

Talbot in *Henry VI Part 1* for Children

Quiller-Couch's Patriotism in *Historical Tales from Shakespeare*

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Abstract

As a continuation of the previous paper on Joan of Arc in Quiller-Couch's *Historical Tales from Shakespeare* (1899), published in *Bulletin of Gifu City Women's College* No. 64, this paper analyzes the representation of Talbot in Quiller-Couch. The first part discusses how Talbot is represented in Shakespeare's text and argues that Talbot is represented as a brave and ideal knight in Shakespeare's text. The second part analyzes how Talbot is represented in Quiller-Couch's version compared to Shakespeare and claims that while Talbot's bravery is reproduced faithfully, Quiller-Couch adds the reference to Talbot's patriotism and omits his brutality which can be observed in Shakespeare. This paper concludes that the manipulated representation of Talbot makes him more worthy and patriotic character, which Quiller-Couch skilfully presents to readers as Shakespeare's representation of him.

Keywords : Shakespeare, *Henry VI. Part 1*, Retellings of Shakespeare for Children, Patriotism, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch

Introduction

In the previous paper, I discussed the representation of Joan of Arc in Quiller-Couch's *Historical Tales from Shakespeare*, arguing that the negative representation of her (as "prostitute," and "witch") is omitted from the text. As a result, Joan of Arc in Quiller-Couch is a nobler figure than Shakespeare (Suzuki 29). Quiller-Couch states that such alteration is made due to the quality of patriotism he wants to represent for children (v).

He also mentions other characters in *Henry VI Part 1* (*IH6*), the Talbots, as important figures to think of English patriotism in his preface. Especially Talbot, the Earl of Shrewsbury, is referred to as an ideal character. The representation of him in children's retelling by Quiller-Couch is, therefore, worth analyzing. This paper deals with the representation of Talbot in the retelling of Shakespeare's *Henry VI Part 1* by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch. The first part will discuss how Talbot is represented in Shakespeare's text, the second analyzing him in Quiller-Couch. Through these analyses, I would like to state that Talbot in the retold story is represented as more ideal and patriotic character.

I. The Representation of Talbot in Shakespeare

Talbot in *IH6* by William Shakespeare is repeatedly represented as a brave, ideal hero for England. This can be observed in the speeches of various characters and the episodes in the play. This section argues how heroic he is represented throughout the play by the analyses of the references to him by English lords, his achievement and behaviour represented in the play, the references to him by French lords, and the scene of Talbot's and his son's death.

Firstly, the speeches by English lords are full of praise for Talbot. The table 1 in the next page shows the adjectives added to him in the speeches of English lords.

The adjectives used to describe Talbot are mainly the words representing his fame: "stout," "valiant," "undaunted," "worthy," "brave," "warlike," "martial," "victorious," "renowned," "noble," "honourable," and "noble-minded." The adjectives that may represent negative image of Talbot are also used: "dreadful" and "over-darling." However, these adjectives do not seem to make the negative image of Talbot as evident as the positive one. The phrase "this dreadful lord" in 3 Messenger's speech (1.1.110) means that Talbot is

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dreadful for France, the enemy of England, hence giving the positive image of Talbot for English audience and readers.

