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Shakespeare Attribution by Rare-Words Association

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Professor Samuel Schoenbaum has revised his *Shakespeare's Lives*¹ [no references in the typescript - ED] to include the latest developments in the field of attribution. He modestly omits to mention his own enthusiastic acceptance of the poem 'Shall I die?'² as authentically Shakespearean. But he duly notes my attribution of *Edmund Ironside*,³ adding that it has failed to impress the establishment. In fact, however, *Ironside* has fared far better than 'Shall I die?', despite the latter's advantage of inclusion in the Oxford Shakespeare and support from a mathematical method⁴ that demonstrated an almost perfect match with canonical word-frequencies. Unfortunately, that method and its results rely upon a serious misinterpretation of the Spevack concordances.

Yet that massive compilation' properly interpreted, must be the best modern measure of Shakespearean authorship. Nothing else has viable. 'Stylometry' has been discredited by its own practitioners' contradictions and illogicalities, such as the presupposition that two different styles must mean two different authors, not two different stages of a revision; hence the assured but baseless identification of 'Wilkins'⁷ as the author of *Pericles* I-II. Imagery studies have proved even less compelling. Professor MacDonald Jackson even went so far as to reject them⁸ twenty years ago, on the ground that they showed Shakespeare to be the author of *Ironside*, which could not possibly be the case.

That same baseless subconscious assumption still dominates Academia, It enabled such commentators⁹ as John Jones, John Kerrigan, Richard Proudfoot, John Wilders and the Oxford Shakespeare editor-in- chief Stanley Wells to decide that all *Ironside's* hundreds of undeniable parallels with the canon must be plagiarisms from Shakespeare since he could not possibly have written such stuff himself. The necessary late dating of *Ironside* to some imaginary time in the middle or late 1590s was invented accordingly, in silent defiance of most previous scholarship and all the actual evidence.

These deplorable practices remain rife. Indeed, another Oxford editor, Samuel Schoenbaum¹, now claims that *Ironside* is generally dated to the mid-1590s, although this is merely the minimum period required to accuse its author of 'plagiarism' from Shakespeare. Professor Donald Foster¹⁰, conversely, accepts all the dating evidence for an early *Ironside* written long before most of the canon, which plainly eliminates any such plagiarism. So the explanation of the copious parallels must be that Shakespeare himself was a persistent and shameless plagiarist of that worthless play, throughout his creative life. In this strongly-held belief, Professor Foster is unique throughout the academic world. But his inference is entirely logical, given the unshakable preconception he shares with his academic colleagues, namely that Shakespeare could not possibly have written *Ironside*. So perhaps that assumption should now be seen as self-refuting, by *reductio ad absurdum*? At least it should always have been argued, not just accepted and asserted as infallible fact, especially since it is the actual question at issue.

And such an argument has indeed been attempted, by the Oxford Shakespeare editor Gary Taylor¹¹. Although avowedly no mathematician, he has devised the statistical 'tests' on which the entire Oxford canon and chronology are based. They allegedly demonstrate beyond doubt that 'the *Ironside* author's mind moved in a different rut from Shakespeare's'. However, not only are Taylor's *Ironside* figures¹² wrong but his general statistical procedures have been refuted by a professional mathematician¹³. The question remains wide open.

It will not be resolved by closed mind, and still less by mere personal disparagement, such as Inge-Stina Ewbank's contribution¹⁴ to the discussion. Nor is agnosticism, though a welcome novelty, at all helpful. Even those who agree that *Ironside* might be by Shakespeare never admit that this might be important, or even interesting. Thus Ernst Honigmann's concession¹⁵ to that effect, late in a long review, was so unobtrusive that it seems to have passed entirely unnoticed, even by him.

The most remarkable of all such admissions came from MacDonald Jackson¹⁶ himself, in a radical reversal of his previous view. For all he now knows, *Ironside* may be Shakespearean after all. But so, in that event, may its typical image-cluster, centred on the word 'blot', first identified in the canon by Kenneth Mui¹⁷. A measure of faith in the imagery or word-association approach to attribution studies may thus now be restored. After all, such methods played an important part in persuading the profession, after a century or so, that Shakespeare wrote the insurrection scene in *Sir Thomas More*.

One other method has also achieved a certain success This is the analysis of rare canonical words, as initiated by Alfred Hart¹⁸ and developed by the late Eliot Slater¹⁹. The professional mathematician Dr. M.W.A. Smith²⁰ has confirmed that the Slater method is at least effective in helping to establish the chronology of the canon, if not the authorship of the apocrypha. But the method has recently scored a

notable (though unnoticed) triumph. Eliot Slater devoted a whole book²¹ to a proposed proof, by way of rare vocabulary, that Shakespeare wrote *Edward III* in its entirety. The Oxford editors²² have recently acknowledged their regret at having omitted this play from their so-called *Complete Works* (which includes 'Shall I Die?').

