

AUTHORSHIP CLUES IN *Henry VI, Part 3*

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SOME years ago, in an article in *Notes & Queries*, Philippa Sheppard noted strong similarities between the speech of Prince Edward in Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part 3* (5.4. 44-49) and the famed "St. Crispin's Day" speech in *Henry V* (4.3.29-39). Furthermore and interestingly, Sheppard points out that, in light of this new-found similarity of the speeches of Edward and Henry, the remark of the Earl of Oxford (John de Vere, thirteenth Earl of Oxford): "O brave young prince! Thy famous grandfather doth live again in thee" (5.4.52-53), that comes directly after Edward's speech, takes on "a new significance." Sheppard sees that, with this comment, not only is "Oxford" noting the similarity between the courage of Prince Edward and Edward's grandfather Henry V, but also the similarity between their exhortatory speeches, and that, in fact, the character of Oxford in *Henry VI, Part 3* is making a purposeful reference to the St. Crispin's Day speech in *Henry V*.

We wish to add to this that such a comment on the part of "Oxford" is either incredibly prescient or else the traditional dating of the two plays, based on what is known about their dates of publication/production, is incorrect. The first edition of *Henry VI, Part 3*—in octavo (henceforth O1 or just O)—was published in 1595 (Arden 76-116), while the first known edition of *Henry V*—in quarto (Q1 or just Q)—was not published until 1600 (525-50), adding to the likelihood that the dates of publication of these two plays at least, have little to do with their actual dates of composition. We have also noticed two other examples, one well-known, though not commonly appreciated, in which *Henry VI, Part 3* itself serves as source material for subsequent Shakespeare plays.

It was the First Folio (1623) version of these plays that caught Sheppard's attention, but, as we show below, this similarity was there from the first—it was not added later. Given the similarity of Edward's and Henry's First Folio (FF) speeches to their respective O and Q versions, we see that the similarity of these two speeches is maintained when Edward's speech in the O is compared to Henry's in the Q.

Henry VI, Part 3

First Folio:

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| Edward: | For did I but suspect a fearful man, He should have leave to go away betimes, Lest in our need he might infect another And make him of like spirit to himself. If any such be here—as God forbid— Let him depart before we need his help. |
| Oxford: | Women and children of so high a courage, And warriors faint! Why, 'twere perpetual shame. |

O brave young prince! Thy famous grandfather
 Doth live again in thee: long mayst thou live
 To bear his image and renew his glories! (5.4.44-54, FF 2931-41)

Octavo:

Edward: And if there be, as God forbid there should
 Amongst us a timorous or fearefull man,
 Let him depart before the battles ioine,
 Least he in time of need intise another,
 and so withdraw the souldiers harts from us.

Oxford: Women and children of so high a courage,
 and warriors faint! why, 'twere perpetual shame.
 O brave young prince! thy famous grandfather
 doth live again in thee: long mayst thou live
 to bear his image and renew his glories! (page 112, lines 19-29)

Henry V

First Folio

Henry: I am the most offending soule alive.
 No 'faith, my couze, with not a man from England.
 Gods peace, I would not lose so great an honor
 As one man more me thinkes, would share from me,
 For the best hope I have. O, doe not wish one more:
 Rather proclaim it, (Westmorland), through my hoast,
 That he which hath no stomack to this fight,
 Let him depart, his passport shall be made,
 And Crowns for Convoy put into his Purse:
 We would not dye in that mans companie,
 That feares his fellowship to dye with us. (4.3.29-39, FF 2273-83)

Quarto

Henry: Whose that, that wishes so, my cousin Warwick?
 God's will, I would not loose the honour,
 One man would share from me.
 Not for my Kingdome.
 No faith my Cousin, with not one man more.

Rather proclaim it presently through our camp,
 That he that hath no stomacke to this feast,
 Let him depart, his passport shall be drawn,
 And crowns for convouy put into his purse.
 We would not die in that man's company,
 That fears his fellowship to die with us. (541, lines 21-31)

How did Edward's and Henry's speeches get to be so similar?

Sheppard suggests that Shakespeare may have derived Edward's speech from a speech of his quoted in Volume III of the 1587 edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles*. We were unable to locate the analogous speech on the page she cited (664), but did find it earlier (on page 277): "King Edward, perceiving the courage of his trustie friend the earle of Warwike, made proclamation, that all men which were afraid to fight, should depart . . ."

One explanation that might account for the similarity between these speeches of Edward and Henry and Oxford's apparent reference to Henry's speech five years before it is typically thought to have been written, is that Henry's speech, like Edward's, also derives from Holinshed's *Chronicles*. However, in searching the 1587 Holinshed we find no reference to a speech by Henry that is an obvious source for his St. Crispin's Day speech in Shakespeare's play.

Alternatively, Cox and Rasmussen, editors of the third Arden edition, suggest that: "Oxford's allusion to *Henry V* at 52-53 suggestively connects this passage to the later one, as if Shakespeare wrote it to confirm what Oxford says here" (350). That is, that Shakespeare wrote the St. Crispin's Day speech in *Henry V* to justify Oxford's remark in *Henry VI, Part 3*. This seems unlikely, particularly if we're to take the standard dating of the play as our guide. During the time *Henry VI, Part 3* was being performed, before *Henry V* was first performed (currently thought to be 1595-1600, or the dates of the *Henry VI, Part 3* O and the *Henry V* Q), "Oxford's" line would have made no sense. Furthermore, when "Oxford" says "thy famous grandfather doth live again," the word *again* implies that the speech in *Henry V* had already been written. Little is known about Shakespeare's methods of composition, but the "Earl of Oxford's" prescience in *Henry VI, Part 3* clearly implies that *Henry V* was already written, or at least conceived, by the time *Henry VI* was first published (in octavo) in 1595.

