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**VILLAINS AND HEROES IN *EDMOND IRONSIDE*: A STUDY OF THEMATIC PARALLELS WITH SHAKESPEARE**

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**Abstract:**

*The anonymous Elizabethan play Edmond Ironside remains an enigma, especially regarding its origins and authorship. This paper examines the play's historical context, structure, style, and thematic elements, arguing that Edward de Vere, rather than William Shakespeare, is its likely author. The manuscript, first printed in 1927 and acquired by the British Museum in 1865, was compiled around the mid-17th century and shows ambiguity in its titling. Set in late Anglo-Saxon England, the play centres on the conflict between Edmond Ironside and Canute Svenson, with the treacherous Edricus adding complexity to the narrative.*

**Research Questions:**

- *How do the linguistic features of Edmond Ironside compare to those in Shakespeare's acknowledged works?*
- *What historical sources influenced Edmond Ironside, and how do they inform its thematic and narrative structure?*
- *How does the characterization of Edricus in Edmond Ironside reflect Shakespearean villain archetypes?*

*The paper highlights the play's deep knowledge of legal matters, pervasive biblical references, and thematic parallels with Shakespeare's works, supported by linguistic analysis. Evaluating historical sources like Holinshed's Chronicles and Lambarde's Archaionomia, it proposes an earlier composition date around 1570. The conclusion posits that Edmond Ironside likely represents an early work by Edward de Vere, contributing to the Shakespearean canon, and calls for further scholarly investigation to fully unravel the play's authorship.*

**Literary Cognizance**  
**ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online) Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)**  
**An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed**  
**e-Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism**  
**Vol.- V, Issue- 4, March 2025**



**Keywords:** *Edmond Ironside, Elizabethan drama, Edward de Vere, William Shakespeare, Authorship debate, Anglo-Saxon England, Literary analysis, Historical context, Thematic parallels, Linguistic analysis, etc.*

**Introduction:**

The anonymous Elizabethan play *Edmond Ironside* is an intriguing piece of literary history, shrouded in mystery regarding its origins and authorship. Despite its compelling narrative and dramatic flair, the play has no recorded performances from the Elizabethan era and was largely unnoticed until the 19th century. It saw its first printing in 1927, long after its creation. The manuscript, acquired by the British Museum in 1865, was part of a collection that remained unknown before its acquisition. This manuscript, believed to have been compiled around the mid-17th century, begins with the title "Edmond Ironside, The English King," with a secondary, crossed-out line reading "Warr hath made all freinds [sic]." This ambiguity in the title reflects the larger uncertainty surrounding the play's history and authorship. Scholars such as Ephraim Everitt and Eric Sams have proposed that the play might be an early work of Shakespeare, a claim that has met with both interest and scepticism. This paper delves into the play's structure, style, imagery, and vocabulary to argue that *Edmond Ironside* is not authored by William Shakespeare of Stratford but rather by Edward de Vere, a prominent figure speculated to have contributed to the Shakespearean canon.

**Historical Context and Manuscript Background:**

*Edmond Ironside* is set in late Anglo-Saxon England, a crucial period occurring just fifty years before the Norman Conquest. The narrative backdrop involves the Viking invasions that began around two hundred years earlier, leading to Danish settlements in eastern England. By 1013, Sven Forkbeard had gained control over significant territories, declaring himself the first Danish King of England. Following Forkbeard's sudden death in 1014, Ethelred II, known as "the Unready," returned from exile in Normandy to reclaim his throne, only to die in 1016. The dramatic opening of *Edmond Ironside* coincides with the arrival of Canute Svenson, Forkbeard's teenage son, who invades England to claim his father's throne. He faces opposition from Ethelred's eldest son, Edmond, nicknamed "Ironside" for his formidable prowess and valor. The struggle for the English crown between Canute and Edmond forms the central plot of the play.

