech is unmistakably topical. In 1594, the very year the play was published, another rebellion led by the O'Neills broke out. The absence of this allusion to the rebellion in *F* is not surprising. The majority of commentators and critics now date this play

Dramatically the Duke's return from Ireland is perfectly feasible, considering that at 3.1 he was despatched there in order to quell a rebellion (see above). But while York did return from Ireland (albeit in 1452 and not 1450 as in *2 Henry VI*), and raise a 'mighty power' in order to remove Somerset, *F*'s stage direction - 'Enter York and his army of Irish with Drum and Colours' (5.1.0.SD), represents a major departure from the chronicles. As Hall clearly states

the duke of Yorke ... with helpe of his frendes, assembled a great army in the Marches of Wales, publishyng openly, that the cause of his mocio[n] was for the publique wealth of the realme, and great profit of the comons ...took his journey to London³⁵

The absence of any reference to York's Welsh Marcher army in *2 Henry VI* is not the only occasion that Shakespeare's judicious handling of his source material helps maintain an image of the Welsh that runs counter to that expressed by various writers in both the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

In both *3 Henry VI* and *Richard III* the Welsh frequently appear as saviours rather than destroyers. Regrouping in 'the marches' (2.1.140) after their defeats at Wakefield and the second battle of St. Albans, the Yorkist army that saves London from the Lancastrian hordes (see above) includes a contingent of 'loving Welshmen' (2.1.180). The portrayal of Welsh levies entering England in order to rescue the kingdom from the failures or excesses of a ruling monarch surfaces twice in *Richard III*. On the first occasion it is Buckingham who, fleeing to 'Brecknock' (4.2.122), leads a Welsh army in an ill-fated rebellion against Richard.³⁶ While Hall reports that Buckingham was 'accompanied with a greate power of wilde Welshmen' who

against their willes had rether therto enforced and compelled by lordely and streite commaundemente then by liberal wayges and gentle reteynoure, whiche

as c.1590-91 a period of relative calm in Ireland, a point that lends weight to the suggestion that *Q* is a later memorial reconstruction of *2 Henry VI* and not an early draft.

³⁵ Hall, Union, 225.

³⁶ In *Richard III* Buckingham's rebellion is motivated in part by his failure to secure 'the earidom of Herford, and the moveables' (4.2.90), a grant that historically would have extended his already substantial influence and power in both the Principality and March.

thinge was the verie occasion why they lefte hym desolate and cowardley forsoke hym,³⁷

the image of a reluctant mercenary army is never acknowledged in *Richard III*. Rather, as on earlier occasions, Shakespeare's selective use of his source material is such that the reputation of the Welsh remains untarnished. Hence, Buckingham's 'hardy Welshmen' (4.3.47) are not defeated in battle, but by a 'sudden flood and fall of water' (4.4.510) -- a point on which Shakespeare does follow Hall. Although this rebellion is a failure, the Welsh have provided the first tangible resistance to Richard's rule. However, Richard's reprieve is only temporary. Serving to heighten the crisis now facing Richard, the capture of Buckingham is immediately followed by news that the

Earl of Richmond
Is with a mighty power landed at Milford (4.4.532-3),

an event which is the prelude to the second and ultimately successful attempt by Welsh levies to liberate the English kingdom from the 'yoke of tyranny' (5.2.2).

Milford Haven

Situated on the coast of Pembrokeshire in the far west of Wales, to many of Shakespeare's contemporaries Milford Haven was not simply the place where Richmond had landed in 1485. By the 1590s the site of Richmond's landfall had, as Gillies remarks, become enshrined as the 'privileged *locus* of Tudor legend.'³⁸ It is a theme picked up by Camden, who in *Britannia* writes how

Milford Haven ... for which there is none in Europe, either more secure ... nor is the haven more celebrated for these advantages, than for Henry the Seventh of happy memory landing here; who from this place gave England (at that time languishing within civil wars) the signal of good hopes.³⁹

³⁷ Hall, *Union*, 394.

³⁸ Gillies, *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference*, 48.

³⁹ Camden, *Britannia*, 629.

George Owen, in his *Description of Pembrokeshire* (1602), describes Milford Haven as 'the most famous part of Christendom',⁴⁰ in the *Poly-Olbion* (1612) Drayton praises Milford Haven as 'this isle her greatest port doth call' (Song V, 275), an accolade usually reserved for London, and goes on to suggest that 'Milford is in every mouth renowned' (291). Although set in a different period, a similar view of Milford Haven appears in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, when Imogen speaks of

... the same blessed Milford. And by th' way
Tell me how Wales was made so happy as
T' inherit such a haven (3.2.59-61).

When Stanley inquires as to 'What men of name' (4.5.11) have resorted to Richmond an audience is left in no doubt as to the nationality of at least two of Richmond's supporters:

Sir Walter Herbert, a renowned soldier,
Sir Gilbert Talbot, Sir William Stanley,
Oxford, redoubted Pembroke, Sir James Blunt,
And Rhys-ap-Thomas with a valiant crew,
And many other of great name and worth (4.5.12-16).

The Welsh credentials of Rhys-ap-Thomas, 'ap' meaning 'son of', require no further explanation. Likewise the 'redoubted Pembroke' (4.5.14) referring in this instance to Jasper Tudor, Richmond's uncle is, by title at least, identifiably Welsh (see above). While those of Welsh origin provide a core of Richmond's 'mighty power' (4.4.533), the fact that a significant number of Richmond's supporters are associated with the former Yorkist stronghold of the area lying 'westward towards Wales' is a further indication that Richard's fortunes are on the wane. In details that may have been more apparent to an Elizabethan audience, Sir Walter Herbert was a member of the once staunchly Yorkist family, whose power and support lay in south-east Wales, including Monmouth and the surrounding districts. Sir Gilbert Talbot was not only Sheriff of the border county of Shropshire, but uncle to the Earl of Shrewsbury whose direct descendant, the seventh earl, appropriately named Gilbert Talbot, succeeded to the title in 1590. Similarly, the Stanleys were large landowners in Cheshire and North Wales.

⁴⁰ Owen, *Description of Pembrokeshire* (1602) 13.

One of the factors that led to Richmond's success in August 1485 was his ability to march through Wales and the Marches unchallenged.⁴¹ There is an allusion to this state of affairs in *Richard III*, when Richmond tells how

... far into the bowels of the land
Have we marched on without impediment (5.2.3-4).

However, Richmond's actions here represent more than a march into the 'centry of this isle' (5.2.11). With both parts of the region now seemingly united in their opposition to Richard, the distinction between a Lancastrian Principality and a Yorkist March, so evident in the *Henry VI* plays, no longer exists.

Summary

In the three *Henry VI* plays and *Richard III* Shakespeare appears to exercise a considerable degree of caution in regard to the portrayal of Welsh kings, nobles and even armies with a tentative link to Wales, a representation that runs counter to that often expressed by fifteenth and sixteenth-century chroniclers. The two exceptions are the Duke of York and his son the Earl of March. But rather tellingly these characters are not Welsh; as Marcher Lords they are identified with the area 'westward towards Wales.' Consequently, in the *Henry VI* plays the distinction between Principality and March is not only expressed in terms of Lancaster and York, but also by Shakespeare's characterisation of those identified as either Welshmen or Marcher Lords.

Perhaps more so than any other region so far considered in this study, Welsh regional identity in the tetralogy is constrained both by the past and the political situation in the 1590s. This is not to suggest that Shakespeare was an apologist for the Tudors or subscribed to the so-called 'Tudor myth', a point borne out by the down-playing of Richmond's regional origins in *Richard III*. Rather, in the climate of the 1590s writers, including playwrights, had good cause to be circumspect. Taking the example of the role afforded to Pembroke's ancestors in 3

⁴¹ This paragraph is based on Jacob's discussion of the events leading up to Bosworth in his *Fifteenth Century 1399-1485*. See also Albert Makinson, 'The Road to Bosworth Field, August 1485', *History Today* (April 1963) 239-249.

Henry VI and *Richard III*, one can suggest that commercial concerns may have influenced Shakespeare's representation of Wales, the 'area westwards towards Wales', and those characters associated with it throughout the tetralogy.

CHAPTER FIVE

'Beyond ... we have in like sort the other eight, as Derby, Yorke, Lancaster, Cumberland, Westmerland, Richemond, wherein are five wapentaxes, & when it is accopted as parcell of Yorkshire (out of which it is taken) then is it reputed for the whole Riding, Durham, Northumberland.'

William Harrison, *Description of England* (1577)

England's Northern Province

In early modern England the division between the highland regions of the north (in effect those counties that lay north of the river Trent) and the lowlands of southern England represented the most widely recognised regional division within the kingdom, and one that in many respects still exists today.¹ In the *Polychronicon*, Higden identified a number of factors that had contributed to the north's status as another England, namely

the grete distaunce of kynges of Englonde from hyt, whiche use moste the southe partes of that londe, returmerge not in to the costes of the northe but with a grete multitude. Also an other cause may be assignede, for the sowthe partes be more habundante in fertillite then the northe partes, moo peple in nowmbre, havenge also more plesaunte portes.²

Written from the perspective of the fourteenth century, Higden's remarks were equally valid in Shakespeare's day.³ In a largely agricultural society the infertile nature of the land remained

¹ Both Elizabethan writers and modern historians frequently refer to the distinctive nature of the north. Contemporary examples are cited throughout this chapter. Among the many recent studies on the region, see J.B. Black, *The Reign of Elizabeth 1558-1603* (Oxford:1936). Steven Ellis, 'Crown, Community And Government In The English Territories, 1450-1575,' *History Journal of the Historical Association*, Vol. 71 (1986). Frank Musgrove, *The North of England: A History from Roman times to the Present* (Oxford:1990) Helen M. Jewell, *The North-South divide: The Origins of Northern Consciousness in England*, Manchester: 1994. Recent scholarship has sought to question the degree to which northern society in both the Middle Ages and the era of the plays production could be considered as a backward and lawless region; on this point see B.W. Beckingsale, 'The Characteristics of the Tudor North,' *Northern History*, Vol. 4 1969, 67-83. A.J. Pollard, *North-Eastern England During the Wars of the Roses: Lay Society, War and Politics 1450-1500* (Oxford:1990).

² Higden, *Polychronicon*, 163.

³ The question of where the north begins is open to interpretation. For many Londoners the north of England begins at Watford. For what can be described as a less jaundiced view see

an impediment to the north's prosperity. Of course exceptions did exist. Even in the valleys of Northumberland a limited amount of arable farming was possible and, although agriculturally and economically parts of Yorkshire and Lancashire had more in common with the southern lowlands, both these counties were regarded as an integral part of England's northern province.

The distinctive nature of northern England was not just a question of variations in speech, agricultural activity or population density. The wide ranging difference between the north and south of the kingdom even extended to the quality of housing. In his *Description of England*, Harrison writes how in the south of the kingdom the 'mansion houses' are of better quality than 'some of the 'north parts of [the] countrie' because they have 'neither daire, stables, nor bruehouse annexed unto them under the same roofe.'⁴ On one level, it is an observation which supports the claim that by the last decade of the sixteenth century there was a clear economic division between an impoverished north and a more prosperous south. Writing at the turn of the century, Thomas Wilson drew attention to the economic difference between northern and southern England when he noted how

... about London and the Conutyys adoiyning, where their landes are sett to the highest, he is not counted of any great reckning unless he be betwixt 1,000 marks ... but Northward and farr off a gentleman of good reputacion may be content with 300 and 400 yerly.⁵

The poverty of northern England partly explains the continuation of bastard feudalism in the region during the sixteenth century, as a lack of viable alternatives (particularly for the young and the ambitious) drove many to seek a career in the household of the great land-owning families. While not unusual in Elizabethan England, what made this situation particularly dangerous in the north was the overriding loyalty of those retained by the local lord, particularly as those drawn into the service of the local magnate were, owing to the military requirements of the border region, often well versed in the martial arts.⁶

Guy, *Tudor England*. Davies, *Print, Peace and Protestantism 1450-1558*. Jewell, *The North South Divide*.

⁴ Harrison, *Description*, 316.

⁵ Wilson, *State of England*, 24.

⁶ Mervyn James, *Society, politics and culture: studies in early modern England* (Cambridge:1986) 291.

Since the reign of Edward IV the monarchy and government had become increasingly centralised in and around London and the south-east of the kingdom. The northern province, with the exception of the county of Lancashire, was administered through the Council of the North, a royal body originally constituted by Richard III, whose permanent home lay in York, then one of England's principal cities and capital of the north.⁷ Perhaps indicative of his ties with the region, Richard III visited York twice during his brief reign -- once following his coronation in 1483 and again in the following year to invest his son as Prince of Wales. Henry VII, in an effort to counter the lingering support for the last Yorkist king, had travelled throughout the north in 1487, journeying as far as Newcastle upon Tyne, but this was the last visit to the region by a reigning monarch until Henry VIII stayed at York in 1541. This reluctance of the early Tudors to visit the northern parts of their kingdom was matched by Elizabeth I. In an era when, as Greenblatt suggests, 'power depended upon its privileged visibility,'⁸ the queen never ventured further north than Stafford in the English midlands or further west than Bristol during her royal progresses. Little wonder that in his partition of the realm Harrison used the word 'beyond' to describe the northern counties. It is a perception that Shakespeare's dramatisation of the region in the first tetralogy does nothing to dispel, indeed it is often exploited.