But if *Edward III* is indeed a Shakespeare play, then attribution studies are thereby revolutionised. First, the Slater rare-word method must surely have much to commend it, if it attains right results of attribution, not just chronology. Secondly, that method also independently supports the authenticity of *Edmund Ironside*²³. Further, the 'blot-cluster' mentioned above was used by Kenneth Muir¹⁷ to show Shakespeare's authorship of *Edward III*; so its presence in *Ironside* must also be *prima facie* evidential. But it is only one among many striking parallels of imagery, phrase, vocabulary, characterisation and stagecraft between those two plays, as already exemplified by the pioneering studies of E. B. Everitt²⁴. His inference that 'the same author wrote both of them in their entirety' will now surely be shared by many other serious analysts, A Shakespearean *Edward III* will thus strongly reinforce *Ironside's* claim to objective academic assessment, which there has so far been no sign at all, despite hundreds of striking and admitted parallels with the canon in vocabulary, imagery and thought-process generally.

So this essay proposes a new two-pronged test of Shakespeare's authorship, combining the rare-word method with the thought-process approach. The basic data are those words (defined as in Slater, op. cit.) which occur *only ten times or fewer* throughout the 37 plays of the First Folio plus *Pericles*, as concorded by Spevack⁶. Of course such rare canonical words will appear by the hundred in any authentic Shakespeare play. Indeed, *Edward III* itself contains some 600 such words, a total which is fully conformable with its authenticity. There are some 450 in *Ironside*, which is only about three-quarters as long. Preliminary studies suggest that they are far less plentiful in plays of known non-Shakespearean authorship. But no research into such subjects has yet been reported; and of course Shakespeare's rarities might prove to be another dramatist's commonplaces. The question at present propounded is whether these rarities are used in an idiosyncratically Shakespearean sense or context. If so, how is that to be reconciled with the explanations of the *Ironside* parallels as 'plagiarisms', whether of its author by Shakespeare (Donald Foster's theory) or by its author of Shakespeare (everyone else's)?

The proposed approach to this problem is by way of discernible concordance patterns. Surprisingly these have been studied only cursorily, if at all. Thus one often hears that Shakespeare rarely repeated his ideas, with such well-known and trifling exceptions as the parallel between

Was ever woman in this humour wooed?
Was ever woman in this humour won? (*Richard III*, I ii.227-8)

and

She is a woman, therefore may be wooed;
she is a woman, therefore may be won (*Titus Andronicus*, I.i.83-4)

However, such notions may be dispelled by spending half an hour with any concordance. Of course Shakespeare's creative mind was crammed with such close associations, deliberate self-quotation²⁵. In what follows, some of his clearest thought-patterns are described compared with parallel procedures in *Ironside*. Naturally, not all its 450 rare concordance words have definable Shakespearean associations; their rarity itself guarantees that. But very many have; indeed, the following selection of over forty examples has been limited by lack of space, not material. Scores of others could also have been exhibited.

Each example below is allotted a separate paragraph, prefixed by the main rare word concerned, in alphabetical order. Under each such reading is a note of the number of canonical occurrences, and a reference to any relevant first citation from Shakespeare found in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989). For good measure, occasional examples from *Edward III* have been included, though none of them is advanced as an argument for *Ironside* authorship.

That contention relies solely on the parallel patterns of thought successively identified and compared. It will at least be conceded that those patterns should share the same general explanation, whatever that may be. That of mere coincidence will find few if any advocates. That leaves just three possibilities, the existence of which is not only undisputed but has been universally agreed. They may all be dated c.1590, without dissent. At that time and for some years thereafter either Shakespeare was copiously and persistently plagiarised by, or he himself was a copious and persistent plagiarist of, the author of *Ironside*; or else he himself was that author.

But even assuming that any such plagiarism is plausible, could it truly have concentrated so closely on Shakespeare's own very rarest words and their demonstrable concordance associations within his creative mind?

If not, then the only answer is identity.

These separate threads of personal thought and of rare vocabulary together weave the same patterns and form the same pictures because they were introduced by the same designer, whose poetic imagination though entirely marvellous was also entirely human and therefore personal.

ABJECT(LY) + (a)base + thought

The epithet 'abject' appears in only nine concordance contexts. In three of them, there is an immediate link with 'base', whether in the same line (*2 Henry IV*, IV.i.33; *1 Henry VI*, V.v.49) or the next (*2 Henry VI*, IV.i.105-6). In each instance these concepts are contrasted with the idea of kingship. The adverb 'abjectly' occurs once only, (*Titus Andronicus*, II.iii.4), the source cited by the Oxford English Dictionary as that word's first known usage). The villain Aaron says that whoever 'thinks of me so abjectly' should know that he is in fact rich, not poor, and is plotting 'villainy' (ibid. 7) against the rulers of Rome. In *Ironsides* the villain Edricus says that despite all his 'villainy' (320), he has been made a duke by the hated King Edmund; but 'thoughts' of his previous poverty 'abase my state most abjectly' (324).

