SHAKESPEARE LECTURE

THE REIGN OF KING EDWARD THE THIRD (1596) AND SHAKESPEARE

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THREE years ago, when this lecture was last delivered in Burlington House, Emrys Jones began by revealing that his title, 'The First West End Comedy', far from introducing a revolutionary reading of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, had nothing to do with Shakespeare. As the directions to British Academy Shakespeare lecturers allow them the choice of any topic concerned with the history of English drama, his decision was to speak about Ben Jonson's *Epicene*. Last year, Glynne Wickham, lecturing on *King Henry VIII*, deliberately avoided reference to the question of the authorship of a play generally conceded to be the collaborative work of Shakespeare and his younger colleague, John Fletcher—for all its inclusion in the First Folio. Today I shall talk on a topic which may, or may not, be Shakespearian, and I intend to postpone the question of whether or not it is until very late in my lecture.

Neither of the lectures to which I refer was delivered on 23 April. When I was invited to give this year's lecture, it was suggested that 'the birthday' might be a suitable date for it. The date had some bearing on my choice of topic. The day wherein our author's birth is celebrated in his role of National Poet of England is the anniversary of the foundation of the chivalric order of St George, better known, from soon after its inception in 1348, as the Order of the Garter. Edward III founded it, and the pleasantly scandalous myth of its foundation, first recorded by Polydore Vergil in his *Anglicae Historiae*, is among the few scraps of information about his long reign still widely current.

Alas, we do not know beyond reasonable doubt that we are right in celebrating today William Shakespeare's 421st birthday—and I do not offer any solution to the perplexed question of his authorship of the historical play *The Reign of King Edward III*,

which—to cap my catalogue of frustrations—fails to include the stageworthy episode at the victory ball for the battle of Crécy, held at Calais in 1347, when a court lady lost a garter, and the gallant king, retrieving it, also retrieved his own reputation by coining the Garter motto, '*Honi soit qui mal y pense*'.

William Shakespeare did die on 23 April. The tradition that it was also his birthday dates only from the eighteenth century. His baptism on the 26th tells against it: by normal usage, a baby born on the 23rd would have been baptized on the next holy day, the 25th, St Mark's Day. On the whole, the 21st, the 22nd—even perhaps the 25th—look likelier as his true date of birth, sadly depriving him both of an 'especially appropriate' birthday and of the strange chance of matching in life the fate of his Cassius, dead on his birthday, or his Cleopatra, dead soon after the gaudy night of a final birthday party.[1] Edward III did not die on 23 April, but he did make his last official public appearance on this day in 1377, when he created two new young knights of the Garter, his grandsons, Richard of Bordeaux and Henry Bolingbroke, the future kings Richard II and Henry IV.

Just as Shakespeare ought to have had the patriotic tact to be born on St George's Day, but may not have, he as surely ought to have written a play about the philoprogenitive monarch whose seven sons and factious descendants supplied the matter for eight of the ten plays printed as his 'Histories' in 1623, and to whose story he alludes in those plays some twenty times. That he may indeed have written such a play has been the claim of scholars, critics, enthusiasts, and even a few editors, since it was first mooted by Edward Capell in 1760. In the preface to his *Prolusions*, a trial volume of short edited texts preliminary to his complete edition of Shakespeare, Capell wrote as follows of one of them, listed in the table of contents as 'Edward the third, a Play, thought to be writ by SHAKESPEARE'.

> But what shall be said of the poem that constitutes the second part? or how shall the curiosity be satisfy'd, which it is probable may have been rais'd by the great Name inserted in the title-page? That it was indeed written by SHAKESPEARE, it cannot be said with candour that there is any external evidence at all: something of proof arises from resemblance between the stile of his earlier performances and of the work in question; and a more conclusive one yet from the consideration of the time it appear'd in, in which there was no known writer equal to such a play: the fable of it too is taken from the same books which that author is

[1] S. Schoenbaum, *A Documentary Life of Shakespeare* (Oxford, 1975), p. 20.

known to have follow'd in some other plays; to wit, *Holinshed*'s Chronicle, and a book of novels call'd the Palace of Pleasure: But, after all, it must be confess'd that it's 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, and by what he shall meet with in perusal of the piece itself.[1]

If Capell's claim remains 'conjecture only, and matter of opinion' over two centuries later, it is mainly because candour still compels the acknowledgement that 'external evidence' remains conspicuously absent. True, in 1656 a catalogue of plays published with an edition of Thomas Goff's *The Careless Shepherdess* lists *Edward III* as Shakespeare's. As it also gives him *Edward II* (Marlowe's tragedy) and *Edward IV* (thought to be by Thomas Heywood), it is hard to see what evidential purpose this list can serve. I propose to attempt some discussion of the anonymous play of *Edward III*, printed in 1596, in which I shall refrain from conjecture about the identity of its author. Then, time and your patience thus allowing, I will speak a little on that question. The first part of my contention is that understanding has sometimes been hampered by a natural desire to further or challenge the association of it with Capell's 'great Name'.

The Reign of King Edward the Third, as published by Cuthbert Burby early in 1596, after entry on the Stationers' Register on 1 December 1595, makes a singularly unattractive little book. Most pages contain a tight column of verse speeches, their beginnings not even signalled by indentation, relieved only by the occasional spaced and centred entry direction. The tightness of the setting allowed the printer, Thomas Scarlet, to squeeze 2,600 lines of text into nine and a half quarto gatherings. Typesetting was by formes, from cast-off copy. This method of setting, which robbed compositors of the aid of an intelligible context, together with what must have been a difficult hand, resulted in a profusion of misprints arising from misreading. Thus three French towns sacked by the English, 'Harfleu, Lo, Crotay', appear as 'Harslen, Lie, Crotag' (vi [III. i].20).[2] More alarming misreadings include the ludicrous 'I will throng a hellie spout of bloud' for 'I will through a Hellespont of bloud' (iii. 152 [II. ii 156]). This line roused Swinburne to paroxysms of rage against the blameless author for

[1] *Prolusions* (London, 1760), pp. ix–x.

[2] Quotations from the play are taken from the text of my forthcoming edition for the Clarendon Press. References include, within square brackets, act and scene numbers from the edition in C. F. Tucker Brooke, *The Shakespeare Apocrypha* (Oxford, 1908).

inflicting on his auditors 'the shock of this unspeakable and incomparable verse'.[1]

Speech prefixes are frequently misprinted, misplaced, or omitted. Stage directions, though sparse, are serviceable. They are undetailed about matters of staging: the use of 'above' is never specified, though two scenes imply its use in their dialogue (ii [I. ii], viii [III. v]), and entries by separate doors are only once described by the technical terms '*at one doore*' and '*At an other doore*' (iii [II. ii] 0.1–2). Cues for sound effects, which the play uses freely, are amply provided, suggesting that the manuscript used as printer's copy, though evidently not a theatrical prompt-book, represented a play conceived in very practical theatrical terms. In three or four places obscurity appears to result from misplacing of verse lines or longer passages, conjuring up the vision of an authorial manuscript with marginal alterations or additions. Beneath its superficial flaws, the text of the quarto gives every sign of completeness and of derivation from copy of high authority. The only known early reprint was printed in 1599 by Simon Stafford, again for Burby. Four subsequent transfers of the copyright, between 1609 and 1639, leave room for conjecture that other editions may once have existed. The title-pages of both quartos state that the play '*hath bin sundrie times plaied about the Citie of London*'. No company is named and it is unclear whether 'about' should be construed as within or without the city.

