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Note

The Winchester Crux in the First Folio's *1 Henry VI*

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In debates over the authenticity of the First Folio's *1 Henry VI*, attention is often drawn to a discrepancy in the plot regarding the status of Henry Beauford, bishop of Winchester. The prelate, who is portrayed with historical accuracy as an ambitious politician, has been appointed by the dying Henry V as joint guardian of the boy-king, Winchester's grandnephew. The bishop soon finds himself at loggerheads with the duke of Gloucester, the boy's uncle and now protector of the realm.

In Act 1, during a public quarrel at the Tower of London between the two noblemen and their followers, Winchester denounces Gloucester as a usurping traitor, and Gloucester replies as follows:

Stand back, thou manifest conspirator, . . .
I'll canvass thee in thy broad cardinal's hat,
If thou proceed in this thy insolence. . . .
Thy scarlet robes as a child's bearing-cloth
I'll use to carry thee out of this place. . . .
Under my feet I stamp thy cardinal's hat;
In spite of Pope or dignities of church,
Here by the cheeks I'll drag thee up and down.
(1.3.33, 36–37, 42–43, 49–51)¹

By appearing at the Tower in a "broad cardinal's hat" and "scarlet robes," Winchester is clearly making a public statement about his lofty rank as a cardinal.

Much later in the play, when the young king decides to send a commission to end the war with France, and Winchester, dressed as a cardinal, enters as its leader, the duke of Exeter comments in an aside on Winchester's attire:

What, is my lord of Winchester install'd,
And call'd unto a cardinal's degree?
Then I perceive that will be verified
Henry the Fift did sometime prophesy:

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, quotations from Shakespeare are from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2d ed., gen. ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).

"If once he come to be a cardinal,
He'll make his cap co-equal with the crown."
(5.1.28–33)

Immediately after these remarks, when Winchester himself refers to his attire as "these grave ornaments" (l. 54), he is clearly at that moment wearing the ornate official vestments of a cardinal.

Exeter's surprise at Winchester's appearance in cardinal's robes has traditionally been held to imply that the bishop had only recently been appointed to that position. Since he has already been referred to repeatedly as a cardinal in 1.3, soon after Henry V's funeral in 1.1, scholars who believe *1 Henry VI* to be a work of multiple authorship argue that the dramatist of 5.1 cannot be the same man who wrote 1.3.² Oddly, this criticism appears to take it for granted that discrepancies such as the one posited about Winchester's status either would have remained unnoticed by any of the actors performing in the play or would not have bothered them.

For the editors of the Oxford *Complete Works* of Shakespeare, this seeming inconsistency was sufficiently disturbing to warrant several editorial changes in the sole authoritative text of the play as printed in the First Folio. In 1.3 (numbered 1.4 in the Oxford edition), the Folio's "Winchester and his men" and "Cardinalls men" in stage directions (TLN 391, 425) are changed to "Bishop of Winchester" and "Bishop's men," respectively.³ The Tower Lieutenant's reference to "The Cardinall of Winchester" (TLN 381) is altered to "My lord of Winchester."⁴ The line with Gloucester's threat, "Ile canuas thee in thy broad Cardinalls Hat" (TLN 402), is omitted altogether; "Scarlet Robes" (TLN 408) becomes "Purple robes"; and in yet another of Gloucester's threats, "Cardinalls Hat" (TLN 416) is demoted to "bishop's mitre."⁵ The duke's ultimate insult, "out Scarlet Hypocrite" (TLN 424), is modified to "Out, cloakèd hypocrite!"⁶ Two later references to Winchester as "Cardinall" by Gloucester and the

² See, for example, John Dover Wilson, ed., *The First Part of King Henry VI* (1952; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1968), xxi–xlvi, esp. xxii; and Gary Taylor, "Shakespeare and Others: The Authorship of *Henry the Sixth, Part One*," *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 7 (1995): 145–205, esp. 154.

³ *The Norton Facsimile: The First Folio of Shakespeare*, 2d ed., prep. Charlton Hinman, intro. Peter W. M. Blayney (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), 450–73. Quotations from *1 Henry VI* taken from this edition are cited by through-line number (TLN). For the Oxford citations, see *The First Part of Henry the Sixth*, in *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, gen. ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 1.4.28 sd and l. 55 sd.

⁴ Wells and Taylor, l. 19.

⁵ Wells and Taylor, ll. 41, 48.

⁶ Wells and Taylor, l. 55.