(A)BROACH + mischief

Shakespeare regularly thinks of serious mischief or quarrelling as pouring out like wine from a broached cask, a presage of spilt blood; hence the phrase 'broachèd mischief' (*1 Henry IV*, V.i.21), connoting rebellion. The verb 'broach' is uncommon, and the adverb 'abroach' is a real rarity. It occurs only thrice in the canon. 'What mischiefs might he set abroach' (*2 Henry IV*, IV.ii.14) and 'The secret mischiefs that I set abroach' (*Richard III* I.iii.324) are also about crimes committed for the sake of a crown. So is King Edmund's suspicion that 'some mischief was abroach' (*Ironsides* 1370).

APPEASE + slaughter + propitiation + soldiers

The verb 'appease' makes only nine appearances. In Shakespeare's mind, though not in the *OED* or the Bible, it conjures up the mention or idea of propitiatory ritual slaughter, usually of soldiers: cf *Cymbeline*, V.v.72 'appeased with slaughter/ of you their captives'; *Titus Andronicus*, I.i.124, 126 'religiously they ask a sacrifice.[of prisoners].../t'appease their groaning shadows that are gone'. In *Ironsides* an army spokesman complains to the warring kings that 'we daily to appease your mortal wars/ offer our slaughtered bodies to the sword'.

BASE-BORN + promotion + downfall

The coinage 'base-born' (= of humble origin), attributed by the O.E.D. to Shakespeare, occurs only thrice in the canon. It is no mere insult; each such usage is related to a double contrast between the promotion of the base-born and the commensurate downfall of true nobility. In *2 Henry VI* (I.iii.79,81) the vaunted affluence of a 'base-born' Duchess is compared by the Queen to 'our poverty'. Later (ibid. IV.viii.47) the King's champion Clifford contrasts 'base-born Cades' with Henry the Fifth, and the rebels with 'earls and dukes'. In *3 Henry VI* (II.ii.143) the Queen herself is reminded of her lowly origins ('base-born heart') and then blamed for the King's downfall: 'what hath broached this tumult but thy pride?' (159). Thus in each canonical 'base-born' context, what goes up should have come down, and conversely. In *Ironsides* (235), exactly the same contrasts cluster around the same word: 'each base-born groom promoted up.../when the true noble ... gentlemen are scorned, disgraced...'.

BRIDLE + will + mild and tractable

The canon includes 'bridle' only eight times all told, whether as noun or verb. Most of these usages are metaphorical; two of them (*Comedy of Errors*, II.i.13-14) refer to a bridling of the will. The total tally for 'tractable' is only six; one example is the collocation 'mild and tractable' (*Titus Andronicus*, I.i.470), again with the same latent image of a harnessed farm-animal. In *Ironsides*(152-3), Canute is advised to deal with the English thus: 'bridle... their wills/ and you shall find them mild and tractable'.

BRINISH + tears + sea

'Brinish', a synonym for salty, appears only four times in the canon; it describes either tears or the drowning depths of the sea, whose 'brinish bowels swallow...' (*Titus*, III.i.97). The epithet is again associated with the bitterness of death as well as tearful grief in *The Rape of Lucrece* (1212-3) and with 'a river' in *A Lover's Complaint*, where tears make a 'brinish current' (283-4). In *Ironsides* (1102-3) a defeated army lies 'drowned in brinish tears/ as jewels in the bottom of the sea'.

CONJOIN + military manoeuvres

The verb has only seven occurrences. Mostly it means marriage; but once it denotes military manoeuvres (*1 Henry VI*, V.ii.11-12: 'the English army, that divided was/ into two parties, is now conjoined in one'. This usage is not recorded by the *OED* before 1795. But the long overdue acceptance of *Edward III*, as the Oxford editors now propose, will add two more examples (1071, 1196); and in *Ironsides* (121-2) the English rebels attack the Danes 'with conjoined force'.

DECIDE + swords

The verb, in any form, appears only thrice in the canon. Its sole idiosyncratic use is 'to the place of difference call the swords/ which must decide it' (*2 Henry IV*, IV.i.180-1); cf *Ironsides* (1905), 'let your swords decide whose title's best'.

at my DEPART + marriage + new bride

The noun 'depart' (= departure) occurs only thrice. Each time, this rare word appears in the form 'at my depart', and is immediately associated with marriage, thus: '...this ring? At my depart I gave this unto Julia' (*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, V.iv.96-7); 'at my depart for France...to marry Princess Margaret...' (*2 Henry VI*, I.i.2,4); 'At my depart,...his new bride' *3 Henry VI*, IV.ii,92,95). *Ironside* (1288-1290) has '...the late-espoused man/grieves to depart from his new-married wife. How many sighs I fetched at my depart...'. See also ESPOUSE, infra.

