EVER since the publication of Caroline Spurgeon's book in 1935, the study of Shakespeare's imagery has attracted a great deal of critical attention. Her theories have been questioned and modified in various ways. It has been doubted whether the field from which images happen to be drawn is as significant as the kind of images the poet employed. More stress has been laid on the dramatic function of the imagery; it has been shown that imagery ought not to be considered in isolation; and several critics have demonstrated that to concentrate on the iterative image that is numerically predominant is bound to over-simplify and miss the richness and complexity of the plays. But it is noticeable that nearly all the imagistic criticism of the last thirty years has been concerned with the tragedies, and that hardly anything has been written about the imagery of the Histories. The main exceptions have been Richard Altick's well-known essay on the symphonic imagery of Richard II, chapters on the same play by Wolfgang Clemen and Brents Stirling, and an essay by E. C. Pettet on King John.

There are three reasons for this comparative neglect. It was not until the middle of the 'nineties that Shakespeare fully realized the dramatic function of imagery, and the three plays in which iterative imagery was first employed—Romeo and Juliet,
A Midsummer-Night's Dream and Richard II—were all written about the same time. Four of the Histories belong to an earlier period. Then, secondly, it may have been assumed that most of the Histories were less poetically organized than the tragedies; but in this connection it should be remembered that when they were first published both Richard III and Richard II were classed as tragedies. Thirdly, many critics believe that Henry VIII and 1 Henry VI were not wholly Shakespeare's, and a few critics still believe that he had a collaborator in the Second and Third Parts of Henry VI.

1 Henry VI is a special case. Although there is nothing unlikely in the assumption that Shakespeare as a young man wrote in the manner of Marlowe, Greene or Peele, as Auden sometimes wrote in the manner of Eliot, there are some scenes in the play which appear to have been written in ignorance of others. One example may be given. In the very first scene we hear that Lord Talbot would have defeated a French army

If Sir John Fastolfe had not played the coward.
He, being in the vaward, placed behind
With purpose to relieve and follow them,
Cowardly fled, not having struck one stroke.

In Act III, the same incident is repeated:

Cap. Whither way, Sir John Fastolfe, in such haste?
Fast. Whither away! To save myself by flight:
We are like to have the overthrow again.
Cap. What! will you fly, and leave Lord Talbot?
Fast. Ay.

In Act IV, Fastolfe is deprived of his knighthood and banished. If the same dramatist wrote all three passages, he must have intended to delete the first; but as it is an integral part of the scene, it seems much more likely that two writers were responsible.

The dual, or multiple, authorship of the play is supported by the incidence of imagery. In Act II, Scene v, for example, the scene in which Mortimer dies, there are eighteen images in 125 lines. In Act V, Scene iv, the scene in which Joan is exposed as a licentious witch, there is no imagery in 175 lines. The difference might be explained by the fact that one is a serious death-scene
and the other is intended to be comic. But the former appears to be characteristically Shakespearian, and the latter contains no indisputably Shakespearian touches.

The characteristic images in the play are similes rather than metaphors. Most of them are unoriginal and only a few seem to be the result of direct observation:

- My thoughts are whirled like a potter's wheel...
- Glory is like a circle in the water...
- As a child's bearing-cloth.

More characteristic and colourless are these examples from the first act: "like captives bound to a triumphant car"; "like pale ghosts"; "like drowned mice"; "like lions wanting food". The commonest biblical and classical names are dragged in for comparisons: Samson, Deborah, Cain, Goliath, Hector, Nestor, Paris, Hercules, Hannibal, Nero. Only one is at all unusual:

- Thy promises are like Adonis' gardens,
  Which one day bloom and fruitful are the next.

This, indeed, was thought to be such a recondite allusion that it was used as a proof that the plays could not have been written by the poacher from Stratford. But one suspects that the author could have derived the information from the third book of *The Faerie Queene*, or from some lost source.

With 2 Henry VI we are on surer ground. It is significant that five of the image-clusters discovered by Caroline Spurgeon and Edward Armstrong are present in the play, though without some of the associations which they afterwards collected. The cluster linking the drone with *eagle, creeping and sucking* does not in iv. i mention the *weasel, cat and music*, as in Shakespeare's later plays. This is what we should expect, for the clusters gradually attract to themselves additional associations.

