LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

“THE CREW / OF COMMON PLAYWRIGHTS”

COLLABORATION AND AUTHORIAL COMMUNITY IN THE EARLY MODERN THEATER

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN ENGLISH

BY

LACEY ANN CONLEY

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

MAY 2012
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In the process of completing this dissertation, I have come to understand the many ways collaboration can occur in the creation of a written work, both in the early modern theater and, more importantly, in my own community. It is to those who made this seem a less solitary endeavor that I would like to express my thanks. I am grateful to the manuscript staff at the British Library for allowing me to have the most exciting scholarly experience of my life thus far, and to the English department at Loyola for creating a space wherein it is pleasant to be a graduate student. I would also like to thank my parents, and those who have become family along the way: Natalie, Kelly, Julia, Elise, Erin, and Allison, any statement of my gratitude for your friendship would have no means to become hyperbolic. I could not have been more fortunate in my dissertation committee. Chris Kendrick and Jim Knapp, I appreciate your time, your input, and your encouragement throughout this process. It has been a true pleasure working with both of you. Finally, my thanks to Suzanne Gossett, who has been both a mentor and a friend, and has held me to a standard that has made me a better writer and a better scholar. She has, by her own example, given me a model for the kind of professional I want to be.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</th>
<th>iii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER ONE: “NEED MAKE MANY POETS”: SETTINGS FOR THE EMERGENCE OF THE PROFESSION OF PLAYWRIGHT</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study: Greene’s Groatsworth of Wit</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER TWO: FORMS OF AFFILIATION</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attached Dramatists</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Professionals</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literary Dramatists</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentleman Authors</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER THREE: AUTHORIAL INTERACTIONS IN THE BOOK OF SIR THOMAS MORE</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Munday and the Date of the Original Text</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Munday and Catholicism</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dangerous Topicality in the Original Text</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chettle and the Date of the Original Text</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tilney’s Encounter with the Manuscript</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Revision, 1603/4</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FOUR: “DO NOT ASSUME MY LIKENESS”: MIDDLETON, COLLABORATION, AND THE DIFFERENCE DIFFERENCE MAKES</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FIVE: “WITHOUT THE PROTESTATION OF A SERVICE”: THE PLACE OF THE GENTLEMAN AUTHORS IN THE COMMUNITY OF PLAYWRIGHTS</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORKS CITED</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Forms of Affiliation, 1580-1625  
77
INTRODUCTION

The theatre is your poets' Royal Exchange, upon which their muses, that are now turned to merchants, meeting, barter away that light commodity of words for a lighter ware than words—plaudities, and the breath of the great beast; which, like the threatenings of two cowards, vanish all into air. Players are their factors, who put away the stuff, and make the best of it they possibly can, as indeed 'tis their parts so to do. Your gallant, your courtier, and your captain had wont to be the soundest paymasters, and, I think, are still the surest chapmen: and these, by means that their heads are well stocked, deal upon this comical freight by the gross; when your groundling and gallery-commoner buys his sport by the penny, and, like a haggler, is glad to utter it again by retailing. (59)

The above passage is taken from Thomas Dekker's 1609 pamphlet, *The Gull's Hornbook*, and provides telling insight into the nature of the playwriting profession in the early seventeenth century. What is described is a world of commerce wherein the poets of the theater produce words that are sold by their muses for the cheap applause of the multitude. Two things are made apparent in Dekker's first sentence: one is that the poets seem to have very little control over the marketing of the "wares" they produce (it is not they, but their muses who act as the merchants, so the poets are not even in control of the sale of the words). The other is that the theater provides a "Royal Exchange" wherein playmaking is an inherently collaborative endeavor. The muses are "meeting" in the marketplace in order to "barter away the light commodity of words." However, it is not each other with whom they are bartering, but with the source of the even lighter "plaudities, and the breath of the great beast," or popular opinion. In other words, the poets' muses collaborate with one another to increase sales, while at the same time
working individually to sell their particular commodity. This collaboration is joined by the actors who are the “factors.” A “factor” is defined by the *OED* as either “One who makes or does (anything); a doer, maker, performer, perpetrator; an author of a literary work” (n. 1.1) or “One who buys or sells for another person; a mercantile agent” (n. 4a). Players “put away the stuff, and make the best of it they possibly can,” so they acting as agents for the selling of the wares, but also contribute to their marketability by “making the best of [them],” since they are in charge of the commodity's final presentation (at least in performance). While this description takes control of the selling of the wares away from the playwrights, the final lines of the passage reveal that some of these products have what we might call immense resale value. In the end, the poets' words, when they leave an impression on their auditor, are stored in memory and repeated to other, more private, audiences. Therefore, a poet whose lines are often remembered and favored by audience members is far more likely to thrive in the “poets' Royal Exchange.”

Dekker's “poets' Royal Exchange” is the product of the emergence and stabilization of playwriting as a commercial profession in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. To understand how this process of professionalization occurred, we must begin by looking at how the profession became necessary—because professions only form when there is a demand for them. It will be useful to take a moment here at the outset to define the terms “profession” and “professional,” since they are key concepts and bear specific and significant meaning in this project. Informed by the work of sociologists Andrew Abbott and Magali Larson,1 Kirk Melnikoff and Edward Gieskes

---

provide a useful definition of these terms:

A profession is an occupation which depends on the deployment of a particular kind of knowledge—of cultural capital—and can, therefore be defined by its always unstable control over a specific area of intellectual labor. This control depends on the existence of a market for the professional's products [...] and that professional's awareness of the norms of that market. The boundaries of a profession develop out of conflict—conflict between producers and consumers and [...] between groups of producers. Professions and their practitioners are thus social products, and to label a figure a 'professional' is to assert that that figure occupies a particular position—a position characterized by a degree of self-awareness and control—in a more or less well-developed area of work. (13)

In these terms, a profession forms out of the necessity created by “the existence of a market.” For the profession of playwright, the market emerged out of the newly settled repertory system characteristic of London theater companies by the early 1590s. The “cultural capital” under disputed control was, of course, the plays themselves, the poets' “wares.” In order to gain control over this “intellectual labor” in its relatively new, commercialized form, playwrights provided a variety of options for their audiences—the “consumers”—hoping that their particular brand of dramatic composition would gain support and increase its own demand in the marketplace. The willingness to attempt innovation in dramatic form and style was thus an important aspect of the professionalization of a writer for the commercial stage.

To be considered a professional, a playwright needed “to occupy a particular position” of power or influence that was recognized by others. Stylistic innovation provided a means for this individuation, and many authors sought to be “known for” certain abilities and tendencies. Christopher Marlowe is one example of an early and

respect” (13 n.51), the “this” being the basic definition of a profession and its practitioners provided here.
active innovator in the theater, and his influence is clearly seen in the works of his contemporaries. But a professional (individual) can only exist within a profession (community), and so group interest had to be acknowledged to some degree in order for playwriting to coalesce into a profession. This concession seems to have come more easily to some playwrights than it did to others: Ben Jonson, for one, was selective about whom he would publicly affiliate himself with, and all playwrights were certainly not created equal in his eyes. He also had very different ideas about the purpose and function of dramatic writing than did many of the other playwrights working in his time, and those differences affected the way in which he engaged with the playwriting profession. The disparate objectives and opinions of the individual playwrights often created contention between individuals and between individual interests and the interests of the profession. To varying degrees, playwrights strove for the more or less contradictory goals of self-promotion and of validation of the profession at large. This paradox is the center point of my project.

Becoming a professional also required “self-awareness and control,” and so an author had to accept, and assert, his own place within his profession. Some playwrights had a great deal of trouble accepting their professional status, not wanting to be associated with a “trade” or refusing to think of their plays as commodities rather than works of art or personal expressions, and their resistance to such identification created even more conflict over professional boundaries. Others were less focused on asserting themselves as identifiable individuals within their community, often because their chief concern was to make money, and the best way to do that was to rely on what had already proven successful and to produce as many plays as possible in quick succession. These
widely varied levels of investment in or resistance to professionalization led to the “conflict between groups of producers” by which “the boundaries of a profession” are developed. The struggle to identify boundaries was, in this case, especially difficult because the playwriting practitioners were often unable to agree upon the “norms of [the] market” since this “area of work” was by no means “well developed,” particularly in the very formative years of the early 1590s.

One important example of “group interest” that needed to be served, especially in the early years of the profession's development, was the considerable demand for plays in quick succession. The repertory system of London's new commercial theater, where companies were performing six days a week and were thus in almost constant need of new material, is probably one of the reasons that professional playwrights began to collaborate regularly, and collaboration quickly became a definitive professional activity for early modern dramatists (though reasons for joint work were multiform). Collaboration was frequently used as a means to increase productivity, adding to the liveliness and variety of the market for consumers. However, while nearly every playwright working in the period 1580-1625 contributed to some degree to multi-authored texts, each author had very different habits, and very different ambitions for himself and for his texts, and so the purpose of collaboration was by no means always to serve the communal interests of the professional group. One of the dominant images, created by modern scholars, of collaboration in the period is that of “Henslowe's hacks,” or that entrepreneur's “stable” of dramatists, which is not at all a flattering depiction of multiple-authorship as a practice. It is true that Henslowe employed many authors, including Munday, Chettle, Jonson, Drayton, Middleton, Marston, and Dekker, and that
they worked together in pairs, trios, quartets or more to write plays for the Admiral's Men. Yet, to lump these individuals, and the works they produced, together with no acknowledgment of their individuality or their potential reasons for affiliation with Henslowe's primarily collaborative world is to miss completely what we might learn from studying contribution to multi-authored texts as an aspect of the professional identities of these playwrights. And to treat Henslowe's documentation of the activities of the authors who wrote for Admiral's as a special case is to ignore the fact that it is the *only* case of such thorough documentation of playwriting in the period.

The playwrights who worked for Henslowe, briefly or regularly, came from sometimes drastically dissimilar backgrounds—the sons of gentlemen, livery company Freemen, judges, and tradesmen—and those backgrounds affected their ideas about professions and professional status. Despite their differences, these playwrights, and many others who did not work for Henslowe, collaborated with one another on plays for the early modern stage. Because they are the products of joint effort by men who did not always agree about the purpose of their work (or “art,” as some saw it), collaborative texts give us special insight into the development of the profession of dramatist. By treating each collaborative text individually, with attention to how it was created, by whom, and for what purpose(s), it is possible to uncover a more specific, and more accurate, depiction of authorial interaction in the period than we gain by accepting the overgeneralized understanding of collaboration as the work of untalented or opportunistic “hacks.” This is done in an effort not just to understand better the many forms of collaboration that took place in the early modern theater, but also to learn more about the dynamics of the professional community of dramatists working therein. Through
analysis of the collaborative process and the contributions of particular authors, we can see the playwrights' various efforts to negotiate the paradoxical needs for self and group promotion that characterized their role(s) as professionals.

In order to draw conclusions about the interpersonal and professional dynamics of early modern London's playwriting community, I explore authorial attitudes and ideas about the role of their profession and their own place within it. While no two authors had identical opinions, many shared similar perspectives. Through careful consideration of each playwright's professional activities both within and outside the theater, it is possible to identify four “forms of affiliation” for the twenty-nine dramatists that can be considered “professionals” working in the period 1580-1625. The purpose of distinguishing these categories is both to facilitate and clarify discussions of early modern playwrights as a professional community, and to highlight the contention (mentioned above) that existed between groups and also between members of the same group. Of particular interest is how playwrights with different affiliations worked together on multi-authored texts, since it was often the case that collaboration took place across these professional categories. Each author and occasion being different, joint effort between authors from different groups could be characterized by anything from a sustained, amicable partnership to utilitarian effort with personal disinterest, to open scorn for one another. But in each case of co-authorship, a playwright's “form of affiliation” to the profession provides a useful tool for understanding the nature of his contributions to the text, and to the collaborative process that created it.

Given G.E. Bentley's now familiar conclusion that as many as half of the plays written in this period are the product of more than one authorial hand, and that nearly
two-thirds of the 282 plays mentioned in the diary of the theatrical entrepreneur Philip Henslowe are products of multiple-authorship (199), it is imperative to accept collaborative writing as a defining characteristic of the authorial community. This is not to say that collaborators necessarily worked closely together, or liked one another, but the simple fact is that they had in common a text or texts to which they contributed. It is in the variety of kinds of multiple-authorship, the many ways in which authors contributed to texts, that we can most clearly see how each author's unique background and perspective affected his attitude about and goals for the profession of playwright. Because multiple-authorship is such a crucial aspect of playwright interactions, it is necessary not only to closely investigate the specific circumstances surrounding the composition of collaborative texts, but also to broaden and delineate the critical vocabulary used to describe authorial actions in a collaborative context. To this end, I carefully define and distinguish between terms like “adaptation,” “revision,” “addition,” “close collaboration,” “removed collaboration,” and “multiple authorship” in order to highlight the meaningful differences between these kinds of authorial activity.

Thus far, the study of multi-authored early modern dramatic texts has been most fruitful in the field of attribution studies led by David Lake, Cyrus Hoy, and MacDonald P. Jackson. This field of literary study focuses on determining authorial contributions through the use of linguistic tests; put simply, the goal is to determine who wrote what.  

While attribution studies is an often contested and constantly developing field, it has proven invaluable as a foundation upon which studies of multiple authorship may build. The development and increasing use of programs like KEMP E and LION, which allow users to perform linguistic “tests” of their own through word and phrase searches with potentially detailed specifications, show one direction attribution studies is headed, and it is one that will only strengthen the field by making it better understood and more useful to a broader audience. Computer software will no doubt become more sophisticated as the field evolves, and conclusions that are here held to be “proven” with little doubt may come in to question, but that seems to be inevitable, the growing pains of scholarship of all kinds,
It is possible to expand from this ever-growing body of work to investigate why and how an author wrote what he did by considering the individual background and goals of each playwright for his text as well as for his profession. This will show that common criticisms of collaborative plays—that they are inconsistent, choppy, and underdeveloped—are rather reflections of authorial unwillingness to sacrifice individual style for the sake of continuity. I consider the stylistic and narrative “seams” in these works not as shortcomings, but as evidence of the operation of disparate authorial interests and goals. Sometimes authors’ “patches,” as Tiffany Stern has termed them, reflect what members of the playwriting profession believed to be marketable to an audience comprised of members with backgrounds and opinions as widely disparate as those belonging to the playwrights themselves. However, while marketability was a central concern for playwrights seeking to earn a living as playwrights, some authors were less willing to “aim to please” their audience, and instead asserted themselves as authoritative instructors or detached “dabblers.” Superciliousness and detachment might create “seams” when one author would refuse openly to consider marketability, or to submit his “art” to the intrusion of other hands, whether he could, in reality, afford such vanity or not. The reasons that “seams” appear are multiform, but rather than label and dismiss them as unfortunate defects, here they are investigated as defining characteristics of the nature of multiple-authorship in the period.

Modern critical opinion too often assumes that the success of a collaborative play is determined on a spectrum that posits unity as the ideal and condemns dissonance as indication of a flawed or inferior text. In Shakespeare: Co-Author, Brian Vickers and should not devalue the usefulness of this particular area of literary study.
comments that “Unity is indeed a rare commodity in co-authored plays” (29), but does not explain what he means by “unity” and takes for granted that whatever “unity” is, it is a universally desired and desirable “commodity.” On the other hand, Alexander Leggatt argues that an early modern audience expected “not a carefully crafted total experience, but a series of favorite ingredients” (305), which is much more in keeping with the theatrical environment described by Dekker above. Tiffany Stern has concluded that “playwrights of the early modern period were frequently known as 'play-patchers' because of the common perception that a play was pieced together out of a collection of odds and ends” (1). Of course, this “perception” was not always the truth, and as Stern points out, the term “play-patcher” was “unflattering and designed to wound” (ibid.). But, particularly for highly prolific collaborators like Dekker, “patching” together a play that was contributed to by four or five different dramatists was by no means a rare endeavor.

The syndicate-style writing characteristic of the bulk of the plays that appear in Henslowe's Diary shows that, although some looked down upon “play-patching,” it was clearly a successful method of production to which audiences responded positively, since the Admiral's Men who performed the plays documented by Henslowe were one of the leading companies in the theater industry. “Unity,” then, does not seem to have been such an exceptionally valuable commodity at all.

Chapman, Jonson, and Marston's *Eastward Ho!* stands out from other collaborative works because it is, indeed, often praised for its “unity,” which can be taken to mean a coherence wherein no author's particular style is evident. It is written in a style that is considered ideal by many scholars because it is entirely effacing of the individual author. According to Heather Anne Hirschfeld, “the play is a seamless blend of
references and allusions that perform an apotropaic function: the authors fill their work
with others' language in order to prevent the loss of their own” (44). In this view, the
authors are abandoning their own styles in order to guard them from cross-contamination.
However, I argue that while the close and involved collaboration that resulted in this play
accounts for its "seamlessness," the authors did not necessarily posit "seamlessness" as
the purpose of the close collaboration. Marston and Jonson spent more of their lives
being enemies than co-workers, so to assume any common "goals" for this text aside
from that of speedy composition is to ignore the almost certain mistrust and distaste these
authors had for one another. In other words, it is much more likely that they worked
together and revised each other's work in a climate of competition for control that is
directly related to each author's perspective about drama and dramatic authorship.

Biographical details are integral to this project because playwriting in the period is
most accurately understood as a community practice wherein the very liveliness, and
livelihood, of the profession depended on differences in taste and opinion that derived
from the perspectives playwrights gained through their personal backgrounds and
experiences. Because collaboration requires some level of interaction, though it could be
miniscule or intensive, there is some need to enter into speculation when assessing an
author's “personality,” or the way he seems to have engaged in personal and professional
relationships. It has become commonplace to accept that John Marston was a
quarrelsome fellow, that Ben Jonson was haughty and self-important, and that “gentle
Shakespeare” was (we would like to think) none of the above. But even in the case of the
famous friendship between Beaumont and Fletcher, the primary evidence of their
closeness comes from sources that were written years after the deaths of both. All of
these assumptions about the characters and relationships of early modern playwrights are supported as best they can be when the subjects under scrutiny are presented to us through four hundred years of often imaginative interpretation. I have made every effort to avoid the possible dangers of biographical interpretation by acknowledging potential contradictions when they occur and by relying first and foremost on historical evidence. Yet, speculation is a useful tool for broadening the critical lens, though it should be wielded with care and full disclosure.

The focus on collaboration as a common activity undertaken by virtually all playwrights in the period is supported by recent scholars such as Hirschfeld, Vickers, and Jeffrey Masten, and while their conclusions vary widely, this expanding critical interest helps to move the study of early modern drama out of the shadow of the single author. Older concepts of the author seem to have one thing in common: solitude. Barthes and Foucault would have him or her alone, separate from the text, because to consider authorial intention is to limit a text's potential meaning. W.W. Greg and Fredson Bowers imagine the critic or editor's primary responsibility to be to recover the intentions of the author, as if to “tune out” all other influences and hear the author's authoritative voice in a vacuum. More recently, perhaps springing from the (quite different) movements of Jerome McGann and G. Thomas Tanselle, the role of the author has been reconsidered, and it is one characterized by anything but solitude. The author has become a collaborator whose voice is but one of many speaking from the lines of a text. The space between a “text” and the “work” is, in theories supported by Ralph G. Williams, Gary Taylor, Leah Marcus, and others, filled with authorial intentions; but also with editorial intentions, printing house practices, actors' memories, and other forces that might have had influence
over the presentation of a text throughout the work's lifetime. These theories are most often concerned with how other interlocutors (editors, printers, collaborators) complicate our understanding of the relationship between the author and the text. I enter into this critical conversation by presenting another crucial element in the relationship between author(s) and text: the profession of dramatist itself, and the paradoxical impulses toward self-promotion and group legitimation that affected, to varying degrees, all members of the professional community of playwrights, both in their endeavors as single-authors and as contributors to multi-authored texts.

