

WHY DID SHAKESPEARE COLLABORATE?

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Anyone interested in Shakespeare must care about collaboration. Modern attribution scholarship agrees that Shakespeare's writing can be found in at least forty plays: the thirty-six in the First Folio, plus *Pericles*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, *Edward III* and *Sir Thomas More*. Of those forty plays, the four not included in the Folio are undeniably collaborative.¹ Within the Folio itself, another four – *Timon of Athens*, *Henry VIII/All Is True*, *Titus Andronicus* and *1 Henry VI* – are now accepted as collaborative by all the leading attribution specialists.² Eight plays out of forty: that's twenty per cent of the canon. Hugh Craig and John Burrows have produced compelling new statistical evidence that the other two parts of *Henry VI* are also collaborative, as most attribution scholars in the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth century contended.³ Ten out of forty: that's twenty-five per cent of the canon. If we accept the growing consensus that Shakespeare wrote the additions to the *Spanish Tragedy* published in 1602, and parts of *Arden of Faversham* and *The History of Cardenio*, then he collaborated in 13 out of the extant 43 plays he worked on: that's 30 per cent.⁴ Those who accept the claims of the 2013 RSC edition of *Collaborative Plays* would add five more.⁵ Modern scholarship gives us a larger Shakespeare canon, but also a larger proportion of collaborative work. Moreover, two plays originally written by Shakespeare alone – *Macbeth* and *Measure for Measure* – were apparently adapted after Shakespeare's death.⁶ That leaves just twenty-eight plays that survive in texts written entirely by Shakespeare.⁷ Shakespeare's is the only

¹ For summaries and syntheses of earlier attribution scholarship, see Gary Taylor, 'The Canon and Chronology of Shakespeare's Plays', in Stanley Wells *et al.*, *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 69–144; and Brian Vickers, *Shakespeare, Co-Author: A Historical Study of Five Collaborative Plays* (Oxford, 2002).

² These eight plays were all identified as collaborative in Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, gen. eds., *Complete Works*, rev. edn (Oxford, 2005). See Jonathan Hope, *The Authorship of Shakespeare's Plays* (Cambridge, 1994); Macdonald P. Jackson, 'Stage Directions and Speech Headings in Act I of *Titus Andronicus* Q (1594): Shakespeare or Peele?', *Studies in Bibliography*, 49 (1996), 134–48; 'Shakespeare's Brothers and Peele's Brethren: *Titus Andronicus* Again', *Notes and Queries*, 242 (1997), 494–5; 'Phrase Length in *Henry VIII*: Shakespeare and Fletcher', *Notes and Queries*, 242 (1997), 75–80; *Defining Shakespeare: Pericles as Test Case* (Oxford, 2003); W. E. Y. Elliott and R. J. Valenza, 'Oxford by the Numbers: What Are the Odds that the Earl of Oxford Could Have Written Shakespeare's Plays?', *Tennessee Law Review*, 72:1 (2004), 323–453; Hugh Craig and Arthur Kinney, eds., *Shakespeare, Computers, and the Mystery of Authorship* (Cambridge, 2009); Hugh Craig, 'Authorship', in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney (Oxford, 2012), pp. 23–30. These scholars do not agree on every scene or passage, but there is overwhelming evidence and a deep consensus among the established figures on the collaborative nature of these plays.

³ Craig and Kinney, *Computers*, pp. 68–76; Elliott and Valenza, 'Oxford by the Numbers'; Paul Vincent, 'Inconsistencies in *2 Henry VI*', *Notes and Queries*, 246 (2001), 270–4; Hugh Craig and John Burrows, 'A Collaboration about a Collaboration: The Authorship of *King Henry VI, Part Three*', in *Collaborative Research in the Digital Humanities*, ed. Marilyn Deegan and Willard McCarty (London, 2012), pp. 27–65. The first scholarly case for their collaborative authorship was Edmond Malone's 'Dissertation on the Three Parts of *King Henry VI* (1787)', in *The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare*, 10 vols. (1790), vol. 6, pp. 383–429.

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hand in less than two-thirds of the plays that Shakespeare had a hand in.

We can be interested in collaboration without mastering Principle Component Analysis, Fisher's Exact Test, chi-square, degrees of freedom, historical sociolinguistics, plagiarism software, palaeography, chainlines or watermarks. Rowe did not believe that all of *Pericles* was written by Shakespeare, but 'some part of it certainly was, particularly the last Act';⁸ Coleridge denied that Shakespeare could have written the first speech of *1 Henry VI* but conjectured that he did write the additions to *The Spanish Tragedy*; Tennyson identified John Fletcher as the author of some scenes of *Henry VIII*; Swinburne insisted on Shakespeare's presence in *Arden of Faversham*. On the basis of their own sensitivity to verse style, each poet floated an intuitive hypothesis, which has subsequently been tested and confirmed repeatedly, by a variety of independent empirical experiments, conducted by people who are not poets. Attribution scholarship is a determinedly dull technical discipline, like physical archaeology or the chemical analysis of pigments. Caravaggio signed only one of his paintings, but you can admire, teach and write about Caravaggio's art without becoming an expert in the scientific techniques that established his canon. Likewise, I will here take for granted the consensus of the leading living experts about *what* Shakespeare wrote, and begin with a different, critical question: *why* did he collaborate?

