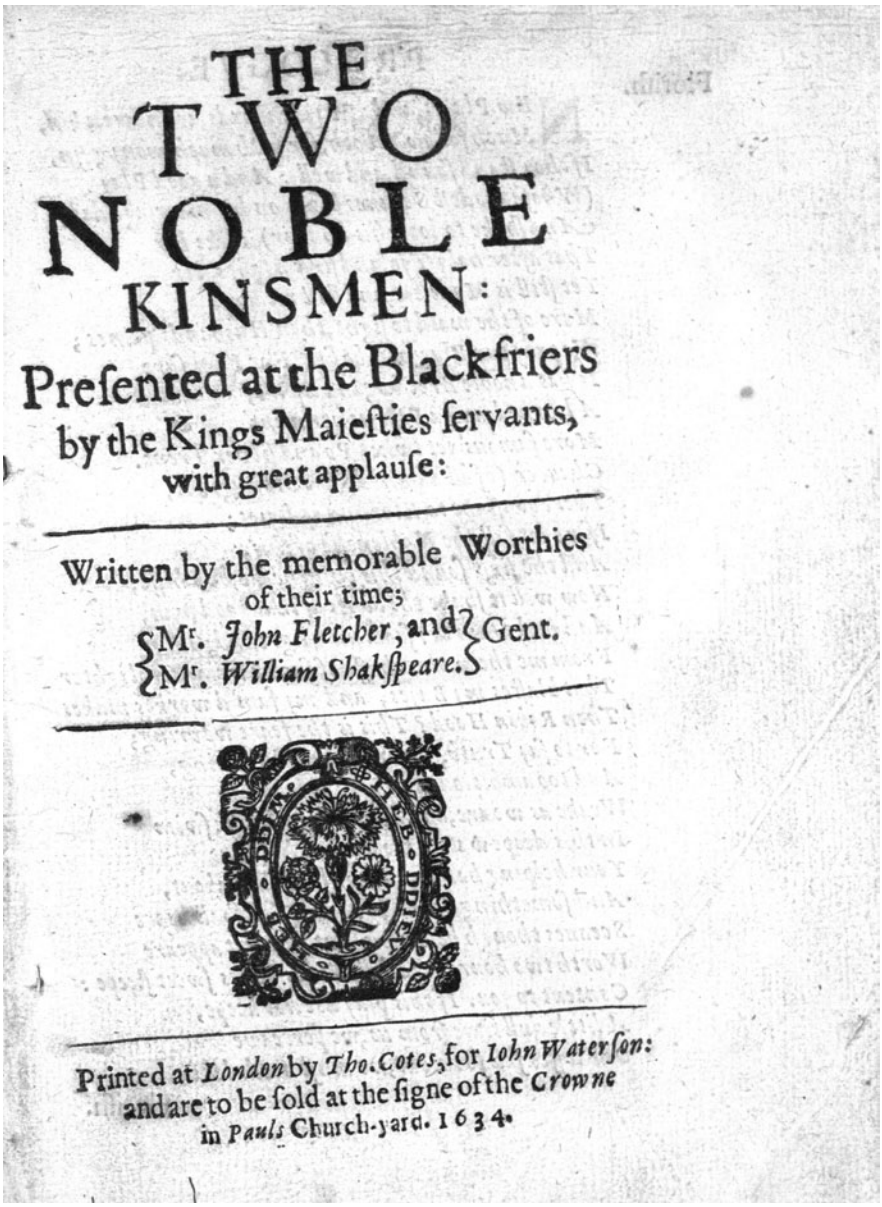
# INTRODUCTION

By the first decade of the twenty-first century, the critical fortunes of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* were at an all-time high. For centuries interest in *Kinsmen* had rested on questions about the collaborative authorship, on its relationship to Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale*, on its problematic genre, and on its usefulness as a quarry from which to extract comparisons with other Shakespearean plays: Theseus and his Amazonian bride; the two noble kinsmen, who, like the two gentlemen of Verona, pursue the same young woman; the madness of Ophelia and the Jailer's Daughter; schoolmasters and mechanicals who prepare performances for their betters; allusions to childhood friendships and popular Renaissance motifs; verbal echoes. Since the late twentieth century, when scholarly attention began to focus on sexuality, collaboration, and Shakespeare's late – or last – plays and especially their style, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* has become an essential script. There remain, however, two major gaps, fissures best filled by the sort of collaboration between page and stage that has long proved beneficial to most other canonical Shakespeare. One need is for full-length studies of the play that explore, for example, assumptions about a scene or character or read theme in the context of the entire play, explorations not easily completed within the confines of an essay. The other essential is for a major production (or, better yet, several productions) that would employ contemporary staging practices to investigate real or imagined problems with apparently static or intractable scenes; examine the relevance of the play's themes and characters to contemporary political and social concerns; place *Kinsmen* in a season with other late plays or with plays – *Measure for Measure* and *Troilus*, for example – with which it is sometimes compared; and test critical assumptions about such things as the nature of the same-sex relationships and Theseus' journey through the play.

## Authorship

The title page of the first edition of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (1634), a quarto, establishes the play's pedigree (Figure 1):

Presented at the Blackfriers
by the Kings Maiesties servants,
with great applause:
Written by the memorable Worthies
of their time;
{ Mr. *John Fletcher*, and
Mr. *William Shakespeare*. } Gent.
[ornament]
Printed at *London* by *Tho. Cotes*, for *Iohn Waterson*:
. . .
. . . 1634.



THE
TWO
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Preſented at the Blackfriers
by the Kings Maieſties ſervants,
with great applauſe:

Written by the memorable Worthies
of their time;
Mr. *John Fletcher*, and Mr. *William Shakſpeare*. Gent.

Printed at *London* by *Tho. Cotes*, for *Iohn Waterſon*:
and are to be ſold at the ſigne of the *Crowne*
in *Pauls* Church-yard. 1634.

1 Title page, 1634 quarto