Although no company or playhouse is named on its title-page, the play must have belonged to one of the four adult companies active in the early 1590s, the Queen's Men, Lord Strange's Men, the Earl of Pembroke's Men, and the Admiral's Men. Equally, the only playhouses outside the city of London at which it could have been acted were the Theatre, the Curtain, and the Rose. Performances inside the city could have been at any of the inns whose yards were used for plays. Something can be deduced from the printed text about the resources of the company and the playhouse. An action requiring a large cast of characters has been plotted with care and resourcefulness to be actable, with much doubling, by eleven men, three or four boys, and about ten non-speaking extras. Staging requires no more than two doors for entries, with an invitation to use 'above'. The countess's reference to 'the great Starre-chamber ore our heads' (iii [II. ii]. 161) invites a gesture to the stage canopy 'heavens' to accompany the appeal to a higher court than the king's. Sound effects are many and

[1] A. C. Swinburne, *A Study of Shakespeare* (London, 1929), p. 264.

ambitious. They include cannon shot for the naval battle of Sluys (iv [III. i]) and '*A clamor of rauens*' (xiii [IV. v]. 18). Performance in a properly equipped playhouse seems at least to be envisaged, while the casting requirements are those of a full company working in London rather than a touring group.

The doubling has one striking result. Although the Dauphin, Charles, duke of Normandy, is captured at Poitiers with his father and his young brother Philip, he does not appear with them in the final scene. In fact, Charles did escape from Poitiers, to begin an outstandingly effective career as regent and later king of France. But it is no scruple of historical accuracy that occasions his absence. The playwright has a higher card to play. King David II of Scotland is, quite unhistorically, brought over by his captor, John Copeland, to be delivered to King Edward in person at Calais—and the role of King David (seen before only in scene ii) is clearly designed to be doubled with the Dauphin. The point of my reference to these details is to dispel from the outset the thought that *Edward III* can be the work of any poet but one who was proficient and professionally experienced in theatrical composition, who knew the resources of his playhouse and his acting company, and who wrote his play to accommodate and exploit them.

The play apparently enjoyed a continuing reputation. Thomas Heywood, in his *Apology for Actors* (1612), chose it to exemplify the power of historical drama to 'new mold the harts of the spectators and fashion them to the shape of any noble and notable attempt'.

> What English Prince should hee behold the true portraiture of that [f]amous King *Edward* the third, foraging France, taking so great a King captiue in his owne country, quartering the English Lyons with the French Flower-delyce, . . . would not bee suddenly Inflam'd with so royall a spectacle, being made apt and fit for the like atchieuement. So of *Henry* the fift: (fol. B4)

That Heywood is referring to our play and no other is confirmed by his inclusion of 'the Countesse of *Salisbury*' (fol. g1^{v}) among examples for the imitation of chaste women, who are 'by vs [the actors] encouraged in their virtues'. Heywood was not the first defender of the stage to jump on the patriotic history play as a reassuring instance of the power of art to shape life. Thomas Nashe, in a well-known passage in *Pierce Penniless*, wrote:

> What a glorious thing it is to haue *Henrie* the fifth represented on the

stage, leading the French King prisoner, and forcing both him and the Dolphin to sweare fealty.[1]

This is our best evidence that the reign of Henry V had been dramatized by the summer of 1592. The play Nashe refers to does not survive, unless *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, published in 1598, stands in some debased relation to it. In *The Famous Victories*, King Henry does receive homage from the Dauphin in the final scene, but he is not a prisoner, neither is his father, who pays no homage, though the duke of Burgundy does. The reference to royal captives rather recalls the end of *Edward III*, with the triumphant return of Edward from Calais at the head of a party containing 'three kings, two princes, and a queene' (xviii [v]. 243). I do not mean to imply that Nashe was confusing the two plays, rather to point to the obvious resemblance between the careers of the victors of Crécy and Agincourt, and to associate patriotic plays about both with the spirit of the years following the failure of the Spanish Armada in 1588. It seems a pity that the chronicler Edward Hall allotted the tag 'Victorious Acts' to the reign of Henry V. Transferred to the stage, it would have suited *Edward III* much better than the sad fragment we know as *The Famous Victories of Henry V*.

The story of the reign of King Edward III (1312–77) offers a variety of interests. It was a period of rapid military and political development, a period, like the reign of Elizabeth I, in which English national identity was strongly asserted and the longevity of the sovereign helped to validate an image of royal excellence harder to associate with an Edward II, an Edward VI, or a James I. Edward's reign saw the outbreak of what would become the Hundred Years' War; it was savagely punctuated by two visitations of the plague. The king enjoyed unprecedented success in holding his nobility and his own large family in a union of loyalty and singleness of purpose without which his military exploits against the Scots and the French would have been unthinkable. He had a harder time persuading a succession of parliaments to go on raising the cash at least to service the debts incurred by those exploits. His reign began in his minority and its early years were overshadowed by the ascendancy of Roger Mortimer, earl of March, the lover of his mother, Isabelle, daughter of Philippe V of France, nicknamed 'le Beau'. The murders of his father, Edward II, and his uncle, Edmund, earl of Kent, probably implied a risk to young Edward's own life. His

[1] *The Works of Thomas Nashe* (ed. R. B. McKerrow, Oxford, 1958), i. 213.

resolution and the loyalty of his closest friends, among them William Montacute, later earl of Salisbury, achieved the arrest of Mortimer and the Queen at Nottingham Castle in 1330 and the summary execution of Mortimer. Edward's declining years were difficult too. After an active and brilliant military career in which he asserted his control over the Scots and came within striking distance of winning the French crown, he withdrew into an increasingly private retirement. The death, in 1369, of his queen, Philippa of Hainault, mother of his twelve children, diminished his concern for his royal duties. Too heavy a reliance on the comfort and advice of the mistress of his old age, Alice Perrers, was enough to tarnish even his heroic image. When he died, most of what he had won in France had been lost again, though Calais remained under English control until the French recovered it in 1558, at the end of the reign of Mary Tudor. A further sad blow was the eclipse of his eldest son, 'Edward, Black Prince of Wales' (*Henry V*, II. iv. 56). The victor of Poitiers returned to Bordeaux from his Spanish expedition of 1367 a sick man. Ill health forced him to resign his rule over English Aquitaine to his brother John of Gaunt and to return to England, where he predeceased his father, leaving his own surviving second son to succeed in 1377 as King Richard II.

The reign, as retailed by the sixteenth-century English chroniclers, offered two clear opportunities to a dramatist. Christopher Marlowe saw one of them, though naturally his treatment of the accession of Edward III takes second place to the tragedy of his father, and it is Edward II and Mortimer who dominate the closing scenes of his play. Ben Jonson too began a play on 'Mortimer his Fall', but he wrote no more than a synopsis, an opening soliloquy for Mortimer, and a scrap of spirited dialogue between Mortimer and the queen. He conceived the play in Greek form, with heavy reliance on choric narratives, one of which was to tell of the murder of Edward II. The conclusion was to be a wholesome '*Celebration of the Kings Justice*', to follow young Edward's arrest and execution of Mortimer.[1] Jonson abandoned his play—or rather he found a more congenial and less wholesome vehicle for a study of Machiavellian ambition pitted against Machiavellian statecraft when, in 1603, he wrote *Sejanus his Fall* instead.

