

*EDWARD III: A STUDY OF CANONICITY, SOURCES, AND INFLUENCE*

*by*

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In the Graduate College

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

2009

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
GRADUATE COLLEGE

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SIGNED: Amy Elizabeth Mathur

*For Granny*

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## ABSTRACT

*EDWARD III: A STUDY OF CANONICITY, SOURCES, AND INFLUENCE*

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August 2009

Since the first attribution of Shakespeare as the author of the anonymous *Edward III* (1596) in 1656, the play has occupied a shifting status in the canon. Over the past twenty years renewed critical interest in questions of the canonicity of *Edward III* has led to a wider acceptance of Shakespeare's involvement with the play.

This study reviews the canonical problems raised by *Edward III* and reappraises the play as a dramatic text. Chapter One concentrates on issues of the play's publication, dating, and authorship. Chapter Two examines how the playwright uses literary and chronicle sources to present celebratory images of Edward III and of his son the Black Prince. Chapter Three analyzes the "ancestral influence" of the figures of Edward III and the Black Prince on the titular hero of Shakespeare's *Henry V*. The Chapter directs attention to *Edward III* as a pre-text for *Henry V*. The Conclusion summarizes the study and indicates future lines of inquiry.

## PREFACE

Since the first attribution of Shakespeare as the author of the anonymous *Edward III* (1596; 1599) in 1656, the play has occupied a shifting status in the canon. The last twenty years have witnessed a renewed interest in questions of the canonicity of *Edward III* (as well as other dramatic and non-dramatic texts), and its canonical and critical fortunes seem on the rise. Individual scholarly editions of the play have appeared from Yale and Cambridge University presses in 1996 and 1998. In 1997 G. B. Evans included *Edward III* in the second edition of the *Riverside Shakespeare*, perhaps the complete works most widely used by both scholars and classroom instructors. The time would seem appropriate for a analytical review of the canonical problems raised by *Edward III* as well as a reappraisal of the play as a dramatic text.

The following study includes three Chapters and a Conclusion. The first concentrates on issues of publication, dating, and authorship of *Edward III*. The second examines its sources, assessing the author's use of Painter, Froissart, and Holinshed. The focus centers on the play's celebratory images of Edward as a just man and a magnanimous political leader and of his son the Black Prince as heroic general. The third analyzes the "ancestral influence" of the figures of Edward and the Black Prince on the titular hero of Shakespeare's *Henry V*. The aim of the Chapter is to direct attention to *Edward III* as a pre-text for *Henry V* and so to restore Shakespeare's play to an important contemporary context. The Conclusion summarizes and indicates future lines of inquiry.

I am indebted to my adviser, Dr. Peter E. Medine, for his patience and guidance throughout this project. I am grateful to Dr. Roger Dahood and Dr. John C. Ulreich, Jr.

for their valuable criticism and advice. I wish to thank my longtime mentor and friend, Dr. Judy Katz, for being a thoughtful sounding board for many ideas in this work. For their accommodations and support that made finishing this dissertation possible, I thank Juniata College Provost, Dr. James Lakso, and my colleagues in Juniata's English Department. I appreciate the research assistance of the staffs of the Folger Shakespeare Library, the University of Arizona Library, Pennsylvania State University's Patee Library, and Juniata College's Beeghly Library. I also appreciate the administrative assistance of the University of Arizona English Graduate Studies Program Assistant, Marcia Marma, and Juniata College's Provost Office Administrative Manager, Joanne Krugh. I am deeply grateful to my parents, Dennis and Patricia Heptner, who sacrificed to provide me with excellent educational opportunities throughout my academic career. Most important, I thank my husband, Ryan, and our son, Nathan, who encouraged and inspired me at the turn of every page.

## CHAPTER ONE

PROBLEMS IN PUBLICATION, DATING, AND AUTHORSHIP OF *EDWARD III*

## PUBLICATION

On December 1, 1595, Cuthbert Burby entered *A book Intitled Edward the Third and the blacke prince their warres with kinge John of France* into the Stationers' Register. The following year, Burby commissioned Thomas Scarlet to print the play in quarto format under the title *The Reigne of King Edward the Third: as it hath bin sundrie times plaied about the Citie of London*. In 1599, Burby ordered a second printing of the play from Simon Stafford, also in quarto format. The Stationers' Register records subsequent editions in 1609, 1617, and 1625, though no surviving copies are known.<sup>1</sup> Neither of the surviving quartos names an acting company that performed the play, nor does either cite William Shakespeare as the playwright. While many quartos appeared without an author's name during the period, the omission in the first texts of *Edward III* has fueled centuries-long debates over the date of the play's composition and the identity of the play's author.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Warnke and Ludwig Proescholdt, eds., *Pseudo-Shakespearian Plays* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1886), vii; Robert M. Smith, *Froissart and the English Chronicle Play* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1915), 67.

<sup>2</sup>Giorgio Melchiori, ed., *King Edward III* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 13. Melchiori notes that publications of publicly performed plays did not identify authorship until about 1597.

The debates did not begin with Burby's publications. At the time, the only written mention of the play concerned transfer of its copyrights. The printing rights changed hands four times in thirty years following Burby's death in 1607, beginning with the transfer from Burby's widow on October 16, 1609 to William Welby. Thomas Snodham (March 2, 1617), William Stansby (Feb. 23, 1625), and Richard Bishop (March 4, 1638) followed in holding claim to the play's printing rights.<sup>3</sup>

Since the seventeenth century, critics have argued over questions of William Shakespeare's connection to the drama. The play was not linked to Shakespeare during his life, nor was it mentioned in the 1623 First Folio prepared by John Heminges and Henry Condell. Critics who have considered Shakespeare's connection to *Edward III* debate this omission's importance. Advocates for *Edward III*'s canonicity cite the absence of *Pericles* and *Two Noble Kinsmen* in the First Folio, two plays widely accepted in later years as Shakespeare's, whether as a single author or collaborator, as reason to downplay the exclusion. Opponents of the Shakespearean attribution suggest that the omission proves that no concrete evidence exists on which scholars, even the playwright's contemporaries, could base an ascription.

After 1638, the next known allusion to *Edward III* occurred in 1656 when the booksellers Richard Rogers and William Ley listed the play as a work of William Shakespeare in their publication, *An exact and perfect Catalogue of all the Playes that are Printed*. This attribution, the first to link Shakespeare to the play, was later considered uninformed speculation based on several known errors in the catalogue,

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<sup>3</sup> Smith, *Froissart and the English Chronicle Play*, 67.

including the mistaken attributions of *Edward II* (by Christopher Marlowe) and *Edward IV* (by Thomas Heywood) to Shakespeare.

Other catalogues of printed plays to follow Rogers and Ley's, such as Edward Archer's in 1656, Francis Kirkman's editions in 1661 and 1671, and Langbaine's *Account of the English Dramatick Poets* in 1691, did not identify Shakespeare as the author of *Edward III*.<sup>4</sup> The case for his connection to the work resurfaced in 1760 in Edward Capell's *Prolusions; or Select Pieces of Ancient Poetry*. Aware that his attribution suffered from a lack of external evidence, Capell classified *Edward III* as a play only "thought to be writ by Shakespeare." Capell wrote, "It must be confess'd that its being his work is conjecture only, and matter of opinion; and the reader must form one of his own, guided by what is now before him."<sup>5</sup>

Capell's edition of the play is commonly faulted for its numerous errors, suspect division of acts and scenes, and personal conjectures. Smith blames Capell's system of placing original quarto texts alongside his own inferences as the reason for a line of faulty editions printed over the next century. Henry Tyrrell used Capell's flawed edition when he printed the play in *The Doubtful Plays of Shakespeare* in 1851. According to Smith, the German translation done by Tieck (1851) and the English editions of Delius (1854), Moltke (1869), and Collier (1874), are "mutilated forms" that also follow

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<sup>4</sup> Gerald Langbaine, *Account of the English Dramatick Poets* (Oxford: L. Litchfield, 1591), 159.

<sup>5</sup> Edward Capell, *Prolusions; or, Select Pieces of Ancient Poetry* (London: J. and R. Tonson, 1760), x.

Capell's edition.<sup>6</sup> In 1886 Karl Warnke and Ludwig Proescholdt detected the errors in Capell's division of the play into acts and scenes, his added *Dramatis Personae*, and his alteration of the text in order to regularize the play's metre and grammar. While acknowledging Capell's edition as a solid one, they note that in his effort to reconcile the differences in the quartos of 1596 and 1599, he often did so simply by choosing his preferred readings. Correcting these problems, Warnke and Proescholdt produced what Smith considers "the first reliable text" of *Edward III*.<sup>7</sup>

Since the 1886 edition, the play has appeared both independently and as part of collections. A. F. Hopkinson included it in his *Shakespeare's Doubtful Plays* (1891-94). Donovan published it in two editions (1896, 1911) of *English History Plays*. G. C. Moore Smith edited and printed the drama for the *Temple Dramatists* in 1897; this was followed by J.S. Farmer's edition for the Tudor Facsimile Texts in 1911. In the late twentieth century, several editions appeared: *Three Elizabethan Plays: Edward III, Mucedorus, and Midas* (1959); *Six Early Plays Related to the Shakespeare Canon* (1965); *Elizabethan History Plays* (1965); *Disputed Plays of William Shakespeare* (1974); *The Raigne of King*

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<sup>6</sup> Smith, *Froissart and the English Chronicle Play*, 69; Henry Tyrrell, ed., *The Doubtful Plays of Shakespeare* (London: Kessinger, 1851); Ludwick Tieck, trans, *Vier Schauspiele von Shakespeare* (Stuttgart and Tübingen: Cotta, 1836); E. Ortlepp, *Nachtrage zu Shakspeare's Weken von Schlegel und Tieck*. (Stuttgart, 1840). Nicolaus Delius, ed., *Pseudo-Shakspeare'sche Dramen* (Eberfeld: R. L. Friderichs, 1854); M. Moltke, ed., *The Six Doubtful Plays of William Shakespeare* (Leipzig, 1869); J. P. Collier, ed., *King Edward the Third: A Historical Play Attributed by Edward Capell to William Shakespeare and Now Proved to Be His Work* (London: T. Richard, 1874).

<sup>7</sup> Smith, *Froissart and the English Chronicle Play*, 69; Warnke and Proescholdt, eds., *Pseudo-Shakespearian Plays*, 1-84.

*Edward the Third: A Critical, Old-Spelling Edition* (1980); *Edward III* (1986); *Shakespeare's 'Edward III'* (1996); and *The New Cambridge Shakespeare* (1998).<sup>8</sup>

## DATING

Without a surviving manuscript, the question of the play's date, like the problem of attribution, generates speculation rather than certainty. Karl Wentersdorf argues that Burby's entry of the play into the Stationers' Register provides the only tangible external evidence for determining dating. Godshalk contends, less convincingly, that Thomas Deloney's ballad, "Of King Edward the Third and the faire Countess of Salisbury setting forth her constancy and endless glory" draws from the dramatic *Edward III*, rather than the play's source material. Deloney's ballad was published in "The Garland of Goodwill," entered in the Stationers' Register on March 5, 1593. William Godshalk uses this entry to set a composition date between 1589 and 1592 for *Edward III*, calling it "as certain and reasonable as such things can be."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> A. F. Hopkinson, ed., *Shakespeare's Doubtful Plays*, (London: M. E. Sims, 1894); Thomas Donovan, ed., *English Historical Plays* (London: MacMillan and Company, 1896); G. C. Moore Smith, ed., *Edward the Third, Edited with a Preface, Notes and Glossary* (London, 1897); J. S. Farmer, ed., *The Tudor Facsimile Texts* (London, 1911); J. Winny, ed., *Three Elizabethan Plays: Edward III, Mucedorus, Midas* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1959); R. L. Armstrong and E. B. Everitt, eds., *Six Early Plays Related to the Shakespeare Canon* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1965); W. A. Armstrong, ed., *Elizabethan History Plays* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965); William Kozlenko, ed., *Disputed Plays of William Shakespeare* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1974); Fred Lapidus, ed., *The Raigne of King Edward the Third: A Critical, Old-Spelling Edition* (New York: Garland, 1980); G. Parfitt, ed., *Edward III* (1985); Eric Sams, ed., *Shakespeare's 'Edward III'* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); Giorgio Melchiori, *King Edward III*.

<sup>9</sup> William Godshalk, "Dating *Edward III*," *Notes and Queries* 42, no. 3 (1995): 299-300.

Other practical considerations, such as stage-to-print timing and the plague's effects on the theatre in the late sixteenth century also influence dating theories. Using those practical considerations, Wentersdorf suggests that the play was written between 1588 and 1595, most likely early in this period, 1589-90. Printers rarely received a manuscript for publication until a play was no longer profitable, usually several years after its original stage runs;<sup>10</sup> therefore the play must have been written and performed well before Burby commissioned *Scarlet's* quarto edition in 1596.<sup>11</sup> Wentersdorf and others also suggest that the plague's prominence in that period would have made a later date of composition unlikely. Wentersdorf writes, "During the period from summer 1592 to the late spring of 1594, the prevalence of the plague in England and the consequent inhibition of acting in the capital and elsewhere exerted a restrictive influence on dramatic output."<sup>12</sup> Without adequate audiences, acting companies had little need to commission new material for performance, thereby making it unlikely that *Edward III* was written during these years.

Although both quartos' title pages state that the play "hath bin sundrie times plaied about the Citie of London," this description reveals little about the identity of the play's author or acting company. Similar phrases appear in at least three other plays performed and registered before 1594. Robert Greene's *James IV's* title page, published

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<sup>10</sup> Lapidés, *The Raigne of King Edward the Third*, 32. Lapidés notes that the delay in publication would last until a play was "no longer profitable as stage property."

<sup>11</sup> Karl Wentersdorf, "The Date of *Edward III*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (1965): 230.

<sup>12</sup> Wentersdorf, "The Date of *Edward III*," 230-31. Lapidés, *The Raigne of King Edward the Third*, 32; Melchiori, *King Edward III*, 4. Lapidés and Melchiori concur with Wentersdorf on this point.

in 1598, indicates that it had been “sundry times publikely plaied.” George Peele’s *David and Bethsabe*’s title page in 1599 records that the play had been “divers times plaied on the stage.” Neither of these plays is connected to an acting company on those pages. A third play, *A Knack to Know a Knave*, registered by Burby only five days prior to *Edward III*, also uses “sundry times played” on its title page. Here, though, Burby identifies “Ed Allen [Alleyn] and his Companie,” (The Lord Strange’s Men) as the performing company. Giorgio Melchiori uses these examples to suggest that such phrases were employed on title pages for one of two reasons: “Either the publication of the plays was not authorized by the company owning them; or they were at the time temporarily derelict, i.e. the company which had performed them was no longer in existence, and no other claim had as yet been put forward on them.”<sup>13</sup> If acting companies disbanded during the closure of theatres due to the plague, publishers could print plays without identifying their original dates of composition, authors, or acting companies.

Without further information than description on the quartos’ title pages, the formulaic characterization of the performance history offers no evidence of a specific author’s or acting company’s involvement for *Edward III*. Also, without record of the acting company, determining whether the “about” meant within the City or in its surrounding areas is problematic. The play must have belonged to one of the four acting companies active in London in the early 1590s: The Queen’s Men, The Lord Strange’s

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<sup>13</sup> Melchiori, *King Edward III*, 3.

Men, The Earl of Pembroke's Men, or The Admiral's Men.<sup>14</sup> Of these, Hopkinson suggests that The Earl of Pembroke's Men owned the play, since he believes that Richard Burbage played the play's title role as a member of the company.<sup>15</sup> J. P. Collier made the same claim in 1874, writing, "As Cuthbert and Richard were brothers, the one a bookseller of repute, and the other an actor of eminence, we may not unreasonably suppose that the play found its way to the press through the person who, doubtless, had sustained the principal part in it on the stage."<sup>16</sup> The possible connection of Richard Burbage to the play also speaks to the question of performance venue(s). As a major actor of the day, Richard Burbage held shares and performed in several playhouses about the City, including the Curtain Playhouse in Shoreditch and the Globe in Southwark. He also performed in inn-yards that periodically doubled as theatres in Ludgate and Smithfield. Burbage's involvement with *Edward III*, if factual, would explain how the play could have been performed "about the Citie."<sup>17</sup>

Richard Proudfoot's conclusion that *Edward III* was designed to be performed "in a properly equipped playhouse. . . [by a] full company working in London" runs counter to suggestions that *Edward III* could have been performed outside the City or written for a private performance.<sup>18</sup> Proudfoot established that a large cast was required, including

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<sup>14</sup> Richard Proudfoot, "The Reign of King Edward the Third (1596) and Shakespeare," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 71 (1985): 159-85.

<sup>15</sup> Hopkinson, *Shakespeare's Doubtful Plays*, v.

<sup>16</sup> Collier, *King Edward the Third*, ii.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, ii-iii.

<sup>18</sup> Proudfoot, "The Reign of King Edward the Third," 140.

“doubling, by eleven men, three or four boys, and about ten non-speaking extras,” on a stage that provided two entry/exit doors and a possibility to use an “above.” Sound effects, such as cannon blasts in Act 3, Scene 1 and “A clamor of ravens” (4.5.18), also point to a professional theatre as the site of performance.<sup>19</sup> The Earl of Pembroke’s Men’s troupe satisfied these staging needs. The company disbanded following the theatre closures in 1593, only two years after its creation, meaning that if the play was written for Pembroke’s Men, it had to have been completed before early 1592.

Like Proudfoot, Melchiori also rejects the possibility of performing the play for a private audience. He bases his conclusion not on venue constraints but on the quartos’ claim that it had “bin sundrie times plaied about the Citie of London.” Melchiori maintains that repeated performances of a play diminishes the likelihood that it was staged only privately. Also in response to Proudfoot, Melchiori analyzes the acting needs and stage directions of the play to determine the probability of Pembroke’s Men’s involvement.<sup>20</sup> He concludes that Proudfoot overestimates the numbers of actors needed to perform even the most populated scenes, finding instead that with the exception of the play’s final scene which calls for a maximum of eleven actors (ten adult males, one boy to play Queen Philippe) and possibly a few non-speaking soldiers, the largest on-stage grouping includes no more than seven actors. In all scenes, the possibility for doubling exists and thus undermines Proudfoot’s determination of the matter. In regard to staging, Melchiori also disagrees with Proudfoot. He notes that a lack of onstage combat and

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<sup>19</sup> Proudfoot, “*The Reign of King Edward the Third*,” 141.

<sup>20</sup> Melchiori, *King Edward III*, 9-10.

walls or gates, all common in contemporary history plays, opens the possibility that the playwright was “not sure that its performance could enjoy the stage facilities offered by the Rose or the other regular theatres.”<sup>21</sup> Even with these differences in mind, Melchiori does not completely reject Proudfoot’s main claim of Pembroke’s Men’s involvement. Instead, he proposes that the play would have been written no later than late 1592 to early 1593 and would have been acted by either Pembroke’s Men or Lord Strange’s Men.<sup>22</sup>

T. W. Baldwin examines the staging needs of *Edward III* in comparison to the casting practices of The Admiral’s Men.<sup>23</sup> He determines that this company generally staged plays that included one major role which would be filled by its chief actor, Edward Alleyn. In those plays, Alleyn’s characters typically had three times as many lines as any other in the performance.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, without a comedian in the company, the Admiral’s Men rarely performed plays with comic roles. Baldwin finds it “evident” that *Edward III* adheres to the formula of most Admiral’s plays written before the company merged with Lord Strange’s Men in 1590-91. That merger altered the troupe’s make-up most significantly in that it now included a notable comic actor, Will Kempe, which according to Baldwin accounts for why the company changed its performance repertoire. *Edward III* would have been eliminated because it did not offer enough large roles or

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<sup>21</sup> Melchiori, *King Edward III*, 9-10.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>23</sup> T. W. Baldwin, *On the Literary Genetics of Shakespeare’s Plays, 1592-1594* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1959), 233.

<sup>24</sup> Sams, *Shakespeare’s ‘Edward III,’* 148. Sams sees *Edward III* and its “one kingly larger-than-life figure” as a natural fit for Alleyn who had just ended his successful run as the lead in *Tamburlaine*.

comedic opportunities to utilize the new company's talents. The possibility of the independent Admiral's Men's involvement then could set the compositional date before 1590.

Without hard external evidence to date the play, scholars look for internal clues to set the potential timeframe. Further rationale for dating *Edward III* between 1588 and 1595 depends on the play's supposed references to England's defeat of the Spanish Armada. Godshalk states that the playwright includes a "definite and ironic reference to the Spanish Armada and so it [*Edward III*] must have been written after the attempted Spanish invasion of 1588."<sup>25</sup> The play's anachronistic references to cannon blasts and artillery use also reflect contemporary descriptions of the defeat of the Armada rather than the Battle of Sluys in 1340.<sup>26</sup> Wentersdorf argues that the playwright's treatment of the Battle of Sluys in Act 3 strays from historical accounts and his source material (Froissart and Holinshed) to capitalize on contemporary nationalistic sentiment. Specifically, he contends that the British fleet's formation "figuring the horned circle of the moon" (3.1.71-2) intentionally evokes the image of the Armada approaching Calais in 1588. Wentersdorf points out that "this formation was apparently common in sixteenth century warfare in the Mediterranean; but the references to the battle published between 1589 and 1642 show that in England, at least, the crescent-shaped battle array was

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<sup>25</sup> Godshalk, "Dating *Edward III*," 299.

<sup>26</sup> Lapidés, *Raigne of King Edward the Third*, 33; Wentersdorf, "The Date of *Edward III*," 228-29.

regarded as noteworthy.”<sup>27</sup> Melchiori concurs and sees several details from the literature chronicling the Armada battle present in the play’s treatment of Sluys. Given the inclusion of such details, Melchiori places the earliest date of composition as after 1590 when the most elaborate accounts of the battle emerged.<sup>28</sup>

Beyond martial strategy, Wentersdorf also cites the line, “Much did the Nonperilla that brave ship / So did the black snake of Bullen . . .” (3.1.177-78), as an internal clue for dating *Edward III*. Records do not name individual ships in Edward III’s fleet, making the playwright’s specific label seem to serve a dramatic, rather than historical end. According to Petruccio Ulbadino’s account of the battle, published in 1590, a ship named the “Nonpareil” actively fought in Queen Elizabeth I’s fleet against the Armada. Wentersdorf suggests then that the playwright deliberately used the Nonpareil reference as a way to capitalize on the fervent nationalistic sentiment which prevailed for several years following England’s triumph over the Armada. Wentersdorf therefore dates *Edward III* between 1589 and 1590.<sup>29</sup>

Other scholars who subscribe to such an early date of possible composition base their arguments on broader language patterns or similarities rather than specific references. Fred Lapidés’s analyses of the image parallels to other Shakespearean dramas, associated word clusters, and vocabulary tests suggests a window of 1588-92.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Wentersdorf, “The Date of *Edward III*,” 229.

<sup>28</sup> Melchiori, *King Edward III*, 5.

<sup>29</sup> Wentersdorf, “The Date of *Edward III*,” 231.

<sup>30</sup> Lapidés, *The Raigne of King Edward the Third*, 32.

Eliot Slater's statistical analysis of the language in *Edward III* similarly dates its composition within Lapides's proposed time frame. Slater determines that the play's "diction, imagery, and treatment of subject matter" are "closely linked to *I Henry VI*, which Wells and Taylor date 1592."<sup>31</sup>

Such comparisons to other Renaissance works inform many arguments that propose a later composition date. Two of Shakespeare's sonnets, commonly believed to have been written during the mid 1590s, figure prominently in these deliberations. The lines of Sonnet 94 and Sonnet 142 appear in *Edward III*, both within the Countess scenes:

Sonnet 94

For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds;

*Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.* (lines 13-14)

*Edward III*

A spacious field of reasons could I urge

Between his glory, daughter, and thy shame:

That poison shows worse in a golden cup;

Dark night seems darker by the lightning flash;

*Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds,*

And every glory that inclines to sin,

The same is treble by the opposite. (2.1.447-53)

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<sup>31</sup> Eliot Slater, *The Problem of the Reign of King Edward III: A Statistical Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 1. Slater notes that Jackson, Ribner, Schaar, and Osterberg all place the play's origin between 1590-92. Jackson says about 1590, Osterberg before 1592, and Ribner and Schaar, 1592-3.

## Sonnet 142

Love is my sin and thy dear virtue hate,  
 Hate of my sin, grounded on sinful loving:  
 O, but with mine compare thou thine own state,  
 And thou shalt find it merits not reproving,  
 Or, if it do, not from those lips of thine,  
 That have profaned *their scarlet ornaments*,  
 And sealed false bonds of love as oft as mine  
 Robb'd others' beds' revenues of their rents. (lines 1-8)

*Edward III*

Anon, with reverent fear when she grew pale,  
 His cheeks put on *their scarlet ornament*,  
 But no more like her oriental red,  
 Than brick to coral, or live things to dead. (2.1.9-12)<sup>32</sup>

Using the presence of the same images in both *Edward III* and Shakespeare's sonnets to date the play depends on which lines appeared first. In his argument about the sequence of the play and Shakespeare's sonnets, Platt contends that the two sonnet lines in question make little sense in the context of the particular lines in which they appear in the play. Therefore, it seems unlikely that Shakespeare would take weak lines from a play and then create entire sonnets around them later. Rather, the unidentified playwright must have

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<sup>32</sup> G. Blakemore Evans, ed., *The Riverside Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997). All references to Shakespeare's plays and poetry are taken from this edition.

admired the lines within the sonnets and made use of them in the drama.<sup>33</sup> That the sonnets were circulated privately in manuscript form is widely acknowledged. Therefore a dramatist could have, as Platt infers, admired and copied the lines in a later work. Given that the sonnets' composition dates are uncertain, using them as a method of dating is problematical.

Chambers uses the allusions in *Edward III* to one of Shakespeare's dated poems, *The Rape of Lucrece* (2.2.193-96), and to Christopher Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* (2.2.152-56) to date the play between 1594 and 1595.<sup>34</sup> *Hero and Leander* was registered in 1593; *Lucrece* appeared in May, 1594, leaving the possibility that Shakespeare worked the image in several ways during one period. Wentersdorf, however, dismisses such claims as shaky speculation. He maintains that any playwright could easily have read *Hero and Leander* in manuscript form as a contemporary of Marlowe's at Cambridge and that the themes in question were used repeatedly in English literature before either Marlowe or Shakespeare, making any argument based on such evidence suspect.<sup>35</sup> Melchiori also contests Chambers's point by presenting parallels to the Lucrece theme throughout Shakespeare's canon.<sup>36</sup> Lapidés similarly rejects Chambers's assumption,

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<sup>33</sup> Arthur Platt, "'Edward III' and Shakespeare's Sonnets," *Modern Language Review* 6 (1911): 511-13.

<sup>34</sup> E. K. Chambers, *A Study of Facts and Problems*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), 545; Kenneth Muir, *The Singularity of Shakespeare and Other Essays* (Liverpool, Liverpool University, 1977), 43.

<sup>35</sup> Wentersdorf, "The Date of *Edward III*," 230.

<sup>36</sup> Giorgio Melchiori, *Shakespeare's Garter Plays. 'Edward III' to 'Merry Wives of Windsor'* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994), 131-32.

observing that the story of Hero and Leander had been told by Livy, Ovid, Painter, Gascoigne, Marlowe, and Greene, making the opportunity for exposure too great to be used as a means of dating *Edward III*.<sup>37</sup>

Prior disagrees with Wentersdorf's conclusion on this point and others in his argument for a later dating. Like Chambers, he finds the echoes of *The Rape of Lucrece* as a determinant.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, while recognizing the closing of London theatres in 1593-94 as a deterrent to playwriting, he dismisses it as a definite way to mark the date of composition. Prior notes that theatres did open again in the City from February 6 to June 3, 1594, making it likely that acting companies would have needed new material to stage.<sup>39</sup> Prior then suggests that the topical allusions in the play that would address the society's current nationalistic sentiment relate, not to the Spanish Armada, but to England's strained relations with Turkey. He points to Act 3, Scene 1 in which foreign parties join the French army before the Battle of Crécy. Froissart's historical account of the battle makes no mention of the Turkish army, yet it appears in Act 5 of the play. Prior contends that the playwright's use of this enemy reflects a government-inspired ploy to pacify England's citizens and its allies. Throughout Queen Elizabeth's reign, Turkey had been "a valuable trading partner and potential ally against Spain."<sup>40</sup> Prior suggests that when war erupted between Turkey and Austria in 1593, the English people wanted

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<sup>37</sup> Lapidés, *The Raigne of King Edward the Third*, 35.

<sup>38</sup> Roger Prior, "The Date of *Edward III*," *Notes and Queries* 37, no. 2 (1990): 180. Prior says this is true if Shakespeare wrote *Edward III*. If not, he maintains that a later date is probable.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

Elizabeth I to side with Austria on the basis of religion. After unsuccessful calls for a peaceful settlement, Elizabeth denounced Turkey, thereby reassuring her countrymen of her support of Christendom and pacifying Austria's Emperor Rudolph. Prior believes that "Hostile references to Turkey in *Edward III* then would only have been topical after the outbreak of open war" in 1593, and thus concludes that the play must have been written after June of that year.<sup>41</sup>

Although all existing arguments fail to answer the question of dating conclusively, those that suggest an earlier time frame (1589-1592) seem most plausible. The play appears to capitalize on similarities between King Edward's reign (1312-77) and Elizabeth I's (1558-1603). Both eras were marked by military challenges and victories that gave rise to a strong sense of national identity. In the seven years following the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, which revived feelings of pride in the country and its monarch, English forces were constantly employed in Brittany and France. Proudfoot's suggestion that the play's treatment of the siege of Calais closely resembles published accounts of England's siege of Paris in the early 1590s adds weight to claims that the playwright was attempting to capitalize on theatergoers' current sense of national pride.<sup>42</sup> Throughout the play, the dramatist portrays France's ruler and his military as weak and its people as unfaithful to their king, as ways to further distinguish England as the superior nation. From the outset, John of Valois is cast as a usurper of the crown that rightfully belongs to Edward (1.1.6-41). John's refusal to honor the bloodline succession

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<sup>41</sup> Roger Prior, "The Date of *Edward III*," 179.

<sup>42</sup> Proudfoot, "*The Reign of King Edward the Third*," 149.

of Edward's mother Isabel immediately defines France's cause as unjust, its ruler as dishonorable. Edward III's determination to vanquish France en route to reclaiming the crown owed to England would gratify audiences' senses of their nation's rightful position of power.<sup>43</sup>

The dramatist continually plays upon his society's fervor over its triumph in 1588 by casting Edward's troops, and in particular the Black Prince, into seemingly dire confrontations. From the very first encounter, in the Battle of Sluys, Prince Edward's success plays upon the English audience's pride in its country's prowess. Recounting his battle Ned says:

Not two hours ago  
 With full a hundred thousand fighting men  
 Upon the one side of the river's bank  
 And on the other, both his multitudes,  
 I feared he would have cropped our smaller power,  
 But happily, perceiving your approach,  
 He hath withdrawn himself to Crécy plains. (3.3.36-42)

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<sup>43</sup> J. P. Conlan, "Shakespeare's *Edward III*: a Consolation for English Recusants," *Comparative Drama* 35 (2001-02): 177-207. Conlan disagrees with the idea that references to the Spanish Armada's defeat were aimed at "exploit[ing] swelling patriotic feeling." Instead he views their inclusion as instructive. He proposes that even though the author ends the play at a high point of Edward III's reign, his audience would have been aware of the monarch's swift decline afterward. Playgoers would have known that Edward III lost his health while trying to claim France and that he had a scandalous affair with Alice Perrier which led Parliament to "impeach the king's lack of restraint and introduce constitutional limitations on the monarchy." Conlan contends that the author purposely drew parallels between Edward III's victories of the 1340s and 1350s and the contemporary triumph of 1588, not to celebrate the past, but to remind audiences that those successes, like their own, were likely to be temporary.