Both prevailing answers to that question are economic. The postmodernist answer celebrates collaboration because, it claims, proprietary individual authorship was a capitalist ideology not written into law until the Enlightenment, and therefore irrelevant to the cooperative *mentalité* of early modern playwrights. Shakespeare collaborated because he didn't know any better.⁹ He belonged to the innocent race before the bourgeois flood. Undeniably, the evolution of copyright and the economics of the book trade affected the subsequent history of Shakespeare's reputation. But although theatre since the time of the Athenians has required actors, musicians, dancers, choreographers, painters, carpenters, costume-makers,

⁴ On *Spanish Tragedy* see Craig and Kinney, *Computers*, pp. 162–80; Warren Stevenson, *Shakespeare's Additions to Thomas Kyd's 'The Spanish Tragedy': A Fresh Look at the Evidence Regarding the 1602 Additions* (Lewiston, 2008); Brian Vickers, 'Identifying Shakespeare's Additions to *The Spanish Tragedy*: A New(er) Approach', *Shakespeare*, 8:1 (2012), 13–43; Douglas Bruster, 'Shakespearean Spellings and Handwriting in the Additional Passages Printed in the 1602 *Spanish Tragedy*', *Notes and Queries*, n.s. 60:3 (September 2013), pp. 420–4. On *Arden* see Craig and Kinney, *Computers*, pp. 78–99, and Jackson, *Determining the Shakespeare Canon: Arden of Faversham and A Lover's Complaint* (Oxford, 2014). On *Cardenio* see Brean Hammond, ed., *Double Falsehood* (London, 2010); David Carnegie and Gary Taylor, eds., *The Quest for Cardenio: Shakespeare, Fletcher, Cervantes and the 'Lost' Play* (Oxford, 2012); Terri Bourus and Gary Taylor, eds., *The Creation and Re-creation of Cardenio: Performing Shakespeare, Transforming Cervantes* (New York, 2013).

⁵ *William Shakespeare and Others: Collaborative Plays*, ed. Jonathan Bate, Eric Rasmussen et al., The RSC Shakespeare (New York, 2013). However, Will Sharpe's essay on 'Authorship and Attribution', in that edition, pp. 641–745, acknowledges that it is 'highly unlikely to almost impossible' that *Lochrine, Thomas Lord Cromwell, The London Prodigal or A Yorkshire Tragedy* 'contain Shakespeare's writing', and claims only that *Mucedorus* is 'worth considering' (642). By contrast, Sharpe endorses the consensus that Shakespeare 'almost certainly to very likely' wrote parts of *More, Arden, Edward III, Double Falsehood* and the *Spanish Tragedy* additions.

⁶ For recent work on these long-suspected cases of adaptation, see Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino, gen. eds., *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works* and *Thomas Middleton and Early Modern Textual Culture: A Companion to the Collected Works* (Oxford, 2007); Gary Taylor, 'Macbeth and Middleton', in *Macbeth*, ed. Robert Miola (New York, 2014), pp. 294–303; Gary Taylor, 'Empirical Middleton: *Macbeth*, Adaptation, and Micro-Authorship' (forthcoming in *Shakespeare Quarterly*); Terri Bourus and Gary Taylor, 'Measure for Measure(s): Performance-testing the adaptation hypothesis', *Shakespeare*, 10:2 (2014).

⁷ If Middleton had a hand in *All's Well That Ends Well*, as suggested by Laurie Maguire and Emma Smith in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 20 April 2012, then the figure would be 27 out of 43. But Brian Vickers and Marcus Dahl have strongly contested the conjecture and, as Maguire and Smith made clear from the outset, much further research is required to test the claim.

⁸ Nicholas Rowe, ed., *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear*, 6 vols. (1709), vol. 1, p. vii.

⁹ The most influential summation of this view is Jeffrey Masten's *Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, Authorship, and Sexualities in Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge, 1997): see especially the chapter 'Between gentlemen: homoeroticism, collaboration, and the discourse of friendship' (pp. 28–62).

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financiers and all manner of back-stage crew, before Shakespeare's lifetime it had never routinely required more than one playwright per play. Even then, as Jeffrey Knapp has demonstrated, 'Collective play-writing was never the norm for Renaissance drama, practically or conceptually.'¹⁰

The collapse of the historically indefensible postmodernist hypothesis has led to a resurgence of the only available alternative: the neoclassical, formalist explanation, which denigrates collaboration as itself a capitalist intrusion upon the natural and desirable state of individual artistic autonomy. According to this theory, the economic dominance of actors and proprietors forced playwrights to collaborate. Shakespeare's plays include material by other writers because the men who paid the piper fiddled with the tunes. 'If we give into this opinion', Pope declared in 1725, 'how many low and vicious parts and passages might no longer reflect upon this great Genius, but appear unworthily charged upon him?'¹¹ Likewise, Bart van Es, in 2013, explains six of Shakespeare's collaborations in terms of 'Shakespeare's working conditions in the early 1590s', dominated by the 'financial pressure' and 'constant haste' of a system where writers 'were the employees of the acting companies'.¹²