Our author avoided Edward's early years, perhaps because Marlowe had handled them already, more certainly because

[1] *Ben Jonson*, vii (ed. C. H. Herford and P. and E. Simpson, Oxford, 1941), p. 59.

Isabel's liaison with Mortimer was an undesirable element in a play in which her role was to afford her son an unimpeachable title to the throne of France. Instead, he went for the other, the heroic theme, this time quite certainly with Marlowe in mind. As many critics have remarked, *Edward III* was written by a poet heavily under the influence of *Tamburlaine*.

Edward III is an exercise in variation on a very few themes. Three nations, four theatres of war, twenty years of history, and a wide array of major and minor figures from the chronicles have been reduced with skill and economy to a stage action which, if undeniably repetitious, avoids monotony of treatment and achieves its own high degree of shapeliness and coherence. A range of military actions on different fronts is shaped into a single sequence of interlocking episodes. (Here I must digress to point out that the division of the play's eighteen scenes into five acts, introduced by Capell, is misleading. The true structure is tripartite, though as it happens phase 1 corresponds to Capell's acts I and II, phase 2 to act III and phase 3 to acts IV and V.) Edward's offensive against France in pursuit of the crown (1345–7) is launched in scene i. There follows the main action of phase 1, based on a romantic myth loosely connected with his counter-offensive against the Scots in 1341—his violent infatuation with the countess of Salisbury. This occupies scenes ii and iii. In the second phase, before the authentic events of the expedition of 1345 are staged or reported, we hear an extended report on the naval battle of Sluys fought in 1340 (scene iv). Then we proceed to the crossing of the Somme and the battle of Crécy (scenes vi–viii). Phase 3 treats chronology with similar freedom. The siege and fall of Calais (1346–7) are presented in scenes x and xviii, which frame an extended presentation of the battle of Poitiers (1356), occupying scenes xii–xvii. These two chronologically and topographically distinct events are linked by conflation of yet more quite unconnected matters. The English support, in 1344, for John de Montfort's attempt to seize the dukedom of Brittany, together with an exploit of one of Edward's most glamorous leaders, Sir Walter Manny, related by Froissart[1] as happening in 1346, provide the action of scenes ix and xi. In them, the earl of Salisbury (the play's equivalent to Manny) is implausibly captured on the field of Poitiers while travelling from Brittany to rejoin King Edward at Calais.

The radical reshaping of the material serves several ends. It lets

[1] *The Chronicles of Froissart* (ed. W. P. Ker, London, 1901), i. 306–8.

the playwright include seven English victories, staged, related, or merely alluded to. Bringing Poitiers forward by ten years means that Prince Edward, historically a man of twenty-six, can be presented as still the brilliant adolescent, freshman in the school of honour, whom we have just seen winning his spurs at Crécy. Each phase of action culminates in a climax of danger for its central figure, which is then resolved by his escape. The first phase ends when the king, faced with the virtuous countess's resolve rather to kill herself than yield to him, is restored to a true sense of his honour as king and as husband. The relation of the love action to the surrounding war is underlined by insistent military imagery, as the Scottish siege of Roxburgh Castle, raised without a fight, gives way to a more insidious danger to the countess from Edward's 'lingring English seege of peeuish loue' (ii. 189 [II. i. 23]). The second and third phases reach more predictable climaxes with Prince Edward's jeopardy in his two great battles. At Crécy, in a heightened version of Froissart's account, the king refuses not one but three requests to send aid to his cornered son, on the grounds that 'we gaue him armes to day, /And he is laboring for a knighthood' (viii [III. v]. 17–18). The prince wins his spurs, returning to his father '*in tryumph, bearing in his hande his shiuered Launce, and the King of Boheme, borne before, wrapt in the Coullours*' (viii [III. v]. 60. 1–3). This is a hard act to follow. Phase 3 accordingly varies the pattern, allowing the spectators the double satisfaction, first of seeing the prince's miraculous victory against overwhelming odds at Poitiers, then of watching with superior knowledge as the king and Queen Philippa first learn from Salisbury of the inevitability of their son's defeat and death and then welcome his arrival at newly-won Calais, this time with a bag consisting of King John of France and his son Philip.

The playwright's freedom with chronology has consequences for his handling of his characters. King Edward and the Black Prince, indeed, appear chiefly in actions for which there is warrant in the chronicle sources. The king's role is confined to command, leaving active participation in the fighting to the prince. English solidarity is reinforced by the continued presence of three lords, Derby, Audley, and Robert of Artois. Artois, a French exile, strengthens our sense of the justice of Edward's claim to the French crown. It is he who first presents it, in the opening scene. Restatements of his right are also put into the mouths of French characters. Artois later appears beside the prince at both big battles. Audley's only moment of glory in the chronicles is at Poitiers. The play introduces him in the first scene, expanding his

role into that of Aged Experience, the proper foil and companion for the prince's Youthful Valour.

The earl of Salisbury is harder to place. He enters the play only in scene ix. After he does so, no reference is ever made to the countess, whose husband we must presume him to be. As his actions are mainly borrowed from Sir Walter Manny, this need not much surprise us. Only the threat of summary execution when he is captured relates him to the historical Salisbury, who was similarly treated in 1339.[1] His name matters, though. It is our cue for recognizing that the episode of his search for a passport to travel to Calais, in the third phase of action, stands in thematic relation to the countess episode in the first. Salisbury's survival depends on awakening the Dauphin's sense of princely honour, and on the Dauphin's resistance to his father's will. Similarly, the countess escapes suicide—or a fate worse than death—by reawakening the lustful King Edward to a true sense of *his* honour. Few details in the play argue so strongly for care in plotting and for unity of conception as the balance struck between the quite separate actions that centre respectively on the countess and the earl of Salisbury.

On the French side, the main alteration of history is to name the king of France 'Iohn of Valoys' (i [1. i]. 37) in its opening scene. As John only succeeded his father, Philippe VI, in 1350, all his actions in the play except his capture at Poitiers are in fact his father's. Clearly the playwright decided that two French kings were one too many: besides, he wanted to introduce John's two sons with their father in the Crécy sequence by way of preparation for their more prominent share in the action at Poitiers.

Though I have so far referred to the chronicle sources of *Edward III* without much particularity, it should be apparent that I assume consultation of more than one. Beyond possibility of doubt, the playwright made careful use of Lord Berners's English version of the chronicles of Froissart, which depend in their turn, for this early period of Froissart's work, on the writings of an older French writer, Jean le Bel. Froissart sticks very close to le Bel, as became clear when le Bel's long-lost work resurfaced after five hundred years in the nineteenth century. Our author also used Holinshed—who taught him, among other things, to spell the names of French towns misprinted in the 1596 quarto. He appears to have consulted one of Stow's chronicles too, on the evidence of a small detail: Stow alone speaks, as does the play, of the emperor's appointment of Edward as lieutenant-general of the Empire,

[1] *Froissart*, i. 132–3.

where the others call him vicar-general. Altogether, the play is as remarkable for the quantity of authentic detail it packs in as for its cavalier way with chronology.