Table 1: Adjectives Added to Talbot in the Speeches of English Characters

Line(s)	Name	Speech
1.1.106	3Messenger	Betwixt the <u>stout</u> Lord Talbot and...
1.1.110	3Messenger	... this <u>dreadful</u> lord ...
1.1.121	3Messenger	Where <u>valiant</u> Talbot...
1.1.127	3Messenger	...spying his <u>undaunted</u> spirit...
1.1.143	Bedford	...such a <u>worthy</u> leader...
2.1.28	Bedford	Ascend, <u>brave</u> Talbot.
3.2.116	Burgandy	<u>Warlike</u> and <u>martial</u> Talbot...
3.4.16	King	<u>brave</u> captain and <u>victorious</u> lord.
4.3.12	York	<u>Renowned</u> Talbot doth expect my aid,
4.3.14	York	...cannot help the <u>noble</u> chevalier.
4.3.19	Lucy	Spur to the rescue of the <u>noble</u> Talbot
4.3.26	York	... we save a <u>valiant</u> gentleman
4.3.34	Lucy	... take mercy on <u>brave</u> Talbot's soul,
4.3.36	Lucy	... toward his <u>warlike</u> father.
4.3.58	Somerset	...the <u>over-darling</u> Talbot
4.3.70	Lucy	And whiles <u>honourable</u> captain there
4.3.77	Lucy	While he, <u>renowned</u> <u>noble</u> gentleman,
4.3.90	Lucy	...entrapped the <u>noble-minded</u> Talbot.
4.4.17	John	...when <u>noble</u> Talbot stood.
4.4.41	John	Yes, your <u>renowned</u> name ...
4.4.63	John	...thy <u>warlike</u> sword...

The other instance that may give negative image of Talbot, "over-darling," is in the speech by Somerset in 4.3. In this scene, Somerset and York, who disputed each other at "the rose garden scene" (Burns 62) in 2.4. and are ordered to "continue peace and love" (4.1.161) by the king, are to support Talbot at Bordeaux under the king's order. But they will not go to help Talbot, attributing each other the cause of their stay to the other's fault. In this context, Somerset refers to Talbot with the adjective cited in the table:

This expedition was by York and Talbot
Too rashly plotted. All our general force
Might with a sally of the very town
Be buckled with: the over-darling Talbot

Hath sullied all his gloss of former honour
By this unheedful, desperate, wild adventure.
(4.3.55-60, underline mine)

Though Somerset defines Talbot and his action as too reckless in this speech, his evaluation is denied by Talbot's messenger Lucy, who asks repeatedly York and Somerset to help Talbot. Lucy, at the last part of this scene, summarizes that it is not French army but English nobles who kill Talbot: "The fraud of England, not the force of France, / Hath now entrapped the noble-minded Talbot" (4.3.89-90). The atmosphere of the scene, therefore, disproves clearly Somerset's negative representation of Talbot.

The praise for Talbot occurs repeatedly in other parts of the speeches by English nobles as well. The Earl of Salisbury calls Talbot his "life" and "joy" when he finds Talbot ransomed from French army (1.4.22). The king Henry VI says that his father, Henry V, praised Talbot for being the bravest knight: "I do remember how my father said / A stouter champion never handled sword" (3.4.18-19). Soon after this speech, he designates Talbot as Earl of Shrewsbury (3.4.26).

Talbot is considered to be an essential figure for the war against France. The Duke of York states that the existence of him is the most important factor at the battle: "If he miscarry, farewell wars in France" (4.3.16). In addition, Lucy grieves over Talbot's death when he finds Talbot killed by France, describing him as "the Frenchmen's only scourge, / Your kingdom's terror and black Nemesis (4.4.189-90). These quotations evidently shows Talbot's crucial role at the war, emphasizing his heroic status.

Moreover, Talbot's name itself works as a strong weapon in the play. In the battle at Orleans, English soldiers cry the name of Talbot (2.1.37SD, 77SD). One of the soldiers reveals the reason for this as follows:

The cry of 'Talbot' serves me for a sword—
For I have loaden me with many spoils,
Using no other weapon but his name.
(2.1.79-81)

Just shouting Talbot's name is, thus, enough to make French generals fly away from the battle.

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Secondly, his achievement in the battle represented in the play emphasizes Talbot's brave and worthy character, the first instance of which can be seen in the third messenger's detailed report of Talbot's battle at Orleans and his failure. Though Talbot, the messenger reported, was captured, he praises Talbot a lot. He reports that Talbot fought against 23,000 French army only with 6,000 "in his troop" (1.1.112-14). Talbot killed hundreds of his enemy, arousing his army against France (121-29). He almost won the battle "If Sir John Fastolfe had not played the coward" (131). It was not Talbot but Fastolfe that the cause of English failure at the battle against France is attributed to. From this part, only Talbot's bravery is emphasized, nothing of his fault is mentioned at all in this episode.