DISADVANTAGE (sb) + fighting: SECOND (vb): discomfit(ure)

The only form of 'disadvantage' recorded in the canon is the noun; and this occurs only twice, each time meaning a handicap in battle. The *OED* credits Shakespeare with the first literary use of the noun in any sense, and cites both examples, without however distinguishing this specific usage: 'Him did you leave unseconded by you/ to look upon the hideous god of war/ in disadvantage' (*2 Henry IV*, II.iii.36); 'We have at disadvantage fought and did/ retire' (*Coriolanus*, I.vi.49). Just so in *Ironside* (69-70); Edricus feigned 'disadvantages/ whenas the king sent me to fight', i.e. as a field commander in battle. The verb 'second', in the above sense of 'support a combatant' (*OED* 2, first cited from 1588) is also very rare in the canon; it too occurs in *Ironside* (929). Another very rare battle-word is 'discomfit' (four times) or 'discomfiture' (once), meaning defeat; cf *Ironside* (1021).

DISDAINFUL + pride

The epithet is found only nine times, thrice in immediate association with pride: 'proud disdainful' in *As You Like It* III.iv.50 and *The Taming of the Shrew*, IV.ii.39, and 'proud and disdainful' in *Antony and Cleopatra*, III.xiii.132. *Edward III* (1351) has 'disdainful pride'; so has *Ironside* (905).

DULCET + music + harmony + heavenly + breathe + womens' voices

The adjective 'dulcet', meaning sweet to the ear, occurs only six times in the canon, with clear links to such ideas as 'breath', 'heaven' and female voices. The key passages are: 'music...dulcet sounds' (*The Merchant of Venice*, III.ii.48,51); 'music.. a dulcet and a heavenly sound' (*The Taming of the Shrew* ind.i.48-9); 'the sea-maid's music'...'her song'...'dulcet and harmonious breath' (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, II.i.151-4). Compare *Ironside* (1174-5): 'borrow the *Muses*' aid and let them breathe/some dulcet and melodious harmony'.

ENCOURAGE + soldiers in battle

The verb 'encourage' in any form occurs only six times in the canon, and the noun 'encouragement' only twice. These usages envisage the exhortation of troops for battle, e.g. 'the enemy [is] encouraged' (*Julius Caesar*, IV.iii.209) or 'encouraging the Greeks to fight' (*The Rape of Lucrece*, 1402); cf *Ironside* (999) 'encouraging his soldiers'.

ESPOUSE = unite in marriage

The canonical uses of the verb 'espouse', totalling only eight in any form, include two clear examples of the special sense 'unite in marriage' which the *OED* attributes to Shakespeare as the first recorded source. The given example is *2 Henry VI*, I.i.9: 'I have performed my task and was espoused' (this is the context already given above under the rubric at my DEPART); another is *Titus Andronicus*, I.i.308: 'I lead espoused my bride along with me'. Cf. *Ironside* 'the new-espoused man' i.e. one recently united in marriage.

FIFE + nasty noise

The noun 'fife', meaning the musical instrument, is mentioned only four times in the canon, twice in uncomplimentary terms; 'vile squealing' (*The Merchant of Venice*, II.v.30) and 'ear-piercing' (*Othello*, III.iii.352). Compare *Ironside* (1036), 'shrieking fifes'.

FLEXIBLE + women

The adjective 'flexible' occurs only twice; one such usage occurs in a general description of women as 'soft, mild, pitiful and flexible' (*2 Henry VI*, I.vi.141). In *Ironside* (407), the Earl of Southampton tells his daughter Egina not to be 'too flexible' when dining with King Canute.

FOAMING + shoreline

The adjective 'foaming' occurs only four times. Twice it is applied to the sea: 'the foaming brine' (*The Tempest*, I.ii.211), 'the foaming shore' (*Othello*, II.i.11). Compare *Ironside* (1521), 'the foaming haven'.

FORTRESS + God + bulwarks + conquering

The noun 'fortress' is found only four times in the canon, twice in immediate association with supernatural powers: 'this fortress [i.e. England] built by Nature' (*Richard II*, II.1.43), and 'God is our fortress, in whose conquering name/ let us ... scale their...bulwarks' (*1 Henry VI*, II.i.26). Compare

Ironsides (1019-1022), '...the eternal bulwark of this land [i.e. England], the fortress ...in Whom I trust...His all-conquering arm'.