The tone of the play's portrayal of King Edward and the Black Prince is closer to the sanctimonious English jingoism of Holinshed and Stow than to the chivalrous generosity of Froissart, a writer of broad and international sympathies. Prince Edward's rhetoric smacks strongly of what A. P. Rossiter, in another connection, called the 'Hotspurious'. He comes close to a later description of him by John Webster:

> Hee that like lightning did his force aduance,
> And shook toth' Center the whole Realm of *France*,
> That of warme bloud open'd so many sluces,
> To gather and bring thence sixe *Flower de Luces*.[1]

After Poitiers, he greets King John, who has fought heroically in the face of foreseen defeat, with the derisive lines:

> Now Iohn in France, and lately Iohn of France,
> Thy bloudie Ensignes are my captiue colours:
> (xvii [IV. ix]. 1–2)

This is a far cry indeed from Froissart's prince who won the praise of friend and foe by the humanity and humility with which he treated his royal captive.

> Sir, methynke ye ought to rejoyse, though the journey be nat as ye wolde have had it, for this day ye have wonne the hygh renome of prowes and have past this day in valyantnesse all other of your partie: sir, I say natte this to mocke you, for all that be on our partie that sawe every mannes dedes, ar playnly acorded by true sentence to gyve you the price and chapellette.[2]

The play's King Edward is the king of the woodcut portrait that heads his reign in the chronicles of Holinshed and Stow. It shows an armed man, with a crown on his helmet, looking suspiciously over his right shoulder, an orb clutched in his left hand and in his right a sword on which two more crowns are broached. To the crowns of England, France, and Scotland, the play adds a coronet, sent in homage by Mountford, duke of Brittany.

Another familiar image of Edward derived from coins first struck in 1344. They bear the device of the king as King of England and Lord of France. Crowned and armed with his sword and with a shield quartered with the arms of England and France,

[1] *A Monumental Column* (London, 1613), B1.
[2] *Froissart*, i. 384.

he stands on a ship, its sails filled with a following wind. The device commemorated his naval victory off Sluys in 1340. In 1894, J. K. Laughton, editor of state papers relating to the Spanish Armada, wrote of it:

> It was no mere coincidence which led to the adoption of such a device in 1344, four years after the most bloody and decisive victory of western war . . . which by giving England the command of the sea, determined the course of the great war which followed.[1]

The device, he added, was 'still in use under Elizabeth, telling to those who could understand it that the might and majesty of England rested on her navy'. These facts may help us to understand the play's treatment of two of its battles, Sluys and Poitiers. The connection between the naval engagements of 1340 and 1588, which saved England from two of the most acute risks it has ever faced of invasion across the Narrow Seas, was not lost on our playwright. His account of Sluys differs radically from the chronicle narrative. The divergent details, as K. P. Wentersdorf pointed out, include several drawn from accounts of the Armada.[2] Among them are a description of Edward's fleet as a 'proud Armado' (iv [III. i]. 64); heavy and anachronistic emphasis on naval gunnery; the use of the name '*Nom per illa*' for a French warship (one of Drake's squadron was the *Nonpareil*); and, most strikingly, this image for the English formation:

> Maiesticall the order of their course,
> Figuring the horned Circle of the Moone,
>
> (iv [III. i]. 71–2)

We may compare Petruccio Ubaldino's description of the Spanish formation:

> their fleete was placed in battell araie, after the maner of a Moone cressant, being readie with her horns & hir inward circumference to receiue either all, or so manie of the English nauie, as should giue her the assault, her hornes being extended in widenes about the distance of 8. miles.[3]

Historically, the Black Prince's victory at Poitiers depended on leading the dismounted French men-at-arms into a trap, a lane where four but went abreast, between hedges manned by the

[1] J. K. Laughton (ed.), *State Papers Relating to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada*, i (London, 1894), ix–x.

[2] 'The Date of *Edward III*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, xvi (1965), 227–31.

[3] P. Ubaldino, *A Discourse Concerning the Spanish Fleet Invading England in the Year 1588* (London, 1590), p. 7.

redoubted English longbowmen. The play will have none of this, substituting a French trap, in which the English are not only outnumbered but surrounded. Audley's description of the French positions once more alludes to the Armada formation:[1]

> Behinde vs too the hill doth beare his height,
> For like a halfe Moone opening but one way,
> It rounds vs in:
>
> (xii [IV. iv]. 30–2)

Both battles, Sluys and Poitiers, are thus assimilated with memories of the Armada narrative which the playwright could presumably rely on his audience to supply.

During the probable period for the play's composition, say 1590–5, English soldiers were continually in action in France and Brittany, fighting on behalf of Henry of Navarre against his Catholic opponents and their Spanish allies. In addition to the Armada references, its presentation of the siege of Calais, while following its chronicle sources with some fidelity, shows remarkable resemblances to accounts of the siege of Paris published in England in the early 1590s.[2]

One other work, Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, has left a pervasive mark on *Edward III*. Both plays dramatize an almost unbroken succession of battles. Edward's campaign in France shows many similarities to Marlowe's version of the campaigns of his younger Scythian contemporary. Among these are his adversary's scornful view of him as 'A theeuish pyrate, and a needie mate', and his offer of 'Exceeding store of treasure, perle, and coyne' as an incentive to the English army to fight 'manfully' (vi [III. iii]. 53, 67, 71). Edward's threats against Calais echo those of Tamburlaine against Damascus and he is ready, when he thinks his son dead, to promise savage revenge:

> . . . in the stead of tapers on his tombe,
> An hundred fiftie towers shall burning blaze,
> While we bewaile our valiant sonnes decease.
>
> (xviii [v]. 173–5)

We may also think of Tamburlaine in an earlier scene, when Edward seeks for poetic expression of the perfections of the countess of Salisbury. The important episode of the king's love for the countess comes, as Capell said, from William Painter's

[1] The point is made by F. Lapides in his edition of *Edward III* (London and New York, 1980), p. 33.

[2] See, e.g. *A Letter . . . from . . . Saint Denis* (London, 1590), B3^{v}–4.

Palace of Pleasure (1566–7). Capell did not add that Painter's story itself comes from Matteo Bandello's *novella* of 1554, which was a fictional expansion of the episode as described by Froissart. The play uses much that is in Painter, but it follows Froissart in making both characters married, so that the catastrophe of the king's wooing cannot be a nuptial. The playwright enlarges on stray references to Edward's courtiers in Froissart and Painter to integrate characters from the military plot with the romantic episode. Derby, Audley, and the Black Prince all come to Roxburgh Castle, ready and eager to embark for France. Their presence heightens the tension of the king's temporary alienation from his proper royal role. When Audley arrives, he is curtly dismissed by Edward:

> *Audley.* I haue my liege, leuied those horse and foote,
> According to your charge, and brought them hither.
> *King.* Then let those foote trudge hence vpon those horse,
> According too our discharge and be gonne.
>
> (iii [II. ii]. 30–3)