The second instance can be observed in the scenes of the battle at Orleans (1.4.-2.2.). Talbot's colleague the Earl of Salisbury is killed by the shot of a Gunner and his son Boy. This shot and French attack lead by Joan make Talbot and his army retreat into "trenches" (1.5.33). Then Talbot resolves to avenge Salisbury (2.1.34-37). This is realized soon, Talbot defeating French and saying:

Bring forth the body of old Salisbury,
And here advance it in the market-place,
The middle centre of this cursed town.
Now have I paid my vow unto his soul.
For every drop of blood was drawn from him
There hath at least five Frenchmen died tonight.
(2.2.4-9)

The next instance is told by Talbot himself before the king. He reports to the king that he has recovered "fifty fortresses, / Twelve cities and seven walled towns of strength, / Beside five hundred prisoners of esteem" (3.4.6-8). Though these numbers are, Burns comments, exaggerated to make his deed sound greater (220n.), the king welcomes Talbot's achievement and awards him the title of the Earl of Shrewsbury. His meritorious deed stated here is, hence, believed to be true in the play.

As I have discussed above, Talbot's great achievement and his bravery at the war against France are continuously represented in the play. This description helps to represent Talbot as a brave and ideal English hero.

Talbot's attitude toward honour also emphasizes his character as an ideal figure. Such a character can be seen in his behaviour when he was captured by France (1.4.), when he loses in the battle of Orleans (1.5.), when he is ordered to fight against the betrayal of Burgundy (4.1.), and finds himself surrounded by French army (4.2.).

In 1.4., Talbot tells Salisbury how he was treated by the French when he was captured. He says that he refused to be exchanged with a figure of lower rank:

... with a baser man of arms by far,
Once, in contempt, they would have bartered
me:
Which I, disdainful, scorned and craved death,
Rather than I would be so peeled esteemed.
In fine, redeemed I was as I desired. (1.4.29-33)

As this quotation shows, Talbot was finally freed in exchange for the person of the rank equivalent to him. Otherwise, he would rather die than stain his fame by being swapped for "a baser man."

Talbot shows this attitude of regarding honour more important than his life again in the next scene. When he is defeated at the battle of Orleans, he wishes he "were to die with Salisbury" and grieved that "[t]he shame hereof will make me hide my head" (1.5.38-39). He means that it would be better for him to die than to survive and appear in public. This attitude to think honour very important highlights Talbot's chivalric and hence brave and ideal character.

His attitude to honour is also observed from his loyalty to the king in 4.1. When Henry VI hears of Burgundy's betrayal, he asks Talbot to attack Burgundy. Talbot accepts it and replies: "but that I am prevented, / I should have begged I might have been employed" (4.1.71-72). This speech demonstrates Talbot's strong loyalty, as he would expose himself to danger and fight for the king without waiting for the order.

Talbot's honourable attitude is again presented in the scene where he finds himself surrounded by his enemy (4.2.). He does not show any fear, but determines to fight and dies at the battle:

Sell everyman his life as dear as mine
And they shall find dear deer of us, my friends.
God and Saint George, Talbot and England's

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right,
Prosper our colours in this dangerous fight.
(4.2.53-56)

“Saint George,” a patron saint of England, is mentioned in Henry V’s famous, heroic, and patriotic speech at the Harfleur (*Henry V*, 3.1.1-34). The reference to Saint George in the public speech before the battle seems to assume patriotic and heroic atmosphere. So it seems to be reasonable to state that Talbot’s representation as an English hero is emphasized here.