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BESIDES this prescience in *Henry VI, Part 3*, the play seems to have been a source for important quotes and ideas in two other plays. The first example of this is well-known. In *Henry VI, Part 3* Queen Margaret speaks the lines “Traytors, Tyrants, bloudie Homicides, They that stabd Casar shed no bloud at all” (5.5.53, Q 110, line 30; FF 3030-1). This reminds one of Caesar’s line in the eponymous tragedy “Et tu, Brute? Then fall, Caesar” (3.1.78, FF 1288). (There is no known quarto or octavo version of *Julius Caesar*). Remarkably, the O version of *Henry VI, Part 3* also has the line spoken by Prince Edward: “E tu Brute, wilt thou stab Casar too?” (110, line 30). Despite the fact that this line does not appear in the First Folio or modern performance editions of *Henry VI, Part 3* it is remarked and appreciated that the line appears in the octavo version. It is an interesting question of why this line was not preserved in the First Folio version of *Henry VI, Part 3*.

THE second example of the foreshadowing of later plays in *Henry VI, Part 3* seems not as well-known or appreciated (emphasis in the examples below is ours). Compare the contexts of the phrases “Alas, poor Yorick!” from *Hamlet* (5.1.177) to that of “Alas, poor Yorke” from *Henry VI, Part 3*, both of which contain merriment, singing and dancing:

Hamlet

Hamlet: Let me see [takes the skull] *Alas, poor Yorick!*
 I knew him, Horatio. A fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy. He hath borne me on his back a thousand times. And now how abhorred in my imagination it is! My gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. Where are your gibes now? Your gambols? *Your songs? Your flashes of merriment that were wont to set the table on a roar?* Not one now, to mock your own grinning? (5.1.177-85, FF 3373-84)

Q1 of *Hamlet*

Hamlet: Was this? I prethee let me see it, *alas poore Yoricke,*
 I knew him Horatio,
 A fellow of infinite mirth, he hath caried mee twenty times upon his backe, here hung those lippes that I have kissed
 A hundred times, and to see, now they abhorre me: wheres your iests now Yoricke! *Your flashes of merriment:* now go to my Ladies chamber, and bid her paint her selve an inch thicke, to this she must come Yoricke. (lines 61-69)

Q2 of *Hamlet*

Hamlet: *Alas poore Yorricke*, I knew him Horatio a fellow of infinite iest, of most excellent fancie, hee hath bore me on his backe a thousand times, and now how abhorred in my imagination it is: my gorge rises at it. Heere hung those lypes that I have kist I know not howe oft, where be your gibes now? Your gamboles, your songs, *your flashes of merriment*, that were wont to set the table on a roare, not one now to mocke your owne grinning, quite chopfalne. Now get you to my Ladies table, & tell her, let her paint an inch thicke.

*Henry VI, Part 3***First Folio**

Q Marg: Alas, poor York! But that I hate thee deadly,
I should lament thy miserable state.
I prithee, grieve, *to make me merry*, York.
What! Hath thy fiery heart so parched thine entrails
that not a tear can fall for Rutland's death?
Why art thou patient, man? thou shouldst be mad;
And I, to make thee mad, do mock thee thus.
Stamp, rave, and fret, that I may sing and dance.
Thou wouldst be fee'd, I see, to make me sport. (1.4.84-92, FF 547-554)

Octavo

Q Marg: Alas poore Yorke: But that I hate thee much,
I should lament thy miserable state?
I prethee greeve *to make me merrie* Yorke?
Stamp, rave and fret, that I maie sing and dance.
What, hath thy fierie hart so parcht thine entrailles,
That not a teare can fall for Rutlands death?
Thou wouldst be feede I see to make me sport. (86, lines 26-32)

WE agree with Sheppard and Cox and Rasmussen that the Earl of Oxford is not only referring to Edward being similar to his grandfather in nature and appearance, but also to the fact that his speech is so similar to Henry's in *Henry V*. If, as the orthodox scholars claim, the octavo was written earlier than the quarto of *Henry V*, then "Oxford" is being extremely prescient. On the other hand, Shakespeare may already have written *Henry V* before he wrote *Henry VI, Part 3*.

Furthermore, it turns out that *Henry VI, Part 3* has material that repeats in other plays such as *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet*.

According to the standard Stratfordian point of view, next to nothing is known about the developmental style of the plays in the Shakespeare canon or the learning/study/growth of the artistic process of William Shakespeare. Thus, at a very minimum, the two foreshadowing lines show that *Henry VI, Part 3* must have been an important play for Shakespeare, as it has kernels for other plays considered “greater.” As well, it shows a reuse of material in a way not often or typically ascribed to the Bard. Further searching of the plays in folio, quarto and octavo may find more.

We find the prescient line in *Henry VI, Part 3* to be the strongest internal evidence in the canon for the incompleteness or incorrectness of the standard view of the plays’ composition. The fact that this line is spoken by one Earl of Oxford may well point to a later Earl of Oxford as the author of the Shakespeare canon. We find it suggestive that, around the time of publication of *Henry VI, Part 3*, the seventeenth earl faded almost completely from public discourse and life, something mirrored and explicitly stated by the thirteenth Earl in his final line in *Henry VI, Part 3*: “For my part, I’ll not trouble thee with words.” _____ 🍀

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