Moments later, King John asks, “Oh, Lorraine, say, what mean our men to fly? / Our number is far greater than our foes” (3.4.1-2). The retreat suggests to the audience that the mere thought of England’s king’s presence is enough to thwart France’s efforts.

Following that conflict, Prince Edward tallies the number of casualties on both sides for his father:

That in this conflict of our foes were slain:  
 Eleven princes of esteem, fourscore barons,  
 A hundred and twenty knights, and thirty thousand  
 Common soldiers; and of our men, a thousand. (3.5.95-98)

England’s triumph against great odds throughout the play would reinforce the idea that English forces prevail in even the most uneven conflicts, thereby increasing national dignity.

During the Battle of Crécy, English soldiers implore King Edward three times to rescue his son from certain death when the prince finds himself “close encompassed with a world of odds” (3.5.20). Yet the prince emerges victorious, shivered lance in hand, the vanquished King of Boheme’s body in tow (3.5.61). The Black Prince’s ability to salvage triumph from defeat demonstrates the playwright’s determination to show England’s martial victories as marvelous.

Finally, in the Battle of Poitiers, the author shows glimpses of the enemy camps to heighten dramatic tension and subsequent audience satisfaction. In the French camp, King John believes that his company has trapped King Edward and has surrounded

Prince Edward (4.3.57-9). Yet soon he hears the alarum that sounds the French retreat.

His son Philip cries out to his father:

Pluck out your eyes, and see not this day's shame!

An arm hath beat an army: one poor David

Hath with a stone foil'd twenty stout Goliaths.

Some twenty naked starvelings with small flints

Hath driven back a puissant host of men,

Array'd and fenc'd in all accomplishments. (4.17-22)

Unaware of his prince's triumph, Salisbury relays to Edward III and his company news of Prince Edward's assumed demise at the hands of the far larger French army. Salisbury describes the enemy forces facing the Black Prince as being, "a battle of ten thousand horse / There twice as many pikes in quadrant wise / Here crossbows and deadly wounding darts" (5.1.136-8). A triumphant flourish that precedes the prince's train quickly follows. The Black Prince's ability to prevail in his first forays into combat, though thousands had entrenched him about (3.5.74), aggrandizes his father's glory and strengthens the theatergoer's perception of the English mythos prominent in the close of the 1580s.

Beyond martial strength, England stands superior to France on moral grounds. Repeatedly, when given the opportunity, French characters betray their king or country through calculated or cowardly behavior. The play opens with the native Frenchman, Artois's discovery to King Edward of John's seizure of the French throne which leads to battle (1.1.18-27). In that confrontation, a French soldier, Gobin de Grace, reveals a

shallow passing point on the River Somme to Edward III's forces, thereby advancing England's progress against France (3.3.1-6). While Gobin does not reveal his motive for assisting his enemy's cause, Artois maintains that his disclosure derives not from "hate nor any private wrong, / But love unto my country and the right" (1.1.33-4), which might indicate a sense that the French can display respectable moral character. However, Artois's state of banishment from France and his quick acceptance by King Edward as the Earl of Richmond, as well as Gobin de Grace's immediate reward of liberty and five hundred gold marks (3.3.7-10) suggests that men with virtuous intentions and honorable principles that aid the right belong within England's realm, not France's.

Villiers's voluntary return to English captivity in Act 4, Scene 3 has often been held up as evidence for a more sympathetic portrayal of the French in the play. While Villiers's action does exhibit personal honor, it does not create an overall positive impression of England's rival. Every stand Villiers makes for his oath is in response to Charles's instruction to break it. When Charles pushes Villiers to choose between his oath to his enemy and his prince, Villiers says that his loyalty to Charles is bound only "In all things that uprightly he commands / But either to persuade or threaten me / Not to perform the covenant of my word is lawless and I need not to obey" (4.3.31-34). Villiers's fidelity should be seen as the notable distinction of one man, not the general portrayal of the French.

Given such ample evidence of the playwright's determination to bolster England's self-image, fixing the date of composition as relatively earlier seems most appropriate. As Wentersdorf and others suggest, the references to the English's military victory of 1588

speak to the widespread nationalistic pride of the era. Though Prior's theory also connects the play to contemporary Elizabethan thinking, Prior sees it as being inspired more by the country's political strategies than its successes. In *Edward III*, the dramatist clearly plays upon pride, not political tactics, especially when describing the improbable victories of the British against the French and its allies. As such, the play would have been most relevant in the period between 1589 and 1592.

#### AUTHORSHIP

The question of authorship, like that of the dating of the play, remains unresolved. General trends in *Edward III* criticism moved from simple identification to subjective interpretation to detailed analysis and have resulted in various theories of authorship. C. F. Tucker Brooke describes the earliest period of Shakespeare criticism in the sixteenth to early eighteenth centuries as an "age of purely unliterary attribution."<sup>44</sup> In these cases, attribution depended almost entirely on the presence of Shakespeare's name or initials on a play's title-page, or on entries in the Stationers' Register and published book lists rather than on the examination of internal evidence. From the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries Capell and his contemporaries considered questions of attribution from a literary perspective. Judgments based on Shakespeare's style and supposed "ring" dominate this period of criticism. Scholars of the twentieth century sought more quantifiable means of distinguishing authorship. Image studies and metrical tests aimed to mark unique characteristics of an author's works.

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<sup>44</sup> C. F. Tucker Brooke, *The Shakespeare Apocrypha* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), viii.

From the numerous hypotheses offered on the issue of authorship during these broad periods of *Edward III* criticism, three main schools of thought have emerged. In the first, scholars reject Shakespeare's authorship of the play and put forth the names of other major dramatists of the period as more plausible candidates. This theory enjoys the least critical backing. More widely received are the second and third schools of thought, which propose some degree of Shakespeare's involvement with the play. Critics in the second school argue that Shakespeare was *Edward III's* sole author. Critics in the third school believe that Shakespeare was a partial contributor to the text, suggesting that he revised an existing work or that he collaborated with another unidentified dramatist to produce the original text. Current academic support leans to the notion of collaboration, but no single theory enjoys universal acceptance. The following subsections (i-iii) examine the three main schools of thought concerning *Edward III's* authorship.

## i

Scholars who reject the idea of Shakespeare as author of *Edward III* rely on the play's publication history or notions of the playwright's style as bases for dismissal. Those who deny Shakespeare's hand completely include: Brooke, Charles Knight, Warnke and Proescholdt, Thomas H. Dickinson, A. M. Sampley, and A. C. Swinburne.<sup>45</sup> The common claims against Shakespeare's authorship hinge on his name's absence from the quartos' title pages and the play's exclusion from the First Folio and other listings of his works, such as: Meres's *Palladis Tamia*, a list of twelve Shakespearean plays,

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<sup>45</sup> Other critics who deny Shakespeare's authorship of *Edward III* include: Symonds, Saintsbury, Lambrechts, Smith, Platt, Golding, and Tillyard.

compiled in 1598 and printed for Burby, Capell's ten volumes of Shakespeare's works in 1767, Steevens's "Twenty Quartos" of 1766, and Malone's "Supplement" of 1780.<sup>46</sup>

Absence from the First Folio remains the predominant reason for dismissing Shakespeare's involvement in the composition of the play. Brooke, specifically, uses a play's appearance in the First Folio as the main criterion for identifying Shakespeare's authorship. In *The Shakespeare Apocrypha*, Brooke includes *Edward III* with thirteen other plays (or parts of plays) with possible claims for canonicity. He dismisses each of those plays, maintaining that the First Folio should be considered the definitive list of Shakespeare's work.<sup>47</sup>

The simple claims about publication allow for simple rebuttals. During the Elizabethan era, many plays were published anonymously. Even of the thirty-six plays in the Folio, only fifteen were reprinted from quartos bearing Shakespeare's name.<sup>48</sup> The Folio's omission of the play is not conclusive. Heminges and Condell leave out *Pericles* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and fail to acknowledge plays that Shakespeare wrote in collaboration with other dramatists—all omissions generally accepted as erroneous. Meres also omitted the three parts of *Henry VI*, from his *Palladis Tamia*, all three of which had been performed before 1594. To suggest, as many have, that *Edward III* was

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<sup>46</sup> Collier, *King Edward the Third*, vi; Frances Meres, *Palladis Tamia*, (London: P. Short, 1598); Sams, *Shakespeare's 'Edward III,'* 159; Collier lists the collections of Capell, Steevens, and Malone as curious places the play did not appear. Sams finds the play's exclusion from the Oxford *Complete Works* (1986) and *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* (1988) more problematic.

<sup>47</sup> Brooke, *The Shakespeare Apocrypha*, xi.

<sup>48</sup> Lapidés, *The Raigne of King Edward the Third*, 4.

likewise erroneously omitted from the First Folio and other play listings is plausible, at the very least.

For those who disagree with the possibility of an error of omission, other reasons, such as personal and political concerns, explain the play's absence from the Folio. Collier speculates that the person who retained the rights to *Edward III*, being reluctant to lose potential monetary gain, may have denied Heminges and Condell's request to print it.<sup>49</sup> Others make a sounder case predicated on ideas of political caution. Ulrici cites the negative image of the Scots in *Edward III* as a reason for the play's exclusion from the First Folio.<sup>50</sup> The Scots had taken offense to their country's portrayal on English stages in the late years of Elizabeth I's reign. In 1598 King James VI's court notified Elizabeth I of its objection, asking the Queen to force a certain play's alteration or closure on the grounds of protecting the Scottish reputation. George Nicolson's letter to Lord Burghley on April 15, 1589 states: "It is regretted that the comedians of London should scorn the king and the people of this land [Scotland] in their play; and it is wished that the matter should be speedily amended lest the king and the country be stirred to anger."<sup>51</sup> Melchiori speculates that, given its harsh treatment of the Scots (from exposing their crude behavior and cowardliness in Act 1, Scene 2 to King David's humiliating defeat at the hands of the

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<sup>49</sup> Collier, *King Edward the Third*, vii.

<sup>50</sup> Since Ulrici introduced this idea, many scholars have agreed with his theory. See Hopkinson, *Shakespeare's Doubtful Plays*, xxxviii; Lapidés, *The Raigne of King Edward the Third*, 38; Melchiori, *King Edward III*, 12; Evans, *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 1732.

<sup>51</sup> Melchiori, *King Edward III*, 12. Melchiori reproduces the excerpt of the letter from J. D. Machie's *Calendar of State Papers Relating to Scotland. . . in the Public Record Office* (1969), vol. xiii (1597-1603), Part 1, 188.

Black Prince in Act 5), the play Nicolson alludes to could have been *Edward III*. If Elizabeth I complied with the request and terminated the play's stage run, the possibility of revival ended when James VI of Scotland became the King of England.<sup>52</sup> At the time of the Folio's publication twenty years later, James I still reigned; therefore omitting plays with anti-Scottish sentiment, like *Edward III*, could have been a political rather than literary decision on the part of Heminges and Condell.<sup>53</sup>

Those who deny Shakespeare's hand in the play often cite the drama's limited depth and immature style as reasons for excluding it from his canon. Brooke does not believe Shakespeare to be involved, suggesting that the author of *Edward III* displays, "the inability to grasp strongly the realities of life [and] produces in the historical scenes a woodenness and restraint" uncharacteristic of other Shakespearean history plays.<sup>54</sup> Knight recognizes talent in the play, but says that it lacks "the depth and discrimination" of Shakespeare.<sup>55</sup> Warnke and Proescholdt agree, claiming that, in his histories, Shakespeare achieved his objective of representing the conflict between humanity and fate by making audiences care about their heroes' destinies. They assert that the author of

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<sup>52</sup> Melchiori, *King Edward III*, 12. Melchiori believes that if Elizabeth I did ban performances of *Edward III*, it explains the quarto reprint of the play in 1599. If the play could no longer be seen on stage, booksellers would try to capitalize through publication of material clearly relevant to audiences who had recently seen *Henry V* performed at the Globe Theatre.

<sup>53</sup> Melchiori, *King Edward III*, 10; Collier, *The Plays and Poems of W. Shakespeare*, iv. Given the play's absence from stage and print for twenty-five years, Melchiori thinks it is also possible that Heminges and Condell had forgotten its existence. Collier disputes this conjecture, saying "The editors of the Folio 1623 could hardly have forgotten a drama on such a popular theme, and so often acted and printed."

<sup>54</sup> Brooke, *The Shakespeare Apocrypha*, xxii.

<sup>55</sup> Charles Knight, *Studies of Shakespeare* (London: Kessinger, 1851), 279-87.

*Edward III* fails to succeed in that endeavor because he limits his focus to recounting the most noteworthy military exploits of the king's reign without developing characters. Thus they deem the play a mere "versified chronicle" not worthy of comparison to Shakespeare's more dramatically compelling histories.<sup>56</sup>

Fixing a date of composition, however, would prove essential in validating such claims. Even considering the most likely range of possible dates, from 1589 to 1592, one must concede that the play, if Shakespeare's, would have been written very early in his career; therefore arguments based on "stylistic inferiority" or comparisons to his later, more mature works, would appear less compelling.

Other arguments against a Shakespearean connection deal with more perceived likenesses to other playwrights' works. Numerous playwrights have been identified as the possible author of *Edward III*, but most serious connections have been made to Robert Greene, George Peele, and Christopher Marlowe.<sup>57</sup>

Dickinson claims Greene as author based upon a sensed resemblance to the playwright's *The Scottish History of James IV* (1598). He notes that neither play can be defined as a "pure chronicle play," but suggests the similarity of source use makes Greene's single authorship clear. Both plays base historical moments on Holinshed's

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<sup>56</sup> Warnke and Proescholdt, *Pseudo-Shakespearean Plays*, xxviii.

<sup>57</sup> S. Golding, "The Authorship of *Edward III*," *Notes and Queries*, 240 (1928): 313-15; Earnest A. Gerrard, *Elizabethan Drama and Dramatists 1583-1603* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928), 266-67; H. Crundell, "Drayton and *Edward III*," *Notes and Queries* clxxvi (1939): 258-60.; G. Lambrechts, *Edward III, Oevure de Thomas Kyd*," *Etudes Anglaises* 16 (1963): 160-74; W. Wells, "Thomas Kyd and the Chronicle History," *Notes and Queries*, 178 (1940): 218-24, 238-43; Other playwrights proposed as possible author of *Edward III* include: Robert Wilson by Golding, Drayton by Gerrard and Crundell, and Thomas Kyd by Lambrechts and Sarrazin (found in Wells).

*Chronicles*, and both draw from a romantic episode in Painter's *Palace of Pleasure* in their most dramatically successful scenes. Each play also contains a romantic subplot first developed in existing works. Though the origins are different, Dickinson sees the King-Countess episodes in the first two acts of *Edward III* as conspicuously akin to the larger theme of *James IV*.<sup>58</sup>

Several critics dispute Dickinson's theory on subjective and objective bases. Hopkinson's dismissal of Dickinson's argument is categorical, but not terribly elaborate. He writes: "Greene was notoriously an imitator of other writers' works and I think the resemblances (which are chiefly in subject) Mr. Dickinson points out, are the result of imitation or of coincident thought. Greene could not write historical drama; all his attempts in that direction were failures."<sup>59</sup> Brooke also summarily rejects the attribution arguing that *Edward III* is "characterized by [a] nearly total abstinence from the mythological jargon of Greene."<sup>60</sup> R. G. Horwarth eliminates Greene as a potential author based on his own comparison of *Edward III*'s Countess and *James IV*'s Ida. Horwarth asserts that Greene fails to create the same level of dramatic tension in the love suit for Ida that the Countess of Salisbury episode reaches and thus could not have written both.<sup>61</sup>

Although Brooke admits that the Countess scenes are much more like Shakespeare's work than first noticed, he ultimately favors Peele's authorship. He sees

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<sup>58</sup> Hopkinson, *Shakespeare's Doubtful Plays*, xxiii.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Roger Prior, "The Date of *Edward III*," 179.

<sup>61</sup> R. G. Horwarth, *A Pot of Gillyflowers: Studies and Notes* (Cape Town: R. G. Horwarth, 1964).

much of the play as “wooden,” but he notes moments of poetic beauty which echo Peele’s work. Brooke praises Peele as a writer, “who in the fire and melody of his poetry rises high above all but the two greatest of his contemporaries.”<sup>62</sup> Brooke finds that stylistically, the verse movement in *Edward III* and Peele’s *David and Bethsabe* is almost indistinguishable. Brooke determines that “The proportion of run-on lines in *David and Bethsabe* is about one in five; in *Edward III* it is slightly less than one in six.”<sup>63</sup> He also points out that neither play includes comic characters or scenes. The perceived absence of comedy in *Edward III* favors rejection of Shakespearean authorship and of course is a further argument in support of Brooke’s belief in Peele’s involvement.<sup>64</sup> In *Edward III*, Brooke sees the same tone that pervades *David and Bethsabe* and *The Battle of Alcazar*, the same seriousness that he attributes only to Peele.

Brooke also finds structural similarities between the first two acts of *Edward III* and the first of act of *David and Bethsabe*. In both, the love episodes, which exceed the political scenes in terms of poetry and dramatic weight, undermine structural unity. The structural problem, according to A. M. Sampley, is characteristic of other chronicle plays

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<sup>62</sup> Roger Prior, “The Date of *Edward III*,” 179.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Brooke, *The Shakespeare Apocrypha*, xxiii; Janis Lull, “Plantagenets, Lancastrians, Yorkists, and Tudors: I-3 *Henry VI*, *Richard III*, *Edward III*,” *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare’s History Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 90. Brooke’s estimation of the play’s lack of humor has been challenged, particularly in terms of Lodowick’s role. Proudfoot calls Lodowick the comic character that “persuades us from the very inception of the king’s passion, that the outcome will be a happy one.” Janis Lull asserts that play is a sort of “political comedy” that is “not funny, but unlike any of the other early histories, [in that] it has a happy ending.”

of the period, but particularly in Peele's writing.<sup>65</sup> He finds that in *David and Bethsabe* the plot is "not well integrated because the main threads of action are spliced, not interwoven; one plot ends before another begins, so that . . . it gives the effect of presenting not one story but several."<sup>66</sup> This arrangement appears in *Edward III*. The king suffers and recovers from his lovesickness before any of the vital battles begin, thereby keeping separate the romantic and historical plots on stage. The evidence Brooke provides seems to satisfy Sampley's criterion that an anonymous play should be attributed to Peele only if it shows the same structural characteristics as his known (and flawed) works.

Opposition to Brooke's theory, however, is plentiful. Hopkinson acknowledges the similarity of the subplots in *David and Bethsabe* and *Edward III*. But he dismisses any other similarities on the basis of style. After looking at the play's "thought[s], phraseology, and method[s] of treatment," he concludes that "the style of *Edward III* bears about the same resemblance to Peele's style, as does the style of *The Vicar of Wakefield* to the style of *Gil Blas*."<sup>67</sup> Kenneth Muir similarly rejects Brooke's theory, contending that the style in *Edward III* surpasses Peele's capabilities: "Nothing we know of his career suggests that he would in his later years have had the opportunity of

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<sup>65</sup> A. M. Sampley, "Plot Structure in Peele's Plays as a Test of Authorship" *PMLA* 51 (1936): 689-701. Sampley uses *The Contention*, *The True Tragedy*, and *Edward II* as evidence for chronicle plays with structural problems.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 699-700.

<sup>67</sup> Hopkinson, *Shakespeare's Doubtful Plays*, xxv.

escaping from the unsatisfactory conditions of a hack-writer, or of rising so far above his accustomed level.”<sup>68</sup>

To provide a more detailed counter to Brooke’s argument, Koskenniemi compares the images, plot devices, and syntax in *Edward III* to those in *David and Bethsabe*, *The Battle of Alcazar*, *Arraignement of Paris*, and *Edward I*. Koskenniemi’s findings suggest that *Edward III* could not be Peele’s for several reasons: the play includes a significantly smaller number of classical images than any of Peele’s plays; the love scenes in the play and in *David and Bethsabe* are treated differently; and the frequent use of compound epithets in *Edward III* does not appear in Peele’s work.<sup>69</sup>

If Greene and Peele can be eliminated on the basis of their inferior skills as playwrights, Marlowe can be considered in light of his dramatic merit. The possibility of Marlowe’s involvement grows from a supposed connection between *Tamburlaine* and *Edward III*. Proudfoot says that both plays, “dramatize an almost uninterrupted succession of battles” and that Edward’s dire threats against Calais compare to those of *Tamburlaine* against Damascus (1 *Tam* 5.1.324).<sup>70</sup> Melchiori also finds *Tamburlaine* echoing in King Edward’s callous response to the news of his son’s death (5.1.167-75). He likens it to the reaction *Tamburlaine* has to Zenocrate’s death in 2 *Tamburlaine* 3.2.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Muir, *The Singularity of Shakespeare and Other Essays*. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1977), 55.

<sup>69</sup> Inna Koskenniemi, “Themes and Imagery in *Edward III*,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 65 (1964): 446-80.

<sup>70</sup> Proudfoot, “*The Reign of King Edward the Third*,” 149.

<sup>71</sup> Melchiori, *King Edward III*, 35.

Even so, Melchiori does not find Marlowe's hand in *Edward III*. He believes the dramatist purposefully imitated Tamburlaine's speech to echo its dramatic value.

Others agree with Melchiori in that they do not believe that the play reveals Marlowe's stylistic capabilities. Slater explains that the potential timing of composition would make this a late play for Marlowe.<sup>72</sup> His development at that point far exceeds the style of *Edward III*, making it unlikely that he would have written the play. Hopkinson, who agrees, writes:

[I] am forced to the conclusion that [Marlowe] had no hand in the play. Comparing the style of the two plays, there appears to me a totally different method of treatment and more self-control exhibited in *Edward III* than can be found in anything Marlowe had written up to 1589.<sup>73</sup> . . . The phraseology and expression is not Marlowean; and the treatment of history is contrary to his method, so far as can be judged by the examples he has left. As to the characterization, that seems to me distinctly not Marlowe's. . . . The metrical style of the blank verse seems to me different to that we are accustomed to find and to admire in Marlowe's 'mighty line'.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Slater, *Problem with the Reign*, 1.

<sup>73</sup> Hopkinson, *Shakespeare's Doubtful Plays*, xiv. Though Marlowe had written *Tamburlaine* and *Doctor Faustus* before the supposed date of *Edward III's* composition, Hopkinson points out that neither falls into the "domain of the English historical drama."

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, xv.

Swinburne agrees that the play never reaches Marlowe's level, suggesting instead that the author of *Edward III* was only "a devout student and a humble follower of Christopher Marlowe."<sup>75</sup> He argues that the play's structural defects and its combination of lyric, elegy, and blank verse may be due to the playwright's immaturity, but is more inclined to see the faults as an "indication of lifelong and irremediable impotence."<sup>76</sup>

In his 1993 study of function words and collocations that appear in Shakespeare's Folio plays, Thomas Merriam rejects subjective stances such as Swinburne's.<sup>77</sup> Through statistical analysis, he describes patterns that he then discerns in the two *Tamburlaines*, finding that the function word distributions that are strikingly similar in the *Tamburlaines* differ significantly from those in Shakespeare's works. In addition he argues that the ratios of function words per line found in *Edward III* match those of the two *Tamburlaine* plays so closely that the possibility of chance cannot exist. In a subsequent study though, Merriam revised his theory, abandoning his belief in Marlowe's authorship and proposing that Shakespeare attempted to mimic Marlowe's style when writing *Edward III*.<sup>78</sup>

Slater's statistical study of the play aligns with Merriam's revised theory. Slater concludes that, "At all three points where it can be tested with statistical rigour, a theory

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<sup>75</sup> A. C. Swinburne, *A Study of Shakespeare*. 4th ed. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1902), 234.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 235.

<sup>77</sup> Thomas Merriam, "Marlowe's Hand in *Edward III*," *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 8 (1993): 59-72.

<sup>78</sup> Thomas Merriam and Robert A. J. Matthews. "Neural Computation in Stylometry II: An Application to the Works of Shakespeare and Marlowe," *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 9 (1994): 1-6.

of authorship by Marlowe fails to a statistically significant degree to compete with a theory of authorship by Shakespeare.”<sup>79</sup> Hart’s study of vocabulary in *Edward III* also supports this position. While acknowledging that Marlowe could be the only other dramatist of the period capable of writing the play, Hart favors a Shakespearean attribution. His examination illustrates that *Edward III* employs a larger vocabulary than any other play written the 1590s.<sup>80</sup> Hart calculates that Shakespeare had the largest vocabulary of his contemporaries and the only one varied enough to produce this chronicle play.<sup>81</sup> Weakening the case for Marlowe, Hart’s consideration of words with seventeen common prefixes and six common suffixes used in the works of both playwrights shows that Shakespeare employed them forty percent more often than Marlowe. Such statistical analyses lead opinion away from the Marlowe attribution and point toward a relatively stronger belief in Shakespeare’s involvement.

ii

The sole-Shakespearean school of thought began in the late nineteenth century when Shakespeare was connected to *Edward III* in publications such as J. P. Collier’s edition of *King Edward the Third* in 1874 and Furnivall’s edition of Delius’s *Leopold*

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<sup>79</sup> Slater, *Problem with the Reign*, 135.

<sup>80</sup> Alfred Hart, *Shakespeare and the Homilies* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1934), 219-41.

<sup>81</sup> Alfred Hart, “The Growth of Shakespeare’s Vocabulary” *Review of English Studies* 19 (1943): 242-54. Hart determined that a total of 17,667 different words appear in Shakespeare’s plays.

*Shakspeare* in 1880.<sup>82</sup> Collier's letter to *The Athenaeum* on March 28, 1874 explains his attribution of *Edward III* to Shakespeare. He outlines his use of internal evidence alone, with its emphasis on the play's "spirit" rather than analysis of specific passages, before coming to the following conclusion: "[I] defy anybody at all acquainted with the style and language of our great dramatist to read *Edward the Third* from beginning to end without arriving at the same conclusion that it must have been the work of Shakespeare, and of no other poet. . . . It ought to have preceded *Richard the Second* in the folios and in every other edition of Shakespeare. It is no doubtful play."<sup>83</sup> After Collier, a number of nineteenth and twentieth century critics relied on systematic studies of *Edward III*'s vocabulary, imagery, and perceived line parallels to other Shakespearean works to promote the idea of Shakespeare's solo authorship. Scholars who endorse the sole-Shakespearean theory include: Alexander Teetgen, Moody Prior, Eric Sams, Caroline Spurgeon, Fred Lapedes, Karl Wentersdorf, and Edward Armstrong.<sup>84</sup> Their arguments, like the objections to them, range from the subjective to the statistical.

The most subjective of those studies comes from Teetgen. In his "indignation pamphlet" of 1875 Teetgen rails against the slightest insinuation that Shakespeare was

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<sup>82</sup> J. P. Collier, ed. *'King Edward the Third': A Historical Play. Attributed by Edward Capell to William Shakespeare and Now Proved to Be His Work* (London: T. Richards, 1874); Frederick Furnivall, ed. *The Leopold Shakspeare: The Poet's Works, in Chronological Order, from the Text of Professor Delius, with 'Edward III' and 'The Two Noble Kinsmen'* (London: Cassell, Petter and Galpin, 1880).

<sup>83</sup> J. Payne Collier, "Shakespeare's 'Edward the Third,'" *The Athenaeum: Journal of Literature, Science, The Fine Arts, Music, and The Drama* (London: Edward J. Francis, 1874), 426.

<sup>84</sup> Other critics who support the sole-Shakespearean theory include: Tieck, Phipson, Hopkinson, O'Connor, Horn, Hart, Bell, and Conlan

not the sole author of *Edward III*, but rarely offers dispassionate, logical evidence for his conviction. He calls the failure to identify Shakespeare as author, “a national scandal, blot, and reproach. . . [and] one of the most ridiculous, futile, humiliating things in literary history.”<sup>85</sup> He then bases his argument primarily upon his sense that his affection for the playwright enables him to identify one of Shakespeare’s lines instantly. Only in rare moments does Teetgen inch toward substantive arguments, as when he notes: a connection to Sonnet 94, a parallel to the genealogical argument that opens *Henry V*, a correlation of rhymed passages that recall Shakespeare’s early writing period, and references to collections of the dramatist’s works which include *Edward III*.<sup>86</sup> In all other instances, he relies on his belief that certain passages of the play could come from no other mind than Shakespeare’s and that they “drop from Shakespeare, like plumes from the pinions of an archangel in his flight through heaven, before God.”<sup>87</sup> Teetgen’s pamphlet provides little evidence for his claims and demonstrates the importance of producing concrete proof or of conducting systematic research when considering questions of authorship.

In an attempt to provide external evidence to support a Shakespearean attribution, Prior discusses the use of Froissart’s chronicles during composition. He asserts that while writing *Edward III*, the author studied a specific copy of *Chroniques*, once held and

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<sup>85</sup> Alexander Teetgen, *Shakespeare’s ‘King Edward The Third,’ Absurdly Called, And Scandalously Treated As, A ‘Doubtful Play:’ An Indignation Pamphlet. Together With An Essay on The Poetry Of The Future: By Alexander Teetgen. Self-Justified Shakespeare; ‘The Subtlest of Authors’* (Covent Garden: Williams and Norgate, 1875), 17.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-9, 19. Teetgen cites the editions of Tauchnitz, Moltke, Capell, and Ortlepp.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

annotated by Henry Carey, Lord Hunsdon. It seems evident to Prior that the author “must have known Hunsdon personally, had access to his library, and used his privileged knowledge in the writing of the play.”<sup>88</sup> He then documents Shakespeare’s connection to Hunsdon through the Lord Chamberlain’s Men. Shakespeare joined Hunsdon’s company in 1594 and remained with it until the end of his career, thus giving him access to Hunsdon’s copy of *Chroniques*.<sup>89</sup>

Sams also attempts to link Shakespeare to the play through external means. He examines Burby’s involvement with the publication of other Shakespearean plays. Sams notes that when Burby published *Edward III* in 1596, he had already published an anonymous version of *The Taming of the Shrew* in 1594 which Sams takes to be the first version of Shakespeare’s comedy. Burby’s name also appeared on the second edition of *Romeo and Juliet* in 1597 and the first edition of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* in 1598.<sup>90</sup> Five known Shakespearean plays appeared in quarto form before 1600 in eleven editions.<sup>91</sup> With the addition of *Edward III*, Burby would have published three of the six plays, in four editions, making the connection circumstantial but not conclusive.