'Berwick in the north'

The episode of the false miracle in *2 Henry VI* represents the first encounter with the north of England in the tetralogy, as the fraud Simpcox, quizzed by the King as to his place of birth, identifies himself as a native of 'Berwick in the north' (2.1.81). Although based on an incident that occurred in 1446, this moment of comic relief serves to highlight the distinctive nature of northern England in the 1590s.

During the corresponding scene in *Q*, Humphrey not only identifies the 'poore man' (Simpcox) as a native of Berwick, but hints as to the remoteness of the town:

⁷ See note 1.

⁸ Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: the Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*, (Berkeley:1988) 64.

Hump. Where was thou borne?

Poore man. At Barwicke sir, in the North.

Hump. At Barwicke, and come thus far for helpe (C2v).

Clearly, to be identified with Berwick was to be identified with a town located on the margins of the realm, geographically isolated from the rest of the kingdom. As 'the last town in England, and best fortified in all the realm',⁹ Berwick was a garrison town to which the Elizabethan government (not renowned for its excessive expenditure on defence) committed huge financial resources, estimated to have totalled over £14,000 per annum, in an effort to safeguard England's northern border. In his *Topographical Dictionary*, Sugden writes that Berwick was considered to 'constitute a country in itself and used to be mentioned separately as a part of Great Britain, which includes England, Scotland, Wales and Berwick-upon-Tweed'.¹⁰ Situated on the Anglo-Scottish border Berwick certainly was remote; the nearest English town of any size was Newcastle located fifty or so miles to the south (see map). The following lines found in William Baldwin's *Mirror For Magistrates* (1559)

The erle of Salisbury, and his sonne of Warwicke,
Wer matchless men from Barbary to Barwicke¹¹

suggest that Barwicke (Berwick) represents the limit of the 'known' world. Such a view was seemingly shared by a parliamentarian who, in a debate on county representation in 1571, remarked 'we who have never seen Berwick or St Michaels Mount [in Cornwall], can but blindly guess of them, albeit we look on maps.'¹²

The perception that Berwick was considered, in certain quarters, as the end of the earth is perhaps borne out by the experience of Robert Carey (the youngest son of Lord

⁹ Camden, *Britannia*, 863.

¹⁰ Sugden, *Topographical Dictionary*, 52. Indeed, Berwick upon Tweed did not constitute a part of Northumberland until its incorporation into the county in 1842.

¹¹ *Mirror For Magistrates*, ed. Lily B. Campbell (Cambridge:1938) 184. On the status and reputation of Berwick in the late Tudor period see Helen M. Wallace, 'Berwick in the reign of Queen Elizabeth', *English Historical Review* Vol. XLVI (1931) 79-88. M.C.Cross, 'Berwick on Tweed and the Neighbouring Parts of Northumberland on the eve of the Armada', *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 4th series, XLI (1963) 123-134. Susan M. Keeling, 'The Reformation in the Anglo-Scottish Border Counties', *Northern History* Vol. 15 (1979) 24-42.

¹² Cited by Morgan, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 146.

Hunsdon the Lord Chamberlain, cousin of the Queen and later patron of Shakespeare's company) who, in the summer of 1589 claimed to have accomplished the remarkable feat of travelling from London 'on foot in twelve days to Berwick', thus winning 'two thousand pounds'. This windfall, a huge sum of money in 1589, is suggestive of a belief among those with whom he wagered that a journey to England's most-northerly town was impossible -- it was a view not without foundation.¹³

Predominantly a highland zone, inaccessible during the winter months and seldom visited, Berwick and the border zone was a world far removed from the playhouses of Southwark and Shoreditch. Although there existed a fairly extensive transport system consisting of roads and rivers linking most regions in the latter part of the sixteenth century, Emery notes how

the network of intersecting roads stopped short at the trans-pennine connection from York to Chester. North of this cross-country line only the western and eastern post roads were recorded.¹⁴

Considering the topography of the region this is not surprising. In his *Britannia*, Camden describes the border region of Northumberland as an area of 'wastes' and 'mountain bogs' that, at times, was impossible to traverse.¹⁵

Contemporary allusions to the harsh environment and the remoteness of the border zone are to be found in private correspondence. Lord Hunsdon declared that the region was a 'myserable countrey',¹⁶ and during his tenure as Governor of Berwick he protested in a letter to the earl of Leicester that his posting to the town had contributed to his 'ill-health'. In 1600 his successor, Lord Willoughby, wrote to his wife lamenting on the 'tempestuousness of the

¹³ *The Memoirs of Sir Robert Carey*, ed., F.H. Mares (Oxford:1992) 12.

¹⁴ F.V. Emery 'England Circa 1600' in H.C. Darby, ed. *A New Historical Geography of England*. (Cambridge:1973) 288.

¹⁵ Cited by E.G.R. Taylor in his chapter titled 'Camden's England' in H.C. Darby's *Historical Geography of England before 1800*. (Cambridge:1936) 376.

¹⁶ Cited by Cuthbert Sharp, ed., *The Rising in the North: The 1569 Rebellion* (Shotton:1975) 113.

Cheviot hills ... whence the sun is so removed.'¹⁷ This is certainly a far cry from the glowing descriptions of the eastern and southern counties that were readily available to the Elizabethan public. Indeed, it is indicative of the border region's isolation from the rest of the kingdom that no individual chorography of a northern county would appear until the latter half of the seventeenth century. In the 1590s descriptions of the border zone would be restricted to general surveys of the kingdom which, more often than not, presented a less than flattering image of England's northern region.

In *2 Henry VI* the topical nature of the allusion to Berwick is not only predicated on the town's remoteness. The motivation behind the fraudulent behaviour of Simpcox and his wife, that they 'did it for pure need' (2.1.154) may be almost lost when this episode is reduced to the level of farce and acrobatic clowning, but the claim by Simpcox's wife that the fraud was perpetuated by hardship is suggestive of the dearth of food in parts of the north during the 1590s. While the shortage of grain, due to the harvest failures of 1592-93, was partly offset in the south of the kingdom by government action, in the far northern counties of Northumberland and Cumberland a number of deaths from starvation were recorded.¹⁸ Indeed, one of the ongoing problems facing the authorities at Berwick was the 'pure need' to maintain adequate supplies, particularly in times of increased tension. In an appendix to William Garrard's *The Art of War*, published in 1591, a 'short discourse' detailing the victualling of the garrison at Berwick reveals that grain and meat were being supplied from as far away as Lincolnshire and Kings Lynn in Norfolk.¹⁹ Significantly, evidence exists of starvation and deprivation suffered by the town's inhabitants due, in part, to the barrenness of the region and the general hostility of border clans, a situation that meant the town could only be supplied by sea, which often proved difficult in the winter. In 1561 Lord Grey reported to William Cecil

¹⁷ Rowse, whose opening chapter in *The Expansion of Elizabethan England* provides a valuable insight into the remote nature of the Border area during the late sixteenth century, cites both these complaints.

¹⁸ During the years of food shortages, due to a series of poor harvests, the authorities in London instigated a series of policies designed to ensure an adequate supply of basic foodstuffs for the population. No such action seems to have been taken in the far north of the country. On this point see Williams, *The Later Tudors*, 173. Wrightson, *English Society*, 145.

¹⁹ Captain Robert Hitchcock of Caversfield. *The English Army Rations in the time of Queen Elizabeth*, reproduced in *An English Garner: Social England Illustrated A Collection of XVIIth Century Tracts*, Intro., Andrew Lang (Westminster:1903).

(made Lord Burghley in 1571) on the 'very great extremities of want of money, want of victuals in store, the dearth of fish and other cates' and of 'soldiers starved with hunger and ready to perish.'²⁰ To what extent such complaints and reports were warranted remains questionable, as an alternative view of Berwick is offered by Fynes Morrison who in his *Itinerary*, writes that in April 1598, he

tooke a journey to ... Barwick, a Towne then very strongly fortified by the English, to restraine the sudden incursions of the Scots, and abounding with all things necessary for food, yea with many dainties, as Salmons and all kindes of shell-fish, so plentiful, as they were sold for very small prices. And here I found that for the lending of sixtie pound, there wanted not good citzens, who would give the lender a faire chamber and good dyet, as long as he would lend them money.²¹

Written a year after one of the worse grain harvests ever, Morrison's account significantly makes no reference to staples. Despite the abundance of 'dainties ... Salmon and ... shell-fish', Berwick was certainly no Land of Cockaigne.

In *2 Henry VI* Shakespeare's allusion to Berwick conforms to what can be recognised as the prevailing view of the town, an outpost of civilisation far from the centre of power which those unlucky enough to be sent to could expect scant reward. The point is reiterated in the play when, finally exposed as frauds, Simpcox and his wife are sentenced to be

... whipt through every market town,
Till they come to Berwick, from whence they came (2.1.155-56).

a punishment, considering that Berwick is some three hundred or so miles from St Albans would, if taken literally, certainly appear harsh and lend weight to Winchester's accusation later in the play that the 'good duke Humphrey' (1.1.159) has

... contrary to form of law
Devise[d] strange deaths for small offences done (3.1.58-59).

Moving on to *3 Henry VI*, the remoteness of Berwick and the border region becomes a distinct advantage when following the Lancastrian defeat at the battle of Towton, the survivors flee 'post amain towards Berwick' (2.5.128) and to safety in Scotland.

²⁰ John Scott, *Berwick-Upon-Tweed: The History of the Town and Guild* (London:1888) 157.

²¹ Fynes Morison, *Itineray*, Part 1, Booke 3, 272.

The Lancastrian north

The construction of the north as a recognisably separate region, already suggested in the Simpcox episode, is graphically portrayed when Shakespeare turns his attention to the contention between York and Lancaster.²² As noted earlier, in the closing scenes of *2 Henry VI* the polarisation of the noble factions (first witnessed during the Temple Garden scene in *1 Henry VI*) begins to coalesce along geographical lines. Shakespeare dramatises the first battle of St Albans as a conflict between the Yorkists already influential in Kent, and the Lancastrians, who are supported by Old Clifford, the 'proud northern lord ... of Cumberland' (5.2.6).²³ Having no historical basis, Warwick's identification of Old Clifford with the county of Cumberland marks the first in a number of departures from the plays' sources which will serve to identify Lancastrian support almost exclusively with the north of England.²⁴

In the corresponding scene, *Q* goes even further in identifying Old Clifford with the north when in a stage direction he is named as the 'Earle of Comberland' (G3r). His status as a northern Earl is reiterated when his horse is referred to as 'the boniest gray that ere was bred in North' (H2v). Moreover, following Old Clifford's death at the first battle of St Albans his son laments the passing of his 'father of Comberland ... the aged pillar of all Comberlands true house' (H3r). As we turn to the quarto of *3 Henry VI*, Young Clifford is now identified in both stage direction and text as the 'Earle of Cumberland' (A3r,A7r), a title not bestowed on the family until 1525, but one which ensures that Shakespeare's dramatisation of the Wars of the Roses is presented to its audience as a north vs south conflict.²⁵

²² To avoid confusion it is perhaps necessary here to reiterate that the Wars were not a conflict between those from the adjacent counties of Yorkshire and Lancaster.

²³ In *2 Henry VI* the two Cliffords, father and son, are differentiated from each other in the play by the prefixes Old and Young, a convention I follow here.

²⁴ In the period in which the play is set the Clifford family's land holdings and power were based mainly in Herefordshire, a county on the Welsh border.

²⁵ On this point see Hattaway, *The Second Part of King Henry VI*, 76.

This division of the realm, between a Yorkist south and a Lancastrian north, is expressed more overtly in the opening scene of *3 Henry VI* when York identifies the defeated Lancastrians as 'the horsemen of the north' (1.1.2), whose dead include

... the great Lord of Northumberland,
Whose warlike ears could never brook retreat,
Cheered up the drooping army, and himself,
Lord Clifford, and Lord Stafford, all abreast,
Charged our main battle's front; and breaking in,
Were by the swords of common soldiers slain (1.1.4-9).

The same point is made later when Northumberland taunts Warwick by declaring that

... 'Tis not thy southern power
Of Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, nor of Kent,
Which makes thee thus presumptuous and proud (1.1.155-57).

Throughout the early part of *3 Henry VI* Shakespeare continues to identify Lancastrian support as predominantly northern in character. After Henry disinherits his son to accommodate the demands of York, Margaret confidently predicts that

The northern lords that have forsworn thy colours
Will follow mine, if once they see them spread;
And spread they shall be, to thy foul disgrace,
And the utter ruin of the house of York (1.1.251-54).

It is a threat that will materialise later in the play when the messenger informs York that

The Queen with all the northern earls and lords
Intend here to besiege you in your castle,
She is hard by with twenty thousand men (1.2.49-51).

At this point *Q* is even more explicit in identifying the geographical origins of Margaret's support,

... thirtie thousand men,
Accompanied with the Earles of Cumberland,
Northumberland and Westmerland, and others of the
House of Lancaster, are marching towards Wakefield,
To besiege you in your castell heere (A7r).

Similarly, an additional stage direction which reads 'Enter the King and Queene, Prince Edward, and the Northerne Earles, with drum and Souldiers' (B6r), serves to reiterate the allegiance of the north to the Lancastrian cause.