But although there is no doubt that Shakespeare was responsible for the whole play, and although the verse is generally more competent than in Part I, there is no attempt to vary the verse to suit the different characters. The immaturity is particularly apparent in the imagery. It is shown in the commonplace, and

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often proverbial, nature of his similes (e.g. "Smooth runs the water where the brook is deep"); in the numerous allusions to classical figures—Dido, Ajax, Medea, Althaea; in the over-elaborate working out of comparisons, sometimes shared by two characters; and, above all, in his decorative, rather than dramatic use of imagery. In the scene of Suffolk's murder, for example, the Captain, who has apparently been Suffolk's servant, describes nightfall in these terms:

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

The objection to these lines is not that they are out of character, for Shakespeare often uses minor characters as a chorus, and the pirate captain is afterwards used to give an eloquent denunciation of Suffolk's vices, complete with an appropriate Latin tag: it is rather that they paint the scene in an uneconomical and entirely conventional way, with twelve tired epithets in seven lines.

In the scene in which Suffolk parts from the Queen, there is a much more dramatic use of imagery. Suffolk says:

If I depart from thee, I cannot live;
And in they sight to die, what were it else
But like a pleasant slumber in thy lap?
Here could I breathe my soul into the air,
As mild and gentle as the cradle-babe,
Dying with mother's dug between its lips.

This is still comparatively clumsy and verbose, but the imagery is called forth by the situation: it is organic, not decorative.

There are two examples of a long epic simile. In one of them of nine lines York compares the loss of the territories in France to piracy; in the other, the King compares the arrest of Gloucester to a calf being taken to the slaughter-house. Both are admirable in their way, but Shakespeare in his later work wisely
limited the use of such similes to passages of epic narration, as in the sergeant’s account of the battle in Macbeth or in the Dido episode in Hamlet.

The difference between Shakespeare’s mature imagery and that of 2 Henry VI is apparent—so apparent, indeed, that it is impossible to believe that two passages in the last act were written at the same time as the rest of the play. One of them is Young Clifford’s discovery of his father’s body during the battle of St. Albans:

Shame and confusion! All is on the rout;
Fear frames disorder, and disorder wounds
Where it should guard. O War, thou son of hell,
Whom angry heavens do make their minister,
Throw in the frozen bosoms of our part
Hot coals of vengeance! Let no soldier fly.
He that is truly dedicate to war
Hath no self-love; nor he that loves himself
Hath not essentially, but by circumstance,
The name of valour. O, let the vile world end,
And the premised flames of the last day
Knit earth and heaven together!
Now let the general trumpet blow his blast,
Particularities and petty sounds
To cease! Wast thou ordained, dear father,
To lose thy youth in peace and to achieve
The silver livery of advised age,
And in thy reverence and thy chair-days thus
To die in ruffian battle? Even at this sight
My heart is turned to stone; and while ’tis mine
It shall be stony. York not our old men spares;
No more will I their babes. Tears virginal
Shall be to me even as the dew to fire;
And beauty, that the tyrant oft reclaims,
Shall to my flaming wrath be oil and flax.

If this speech is compared with that of the Captain in Act IV the difference of style is apparent. Instead of the regular end-stopped lines of the earlier speech, with conventional epithets and images, we have a freer and more colloquial rhythm, frequent enjambement, and original epithets; and the imagery of disorder and of the Last Judgment is characteristic of a much more mature Shakespeare.

1 v. ii. 31-55.
There is no trace of these lines in the bad quarto which has instead:

O! dismall sight, see where he breathlesse lies,
All smeard and weltred in his luke-warme blood,
Ah, aged pillar of all Comberlands true house,
Sweete father, to thy murtherd ghoast I sweare,
Immortal hate vnto the house of Yorke,
Nor neuer shall I sleepe secure one night,
Till I haue furiously revengde they death,
And left not one of them to breath on earth.

Young Clifford’s speech continues in the Folio in a more conventional and earlier style:

Henceforth I will not have to do with pity:
Meet I an infant of the house of York,
Into as many gobbets will I cut it
As wild Medea young Absyrtus did;
In cruelty will I seek out my fame.
Come, thou new ruin of old Clifford’s house;
As did Æneas old Anchises bear,
So bear I thee upon my manly shoulders;
But then Æneas bare a living load,
Nothing so heavy as these woes of mine.