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<sup>88</sup> Roger Prior, “Was *The Raigne of King Edward III* a Compliment to Lord Hunsdon?,” *Connotations* 3, no. 3 (1993-94): 243-64.

<sup>89</sup> Sams, *Shakespeare’s ‘Edward III,’* 174. Sams observes that Prior’s work can be used for dating, but mostly as a *terminus a quo*. Hunsdon “had been Lord Chamberlain, and hence responsible for his sovereign’s theatrical entertainment, since 1585.”

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>91</sup> *Richard II* (1597) published by Andrew Wife; *Richard III* (1597) published by Wife; *Romeo and Juliet* (1597) printed by John Dancer; *1 Henry IV* (1598) published by Wife; *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (1598) published by Cuthbert Burby; *Richard II* (second quarto in 1598) published by Wife; *Richard III* (second quarto in 1598) published by Wife; *1 Henry IV* (second quarto in 1599) published by Wife; and *Romeo and Juliet* (second quarto in 1599) published by Burby.

Studies that systematically consider internal evidence often include careful consideration of specific vocabulary, images, themes, or lines used in the play in relation to other known Shakespearean works. Collier says that in such analyses patterns will show that Shakespeare constantly revisited images or lines previously used in his plays. He also believes that in cases where identical uses are found, “It is not for a moment to be supposed that he [Shakespeare] stole from earlier dramatists, and thus became one of the most bare-faced plagiarists upon record; [rather] we must necessarily assign to him the drama in which the thought and words originally occurred.”<sup>92</sup> Following this premise, Collier concludes that the frequency of repeated images and lines found in *Edward III* and the rest of Shakespeare’s accepted canon undoubtedly establishes his authorship of the doubtful play. Others subscribe to this belief, proposing that the presence of specific vocabulary and typically Shakespearean images in a doubtful play, or in portions of a suspected collaboration, help to establish a work’s canonicity.

Caroline Spurgeon examines Shakespearean imagery as a way of distinguishing him from other playwrights of the period. Spurgeon claims that “each writer has a certain range of images which are characteristic of him, and that he has a marked and constant tendency to use a much larger number of one or two kinds.”<sup>93</sup> Lapides and Wintersdorf point to Spurgeon’s discussion of two of Shakespeare’s unique animal images as support for attributing *Edward III* to Shakespeare. Bear-baiting was popular in the sixteenth century, but Spurgeon does not find one related image in any play outside of

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<sup>92</sup> Collier, *King Edward the Third*, vii.

<sup>93</sup> Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare’s Imagery and What it Tells Us* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), 13.



presumed death by French hands to Edward III and Queen Philippe: “Or as a bear fast chained unto a stake / Stood famous Edward still expecting when / Those dogs of France would fasten on his flesh” (5.1.143-45). In each instance, the popular notion of sport is replaced with a more personal sense of desperation.

Spurgeon also considers Shakespeare’s unusual depiction of the snail as another distinguishing characteristic of his imagery. Unlike his contemporaries, who often utilize the snail as a symbol of slowness, Shakespeare emphasizes the creature’s delicate senses. His earliest references to the snail appeared in 1593. In *Venus and Adonis*, he writes, “Or, as the snail, whose tender horns being hit, / Shrinks backwards in his shelly cave with pain” (lines 1033-36). Also that year, in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* the snail represents love’s feeling which is “more soft and sensible/ Than are the tender horns of cockled snails” (4.3.334-5).<sup>95</sup> Lapidés shows that the image functions similarly in *Edward III* when King Edward warns King David, “But I will make you shrink your snaily horns” (1.1.138).<sup>96</sup> If an early date of composition is accepted, one could argue Shakespeare’s interest in developing the snail imagery from a passing reference in *Edward III* to more developed and poetic uses in his narrative poem and early comedy. Spurgeon’s contention that no other playwright of the period used the snail image with consideration of the animal’s senses or included bear-baiting images seems to bolster arguments that attribute *Edward III* to Shakespeare.

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<sup>95</sup> Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery*, 107.

<sup>96</sup> Lapidés, *The Raigne of King Edward the Third*, 12.

Wentersdorf's study of Shakespeare's imagery also shows that the image clusters in *Edward III* often relate to nature, wildlife, and sporting events, among other things. He concludes that Shakespeare uses such images in his plays in greater proportion than any other known dramatist of the period. Of the 457 images studied, the greater number of them appear in the Countess scenes. Wentersdorf counts twenty-four images per every 100 lines in the 747 lines of the love scenes and sixteen images per every 100 lines in the 1747 lines of the historical portions of the play.<sup>97</sup> While opponents of the solo-Shakespeare theory could use this evidence to strengthen their belief in dual authorship, Wentersdorf preempts this potential dispute by suggesting that the distinctions in subject matter of the two threads dictated the types of images used. He also avoids potential challenges on this point by naming thirty-four images used in both portions of the play. He concludes that theories of dual authorship or of Shakespeare's late revision of an existing manuscript are illogical.

Armstrong examines image clusters found in Shakespeare's known works. He suggests that when a dramatist subconsciously develops associations between words and images, he repeatedly uses those connections in his works, thereby marking an individual writer's identity.<sup>98</sup> One image cluster he examines connects the eagle and the drone. The cluster, which Shakespeare uses in *2 Henry VI* ("drone," "eagle," "crept," "suck," and "rob," in 4.1.102-09), and *Henry V* ("drone," "eagle," "sneaking," "sucks," "thieves,"

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<sup>97</sup> Wentersdorf, "The Authorship of 'Edward III'," 180.

<sup>98</sup> Edward Armstrong, *Shakespeare's Imagination* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), 161-73.

“weasel,” “cat,” “surly,” in 1.2.170-204), also appears in *Edward III* (“drone,” “eagle,” “creeping,” “stealth,” “nightingale,” and “grudging” in 1.1.84, 93-95, 110-111, and 3.1.88). Armstrong’s identification of the similar reiteration of the image cluster throughout the plays, suggests that Shakespeare must have written all three.<sup>99</sup>

Muir questions the usefulness of applying Armstrong’s analysis of the eagle and the drone image cluster when investigating a possible authorial connection in these three dramas. He acknowledges the apparent development of the cluster from its smallest example the earliest play, *2 Henry VI* through *Edward III* to its greatest use in the latest play, *Henry V*, which could mirror the maturation of a young writer. Yet Muir hesitates to attribute *Edward III* to Shakespeare based on this cluster. He notes that the cluster appears both in a scene not typically considered Shakespeare’s and elsewhere in “a popular piece of folk-lore used more than once in Lyly’s works.”<sup>100</sup> Despite this objection, Muir views the image cluster as a potentially legitimate indicator of authorship.

In his own study, Muir examines a number of images found in *Edward III* which resemble those used in Shakespeare’s known works. He calculates that characteristically Shakespearean images appear once per every 3.8 lines in the King-Countess scenes and once in every seven lines in the historical scenes, a slightly higher occurrence than

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<sup>99</sup> Armstrong, *Shakespeare's Imagination*, 25-34; Muir, *Shakespeare as Collaborator*, 20-21.

<sup>100</sup> Muir, *Shakespeare as Collaborator*, 21.

Wentersdorf tallies.<sup>101</sup> His discussion of the parallel use of coining imagery in *Edward III* (2.1.255-59) and *Measure for Measure* (2.4.42-49) leads him to attribute at least part of the doubted play to Shakespeare. Muir notes that if *Edward III* is accepted as the earlier play, its inferior version of the coining image fits Shakespeare's known practice of improving upon ideas in later passages. Although Muir does not attribute the entirety of the play to Shakespeare, he finds that the study of image clusters found exclusively in Shakespeare's known works provides "perhaps the strongest evidence for the Shakespearian authorship on an apocryphal scene."<sup>102</sup>

Opinion about the reliability of image studies is mixed. Proponents contend that comparing specific images in a doubtful play to similes and metaphors regarded as "characteristic Shakespearean imagery" within canonical works produces reliable results.<sup>103</sup> Detractors are less convinced. Moody Prior finds that the methods used in many image studies rest on mere assumptions of authors' preferences for certain images. Additionally, he says that to use an image as a determinant of authorship, scholars would need to show with "reasonable certainty that in its most characteristic form, the image is not likely to occur in the work of another writer."<sup>104</sup> Without such proof of certainty, he says the image test would be invalid. Wentersdorf dismisses Prior's condition, saying that

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<sup>101</sup> Muir, *Shakespeare as Collaborator*, 14.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>103</sup> Karl Wentersdorf, "The Authenticity of *The Taming of the Shrew*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 5, no. 1 (1954): 11-32.

<sup>104</sup> Moody Prior, "Imagery as a Test of Authorship," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 6, no. 4 (1955): 384.

no such certainty can, nor need, exist. He concludes that “the presence of numerous characteristically Shakespearian images would be strongly suggestive of Shakespeare’s authorship and, in conjunction with other stylistic features, convincing evidence of the master’s hand.”<sup>105</sup> To move beyond suggestion toward certainty, Wentersdorf stresses that scholars must evaluate an author’s image use in “conjunction with other specific stylistic criteria such as structure, versification, and diction.”<sup>106</sup>

Scholars in every era of apocrypha studies have relied upon parallel readings between doubtful plays and Shakespeare’s known works to establish or deny authorship. Lapides sees parallel line studies as a valid basis for verifying “that similarities exist between a known author’s work and an anonymous work.”<sup>107</sup> Swinburne repudiates this type of research, claiming that “Men of Shakespeare’s stamp . . . do not thus repeat themselves.”<sup>108</sup> His claim has been rejected through a variety of tests. Refuting Swinburne and others of like mind, V. Osterberg writes: “Shakespeare did repeat himself largely, not slavishly or like one poor in mind, but in a manner which suggests the natural working of an artistic spirit. . . . [F]rom his writings we can easily make up a very long list of undisputable reiterations of dramatic elements, idea, and phrases of every kind.”<sup>109</sup> Indeed, over time, studies have illustrated theme and line echoes between the anonymous

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<sup>105</sup> Wentersdorf, “The Authorship of ‘Edward III,’” 234.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>107</sup> Lapides, *The Raigne of King Edward the Third*, 7.

<sup>108</sup> Swinburne, *A Study of Shakespeare*, 253.

<sup>109</sup> V. Osterberg, “The ‘Countess Scenes’ of ‘Edward III,’” *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* (1929; Kraus repr., Stuttgart: Nendeln/Liechtenstein, 1969), 52.

*Edward III* and eight Shakespearean plays, his narrative poems, and his sonnets. Echoes in *3 Henry VI*, *Measure for Measure*, Sonnet 94, and Sonnet 142 deserve thorough discussion since they are commonly considered to provide the most convincing evidence for Shakespeare's authorship of *Edward III*.

*Edward III* shares with *3 Henry VI* a common theme of rulers misusing power for personal gain. In *3 Henry IV*, King Edward IV's pursuit of Lady Grey in Act 3, Scene 2 resembles the basic premise of power versus chastity found in the Countess of Salisbury-King Edward III scenes of *Edward III*. Although Lady Grey's husband is dead, thus releasing her from the bonds of marriage, King Edward IV challenges her honor when trying to capitalize on her desperation. In exchange for her dead husband's lands, Lady Grey must offer her sovereign her body. Like Edward III, Edward IV learns mastery of his desires through the constancy of a woman. Lady Grey's willingness to lie in prison rather than in the king's bed (3.2.69), and her readiness to forfeit her lands rather than her body (3.2.79-81), transforms the king's designs. In the face of such honor, Edward IV reforms his own behavior and seeks Lady Grey's hand in marriage. Though she considers herself, "too mean" to be England's queen (3.2.97), the lady proves otherwise by unknowingly inspiring Edward IV to abandon his own base designs. The education of a king which leads to mastery of the self recalls the lesson Edward III learns in the Countess of Salisbury's castle in *Edward III*.

The Countess-King episode also anticipates Antonio's attempts to seduce Isabella in *Measure for Measure*. In each play, a ruler again shamelessly manipulates his power and his desired lady's family to try to force her submission to his sexual desires. Facing

unyielding chastity and morality in their coveted women, King Edward and Angelo confront their own depravity and end their abuse of authority. Several parallel lines in the two plays strengthen the argument for Shakespeare's direct involvement with *Edward III*.

After fulfilling his liege duty by presenting his king's desires to his daughter, Warwick welcomes her indignation and matches it, crying out:

*An evil deed, done by authority*

*Is sin and subornation; deck an ape*

In tissue, and the beauty of the robe

Adds but the greater scorn unto the beast. (2.1.443-46)

The passage points toward the similar image of Isabella's horror over hearing Angelo's merciless disregard for her pleas for Claudio's life in *Measure for Measure*. In her rebuke of the duke's unfeeling aggression, she says:

Merciful heaven,

Thou rather with the sharp and sulphurous bolt

Splits the unwedgeable and gnarled oak

Than the soft myrtle; but man, proud man,

*Dress'd in a little brief authority,*

*Most ignorant of what he's most assur'd,*

*(His glassy essence) like an angry ape*

Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven

As makes the angels weep. (2.2.114-22)

A second parallel reading found in the same scenes stands out to Muir as reliable proof of Shakespeare's hand in *Edward III*. Responding to the king's direct petition for her adulterous affections, the Countess of Salisbury asks:

He that doth clip or counterfeit your stamp  
 Shall die, my lord: and will your sacred self  
 Commit high treason against the King of Heaven  
*To stamp his Image in forbidden metal,*  
 Forgetting your allegiance and your oath? (2.1.255-59)

In *Measure for Measure*, moments before Angelo exploits his power to propose an exchange of Claudio's life for Isabella's body, he denies her second appeal for her brother's stay of execution. He taunts:

Ha? fie, these filthy vices! It were as good  
 To pardon him that hath from nature stol'n  
 A man already made, as to remit  
*Their saucy sweetness, that do coin heaven's image*  
*In stamps that are forbid.* Tis all as easy  
 Falsely to take away a life true made  
 As to put metal in restrained means  
 To make a false one. (2.4.42-49)

This particular parallel, which elicited Swinburne's ire over the thought of Shakespeare repeating himself, fits the practice Shakespeare made of revisiting and improving upon images or lines from earlier plays in his more mature works. Muir suggests that the

inferiority of the coining image in *Edward III* lends strength to the received belief that the chronicle play was written before *Measure for Measure*. Muir says, “Shakespeare might conceivably be echoing and improving on a play by another dramatist, in which, perhaps, he had himself acted. But if this were so, it would be unique for his career; for even where he was using a play as a direct source, as he did in writing *King Lear*, there are comparatively few verbal echoes.”<sup>110</sup>

That Shakespeare revisited and revised his own ideas throughout his career is widely recognized, and scholars have shown copious parallels between canonical works and *Edward III* to further the argument for his hand in the doubtful chronicle play. Sams calculates that over 800 cross-references to the Shakespearean canon exist. Table 1 identifies a small sampling of parallel readings found in later published plays.<sup>111</sup> The examples chosen demonstrate the range of Shakespeare’s works that apparently echo *Edward III*. Such readings could be used as evidence for a Shakespearean attribution. It seems unlikely that Shakespeare would have repeated or enhanced so many images or lines from the play in his later works unless he had a direct hand in the original.

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<sup>110</sup> Muir, *Shakespeare as Collaborator*, 29.

<sup>111</sup> MacD. P. Jackson, “*Edward III*, Shakespeare, and Pembroke’s Men,” *Notes and Queries*, 210 (1965) 329-31; Lapidés, *The Raigne of King Edward the Third*, 10-11, 15; Collier, *The Plays and Poems of W. Shakespeare*, ix-x; Muir, *Shakespeare as Collaborator*, 23; Hopkinson, *Shakespeare’s Doubtful Plays*, xl-xli; Sams, *Shakespeare’s ‘Edward III,’* 185-87. Line parallels presented taken from these studies.

<i>Table 1</i> Later canonical work	<i>Edward III</i>
<p><u>2 Henry VI (1590-91)</u> Never yet did base dishonor blur our name But with our sword we wiped away the blot. (4.1.39-40)</p>	<p>Let them be soldiers of a lusty spirit, Such as dread nothing but dishonor's blot. (1.1.143-44)</p>
<p><u>3 Henry VI (1590-91)</u> And when the morning sun shall raise his car Above the border of this horizon. (4.7.80-81)</p>	<p>What is she, when the sun lifts up his head, (2.1.145)</p>
<p><u>Love's Labour's Lost (1594-95)</u> Boyet: If to come hither you have measur'd miles, And many miles, the Princess bids you tell How many inches doth fill up one mile. Berowne: Tell her we measure them by weary steps. (5.2.191-94)</p>	<p>He that hath far to go, tells it by miles; If he should tell the steps, it kills his heart. (4.4.57-58)</p>
<p><u>King John (1594-96)</u> This little abstract doth contain that large Which died in Geffrey; and the hand of time Shall draw this brief into as huge a volume. (2.1.101-03)</p>	<p>Whose body is an abstract or a brief, Contains each general virtue in the world. (2.1.82-83)</p>
<p>Unkind remembrance! thou and endless night Have done me shame. (5.6.12-13)</p>	<p>Leaving no hope to us but sullen dark And eyeless terror of all-ending night. (4.4.6-9)</p>
<p><u>Richard III (1595)</u> Ah! That deceit should steal such gentle shape, And with a virtuous vizard hide deep vice. (2.2.27-28)</p>	<p>His lame, unpolish'd shifts are come to light, And truth hath pull'd the visard from his face. (1.1.76-77)</p>

<i>Table 1 continued</i> Later canonical work	<i>Edward III</i>
<p><u><i>Romeo and Juliet</i> (1595-96)</u> My ears have not yet drunk a hundred words Of thy tongue's uttering. (2.2.58-59)</p> <p>Sole monarch of the universal earth. (3.2.94)</p>	<p>His ear to drink her sweet tongue's utterance.(2.1.2)</p> <p>Sole-reigning Adam on the universe. (2.1.264)</p>
<p><u><i>As You Like It</i> (1599)</u> Not out of your apparel, and yet out of your Suit. Am I not your Rosalind? (4.1.88-89)</p>	<p>Thus have I, in his Majesty's behalf, Apparell'd sin in virtuous sentences, And dwell upon thy answer in his suit. (2.1.409-11)</p>
<p><u><i>Hamlet</i> (1600-01)</u> A double blessing is a double grace, Occasion smiles upon a second leave. (1.3.53-54)</p> <p>For if the sun breeds maggots in a dead dog, Being a good kissing carrion. . . (2.2.181-82)</p>	<p>See how occasion laughs me in the face! No sooner minded to prepare for France, But straight I am invited; (1.1.67-69)</p> <p>The freshest summer's day doth soonest taint The loathed carrion that it seems to kiss. (2.1.438-39)</p>
<p><u><i>Measure for Measure</i> (1604)</u> Merely thou art death's fool; For him thou labor'st by thy flight to shun, And yet run'st toward him still. (3.1.11-13)</p> <p>But it is I, That, lying by the Violet in the Sunne, Do as the Carrion does, not as the flower Corrupt with virtuous season. (2.2.165-68)</p>	<p>Ah! What an idiot hast thou made of life, To seek the thing it fears. (4.4.152-53)</p> <p>The freshest summer's day doth soonest taint The loathed carrion that it seems to kiss. (2.1.438-39)</p>

Parallel reading studies extend beyond Shakespeare's dramatic works to his poetry as well. Robertson and Osterberg both identify a line echo between *The Rape of Lucrece* and *Edward III*:

*The Rape of Lucrece*

The mightier man, the mightier is the thing

That makes him honour'd or begets his hate. (lines 1004-5)

*Edward III*

The greater man, the greater is the thing,

Be it good or bad, that he shall undertake. (2.1.434-35)

Without elaboration, Robertson merely says that the echo proves that Shakespeare knew the play from public performances and imitated the line in his narrative poem. Osterberg finds that the repetition indicates Shakespeare's use of the line in both forms. He rejects the idea of "slavish imitation" by pointing to the "rhythmic power, the cadence and the 'touch'" he views in each use as being identical.<sup>112</sup> These questions of original use and authorship can be applied in other comparisons of the play and the poem as well.

Scholars call particular attention to an apparent allusion to *Lucrece* from Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece* in the closing moments of the King-Countess episode. Following the Countess of Salisbury's condition that she and the king each kill their lovers before she submits to his advances, Edward III reaches a moment of penitent clarity. Withdrawing his suit, the king praises the Countess' purity and resolve, saying:

Arise, true English lady, whom our isle

May better boast of than ever Roman might

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<sup>112</sup> Osterberg, "The 'Countess Scenes'," 58.

Of her, whose ransack'd treasury hath task'd

The vain endeavor of so many pens. (3.1.193-96)

The image also appears in *The Rape of Lucrece*, when Lucrece laments Collatine's expected reproach and her shame over her violated body:

If, Collatine, thine honor lay in me,

From me by strong assault it is bereft;

My honey lost, and I, a drone-like bee,

Have no perfection of my summer left,

But robb'd and ransack'd by injurious theft. (lines 836-38)

The extent of violation in each scenario differs, yet the underlying comparison holds Lucrece and the Countess up as models of virtue capable of exposing the dishonorable qualities of a powerful man's sexual desires.

The indeterminate dating of *Edward III* causes some debate over the original use of the "ransack'd" image, which in turn leads to the question of authorship. Proponents of a Shakespearean attribution dismiss the controversy on two points. The proposed range of composition for *The Rape of Lucrece* is between 1593-1594. These dates fall within the widely accepted range of possible composition dates for *Edward III*; it can be argued, then, that at the time, Shakespeare was intrigued enough by Lucretia's story and its instructive merits to use it in two distinct ways. Moreover, the author of *Edward III* would not have needed to depend upon *The Rape of Lucrece*, published in 1594, as its sole source. The story of Lucrece (Lucretia) existed in numerous sources, including: Ovid's *Fasti*, Livy's *Historia*, Chaucer's *The Legend of Good Women*, and Daniel's *The*

*Complaint of Rosamond*.<sup>113</sup> Shakespeare's interest in classical and medieval literature predates *Lucrece*, making it probable that he would have known the story even before the earliest possible date of composition for *Edward III* in 1589.

The problem of distinguishing between original and imitated lines figures prominently in studies that use parallel readings to link the sonnets and doubtful plays. Scholars generally agree that *Edward III* shares specific words or lines with several sonnets, but they fail to explain the nature of those connections with any certainty. Some maintain that the sonnets echo the existing play. If so, Shakespeare either reworked his own ideas into his poetry, or he copied the lines from another dramatist's play that he had intimate knowledge of, most likely through his acting in the play. Others believe that the writer of *Edward III* had seen Shakespeare's sonnets, possibly in manuscript form, and proceeded to incorporate admired lines into the play.<sup>114</sup> Without knowing the composition dates of the play or the individual sonnets, settling this question of source remains unlikely.

Those who still endeavor to resolve the matter of influence consider the appropriateness of an image or line within its immediate context. Two of the parallels most discussed appear in Sonnet 94 and Sonnet 142. George Steevens first identified Sonnet 94's "Lilies that fester, smell far worse than weeds" in *Edward III* in 1780.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Evans, *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 79.

<sup>114</sup> G. Harold Metz, *Sources of Four Plays Ascribed to Shakespeare* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1989), 25.

<sup>115</sup> George Steevens, *Supplement to the Edition of Shakespeare's Plays Published in 1778 by Samuel Johnson and George Steevens*, 2 vols. (London, 1780), 658.

Subsequent debate over the line's origin has been divided. Platt finds that intended use of the sonnet line does not work in the play. Warwick strings together several images meant to demonstrate to the Countess how evil or menacing things become worse when viewed against positive images of treasure or light. The image of lilies festering should be used in a way that shows how they only make an ugly hand appear uglier, which the image does not. Weeds do not appear worse for being placed beside the festering lilies.<sup>116</sup> Claes Schaar agrees with this reading, asserting that the "lilies" line adheres to the main idea of the sonnet: "the best and purest, if sullied, become more wretched than the basest thing."<sup>117</sup> He finds in the play, though, that the metaphor of festering lilies does not connect to the other metaphors in Warwick's speech. Both Platt and Schaar decide that the playwright consulted Shakespeare's sonnets in manuscript form when in need of an appropriate image or line. Their resolution accords with Swinburne's earlier presumption that the line in *Edward III* appears "more like a loan or a theft from Shakespeare's private store of undramatic poetry than a misapplication by its own author to dramatic purposes of a line too apt and exquisite to endure without injury the transference from its original setting."<sup>118</sup>

Melchiori disagrees and sees the line as logically fitting within Warwick's long speech on the corruption of authority. He also finds it significant that the line appears in

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<sup>116</sup> Platt, "'Edward III' and Shakespeare's Sonnets," 511-13.

<sup>117</sup> Schaar, C. *Elizabethan Sonnet Themes and The Dating of Shakespeare's "Sonnets,"* (Copenhagen: Lund, 1962), 25.

<sup>118</sup> Swinburne, *A Study of Shakespeare*, 258.

the portion of the play most commonly seen as Shakespearean.<sup>119</sup> Most important to Melchiori in this instance is the apparent critical disregard for what he sees as a second parallel to the play in line 12 of the same sonnet. “The basest weed” image appears in *Edward III*’s Act 2, Scene 1 as the king gives Lodowick examples of comparisons he could make between the Countess and the sun: “Bid her be free and general as the sunne, / Who smiles upon the basest weed that grows / As lovingly as on the fragrant rose” (2.1.163-5). Melchiori notes that while the images of the “basest weed” and “fragrant rose” were conventional for the day, they can be found in identical use only twice in Shakespeare’s known works (Sonnet 94, line 12 and Sonnet 95, line 2). The uniqueness of expression in the canon leads him to conclude that:

It is hardly likely that the author of *Edward III* should have borrowed freely expressions from different Shakespearian sonnets, putting them together in the current conceit on the indiscriminate generosity of the sun.

It is much more probable that Shakespeare, writing different sonnets, remembered passages of a play which he knew, and more particularly the scenes that he either wrote himself or revised.<sup>120</sup>

Chambers concurs with Melchiori. Although he finds general arguments over a line’s contextual appropriateness somewhat unconvincing, he believes that the “lilies that fester” repetition goes beyond coincidence or imitation. Chambers concludes that it is more reasonable to suppose that Shakespeare employed his own line twice, once for

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<sup>119</sup> Melchiori, *Shakespeare’s Dramatic Meditations*, 42-46.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 44-5.

public staging and once for private reading, than it is to assume that he plagiarized from another writer's play.<sup>121</sup>

Sonnet 142 also figures prominently in the discussion of parallel readings. In 1790, Malone observed that the phrase, "their scarlet ornaments" appears in both the sonnet and in *Edward III* (2.1.10).<sup>122</sup> Like discussions of Sonnet 94, thoughts on the most appropriate use of the parallel line differ. Platt suggests an incorrect transfer of meaning from the phrase in Sonnet 142 to the play. He believes that the ornaments in the sonnet refer to the scarlet wax with which bonds were sealed.<sup>123</sup> Alternative readings of the "ornaments" image include "blushing cheeks," the "red robe" worn by officials in Elizabethan England, and the lover's kisses.<sup>124</sup> Any of the three readings speak to Platt's assumption that the images are misconstrued in the play where the ornaments in question are applied to King Edward's blushing cheeks. Robertson's idea conflicts with Platt's. Robertson assumes that the "cheeks" form of the image must have preceded the sonnet's "lips" form, an image, he says, "which no man could have struck out as an original idea."<sup>125</sup> Schaar disagrees with both arguments by asserting that "scarlet ornaments"

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<sup>121</sup> Chambers, *A Study of Facts and Problems*, 517.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>123</sup> Platt, "'Edward III' and Shakespeare's Sonnets," 511-13.

<sup>124</sup> Schaar, *Elizabethan Sonnet Themes*, 123. Chambers, *Study of Facts and Problems*, 517. Schaar recounts James Fort's (1929) reading of blushing cheeks and T. W. Herbert's (1955) reading of the official robes. Chambers makes the connection to "sealing lips."

<sup>125</sup> J. M. Robertson, *The Problems of the Shakespeare Sonnets*, (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1926), 155-56.

commonly signified both the lips and cheeks in the period.<sup>126</sup> Given that the image existed in various forms in other published works, Schaar proposes that resolving the issue of original use between the sonnets and *Edward III* relies on an examination of the appropriateness of the image in both instances. He asserts that the image “has its full force and meaning only in the sonnet.”<sup>127</sup> He calls the use of “scarlet ornaments” in the play a misnomer that lacks significance. Therefore, Schaar decides that the author of *Edward III* haphazardly affixed the sonnet image to the weak description of the king.

The inability of scholars to agree upon questions of influence or imitation undermines the certainty of any conclusion drawn by parallel reading studies. For those who endorse a Shakespearean attribution, though, these inquiries strengthen their arguments. Osterberg cites that, with the exception of *The Rape of Lucrece*, the bulk of Shakespeare’s undoubted works were not available in print at the probable date of *Edward III*’s composition.<sup>128</sup> It follows then that *Edward III* existed as the source of most of the parallel lines noted in Shakespeare’s later works, meaning that Shakespeare either borrowed from the playwright of the early history repeatedly or he often revised his own earlier images in later works. Regardless of uncertainties, scholars who believe in Shakespeare’s authorship of *Edward III* believe that parallel readings stand as proof for their argument. Collier summarizes this position, saying, “These are not fancied, or far-

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<sup>126</sup> Schaar, *Elizabethan Sonnet Themes*, 123. Schaar notes two instances of “scarlet ornaments” standing for cheeks: Constable’s *Diana* (3.3.4, 9) and Sidney’s *Astrophil and Stella* (LXXIII, 2). He finds the image representing cheeks in *Romeo and Juliet* (2.5.70).

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Osterberg, “The ‘Countess Scenes’,” 54.

fetches resemblances of style or language: it is not imitation, it is identity: no two authors could have hit so exactly upon the same thoughts, and expressed them in the same words.”<sup>129</sup>

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The third school of thought contests the claim of sole authorship and advances the idea of Shakespeare as partial contributor to the writing of *Edward III*. These critics concede that the play displays imagery and expression characteristic of Shakespeare. But they point to the absence of structural unity as reason to reject Shakespeare as the sole author, and frequently detect a marked unevenness in dramatic and poetic quality between the Countess scenes and the rest of the *Edward III* which would suggest Shakespeare as collaborator or as reviser of an earlier work. Critics who argue in favor of dual authorship include: A. W. Ward, Proudfoot, Muir, Osterberg, Melchiori and E. K. Chambers.<sup>130</sup> Their discussions tend to assign the portions of the play distinguished by relatively greater dramatic merit to his hand.

To many scholars, the subject-matter and treatment of the Countess scenes varies too starkly from the main military episodes for both to be accepted as the work of one author. Ward explains that opponents of Shakespearean attribution maintain that the playwright would have forbidden the interruption of the main story's action with the

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<sup>129</sup> Collier, *King Edward the Third*, xii.