My first chapter examines how and why the profession of playwright emerged in the final decades of the sixteenth century in order to open a discussion of the many ways authors began to confront the benefits and problems that arose in the process of professionalization. Rather than insisting on specific, key dates and events as definitive moments of change, I provide a history of movements, of periods wherein a collection of events and changes came together to create an empty space to be filled by the emerging professional community of playwrights. Some of these changes include the building of permanent playhouses and the consequent settled repertory system that created a demand for a wide variety of plays in a short period of time, the retirement or death of the "University Wits" who had been responsible for the bulk of playwriting until the early 1590s, and the appearance of the new crop of writers from vastly disparate backgrounds who seized the opportunity to take—and expand from—their place. Using the words of the playwrights themselves, I show how authors navigated the unfamiliar territory of their developing profession, working at times with, and at times against, one another. As an example of the commodification of authorial/stylistic identity, I end the chapter with a
"case study" in which I reexamine the authorship of the 1592 pamphlet *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit* in order to show how Henry Chettle took advantage of Robert Greene's fame and used his name and well-known authorial style to create scandal and boost book sales.

In Chapter Two, "Forms of Affiliation," I analyze the careers of twenty-nine professional dramatists working in the years 1580-1625. Based on their involvement in authorial activities (writing of non-dramatic prose or verse, pageants, masques, Lord Mayor's shows), and professional relationships (attachment to companies, patrons, civic or court appointments), I separate the dramatists into four categories: Attached Dramatists, Commercial Professionals, Literary Dramatists, and Gentleman Authors. The data is conveniently presented in a spreadsheet that makes easily graspable the different life and professional trajectories of the authors in each category. While acknowledging that many dramatists occupied different positions at certain points in their careers, I describe the activities and attitudes toward playwriting generally characteristic of the members of each “form.” The purpose of this chapter is to show that the dramatists of each category had different goals and expectations for themselves and for their profession, which manifest themselves in assertions of individual style and content within the plays on which they collaborated. To illustrate this point, I discuss the controversial play *Eastward Ho!* as an example of the ways in which authors used collaboration to achieve their individual purposes even when working together. I also argue that the "Poet's War" of 1599-1601 can be better understood when we consider each author's "form of affiliation" to his profession as the perspective from which he engaged in this heated, public debate about the purpose and function of dramatic writing and authorship.
To demonstrate how complex the relationship between different authorial positions and their part(s) in a collaboration could be, in Chapter Three, I examine the circumstances surrounding the composition of *The Book of Sir Thomas More*. As a collaboration then revised in a collaborative effort, this play's complicated authorship requires a discussion of two points in time, revealing that a play's content can be subject to changing tastes and trends in the theater. While the majority of attention to this play has been given to the passages attributed to Shakespeare, my primary focus is the initial collaboration between Anthony Munday and Henry Chettle. Insight into their long time friendship and professional association provides a new entry into the long-standing debate surrounding the dating of the play's Original Text. The later revisions and additions by Dekker, Heywood, and Shakespeare require separate consideration as examples of differing conceptualizations of the play and its potential audience. The manuscript of *The Book of Sir Thomas More* is the product of five authors with differing backgrounds and relationships within and outside the theater, but it also reflects the theatrical authority of the playhouse scribe, and the political authority of the Master of the Revels. Those involved did not all share the same goals, and they contributed to the text with different levels of awareness of its overall shape and content. The complicated and varied actions of the “hands” involved in the composition of *More* are considered individually in order to highlight the innumerable kinds of “collaboration” that took place in the early modern theater.

While Chapter Three examines the circumstances of a particular text's creation, Chapter Four focuses on the career and collaborative activities of a particular author: Thomas Middleton. Middleton's long and productive career both within and outside the
commercial theater industry raises questions about his position within the profession of
dramatist, a position that frequently shifted throughout his career. The impact of that
shift can be seen in his collaborative activities, which changed depending upon his co-
author(s) and his professional goals at the time he was contributing to each particular
text. I examine his long-time associations with Thomas Dekker and William Rowley,
studying the attribution, stage production, and publication of the plays, *The Patient Man
and the Honest Whore* and *A Fair Quarrel*, respectively, to determine the goals of each
individual author for the text. I read their contributions as indications of the playwright's
personal interest and ambitions for his play, even as the collaborators are working
together, often closely, to create a single, successful dramatic work. Middleton seems to
have preferred long term and friendly associations with his co-authors, making his one
time work with Shakespeare on *Timon of Athens* a point in his career worthy of more
thorough consideration. I discuss Middleton's possible motivations for this mid-career
collaboration, moving discussion of this play away from the potentially faulty assumption
that Shakespeare “chose” Middleton as co-author, or even that they spent any time
working together on the play at all.

Finally, Chapter Five examines the activities of what I have termed the
“Gentlemen Authors”: Francis Beaumont, John Marston, and John Ford in order to show
how this “form of affiliation,” as a group, impacted the form of drama and the role of the
dramatist in the period. These authors entered the theater with awareness that they were
different from most of the members of the playwriting community. With the exception of
John Webster and Thomas Lodge, Beaumont, Marston, and Ford are the only professional
playwrights in the period 1580-1625 to hold membership at the Inns of Court. Beaumont
and Marston had short but productive careers in the theater, then left to pursue very different lifestyles, and Ford had a significant professional life in the Middle Temple before he turned to writing plays. The often radical choices in content and style made by these three reflect the desire to affect the common understanding of and expectations for dramatic works. They show a shared willingness and perhaps even propensity to test boundaries and arrogantly flout convention, and the ability to do so was certainly facilitated by their relatively privileged social positions and family ties. They are by no means the only individuals to challenge convention as playwrights, but they arguably do so most forcefully and with least consideration for consequence, especially in their single-authored works. However, as collaborators, the Gentleman Authors act differently and seem to avoid easy identification. I argue that this is because they do not have the same dependence on playwriting as a lifelong profession as authors from other groups do, but are rather temporary members of the profession who could rest on the certainty of other, more prestigious options outside the theater. Therefore, while they did make significant contributions to the content and form of the corpus of early modern dramatic texts, it was often in spite of their own efforts to maintain a fiction of “amateur status” in relation to the playwriting profession.
CHAPTER ONE

“NEED MAKE MANY POETS”

SETTINGS FOR THE EMERGENCE OF THE PROFESSION OF PLAYWRIGHT

The focus of this chapter is origins, but origins in the theatrical community of early modern London are notoriously difficult to pin down. By that time, the secularization of drama had been taking place in England for centuries, moving the form away from its liturgical roots. But it was not until the end of the sixteenth century, with the establishment of permanent playhouses in London, that the demand for commercial drama became so great that it could only be satisfied by a group of men whose primary occupation was to create plays for public entertainment. To determine how this demand came about, rather than insisting on specific, key dates and events as definitive moments of change, I will provide a history of movements and of periods wherein a collection of events and changes came together to create an empty space to be filled by the emerging professional community of playwrights. Yet, that professional space was not filled immediately or without controversy. Therefore, using the words of the writers themselves, I will begin to show how authors navigated the unfamiliar territory of their developing profession. These authors worked at times with, and at times against, one another as they confronted the paradoxical needs for self-promotion and for group legitimation that characterized professional engagement with this new area of work in the growing world of London's theatrical community.
Because playwriting emerged as a profession that formed only part of the larger theater industry, it is necessary to consider the influences of those “outside” yet connected groups of professionals working in other capacities of theatrical production.

One of the factors that contributed to the commercial success of dramatic works on the early modern stage was the playing companies themselves. Recent work centered on the identification of individual repertories in early modern theater companies shows that, despite the heterogeneity of audience members in the period, certain companies were known for particular strengths and styles of literary material and performance, giving “the marketplace” of London's commercial theater, in Roslyn Lander Knutson's terms, “a variety and vitality that profited every organization” (11). Competition among the companies was not based on vicious quarrels between jealous rivals, but rather the result of the fact that “commerce among the playing companies was built on patterns of fraternity, the roots of which were feudal hierarchies such as kinship, service, and the guild” (10). Though the companies decided which plays to perform or to solicit from writers, the power to control the style of the writing, and thus to some extent the style of the company, was largely in the hands of the authors themselves who provided the resource of plays from which the company could choose. In other words, authors had to be aware of what manner of style and content would sell to the company, and this would be based on the company's chosen identity and desired audience. In order to thrive, both

---

1 See Roslyn Lander Knutson, *The Repertory of Shakespeare's Company, 1594-1613*, and Lucy Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels: a Jacobean Theatre Repertory* as examples of the the way repertories reflect a company’s unique identity. Andrew Gurr argues that the idea of individual company style did not develop until later, that “the two or three adult companies that first established themselves with a base in London in the 1590s appealed equally to the entire spectrum of London's population. By contrast, the five companies of the 1630s divided their attentions, aiming at different social levels and appetites” (10). However, it is possible to read the repertories of the early companies as test sites of audience response, the moment of definition wherein the companies were still at work identifying the style that would best suit them in the pursuit of optimum financial gain.
company and author needed to be able to understand as well as anticipate “the marketplace” to which Knutson refers. In the early years of the commercial theater, particularly the 1580s and early 1590s, the need for “anticipation” was particularly strong, since the newness of the marketplace meant that it was as yet undefined, and so companies and authors alike were negotiating the boundaries of a territory wherein their survival depended upon the staking of a claim over a particular part.

Other members of the theater industry were influential as well—the stylistic identity of a playing company was also contingent upon its actors. Companies thrived with the help of their “stars,” who could draw audiences simply based on their talents in performance. Playwrights frequently relied upon actors as well. Popular actors were often associated with specific roles, and authors responded to this popularity by writing parts with their intended actors in mind.\(^2\) Improvisation was not infrequent, and some playwrights clearly responded negatively to the alteration of their texts. However, they were also sometimes able to anticipate the actors' embellishment of a role and expect the additions made to a pre-existing character first imagined by the author, and so controlled contribution may have sometimes been welcome. In *Shakespeare in Parts*, Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern suggest that because he was “so intimately a member of the same team of men for his entire play-writing career,” Shakespeare was able to “[shape] each written part to a particular actor” (4), and it is likely that other writers, even if not

---

\(^2\) For example, Will Kempe is associated with a number of Shakespeare's roles, most notably Dogberry in *Much Ado About Nothing* and Peter in *Romeo and Juliet*, since his name appears in the printed text of both plays (Q and F of the former, and Q2 of the latter). Edward Alleyn embodied the roles of Marlowe's Tamburlaine, Faustus, and Barabas, as well as Robert Greene's Orlando. Less is known about the roles played by the earlier star Richard Tarlton; but given his immense fame and favor with the Queen, it is likely that writers saw a great opportunity in writing for him.
quite so closely affiliated with their actors, were able to do the same. Writing for the public theater required knowledge of the members that composed its community, along with awareness of the trends and tastes in audience response, even to the extent of being able to anticipate or shape them. Shakespeare's positions as actor, playwright, and eventual share-holder and attached dramatist within his company allowed him a particular intimacy with its members, an intimacy that would have looked obviously advantageous to certain other playwrights seeking consistent and economically stable careers in the theater. Discussing the multiple roles (both on and off the stage) occupied by the famous actor Edward Alleyn—his versatility similar to that of Shakespeare—Lene B. Petersen concludes that “if one wanted to be successful in the industry one had to be a Jack-of-all-Trades” (21). However, as we will see, success was measured in very different ways within the community of playwrights, and the close affiliation with a single company enjoyed by Shakespeare (who was first an actor) was not necessarily desirable to other professionals who better valued their autonomy and freedom to write

---

3 A focus on “parts” as the units with which a play is composed becomes problematic when thinking about collaborative efforts. Multi-authored plays were often organized from “plots” that were divvied up amongst the writers, commonly, though certainly not always, by Act and scene division. Furthermore, songs, speeches, prologues, epilogues, and other pieces could be inserted, deleted, and moved around by any number of hands. One “part” then, could be the responsibility of multiple authors who may or may not have been in communication with one another while writing. Palfrey and Stern acknowledge the frequency of collaboration as another reason for us to “conceive of [plays] as loose-leaf sheets, commissioned or swapped or shuffled with facile aplomb” (6), but collaboration is not the focus of their study, and so its multiform effects on the construction of “parts” has not yet been explored.

4 Tarlton, Kempe, and Alleyn found their fame in acting, but like Shakespeare, they all also involved themselves in company business, and to some extent, writing (Petersen cites Alleyn’s marginal contributions to the written “part” of Greene's Orlando as evidence that he “[wrote] something for the stage” [21]).

5 This distinction is important because actors had a specific need for affiliation with a particular company due to Queen Elizabeth's 1572 “Act for the Punishment of Vagabonds.” Without the protection provided by a company's patron's livery, players were subject to punishment as “sturdy beggars” under this Act.
for whomever they pleased.

All actors were of course not stars, and Palfrey and Stern also explain, “the fact that Shakespeare knew his actors so well meant that, as much as he wrote 'to' their identifiable skills or characteristics, he also wrote 'around' them” (5). An actor's shortcomings would be a liability to any dramatist who was not familiar enough with the company who would perform his play to be able to “write around” potential failures in performance. With this in mind, we can read the resentment apparent in Hamlet's advice to the players as a response to the varied levels of actors' talents: “let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them; for there be of them some that will themselves laugh to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too, though in the mean time some necessary question of the play be then to be considered” (3.2.34-8 emphasis added). The problem as Hamlet sees it is not all clowns, but those who interrupt their own character and the plot of the play in order to get cheap laughs from the ignorant members of the audience. This type of clown detracts from the effectiveness of the play and thus mars its potential to convey the work's intended meaning. Hamlet's familiarity with the actors is crucial here as well: they are the same “tragedians of the city” that Hamlet was “wont to take delight in” (2.2.315-16). Furthermore, that the player responds to Hamlet's criticisms of over-acting by saying, “I hope we have reformed that indifferently well with us, sir” (3.2.32-3) suggests that there are members of the troupe that Hamlet may have seen perform in such a manner (necessitating the “reform” the player mentions), or that there are perhaps new members of the company that Hamlet does not know, and thus does not feel confident in writing for. Given Hamlet's unique and specific intentions for the play to be performed at Elsinore, it makes
sense that he would insist upon strict adherence to the playtext in this case, but the broader understanding of the dependence of author upon actor carries implications outside the walls of the castle and into the theater in which the play is being performed. Perhaps the greatest benefit to being a “Jack-of-all-Trades” is the knowledge across professional boundaries that allows one to understand the inner and inter workings of the respective parts that make up the whole of the theater industry.

Despite the potential advantages of an intimate relationship like that of Shakespeare with his company, many, indeed most, other playwrights of the period did not spend their careers so embedded within one company. And given Bentley's estimation that a company's principal dramatist would be expected to produce an average of two plays a year (120-26), there would be significant need for other “freelance” dramatists, especially in the company's early years when it had not yet built up a sizable repertory. Some writers clearly preferred the independence that came with being unattached, which prevented the act of playwrighting from being subsumed under the theater companies’ larger professional structure. Thomas Heywood occupied an attached position with Worchester's/Queen Anne's Men early on; but, unlike Shakespeare, did not continue with that company through the end of his career. The reason for this is unknown, but it is likely that he left that company either due to a desire for autonomy, or because the company was simply not successful enough to keep an attached dramatist in their employ. The same shift of allegiance occurs in other playwrights' careers as well. In 1623, William Rowley left his longtime attachment to Prince Charles' Men in order to join the more prestigious King's Men as an actor. Despite his association with The King’s Men, in 1624, Rowley collaborated with Dekker, Ford and Webster on *Keep the Widow*.
Waking, a play intended for another theater (The Red Bull), perhaps because his skills as a dramatist were not being put to use in his new company. From these examples, one might conclude that, while it could provide a certain level of financial stability for some, employment as an attached dramatist was not necessarily the culmination of an author's career, unless, that is, one is the attached dramatist for The King's Men, London's leading playing company.

When playwriting is a means of financial security, the ability to work for multiple companies at once, and perhaps on multiple plays with multiple collaborators, might be more attractive than sole dependence on one company, particularly when the threat of theater closure was ever-loom- ing. Though The King's Men were repeatedly supplied with funds from their patron when the theaters were closed due to plague, there is no evidence of the same practice in other companies (Gurr Companies 366). This is the concern that led Richard Brome to break his contract with the actors and proprietors of the Salisbury Court theater made in 1635 and renewed in 1638. These contracts stipulated that Brome would supply the company with three plays a year and also that he would write exclusively for that company. Brome broke this contract, with the excuse, in Bentley's words, that “as the plague continued, his salary was not paid—at least in full—and that in his poverty and desperation, he went to William Beeston who lent him £6 on his agreement to write a play for Beeston's company at the Cockpit” (115). Independence from his company was thus a necessity for Brome, and given the repeated closures of the theater in the period, it is clear that an attached position within a company

---

6 Brome also did not achieve the rate of three plays a year expected of him, and had apparently expressed concern about this high rate of production from the beginning in 1635. He did, however, manage to produce an average of two plays a year, which is the usual rate Bentley suggests for attached dramatists (121).
did not always provide the stability necessary for one earning his living as a dramatist.

The autonomy of the author from a single company brought competitive vitality to the market for plays and fueled the struggle for control necessary for the establishment and expansion of the profession of playwright. On the other hand, the rapid expansion of London's theater industry in the late sixteenth century should not mislead us into imagining a boundless community with too many members to count. Andrew Gurr estimates that “there can never have been more than 200 people directly employed in the play-making business” (Companies 5) at one time, and authors would have made up only a small portion of that group. Gary Taylor tells us that “[w]e know the names of only twelve playwrights writing for the public theaters in the period between 1580 and 1595,” and “twenty-one of the sixty-one extant public theater plays written [in those years] remain anonymous; for all we know, each might have been written by a different author” (173). Even if this was the case, which seems unlikely, the total for this period is then thirty-three playwrights—by no means a group too large for its members to be aware of one another, or for the other members of the theater industry to know them. Furthermore, if those twenty-one plays were each written by a different author, then chances are those playwrights were not in pursuit of a writing career, and if they did hold positions within the theatrical community at all, it was probably in some capacity other than writing. Thus, although we are now unfortunately unable to identify many of the playwrights who were involved in the burgeoning professional theater, it would be misleading to assume anonymity for these figures in their own time, especially within the community itself.

The period Taylor describes, the years 1580 to 1595, encompasses a gradual but substantial change in the size and composition of the London theatrical community. It
was only four years earlier, in 1576, that James Burbage built the Theater in Shoreditch, establishing the first purpose-built public playhouse for Londoners; and, according to Edward Gieskes, “as a specifically professional practice, the writing of plays takes its modern form in the post-1576 world of London's theaters” (163). Prior to that, theatrical productions in the city had taken place primarily at court, in guildhalls, or, in the case of Midsummer Shows and Lord Mayor's Pageants, with the city itself as stage. Court productions were overseen by the Office of the Revels, but civic theater, including the Lord Mayor's Pageant, was the responsibility of the livery companies. Apparently, by 1573, commercial performances in the guildhalls were the source of some distress for company authorities, as evidenced by an entry found in the Merchant Taylor's court books in that year:

whereas at our common playes and suche lyke exercises which be commonly exposed to the seane for money ev'ry lewed persone thinketh hime selfe (for his penny) worthy of the cheif and moste comodious place withoute respecte of any other either for age or estimacion in the common weale which bringeth the youthe to such an impudent familiarity with their betters that often tymes greite comtempte of Masters, parents, and majestrates followth therof as experience of late in this our common hall hath sufficiently declared. (qtd. in McLuskie 55)

The obvious concern reflected in this statement is the subversion of the hierarchical structures that are integral to the livery company system. The nature of commercial theatrical productions—that they are “exposed to the seane for money”—causes “ev'ry

---

7 In *English Professional Theatre, 1530-1660*, Glynne Wickham, et. al. put forth the possibility that the now unnamed playhouse at Newington Butts predated Burbage's Theatre by a year (320). There is no concrete proof of this, but the documentary evidence provided certainly supports the possibility that Newington Butts was built in 1575. It is also true that one of the four London inns that were “made into playhouses but continued as inns” (295) (their dual purpose perhaps being the reason they were allowed to remain inside the city walls) predated the Theatre by at least a year. Apparently, “people were going to plays [at the Bel Savage] in 1575, if not several years earlier” (ibid.). However, these facts do not negate the accepted conclusion that the Theatre can be called the first “public, purpose-built playhouse,” since evidence of Newington Butts is inconclusive, and the Bel Savage was an inn before, during, and after its function as a playhouse.
lewed persone” to think that, because he paid his entrance fee, he is entitled to the “moste comodious place,” regardless of the presence of his elders and social superiors. Likewise, “the youthe” are prone to “impudent familiarity with their betters,” leading to “greite comtempte of Masters, parents, and majestrates,“ which, worst of all, carries over after the performance into daily experiences in the “common hall.” Complaints like this would be echoed ad nauseum in later criticisms of the professional theater, but there is certainly more at stake for the livery companies, whose function relies on the sort of hierarchy attendance at commercial performances threatens to ignore.