The conclusion is inescapable that Shakespeare made alterations to the play some years after its first performance, probably for a revival after the success of *Henry IV* and *Henry V*.

The other passage which clearly belongs to a later stratum of the play is in the last scene:

And thus as old Ankyses sonne did beare
His aged father on his manly backe,
And fought with him against the bloodie Greeks,
Even so will I.

The corresponding words in the quarto are simply “But did you see old Salisbury?” But the next speech, which reverts to a
more primitive style, is reproduced, if inaccurately, in the quarto.

If one compares 3 Henry VI with The True Tragedie, it is clear that the actors endeavoured to preserve the substance of each scene, but they cut the more "poetical" speeches which were inessential to the plot. Gloucester's tremendous speech in iii. 3 is cut from 62 lines to 30, and among the passages sacrificed is one of the most effective of Shakespeare's similes¹:

And I—like one lost in a thorny wood
That rents the thorns and is rent with the thorns,
Seeking a way and straying from the way;
Not knowing how to find the open air,
But toiling desperately to find it out—
Torment myself to catch the English crown;
And from that torment I will free myself
Or hew my way out with a bloody axe.

Gloucester's later soliloquy, after the murder of Henry VI, apart from a few vulgarizations, is reproduced entire; but the King's more poetical soliloquy on the Towton molehill² is cut from 54 lines to 13. The cuts include the two similes at the beginning of the speech and Henry's praise of the shepherd's life. In the last 40 lines there is only one image: melodious, vivid and charming as the passage is, Shakespeare obtains his effect by skilful rhetorical repetitions and by an extraordinary purity of diction³:

the shepherd's homely curds,
His cold thin drink out of his leather bottle,
His wonted sleep under a fresh tree's shade,
All which secure and sweetly he enjoys,
Is far beyond a prince's delicates—
His viands sparkling in a golden cup,
His body couched in a curious bed,
When care, mistrust, and treason waits on him.

The very absence of imagery in one of the most memorable passages in the play is an indication of the mainly decorative function of imagery in Shakespeare's early work.

Caroline Spurgeon, indeed, showed that these early Histories contain a large number of garden images and she pointed out that in 3 Henry VI there were an unusually large number of images

¹ III. ii. 174-81. ² ii. v. 1-54. ³ Lines 47-54.
taken from sea-faring. The garden images become more functional in *Richard II*; but the sea-faring images do not, as iterative images were later to do, throw much light on the theme of the play.

In *Richard III* the imagery becomes for the first time functional and organic. Several critics have called attention to the animal imagery in the play, used mainly to characterize the villain-hero. He is compared to a dog, a hell-hound, a toad, a spider, a hedgehog, a hog and a boar—the last being suggested by his crest.

Neither Caroline Spurgeon nor Wolfgang Clemen, in his book on imagery, referred to another group of images which are quantitatively important and qualitatively significant: these are the images drawn from the stage. The Duchess of York asks Queen Elizabeth:

> What means this *scene* of rude impatience?

She replies:

> To make an *act* of tragic violence.

Margaret compares Elizabeth to a stage queen:

> I called thee then poor shadow, painted queen,
> The presentation of but what I was,
> The flattering index of a direful pageant . . .
> A queen in jest, only to fill the scene.

Earlier in the same scene, Margaret says she is witness to "a dire induction",

> hoping the consequence
> Will prove as bitter, black, and tragical.

These images are used to present the fall of princes as a tragic pageant and they reinforce the element of ritual in the play, to which A. P. Rossiter called attention. But much of the stage imagery is used by Richard himself or in reference to him by others. In the third scene he speaks of himself as seeming "a saint when most I play the devil". In Act III he compares himself to "the formal vice, Iniquity", who moralizes "two meanings in one word". His mother complains that beneath "a virtuous vizor"

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1 *Shakespeare's Imagery*, p. 230.  
2 II. ii. 38-39.  
3 iv. iv. 82-85.  
he conceals "deep vice". This stage imagery throws light on Richard’s role and character. His hypocrisy may be regarded as the application of the actor’s art to real life. Sir Edmund Chambers, indeed, argued that in Richard III Shakespeare the actor was pursuing the psychological secrets of his craft, the play being "a professional notebook full of the nicest and most penetrating observation". It would, perhaps, be more accurate to say that Shakespeare presents his Machiavellian villain as one who perverts the art of acting to obtain his own ends in real life. This is made clear by several passages, notably by the dialogue between Richard and Buckingham in III. v.:

Glou. Come, cousin, canst thou quake and change thy colour,
Murder thy breath in middle of a word,
And then again begin, and stop again,
As if thou wert distraught and mad with terror?