But the neoclassical economic claim is as suspect as the postmodernist one. Since most commercial plays of the period were apparently written by a single author, the theatres were unsuccessful in imposing their alleged collaborative agenda. Anyway, *why* would theatres want multiple authors? When Knapp claims that 'collective playwriting helped speed up the process of satisfying' the commercial theatre's 'demand' for new material, he is simply echoing the assertion by Brian Vickers that 'the need to keep the theatrical companies supplied with material must have been one reason for co-authorship'.¹³ Vickers himself supports this thesis by citing, more than once, a 1927 article by Charles Sisson.¹⁴ Sisson discovered legal documents about a lost play called '*The late Murder in White Chappell, or Keepe the Widow Waking*', which 'was contrived and written by Wm Rowley, Jon ffoord, John Webster, and Tho: Decker'. This indisputably collaborative play was based upon two recent ('late')

and local ('White Chappell') events, which took place between April and August 1624; the play was licensed in September, and both Sisson and Vickers agree that it must therefore have been written 'at great speed' by all four authors. Vickers then notes, on the basis of Henslowe's account books, that the six weeks allowed for *Keep the Widow Waking* was 'a not-unusual period of time' for writing a play. Combining the evidence of Henslowe and Sisson, Vickers generalizes that collaborative dramatists 'must have worked in permanent haste'.

Can these grand claims be supported by a few self-serving depositions in a lawsuit about a lost late-Jacobean play? The timetable of composition is less certain than Sisson and Vickers assert.¹⁵ But

¹⁰ Jeffrey Knapp, *Shakespeare Only* (Chicago, 2009), p. 120. The book expands and develops the historicist argument of Knapp's 'What is a Co-author?', *Representations*, 89 (2003), 1–29. For a less temperate pummelling of postmodernist views of the author function, see Vickers, *Co-Author*, pp. 506–41.

¹¹ *The Works of Shakespear*, ed. Alexander Pope, 6 vols. (1725), vol. 1, p. xxi.

¹² van Es, *Shakespeare in Company* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 55, 44, 48, 54. He acknowledges 'The evidence of co-authorship' in the early '*Henry VI* plays, *Titus Andronicus*, and probably *Edward III* (51, 284), and reverts to the early dating of *Sir Thomas More*, citing no source later than 1990 (313). He gives no reason for his rejection of more recent empirical scholarship that dates Shakespeare's collaborative work on *More* to the seventeenth century; that dating is simply inconvenient for his overall thesis (284). For confirmation of seventeenth-century composition, see most recently Hugh Craig, 'The Date of *Sir Thomas More*', in *Shakespeare Survey 66* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 38–54.

¹³ Knapp, *Shakespeare Only*, p. 120; Vickers, *Co-author*, p. 28.

¹⁴ Sisson, '*Keep the Widow Waking: A Lost Play by Thomas Dekker*', *Library*, IV:8 (1927), 39–57. Sisson reprinted this as a chapter of *Lost Plays of Shakespeare's Age* (Cambridge, 1936), pp. 80–124. I cite the 1936 printing because Vickers does, both in *Co-Author*, pp. 32–4, and in 'Incomplete Shakespeare: Or, Denying Co-authorship in *Henry the Sixth, Part 1*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 58:3 (2007), 311–52, p. 315.

¹⁵ Vickers claims that the co-authors 'had about six weeks to fulfil the commission', but we do not possess any documentary evidence that their commission specified a completion date. Sisson, followed by Vickers, assumes that the play was licensed before mid-September, but this specificity is not supported by N. W. Bawcutt's authoritative edition: see *The Control and Censorship of Caroline Drama: The Records of Sir*

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even if we accept their conjectures, none of the very specific circumstances that encouraged rapid production of *Keep the Widow Waking* is relevant to any Shakespeare play that attribution specialists have identified as collaborative. Vickers is correct when he claims that, in Henslowe's accounts, 'plays were normally finished in four to six weeks' (*Co-author*, 43). But that sentence, tellingly, is about all plays, not just collaborative ones. Vickers cites Neil Carson for this statistic, but he omits Carson's preceding and following sentences: 'However organized, the playwrights worked with considerable speed. Henslowe's accounts indicate that plays were normally finished in four to six weeks. Drayton promised to complete a book in a "fortnyght".'¹⁶ Likewise, Vickers ignores the fact that Sisson's book also contains a chapter about another lost play produced in haste to exploit a topical scandal: *The Old Joiner of Aldgate*, written by George Chapman, alone. Nor were Drayton and Chapman the only playwrights capable of writing quickly. Ben Jonson 'fully penned' the very long text of *Volpone* in five weeks (85 lines per day), and the biggest hit of the entire period, Middleton's *A Game at Chess*, must have been written in five weeks or less (375 lines per week).¹⁷ Shakespeare allegedly wrote *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in two weeks.¹⁸ Noël Coward wrote his most admired play, *Private Lives*, in four days.¹⁹ Alan Ayckbourn began writing his enormously popular *Bedroom Farce* on a Wednesday, completed it that Friday, typed it all up on Saturday, and began rehearsals on Monday.²⁰ Compositional velocity is not a function of the number of playwrights involved. Neither is commercial success.