The changing place of theatrical performance in relation to the civic authorities—the establishment of independent commercial theaters outside the city walls—upset what had once been relatively untroubled relationships for men who had occupied places both within the theatrical community and as employees of London’s government. Anthony Munday, the actor/stationer’s apprentice/translator/spy/playwright/pageant maker (among other things), may have particularly felt the tensions of the shifting power structures around him. Before traveling to Rome in 1578 in order to report back on the English Jesuit College there, Munday had been an actor and, in 1576, was apprenticed to the stationer Thomas East. He also found favor with the Earl of Oxford in these years, and that individual patronage carried on and was also reshaped by the new system of playing company patronage that was largely replacing the relationships between individual authors and patrons. Upon his return from Rome in 1579, Munday “resumed dedicating to Lord Oxford” (Wright “Young” 155), and also went back to the theater, acting with the Earl of Oxford’s Men (Warwick’s men until Oxford took over in 1580) from 1579-84. He thus enjoyed Oxford’s patronage both personally and through his playing company
affiliation. However, in 1580, Munday published his *Second and Third Blast of Retreat from Plays and Theaters*, following the example of Stephen Gosson’s 1579 *School of Abuse*. Both condemn the theater as a site of artifice and corruption, and Munday calls for all authors to stop writing plays so that the theaters will have no choice but to close for want of material to perform: “that both the rude multitude, if not for feare of Gods displeasure, yet because they do heare nothing but what is stale will leave haunting of stinking plaies and also plaiers themselues forfeit their unlawful, ungodly, and abominable exercise, for lacke either of Autors, or of auditors” (A4v-A5r). This publication can certainly be considered opportunistic, since the pamphlet was published “with the arms of the corporation of London on the back of its title-page, suggesting sponsorship by the authorities who opposed the stage” (Pollard 63). The title page also proudly proclaims the pamphlet “Allowed by auctoritie,” but does not include Munday’s real name, he rather calls himself “Anglo-phile Eutheo.” However, as we will see, the authorship of *Second and Third Blast* was no secret, and Munday's inspiration for writing may have been as personal as it was political. According to a Catholic tract published in 1581, *A True Report of the Death of M. Campion*, Munday's reappearance as a player in 1579 was not successful—he was apparently hissed off the stage. The tract relates Munday's career as follows:

Munday was first a stage player, after an apprentice, which tyme he wel serued with deceauing of his master, then wandring towards Italy, by his owne report, became a cosener in his journey. Comming to Rome, in his

---

8 *The School of Abuse* was published in 1579 with Gosson’s full name on the title page and included a dedication to Sir Philip Sidney (which apparently prompted Sidney to write his *Apology for Poetry*). Munday may have avoided publicly attaching his name to *Second and Third Blast* based on his relationship to the Earl of Oxford, since, having taken over Warwick’s Men in 1580, Oxford certainly had an interest in the theater. Gosson, on the other hand, severed ties with the theater and had comparatively little to lose by his name appearing on a publication denouncing it.
short abode there, was charitably relieued, but neuer admitted in the seminary, as he pleseth to lye in the title of his booke, and being wery of well doing, returned home to his first vomit, and was hist from the stage for his folly. Being thereby discouraged, he set forth a balet against playes, tho’ (O constant youth) he afterwards began again to ruffle vpon the stage. (qtd. in Bliss 477 n.9)

Of course, the purpose of this description is to belittle and insult Munday, and so it cannot be considered an entirely trustworthy account of this enigmatic figure; however, Munday's relationship to the theater in the years following his return from Italy is inconstant at best. This ambivalence may have been a result of the changing place of the theater in relation to civic authority. The years in which he made his trip to Rome (1578-79) would have involved a great deal of change in the city of London's corporate attitude toward the theater, following so close upon the heels of the opening of the Theater, and perhaps also Newington Butts and Blackfriars in 1576 (Wickham, et. al. 388). The stage was moving from a stable space within the hierarchical model of livery companies and occasional performance under a system of direct patronage into a relatively unrestricted public milieu wherein the audience, in all its diversity, became the patron, making players and playwrights subject to the varied tastes of the public. Furthermore, Munday's patron, the Earl of Oxford, fell from the Queen's favor in 1580 after admitting to his own Catholicism: “[e]ntreating pardon for himself, he denounced as traitors his Catholic friends Lord Henry Howard (a cousin) and Charles Arundel. Instead of destroying these men, he made himself an object of suspicion” (Wright “Young” 156). Though Oxford was able, for a time at least, to regain favor with Elizabeth, it was no doubt unsettling for Munday to see his benevolent patron in danger, since he was both socially and economically dependent on that lord. Thus, Munday may have been in some sense
hedging his bets by taking up the cause of London’s civic authorities against the theater in light of his patron's perilous position at court, hoping to ally himself with a ship that was not sinking. And on a personal level, the socially ambitious Munday perhaps resented the need of an actor to please an audience from whom he could not garner social advancement; and if he was in fact the hiss-worthy actor of the Catholic tract's accusation, his frustration may have fueled the composition of the anti-theatrical pamphlet. Kathleen E. McLuskie suggests that “the wave of anti-theatrical commentary from the 1580s seems to have been particularly concerned with the shift from patronage to commerce and to have dealt with its seeming acceleration in terms which involved more than a sense of economic change” (54). This point becomes very clear in Munday’s case, who responded to the changes around him with invective that is economically opportunistic (if the city did in fact pay him for his troubles), but also reveals what seems to be genuine personal distaste for the independent operation and commercialization of the theater.

The conflict that existed between the civic authorities and the theater does not mean that the establishment of permanent playhouses severed the relationship between livery companies and theatrical productions. On the contrary, “[t]he close association of the livery companies with professional playwrights and theater craftsmen in the seventeenth century in what are among the single largest annual expenditures of the companies—the Shows—undermines the starkness of the traditionally perceived opposition between the City and the theater” (Gieskes 174). While livery companies continued to put on annual Shows and Lord Mayor’s Pageants, the establishment of the professional theater industry meant that control of theatrical entertainments largely left
the hands of the civic authorities and became the domain of the theater companies.

Gieskes notes a similar ceding of control made by the Revels Office:

Under a series of economic pressures (chief among them the increasing expense of the elaborate staging of masques and other scenically demanding entertainments), the Revels Office began relying increasingly on the professional acting companies for its performance schedule after about 1580—professional players become the dominant performers after 1583 with the establishment of the Queen's Men—and production records get more and more attenuated until they become mere abstracts by the middle of the 1590s. (184-5)

Just as the relative autonomy of authors from the structures of playing companies created a climate for the rapid and prolific writing of plays, the independence of the theater industry from civic and court authority necessitated its expansion into a marketplace of its own. In The Queen's Men and their Plays, Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean argue that “[i]t was during the decade of the 1580s that the repertory system took hold in the London playhouses. By 1592, when Henslowe's listing of plays begins, a full-fledged repertory was being rotated at the Rose, and programmes so vast do not happen suddenly or in isolation.” They go on to claim that “the 'watershed' years in the London drama were the early 1590s, roughly from 1590 to 1594, and a major development of that period was the establishment of the major companies in particular purpose-built playhouses, offering large-scale repertories” (6). Thus, the 1580s seem to be the years wherein the bulk of the change from unsettled touring companies with limited repertories (since the circumstances of touring required fewer plays, and even when they did perform in London, it was with a relatively low frequency so that they would not need substantial repertories) to settled companies offering performances of different plays six days a week.
While the need for plays significantly increased in light of the establishment of settled London companies, G.E. Bentley's calculations for the period 1590 to 1642, like Taylor's for the period 1580 to 1595, show that the professional authorial community was small but productive. Of the “1,200 plays written by assignable authors,” 265 were written by “about 200 amateur playwrights,” leaving “900-odd plays which provided most of the entertainment in the London theaters over a period of 52 years,” and this sizable body of texts was “provided by some 50-odd writers” (25). Within this small group of prolific writers, we must also remember that collaboration was frequent: “as many as half the plays by professional dramatists in the period incorporated the writing [. . . ] of more than one man” (199). That these authors formed a community, and one that must have been tightly knit and intensely collaborative, is undeniable. This community did not materialize out of nowhere, and there can be no credible “Big Bang” theory of the appearance of the profession of playwright. The first half of the 1590s—the five year overlap covered by both Taylor’s and Bentley’s calculations—is a noteworthy period of transition, since a number of the twelve playwrights identified by Taylor working in the period 1580 to 1595 were in fact dying or leaving the theater in those five years, making way for a new crop of dramatists just beginning their careers to follow both in and (often deliberately) out of their predecessor's footsteps.

Petersen marks another change in theatrical tradition in “the years leading up to the formation and stabilization of the Admiral's and Chamberlain's companies in 1594;” namely, that “the main effect of the dissolution of the older companies is the obliteration

---

9 Robert Greene, John Lyly, Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Kyd, and George Peele all parted with the theater in these years. Thomas Nashe did as well, with the exception of the scandalous *Isle of Dogs* (now lost) performed in 1597.
of old-fashioned subject matter in the grand Senecan verse style – the tragedies of blood and bombastic history plays supplied by the university crew” who she describes as either “opting or dying out” (24-5) in the early 1590s. It is this generational shift that allows for new forms of professionalization and professional affiliation to take shape within the expanding community of commercial playwrights. Although the shift from playwriting as the domain of the “University Wits” to that of the less often university educated and more often career oriented playwrights responsible for the bulk of plays written in McMillin and Maclean's “watershed years” is by no means drastic or easily pinpointed, there is still a marked difference between the London theater of the 1580s and that of the early 1590s. Thus, these years of transition, 1590 to 1595, are important for this study because they represent the site of opportunity in which playwrights were able to begin to establish and identify the nature of their own profession at a moment when London's commercial theater was taking hold as a significant presence in the city's entertainment industry.

The various perspectives from which these critics approach the changes taking place in the theater all have in common the early 1590s, which argues the need for a consideration of the establishment of the profession of playwright in the theatrical climate of these years. As I have already stated, there was by no means a consensus among writers of plays about what the “norms of the market” might be. Though the University Wits were largely at the end of their careers by this time, they certainly had opinions on the subject. While they earned a living from their writing, most of the Wits did not write plays only, or even primarily, and they did not seem to desire identification with
playwriting as a “profession,” as they would have considered it to be beneath them. Rather, for many of them, the writing of plays was a means to an end, a way to support one's self while pursuing other, more prestigious occupations (positions at court, the writing of entertainments, masques, poetry, and prose). Perhaps because their involvement in dramatic composition was fueled by ambitious self interest, or perhaps because the public theater was still in its formative stages when they were writing, and so the demand for numerous and rapidly produced plays was not as formidable as it would be for the next generation of dramatists, the University Wits were also seemingly less inclined to collaborate on plays, although the practice was by no means unheard of (Peele's contribution to *Titus Anronicus*, or Greene and Lodge’s *Looking Glasse for

---

10 The use of the category of “University Wits,” like many other groupings imposed by modern critics, can lead to oversimplification of the differences between these authors. Marlowe's place in this group is particularly deserving of investigation, since he thrived in the theater, and perhaps even preferred to pursue a career there, rather than seeking to make connections and further himself through his work as a spy for the Queen's Council. Another question that must be considered is whether these authors imagined themselves to be a “group” composed of men with similar backgrounds, goals, and interests. Greene certainly did not feel any camaraderie with Marlowe, attacking him repeatedly in prose works (Honan 184-5). However, regardless of their personal feelings about one another, this group of authors is connected by their university background in the same way that later authors might be connected by their lack of university education and social status; therefore, I employ the term “University Wits,” but proceed with caution.

11 Certainly, to be identified with any form of what we would today call “creative writing” was in and of itself undesirable—a fact that provided the reason for Sir Philip Sidney's *Apology for Poetry*, printed in 1595 after the author’s death (though probably written in 1579). Sidney begins by describing himself as one “who (I know not by what mischance) in these my not oldest years and idlest times having slipped into the title of a poet,” feels the needs to defend “that my unelected vocation” (95). He describes poetry as educational and edifying, “the first light-giver to ignorance” (96), and a moral and social necessity upon which civilization and learning has been built. Thus, he connects poetry with power and classical forms of learning, an association the University Wits would have found desirable, since they strove to employ their creative powers in the service of gaining social and political power. This description of the function of poetry is much more difficult to reconcile with the comparatively “base” goals of the professional playwrights who penned plays for commercial gain and public entertainment (it is not that the Wits did not also do this, but rather that they did not want to be labeled as doing this). Sidney goes on to declaim “[o]ur Tragedies and Comedies (not without cause cried out against), observing rules neither of honest civility nor of skillful Poetry, excepting *Gorboduc*, [. . .] as it is so full of stately speeches and well-sounding phrases, [. . .] and as full of notable morality, which it doth most delightfully teach, and so obtain the very end of Poesy, yet in truth it is very defectious in the circumstances, which grieveth me, because it might not remain as an exact model of all Tragedies” (133-4). In works of drama, *Gorboduc* is the exception, and Sidney has no hope that future plays will “obtain the end of Poesy,” because they will not, and do not, follow this one admirable example. .
The aspiration that characterized many of the Wits is apparent in the career of John Lyly, who ardently pursued the position of Master of the Revels, a preferment he was never granted. His involvement with the theater began when he took control of the first Blackfriars theater in 1583, and he wrote a number of prose comedies for the boy companies throughout the 1580s, penning only one play in verse—and this, *The Woman in the Moone*, not until the early 1590s. He became famous for pioneering the Euphuistic style that influenced a number of his contemporaries and successors. Despite his early commercial success, Lyly's desire for advancement at court was never realized, and his career drops into obscurity in the 1590s. Another disgruntled Wit, Robert Greene, in his 1588 pamphlet *Perimedes the Blacke-Smith*, insists that the value of prose writing is higher than that of dramatic blank verse. In the prefatory letter "To the Gentlemen readers," he gives the following defensive explanation for his preference for prose:

*I keepe my old course, to palter vp something in Prose, vsing mine old poesie still, omne tulit punctum, although latelye two Gentlemen Poets [. . .] had it in derision, for that I could not make my verses iet vpon the stage in tragicall buskins, euerie worde filling the mouth like the faburden of Bo-Bell, daring God out of heauen with that Athi est Tamburlan, or blaspheming with the mad preest of the sonne: but let me rather openly pocket vp the Asse at Diogenes hand: then wantonlye set out such impious instances of intollerable poetrie, such mad and scoffing poets, that haue propheticall spirits as bred of Merlins race, if there be anye in England that set the end of scollarisme in an English blanck verse, I thinke either it is the humor of a nouice that tickles them with selfe-love, or to much frequenting of the hot house [. . .] hath swet out all the greatest part of thier wits, (3-4)*

Melnikoff and Gieskes describe this passage as "clear witness to Greene's tense familiarity with London's burgeoning professional stage" (1), and Ronald A. Tumelson II remarks that "[a]t issue is the public fact of [Greene's] artistic failure vis á vis the public
fact of the artistic success of fellow university graduates, notably Marlowe” (105).

"Artistic" failure should here be taken to mean "commercial" failure, though these were not at all interchangeable terms for many playwrights in the period. Greene's anger is thought to be in response to the failure of his *Comical History of Alphonsus, King of Aragon* (1587), but despite its personal nature, the language Greene uses in this defense is telling of his resistance to the larger issue of changing stylistic trends in playwriting, not just in the work of his fellow university graduates, but in that of all those writing for the stage. Perhaps his anger is so fiercely focused on Marlowe here because the commercially successful author of *Tamburlaine* looks like a traitor to anyone clinging to older styles of dramatic writing. Greene's concern that any might find "the end of scollarisme in an English blank verse" sounds like the resentment of an older generation to the inventions of the new. Some of the Wits, especially Marlowe, were as responsible for the stylistic changes as anyone, but clearly Greene was not on board. As Alan C. Dessen admits, "[n]o one [. . .] would deny that something changed in the mid-to-late 1580s with the appearance of *1 Tamburlaine* and *The Spanish Tragedy*, two items that irrevocably shifted the paradigm. In this watershed period that lasted through the early 1590s [. . .], fresh materials and experiments abound" (Dessen 26). The innovation Dessen describes is clear evidence of the fact that, by the latter 1580s, individual style is being asserted with unprecedented force from a variety of authorial hands. The settled repertory system does not just require a new abundance of plays, but also a spectrum of styles by which playwrights could make a name for themselves and secure their position

---

12 It is also worth noting that the new generation of authors that Greene appears to resent were more often working toward "ends" other than "scollarisme," which only serves to make Greene sound even more out of touch.
as leading professionals within the community of writers.

Greene was only thirty years old at the time he wrote *Perimedes*, six years Marlowe's senior and in fact the same age as Kyd, but his inability to successfully adapt to the times makes him the voice of an aged and dying orthodoxy. The problem for Greene is not necessarily that plays are being written, but that they are being written in a style on which he is not able to capitalize. In protest, it seems, he reverts back to prose, a form in which he had been and would continue to be extremely successful until his death. However, despite his proclaimed distate for the popular conventions of the professional theater, perhaps unwilling to let such a lucrative market go unattempted, Greene would try to "make [his] verses iet vpon the stage" at least four more times before his death in 1592. Marlowe and Kyd were clearly better able to adapt to changes in the theatrical climate, and some of these changes in popular dramatic style can be attributed to their innovative and original pens. Their unfortunate deaths in 1593 and 1594 respectively cut short any further contribution to the establishment of the playwriting profession. It is likely that Marlowe in particular would have been a frontrunner in defining the "norms" of the profession, his influence is apparent already, and one can only imagine how much stronger it would have been had he lived longer and continued to write plays.

Despite the “fresh materials and experiments” being tried by authors in the early 1590s, the attitude of the more conservative University Wits continued for some, particularly Ben Jonson, who began writing plays for the boy companies in the late 1590s.

---

13 According to D. Allen Carrol, “anything with [Greene's] name on it was certain to sell” (12), which is confirmed in a letter written by Gabriel Harvey just after Greene's death: “the Countesse of Pembrookes Arcadia is not greene inough for queasie stomackes, but they must have *Greenes* Arcadia: and I beleev most eagerlie longed for *Greenes* Faerie Queene” (qtd. in Carroll 12).
but never seemed entirely comfortable with the idea of being a "playwright." Like many of the Wits, and also some of the more ambitious authors without a university education, he sought other, more prestigious affiliations for himself throughout his career. He, like Lyly, had an interest in becoming Master of the Revels, an honor he was granted in reversion in 1621, though he did not live long enough ever to occupy the position.