<sup>130</sup> Other critics who endorse the theory of Shakespeare's collaboration on the play include: Campbell, Fleay, Tennyson, Ward, Moorman, Chambers, Muir, Osterberg, Kozlenko, Koskenniemi, and Dobson.

unconnected wooing scenes.<sup>131</sup> Yet Ward and others demonstrate that the two portions of the drama connect in subtle ways. Ward finds that the dramatist links the two plots by continually infusing discussion about, and glimpses of, battle preparations into the moments when Edward III appears completely engrossed in his adulterous pursuits. As evidence for this theory, he highlights instances in Act 2, Scene 2, particularly when Derby and Audley update the king on the assembly of the English forces and the Emperor's favor on Edward's cause, and the arrival of the Black Prince, which inspires Edward to recover his priorities. When the king calls out, "Give me an armor of eternal steel: / I go to conquer kings" (2.2.97-8), the audience recognizes that his loss of focus will be temporary.

Proudfoot observes that "The alternation of love and war in scenes [2] ii and iii cannot continue in the later scenes in France, but tone and pace are still carefully varied."<sup>132</sup> Without the continued presence of the Countess, the playwright must find other ways to connect the two plots. Proudfoot notes a link that shows King Edward's growth into a capable and deserving ruler. Twice in the play gates open to six men. Once, before Roxburgh Castle, six diseased, infirm, or lame Frenchmen spill forth, purged from within in a captain's attempt to save rations. Rather than execute the men as retribution for their enemy's refusal of a truce, King Edward shows mercy, ordering Derby to relieve the men of their suffering with gifts of food and five crowns each (4.2.5-32). At the

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<sup>131</sup> A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller, eds., *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), 275.

<sup>132</sup> Proudfoot, "*The Reign of King Edward the Third*," 154.

second gate scene, during the siege of Calais, six citizens surrender to the king's demands and emerge from the town wearing only their shirts and halters around their necks in hopes of securing the sovereign's mercy. Initially deaf to their pleas, Edward III listens to Queen Philippe sue for the citizens' lives and yields to her. He calls out, "Yet, insomuch it shall be known that we / As well can master our affections / As conquer other by the dint of the sword" (5.1.50-2). Proudfoot sees the two gate scenes as tied to the Countess episode through a contrast of "the earlier treachery of the king's assault on a loyal subject and his final magnanimity towards defenceless enemies."<sup>133</sup> The greater thematic link between the gate and Countess scenes hinges on Edward III's growth. In all three incidents, the king masters his initial impulse toward malevolence in favor of graciousness.

Seeing the Countess scenes' influence on the characters and morality within the play slightly differently, Muir establishes the ways in which the playwright (or playwrights) develops ideas of honor.<sup>134</sup> The Countess of Salisbury stands as an emblem of honor in marriage. Faced with the prospect of betraying her husband in order to fulfill her obligation to her sovereign, she proposes suicide as a way to remain true to both her roles as wife and subject. Her devotion to virtue reforms the king's base behavior (2.2.171-88). In Act 4, Scenes 1 and 3, Villiers, a prisoner of war, promises his captor, Salisbury, that he will return to his hold if he cannot procure a passport for Salisbury from Charles, the Duke of Normandy. When Charles refuses that safe passage, Villiers

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<sup>133</sup> Proudfoot, "*The Reign of King Edward the Third*," 154.

<sup>134</sup> Muir, *Shakespeare as Collaborator*, 47-48.

refuses to violate his oath and readies himself for his return to captivity. Charles questions where Villiers's allegiance should fall first, to his oath to an enemy or to his prince. Like the Countess, Villiers offers an argument that precludes betrayal either of his word or his ruler. He allows that he must be obedient to Charles only, "In all things that uprightly he commands" and instructs the duke that, "Either to persuade or threaten me / Not to perform the covenant of my word / Is lawless, and I need not to obey" (4.3.31-4). Enlightened by his soldier's moral steadfastness, Charles grants Salisbury's passport and promises Villiers his unending favor. Charles's shout of, "Stay, my Villiers! Thine honorable mind / Deserves to be eternally admir'd" (4.3.45-6) echoes King Edward's praise of the Countess of Salisbury in which he proclaims, "Arise, true English lady. . . . Arise, and be my fault thy honor's fame, / Which after-ages shall enrich thee with" (2.2.193, 197-8). As Muir points out, in both scenes, "one's obedience to a prince is limited by the over-riding moral law."<sup>135</sup>

Despite acknowledging these kinds of thematic connections between the two plots, Ward and Muir conclude that Shakespeare revised an existing play. They agree that Shakespeare, facing demands of the stage, hastily rewrote individual scenes and left others almost completely untouched.<sup>136</sup> Osterberg agrees, claiming that at some point shortly before or after the theatres reopened in 1594, Shakespeare's acting company acquired the rights to the play and tasked him with improving it. He suggests that Shakespeare inherited a flawed play written in collaboration by several authors, possibly

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<sup>135</sup> Muir, *Shakespeare as Collaborator*, 48.

<sup>136</sup> A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller, eds. *The Cambridge History of English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), 276; Muir, *Shakespeare as Collaborator*, 30.

Marlowe, Kyd, and Greene.<sup>137</sup> Collier, who believes Shakespeare to be the author of *Edward III*, brings attention to the “not unusual practice of taking up some older drama, on the same popular subject, and of adding to it and strengthening it by the erasure of whole acts, scenes, prominent passages, and by the insertion of substitutions from his own abundant stores of thought and invention.”<sup>138</sup> Shakespeare’s known engagement in this “not unusual practice” may fortify the theory of dual authorship rather than one of Shakespeare’s lone hand. Brooke suggests that certain noteworthy passages in the apocryphal plays illustrate the hurried influence of Shakespeare’s hand, but that his canonical works “would not naturally, and do not, include his slight or casual revisionary labours.”<sup>139</sup>

Melchiori disagrees with Brooke’s argument and proposes that a dramatist does not need to be the original plotter of the play to have the work included in his canon. He offers the three parts of *Henry VI* as examples of received Shakespearean texts considered to be collaborations.<sup>140</sup> In collaborative work, the plotter provided the guidelines of a play by selecting and framing historical source material for staging. Melchiori argues that the plotter could not be considered the author of the play. He reserves that distinction for the writer who dressed the model. He writes: “In a way, the later revisers of the books, responsible for substantial additions and changes that gave the

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<sup>137</sup> Osterberg, “The ‘Countess Scenes’,” 90; Metz, *Sources of Four Plays*, 6. Osterberg and Metz add Peele and Lodge to the list of possible collaborators.

<sup>138</sup> Collier, *King Edward the Third*, vii.

<sup>139</sup> Brooke, *The Shakespeare Apocrypha*, xiii.

<sup>140</sup> Melchiori, *King Edward III*, 14.

texts their final shape, have a stronger claim to authorship than the devisers of the original treatment.”<sup>141</sup> Warning against the assumption that dual authorship denotes simple collaboration between only two playwrights or the basic revision of one author’s work by another, Melchiori suggests that *Edward III* exists as a product of a collaboration of multiple authors later revised by Shakespeare.

In his study of the facts and problems associated with Shakespeare’s works, Chambers also describes the complicated system of collaboration in the Elizabethan theatre. He establishes that the division of labor did not follow one procedure without fail, noting that after the dramatists agreed upon a play’s outline, writers divided the work either by acts and scenes, plot and sub-plot, characters, or themes. Chambers finds that “There is no evidence at all for anything of the nature of a line-by-line collaboration, which certainly would not have made for expedition.”<sup>142</sup> Taking into account what he calls the “rough-and-ready” approach, which divided writing tasks by act or scene, Chambers endorses a belief in Shakespeare’s collaboration on *Edward III*. Based on his sense that the quality of writing in the portion between Act 1, Scene 2, line 94 until the end of Act 2 surpasses the remainder of the play and his subsequent investigation of diction, he finds that Shakespeare’s influence can be seen.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Melchiori, *King Edward III*, 14.

<sup>142</sup> Chambers, *A Study of Facts and Problems*, 210-11.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 516. Chambers’s systematic examination of word endings shows that twelve percent of the words in the Countess scenes have feminine endings. Act 4, Scene 4, the second portion of the play commonly attributed to Shakespeare, includes a similarly high percentage of such word endings.

Numerous studies exist that espouse the theory of dual authorship through revision or collaboration. The greatest portion of critical support attributes the entirety of the Countess of Salisbury episode and Act 4, Scene 4 to Shakespeare. The reasons for those attributions vary, but consensus finds differences in these portions' "general style, poetic power, versification, linguistic elements, and characterization" that resemble those of Shakespeare's later, undoubted works.<sup>144</sup>

Wells and Taylor suggest that Shakespeare, like any young playwright in the late 1580s to early 1590s, would have had difficulty earning a reputation in the theatre without the opportunity for collaboration. Therefore they believe that Shakespeare engaged in the practice.<sup>145</sup> Evidence within Shakespeare's early and late works proves that he collaborated with various established and upstart dramatists during his career. His willingness to contribute to the collective creation of plays, however, cannot establish Shakespeare's authorship of *Edward III*.

For more than two centuries scholars have sought the answer to the attribution question through scrutiny of all the available internal and external evidence. Certainly the trend of critical theory, with examinations of the play's vocabulary and imagery, inclines toward accepting Shakespeare's involvement to some degree. Yet without additional concrete evidence of *Edward III*'s date of composition or acting company, the question of authorship is likely to remain open.

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<sup>144</sup> Metz, *Sources of Four Plays*, 6-8. Metz summarizes various studies which favor a Shakespearean attribution, including those of: Fleay, Halliwell-Phillips, Moore Smith, Brandes, Ward, Schelling, and Moorman.

<sup>145</sup> Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 73.

## CHAPTER TWO

## SOURCE TO STAGE: MANUFACTURING DRAMATIC EFFECT

While studies of *Edward III* have primarily focused on questions of authorship, dating, and performance, relatively few have considered the playwright's use of source material. Scholars who have studied the play's sources have reached near consensus on the identification of individual works' drawn from, but have paid relatively little attention to the ways in which the playwright manipulates his historical and literary source materials. Even Melchiori's edition of *Edward III*, which supplies a thorough identification of the playwright's deviation from his sources, offers scant discussion of the effects those changes produce on stage. The bulk of source studies instead have attempted to answer the question of primary influence. The endeavor has provided more conflicting theories than authoritative conclusions. Nevertheless the sources of *Edward III* merit further attention since they reveal the way the dramatist integrated them and so fashioned them into the play. Examining that use of source material in more detail than previous studies have done can move scholarship of *Edward III* away from centuries' old preoccupations with the play's date and authorship toward serious analysis of its dramatic impact in the Elizabethan theatre.

In 1760, Edward Capell first identified the sources of *Edward III* as Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1587) and William Painter's book of

novels, *The Palace of Pleasure* (1566).<sup>1</sup> His conclusion remained unchallenged for nearly ninety years until Charles Knight agreed that the playwright followed Painter's novel when plotting the Countess of Salisbury-King Edward III episode (1.2-2.2) but argued for Froissart's *Chroniques* as the play's main source.<sup>2</sup> In the critical history that has followed, scholars have debated the extent to which the playwright combined pieces of Holinshed, Painter, and Froissart to create a dramatic rendering of *Edward III*.

While consensus has not been reached on whether the dramatist primarily consulted Froissart or Holinshed for the political portions of the play, most critics accept Painter's novel as the principal source for the Countess-King scenes. Holinshed's English chronicle mentions the Countess of Salisbury only in a passing reference as allegedly being the woman who dropped the garter that King Edward used as a token when creating his Order of the Garter.<sup>3</sup> Froissart gives a longer account of the king's acquaintance with the Countess than Holinshed, but provides only the framework for the play's rendering of the episode. In Froissart, as in the play, King Edward travels to Roxborough Castle to defend the Earl of Salisbury's home and wife against the warring Scots. He instantly falls in love with the Countess for her unsurpassed beauty and nobility. Froissart briefly details the king's pained internal deliberation over whether he should honor Salisbury's loyalty and the Countess's chastity or gratify his physical

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<sup>1</sup> Capell, *Prolusions*, x.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Knight, *Studies of Shakespeare* (London: Charles Knight, 1849), 280.

<sup>3</sup> Raphael Holinshed, *Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, vol. 2 (London: J. Johnson, F. C. and J. Rivington; T. Payne; Wilkie and Robinson; Longman; Hurst; Rees and Orme; Cadell and Davies; and J. Mawman, 1807), 629.

desire. The dilemma is short-lived in Froissart as the Countess calmly reprimands her sovereign for his base intentions and tells him that she will do him service only that honors them both. Edward III instantly accepts her chastisement before he “depart[s] all abashed.”<sup>4</sup>

In *Edward III*, the king’s languishing over the Countess receives greater treatment. For the more dramatic details in this instance, scholars agree that the playwright consulted novel forty-six in Painter’s collection. Painter’s work was itself a translation of the story he found printed in Boistreau’s French translation (1559) of Bandello’s Italian novella. Bandello’s version of the story (1554) provides the messenger that delivers the king’s love letter to the Countess. The playwright transforms the messenger into Edward III’s secretary, Lodowick.<sup>5</sup> The exchanges between Lodowick and Edward III infuse what some see as the only comic moments in the play while providing the audience a longer, more intriguing view of the king as a man compromised by lovesickness. In his adaptation of the episode, Painter invents a more involved role for the Countess’s father who must honor the king’s command and unwillingly aid in the immoral pursuit of his daughter.<sup>6</sup> In Painter’s translation, the Countess’s father delivers a harsher rebuke of the king’s morals and intentions than Warwick does in the play. Whereas Painter’s character chastises his ruler at length for his disregard of his subject’s

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<sup>4</sup> Jean Froissart, *The Chronicles of Froissart*, trans. John Bouchier, Lord Berners, ed. G. C. Macaulay (London: Macmillan and Co., 1895), 74.

<sup>5</sup> Metz, *Sources of Four Plays Ascribed to Shakespeare*, 21.

<sup>6</sup> Lapidés, *The Raigne of King Edward the Third*, 42.

loyalty and good service, in *Edward III* Warwick simply laments his task.<sup>7</sup> He emphasizes that his charge is a “detestable office,” (2.1.347) but refrains from deriding the king who burdened him with it. Instead, the playwright reserves for the Countess of Salisbury the right to ridicule the king, whom she calls a “corrupted judge” and “lascivious king” (2.2.163, 178).

*Edward III* also deviates from Painter’s novel concerning the resolution of the king’s lustful advances. In Painter, after the Countess’s mother attempts to convince her to submit to the king’s will to avoid retaliation, the Countess throws herself at Edward’s feet, begging him to kill her rather than compromise her honor.<sup>8</sup> In *Edward III*, the Countess stands resolute against her lord’s advances. Rather than accept Edward’s late offer of marriage as she does in Painter, the play’s Countess defiantly arms herself with her wedding knives and threatens to cut out her own heart before satisfying his desires (2.2.171-188). Confronting the king’s depravity with her own steadfastness, she elevates the dramatic intensity of the scene. Through this unrelenting defense of morality, she simultaneously establishes herself as a “true English lady” (2.2.193) and educates Edward III in ways that allow him to become a noble English king. Scholars agree that Painter’s version of the Countess episode provides the development of scene and character not found in either Froissart or Holinshed, and thus must be considered a source for *Edward III*.

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<sup>7</sup> William Painter, “*Palace of Pleasure* (1575 edition): The Countesse of Salesburie” in *Sources of Four Plays Ascribed to Shakespeare*, ed. G. Harold Metz (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1989), 118-20.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 125-26, 128-29.

Painter's influence on the play extended only to its love scenes. For treatment of the political scenes, the playwright consulted Froissart and Holinshed. Critics often show evidence to suggest the playwright's combined use of the two works in the scenes, which again raises questions of identifying the play's primary source. Warnke and Proescholdt propose that the dramatist chiefly consulted Holinshed for the political material.<sup>9</sup> They show twenty-five instances in which details, actions, or dialogue found in *Edward III* can be traced directly to Holinshed.<sup>10</sup> G. C. Moore Smith, C. F. Tucker Brooke, W. A. Armstrong, and Irving Ribner agree that the dramatist chiefly consulted Holinshed to depict the king's military conquests, but also occasionally drew from Froissart for battle details and from Painter for the Countess episode.<sup>11</sup>

Those who identify Holinshed as the play's main source note that, while *Edward III* contains events and depictions similar to those in other sources, two significant moments exclusive to Holinshed indicate the dramatist's primary use of the *Chronicles*. In Act 1, Scene 2, as the Countess of Salisbury recognizes the imminent arrival of the king's retinue, she ridicules the cowardly retreat of the Scots from Roxborough Castle. R. L. Armstrong observes that this moment, the first to indicate the Countess's fearless nature, does not appear in Painter or Froissart. Only Holinshed, in his *Chronicles of Scotland*, describes a scene in which another countess, the Scottish Countess of March,

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<sup>9</sup> Warnke and Proescholdt, *Pseudo-Shakespearian Plays*, x. Warnke and Proescholdt acknowledge that the playwright also consulted Painter's *Palace of Pleasure* and possibly another minor source for "scenes in which Villiers plays the principal part (4.1.19-43, 4.3.1-56)."

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, x-xxi.

<sup>11</sup> C. F. Tucker Brooke, *The Shakespeare Apocrypha*, xx; Irving Ribner, *The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 147-48.

mocks an English army approaching her Dunbar Castle.<sup>12</sup> The playwright's reversing of roles in order to exalt the puissance of the English king and the boldness of his subjects strengthens the patriotic sentiment within *Edward III*.

Armstrong locates a second moment exclusive to the *Chronicles* which serves a similar purpose. Holinshed describes the resourcefulness of the English archers who, after depleting their stores of arrows in the Battle of Poitiers, succeed in repelling their enemy by heaving stones at the approaching French forces.<sup>13</sup> The dramatist again extols the power of an undersized English army through the French Prince Philip's description of his country's defeat at Poitiers. Philip cries to his father, King John:

Pluck out your eyes and see not this day's shame!

An arm hath beat an army: one poor David

Hath with a stone foil'd twenty stout Goliahs [sic].

Some twenty naked starvelings with small flints

Hath driven back a puissant host of men

Array'd and fenced in all accomplishments. (4.7.17-22)

Such moments lead Armstrong and others to prefer Holinshed as the primary influence on the playwright's rendering of Edward III's military prowess. Proudfoot suggests that the "tone of the play's portrayal of King Edward and the Black Prince is closer to the

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<sup>12</sup> R. L. Armstrong and E. B. Everitt, eds., *Six Early Plays Related to the Shakespeare Canon* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1965), 195-97, 241.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

sanctimonious English jingoism of Holinshed and Stow than to the chivalrous generosity of Froissart, a writer of broad and international sympathies.”<sup>14</sup>

Those who downplay Holinshed’s influence on *Edward III* often rely on Robert M. Smith’s conclusion that Froissart’s *Chroniques* is the principal source of the play because Holinshed includes nothing in his work that is not more fully developed in Froissart.<sup>15</sup> To demonstrate his theory, Smith analyzes individual scenes to connect specific moments in the play to Berners’s translation of Froissart’s *Chroniques*.<sup>16</sup> Smith argues that the author of *Edward III* consulted Berners’s English translation of Froissart’s first version of *Chroniques* because it portrayed “the Battles of Crécy and Poitiers with a spirit and sympathy thoroughly English and gave the English people the first worthy narratives of their illustrious past.”<sup>17</sup> In addition, only in Berners’s translation does Smith find the basis for the play’s Villiers-Salisbury episode. Berners’s Froissart relates the same story of an Englishman seeking safe passport across French lands as does the author of *Edward III*, but recognizes that Englishman as Sir Gaultier of Manny, not the Earl of

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<sup>14</sup> Proudfoot, “*The Reign of King Edward the Third*,” 146-47. Proudfoot briefly notes that the playwright may also have consulted John Stow’s chronicles. He bases this claim on the appearance of a detail in *Edward III* that recalls the emperor’s sanctioning of the English king’s claim on the French crown. According to Proudfoot, only Stow notes that the emperor appointed Edward III lieutenant-general of the Empire.

<sup>15</sup> Smith, *Froissart and the English Chronicle Play*, 68. Wentersdorf, Muir, Chambers, R. L. Armstrong, and Tillyard either reference Smith’s work directly or show acceptance of his position by asserting the same idea without further discussion.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 70-92.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

Salisbury, and identifies the Frenchman as an unknown knight of Normandy.<sup>18</sup> The episode, crucial to the theme of honoring oaths in the play, does not appear in Holinshed, thus leading Smith to declare Berners's Froissart to be the playwright's primary source. Lapidès concurs with Smith, citing several instances from the play that appear in Froissart, not Holinshed. Those moments include the Scottish siege of Roxborough Castle (1.2.1-72; Froissart Chapter LXXVI, 73), the king's love for the Countess (1.2-2.2; Froissart Chapter LXXVII, 73), the assault on Newcastle (1.1.28; Froissart, Chapter LXXIV, 73), and the Villiers-Salisbury episode (4.3; Froissart, Chapter CXXXV, 108).<sup>19</sup>

In essence, Smith's acknowledgement of Painter's novel as a minor source for *Edward III* reinforces his claim for Froissart's primary influence. He argues that Froissart heard accounts of the Countess's refusal of the king's advances during a visit to Edward III's court in 1361. Though the story had appeared earlier, in Jean le Bel's French chronicle, the *Chronique de Jean le Bel*, Smith suggests that the recent death of the Countess would have renewed interest in her legend, making it popular enough within the court to intrigue Froissart.<sup>20</sup> The chronicler then incorporated and magnified le Bel's original story in his prose history of England, also begun in 1361.

Froissart varied his version of the Countess of Salisbury story from Le Bel's longer, more sinister account in which the king, being enamored with the Countess, sends her husband into combat in order to be alone with her. According to le Bel, after being

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<sup>18</sup> Smith, *Froissart and the English Chronicle Play*, 22.

<sup>19</sup> Lapidès, *The Raigne of King Edward the Third*, 42. Lapidès also charts seventeen scenes within the play in which the dramatist draws directly from Froissart.

<sup>20</sup> Smith, *Froissart and the English Chronicle Play*, 63.

denied by the Countess, Edward III rapes her behind the locked door of her chamber where his men and her ladies-in-waiting could not stop him. Leaving her bloody and bruised, Edward III rides away from her castle in the morning.<sup>21</sup> Believing le Bel's story to be a fabrication, Froissart eliminates the rape entirely from his chronicle. In *Chroniques*, Froissart explains his omission, writing:

Now, I declare that I know England well, where I have lived for long periods mainly at the royal court and also with the great lords of that country. And I have never heard tell of this rape although I have asked people about it who must have known if it had ever happened. Moreover, I cannot believe and it is incredible that so great and valiant a man as the king of England would have allowed himself to dishonour one of the most noble ladies of his realm and one of his knights who had served him so loyally all his life.<sup>22</sup>

Modern scholars tend to agree with Froissart's rejection of le Bel's rendering and find the original fraught with inaccuracies.<sup>23</sup> Antonia Gransden views le Bel's rape story as indicative of the propaganda that flourished during the Hundred Years' War. She suggests that the rape rumor began in French circles as a way to disgrace Edward III. Le

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<sup>21</sup> Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England II c. 1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1996), 89.

<sup>22</sup> Antonia Gransden, "The Alleged Rape by Edward III of the Countess of Salisbury," *The English Historical Review*, 87, no. 343 (April, 1972), 335-34. Gransden includes this excerpt from Jean Froissart, *Chroniques de Jean Froissart*, eds., S. Luce, G. Raynaud and L. and A. Mirot (Paris: Société de l'histoire de France, 1869-1966), 340-42.

<sup>23</sup> Gransden, "The Alleged Rape," 340. Gransden outlines five specific instances in which le Bel's rendering of events is inaccurate.

Bel heard the story in the French court, assumed it to be true and included it in his otherwise sympathetic account of Edward III's reign. Froissart's elimination of the story may restore historical accuracy, but it also protects the English perception of the king.

Froissart's desire to portray Edward III positively is expected given the chronicler's connection to the king's court. From 1361-69 Froissart lived at court, working as Queen Philippa's poet and secretary. The queen first encouraged Froissart to write a chronicle of the wars between England and France and funded his subsequent trips to Scotland and France to gather firsthand accounts of the battles for that purpose.<sup>24</sup> Unsurprisingly, Froissart represents the queen's husband favorably throughout his chronicle.

Bandello extracted the Countess episode from Froissart, embellishing details to satisfy his Italian audience. He augmented the story by adding elements such as the king's messenger, the king's love letter to the Countess, the complicated roles of the Countess's parents, King Edward's murder of the Countess's husband, her plea for the king to murder her, and the king's subsequent accepted proposal of marriage. In translating Bandello, Boisteanu carried over many of the elements which intensify the drama of the episode.

Painter then translated the story from Boisteanu's *Histories Tragiques* into his own *Palace of Pleasure* where he names the Countess's father as the Earl of Warwick and transforms the Countess from a "silly lady" to a formidable woman.<sup>25</sup> Painter generally

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<sup>24</sup> Smith, *Froissart and the English Chronicle Play*, 6-7.

<sup>25</sup> Metz, *Sources of Four Plays*, 21. Melchiori, *King Edward III*, 184.

follows Froissart's rendition of the Countess of Salisbury story, but concludes his version with the king's marriage proposal.

Smith, therefore, shows that although three times amended from its original source, the basis for Painter's story in novel forty-six comes from Froissart's court version. *Edward III's* playwright indeed follows in the tradition of Froissart and Painter, allowing Edward III to emerge from the episode reformed and refocused. In this instance and others, the author of *Edward III* seems to put forth a kind of English propaganda in which the king of England appears as a noble man and victorious ruler.

In addition to defining an image of the ideal Christian king, the playwright's liberal use of the source enhances his play's theatrical effectiveness. Some alterations affect the play as a whole. Armstrong notes the author's merging of two French kings' reigns as such an instance.<sup>26</sup> In the play, Philip VI does not appear, although he ruled France from 1328-50, a reign which included the Battle of Sluys, the Battle of Crécy, and the siege of Calais. Instead King John leads France on stage from the outset. Without needing to contemplate the differences between King Philip VI and King John's reigns, the playgoer can focus on the differences between England and its enemy. Metz shows that the dramatist also manipulates time, a manipulation characteristic of many Elizabethan history plays. Historically, the battles of Sluys, Crécy, and Poitiers occurred over a ten year period, not in successive weeks as the play suggests. This "telescoping of time" between military events sharpens focus on Edward III's military prowess,

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<sup>26</sup> Armstrong, *Six Early Plays*, 197.

reminding the audience of the king's importance in English history.<sup>27</sup> Metz also notes that the playwright elevates the rank of certain characters in order to make their triumphs or defeats seem more significant to the audience.<sup>28</sup>

Such choices that the dramatist makes to construct his desired portrait of Edward III resemble those made previously by the authors of the play's source materials such as Painter's modified portrayal of the alleged historical episode that derived its storyline from Froissart's account.

From the close of the Countess episode, the dramatist continually enriches this portrait of Edward III by carefully selecting, omitting, or reworking details from his early wars with France which Froissart's *Chroniques* and Holinshed's *Chronicles* provide. The author's careful manipulation of source material solidifies the favorable image of Edward III in the Elizabethan mind while intensifying the impact of the play on the Elizabethan stage. The likelihood that audiences would be receptive to idealizing of English forces and monarchs was high in a post-Armada culture.

The playwright intentionally evokes memories of England's defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 in his dramatization of the Battle of Sluys. Wentersdorf finds clear separation of source and play in several key instances.<sup>29</sup> Froissart describes in detail the archers' feats and sailors' hand-to-hand combat at Sluys. Holinshed's more economical report follows Froissart in announcing a victory for the English navy. The dramatist

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<sup>27</sup> Metz, *Sources of Four Plays*, 36.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>29</sup> Karl Wentersdorf, "The Date of *Edward III*" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (1965): 227-31.

echoes the battle's outcome, but provides an anachronistic picture of cannons firing from English vessels, leaving French ships with "crannied cleftures of the through-shot planks" (3.1.164). Wentersdorf notes that the "echoing cannon shot" (3.1.123) could not have been heard by the French prince since, "It was not until the sixteenth century that naval cannons were sufficiently developed to be capable of inflicting the kind of damage described in *Edward III*."<sup>30</sup> He suggests that England's first naval battle of comparable scale to the fictionalized version of Sluys was fought against the Armada.

More specific battle details appearing in Act 3, Scene 1 suggest that the playwright drew from published accounts of the Armada defeat, not Froissart or Holinshed's story of Sluys, when plotting his staged battle. According to Froissart, as Edward III approached the French coastline in 1340, he "Set all his ships in order, the greatest before, well furnished with archers, and ever between two ships of archers he had one ship with men of arms; and then he made another battle to lie aloof with archers, to comfort ever them that were most weary, if need were."<sup>31</sup> The dramatist chooses instead to portray the English navy as "Majestical [in] the order of their course, / Figuring the horned circle of the moon" (3.1.71-72). The alteration calls up images of Spain's Armada advancing its attack on England in a half-moon formation.<sup>32</sup>

The playwright continues to connect his audience's contemporary experience to Edward III's conquest at Sluys by invoking the name of a famous Elizabethan ship for a

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<sup>30</sup> Wentersdorf, "The Date of *Edward III*," 228.

<sup>31</sup> Froissart, Chapter L, 61.

<sup>32</sup> Melchiori, *Edward III*, 108.

vessel in that fight. The chronicles name only one ship, the *Cristofer*, during their accounts of Sluys. Each refers to the great celebration made after the English recapture the *Cristofer*, one of Edward III's vessels which the French had seized a year before.<sup>33</sup> In *Edward III*, King John's messenger mentions a different ship, the *Nonpareille*, and praises its valiant efforts on the day (3.1.177). Wentersdorf points out that Petruccio Ulbadino repeatedly names one of Elizabeth I's vessels, the *Non Pariglia*, in his well-known account of the Spanish Armada's invasion.<sup>34</sup> The connection, likely satisfying to Elizabethan audiences, would have enhanced the play's overall patriotic appeal.

To illustrate the circumstances that led to England's victory at Sluys, the dramatist returns to Froissart and Holinshed. Both chroniclers explain that the king gains advantage by repositioning his ships from their original course so that the sun and wind fall on the English armada's back.<sup>35</sup> The playwright echoes the source material without following it verbatim. Edward III's historical decision to change course does not appear in the play. Only an allusion to the maneuver emerges when King John hears a retreat and cries out:

One side that the worse.

O, if it be the French, sweet Fortune, turn,

And in thy turning change the forward winds,

That, with advantage of a [favoring] sky,

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<sup>33</sup> Froissart, Chapter L, 61; Holinshed, 615.

<sup>34</sup> Wentersdorf, "The Date of *Edward III*," 229. Melchiori, *Edward III*, 28. Melchiori notes that in both quartos, the ship's name appears as "Nom per illa."

<sup>35</sup> Froissart, Chapter L, 62; Holinshed, 614.

Our men may vanquish, and [the other] fly. (3.1.132-36)

The French king can only hope for what the chronicles show that Edward III accomplished. In both source and play, the French ships, blinded by sun and inhibited by headwinds, cannot escape the haven of Sluys, which leads to their overwhelming defeat, the first significant maritime triumph of Edward III's reign.