Adding complexity to this direct conflict are the schemes of Edricus, Duke of Mercia, a self-declared villain and historical figure known as Eadric Streona. Chronicled as a notorious murderer and traitor, Edricus had initially been an ally of Edmond Ironside before betraying him to side with Canute. The play starts in a council chamber in Southampton, where Canute forcefully claims the English throne, denouncing Edmond as a usurper and demanding the allegiance of the nobles present. Alongside Edricus, nobles such as Turkillus and Leofricke have also switched allegiances to Canute, who, distrusting them, has taken their sons as hostages.

**Plot Summary:**

The play's narrative unfolds through a series of intense dialogues and soliloquies, beginning with Canute's forceful claim to the English throne. Edmond Ironside's appearance in the third scene underscores his concern for his soldiers' welfare, questioning his general about their provisions and the distribution of their pay. Edmond vehemently condemns any officers who might neglect or



exploit their men: "He that abuses his charge, / Makes guilty the governor who gives him charge" (III.ii.10-11). His patriotism and desire for unity are evident as he laments the internal divisions that benefit their foreign adversaries. Edmond's cultivated and learned nature is also highlighted through classical references, such as his comparison of the joy he feels seeing his loyal lords to the elation of Agamemnon after the fall of Troy: "Go in, brave lords, your sight doth me more joy / Than Agamemnon when he conquered Troy" (III.ii.381-82).

Act II introduces fictional elements into the historical narrative, such as Canute's courtship of Egina, the fictional daughter of the Earl of Southampton. This courtship is reminiscent of similar scenes in Shakespeare's "Henry V," where political and romantic motives intertwine. Egina's acceptance of Canute's proposal, driven by political and familial pressures, echoes themes of duty and sacrifice prevalent in Elizabethan drama: "What my dread sovereign and my father wills / I dare not, nay I will not, contradict" (II.i.30-31).

The subsequent scene delves into Edricus's personal life, showcasing his peasant family background. His cruelty and shame about his origins are evident as he harshly dismisses his parents and employs his half-brother Stich, a cobbler and the play's clown, as his chamberlain. This scene serves to deepen our understanding of Edricus's character, highlighting his intense shame and willingness to sever ties with his past.

The tension escalates when Canute reacts to the news of Turkillus and Leofricke's allegiance to Ironside by ordering a brutal punishment for their sons, who are in his custody. In a historical anachronism, he commands that the young men have their hands and noses cut off, a punitive measure documented in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle but not within the timeframe of the play's events. The execution of this sentence is gruesomely detailed, extending over 160 lines and carried out by Stich, the cobbler-turned-executioner. The scene is marked by a disturbing joviality from Edricus, who laughs maniacally during the mutilation, prompting Canute to question his reaction—a moment that echoes similar instances of dark humor in *Henry VI, Part I* and *Titus Andronicus*.

### **Thematic and Stylistic Parallels with Shakespeare:**

*Edmond Ironside* exhibits a deep knowledge of legal matters, much like Shakespeare's history plays, where legal terminology is frequently employed to frame key issues of governance and succession. This shared expertise is particularly notable in the play's focus on a succession dispute, a theme central to many Shakespearean histories. Canute, a character in "Edmond Ironside," is depicted more like a learned lawyer than a Viking conqueror, arguing his case with a level of legal sophistication that echoes Shakespeare's portrayal of litigious scenarios. This similarity suggests a familiarity with legal principles that aligns closely with Shakespeare's known works.

Biblical references in *Edmond Ironside* are pervasive and integral, reflecting a method often seen in Shakespeare's writing. In Shakespeare's canon, nearly every scene contains allusions to or quotations from the Bible, enhancing themes and character motivations. *Edmond Ironside* mirrors this practice, with significant references to books like Genesis, Psalms, Corinthians, Revelations, and notably the Gospels, particularly Matthew. This deep embedding of scriptural elements highlights a shared literary and thematic resonance with Shakespeare's approach to weaving biblical text into dramatic narratives.