Cygnus' commendatory verse to Jonson's *Sejanus His Fall*, "To The Deserving Author," celebrates Jonson's victory over "the crew / Of common playwrights, whom opinion blew / Big with false greatness," and groups Jonson with the "tragedians, ministers of their art" (6-8, 12) who do not need to rely on ignorant popular opinion because "Muses do ordain" (11) their artistic, rather than commercial greatness. Jonson asserts his own difference from the "common playwrights" in his prologue to the 1616 Folio edition of *Every Man in His Humour*, which begins:

```
Though need make many poets, and some such
As art and nature have not bettered much;
Yet ours, for want, hath not so loved the stage
As he dare serve th'ill customs of the age,
Or purchase your delight at such a rate,
As, for it, he himself must justly hate. (1-6)
```

Jonson presents himself as one unwilling to partake in the marketplace culture of playwriting. He separates himself from those who are made poets by "need," and insists that his contributions to the stage are not for the purposes of base commercial gain. Instead, his play sets an example for what "other plays should be" (14), revealing "deeds, and language, such as men do use" (21) in order to "show an image of the times" (23) rather than to disrupt the classical unity of time by "[making] a child, now swaddled, to proceed / Man, and then shoot up, in one beard and weed, / past threescore years" (7-9).
If *Gorboduc* is Sidney's example of what should be the "exact model of all Tragedies," then Jonson is here making a claim that his comedy should be the "exact model" for that genre on grounds similar to those Sidey uses to defend his argument when he also insists upon adherence to the Aristotelian unties (134).

Paul D. Cannan believes that Jonson's choice to insert his authorial commentary into the playtext itself is a strategy for control: "Faced with the inherent defensiveness of prefatory rhetoric and the whims of the reader, Jonson preferred conveying critical matter and regulating audience response through performance and the playscript, a practice that must have seemed old-fashioned to his contemporaries" (200-01). This action appears "old fashioned" because, as Tiffany Stern relates in *Doxuments of Performance in Early Modern England*, "prologues and epilogues were regularly written by someone other than the playwright." She cites examples from *Henslowe's Diary* showing that Thomas Middleton was commissioned in 1602 to write a prologue for the court performance of Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, and Thomas Heywood was later paid for "Prologues and Epilogues" to Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* (110). Jonson's fear of this sort of authorial usurpation, committed upon the works of two Wits by then long dead, is perhaps what led him to take control of *Every Man's* prologue, since that play appears first in the order of the 1616 *Works* and therefore provides an ideal place for his in-text authorial manifesto. It is difficult to reconcile this attitude toward non-authorial contributions with the fact that Jonson is recorded in *Henslowe's Diary* as being paid on 25 September 1601 "vpon hn wtitinge of his adicians in geronymo" (182), and again on 22 June 1602 "for new adicyons for Jeronymo" (203). One can only speculate, but perhaps Jonson was of the opinion that, if someone was going to make additions to *The
Spanish Tragedy, then it might as well be him. Whether he could admit it to himself or not, Jonson was able to write because he was able to make money as a writer, and financial need would have been an unavoidable pressure to take what work he could get.

Another example of Jonson's need for control appears in the fact that, while he did collaborate, the Folio publication of Sejanus reveals a real reluctance to be on record as a collaborator. His address to the reader states clearly that "this book, in all numbers, is not the same with that which was acted on the public stage; wherein a second: pen had good share: in place of which, I have rather shown to put weaker, and no doubt, less pleasing, of mine own, than to defraud so happy a genius of his right by my loathed usurpation" (52). Despite the (likely disingenuous) self-deprecating tone, Jonson's editing out of his collaborator makes a strong statement about his attitude toward self-representation in collaboration. He does not want to "usurp" the "right" of another to "his happy genius," but also he does not want his own "happy genius" to be (mis)represented by the words of another. The play is not "that which was acted," because Jonson has taken control of its content from any outside contributors (the "second pen" or any actor interpolations). Reclaiming the power over his play that had been compromised the moment the text left his hands, Jonson reasserts his authority by aligning himself with the "offices of a tragic writer" drawn from the style of the "ancients." But the characteristics of this occupation (or duty) are, in Jonson's time, in opposition to "any popular delight," a fact that exemplifies the trend noted by Petersen of the move in the early 1590s away from the "old-fashioned subject matter in the grand Senecan verse style [. . .] supplied by the university crew." Jonson, the self-proclaimed Horace of England, may have felt that he had been born too late, that the heyday of his form of art had come and gone. Certainly
for him, true art and true artists have no place in the commercial theater industry.14

Despite the purposes dramatic writing served for the Wits, or at least the socially ambitious purposes many wanted it to serve, as Bentley explains, the bulk of plays about which we have information from the period 1590-1642 was produced for the purpose of commercial profit by a relatively small group of professional playwrights who supported themselves by writing plays for the public stage. It is clear that authors who had no supportive ties to the court, noble patrons, or livery companies needed to establish themselves as legitimate professionals in order to combat the negative opinions of those who condemned a life in the theater or jealously guarded the right to write plays. They also had to compensate for the fact that the patronage system was quickly taking a new shape as theater companies, rather than individual authors, were gaining the support of noble patrons, and later the crown. The growth of the theater industry provided the space wherein that legitimation could take place, but how that space was to be filled, and by whom, was a matter of debate among the authors.

Gurr describes the results of the establishment of permanent playhouses under the new order of patronized companies as follows: "once the venue was fixed, the repertory had to keep changing [. . .] there had to be an intimate interaction between the settled expectations of the playgoers and the fare they fed on. The result was a constant, pressurised evolution in the players' repertoire of plays, a kind of aesthetic Darwinism" (Playgoing 115). In this climate of "aesthetic Darwinism," talented playwrights,

14 Jonson’s letter to the Earl of Salisbury written during his imprisonment for Eastward Ho! is another example of this attitude toward playwriting (and also on the topic of another collaboration). That Jonson, embarrassed it seems, reluctantly admits of his incarceration, “The cause (would I could name some worthier, though I wish we had none worthy our imprisonment) is . . . a play” (qtd. in Parrott 836) suggests that it is not the transgression itself that he regrets (insulting the king), but the form in which it publicly appeared.
especially those writing in the early 1590s, were able to provide a spectrum of new "traits" in their plays (innovations in style, content, and form) that might be "selected" to thrive by gaining the approval of the audience. Individual styles and abilities, when received approvingly, would (to continue Gurr's metaphor) survive the evolution of the profession. But, while Darwin's process of selection is passive, in the evolution of the playwriting profession, authors could achieve some level of control over their own and their groups' survival. The success of a playwright's innovation could serve to identify marketable writing strategies that other playwrights could learn to adopt and imitate in order for their own style to thrive. In this way, playwrights better suited to their professional environment (those who are commercially successful) would dictate the desirable attributes to be held by the members of the community of authors from which theater companies would receive their new plays. These accepted members would take the lead in establishing the profession of playwright based on the terms laid out in Melnikoff and Gieskes's description of the process of professionalization (see this volume's Introduction, p. 3). However, since different authors had different styles, and that difference is what made them desirable when successful; and furthermore, as I will show in the next chapter, different playwrights had different goals and ambitions for themselves and their profession, the establishment of the playwrighting profession was by no means without internal conflict and contention. In this case, adapting to one's environment was dependent not just on ability, but on a choice between conformity and invention. The Darwinian metaphor only works to a point because the "boundaries of a profession develop out of conflict," and a professional community faces "always unstable control over a specific area of intellectual labor" (Melnikoff and Gieskes 13), so authors
had to be innovative as well as adaptive in order to assert their own styles and opinions as worthy of a place within that community.

An individual author's understanding of his own role as author and as member of the community of authors is often most apparent when he is working to produce a text to which multiple authorial hands have contributed. The many forms collaboration takes in the production of texts in the early modern period testify to the contributing authors' varying roles within the community of playwrights, and their differing views about authorship, and about the purpose of the works being produced. However, collaboration is not the only way in which multi-authored texts are produced. We have already seen that actors sometimes contributed to their roles, and that later additions to texts were frequently made in the form of prologues and epilogues. Jonson's additions to *The Spanish Tragedy* show yet another form of multiple-authorship, as do Middleton's adaptations of *Macbeth* and *Measure for Measure*. What these forms all have in common is that they are acts of multiple-authorship that occur outside the control, and often without the knowledge of, the original author. The contention I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, that which exists between individuals and between individual interests and the interests of the profession, exists most apparently in these varied forms of multiple authorship. Plays had to be produced, and reproduced, in order to feed the needs of the constantly shifting repertories and changing audience tastes. However, authors also needed to be recognized for their work in order to maintain their position within the community. Authorial style was a commodity, but authors were not always able to control that commodity due to the intensely collaborative nature of the profession. Acts of non-authorial contribution become increasingly commonplace in the development
of the playwriting profession, which mirrors the shift from private to public that marks the emergence of the profession in the first place. In the same way that individual patronage is largely replaced by company patronage, and performances leave the environs of guildhalls and occasional productions to be opened up with large scale repertories performing six days a week for vastly heterogenous audiences in public playhouses, authors' texts, after being sold to the company, were treated as public documents (within the company that owned them) and were added to, cut, and revised accordingly. However, this does not mean that playwrights did not resist and resent such actions.

The case study that concludes this chapter will illustrate the importance of individual authorial style as a valuable commodity in the authorial community as well as in the commercial industry of literary production, particularly in the early 1590s. The text I will discuss, *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit, Bought with a Million of Repentance*, is not a dramatic work; however, it provides commentary on the conflicts inherent to the formation and establishment of the profession of dramatist in the period, commentary provided by one dramatist in the voice of another. A discussion of this pamphlet's composition also necessarily confronts key questions about how we define authorship and the varied actions that produce multi-authored texts, revealing that the language used to describe these acts in modern interpretations of early modern authorial habits is in need of expansion and specification.

**Case Study: Greene's Groatsworth of Wit**

*Greene's Groatsworth of Wit, Bought with a Million of Repentance* is best known for the brief portion near the end of the pamphlet now termed the “letter to the
playwrights,” which includes the first mention of Shakespeare as a member of the burgeoning theatrical community of early modern London. Here we find the famous rebuke of that “upstart Crow, beautified with out feathers, that with his Tygers hart wrapt in a Players hyde, supposes he is well able to bombast out a blanke verse as the best of you: and beeing an absolute Johannes fac totum, is in his owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in a countrey” (84-85). The cautionary letter is addressed to “those Gentlemen, his Quondam acquaintance, who spend their wits in making plaies” (80), and is written, ostensibly, in the first-person voice of the dying Robert Greene. In the letter, the author refers, though not by name, to the university educated Marlowe, Nashe, and Peele, urging them to repent and abandon the thankless and fruitless occupation of playwrighting.

Much of the rest of the pamphlet contains third-person narratives, beginning with the story of the scholar Roberto, the eldest son of Gorinius, who is denied his inheritance and, as a result of his poverty, is forced into the profession of playwright after being exposed by his former partner Lamilia, with whom he had conspired to trick his wealthy younger brother out of his fortune. Following the letter to the playwrights, the pamphlet concludes with a re-telling of Aesop's fable of the Ant and the Grasshopper. The Groatsworth’s provocative commentary on London’s authorial community in 1592 may sound like yet another outburst from the disgruntled Robert Greene, the author the title page claims. However, recent work on the pamphlet has led to the conclusion that it is primarily (or perhaps entirely) not Greene’s, but rather the work of Henry Chettle.

To understand this pamphlet’s troubled authorial identity, it is helpful to examine

---

the strange story of its publication. The *Groatsworth* was entered in the Stationer's Register to William Wright on 20 September 1592 “uppon the perill of *Henrye Chettle*“ (qtd. in Carroll 19) just seventeen days after the death of Robert Greene. The text's printing was split between John Wolfe and John Danter, the latter with whom Chettle worked from 1591 “until 1596 at least” (Jowett “Notes” 385). Chettle began working for Danter after their partnership with a third party, William Hoskins, fell apart after only a few months. He apparently fulfilled a number of roles for his employer: “Chettle was probably Danter's reader, and an intermediary between Danter and the authors, as well as working as compositor, patcher of texts, publicist, and epistle-writer” (Jowett “Notes” 385-6). The title page of the printed pamphlet reads, “Imprinted for William Wright,” and thus, unlike the Register entry, Wright's is the only other name besides Greene's to appear on the page. Greene's name is given only in the work's title, and we are told that the pamphlet was “Written before his death and published at his dyeing request.”

The phrase “uppon the perill of *Henrye Chettle*” included in the Register entry immediately raises suspicions about the circumstances of the *Groatsworth*’s publication. John Jowett explains that the entry's strange wording “protected the Wardens from liability in the case of future trouble over the book, and so suggests that trouble was anticipated” (“Johannes” 471). What this anticipated trouble was can only be conjectured, but one must wonder why “Chettle himself presented the book for entry,” because “Chettle was associated with Danter, who as part-printer had some interest in the

---

16 It is unclear why Chettle, who had been made a freeman of the Stationer's Company in 1584, would have taken this step down from “partnership with” to “working for” Danter. Perhaps his ambitions lay elsewhere, or he was able to have more freedom as an employee rather than a business partner. In any case, it seems that the dissolved partnership with Hoskins was the catalyst for this reshuffling of position.
book, but he was entering the title to another party” (Jowett “Johannes” 471, 472). It would have made sense for Chettle to bring the book to be entered into the register to Danter, since such a task might have been part of his job. It makes less sense for Chettle to do the same for Wright, however, who was not his employer. Furthermore, there was a fee for entrance which Wright, as publisher, would have paid; but as Peter Blayney notes, “[c]ertainly before 1622 [. . .] a stationer was not required to spend money on an entry in the register. An entry was an insurance policy: paid for, it provided the best possible protection” (404). Generally, an entry provided protection from cases of infringement, since an entry in the Register was a stationer's “only unquestionable evidence of ownership” (Blayney 403), but in the case of the Groatsworth, the anomalous entry suggests a more complicated desire for protection. Apparently, not just the Wardens, but Wright himself felt the need to have on record the fact that Chettle was to some extent responsible for the pamphlet, especially since only Wright’s name appears on the title page of the printed work.

The Groatsworth presents a confusing case of ownership because Chettle and Danter were so closely involved with the production of the text, yet it seems to “belong” to Wright. Some explanation for this can be provided by considering Chettle's interactions with his employer and with the community of authors to which he belonged. According to Jowett, “Danter's links with Chettle fostered a culture of opportunism flowing from the writer's pen to the stationer's shop. [. . .] With Chettle's help, Danter seems to have played an active role in securing literary manuscripts, even though he must have known that there was little prospect of him issuing any of them” (“Notes” 386). Danter was sometimes able to serve as the issuing stationer—he was, for instance, the
publisher of *Titus Andronicus* as well as of the “bad” quarto of *Romeo and Juliet*—so his inability to publish the *Groatsworth* himself (and also the other texts that were procured but not issued by him) was probably due to a lack of funds. The costs of publication were significant, and the publisher was entirely responsible for all expenditures, from licensing and entrance fees to the cost of paper and the printers' charges for the production of the book (Blayney 405-10). However, Chettle and Danter would still benefit from the manuscripts they acquired if they brought them to willing publishers with the understanding that, in exchange for the rights to the work, Chettle and Danter would be the chosen printers for the publication. If Chettle was acting the part of just such an intermediary when he brought the *Groatsworth* to Wright, then the Register entry perhaps reveals Wright's (or others') skepticism about the manuscript's true origins—it was important to someone that there be a paper trail leading directly to Chettle.

In the epistle to his *Kind Heart's Dream*, entered on 8 December 1592, Chettle claims that the *Groatsworth* was found among the “many papers [left] in sundry Booke sellers hands” after Greene's death, but that it was “ill written, as sometime Greenes hand was none of the best,” and so Chettle “writ it ouer, and, as neare as I could, followed the copy” (iv-v). That Greene apparently left his papers in “sundry Booke sellers hands” is a frustratingly vague explanation of the text’s origins. If Chettle's story of the *Groatsworth*'s discovery is to be believed, and he was the one to “copy” the work in its entirety, then it would seem that he had first access to it, and it would be logical then to assume that the work would have been entered into the Register as the property of Chettle's employer Danter if he had possessed the means to publish it. Clearly, however, this was not the case. These unorthodox circumstances are certainly enough to raise
questions about the text, since responsibility for its production seems to shift between Danter, Chettle, and Wright in varying degrees of public acknowledgment of ownership, and Jowett also suggests that Wright's publication of the pamphlet may have been the cause of a later dispute between Chettle and Danter, “especially if indeed Chettle had forged the *Groatsworth*” (“Johannes 472). However, the *Groatsworth* is surrounded by an even more puzzling cloud of mystery—questions about the circumstances of its printing lead into larger questions about its origins; for we do not, and may never, know for sure who wrote it.

Doubts about the authorship of this pamphlet can be traced back to its immediate reception at first publication. Thomas Nashe questions the value and legitimacy of the *Groatsworth* when he complains in his epistle to the second edition of *Pierce Penniless* “that a scald trivial lying pamphlet, called *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit*, is given out to be of my doing. God never have care of my soul, but utterly renounce me, if the least word or syllable in it proceeded from my pen” (50). Nashe's anger appears to be twofold—that the pamphlet is itself false and “trivial,” and that he has been wrongly accused of its authorship. In other words, Nashe is reacting to two different forms of authorial misattribution—the pamphlet is “called” *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit*, but it is “lying;” and furthermore, Nashe seems to resent the accusation that he is responsible for this falsehood.

Chettle prints a more detailed denial of authorship in *Kind Heart's* epistle,

---

17 In the epistle, Nashe laments that he was away from London (fleeing the plague) at the time of Greene's passing and during the subsequent “coil of pamphletting on him after his death” (49). R.B. McKerrow dates the second edition of *Pierce* to mid-October of 1592 (Carroll 2), at most a month after *Groatsworth*'s publication, which suggests that readers of “Greene's” pamphlet were not only quick to suspect its authenticity, but also that this response was widespread enough to provoke Nashe to a hasty and adamant denial of responsibility.
claiming, “only in that letter [to the playwrights] I put something out, but in the whole booke not a word in, for I protest it was all Greenes, not mine nor Maister Nashes, as some vnjustly have affirmed” (v). Most critics believe that the “something” Chettle “put out” of the letter was a particularly damaging accusation towards Marlowe, probably regarding his homosexuality, that “in conscience [Chettle] thought, [Greene] in some displeasure writ: or had it beene true, yet to publish it was intollerable” (Kind Heart's iv). It is unclear who Chettle is attempting to safeguard by this editorial choice. Marlowe is not named in the letter, no one is, but the identity of the “famous gracer of Tragedians” who “hath said [. . .] There is no God” (Groatsworth 80) would have been fairly obvious to readers. Confirmation of this identification appears in Kind Heart's epistle, since Chettle admits that the “letter written to diuers play-makers, is offensiuely by one or two of them taken. [. . .] With neither of them that take offence was I acquainted, and with one of them I care not if I never be” (iv). He goes on to apologize to the other offended party, undoubtedly Shakespeare, but his clear personal distaste for Marlowe prevents him from lamenting more than the fact that the insults in Groatsworth have (unfairly, in his opinion) brought criticism upon his own head: “because on the dead they cannot be auenged, they wilfully forge in their conceites a liuing author: and after tossing it to and fro, no remedy, but it must light on me” (iv). Thus, Chettle's omission seems primarily self-serving, since he is the “liuing author” who stands to be held responsible for the contents of the work. The belief that he was the author of Groatsworth must have been widespread to warrant such a denial, since Chettle admits that his original intention was to publish Kind Heart's anonymously, to let it “come forth without a father,” but that he attached his name to it because “it discouers the false hearts of diuers that wake to
commit mischiefe” (v). He believes that the work's epistle provides enough evidence to support his denial of paternity for Groatsworth. However, as I will show, Chettle's career reveals him to be both uniquely adept at stylistic mimicry of his fellow authors, and also no stranger to committing dishonest acts in print, making it impossible to trust his claims about Groatsworth's authorship.

The full title of the work to which Chettle attached the previously discussed epistle is Kind Heart's Dream: Containing Five Apparitions with their Invectives Against Abuses Reining. One of these “apparitions” is none other than Robert Greene. According to the titular Kind Heart's narration, his dream is of a visitation from five ghosts, each of whom he is able to identify. Each ghost presents him with papers and “at once charged mee to awake and publish them to the world” (12). Kind Heart goes on to do just that, incorporating the writings into his own work and providing occasional commentary in between. In other words, the speaker of this pamphlet does not report back in his own words the messages of these apparitions, but rather insists that there are a total of six authors present in the work. Each ghost's individual persona and style is adopted in order to create the “papers” supposedly written by him. The ease with which Chettle takes on this task reveals his adeptness with such ventriloquism; and the fact that one of the voices he appropriates is Greene's makes it all the more likely that he would have had no problem writing as “Greene,” even for a longer work like the Groatsworth. As Jowett points out, “[Walter] Davis sees in the apparition's prose an imitation of the style specifically of the Groatsworth. This would only be expected if the Groatsworth itself were Chettle's imitation of Greene” (“Johannes” 477).

