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Excerpt

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HENRY VIII

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TEXTUAL INTRODUCTION

The Famous History of the Life of King Henry the Eighth (Greg, *Bibliography*, no. 400) was entered in the Stationers' Register for the Shakespeare Folio among a group of sixteen plays (including two Histories) to Edward Blount and Isaac Jaggard on 8 November 1623. As printed, it occupies sigs. t3-x4^v, pp. 205-32 (p. 216 mispaged 218) in the First Folio of 1623. It must have been written before 29 June 1613, when the Globe caught fire from the discharge of the chambers that mark the arrival of the King at Wolsey's feast in I.iv.49 (TLN 732) and burned to the ground.¹ Wotton's description of events in the play later than I.iv indicates that he must also have seen it before 29 June even though he calls it 'new'. General opinion holds that it was written and produced in the early months of 1613. The title *All is True* given by Wotton was perhaps the original, as suggested by the emphasis in its prologue on the truth of the play. This prologue also seems to glance at the rowdiness of Samuel Rowley's popular play on Henry, *When You See Me, You Know Me*, first printed in 1605 as acted by the Prince's Men, with a second edition in 1613. The month in which this 1613 edition was published is not known, nor is there any record of a revival in 1613 that might have caused the play to be reprinted. Nevertheless, the prologue reference seems to be topical, whether to the edition or to a stage production of Rowley's play.

Speculation has centred on the possibility that *Henry VIII* was written to form part of the lengthy celebration of the marriage of Princess Elizabeth to the Elector Palatine on 14 February 1613; but no mention is made of it in the payment on May 1613 for the numerous listed plays acted by the King's Men during these festivities.² Whether or not the play was in preparation at the time, the ceremonial events surrounding the marriage may have influenced its pageantry, with a faint possibility that Cranmer's eloquent prophecy at the end may have been influenced by sermons preached in congratulation. 'The whole peroration would in fact have been very appropriate for a time when Queen Elizabeth seemed reborn in the princess, another champion of the protestant cause.'³

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Of paramount interest is the question of Fletcher's share in the writing. As early as 1850 James Spedding, seconded by Samuel Hickson,⁴ used metrical evidence, a study of imagery, and general stylistic impressions to assign to Fletcher the Prologue and Epilogue, I.iii–iv, II.i–ii, III.iib (203–459), IV.i–ii, V.ii–iv.⁵ Shakespeare's share was reduced to I.i–ii, II.iii–iv, III.iii*a* (1–203), and V.i. Until recently this assignment, surmounting assorted controversy in the earlier years, has met with general acceptance. Moreover, an early view that Shakespeare had turned a partially completed play over to Fletcher for retouching and finishing has foundered, and the general conclusion now rests that in the Folio text we have an authentic planned collaboration, not a revision.⁶ It is not likely that this general assessment will be modified. Nonetheless, some question has always existed, and may still exist, whether here and there Fletcher touched up Shakespeare's work. Literary-critical identifications of separate lines or brief passages within this general framework as seeming inferior to Shakespeare, or superior to Fletcher, represent perhaps legitimate suspicions, for the possibility cannot be ignored (in some part dependent on an attempted reconstruction of the nature of the underlying manuscript) that Fletcher in some sense may have 'put together' the whole play. That is, unless two separate manuscripts were handed over to the company, via the book-keeper who would have been charged with ordering them for the stage, it may seem probable that Fletcher himself assembled the copy, with the further possibility that in the process he reworked and added to Shakespeare's stage-directions according to his own descriptive proposals for this play.⁷ If so, in reading over Shakespeare's scenes for continuity, he could have succumbed here and there, in more than the directions, to a touch that appealed to his theatrical sense. Nevertheless, what can well be Fletcherian stage-directions in Shakespeare's scenes are one thing; any attempt to isolate a 'touch' in the text is another and would be subject to G. L. Kittredge's bluff opinion that some elements 'cannot be determined by any tests beyond those of editorial imagination'.⁸

On the other hand, Cyrus Hoy,⁹ the latest scholar to examine the distribution, with an array of linguistic and stylistic evidence about Fletcher more comprehensive than before, while confirming I.iii–iv, III.i, and V.ii–iv as Fletcher's, believes that some evidence points towards the work of both dramatists in II.i–ii, III.iii*a*, and IV.i–ii, all

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these being scenes previously assigned to Fletcher alone. In short, Dr Hoy takes it that in these moot scenes 'Fletcher has done nothing more than touch up a Shakespearean passage, or insert a passage of his own in a Shakespearean context' (p. 79).