Painter supplies two extra characters: Warwick, as father of the countess, and Edward's secretary, though a third, the countess's mother, is relegated to a single passing mention (at ii. 536 [II. i. 727]), doubtless to keep down the demand for boy players. From Painter's discreet and obedient secretary, the playwright has developed Lodwick, the first opponent to the king's pursuit of the lady, a subtle upholder of right values who, when called on to compose a love-poem, uses his awareness of its intended recipient to present the king instead with the opening lines of a verse sermon against adultery. His is the only comic part in the play: it persuades us, from the very inception of the king's passion, that the outcome will be a happy one. Not for nothing did John Barton include his first dialogue with King Edward in his popular dramatic anthology, *The Hollow Crown.*

Much conjecture and controversy surrounds the question whether this romantic episode bears any relation to historical events, indeed, whether the countess of Salisbury in it is more than a conventional figure of fiction. The topic deserves a separate lecture, so a brief summary must suffice. Both versions of the story known to the playwright are clearly fictitious. Chapters 76, 77, and 89 of Froissart's first book charmingly elaborate a romantic moral tale, a cliff-hanger of virtue in danger, of wifely continence and constancy preserved by royal recovery from unbridled passion to the right reassertion of self-government. The themes were dear to

English playwrights of the 1590s and earlier. They abound in plays like John Lyly's *Campaspe*, Robert Greene's *James IV* and *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* or the anonymous *A Knack to Know a Knave*. The moral is proverbial: 'He is not fit to rule others that cannot rule himself.' No one in the sixteenth century could possibly have known that Froissart, usually slavish in his following of Jean le Bel, here rewrote him. Recovery of le Bel's chronicle uncovered a very different story, the tragic tale of the violent rape of Alice, countess of Salisbury, by King Edward, of the reactions of his friend, her husband, and of her miserable death.

Michael Packe, in a recent biography of Edward III which has not, in this particular, won universal assent, presents documentary evidence held to substantiate the central fact of le Bel's story, despite much divergence of detail.[1] What concerns us as readers of the play is that the fictional countess in it may owe something to three historical originals. They are:

1. Catherine, countess of Salisbury, wife of Edward's closest friend and for some time governess of the royal children.

2. Joan, 'the Fair Maid of Kent'. She was countess of Kent in the right of her father Edmund, half-brother to Edward II, and countess of Salisbury only in expectation and only during the years of her second (and bigamous) marriage to Catherine's son, William Montacute junior. After the dissolution of her marriage to him and the death of her first husband, Sir Thomas Holland, she was to remarry, with the Black Prince, and give birth to Richard II.

3. Alice, never countess of Salisbury, but wife of Edward Montacute, the earl's youngest brother. In 1341, it was probably she and her husband who held Wark Castle (not Roxburgh) against the Scots. She, if anyone, was the victim of King Edward's lust. She died in 1351, after being violently beaten by her husband, whose prosecution was quashed by the king.

The countess in the play combines the title of Catherine with her daughter-in-law's fabled attractions. Alice, lost to memory with le Bel's chronicle, strangely survived in the fictional tradition—or at least her name did. Bandello called his countess of Salisbury 'Ælips', and variants of that name, Alice among them, recur in derivative versions of his story, more than a dozen of which were already known by the end of the sixteenth century.[2] Bandello

[1] M. Packe, *King Edward III* (ed. L. C. B. Seaman, London and Boston, 1983), pp. 105–23, 175–8.

[2] See G. Liebau, *König Eduard III. von England und die Gräfin von Salisbury* (Berlin, 1900).

may have invented the name, or he may have heard of Edward's mistress, Alice Perrers, but the remote possibility remains of a tradition of an 'Alice, countess of Salisbury', with whom Edward's name was associated, whether romantically or shamefully—a tradition fresh enough to prompt, and to survive, the whitewash job performed by Queen Philippa's good servant Froissart when he turned le Bel's tale of rape and remorse into one of wholesome morality and romantic sentiment.

What is critically useful here is chiefly a sense that in its treatment of the countess story, as much as in its treatment of Edward's campaigns, the play is pulling its punches. Serious issues are broached, but the serious potential of pain in both actions is evaded or sublimated, either into rhetoric or into a poetry that is more often lyrical or epic than engagedly dramatic. The tone of the countess scenes is well captured by Cyrus Hoy, who writes of the 'utter simplicity' of moral bearings in our playwright's handling of an episode 'fully stocked with a store of romantic, not to say erotic, potential which the Jacobean dramatists and their successors would prove themselves adept in the art of exploiting'.[1]

Criticism of *Edward III* has habitually taken as its focus the question of the Shakespearian or un-Shakespearian quality of the writing. Risking the charge of perversity or evasiveness, I propose to comment briefly on some other aspects of the play. As I do so, I cannot help reflecting how hampering it is to have had no opportunity of seeing it performed. William Poel, indeed, adapted the countess scenes into a one-acter, *The King and the Countess*, which was acted, evidently with some success, on rare occasions in 1890 and 1897. It was revived at the Old Vic for his centenary in 1954.[2] In 1977, a BBC radio series of twenty-six episodes drawn from Elizabethan history plays and called *Vivat Rex* included in its third and fourth parts heavily cut selections, mainly from the countess scenes and the Crécy and Poitiers sequences. Recent rumours of an intended production at the Nottingham Playhouse have proved over-optimistic (though new hopes have since arisen of a production at the Greenwich Theatre in the early summer of 1986). The play is clearly conceived in terms of performance and of the physical resources of its theatre.

The challenge of the heroic subject is to avoid monotony and bathos. *Edward III* achieves a modest success on both counts. It

[1] 'Renaissance and Restoration Dramatic Plotting', *Renaissance Drama*, ix (1966), 261–2.

[2] R. Speaight, *William Poel and the Elizabethan Revival* (London, 1954), pp. 73, 122–3, 190.

never stages any fighting. The nearest we get to it is the spectacle of the Black Prince chasing the French just before his moment of gravest peril at Crécy. Military trappings, though, are much in evidence. Many scenes demand weapons, armour, or flags, while the sound effects most in demand are trumpets and drums. Though the imagery of storm, smoke, and darkness pervades the battle scenes, thunder is not called for. Battles are narrated in formal and sometimes long messengers' speeches. Among the most impressive is this characterization of the advance of Edward's forces through northern France. It is spoken by a nameless French refugee:

> Flie cuntry men and cytizens of France.
> Sweete flowring peace the roote of happie life,
> Is quite a bandoned and expulst the lande,
> In sted of whome ransackt constraining warre
> Syts like to Rauens vppon your houses topps.
> Slaughter and mischiefe walke within your streets,
> And vnrestrained make hauock as they passe:
> The forme whereof euen now my selfe beheld,
> Vpon this faire mountaine whence I came,
> For so far of as I directed mine eies,
> I might perceaue fiue Cities all on fire,
> Corne fieldes and vineyards burning like an ouen,
> And as the leaking vapour in the wind
> Tourned but a side, I like wise might disserne
> The poore inhabitants escapt the flame,
> Fall numberles vpon the souldiers pikes.
> Three waies these dredfull ministers of wrath
> Do tread the measures of their tragicke march:
> Vpon the right hand comes the conquering King,
> Vpon the lefte his hot vnbridled sonne,
> And in the midst our nations glittering hoast,
> All which though distant yet conspire in one
> To leaue a desolation where they come.
>
> (v [III. ii]. 46–68)

The imagined mountain top from which this panoramic view is taken recurs. The French at Poitiers are in hilltop positions, and King John sends Salisbury to witness their expected victory from

> . . . a loftie hill,
> Whose top seemes toplesse, for the imbracing skie
> Doth hide his high head in her azure bosome,
> Vpon whose tall top when thy foot attaines,
> Looke backe vpon the humble vale beneath,

> Humble of late, but now made proud with armes,
> And thence behold the wretched prince of Wales,
> Hoopt with a bond of yron round about,
>
> (xiii [IV. v]. 113–20)

Chivalry is theatrical. To the pictorial theatricality of these panoramas, the play adds the spectacle of the formal investiture of the Black Prince in his arms before Crécy and of his battered but triumphant return.