FORWARDNESS + soldiers in battle

This noun occurs only four times in the canon, always in the sense of 'zeal' or 'boldness'. Two of these contexts are especially associated with warfare; '...fight it out...why doubt'st thou of my forwardness? / An army...' (*1 Henry VI*, I.i.100) and 'your forwardness./ Here pitch our battles...' (*3 Henry VI*, V.iv.65). Compare *Ironsides* (1894), 'your soldiers' forwardness'.

FOULLY + SCANDALISED + mouth

The adverb 'fouly' occurs only four times in the canon, once with the connotation of 'foul-mouthed': 'we in the world's wide mouth/ live scandalised and fouly spoken of' (*1 Henry IV*, I.iii.154-5). The word 'scandalised' is even rarer, with only one other appearance in the canon. Compare *Ironsides* (65), 'fouly scandalised', together with 'mouth of fame' (1024) and 'opinion's mouth' (1916).

FRAUD + force of arms + Hannibal

The noun 'fraud' occurs in only six contexts, one of which contrasts it with force of arms: 'the fraud of England, not the force of France..' (*1 Henry VI*, IV.iv.36). In *Edward III* (2137) a diversion from the serious business of battle is stigmatised as 'a silly fraud'. *Ironsides* contains the same contrast, twice: 'fraud won *Tarentum*' (1557) and Sweyn won England 'by treason, not by force of valiant arms' (1824). *Ironsides* also names the victor of *Tarentum*, Hannibal, who received only three mentions in the canon, one of which is also in *1 Henry VI* (I.v.21) and makes the same point yet again; Joan of Arc is a witch who like Hannibal 'drives back our troops... by fear, not force...'.

FRESHLY + recollection + war + dear-bought

The adverb 'freshly' has only eight canonical occurrences. Two of them are about the recollection of past dangers in war or rebellion: 'freshly remembered' (*Henry V*, IV.iii.55) and 'freshly pitied in our memories' (*Henry VIII*, V.iii.30-31). Compare the *Ironsides* (192-3) reference to civil war: 'the former perils we have passed/whose dear-bought times are freshly yet in mind'. That hyphenated epithet itself occurs only once in the canon: *2 Henry VI*, I.i.252, 'England's dear-bought queen', i.e. the cause of civil war.

GOLIATH + English soldiers confronting their enemies

There are only two canonical references to the Biblical giant Goliath. One uses the form 'Goliath', in an invented plural: 'Samsons and Goliathes' (*1 Henry VI*, I.ii.33, dated 1591). This is the *OED*'s first citation for the use of that name, in any form, to mean a giant. But that usage, in its context, is even more specific. It refers to the supposedly huge size of English soldiers in comparison with their French opponents in hand-to-hand combat. Compare *Ironsides* (1953), where King Edmund claims to be 'Goliath' in comparison with the 'little king', as they prepare for their duel.

HELPLESS + the uselessness of a woman's tears

The epithet 'helpless' sounds familiar and frequent enough; but it occurs only seven times in the canon, always in its specially Shakespearean sense (*OED* 3) of 'unavailing'. This is first cited from *The Comedy of Errors*, dated 1590. It is twice associated with a woman's tears, which are of no avail in her tragedy: 'the helpless balm of my poor eyes' (*Richard III*, I.ii.13), and 'upon my cheeks what helpless shame I feel' (*The Rape of Lucrece*, 756). Compare *Ironsides* (1472) 'Madam, your helpless tears...'

HITHERWARD(S) + messenger + massive trained army ('mighty power'..'marching') + named commanders + high-resolved

The archaic adverb (as the *OED* describes it) 'hitherward(s)' occurs only eight times. But its use is anything but fusty or antiquated in these canonical contexts. Most of the eight usages evoke a sudden surprise attack by enemy forces. The predominant pattern imposes a sense of urgency, often enhanced by the entrance of a messenger. Key words are 'mighty', 'power' and 'marching'; the excellence of the force, in numbers or fighting spirit, is regularly emphasised; the field commanders are often named, for extra effects of immediacy. Shakespeare's actual words are worth excerpting *in extenso*.

'Messenger.

Please it your grace to be advertised

the Duke of York is newly come from Ireland

and with a puissant and a mighty power...

is marching hitherward in proud array' (*2 Henry VI*, IV.ix.24-6, 28)

'First Messenger.

[The Earl of Oxford is]

by this at Dunsmore, marching hitherward.