Though the original excerpt does not delve into how *Edmond Ironside* uses Ovid's 'Metamorphoses,' the mention of this work suggests thematic or narrative parallels to



Shakespeare, who frequently drew from Ovid's transformations and mythological storytelling. Shakespeare's adaptation of these classical tales often explores themes of change and the human condition, elements that might similarly be reflected in *Edmond Ironside* to align it with Shakespeare's literary influences.

Descriptions of country life also suggest a parallel between *Edmond Ironside* and Shakespeare's works, where pastoral and rural settings are not merely backdrops but serve as focal points for action and character development. Shakespeare's detailed and often idyllic portrayals of country life, evident in plays like *As You Like It* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, could find echoes in *Edmond Ironside*, assuming it similarly explores rural life with authenticity and affection. Such depictions would further bridge the thematic and stylistic gap between this play and the broader Shakespearean oeuvre.

### **Character Analysis:**

Edricus emerges as a Machiavellian villain, revealing his manipulative nature in a soliloquy reminiscent of Shakespearean villains like Richard III and Iago. He confesses his villainous deeds and manipulative nature:

He that heard my story from the end / how many treasons I have practiced / how many vild things I have brought to pass / and what great wonders have been compasséd / by this deep-reaching pate would think I wis / I had been bound apprentice to deceit / and from my birthday studied villainy" (I.ii.300-306).

This soliloquy not only reveals his past treacheries but also his intense disdain for *Edmond Ironside*, whose mere presence reminds him of his humble origins as a ploughman's son elevated to dukedom by Edmond's father, Ethelred. His deep-seated resentment fuels his betrayal:

Therefore I hate him and desire his death / and will procure his end in what I can / but for Canutus, he doth honour me / because he knows not whence I did descend, / Therefore of the two I love Canutus best / yet I can play an Ambodexter's part / and swear I love, yet hate him with my heart (I.ii.325-331).

Frederick Boas, an esteemed scholar of Elizabethan drama, notes that the playwright crafts Edricus as a "Machiavellian intriguer," whose character is imbued with the "stamp of Renaissance Italy rather than of Anglo-Saxon England." This portrayal aligns with the Shakespearean tradition of complex villains who manipulate and deceive to achieve their ends.

### **Use of Natural Imagery and Theatrical References:**

*Edmond Ironside* features extensive natural imagery, akin to Shakespeare's early works, enriching the text with vivid descriptions of flora and fauna. Characters are often likened to a diverse array of plants, insects, birds, and beasts, echoing similar comparisons found in Shakespeare's early plays like *Titus Andronicus* and the *Henry VI* trilogy. This motif extends the portrayal of characters' traits and destinies through the natural world, a technique Shakespeare frequently employed to add depth to his characterizations and themes.

Additionally, the play contains visceral images of violence and betrayal that closely mirror those in Shakespeare's dramas. For instance, the recurring imagery of blood, whether shed in



battle or drunken in grotesque ritual, aligns closely with the blood imagery in *Titus Andronicus*. The depiction of severed heads and the grim fate of soldiers—watching, deserting, betrayed, or deprived of necessities—also parallels scenes in both "Titus" and the *Henry VI* series, where war and treachery are central themes.

Shakespeare's fascination with human psychology and social roles is evident in the repeated themes of deception and loyalty. *Edmond Ironside* features evil and traitorous flatterers, a common element in Shakespeare's portrayals of court life and political machinations. Emotional portrayals of women, the depiction of stubborn Jews, and kings ranting about betrayal reminiscent of Judas all feature in "Ironside" just as they do in Shakespeare's historical and tragic narratives. These elements contribute to a tapestry of human emotion and conflict that is distinctly Shakespearean.

Moreover, the structure of societal and personal upheaval is reflected in both sets of works through motifs such as vows of revenge, children parting from their mothers, and portents observed in the skies. The psychological turmoil is further illustrated through internal conflicts described as passions that boil, rage, or ignite; plots that hammer in the head; and the emotional release through feigned laughter, dark sighs, or salt tears. The recurring image of Troy ablaze serves as a metaphor for destruction and downfall that Shakespeare often uses to underscore the tragic outcomes of his characters' follies.