The presence of Westmorland in the opening scene of both *Q* and *F* of *3 Henry VI* presents an interesting departure from the chronicle sources and from what occurs in the closing stages of *2 Henry VI*. To take the first point, historically Ralph Nevil, the second Earl of Westmorland, took no part in the Wars of the Roses, although his brother Sir John Nevil died fighting for the Lancastrians in the skirmish before the actual battle of Towton; as Hall writes, 'the earle of Westmerlands brother and all his companie almost were there slayn, at a place called Dintingdale.'²⁶

In *2 Henry VI* the Lancastrians killed at St Albans are Old Clifford, Northumberland and Somerset, yet in *3 Henry VI* Warwick's claim

That we are those which chased you from the field
And slew your fathers (1.1. 89-91),

is addressed to the surviving sons of Northumberland, Clifford and Westmorland, despite the fact that no Westmorland, father or son, plays any role in *2 Henry VI*. While Westmorland's 'farewell' (1.1.183) might be seen as a convenient device to rectify an anomaly, the point is that in the initial stages of *3 Henry VI* the replacement of Somerset with Westmorland has effectively brought to the stage a northern earl at the expense of a southern duke.²⁷

Shakespeare continues to make a number of changes from his sources in order to present the north of England as aligned to the house of Lancaster. Although Hall states that both Somerset and Exeter were part of Margaret's 'company' at Wakefield, neither appears in Shakespeare's dramatisation of the battle.²⁸ Despite earlier having been presented as one of the principal supporters of Henry, the temporary withdrawal of Exeter, provided for at 1.1.273, removes another character from the ranks of the Lancastrians whose title identifies him with the south-west England.

²⁶ Hall, *Union*, 253.

²⁷ This discrepancy is noted by both Cairncross and Hattaway in their editions of play. Neither comment on the implications this has in regard to the regional identity of the two opposing sides.

²⁸ Hall, *Union*, 250.

In similar fashion, the death of the Duke of York at the battle of Wakefield eliminates the only figure in the Yorkist camp whose title implies an association with the north of England.²⁹ This leaves the way open for Shakespeare to dramatise the battle of Towton as clash between Margaret's 'puissant host' (2.1.207) of northern earls and a Yorkist army assembled in the 'Marches' (2.1.140) of Wales, supported by Warwick and his 'southern power' (1.1.155). But once again, a reading of the chronicles suggests that there has been a careful sifting of material in order to present the battle of Towton in such a manner. White Hall describes how prior to Towton the Lancastrian army was 'committed ...to the duke of Somerset, the erle of Northumberland and ye lord Clifford',³⁰ in Shakespeare's version of events Somerset is absent and Northumberland takes no part in the ensuing tumult, although at the end of the play he is listed among those 'mowed down' (5.7.4). Moreover, Exeter only makes a belated appearance in the closing stages of the battle when he urges the remnants of the defeated Lancastrian army to 'make speed' (2.5.135) and flee. The end result of these departures from the sources is to leave Clifford as the only northerner to face the onslaught of the southern Yorkist nobles and their army.

The Role of the Northern Lords

At Wakefield the 'hot coals of vengeance' (2*H6* 5.2.36), promised by Young Clifford in the aftermath of the first battle of St Albans, graphically materialise with the murder of Rutland. By altering Rutland's age to make him appear as a mere child in the play, Shakespeare adds infanticide to the growing catalogue of 'crimes' perpetrated by the Lancastrians. As the audience is confronted with images of weapons

With purple falchion painted to the hilt.
In blood of those ... encountered (3*H6* 1.4.12-13),

Wakefield is dramatised as a battle in which the actions of 'bloody Clifford, Rough Northumberland' (1.4.27) only serve to demonstrate that any lingering vestige of the chivalric ideal has disappeared. It is replaced by a code of ethics whereby

²⁹ See Chapter one, note 61.

³⁰ Hall, *Union*, 254.

It is war's prize to take all advantages
And ten to one is no impeach of valour (1.4.59-60).

The status of the northern Earls as 'brave warriors' (1.4.66) is clearly undermined by their role in the torture and slaying of York. The dramatisation of the 'dreadful story' (2.1.44) whereby the

... unrelenting Clifford and the Queen;
Who crowned the gracious Duke in high despite,
Laughed in his face; and when with grief he wept,
The ruthless Queen gave him to dry his cheeks
A napkin steeped in the harmless blood
Of sweet young Rutland, by Rough Clifford slain (2.1.58-63)

ensures that Clifford, unlike York, will never be remembered as 'the flower of Europe for his chevalry' (2.1.71).

Shakespeare dramatises the battle of Towton as a conflict of mayhem and slaughter in which both sides are 'drunk' (2.3.15) with revenge, horses are 'stained to their fetlocks ... in smoking blood' (2.3.21) and sons and fathers kill each other. Towton was widely recognised as the bloodiest battle of the entire period and one which sealed the fate of the Lancastrian cause. For Camden, writing in 1586, this battle was the 'greatest fight of nobility and gentry' of the entire period in which 'no less than 35000 English were cut off.'³¹ Even Lambarde, in his *Perambulation of Kent*, alerts his readers, via a marginal note, to the 'great battell and slaughter at Towton.'³² Nevertheless, while aware both sides are implicated in an ever-increasing spiral of violence and revenge killings, at this point in the play there is an underlying sense that Clifford, the sole representative of the northern Lords at Towton, is singled out as the villain

... whose unstaunched thirst
York and young Rutland could not satisfy (2.6.83-84).

³¹ Camden, *Britannia*, 713.

³² Lambarde, *Perambulation*, 423.

The point is perhaps best illustrated by comparing the role of this northern earl to his 'valiant' (2.1.100) rivals who, regrouping 'after the 'bloody fray at Wakefield' (2.1.107), lead an army northwards to avenge the deaths of Rutland and York. In contrast to the revengeful acts and atrocities carried out by Margaret and Clifford after their success at Wakefield, the Yorkist victory at Towton ends on a note of reconciliation as the victorious Edward decrees

... now the battle's ended,
If friend or foe, let him be gently used (2.6.44-45).

While this 'doom of mercy' (2.6.46) is revoked when Clifford is seemingly found alive (the text is unclear on this point), this noble gesture marks an interesting departure from Hall's account of Towton in which Edward proclaims 'that no prisoner should be take[n], nor one enemie saved.'³³

Shakespeare's portrayal of the northern Lancastrian nobles in *3 Henry VI* mirrors a tradition found in the plays' sources. The historian A.J. Pollard has drawn attention to the 'regional animosity' against the north expressed by fifteenth-century chroniclers and their Tudor counterparts, works that almost without exception were written from a southern perspective.³⁴ As noted already, this less than positive attitude to the northerners is found in the reactions of the chroniclers to the Lancastrian victories at Wakefield and the second battle of St Albans. A similar attitude is found in Hall's description of the events prior to battle of Towton,

The erls of Marche and Warwyck, hauyng perfite knowledge, that the kyng and quene with their adherentes, were departed from saint Albons, determined first to ryde to London as the chefe key, and common spectacle to the whole Realme, thinking there to assure them selfs of the East and West parte of the kingdome, as king Henry and his faction nesteled and strengthed him and his alies in the

³³ Hall, *Union*, 225. Holinshed, *Chronicles*, 278. The same point is also made by Hattaway in his edition of *3 Henry VI*, 125.

³⁴ A.J. Pollard, 'The Tyranny of Richard III,' *Journal of Medieval History* Vol. 3, No 2 (June 1977) 162. The collection of various writings dating from the fifteenth century known as the *London Chronicles* were, as the name suggests, written by Londoners and reflected to a large extent that city's view of national events. The *Croyland Chronicle* was composed by various monks of an Abbey situated in the Fenlands of south Lincolnshire. Polydore Vergil was employed by Henry VII to write his *Anglica Historia*. Robert Fabyan, born in Essex, rose from humble beginnings to become an Alderman of London. Moreover, Edward Hall was a staunch Protestant supporter of Henry VIII whose grandfather had served Edward IV and although Raphael Holinshed was born in Cheshire, the chronicles which bear his name present an image of the north that is not significantly different from its predecessors.

North regions and boreal plage: meaning to have a buckelar against a swourd,
and a southerne byl to coteruayle a Northern bassard.³⁵

The *OED* has no entry for 'Bassard', yet a clue as to what may be implied here is provided by Richard Grafton who, in the corresponding section of his *Chronicle at Large*, ends his account of Towton with the phrase 'northern Bastard'³⁶ -- an epithet that is certainly applicable to the actions of Clifford in *3 Henry VI*.

The role of Clifford at Wakefield and his hand in the death of York is made patently obvious in the sources, and his reputation as the 'cruel child killer' (*3H6* 2. 2.112) had wide currency beyond the walls of the popular theatre. In the *Mirror for Magistrates* the 'tragedy' of Clifford is prefaced in the following manner; 'How the lord Clyfford for his straunge and abhominable cruelty, came to as straunge and sodayne a death.'³⁷ Nevertheless, one can question why in *3 Henry VI* there is no attempt to sanitise the role of a character identified as a 'dastard and treacherous coward' (2.2.114), particularly as Clifford was an ancestor of two prominent Elizabethans. In order to address this issue one needs to consider what occurs in the closing moments of *2 Henry VI*.

One of those who might have taken offence to Shakespeare's portrayal of Clifford in *3 Henry VI* was George Clifford, the third earl of Cumberland, a hero of the Armada and Elizabeth's champion, a figure who counted among his partners in his privateering ventures against the Spanish treasure ships the Queen herself. It remains possible that the earl was simply unaware that one of his ancestors was being represented on the popular stage as a child killer, particularly as between 1589-91, Cumberland, in an effort to bolster his ailing finances, was away at sea.³⁸

The second figure is none other than Ferdinando Stanley, Lord Strange, whose mother, Margaret Clifford, was a direct descendent of the Clifford portrayed in the *Henry VI* plays. In *Shakespeare: 'the Lost Years'*, E.A.J. Honigmann has raised the possibility that in both *2* and *3 Henry VI* Young Clifford's role as 'one of the most resolute champions of the

³⁵ Hall, *Union*, 253.

³⁶ Cited by Hart, *Third Part of Henry VI* (1909) 49.

³⁷ *Mirror for Magistrates*, 192.

³⁸ Rowse, *Expansion of Elizabethan England*, 313-14.

house of Lancaster' may have been somehow designed to appeal to Ferdinando Stanley.

Drawing attention to what he terms the 'Clifford sequence', namely the speech in *2 Henry VI* at

5.2.31-65, in which the death of Old Clifford is seen to provide the motivation for Young

Clifford's subsequent actions in the following play, Honigmann points out that

if *2 Henry VI* and *3 Henry VI* were performed consecutively, the speech is needed: if, however, *2 Henry VI* was performed on its own when the reported text came into being, such a preparatory speech would be less functional and might well be dropped, since it obstructs the 'closure' of *2 Henry VI* in its dying moments.³⁹

Certainly, Young Clifford is a loyal Lancastrian until his death at Towton, a role he shares with his father who, in *2 Henry VI*, plays a central part in dispersing Cade's Kentish rebels, but turn to the quarto, and the version of the Clifford sequence in this text makes the idea that the representation of Young Clifford would flatter Lord Strange harder to accept.

Taking as my starting point Wells and Taylor's suggestion that Clifford's speech in *F* may represent the earlier version while *Q* is a later revision, I propose that the difference between the two texts is a measure of the extent to which theatrical patronage and regional touring are implicated in the construction of regional identity throughout the tetralogy.⁴⁰ Central to this premise is the idea that financial considerations may not have been the only reason as to why Elizabethan acting companies embarked on tours throughout the kingdom, particularly through areas such as the north of England and the Welsh border counties, where the region's topography made travelling difficult and a sparse population made the enterprise less profitable than in the more populous south. McMillin has persuasively argued that the Queen's men were 'emissaries of the royal name in the far-flung regions' of England, and that their appearance at York in 1584 represented a 'significant early venture into Yorkshire and the north-east, where recusancy remained a challenge to the Protestant authorities of Church and State for decades to come.'⁴¹ Indeed, one of their plays, *The Famous Victories of Henry*

³⁹ Honigmann, *Lost years*, 154.

⁴⁰ *Textual Companion* 193. In his textual analysis of this speech Cairncross takes the view that *F* represents the revised version brought about by the censor. See his discussion in *King Henry VI, Part 2*, xxv-xxviii.

⁴¹ Scott McMillin and Sally Beth Maclean, *The Queen's Men and their Plays* (Cambridge:1998) 47,57. The motivation behind patronising acting companies is also discussed by Peter H.

the Fifth, is considered by Giorgio Melchiori to be 'a tribute to the English fighting spirit at a time when Elizabethan England was under the threat of a Spanish invasion.'⁴² Whether or not this play was performed by the Queen's men while at York and Beverley in 1587, New Park, Lancashire in 1588, or during their visits to the Stanley residences at Lathom and Knowlesly the following year is not known, but it is not unreasonable to suggest that the portrayal of English solidarity in the face of huge odds at Agincourt might have been useful propaganda in an area whose commitment to the Elizabethan settlement was always suspect.

The extent to which the three parts of *Henry VI* or *Richard III* were appropriated for the same purpose is open to conjecture, although with their portrayal of a kingdom racked by 'civil dissension' (*1H6* 3.1.72) the plays can be seen as offering a warning to dissident elements and the dangers of civil war which, in the last decades of the sixteenth century, might well have involved a fracturing of the kingdom along religious lines. But one thing that we can say with some degree of certainty is that Pembroke's and Strange's Men, the two companies associated with the *Henry VI* plays, were emissaries of their respective patrons, and playwrights writing for such companies would have been aware of preserving the patron's reputation.