18 They are, in the order the narrator first describes them: Anthony Now Now (believed to be Chettle’s friend Munday), Richard Tarlton, William Cuckoe, Doctor Burcot, and Robert Greene.
Despite his ability to write as Greene, Chettle seems to have trouble writing about him. Kind Heart's initial description of the five apparitions contains an admitted reluctance to go into any detail about “Robert Greene, maister of Artes: of whome (howeuer some may suppose themselues injured) I haue learned to speake, considering he is dead, nill nisi necessarium” (11). Furthermore, after transcribing the papers of the five apparitions, Kind Heart returns to tell the “conclusion of his dreame, and his censure on the apparitions severally” (55); and yet fails to comment on Greene's statement, which takes the form of a letter invoking Nashe's character Pierce Penniless to revenge on his critics. The speaker admits, “With Robin Greene it passes Kind-Harts capacity to deale; for, as I knowe not the reason of his vnrest, so will I not intermeddle in the cause; but, as soone as I can, convey his letter where it should be deliuered” (56). Perhaps Chettle, through Kind Heart, is reluctant to connect himself and his commentary with what has been said by “Greene,” lest those two voices begin to sound suspiciously similar. Having just apologized for offending Shakespeare by publishing Greene's words in the Groatsworth, Chettle claims ignorance of “Greene's” meaning in Kind Heart's in order to make himself innocent of responsibility for it (a trick that would have worked much better had he in fact let the pamphlet “come forth without a father”). Chettle's need to—dishonestly, and only partially—acknowledge his relationship to the Groatsworth in a work where he is again employing his skills to write as Greene puts the mimic in a sticky situation indeed.

Though it cannot be asserted without doubt that Chettle is in fact the author of the Groatsworth, evidence in the case for his authorship is by far more convincing than that which can be found for any other writer. Thus, in all likelihood, Henry Chettle's hand,
not Greene's, not Nashe's, is largely responsible for the pamphlet. However, determining the extent to which Chettle can be assigned sole authorship adds further complication to the question. Although, as Jowett reminds us, Chettle “confessed to having transcribed [Groatsworth] to supply printer's copy” (“Notes” 385), analyses of the text by Jowett himself, as well as W.B. Austin's 1969 computer based stylistic analysis point to the conclusion that “Chettle's contribution cannot be confined to scribal sophistication, or even editorial overlay.” Furthermore, the letter to the playwrights, the portion of the text that has by far received the most critical attention, “contains an unexpected hoard of features that point to Chettle's authorship” (387). The most likely possibilities are that Chettle was either working with papers in fact written by Greene (what Jowett calls an “ur-Groatsworth” [“Johannes” 460]), or that the text was entirely his creation based on familiarity with Greene and his writing, perhaps with the occasional incorporation of bits of Greene's writing taken from other works. He had access to other repentance narratives by Greene in the printing house (Jowett “Notes” 388), and his aptitude for mimicry has been proven in multiple other cases.

Chettle was a known literary impostor, signing the epistle to Munday's II

---

19 Carroll discusses the possibility of another contributing author to Groatsworth—Thomas Lodge. According to Carroll, “The Roberto story actually conforms generally to the life of Thomas Lodge. [. . .] Too, Chettle or Greene may have had Lodge manuscripts on hand (while Lodge was away at sea),” and so he concludes that “[t]he Roberto story may have originally been, up to the break, modeled on Lodge's; it may have even been by Lodge” (9 n.23). Though Carroll does not expand on the likelihood of this scenario—understandably so, since it is one wholly reliant upon conjecture—the possibility that Lodge unknowingly contributed to the Groatsworth further complicates the question of how we identify the nature of the work's composition. Is Lodge (possibly) another unknowing collaborator, or the victim of literary theft? Does it make a difference that the potential incorporation or theft is one of content rather than style (Lodge's story vs. Greene's voice)? Again, there is not a firm platform of information on which we might stand here, but the line of questioning opened by this kind of speculation is one that will prove useful for other, more clear-cut cases of identifiable collaboration, stylistic overlap, or forgery.

Gerileon, (entered 8 August 1592) with the initials “T.N.,’ obviously meant to be taken as 'Thomas Nashe” (Schoon-Jongen 25). Chettle blames this misattribution on “the workmanes error” (Kind Heart's v) when he admits to writing the epistle himself, but such blame shifting is not terribly convincing. As Celeste Turner Wright remarks, “[t]he apology is suspect in view of Chettle's later mystifications and of his long acquaintance with the ‘workman' in question, Thomas Scarlet, whom he may even have helped” (“Mundy and Chettle” 131). Chettle again reveals his penchant for dishonest attributions when he helps his friend Munday in a deception involving “Lazarus Pyott,” who is “criticized by Chettle as a rival translator to Munday, in a poem and letter of 1596” (Carroll 17). “Pyott” is, in reality, Munday himself, a fact of which Chettle was undoubtedly aware.

The line between stylistic imitation and forgery is a blurry one, particularly for Chettle, whose work in the printing house fostered intimate connections with and knowledge of the style of others' writing. According to Jowett, Chettle's apprenticeship to Thomas East in 1577 put him in close contact with the publication of Lyly's Euphues, printed by East in 1578, and “a diluted version of the Euphuistic manner stayed with Chettle for many years” (“Notes” 384). Though one might argue that Chettle's susceptibility to stylistic influence is a product of his young age and inexperience, it is more likely symptomatic of the mature writer to come, as influence encourages borrowing, imitation, collaboration, or forgery (designations that are often overlapping and unclear—a problem to which I will return). D. Allen Carroll describes the maturation of the mimic when he suggests, “Chettle may have been uniquely capable of pulling off such a hoax. His training and life experience as a compositor would have taught him
skills of memory that, as a would-be writer, he could exploit in imitating the styles of others, and he would have done so because he was otherwise uneducated” (17-8). The term “uneducated” must, I think, be taken as a reference to Chettle's lack of a university education, since it is otherwise misleading to suggest that this highly literate Freeman of the Stationer's Company was not “educated” in a more general sense. If Chettle is primarily responsible for the letter to the playwrights, then the fact that he is without a university education becomes particularly interesting. Carroll argues that the famous criticisms of Shakespeare appearing in the letter “ought to be seen as part of an ongoing conflict [...] between the [University] Wits and the new, uneducated professional playwrights” (141). Although Chettle is obviously speaking as Greene, and thus from the side of the Wits, he is himself a member of the other party, and his jabs at Shakespeare can be read as professional jealousy of an “upstart” like himself who is far more talented and successful than Chettle would ever be. And in Jowett's words: “An absolute Johannes Factotum: so says Henry Chettle, compositor, editor, epistle-writer, scribbler, printer's reader, patcher, playmaker, plagiarist, and would be man of letters. If Chettle wrote this passage, there is not only hypocrisy behind the bravura; there is a pained and embarrassed self-knowledge” (“Johannes” 483). In any case, Chettle's particular abilities lead Jowett to conclude that “[o]ne thing is sure: even in the pamphlet's most Greenian moments, the incidence of Greene-favoured vocabulary does nothing to undermine the hypothesis that the work as a whole is essentially by another writer” (“Johannes” 463).

Although we may never be entirely sure, it is the responsibility of the scholar to make a decision about where she stands on the question of authorship, a decision that should be based on thorough consideration of the available evidence. I find Jowett's
conclusion to be most convincing, given his use of attribution studies tempered with historical evidence, and believe that the *Groatsworth* is most likely the work of a careful and studied mimic who “may have grafted Greene cuttings of short passages from a Greene manuscript, rather than, or as well as, single words from a printed text, or adapted such passages whilst retaining some of their diction” (“Johannes” 463). However, Jowett’s repeated use of the word “forgery” to describe the *Groatsworth* restricts the ways in which we might use this new information about the pamphlet’s complicated authorship. Steve Mentz compellingly argues that “the extant evidence suggests that the *Groatsworth* is better read as an unusual form of collaboration than a single-author book or a forgery” (117-8). Mentz believes that “Greene wrote at least some of the text,” but admits that “we cannot determine exactly what” (117). The different choice of terminology between Jowett and Mentz can be explained by the fact that Mentz believes *Groatsworth* to be a work at least conceptualized by Greene, although primarily executed by Chettle, while Jowett is not convinced that such a work ever existed in Greene’s mind. Certainly, to consider the work a collaboration, Greene should have been aware of the work to which he was contributing. However, if Greene's style, vocabulary, and perhaps even, admits Jowett, “about forty lines and a song” (“Johannes” 463) are being used in the creation of the *Groatsworth*, then the work is not quite a forgery, either. How, then, do we define Chettle’s authorial actions?

I would suggest that the term “adaptation” is most suitable to describe either scenario, since whether or not the original idea for the *Groatsworth* came from Greene, his death prevented him from collaborating in any real sense with Chettle, so the end product cannot possibly reflect the deceased's intentions. However, it rather does reflect
those of Chettle, who adapted Greene's work for his own purposes. Mentz argues that what is “at stake is not just the historical accuracy of saying that the text is or is not 'Greene's'; we also need to determine what the consequences of reading the text as a destabilized collaboration are for early modern studies” (118). Yet before we can embark on that task, we need to think more carefully and be very clear about what we mean when we use terms like “forgery,” “collaboration,” “destabilized collaboration,” and “adaptation.” Works formed from the hands of multiple authors—knowing or unknowing—come into existence under radically different circumstances. Those circumstances, when we can discover them, offer invaluable clues about the nature of early modern authorial habits. When discussing collaborative playwriting practices in the early modern period, Jeffrey Masten argues that “a significant problem to twentieth-century bibliography in this area has been to reduce the multiplicity of diverse practices to fit our singular theories” (“More” 113). Similarly, Mentz's description of the Groatsworth as a “destabilized collaboration” neglects the very real fact that it would be impossible to define a “stabilized collaboration.” To do so, one would fall into the trap of the “singular theories” Masten describes by resting on the assumption that there is some standard form which collaboration must take and that the circumstances of this pamphlet's production are the exception to some hard and fast rule.21

In a move that skirts the issue further, Mentz goes on to offer the suggestion that, since the pamphlet's “exact attribution may be unrecoverable, the value of this text for

---

21 Of course, the same can be said for “adaptation,” another term that puts its user in danger of misrepresenting the complicated circumstances of authorship in the period. I use the term here without qualification because I believe its breadth of meaning is actually advantageous in the case of the Groatsworth, where more than one possibility exists for its authorship; for in either case, the term adaptation applies as a satisfactory descriptor.
early modern studies is its picture of early modern authorship,” and thus “the
Groatsworth’s Greene should be read as the then-current idea of the marketplace author”
(119) rather than as the voice of the real Greene, or the real Chettle for that matter.
However, this attempt to solve the problem of how we talk about the Groatsworth is
unsatisfactory because it neglects the fact that Greene and Chettle would have had very
different conceptions of “the marketplace author” and “early modern authorship”—the
“professional” and the “profession” respectively. Greene the University Wit and Chettle
the printer (among other things) certainly did not share the same views about what it
means to be an author. Therefore, while the Groatsworth does stage a commentary on the
early modern authorial and theatrical communities, how that commentary is read relies
unavoidably on which author’s perspective one is considering. Carroll suggests quite
rightly that “[i]f Chettle wrote it, he had to have presented attitudes either widely
believed to be Greene's or else to be close enough” (131), and so making a distinction
between the two writers is in some cases pointless. However, regardless of how much
effort and skill Chettle puts into sounding like Greene, he cannot cease to be himself, and
therefore any and all Greeneisms are unavoidably filtered through the background and
experience of Chettle. The aforementioned stylistic connection made by Davis and
Jowett, that the Greene apparition in Kind Heart's is “an imitation of the style specifically
of the Groatsworth,” reiterates this point. The “Greenes” produced by Chettle are more
evidently similar to one another than either is to a work written by the real Greene.

As an example of the separate perspectives of “Greene” and Chettle that could
occasionally meet to accomplish mutually beneficial goals, consider the message in the
letter to the playwrights: “O that I might intreat your rare wits to be imploid in more
profitable courses: and let those Apes imitate your past excellence, and never more acquaint them with your admired inventions” (85). If this advice is heeded, both Greene (or at least an idea he would have supported) and Chettle find satisfaction. As Carroll observes, “[w]ith Greene's friends no longer writing plays, which is what the letter advises, the field would be left, as indeed happened, to those without university training, to Munday and Chettle” (Carroll 12). Of course, it was not just Munday and Chettle occupying the abandoned field, but rather a comparatively large and ambitious crop of playwrights, often without university educations, of which Shakespeare was the much envied (by Chettle) front-runner. As writer, go-between, and printer, it is clear that in 1592, “Chettle was steeping himself in theatrical affairs, though any achievements he may have already made as a dramatist were not noteworthy” (Jowett “Johannes” 484). However, his lack of accomplishment does not reflect a lack of ambition.

Chettle's desire to be an active member in the community of playwrights was perhaps prominent in his thoughts as he worked on the Groatsworth. There is an interesting connection between the pamphlet and The Book of Sir Thomas More, on which Munday and Chettle may have already been working when Chettle took up his pen for the Groatsworth. The connection exists in two plays mentioned both by the Player-Patron in the Groatsworth, and by the Players in More, in a section of the play that has been assigned by Jowett to Chettle, “with little fear of contradiction” (qtd. in Carroll 11). If Chettle was working on both texts at the same time, it is not hard to imagine that

---

22 Jowett first dates the work on More to “around 1593” (“Johannes” 485), though he changes his mind and suggests a much later date of 1600 in his 2011 edition of the play for the Arden third series (see Chapter Three). But Carroll argues that “many who have studied Chettle's contribution to More (thought to be hand A) agree that he probably collaborated with Munday (Hand S) sometime in the spring or summer of 1592” (11). Of course, whether or not Chettle was already working on More when
he, ever the opportunist, would use Greene's voice to clear a path for himself and his friend and collaborator. Advising the Wits to cease writing plays and launching a smear campaign on a leading literary rival could potentially open some space for Chettle's playwrighting ambitions.

Despite his dishonest dealings, or perhaps through them, Chettle reveals a significant investment in the formation of the profession of playwright. He participates in the authorial community by taking on and speaking through the personas of others—in *Kind Heart's* and in the *Groatsworth*—to comment upon and affect the very definition of the community's appropriate members. Unfortunately for him, this desire to “belong” is a self-defeating one, since it is not his own style, but the adoption of the style of others that makes his writing known. According to Jowett, “Chettle's authorial self-hood is underdeveloped in his writings; he is a collaborator; he is an imitator. Yet imitation has its own psychology, or rather its own convoluted textuality of authorial self. That self is displaced, disguised, in short, repressed” (Jowett “Johannes” 485). Chettle is aware of the importance and value of an “authorial self,” evidenced by his opportunistic mimicry of others' commercially successful styles, yet his tendency to adopt these styles suppresses his ability to achieve a style of his own, and so his place in the authorial community, at least in the early 1590s, remained peripheral.

That Chettle was “peripheral” to the playwriting profession was certainly true in 1592, but his role in the community would become far more central in the years to follow. Francis Meres names him as one of the “best for comedy” in his 1598 *Palladis Tamia*, and he apparently “worked on approximately four dozen projects between 1598 and

---

he wrote the *Groatsworth*, he clearly had interest and ambitions in the realm of dramatic writing. Yet, the echoing of the players' repertory certainly helps to make a case for contemporaneous composition.
1603” (Knutson 54). Furthermore, in 1602, Chettle entered into a contract with the Admiral's Men as their attached dramatist (though the agreement was soon broken); and finally, Chettle is allowed to join the other playwrights in the “Grove of Bay Trees” in Dekker's 1607 *A Knight's Conjuring*, though he comes in quite late and “sweating and blowing by reason of his fatness.” Despite this unflattering portrait, it is true that the other poets (Marlowe, Greene, Peele, and Nashe (a group with which Chettle's vexed relationship has already been made apparent) “all rose up and fell presently on their knees” to welcome him, “because he was of old acquaintance” (qtd. in Hunt 5). The fact that he was commercially successful later in his career does not, of course, relieve Chettle of the charge that his abilities are those of imitation rather than invention; however, it is in any case significant that he was eventually able to make a career and a name for himself in the community of authors.

In summary, what the *Groatsworth* shows us is that authorial attribution was an important matter for writers in the period, that “the concept of plagiarism did exist” (Jowett “Johannes” 476), and that an author's livelihood and reputation could be imperiled by misattribution if he was held responsible for controversial or insulting material that he did not write. From this we learn that individual authorial style had value. Greene was an extremely popular writer, as Schoon-Jongen points out, “[v]arious writers at the time testify to the lucrative nature of Greene's name in the publishing business, as does the proliferation of works referring to Greene after his death” (26). The popularity of Greene's style must have been a great motivating factor for the writer/printer Chettle. Lastly, the complication and mystery surrounding the authorship of this text suggests that the existing critical vocabulary used to describe multi-authored
works is in need of reassessment and expansion in order to accommodate our ever-increasing knowledge of the details of relations between authors both within and outside the works to which they may have knowingly or unknowingly contributed. Chettle's apology to Shakespeare in *Kind Heart's Dream*'s epistle also shows us that relationships and allegiances changed within the profession because these authors had to work together in order to support themselves. Their reputations, both stylistic and social, impacted their ability to survive in the growing and evolving professional community of playwrights in the early 1590s.
CHAPTER TWO
FORMS OF AFFILIATION

Faith, there has been much to do on both sides, and the nation holds it no sin to tarre them to controversy. There was for awhile no money bid for argument unless the poet and the player went to cuffs in the question. 

(\textit{Hamlet} 2.2.337-40)

Rosencrantz's famous description's of the “little eyases,” or company of boy players, who have supplanted the “tragedians of the city” has long been assumed to be Shakespeare's commentary on the “War of the Theaters” that took place at the turn of the seventeenth century in London. In recent scholarship, this debate is more often referred to as “The Poet's War,” or \textit{Poetomachia} (as Dekker called it), and the difference in terminology is meaningful. While some level of competition must have existed between the institutions of the public and the private theaters in London, the existence of the boy players is not the only, or even the central, problem discussed by Hamlet and his schoolmates. Rather, the trouble seems to be the manner in which these boys are performing, the “late innovation” to which Rosencrantz refers (320). If this is a commentary on the early modern theater industry, then boy players themselves could not be described as a “late innovation.” But boy players being used as satirical mouthpieces for authorial quibbles could be considered innovative. The biting satire for which the boys “are most tyrannically clapped” (327) had the result that “many wearing rapiers are afraid of goose-quills” (329-30). But the tyrannical clapping also means that this kind of satirical dramatic style caused a sensation among audiences that almost \textit{required}
playwrights to engage in the staged controversy, since “there was for awhile no money bid for argument” unless the play in question contributed to the dispute that had apparently commanded the attention of the poets, players, and audiences of both the indoor and the outdoor theaters. What was at stake for the playwrights engaged in the Poet's War was the power to shape the form and function of drama. This power was, for some, potentially threatened by the audience's positive response to a form of satire of which all playwrights did not approve. As I will discuss later in this chapter, the Poet's War was for some if its combatants a serious debate about drama, while for others, it was a lucrative opportunity to gain popularity as a writer of the material that was causing such excitement among theater audiences. In each case, an author's engagement with the Poet's War was informed by his position within the playwriting profession, and his opinions about the purpose of drama as well as the role of the dramatist.