The theatrical rendering of the king's first military achievement introduces the idea that Edward III's advances on the French coast and crown are justified. During the Battle of Sluys, even the French mariner claims that the "sun, the wind, and tide" (3.1.180) choose to aid the English king. The playwright enlarges this vindication of Edward III's conquest in an invented scene on the countryside of Crécy. In Act 3, Scene 2, French citizens begin to flee their homeland after hearing of their navy's destruction at sea. While being chastised for his lack of faith in his country's ability to withstand England's assault, a French citizen responds, "But 'tis a rightful quarrel must prevail: / Edward is son unto our late king's sister, / Where John Valois is three degrees removed" (3.2.35-37). Historical accounts support this argument, detailing Edward III's possible claim on the French crown through his mother's Capetian bloodline. Though barred from assuming the crown herself by French Salic law, Queen Isabella asserts that her son, not his cousin Philip of Valois, is the most direct descendant of Charles IV and thus holds the rights to the French throne. As the playwright illustrates in the combining of the royal arms of England and France on the king's ships' banners (3.1.73-79), Edward III did

begin to call himself the King of England and France in 1340.<sup>36</sup> The citizen's speech in Act 3, Scene 2, like the conclusion of the Battle of Sluys, suggests to the audience that Edward III does indeed deserve the French crown. Through his rendering of Sluys and his development of subsequent battles in *Edward III*, the playwright repeatedly portrays Edward III as a more capable ruler than Philip VI.

In the next staged confrontation, the Battle of Crécy in 1346, the author reinforces the popular historical perceptions of Edward III and his son, the Black Prince. The dramatist augments or alters elements found in the chronicles' depictions of the two men to enhance their images as majestic rulers who possess great strength of both will and arms. Before the English meet the French forces in battle, King Edward calls the Black Prince to him. The king makes a ceremony of arming his son for his first battle, calling it an "ancient custom" (3.3.174). Edward III, the Earl of Derby, Lord Audley, and the Earl of Richmond (Robert Artois) equip the Black Prince with his armor, helmet, lance, and shield (3.3.179-203). The ceremony, not found in any of the play's accepted sources, serves a dramatic, rather than historical, purpose. Through the arming, Edward III and his lords create for the audience an inspiring image of the "unrelenting," "matchless," and "valiant," English soldier who will "conquer where [he] com'st" (3.3.181-84, 191, 197, 203).

During the play's version of Crécy, the Black Prince fulfills the expectation of the heroic English soldier. Three times Edward III's men unsuccessfully entreat the king to rescue the Black Prince from "the snares of the French," (3.5.28) on the battlefield. In

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<sup>36</sup> W. M. Ormrod, *The Reign of Edward III: Crown and Political Society in England, 1327-1377* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 10.

Froissart and Holinshed's versions of Crécy, Artois, Derby, and Audley do not repeatedly petition the king. Froissart's Black Prince joins the Earl of Warwick, the Earl of Oxford, and other knights in sending "a messenger to the king, who was on a little windmill hill" in hopes of procuring the king's aid.<sup>37</sup> In Holinshed, the Earl of Northampton and others petition the king on the prince's behalf. In both sources, after being denied once, the prince takes inspiration from Edward III's decision to allow the "journey to be his and the honour thereof."<sup>38</sup> By multiplying the appeals to the king, the playwright again heightens the dramatic tension on stage. With each new plea, the author promotes a growing sense of the prince's supposed desperation. That perception of impending doom followed by the discovery of the Black Prince's eventual victory over seemingly unconquerable odds plays upon the relief and national pride felt throughout England after the Armada victory.

Following that triumph, the prince approaches his father's company with his "shivered lance" and the dead body of the King of Bohemia. Neither Froissart nor Holinshed report that the prince slew Bohemia's king. The playwright aggrandizes the Black Prince's legend by fashioning a scene in which the prince, who sits "cropped and cut down even at the gate of death . . . [while] thousands had entrenched [him] round about," succeeds in taking a powerful king as the "first fruit" of his sword (3.5.71-74). Had the dramatist remained faithful to his sources, he would have shown a withered, yet fearless, King of Bohemia, who despite his age and blindness, commands his company to

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<sup>37</sup> Froissart, Chapter CXXX, 105.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

lead him into the battle so that he “may strike one stroke” upon his enemy.<sup>39</sup> Froissart and Holinshed similarly depict a scene in which Bohemia’s soldiers obey his command, taking care to tie their horses to their sovereign’s in order to safeguard him in the upcoming fray. Holinshed recounts:

. . . by the meanes aforesaid [the King of Bohemia] went so far forward, that ioining with his enimies he fought right valiantlie, and so did all his companie: but finallie being entred within the prease of their enimies, they were of them inclosed and slaine, together with the king their master, and the next daie found dead lieng about him, and their horses all tied ech to other.<sup>40</sup>

Presumably the playwright ignores the king’s infirmity, his courage, and his death at anonymous hands in order to enhance the earliest moments of the Black Prince’s legend. In the play, Prince Edward emerges from his first battle as a conqueror of a formidable king to stand as a symbol of England’s valor.

The immediate knighting of the Black Prince by his father after the Battle of Crécy is another scene which appears only in the play. In both Froissart and Holinshed, the reunion of father and son concludes quickly. The sources detail the king’s congratulations to his son for his perseverance and his acknowledgement that the Black Prince’s bravery make him “worthy to keep a realm,” after which the prince kneels

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<sup>39</sup> Froissart, Chapter CXXX, 105.

<sup>40</sup> Holinshed, 638.

before his father to honor him.<sup>41</sup> The playwright departs from his sources' depiction of Edward III immediately leading his son and their soldiers in prayers of thanksgiving to God for England's triumph. In Froissart and Holinshed, the English acknowledge and give credit to Heaven, "for so the king commanded, and willed no man to make anie boast of his owne power, but to ascribe all the praise to almightie God for such a noble victorie."<sup>42</sup> It is clear in the play that the Black Prince kneels in proud homage before his father on Earth, not in humble gratitude before his Father in Heaven. The play's praise falls upon the prince's immediate triumph and his knighting suggests the promise of England's future military successes.

Even Edward III's short remark of "Our God be praised," (3.5.99) comes after the primary focus of the Black Prince's knighting ceremony. That remark does not lead to the king's entreaty for his soldiers and lords to engage in prayerful thanks. Rather, Edward III turns his attention immediately to John of France, calling out to his absent enemy for him to acknowledge the true power of England's king and his soldiers. That power, according to the Black Prince, claimed "Eleven princes of esteem, fourscore barons, / A hundred and twenty knights, and thirty thousand / Common soldiers" (3.5.96-98), while the English forces only lost one thousand men. The dramatist here again manipulates the source material. Froissart and Holinshed both report numbers similar to those of the

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<sup>41</sup> Froissart, Chapter CXXXI, 106; Holinshed, 639.

<sup>42</sup> Holinshed, 639.

playwright, but in the chronicles, the Black Prince is not the herald of those figures.<sup>43</sup> The sources report the king sending Sir Raynold Cobham and Sir Richard Stafford out with three men to count the casualties on the Sunday following the battle.<sup>44</sup> The change from chronicles to the dramatic text stage is subtle, yet significant. Froissart and Holinshed describe a series of smaller engagements over two days between the English and French which result in additional French victims that the king's heralds count. In the play, the Black Prince's ability to report that same number of casualties on the same evening as the initial battle indicates the overwhelming English victory while implying its more impressive swiftness. In all features of the dramatized conclusion of the Battle of Crécy, the playwright aggrandizes the images of Edward III and the Black Prince in order to play to the contemporary English nationalistic fervor.

The dramatist continues to reshape his source material in his dramatization of King Edward's siege of Calais, albeit for a different purpose. Rather than continue to exalt Edward III's martial prowess, in Acts 4 and 5 the author develops the king's chivalric qualities. The shift of focus away from physical domination is clear. The playwright ignores the chronicles' records of specific numbers of enemies slain in England's battle against Scotland which occurred simultaneously with the siege of Calais. Froissart and Holinshed similarly report that England's assembly of "twelve hundred men of arms, three thousand archers, and seven thousand of other with the Welshmen" meets a

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<sup>43</sup> Melchiori, *King Edward III*, 132. Melchiori notes that the dramatist miscopied the number of knights slain in the Battle of Crécy. Froissart and Holinshed both record 1,200 knights, not 120.

<sup>44</sup> Froissart, Chapter CXXXII, 107; Holinshed, 640.

Scottish force of “three thousand men of arms, knights and squires, and a thirty thousand of other on hackneys” at Newcastle.<sup>45</sup> The outnumbered English army prevails, allegedly slaying fifteen thousand.<sup>46</sup> Such an overwhelming victory against impressive odds would fit with the dramatist’s celebrating of English power during the Battle of Crécy scenes. Yet the playwright omits the reiteration of Newcastle’s battle numbers and Scottish victims entirely, suggesting that England’s military prowess is of secondary concern to the playwright at this point.

When the author modifies the source materials’ treatments of the siege of Calais, he leaves off boasting of England’s physical power completely. In Froissart and Holinshed, after seeing the French town’s defenses, Edward III “would not assail the town of Calais, for he thought it but a lost labour: he spared his people and his artillery, and said how they would famish them in the town with long siege.”<sup>47</sup> In *Edward III* the king first appears in front of the gates of Calais addressing his unnamed soldier. He explains:

Since they refuse our proffered league, my lord,  
 And will not ope their gates and let us in,  
 We will entrench ourselves on every side,  
 That neither victuals, nor supply of men  
 May come to succor this accursed town:

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<sup>45</sup> Froissart, Chapter CXXXVII, 109-110; Holinshed, 644.

<sup>46</sup> Froissart, Chapter CXXXVII, 110; Holinshed, 644.

<sup>47</sup> Holinshed, 642; Froissart, Chapter CXXXIII, 108.

Famine shall combat where our swords are stopped. (4.2.1-6)

The prospect of starving a city's population for any duration suggests callousness, yet the dramatist makes it clear that audiences should see the king's actions as justified. In *Edward III* the king forces the famine on the city only after the citizens of Calais reject his proposed alliance. This rationalization departs from Froissart and Holinshed, neither of whom recalls King Edward generously extending his hand to Calais before the siege. The chronicles tie Edward III's decision only to his recognition of Calais's impenetrable defenses.<sup>48</sup> The playwright's invention of the offered league portrays the king as a careful strategist who punishes his foes only when diplomacy fails.

The suggestion that England will treat its enemies magnanimously until being betrayed or rebuffed by them appears earlier in *Edward III* as well. In Act 3, Scene 3, the Black Prince details his successful campaign across France. While reporting to his father on his seizure of Barfleur, Lô, Crotoy, and Carentan, and of his wasting of other French towns along his path, Prince Edward is plain: "Yet those that would submit we kindly pardoned, / For who in scorn refused our proffered peace / Endured the penalty of sharp revenge" (3.3.24-26). Here, as in the siege of Calais, England subdues its enemy to achieve its goals, but the playwright clearly accentuates a different facet of the king and his forces. In these moments of the play, emphasis rests on Edward III's command of an army civil enough to attempt to advance its agendas first through offers of peace, not one that annihilates its adversaries through unprovoked combat.

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<sup>48</sup> Froissart, Chapter CXXXIII, 108; Holinshed, 642.

The author continues to build the image of Edward III as a just man in the siege's opening moments. Here, when the king encounters six poor Frenchmen outside the wall of Calais, he learns that these "diseased, sick, and lame" men have been cast out of the city by their captain in order to save "the expense of victuals" (4.2.17-21).<sup>49</sup> Although Edward III cites his right to put the men to death for their town's rejection of England's offered truce, the king forfeits his claim on them after one of the poor men voluntarily submits to the king's will. Proving once again that "The lion scorns to touch the yielding prey," Edward III orders the Earl of Derby to relieve the men of their suffering by supplying them with food and "five crowns apiece" (4.2.30-33). The scene draws upon and enlarges the chronicles' portrayal of the events. In Froissart and Holinshed, the king learns the reason for the people's exile and takes pity on the castoffs without advancing his claim on their lives or procuring their submission to him.<sup>50</sup> The modification in *Edward III* suggests that the playwright wants to emphasize that the king's strategies, including the famishing of Calais, are not personal whims but conform to established and just codes of warfare.

Possibly the most telling example of the dramatist's intention to portray Edward III as a magnanimous sovereign who learned to reign according to right, not desire, appears in his treatment of the source material concerning the end of the siege of Calais. The play's resolution of the episode differs significantly from the chronicles in

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<sup>49</sup> Melchiori, *Edward III*, 136; In Froissart and Holinshed, 1700 people are cast out of Calais. Melchiori suggests that the playwright reduces the number to six to produce an analogy to the six burghers of Calais in 5.1.7-59.

<sup>50</sup> Froissart, Chapter CXXXIII, 108; Holinshed, 643.

meaningful ways. The historic accounts recall King Philip VI amassing an army to relieve Calais, but then abandoning the effort after finding that King Edward's newly forged alliance with the Flemings bars French passage through all routes of Flanders thus solidifying the English blockade of the city.<sup>51</sup> According to Froissart, perceiving that their hopes of aid from Philip VI are futile, the people of Calais send Sir John of Vienne to seek mercy from King Edward. Sir John beseeches Edward III's emissary, Sir Gaultier of Manny, to offer the king the town, including its castle and all its goods, in exchange for the peaceful release of Calais's citizens.<sup>52</sup> Sir Gaultier of Manny explains that the king would "ransom all such as pleaseth him and . . . put to death such as he list; for they of Calais hath done him such contraries and despites, and hath caused him to dispend so much good, and lost many of his men, that he is sore grieved against them."<sup>53</sup>

Presumably, the playwright omits the scene because Froissart emphasizes that it is the king's personal enmity toward the townspeople, not the rejection of a truce, which precipitates Edward III's declaration that "he would none otherwise but that they should yield them up simply to his pleasure."<sup>54</sup> Unlike the emotionally charged report in Froissart, the dramatist's king acts logically within established protocols. On stage, Edward III rejects the townspeople's offer of surrender, declaring: "Since they did refuse / Our princely clemency at first proclaimed, / They shall not have it now, although they

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<sup>51</sup> Froissart, Chapters CXLIV-CXLV, 114; Holinshed, 646.

<sup>52</sup> Froissart, Chapter CXLVI, 114.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Froissart, Chapter CXLVI, 114-15.

would” (4.2.69-71). Froissart recalls that Sir Gaultier reprimands King Edward for his pitiless handling of his yielding foe, suggesting that the king’s proposed course would set “an evil example” that could jeopardize English soldiers’ fates in similar moments of captivity.<sup>55</sup> In *Edward III*, no one questions the king’s instant rejection of Calais’s offer because the decision is logical and warranted. The subsequent bargain of exchanging the lives of six men of Calais for the freedom of the remaining townspeople comes then as an example of Edward III’s innate generous nobility, not as the coerced response to Sir Gaultier’s chastisement.

The author again minimizes the cruelty of Froissart’s depiction of Edward III’s treatment of the six surrendering enemies by inventing its justification. Froissart makes it clear in *Chroniques* that when the captain of Calais relinquishes six of his citizens to Sir Gaultier of Manny, he delivers the “most honourable, rich and most notable burgesses of all the town of Calais.”<sup>56</sup> Upon seeing these six men, “The king looked felly on them, for greatly he hated the people of Calais for the great damages and displeasures they had done him on the sea before. Then he commanded their heads to be stricken off.”<sup>57</sup> In Froissart, the king’s wrath at the people’s past transgressions, not the demands of the immediate conflict, fuel his judgment. In the play, however, Edward III commands the men’s beheadings after he perceives an insincere fulfillment of the bargain’s terms by the townspeople. Seeing the six men being ransomed, the king exclaims:

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<sup>55</sup> Froissart, Chapter CXLVI, 115.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Froissart, Chapter CXLVI, 115-16.

But I require the chiefest citizens  
 And men of most account should submit.  
 You, peradventure, are but servile grooms,  
 Or some felonious robbers on the sea,  
 Whom, apprehended, law would execute,  
 Albeit severity lay dead in us.  
 No, no, you cannot overreach us thus. (5.1.20-26)

This exclamation serves two purposes of subtle propaganda. By allowing the king to mistake the most notable men of Calais for common thieves and beggars, the playwright slyly promotes the belief in England's superiority over its enemies. The idea that the greatest men of Calais could compare only to English rabble accords with pro-English propaganda of Edward III's day and with nationalistic pride in Elizabethan England. More important, Edward III once again appears as a ruler who bases his actions on objective adherence to established codes or agreements.

The playwright's representation of the siege's final moments abandons the emotion so prevalent in the chronicles' accounts. In Froissart and Holinshed, upon seeing the six burgesses emerge from the gates of Calais "bare-headed, bare-footed, and bare-legged, and in their shirts, with halters about their necks, with the keys of the town and castle in their hands," English earls and barons weep for pity of them.<sup>58</sup> After hearing the king's condemnation of the men to death, Sir Gaultier of Manny launches a spirited appeal for his sovereign's reconsideration. Upon seeing that entreaty fail, Queen Philippa,

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<sup>58</sup> Froissart, Chapter CXLVI, 115-16; Holinshed, 648.

“being great with child,” kneels before her husband and weeps for the captives. According to the chronicles, her plea appeals to her husband’s love for her, not to her sovereign’s sense of fairness. In Froissart, she cries, “Sith I passed the sea in great peril, I have desired nothing of you; therefore now I humbly require you in this honour of the Son of the Virgin Mary and for the love of me that ye will take mercy of these six burgesses.”<sup>59</sup> Holinshed, omitting dialogue, describes that the sight of the pregnant queen kneeling before her husband “with lamentable cheere & weeping eies” mollifies Edward III’s anger.<sup>60</sup> Each chronicle records that the queen’s emotional display elicits the king’s mercy and secures the prisoners’ release into her custody.<sup>61</sup>

In *Edward III*, none of the king’s lords or soldiers shows remorse for the burgesses’ fate. Unlike the chronicles’ accounts, only Queen Philippa challenges the king’s ruling in the play, and she does so without emotion. Instead, the dramatist portrays the queen as putting forth a calm caution that echoes Sir Gaultier of Manny’s address found in Froissart.<sup>62</sup> Queen Philippa’s rational argument appeals to Edward III’s care for his reputation, suggesting that “It is a glorious thing to stablish peace, / And kings approach the nearest unto God / By giving life and safety unto men” (5.1.40-42). Without hesitation, Edward III grants the six men a reprieve, demonstrating to all that his powers of restraint match the might of his sword. Rationality, not emotion, prevails on

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<sup>59</sup> Froissart, Chapter CXLVI, 116.

<sup>60</sup> Holinshed, 648.

<sup>61</sup> Froissart, Chapter CXLVI, 116; Holinshed, 648.

<sup>62</sup> Froissart, Chapter CXLVI, 116.

stage, indicating that the early education the king received at the Countess's hands stands out, not as a temporary rebuke, but as a truly transforming moment. The Edward III of Poitiers rules himself before all others and reveals the just conscience of an ideal ruler.

Of the four battles dramatized in *Edward III*, the treatment of the Battle of Poitiers exhibits the playwright's greatest manipulation of his historical sources. Throughout his treatment of the battle, the dramatist uses fewer details from Froissart and Holinshed and invents a greater number of conversations, situations, and events than he does in other battle scenes. The play's divergence from its sources in this case suggests that the author is more interested in the dramatic effect of the work than in its strict historical accuracy.

A greater difference between Froissart's and Holinshed's treatments of the Battle of Poitiers exists as well. The chronicles consistently report basic facts of the conflict. Each counts the same number of armed men that England and France bring to the battlefield. The French divide into three battles of 16,000 men of arms each while the English force contain "two thousand men of armes, foure thousand archers, and fifteen hundred of others" all in one battle.<sup>63</sup> Holinshed follows Froissart's account of English archers fortifying hedges and bushes along the thoroughway to impede the French army's approach from reaching the Black Prince.<sup>64</sup> The two chronicles also agree that English soldiers took France's King John captive on the battlefield and claimed so many

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<sup>63</sup> Holinshed, 664; Froissart, Chapter CLIX, 119.

<sup>64</sup> Froissart, Chapter CLIX, 120-21; Holinshed, 664.

prisoners of war during the fight that they had to ransom the Frenchmen immediately.<sup>65</sup> Holinshed's chronicle sticks to the factual details in his concise description of the battle, whereas Froissart offers a fuller account.

Froissart includes a number of moments that lend themselves to a relatively more dramatic interpretation of the events. He writes of the Black Prince's readiness for combat after the Cardinal of Perigord's efforts to broker a peace treaty between the nations fail, suggesting that the prince's confidence soars because he believes that God will help the right.<sup>66</sup> Froissart emphasizes themes of oath-taking and oath-keeping in his account, as well. First, he remembers Audley's successful petition to the Black Prince that he be allowed to honor the vow he had made to become the "first setter-on and best combatant" in any battle that King Edward or his children fought.<sup>67</sup> Audley's demonstration of valor throughout Poitiers stands then as a testament to the good procured through honoring one's word. Froissart also shows the converse of Audley's loyalty to his vow when recalling the betrayal of the Cardinal of Perigord's men. According to Froissart's Black Prince, the Cardinal's men who joined King John's company after the peace treaty efforts failed violate the "right order of arms" which stipulate that "men of the church that cometh and goeth for treaty of peace ought not by reason to bear harness nor to fight for neither of the parties; they ought to be

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<sup>65</sup> Froissart, Chapter CLXIV, 128-30; Holinshed, 667.

<sup>66</sup> Froissart, Chapter, CLXI, 123

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., Chapter CLXII, 124.

indifferent.”<sup>68</sup> To show his displeasure with the Cardinal and his men, the Black Prince sends Perigord his nephew’s dead body which the prince had found lying dead in a bush after the battle.<sup>69</sup> In both instances, Froissart offers a more elaborate illustration than Holinshed does of the importance of oath fulfillment that the playwright plays upon in *Edward III*.

Froissart’s chronicle also develops the chivalric courtesy of the Black Prince and his company in ways that Holinshed does not. When recounting the capture of King John, Froissart details a scene in which the Earl of Warwick and Sir Cobham chide the English soldiers for their selfish bickering over the claim to the captive. Relieving the soldiers of their prisoner, Warwick and Cobham lead the French king courteously to the Black Prince’s tent. Upon seeing King John in his camp’s custody, the Black Prince approaches the king with great humility, and serves him in his tent with the respect due to a monarch. Whereas Holinshed simply shows that the Black Prince feasts the French king and speaks nobly to him, Froissart embellishes the moment. In *Chroniques*, the English prince will not begin to eat before King John does; nor will he agree to sit at the king’s table even when invited by the French monarch. Humbly he declines, saying that he is “not sufficient to sit at the table with so great a prince as the king.”<sup>70</sup> The modesty shown by the Black Prince in his great moment of triumph extends in Froissart’s account until the moment that he brings King John through the city of London in presentation to Edward

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<sup>68</sup> Froissart, Chapter CLXII, 125.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Froissart, Chapter CLXVIII, 131.

III. As Londoners line the streets to witness their countrymen's great triumph, the Black Prince does not lead his prisoner in a shaming manner. Instead he rides a "little black hobby," alongside King John who sits astride a "white courser well apparelled."<sup>71</sup> These moments of fair and noble treatment of one's conquered enemy, though not reproduced literally in *Edward III*, influence the playwright's concept of the ideal prince.

The portrait of the ideal English lord appears in the story of Audley's reward. Both Froissart and Holinshed recall that after the Battle of Poitiers's conclusion, the Black Prince learns that Lord Audley, who fought heroically to England's great benefit, "received in the battell manie sore wounds" and thus rewards him with 500 marks annually.<sup>72</sup> Froissart enlarges the moment, describing the Black Prince's inquiries after Audley's whereabouts and his promise to seek out the earl if the wounded man cannot be brought to him. Twice Audley expresses great humility at hearing of his prince's concern. First, he receives the news of the Black Prince's desire to see him saying, "I thank the prince when he thinketh on so poor a knight as I am." Later, upon hearing the prince's praise and the bestowal of his reward, the knight says, "If I have this day anything advanced myself to serve you and to accomplish the vow that I made, it ought not to be reputed to me any prowess. . . . God grant me to deserve the great goodness that ye shew me."<sup>73</sup> Holinshed streamlines Froissart's account, noting the reward but eliminating the personal meeting completely.

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<sup>71</sup> Froissart, Chapter CLXXIII, 134.

<sup>72</sup> Froissart, Chapter CLXVII, 130; Holinshed, 668.

<sup>73</sup> Froissart, Chapter CLXVI, 130.

Each chronicle shows Audley generously turning over his reward to the four squires who battled by his side and served him loyally at Poitiers.<sup>74</sup> Though the episode ends here for Froissart, Holinshed adds a detail. Upon hearing of Audley's action, Holinshed's Black Prince recalls the earl to his tent and demands to hear the rationale behind it. When Audley excuses his act by "extolling the good service done to him by his esquires, through whome he had so manie times escaped the dangers of death," the prince instantly bestows upon Audley a second gift of 500 annual marks.<sup>75</sup> The playwright elaborates the full story offered by Holinshed in *Edward III*. Audley emerges from the chronicles as a perfect English knight—loyal in service, valiant in battle, generous in spirit, and humble in person. On stage his great character and wisdom play vital roles in the education and success of the Black Prince on the battlefield.

Although the dramatist draws specifically from Holinshed in this episode, he primarily utilizes the more descriptive, more personal account of the Battle of Poitiers found in *Chroniques* when writing *Edward III*. Froissart's development of scene and character lends itself more readily to the dramatic needs of the playwright. The author's repeated reshaping of chronology illustrates that he places satisfying those dramatic needs above preserving historical accuracy in his play. Even though the siege of Calais (1346-1347) and the Battle of Poitiers (1356) occurred ten years apart historically, on stage the two events unfold simultaneously. At the close of the Battle of Crécy, the Black Prince and his father part company en route to Poitiers and Calais, respectively (3.5.103-

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<sup>74</sup> Froissart, Chapter CLXVII, 130; Holinshed, 668-69.

<sup>75</sup> Holinshed, 668.

105). While certainly necessitated by theatrical time constraints, the condensing of time serves more than a functional purpose. The king's willingness to trust his son with pursuit of the French king subtly contributes to the legend of the Black Prince. Audiences see the prince as needing only one campaign, not a decade of combat, to develop the skills of battle and leadership needed to lead an English army.

The intermingling of scenes from Calais and Poitiers also serves a larger thematic end as the two episodes move toward convergence in Act 5, Scene 1. Rather than depict Edward III as sitting safely in England during his son's engagement at Poitiers, as would be historically accurate, the author maintains the king's stage presence throughout the play. Edward III does not advance in years to become a ruler who hears of battles instead of waging them personally. The dramatist places the king and his son in concurrent struggles of equal military importance. In doing so, he connects their independent experiences as a way of defining the stability and nobility of the monarchy in the present and future.

The audience witnesses the culmination of Edward III's personal education at Calais. Strategic, powerful, and merciful, the king displays essential characteristics of an ideal sovereign in his treatment of the surrendering burgesses. Perfected by the Countess of Salisbury's lesson of constancy, Edward III shows throughout the staged siege that he has mastered his baser, selfish desires to become the generous leader of a thriving nation. These closing moments of Calais, in which King Edward shares the fruits of his education, play directly against scenes of philosophical struggle for his son at Poitiers.

Although he presents a confident, defiant façade to the French heralds whom King John sends to provoke him, the young Black Prince harbors doubts about his ability to survive his enemy's advances. He looks to his sage advisor Audley for instruction, saying, "Thou art a married man in this distress. / But dander woos me as a blushing maid: / Teach me an answer to this perilous time" (4.4.131-33).<sup>76</sup> Listening to Audley's speech, which teaches that "whether ripe or rotten, drop we shall," (4.4.148) the Black Prince recognizes that his fear of dying in battle is misguided and useless. With this lesson, he finds a "thousand thousand armours" on his back, and vows to advance England's cause without selfish concern for himself. The nearly simultaneous scenes in which the Black Prince begins to learn the lesson of self-mastery that his father has already perfected suggests a favorable outlook for the future of England's monarchy.

The dramatist's handling of the chronicles in his plotting of the Battle of Poitiers serves both practical and psychological ends. Critical discussion of this section of the play, though, has often focused only on the functional aspects of the Villiers-Salisbury episode. Smith was first to show that the playwright finds the basis for his version of the episode in Froissart.<sup>77</sup> The playwright changes little from the source account except names. In Froissart, Sir Gaultier of Manny bargains with his prisoner, an unnamed knight of Normandy. In *Edward III*, the Earl of Salisbury negotiates a safe passport across France through his French prisoner, Villiers (4.1.19-43). The author remains faithful to

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<sup>76</sup> Melchiori, *Edward III*, 118. Melchiori references R. L. Armstrong's statement that the playwright's portrayal of Audley as the wise, elder counselor is a dramatic distortion. Armstrong shows that Audley was "actually not much more than thirty" at Crécy.

<sup>77</sup> Smith, *Froissart and the English Chronicle Play*, 69.

Froissart's narrative in many ways in 4.1, 4.3, and 4.5, showing Salisbury setting conditions and the successive struggles of Villiers and Prince Charles to convince their superiors to honor Villiers's oath. Melchiori points out that the changes made to the original serve a basic plot need of reuniting Salisbury with Edward III at the play's conclusion.<sup>78</sup>

The dramatist takes greater liberties with his sources, in terms of reordering and reworking them, while fashioning the theatrical conclusion of the Battle of Poitiers. The more elaborate reshaping becomes essential to the lasting impression of Edward III that the dramatist leaves on stage. In their separate descriptions of the encounter, Froissart and Holinshed each commends King John for his courageous deeds on the battlefield at Poitiers and attributes his army's final defeat that day to Poitiers's betrayal, not the English soldiers' overwhelming power. The historical accounts recall that the people of Poitiers refused to open their city's gates to the French king when commanded to do so for fear of warfare spilling behind their walls. Pinned against the unyielding gates, the French horses and soldiers could not escape the English archers' arrows.<sup>79</sup>

In *Edward III*, the playwright ignores these reports, choosing instead to convert a past natural phenomenon into the prophecy that ensures England's success. The amended incident appears in both chronicles, but in the midst of the Battle of Crécy, not Poitiers. Froissart and Holinshed recall that during the campaign at Crécy, "there fell a great rain and a clipse with a terrible thunder, and before the rain there came flying over both

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<sup>78</sup> Melchiori, *Edward III*, 124.