Consequently, we should not be surprised if the role of a patron's ancestor or namesake was treated with a degree of caution in chronicle history plays, especially in an age when Privy councillors and members of the Court were not averse to challenging dramatic representations of their ancestors on the stage (the most famous case remains that of the Brooke family whose objections to the portrayal of Sir John Oldcastle I have already discussed). With this in mind, the inclusion of the 'Clifford sequence' in *F of 2 Henry VI*, making the role of Stanley's ancestors in *3 Henry VI* if not more palatable, at least understandable, would have been clearly advantageous if, as suggested by a number of editors, *2* and *3 Henry VI* were originally written for Lord Strange's Men and performed together.⁴³

Greenfield in *A New History of Early English Drama* ed., John D.Cox & David Scott Kastan (New York:1997) 251-268.

⁴² Melchiori, *King Edward III*, 18.

⁴³ Cairncross, *King Henry VI, Part 2*, xxvii.

Still, as the title page belonging to *Q* of *Titus Andronicus* demonstrates, playtexts did not necessarily stay with one company. By accepting that *Q* of *2 Henry VI* represents a recollection of the play performed by Pembroke's Men (a position taken throughout this study), I suggest that the need to gloss the role of Stanley's ancestors would have been less of a priority. In other words, cuts to Clifford's speech at 5.2. could be made without giving offence - particularly being that Pembroke's men are recorded as playing in East Anglia, the Welsh marches, and at York in June 1593, but not in the north-west, the area in which the Stanleys were the leading family.⁴⁴

When viewed alongside what occurs in the final moments of *2 Henry VI*, Clifford's role is far more problematical in *3 Henry VI*. As suggested earlier, in a play noted for the barbarity of all the protagonists Clifford stands apart, as his murder of the unhistorically young Rutland and role in the torture of the Duke of York is constantly foregrounded -- actions that would hardly commend themselves to Lord Strange. With this in mind, the way in which Shakespeare portrays Clifford could be regarded as further evidence that *3 Henry VI* was originally written for Pembroke's Men. The characterisation of Clifford highlights how the fashioning of regional identity in the tetralogy is shaped by a number of factors, in this case theatrical patronage.

RICHARD III: The Northern King

The death of 'Clifford of Cumberland' (5.2.6) at Towton may represent the demise of one northern character, but it sees the rise of another more deadly version whose presence from this point on will increasingly dominate *3 Henry VI* and *Richard III*, namely, Richard, Duke of Gloucester. Here it should be emphasised that historically Richard was not a northerner by birth, indeed he was born at Fotheringay in the midland county of Northampton and spent his early years residing in the Welsh marches. It was the inheritance of Warwick's former estates in the north, plus his fortuitous marriage to Warwick's youngest daughter Anne, dramatised, if rather sensationally in *Richard III* at 1.2., which transformed this youngest brother of Edward IV into a northern magnate of the first order 'magnified and applauded of the northe nacion'.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ See Gurr, *Shakespearian Playing Companies*, 212-217, 252-257.

⁴⁵ Hall, *Union*, 380.

By 1483 Richard was warden of the West Marches, keeper of the northern forests, chief steward of the duchy of Lancaster in the north, sheriff of the county of Cumberland for life, Lord-Lieutenant of the north, and the commander in chief of the royal army during the 1480-83 war against the Scots, a campaign that resulted in the recapture of Berwick, ceded to the Scottish crown by Henry VI after the Lancastrian defeat at Towton in 1461.⁴⁶

Before turning to Richard's role in the tetralogy it is necessary to consider contemporary and Tudor accounts that refer directly to Richard's close affinity with the north. The authors of the *Croyland Chronicle*, displaying their usual animosity against northern England, accuse Richard of distributing

estates and patrimonies .. amongst his northern adherents, whom he planted in every spot throughout his dominions, to the disgrace and lasting and loudly expressed sorrow of all the people in the south, who daily longed more and more for the hoped-for return of their ancient rulers, rather than the present tyranny of these people.⁴⁷

The affection with which Richard was regarded in the north of the country is suggested by the following report that reached York on the 23 August 1485, the day after the battle of Bosworth,

it was shewed by diverse personnes, and especially by John Spooner, sent unto the feld of Redmore to bring tidings frome the same to the Citie, that King Richard, late mercifully reigning upon us, was, through grete treason of the Duc of Northfolk [Norfolk] and many other that turned ayenst hyme, with many other lords and nobills of this North parties, pitiously slane and muredred, to the grete hevynesse of this Citie.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ I have only provided a brief summary here of Richard's early life. For a more detailed discussion on Richard's career prior to his seizure of the throne see Michael Hicks, Richard, Duke of Gloucester and the North in *Richard III and the North*, ed., Rosemary Horrox (Hull:1986). There is an allusion to Richard's capture of Berwick in *Richard III*. It occurs when Buckingham, recounting how he attempted to persuade the citizens to accept that Gloucester's claim to the throne is legitimate, tells how he

Laid open your [Richard's] victories in Scotland,
Your discipline in war, wisdom in peace,
Your bounty, virtue, fair humility (3.7.15-17).

⁴⁷ *The Croyland Chronicle*, 496.

⁴⁸ Markham, *The Road to Bosworth Field*, 249.

Richard's northernness would become an inherent part of the discursive tradition established by Polydore Vergil and Sir Thomas More, and embellished throughout Hall's narrative on the *Pitiful life of Edward V* and *The Tragical Doynges of Kyng Richard The Thirde*, one of the principal sources on which Shakespeare's characterisation of the last Yorkist king would be based. Whether fact or fiction, the belief that Richard was a northerner is reiterated by no less a figure than Sir George Buck, Master of the Revels between 1610 until his death in 1622, who writes in his *History of King Richard III* (1616) that 'Yorkshire was his [Richard's] native country' a region where 'he was generally well beloved and honoured of all northern people, his countrymen.'⁴⁹ Expressions of the close link between Richard and the north of England were not confined to historical accounts of his reign. At one point in the *Ballad of Bosworth Felde* it is claimed (unhistorically) that

... the Lord Dacres raised all the North cuntrye;
& all said Richard shold keepe his crowne (62.248).⁵⁰

In light of such comments, Richard's lament that 'if I die no soul shall pity me' (5.3.201), uttered on the eve of Bosworth in *Richard III*, might well be seen as somewhat misplaced.

Richard's early career in the north is partly responsible for the existence of an alternative opinion regarding his reign, and one which appears at odds with that painted by Sir Thomas More, chroniclers and Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists, poets and writers. In a letter addressed to the Prior of Christ Church, Canterbury, dated 1483, Thomas Langton, Bishop of St David's, wrote

He [Richard] contents the people wher he goys best that ever did prince; for many a poor man that hath suffred wrong many days have be relevyd and helpyd by hym and his commands in his progresse ... On my trouth I lykyd never the condicions of ony prince so wel as his; God hath sent hym to us for the wele of us al.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Sir George Buck, *History of King Richard III* (1646) 20.

⁵⁰ *Bishop Percy's Ballads and Romances* III, 233-59. Michael Bennet in his *Battle of Bosworth* (New York:1993) draws attention to the fact that the ballad survives as a mid-17th century copy, but suggests that the form and content indicate initial composition within living memory of battle possibly by an anonymous member of Stanley entourage who may have been an eye-witness.

⁵¹ *Christ Church Letters: A volume of Medieval Letters*. Camden Society (1876).

In the ballad *Scottish field*, describing the battle of Flodden in 1513, the Stanleys lament how

Richard that rich lord: in his bright armour,
He held himself no coward: for he was a noble king,
He fought right royally and vigorously his foemen amongst
till all his bright armour was all besmirched with blood
then was he done to death with many cruel strokes.⁵²

Surprisingly Tudor accounts of Richard's reign are not as consistent in their demonising of Richard as one might at first imagine. Even the chronicler Hall, one of Richard's most ardent vilifiers, could concede that had Richard not usurped the throne he would have been 'much prayed and beloved as he is nowe abhorred and villipended.'⁵³ The same writer provides another example of this alternative view of Richard. Recording a conversation between Cardinal Wolsey and a leading London councillor, Hall notes that in reply to Wolsey's retort that 'Richard III ... was a usurper and a murtherer of his own nephews', the councillor suggested that while Richard 'did evil, yet in his time wer many good acts made.'⁵⁴ This revisionist view of the last Yorkist king is expressed by the aforementioned Sir George Buck in whose *Eclog treating of Crownes, and of Garlandes, and to whom they appertaine*, an historical poem published in 1605 tracing the ancestry of James I, one finds the following stanza

Fame hath been sharp to th' other [Richard] yet bicause
All accusations of him are not proved:
And hee built churches, and made good laws
And all men held him wise, and Valiant
Who may deny him then his Genest Plante? (E4v).⁵⁵

⁵² *Bishop Percy's Ballads and Romances*, ed., J.W.Hales, et al., (London:1867) Vol. 1, 213.

⁵³ Hall, *Union*, 421.

⁵⁴ Hall, *Union*, 698. This example is cited by Daniel Williams in his chapter on Richard III in *England in the Fifteenth Century* ed., Nicholas Rogers (Stamford:1994) 62-63.

⁵⁵ *Daphnis Polystephanos, Eclog treating of Crownes, and of Garlandes, and to whom they appertaine* is reproduced in his Arthur Noel Kincaid edition of *The History of Richard the Third* (Gloucester:1979) XXiii-XXV.

Moreover, in 1617 Sir William Cornwallis published *The Praise of King Richard the Third*, an essay in which he attempted to repudiate the accusations laid against Richard in 'Pamphlets and plays'.⁵⁶

I have drawn attention to the above not in order to argue for a re-appraisal of Richard's reign, nor to join the throng of individuals and societies who continue to suggest that Richard is a victim of Tudor propaganda. But this alternative view of the last Yorkist king, circulating during the 1590s, occasionally appears in the plays of the first tetralogy. In 2 & 3 *Henry VI* Shakespeare's Richard, as the duke of Gloucester, is portrayed as a loyal adherent of the Yorkist cause, whose presence at the battles of St Albans, Wakefield and Towton (albeit unhistorically) is in support of his father and brother's claim to the throne. During the battle of Towton it is Richard's encouragement to Warwick, Edward and Clarence that ensures victory for the Yorks, a role repeated later at Barnet when Richard urges Edward to pursue the remaining Lancastrians before they 'have time to breathe' (5.3.16). In addition, it is worth recalling that in 3 *Henry VI* Richard's speech

How sweet a thing it is to wear a crown,
Within whose circuit is Elysium
And all that poets feign of bliss and joy.
Why do we linger thus? I cannot rest
Until the white rose that I wear be dyed
Even in the luke-warm blood of Henry's heart (1.2.29-34)

is uttered only in respect to his father's claim to the throne. Indeed, Richard's own ambition 'to catch the English crown' (3.2.179) does not surface until his long soliloquy mid-way through the play. Witty, urbane and dangerous, Shakespeare's Richard, 'is a play-actor as well as a villain'⁵⁷, whose personification of the loyal brother is only one of a number of roles that this multi-faceted character will assume in *Richard III*.

As noted already, to a number of Shakespeare's fellow Elizabethans Richard's northernness appears to have been a widely acknowledged fact, a regional identity that at certain points surfaces in *Richard III*. The opportunity for Richard to 'change shape with

⁵⁶ The essay appears in Vol. III of the collection of documents known as *The Somers Tracts* ed., Walter Scott (London:1810) 328.

⁵⁷ Harold F. Brooks, 'Richard III: The Women's Scenes and Seneca,' *Modern Language Review* (October:1980) Vol. 75, part 4, 736.

Proteus for advantages' (3H6 3.2.192) and play the role of the northerner occurs early in *Richard III* during his wooing of Anne Neville, a scene where, in a dramatic gesture, the duke offers her his

... sharp-pointed sword,
Which if thou please to hide in this true breast,
And let the soul forth that adareth thee,
I lay it naked to the deadly stroke,
And humbly beg the death upon my knee (1.2.174-78).

Brooks, following on from Bullough, notes how this 'sensational scene' is greatly indebted to Seneca.⁵⁸ Brooks' detailed discussion, while persuasive, relegates to a footnote the clear parallel that exists between Richard's courting of Anne and a scene in Thomas Legge's *Richardus Tertius* where, attempting to persuade Elizabeth of York to marry him, Richard offers his 'breast to readied swords' lamenting that if his suite fails he 'shall die by [her] arms' (4.5).⁵⁹ While not disputing the possible influence of both Seneca and Legge on this particular scene in *Richard III*, I want to draw attention to an extract from John Udall's description of the far north of England dating from 1598. Writing of a 'barbarous' people 'more of will than manners ... full of malice and revenge', Udall observed how one accused of murder would 'submit himself naked upon his knees, holding his own sword by the point held to his breast, yielding the handle to his enemy's hand, and so with abject humility ask for forgiveness'⁶⁰ -- a practice that bears a striking resemblance to the actions of Shakespeare's Richard, a character who in *Richard III* is 'rudely stamped' (1.1.16) by his deformity and his regional origins.

Rotten Armour

What may well represent Shakespeare's most overt reference to Richard's status as a northerner is to be found in the stage direction which reads 'Enter Richard and Buckingham in

⁵⁸ Ibid, 727-728.