The order in which the authors are named seems without significance; it may be simply alphabetical. That Fletcher had a hand in the play seems never to have been seriously questioned; those who think Shakespeare had none are influenced by two considerations. By 1634 two of the four seventeenth-century Shakespeare folios had appeared, and Shakespeare's reputation was such that his name on a newly published play would attract buyers. The quarto's publisher, John Waterson, if he did not invent the attribution, may have been pleased to accept an unsupported one accompanying the manuscript he acquired. More important, however, is the fact that the Shakespeare First Folio (1623) omits *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. If Shakespeare wrote a significant part of the play, Heminges and Condell, the Folio's compilers, should have known of it, and because a revival seems to have been considered in 1619 (see Performance, p. 29) there ought to have been a text available when the publishers rounded up Shakespeare's other plays. And then there are the style and manner of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. Scenes that some believe Shakespeare wrote give others a firm impression that he could never have written them. The design of the action, framework of ideas, development of character, syntax, vocabulary, verse cadence, imagery: for the doubters, all ring false. Ironically, however, the opposite view has also been advanced: that the play is entirely Shakespeare's, neither Fletcher nor anyone else having touched it.[1]

If the external evidence of the 1634 title page and the related Stationers' Register entry (see Note on the Text, p. 52) are set aside, only internal evidence remains, and by it authorship cannot be proved conclusively. Over the years, however, a substantial body of work has converged to support the title page's validity.[2] Included are studies of imagery, syntax, metre, the presence or absence of certain verbal contractions, and other features of style that can be quantified. Aesthetic objections have been met by persuasive aesthetic counterarguments. Textual evidence shows that for the revival of 1625–6 a new promptbook was prepared (see Textual Analysis, pp. 221–2), so if they sought a few years earlier a text for the Shakespeare First Folio, Heminges and Condell might have sought in vain. Today's consensus is that Shakespeare and Fletcher did write the play jointly, Shakespeare having been the author of 1.1–2.1, 3.1–2, 5.1 (from line 34), and 5.3–4; and Fletcher of 2.2–5, 3.3–5.1 (to 33 SD), and Act 5, scene 2.[3] The influence of Beaumont's *Masque of the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn*, performed on 20 February 1613, on the Schoolmaster's entertainment in Act 3, scene 5 suggests that the writing took place in 1613, when

[1] Bertram. Cyrus Hoy, review of *Shakespeare and 'The Two Noble Kinsmen'*, by Paul Bertram *MP* 67 (August 1969), 83–8, describes Bertram's argument as 'badly crippled by his enthusiasm for the play' (p. 83) and comprehensively refutes his thesis.