<sup>79</sup> Froissart, Chapter CLXIV, 128; Holinshed, 667.

battles a great number of crows for fear of the tempest coming.”<sup>80</sup> After the birds and storm pass, “Then anon the air began to wax clear, and the sun to shine fair and bright, the which was right in the Frenchmen’s eye and on the Englishmen’s backs.”<sup>81</sup> In his conclusion to *Poitiers*, the playwright seizes upon the chronicles’ implied sense that the Heavens showed favor upon the English army at Crécy when aiding its cause by incapacitating its enemy. As King John boasts to his son that the Black Prince is “scarce eight thousand strong, / And we are threescore thousand at the least,” Prince Charles shares the playwright’s fabricated prophecy (4.3.61-62). He reads:

When feathered fowl shall make thine army tremble,  
 And flintstones rise and break the battle ’ray,  
 Then think on him that doth not now dissemble,  
 For that shall be the hapless dreadful day.  
 Yet in the end thy foot thou shalt advance  
 As far in England as thy foe in France. (4.4.68-73)

The choice to reconstruct the storm as divination reveals the author’s intention for audience’s perception of the English king at the close of the play. To this point, either through his education or experience within separate episodes, the king has demonstrated his determination and strength. Rehashing another triumph of combat here would do little to enhance the playwright’s portrait of the king. Including a prophecy’s fulfillment at this

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<sup>80</sup> Froissart, Chapter CXXX, 104; Holinshed, 638.

<sup>81</sup> Froissart, Chapter CXXX, 104; Holinshed, 638. The image of the sun shining in the French forces’ eyes recalls the similar blinding of the French navy at Sluys. At *Poitiers*, though, the crows’ flight, not the sun’s position, incapacitates the French army, indicating that the playwright looked to the chronicles’ account of the Battle of Crécy, not Sluys, in this scene.

juncture, however, affords the dramatist the opportunity to cast Edward III as providentially favored.

As the French king and his sons lament their soldiers' cowardly retreat from a "flight of ugly ravens" (4.5.28) and sudden fog, the Black Prince leads his army's offensive and claims the lives of two-thirds of the French army (4.7.24). When captured, King John assures the Black Prince that "Thy fortune, not thy force, hath conquered us" (4.9.10). King John's perspective indicates that the playwright intends his audience to accept the notion that "heaven aids the right" (4.9.11).<sup>82</sup> The day's victory belongs to the Black Prince, but the glory is not his alone. He acknowledges that he acted as the instrument chosen to show Edward III's power and thus the audience sees the king as divinely sanctioned (5.1.219). Through his reconstruction of the storm at Crécy into the fulfilled prophecy at Poitiers, the dramatist completes the image of Edward III. Already proven to be self-aware and self-mastering, strategic and powerful, determined yet merciful, Edward III is finally seen as being providentially favored, and as such, he presents on stage the portrait of an ideal English king.

The playwright's unique treatment of the Battle at Poitiers includes more than restructuring historical chronology. He also invents more original material than in any other battle-related scene in the play. These invented moments largely heighten dramatic tensions on stage. In the first glimpse of Poitiers, the audience hears King John boast that

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<sup>82</sup> Froissart, Chapter CLXI, 123. The playwright plays upon a statement taken from Froissart's account of the Black Prince's response to the Cardinal of Perigord's failed efforts to secure a peace treaty between England and France before the opening of the Battle of Poitiers. In Froissart's chronicle, when the Cardinal instructs the Black Prince to prepare for combat, the Englishman answers, "The same is our intent and all our people: God help the right!"

his forces have encompassed Edward's troops, trapping them in such a way as to make escape impossible (4.3.57-59). According to the chronicles, the English ordering of troops allows for only one possible battlefield. French knights spy the English formation and report to King John that:

Along the way they have fortified strongly the hedges and bushes: one part of their archers are along by the hedges, so that none can go nor ride that way, but must pass by them, and that way must ye go an ye purpose to fight with them. In this hedge there is but one entry and one issue by likelihood that four horsemen may ride affront. At the end of this hedge, whereas no man can go nor ride, there be men of arms afoot and archers afore them in manner of a herse, so that they will not be lightly discomfited.<sup>83</sup>

In Froissart and Holinshed, the Black Prince orders his regiment so that the French's sole option is to approach the English forces straight-on in waves, first of 300 horsed men of arms ordered to break through the archers, and then of soldiers on foot charged with engaging the English in hand-to-hand combat.<sup>84</sup> The chronicles differ slightly in description of the French attack in terms of details, but each recounts the feats of the English archers and of Lord Audley's men, both of which exact great harm upon the French horsemen and foot soldiers, causing them to retreat before ever approaching the

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<sup>83</sup> Froissart, Chapter CLX, 121.

<sup>84</sup> Froissart, Chapter CLX, 121-22; Holinshed, 666.

Black Prince.<sup>85</sup> Strict adherence to the chronicles would eliminate the possibility of the more dramatically compelling French entrapment of the prince's camp.

Strict adherence to the play's source material would also alter Act 4, Scene 4, in which three French heralds address the Black Prince on King John's behalf. The first herald presents the prince with an option for peaceful resolution. He announces that if the Black Prince would surrender his person along with 100 men of name, King John would "fold his bloody colors up" (4.4.69-72). This offer differs from talks of treaty present in Froissart and Holinshed. In the chronicles, the Cardinal of Perigord, not French heralds, seek to facilitate a peace treaty between England and France. The cardinal delivers demands and proposed concessions from each side over a two day period. The dramatist omits the early stages of negotiation in which King John first demands to "have four of the principallest of the Englishmen at his pleasure, and the prince and all the other to yield themselves simply" to which the Black Prince instead offers "to render into the king's hands all that ever he had won in that voyage, towns and castles, and to quit all prisoners that he or any of his men had taken in that season, and also to swear not to be armed against the French king in seven year after."<sup>86</sup> In the chronicles, the cardinal's mediation does end with King John's same stipulation that the Black Prince forfeit himself and his 100 knights that appears in the play. The playwright, however, passes over the historical negotiation, choosing instead to develop a scenario that would provoke a more emotional response from his audience. In the chronicles, the peace talks reveal a

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<sup>85</sup> Froissart, Chapter CLXII, 124; Holinshed 666-67.

<sup>86</sup> Froissart, Chapter CLXI, 122; Holinshed, 665.

sterile glimpse of military negotiation. *Edward III's* invented scene of the three heralds taunting the surrounded prince touches upon the audience's sense of national pride. Playgoers see the Black Prince reject, in succession, the French king's call for the prince's forfeit to escape sure death, the gift of a "nimble-jointed jennet" meant to supply the prince with means of flight, and the present of a prayer book intended to provide the doomed prince with means of preparation for death (4.4.67-109). With each rejection of the heralds' messages, tensions rise. Just as King Edward denied the three pleas for his rescue of the Black Prince at the Battle of Crécy, here the Black Prince illustrates that English monarchs stand resolute against their fears and their foes in even the direst circumstances.

In deviating from his sources to create original moments in the representation of the Battle of Poitiers, the playwright again chooses dramatic tension over historical accuracy. Rather than portraying the conventional peace talks and an easily-thwarted linear attack chronicled in history, the author shows the Black Prince contemplate death as the odds mount against him, and then rejoice as God's favor upon the English secures the prophecy's fulfillment and his army's triumph.

The author's concern with dramatic effect is evident throughout the play. At the close of the Battle of Poitiers, King Edward, still in Calais, receives news from the Earl of Salisbury concerning the presumed death of the Black Prince (5.1.109-156). The scene is wholly invented. Froissart and Holinshed report that Edward III sat in London with Queen Philippa during the whole of the campaign at Poitiers.<sup>87</sup> As noted, the compression

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<sup>87</sup> Froissart, Chapter CLXXIII, 134; Holinshed, 669.

of time functions dramatically. The staged announcement of the Black Prince's assumed death, followed by his march toward his father, juxtaposes moments of the monarch's personal suffering and political triumph to create an abrupt emotional swing.

In addition to this alteration, the author fabricates the presentation of the Black Prince's prisoners to his father before the walls of Calais. The chronicles show that Edward III knew of his son's victory and capture of King John for several months before reuniting with him.<sup>88</sup> Froissart and Holinshed also list only King John and his son, Prince Phillip, as the prisoners taken by the Black Prince. The author enlarges the prince's spoils to include Prince Charles. The suspense and subsequent joyous revelations of the Black Prince's survival exist only in the dramatic text, a clear indication of the playwright's priorities. By reuniting the royal family on stage before Calais, the playwright draws together the plot's various strings. The king stands beside his wife at the scene of his great military siege and proudly receives his triumphant son who leads the vanquished foe in a final testament to Edward III's divinely sanctioned power.

In the Black Prince's last speech, he predicts that many future princes of England will secure similar victories in their kings' names. Recalling the physical peril he overcame en route to delivering his father's greatest enemy, the Black Prince regards all that he has endured as worthwhile. He declares that he has persisted:

So that hereafter ages, when they read  
The painful traffic of my tender youth,  
Might thereby be inflamed with such resolve

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<sup>88</sup> Froissart, Chapter CLXXIII, 134; Holinshed, 669.

As not the territories of France alone,  
But likewise Spain, Turkey and what countries else  
That justly would provoke fair England's ire,  
Might at their presence tremble and retire. (5.1.229-235)

As the play ends, the Plantagenets stand together before the audience as the symbol of ideal English sovereignty and as a warning to England's enemies of the country's lasting strength. This final image of Edward III's reign exemplifies the standards of rule still relevant to Elizabethan audiences in a post-Armada culture. Capable of inspiring national pride within his realm and of creating an aura of indestructibility beyond it, the dramatized Edward III mirrors the same attributes the playwright's audiences extolled in Elizabeth I. Thus the playwright's manipulation of source material achieves its intended dramatic effect of enhancing the nationalistic sentiment that both rulers succeeded in fact to inspire.

## CHAPTER THREE

ANCESTRAL INFLUENCE: *EDWARD III* AS PRE-TEXT FOR SHAKESPEARE'S  
*HENRY V*

As I have shown in the previous chapter, in order to portray an ideal sovereign, the author of *Edward III's* draws from and manipulates his chronicle sources, repeatedly depicting Edward as a ruler who relies on his learned morality to make merciful decisions and spearhead martial success. On stage, Edward III seems to possess the qualities that, according to Elizabethan standards, define a model Christian king. These traits enjoy celebration in other late 16th century works, most notably Shakespeare's second tetralogy. Over a hundred and fifty years ago, Hermann Ulrici suggested that *Edward III* "forms the introduction — the hanging-sign as it were — to the lofty edifice which the poet [Shakespeare] has constructed out of the materials of English history, from Richard the Second down to Richard the Third."<sup>1</sup> In the second tetralogy, the influence of Edward III's reign is most noticeable in *Henry V*. Shakespeare's characters invoke the birthrights of Edward III and the legends of the king and the Black Prince, as portrayed in *Edward III*, six times throughout *Henry V* as a source of motivation or education. As Shakespeare develops the character of the titular hero, Henry V draws inspiration from his ancestors' storied pasts and emulates their educational journeys to rise to his historical position as

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<sup>1</sup> Hermann Ulrici, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Art: And His Relation to Calderon and Goethe* (London: Chapman Brothers, 1841), 455.

celebrated hero-king. As such, *Edward III* can be considered a possible pre-text for *Henry V*.

Suggesting *Henry V*'s indebtedness to *Edward III* does not imply Shakespeare's authorship. Shakespeare's practice of drawing upon other authors' works and enriching their characters, storylines, or images to heighten the drama or poetry of his own plays has long been recognized. Regardless of any involvement he might have had in writing *Edward III*, Shakespeare would likely have been familiar with the play when writing the second tetralogy. *Edward III* was first published in 1596 and reprinted in 1599, making it available to Shakespeare in quarto form while he wrote his *Henry* plays between 1597 and 1599. Rather than answer the authorship question of *Edward III*, I use the following examination of the two kings' dramatic educations and triumphs, and the repeated invocations of Edward III's legend in *Henry V*, to reveal philosophical and historical links between the two plays that suggest that Shakespeare used *Edward III* as a pre-text for constructing public perception of his ideal Christian king.

Much scholarship holds that in the character of Henry V Shakespeare portrays his ideal monarch. Tillyard asserts that Henry V "was traditionally not only the perfect king but a king after the Englishman's heart; one who added the quality of good mixer to the specifically regal virtues."<sup>2</sup> J. Dover Wilson claims that in Henry V's character, Shakespeare "crowns *noblesse oblige*, generosity and magnanimity, respect for law, and the selfless devotion to duty which compromise the traditional ideals of our public

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<sup>2</sup> Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays*, 299.

service.”<sup>3</sup> Brownwell Salomon calls Henry V “the larger-than-life culture hero who epitomized the ideal king, one whom the dramatist could ringingly portray as ‘the young Phoebus’ (3.Chorus 6), ‘a Jove’ (2.4.100), a man ‘full of grace and fair regard’ (1.1.22), ‘the mirror of all Christian Kings’ (2.Chorus 6), and ‘this star of England [...] in the very May-morn of his youth (Epilogue 6; 1.2.120).”<sup>4</sup>

Such accounts of the character have not gone without challenge. Opposition to the view of Henry as an ideal monarch sees him at best as “not an ideal king at all, merely a successful one,” and at worst, as “a cold-blooded opportunist” and a “Machiavellian militarist who professes Christianity but whose deeds reveal both hypocrisy and ruthlessness.”<sup>5</sup> Alison Thorne notes that William Hazlitt’s 1817 criticism of *Henry V*, which condemned “the gaps between Henry’s laboriously constructed public image . . . and his manifest brutality and political opportunism,” was later supported by cultural materialists.<sup>6</sup>

Such negative readings do not reflect the chronicles’ portrayals of Henry V. In depicting Henry V as the “madcap prince” in the *Henry IV* plays and the warrior-hero in

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<sup>3</sup> J. Dover Wilson, *The Fortunes of Falstaff* (repr., 1944; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 128.

<sup>4</sup> Brownell Salomon, “The Myth Structure and Rituality of *Henry V*” *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 23 (1993): 254.

<sup>5</sup> David Kastan, *Shakespeare and the Shapes of Time* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1982), 63; Karl P. Wentersdorf, “The Conspiracy of Silence in *Henry V*” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (1976): 265; Norman Rabkin, “Rabbits, Ducks, and Henry V” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (1977): 279.

<sup>6</sup> Alison Thorne, “‘Awake Remembrance of These Valiant Dead’: *Henry V* and the Politics of the English History Play” *Shakespeare Studies* 30 (2002): 163.

*Henry V*, Shakespeare follows the popular 15th century legend of the king that informs the chronicles of Hall and Holinshed. Although challenged by his own imperfections, for many, Shakespeare's *Henry V* stands as an unequalled hero-king who learns to master himself in order to rule his country with moral fitness and military strength. M. M. Reese argues that in *Henry V* Shakespeare "has shown us not only the sort of man the ideal king will be but also the roots from which he must grow."<sup>7</sup>

The roots that Shakespeare turns *Henry V*'s attention to are those of the king's great-grandfather, Edward III, and his great-uncle, the Black Prince. Ulrici sees *Edward III* as presenting "the prelude and prototype of the heroic deeds of Henry the Fifth, which formed the only bright spot in [a] long era of dark suffering."<sup>8</sup> When Canterbury and Ely approach *Henry V* to encourage his pursuit of the French crown, they initially set down the legitimacy of *Henry*'s claim as stemming from Edward III's descent from the Capetian line of French kings (1.1.84-89). To encourage their sovereign to advance his lawful claim on France, Canterbury and Ely advise *Henry* "to 'go to' his grandfather's tomb, [and] undertake a chivalric pilgrimage to a site sanctified by heroic legend, in order to discover, in his own ancestry, the meaning of kingship."<sup>9</sup> Each cleric recalls the fearsome warrior courage that steeled *Henry V*'s ancestors in their great battles with the

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<sup>7</sup> M. M. Reese, *The Cease of Majesty* (London: Edward Arnold, 1961), 319.

<sup>8</sup> Ulrici, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Art*, 455.

<sup>9</sup> Graham Holderness, *Shakespeare: The Histories* (London: Macmillan Press, 2000), 141.

French in hopes of inspiring the king to recreate that valor in England's present cause.

First, Canterbury urges:

Gracious lord,

Stand for your own, unwind your bloody flag,

Look back into your mighty ancestors;

Go, my dread lord, to your great-grandsire's tomb,

From whom you claim; invoke his warlike spirit,

And your great-uncle's Edward the Black Prince,

Who on the French ground played a tragedy,

Making defeat on the full power of France,

Whiles his most mighty father on a hill

Stood smiling, to behold his lion's whelp

Forage in blood of French nobility. (1.2.100-110)

Ely seconds Canterbury's urgings, saying:

Awake remembrance of these valiant dead

And with your puissant arm renew their feats.

You are their heir; you sit upon their throne;

The blood and courage that renownéd them

Runs in your veins. (1.2.115-119)

The play's opening scene reveals the bishops' vested interest in sponsoring Henry's continental diversion and has created critical suspicion of Henry's reaction to the clergymen's image-laden speeches. Theodor Meron suggests that:

In a way, both Canterbury and Henry use each other. Canterbury offers financial incentives and somewhat strained legal interpretations for a war Henry actually seeks—in order to fight a bill that would strip the church from a considerable portion of its temporal possessions. Henry uses the Archbishop to absolve himself of responsibility for the bloodshed he knows will occur. The fact that both Canterbury and Henry have their own agendas introduces a certain doubt in the procedures designed to validate a recourse to war.<sup>10</sup>

Stephen Marx also sees Henry V as a Machiavellian plotter who uses Canterbury's endorsement as a way to legitimize a suspect war in his subjects' minds. He notes Machiavelli's claim that "The princes who have done great things are those who have taken little account of faith and have known how to get around men's brains with their astuteness."<sup>11</sup> Machiavelli asserts that in order to succeed, it is necessary for any ruler "to know well how to . . . be a great pretender and dissembler."<sup>12</sup> Marx views Henry V's behavior as consistently deceiving "both with appearances of prodigality and of holiness" throughout the play.<sup>13</sup>

The dramatic facts as Shakespeare presents them do not unequivocally support such a cynical reading of Henry's character. In the main, Shakespeare hews to

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<sup>10</sup> Theodor Meron, *Bloody Constraint: War and Chivalry in Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 25.

<sup>11</sup> Steven, Marx, "Holy War in *Henry V*," *Shakespeare Survey* 48 (1998): 91.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Marx, "Holy War in *Henry V*," 91.

Holinshed's account. Holinshed recalls that during the Parliament of 1414, the clergy did fear the bill that would compromise their finances and "Therefore, to find remedy against it, they determined to assay all ways to put by and overthrow this bill; wherein they thought best to try if they might move the King's mood with some sharp invention, that he should not regard the importunate petition of the commons."<sup>14</sup> Canterbury then encourages Henry V to claim his rightful position as France's king, using a lengthy refutation of the "surmised and false feigned Law Salic"<sup>15</sup> and an additional reference to the Bible's Book of Numbers to validate his proposal. Holinshed then details the interjection made by the Earl of Westmoreland that cautions the king to deal with Scotland's imminent threat before engaging France. Nowhere does Holinshed suggest that King Henry knew of the clergy's plan to buy protection of their assets by suggesting and financing a foreign war. Neither does Shakespeare. Therefore, to read such internal plotting into Henry's words on stage goes beyond what the dramatic text or its source offers.

Shakespeare, again following Holinshed, suggests that Henry believes that his cause would be sanctioned by both his ancestors and his contemporaries only after hearing the agreement of Exeter. In Holinshed, the king never asks Canterbury if his cause in France would be just. In the chronicle's account, Henry only listens. Holinshed writes: "To be brief, the Duke of Exeter used such earnest and pithy persuasions to

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<sup>14</sup> Richard Hosley, ed., *Holinshed: An Edition of Holinshed's Chronicles (1587) Source of Shakespeare's History Plays, King Lear, Cymbeline, and Macbeth* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1968), 120.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 120-121.

induce the King and the whole assembly of the parliament to credit his words that immediately after he had made an end all the company began to cry, 'War, war! France, France!' Hereby the bill for dissolving of religious houses was clearly set aside, and nothing thought on but only the recovering of France."<sup>16</sup>

In the play, Exeter joins in encouraging Henry's advance on the French by assuring him that it is anticipated as a revival of his ancestors' nobility. He tells Henry: "Your brother kings and monarchs of the earth/ Do all expect that you should rouse yourself, / As did the former lions of you blood" (1.2.122-124). The council's encouragement succeeds, leading Henry to declare a war meant to honor his family's past and strengthen his country's future.

In both the source and the play, Henry's declaration of war follows Exeter's endorsement, not the clergymen's initial provocation. In following Holinshed's chronicle, Shakespeare shows that Henry follows the advice of a man who proves himself a trustworthy guardian of the king's interests throughout the play. Henry would seem less like a Machiavellian plotter or conscious dissembler than a cautious ruler concerned with both the justice of his cause and genuine support for a bloody war.

Just as Exeter invokes Henry's forefathers, England's opponent in the upcoming war, King Charles of France, also conjures up Henry V's warrior heritage as a means of cautioning his dukes and son about the power they will face. He readies his forces by reminding them of past English triumphs on French soil, saying:

It fits us then to be as provident

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<sup>16</sup> Hosley, *Holinshed*, 122.

As fear may teach us out of late examples  
 Left by the fatal and neglected English  
 Upon our fields. (2.4.11-14)

In response, the Dauphin voices his skepticism over Henry's fitness as a ruler, recollecting the image of Henry as a "vain, giddy, shallow, humorous youth" (2.4.28). This image, which prevents the Dauphin from seeing Henry V as a threat, crumbles when King Charles again associates England's present king with his legendary progenitors. To remove doubt over England's power, Charles recounts the tragedy that France suffered at the hands of Edward III's assault. He cautions his men:

Think we King Harry strong;  
 And princes, look you strongly arm to meet him.  
 The kindred of him hath been fleshed upon us;  
 And he is bred out of that bloody strain  
 That haunted us in our familiar paths;  
 Witness our too much memorable shame  
 When Crécy battle fatally was struck,  
 And all our princes captive, by the hand  
 Of that black name, Edward, Black Prince of Wales;  
 Whiles that his mountain sire—on mountain standing,  
 Up in the air, crowned with the golden sun—  
 Saw his heroical seed, and smiled to see him  
 Mangle the work of nature, and deface

The patterns that by God and by French fathers  
 Had twenty years been made. This is a stem  
 Of that victorious stock; and let us fear  
 The native mightiness and fate of him. (2.4.48-64)

King Charles looks back to the English rulers who had earned their places in history on French soil as a matter of prudence, just as Henry's counselors in Act 1, Scene 2 looked to their sovereign's ancestry as a source of motivation. In each scenario, Henry's connection to his forefathers' legends anticipates the successful conqueror and ruler he can become.

The central question of the *Henry IV* plays, which concerns Hal's moral suitability to lead the realm one day, is resolved in *Henry V*'s opening scene. Canterbury describes what he perceives as Henry's startling transformation from "madcap Prince of Wales" (*1 Henry IV* 4.1.95) to a "sudden scholar" (*Henry V* 1.1.32) and formidable king. Although Hal formerly revealed his true self to the audience through his soliloquy in Act 1, Scene 2 of *1 Henry IV*, no other characters are aware of the prince's intentions "to make offence a skill" (1.2.216) in order to make his planned moment of redemption "show more goodly and attract more eyes" (1.2.214). His strategy succeeds when the archbishop, recalling Henry's behavior upon his father's death, does not recognize the end of a planned publicity stunt, but instead believes that he has witnessed the prince's complete character transformation. Audiences know, though, that Henry's knowledge of both divine and state matters (1.1.39-52) is not newfound. As they watch Henry V break

through “the foul and ugly mists” (1.2.202), playgoers see the fulfillment of the prince’s past promise and the culmination of his education.

Between the moment in *1 Henry IV*’s Act 1, Scene 2 when Hal privately declares his intentions to reveal his true self in the future, to the day he is perceived as a blessing to England (1.1.37) in *Henry V*, he learns lessons that make his chosen moment of redemption both possible and satisfying. The process he engages in recalls the dramatic growth of Edward III and the Black Prince in *Edward III*. Henry’s development can be seen as a more complex rendering of his ancestors’ educations. Ribner notes that:

Prince Hal must be educated in the arts of war and the arts of peace, and to each of these ends one part of *Henry IV* is devoted. We thus have in the two plays a development of the two ends which the author of *Edward III* had encompassed in his single play. Just as the moral aspects of kingship are taught to Edward and the military aspects are taught to his son, Prince Hal is taught to be a soldier in *1 Henry IV* and a statesmen in *2 Henry IV*.<sup>17</sup>

By connecting Henry V to the conquerors in *Edward III*, Shakespeare achieves two aims. First, when using the victories of Edward III and the Black Prince as Henry’s motivation to pursue his ancestral claim on France, Shakespeare demonstrates the ways in which the past can instruct the future. In addition, by remembering the ways in which the former

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<sup>17</sup> Ribner, *The English History Play*, 169-170.

king and prince attained greatness, Shakespeare seems to invite consideration of what Ribner calls “the process by which the ideal king is made.”<sup>18</sup>

That process begins long before the first staged battle cries for Henry V and Edward III. With their focus on the education of rulers, *Edward III* and *Henry V* each can be read as a subset of the English Chronicle Play. As “education plays,” they both go beyond the basic chronicling of England’s past to investigate the ways in which ideal rulers must learn to conduct themselves before they can govern their kingdoms. David Bevington explains that Edward III must learn to “maintain a proper subservience of king’s law to moral law, both in his private and public life.”<sup>19</sup> Having learned the lesson, “It is [Edward’s] moral superiority over his rival kings alone that entitles him to God’s protection.”<sup>20</sup> Reese views Henry V’s education in a similar way. He finds that:

[Henry’s] victory over himself has been much more than a personal victory. Riot and dishonor have been put to flight, reason is passion’s master, and England has at last a king who can physic all her ills. Because he has proved himself a valiant and chivalrous prince, and one who acknowledges the sovereignty of law and justice, the crown comes to him ‘with better quiet, better opinion, better confirmation,’ and all the soil of the Lancastrian achievement has gone with his father to the grave.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>19</sup> David Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics: A Critical Approach to Topical Meaning* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 203.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Reese, *The Cease of Majesty*, 317.

In each play, the playwright first presents the king, or king-to-be, as a man who overcomes his own challenges and flaws and then dramatizes his transformation into the ideal English monarch.

In *Edward III*, the king is educated by a “true English lady,” the Countess of Salisbury. Ribner points out that Edward must learn from the Countess “the rights and duties of kingship in relation of the king’s law to moral law.”<sup>22</sup> The king’s mastery of the lesson is in doubt while he ignores his kingly duties in order to “pine in shameful love” at Roxborough Castle (1.2.117). Ribner notes that “The king’s infatuation with the Countess of Salisbury is made to symbolize all that is unbecoming in a king. It is a lustful self-indulgence which not only violates moral law, but which keeps the ruler away from the duties he should rightfully perform.”<sup>23</sup> Rather than prepare for military engagement with the Scots on English soil or for conquest on the Continent, Edward busies himself with the writing of love poetry and with trapping his loyal subject, Warwick, into assisting him in his pursuit of Warwick’s married daughter. His doting and conniving, both aimed at satisfying his sexual desires, undermine his leadership and his person. Edward’s lords cannot deliver news that the emperor named the king lieutenant-general, a development that solidifies Edward’s position of power against France, because their sovereign remains “in his closet, malcontent” (2.2.15). While incapacitated with love-sickness, Edward ignores affairs of state and transforms his desired female subject into a position of power over him. While talking to Lord Audley about the English cavalry, Edward

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<sup>22</sup> Ribner, *The English History Play*, 148.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

exchanges “Countess” for “emperor” and says, “She is as imperator over me, and I to her / Am as a kneeling vassal, that observes / The pleasure or displeasure of her eye” (2.2.39-42). In “his humour” (2.2.37), Edward III cannot concentrate on the impending threats to his kingdom, nor exercise his sovereignty in government matters. Instead he retreats into a melancholic solitude where his conquest of the Countess eclipses both his concern for his claim on France and his pursuit of the Scots. Unlike his lords and son who prepare for crucial military campaigns, Edward says:

The quarrel that I have requires no arms  
 But these of mine, and these shall meet my foe  
 In a deep march of penetrable groans;  
 My eyes shall be my arrows, and my sighs  
 Shall serve me as the vantage of the wind,  
 To whirl away my sweetest artillery. (2.2.61-66)

Edward’s preoccupation with his own desires debilitates him as a military ruler. The king would have “ransomed captive France, and set the king, / The Dauphin, and the peers at liberty” (2.2.104-105) if it were not for the instruction he eventually receives from the Countess.

Resistant to the king’s advances from the start, the Countess of Salisbury stands resolute in defense of her chastity throughout the episode. Her denial of Edward III’s adulterous proposition reveals the degree to which the king has compromised his moral integrity. She warns Edward that if he forced her to break her marriage vows, he would “Commit high treason against the king of heaven” (2.1.259) for:

In violating marriage's sacred law  
 You break a greater honour than yourself. . . .  
 It is a penalty to break your statutes,  
 Though not enacted with your highness' hand;  
 How much more to infringe the holy act  
 Made by the mouth of God, sealed with His hand? (2.1.261-271)

The Countess's dedication to her marriage vows pushes Edward to the brink of an action that would bar moral recovery. When the Countess concedes that she will sleep with the king if he agrees to remove the obstacles that currently make the proposed act unlawful and indecent, she challenges him to kill her husband, the Earl of Salisbury, and Queen Philippa. In response, Edward III declares, "Thy beauty makes them guilty of their death / And gives in evidence that they shall die, / Upon which verdict I, their judge, condemn them" (2.2.159-161). Such a proclamation indicates that Edward III has abandoned the just use of his sovereign power in favor of exploiting his authority for immoral ends.

At the moment Edward slips into the darkest shadows of immorality, the Countess employs her ingenuity to preserve her chastity and to recover the wayward monarch. When the Countess forces Edward to choose between abandoning his "unholy suit" (2.2.182) or watching her carve out her own heart with her wedding knives (2.2.184-187), she rouses him from his "idle dream" (2.2.198). Rehabilitated by the Countess's constancy and fueled by his shame over his personal failings, Edward III learns to master his baser human qualities and regains his focus as England's sovereign. Within moments of praising the Countess for her unfailing honor, Edward III turns to his gathered

noblemen to direct them toward their varied courses en route to France. After learning that a king's decree cannot challenge moral law, Edward III recommits himself to the duties of kingship, and recasts himself as an English monarch worthy of conquering France. Ribner suggests then that "The Countess episode is a crucial element in a play which is a carefully constructed 'mirror for princes.'"<sup>24</sup>

Ribner's belief in the centrality of the Countess episode to the king's enlightenment not only runs against scholarly criticism about the apparent disconnect in the double plot structure of *Edward III*, but it also invites a comparison to what Wilson sees as Henry V's prodigal journey as well. Just as Edward III's episode with the Countess solidifies the moral character the king needs to exhibit in later scenes of his play, Prince Hal's fraternity with Falstaff and the tavern revelers in the two *Henry IV* plays proves essential to the ultimate development of the character he reveals after taking the throne. Ribner asserts that "The prince's association with Falstaff and his fellows is not a wasteful experience, for in it he learns to know the common people who will be perhaps his most powerful allies when he attains the crown. . . . It is this early training which enables King Henry V to conduct himself as he does on the eve of Agincourt."<sup>25</sup>

Shakespeare's depiction of Henry V's wayward youth, though shown to be historically inaccurate by modern scholars, does adhere to the common perception of the king that remained popular for centuries after his death. Wilson notes that Shakespeare was not "the first to see Hal as the prodigal. The legend of Harry of Monmouth began to

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<sup>24</sup> Ribner, *The English History Play*, 148.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

grow soon after his death in 1422; and practically all the chroniclers, particularly those writing in the fifteenth century, agree on his wildness in youth and on the sudden change that came upon him at the accession to the throne.”<sup>26</sup> Shakespeare’s faithfulness to this prodigal legend culminates in Henry V’s unlikely transformation as perceived by the Archbishop of Canterbury in the opening scene of *Henry V*. Canterbury marvels at both the unexpected and complete natures of the reformation, saying:

The courses of his youth promised it not.  
 The breath no sooner left his father’s body  
 But that his wildness, mortified in him,  
 Seemed to die, too; yea, at that very moment  
 Consideration like an angel came  
 And whipped th’ offending Adam out of him,  
 Leaving his body as a paradise  
 T’ envelop and contain celestial spirits. (1.1.24-31)

The process through which Henry learns to give over his life of idle carousing to exert this kingly behavior begins earlier, in the *Henry IV* plays. Within that process, Hal must choose, as Edward III does in the Countess episode, between personal moral recklessness and sovereign responsibility.