Mayor (TLN 450, 455), are likewise changed to "Bishop."⁷ In Oxford's *Textual Companion* to the *Complete Works*, Gary Taylor argues that the Folio text "is incoherent in its treatment of Winchester" and "can be made coherent by the omission of two lines and the alteration (mostly obvious) of eight words of dialogue."⁸

These alterations in the pursuit of coherence have not gone unchallenged.⁹ The most recent Arden Shakespeare edition of the play, while agreeing that there is an inconsistency in the Folio text between 1.3 and 5.1, nevertheless retains the original readings of 1.3.¹⁰ In the Oxford Shakespeare edition of *1 Henry VI*, Michael Taylor also ignores the changes made by the editors of Oxford's *Complete Works* "to regularize the chronology" of Winchester's career; as Taylor cogently puts it, "there is simply too much dramatic fall-out here from the Cardinal appearing as a Cardinal—his scarlet hat and his robes for instance—to allow us to correct F's contradictory chronology at the expense of the scene's colour and flair."¹¹ But is the chronology really contradictory?

I would argue that the long-accepted notion of a discrepancy between 1.3 and 5.1 is more apparent than real. To begin with, the Elizabethan chronicler Holinshed reveals that, in spite of Henry V's adamant opposition to Winchester's promotion to the Vatican's electoral college, the bishop did officiate as a cardinal both during the reign of Henry V and early in the reign of Henry VI, who was proclaimed king in 1422 at the age of nine months. Then in 1427, according to Holinshed's source, "the [new] king being yoong and the regent his frénd," Winchester was able to achieve his aim, and at Calais he "receiued the habit, hat, and dignitie of a cardinall, with all ceremonies to it apperteining."¹² At West-

⁷ Wells and Taylor, ll. 78, 83.

⁸ Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* (1987; repr. with corrections, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997), 218.

⁹ See David Bevington's review essay "Determining the Indeterminate: The Oxford Shakespeare," in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 38 (1987): 501–19, esp. 505–6. Discussing the Oxford edition's emendations of *1 Henry VI*, 1.4, Bevington comments, "The [Oxford] editors argue that the revision needed to eliminate this discrepancy would surely have been made by Shakespeare or his collaborator"; he notes that the Oxford editors believe that, in his words, "The Folio text is the product of foul papers in which the matter was left temporarily unresolved" (506). But as Bevington puts it, "Even supposing that such a revision did take place, . . . what assurance can we have that the corrections took the form now embodied in the Oxford text? The consistency of the Folio text [in referring to Winchester throughout 1.4 as a cardinal] is clear evidence that [this scene] was written with a cardinal in mind" (506).

¹⁰ *King Henry VI, Part 1*, ed. Edward Burns, Arden3 (London: Thompson Learning, 2000), 143–48; see also 1.3.36n.

¹¹ *Henry VI, Part One*, ed. Michael Taylor (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003), 119; see also 1.3.19n.

¹² W. P., in Raphael Holinshed, *The First and second volumes of Chronicles* (London, 1587), fol. 596.

minster in 1430, Henry VI (aged eight) was enthroned as ruler of England; a year later in Paris, Winchester as cardinal crowned him king of France.¹³ In the play, at 4.1, the brief episode of the Paris coronation does not mention Winchester's elevated rank, and when Gloucester gives the order "Lord Bishop, set the crown upon his head" (l. 1), I feel certain that the Protector is intentionally ignoring Winchester's princely ecclesiastical status.¹⁴

Because the historical Winchester, according to the chronicles, continued to act as if he were coequal with the king, doing "manie things without the consent of the king or of the duke," Gloucester presented in Parliament a bill of attainder titled "A complaint . . . vpon the cardinall of Winchester," with twenty-four articles accusing him of numerous crimes; the bill included the words "then being bishop" and "now being cardinall."¹⁵ In the play, this parliamentary procedure against the cardinal is the principal subject of 3.1; the opening stage direction in the First Folio, after listing the king and his nobles, reads: "*Gloster offers to put vp a Bill: Winchester snatches it, teares it*" (TLN 1203-4). The prelate's scornful rejection of the written charges and Gloucester's verbal summary of them lead to an acrimonious exchange, followed by another brawl between their followers and ending with a feigned reconciliation. This episode in the drama likewise makes no specific mention of Winchester's clerical rank, but his power is implied in the curt threat, "Rome shall remedy this" (3.1.51).