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

Here the stage-imagery has been turned into direct description; and when, two scenes later, Richard enters between two bishops we observe the stratagems being put into operation. The imagery of Richard III is no longer decorative, but an integral part of the design.

Richard II exhibits a further stage in the development of Shakespeare’s use of imagery. Pater remarked that in this play "dramatic form approaches to something like the unity of a... single strain of music"; and Altick wrote of its "symphonic imagery" and of the numerous groups of interrelated images. But one of the main characteristics of the play, one of the chief means by which Shakespeare achieves its particular tone, is the frequent use of religious imagery and allusion. This characteristic is oddly ignored in Altick’s otherwise comprehensive account. Richard compares his false friends to Judas, and those who show "an outward pity" to Pilate. Bolingbroke, because he has

1 Shakespeare: A Survey (1925), p. 20.
broken his oath of allegiance, is "damned in the book of heaven"; and Bolingbroke, in his turn, compares Exton to Cain. The Bishop of Carlisle compares England to Golgotha and warns Bolingbroke not to set house against house. Richard declares that he has been delivered to his "sour cross" and in his last soliloquy quotes twice from the Sermon on the Mount.¹

These religious associations have links with the comparison of Richard with the sun—"the searching eye of heaven", "the blushing discontented sun"—and with Richard's belief that God is mustering "Armies of pestilence" to strike the yet unborn children of the rebels.² The theme of the divine right of kings is counterpointed with that of the king's own mortality³:

Within the hollow crown
That rounds the mortal temples of a king
Keeps Death his court; and there the antic sits
Scorning his state and grinning at his pomp;
Allowing him a breath, a little scene,
To monarchize, be fear'd, and kill with looks;
Infusing him with self and vain conceit,
As if this flesh which walls about our life
Were brass impregnable.

The date of King John is still under dispute; but if, as some believe, it was written before The Troublesome Raigne, it must have been substantially revised, for most of the verse is more mature than that of the three parts of Henry VI. The imagery of the play is often striking and it is certainly not merely decorative, but it is also puzzling. The personifications and the imagery connected with bodily movement, regarded by Caroline Spurgeon as characteristic of the play, seem to have no special dramatic significance; and though E. C. Pettet is right to call attention to the imagery drawn from the fire and fever and to suggest that it may have proliferated from the scenes of Arthur's attempted blinding and of John's death, here again the dramatic function is obscure.⁴

² iii. iii. 85.
³ iii. ii. 160.
⁴ Clemen suggested that the disease imagery in Hamlet evolved from the Ghost's description of the effect of the poison: but see K. Muir, "Image and Symbol in Hamlet", E.A., xvii (1964), 352-63.
In most respects *1 Henry IV* exhibits a considerable advance on the earlier Histories. Structure, characterization, and verse are all masterly. There are no weak scenes and no unrealized characters. But in one respect the play is something of a retrogression: the images used by Shakespeare seem less organic than those in *Richard II* or even in *Richard III*. Many of them are effective in themselves and some of them are a vivid means of characterization, as when the King says that Hotspur is

> Amongst a grove, the very straightest plant;

and Westmoreland replies that Worcester's teaching makes Hotspur

> prune himself, and bristle up
> The crest of youth against your dignity.

Even more revealing are Hotspur's own lines:

> By heaven, methinks, it were an easy leap
> To pluck bright honour from the pale-faced moon;
> Or dive into the bottom of the deep,
> Where fathom-line could never touch the ground,
> And pluck up drowned honour by the locks;
> So he that doth redeem her thence might wear,
> Without corrrival, all her dignities

Hal, at the end of the first scene in which he appears, defines his role by a comparison with the sun:

> Herein will I imitate the sun
> Who doth permit the base contagious clouds
> To smother up his beauty from the world,
> That when he please again to be himself,
> Being wanted, he may be more wondered at,
> By breaking through the foul and ugly mists
> Of vapours that did seem to strangle him.