Second Messenger.
[The Marquis of Montague is]
by this at Daintry, with a puissant troop' (*3 Henry VI*, V.i.3,6)

'The Dolphin is preparing hitherward' (*King John*, V.vii.59)

'The Earl of Westmoreland, seven thousand strong
is marching hitherwards...
The King himself in person is set forth
or hitherwards intended speedily
with strong and mighty preparation' (*1 Henry IV*, IV.i.88-9,91-3)

'Messenger.
News, madam.
The British powers are marching hitherward.' (*King Lear*, IV.iv.20-1)

'Some parcels of their power are forth already,
and only hitherward' (*Coriolanus*, I.ii.32-3)

'We have descried...
a portly sail of ships make hitherward' (*Pericles*, I.iv.60-61)

The same pattern is plainly apparent in

'a power
of high-resolvéd men...
they hither march amain, under conduct
of Lucius..' (*Titus Andronicus*, IV.iv. 62-5)

All this assorts well with Shakespeare's authorship of *Edward III*, with its

'Enter a Scot in haste
Messenger. ...marching hitherward
we might descry a mighty host of men' (226-9)

and also

'Mariner. I have descried...
The proud armada...
They plough the ocean hitherward amain' (1108-9, 1111, 1125)

Compare also *Ironsides*

'Messenger.
Edmund your foe is coming hitherward
with a choice company of arméd men
intending to surprise you suddenly. (916-8); to which Canute casually replies 'He is welcome',
as Hotspur greets the similar news cited above from *1 Henry IV* with 'He shall be welcome too'. Other
Ironsides analogues are equally clear, thus: '[Edmund] is coming with a mighty power' (1748);
'Edmund... is coming with a mighty host'(1764-5); 'Canute comes marching bravely on' (1783).
Further, the coinage 'high-resolvéd', unique in the canon, is first cited by the *OED* from the *Titus*
context above, where it described the mettle of a foreign invader; so it does in *Ironsides* (1945). See
also NIP, infra.

MANUAL + seal + kiss

The adjective (or adjectival noun) 'manual' is encountered only twice throughout the canon. The
O.E.D. distinguishes the separate sense (A.1.b) of 'autograph' in such collocations as 'seal manual', its
first and only citation of which comes from *Venus and Adonis* (516), 'set thy seal manual on my wax-red
lips'. The other canonical usage is 'Here is my gage, the manual seal of death' (*Richard II*, IV.i.25).
There too the thought is linked to 'his slanderous lips' in the previous line. In each instance the meaning
is not so much 'autograph' as 'authentication, validation', sealed with pressure on warm soft redness as
in the application of a signet-ring to wax on a legal document; hence the connotation of a kiss as an
earnest of lasting love, which also sounds like a new-minted Shakespearean coinage. The thought

recurs in *Measure for Measure* (IV.i.6-7): 'But my kisses bring again / Seals of love, but sealed in vain'. Compare *Ironsides*, where King Canute says to Egina, who has just accepted his proposal of marriage, 'then for a manual seal receive this kiss' (439).

MANURE + blood + death on the battlefield

The word 'manure' occurs only as a verb, and then only thrice. In the sense of 'apply fertilising material' the first citation (*OED* 3) comes from Nashe 1599; but this surely overlooks the terms in which the Bishop of Carlisle warns of civil war: 'the blood of English shall manure the ground' (*Richard II*, IV.i.137). The countryman Shakespeare, who (according to John Aubrey) had worked in the family trade of butchery, might well know the efficacy of blood and bone fertiliser. Compare *Ironsides*, on the same subject: '...this little isle/ whose soil is manuréd with carcasses'.

MASSY + accoutrements

There are only four instances of the adjective 'massy'. All but one of the items that Shakespeare thought worthy of that impressive description were a man's weapons or accoutrements: swords in *The Tempest* (III.iii.67), 'irons' or swords again, ironically in *Troilus and Cressida* (II.iii.17); a club, or a codpiece, humorously, in *Much Ado about Nothing* (III.iii.137). Even in his youth, King Edmund, the eponymous hero of *Ironsides* (758), was strong enough to bear 'a massy helmet and a curtle-axe'.

MIGHTINESS + title of dignity

The noun 'mightiness' appears only five times, thrice as a title of dignity, a usage which the *OED* first cites from Shakespeare: 'your mightiness' (*Titus Andronicus*, II.iii.126). The same formula is found, used ironically, in *The Taming of the Shrew* (Ind.2.76) and seriously in *Henry V* (V.ii.28), where the title 'your mightiness' is addressed to the kings of France and England. So Edricus styles King Canute in *Ironsides* (769).

NEVER-HEARD-OF + torturing + new

The adjective 'never-heard-of' occurs only once in the canon, and 'torturing' only thrice. They combine in the phrase 'some never-heard-of torturing pain' (*Titus Andronicus*, II.iii.285), which far antedates the *OED*'s first citation of 1600 for the former epithet (under 'never', II.6d). For so heinous a crime, no known agony can suffice, and some new torment must be 'devised' (ibid. 284). Exactly the same thought, in the same two words, informs the declaration of Edricus in *Ironsides* (1276) that he himself deserves 'some new never-heard-of torturing pain'.