In the previous chapter, I outlined some of the circumstances of early modern London's social and political development that led to the creation of a professional community whose purpose was to produce plays for the public theater. In this chapter, I will provide a detailed description of the dynamics of that community based on information about its members that I will use to categorize four “forms of affiliation” by which the professional interests of these authors can be defined. By looking at details of the careers of the dramatists who made up the professional community of playwrights in the years 1580-1625, I will show how a dramatist's level of investment in the professional development of his trade was expressed through his professional activities, both those he undertook as a writer of drama, and those that relied on engagements outside the commercial theater. Since we have only scant evidence of “contracts” between
playwrights and theater companies, and those that do exist are more often than not obscure about terms and seem not to have been strongly enforced agreements, how do we identify the different forms the relationships between these two agents took? No two playwrights shared the same career trajectory. Affiliations changed for these men—whether as a result of their personal choice, changes within the theater companies' structures, or an inability to prove themselves up to the task of providing the literary goods required by their position. An author's theatrical activity and professional associations both affect and reflect his attitudes about the nature of the profession of dramatist, and his personal investment in, and identification as a member of, that profession.

Where a playwright begins his career, and where that career ends are often very different positions both within and outside the community of authors. Those who ended their theatrical careers in the position of attached dramatist did not begin in such a secure and therefore privileged association with the theater companies. G. E. Bentley provides a list of “the more prolific dramatists [. . .] who profited from furnishing plays for the theatres.” He names these men “the regular professionals or the attached professionals,” and lists them in order of “known dramatic productivity”: Heywood, Fletcher, Dekker, Massinger, Shakespeare, and Rowley (Dramatist 37).

Yet, four pages earlier in his study, Bentley draws an unacknowledged line of distinction within this group when he describes “the protracted period of steady writing for the theatres which characterizes the attached or regular professional playwrights like Heywood, Fletcher, Massinger, [and]

---

1 In this list, and the one to follow, Bentley also includes Brome and Shirley. However, since this chapter is interested in playwrights who wrote the bulk of their dramatic material between 1580-1625 (rather than Bentley's 1590-1642), I am not examining Brome and Shirley in my list of professional dramatists because their careers began too late.
Shakespeare” (33). Both groups are identified as “regular” or “attached” professionals, but conspicuously absent from what is here the latter list are Dekker and Rowley. This is for good reason, since both dramatists had careers that were by no means “regular,” and any attachment they might have had was not sustained throughout their professional lives. Thomas Dekker was neither an actor nor a shareholder in any theater company, which means that he never enjoyed the financial security of a salaried professional. From 1598-1600 he wrote exclusively and extensively for Henslowe, but beginning with *Satiro-mastix* in 1601, performed by Paul's Boys and the Chamberlain's Men, he wrote for other companies as well. Dekker's theatrical activity tapered off significantly in the first decade of the seventeenth century, and he turned to writing pamphlets, poetry, and pageants for the bulk of his income. Financial troubles landed him in prison for the years 1613-1619. Upon his release, he returned to playwriting, though not exclusively. Most, but not all, of his plays during this time were performed at the Red Bull (Twyning). Dekker was certainly a “professional” writer, but there was nothing “regular” or “attached” about his relationship to the theater.

Bentley's other omission, William Rowley, has many more marks of the “regular or attached professional” than Dekker. Yet, there are important differences between his career and that of Shakespeare, Fletcher, or Massinger. Rowley was an actor, shareholder, and resident playwright for the Duke of York's/Prince Charles' company from 1608-1623, and “seems in many ways to have been more the leader than Gilbert Reason, at least in London” (Gurr *Companies* 396). David Gunby also suggests that it is “possible that he was earlier a member of Queen Anne's Men.” In any case, in 1623, he left his longtime company association to join the King's Men as an actor and sometimes
writer, but he did not write exclusively for them. Apparently he traded his more central role with Prince Charles' for the more prestigious company affiliation of the King’s Men, with its near monopoly on court performance and the additional status and stability of wearing the King's livery. Though Rowley continued to act and to write throughout his career, his company loyalties changed; and more importantly for our categorization of him as an author, as T.H. Howard-Hill puts it, “the fact that he paid little if any attention to the publication of his plays suggests that he regarded himself primarily as an actor who occasionally wrote plays rather than as a dramatist. The kind and quality of his dramatic achievement make the conclusion easy to accept.” Rowley was a “regular or attached” member of the theatrical community, but not necessarily a “regular or attached dramatist.”

Though Bentley includes him in both lists, Thomas Heywood is perhaps better grouped with professional writers like Dekker and Rowley that as an “attached dramatist.” His career is in many ways similar to that of Shakespeare, both having begun as actors. He signed a contract in 1598 to act exclusively for Henslowe for two years, in which time he wrote two plays for the Admiral’s Men. By 1601, however, he was an actor for Worcester's Men (to become Queen Anne's Men in 1603). He became a shareholder in this company and wrote prolifically for them for a number of years. His path diverges from Shakespeare's around 1608 when Heywood began writing significant non-dramatic works. He did not stop writing plays altogether at this time, but did divide

---

2 Bart van Es makes the claim that “on the overwhelming balance of probability Shakespeare started out as a playwright rather than a player” (553). However, his evidence, largely drawn from the famous reference to Shakespeare in the Groatsworth and events surrounding that attack, is not sufficiently convincing in its attempt to disprove the long-standing conclusion that when he came to London, Shakespeare worked first as an actor, then as a playwright.
his attention between different kinds of writing. His literary output does seem to have reached a noticeably low ebb between the years 1615 and 1624, when there are no records of published works by this author. Yet this does not mean he ceased writing entirely—it would not have been unusual at the time for there to be a lapse of years between the composition and the publication of a work. David Kathman suggests that “[a]bout this time he also began compiling ‘The lives of all the poets modern and foreign’, which he worked on intermittently for two decades but unfortunately never published” (“Heywood”). After that period of (at least publishing) silence, Heywood returned to playwriting, but never occupied a company attachment again for the remainder of his life (ibid.). Perhaps it was his interest in other forms of writing, or a more general desire to be a “free agent,” working when and with whom he pleased, that led Heywood from the secure position of actor, dramatist, and shareholder of Queen Anne's Men. Or the failure of the company itself may have forced him to seek other means of financial support—after years of questionable financial management by Christopher Beeston, unable to pay its debts, the company broke in 1623 (Gurr 324). Whatever the reason for Heywood's change of position, it is clear that, despite their similarities, Shakespeare and Heywood cannot both be described as “attached dramatists” without ignoring the meaningful differences in their career trajectories.

The various connotations of the words “regular” and “attached” are perhaps part of the problem with placing these dramatists into meaningful categorizations. “Regular” is an ambiguous term that might suggest either continuous activity, or a certain level of overall productivity, however sporadic. Two definitions of “regular” from the OED express this ambiguity well: “Reliably or continually provided or existing; continuing
without interruption; stable; *spec.* (of employment) secure; not temporary or casual” (A. *adj. 3b.*), or, “Recurring or repeated at fixed times (although not necessarily at uniform intervals; characterized by repetition of this sort” (A. *adj. 3d.*). The first definition expresses consistency; the second, repetition, so a dramatist might be described as “regular” if he writes two plays a year for a period of twenty years, or if he has periodic stints of prolific writing intermixed with intervals of no dramatic activity at all.

The term “attached” is more concrete in meaning, and is defined most appropriately for our purposes as “Joined functionally” (*adj. 4*), or, “fixed to a spot during life, stationary, as opposed to ‘free’” (*adj. 3b.*). To say a dramatist is “attached” thus implies a continuous and uninterrupted relationship to a company; and as Bentley conjectures, this is an accurate term, since attached dramatists seem to have been expected to produce about two plays a year for their company (*Dramatist* 121). 3 Shakespeare, Fletcher, and Massinger best fit this definition of “attached dramatists” because their careers led them to this sustained, and obviously to them desirable, position within the King's Men. Though other of these playwrights may have sought out such a position at some point in their careers, they did not reach their goal, or they changed their minds about its desirability. It is likely that some dramatists felt more secure relying on their ability to market themselves to multiple companies in hopes of finding continued employment in an environment where companies frequently lost or changed patrons and

3 Bentley makes this estimate based on the breach of contract dispute between Richard Brome and the Salisbury Court players. Brome signed a contract in 1635 to provide three plays a year for that company, but was unable to produce at that rate, supplying instead two plays a year for three years. Bentley explains, “Brome says that at the signing of the first contract he objected to the to the quota of three plays a year ‘as being more than he could well perform’” (*Dramatist* 121). From Brome's actual productivity, and the fact that “other professional dramatists whose company attachments were steady and whose plays can be dated with some precision seem to have come quite close to this rate of two plays a year” (*ibid.*), Bentley provides ample evidence that this estimate would be a standard expectation for an attached dramatist's productivity.
playing spaces, and suffered precarious economic conditions due to poor management or theater closure in times of plague.

Intimate knowledge of the companies would be necessary for any dramatist seeking the kind of free-lance survival characteristic of an unattached professional, because the actors and audience for each company seemed to favor and hence support particular dramatic styles and subject matter. Certainly acquiring this knowledge would be much easier for a playwright who wrote often for one company, even without an attached position. Henry Chettle's relationship to the Admiral's Men is a good example. Knutson describes the significance of this connection for our understanding of Chettle's position in the development of the playwriting profession:

Perhaps it is also plausible that playwrights who worked for a company regularly were familiar enough with the abilities of company personnel and the tastes of its usual audience to choose subjects and formulas that the company would want to buy. If so, these playwrights deserve more credit than they are usually given for the prosperous economy of the playhouse world in Shakespeare's time. Henry Chettle, a regular with the Admiral's Men, is rarely evaluated from a commercial point of view; rather, he is called a hack for writing prolifically and a wastrel for spending what he earned (and more). [. . .] But Chettle should be judged by his contributions to the commerce of the Admiral's Men, which are measurable by the volume of his work and its diversity in subject matter and genre. [. . .] [H]e deserves credit for initiating or promoting new developments in generic formulas. (54)

Chettle's ample abilities as a stylistic mimic have been discussed at length in the previous chapter. However, Knutson's description of this playwright's career marks him as an innovator, not imitator; one whose awareness of the literary and theatrical community allowed him to create, rather than copy, popular trends in dramatic material. Here again we encounter the term “regular” as a description of authorial activity, and for Chettle's period of contribution to the Admiral's Men, this is appropriate in the first sense of the
term (continuing without interruption). As Neil Carson explains in A Companion to Henslowe's Diary, by the Spring-Summer season of 1598, Chettle was “the most prolific and highly paid of the dramatists working for Shaa and Downton” (61), who were leading players in the Admiral’s Men and served as managers for the Rose Theater where that company performed (25). Yet, despite his impressive output of plays for Admiral's, Chettle, like many of his colleagues, did not write exclusively for that company: “From August 1602 to March 1603 most of the Admiral's dramatists were also contributing to the repertoire of Worcester's Men. [. . .] [S]everal playwrights, such as Chettle, Hathway, and Day divided their time fairly equally between the two organizations” (Carson 63). Such artful juggling and high productivity suggest the impressive knowledge of the market held by playwrights like Chettle, who was able to produce works for two companies (and two theaters, and two audiences) at once. Chettle can be judged not only for his “contributions to the commerce of the Admiral's Men,” but also for his significant and simultaneous contributions to Worcester's Men as well.

Chettle's accomplishments are described by Knutson as “initiating or promoting new developments in generic formulas.” The “or” in this statement is meaningful. In the collaborative context of early modern playwriting, it is difficult to determine what constitutes “initiating,” and what “promoting,” since playwrights inevitably influenced and were influenced by one another. Yet, to some extent, and probably for many early modern dramatists themselves, the distinction is moot. As one often in debt and trying to earn a living as a professional playwright, Chettle would have been interested in creating texts that would be bought. This might in fact have made him less likely to take chances in his writing—a safer bet would then be to “promote,” rather than “initiate.” It would
have been important for him to write quickly and well enough to be kept in mind as one able to produce plays that would be popular on the stage. As a result, his contributions to plays should be thought of less as artistic exercises than as commercial endeavors. We also know that almost three-quarters of the plays he wrote for Henslowe were collaborative: “Between 1598 and 1603, the diary connects him with some forty-nine plays. Thirty-six of these seem to have been in collaboration” (Smith). I by no means wish to imply that a tendency toward collaboration and financial reliance upon playwriting signify artistic disinterest. On the contrary, to be a commercially successful playwright, to initiate and promote new developments in playwriting, one needed to cultivate an individual authorial style—it simply also had to be one that was marketable to the playing companies and their audiences. One who is invested in becoming a master of his trade must feel a personal investment and artistic pride in his work; but the purpose of the goods he produces is for them to be sold.

One might argue that those, like Chettle, who did not resist identification as a professional playwright were less thin-skinned when their plays were not successful, or when their style was criticized. As one who was seemingly willing to take on any project handed to him, from any company that would employ him, Chettle's particular strengths as an author were perhaps not primarily aesthetic ones, but rather practical: a high rate of productivity and level of adaptability. There is inarguably something different about the unapologetic commercial professional's attitude toward playwriting and the plays he produced from the response of haughty disdain made by authors like Greene and Jonson, who took their failures more personally. Chettle's ability to multi-task and work on multiple plays at once, facilitated by his tendency toward collaboration, meant that if one
The project did fail, there were others immediately forthcoming that held potential for success. Francis Meres' inclusion of Chettle as one of the “best for comedy” in his 1598 *Palladis Tamia* argues that we should not think of him as a “hack;” but rather, as a consummate professional who was able to produce so much writing in the genre of comedy (among others) that he was impossible to ignore as an highly productive member of the playwriting community.

Knutson's suggestion that professional playwrights might “deserve more credit […] for the prosperous economy of the playhouse world” is worth pausing over. Dramatists, as the creators of the commodities for sale, had control over the form and content of plays. They needed to sell these products, to be sure, and so their success relied on knowledge of the market to which they were selling. However, as Knutson's description of Chettle shows us, innovation was just as, if not more, important to the establishment of a career as a professional playwright. It would not do simply to give the company members what they wanted—playwrights also had, in a sense, to teach them what they wanted in order to encourage the need for new plays and continued audience interest.

The most successful playwrights were able to develop new subjects, genres, and styles that would draw audiences and evoke responses in the form of mimicry, adaptation, and mockery by other dramatists—creating situations like the Poetomachia or “Poet's War” in the years 1599-1601, which will be discussed in more detail at the end of this chapter. As a result of the public interaction of playwrights through the professional commentary embedded in their plays and appended to their texts, the potential market for new dramatic material continued to grow and flourish to make room for the changes in
content, genre, and style called for by the lively competition that existed within the playwrighting community. Also along these lines, Knutson describes how companies played off of one another's successes and “exploited offerings not only in their own repertory, but also in the repertories of their competitors” (61). She cites as one example a 1596 revival of Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* by the Admiral's men as inspiration for Shakespeare's “response” in the composition of *The Merchant of Venice* for the Chamberlain's Men (62). This complicates the question of unique identities for the playing companies, since theatrical trends transcended company boundaries; however, Shakespeare of course did not simply “copy” Marlowe's success, but rather drew from and built upon it in the genre of comedy. Popular themes and subject matter could thus be employed by a gifted artist without sacrificing his individual style. And company style can still be identified if Shakespeare had the Chamberlain's Men's actors and audience in mind when considering how best to incorporate aspects of Marlowe's story, which he almost certainly did.

It was not only Shakespeare who found inspiration through Marlowe's successes—Robert Greene, for one, whose jealousy of his contemporary's theatrical triumphs is undeniable, “almost parodies” Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* plays in his *Comicall Historie of Alphonsus, King of Aragon* (Newcomb). George Peele also saw something in these plays, and the character of Muly Mahamet from his *Battle of Alcazar* is, according to Reid Barbour, Peele's “version of Christopher Marlowe's Tamburlaine.” Marlowe's contribution to playwriting was brief but assertive in its relentless originality, sparking ample criticism from conservative rivals, but also serving as a cache of innovative ideas to be adopted and elaborated on by playwrights who could recognize and anticipate the
changing tides of taste and opinion that would require new plays in new forms and styles.

In van Es's words, “[i]mitation, especially imitation of Tamburlaine, was the hallmark of the professional 'Arch-plaimaking-poet’” (571) in the thriving “culture of imitation and coauthorship” (572) of the early 1590s. Playwrights learned from the successes and failures of others, and the level of awareness and adaptability of a particular dramatist played an important role in his ability to occupy a commanding position within the community of playwrights. However, not all playwrights shared the same professional goals, and to be a successful “playwright” was often not considered an admirable or desirable distinction, even for those who spent a large portion of their adult lives composing for the stage. Furthermore, unlike other “professions” of the time, there was no standard system of apprenticeship by which one could prove his qualification as a trained and capable playwright. As I will show, dramatists came from widely disparate backgrounds and wrote for the stage for very different reasons.

To illustrate the multiform careers of early modern dramatists, the following table records the professional activities of twenty-nine members of the playwriting community working in the years 1580-1625 (Table 1). It outlines affiliations both within and outside the theater in order to show the many ways in which these writers supported themselves and sought to establish their careers. It becomes clear that some of these authors did not set playwriting as a primary goal of professional identification, while others certainly did. What these men all have in common is a recognizable involvement in the profession at some point in their lives, and a writing career prolific enough to be considered the output of one who is clearly a member of the authorial community, whether such an affiliation was desirable to him or not.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date of Birth</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Affiliation to University</th>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Birth Place</th>
<th>University Education</th>
<th>University Residence</th>
<th>Church Employment</th>
<th>Court Employment</th>
<th>Alternate Profession</th>
<th>Plays Performed by Key Company</th>
<th>Composed Music of Entertainments</th>
<th>Composed Music</th>
<th>Composed Choral Entertainments</th>
<th>Composed Stage Entertainments</th>
<th>Composed Royal Entertainments</th>
<th>Composed Court Entertainments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Lyly</td>
<td>1554-1625</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Copyright Manager</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>MA, CAM.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Parliament</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>poetry, translation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>poetry, translation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Peele</td>
<td>b. 1558-1556</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Copyright Manager</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>MA, CAM.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Parliament</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>poetry, translation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>poetry, translation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Lodge</td>
<td>1559-1625</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Physician of the Court</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>BA, CAM.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Parliament</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>poetry, verse</td>
<td>translation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Greene</td>
<td>1569-1632</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Copyright Manager</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>MA, CAM.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Parliament</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>poetry, verse</td>
<td>translation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christopher Marston</td>
<td>b. 1554-1555</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>MA, CAM.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>poetry, translation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Hacb</td>
<td>b. 1557-1561</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>BA, CAM.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>poetry, translation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Wilson</td>
<td>1540-1608</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>poetry, verse</td>
<td>translation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Fyld</td>
<td>b. 1556-1576</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Copyright Manager</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>poetry, verse</td>
<td>translation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Chapman</td>
<td>1559-1564</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>poetry, translation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Chevery</td>
<td>c. 1560-1567</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Copyright Manager</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>poetry, translation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony Vandy</td>
<td>b. 1550-1553</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>poetry, verse</td>
<td>translation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Blyton</td>
<td>1565-1581</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>poetry, verse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Shakespeare</td>
<td>1564-1616</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Copyright Manager</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>poetry, verse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westminster Smith</td>
<td>1575-1587</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>poetry, verse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Delar</td>
<td>c. 1572-1622</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>poetry, verse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben Jonson</td>
<td>1573-1637</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>poetry, verse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Heywood</td>
<td>c. 1573-1641</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Copyright Manager</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>poetry, verse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Day</td>
<td>1574-1592</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>poetry, verse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Marston</td>
<td>1576-1604</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Copyright Manager</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>poetry, verse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Weldon</td>
<td>1576-1638</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Copyright Manager</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>poetry, verse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Fletcher</td>
<td>1579-1625</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Copyright Manager</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>poetry, verse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Walshe</td>
<td>b. 1562-1567</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Copyright Manager</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>poetry, verse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philip Massinger</td>
<td>1569-1620</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Copyright Manager</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>poetry, verse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis Beaumont</td>
<td>1584-1616</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Copyright Manager</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>poetry, verse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Rawley</td>
<td>1585-1636</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Copyright Manager</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>poetry, verse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Hart</td>
<td>b. 1586-1625</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Copyright Manager</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>poetry, verse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathan Field</td>
<td>1584-1637</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Copyright Manager</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>poetry, verse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Hoileton</td>
<td>c. 1598-1633</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Copyright Manager</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>poetry, verse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1
The first six playwrights listed (Lyly, Peele, Lodge, Greene, Marlowe, and Nashe) are those who generally carry the group identification of the “University Wits.” Their place here is that of something like a “control group.” Their dramatic careers largely ended within the first ten to fifteen years covered by this chart, and they represent an older generation of authors with interests and goals quite different from those of the emerging crop of professional playwrights. “Older” should not be taken to mean simply an expression of age, since the authors in this group were born in years that also mark the births of some of the other dramatists listed; but instead, the term is intended to reflect the fact that these authors “wrote a good portion of their plays before 1590 and were dead or had deserted the commercial theatres before the end of the century” (Bentley Dramatist 26). The careers of the wits are by no means uniform, but they are connected by the status of being university graduates, an accomplishment achieved by only two (8.7%) of the twenty-three remaining dramatists on the list (or three [13%] if Jonson's honorary degree is to be counted). Even factoring in those dramatists who attended university but did not earn a degree, the number is still only nine of twenty-three (39.1%). The wits also wrote fewer plays than the subsequent generation of dramatists: Lyly wrote eight, Peele eight, Lodge two, Greene six, Marlowe seven, Nashe two. It is easy to imagine that Marlowe would have continued on in his theatrical career to write more plays; however, his output of seven plays in seven years would be considered rather infrequent writing for later dramatists. Of course, this is partly due to the increased demand for

---

4 Collaboration are counted for each contributing author. For example, *A Looking-Glasse for London and England*, written by Greene and Lodge, is included in both of their respective totals. Similarly, Peele's contribution to *Titus Andronicus* is counted among his plays. Debates about attribution continue for some of the plays counted, so numbers are necessarily approximate, though every effort has been made toward accuracy.
plays that was just beginning to take hold in Marlowe's final years—a demand that can also account for the fact that the wits were far less frequent collaborators than their successors.