The King, in a later scene, comparing his son with Richard II, says that they both made themselves too common,

> seen, but with such eyes,
> As, sick and blunted with community,
> Afford no extraordinary gaze,
> Such as is bent on sun-like majesty
> When it shines seldom in admiring eyes.

The King, by using the sun-image, reminds us of Hal's earlier words, which unfortunately give to a modern audience the
impression of cold-blooded calculation, like his father's, but which Shakespeare can hardly have intended.  

The second part of *Henry IV* is much more interesting from the point of view of our subject because Shakespeare reverts to the use of iterative imagery. To use Elizabeth Barrett Browning's phrase about Horne, Shakespeare malleted the metaphors into the groundwork of his play. All through the play our attention is called to disease and senility. The King is dying, and like Charles II he takes an unconscionable time about it. Northumberland is crafty-sick. Shallow is senile, and he talks a lot about the friends of his youth who are dead. Falstaff, in spite of his vitality, is suffering from various diseases, and he implies that the Chief Justice is senile and that Doll Tearsheet has the pox. The iterative image reinforces the atmosphere of disease, so that we are made to realize that the country itself is sick. There are more than thirty images drawn from sickness and physic.  

In the first scene Northumberland, hearing the news of Hotspur's death, compares himself to

> the wretch, whose fever-weakened joints,
> Like strengthless hinges, buckle under life,
> Impatient of his fit, breaks like a fire
> Out of his keeper's arms.

Morton, in the same scene, calls England

> a bleeding Land,
> Gasping for life.

In the long scene between Falstaff and the Lord Chief Justice most of the conversation is about disease and bodily infirmity—"deafness", "sick", "apoplexy", "lethargy", "a kind of sleeping in the blood, a whoreson tingling", "the disease of not listening", "physician", "gout", "pox"—and several of the images are taken from the same field. Falstaff, for example, says:

> Your Lordship may minister the potion of imprisonment to me in respect of poverty; but how I should be your patient to follow your prescriptions, the wise may make some dram of a scruple, or indeed a scruple itself.


2 C. Spurgeon declares that there is no iterative imagery in the play.
The Chief Justice says he is "loath to gall a new-healed wound"; and Falstaff complains:

I can get no remedy against this consumption of the purse: borrowing only lingers and lingers it out, but the disease is incurable.

In the last words of the scene he declares that he "will turn diseases to commodity".

In scene 3, there is one image from mental illness; two from surfeiting and vomit; there is one burning image suggested by fever, and the Archbishop declares "The commonwealth is sick", the barest and simplest use of this particular image.

There are fewer sickness images in Act II, three scenes of which are in prose. But Hal speaks of the discolouring of "the complexion of his greatness" and of his heart bleeding inwardly. Poins says that Falstaff's "immortal part needs a physician"; and Mistress Quickly says that Falstaff, and Doll are "as rheumatic as two dry toasts".

In Act II, the King, suffering from insomnia, speaks of sleep as Nature's nurse, and again refers to the sick commonwealth:

Then you perceive the body of our kingdom  
How foul it is; what rank diseases grow,  
And with what danger near the heart of it.

To which Warwick replies:

It is but as a body yet distempered,  
Which to his former strength may be restored,  
With good advice and little medicine.

The King recalls Richard II's words to Northumberland:

The time will come, that foul sin, gathering head,  
Shall break into corruption.

In the Gloucestershire scene there is little imagery, but the theme of sickness is presented directly by the portrait of Justice Shallow and by the group of conscripts, Mouldy, Wart and Feeble. Even Bullcalf pretends he is diseased.

In Act IV the Archbishop, in defending the rebellion to Westmoreland, bases his whole argument in analogies of disease:

We are all diseased;  
And with our surfeiting and wanton hours  
Have brought ourselves into a burning fever,  
And we must bleed for it: of which disease  
Our late king, Richard, being infected, died.
He disclaims being a physician of the commonwealth, but declares that he wishes

To diet rank minds sick of happiness,
And purge the obstructions, which begin to stop
Our very veins of life.

He promises that if their grievances are remedied the rebels will knit their "powers to the arm of peace", and claims that

Our peace will, like a broken limb united,
Grow stronger for the breaking.

The madness of rebellion would thus be cured.

In the last scene of this act the dying King again speaks of his sick kingdom; Hal contrasts the golden crown with the gold that is "medicine potable" and denies that his blood was infected with joy when he thought his father dead.