It is unfortunate that no scholar to date has taken up this challenge to tradition and has made a closer study of the evidence than Dr Hoy's main purpose permitted.¹⁰ Nor is this the place to attempt anything resembling a definitive second look at the problem. In the end, it may be said, the argument for Fletcher touching up II.i–ii, III.ii*b*, and IV.i–ii originally written by Shakespeare is essentially negative and linked to the less than normal appearance of the Fletcherian *ye* in these scenes except in odd clusters. That is, what should have appeared did not appear, and a cause must be sought. One cause that Dr Hoy takes into account is Compositor *B*'s known proclivity in other plays for setting copy *ye* as *you*. This, he acknowledges, may account in some part for the lower statistical level; but *B*'s occasional tendency is still, in his opinion, insufficiently strong to produce the marked predominance in these scenes of *you* as against *ye*. He notes, also, that, for example, II.i–ii were set by *B*'s partner, now identified as Compositor *I* but labelled by Dr Hoy, following Hinman, as *C**. The characteristics of this Compositor *I* have not yet been studied except for the few habits of spelling that seem to distinguish him from *A*, *B* and *C*, as well as from other Folio compositors.¹¹ Dr Hoy is of the opinion that this compositor followed copy in reproducing *ye* more faithfully than *B* although the evidence is not strong. For instance, *I* set all of I.i–ii, which Hoy would take away from Fletcher and, instead, assign to Shakespeare with Fletcherian retouchings and minor revisions. Statistically, he notes the disproportion in II.i of only four appearances of *ye* versus twenty of *you* and in II.ii of only three *ye* versus twelve *you*.¹² He finds it especially suspicious that in II.i after an initial *ye* in the first line (822), the other three in the scene cluster in lines 130–2 (976–8), as if Fletcher had suddenly intervened at that point. In II.ii two *ye*'s cluster in successive lines 67–8 (1112–13) whereas the third and last in the scene comes after a marked interval, at the end, line 137 (1195). In III.ii*b*. 203–459, after two *you*'s we have in lines 239–42 (2123–6) a cluster of four successive *ye*'s followed then by four *you*'s, a single *ye* in line 278 (2168), then twenty-three *you*'s before a single isolated *ye* in line 365 (2265) followed by two *you*'s. Dr Hoy finds the cluster in lines

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239–42 particularly conspicuous within such a frame of encompassing *you*'s (as also the cluster in II.i.130–2), the more so since, even with Compositor *B* setting III.ii, the proportion of *you*'s is extremely high for Fletcher, although not for Shakespeare.

It must be acknowledged that these clusters are odd and that it would be difficult to assign them as sudden compositorial faithfulness for both *B* and *I*. But the disproportionate number of *you*'s to *ye*'s even in the admitted Fletcherian scenes of *Henry VIII* is in general so marked as to call for some explanation other than compositorial neglect.¹³ This disproportion was even more noticeable in the Fletcherian scenes in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, where the relative paucity of the *ye* form was put down to the intervention of a copyist between Fletcher's autograph and the compositor, an explanation invariably advanced for a number of other Fletcher plays, with or without collaboration, whenever the number of *ye*'s drops drastically. Clusters are not found in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, however, except possibly in Fletcher's III.v–vi. In III.v the scene begins with four consecutive *ye*'s before the intervention of two *you*'s, then two *ye*'s, two *you*'s, one *ye*, and then ten *you*'s before the last *ye*. In III.vi the eleven *ye*'s are scattered relatively widely except for a cluster of two in lines 299–300, two *you*'s in lines 301 and 303, and a *ye* in line 305. This evidence for clustering is less convincing than in *Henry VIII*. Nevertheless, it is possible, and indeed probable, to offer the same explanation as in the *Kinsmen* for the comparatively low number of *ye*'s in Fletcher's generally acknowledged scenes in *Henry VIII*, namely, the printer's copy, which on the evidence seems to have been a scribal transcript though not the prompt-book.¹⁴ Given the uncertain history of the textual transmission – although more certainty can be expressed that the printer's copy was neither holograph papers nor prompt-book – scribal plus compositorial neglect of a number of Fletcherian *ye*'s seems a reasonable hypothesis. The clusters of *ye* noted by Dr Hoy may be aberrations (we cannot know whether more than one scribe dealt with the authorial papers) and possibly accidental in occurrence. For several reasons some doubt may be cast on the significance of these clusters as identifying Fletcher's intervention in a Shakespearean text. For example, the cluster of three *ye*'s in II.i.130–2, the two in II.ii.69–70, and even the four in III.ii.b.239–42 are not wholly out of line with somewhat similar concentrations of *you* versus *ye* in *The Two Noble*