    John Lyly stands out among the wits because he is marked as occupying an attachment to a company, but this categorization needs clarification. His work with the boys began at court, where his first two plays were performed by “Oxford's Boys,” a troupe put together by Lyly's patron, the Earl of Oxford, and described by G.K. Hunter as “a nonce group composed, as title-pages state, of 'the Children of her Majesty's Chapel and the Boys of [St.] Paul's [Cathedral]’” (“Lyly”). These two plays were also “rehearsed” at Blackfriars in front of paying audiences. Lyly had been given temporary control over the Blackfriars property and so managed productions of his plays there until some point in 1584 when the landlord of the property procured a court order to regain control of the space and put an end to theatrical productions. Lyly then focused his attentions on Paul's Boys and wrote plays for them to be performed at court and in the private playhouse in St. Paul's. He worked as a sort of “deputy” to Thomas Giles, new choirmaster to Paul's; but he seems to have had a great deal of liberty as the company's playwright, perhaps partly due to his powerful connections with Oxford. Furthermore, as Gurr tells it, Giles was “less of a playmaker than [his predecessor] Westcott” (222), and so Lyly was able to take charge of that task with fairly little competition or interference from the choirmaster.

    Lyly's goal as playmaker was to gain favor at court, and his interest in the boys was fashioned to that end. Furthermore, we cannot think of him as an “attached dramatist” in the same way one might be for an adult company. Boy actors, unlike
professional adult players, had little to no control over choosing the plays they performed and the dramatists who wrote them. As Bentley explains, “[t]here is no evidence that these boys ever had anything to do with the administration of their activities, the selection of their plays, or any profit which might accrue from their endeavors. [. . .] [T]hey were not really professionals” (Bentley Player xii). Lyly did not have to convince the boy actors that his plays were worth performing, or would be sure audience drawers; the boys did what they were told. And having been in charge of the boys previously as their manager in the conglomerate group “Oxford's Boys,” along with his position as Oxford's servant and Giles' deputy, Lyly's role as dramatist was relatively secure, and can be described as one based on important connections, rather than artistic or commercial merit; though of course his literary fame undoubtedly earned him the trust of his superiors, at least until his style became outmoded and the subject of mockery by later dramatists.\(^5\) Shakespeare, Fletcher, and Massinger, on the other hand, certainly had to prove themselves to company members as skilled dramatists in order to ensure their attachment—plenty of plays by other professionals were available for performance should they find themselves incapable of producing what the company wanted.\(^6\)

The remaining twenty-three dramatists who appear on the above spreadsheet can

---

\(^5\) The stability of this recognized association, and the assumption of the author's control over the boys' productions got Lyly into some trouble in 1590 during the Marprelate controversy. Even though “there is no indication that it was his plays that gave offense” (Gurr 223), Lyly was held responsible as the leader of the group; and when the Paul's playhouse shut down in that year, “Lyly's career promptly went into terminal decline” (226).

\(^6\) This is likely to be especially true for Fletcher and Massinger. Unlike Shakespeare, they were not actors and shareholders in the King's Men, and probably Shakespeare's opinion consequently weighed heavily in that company in a way that theirs might not have done. Furthermore, as time went on there were more plays already in the repertory that could be revived and reworked for performance, limiting the company's reliance on a productive attached dramatist.
all be described in Bentley's terms as those who “wrote or collaborated in a dozen or more plays for the commercial theatres” \(^7\) [. . .], who were clearly being paid for their literary efforts, and who in a general sense may be considered more or less professional, at least for a certain period of years” (Dramatist 26).\(^8\) However, despite having these things in common, as the spreadsheet shows, many of these men had experiences both within and outside the theater that made their lives and careers very different. Based on the information outlined in the spreadsheet and from opinions expressed in the writing of the authors themselves, I have placed each of these men in one of the following four “forms of affiliation”: Attached Dramatists, Commercial Professionals, Literary Dramatists, and Gentleman Authors. Each of these categories represents a distinct level of investment in and acknowledgment of belonging to the profession of playwright. Because affiliations often changed as careers progressed and opportunities arose or disappeared, many of these authors could be placed in different categories at different points in their careers. I have nonetheless attempted to place each man in the category to which he seems to have most willingly belonged; or, in other words, where he might have thought himself or wished himself to be had he been asked the question. These categories are useful to the understanding of playwriting as a profession because,

\(^7\) The “dozen or more plays” mentioned is undoubtedly a conservative estimate, even as a minimum requirement of professionalism for most of these playwrights. The scarcity of extant evidence in the form of company records and playtexts means that much of the playwriting activity of this period is undocumented. It is more than likely that the number of plays actually written or contributed to by these dramatists is significantly higher than what can be shown through the materials available to us.

\(^8\) The one exception is Nathan Field, to whom eight plays have been attributed (two solo works and “at least six” collaborations [Cauthen]). Field is included because he was extensively involved in the theatrical community, and had, at the end of his career, a close collaborative relationship with John Fletcher that seems to suggest that, had he not died in 1619 or 1620, he would have been a candidate for Fletcher's successor as attached dramatist to the King's Men. At the very least, it can be assumed that their collaborative relationship would have continued, and Field would have reached the “dozen or more plays” Bentley cites as characteristic of a professional dramatist's output.
although it did not have the strictly enforced hierarchy and apprenticeship system of a livery company, similar models of professional behavior existed in less structured ways in relationships between playwrights. This means that authors from different categories found themselves working together in various forms of collaboration, and their individual attitudes about plays and playwriting (the result of their level of affiliation to that profession) become evident in their behavior as contributors to multi-authored texts. And by “behavior,” I do not simply mean their congeniality or aloofness, but also their stylistic behavior, exemplified by choices they made about the content and form of their writing, and the extent to which they were willing to subdue their individual style or adapt it to that of their co-authors.

**Attached Dramatists**

William Shakespeare

John Fletcher

Philip Massinger

These dramatists followed a career trajectory that led them into intimate involvement with one theater company—in all three cases the King’s Men—and their success in the commercial theater reflects a high level of engagement, and also power, in the formation and maintenance of the profession of playwright. Perhaps this particular company was uniquely equipped to provide a comfortable living for its attached dramatist, especially with the security of royal patronage. It may also be true that the success of the company can in some part be attributed to the talents of its primary dramatists, who supplied the plays that gained and maintained royal favor. Although Shakespeare was involved through the treble affiliation of dramatist, actor, and
shareholder, the other two were not, and yet were not drawn away from that company to more lucrative opportunities—though Fletcher did, during his tenure with King’s, collaborate on a few plays for other companies. This might suggest that to be “just” the dramatist for the company did not provide adequate financial stability, and so Fletcher had to find other buyers for his wares. But it could just as easily mean that Fletcher simply wrote more than could possibly be used by one company, or contributed to projects that were spearheaded by other dramatists intending to sell them to other companies.\(^9\) In any case, the prestige of the position of attached dramatist to the King’s Men undeniably conferred meaningful status on its occupant, who wore the King’s livery and enjoyed the “pre-eminence at court” (Gurr 366) that supplied added funds and acted as a meaningful advertisement for his plays. The public would want to see what the King was seeing—and though we have no evidence of extant playbills for public performances (Stern 37), one can imagine that, like many title pages of printed plays, the playbills would have capitalized on the fact that the play had been performed at court by proclaiming it to the public, which would undoubtedly fuel the same kind of attraction that drew audiences to the Blackfriars “rehearsals” for the boy players’ court performances.

As collaborators, these authors (once they reached the position of attachment) are best described as the equivalent of masters to an apprentice.\(^10\) The relative financial

---

\(^9\) What this does tell us is that Fletcher must not have had a formal “contract” with the King's Men. Or, if he did, it either did not require exclusivity, or such a requirement was made, but not enforced. Given Fletcher's output of plays, it is possible that the King's Men didn't mind his involvement in outside work, since it was not impeding him from producing enough plays for them.

\(^10\) The collaboration between Shakespeare and Middleton is of a different sort, since Middleton was not being “apprenticed” or brought into a position of attachment. The nature of the relationship between these two dramatists is the subject of chapter four and will be analyzed in detail there. Shakespeare's
stability, obvious commercial success, and lower required rate of productivity (around two plays a year) of these dramatists gave them the status and power to influence and teach aspiring playwrights a trade that they had clearly mastered. As the first attached dramatist for the Chamberlain's/King's Men, Shakespeare in a sense created this position, and his late-career collaboration with Fletcher looks like a period of training for the younger dramatist who had been writing for the King's Men already (though not exclusively), and who would take over the secure position occupied by Shakespeare upon his retirement in 1613. This is not to say that Shakespeare taught Fletcher “how to write,” but the former did have insight and understanding of the King's Men company that he could pass on to his successor, and we have already seen how advantageous such detailed knowledge of a company's members and audience could be. In “Shakespeare and the Blackfriars Theatre,” Bentley suggests that the King's Men's new acquisition of Blackfriars in 1608 caused the company to seek out the talents of Fletcher and his collaborator Francis Beaumont, who had already shown themselves talented writers for private theater audiences (45). As a leading member of the company, Shakespeare undoubtedly had significant input in this decision making and might have seen certain promise in the existing compositions of these two authors. Bentley postulates, albeit tentatively, that “the association between Fletcher and Shakespeare from 1608 to 1614 was closer than has usually been thought” (49), and asks that we consider the possibilities that “Shakespeare was at least an adviser in the preparation of Philaster, A King and No King, and The Maid's Tragedy for his fellows,” and “that Shakespeare, the old public involvement in the composition of The Book of Sir Thomas More also stands out as a seemingly different kind of collaborative activity from that which he engaged in with Fletcher. Complicated questions of attribution, dating, and censorship surround this manuscript and complicate the nature of its multiple authorship. These questions will be examined at length in chapter three.
theatre playwright, preparing his first and crucial play for a private theatre, might have asked advice—or even taken it—from the two young dramatists who had written plays for this theatre and audience four or five times before” (*ibid*.). These speculations imply that influence between Shakespeare and Fletcher (and Beaumont) was not one-sided. But the fact remains that the initial decision to bring Fletcher in to a close association with the King's Men was one made in part by Shakespeare. Uniquely aware of the specific needs of his company, especially upon their new occupation of Blackfriar's, with its smaller space and different audience composition from the Globe, Shakespeare perhaps saw in Fletcher the attributes required to be his successor—and his choice proved a good one.

Fletcher was, unlike Shakespeare, one prone to collaboration. He had many co-authors; but as an attached dramatist, his most important collaborative relationship was with Massinger in the final years of his life. The two worked together on “approximately seventeen plays, and when Fletcher died, Massinger inherited his role as principal playwright” (McMullan). Noticeably, the “approximately seventeen” plays attributed to this pair significantly oversteps the expected two plays a year for an attached dramatist. This can be explained by the fact that Massinger was not yet attached at the time, and so he perhaps needed to produce more in order to make a living. We know that between 1621 and 1625, in what looks like his apprenticeship period with Fletcher, Massinger wrote five solo plays for the companies performing at the Phoenix or Cockpit theater (Garrett). Collaboration with Fletcher had an impact on Massinger, so much so that he continued the relationship even after Fletcher's death when he took up the post of attached dramatist to the King's Men. As the principal dramatist for that company, he revised and reworked a number of plays, some that had been originally by Fletcher only,
and some that had been collaborations with Massinger as a contributor.

**Commercial Professionals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Robert Wilson</th>
<th>William Haughton</th>
<th>John Day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Henry Chettle</td>
<td>John Webster</td>
<td>Richard Hathway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wentworth Smith</td>
<td>William Rowley</td>
<td>Thomas Heywood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Dekker</td>
<td>Nathan Field</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The largest group of the four, these professional playwrights found their livelihood in long and/or productive careers in the theater—and it is perhaps to this group that the term “regular” can be applied as a career descriptor because the breadth of its meaning makes it applicable to all of these dramatists, even those with sporadic engagements with dramatic writing. Some of these writers were very productive contributors to the supply of plays for the commercial theater. For example, if Heywood's claim in his preface “To the Reader” of *The English Traveler* in 1633 is to be believed, he “had an entire hand or, at the least a maine finger” in “two hundred and twenty” plays (5). These authors did not follow the same trajectory as Shakespeare, Fletcher, and Massinger; but their interest and investment in the establishment and characterization of the community of authors would be equal to that of the attached dramatists. There is very scant information about some of the members of this group—particularly Smith, Haughton, and Hathway—and their placement in this category is the result of some conjecture, though one hopes that the increased scholarly attention paid in recent years to early modern dramatists other than Shakespeare is a sign that interest in these lesser-known writers may lead to new knowledge about their careers. The information we do have points to the desire or intention for a long-standing association
with dramatic writing. Though Webster did not write as prolifically as other dramatists in this category, writing, according to Bentley “14 [plays] in about 24 years” (*Dramatist* 29), his association with these dramatists as collaborators, his innovative dramatic style, and his continued interest in playwriting (despite his slow pace of composition) mark him as one deeply invested in the playwriting profession. It is upon those grounds that I find him to be best defined as a Commercial Professional.

We have very little evidence of contracts between dramatists and playing companies. Knutson provides examples from Henslowe's diary of contracts between Porter and Chettle and the Admiral's Men and between Daborne and Henslowe; however, it is unclear whether the playwrights are contracting themselves to Henslowe or to the company (55). The difference is crucial because the former would be a financial agreement, the latter a professional one. In any case, none of these agreements seem to have been strictly enforced, and it looks as though playwrights were able to move freely through company relationships. In Carson's words, “players do seem to have tried to bind their dramatists to them from time to time [. . .]. But such schemes seem to have been fruitless” (63). Furthermore, none of the contracts listed in the diary enforced the sort of exclusivity of the more detailed contract of Richard Brome, the breaking of which led to proceedings in the Court of Requests in 1640 (Bentley *Dramatist* 74).

For the Commercial Professionals, collaboration was often a means to work more quickly on multiple texts at once, thus facilitating higher productivity and higher pay. Many of these professionals collaborated more often than not, which is true of other dramatists in other categories as well; but the driving force behind such extensive collaboration is, for this group, largely financial. As Bentley points out, professional
dramatists “took in more cash from their professional activities than was usual for writers or for those in some related professions” (Dramatist 89). This earning power depended on the ability to work quickly and to multi-task. Frequent writing did not always keep these authors from debt—despite Bentley's crediting them with involvement in 64 and 50 plays respectively (28), Dekker and Chettle both had seemingly continuous problems with money, as did others. But most critics now agree that these problems were the result of over-spending rather than being under-paid.

Henslowe's diary gives evidence that these authors often worked in what Carson calls “syndicates,” groups whose members changed, sometimes frequently, but they also occasionally settled into fairly stable writing relationships. For example, in the Fall-Winter season of 1599-1600, “Chettle, Dekker, Drayton, Hathway, Haughton, Day, and Munday (with the assistance in one play of Wilson) [ . . .] did all the writing for the entire season.” This small group of impressively active writers divided themselves into two syndicates: “Drayton and Munday collaborated with Hathway and Wilson; Chettle and Dekker worked with Day and Haughton, who seem to have formed some sort of a partnership. The groups functioned independently – Hathway always collaborating with Drayton and Munday, Haughton only writing with Chettle, Dekker, or Ford” (59). Interestingly, the only two in this list not included in the category of Commercial Professionals are Munday and Drayton, who are both, as will be explained, part of the next grouping (Literary Dramatists), and who wrote together in the first syndicate listed by Carson. Perhaps these two worked particularly well together as a result of their common perspective in relation to the profession of dramatist—a perspective that will be discussed under their categorical heading. The existence of these syndicates suggests that
groups were able to figure out a winning formula for putting together dramatic texts. Roles within the groups were probably fairly stable, and once responsibilities had been meted out in a way that proved functional and led to successful final products, it must have been easy to see the benefit, both artistic and commercial, of working in such a stable collaborative relationship. Just as playwrights were often better equipped to write for a company whose members and audience were familiar to them, entering into a collaborative endeavor with foreknowledge of the other dramatists' stylistic tendencies, strengths, and weaknesses would make it much easier to take advantage of, and work around, those unique authorial identities.

Hierarchical relationships are difficult to identify amongst the Commercial Professionals; however, something like an apprenticeship system was in place, wherein less experienced dramatists might be paired with seasoned professionals in collaborative relationships through which the tools of the trade might be handed down. Carson finds evidence for such relationships in Henslowe's diary in the fact that “a number of playwrights mentioned appear first as protégés or associates of more established authors,” and “[f]requently, authors were paid less than the usual £6 fee for their first play” (60).

Again, the difference between learning how to write plays and learning how to be a playwright is an important one. The experienced Commercial Professionals would teach their co-authors methods of collaboration and multi-tasking, and perhaps expose them to current trends in writing that would allow them to earn a living while still expressing their own personal style as authors.

As a useful analogy, one might think of a dressmaker teaching his apprentice how to measure and cut cloth to a pattern, the different stitches that might be used in putting
the pieces together, and the other necessary skills that go into making a dress. However, if that apprentice has any hope of becoming a successful dressmaker himself, he will make his own decisions about what fabric to use, where slight changes can be made to the pattern in order to make the dress fit better or more flatteringly, and what ornamental pieces will be added to give the garment flair and individual recognizability as the product of its particular maker. The apprentice learns from the master the mechanics of how to make a dress, but it is up to him to figure out how to make his dresses the ones that women will want to buy. The same is true of playwrights, who can learn how a play is made, but must decide for themselves what that play is made of. As Middleton explains in his epistle to *The Roaring Girl*, written with Thomas Dekker, “fashion” and “invention” are as important to the making of plays as they are to the making of clothes:

The fashion of play-making I can properly compare to nothing so naturally as the alteration in apparel: for in the time of the great-crop doublet, your huge bombasted plays, quilted with mighty words to lean purpose, was only then in fashion; and as the doublet fell, neater inventions began to set up. Now in the time of spruceness, our plays follow the niceness of our garments: single plots, quaint conceits, lecherous jests dressed up in hanging sleeves; and those are fit for he times and the termers. (1-9)

Knowledge, and even anticipation, of the tastes of “the times and the termers” in early modern London was as important for the success of an aspiring playmaker as it was for a professional clothier. And, as Middleton points out, the singular dominance of the “great-crop doublet” and the “huge bombasted plays” (characteristic of the older style of dramatic writing popular in the time of the university wits), is replaced by not just one, but many “neater inventions” in fashion and theatrical composition. As the market for dramatic material expanded in the emerging commercial theater industry, invention and individuation in style became increasingly important for playwrights seeking a stable
position within their trade.