The scene of Talbot’s and his son John’s battle against France and their death also represent Talbot’s heroic character as an ideal and noble soldier. In 4.4., Talbot meets his son for the first time in seven years. Talbot originally intended to teach his son “stratagems of war” (4.4.2), but the situation is so unfavourable to them that Talbot orders his son to ride his “swiftest horse” and run away soon (4.4.9-11). John refuses to escape alone and tries to persuade his father to get away from the battlefield, which Talbot refuses because he thinks such an action will taint his fame: “And leave my followers here to fight and die? / My age was never tainted with such shame” (4.4.45-46). Finally Talbot accepts his son’s will to fight and die with him. Their last battle ends with the death of Talbot, who takes his dead son in his arms (4.4.144).

Talbot’s character which this scene represents is, firstly, his love for his son. Though his order for John to escape is motivated from his regarding honour the most important thing, to “revenge” his “death” (4.4.18), this episode emphasizes Talbot’s intention to save John’s life, another aspect of his ideal character. Secondly, his bravery at the battle is represented here again. While he is fighting, he rescued John, beating “down Alençon, Orleans, Burgundy” (4.4.69). Finally, his death emphasizes his character as a hero. Finding his son dead, Talbot tells his soldiers to give him the dead body of his son:

Come, come, and lay him in his father’s arms;
My spirit can no longer bear these harms.
Soldiers, adieu. I have what I would have,
Now my old arms are young John Talbot’s

grave. *Dies.* (4.4.141-44)

The speech and stage direction show that “he does not die by the sword, but of a broken heart over the death of his son” (Taylor 215n.). Talbot’s death is, therefore, represented very sympathetically. Moreover, it does not harm his reputation as a courageous knight at all, rather intensifying his heroic figure.

The speeches of the French represent Talbot rather differently from those of the English side. Positive and negative aspect of Talbot’s character is mentioned by the French throughout the play. First, positive aspect of Talbot, his bravery, is repeatedly mentioned in the play in the same way with the speeches of the English lords. The table below is the list of adjectives praising Talbot spoken by French characters.

Table 2: Adjectives Praising Talbot in the Speeches of French Characters

Line(s)	Name	Speech
2.2.35	Messenger	... the <u>warlike</u> Talbot
2.3.66	Countess	<u>Victorious</u> Talbot...
2.3.81	Countess	...so <u>great</u> a warrior in my house.
4.2.31-32	Captain	... a breathing <u>valiant</u> man Of an <u>invincible unconquered</u> spirit

Though there are fewer characters praises his valour than the English, this table shows French characters also recognise it. Other instances, French Messenger’s speeches such as “his acts / So much applauded through the realm of France” (2.2.35-36) and Talbot’s “glory fills the world with loud report” (2.2.43), and Bastard’s speech after Talbot’s death that Talbot’s “life was England’s glory, Gallia’s wonder” (4.4.160) show such fame of Talbot is spread in France as well.

His valour discussed above is also represented as the cause of French terror in the speeches by French characters. He is represented as “dreadful knight” (2.3.7), “bloodthirsty lord” (2.3.33), and “frantic” (3.3.5), as the table 3 below shows.

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Table 3: Adjectives showing Talbot's fearfulness in the Speeches by French Characters

Line(s)	Name	Speech
2.3.7	Countess	Great is the rumour of this <u>dreadful</u> knight,
2.3.33	Countess	To me, <u>bloodthirsty</u> lord;
3.3.5	Joan	Let <u>frantic</u> Talbot triumph for a while,

Other characters also frequently refer to Talbot's fearful characters: Bastard's "I think this Talbot be a fiend of hell" (2.1.46); the Captain of Bordeaux's "Thou ominous and fearful owl of death, / Our nation's terror and their bloody scourge" (4.2.15-16); Charles's order after finding Talbot's corpse, "For that which we have fled / During the life, let us not wrong it dead" (4.4.161-62); Burgandy's comment upon English attack coming after Talbot's death, "Now he is gone, my lord, you need not fear" (5.2. 17).