Prince Hal forecasts that he will eventually change his public persona from reprobate to monarch in *1 Henry IV* in the soliloquy concluding Act 1, Scene 2.

Yet herein will I imitate the sun,

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<sup>26</sup> Wilson, *The Fortunes of Falstaff*, 20.

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 wondr'ed at  
 By breaking through the foul and ugly mists  
 Of vapors that did seem to strangle him. (1.2.198-203)

Hal shows signs of fulfilling his prophecy in several scenes scattered throughout the two parts of *Henry IV*. When confronted by his father for his roguish behavior in *I Henry IV*, Hal promises, "I shall hereafter, my thrice-gracious lord, / Be more myself" (3.2.92-93). In his oath to reclaim his father's trust and love, he employs the bloody images of war to predict a day when he will redeem his name "on Percy's head" (3.2.132). Yet in the following scene, Shakespeare places Hal again in the tavern where he engages in idle word games with Falstaff, Bardolph, and Mistress Quickly. Evidently Hal recognized the urgent need for pledging his oath, but not the urgent need to fulfill it.

His first active step toward reclaiming his name comes in late in *I Henry IV*, when he refuses to be led from the battlefield upon his father's orders. For the first time, Hal's speech coincides with his actions. He rejects Westmoreland's hand, saying:

I do not need your help,  
 And God forbid a shallow scratch should drive  
 The Prince of Wales from such a field as this,  
 Where stain'd nobility lies trodden on,  
 And rebels' arms triumph in massacres! (5.4.9-14)

Hal remains on the battlefield and immediately prevents the Douglas from killing his father. By thwarting the attempt on Henry IV's life, the prince redeems himself in his father's eyes. As the scene continues, Hal further separates himself from his former routine of making promises intended for a distant future in his confrontation with Hotspur. Upon meeting Harry Percy, Hal declares that "Two stars keep not their motion in one sphere, / Nor can one England brook a double reign / Of Harry Percy and the Prince of Wales" (5.4.65-67). Within moments, Hal fights and kills Hotspur, honoring his word and proving his true character.

Although Prince Hal is never again seen carousing with Falstaff in the taverns, he does not sever his ties to that world altogether. In *2 Henry IV*, Hal confides to Poins that he is weary of living up to his "greatness" (2.2.1-5). He desires the simple pleasure of a beer over the complexities that fill his royal existence. He says, "But indeed these humble / considerations make me out of love with my greatness" (2.2.11-12). The prince realizes that it is a disgrace for him to know Poins's name and his business (2.2.13-26), yet the fact that he does know such things suggests that his victory over Hotspur did not dispel altogether his proclivity for idleness.

Throughout the two parts of *Henry IV* the prince shifts between becoming the man he promises to be in Act 1, Scene 2 of *1 Henry IV* and behaving in a way that "hast seal'd up [Henry IV's] expectation" (*2 Henry IV* 4.5.103). Even after his moments of glory, Hal maintains his dual character to the point where his dying father laments, "Thy life did manifest thou lov'dst me not, / And thou wilt have me die assur'd of it" (4.5.104-105). Only at the close of *2 Henry IV*, when Henry V publicly rejects Falstaff, does the

newly crowned king permanently abandon his double character. Wilson claims that as the reigning monarch, Henry V no longer has the luxury of “frittering away his time, and making himself cheap, with low companions” and therefore unfeelingly removes all possible distracting or destructive forces from his circle.<sup>27</sup>

In his dismissal of Falstaff, Henry V nearly mimics his great-grandfather’s words during the former king’s own prodigal moment in *Edward III*. In the instant that Edward abandons his pursuit of the Countess, he awakes from his “idle dream” (2.2.198) and learns to honor God’s moral law before pursuing his own sovereign aims. Henry V likewise employs the dream image when denying Falstaff’s acquaintance, saying, “I have long dreamt of such a kind of man, / So surfeit-swell’d, so old, and so profane; / But being awak’d, I do despise my dream” (5.5.49-51). Like Edward III, Henry V publicly portrays his past indiscretions as part of a delusion from which he has recovered completely. The difference between the two moments concerns sincerity. In *Edward III* an actual conversion occurs. Edward III moves from a campaign of lust to a campaign properly militant, political, and nationalistic. Though Hal’s soliloquy in *1 Henry IV* shows that his conversion in *Henry V* is as unreal as a dream itself, his use of the dream imagery marks—as it did for Edward III—his final moment of dereliction. Seconds after refusing Falstaff’s company, he declares, “Presume not that I am the thing I was, / For God doth know, so shall the world perceive, / That I have turn’d away my former self; / So will I those that kept me company” (5.5.56-59). From the moment Henry banishes his former drinking companions on pain of death, he commits fully to performing his duties

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<sup>27</sup> Wilson, *The Fortunes of Falstaff*, 24.

as king. In *Henry V*, characters repeatedly believe in the totality and genuineness of the king's reformation. The French constable warns the overconfident Dauphin, "You are too much mistaken in this king" (2.4.30) and Henry's own emissary, Exeter, similarly cautions the French that they shall find a difference, "Between the promise of his greener days / And these he masters now" (2.4.136-137). Such statements demonstrate that characters believe that Henry V's unexpected conversion has produced a worthy king.

To evolve further from a worthy to an ideal king, a ruler must also master the arts of warfare. Edward III never struggles with military matters after the Countess episode. He rules confidently and wisely in order to create the most honorable and successful outcomes possible for his men. The Black Prince, however, demonstrates the progression from untested youth to acclaimed victor that resembles the process Henry V undergoes en route to becoming an ideal king.

Edward III ushers his son into his warrior role, instructing him to "forget thy study and thy books, / And ure thy shoulders to an armour's weight" (1.1.158-159). The prince's reaction implies his inherent understanding that monarchy's first priority must be the protection of the realm, not personal refinement. Therefore Prince Edward willingly forfeits his studies to enter a new "school of honour" (1.1.165) where he will learn the skills and strategies of warfare needed to fortify a nation and advance its interests. The Black Prince then receives his first lesson in this new school before the Battle of Crécy during his ceremonial arming scene. With great pageantry, Edward III and his most respected lords arm the prince, not only with the material accoutrements of war, but also with an understanding of the mental and emotional qualities necessary for success in

battle. Receiving the gifts of armor, a helmet, a lance, and a shield, the Black Prince also accepts the responsibilities of proving himself noble, unyielding, valiant, courageous, and unfailingly bold in combat (3.3.179-203).

The Black Prince meets his first test in that Battle of Crécy when he finds himself surrounded and outnumbered by the French army. Although Artois, Derby, and Audley implore the king to rescue his son from certain death, Edward III repeatedly refuses. Already educated in the proper conduct of a ruler in battle, Edward III seeks to instruct his son in those same lessons. He explains to his pleading lords:

Let Edward be delivered by our hands,  
 And still, in danger, he'll expect the like;  
 But if himself, himself redeem from thence  
 He will have vanquished, cheerful, death, and fear,  
 And ever after dread their force no more  
 Than if they were but babes or captive slaves. (3.4.61-66)

The lesson, considered cruel and damning by Artois, Derby, and Audley, pays immediate dividends for the Black Prince and Edward III. When the prince approaches his father and the lords, victoriously bearing his shivered lance and the corpse of Bohemia's king, he recounts that while facing overwhelming odds, he steeled his weary arms with the assembled elders' gifts and remembrance of his vow to use them bravely. He credits their teachings with engendering a courage which refreshed him in moments of weakness and inspired him to fulfill "the duty of a knight" in conquering his sovereign's foes (3.4.91-99).

Tillyard suggests that the Black Prince's enlightenment, begun at Crécy, "is completed when before Poitiers the great force of the enemy hedge him and his army in on every side and threaten them with certain death. He rejects all French offers to save his life and then turns to the aged Audley for advice and help."<sup>28</sup> Audley's counsel concerning man's irrational fear of death convinces the prince to "hold indifferent" (4.4.162) whether he lives or dies at Poitiers. Prince Edward recognizes that no man can escape the "limit of [his] fate" (4.4.147) and thus embraces his mortality by concluding that in dying men do but begin new life (4.4.160). This conclusion perfects the Black Prince's warrior education and illustrates the principle that the ideal Christian monarch should toil courageously in corporeal affairs knowing that, even in mortal defeat, the rewards of Heaven await him.

Henry V experiences a similar process of martial education through which he learns to uphold the expected chivalric virtues of an English soldier while honoring the principles of Christian rule. Ribner believes that Hal's comprehension of "military virtues is made explicit by his behavior at Shrewsbury" in *1 Henry IV*. Prior to the battle, Hal endures harsh censure from his father. Henry IV chastises his son for his riotous, base behavior that distracts him from the interests of the realm and charges him with being likely to fight against his father in hopes of unseating the king. In response, Prince Hal promises to mend his father's opinion of him. He vows:

I will redeem all this on Percy's head,  
And in the closing of some glorious day

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<sup>28</sup> Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays*, 114.

Be bold to tell you that I am your son,  
 When I will wear a garment all of blood,  
 And stain my favors in a bloody mask,  
 Which wash'd away shall scour my shame with it. (3.2.132-137)

Hal fulfills his promise at Shrewsbury where he proves himself a valiant English soldier in his first venture into combat. As his great-uncle had done at Crécy in *Edward III*, Prince Hal strives to fulfill his father's expectations and to honor his position as England's heir. He does so, as the Black Prince did, by felling an enemy. In Hal's case, his enemy stands not as a foreign foe, but as a rebel countryman determined to depose his king and to usurp his rightful position of honor. Hal simultaneously proves to his father that he is committed to preserving his country's security and to redeeming his good name.

After defeating Hotspur, Hal's speech provides a second connection to the Black Prince's learning process in *Edward III*. Like the Black Prince, Hal comes to terms with mortality. While speaking over his fallen enemy's body, Hal separates the value of Hotspur's bold spirit from his useless corpse and recognizes the limits of man. The recognition in turn leads him to try to perfect his own soul through displays of Christianity. Hal first demonstrates Christian selflessness at Shrewsbury when he concedes the glory of his victory over Hotspur to Falstaff. Handing over Hotspur's body, Hal says, "For my part, if a lie may do thee grace, / I'll gild it with the happiest terms I have" (5.5.157-158). Wilson finds that through the sacrifice, Hal shows himself as a "soul of true honour, [who cares] nothing for renown, for the outward show of honour in

the eyes of men, so long as he has proved himself worthy of its inner substance in his own.”<sup>29</sup>

Repeating the lessons learned by the royal figures of *Edward III* in *Henry V* suggests Shakespeare’s aim in invoking Edward III’s history in *Henry V*. More than a simple patriotic motivation for war, the frequent consideration of Edward’s legend provides the audience with a standard against which Henry V’s image as the “mirror for Christian kings” should be tested.

The concept of an ideal king existed beyond dramatic texts and the Elizabethan stage. Sixteenth-century writers, philosophers, and historians worked to define the model in a variety of published works. One such publication, the highly successful and oft imitated *Mirror for Magistrates* (1559), recounted the actions of famous fallen English heroes in ways that allowed current rulers to learn from their predecessors’ failings. A precursor to the *Mirror*, Desiderius Erasmus’s *Institutio principis Christiani* (1516) still reigned in Elizabethan England as perhaps the most instructive text concerning the image of the ideal Christian king.<sup>30</sup> In it, Erasmus sets down the authoritative guidelines for how a king must conduct himself privately and publicly to ensure a just and benevolent rule. J. H. Walter summarizes Erasmus’s doctrine, observing:

It is assumed that the king is a Christian and one who supports the Christian church. . . . Justice should be established in his kingdom and he

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<sup>29</sup> Wilson, *The Fortunes of Falstaff*, 72.

<sup>30</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, ed. Lester K. Born, (New York: Octagon Books, 1965), 253.

himself should show clemency, not take personal revenge and exercise self-control. He should allow himself to be counseled by wise men, and should be familiar with humble people though . . . he should not allow himself to be corrupted by them. The king seeks defence and preservation of his state, his mind burdened with affairs of state which keep him awake at night. . . . The ceremony and insignia of a king are valueless unless the king has the right spirit; some titles are mere flattery; at all costs flattery is to be avoided. . . . The king should consider his responsibility in war for causing the deaths of so many innocent people.<sup>31</sup>

The popularity and impact of Erasmus's teachings transcended the realm of philosophical treatise to influence Elizabethan drama as well. Both *Edward III* and *Henry V* speak to the principles set forth in Erasmus's work while offering the two kings and the Black Prince as examples of ideal Christian rule.

The matter of engaging foreign adversaries in war raised genuine concerns for Elizabethan England as the queen constantly monitored both actual and perceived threats from Spain and France. The concerns manifested themselves in various ways in the history plays of the 1590s which often suggested to playgoers the supposed correct behavior of the sovereign in issues of foreign dispute. Bevington claims that in the Elizabethan "genre of war plays . . . any English monarch presuming to overthrow a neighboring kingdom must justify his acts before the world by his impeccable personal and official conduct, by his legitimate claim through primogeniture, and by his

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<sup>31</sup> J. H. Walter, ed., *Henry V* (London: Methuen, 1954), xvii-xviii.

demonstration of the usurper's total unfitness."<sup>32</sup> Such dramatic renderings of the sovereign's responsibility to legitimize a call to arms echo the philosophical precepts concerning war proposed by Erasmus. Although opposed to war, Erasmus acknowledges that a king must be prepared for it and offers a set of precepts to guide the sovereign toward conflict resolution befitting of a Christian. He writes, "The Christian prince should first question his own right, and then if it is established without a doubt he should carefully consider whether it should be maintained by means of catastrophes to the whole world."<sup>33</sup>

This issue of establishing the right is an initial concern in both *Edward III* and *Henry V*, as each play opens with conversations concerning the kings' claims to the French crown. In *Edward III*, Artois, the banished Frenchman, reviews the end of the Capetian line in France and notes that Edward III's rightful place as the successor through his mother's lineage has been unfairly usurped. Artois blames "the rancor of rebellious minds" (1.1.17) for enforcing the Salic Law which stated that France "Ought not admit a governor to rule, / Except he be descended of the male" (1.1.24-25). He maintains that patriotism urges him to expose John of Valois as the impostor that prevents Edward III from assuming his rightful seat as King of France. Without further question Edward believes Artois when he says that his motive for uncovering the matter is tied not to spite or revenge "but love unto [his] country and the right" (1.1.34). Without internal deliberation, Edward assures Artois that he shall "approve fair Isabel's descent"

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<sup>32</sup> Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics*, 204.

<sup>33</sup> Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, 253.

(1.1.48) and claim his sovereignty in France. For Edward, the matter of establishing his right is as simple as following a bloodline.

The fact that Edward III does not deliberate reasons for declaring war on France at length does not reflect upon the quality of the sovereign, nor does it compromise the playwright's adherence to Erasmus's teachings concerning the role of the ideal Christian king. Other characters within *Edward III* reinforce the legitimacy of the king's declaration of war. Even French citizens do not question Edward's pursuit of their country's throne or doubt his likely victory. In Act 3, Scene 2, an escaping French citizen prophesies that though England's forces will be far outnumbered by the French defenses, "'tis a rightful quarrel must prevail; Edward is son unto our late king's sister, / Where John Valois is three degrees removed" (3.2.35-37). The legitimacy of Edward III's claim, and thus his war, stands as clear to his enemy as it does to Edward. Those within Edward's camp also see the privilege of his birthright as justification for his assault. Derby challenges King John directly, asking whether any member of his father's house had graced the throne as Edward's line had for 500 years (3.3.131-136). Derby can express the question with confidence, knowing that John's answer could only solidify Edward's position. Such assuredness from other characters in the play validates Edward's abrupt acceptance of Artois's message. Without doubt to hinder him, Edward can confidently initiate an offensive directed at obtaining the French kingship without betraying the laws of succession or the expectations of a Christian prince.

Henry V does not enjoy the same security of bloodline that emboldens Edward, and he accordingly struggles more with the question of justness when he considers

advancing his claim on the French crown in *Henry V*. When Henry enters, he says that he already carries “things of weight / That task our thoughts concerning us and France” (1.2.5-6). Past revelations call for thoughtful resolution, and Henry seeks answers in a cautious, deliberate manner. When entertaining counsel, the king cautions his spiritual advisor Canterbury to “justly and religiously unfold” (1.2.10) the ways in which the French Salic Law may affect his claim on the French throne. Even after hearing Canterbury’s lengthy explanation of the law and his conclusion that it in no way bars Henry’s claim, the king asks again, “May I with right and conscience make this claim?” (1.2.96). Unlike Edward III, Henry belabors this question of justness before declaring war. The play’s opening conversation between Canterbury and Ely indeed indicates that Henry V exists in a more complex political world than the dramatized Edward III did. Whereas Artois publicly announces his noble motive for supporting an English king in *Edward III*, Canterbury and Ely reveal their self-serving aim behind Henry V’s back. The bishops then successfully hide their ulterior motive for encouraging Henry’s engagement on foreign soil behind promises of financial backing and verbose unraveling of the Salic Law. Henry recognizes the potential for manipulation and cautions Canterbury to speak only his thoughts that in his conscience have been “washed / As pure as sin with baptism” (1.2.31-32). To advance his claim in an ideal Christian way, Henry V must work more diligently to erase doubt than Edward III does.

Henry V’s more cautious consideration of instigating war, though, has been challenged by critics as proof of the king’s deficiencies. Those who contest Henry’s characterization as an ideal Christian king see him as “a lone wolf playing a double game

to which not even his anxious father [was] admitted, [and one who waited] to acquire moral estimation by humiliating an old friend in the moment of triumph, and to hoodwink his subjects by a sham reformation prepared well in advance.”<sup>34</sup> Detractors see Henry’s council scene in Act 1, Scene 2 as an extension of his duplicity. Wilson believes that Henry had already decided to initiate the war and simply used the clergy’s sanction as a means of justifying it to his people. He suggests, “It is not the Archbishop who sets the King a work, but the King the Archbishop.”<sup>35</sup> Tillyard thinks that Henry is manipulated by Canterbury and Ely.<sup>36</sup> He notes a marked change in the king from his youth. He describes Hal as having been an “eminently self-reliant and self-sufficient young man, one who would never accept the advice of others without subjecting it to the closest scrutiny,” and then contrasts that depiction with his perception of the king in the scene as being “quite passive, [and] leaving the business to others.”<sup>37</sup> Tillyard laments the apparent eclipse of the “perfect courtier” by the “pure man of action” he thinks Henry has become.<sup>38</sup> Robert Ornstein disagrees with Tillyard, calling Henry V “the most incisive thinker of the play; sober, perhaps even pedestrian in his thoughtfulness, [but] the only

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<sup>34</sup> James Winny, *The Player King: A Theme of Shakespeare’s Histories* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1968), 132.

<sup>35</sup> J. Dover Wilson, ed., *Henry V* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), xxi.

<sup>36</sup> Tillyard, *Shakespeare’s History Plays*, 310.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

one in the council who is able to grasp and be troubled by the moral issue of war.”<sup>39</sup> By demanding that the justness of his enterprise be determined before launching it, Henry also more fully satisfies Erasmus’s call for Christian princes to contemplate the broader consequences of their declared wars than Edward III does.

Whereas Edward simply considers probable gains before declaring his war, Henry V recognizes possible losses. The moment that Edward III reveals his intention to seize his birthright in France, he confidently announces that he will “yoke their stubborn necks with steel / That spurn against my sovereignty in France” (1.1.49-50). Throughout the scene Edward continues to speak aggressively, asserting that his desire for the French crown is sharper than his sword’s edge and sending Lorraine back to King John with news of his intentions to enter France as “a conqueror to make [John] bow” (1.1.75). While Edward’s concern does not extend beyond his own personal gain in his initial declaration of war, Henry V displays a greater appreciation for the realities of combat and a deeper concern for those who will take arms in his name. As Lily Bess Campbell points out, Henry “does not want to go to war without the assurance of justice on his side, for the horrors of war are too terrible to be risked in an unworthy cause.”<sup>40</sup> The king makes clear his awareness of the consequences of war and of his moral culpability in sending his men into it:

For God doth know how many now in health

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<sup>39</sup> Robert Ornstein, *A Kingdom for a Stage: The Achievement of Shakespeare’s History Plays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 181.

<sup>40</sup> Campbell, *Shakespeare’s Histories*, 260.

Shall drop their blood in approbation  
 Of what your reverence shall incite us to.  
 Therefore take heed how you impawn our person,  
 How you awake our sleeping sword of war.  
 We charge you in the name of God, take heed;  
 For never two such kingdoms did contend  
 Without much fall of blood, whose guiltless drops  
 Are every one a woe, a sore complaint  
 'Gainst him whose wrongs gives edge unto the swords  
 That makes such waste in brief mortality. (1.2.18-28)

In issuing his warning to Canterbury, Henry reflects Erasmus's teachings concerning the most Christian way for a prince to wage war. Erasmus maintains that the prince must consider "how disastrous and criminal an affair war is and what a host of all evils it carries in its wake even if it is the most justifiable war."<sup>41</sup> Winny notes that Henry "feels his way uncertainly towards a judgment formed by weighing legal arguments and material considerations. This respect for moral law and humanity is in itself admirable."<sup>42</sup> Henry's larger consideration of the welfare of his soldiers and deeper concerns for the moral implications of initiating war thereby illustrate a more developed sense of Christian ideals than Edward III's initial egocentric declaration provides.

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<sup>41</sup> Erasmus, *Education of the Christian Prince*, 249.

<sup>42</sup> Winny, *The Player King*, 182.

According to Erasmus, even in the most justifiable circumstances, such as those that Edward III and Henry V believe they face, “A good prince should never go to war at all unless, after trying every other means, he cannot possibly avoid it.”<sup>43</sup> In Act 1, Scene 1, Edward III struggles to meet Erasmus’s criteria. From the moment Artois reveals Edward’s genealogical right to France’s crown, the king plans to advance his claim “with steel” (1.1.49). Edward’s message to King John, delivered through Lorraine, does seem to offer an alternative to war. If John agrees to yield the entire dominion of France, he will escape harm. In refusing to yield, the French king would force Edward III to “take away those borrowed plumes of his / And send him naked to the wilderness” (1.1.85-86). The choice, however, is not to be taken as a sincere item of negotiation, and therefore could suggest a shortcoming in Edward’s Christian image.

This scene occurs before Edward’s prodigal moment. After the Countess of Salisbury educates the king, he aligns his moral compass and follows a Christian path. Before besieging Calais, Edward offers the French citizens a peaceful league with England. Only after being rejected does Edward command his soldiers to encircle the town walls to cut off supply of food to the burghers of Calais (4.2.1-6). Even the seemingly callous tactic of starving townspeople into submission speaks to Edward’s Christian growth. Erasmus declares that “if so ruinous an occurrence cannot be avoided, then the prince’s main care should be to wage the war with as little calamity to his own people and as little shedding of Christian blood as may be, and to conclude the struggle

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<sup>43</sup> Winny, *The Player King*, 249.

as soon as possible.”<sup>44</sup> By choosing to hold the people of Calais hostage within their walls rather than force combat, Edward protects his soldiers from potential physical harm, avoids bloodshed of his enemies, and offers the opportunity for peaceful submission daily.

Edward’s siege of Calais accords with his stated strategy for his entire French expedition. Upon reuniting with the Black Prince in France, the king listens to his son’s account of his company’s experiences with the enemy. The Black Prince recalls that in every encounter, the English raised arms only against the obstinate who would not accept proffers of peace (3.3.18-26). The practice reveals more than a young prince’s predilection for mercy. Edward III’s response to the report shows that the prince simply followed the king’s directive to extend a peaceful hand before unsheathing his sword. He cries out:

Ah, France, why shouldst thou be this obstinate  
 Against the kind embracement of thy friends?  
 How gently had we thought to touch thy breast,  
 But that in forward and disdainful pride  
 Thou, like a skittish and untamed colt,  
 Dost start aside, and strike us with thy heels! (3.3.27-33)

Edward III set on France with a strategy befitting the Christian king. Consequently, once French soldiers and leaders spurn England’s offers of peaceful resolution, Edward views his tactics as justified.

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<sup>44</sup> Erasmus, *Education of the Christian Prince*, 249.

Henry V similarly adheres to Erasmus's teachings on attempting to end conflicts diplomatically before resorting to physical means. On several occasions Henry sends emissaries to France on diplomatic missions, only to be rebuffed by King Charles and the Dauphin. In Act 1, Scene 2, a French ambassador returns Charles's response to Henry V's prior claim on continental dukedoms. When the ambassador asks if he will be free to deliver his lord's message, Henry conforms to the teachings of Erasmus and the principles of Elizabethan warfare and emphasizes that his sovereignty begins with mastery of his own person. He announces:

We are no tyrant, but a Christian king;  
 Upon whose grace our passion is as subject  
 As our wretches fetter'd in our prisons;  
 Therefore with frank and with uncurbed plainness  
 Tell us the Dolphin's mind. (1.2.241-245)

For his initial peaceful claim on his rightful dukedoms and his present display of Christian restraint, Henry receives verbal taunting and a gift of tennis balls to mock the king's storied wayward youth. Campbell asserts that at this point, "The justification of the war against France is thus established, and the conviction that [Henry V's] is a righteous war should be fixed in the mind of every playgoer."<sup>45</sup>

In response to being denied and ridiculed, Henry sends the ambassador back to France with a message concerning the war it has provoked. He instructs the ambassador to:

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<sup>45</sup> Campbell, *Shakespeare's Histories*, 271.

. . . tell the pleasant prince this mock of his  
 Hath turned his balls to gunstones, and his soul  
 Shall stand sore charged for the wasteful vengeance  
 That shall fly with them. (1.2.281-284)

Even after this moment of justified indignation, Henry V maintains his Christian ideals of offering amity before waging war. Though he sailed to France anticipating a “fair and lucky war” (2.2.184) sanctioned by God’s favor, Henry delays battle until offering Charles another opportunity for peaceful surrender. Exeter carries his king’s message and announces to Charles that he should willingly surrender his unlawful hold on the French crown or else prepare for bloodshed. Exeter warns:

That if requiring fail, he will compel;  
 And bids you, in the bowels of the Lord,  
 Deliver up the crown, and to take mercy  
 On the poor souls for whom this hungry war  
 Opens his vasty jaws. (2.4.101-105)

When spurned again by Charles, Henry V forges ahead with his war, yet he still harbors hope of settling the conflict without violent engagement. Before the great battles at Harfleur and Agincourt, Henry appeals in person to his enemies, offering diplomacy before destruction. In each case, the king introduces the idea of mercy. To the men of Harfleur he offers submission to “our best mercy” (3.3.3), which denied would buy the town and its inhabitants total decimation (3.3.1-21). Outside Picardy, Henry V seeks mercy for his own “weak and sickly guard” (3.6.155) when he instructs Montjoy to

request a safe passage for the English company to Calais. The king's first thought is to travel peacefully; yet he makes clear that "If we may pass, we will; if we be hind' red, / We shall your tawny ground with your red blood discolor" (3.6.160-162). In each case, Henry shows his initial desire is to conduct affairs in a peaceful, Christian manner. He acknowledges that "In peace there's nothing so becomes a man / As modest stillness and humility" (3.1.3-4), but knows that his soldiers must "Stiffen the sinews, conjure up the blood, / [and] Disguise fair nature with hard-favored rage" (3.1.7-8) if they hear the call to war. Only when the boorishness and hatred of the enemies make war inevitable does Henry unleash his terrible wrath—wrath he views as being justified by God.

Ribner suggests that kings who enter war with confidence in the justness of their cause must continually conduct themselves honorably. He notes that "with a just cause a king may go to war without remorse and with expectation of victory, for God will always give victory to the lawful cause, as the French themselves admit ([*Edward III*] 3.2.35-37). But when victory has been achieved, a king must be merciful to his enemies."<sup>46</sup> Edward III and Henry V each extend mercy befitting the expectations of the just Christian ruler. Edward III displays his merciful side with citizens of Calais. The king takes pity initially on the six poor men of Calais who had been expelled from the city's walls by the town's captain in order to spare dwindling resources. Although Edward voices his right to put his enemies to the sword as punishment for Calais's refusal of England's offered truce, it resonates as a passing reference to established precedent, not a serious declaration of his immediate intention. Without pleas from the castaways, counsel from his lords, or

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<sup>46</sup> Ribner, *The English History Play*, 153.

personal deliberation, Edward III instantly takes pity on the men, instructing Derby to “see they be relieved, / Command that victuals be appointed them / And give to everyone five crowns apiece” (4.2.30-32).

Edward III’s later triumphs at Crécy and Poitiers are held up to Henry V as examples of martial genius worthy of emulation throughout *Henry V*, but it is his great-grandfather’s merciful dealing with a surrendering enemy that Henry could look to for a model of Christian leadership. At the conclusion of his siege of Calais, Edward III presents the townspeople with the bargain of trading six of their highest ranking citizens for the preservation of their lives. With the covenant agreed upon, Edward, by right, can dispose of the burghers according to his will and he intends to do so violently in recompense for the losses his army incurred during the siege. Yet, with Queen Philippa’s call for the king to “be more mild unto these yielding men!” (5.1.39) and her reminder of the Christian king’s duty to give “life and safety unto men” (5.1.42), Edward readily forfeits his right to their lives. By extending his merciful hand, Edward abjures retribution and embraces Christian ideology and so epitomizes Erasmus’s portrait of a model Christian prince. Erasmus declares that the king “must exhibit the highest moral integrity, while in others a general appearance of uprightness is enough. His mind must be divested of all private emotions. . . . He must perform kindnesses even to those who are ungrateful, to those who do not understand, and to those who are opposed.”<sup>47</sup> By foregoing his personal desire for reckoning and releasing his prisoners without malice,

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<sup>47</sup> Erasmus, *Education of the Christian Prince*, 182.

Edward III teaches tyranny to strike terror unto itself (5.1.55) and establishes a precedent in ideal Christian governance for his descendants to follow.