Why should a theatrical demand for new material create a demand for collaboration? Carson pointed out that seven playwrights did all the writing for Henslowe's crowded fall and winter season of 1599–1600; an eighth actor-playwright (the older Robert Wilson) joined them to collaborate on one play. Seven playwrights working alone on separate plays should, theoretically, be able to produce as many plays as seven playwrights working together on collaborative plays. The only obvious gain in productivity here, created by

collaboration, is the single collaborative contribution of Robert Wilson. But Wilson worked on fifteen other Henslowe plays from spring 1598 to summer 1600, so he clearly belongs to the same ensemble of writers. From the perspective of theatre management, why not have eight playwrights writing separately, instead of eight playwrights writing collaboratively with each other?

With professional playwrights writing for commercial theatres, collaboration cannot be explained by simple economies of time or personnel. The motive cannot be quantitative. It's not about the numbers. It must be qualitative, and therefore phenomenological. Collaboration in some way improved the quality of the human experience. Analysing Henslowe's records, Carson could detect only one statistical difference between single-author plays and plural-author plays: the collaborative ones were more likely to get finished (57–8). If theatres had an economic motive for encouraging collaboration, it was not because co-authors worked faster, but because they were more often able to achieve closure. Why? Carson does not venture an answer. Finishing a play for which you were the sole author (and therefore the sole payee) would have provided a greater financial incentive to finish. Therefore, the economic motive cannot

Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels 1623–73 (Oxford, 1996), which gives only 'Sept. 1624' as the licence date, and does not place it between or after the entries of 3, 15, or 18 September (154–6). Moreover, Herbert licensed the play as 'A new Trag: call: a Late murder of the sonn upon the mother writt: by M<r> Forde Webster'. This title refers only to the earlier of the two scandals; Ford and Webster could have begun work on that tragedy before Dekker and Rowley joined them to incorporate the more recent comic material. Dekker's testimony was in response to charges of slander about the comic plot.

¹⁶ Carson, *A Companion to Henslowe's Diary* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 59 (my italics).

¹⁷ 'Canon and Chronology', in *Companion*, ed. Taylor and Lavagnino, pp. 440–1.

¹⁸ T. W. Craik, ed., *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Oxford, 2008), p. 4 (citing John Dennis in 1702).

¹⁹ Philip Hoare, *Noël Coward: A Biography* (Chicago, 1995), p. 214.

²⁰ Prunella Scales, interviewed on *The National Theatre: 50 Years* (BBC, broadcast 2 November 2013).

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have been paramount: playwrights apparently had greater or more effective incentives to finish plays for which they received smaller, divided payments. Why? Historically, some playwrights, some of the time, have found it stimulating, socially and imaginatively, to work with what Nashe called a 'fellow writer'.²¹ Apparently, at least some of the time, the social relationship of one Elizabethan playwright to his fellows mattered more to him than his economic relationship to Henslowe. Some of the time, collaboration created a different, more satisfying working experience for the playwrights themselves.²²

Collaboration might also, theoretically, have increased the quality of the product. Acting companies could have believed that collaboration produced scripts that improved the experience of acting in them, and therefore improved the experience of audiences watching and hearing them. Economic pressure might thus, theoretically, have created an incentive to produce a better product. This possibility may seem counter-intuitive, and many critics reject it out of hand. Sisson had nothing but contempt for *The Late Murder in Whitechapel, or Keep the Widow Waking*: 'Incongruous as was the linking together of these two stories into one play, in which no possible dramatic connection could give them any artistic unity, it was evidently sufficient for the dramatist exploiting topical interest that the two wretched criminals involved lay in the same gaol together and were led forth on the same day to stand at the bar of judgment' (82). Vickers, likewise, asserts that 'the speed with which the play was staged meant that the four dramatists had little time for consultation' with each other (315) – thus explaining what he sees as a lamentable lack of artistic unity in all collaborative plays.

It should be obvious that we can say nothing intelligent about the artistic unity of a lost play. Nor can we say anything useful about the lost conversations of one playwright with another. How does Vickers know that four professional playwrights, all living within the much smaller space of early modern London, in easy walking distance from each other, had 'little time' for interaction? In six

weeks *none* of them could find *any* time to talk to each other? Are we to imagine them, walled up in separate rooms for a month and a half, never venturing out to share a meal, an ale or a chat? Should we assume that playwrights, people who make a living writing dialogue, are by nature anti-social? Isn't it likely that some playwrights, then as now, were capable not only of 'empathic listening' but also of mutually productive and interactive 'dialogic listening'?²³ The fact that such conversations were not recorded does not mean that they never took place.

Vickers jumps immediately from *Keep the Widow Waking* to *Sir Thomas More (Co-author, 34–43)*. Both plays provide documentary evidence of commercial theatre practice. Like the lost 1624 play, the manuscript adaptation of *More* contains the work of four playwrights, one of whom is Thomas Dekker; the others are Chettle, Heywood and Shakespeare.²⁴ However, the adaptation of *More* has not been linked to any topical scandal that needed to be exploited quickly. Even if speed had been necessary, adapting the play required much less work than writing a new one from scratch, and should have taken much less time to write. Moreover, for most of the period from spring 1603

²¹ Nashe, *Strange Newes* (1592), sig. F1; *Have with you to Saffronwalden* (1596), sig. V2. See also John Foxe, *Actes and monuments* (1583), on the interestingly complicated writer Bishop Gardiner: 'standyng so much in a singularitie by hymselfe, neither agreeth wyth other hys fellow writers of his own faction, nor yet fully accordeth with hymselfe in certain cases' (p. 1792).