⁵⁹ Thomas Legge's *Richardus Tertius*, A critical edition with a translation Robert Joseph Lordi (New York:1979).

⁶⁰ John Udall, A Description of the state and government, together with the land as it lieth, in and upon the West Marches of England (C.1598), cited in the *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Marquis of Salisbury*, 562-563.

rotten armour, marvellous ill-favoured' (3.5.0.SD). But before proceeding any further it is necessary to recall W.W. Greg's warning that one needs to approach stage directions with caution, particularly with regard to their origin and purpose. Certainly, a number of stage directions do seem to have what Greg terms a 'literary appeal', in which their descriptive nature has little to do with the corresponding stage action. One such example appears in *Henry VI*, where during a scene dramatising the siege of Orleans a direction reads that the French are to be 'beaten back by the English with great loss' (1.2.21), which no doubt is drawn from the chroniclers' report of the siege, but still provokes the question as to how 'a great loss' would have been presented in the theatre.

On one level the image of 'Richard and Buckingham in rotten armour, marvellous ill-favoured' would also appear to be a descriptive direction, written for the reader rather than the actor, as no mention of the Dukes' attire is made during the ensuing scene. Nevertheless, as Greg himself notes, this 'descriptive' stage direction, preserved only in *F*, is 'unquestionably the author's' and thus, one assumes represented a clear instruction that the actors would appear on stage in a costume of rotten armour.⁶¹

Many commentators have suggested that the stage direction at 3.5. was prompted by the following passage in Hall:

the Protectoure immediatly after dyner ... sent in all the haste for many substancial men out of the cytie into the Tower, and at their comyng him selfe with the duke of Buckyngham stode, harnessed in olde evill favored briganders, such as no man would wene that they would have vouchesafed to have put on their backs, excepte some sodeyne necessitie has constrained them.⁶²

Certainly Hall's description of the Dukes 'harnessed in olde evill favored briganders' (actually a form of body armour consisting of a metal jacket made out of plates riveted together and covered in either velvet, quilted linen or leather)⁶³ is attractive, particularly as at this point in the play Shakespeare closely follows his sources. Still, what is considered by Anthony

⁶¹ W.W. Greg, *The Shakespeare First Folio: Its Bibliographical and Textual History* (Oxford:1955) 124.

⁶² See Bullough, *NDS*, 267. Hall, *Union*, 362.

⁶³ Fairholt, *Costume in England*. Cited by A. Hamilton Thompson in his edition of *Richard III* (London:1909) 113.

Hammond to represent the 'most obviously authorial direction in the play' has been subjected to frequent editorial mediation.⁶⁴ Rowe, without comment, emended the stage direction to read 'Enter Richard and Buckingham in *Rusty Armour*'. Subsequently followed by all the major eighteenth and nineteenth-century editors of the play, the change from 'rotten' to 'rusty' may well have been predicated on the rather obvious point that the term 'rotten' is normally associated with decaying vegetable or animal matter; whereas when metal rots it rusts - a point alluded to in *2 Henry VI* when the armourer's apprentice allegedly overhears his master speaking treasonous words while 'scouring [the] lord of York's armour' (1.3.192). Certainly, the image of rusting metal surfaces in a number of Shakespearian plays. For example, in *Richard II* Northumberland speaks of 'glittering arms ... condemned to rust' (3.3.116) and in *Othello*, the Moor himself warns his supporters to 'Keep up [their] bright swords, for the dew will rust them' (1.2.59). Moreover, to an Elizabethan 'rusty' could also mean 'rotten', as in the more traditional sense. Just such an image surfaces in the following passage taken from Antonio de Guevara's hilarious description of galley travel published in English in 1578:

It is a privilege of the Gallie, that the flesh which they ordinarily shall eat, is joynys of Goats, quarters of Sheepe, salt Beefe, and rustie bacon, not boyled, but parboilde: not roasted, but burnt: in such wise, that being sett on table, it is loathsome to behold, hard as the divell to gnawe or., slat as broyne to feed on, and indigestible as a stone.⁶⁵

In light of such evidence the glossing of rotten armour to rusty armour in *Richard III* is not misplaced. Further justification for the change can be found in the old Arden edition of the play where Thompson draws attention to a line in Richard Rolle's *Paraphrase of Psalms*; 'When I am rotyen, rub of the rust.'⁶⁶ The perception that in early modern England the term rotten armour was somehow synonymous with rusty armour is not only reliant upon this rather obscure line from a fourteenth-century Yorkshire mystic; a similar image surfaces in book two of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* when Guyon encounters Mammon in an 'Iron coat all overgrown

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 237. In *Q* the stage direction reads 'enter Duke of Gloucester and Buckingham in armour'. Greg, *The Shakespeare First Folio*: 193.

⁶⁵ Antonio de Guevara's 'Invention of the Art of Navigation' (1578) quoted in *Shakespeare's England*, Vol. 1, 150.

⁶⁶ Thompson, *Richard III*, 113.

with rust.' In the *Mirror for Magistrates*, a volume largely based on Hall's *Chronicle*, there is a specific reference to the dukes in rusty armour. Referred to, if rather fleetingly, by Bullough as the source of Shakespeare's stage direction at 3.5, it occurs in the *Tragedy of Lord Hastings* where Richard and Buckingham

In rousty armour as in extreme shyft,
... cladd them selves, to cloake theyr divelysh dryft (689-90).⁶⁷

It is an image that has clear parallels with Shakespeare's *Richard III* where, for the benefit of the mayor and the leading citizens of London, the appearance of the duke in rusty armour is part of the 'stratagem' to gain the crown by 'counterfeiting the threat on the life of the protector by the 'dangerous and un-expecting Hastings' (3.5.23).

Richard III is not the only play in which we find a reference to the last Yorkist king attired in some form of rusty armour. In the anonymous *The True Tragedy of Richard the Third*, the contaminated nature of its text pointing, as most critics now agree, to its status as a memorial reconstruction (put together either by reporters or actors of a lost play), we have a direct reference to rusty armour when Rivers taunts Richard with the claim that

The Wars in France, Irish conflicts, & Scotland knowes my trust
When thou hast kept thy skin unscared, and let thine armor rust (TLN 623-24).⁶⁸

The state of Richard's amour in *The True Tragedy* is clearly meant as a term of abuse (whereby rusty armour signifies cowardly behaviour because others risked their lives fighting), yet on another level rusty armour did carry with it significant historical and cultural connotations.

In order to explain it is necessary to turn to the Tudor chronicles. During his account of the Wars of the Roses, one recalls that Hall describes Margaret's Lancastrian army in the following manner:

... with a great multitude of Northren people she marched toward London, of whose approche the Londoners were nothing glad: for some affirmed, that she

⁶⁷ *NDS*, Vol. III, 230-32.

⁶⁸ See Hammond, *Richard III*, 83-84.

brought that rusty company, to spoile and robbe the citie.⁶⁹

Hall's identification of northern troops as a rusty company is not confined to the army that travelled south after their success at the battle of Wakefield in 1461. As noted by Hammond, in a recent study on Richard's reign Alison Hanhan has drawn attention to Robert Fabyan's description of Richard's troops brought to London for his coronation in 1483:

Thenne, soone after, for fere of the quenes blode and other, which he had in jolousy, he [Richard] sent for a strenght of men out of the North; the whiche came shortly to London, a lytell before his coronacion, and musteryd in the Moore Feldes wele upon. iiii. M. men, in theyr beste jakkis and rusty salettes⁷⁰

The 'rusty' appearance of Richard's northern supporters in London would be noted by subsequent chroniclers; with only minor variations Hardyng, Hall and Holinshed all write that

... to be sure of all enemies (as he thoughte) he [Richard] sent for five thousand men of the North against his coronacion, which came up evil appareed and worse harneissed, in rusty harneys ... to the great disdain of all the lookers on.⁷¹

In these later accounts it is the northerners' harness, in other words, their body armour that is described as being rusty. The low standard of the armour worn by the northern troops who, in the early summer of 1483, provided what Rosemary Horrax has aptly described as the 'muscle behind Richard's coup'⁷² might have been prompted by financial circumstances. In the York Civic records one finds an entry, dated 16 June 1483, stating that the city authorities agree to pay a wage of 12d a day to each man sent to London in support of the Protector on the proviso that 'every socher shall pay for hys aun jaket' -- a less than generous compromise which might well have been the reason why on this occasion Richard's supporters appeared in London attired in rusty armour.⁷³ More to the point, on the two occasions that Hall refers to

⁶⁹ Hall, *Union*, 252.

⁷⁰ Robert Fabyan, *The New Chronicles of England and France*, 669. See Alison Hanhan, *Richard III and his Early Historians 1483-1535*. (Oxford:1975) 173.

⁷¹ John Hardyng, *The Chronicle of John Hardyng from the firste begynnyng of Englande* (1543), fol. lccviii. Hall, *Union*, 375. Holinshed, *Chronicles*, 397.

⁷² Rosemary Horrax, *Richard III: A Study in Service* (Cambridge:1989) 129.

⁷³ York Civic Records, cited by C.A.J Armstrong in endnote 106 on page 133 of his edition of Mancini's *Usurpation of Richard the Third*.

northern troops descending on London, they are identified by wearing this type of armour. Therefore, by the time *Richard III* was first performed such armour was associated, at least in the chronicles, with northern soldiers invading the south of the kingdom.

The identification of Richard as a northerner adds to the dramatic effect of his subsequent actions, particularly when we consider that in *Richard III* the majority of the murders, 'plots' and 'inductions dangerous' (1.1.32) are not acted out in regional England or the dark recesses of the palaces of Westminster, but in the city of London where geographically our attention is no longer on the remote, but the recognisably familiar. As such, the portrayal of Richard as a northern magnate controlling events from Crosby House (3.1.187) and Baynard's Castle (3.5.96) -- locations within the city precincts -- adds to the general sense of dislocation and the subversion of socially accepted 'norms' that pervade the plays of the first tetralogy.

The Changing Status of the North

While Richard transforms himself from a Yorkist duke into a successful northern usurper, the loyalties of the once solidly Lancastrian north undergo a similar metamorphosis in *3 Henry VI* and *Richard III*. It is a process that begins with Edward's victory at Towton, a victory that not only unites the kingdom under the Yorkist crown but also marks a corresponding shift in the focus of the play. From this point on events in the southern half of the kingdom and the breakdown of consensus within the ranks of the Yorkist party dominate. The changing status of the north is no better emphasised than when Shakespeare dramatises Edward's return from exile and march 'from Ravenspur haven [to] the gates of York' (4.7.8).⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Following Bolingbroke in 1399, Edward landed at Ravenspur on the East Yorkshire coast, a port now under the sea. There are two further incidents dramatised in *3 Henry VI* that traditionally have been associated with the north of England. The first is found at 3.1 and involves Henry VI's capture by the keepers, a scene which a majority of editors since Theobald have localised the north of England; mainly on the grounds that previously Henry had fled north to Scotland. Textually there is nothing to identify those who capture the 'quondam king' (3.1.23) with this part of the world, nor in Hall and Holinshed where both chroniclers simply report that Henry was taken after he 'boldly entered into England.' Intriguingly though Fabian does note that the king was 'taken in a wood in the north country', a tradition that might have found its way into the theatre. See Hattaway, *The Third Part of King Henry VI*, 128. Similarly, many recent editions of *3 Henry VI* localise Edward IV's imprisonment (and subsequent escape) at Middleham in Yorkshire because, one suspects, of Warwick's request to Somerset that

Edward's successful, if slightly devious, wooing of the city of York and his promise to the Mayor and Alderman to

... defend the town and thee,
And all those friends that deign to follow me (4.7.38-39)

sees the north aligned with the Yorks, a point reiterated when according to the speech prefix (4.7.76) 'All' proclaim Edward as their King.

Similarly, in *Richard III* there is a subtle but telling difference between Richard, the northern usurper, and the north as a region. As I have suggested, Shakespeare has provided a number of allusions to Richard's northernness, yet we never witness any northern support for him in the play. Indeed, in his hour of need those of the 'northern nation', to paraphrase Hall, desert him. Thus, while Stanley may have 'friends ... in the north' (4.4.483), meaning Lancashire and Cheshire, they are 'Cold friends' (4.4.484) to Richard. Over the Pennines the situation is no better. When it is reported that 'Yorkshire [is] in Arms' (4.4.519) even Richard's former stronghold has gone over to the Tudors. And when it becomes clear that the 'melancholy Lord Northumberland' (5.3.67) will stay aloof from the ensuing fray, it is evident Richard's days are numbered.

Consequently, in *Richard III* Shakespeare presents the north as part of a united front against Richard, a portrayal that runs counter to the perception of the region as another England. In fact, in the final moments of the play Shakespeare completely reverses the situation, for unlike the south (represented by Surrey and Norfolk), the actions of Stanley and Northumberland, two major northern magnates, ensure that the north of England is not out of step with prevailing political sentiment. Hence, a region whose support for the Tudors was always conditional, graphically demonstrated by the rebellion known as the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536 and the Northern Rebellion of 1569, is seen on the stage to take a central role in the defeat of Richard.

... Edward be conveyed
Unto my brother, Archbishop of York (4.3.52-53)

- reiterated by Queen Elizabeth in the next scene as she laments how her husband is 'committed to the Bishop of York' (4.4.11), and because of a recognition that the chroniclers note how Edward after his surrender to Warwick was imprisoned at Middleham castle in Yorkshire.