[2] For a comprehensive study of this work, see Vickers, pp. 402–32. In a lengthy appendix, Vickers refutes Jeffrey Masten's 'contention that late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century dramatic writing occurs within [the] context of a collaborative homoerotics' (p. 535, citing Masten, *Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, Authorship, and Sexualities in Renaissance Drama*, 1997, p. 37).

[3] For a denial of Shakespeare's participation in *TNK*, see Donald K. Hedrick, '"Be Rough With Me": The Collaborative Arenas of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*', in Frey, pp. 45–77. In a long note Hedrick, p. 46, suggests that Fletcher's collaborator in *TNK* was Nathan Field, the actor-playwright who had starred as Bussy D'Ambois in Chapman's play.

the lost *Cardenio* and *Henry VIII*, both collaborations of Shakespeare and Fletcher, were first acted.[1]

As sometimes happens in collaborations, the playwrights treat certain details in different ways. Shakespeare gives 'Pirithous' three syllables, Fletcher four, a difference that might arise if the authors neither much discussed the play while it was in progress nor much exchanged manuscript; the Jailer's Daughter moves without transition from equal admiration of the two kinsmen in Act 2, scene 1 to desperate love of Palamon in Act 2, scene 3; the two young men who in Act 3, scene 3 grow vinously mellow and twit each other about old romances are not quite the high-minded cousins of Act 1, scene 2 and Act 5, scene 1. Nevertheless, if the attributions given above are about right, it seems clear that on the general plan of the play the authors reached an agreement that allowed each to contribute with a fair degree of consistency to both the main plot and the subplot.[2] Shakespeare alone took the story of the three queens and the associated events in Theseus' court, a segment nearly detachable from the narrative but of importance to theme; Fletcher alone created the country grotesques and their dance, a segment which has no narrative function but which parodies some serious concerns of the rest of the play. To the main plot and the principal subplot, however, both seem to have contributed. Shakespeare introduces Palamon and Arcite and establishes the basis of their characters (or as many argue, singular character);[3] handles the meeting in the woods of the kinsmen turned noble rivals; and works out the elaborate appeals to the gods, the tournament, Arcite's death and Palamon's narrow escape from death, and the denouement. Fletcher develops the main love story – the young men's first glimpse of Emilia and the subsequent collapse of their friendship, Arcite's reception into Emilia's service, the competing lovers' duel and capture, and the idea of the tournament.

The playwrights similarly share the contrasting subplot of the daughter's love-madness. Shakespeare introduces her and her decent, ordinary father and Wooer and develops her growing distraction as she searches helplessly for Palamon in Act 3, scene 2. Fletcher again handles the love story – the daughter's hopeless infatuation with an unattainable man, her resulting madness, and the Doctor's all-too-practical remedy: straight sex, done home (5.2.36–7). In order to collaborate in this fashion, the playwrights had to agree not only how to adapt Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* for the main plot (they follow the narrative fairly closely considering its conversion to another medium), but also how to integrate the newly invented subplot to create a various but unified effect. Thus they had to agree on a common attitude towards their material, and it is hard to escape the impression that the controlling ideas originated with the senior playwright. The thematic centres of the play are in the first act and in Palamon's prayer to Venus in Act 5, scene 1, both of Shakespeare's

[1] Oxford, p. xxiv. *Textual Companion*, pp. 132–3, dates the composition of *Cardenio* 1612–13 and *Henry VIII*, 1613.
[2] Vickers discusses the co-authorship of *Kinsmen*'s plot and characters, pp. 491–500.
[3] This observation occurs more often in study-based criticism than in reviews of performance, where casting and costume distinguish between the cousins.

composition. Yet the technique seems quite Fletcherian. *The Two Noble Kinsmen* is not primarily about psychology of character or the moral implications of choices made or declined. It is about the resolution of an apparently irresolvable dilemma and the passions the dilemma generates. That is more Fletcher's line of work than Shakespeare's.