²² My own experience is that a sense of ethical obligation to collaborators I know and respect encourages me to prioritize finishing a job that I might otherwise postpone or abandon.

²³ See John Stewart, Karen E. Zediker, and Saskia Witteborn, 'Empathic and Dialogic Listening', in *Bridges Not Walls: A Book about Interpersonal Communication*, ed. John Stewart, 11th edn (New York, 2012), pp. 192–207, and Cathy Turner, 'Hare in Collaboration: Writing Dialogues', in *The Cambridge Companion to David Hare*, ed. Richard Boon (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 109–22.

²⁴ John Jowett, ed., *Sir Thomas More* (London, 2011), pp. 415–60. Jowett summarizes, and expands, the compelling empirical evidence, accumulated by dozens of specialists over the course of more than a century, for the identification of those four hands in the manuscript.

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to the end of 1604 (when Jowett and other recent scholars date the adaptation), plague closed the London theatres. No public performances means no urgent demand for new material. Time pressure, that catch-all economic explanation for collective writing, cannot explain the manuscript of *Sir Thomas More*. So, why four playwrights, instead of one? Why collaboration at all?

We could ask that question, and distinguish those four hands in the manuscript, even if we could not connect those hands to particular playwrights working simultaneously in the commercial theatres of early modern London. In the manuscript, authorship is not a theory about cultural authority. The manuscript does not contain Shakespeare's name, and the British Library originally acquired it without knowing that Shakespeare had anything to do with it. Of course, the value of the manuscript rocketed once scholars began to identify Hand D as Shakespeare, just as sales of a crime novel called *The Cuckoo's Calling* rocketed when its author, 'Robert Galbraith', was outed as a pseudonym for J. K. Rowling. Like Rowling, Shakespeare is a lucrative brand name. In the twenty-first century, many more people will buy an edition of *Sir Thomas More*, or buy tickets to a performance of *Sir Thomas More*, because the trademark 'Shakespeare' is attached to it. But that is a fact about the subsequent history of the text. It tells us nothing about Shakespeare, or collaboration, in the early modern London theatre.

Let's begin, therefore, with 'Hand C', which remains anonymous, but does appear in other extant playhouse documents. Hand C might be a theatrical scribe, or (less likely) an unidentified playwright, or some combination of the two. There needs no ghost, come from the grave, to tell us that theatre is a collaborative art-form, but Hand C usefully incarnates the commercial and intrinsically social institution of a joint-stock theatre company.²⁵ His handwriting illustrates one particular kind of collaborative interaction.

Shakespeare's three pages of the manuscript – the smallest of his known contributions to a collaborative play – contain 1266 words in his own handwriting, including stage directions and speech

prefixes, but excluding the eighteen words that he himself deleted in the course of his writing. Hand C subsequently altered Shakespeare's 1266 words thirteen times. In nine places he changed Shakespeare's speech prefixes to bring them into line with the rest of the play, replacing Shakespeare's anonymous crowd with the specific individuals established by the other playwrights. Once, Hand C added the word 'Enter' before a speech prefix, to clarify the stage logistics. These ten changes clearly belong to the necessary business of performing a play: telling actors when to enter, identifying which lines are spoken by which actors. Another change corrects Shakespeare's tautology 'letts us' to 'letts'; this necessary correction might have been made by any scribe or editor. Together, these eleven interventions alter the text no more than Shakespeare himself did, deleting words when he changed his own mind. More significant, from an editorial or dramaturgical point of view, is Hand C's deletion of 26 consecutive words:

is safer wars than ever you can make, whose discipline is riot; in, in to your obedience; why, even your hurly cannot proceed but by obedience

In context, in the manuscript, with interlineations and deletions and an unpunctuated relationship to what goes before and after, this is a confusing and superfluous passage. Hand C replaced it with four unexciting but clear transition words of his own: 'tell me but this'. This is the kind of intrusion that, we can imagine, would make Ben Jonson furious. Nevertheless, these twenty-six deleted words constitute only 2 per cent of Shakespeare's original handwritten text, and Hand C's four added words are less than one third of one per cent. Hand C tinkers with what Shakespeare wrote – and with what the other playwrights wrote. Whether scribe or playwright, his function was to coordinate the work of all the other hands in the manuscript.

²⁵ Paul Werstine points out that the one element of universal consensus about *More* is that 'Hand C has as his goal the preparation' of the manuscript 'to use for performance': *Early Modern Playhouse Manuscripts and the Editing of Shakespeare* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 255.

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Notoriously, Shakespeare's own contribution to *More* is not well connected to the work of the three other adapters; therefore, at the time he wrote his three surviving pages, he was not intensely interacting with Chettle, Dekker or Heywood, and his primary motive for writing those pages does not seem to have been social. Either he wanted to write that particular episode, or someone else thought that the play would be improved if he wrote that particular episode. We cannot know whether the initiative came from Shakespeare or someone else, but it hardly matters, because either way the motive was aesthetic, and either way Shakespeare was willing. He was not forced. Although for twenty years Shakespeare was what Gerald Bentley called the company's 'attached dramatist', he did not write the company's additions to their expropriation of Marston's *Malcontent*, which were provided instead by John Webster, a younger playwright with, at the time, no known previous connection to the company. If Shakespeare in 1603–4 chose not to write additions to *The Malcontent*, Shakespeare in 1603–4 could also have chosen not to write additions to *Sir Thomas More*. In fact, by 1603–4 Shakespeare had more economic and artistic freedom than any other professional playwright in London. Consequently, the best explanation for Shakespeare writing those three pages is that something about one episode in *Sir Thomas More* was particularly appealing or appropriate for him to write – by contrast with the material added to *Sir Thomas More* by Chettle, Dekker and Heywood, which seemed appealing or appropriate for each of them, but not for him.