In the last act there is hardly any disease imagery, for we are to suppose that with the accession of Henry V the sickness of the commonwealth, caused largely by the sins of usurpation and rebellion, has been cured.

A little-known, nineteenth-century critic, Elwin, has an interesting comment on Henry's soliloquy on sleep.¹

Nothing, perhaps, displays more largely how [Shakespeare] luxuriated in plenitude of power, than his constantly-repeated practice of constructing his sentences in a fanciful allusion altogether differing from their express purport. As when, in the upbraidings addressed by King Henry IV to that sleep that has become a fugitive from his couch, in order to indicate an involuntary association of ideas in the mind of the royal soliloquizer, whose repose is interrupted by the rebellion of his subjects, the phraseology is fashioned to the notion of a visitation of justice, on a scene of tumult:

"And in the visitation of the winds,
Who take the ruffian billows by the top,
Curling their monstrous heads, and hanging them
With deaf'ning clamours in the slippery clouds."

The epithet, slippery, glances at doubtful agents of authority, who permit offenders to escape; whilst its direct reference is to the effect produced by the distant billows of a stormy sea; each one in succession seeming to be suspended for a moment in the clouds, from which it presently glides again into the deep.

Henry V is less interesting from the point of view of imagery. The Chorus wishes for

¹ H. Elwin, Shakespeare Restored (1853).
and laments the inadequacies of the Elizabethan stage—"this wooden O"—to portray the heroic deeds of Henry V. But the weaknesses of the play are not theatrical, but poetical. Some of the best scenes are in prose—the account of Falstaff's death and the conversation on the eve of Agincourt between Williams and the King—and some of the verse is deplorably prosaic. The Archbishop of Canterbury's 60-line speech about the salique law is flatter than anything in Shakespeare's early histories. The King's speeches before Harfleur, on the other hand, are painfully inflated. One of his best speeches—his reply to Westmoreland before the battle of Agincourt—obtains its effect, without a single image, by the simplicity of its rhetorical appeal:

If we are marked to die, we are enow
To do our country loss: and if to live,
The fewer men the greater share of honour . . .
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he to-day that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother.

His address to the three conspirators has as many as fifteen images, but none of them is particularly striking:

As dogs upon their masters, worrying you . . .
Thou that did'st bear the key of all my counsels . . .
the truth of it stands off as gross

As black and white . . .
Glistering semblances of piety . . .
For this revolt of thine, methinks, is like
Another fall of man.

Much more impressive is the speech on the cares of kingship iv. i, based, we are told, on Sir Thomas Elyot, Priscian, Erasmus, and Horace. Here, apart from references to Phoebus, Hyperion and "Night, the child of hell", there is hardly any imagery. There is one splendid image—

the tide of pomp
That beats upon the high shore of this world—

but it comes in the middle of a long and complex sentence which stretches over 24 lines.
No, thou proud dream,
That play'st so subtly with a king's repose;
I am a king that find thee; and I know
'Tis not the balm, the sceptre and the ball,
The sword, the mace, the crown imperial,
The intertissued robe of gold and pearl,
The farced title running 'fore the king,
The throne he sits on, nor the tide of pomp
That beats upon the high shore of this world,
No, not all these, thrice gorgeous ceremony,
Not all these, laid in bed majestical,
Can sleep so soundly as the wretched slave,
Who with a body, fill'd and vacant mind
Gets him to rest, cram'd with distressful bread;
Never sees horrid night, the child of hell,
But, like a lackey, from the rise to set
Sweats in the eye of Phoebus, and all night
Sleeps in Elysium . . .

The diction, the structure and the control displayed in these lines are beyond the range of the early Shakespeare. But the play is, nevertheless, poetically something of a disappointment after the two parts of Henry IV.