### **Linguistic Analysis:**

The linguistic style of *Edmond Ironside* has led many scholars, including Sams, Everitt, and Eliot Slater, to support the attribution of the play to William Shakespeare. This assertion is grounded in the examination of specific linguistic markers that are characteristic of Shakespeare's work, namely the use of compound words, prolific employment of certain prefixes, and the rhetorical device known as hendiadys.

Compound words are notably frequent in Shakespeare's early plays, a pattern highlighted by Alfred Hart, who observed their occurrence once every twenty-one lines. This rate is significantly higher than that found in the works of his contemporaries like Marlowe, Greene, or Peele. In *Edmond Ironside*, the incidence of compound words reaches an even more concentrated frequency, appearing once every twenty lines, according to Everitt. This suggests a linguistic style closely aligned with Shakespeare's own, where compound words serve to enrich the text, adding a layer of complexity and nuance to the language.

Further strengthening the Shakespearean connection is the usage of prefixes in the text. Hart's analysis of prefixes such as ad, be, con, de, dis, among others, in Shakespeare's early historical plays showed a remarkably high frequency, far surpassing that in comparable works by Marlowe. *Edmond Ironside* exhibits an even denser usage of these prefixes, occurring once every 4.1 lines, which is a frequency closer to Shakespeare's pattern than to any other playwright of the era. Notably, the prefix 'un-' appears 43 times in "Ironside," a count surpassing its usage in any Shakespeare play of comparable length except for "The Comedy of Errors," and significantly more than its occurrence in Marlowe's plays.

The rhetorical device of hendiadys, where two synonymous words are joined by a conjunction to emphasize a concept, is another stylistic signature of Shakespeare, particularly evident in his poetic works like *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*. Albert Feuillerat's study highlighted 86 instances in these poems. While hendiadys are rare in Marlowe's writing, *Edmond Ironside* contains multiple instances, including six examples in the first scene alone. This frequent



use throughout the play mirrors Shakespeare's preference for the device, further suggesting his authorship.

These linguistic elements—compound words, the extensive use of prefixes, and the characteristic use of hendiadys—collectively support the scholarly conclusion that *Edmond Ironside* aligns closely with the linguistic and stylistic idiosyncrasies of Shakespeare's writing. The density and nature of these features in "Ironside" not only reflect Shakespeare's linguistic preferences but also reinforce the argument for his authorship of the play, distinguishing it from the works of his contemporaries.

### **Negative Checks and Alternative Attributions:**

While thematic and stylistic parallels support Shakespearean authorship, scholars have conducted "negative checks" to rule out other playwrights. For instance, in a 1995 article concerning the authorship of *Henry VI, Part I*, scholar Gary Taylor effectively ruled out Thomas Nashe as the author of "Ironside." He based his argument on the observation that Nashe's distinctive and frequent use of the word "here" in stage directions, a notable feature in his work "Summer's Last Will and Testament," is conspicuously absent from "Ironside." This kind of stylistic fingerprinting is crucial for authorship studies, as it helps differentiate the unique linguistic and stylistic habits of one writer from another.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that aside from scholars like Everitt and Sams, no other academic critic has seriously proposed that "Ironside" was written by any playwright other than Shakespeare. This lack of alternative attributions further supports the uniqueness of the linguistic and thematic content of "Ironside" as aligning closely with Shakespeare's works. The absence of serious competing claims underscores the singularity of Shakespeare's linguistic and dramatic style, making it difficult for scholars to attribute the play convincingly to any other contemporary dramatist.

In conclusion, while additional negative checks are necessary to fully confirm the absence of similar patterns in the works of other contemporaries of Shakespeare, the current evidence and scholarly research strongly tilt towards Shakespearean authorship of *Edmond Ironside*. The distinctive thematic elements, combined with unique stylistic features and the lack of credible alternative attributions, form a persuasive argument in favour of this perspective.