Still, having the north rise against Richard in this play subverts the idea that the last Yorkist king was beloved of all the northern nation. Admittedly, some modern productions of *Richard III*, in which it is made perfectly clear that Richard is a northerner, do not result in riots in northern playhouses or letters to *The Times* or *Yorkshire Post* claiming cultural bias. But it is possible that only a hundred years or so after Bosworth having Richard's 'nation' play a role in his downfall may have been more problematical to northerners, particularly if, as I have sought to suggest throughout this study, these plays were performed both in the London theatres, whose audiences were drawn from all over the kingdom, and in various halls and inns throughout regional England.

This potential difficulty is offset somewhat in all the quarto texts published before *F* (Q1 to Q6), where on two occasions Richard's northernness is underplayed. While in *F* Richard and Buckingham enter in 'rotten armour' (TLN 2082 /3.5.0 SD), the corresponding stage direction in Q1 through to Q6 states 'enter Duke of Gloucester and Buckingham in armour' (G2r),⁷⁵ so excluding what I have suggested represents the most overt allusion to Richard's northern status in the text. The second variant occurs towards the end of the play. As resistance to Richard's rule is mounting, a messenger enters to report that

Sir Thomas Lovel and Lord Marquess Dorset
'Tis said my liege, Yorkshire is in arms (TLN 3325-26/4.4.518-19).

But in Q1 to Q6 the lines read

Sir Thomas Lovel, and Lord Marques Dorset,
'Tis said my liege, are up in arms (L3r).

The absence of the reference to Yorkshire is, I suggest, a significant omission. The county of Yorkshire was in many respects Richard's power base. As Edward IV's Lord-Lieutenant of the North, Richard administered the region from his Yorkshire residences at Middleham and Sheriff Hutton. He returned to Yorkshire as King in 1483 and 1484, and as noted already the 'great heaviness' expressed by the citizens of York represents the only surviving record of regret over Richard's defeat and death at Bosworth. Hence, *Q*'s account of events serves to

⁷⁵ Quotations from the quarto are drawn from *Q1, The Tragedy of King Richard the third* (1597), reproduced in the Tudor Facsimile Texts series edited by John S. Farmer.

absolve Richard's 'adopted county' of any role in his downfall. In doing so, the question then arises, does *Q* preserve a version of the play which, if performed in the north of England, might have made the play more palatable -- particularly in Yorkshire?

In order to address this issue one has to return to the early history of *Richard III* and the status of the quartos. As noted previously, D.L. Patrick's conclusion that *Q1* represents a memorial reconstruction of *Richard III* performed in the provinces has continued to attract widespread support, most recently by Peter Davison.⁷⁶ As the title page of *Q1* states, the play was 'lately Acted by the Right honourable the Lord Chamberliane his servants', a company which predominantly based in London did embark on a provincial tour in 1597. Even though on this occasion the Chamberlain's men do not appear to have travelled further north than Cambridge, one cannot discount the idea that a quarto version of *Richard III* could have been surreptitiously presented in Yorkshire itself; a not improbable suggestion as records unearthed by C.J. Sisson demonstrate that a Catholic troupe of players was active in the North Riding of Yorkshire from at least 1595.

In 1609 this company offered those assembled at Gowthwaite Hall, in the west of the county, a choice of either Shakespeare's *King Lear* or *Pericles, The Travailes of the Three English Brothers* or *St Christopher* (the selection of *St Christopher* perhaps gives a valuable insight into the religious loyalty of the audience).⁷⁷ That this obscure company had access to a text of *Pericles*, a play that had only been entered with the Stationers' Company on 20 May 1608 and published in a quarto the following year, demonstrates that playtexts circulated quickly throughout the kingdom. Prosecuted for sedition by the Star Chamber in 1611 for acting the aforementioned *St Christopher*, a play for which no text survives, in their defence one of the actors testified that the

⁷⁶ In his edition of *The First Quarto Of King Richard III* (Cambridge:1996) Davison argues that the Lord Chamberlain's Men used a memorially reconstructed text of *Richard III* during their tour of the provinces in 1597, and that text forms the basis of *Q1*. Patrick's arguments are considered in detail by Hammond in his edition of *Richard III*, 3-12. See also Taylor's discussion on *Richard III* in *Textual Companion*, 228-232.

⁷⁷ C.J Sisson, 'Shakespeare's Quartos as Prompt-copies' *Review of English Studies* 18 (1942). Hugh Aveling, *Northern Catholics: The Catholic Recusants of the North Riding of Yorkshire 1558-1790*. (London:1966) 288-89.

plaies which they so plaied [were] played according to the printed booke or bookes .. and they onelie acted the same according to the contents therein printed, and not otherwise ... there was no new addition or new material put into but was acted before in other places.⁷⁸

While it seems highly unlikely that plays were ever acted exactly as printed, from the activities of this company a number of possible conclusions regarding the performing of plays in the provinces can be drawn. Firstly, once printed, playtexts were used as scripts by provincial companies. Secondly, circulating quickly through the kingdom playtexts provided regional companies with an up to-date repertory which, as Sisson's notes, 'in their eyes the use of a printed play as prompt-copy was equivalent to a licence from the Master of the Revels and gave them complete protection.'⁷⁹ Thirdly, and perhaps most significantly, once printed in quarto form Shakespeare's plays were performed by local companies active in the north. Consequently if the quarto of *Richard III* was one such play (recalling that six quartos were printed prior to 1623), then the variations between *Q* and *F* could be regarded as particularly significant in regard to the construction of the north's role in the final moments of the play.

Northern Catholicism

As I have consistently suggested throughout this study, the representation of regional England in the tetralogy is not only reliant on the past, but is informed by, and is, an expression of contemporary perceptions. The north is no exception. In the 1590s this part of England remained an unstable zone beset by strife, particularly in the border counties. Indeed as late as 1601 parliament found it necessary to pass 'An Act for the more peaceable government of the parts of Cumberland, Northumberland, Westmorland and the bishopric of Durham' because of the continued 'incursions ... robberies, and burning and spoiling of towns, villages and houses.'⁸⁰ The distinctiveness of the north may have been reliant upon its climate, sparse population, relative poverty, remoteness from the centre of power and even the way in

⁷⁸ Sisson, 'Shakespeare's Quartos', 138.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁸⁰ Elton, *The Tudor Constitution*, 209.

which its inhabitants spoke, but in the 1590s there was another factor, perhaps above all else that singled out this region as the *locus* of another England -- Catholicism.

As shown above, Simpcox and his wife are manifestations of the vagrants and strumpets roaming the country, the masterless men and woman feared by both the local and central authorities in early modern England. In a recent publication, Pugliatti has noted that the whipping of Simpcox and his forcible return to his place of birth makes this particular episode 'more openly allusive of the contemporary vagrancy legislation and therefore more immediately comprehensible to the audience.'⁸¹ This scene is based on an incident originally found in Sir Thomas More's *A dialoge of the veneration & worship of ymages* (1529) and subsequently reported by Richard Grafton in his *A Chronicle at Large* and John Foxe in *Acts and Monuments*, a popular text that Shakespeare may well have used as a source.⁸² Considering the polemic nature of Foxe's martyrology it is perhaps not surprising that at least one critic has suggested that this scene represents a ridiculing of 'deceptive Catholic practices',⁸³ even though Shakespeare is dramatising an incident that occurred in 1446, a period in which it was totally appropriate for both the King and his subjects to express a belief in the working of 'miracles' (2.1.59) at shrines dedicated to holy saints. But in the climate of post-reformation England the portrayal of the beggar suggesting that his journey to St Albans was motivated by

... pure devotion, being called
A hundred times and oftener, in my sleep,
By good Saint Alban, who said, 'Simon, come;
Come offer at my shrine and I will help thee' (2.1.87-90)

would have surely been identified as an element of the Catholic faith. Indeed, as Hattaway notes, the Simpcox episode represents a parodying of Christ's gift of sight to the blind man,

⁸¹ Pugliatti, *Shakespeare the Historian* (Basingstoke:1996) 214. The representation of Simpcox as vagrant is also discussed by William C. Carroll, *Fat King, Lean Beggar: Representations Of Poverty In The Age Of Shakespeare* (Ithaca:1996) 153-155. published in an earlier version as 'The Nursery of Beggary': Enclosure, Vagrancy, and Sedition in the Tudor-Stuart Period, *Enclosure Acts*, see above note. However, the idea that Simpcox is constructed as a regional character has not been explored in either study.

⁸² Bullough provides a transcript of the relevant section in Foxe's text, see *NDS*. Vol. III, 127.

⁸³ Jean E. Howard, *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England* (London:1994) 132.

one that is designed to discredit belief in miracles.⁸⁴ The degree of scepticism existing within Elizabethan society against the very idea of miracles is expressed by Harrison who, in his *Description*, lists amongst those places that had 'wrought manie miracles in time of superstition ... the Holie well at St. Albones', a site where 'vertues are now found out to be but baits to draw men and women unto them, ether for gaine unto the places where they were, or satisfaction of the lewd disposition of such as hunted after other gaine.'⁸⁵

While the motivation behind Foxe's narration of the episode was to expose

... not only the craftye working of false miracles in the clergie, but also the prudent discretion of this high and mighty prince, the fore sayd Duke Humfrey, may geve us better to understand what man he was⁸⁶

a reading of this episode in *Acts and Monuments* and, most importantly, *2 Henry VI* suggests otherwise. While both texts succeed in presenting Humphrey as a 'prudent' prince, they both fail to portray the clergy as responsible for the false miracle. In *2 Henry VI* Cardinal Winchester may well be on stage during the whole episode, but there is no suggestion that he is responsible for Simpcox's deception. Instead, the 'craftye working' of deceptive Catholic practices during this scene is directly attributable to those identified in the play with the north of England.

For a playhouse audience of 1590-91 the association of Simpcox with the 'old faith' would have been enhanced by the identification of this character with northern England. Although the survival of Catholicism was not confined solely to the region, as S.T. Bindoff notes, the north remained the 'refuge for the lost causes of Tudor England where the cause of feudalism and Rome, held out most stubbornly.'⁸⁷ The Elizabethan Privy Councillor Sir Ralph Sadler remarked how in the north the 'ancient faith still lay like lees at the bottom of men's

⁸⁴ Hattaway, *The Second Part of King Henry VI*, 112.

⁸⁵ Harrison, *Description*, 335.

⁸⁶ *NDS*, Vol. III, 127.

⁸⁷ Bindoff, *Tudor England*, 208.

hearts and if the vessel was ever so little stirred came to the top.⁸⁸ In 1587 Lord Hunsdon noted in a letter to Burghley that the population

from Yorkshire hither, the most part of Richmondshire, the Bishopric [Durham], the Middle and this East March, are almost all became Papists, for where in this East march at my going hence I knew not three Papists, I find not now three Protestants, for though some of them will some time come to the church, and that not past once a quarter, their wives are notorious recusants.⁸⁹

Possibly in response to such letters, a note in the State Papers Domestic entitled 'Gentry on the borders', dated December 1587, reads: 'The greater part of the gentry are Papists or addicted to Popery.'⁹⁰ By the 1590s, due to greater vigilance on behalf of the relevant authorities, records of recusancy had risen in many parts of the north, and while it is certainly true that Catholics were discovered in all parts of the kingdom, northern counties such as Lancashire were renowned as centres of the faith, a situation that prompted John Aylmer, the Bishop of London, to seek Burghley's financial assistance for a scheme to send radical puritans to 'Lancashire, Staffordshire, Shropshire and ... other barbarous countries to draw people from papism.'⁹¹ Possibly because of its reputation as a centre of Catholicism, Camden would write that his survey of Lancashire was 'approach[ed] with a kind of aversion',⁹² and no lesser figure than Burghley possessed a copy of Saxton's map of the county on which he marked with a '+' those families who remained loyal or were suspected of being adherents to the old faith.

During the decade in which *2 Henry VI* was first performed there was an increasing repression of Catholics, culminating in 1593 with the passing of the *Act Against Popish Recusants* placing restrictions on the movement of English Catholics and the education of their children. From the perspective of the 1590s, the portrayal of a character from Berwick

⁸⁸ *C.S.P.D.*, addenda 1566-79, Vol. XV, 77.

⁸⁹ Cited by S.J. Watts with Susan J. Watts, *From Border to Middle Shire: Northumberland 1586-1625* (Leicester:1975) 78-79.

⁹⁰ *C.S.P.D.*, Addenda 1580-1625 Vol. 12, 231.

⁹¹ Quoted by Carol Z. Wiener, 'The Beleaguered Isle. A Study of Elizabethan and Early Jacobean Anti-Catholicism', *Past and Present*, Number 51 (1971) 48.

⁹² *Britannia*, 787.

traversing the country as far as St Albans in order to pray at a shrine dedicated to a saint presents an image that flaunts the decree.