Though these speeches are clearly connected with Talbot's bravery, which is repeatedly represented in the speeches of both English and French characters, this terror implies Talbot's brutality toward France. In fact, this brutality is stated by the Countess of Auvergne, who invites Talbot to her castle, when she tries to capture Talbot:

And I will chain these legs and arms of thine,
That hast by tyranny these many years
Wasted our country, slain our citizens
And sent our sons and husbands captivate.
(2.3.38-41)

Here, his achievement, which is thought of as heroic by English side, is denounced as "tyranny," by which he kills and captures a lot of Frenchmen. Such brutality can be observed in Talbot's speeches as well. He replies the Countess's attempt by calling his soldiers there, saying that they are Talbot's power "With which ... / Razeth your cities and subverts your towns, / And in a moment makes them desolate" (2.3.63-65). The words "razeth," "subverts," and "desolate" strongly suggest Talbot's merciless attack against his enemy. He again represents himself as a brutal figure later. At the gate of Bordeaux, Talbot requires his enemy to surrender, stating "If you frown upon this proffered peace" (4.2.9), "Lean famine, quartering steel and climbing fire" (11) will destroy the "stately and air-braving towers" soon (13).

Thus the French represent Talbot positively and negatively, both as a brave English soldier and as a brutal tyrant. From the point of view from the enemy of England, this ambivalence seems quite reasonable.

In summary, Talbot is represented as a brave and ideal knight from English point of views, while French characters represent him as both brave and brutal at the same time. The next section will analyse how these characteristics of Talbot is treated in the story retold by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, showing what kind of Talbot's character was presented and emphasized for children readers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

II. Talbot in Quiller-Couch's *Historical Tales from Shakespeare*

As in Shakespeare's play, Talbot is represented as a brave and heroic character in Quiller-Couch's *Historical Tales from Shakespeare*. To begin with, the adjectives added to Talbot represent Talbot bravery as well. The first reference to him in Quiller-Couch is made at the battle of Orleans, where the French are surrounded by English force and "lay under a spell of terror, cowed as it were, by the name of Bedford and his two gallant lieutenants, the Earl of Salisbury and Lord Talbot" (217, underline mine). He is also referred to as "mad-brained...Talbot" (219), "so renowned a warrior," and "redoubtable Talbot" (220). While the latter two instances are no doubt adjectives that suggest Talbot's bravery and fame, the first instance, "mad-brained," may have an implication for his brutality. This adjective is, however, not used with any concrete episode showing such a character of him: "his French were so completely cowed by past defeats, and stood in such awe of the very names of mad-brained Salisbury and Talbot" (219). It seems, therefore, the word "mad-brained" is rather used to emphasize Talbot's bravery than his cruelty.

Other phrases representing Talbot also emphasize his bravery. Quiller-Couch compares him with "a lion" in narrating the progress of the battle at Orleans: "Talbot fought like a lion, but was utterly outnumbered" (219). This sentence emphasizes his bravery and indicates that it is not his way of fight but the disadvantageous situation that leads to Talbot's defeat at the battle of Orleans. He is also represented as "the scourge of France" (220), which strengthens again his existence as a terror for France.

Moreover, he is called “the last surviving spirit of Agincourt” at the scene of his death (227). The battle of Agincourt is one of the most famous battle, in which Henry V won against France overcoming the crucially disadvantageous situation. As a successor to Henry V’s spirit, Talbot’s heroic character is further emphasized in Quiller-Couch.

Talbot’s achievement at the battle is represented in Quiller-Couch, though 3 Messenger’s report in Shakespeare’s 1.1. is shortened and changed. *Historical Tales* narrates that Talbot was “made prisoner in an engagement when the odds against him were four to one” (219). His great performance at the battle is not narrated, and the reference to Fastolfe’s “coward” (1.1.131) is also omitted here, but the cause of Talbot’s defeat is attributed to his disadvantage in the number of soldiers, a fourth of the French army. This gap seems enough for the readers to take Talbot’s loss for granted. Moreover, the fear that the French feel for him is repeatedly expressed before and after the quotation, and the beginning of the following paragraph that “Talbot, however, was not the leader to be daunted by a single reverse, nor could the spell his prowess had built up be destroyed so summarily” (219) implies that he has achieved a great success and glorious victory so far. It seems, therefore, that Talbot’s bravery is not stained in this alteration.