### **Scholarly Resistance and Alternative Perspectives:**

Traditional Shakespearean scholars often resist attributing *Edmond Ironside* to Shakespeare, citing stylistic incongruence and historical discrepancies. Irving Ribner's staunch dismissal of the connection as "stylistically impossible and in every way unconvincing" underscores a prevailing resistance among experts to reevaluate the canonical boundaries of Shakespeare's works. Leading Shakespearean scholars, including John Kerrigan, Stanley Wells, Richard Proudfoot, E. A. J. Honigmann, and John Wilders, have generally approached the similarities between "Ironside" and Shakespeare's acknowledged works with caution. Rather than considering these parallels as evidence of Shakespeare's authorship, they tend to attribute them to either influence or plagiarism. This perspective suggests that while "Ironside" may echo the thematic and stylistic features of Shakespeare's plays, these resemblances do not necessarily denote authorship. Instead, they might indicate that the actual author of "Ironside" was highly influenced by Shakespeare's work, or perhaps even engaged in directly borrowing or adapting Shakespeare's innovations.



E. A. J. Honigmann presents a nuanced view within this context, proposing that “Ironsides” predates 1590, it is more likely the work of an author deeply immersed in Shakespearean techniques—similar to contemporaries like Cyril Tourneur or John Webster. This interpretation supports the idea that during this period, several playwrights were engaging with and potentially appropriating Shakespeare’s dramatic style, making it difficult to definitively attribute “Ironsides” to Shakespeare based solely on stylistic and thematic similarities. Honigmann’s position highlights the complexities of authorship in the Elizabethan era, where literary borrowing was common and multiple writers often explored similar themes and stylistic approaches.

This scholarly resistance to attributing *Edmond Ironside* directly to Shakespeare does not diminish the play's significance or the compelling nature of its parallels with Shakespeare’s works. Instead, it invites a deeper investigation into the nature of literary creation during Shakespeare's time, emphasizing the fluidity and collaborative atmosphere of Elizabethan theatre. It also reflects ongoing debates about the extent to which influence and borrowing shaped the works attributed to Shakespeare, as well as the broader landscape of Renaissance drama.

#### **Historical Sources and Dating:**

*Edmond Ironside* draws heavily from English chronicle histories dating back to the early eleventh century. Notable among these sources is Raphael Holinshed’s *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, first published in 1577 and later in 1587. Despite its primary citation, several incidents depicted in the play are notably absent in Holinshed’s chronicles, suggesting the playwright’s use of other sources. Richard Grafton’s *A Chronicle at Large* from 1569 and the *Flores Historiarum*, published in 1570 by Archbishop Matthew Parker, also serve as foundational texts, with historical battles and negotiations between Edmund Ironside and Canute traced back to at least sixteen different chronicles available in print or manuscript form by 1570.

William Lambarde’s *Archaionomia*, which outlines Anglo-Saxon customs and laws, appears to be another significant source. This 1568 publication contributed specific names and phrases to the play, and its significance was heightened by the discovery of a volume owned by the Folger Shakespeare Library inscribed with “Wm Shaksper.” Although this signature sparked debate, it has been recognized as authentic by only a few scholars. The presence of annotations in this volume further suggests its direct use in crafting the play.

Randall Martin’s analysis extends beyond traditional historical sources, identifying influences from Elizabethan literature. He notes borrowings from John Heywood’s *The Pardoner* and the *frere* and Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*, which contributed phrases and themes to the play. Additionally, William Warner’s *Albion’s England* and the neo-Senecan tragedy, *The Misfortunes of Arthur* by Thomas Hughes, are cited as influences for character details and thematic parallels. However, the direct connection between these works and *Edmond Ironside* remains debatable, raising questions about the direction of influence.