In the first tetralogy the episode of the false miracle is not the only occasion that Shakespeare's medieval world is allusive to northern recusancy in late Tudor England. I noted earlier how Shakespeare's inclusion of the Earl of Westmorland in this play had no historical basis, but this character's appearance along with Northumberland in the early part of *3 Henry VI* has a distinct resonance with events that occurred only two decades before the play was first performed. The image of a queen backed by northern magnates parallels the events of 1569 when the Elizabethan Earls of Westmorland and Northumberland, the direct descendants of the characters portrayed in the play, led a northern army in support of another foreign Queen, Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots. Moreover, in 1569 it was the Earl of Warwick who was placed in charge of the southern army which marched northward to counter the threat from the northern rebels -- a role his namesake performs consistently in *3 Henry VI* until his defection to the Lancastrian cause. Although historians have debated the extent to which the Northern Rebellion of 1569 was motivated by the desire to replace Elizabeth and return the country to the old faith, contemporaries had no such doubt that religion played a significant role in the uprising.⁹³ During the rebellion the Privy Councillor, Sir Ralph Sadler, commented 'there be not in all this country ten gentlemen that do favour and allow of her majesty's proceedings in the cause of religion.'⁹⁴ The same point is made in the following lines from the contemporary *Ballad rejoicing the sodaine fall, of rebels that thought to devower us all*,

It was the Erle of Westmerland,
That thought himselfe so sure;
By the aide of his rebellious bande,
His countrie to devoure;
The Erle eke of Northumberland,
This tratterous parte did take;
With other rebels of this lande,
For ave Marie's sake.⁹⁵

⁹³ See G.R. Elton, *England Under the Tudors* (London:1962) 298. On other factors behind the rebellion see Guy, *Tudor England*, 272-274.

⁹⁴ Cited by Keeling, *The Reformation in the Anglo-Scottish Border Counties*, 41.

⁹⁵ Quoted by Sharp, *The Rising of the North*, 883. Shakespeare is not the only playwright to allude to the rebellion of 1569 in a play dealing with the Wars of the Roses. What may well represent a veiled allusion to this rebellion is found in *The True Tragedy of Richard the Third* (c.1594) when, in response to the news that Richard had been made protector, the Page announces that 'the Earl of Westmorland and Northumberland, are secretly fled' (TLN 482-

Ultimately a failure, the Northern Rebellion did demonstrate that in the north acceptance of Protestantism and loyalty to the Anglican settlement of 1559 was suspect. Indeed one of the principal ideological tracts of the Tudor period, the homily *Against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion*, was a response to the events of 1569. Nevertheless it remains the case that Catholicism, particularly in the north of the kingdom, and by implication the threat it posed to the Elizabethan regime, had not passed with the defeat of the northern rebels in 1569. Throughout the remaining decades of the sixteenth century reports reaching the King of Spain would continue to suggest that the population of England's northern counties, including its leading figures, were sympathetic to the Catholic cause. In *the State Papers Spanish* we find a letter composed by a Scottish spy named Jacobus Stuart. Dated 1587, it lists the *Names of the Heretics, Schismatics, and Neutral in the Realm of England*, amongst whom

Northumberland and Westmoreland are loyal friends of his majesty [Philip of Spain], but there is no one to lead them now, as the earl of Northumberland has been executed as a martyr in York, and was succeeded by his brother, who was treacherously killed by a pistol shot in the Tower of London, the pretence being that he had killed himself. The earl of Westmorland is in Paris, maintained by king Philip. These two counties are really faithful to his Majesty. If his majesty intends to send a fleet to England it will have to encounter strong resistance if it does not come to one of these two counties.⁹⁶

A similar report to the Privy Council in October 1593 lends weight to these claims by noting how the population of 'Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmoreland and Yorkshire have these last two years been much converted to Popery, especially the [earl] of Westmoreland's tenants and friends'.⁹⁷ Even from afar the Earl of Westmorland continued to be a thorn in the side of the English government. In the service of the Spanish, the earl would lead a regiment of English Catholic exiles in the Low countries. Against this background, it is not surprising that a region where religious loyalties had posed a major threat to the crown in 1569 and was

483), an action that parallels that of their namesakes in 1569. See G.B. Churchill, *Richard the Third up to Shakespeare* (Berlin:1900) 424.

⁹⁶ *CSPS*, 1587-1603, Vol. 4, 186

⁹⁷ *CSPD*, 1591-1594, Vol. 3, 378.

in 1590 still regarded in certain circles as a centre of the old faith could be constructed in the popular theatre as the *locus* of another England.

THE STANLEYS

Any discussion regarding possible allusion to Catholicism in Shakespeare plays is inextricably linked to the Stanleys, a major northern family whose estates were concentrated in the north-western English counties of Lancashire and Cheshire. Their first appearance occurs during *2 Henry VI* as the custodians of the disgraced Eleanor Cobham, whose punishment for her involvement in witchcraft is to live

... in banishment
With Sir John Stanley, in the Isle of Man (2.3.12-13).⁹⁸

The Stanley family also appears in *3 Henry VI* as allies of the Yorkists, when Sir William Stanley's 'forwardness' (4.5.23) is instrumental in Edward IV's escape from captivity. This character reappears in *Richard III* when he is named by Sir Christopher Urswick as one of those 'men of name' (4.5.11) who lands with Richmond at Milford Haven. Contrary to Hammond's suggestion, in *Richard III* Shakespeare does not conflate the two Stanleys, Lord Thomas and Sir William.⁹⁹ Although he is not named directly, the appearance of a number of stage directions and speech-prefixes naming Stanley as Derby, coupled with his remark at 5.5 that Richard is holding his son George, serves to identify the character who appears throughout the play as Thomas Stanley, the direct ancestor of Ferdinando, Lord Strange.

In *Richard III* Lord Stanley/Derby is characterised in a manner that presents an image of a northern lord which is in stark contrast to those previously identified with the region. Here we find a northern lord pleading for the life of his servant (2.1), warning Hastings of his impending death (3.2) and being one of the first to organise the resistance against the soon to be crowned Richard by advising Queen Elizabeth to

⁹⁸ The reference to Sir John Stanley in the play repeats a mistake made in the sources. It was Sir Thomas Stanley who was given charge of Eleanor Cobham. The Isle of Man was granted to the family in 1406, along with the appellation 'Kings of Man' – a title which seems to have been seldom adopted.

⁹⁹ Hammond, *Richard III*, 13.

Take all the swift advantage of the hours.
You shall have letters from me to my son (4.1.48-49).

As Thomas Stanley's role prior to Bosworth and during the battle itself was to say the least ambiguous, it has long been recognised that in *Richard III* Shakespeare made a number of significant changes to history in order to make Ferdinando's ancestor appear as the 'kingmaker'.¹⁰⁰ Hence, as noted previously, at 5.3. Shakespeare has Thomas Stanley secretly visiting Richmond, whereas historically it was Richmond who sought out the assistance of the Stanleys, an alteration to the sources that when seen from this perspective serves to flatter the role of the family. In the final scene of the play the implication is clearly made that Thomas Stanley's involvement has been instrumental in Richmond's victory, a device which, as Honigmann notes, represents a 'clever re-touching of facts as Stanley left it to his brother, William, to lead the Stanley forces',¹⁰¹ a point which Hall makes abundantly clear in the following passage:

the earle of Richmond ... and his compaignions ... which beyng almost in
despaire of victorie, were sodainly recomforted by Sir William Stanley, whiche
came to succours with iii thousand tall men, at whiche very instant kynge
Richardes men were dryven backe and fledde.¹⁰²

On one level the absence of William saves any possible confusion of having two characters with the same surname appear on stage together during what is a climactic final scene, but the extent to which, as Dover Wilson suggests, Shakespeare was seemingly 'unconscious' of the fact that William Stanley was the brother of Thomas Stanley can be disputed.¹⁰³ Considering that William Stanley was executed in 1495 for his role in the Perkin Warbeck rebellion against Henry VII, it is not surprising that Shakespeare sought to maximise

¹⁰⁰ Bullough, *NDS*, III, 247. Honigmann, *Lost Years*, 64. Gurr, *Shakespearian Playing Companies*, 258.

¹⁰¹ Honigmann, *Lost Years*, 64-65.

¹⁰² Hall, *Union*, 419.

¹⁰³ Dover Wilson, *Richard III*, 241.

the role of his brother Thomas.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, the dramatist's own links with the family, particularly before his appearance in London, cannot be discarded as a motive for portraying the ancestors of Henry Stanley, the fourth Earl of Derby, and his son Ferdinando in a positive light.

Urswick's mention of William Stanley at 4.5. momentarily foregrounds a character whose name would have been recognisable to theatregoers in the 1590s. One of these was none other than the sixth Earl of Derby, William Stanley who succeeded to the title in 1594, after the death of his brother the fifth earl Ferdinando -- a fact that might be regarded as further evidence that the play was written prior to this date. The sixth earl was not the only William Stanley with a high profile; the suppression of Sir William Stanley's role at Bosworth in *Richard III* may have been prompted by the actions and reputation of another Elizabethan of that name. Although not a direct descendant of the character named at 4.5., in 1586 the namesake of the character briefly mentioned in *Richard III* was in charge of one thousand Irish troops temporarily stationed in London, whose embarkation to Flanders was mysteriously delayed for a month, an action that intriguingly seems to have been contrived in order to coincide with the Babington plot to kill Elizabeth and place Mary, Queen of Scots on the throne. Possible evidence to this end is to be found among the Spanish State Papers where in one report from Mendoza (the former Spanish ambassador to England expelled in 1584 for his role in various schemes to return England to Catholicism) to Philip II states that

Sir William Stanley, a soldier of great experience, who has come from Ireland by the Queen's orders with 1,000 troops, mostly Catholics, to pass over to Flanders. They are now quartered in the neighbourhood of London. The Queen herself administered the oath to this colonel three times in one week, that he would be loyal to her; but as he is a Catholic he has found excuses for not going over quickly with his men to Flanders.¹⁰⁵

If Babington and his fellow conspirators had succeeded in murdering the Queen, the same report states, Stanley was then to 'seize the Queen's ships [and] either kill or seize Cecil,

¹⁰⁴ The William Stanley who fought at Bosworth and was executed in 1495 was survived by his illegitimate son Thomas, himself imprisoned by Henry VII. On his subsequent release by Henry VIII he went abroad and joined Richard de la Pole the last Yorkist claimant. On his death the line ended.

¹⁰⁵ *CSPS*, Vol. III 1580-86, 604.

Walsingham, Lord Hunsdon, Knollys and Beal of the Council', an action that if successful would at a stroke destroy the core of the Elizabethan regime.¹⁰⁶

Distantly related to the more senior branch of the family, Sir William Stanley's most infamous action was, along with Sir Rowland Yorke, to surrender the forts at Deventer and Zutphen, and subsequently defect to the Spanish in 1587, during Leicester's campaign in the Low Countries. Loudly condemned in England, at least in official quarters, Stanley's act was supported by William Allen, the exiled English Cardinal and founder of the seminary at Douai, who writing a defence of Stanley's actions made the intriguing suggestion that the surrendering of Deventer should be seen in the same light as the conduct of the

... renowned Stanley, one of this Sir William his house, and name, to revolt from King Richard the Tyrant, and to yeeld him selfe, and his charge, to Henrie the Seveth.¹⁰⁷

If Allen could make the connection between the role of William Stanley in 1485 and his namesake in 1587, one cannot discount that the theatre audiences of the early 1590s could do likewise. As a former client of the Stanleys, Shakespeare may have been more sensitive to this issue than his fellow playwrights, particularly as the only other extant plays dealing with the reign of Richard, Legge's *Richardus Tertius* and the anonymous *True Tragedy*, make no mention of William Stanley.

William Stanley continued to be at the centre of plots to destabilise the Elizabethan regime. Speculation concerning the Stanley family's loyalty (and that of the northern lords generally) to Elizabeth and the Protestant settlement continued to arise. A letter supposedly written by a Spanish spy and published in London in 1588 relates how during the preparations to meet the Armada Ferdinand, Lord Strange, made lieutenant of Lancashire and Cheshire in his father's absence, raised 'a great power of horsemen' to defend the realm. Yet a few years earlier, Mendoza, during his tenure as the Spanish Ambassador to London, had informed the King of Spain that Lord Strange and the majority of the population of Lancashire and Cheshire were favourable to the Catholic cause, and for all Henry Stanley, the fourth Earl of Derby's

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 607.

¹⁰⁷ *The Copie of A Letter Written By M. Doctor Allen: Concerning The Yielding Up, Of the Citie of Daventrie, Unto his Catholike Maiestie, by Sir William Stanley Knight.* (Antwerp:1587), 22.

zeal in prosecuting Catholics, the numbers of recusants in Lancashire and Cheshire continued to grow. Indeed, such was the alarm that in response to rumours that Sir William Stanley was to attempt an invasion of Anglesea in North Wales, in 1590 the Privy Council wrote to the fourth Earl of Derby expressing concern that

ther are many seminaries and other evill affected persons in the said counties of Lancashire and Cheshire and the north parts of Lancashire, which are not so well looked unto as in respect of these doubtfull and daungerous tymes in reason they ought to be, we have thought it expedient to praie and accordingly to require your Lordship to take present ordre that such suspected persons with your jurisdiction [and] auctoritie as be of good habilitie.¹⁰⁸

Despite the fourth Earl of Derby's diligence, hopes of returning England to Catholicism continued to revolve around the possible accession to the throne of his son Ferdinando, Lord Strange. In the State Papers, a document dated 14 September 1592, detailing the examination of one George Dingley by members of the Privy Council, records how

the earls of Oxford and Cumberland, and Lords Strange and Percy [are] talked of as much alienated by discontent. Their chief hope is the death of Her Majesty. The Spaniard gives that as a reason of his lingering in re-attempting a new assault, because time may call her away whose life makes the attempt three times more perilous, and they confirm their opinion with the certain hope of a debate between the two houses of Hereford and Derby, who, they think will seek the Crown, each one for himself, during which contention the Spaniard thinks the entry into England would be without danger... They think Lancashire and the north would soonest favour them, and Stanley would have the Spanish navy come to Milford Haven rather than the narrow seas; if 6,000 horsemen were landed there, he would undertake so to coast the country with them.¹⁰⁹

The similarities between the events dramatised in *Richard III* and this alleged conspiracy hardly need spelling out, certainly if we are willing to accept that the play can be dated around 1591-1592. If this was the climate in 1592, no wonder stage plays attended by 'ten thousand spectators' were considered dangerous by the authorities.¹¹⁰

As Barry Coward notes, in 1594 Ferdinando, now fifth Earl of Derby following the death of his father, once more became the focus of a plot to place him on the throne as a

¹⁰⁸ A.P.C., 1590, Vol. 19, 156.