Above all, Henry V's determination to frustrate Winchester's early bid for the cardinalate is prominently mentioned at the beginning of Gloucester's parliamentary bill:

First, the cardinall then being bishop of Winchester, tooke vpon him the state of cardinall, which was naied and denaied him, by the king of most noble memorie [Henry V], . . . saieng that he had as leefe set his crowne beside him, as see him weare a cardinals hat, he being a cardinall. For he knew full well, the pride and ambition that was in his person, then being but a bishop, should haue so greatlie extrolled him into more intollerable pride, when that he were a cardinall. . . . my said lord your father (whom God assoile) would haue agreed him to haue had certeine clearks of this land cardinals, and to haue no bish-oprikes in England. . . . But the cause was that in generall . . . he should haue proctors of his nation, as other kings Christen had, in the court of Rome, and not to abide in this land, nor to be in anie part of his counsels.¹⁶

¹³ Holinshed, fols. 602, 606.

¹⁴ It is also noteworthy that after Talbot has been raised to the earldom of Shrewsbury, he is referred to several times in the play as "Talbot" and never by his elevated title (with the exception of Lucy's list of all his titles [4.7.60-71]).

¹⁵ Hall, in Holinshed, fols. 620-22, esp. fol. 620.

¹⁶ Holinshed, fol. 620.

The most striking element in this formal charge is that during the reign of Henry V, Winchester, "then being bishop . . . tooke vpon him the state of cardinall," meaning that he had publicly assumed the status—the title, throne, and robes—appropriate to that rank.¹⁷

Ambitious though he was, the bishop portrayed in the chronicles would not have taken this step unless he had good reason to believe that he had been or was about to be named to the Vatican college. Such an appointment would not have been surprising: Winchester had served as Henry V's ambassador at the Council of Constance (1414–17), summoned to put an end to the Great Schism; he had been one of several English bishops who participated in the election of the new pope, Martin V.¹⁸ Twentieth-century historians make clear that immediately after the election, Martin did appoint Winchester a "cardinal, without any special title as yet, and legate of the apostolic see . . . , and promised to publish the appointment on the first convenient occasion, and to send him the insignia of his new office."¹⁹ The sixteenth-century English chronicles do not give details of this appointment, but its existence and consequences are implicit in the parliamentary complaint just quoted from Holinshed. Notification of an appointment, however, is one thing; the reality of installation, as Winchester discovered, is another.

It was the opinion of Henry V, as Gloucester stated in his bill, that the appointment of English clerics ("clearks of this land") as cardinals was lawful, provided that the appointees did not already preside over bishoprics. It was also lawful for proctors (clerics with legal training) to accept papal office as legates and to live abroad, provided they did not also serve as royal councillors. In order to avoid prosecution under the law of the realm, Winchester had to surrender his claim to the title of cardinal so long as Henry V was alive; but he was merely biding his time.

It may be taken for granted that after Henry V's unexpectedly early death in 1422, the aspiring churchman would have anticipated that the already-

¹⁷ See the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2d ed., prep. J. A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner, 20 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), s.v. "state" (n.), 19a, "to keep . . . one's state: to observe the pomp and ceremony befitting a high position," and 20a, "a raised chair with a canopy . . . a throne." The word is used in these senses in Shakespeare's *1 Henry IV*, 2.4.378; *Julius Caesar*, 1.2.160; and *Henry VIII*, 2.4 sd and 5.2.24. It is used in this same sense in Ben Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels*, 5.6 ("Hymn to Cynthia," l. 4); see *The Complete Plays of Ben Jonson*, ed. G. A. Wilkes, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981–82), 2:99.

¹⁸ Lewis Bostock Radford, *Henry Beaufort: Bishop, Chancellor, Cardinal* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, Ltd., 1908), 61–91. According to Radford, 80–82, Winchester himself was considered to be *papabile*.

¹⁹ Radford, 84; a bull to this effect was issued at a session of the Council in Winchester's presence.

nominated papal advancement would be revived and that, while he would not have appeared at court in a cardinal's regalia, he would have expected and received recognition as a cardinal from all but his political enemies. In spite of the danger of prosecution under English law, which prohibited the assertion of papal jurisdiction in England, the bishop of the chronicles was finally ritually installed in France as a cardinal in 1427 and appointed as papal legate in England.²⁰ In the play, details of this event are not specifically mentioned, and the fact of Winchester's now-official installation is not asserted at the English court until he presents himself before Henry VI, dressed in full canonicals, in 5.1.²¹ When the duke of Exeter displays surprise at this development, it is highly unlikely that Shakespeare thinks of the duke—an important figure at court and in council—as being unaware of the bishop's long-standing pursuit of the coveted rank and therefore nonplussed by an unanticipated promotion. It is more likely that Exeter expresses astonishment at Winchester's decision to display his defiance of English law (not to mention Henry V's ban) before the highest forum of the state. The impressive theatrical reminder of Winchester's eminent status is, of course, ironically undermined minutes later when he privately informs the legate that he will now hand over "The sum of money which I promised / Should be delivered to his Holiness / For clothing me in these grave ornaments" (ll. 52–54). The implication of venality is abundantly clear.