In *Henry V*, the young king imitates his great-grandfather's example when resolving his own stand-off at Harfleur. Initially, like Edward III, Henry responds to his enemy's obstinacy with venomous rage. Taking Harfleur's rejection of England's proposed peace as a personal affront, Henry V promises that the end of his mercy shall lead to the defiling of virgins, the torture of elders, and the murder of infants (3.3.35-38). David Kastan suggests that, "Convinced of the sanity [sic] of his undertaking, Henry can only see the resistance of the city as blasphemous opposition to his legitimate presence. Harfleur is 'guilty in defense' (3.3.43) and thus deserves to suffer all that he threatens."<sup>48</sup> When Henry asks, "What is't to me, when you yourselves are cause," (3.3.19) he echoes Edward III's dismissal of Calais's captain who sought the ruler's mercy. In his denial, Edward calls out:

No, sirrah, tell them, since they did refuse

Our princely clemency at first proclaimed,

They shall not have it now, although they would.

I will accept of nought but fire and sword. (4.2.69-72)

Like Edward, Henry sees the impending decimation his enemies face as the product of their own creation and views the harsh penalties he promises as warranted. Ornstein concurs with Henry V's perception. He finds Henry's actions acceptable in an Elizabethan sense and points out that:

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<sup>48</sup> Kastan, *Shakespeare and the Shapes of Time*, 66.

The rules of battle, which allowed captured populations to be expelled from cities and territories, to be sold into slavery or slaughtered, were carefully prescribed and scrupulously obeyed by honorable and courteous combatants. According to these rules, Harry's position at Harfleur was impeccable: a hopeless resistance to a siege was 'guilty' because it needlessly cost the attackers' blood: and it thus gave the captors the right to slaughter or sell into captivity those who did not surrender.<sup>49</sup>

Justified by Elizabethan standards or not, the king's rage and desire for enemy blood compromises his Christianity, leaving him well short of Erasmus's lofty moral standards for the ideal prince. Similar to Edward III's early words on war, Henry V appears for a fleeting moment as little more than a bloodthirsty soldier.

The moment passes when Henry's receives news of Harfleur's surrender. More quickly than his great-grandfather, Henry V recognizes that an ideal ruler must suppress personal desire for retribution to pursue the noblest course to victory. In an exact replica of Edward III's experience outside Calais, at Harfleur Henry V listens to his besieged enemy's leader beg for England's mercy. Just as King John of Valois fails to provide aid to Calais in *Edward III*, in *Henry V* King Charles' son abandons the trapped citizens of Harfleur, forcing them to surrender their town and lives to England's sovereign. Without further bargain or demands, Henry shows compassion by ordering Exeter to enter Harfleur's gates and to "[u]se mercy to them all" (3.3.54). Like his ancestor, Henry

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<sup>49</sup> Ornstein, *A Kingdom for a Stage*, 190-191.

demonstrates one of Erasmus's principles of Christian rule by "[casting] aside all personal motives, and [using] only reason and judgment."<sup>50</sup>

The idea that Henry's control of his emotions both eliminates his desire for revenge and inspires his merciful decision at Harfleur, however, is purely dramatic. Ribner explains that "Shakespeare, in the manner of the Renaissance historian, freely alters the events of history in order to better delineate the kind of king he wishes to uphold as his example. The historical Henry V, for example, showed no mercy to the citizens of Harfleur, as Shakespeare's Henry does."<sup>51</sup> In his chronicle, Holinshed reports that when the French captain reveals that the Dauphin will not amass a power capable of ending the English siege, "The soldiers were ransomed and the town sacked, to the great gain of the Englishmen."<sup>52</sup> Shakespeare's modification of history mirrors *Edward III's* playwright's alteration of Edward's final judgment at Calais. In the play, after Edward pardons the six burghers, he orders them to reenter town and receive him as their king (5.1.57-59). This conclusion suggests that through his magnanimous treatment of his conquered foes, the king assures a tranquil co-existence of mutual benefit to England and France. Holinshed's chronicle describes the scene differently. Holinshed reports that after Calais yielded to Edward:

The capteine the lord Iohn de Vienne, and all the other capteins and men of name were staid as prisoners, and the common soldiers and other

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<sup>50</sup> Erasmus, *Education of the Christian Prince*, 159.

<sup>51</sup> Ribner, *The English History Play*, 184.

<sup>52</sup> Hosley, *Holinshed*, 127.

meane people of the towne were licenced to depart and void their houses, leauing all their armor and riches behind them. The king would not haue any of the old inhabitants to remaine in the towne, saue onlie a priest, and two other ancient personages, such as best knew the customes, lawes and ordinances of the towne.<sup>53</sup>

Froissart similarly recalls Edward's treatment of the citizens of Calais, noting that the king had ordered Sir Gaultier of Manny and his marshals to imprison all the knights of Calais, to evict all other men, women, and children from inside the town walls, and to take possession of all their homes and goods. Froissart reports that Edward III then sent from London "thirty-six good burgesses to Calais to dwell there, and to do so much that the town might be peopled with pure Englishmen."<sup>54</sup>

In each play, the dramatist's manipulation of Holinshed suggests his desire to portray his king as a compassionate conqueror whose fleeting moments of violent rage fade behind his inherent benevolence. Though the accepted rules of warfare legitimize Edward III and Henry V's initial calls for enemy slaughter and their historical evictions of the vanquished French, the dramatized sovereigns honor the spiritual over secular laws. By extending mercy to those who, by law, did not deserve it, each monarch epitomizes on stage what Erasmus sees as the "three prime qualities [of] God—the highest power, the greatest wisdom, the greatest goodness."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Holinshed, *Chronicles*, 648.

<sup>54</sup> Froissart, *The Chronicles of Froissart*, 116-117.

<sup>55</sup> Erasmus, *Education of the Christian Prince*, 158.

Although each playwright depicts his king as wielding his greatest power to achieve the maximum good at Calais and Harfleur, neither dramatist ignores moments in which the two monarchs display the greatest wisdom in denying mercy. In *Edward III*, the Black Prince returns to his father from the field at Poitiers as an unexpected victor leading his rival king and prince in captivity. Once delivered into Edward III's hands, King John immediately wants to know the ransom England will demand for his release (5.1.209). Rather than naming his price and freeing his prisoners, Edward III resolves to carry King John and Prince Philip to England. France's shame over its sovereign's defeat and its payment to liberate both king and the prince may swell Edward's heart and coffers, but in keeping John and Philip in his custody, Edward achieves an end that benefits more than his person. By removing his enemy's leaders, Edward III temporarily paralyzes the French resistance and permits him to "proclaim a rest / An intercession of our painful arms" and to instruct his valiant soldiers to "Sheathe up your swords, refresh your weary limbs, / Peruse your spoils" (5.1.236-239) in preparation for a triumphant return to England. Though an instant release of his disgraced foes would be an admirable display of mercy, Edward cannot liberate King John and Prince Philip without the potential for continued combat that could compromise his soldiers' welfare. Edward simultaneously plays the gracious captor and sensible monarch. Maintaining his hold on John and Philip, he courteously vows to show them "what entertainment [England] affords" (5.1.211) and expresses his intention to treat the French captives with dignity. Historically, Edward III kept his promise, treating King John to lavish dinners and

affording him free reign on his private hunting grounds.<sup>56</sup> Though the statement remains a mere promise at the play's end, it rings true because it is issued by a practical king who has ruled on stage with controlled emotions, conscious regard for human dignity, and careful consideration for soldiers' and his country's stability.

Moments in which Henry V refuses to bestow mercy upon his opposition have sparked questions and negative interpretations of the king's character. Wentersdorf notes that some critics find that Henry is "callous in playing a cat-and-mouse game with men he is about to send off to execution" at Southampton.<sup>57</sup> Hazlitt, in particular, criticizes Henry as being a careless man who reigned with "no idea of any rule of right or wrong, but brute force, glossed over with a little religious hypocrisy."<sup>58</sup> Shakespeare's portrayal of Henry V refusing mercy at Southampton (2.2) and Agincourt (4.6.37; 4.7.65-67), however, accords with the idealized actions of Edward III that Henry is encouraged to emulate. In both instances, Henry's denials stem from the necessities of statesmanship, not emotion.

Elizabethan audiences could consider Henry V's actions during his discovery of the treasonous plot of Lord Scroop, the Earl of Cambridge, and Sir Thomas Grey as an exemplification of Erasmus's principles of Christian justice. Soellner notes that Henry "demonstrates his sense of justice through restraint as well as, when necessary, through

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<sup>56</sup> Holinshed, *Chronicles*, 669.

<sup>57</sup> Wentersdorf, "The Conspiracy of Silence in *Henry V*," 268.

<sup>58</sup> William Hazlitt, *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*, 3rd ed. (repr., 1817, New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1845), 132.

severity. . . . Henry dispenses justice in the way Erasmus thought a prince should: he forgives most readily those crimes that affect him alone, and he seeks to punish rather than to take revenge.”<sup>59</sup> In the scene, the king has already illustrated his willingness to forgive personal affronts. He directs Exeter to free a man who drunkenly railed against the king’s own person before he directs his attention to the turncoats (2.2.39-43). Henry understands that offering clemency to detractors and other opponents cannot stand as his stock practice. Therefore, when the king turns his judgment on the conspirators who have traded the promise of his assassination for French gold, he acts similarly to his great-grandfather at the close of *Edward III*. Henry V denies the traitors’ pleas for liberation in order to safeguard his kingdom’s security, not to satisfy a personal appetite for vengeance. He announces:

Wherein you would have sold your king to slaughter,  
 His princes and his peers to servitude,  
 His subjects to oppression and contempt,  
 And his whole kingdom into desolation.  
 Touching our person, seek we no revenge,  
 But we our kingdom’s safety must so tender,  
 Whose ruin you have sought, that to her laws  
 We do deliver you. (2.2.170-177)

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<sup>59</sup> Rolf Soellner, *Shakespeare’s Patterns of Self-Knowledge* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1972), 115.

As Campbell notes, Henry proceeds “quite in the best tradition when he disavows private vengeance as a motive.”<sup>60</sup> The decision exemplifies Henry V’s ability to govern with reason and judgment while always prioritizing the well-being of his subjects.

The king’s self-control while sentencing the traitors to death does not erase his personal rage over his trusted councilors’ betrayal. Henry V erupts in anger when charging the traitors as “English monsters” and chastising Scroop as a “cruel, / Ingrateful, savage, and inhuman creature” (2.2.94-95) who willingly schemed with a “cunning fiend . . . [who] Hath got the voice in hell for excellence” (2.2.111-113). Ornstein suggests that Henry sees his fury as defensible because he considers it “wholly impersonal.”<sup>61</sup> Even in anger, Henry maintains that “It is the law that condemns wrongdoers, not he.”<sup>62</sup> Ornstein questions the sincerity of the king’s statement, suggesting that Henry recasts his image as “the helpless instrument of the law” immediately after performing “the godlike office of charity” to the drunken rabble-rouser in order to achieve his predetermined ends.<sup>63</sup> Wentersdorf opposes Ornstein’s cynical reading, maintaining that Henry V adhered to Erasmus’s policies on handling rebels. Wentersdorf suggests that “Henry follows this policy when he denounces the evils of ingratitude and treachery, administers the law strictly but fairly, and energetically metes out the traditional capital punishment, not so

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<sup>60</sup> Campbell, *Shakespeare’s Histories*, 292.

<sup>61</sup> Ornstein, *A Kingdom for a Stage*, 188.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

much because his own life has been threatened as because the conspiracy has jeopardized the welfare of the whole country.”<sup>64</sup>

Henry V protects that welfare on two occasions in Act 4. First, Shakespeare embellishes Holinshed’s account of the fray at Agincourt. In Holinshed, Henry’s army’s valiant efforts give England the advantage, “Which when the King perceived, he encouraged his men and followed so quickly upon the enemies that they ran hither and thither, casting away their armor; many, on their knees, desired to have their lives saved.”<sup>65</sup> Holinshed does not develop the moment to reveal Henry’s reaction to those appeals. Shakespeare elaborates Holinshed’s concise version of the event and portrays a vigilant, warrior king who weighs the lives of his prisoners against the threat to his soldiers. Shakespeare’s Henry V hears the French alarm that calls its soldiers to regroup and return to battle then tells his men: “The French have reinforced their scattered men. / Then every soldier kill his prisoners!” (4.6.36-37). Fallon suggests that “According to modern codes of war, such an act would constitute a ‘crime against humanity,’ but under the circumstances at the time, the order may appear justified.”<sup>66</sup> Fallon continues to rationalize Henry’s order, speculating that the king required every available soldier in the battle ranks to meet the advancing French. Therefore, soldiers either needed to dispose of their captives or move them to the rear of the company to be left unattended. Given these

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<sup>64</sup> Wentersdorf, “The Conspiracy of Silence in *Henry V*,” 268.

<sup>65</sup> Hosley, *Holinshed*, 132.

<sup>66</sup> Robert Thomas Fallon, *A Theatergoer’s Guide to Shakespeare’s Themes* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2003), 58.

options, Henry V's order appears prudent, if not merciful. A release of French detainees would increase the already overwhelming number of enemy combatants the outmanned English army faced. Leaving an unguarded host of prisoners to trail Henry's rear flanks would compromise the safety of his forward-marching soldiers.<sup>67</sup> Fallon concludes that the king gave the order to kill all French prisoners because no alternative existed which would both secure the marching ranks' safety and diminish the enemy's strength.

Henry V's command once again demonstrates the crucial difference between the Christian citizen and the Christian king. Whereas the former must only consider the personal spiritual implications of his actions, the latter must carefully weigh the consequence of his every decision in terms of the preservation and prosperity of his whole realm. Given the distinction, Herschel Baker suggests that the audience or critic should not be astonished by flashes of callousness in Henry V, a king who identifies himself as both a Christian and a soldier. Baker notes that "a certain hardness" in Henry V's character should be expected, "for successful men, especially those whose talents run to war, are rarely noted for their sweetness and compassion."<sup>68</sup>

Later in the battle of Agincourt, Henry V again orders the murder of England's present and potential prisoners. Upon learning that French soldiers ruthlessly butchered the young English boys left behind to guard his camp, Henry unleashes his anger a second time. When calling for the herald's trumpet, the king determines to engage the French in new battles and announces to his soldiers that ". . . we'll cut the throats of those

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<sup>67</sup>Fallon, *A Theatergoer's Guide to Shakespeare's Themes*, 58.

<sup>68</sup>Evans, *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 976.

we have, / And not a man of them that we shall take / Shall taste our mercy” (4.7.63-65). Fallon suggests that “In one case, the order may be justified as a desperate measure demanded by the fortunes of battle; in the other, it is given in anger, a brutal response to an atrocity by committing another in reprisal.”<sup>69</sup> Though England faces overwhelming odds at Agincourt, the loss of non-combatant personnel and Henry’s personal effects do not jeopardize the army or render the king desperate. Henry’s order, though, cannot be considered a vicious reaction fueled solely by fury. As Ornstein notes, Shakespeare’s minor characters defend the king’s directive. While reporting on the execution of the English boys, Fluellen condemns France’s treachery, saying, “‘Tis expressly / against the law of arms; ‘tis as arrant a piece of / knavery, mark you now, as can be offert” (4.7.1-3). Gower concurs, calling the French soldiers “cowardly rascals” (4.7.6) and believes that Henry V acts “most worthily” when passing the death sentences. By breaking the established codes of warfare, the French force Henry to make a merciless decision.

The play also reiterates the historical perception offered in the chronicles. Holinshed writes that, to protect his company, Henry V acts “contrary to his accustomed gentleness” when deciding to eliminate enemies whose behavior is neither predictable nor permissible.<sup>70</sup> Holinshed recalls that the king commands the slaying of the French after “doubting lest his enemies should gather together again, and begin a new field; and mistrusting further that the prisoners would be an aid to his enemies or the very enemies

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<sup>69</sup> Fallon, *A Theatergoer’s Guide to Shakespeare’s Themes*, 59.

<sup>70</sup> Hosley, *Holinshed*, 133.

to their takers indeed if they were suffered to live.”<sup>71</sup> The order, while scarcely exemplifying Christian mercy, is a wise martial strategy. Holinshed recalls that after Henry V’s order, “The Frenchmen fearing the sentence of so terrible a decree, without further delay parted out of the field.”<sup>72</sup>

Henry V’s separate calls for execution of French captives are more violent than Edward III’s decision to deny King John and Prince Philip’s ransom in *Edward III*, but the different circumstances Henry faces render his orders understandable, if not acceptable. Whereas Edward III has the luxury of making his decision concerning his prisoners in a calm moment of celebration after the English victory at Poitiers, Henry V must issue his merciless decrees in the heated confusion of combat. Judgments rendered in courts and chambers follow periods of deliberation that allow for prolonged contemplation of political and spiritual consequences. In the field of battle, reactions carry the day, and the king must respond in ways that preserve his subjects’ lives, even if in doing so he runs against his own Christian principles. Though Henry V’s actions bar the kindnesses Erasmus expected a Christian prince to offer his enemies, they still fall within Erasmus’s guidelines for the conduct of the Christian king. Erasmus posits that “for so much does [the king] want to be of real help to his people, without thought of recompense, that if necessary he would not hesitate to look out for their welfare at great risk to himself.”<sup>73</sup> In ordering the execution of French prisoners and enemies, Henry V

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<sup>71</sup> Hosley, *Holinshed*, 133.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Erasmus, *Education of the Christian Prince*, 162.

may deny Christian mercy, but he preserves the safety of his countrymen. Therefore, on the field at Agincourt, Henry V shows that though he may not be a perfect man, he is an ideal monarch.

At the heroic climax of the play, Henry V unites the kingdoms of England and France, though as the Epilogue reminds the audience the union is short-lived. By redeeming his apparently derelict youth by conquering his greatest foe and expanding his nation's power, Henry V lives up to the heroic legend of Edward III and the Black Prince. He shows that in the course of his educational journey, he has discovered "in his own ancestry, the meaning of kingship."<sup>74</sup> Holderness suggests that Henry's acknowledgment of his ancestry is a critical step in Henry's education because "The present . . . can read in the inscriptions of such monuments an honourable and ancient language capable of guiding and inspiring the present from the past."<sup>75</sup> Ulrici suggests that the language of Edward III's moral nobility and the Black Prince's military fortitude teaches Henry that:

All human grandeur, power, and sovereignty, have no stability if they be not planted on the soil of genuine morality, without which the highest energy of man is too feeble to resist the assaults of temptations when directed against his weak side. . . . But the fall of true nobleness and energy is not irremediable; they may rise again, and derive strength from that very virtue against which they were tempted to offend.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Holderness, *Shakespeare: The Histories*, 141.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ulrici, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Art*, 453-454.

Such examples serve Henry in his final ascent toward his heroic legend status and further indicate a possibly intentional connection of *Henry V* to *Edward III*. The revival of Henry V's grand ancestry provides the examples of kingship he needs to become the archetype of Christian sovereignty.

In *Henry V*, Shakespeare shows an awareness of Henry's place in history that exceeds the Black Prince's forward-thinking speech. As Jones points out, while Edward III and the Black Prince are remembered frequently in *Henry V*, "There are no such recollections of heroic precedents in *Edward III*. . . . Prince Edward is shown as a model for emulation, but since he does not look back at other models, we do not see exemplary history at work *in* the play and thereby becoming a subject *of* the play, as it is in *Henry V*."<sup>77</sup> The Black Prince and Edward III do continually consider actions in terms of future generations' perceptions of their honor. In Edward III's speech at the close of the Countess episode, he wishes his fault to be the Countess's "honour's fame" (2.2.196). Later, he refuses aid to his son at Crécy so that the Black Prince might "win a world of honour" (3.4.34) for his deeds. The Black Prince, after his victory at Poitiers, wishes to have his struggles "redoubled twentyfold" (5.1.228) so that his "bloody scars," "weary nights," and "dangerous conflicts," would inspire future generations of English soldiers to win honor in the face of foreign enemies (5.1.223-235). In such moments the Plantagenets recognize how their conduct will produce positive ends in the future.

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<sup>77</sup> Robert C. Jones, *These Valiant Dead: Renewing the Past in Shakespeare's Histories* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991), 129.

Henry V displays similar recognition of his actions' potential future influence during his St. Crispin's Day speech. He incites his soldiers to take heart before the battle ahead by promising that their victory will make their names as "Familiar in [the] mouth as household words" (4.3.52). Knowing that his forces face seemingly insurmountable odds at Agincourt, Henry V inspires his soldiers, not with dazzling military strategies that will ensure victory, but with the promise that for their valiant efforts, "Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by, / From this day to the ending of the world, / But we in it shall be remembered" (4.3.58-59). Like Edward III and the Black Prince, on the battlefield Henry V portrays the most favorable possible scenario for the impact of the present on the future.

To be sure, *Henry V* goes beyond the easy commemoration of valiant deeds to display a fuller sense of history than *Edward III* does. Henry is encouraged to look back to his forefathers as models for emulation, but he also sees his own father as a cause for contrition when he asks God to look favorably on his attempts at atoning for Henry IV's deposition of Richard II. When he implores, "Not today, O Lord, / O, not today, think not upon the fault / My father made in compassing the crown!" (4.1.297-299) before the Battle of Agincourt, Henry demonstrates his understanding of the past's full range of possible influence. He recognizes that future generations may look to their ancestors as blights on their lineage just as easily as they can look to them as their champions.

Although Shakespeare establishes Henry V as a champion worthy of emulation at Agincourt, he avoids suspending the king's legacy at his heroic high point as *Edward III*'s playwright does for Edward. History shows that after the Battle of Poitiers, Edward

III never duplicated that battle's success. By the end of his fifty year reign, Edward never recovered from the loss of Queen Philippa. Allowing flatterers to assume increasing control over his decisions, Edward III died having lost much of what he gained during the ten year period celebrated in *Edward III*. Yet the playwright ignores the king's historical end in favor of maintaining the play's triumphant tone. In *Henry V*, Shakespeare also concludes the dramatic action at the historical climax of Henry's reign, the moment Henry prepares for his marriage to Katherine, which promised the union of English and French rule. Shakespeare continues then to offer the epilogue that describes Henry's triumphs as fleeting moments within a nation's ongoing history:

This star of England. Fortune made his sword;  
 By which, the world's best garden he achieved;  
 And of it left his son imperial lord.  
 Henry the Sixth, in infant bands crowned King  
 Of France and England, did this king succeed;  
 Whose state so many had the managing,  
 That they lost France, and made his England bleed. (Epilogue.6-12)

Whereas *Edward III* leaves the audience reveling in the moment of Edward's greatest military achievement, and thereby suspends his dramatic legend at its heroic zenith, *Henry V* provides a complete revelation of the king's place in England's history. As such, *Henry V* stands as a better historical drama than *Edward III* in the same ways that Henry V the character supersedes the dramatized Edward III as the ideal Christian king. By looking back into Edward III's lineage to find models of kingship and by looking

ahead to caution against faith in the permanence of prosperous times, *Henry V* acknowledges the full scope of history's usefulness. *Edward III* provides a vital foundation on which *Henry V* builds to fulfill the full promise of the English Chronicle Play as both a celebratory and instructive genre.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## CONCLUSION

Since booksellers Richard Rogers and William Ley listed *Edward III* the play as a work of William Shakespeare in their publication, *An exact and perfect Catalogue of all the Playes that are Printed* in 1656, most critical studies of the play have pursued an answer to the seemingly unanswerable question of authorship. Though criticism has shifted through the centuries and has advanced various theories of authorship, including notions of Shakespeare's lone hand, of other playwrights' independent work, and of Shakespeare's collaboration, ambiguities in published texts, indeterminacy about date of composition, and uncertainty about the play's acting company have suspended scholarship on the issue of attribution in perpetual speculation. Moving beyond this question to consider the dramatic aims of the play enriches the study of *Edward III* by revealing the ways in which the English Chronicle Play genre resonated with Elizabethan audiences.

Written between 1589 and 1595, *Edward III* falls within the period when English Chronicle Plays were in vogue. Felix Schelling notes that between 1562 and 1642 records show the performances of more than 150 plays that drew their subject matter from the history of England.<sup>1</sup> Of those 150 plays, Schelling calculates that nearly eighty are dated

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<sup>1</sup> Felix E. Schelling, *The English Chronicle Play: A Study in the Popular Historical Literature Enviroing Shakespeare* (New York: Macmillan, 1902), 51.

between 1590 and 1600.<sup>2</sup> Critics have often attributed the flourishing of the genre during this decade to England's defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. Many scholars credit the Elizabethan audience's patriotic exuberance over their nation's thwarting of a foreign threat as creating a popular appetite for dramatic renderings of England's storied past. This rationale, however, is not universally accepted. Benjamin Griffin asserts that "Although the defeat of the Armada was widely celebrated, both at the time and later, that does not make the Armada's aftermath an inherently 'celebratory' time. The international situation was still troubling."<sup>3</sup> E. M. W. Tillyard also finds that the claim linking the English Chronicle Play genre with the Spanish Armada's defeat is unsubstantiated. He suggests that "At most that event encouraged a process already in full working. . . . Indeed it is likely that the publication of a second edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles* in 1587 did more to forward the growth of the English Chronicle Play than the defeat of the Armada in 1588."<sup>4</sup>

Seen from the perspectives developed by Griffin and Tillyard, the author of *Edward III* would appear to have created a play that would satisfy its audiences on several patriotic levels. By incorporating allusions to the defeat of the Armada in his dramatization of the Battle of Sluys in Act 3, Scene 1, the playwright joins his countrymen in celebrating England's recent significant naval victory in a time of

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>3</sup> Benjamin Griffin, *Playing the Past: Approaches to English Historical Drama 1385-1600* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 2001), 65.

<sup>4</sup> E. M. W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays* (1944; repr., New York: Barnes and Noble, 1969), 100.

continued foreign threat. He also exploited the national history popularized by the two editions of Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1577; 1587) in order to characterize the English monarchy as being steadfast throughout the centuries. The play then stands as a reminder of the country's triumphs in its perilous past aimed at fortifying a nation's resolve in the face of an uncertain future.

Although Tillyard downplays the significance of the Armada victory in the emergence of the Chronicle Play genre, he does not dismiss patriotic sentiment completely. He acknowledges that patriotism gathered "force in the middle years of the Queen's reign" and finds that "this national self-satisfaction is an animating principle of these plays."<sup>5</sup> Schelling also concludes that the popular interest in England's historic tradition "sought utterance in dramatic form in the reign of Elizabeth because the dramatic was the most potent mode of literary expression in that favored age."<sup>6</sup>

Janette Dillon finds that the Chronicle Plays' concentration on England and its national history "made particular sense within the context of 1590s public theatre [because] the audience was popular and English; the language of the plays was English; England was at war; and censorship legislations, virtually non-existent in the reign of Henry VIII, sought to prevent the stage from meddling in contemporary politics."<sup>7</sup> By revisiting the reigns of the past, modern playwrights could safely question or commend

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<sup>5</sup> Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays*, 101.

<sup>6</sup> Schelling, *The English Chronicle Play*, 3.

<sup>7</sup> Janette Dillon, "The Early Tudor History Play," in *English Historical Drama 1500-1660: Forms Outside the Canon*, eds. Teresa Grant and Barbara Ravelhofer (New York: Macmillan, 2008), 41.

those former kings' personal and political exploits as a way to offer examples of how a monarch should behave.

*Edward III's* author creates an image of that ideal Christian king by carefully manipulating his source material. Drawing on versions of the king's failed sexual pursuit of the Countess of Salisbury found in Painter's *Palace of Pleasure* and in Froissart's *Chroniques*, the dramatist invites his audience first to question the limits of sovereign prerogative, then to applaud Edward III's moral awakening. By showing the king exploit the power of his crown in hopes of satisfying his base physical desires, the playwright suggests that depravity exists when a ruler subjugates moral laws to the king's laws. Through depicting Edward III's enlightenment as being precipitated by the Countess's constancy, the dramatist then celebrates the king's restoration of moral order. At the close of the King-Countess episode, the audience understands that by honoring God as the true head of England's hierarchical society, its monarch can avoid the trappings of human weakness to maintain an order based on moral integrity.

In the second plotline of *Edward III*, such decency engenders military success. Fortified by his moral development, the king turns his attention to conquering France. Using historical accounts of Edward III's reign found in Froissart and in Holinshed's *Chronicles* selectively, and sometimes creatively, the playwright repeatedly portrays the king as honorable, merciful, and resolute. In his separate dealings with castoffs and prisoners outside the walls of Calais, Edward III exercises his Christian ethics, first sustaining the six castoffs in Act 4, Scene 2, and then releasing his six ransomed prisoners in Act 5, Scene 1. As a reward for his benevolence, God looks favorably upon

Edward's soldiers and his son in the most dire moments of combat en route to their victory over the French. By concluding the play at the height of Edward III's historical success, the dramatist encourages the audience to remember England's former king as formidable ruler whose virtue inspires divine favor to fall upon his realm.

Lily Bess Campbell observes that playwrights of the late 16th century took full advantage of the past as an instructive force in the present. She notes that Shakespeare, among others, used the English Chronicle Play as an "historical mirror....in which the Elizabethans could see their own national problems being acted out on the stage before them, and in which they could witness the eternal justice of God in the affairs of the body politic. They showed the conflicts of the age which endangered the state, threatening its peace and security."<sup>8</sup>

Irving Ribner maintains that in the last decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the problem of succession became the most critical issue for the English. Assured that Elizabeth I would produce no heirs, Elizabethans considered possible successors with great anxiety. Ribner claims that Shakespeare spoke to "the obvious problem of the type of man who should succeed Elizabeth" in his second tetralogy by attempting to "delineate various royal types and to indicate the qualities of the perfect English king."<sup>9</sup> Critical opinion tends to identify Shakespeare's example of a true hero-king as Henry V. Within *Henry V*, King Henry perfects the education begun in the *1 and 2 Henry IV*, an edification that resembles

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<sup>8</sup> Lily Bess Campbell, *Shakespeare's Histories: Mirrors of Elizabethan Policy* (San Marino, CA: The Huntington Library, 1947), 255.

<sup>9</sup> Irving Ribner, *The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 150-151.

the refinement of character seen in *Edward III*. Just as King Edward and the Black Prince must develop their moral and military sensibilities to ensure England's prosperity, Henry V must finally abandon the vain pursuits of youth to become the valiant leader of his realm. The relationship between the two plays extends beyond ideological associations. Throughout *Henry V*, Edward III and the Black Prince are repeatedly held up as archetypes of successful rule. The royal characters of *Edward III* then can be viewed as specific models for the perceived humanity and nobility of Shakespeare's ideal Christian king.

Recognizing *Edward III*'s role in cultivating English nationalism and in shaping perceptions of ideal kingship both in Shakespeare's texts and in Elizabethan audiences' minds suggests a direction for future comprehensive studies of the play. Scholarship concerning questions of authorship and dating has produced 400 years of rich debate which has reached a consensus of belief in Shakespeare's collaboration on the text. Extending investigations of *Edward III* beyond the mysteries of its origin toward examinations of its social and dramatic impacts presents exciting possibilities for new perspectives on the play's merits as an English Chronicle Play.

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