Contrasts in style offer another set of clues to authorship. Studies since Charles Lamb's perceptive analysis of three scenes (Shakespeare's Act 1, scene 1 and Act 1, scene 3 and Fletcher's Act 2, scene 2) have examined the presence, or absence, of characteristic metric, syntactic, and linguistic markers.[1] Two scenes with Palamon and Arcite – Shakespeare's Act 1, scene 2 and Fletcher's Act 2, scene 2 – illustrate not only the oft-noted differences in the situations and characters of the kinsmen but also a contrast in expression. Shakespeare, whose style is examined on pages 23–8, gives Arcite a complicated six-line metaphor about swimming (7–12) to explain the cousins' untenable position in Thebes. Palamon's response is an equally complicated, and longer, lament about the unenviable state of the Theban soldier (12–26). In both speeches Shakespeare introduces complex syntax and enjambment (only five lines have terminal pauses and only the final line of each speech is end-stopped), to cite only two traits. In the next scene in which they speak, Fletcher gives the kinsmen a clearer, more direct, more immediately comprehensible style. Palamon answers Arcite, for example, not with one demanding image but with an easily accessible catalogue of pleasures and pastimes denied the cousins because they are prisoners in Athens. Many of Fletcher's lines have terminal pauses or are end-stopped. Many lines have extra syllables. His syntax presents few challenges, and his imagery does not usually startle. 'All', as Theodore Spencer points out, 'is languorous and gentle . . . The emotion is so much easier than Shakespeare's; it is no trouble to understand because there is no mental toughness or gristle combined with it.' For Spencer, 'Fletcher's share . . . is . . . much better theater than Shakespeare's.'[2]

In the Commentary of this edition the authorship of each scene is given, insofar as that can be determined, as well as the scene's location. The attributions are those made by Cyrus Hoy in 'The Shares of Fletcher and his Collaborators in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon (VII)'. Hoy's study was based on linguistic evidence – for example, *ye* preferred to *you*, *hath* to *has*, *doth* to *does* – and in four scenes (1.2, 1.4, 3.1, and 5.4) Hoy's authorial assignments accord with those Kenneth Muir assigned to Shakespeare because of image clusters found in them.[3] Later studies using other discriminators have agreed with Hoy in the main but not in every particular. G. R. Proudfoot, for instance, cites as examples of scenes about which doubts have 'most often been expressed' Hoy's assignments of Act 1, scene 5, Act 2, scene 1, and Act 4, scene 2 to Shakespeare.[4] Thomas Bolton Horton, in 'The

[1] Vickers, *passim* pp. 412–29, presents twelve tables from studies that distinguish between features of the two playwrights. See, e.g., run-on lines (p. 412), extra monosyllables and feminine endings (p. 419), pause patterns (p. 421), and words new to English literature (p. 425).
[2] Spencer, pp. 264–5.
[3] Muir, 'Hand', pp. 55–9.
[4] Proudfoot, p. xvi.

Effectiveness of the Stylometry of Function Words in Discriminating between Shakespeare and Fletcher', finds eight scenes either too short to evaluate or of uncertain authorship, but he agrees with Hoy about eleven of the remaining sixteen scenes. The disagreements are over Act 2, scene 3 and Act 4, scene 3, both of which he gives to Shakespeare, and Act 5, scene 1, which he gives to Shakespeare but Hoy gives to Fletcher (1–33) and Shakespeare (rest of scene).

## Date

The morris dance in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* Act 3, scene 5 was borrowed from Beaumont's *Masque of the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn*, performed on 20 February 1613 (see Authorship, pp. 3–4). In Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*, first acted on 31 October 1614, reference is made to a play known as 'Palemon' (4.3.70) as well as to a character of that name (5.6.85).[1] In Samuel Daniel's *The Queen's Arcadia* (1605) a Palæmon appears, but since that piece was performed only once (by students of Christ Church, Oxford, for the Queen and her entourage), it is unlikely that *Two Noble Kinsmen*'s character was alluded to. Glynne Wickham argues that *Kinsmen* was written for performance during the same festivities celebrating the marriage of the Princess Elizabeth and the Elector Palatine for which Beaumont's masque was written.[2] If so, *Two Noble Kinsmen*'s date would be late February, 1613. *Textual Companion* dates it 1613–14.[3] Its anterior date would thus seem to be early 1613 and its posterior date the autumn of 1614.