So, what is it about that scene that seemed to him, or someone else, particularly Shakespearian? To begin with, it is not the beginning of the play. Shakespeare's three pages contribute to the sixth scene of the play; editors with a fetish for act divisions have placed it somewhere in the middle of Act 2. The play's original first scene of urban unrest had been so thoroughly eviscerated by the censor that it had to be replaced, or abandoned. Shakespeare did not write a replacement. Instead, Heywood added new material in scene 4, and a new scene 5 was supplied by Hand C (perhaps

copying and modifying something written by Chettle). Only then does Shakespeare appear.

Shakespeare's contribution to *More* fits a pattern found in all his known or suspected collaborations from the beginning of his career until the early Jacobean period.²⁶ According to the most recent attribution scholarship, Shakespeare did not begin *Arden of Faversham*, *Edward III*, *Titus Andronicus*, any of the three *Henry VI* plays or *Pericles*. For most of his career, Shakespeare was less interested, or less accomplished, in setting up a situation than in developing one. Playwright David Edgar, without any knowledge of this pattern, contends that 'Shakespeare wasn't skilled at exposition.'²⁷ No modern Shakespeare scholar would dare say so, but the Royal Shakespeare Company apparently agrees: their 2013 productions of *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Richard II* and *Othello* (the only ones I saw) all interpolated new material to jumpstart the play. So did the 2013 Chicago Shakespeare Theatre's *Henry VIII* and the Goodman Theatre's 2013 *Measure for Measure*. All productions at Shakespeare's Globe now begin with an interpolated, energetic musical performance; in their outstanding 2013 *Midsummer Night's Dream* director Dominic Dromgoole also added an introductory dumbshow of the war between Theseus and the Amazons. We might perhaps agree that 'Shakespeare wasn't as skilled at exposition' (much virtue in *as*). Certainly, he owes more of his global reputation to an extraordinary gift, demonstrated in *More*, for writing scenes of intense conflict.

In Shakespeare's three pages, *More* single-handedly quells a rioting mob, one which shouts

²⁶ Shakespeare did write the opening scene of *Timon*, but scholars continue to disagree about that play's date: John Jowett's edition (Oxford, 2004) prefers 'spring 1606' (pp. 3–8), but Anthony Dawson and Gretchen Minton's edition (*Arden Shakespeare*, 2008) prefers '1607 or early 1608' (pp. 12–18). If *Pericles* preceded *Timon*, then Shakespeare's collaborations would neatly divide into two periods, distinguished by whether he began the play (as he did in *Timon* and in all three collaborations with Fletcher). But the transition need not have been so tidy, and in either case *More* belongs to the earlier pattern.

²⁷ Edgar, *How Plays Work* (London, 2009), p. 31.

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down a sergeant, a mayor and two earls. Scholars have compared this episode to other mob scenes in Shakespeare's works, and in certain respects it does resemble two scenes in *Julius Caesar* and, especially, the opening scene of *Coriolanus*. Those parallels help establish Shakespeare's authorship of the episode, but they have also been used to explain Shakespeare's participation in the project: he had 'a specific expertise in staging popular uprisings' (Jowett, 379), in a way that excited spectators but did not disturb censors.

But the episode in *More* also differs from the mob scenes in *Caesar* and *Coriolanus* in one crucial respect, which connects it to Shakespeare's aesthetic much more broadly. Shakespeare's three pages are entirely dominated by the play's charismatic male protagonist, an 'abnormally interesting' person.²⁸ Thomas More speaks 788 of the 1213 words that Shakespeare wrote for actors to speak: 65 per cent of the dialogue, including one speech 44 lines long.²⁹ The consensus of attribution scholarship is that Shakespeare also wrote More's first meditative soliloquy, transcribed by Hand C in scene 8, a turning point for the play and for More's career. More recently, Jowett has argued that Shakespeare wrote parts of a second soliloquy for More, in scene 9, also transcribed by Hand C.³⁰ But even if we disregard those two soliloquies, the pattern is clear. What interested Shakespeare was Thomas More. From *Richard III* to *The Tempest*, Shakespeare wrote a succession of exceptionally long, exceptionally dominant roles for male protagonists. As Scott McMillin first pointed out, the part of More is comparably long, and must have been written for one of the few Elizabethan actors capable of memorizing and mastering so many lines. Edward Alleyn and Richard Burbage are the most plausible candidates.³¹ But for *Othello* (1603–4) and *Volpone* (1605–6) the King's Men required two such actors, to play the paired protagonists Othello–Iago and Volpone–Mosca. This change in company practice might well be connected to the arrival of John Lowin, who at some point in the second half of 1603 left Worcester's Men (working for Henslowe at the Rose) to join the King's Men.³²