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Kinsmen, as noted above. Moreover, the Fletcherian *'em* – not unknown to Shakespeare but still not common – is sprinkled in these scenes in the midst of the *you*'s that were taken to represent Shakespeare, whereas the more Shakespearian *them* occurs only once in II.ii, once in III.iib, once in IV.i, and twice in IV.ii, against, respectively, two, two, three, and three appearances of *'em*. The lines containing *ye* offer no evidence for revision. If II.i and IV.i were originally Shakespeare's, we must accept the expository two Gentlemen as his invention and mostly his writing, a not impossible concept in view of *Cymbeline*, I.i, although stylistically comparison would be difficult. If III.iib were originally Shakespeare's, we should need to accept as his, or as a remarkably thorough rewriting, the almost unmotivated abrupt change, without transition, from pride to humility in Wolsey; and if IV.ii were Shakespeare's, the corresponding unmotivated instantaneous capitulation of Katherine, both being characteristic of Fletcher's facile methods to the highest degree. Certainly in IV.ii Shakespeare could have had no hand in the vision and its surrounding dialogue; moreover, the distinct stylistic and linguistic breaks between III.iii and III.iib remain unaccounted for if both were basically Shakespearian. In sum, in the scenes Dr Hoy believes to have been initially Shakespeare's no positive evidence against Fletcher's sole authorship is advanced but only the negative evidence that in these scenes *ye* is likely to cluster instead of appearing sporadically spaced as in Fletcher's acknowledged scenes. The force of this observation, unaccompanied by other evidence for Shakespearian involvement,¹⁵ is blunted by the lack of any obvious signs of rewriting and by the periodic presence in these scenes of such Fletcherian signs as *'em* versus *them*, no different from what is found in his undisputed scenes. At best, a Scottish verdict of 'not proven' must be suggested at the moment, and the traditional assignment to Fletcher reaffirmed of II.i.ii, III.iib, and IV.i.ii.

In 1958 R. A. Foakes made a compositorial study of F1 *Henry VIII*, in which on the basis of spelling-differences he assigned to Compositor *B* sigs. t3–3^v, v2^v, v4–x2^v (13 pages) and to his partner, then believed to be Compositor *A*, sigs. t4–v2, v3–3^v, x3–4^v (15 pages).¹⁶ In his classic study of the First Folio in 1963, C. J. K. Hinman confirmed the assignment by adding typographical evidence, in the process rejecting previous identifications of *A* in these pages and, with

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reservations, assigning them to Compositor *C*, whom he separated from earlier established *C* by adding an asterisk.¹⁷ His study showed that *Henry VIII* had been set out of the regular order of the Histories owing to some unspecified difficulty. When quire *s* of *Richard III* had been completed the text was left unfinished and a start was made on the Tragedies.¹⁸ Work on the Tragedies continued until *B* and *A* had set leaves nn1.6 of *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* respectively, and only then – after an intercalary forme ff2.5^v of *Romeo and Juliet* set by Compositor *E* (x-case) – was work begun on *Henry VIII* by *B* (y-case) setting t3^v and *C** (x-case) (i.e., Compositor *I*) setting t4. Work then proceeded regularly, the last pages of *Richard III* being set in the formes containing *Henry VIII* t5–6^v. In addition to *E* (y-case) intercalating two separated formes of *Romeo and Juliet*, *E* also intercalated *gg4^v.3 and *gg2^v.5 (original pages of *Romeo and Juliet* and of precancellation *Troilus and Cressida*) after x2.3^v, but otherwise setting and machining was normal, the play being finished with a four-leaf quire as the final History.