The alternation of love and war in scenes ii and iii cannot continue in the later scenes in France, but tone and pace are still carefully varied. The strongest emotions are evoked in scenes of quiet tension which precede or follow those of belligerent rhetoric, the clearest instance being the scene before Poitiers when the aged Audley counsels and comforts the Black Prince as he contemplates the imminence of death.

Without experience of the play in performance, it is harder to speak confidently of visual effects, but a few may be suggested. Actions are sometimes linked in pairs or larger patterns. In scene ii [I. ii], in an action memorably described by Froissart, the countess descends from her battlements to open the castle gates to the king. The play elaborates his reluctance to enter, forcing her to plead for the royal visit which will imperil her honour. After Crécy, it is Edward's turn to descend from the 'little hill' (viii [III. v]. 2) to which he has withdrawn and reward his victorious son with knighthood. As at Roxburgh Castle, so at the siege of Calais, the opening of the gates is a significant action. The gates open twice and each time six men emerge: in scene x [IV. ii], they are poor men, driven out by the captain to save provisions; in scene xviii, the six burghers whose surrender Edward has imposed as a condition of clemency come out, '*in their Shirts, bare foote, with halters about their necks*' (xviii [V]. 0. 1–2). The two sieges are thus linked and a contrast is suggested between the earlier treachery of the king's assault on a loyal subject and his final magnanimity towards defenceless enemies. Only two identified women appear in the play. The early prominence of the countess has its counterpart in Queen Philippa's arrival in the last scene, 'big with child' (x [IV. ii]. 45), as so often. Any vestige of blame attaching to Edward for the adulterous frenzy in which he was ready to contemplate killing his wife is removed by that wife's entry, visibly in enjoyment of his conjugal attentions, to repeat the countess's role of moderator of his passions as she kneels to plead for the lives of the six burghers.

Thematic links as well as visual relate different areas of the episodic action to each other. Sometimes they correspond with patterns of character. The two kings, Edward and John, are contrasted in terms of right to and possession of the French crown. They exchange mutual accusations of tyranny, clearly justified by John's readiness to turn the field of Crécy to a 'poole of bloode' and a 'slaughter house' (vi [III. iii]. 116–17) and as clearly refuted by Edward's acts of generosity and mercy. Admittedly this balance is only maintained by the expedient of transferring to the Black Prince an English bloodthirstiness which contrasts him with the varieties of arrogant timidity displayed by the French princes.

The historical subject is much concerned with oaths of allegiance, whether to one's monarch, or in the form of homage to a feudal lord. In the play, Edward refuses homage to John for a French dukedom, claiming the right of sovereignty over him. Mountford sends a coronet to Edward in token of his homage for the dukedom of Brittany. Both the countess and her father, Warwick, are tricked by Edward into swearing to help to relieve his distress before they learn that its cause is his guilty passion for the lady. Both escape with honour. The countess does so by opposing her marriage vows to her duty to the king:

> He that doth clip or counterfeit your stamp
> Shall die my Lord, and will your sacred selfe
> Comit high treason against the King of heauen,
> To stamp his Image in forbidden mettel,
> For getting your alleageance, and your othe?
> In violating mariage sacred law,
> You breake a greater honor then your selfe.
> To be a King is of a yonger house
> Then to be maried: your progenitour,
> Sole raigning Adam on the vniuerse,
> By God was honored for a married man,
> But not by him annointed for a king.
>
> (ii. 420–31 [II. i. 255–66])

Warwick keeps the letter of his oath to the king, first wooing his daughter for him, then applauding her opposition. 'It is the purpose that makes strong the vow; / But vows to every purpose must not hold', as William Shakespeare would one day write in his *Troilus and Cressida* (v. iii. 23–4). Oaths regain prominence in the Salisbury/Villiers scenes. Unexpectedly, the outcome of this action is to vindicate French honour. Villiers, a French prisoner, is released, on his parole to return, to obtain a passport for Salisbury from his childhood friend, Charles, the Dauphin. 'Thus once I

meane to trie a French mans faith' is Salisbury's comment (ix [IV. i]. 43). Charles urges Villiers to break his parole, insisting on the superior force of his oath of allegiance. Villiers resists, impressing Charles to the point of granting the passport. When Salisbury is captured at Poitiers, the action is repeated, Charles in turn resisting his father, King John, thus saving Salisbury from hanging on the next tree and his own honour from impeachment. This vindication of the honour of a soldier and of a prince stands in direct relation to the vindication of the countess's honour as a faithful wife. The theme recurs in a lighter vein in the final scene, when King Edward applauds the refusal of Copeland to surrender King David of Scotland to Queen Philippa, on the grounds that he loves the king's person more than his name (xvii [v]. 83–7).

As with themes, so with images. Critics who believe in collaborative authorship, particularly those who want to assign to Shakespeare the countess scenes and little more, have seriously understated the extent to which those scenes owe their metaphoric richness to material derived from the military action. To cite one clear instance: the king's line, 'Ah but alas she winnes the sunne of me' (iii [II. ii]. 66), uses a military image that would have been strongly impressed on the mind of any poet who had just read Froissart. Both at Sluys and at Crécy, the English tactics included 'winning the sun' of the French. Conversely, the military action contains images drawn from love and marriage, notably Prince Edward's plea to Audley:

> Thou art a married man in this distresse,
> But danger wooes me as a blushing maide:
> Teach me an answere to this perillous time.
>
> (xi [IV. iv]. 130–2)

Although time must have a stop, history has no ending. A playwright's first decision must be where to start and where to conclude his action. To conflate the victory of Poitiers, the taking of Calais, the winning of Brittany and the capture of David II at Neville's Cross into a single final scene is as strong a statement of commitment to English patriotic values as can easily be imagined. Philip Edwards writes of the ending of Shakespeare's *Henry V* that, 'while it is quite legitimate for an historical dramatist to conclude his play at a moment of actual triumph and peace, the feeling which he may give of the achievement being final and the peace permanent belongs to the experience of art'.[1] Shakespeare added an epilogue to *Henry V*, reminding his audience of the disasters to

[1] *Threshold of a Nation* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 112.

follow, 'Which oft our stage hath shown'. In *Edward III*, before Poitiers, King John of France hears a riddling prophecy of French defeat. It ends:

> Yet in the end thy foot thou shalt aduance,
> As farre in England, as thy foe in Fraunce.
>
> (xi [IV. iii]. 72–3)

He sees that this could foretell his future success in invading England, only to recognize his error at the end, as a prisoner awaiting shipment to England:

> Accursed man, of this I was fortolde,
> But did misconster what the prophet told.
>
> (xviii [V]. 214–15)

Was the author of *Edward III* aware that, by the 1590s, the prophecy had an ironic ring? That, though Englishmen were fighting in France, it was in support of Henry of Navarre and not of any English territorial claim? That now England's foot extended no further in France that France's in England? If so, he excluded the awareness from his play.