Caroline Spurgeon called attention\(^1\) to "an unusual number of images of the flight of birds", and she argued that "the keynote to the dominating atmosphere of the earlier and best part of the play" was "swift and soaring movement". But it may well be objected that the number of flight images is too small to be significant; that only one of the images quoted by Miss Spurgeon comes from the earlier part of the play; that these images do not help in the interpretation of the play; and that the earlier part of the play is not the best. The best part is really Act IV; and almost the only first-rate passage in Act I is the comparison of the state to the kingdom of the bees. It is not, of course, original. It is found in the Georgics, in Elyot and in Lyly; and Professor T. W. Baldwin\(^2\) has argued convincingly that Shakespeare made use of Willichius' commentary on Virgil since "he used the same classifications and the same order as Willichius". But the comparison is worked out with great gusto and it contains, as Edward Armstrong showed, one of Shakespeare's characteristic image-clusters. The word *hum*, as usual,

\(^2\) *Shakespeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greek* (1944), ii. 472-8.
is associated with death (executors), sleep (yawning), food (honey), music (singing) and wealth (gold).

After writing *Henry V*, Shakespeare turned to Plutarch's *Lives* as a quarry for historical material; and although he made use of Holinshed's *Chronicles* in *King Lear*, *Macbeth* and *Cymbeline*, it was not until 1613 that he wrote a sequel to his English Histories. Since Spedding's study of *Henry VIII*, published in 1850, many critics have assumed that the play was written in collaboration with Fletcher, a theory which receives some confirmation from the knowledge that Shakespeare and Fletcher did collaborate in two other plays—*The Two Noble Kinsmen* and *Cardenio*. Although Peter Alexander and G. Wilson Knight have argued for Shakespeare's sole authorship of the play, it is not denied that some scenes are very much in Fletcher's style.

Attempts have been made to determine the authorship of the play by a study of its imagery. There appear to be none of the image-clusters which have hitherto been isolated in Shakespeare's works. But some of the other plays in the First Folio are equally barren of clusters. A more profitable line to follow was the detection of iterative imagery. Miss Spurgeon demonstrated that the iterative image of the play was that of bodily movement, especially of a body being weighed down. Buckingham in the first scene says that

\[
\text{Have broke their backs with laying manors on 'em}
\]
\[
\text{For this great journey}
\]

In the second scene, Queen Katherine says that the people, complaining of Wolsey's exactions, use language which "breaks the sides of loyalty", exactions which

\[
\text{to bear 'em}
\]
\[
\text{The back is sacrifice to the load.}
\]

Buckingham in II. i protests

\[
\text{And if I have a conscience, let it sink me,}
\]
\[
\text{Even as the axe falls, if I be not faithful.}
\]

In II. 2 there are several images of bodily movement—crept, dives, gripped—but none of bearing a heavy burden. In II. 3

the Old Lady asks Anne if she has limbs "to bear that load of title" and tells her

if your back
Cannot vouchsafe this burthen, 'tis too weak
Ever to get a boy.

In the trial scene the King, speaking of his troubled conscience, tells the Bishop of Lincoln:

You remember
How under my oppression I did reek—

that is, he sweated under the burden. In III. 2—the scene of Wolsey's disgrace—he confesses that the King has heaped graces on him. The Lord Chamberlain urges Surrey not to press "a falling man too far". Wolsey tells Cromwell that the King from these shoulders,

These ruin'd pillars, out of pity, taken
A load would sink a navy, too much honour.

O, 'tis a burden, Cromwell, 'tis a burden
Too heavy for a man that hopes for heaven!

and he says that Ann Boleyn "was the weight that pull'd" him down.

In the last act, Cranmer tells Gardiner

Lay all the weight ye can upon my patience;

and Cromwell intervenes with the words:

'tis a cruelty
To load a falling man.

The interesting thing about the distribution of these images is that it cuts right across the usual allocation of the scenes to Shakespeare and Fletcher. There are none of these images in v. i—a scene which is always ascribed to Shakespeare—and there are several in v. 3, which is usually ascribed to Fletcher. Moreover, in the scene of Wolsey's disgrace, which was thought to be Shakespeare's up to the exit of the King (line 203), and Fletcher's thereafter, the iterative image is to be found in the second half of the scene. Miss Spurgeon duly observed this and she concluded that Shakespeare, and not Fletcher, was responsible for Wolsey's famous farewell. She did not, however, realize the full implications of her conclusion. The speech has all the metrical
characteristics which have made critics ascribe it to Fletcher; and, if Shakespeare wrote it, the elaborate metrical arguments to prove that Fletcher wrote any of the play fall to the ground.