NIP + news + plants + drooping + grass + down

The verb 'nip', in the *OED* sense 6b, to check or destroy the growth of plants, is first cited from Shakespeare: 'If frosts...nip not the gaudy blossoms of your love' in *Love's Labour's Lost* (V.ii.802), puzzlingly dated 1588. There is only one other canonical example of this idiosyncratic usage, and it is even more graphic: 'These tidings nip me, and I hang the head/ as flowers with frost, or grass beat down with storms...' (*Titus Andronicus*, IV.iv.69-70, which on contemporary evidence was indeed an early play, c.1589). The tidings in question are that 'the Goths...with a power of high-resolvéd men...hither march amain, under the conduct of Lucius...' (loc.cit., 63-66). This equally typical Shakespeare utterance follows a pattern already discussed (under HITHERWARD, qv), with the same components of 'power', 'march', 'hither', and a formidable force under named leadership), which is also clearly exemplified in *Ironsides*, loc. cit. There too (1945) appears the adjective 'high-resolved', which is unique in the canon and first cited by the *OED* from this *Titus* source. The picture of a Roman emperor hanging his head at bad news may seem incongruous. What the mind's eye sees is the actual effect of frost on a garden plant, which is naturally incorporated into the metaphor. The image of flattened grass, also hanging its head, is equally unique in the canon.

All these pictorial aspects also appear as part of exactly the same pattern in *Ironsides*. Again it is ominous tidings about an enemy's army that has the same incongruous effect: 'This unwelcome news/ nips like a hoary frost our springing hopes/ and makes my fearful soldiers hang their heads' (742-4). After a later defeat, Canute's supporters are seen 'drooping our heads as grass down-weighed with dew'.

OILY + speak + beseech

The epithet 'oily' occurs only thrice in the canon...It is spoken with scorn by the candid Cordelia, who explains that she lacks 'that ...oily art / to speak and purpose not'. The word 'beseech' occurs in the previous line (*King Lear*, I.i.223-4). In *Ironsides* (1368-9), honest King Edmund reproaches Edricus for his 'oily speech', which is rhymed with 'beseech'.

PELT + improvised weapons + pate (+ presumptuous + prelate)

The bitter quarrel between the Bishop of Winchester and the Duke of Gloucester (1 *Henry VI*, III.i.) includes several of Shakespeare's rare words and expressions also found in *Ironsides*, such as 'prostrate' and 'spiritual'. In *Ironsides* there is a parallel confrontation between the Archbishops of York and

Canterbury, also with rare words shared with the same *1 Henry VI* scene, such as 'presumptuous' and 'prelate'. The two quarrels culminate in improvised weapons and physical violence, expressed by the rare verb 'pelt', in the sense of repeated striking or throwing, which occurs only thrice in the canon. In *1 Henry VI*, the rival factions, forbidden to carry any weapons, have filled their pockets with pebbles and 'pelt so fast at one another's pate...' (loc.cit., 82); in *Ironsides*, Canterbury menaces York with his crozier, which 'longs to be pelting that old hoary pate'. The adjective 'hoary' itself occurs only twice in the canon.

POPULARITY + base + common

Perhaps surprisingly, this noun occurs only twice in the canon (*1 Henry IV*, III.ii.69; *Henry V*, I.i.59). Its significance is pejorative; it is what kings crave or court when they associate with common people. This usage is first cited by the *OED* (sense 3b) from 1597-8; but *1 Henry IV* may well be earlier. The corresponding adjective 'popular' occurs only six times, usually in disapprobation; it is followed by 'base' in *Coriolanus*, III.i.106, 108. Both noun and adjective are also immediately associated with 'common', as in *1 Henry IV* ('common streets...popularity', loc.cit. 68) and *Henry V* ('art thou base, common and popular?', IV.i. 38). Compare *Ironsides* (482), where Edricus, who aspires to the crown, advises himself to 'shun base common popularity'.

REDOUBLE + fateful blows falling upon one's head

This verb, always in the form 'redoubled', occurs in only four contexts. Three of them describe how blows, whether literal or metaphorical, fall on someone's helmet or head: 'let thy blows, doubly redoubled, fall ...on the casque /of thy... enemy' (*Richard II*, I.iii.80-2); 'on my head...my shames redoubled' (*1 Henry IV*, III.ii.143-4); 'doubly redoubled strokes upon the foe' (*Macbeth*, I.ii.38). The first of these examples is the *OED*'s first citation for this sense (3b), dated 1593. In *Edward III* (2584) the Black Prince wishes that his misfortunes were 'redoubled'. In *Ironsides* (1489) Queen Emma says that if anything amiss should befall her young sons 'the same on me should be redoubled'.