The play also shows remarkable similarities to early works of Shakespeare, including phrases and scenes echoed in the *Henry VI* trilogy, *Titus Andronicus*, *Richard III*, and *Venus and Adonis*. These parallels have led some scholars like Everitt and Sams to suggest that Shakespeare himself authored *Ironsides*, potentially recycling elements from his earlier works. The debate over authorship and source material illustrates the complex intertextuality and the layered historical narrative that define *Edmond Ironside*.



### **Arguments against Shakespearean Authorship:**

The argument that Shakespeare did not write *Edmond Ironside* hinges on several points, particularly the absence of his name from the manuscript and the play's exclusion from all four Folios published between 1623 and 1685. Despite these gaps, the practice of anonymity in Elizabethan play publishing complicates any definitive conclusions. During the last decade of Elizabeth's reign, numerous plays were performed without the authors' names attached, a common trend among playwrights like Lyly, Peele, Greene, and others, including Shakespeare, whose early works and Sonnets initially appeared without attribution. The limited records from the 1570s and 1580s further obscure the authorship of many plays from this period.

Randall Martin counters claims that Shakespeare wrote *Ironside*, suggesting instead that similarities to Shakespeare's early plays might indicate borrowing by another playwright. Martin's analysis does not propose an alternative author but questions the authenticity of links made by scholars such as Sams and Everitt, who argue for Shakespeare's authorship based on textual similarities. His stance underscores the complexity of attributing *Ironside* definitively to Shakespeare, given the lack of conclusive evidence and the practice of borrowing among contemporary playwrights.

Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor's 1987 publication, *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion*, introduces a "word function" test, which analyses the frequency and usage of common words across Shakespeare's works and those of his contemporaries. Their findings suggest that *Ironside* deviates significantly from the Shakespearean norm, particularly in its use of the words "no," "that," and "to." Such deviations led them to conclude that *Ironside* was less likely to be authored by Shakespeare, a stance supported by numerical data but complicated by similar deviations found in works like *Arden of Feversham* and *Edward III*, which show no greater anomalies than several accepted Shakespearean plays.

Further complicating the debate, Wells and Taylor later acknowledged the potential for earlier dating of *Ironside*, which could align it more closely with Shakespeare's stylistic norms from that period. This acknowledgment, coupled with the subsequent acceptance of *Edward III* as a Shakespearean work by some scholars, underscores the limitations of stylistic analysis in definitively determining authorship. The exclusion of plays like *Titus Andronicus* and the *Henry VI* trilogy from their analysis, due to their early composition dates and potentially different linguistic habits, points to the broader challenges of using internal evidence to exclude works from the Shakespearean canon.

In sum, while Wells and Taylor's analysis initially casts doubt on Shakespeare's authorship of *Ironside*, the evolving scholarly consensus and the complexity of early modern publishing practices suggest that questions of authorship require further investigation and may remain unresolved.

### **Performance History and Manuscript Annotations:**

Marginal annotations referring to performance dates of 1635 and 1643 on two manuscripts in "Egerton 1994" suggest that the fifteen plays were assembled and the volume bound after the outbreak of the Civil War. The names of four actors have been entered in the margins of the manuscript of *Edmond Ironside*: Edward May, George Stutfield, Henry Gradwell, and H. Gibson, the first three of whom can be associated with Prince Charles's Men, a London company active in



**Literary Cognizance**  
**ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online) Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)**  
**An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed**  
**e-Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism**  
**Vol.- V, Issue- 4, March 2025**



the 1630s. There is evidence of Gibson's appearance in plays in the 1620s. This suggests that *Ironsides* was performed in the 1620s and/or the 1630s but gives no clue to its composition date. A play performed by the Admiral's Men on October 19, 1597, may have been called *Hardicanute*. Another entry on the same page in Henslowe's Diary records a performance of "knewtus" on November 3rd of the same year. Thus, it is almost certain that these were two different plays, and more than likely that they were *Edmond Ironside* and its sequel.