¹⁰⁹ CSPD, 270.

¹¹⁰ The quote is from Nashe's *Pierce Pennilesse* and is considered to allude to a performance of a play in which one of the central characters was Talbot; as to whether this play was indeed Shakespeare's *1 Henry VI* is far from certain, but the popularity of chronicle history plays is surely not in doubt. See Hattaway, *The First Part of King Henry VI*, 34.

Catholic King. Involving Sir William Stanley, this scheme was outlined to the fifth earl by Richard Hesketh of Rufford, a Catholic exile whose family Shakespeare appears to have had strong links with during the 1580s.¹¹¹ Hesketh was tried and executed in 1594 after being denounced by Ferdinando, an action for which speculation exists that Ferdinando's untimely death in the same year was the result of poison administered by disgruntled Catholics. While I do not intend to enter into the debate as to whether or not Shakespeare himself was a recusant (a point discussed at length by both Wilson and Honigmann in their respective studies cited above), it remains possible that in a period of increased repression the anti-Catholic tone of the *Henry VI* plays and the privileging of Thomas Stanley's role at Bosworth may have been designed as an outward show of conformity for the benefit of the many spies and agents ready to denounce anyone considered suspect.¹¹²

SUMMARY

Populated with frauds from Berwick, a 'haught' (*3H6* 2.1.169) earl from Northumberland, a 'Cruel child killer' (*3H6* 2.2.112) identified with Cumberland, a deformed tyrant who slaughters his way to the throne, and a major land-owning family whose role is often ambiguous, Shakespeare's representation of northerners would seem to conform with the perception of the region's population as expressed by most Medieval and Tudor writers.

Similarly, the actual region fares little better, for nowhere in these plays do we encounter a land of the 'homely swain' (*3H6* 2.5.22). Shakespeare's foregrounding of the bloody deeds carried out within the walls of Pomfret Castle (modern day Pontefract, a town south-west of York) is a case in point: presented as the northern version of the Tower of London, it is here that in *2 Henry VI* York tells how Richard II was 'murthured traitorously' (2.2.27) by Bolingbroke. In *Richard III* it is reported that the Queen's relatives are arrested and sent northwards to their deaths at 'Pomfret' (2.4.42) a place described quite accurately by the doomed Rivers as a

¹¹¹ Honigmann, *Lost Years*, 37-38.

¹¹² Once again Honigmann's work on this aspect of Shakespeare's plays has been invaluable. He draws the same conclusion regarding the overt attack on the Papal authority found in Shakespeare's *King John*.

... bloody prison!
Fatal and ominous to noble peers! (3.3.9-10).

Put simply the region is consistently constructed as a barbarous zone of slaughter and murder. Berwick, Wakefield, Towton and to a lesser extent Pomfret may be actual places within the northern half of the kingdom, but in these plays they become metaphors for 'otherness'.

While the role and representation of the north in the tetralogy was largely dictated by the events of the past, it is also the case that the political, cultural and social climate of the 1590s help fashion an image of a world aptly described by Harrison as 'beyond.' This is expressed most readily in the *Henry VI* plays where the role of both Simpcox and the alliance of northern lords supporting Margaret is often allusive to northern Catholicism. Illustrated by the difference in the portrayal of the Clifford's in the closing moments of *Q* and *F* of *2 Henry VI*, and the variations between *Q* and *F* of *Richard III* as outlined above, factors such as regional touring and theatrical patronage also appear to contribute to the projection of the north in these plays.

In the final moments of *Richard III* the joining of the 'White Rose and the Red' (5.5.19) at Bosworth field metaphorically represents the uniting of the north with the rest of the kingdom under Henry VII, an ending which conforms to Tudor political orthodoxy whereby the period of civil broils had ended with the death of Richard. It is an image which in one sense highlights what Blair Worden terms, 'the gains and losses of the Tudor 'achievement',¹¹³ whereby the north would be transformed from an alternative and rival element within the state into what was, by the 1590s, a marginalised and ideologically constructed other. But as Shakespeare's representation of the north would highlight, in one of the most visible forms of cultural exchange -- the Elizabethan public theatre -- the distinctive nature of the region had not disappeared.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Blair Worden, 'Shakespeare and Politics' *Shakespeare Survey* (1992) 44, 9.

¹¹⁴ See David Scott Kastan's essay in *Shakespeare Left and Right* ed., by Ivo Kamps (New York:1991).

CHAPTER SIX

Concluding Comments

This study has examined the representation of England in the plays of the first tetralogy. In doing so, it has argued that regionalism and regional identity play a pivotal role in these plays.

In foregrounding the degree to which regionalism and regional identity informs the tetralogy, the obvious danger is to over-emphasise the autonomy of the regional world and exaggerate the extent to which early modern England was a loose confederation of counties. For if regionalism could be perceived as a form of resistance to centralisation and standardisation, it never totally overshadowed a sense of belonging to the greater geographical construct -- England. Nor to a certain extent does it in the three parts of *Henry VI* and *Richard III*. Simpcox's journey from Berwick to St Albans, the Kentish rebels' perambulation of Kent and the march of armies across the length and breadth of the kingdom serve to undercut what Wrightson identifies as the 'myth of the relatively isolated, self contained and static rural community.'¹ In *2 Henry VI* Cade's rebels are both Kentishmen and Englishmen who willingly desert their leader when their 'native coast' (4.8.52) is threatened by external forces. Similarly, the contention between York and Lancaster is not fought to divide the realm, but to determine which branch of the Plantagenets will wear the crown.

Taken as four parts of one dramatic composition, the first tetralogy does dramatise the nation's journey from fracture to unity which, in the final moments of *Richard III* sees the once recalcitrant regions now united under the Tudor cause. Looking back from the perspective of the 1590s, Richmond's victory had ended a period of 'civil wounds' (5.5.40), at least on the scale witnessed between 1455 and 1485. Furthermore, the shirring of Wales ended the independence of the western Marcher lordships, and the extinguishment of the various franchises and liberties in the north represented another step in the consolidation of the kingdom under the Tudors. Indeed, the failure of the northern rebellion in 1569 provided

¹ Wrightson, *English Society*, 41.

the opportunity for the Elizabethan regime to remove the northern earls from their traditional offices as wardens of the northern Marches and replace them with more compliant crown appointees. As Ellis has argued, the slow imposition of a southern based hegemony over the peripheral parts of the kingdom was complete by the 1590s.²

Nevertheless, in spite of the various reforms carried out between the battle of Bosworth and the writing and performing of these plays, regionalism, as a social, economic and cultural determinant remained a potent factor within English society. The power of the nobility may have declined in the intervening century after Bosworth, and the days of the over-mighty subject passed, but a number of magnates remained important and influential figures in their 'countries'. The Stanleys were all powerful in the north-west, the Herberts had immense influence in the Welsh border districts and Wales and, as Wallace T. MacCaffrey suggests, Burghley 'played the great seigneur in Northampton, Lincolnshire and Hertfordshire'.³

As Camden, Lambarde, Speed, Norden and a host of other writers engaged in the discovery of England would reveal, political unification and the progressive march towards the centralisation of power and standardisation had not effaced localism. It was a project that, whether consciously or not, brought to the fore the diverse nature of English society. The prevalence of Catholicism in the county of Lancashire, a serious enough problem for Burghley to annotate his copy of Saxton's map of the county with the names of recusant families, is but one of the many examples pointing to the survival of different customs, rituals, and community within late Tudor England.

In bringing to the stage a myriad of characters who are identified with various villages, towns, counties or regions throughout the kingdom, Shakespeare's first tetralogy also draws attention to the cultural and geographical divisions within early modern England -- no more so than in *2 Henry VI*, a play in which we are confronted with petitioners from Long Melford, frauds from Berwick, beadles from St Albans, rebels from various villages in Kent, and a nobility whose titles serve to distinguish them as regional magnates. Providing more than

² Ellis, *Conquest and Union*, 40.

³ Wallace T. MacCaffrey, *Queen Elizabeth and the Making of Policy 1572-1588* (Princeton:1981) 457.

simply a backdrop to the unfolding action, the localisation of scenes and the identification of characters with specific places in the kingdom. It represents an acknowledgment of not one England, but a multiplicity of other 'Englands' existing within the borders of the Elizabethan state.

As I have argued, Shakespeare's fashioning of regional identity in the first tetralogy is not simply predicated on the chronicle sources, but a host of other related factors that reflect the political, social and cultural climate of the 1590s. Perhaps the most obvious example is the portrayal of the Welsh, whose role in these plays is rarely problematical (with a Tudor on the throne perhaps we should expect no less). Yet throughout the *Henry VI* plays and *Richard III*, there is a degree of regional stereotyping in which Shakespeare often appears to exploit widely accepted perceptions, whether real or imagined, for the sake of creating a viable and dynamic drama. As an illustration, one can cite the construction of northern regional identity, exemplified by the characterisation of Simpcox in *2 Henry VI*, young Clifford in *3 Henry VI* and Richard III himself: this less than flattering image has a certain correlation with the reputation of the north's population found in state papers, private correspondence and geographical descriptions written during the last decades of the sixteenth century.

Constantly under attack from both pulpit and council chamber, the necessity of Elizabethan theatre companies to secure the protection of powerful and influential figures also informs the construction of regional identity in the three parts of *Henry VI* and *Richard III*. I am not the first to explore the idea that the role of the Stanleys or the Earls of Pembroke in the tetralogy is in some way related to the status of their Elizabethan descendants as the patrons of the acting companies who first performed these plays. But in this study I have sought to extend this theory somewhat in order to propose that the glossing of Pembroke's role in *3 Henry VI*, and that of the Stanleys in *Richard III* was partly motivated by the necessities of touring, especially in those areas of the kingdom where their Elizabethan descendants held sway.⁴ Equally, a prevalence of local details, the allusive nature of the plays to regional issues (a trait particularly noticeable in *2 Henry VI*) and the possibility that a number of the variants between the Folio and Quarto texts of *2* and *3 Henry VI* and *Richard III*

⁴ McMillin, *Queen's Men*, 251. See the discussion on this point in chapter five.

point to the adaptation of the texts to suit specific circumstances, is further evidence that the construction of regional identity in these plays was influenced by provincial touring.

The Politics of Regionalism

Writing in 1600, Thomas Smith would remark that among the

12 competitors that gape the death of that good old Princess now Queen the 6th is the Earle of Huntington who, fynding all these offspring of Henry 7 by foranage, lawe or bastardy, cometh in with a title before Henry 7 from George, Duke of Clarence, brother to Edward the 4 of the house of Yorke, 240 yeares since; and so meanes to revive the title of ye house of Yorke, and so the variance betwixt the 2 houses of Lancaster and York, which hath cost 20 Hundred thousand mens' lyves and 30 yeare of Civil Warr. but his grandfather, the lord Montague, was attayned of Treson and putt to death by Henry 8, and so his heyers cutt of.⁵

Smith's fears were echoed three years later by Francis Bacon who wrote how 'after Queen Elizabeth's decease, there must follow in England nothing but confusions, interreigns, and perturbations of estate, likely far to exceed the ancient calamities of Lancaster and York.'⁶ Against this background, Shakespeare's portrayal of the nation racked by a civil war, which is largely the result of a disputed succession, is clearly topical.

While history would prove Smith and Bacon wrong, both writers raise doubts as to the extent of national uniformity in early modern England. One witnesses a similar tension in the first tetralogy, where the regional world is often presented as one of chaos and disorder, a kingdom which largely appears to be populated by rebellious subjects or a nobility quick to resort to arms in order to satisfy their ambitions, and where regional alliances frequently run counter to the national interest, the most extreme being in 2 and 3 *Henry VI* when the kingdom is polarised between a Lancastrian north and a Yorkist south. Throughout the plays successive kings fail to unite the country, an issue that remains unresolved in the final moments of *Richard III* when Richmond only 'promises' unity -- an ambiguity that may point to the fact that in the early 1590s the ideal of the unified nation state and what constituted 'Englishness' was not totally secure.

⁵ Smith, *The State of England*, 3.

⁶ Cited by Hattaway, *The Second Part of King Henry VI*, 5.

By drawing attention to the presence of the nation beyond the world of the court and palaces of Westminster and London, the first tetralogy subverts the idea of England as an homogeneous whole by portraying a culturally diverse society in which constructions of 'self' are both multiple and fluid, a world in which an individual is both a countyman and countryman. Perhaps we should expect nothing less from a dramatist, himself the son of a glover, who throughout his years as one of the central figures in London's theatrical world, maintained his links with his own 'country' of Warwickshire.

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