Another group of images,\(^1\) relating to shipwreck and storm, is present in many scenes, including some which have been ascribed to Shakespeare and others which have been ascribed to Fletcher. Buckingham in the first scene refers metaphorically to a hideous storm and tempest. A Gentleman in II. i says that the Commons wish Wolsey "ten fathom deep". The King in II. 4 speaks of his feeling about his marriage to his brother's widow:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Thus hulling in} \\
\text{The wild sea of my conscience, I did steer} \\
\text{Toward this remedy.}
\end{align*}
\]

Katherine in III. i speaks of herself as "Shipwreck'd upon a kingdom" and Wolsey warns her that kings "grow as terrible as storms" to disobedient subjects. In the next scene the Lord Chamberlain says that the King "coasts" (like a vessel following the windings of the coast); Wolsey describes himself as swimming beyond his depth and left

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{to the mercy} \\
\text{of a rude stream;}
\end{align*}
\]

and tells Cromwell that he had

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{sounded all the depths and shoals of honour,}
\end{align*}
\]

and found Cromwell a way, "out of his wreck", to rise. The Third Gentleman in IV. i compares the noise of the people to that made by shrouds in a stiff tempest. Wolsey is described in IV. 2 as

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{An old man, broken with the storms of state.}
\end{align*}
\]

A study of the imagery of the play lends no support to the theory of dual authorship. But the recent work of A. C. Partridge\(^2\) and Cyrus Hoy\(^3\) show that certain "grammatical peculiarities . . . seem to establish the presence of two hands, and they substantiate broadly the divisions of the play, made upon other grounds, by Spedding and Hickson".\(^4\)

\(^1\) C. Spurgeon does not mention these.

\(^2\) The Problem of Henry VIII Reopened (1949).

\(^3\) Studies in Bibliography, VIII-XV (1956-62).

\(^4\) Transactions of N.S.S. (1874).
A study of the handwriting as well as of the imagery has proved beyond question that Shakespeare contributed to the censored play on Sir Thomas More; and I have tried elsewhere to show, from a study of the imagery alone, that he was part-author of Edward III.\footnote{Shakespeare as Collaborator (1960).} In both these cases there is no evidence which conflicts with that of the imagery. The problem of the authorship of Henry VIII, where the evidence is conflicting, remains unsolved.

I have tried to show that there is no iterative imagery in the earliest Histories; that there are traces of it in Richard III and a whole complex of patterns of imagery in Richard II; that there is iterative imagery in King John, which, however, throws little light on the theme of the play; that there is no such imagery in 1 Henry IV; that the sickness imagery of 2 Henry IV contributes a great deal to its atmosphere; and that the weighing down and shipwreck imagery of Henry VIII would seem to indicate that if there were two authors they worked in close harmony.

In other respects the sequence of Histories written in the sixteenth century shows a gradual progression in the use of imagery. In the three parts of Henry VI, the usual form of image is the simile; in the later Histories it is the metaphor. Shakespeare hardly ever uses in his later Histories the long epic simile which is prevalent in Henry VI. In 2 Henry IV there is one long comparison between building a house and planning a war (iv. iii: 41-62) which is so unusual in so late a play that critics have argued that it reflects the poet's experience in repairing New Place, the house he had bought in 1597.

The other development in the use of imagery which may be noted is that in the later plays more is derived from life and less from books. Shakespeare continued, as we have seen, to draw some of his images from Ovid; but there are fewer of them, they came as naturally as the leaves to a tree, and they are no longer decorative. Some of the bookish similes in Henry VI give one the impression that the upstart crow, who had only a grammar school education, was anxiously determined to show that he could beat the University Wits at their own game. After the success of Venus and Adonis he lost this anxiety.
This survey of the imagery of the Histories goes some way to explain why they have attracted less attention from imagistic critics than the tragedies have done. But it may nevertheless be claimed that in *Richard II* Shakespeare first realized the truth of Coleridge's words:

> that images, however beautiful, though faithfully copied from nature, and as accurately represented in words, do not of themselves characterize the poet. They become proofs of original genius only as far as they are modified by a predominant passion; or by associated thoughts or images awakened by that passion; or when they have the effect of reducing multitude to unity, or succession to an instant; or lastly, when a human and intellectual life is transferred to them from the poet's own spirit.

In *2 Henry IV* Shakespeare first exploited this discovery to the full and the way was open to the achievement of the great tragedies where image and structure, plot and character are perfectly integrated.

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1 *Biographia Literaria, XV.*