Perhaps he brought the manuscript of *More* with him.³³

More's dominance is nowhere more evident than in the three pages Shakespeare wrote. Like many of Shakespeare's most famous roles, More in this scene enacts, embodies, the political, imaginative and charismatic power of male eloquence. By contrast with Shakespeare's history plays, much of the rest of *Sir Thomas More* presents, as Jowett says, 'a strong sense of a London locality', of London as 'a city of the people', and of More himself as

²⁸ On 'hypermimesis' and 'charismatic art', see C. Stephen Jaeger, *Enchantment: On Charisma and the Sublime in the Arts of the West* (Philadelphia, 2012), pp. 3, 38. On 'abnormally interesting people', particularly in relation to seventeenth-century theatre, see Joseph Roach, *It* (Ann Arbor, 2007). Roach focuses on the Restoration, but admits that 'the most popular actors in Shakespeare's time enjoyed robust celebrity status' (30), and by the time the additions to *More* were written they also enjoyed royal patronage; Alleyn and Burbage (for either of whom the role of More might have been written) inaugurate the circulation of portraits of sexy leading actors; like other history plays, *More* required the recycling of aristocratic clothing on common stages.

²⁹ This is all the more remarkable because Shakespeare wrote 344 words before More speaks at all.

³⁰ Jowett, 'A Collaboration: Shakespeare and Hand C in *Sir Thomas More*', in *Shakespeare Survey 65* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 255–68.

³¹ Scott McMillin, *The Elizabethan Theatre and 'The Book of Sir Thomas More'* (Ithaca, 1987), pp. 61–3.

³² Martin Butler, 'John Lowin', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), online, accessed 1 September 2013; Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespeare Company, 1594–1642* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 233–4. McMillin suggested that Lowin could have been the actor paired with Burbage in *Othello* and *Volpone*.

³³ My conjecture about Lowin might resolve the continuing issue about the apparently conflicting relationship between Shakespeare (clearly tied to the Chamberlain/King's Men from 1594 to 1614) and Hand C (whose company affiliations, or movements between companies, remain disputed): see Jowett's discussion (*More*, 102–3). Worcester's Men became a London company in 1601, the year that Lowin would have completed his apprenticeship as a goldsmith; he first appears in Henslowe's account books during the winter of 1602–3, usually through business concerning the purchase of new plays. Jowett places composition of the original play 'in or around 1600' (424–32); both Munday and Chettle were working for someone other than the Admiral's Men from 19 June 1600 to 31 March 1601.

WHY DID SHAKESPEARE COLLABORATE?

a Londoner among Londoners. Vittorio Gabrieli and Giorgio Melchiori go so far as to claim that London is the 'protagonist' of Act 2.³⁴ Twenty specific London localities are mentioned by name. But not in Shakespeare's three pages, which do not even contain the word 'London'. The original play, and the other additions, can be clearly linked to emergent genres of city comedy and of history plays with a strong local London interest, like Heywood's *Edward IV* and Dekker's *Shoemaker's Holiday*. The presence of Dekker and Heywood among the adapters makes perfect sense. They specialized in citizen pride and civic humanism. Shakespeare did not. His three pages echo, instead, with the names 'Surrey' and 'Shrewsbury', and evocations of 'the majesty of England'. Although editors describe the mob as citizens, in Shakespeare's pages they are addressed, instead, as 'countrymen', they first refer to their home not as London but as 'our country', and the imagery is not urban either, but imported instead from the natural world: herring, butter, beef, roots, parsnips, dung, pumpkins, a river's 'bank', shark, ravenous fishes, a hound, dogs, mountainish. Thomas More may be a Londoner speaking to Londoners, but Shakespeare still warbles his native woodnotes wild.

You can see the same pattern in *Timon of Athens*, another early Jacobean collaboration, written not long after the additions to *Sir Thomas More*. Shakespeare creates almost the entire long part of the eloquent tragic male protagonist Lord Timon, and Shakespeare completely dominates the play once Timon leaves the city for the countryside; Shakespeare's 'poesy is as a gum, which oozes / From whence 'tis nourished'. By contrast, his younger collaborator, the life-long Londoner Thomas Middleton, dramatizes the satiric, comic, urban ensemble world of servants, creditors and so-called 'senators' who are indistinguishable from the oligarchic commercial aldermen who ruled London. Shakespeare wrote most of the play, but MacDonald P. Jackson observes that Middleton 'created the scenes on which the plot pivots', and that 'Middleton's satirical cameos in Act 3 . . . mingling verse and prose, are the only scenes by a collaborator that Shakespeare could not have

written better himself'.³⁵ Theatrically, Middleton's fast, energetic, urban scenes have always worked better than the magnificently metaphysical poetry of the long, slow, self-indulgent, emotionally static monologues of Timon in the woods. The National Theatre's award-winning 2012 production of *Timon*, directed by Nicholas Hytner, demonstrated how powerful and pertinent the play can be in performance. And if, for some critics, the play is a failure, that failure has to be attributed to the dominant playwright: Shakespeare's excessive focus on the protagonist and Shakespeare's lack of interest in the rest of the plot, including its conclusion.