In *Shakespeare and the Rhetoricians*, a challenging enquiry into the ways in which understanding of sixteenth-century rhetoricians' ideas of the topic of invention may help us to a truer picture of what an Elizabethan poet might have supposed he was doing, Marion Trousdale observes that 'a play in which attitude is predetermined is not by virtue of that fact bad. A point of view, even if doctrinaire, ought not to occasion suspicion of the art.'[1] *Edward III* appears to reflect the working of an artistic intelligence of the highest order on material which, though far from merely uncongenial, is in many ways constricting. Intelligence and theatrical professionalism warm into full imaginative engagement only sporadically, and not always for long at a time. It is most apparent where we might expect it, in the fictional episode of the countess of Salisbury, where rhetorical energy takes off into flights of poetic and emotional power and where a comic spirit, starved elsewhere by the heroic theme, enjoys brief nourishment. Here, and in the dialogue of Prince Edward and Audley before Poitiers, the playwright was free of the burden, self-imposed though it probably was, of a quantity of historical material whose mere exposition must have taxed his constructive powers. Slackness of imaginative engagement with the patriotic matter is reflected in the play's repetitiveness. Some of the repetitions, among them the

[1] (London, 1982), p. 124.

much-studied 'recurrent images' and those patterns of action and theme to which I have referred, may be felt to develop cumulative meaning. Others, I submit, more likely reflect an orderly mind writing at speed and under some pressure to meet a deadline.

One lapse of imaginative concentration curiously damages the play's handling of Edward's claim to the French crown. Arguing that the disparity of numbers between his own small force and the surrounding French multitudes at Poitiers can be minimized by speaking of each as merely one army, Prince Edward hits on a positively Freudian analogy:

> There is but one Fraunce, one king of Fraunce,
> That Fraunce hath no more kings, and that same king
> Hath but the puissant legion of one king?
>
> (xii [IV. iv]. 61–3)

The prince may refer to the office rather than the man, but it is natural to identify that 'one king' with John of Valois—and the prince is fighting for his father's claim that he, rather than John, is truly the one king of France. Inevitably, our minds move forward to another King John—Shakespeare's—and to a more extended debate as to just who may be the true King of France.

And Shakespeare?

Can *Edward III* be accommodated within any panoramic view of his works? Without arguing the case, may I draw your attention to some of the points of contact. Like *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*, and *Troilus and Cressida*, *Edward III* combines stories of love and fighting, integrating them with each other by cross-reference of theme and image. Like *3 Henry VI*, *Richard III*, and *Measure for Measure*, it shows man in authority using his position to attempt to coerce the love of a subject. Like *Lucrece*, it employs the image of siege warfare for a sexual assault. Like *Romeo and Juliet*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, and *Richard II*, it uses recurring metaphors, of which the siege is one of the most prominent, as a structural technique. As in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, rather more than half of the action consists of duologues. Like *The Two Gentlemen*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, and *As You Like It*, it introduces cynical comment on the use of poetry in courtship. Like *3 Henry VI*, *Richard II*, and *King John*, it is written in verse throughout. Like *1 Henry VI*, *King John*, and *Henry V*, it dramatizes English wars in France. It shares with *King John* a central concern with the rival claims of strong possession and right for the crown of France (though not that of England). Its treatment of King Edward and the Black Prince includes an element of the educative theme central to *Henry IV*.

Unlike *Henry V*, it has not discovered the expedients of choric commentary and comic subplot to alleviate the pressures of an heroic military action. Like *Richard III*, *Macbeth*, and *The Winter's Tale*, it uses prophecies to control audience expectations. Like *1 Henry IV* and *Henry V*, it celebrates military honour. Unlike *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, it makes no reference to the Order of the Garter. Like *The Two Gentlemen*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, and *Measure for Measure*, it dramatizes conflicts of loyalty and explores the proposition that there may be circumstances in which one must break an oath to find, or preserve, one's self. Like *Hamlet* and *Measure for Measure*, it treats of the art of dying well.

Some of these analogies are closer than others—but the list is only illustrative. Of verbal parallels, especially with the earliest plays and the poems, I need say nothing. They are legion, and they have been thoroughly explored.[1] The line 'Lillies that fester, smel far worse then weeds' (ii. 617 [II. i. 451]), shared by the play and Sonnet 94, is only the most famous, and was one of the earliest clues on the trail that has led to the convergence of the play and the name of Shakespeare.

It is more than time to ask some simple questions. They are not independent of each other. When was *Edward III* written? For whom was it written? Who wrote it? The casting pattern corresponds exactly with the findings of Scott McMillin's investigation of five plays that make up the known repertoire of Pembroke's Men.[2] Three of them, adaptations of Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, and *2* and *3 Henry VI*, were printed, in reported texts, in 1594 and 1595. Pembroke's Men were among the three companies that had acted *Titus Andronicus* before it was printed in 1594. Their fifth play is Marlowe's *Edward II*. MacDonald Jackson has demonstrated that the reporter of the *Henry VI* plays distorted several passages under the influence of his knowledge of *Edward III*.[3]

Pembroke's Men remains an obscure company. We know that it broke up before September 1593. We are less sure when it was formed, probably, though, in 1591 or 1592. In June 1592 plague deaths rose to the point at which London playhouses were closed.

[1] See especially V. Østerberg, 'The "Countess Scenes" of "Edward III"', *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, lxv (1929), 49–91; K. P. Wentersdorf, 'The Authorship of "Edward III"' (Ph.D. thesis for the University of Cincinnati, 1960).

[2] 'Casting for Pembroke's Men', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, xxiii (1972), 141–59.

[3] '*Edward III*, Shakespeare, and Pembroke's Men', *Notes and Queries*, ccx (1965), 329–31.

They stayed shut for some eighteen months. If *Edward III* was written for Pembroke's Men, then late 1591 or early 1592 seem the likeliest dates of composition. The players who made up the company came from two others, Lord Strange's Men and the Queen's Men. From Strange's Men they acquired their four Shakespeare plays, from the Queen's Men they probably added to their repertoire *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, *The Troublesome Reign of King John*, *The True Tragedy of Richard III*, and the old play of *King Leir*. G. M. Pinciss has pointed out that the plays which Shakespeare knew well enough to quote from or parody in later years include several from this repertoire.[1] Shakespeare also knew *Edward III*—so well that there are few of his plays from 1594 onwards that have not been shown, more or less convincingly, to reflect that knowledge. It is most apparent in the two plays whose actions most resemble the elements of *Edward III*, namely *Henry V* and *Measure for Measure*. The degree of similarity has been fully demonstrated, most impressively by Kenneth Muir.[2]

Cuthbert Burby entered the manuscript, possibly an authorial one, on the Stationers' Register on 1 December 1595. On 28 November the Admiral's Men at the Rose had presented a new, or refurbished, play of 'harey the v', playing it thirteen times between that date and 15 July 1596.[3] The coincidence seems hardly casual. Someone evidently decided, late in November 1595, that the stage career of *Edward III* was sufficiently in decline to warrant selling it for publication.