For the information of scholars who may be interested in examining the details of the text not only in relation to the characteristics of the two compositors but also to the order in which the text was set by pages – of special interest as tracing the growing familiarity of the workmen with the contents – the following table with through-line-numbers is drawn from Hinman, II, 517:

Compositor <i>B</i>	Compositor <i>I</i>
t3 ^v (80–209)	t4 (210–336)
t3 (1–79)	t4 ^v (337–467)
t2 ^v (R3)	t5 (468–593)
t2 (R3)	t5 ^v (594–718)
t1 ^v (R3)	t6 (719–843)
t1 (R3)	t6 ^v (884–973)
v4 (1740–864)	v3 ^v (1614–739)
v4 ^v (1865–994)	v3 (1482–613)
v5 (1995–2124)	v2 (1225–349)
v2 ^v (1350–481)	v1 ^v (1099–2224)
v5 ^v (2125–256)	v1 (974–1098)
v6 (2257–381)	x3 (3018–148)
v6 ^v (2382–511)	x3 ^v (3149–274)
x2 ^v (2895–3017)	x4 (3275–398)
x2 (2768–894)	x4 ^v (3399–464)
x1 ^v (2638–767)	
x1 (2512–637)	

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With due account of the division of the text between the two composers, and the order of their setting, a study of the variant speech-prefixes indicates clearly that with a few major exceptions in several scenes variation can be compositorial and bear no relation either to the shares of the authors or, seemingly, to possible variation in the forms of the manuscript.¹⁹ For example, regardless of the author Compositor *B* sets Suffolk's prefix regularly as *Suf.* with only a single *Suff.* in a Shakespeare scene. Compositor *I*, setting four Fletcher scenes, ordinarily uses *Suff.* The prefix is *Buc.* in *B* throughout Shakespeare's I.i except for a single *Buck.* as the first inset prefix for Buckingham after he has made his entrance under his full name centred. In Compositor *I*'s pages the prefix is *Buck.* in Shakespeare's I.i and Fletcher's II.i. In Shakespeare's I.i *B* sets *Nor.* ordinarily but allows *Norf.* once and also twice in III.ii (along with eleven *Nor.*); *Nor.* is *B*'s form in Fletcher's III.ii, whereas *I* sets *Norf.* in two Shakespeare scenes. One should note, however, that although *I* also sets *Norf.* in Fletcher's V.ii, four *Norff.* spellings crop up (along with *Norf.*) in *I*'s setting of Fletcher's II.ii. In *B* Katherine is *Qu.* (3) and *Queen.* (1) in Shakespeare's II.iv; in *I* she is *Queen.* invariably whether in Shakespeare or in Fletcher. The Lord Chamberlain is *Cham.* in both composers for Shakespeare and Fletcher except, oddly, that he is *L.Ch.* (3) on sig. t5 and *L. Cham.* (8) on t5^v, the first pages that *I* set with him as a character – this is Fletcher's I.iii, before *I* settled on *Cham.* in II.iv, which starts on the same t5^v. The change from the fuller to the shorter form between scenes on the same page seems to point to some change within copy between the first and second scenes that Fletcher wrote in the play.

Henry in *B*'s setting of Shakespeare's scenes is *King.* invariably, and he is also *King.* in *B*'s setting of Fletcher's V.ii. In Compositor *I*'s setting of Shakespeare he starts as *King.* in I.ii (t4) but then becomes *Kin.* in the continuation of the scene on t4^v and t5, as also in Shakespeare's II.iv.²⁰ He is also *Kin.* in Fletcher's scenes save for one *King.* in I.iv on sig. t6 along with five *Kin.* Lovell is *Lov.* in *B*'s setting of Shakespeare's V.i except for one *Lovell.* In *I*'s share of Fletcher's scenes he is usually *Lov.* but two *Lovell.* creep in, the first on initial setting. Compositor *B* sets only *Lady.* in V.i even though her entrance-direction specifies her as *Olde Lady.* In III.ii, an earlier Shakespeare scene, Compositor *I* first set *Old L.* and *Old. L.* at

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random on sig. v2, but on the later set, v1^v, he has her first as *Old. La.* (perhaps under the influence of the opening direction) but then *Old. L.* Anne Boleyn in Shakespeare's III.iii set by *I* is *An.* (9) and *Anne* only once (initially); but in Fletcher's I.iv, also the work of *I*, set earlier, she is *An. Bul.* in her introduction and thereafter *An. B.*