The next episode to emphasize Talbot’s bravery in Shakespeare is the battle at Orleans in which Talbot fights as an avenging battle for Salisbury (1.4.-2.2.). Quiller-Couch’s version narrates Salisbury’s death, Talbot’s determination to avenge his death, Talbot’s battle in which he uses “the scaling ladder,” and the fulfilment of the vengeance (220).

Talbot’s first interview with the king Henry VI in Shakespeare’s 3.4. is omitted from Quiller-Couch. As a result of the omission, Talbot’s claim of the great achievement and his willingness to fight for the king (4.1.71-72) are not mentioned in *Historical Tales*. In addition to the omission of the speech above, other speeches which show his attitude toward honour, his refusal to be exchanged for “a baser man” (1.4.29), his wish to “die with Salisbury” (1.5.38), are deleted in Quiller-Couch. His resolution to die, made at a time when he finds himself besieged in Bordeaux (4.2.53-56) is also omitted.

On the other hand, his conversation with his son John in which he tries in vain to persuade his son to escape, and eventually decides to fight and die together is reproduced in

Quiller-Couch (227). Talbot’s death is the same with Shakespeare: he dies, holding his dead son in his arms (227).

As I have analysed so far, Talbot’s bravery and achievement are generally retained in Quiller-Couch’s *Historical Tales from Shakespeare*. Though the speeches emphasizing his behaviour regarding honour important are omitted, the faithful retelling of his and his son’s death reasonably makes up for these omissions. Talbot in Quiller-Couch is, therefore, represented as a brave and respectable figure in the same way as in Shakespeare.

What is notable in the representation of Talbot in Quiller-Couch is, however, the alterations of his character, though they look slight at first glance. The first change is the addition of Talbot’s motive toward the war against France. The narrator of *Historical Tales* explains:

Though far differently inspired, these soldiers of France and England thought first of their duty; Joan following a heavenly vision, Talbot fighting under no such lofty enthusiasm, but doggedly and as a man should who loves his country. (221)

In this quotation, Talbot is compared with Joan of Arc, who is represented constantly as a sacred figure in Quiller-Couch, and his motivation is explained to derive from his patriotism. This patriotism is not directly represented in Shakespeare. Accordingly, Quiller-Couch’s Talbot is made much more patriotic figure than Shakespeare’s.

The other alteration is caused by the omissions of the speeches of the Countess of Auvergne in 2.3.38-41 and Talbot in 2.3.63-65 and 4.2.9-13., which represent, as I discussed before, Talbot’s brutality. These omissions take away all the references to Talbot’s brutality, making him less brutal figure in Quiller-Couch than in Shakespeare.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Quiller-Couch preserves Talbot’s bravery represented in Shakespeare, adding patriotism to, and erasing brutality from, his character. As a result, more worthy and patriotic Talbot is presented to the late 19th and early 20th century children readers. It is notable that this added and emphasized patriotism is presented to be Shakespeare’s own representation, as Quiller-Couch states in

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his preface: “[Shakespeare] has left us—in Faulconbridge, in King Harry, in the two Talbots— lofty yet diverse examples of what patriotism can do” (vi). Seeing Quiller-Couch’s manipulated representation of Talbot, the patriotism he intends to introduce to children at that time is not entirely expressed by Shakespeare alone, but by the collaboration of Shakespeare and Quiller-Couch, the author of the prose adaptation of Shakespeare. Thus, it can be concluded that patriotism emphasized in education at that time was skilfully transmitted under the name of William Shakespeare.

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