These facts will afford the circumstantial basis at least for a romantic hypothesis that could connect Shakespeare and *Edward III*. It goes like this. Shakespeare wrote the play, in 1591 or 1592, for Pembroke's Men. He may for a time have belonged to the company, long enough to acquire an actor's familiarity with their repertoire. He wrote it after *2* and *3 Henry VI*, at a time when he already had in mind a long poem about the rape of Lucretia (alluded to in the play as 'her whose ransackt treasurie hath taskt / The vaine indeuor of so many pens' (iii [II. ii]. 192–3]). Either he took his manuscript with him when he joined the Lord Chamberlain's Men in 1594, or it remained in the hands of some other member of Pembroke's Men. In either case, the Admiral's Men's 'harey the v' put paid to its hopes of revival, or—to retain

[1] 'Shakespeare, her Majesty's Players and Pembroke's Men', *Shakespeare Survey*, xxvii (1974), 129–36.

[2] *Shakespeare as Collaborator* (London, 1960), chapters ii, iii.

[3] *Henslowe's Diary* (ed. R. A. Foakes and R. T. Rickert, Cambridge, 1961), p. 33.

our sense of the speculative—provided a natural occasion for the publication of a play on so closely related a subject. The latter hypothesis may explain the reprinting of *Edward III* in 1599, the year of Shakespeare's *Henry V*.

The subsequent history of the text is easier to account for. The 1599 reprint came at an awkward moment. Complaints had been heard from Scotland in the previous year that 'the comedians of London should scorn the king and the people of this land in their play'.[1] We do not know what play is meant, but once James VI of Scotland had grown (or shrunk?) into James I of Great Britain, only a hardy stationer would have risked his ears by venturing into print with this exchange between King David and Douglas.

> *King David.* Dislodge, dislodge, it is the king of England.
> *Douglas.* Iemmy my man, saddle my bonny blacke.
> *King David.* Meanst thou to fight, Duglas we are to weake.
> *Douglas.* I know it well my liege, and therefore flie.
>
> (ii [i. ii]. 56–9)

We may recall that when *Henry V* was printed, in 1600, no Captain Jamy appeared. This is the case of supporters of Shakespeare's authorship of *Edward III* who wish to account for its absence from the First Folio. It is a strong one. As for its omission from Francis Mere's list of titles in *Palladis Tamia* (1598), it may suffice to remember that *Henry VI* is not there either.

Any reader of *Edward III* who is reasonably well-versed in Shakespeare will feel the attraction of Capell's invitation to the exercise of personal connoisseurship. As I have quoted from it, many of you have probably been accepting that invitation—though I missed out the best bits, deliberately, because Professor Muir has scooped them all in his account of the play! But connoisseurship cannot solve the historical problem or answer the question 'Did Shakespeare write it?'.

Investigators have, in recent years, increasingly sought grounds more—or do I mean less?—relative than personal sensibility. No doubt aesthetic estimates must affect our thinking. But if we feel drawn to ask 'Is it good enough for Shakespeare?', we must reflect that the Shakespeare we are to consider is the author of *Henry VI*, *Richard III*, and *The Taming of the Shrew* rather than *Twelfth Night*, *King Lear*, and *The Tempest*. The author, too, of the Ovidian narrative poems, and of the sonnets. To follow Swinburne's line in urging his authorship of *Henry V* as 'one single and simple piece of evidence that Shakespeare had not a finger in

[1] E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, i (Oxford, 1930), 65.

the concoction of *King Edward III* will no longer do—if it *ever* did.[1] Investigation of the play's language, particularly its exceptionally large vocabulary, and of its imagery, particularly those associative links described as 'image clusters', is far on the way to demonstrating a kind and degree of connection between the whole play and the early works of Shakespeare that amounts to a strong positive case for his authorship—or that of some person unknown.[2] The same evidence by now implies the improbability of the play's being the work of any other known playwright of the early 1590s. Here, however, much work of validation and verification remains to be done, mainly by way of systematic study of those other writers.

The incipient bardolatry that led Capell to offer *Edward III* as a new and minor jewel in Shakespeare's crown has yielded, as Shakespeare studies have grown from cottage craft to heavy industry, to an uneasy sense that we may instead be busy unearthing a skeleton from his cupboard. What is unequivocal is that *Edward III* now stands squarely on the frontier of the Shakespeare canon. Five plays omitted by the editors of the First Folio have been strongly backed as wholly or in part his work. Three of them now generally find a place in collected editions. *Pericles* was in print as his by 1609; *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, as the product of his collaboration with Fletcher, in 1634. Both have now moved from the 'Apocrypha' to the 'Works'. The lines in *The Book of Sir Thomas More* attributed to him on the evidence of handwriting, style, and language, have also won an enigmatic niche, often as an appendix. The 'lost play' of *Cardenio* can hardly follow suit. Even if Lewis Theobald's *Double Falsehood*, printed in 1728, derives from an authentic Jacobean manuscript of a play by Fletcher and Shakespeare, the text he printed is avowedly a thorough adaptation for eighteenth-century stage conditions. *Double Falsehood* may even be a double palimpsest—to wit, Theobald's reworking of Thomas Betterton's adaptation of the Jacobean original.[3]

Edward III was more in evidence in the nineteenth century than it is today. But its tentative appearances, as a 'doubtful play', in

[1] *A Study of Shakespeare*, p. 274.

[2] M. Bell, 'Concordance to the Shakespeare Apocrypha' (MA thesis for the University of Liverpool, 1959); K. P. Wentersdorf, 'The Authorship of "Edward III"'; E. T. O. Slater, 'The Problem of "The Reign of King Edward III" (1596): A Statistical Approach' (Ph.D. thesis for the University of London, 1982).

[3] See J. Freehafer, '*Cardenio*, by Shakespeare and Fletcher', *PMLA*, lxxxiv (1969), 501–13.

complete editions of Shakespeare ceased when the new broom of reintegrationist scholarship reasserted the authority of the Folio canon against the extravagances of such as J. M. Robertson. Its inclusion was, in any case, easier in an age when it was still respectable to regard *Henry VI* as Shakespeare's revision of other men's work and to reject *Titus Andronicus* outright.

Publishers of multi-volume editions, whose stake in Shakespeare might suffer little if *Titus* and *Henry VI* were to vanish from their lists, may view with concern any move to promote yet another early history to canonic rank. Even outside the canon, the play has been separately published only four times in our century. It is harder to see why single-volume complete works should continue to exclude what has become, by the process of elimination I have just outlined, the sole remaining 'doubtful play' which continues, on substantial grounds, to win the support of serious investigators as arguably the work of Shakespeare. Such inclusion would at least shift the burden of proof on to the sceptics, while ensuring renewed access to a play obtainable only in an expensive reprint of an American dissertation[1] or from the fast-disappearing shelves of second-hand English drama.[2]

[1] F. Lapides (ed.), *The Raigne of King Edward the Third: A Critical, Old-Spelling Edition* (London and New York, 1980).

[2] Since this lecture was delivered, an edition in modernized spelling by George Parfitt has been published in the Nottingham Drama Series. Though commendably inexpensive, and though level-headed in its brief but informative introduction and commentary, it presents a grossly inaccurate text.