## Sources

Shakespeare and Fletcher were not the first to dramatize Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*. While visiting Oxford University, Queen Elizabeth attended a performance of the first part of Richard Edwards's *Palamon and Arcite* on 2 September 1566 and on 4 September the second part. This play is no longer extant, but a Latin summary of its action indicates that it was substantially different from *Two Noble Kinsmen*.[4] Moreover, Philip Henslowe, the theatrical impresario, recorded in his 'diary', or memorandum book, that in 1594 'palamon & a$^{r}$sett' (variously spelled by him) was performed on four occasions.[5] About the content of this play nothing is known. Because of the title a connection with Chaucer seems certain and a connection with Edwards possible, but there seems to be none with Shakespeare or Fletcher. Regarding the main plot of *Two Noble Kinsmen*, Skeat, however, firmly declares 'we may feel sure that the authors of the *Two Noble Kinsmen* followed Chaucer, as they professed to do, without troubling themselves with examining these earlier plays'.[6]

[1] Jonson, vol. 4, 1982.
[2] Wickham, pp. 176–9.
[3] *Textual Companion*, p. 134.
[4] W. Y. Durand, 'Notes on Richard Edwards. II. Palæmon and Arcyte not a Source of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*', *Journal of Germanic Philology* 4 (1902), 356–69.
[5] Henslowe, p. 24 (17 September, 16 October), p. 25 (27 October, 9 November).
[6] Skeat, p. viii.

The Prologue speaks explicitly of Chaucer and Chaucer only as the giver of the story, and the Epilogue's allusion to 'the tale we have told' may possibly have been intended to acknowledge indebtedness to *The Knight's Tale*. Theseus and Hippolyta appear not only there, however; they also figure in North's translation of Plutarch's 'Life of Theseus' in *The Lives of the Noble Grecians & Romans* (1579), a work Shakespeare frequently drew upon, and their first Shakespearean appearance had been in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595–6). Thus it is not surprising that details of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* may derive from sources other than *The Knight's Tale*, but it is clear that Chaucer's bellwether narrative was Shakespeare's and Fletcher's main inspiration by far.

## Craftsmanship

But if the dramatists followed Chaucer's lead, they also made significant changes in adapting the medieval tale for the Jacobean stage. To darken the tone of Chaucer's philosophical romance, the playwrights complicate the poet's characters, broaden the social range of the dramatis personae, and insist on a more complex view of the intertwined motifs of love, honour, war, and entitlement to rule. From the 2,249 lines of their source the playwrights expanded some incidents and characters, condensed others, and occasionally echoed the 'learnèd' poet's descriptive details.[1] The dramatists shorten considerably the period covered by the action of the poet's tale, which takes place over more than nine years: Palamon escapes during the seventh year of his imprisonment (1452); Palamon and Arcite have fifty weeks to gather their knights (1850); Arcite lingers on his deathbed (2696–810); and his funeral and a period of mourning 'by lengthe of certeyn yeres' (2817–969; 2967) precede the official betrothal of Palamon and Emilia (3075–93). Not clearly signalling how much time elapses, Shakespeare and Fletcher concentrate the plot line of the cousins' love for Emilia but also complicate it by expanding the roles of the three queens, Hippolyta, and Emilia and by introducing the subplot of the Jailer's Daughter.

Crafting the first act from his source, the more experienced playwright relied on his assured eye for stage-worthy incidents to expand, incidents that would also introduce key thematic images.[2] Unlike Chaucer's narrator, who passes quickly over 'the feste that was at hir weddynge' (883), Shakespeare's first scene opens with the wedding procession of Theseus and Hippolyta led by Hymen and a Boy and attended by four nymphs, Pirithous, Emilia, and others. Lengthy stage directions,

[1] For a scene-by-scene analysis, see Thompson. See also Richard Proudfoot, 'Shakespeare and the New Dramatists of the King's Men, 1606–1613', in John Russell Brown and Bernard Harris (eds.), *Later Shakespeare*, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies 8, 1966, pp. 235–61; and E. Talbot Donaldson, *The Swan at the Well: Shakespeare Reading Chaucer*, 1985, especially chapter 3. For a selection of verbal echoes and repetitions, see Commentary in this edition: 1.5.6, 15–16; 2.2.163–5; 2.5.50–1; 3.1.5; 4.2.75–140, 81–2, 103–4, 110–11, 112–13, 116, 120, 131, 137; 5.1.53–6.