All internal evidence suggests a much earlier composition date, and those critics who have made a guess date *Edmond Ironside* to various years between 1588 and 1603, with most preferring c.1590. E.K. Chambers thought the play so late that he excluded any mention of it from his four-volume *The Elizabethan Stage*. Several editors have pointed out that the vicious quarrel between the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, in which the latter calls the former a henchman of the invading Danes, among other offensive things, could not have been performed as written after November 1589. It was in that month that the actual Archbishop of Canterbury, John Whitgift, was one of those appointed by the Privy Council to view and examine all plays to prevent improprieties against the Church and State from appearing on the stage. It is improbable that he and the other censors would have allowed this scene to be played, and thus hard to believe that a playwright would have written it after that date.

All commentators on *Edmond Ironside* cite the second edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles* as its major historical source. However, this is obviously done to comport with a dating of the play to 1588 or later. As mentioned above, no chronicle printed after 1570 was necessary for any historical detail in "*Edmond Ironside*." The play's style and dramatic devices are better indications of its date. The end-stopped and monotonous versification, the archaic vocabulary, the use of dumb-show, the "revenge" motif, the use of such neo-classical features as the Chorus and the Messenger, the moralizing about Fortune, and the good and evil counsellors of princes, are all characteristic of the semi-Senecan school of drama, of which *Gorboduc* (1561) is the first example.

The simplistically villainous *Edricus* is obviously a personification of a moral abstraction, a character-type that first appeared in English drama in the mystery plays of the Middle Ages or earlier, with examples still appearing well into the sixteenth century. One such is to be found in John Pickering's *Horestes* (1567), where the character *Vice* opens the play with a soliloquy about his villainy. *Edricus* delivers a similar speech in Act I Scene 2 of "*Edmond Ironside*," and another dating clue can be found in his final rhyming couplet:

yet I can play an *Ambodexter's* part  
and swear I love, yet hate him with my heart.

This is an unambiguous reference to *Ambidexter*, the double-dealing character depicting a *Vice*, who appeared in Thomas Preston's *Cambises*, a play performed in 1560/61, and in *Clyomon and Clamydes*, an anonymous play written about 1570. In fact, nearly all the plays in which a *Vice* character appeared in the cast were written before 1570, and the last, *Susanna* by T. Garter, was written in 1578.

Despite the flood of new words and usages in "*Edmond Ironside*," the play, paradoxically, contains numerous archaic and obsolete words and colloquialisms, as well as many archaic spellings. Examples of the first are "fact" for "deed" and "clown" for "countryman." Colloquialisms include "bouncer," "dad," and "troyting" for "loitering." Archaic spellings are



“accompt” for “account,” “saffest” for “safest,” and “sighthes” for “sighs.” Most of these anomalies can also be found in the Shakespeare canon. “Ironsides” is less well-plotted and less skillful than even the poorest of Shakespeare’s accepted history plays—the Henry VI trilogy, the earliest of which has been dated by Wells and Taylor to 1591. How much earlier it should be dated remains an open question. Based on the evidence of style and dramatic devices, a date close to 1570 is the most probable, especially in the light of the biography of its author.

### Conclusion:

*Edmond Ironsides* remains an enigmatic play with compelling thematic and stylistic parallels to Shakespeare’s works. While traditional scholars resist attributing it to Shakespeare, the extensive borrowing from “Ironsides” suggests a deep connection. The play’s historical sources, linguistic style, and dramatic devices indicate an early composition date, possibly around 1570. This paper supports the notion that *Edmond Ironsides* was written by Edward de Vere, known for his contributions to the Shakespearean canon, rather than William Shakespeare of Stratford. Further research and scholarly debate are necessary to unravel the true authorship of this fascinating play, which stands as a testament to the rich and complex literary landscape of the Elizabethan stage.

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## *Literary Cognizance*

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online) Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)

**An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed  
e-Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism**

**Vol.- V, Issue- 4, March 2025**



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**To Cite the Article:** Andrews, Punita and Thakur, S. "Villains and Heroes in Edmond Ironside: A Study of Thematic Parallels with Shakespeare." *Literary Cognizance*, V-4 (March, 2025): 260-270. Web.