The problem of Winchester's promotion therefore has no bearing on questions regarding the authorship of *1 Henry VI*, but for Elizabethan theater audiences it did shed additional light on the political divisions in England that provide the background to Talbot's defeat and death in France. While Henry V was alive, the bishop had not dared to continue parading his nominal but royally forbidden status as cardinal. Once the strong-willed warrior-king is dead and the boy-king's responsibilities have been divided among quarreling relatives, Winchester again ventures to appear in public dressed in the scarlet attire of a papal elector. In view of the antipapal English statute, Winchester is (as it were)

²⁰ Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, eds., *Dictionary of National Biography*, 22 vols. (London: Humphrey Milford for Oxford UP, 1917), s.v. "Beaufort, Henry," esp. 2:43–44. The Statutes of Praemunire were intended, among other things, to prevent a legate from asserting papal authority in legal matters in England. See B. J. Sokol and Mary Sokol, *Shakespeare's Legal Language: A Dictionary* (London: Athlone Press, 2000), s.v. "praemunire," esp. 277–79.

²¹ Customary delays in the installation of high-ranking personages to internationally prestigious institutions may be illustrated by elections to the English Order of the Garter. For example, Henri IV of France was elected a Knight of the Garter in 1590, invested in 1596, but not ceremonially installed until 1600; and the German count Mompelgard, later duke of Württemberg, was promised the Garter possibly as early as 1592, elected a Knight in 1597, but not installed until 1604, in the reign of James I. See Barbara Freedman, "Shakespearean Chronology, Ideological Complicity, and Floating Texts: Something Is Rotten in Windsor," *SQ* 45 (1994): 190–210, esp. 201–2 and n. 34.

pushing the envelope. His surprising appearance at the Tower of London in 1.3 while garbed as a cardinal is, of course, one of Shakespeare's inventions in the course of fleshing out the bare bones of the historical record.²² Such behavior is, however, fully consistent with the stage character's verbal arrogance and the political trickery he is shown to routinely practice.

It is noteworthy that in 4.1, when Gloucester imperiously orders that young Henry VI be crowned king of France, he does so with peremptory and significant brevity: "Lord Bishop, set the crown upon his head" (l. 1). His use of Winchester's prelatical rank rather than electoral title pointedly underscores his animosity, even while his language carefully remains within the framework of a public religious ceremony. As for Winchester's failure at this point to respond contentiously, as he had done in the Tower episode, I would argue that he is silent because this is a historically sacred moment in the coronation; he has no option but to suppress his personal anger and proceed with his official role in a formulaic liturgy that in medieval times was of the highest social and legal importance.

In Act 5, Winchester has been appointed, as the representative of Henry VI, to lead a peace embassy to the king of France. With the arrival in England of a papal legate and the latter's reception at court (5.1.1, 28–55), it is evident that Winchester can now flaunt his electoral status with impunity. The duke of Exeter's surprise at this move is the dramatist's way of reflecting that the real-life ceremonial installation of the bishop as a cardinal (as distinct from the initial nomination years earlier) had taken place, as Holinshed reported, not in England but in France. Winchester's unexpected appearance at court in the robes of a cardinal and flanked by the papal legate now appears to be the culminating step in his self-serving struggle to outmaneuver Gloucester, a struggle—as he himself asserts in a soliloquy—that will either bring the Protector to his knees, "Or sack this country with a mutiny" (l. 62). In 2 *Henry VI*, the cardinal's successful plot to remove Gloucester from power will play a notable role in precipitating the series of mutinies known as the Wars of the Roses.

²² One striking example of such an invention is York's dramatically effective but historically inaccurate capture and execution of Joan de Pucelle in revenge for Talbot's death. Talbot was killed in battle in 1453, while the historical Joan had been captured by Burgundian forces and handed over to the English more than two decades earlier, in 1431. On Talbot's death, see the *Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. "Talbot, John," esp. 19:321–22; and on Joan's death, see *Webster's Biographical Dictionary* (Springfield: Merriam Company, 1972), s.v. "Joan of Arc."