[2] Among the critics who discuss Shakespeare's presentation of theme in Act 1 is Edwards, especially pp. 95–100.

which call for music, props, and costumes (1.1.0 SD), and a song (1–24),[1] introduce evocative visual and aural images that will resonate with later scenes. The bride's chaplet of wheat, for example, contrasts with the widow's withered one (1.1.64–5), with the one of 'daffadillies' the Jailer's Daughter imagines her 'bevy' of love-lorn maids will wear (4.1.71–3), and with the 'wreath of bulrush' she wears (4.1.84). The bride's chaplet contrasts also with the garland Arcite wears as a successful games competitor (2.5.0 SD.2) and anticipates wearing if Mars grants him victory over Palamon and his knights (5.1.44). The four-stanza song honouring bride and bridegroom contrasts with both the funereal lament of the three queens (1.5) and the folk songs and disjointed love lyrics of the Jailer's Daughter (3.5, 4.1, 4.3). More immediately, the final stanza of the Boy's song, with its cacophonous catalogue of unwelcome wedding guests – the crow, cuckoo, raven, chough, and magpie – sets the stage for a dramatic shift in tone: the entrance of the three widowed queens, veiled and in black.

As Chaucer's knight recounts the story, a 'compaigyne of ladyes, tweye and tweye' (898) interrupts Theseus' entourage as he returns from his victory over the Amazons and his marriage to the Amazonian queen, and the widows waste no time (it is a passage of forty lines, 912–51) in persuading the duke to attack Creon. Then the 'compaigyne of ladyes' disappears from the narrative (999). Having interrupted the wedding procession, Shakespeare's three queens not only plead with Theseus to postpone his marriage in order to avenge them but also invoke Hippolyta and Emilia, appealing to the Amazons as a bride and a future bride, respectively, to help them soften the reluctant Theseus. (In *The Knight's Tale* Hippolyta and Emilia are silent witnesses to the queens' entreaty.) After 166 lines of pleading, most of it on their knees, the five women wring assent from the duke. On the most basic level, the appearance of war widows reveals a chilling aspect of the motif of love and war introduced by Theseus' conquest of Hippolyta. (Figure 2 depicts Theseus attacking an Amazon and Hippolyta, on horseback, riding to her defence.) More significantly, the queens' graphic imagery stresses the brutal ugliness of war. The First Queen tells Theseus that the 'stench' (47) of the bodies of the slain kings 'infects the winds' (46) and that their corpses 'Lie blist'ring fore the visitating sun' (146). The Second Queen urges Hippolyta to tell Theseus what she would do 'if he i'th'blood-sized field lay swollen, / Showing the sun his teeth, grinning at the moon' (99–100).

In two more brief appearances the queens again contribute to overarching motifs. In the first they praise Theseus for his victory over Creon (they '*meet him and fall on their faces before him*', 1.4.0 SD.2–3, 1.4.1–13). In the second they '*Enter . . . with the hearses of their knights in a funeral solemnity*' (1.5.0 SD) and sing a dirge, their doleful song a contrast with the Boy's celebratory lyrics in the wedding procession honouring Theseus and Hippolyta and a foreshadowing of the funeral and marriage announced in the final scene. The last two lines of the act, an apparently minor

[1] Muir, p. 124, cites the stage direction as an example of changes in early staging since the entrance of Theseus and Hippolyta in *MND*.