The collaborative adaptation of *More* and the collaborative creation of *Timon* both recognize two things: first, that London audiences had a growing appetite for the city comedies and city histories being written by Shakespeare's younger contemporaries, and secondly, that Shakespeare himself was not the man to satisfy that appetite and needed a collaborator to do so. Did Shakespeare personally recognize his limitations? Or did the recognition come from Richard Burbage and the rest of the King's Men? Who knows? What matters is that we can see, here, the artistic logic of collaboration. An actor is cast in one role, and not another, because every actor does certain things especially well, and other things not quite so well; ideally, the producer or director or actor-manager or someone in the company aligns the skills of a particular actor with the requirements of a particular role. Casting is, according to a widespread theatrical and cinematic axiom, ninety per cent of directing. Casting is also, I would propose, ninety per cent of collaboration. In a collaborative work, each contributor is cast in a particular role; ideally, each is cast in a role that suits his or her particular talents. The achievement of *West Side Story* depends, for instance, on the music of Leonard Bernstein, the lyrics of Stephen Sondheim, the choreography of Jerome Robbins,

³⁴ Gabrieli and Melchiori, eds., *Sir Thomas More*, Revels Plays (Manchester, 1990), p. 30.

³⁵ MacDonald P. Jackson, 'Collaboration', in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare*, p. 51.

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the script by Arthur Laurents – and even, a little, on the precursory author, William Shakespeare.

Shakespeare was an actor, but he certainly knew – indeed, everyone knew – that Burbage was a better actor. Burbage was also a painter, which Shakespeare was not. Robert Johnson and Thomas Morley were accomplished composers, which Shakespeare was not. We are willing to admit that Shakespeare collaborated with other people, like Burbage and Johnson, because they were better at something than he was. Why then are we so resistant to accepting that another *writer* might have been better at some aspect of *writing* than Shakespeare was? We accept that Shakespeare incorporated traditional song lyrics, written by other people, into his plays. Why then has it taken Shakespeare's editors three centuries to recognize or accept the evidence of his collaborations?

Part of the explanation must be that human beings are hard-wired to seek the simplest possible cause of an effect, and therefore we typically focus on a single agent, even when we know there is more than one. Everybody talks about Verdi's operas, or Sondheim's musicals, even though neither Verdi nor Sondheim ever worked alone, or wrote what theatre credits call 'the book' of a musical play. Thus, modern productions and editions advertise 'William Shakespeare's' *Timon of Athens*, even when the inside of the book, or the programme, acknowledges that Middleton wrote parts of the play. Likewise, as David Nicol has pointed out, critics routinely praise the collaborative plays of Middleton and Rowley as though they had been written entirely by Middleton.³⁶ Jeffrey Knapp recognizes that *Pericles* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* are collaborative plays, and indeed he interprets both as metatheatrical meditations on collaboration – but only in terms of *Shakespeare's* thoughts about collaborating.³⁷

Another part of the explanation must be another, related illusion: what Thomas Carlyle called 'hero-worship', what Daniel Kahneman and other cognitive psychologists call 'the halo effect'.³⁸ This can be seen clearly in the first edition of Shakespeare's works to pay serious attention to the problems of attribution and collaboration. In 1725 Alexander

Pope correctly denied that Shakespeare had written '*Lochrine, Sir John Oldcastle, Yorkshire Tragedy, Lord Cromwell, The Puritan*' or *The London Prodigal*. But in the very next sentence he conjectured that in some other plays '(particularly *Love's Labour Lost, The Winter's Tale* and *Titus Andronicus*)', Shakespeare wrote 'only some characters, single scenes, or perhaps a few particular passages' (xx). In the edition itself Pope marks as un-Shakespearian particular scenes in other comedies (*Two Gentlemen of Verona, The Comedy of Errors, Much Ado about Nothing, The Taming of the Shrew*) and the comic Porter's scene in *Macbeth*. Pope, a great satiric poet with a brutally sharp sense of humour, did not think this comic material was funny, and accordingly could not believe that Shakespeare wrote it.

As it happens, modern scholarship has found plentiful evidence of collaboration in Shakespeare's histories and tragedies, but no collaborator has been identified in any of his comedies – and although Middleton adapted *Macbeth*, Shakespeare created the Porter. In this respect, Samuel Johnson was a more accurate judge of Shakespeare's achievement than Pope. Shakespeare's 'natural disposition', Johnson famously intoned, 'led him to comedy. In tragedy he often writes with great appearance of toil and study, what is written at last with little felicity; but in his comick scenes, he seems to produce without labour, what no labour can improve. In tragedy he is always struggling after some occasion to be comick, but in comedy he seems to repose, or to luxuriate, in a mode of thinking congenial to his nature.'³⁹ On the basis of what we now know about Shakespeare's collaborations, we can modify Johnson's summary slightly by concluding that (like John Lyly) Shakespeare created his own mode of Elizabethan romantic comedy, which was

³⁶ Nicol, *Middleton and Rowley: Forms of Collaboration in the Jacobean Playhouse* (Toronto, 2012), esp. pp. 5–21.

³⁷ Knapp, *Shakespeare Only*, pp. 133–46.

³⁸ Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York, 2011), pp. 82–5.

³⁹ 'Preface 1765', in *Johnson on Shakespeare*, ed. Arthur Sherbo, 2 vols. (New Haven, 1968), vol. 7 in the *Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson*, p. 69.