REFRESH + weary + music

The verb 'refresh', in any form, occurs only nine times. It connotes reinvigoration after labour; it is immediately associated with that word, as in *The Tempest* (III.i.14: 'these sweet thoughts do ever refresh my labours'), with 'weary', as in *The Winter's Tale* (IV.iv.335: 'you weary those that refresh us'), and with 'music', as in *The Taming of the Shrew* (III.i. 11: 'music was ordain'd/ ...to refresh the mind...'). In *Edward III*, after an armistice, the warriors are enjoined to 'refresh your weary limbs'. In *Ironsides* (2015) the prospect of peace is hailed as 'refreshing ointments to my weary limbs' as well as 'Aeolian music' (2011).

SECURELY + sleep + war + reproach

In the sense 'free from care or apprehension' (*OED* 1a), the rare adverb 'securely' is first cited from *Titus Andronicus* (III.i.3: 'in dangerous wars, while you securely slept'). That context, with its contrast and implied reproach, is unique among the canonical usages of 'securely', which amount to only seven all told. In *Ironsides*, Edricus takes the same reproving tone with the same collocation; while Canute 'securely sleeps', Prince Edmund 'wins with ease what we with pain have got'. Compare also *Edward III* (1412-3): the king admits he has taken no towns thus far in his invasion of France but 'upon the coast...securely slept'.

SUPPLICATION + deliver + fellow

The rare noun 'supplication' occurs only six times in the canon, usually in the special sense of a written petition. In two contexts, much is made of the deliverer's social inferiority and submissiveness: *Titus Andronicus*, IV.iii.107 ('deliver up a supplication') and *2 Henry VI*, I.iii. 3 ('deliver our supplications'). In the latter scene, the Earl of Suffolk deliberately keeps his distance: 'How now, fellow; would'st anything with me?' Just so in *Ironsides* (488-9), where Duke Edricus says to the peasant Edrick 'Good fellow, hast thou any suit to us? Deliver up thy supplication'.

SWARM + gnats + summer + the king's enemies

The verb 'swarm', in any form, occurs only six times in the canon, thrice as an image of plebeian crowds. 'The common people swarm like summer flies' (*3 Henry VI*, II.vi.8) is a typical instance. Thus Clifford describes a host of enemies to the king's cause. He proceeds 'and whither fly the gnats but to the sun?'. He repeats the same simile for further emphasis in line 17: 'like summer flies'. The same pattern of a menaced monarch, with the same key concepts, appears in *Ironsides* (1331-5): 'Haste, King Edmund...thy land/...oppressed by multitudes of Danes./ They swarm...like little gnats/ ...in a summer's night'.

TIMELESS + fathers + widows + civil war

The adjective 'timeless', meaning ill-timed, untimely or premature, makes only nine appearances in the canon. One occurs in a formal lament by King Henry the Sixth about how different England would

have been without the civil war which is about to end: 'orphans' [tears] for their parents' timeless death' (*3 Henry VI*, V.vi.42). Other phrases are 'many a widow's [sigh]', 'men [weeping] for their sons', wives for their husbands' [timeless death]'. In *Ironsides*, King Canute voices the same thoughts in the same circumstances, and much the same words: 'many a tear [shed]/ by fathers for their sons' unhappy death, by mothers for their children's wretched ends/ and widows for their husbands' timeless want'.

These examples collectively constitute perhaps 1% of the total evidence for Shakespeare's authorship of *Ironsides*. What of their quality? On Professor Foster's unique theory, the plagiarist Shakespeare was so impressed by the rusty scrap-heap of *Ironsides* that he painstakingly incorporated its smallest separate components into some thirty of his own masterpieces, year after year, throughout the two known decades of his creative life-span. He began his writing career in a kleptomaniac frenzy of shameless plagiarism, stealing at least a dozen distinct ideas and expressions from *Ironsides* and popping them piecemeal into *Titus Andronicus*. Ten years later, he was still tirelessly mining lumps of *Ironsides* dross, by the dozen, and exhibiting them untreated as his own finished products. This is a modern American academic concept of Shakespeare.

The English school sees him rather more sympathetically, but hardly more realistically, as the victim of a remorseless unprecedented plagiarist of unknown name and motives, writing at a wide variety of imaginary dates which all entail an extraordinarily detailed familiarity with Shakespeare's work, including its very rarest vocabulary, often before it was published and indeed apparently before it was written.

On either view, the rare-word predator is surely a rare bird. To ordinary readers everywhere it will look entirely fabulous, a creature compounded of endless legends and fantasies invented in solemn defiance of all the rules of reasoning and typically presented as literary scholarship instead of subconscious prejudice. A rational explanation of the observed facts is that Shakespeare wrote *Edmund Ironsides*, which shares his personal imprint of rare words and their subconscious association, readily verifiable from any concordance, exactly as in all his other plays including *Edward III*.