2 Hippolyta, on horseback, attempts to aid Andromache, whom Theseus has wounded. Pirithous is the obscured figure behind Theseus. From a Greek bowl dated 440–430 B.C., in the collection of the British Museum

adjustment to the source, are portentous. Towards the close of *The Knight's Tale* (2847–9), Theseus' old father, making his first appearance in the *Tale*, comforts his son, who grieves for Arcite, with a proverb.[1] By slightly revising the proverb, assigning it to a widowed queen, and placing it at the close of the first act, with its intertwined themes of love, war, and death, Shakespeare emphasizes the dark undercurrent of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*: 'This world's a city full of straying streets, / And death's the marketplace where each one meets' (1.5.15–16).[2]

[1] 'This world nys but a thurghfare ful of wo, / And we been pilgrymes, passynge to and fro. / Deeth is an ende of every worldly soore.'

[2] The Jailer's Daughter, in despair that Palamon has not met her, echoes the lines: 'So which way now? / The best way is the next way to a grave; / Each errant step beside is torment' (3.2.32–4). Bradbrook, p. 30, points out that the couplet is 'a mimetic rendering of the Virgilian "Mille viae mortis"'. Roberts, p. 142, calls attention to 'the distance between Chaucer and the Renaissance . . . In Chaucer the world

These alterations to Chaucer's medieval tale, changes that juxtapose marriage and funerals, love and war, anticipate the conflicts that the two noble kinsmen will face. But Shakespeare's introduction of Arcite and Palamon offers a third juxtaposition, that between Athens and Thebes and through their rulers a contrast between admirable and corrupt leadership. Chaucer's tale returns only briefly to Thebes: fifty-nine lines (1355–413) describe the exiled Arcite's lovesick year or two in his birthplace. Shakespeare, on the other hand, juxtaposes the first scene, set in Athens, with the resonant second scene, set in Thebes. Palamon and Arcite's distaste for their uncle Creon's rule underscores the three queens' complaint that the Theban king has denied the rightful burial of their slain husbands, and Valerius' depiction of Creon's 'great rage' (1.2.85) furthers the contrast between Theseus and Creon. Like the three queens and their dead kings, Creon's broken and wounded soldiers expand the motif of warfare and its victims. Just as Theseus postpones his wedding celebration to challenge Creon, so the kinsmen postpone their intended escape from Creon's court. The close bond shared by the kinsmen parallels the friendships of Emilia and Flavina and Pirithous and Theseus (1.3). In the theatre, the scene ensures that the audience will recognize the cousins (and distinguish between them) before Theseus discovers the identity of his wounded prisoners (1.4.16).

In Act 1, scene 3 Shakespeare introduces a set of alterations that signals the increased importance the playwrights accord Hippolyta, whom Chaucer introduces five times as Theseus' silent consort, and Emilia, whom the collaborators develop as more than the Chaucerian passive love object. Placed between Theseus' departure for and return from battle with Creon, the scene functions, like Act 1, scene 2, as an intimate conversation and voices the women's views on war, kinship, and friendship. Hippolyta reveals a familiarity with war essential for an Amazonian warrior, if somewhat shocking to some tastes: she does not weep when she is told 'of babes broached on the lance, or women / That have sod their infants in the brine they wept / At killing 'em, and after ate them' (1.3.20–2). The sisters, as had the cousins, converse with an easy familiarity. Emilia is quick to assure Hippolyta that Theseus prefers his bride to his best friend; Hippolyta answers gently Emilia's determination never to love a man.[1] The openness of their discussion of friendship, love, and marriage, heretofore addressed principally in image, allusion, and subtext, is central to their characters. Hippolyta is the less complex and less well developed of the two sisters. Whatever misgivings she might have had earlier in the scene about Theseus' inability to choose between herself and Pirithous, Hippolyta exits to 'kneel, with great assurance / That we, more than his Pirithous, possess / The high throne of his heart' (1.3.94–6). Hippolyta seems more sensitive to others than the battle-hardened bravura of 'babes broached on the lance' suggests. She notes Theseus is 'Heart-deep' with the 'distress' of the three queens (1.1.105). She

is a "thurghfare" from which wandering pilgrims are released by death (2847). In the drama, death is the heart of the mystery.' Abrams, 'Bourgeois', p. 145, however, reads the couplet as a statement of 'the centrality of commerce to human society and the consequent futility of lofty aspiration'.

[1] Weller, p. 99, hears a different tone: 'Hippolyta responds rather crossly to this nostalgic rhapsody.'