Wolsey in *B*'s setting of Shakespearian scenes is *Car.* but with some slight tolerance for *Card.* (3 in III.iii). Compositor *B* set only III.iib with Wolsey in a Fletcherian scene. Here, beginning on sig. v5, *B* continues the *Car.* prefix he had finally accepted for III.va (6 on v5), which he also continues in a jump back to Shakespeare's II.iv (2) on v2^v; then on the next page set, v5^v, there is indecision between *Car.* and *Card.* until on v6 after one *Car.* *B* finally settles down to *Card.* (8). In *I*'s setting of Shakespeare or Fletcher the form is always *Card.* An exception comes when the Cardinal is designated in the prefixes as *Wol.* In *B*'s setting of Shakespeare's trial scene II.iv the opening text on sig. v2^v starts with two *Car.* prefixes but shifts to *Wol.* at 1411 when Cardinal Campeius (*Camp.*) will be the next speaker, this *Wol.* continuing on v3 set by *I* and therefore indicated as a copy-form. The *Wol.* designation occurs regardless of compositor when Wolsey appears with Campeius. For example, in Fletcher's II.ii, set by *I*, when Wolsey introduces Campeius (*Cam.* and *Camp.*) to the King he is invariably *Wol.* In Fletcher's III.i, the interview of the two Cardinals with Katherine, in the setting begun by Compositor *I* we have the stage-direction 'Enter the two Cardinalls, Wolsey & Campian' with the immediately following prefix *Wols.*, then *Wol.*, then *Card.* twice, *Wol.* twice, then (*B* now the compositor) *Car.* four times. The first prefix *Wols.* could have been affected by the direction – a common occurrence – but the mixture of *Wol.* and *Card.* in *I*'s work thereafter is perhaps from copy, even though when *B* took over he settled for (or followed) *Car.* Finally, in Fletcher's III.iib Compositor *B*'s *Car(d).*, as found in Shakespeare's III.iii, continues for four *Car.* prefixes until in line 264 (2152) a single *Wol.* intervenes (no influence from context being present), whereupon, after two *Car(d).* prefixes, *Wol.* returns three consecutive times only to give way to invariable *Car(d).* for the rest of the scene after Cromwell's entrance. The mixture only in Fletcher's section of III.ii may parallel that in his III.i; and it may be thought to reflect copy, in some part at least, since it occurs in *B*'s setting of III.iib, whereas in III.i the variation was only in Compositor

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I's stint. Slight as it is, the evidence suggests that Fletcher was irregular in writing his prefixes for Wolsey whereas in Shakespeare's II.iv the printer's copy may well have started with the two *Car.* prefixes but thereafter changed to *Wol.* once Wolsey completed the opening of the trial and, joined by Campeius, entered a more personal phase in his dialogue first with the Queen and then with the King. Finally, one of the clearest cases of compositorial distinction comes in *I*'s setting of II.i and *B*'s of IV.i, both Fletcher scenes. In *I*'s II.i the two Gentlemen are identified as '1.' and '2.' with full stops; in *B*'s IV.i they are '1' and '2' (and '3') without stops.

It would appear that much of the minor variation in speech-prefixes is compositorial and caused by *B*'s general habit, observed elsewhere in the Folio, of shortening the forms. If Compositor *I*'s general predilection for the longer forms can be trusted (and these may in a few cases be corroborated by a slip on *B*'s part) the printer's copy in general had longer forms than found in *B*'s setting. (An exception would be *I*'s shortening to *Kin.* of *B*'s invariable *King.*) Some major variations indicate that the copyist did not consistently attempt to iron out alternative forms in the authorial papers. This difference in the two sets of papers may be observed in the variant prefixes for Anne Boleyn, for the Old Lady, on special occasions for Wolsey, and in two puzzling cases for the Lord Chamberlain and for Lord Sands in Fletcher's I.iii and I.iv. In I.iii the prefix *L. Ch.* on *I*'s sig. t5 changes to *L. Cham.* on t5^v but in I.iv, starting on the same page, the invariable prefix is *Cham.* Simultaneously, in I.iii we have *L. Sandys* in the entrance direction and *L. San.* for the prefixes, but in I.iv he is *L. Sands* in the entrance and *San.* in the prefixes. This variation must have stood in the copy.²¹

So little is known about recently identified Compositor *I*'s fidelity to copy that only a general judgement may be applied to *Henry VIII*. Yet it is noticeable that some two dozen or more substantive readings in his fifteen pages have required editorial emendation in the present edition,²² whereas only about half a dozen seem advisable in *B*'s thirteen pages. Although editors have customarily called the text 'clean', in addition to the substantive errors there is an unusually high proportion of misunderstandings of the syntax and sense that have resulted in a considerable number of so-called 'semi-substantive' emendations in which the pointing needed adjustment to correct misleading interpretations of the sense that would cause trouble to any