Another way some of these dramatists were able to work successfully with a theater company was by simultaneously playing the roles of actor and dramatist. Of the Commercial Professionals, Heywood, Rowley, Wilson, and Field were all also actors. William Rowley used this to his advantage by creating a reputation as a comedian who wrote roles for himself as the "fat clown" in a number of plays. This clearly allowed him the opportunity to capitalize on his own unique and recognizable style, even within a collaborative context. In the case of *A Fair Quarrel*, written with Thomas Middleton, the second issue of the play's first edition in 1617 advertises on the title page, "new Additions of Mr. Chaugh and Trimtrams Roaring, And the Bauds song," which refers to the inclusion of a new scene at the end of the fourth Act, written, it seems, entirely by Rowley and perhaps even without Middleton's consultation (*Companion* 633). Rowley probably acted the part of Chough, and it would not be unreasonable to assume that his own observation of the success of the existing roaring scene caused him and the company members to see the addition of more of that style to be a worthwhile means of boosting ticket (and book) sales. His position as actor, dramatist, and shareholder for the Duke of York's/Prince Charles' company at the time would have given him even more decision-making power for the production and revision of plays like *A Fair Quarrel*. The famous comic actor Robert Wilson is also known for writing plays that are "humorous, moralistic, populist, patriotic, and anti-Catholic, and generally contain a wise clown as a central character" (Kathman "Wilson"). Thus, his political/religious beliefs and his personal talents are showcased in his own compositions, since it only makes sense that he would perform the role of the "wise clown" himself. Irby B. Cauthen accuses Nathan
Field of “taking advantage of his fame as an actor and capitalizing upon it in an attempt to become a dramatist like those he admired and whose works he acted.” This is a less than complimentary description of the way that an actor/dramatist was especially well equipped to work with a company with which he was doubly tied, but the fact remains that there was special advantage to being an actor and a dramatist—both for the individual and the company.

**Literary Dramatists**

- Ben Jonson
- Michael Drayton
- George Chapman
- Anthony Munday
- Thomas Kyd
- Thomas Middleton

The careers of these authors are characterized by an interest in forms of writing other than drama; particularly those forms that confer upon their writer a level of status like that pursued by the university wits, including court and civic appointments. Kyd is, like Smith, Haughton, and Hathway in the previous category, placed here as a result of some conjecture, since arguably the least is known about his life and writing. With the exception of Middleton, the Literary Dramatists all had patrons at one time or another. Though each of these authors wrote prolifically for the stage, self-identification as a career playwright would have been, for some, reluctant and likely based on economic necessity rather than investment in the establishment of the profession. This is not to say that these men were not interested in playwriting, but rather that they found its uses to be, ideally, for purposes of self-promotion rather than commercial or financial success based on the opinion of the masses that composed theater audiences. These authors did not (or were not able to) single-mindedly pursue prestige: Jonson and Munday were also actors,
which would not be a means of advancing social status; and, as mentioned above,
Munday and Drayton worked extensively as collaborators with other dramatists for
Henslowe. But these forays into work more characteristic of the Commercial
Professionals are, again, probably based on the need to make a living—neither Jonson
nor Munday achieved any great reputation as actors.

Munday is in fact a complicated individual to place in these categories of
affiliation. His career, both in and out of the theater, was varied and somewhat
mysterious. As the spreadsheet shows, he had a number of things in common with
Chapman: they both benefited from the system of patronage, both had positions within
the court, wrote entertainments (Chapman for the court, Munday for civic occasions), and
composed non-dramatic poetry and translations, though Munday also wrote non-dramatic
prose as well.11 But Chapman was never an actor, he wrote for the boy companies, and
he attended university (without receiving a degree). Furthermore, Chapman's attitude
toward writing is aligned much more closely with that of Jonson. As Gordon Braden
explains it:

Chapman was the most intellectually ambitious of the English Renaissance
dramatists, the one with the highest claim for the philosophical dignity and
importance of his work. His nearest rival was his friend and sometime
collaborator Ben Jonson; and, like Jonson, he based much of his claim to

11 These small distinctions are perhaps important ones. Court entertainments would have been more
desirable projects for the high-minded Chapman, and Munday's many prose compositions include A
View of Sundry Examples (1580), a collection of sensational news stories—a kind of writing best
compared to modern tabloid magazines, and thus not an undertaking that would gain prestige for the
author. Conversely, he also made an attempt to take “the moral high ground” (Branyan) In that same
year by speaking out against the theater in a Second and Third Blast of Retreat From Plays and
Theaters, which shows his troubled association with that professional affiliation, at least for a time.
According to Branyan, he soon “found an even worthier podium of bourgeois respectability in his
conspicuous anti-Catholicism,” beginning with A Brief Discourse of the Taking of Edmund Campion in
1581. Munday begins to look like one who would try anything he could to support himself financially,
and if that support could come from a source that would also confer respectability upon him—all the
better. Yet, as many of these pursuits took place outside, and even against, the theater, he belongs more
to the category of Literary Dramatist than Commercial Professional.
seriousness on his study and use of the wisdom of classical antiquity, with much overt display of scholarship.

For Jonson and Chapman, then, writing is meant to be an intellectual and artistic pursuit.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Jonson's editing out of his collaborators in his 1616 Works, when he included collaborative plays at all, is an act representative of his attitude toward the integrity and value of his personal writing style. According to James Bednarz, Jonson “repeatedly claimed that he alone possessed a credible form of poetic authority, based on neoclassical standards that demolished his rivals' literary pretensions” (2).

Famously criticized for including plays in his collection, Jonson was making a statement about the potential for dramatic compositions to be considered works of art rather than commercial goods.

In Every Man Out of His Humour, which will be discussed in more detail below, Jonson emphasizes the value of “good” plays as vehicles for instruction and artful entertainment in the voice of his own authorial vehicle, Asper, who states his ambitions for his play in the Induction scene:

Good men and virtuous spirits that loath their vices
Will cherish my free labours, love my lines,
And with the fervour of their shining grace
Make my brain fruitful to bring forth more objects
Worthy their serious and intentive eyes.
But why enforce I this? As fainting? No.
If any here chance to behold himself,
Let him not dare to challenge me of wrong,
For, if he shame to have his follies known,
First he should shame to act 'em. My strict hand
Was made to seize on vice, and with a grip
Crush out the humour of such spongy souls
As lick up every idle vanity. (133-45)

Jonson's work requires a specific audience, and a close relationship between author and
select audience wherein the “fervour” of those enlightened members will make his brain “fruitful” in producing more edifying fare upon which they may feed. It would have been beneath the Literary Dramatist in Jonson to seek the approval of audiences en masse and without distinction, but he cleverly skirts this debasement by appealing to the heterogeneous audience at the Globe (where this play was performed), perhaps with the intent of encouraging each member of the audience to wish or imagine himself to be one of those “Good men and virtuous spirits” who should enjoy the coming play and recognize, through their enlightenment, the true value of Jonson’s art. This is a similar tactic to one employed often in epilogues to plays, where the speaker incites the audience to applause through flattery or special appeal to a common understanding or experience between speaker and audience member. Shakespeare makes Puck beg for applause in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, and Prospero also relies on audience sympathies for his very freedom in The Tempest:

Unless I be relieved by prayer,
Which pierces so, that it assaults
Mercy itself, and frees all faults,
As you from crimes would pardoned be,
Let your indulgence set me free. (16-20)

Despite the common reliance upon audience understanding and acceptance, there is an obvious difference between Jonson’s attempts to control his audience in Every Man Out’s Induction and Shakespeare’s and others’ pleas for praise in epilogues, especially if Stern is correct that we should consider the bulk of prologues and epilogues in early modern drama to be special additions used only for first or occasional performances (83). Jonson, through Asper, imposes his will on the viewers and readers of his text by making that will a permanent part of their experience of the play. His self-confident assertion of the
purpose and meaning of his art is a part of the work, not to be replaced or displaced in later performance. Furthermore, Asper's purpose is not like Prospero's “project [. . .] to please” (12-13), but rather his “strict hand / Was made to seize on vice, and with a grip / Crush out the humour of such spongy souls / As lick up every idle vanity.” In his mind, Jonson does not pander his art to the fancy of his audience, but expects them to heighten their understanding through appreciation of the unique value of his work. Not all Literary Dramatists felt these convictions so strongly, but their desire for literary recognition in some form is different from the desire for popular approval and financial security that comes from writing plays as an unapologetic professional. An enigmatic figure indeed, Jonson stands out as the only dramatist on the chart to have been involved in absolutely every category of professional affiliation listed. While he at times ardently spoke and acted out his beliefs about the value of dramatic writing, he also seems to have taken every opportunity afforded him to try to advance and/or support himself within and outside the commercial theater industry.

Placing Middleton confidently in this category is not as easy as placing Jonson or Chapman, and may lead to some questions. On one hand, he did occupy the position of City Chronologer, worked on translations, and wrote non-dramatic poetry, pamphlets, pageants, and Lord Mayor's shows, and thus can be seen to have pursued positions outside the theater. On the other hand, his career in the theater was well established, and its end was probably enforced rather than voluntary after the scandal caused by *A Game At Chess* in 1624 (Taylor “Lives” 49). Regardless of this circumstantial divorce from dramatic writing, I believe Middleton's career to be most like that of some of the other Literary Dramatists listed here, his range of interests and involvements, in its breadth,
looking much like that of Munday. Their playwriting activity proves that neither condemned writing for the stage for commercial profit, and neither seemed to mind the artistic “imposition” of collaborative relationships (as Jonson imagined it to be); however, Middleton, Munday, and Jonson all have in common a clear interest in self-promotion outside the theater; and unlike the Attached Dramatists and Commercial Professionals, they sought appointments that had nothing to do with writing for the commercial theater. Jonson and Middleton specifically have in common the position of City Chronologer, and extensive involvement in the production of both civic and court entertainments. Middleton was a great deal less resistant to being associated with the profession of playwright than Jonson was, but his career goals were, like Jonson's, often more aspirational than a life in the theater could satisfy.

**Gentleman Authors**

Francis Beaumont

John Marston

John Ford

All three of these dramatists came to playwriting from having spent at least some time at university (Beaumont and Ford never receiving a degree); and Beaumont was a member of the Inner Temple, Ford and Marston the Middle. The first two of these men had a short lived, though highly productive career in the theater, and then abruptly left the scene; Beaumont upon his marriage to a wealthy heiress in 1613, and Marston in 1607 to eventually become a priest in 1609. Further details of these authors' careers, relating to publication of their works and stylistic tendencies suggest that their engagement with the establishment of the profession of playwright was minimal. They made significant
contributions to the corpus of early modern drama, but their personal investment in the writing of plays was not a choice of professional affiliation based on financial need or the lack of other options. Beaumont and Marston left the theater to pursue very different lifestyles, and Ford had a significant professional life in the Middle Temple before he turned to writing plays (and we in fact do not know how and where Ford's life and career ended).

Ford's story is somewhat different from the other two. His career in the Middle Temple gives the impression that he was rebellious and restless, ill-suited to the profession of a lawyer, and it is not entirely certain whether he ever actually practiced law. Like Marston, he had a troubled relationship with that institution: Ford was expelled for about two years during the 1605-1606 term for not paying his buttery bill; and in 1617, he and forty other members of the Middle Temple were suspended for not wearing the traditional lawyer's caps. Seemingly unhappy with his professional associations, Ford moved on to writing; first prose, then plays. Bentley compares Ford's attitude to playwriting with that of the “amateurs,” or dabblers in dramatic composition. In other words, he states that Ford “did not think of himself as a professional playwright,” and his dramatic activity reflects that disconnection from the profession (Dramatist 34).

Paul A. Cantor argues that “Ford pushed Renaissance drama to its limits” through his use of “normally taboo themes” and complex plot structures. This sort of stylistic extravagance and flagrant innovation can be seen in Beaumont's only solo play, Knight of the Burning Pestle, as well, which suggests something about the dramatists in this

---

12 Marston was expelled from the Middle Temple for a few weeks in October, 1601 for “nonpayment of commons and other causes” (qtd. in Geckle). What those “other causes” were is unclear, unfortunately; but one wonders if his generally irascible temperament had anything to do with it.
category. I proposed earlier that for a playwright like Chettle, the “promotion” of new genres and styles was a much safer bet than strict “innovation.” However, for Gentleman Authors like Ford, who received a legacy of around twenty pounds a year upon the death of his brother in 1616 (Cantor), and Beaumont and Marston, who obviously had other options for financial subsistence, radical innovation was not quite so risky because the financial consequences of failure were far less threatening.

Beaumont's authorial activities shed light on the circumstances of a Gentleman Author's investment in playwriting, and especially collaboration. His one independent work, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, was a commercial failure (perhaps showing that he, at that point, had little understanding of or interest in the market for which he was writing). His continued collaborative relationship with Fletcher is less like an apprenticeship than a personal engagement between friends, and resulted in a number of successful plays. He was not, however, interested in advancing his career as a playwright, as his advantageous marriage and retreat to the country show; so his authorial style is notoriously difficult to identify. According to Cyrus Hoy's extensive study of “The Shares of Fletcher and His Collaborators in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon,” Beaumont's language is “flexible and various” and his “preferences are not essentially different from Fletcher's” (III 86). I will, in chapter five, examine at length the collaborative relationship between Beaumont and Fletcher, but for the purposes of defining these categories of affiliation, it is important to note that an absence of personal style in a collaborative context can sometimes be a sign of the elusive author's lack of interest in self-promotion as a professional playwright.

While it is clear that no group is monolithic, and each of the dramatists listed here
is worthy of individual investigation as a member of the early modern playwriting community, some conclusions can be drawn about the attitudes toward playwriting and collaboration generally supported by the members of each of the above four forms of affiliation. The proportions alone tell us something about the most common form a professional playwright's career would take. There are far more Commercial Professionals than there are members of any other group—in fact, almost as many as all the others groups combined. Eleven out of twenty-three (48%) of the playwrights mentioned were Commercial Professionals. In a way, this is not surprising because the defining terms of that category are arguably the least restrictive of the four. However, this group is not meant to serve as a “catch-all” for playwrights who just do not seem to fit anywhere else. Rather, this category is the place where we can see the many elements and backgrounds that came together in the formation of the profession of playwright. As the largest group, and the one containing the most prolific writers of all, who were also most likely to work with numerous collaborators and for multiple theater companies, the Commercial Professionals include some of the most powerful and influential members of the playwriting community. They share with the Attached Dramatists a deep investment in contributing to the establishment, control, and promotion of the profession of playwright.

In collaboration, it was important for dramatists from any of these categories interested in securing positions for themselves in the professional community to assert their individuality. As Stern explains, the common (though largely pejorative) term “play-patchers” was often used to describe playwrights in the period because “the writers of the texts are, like shoe-makers, constructing their artifacts of discrete and separate
pieces” (1). This is especially true of collaborative works. Though Stern goes on to say that “when the joints are ill-fitting or overly visible, that is a problem” (*ibid.*), I would argue that it is just as frequently a sign of intentional dissonance. The “discrete and separate pieces” give us evidence of the unique styles and voices of the contributing authors, and it is likely that such recognizability would have, to some extent, been desirable to a professional playwright seeking to promote himself and his abilities. His “patches” are his signature on the text, evidence of his ability to stand out from his co-authors. The extent to which a collaborative text reveals signs of “patchiness” may be useful information about how well and how willingly its authors worked together. Chettle is a good example of one probably more interested in advancement of the profession that would provide for him a stable income than in personal fame. His tendency to collaborate far more often than not and his stylistic adaptability make him an expert patcher of texts because his "seams" hardly show. On the other hand, a Literary Dramatist like Jonson, with the exception of his contribution to *Eastward Ho!*, was far less willing to let his patches blend in to those of his co-authors.

Looking for a moment at Chapman, Jonson, and Marston’s *Eastward Ho!*, which has been allotted a great deal of attention in studies of collaboration in the period, we can begin to see how the category with which an author is identified affected the way he approached collaborative projects. Modern interest in the play stems from a larger conversation about critical approaches to the study of multiple authorship and the preexisting biases that color our interpretations. In *Shakespeare, Co-Author*, Brian Vickers comments that “[u]nity is indeed a rare commodity in co-authored plays” (29), but does not go on to explain what he means by “unity” and takes for granted that
whatever “unity” is, it is a universally desired and desirable “commodity.” As Suzanne Gossett observes, “editors have not abandoned the traditional view that a successful work of art, no matter how many persons participated in its creation, is ultimately singular” (“Editing” 215). The success of a collaborative play is, in our time, determined on a spectrum that posits unity as the ideal and condemns dissonance as indication of a flawed or inferior text. *Eastward Ho!* is an extremely successful collaboration in these terms, since it is often praised for its “unity,” which can be taken to mean a coherence wherein no author's particular style is evident. The play's style is ideal because entirely effacing of the individual author. According to Heather Anne Hirschfeld, “the play is a seamless blend of references and allusions that perform an apotropaic function: the authors fill their work with *others’* language in order to prevent the loss of their *own*” (44). In this view, the authors are abandoning their own styles in order to save them, as if allowing them to coexist in one play would rob them of their individual splendor. As Gossett points out, Hirschfeld's “very words seem chosen to suggest that to collaborate is to be diminished: [. . .] Hirschfeld accepts a view of authorship as primarily individualistic and of collaboration as a sign of inferiority” (“Marston” 187). However, the individual could and did still exist in a collaborative context, and there is no less opportunity for an author working in collaboration to assert his stylistic identity should he choose to do so. R. W. Van Fossen, in his introduction to the 1979 Revels edition of *Eastward Ho!* , celebrates that “[o]n the seamlessness and the excellency of the collaboration, almost everyone who has approached the problem, from whatever perspective, agrees” (3). Here, “seamlessness and excellency” appear to mean the same thing—and we can only assume that the “problem” he refers to is the act of collaboration itself, which, by implication,
generally works in opposition to “seamlessness and excellency.” But unity was not necessarily an ideal for early modern dramatists, so we must consider *Eastward Ho!* as a product of its particular co-authors and consider the possible reasons for the suppression of individual stylistic voice in this work.

One problem with Hirschfeld's description of the authors' stylistic intentions in this play is that it considers all three writers to be of one mind in relation to their work. She assumes, by grouping the three into one, that they all have the same goals for and attitudes about the play on which they collaborated, and about the practice of collaboration itself. In a necessary step toward complicating the question of authorial intention in multi-authored works, we can perhaps draw some conclusions about what each of the authors of *Eastward Ho!* might have thought about their collaborative endeavor based on their "Form of Affiliation.” Chapman and Jonson, the Literary Dramatists with perhaps the most investment in personal promotion, not as playwrights, but as literary artists, both valued, in Braden's words, "the study and use of the wisdom of classical antiquity, with much overt display of scholarship" in their works. Clearly, both of these authors saw their texts as expressions of themselves, and so collaboration did pose something of a problem for them. Because "the early career of Ben Jonson forms a progression from a kind of apprenticeship spent writing with other men to preponderently individual authorship" (Gossett "Marston" 182), we can conclude that Jonson probably preferred to work by himself. A similar conclusion can be drawn about Chapman, since "in his later dramatic career he, like Jonson, wrote alone" *(ibid.).* Furthermore, we must remember Jonson's deliberate exclusion of collaboratively written plays in his *Works*, and, as discussed in the previous chapter, his editing out of his collaborator in *Sejanus*
before deeming the play worthy of inclusion in the collection. His 1597 imprisonment for *Isle of Dogs*, written with Thomas Nashe, followed by his 1605 imprisonment for *Eastward Ho!* may reveal that the author had a rebellious streak that he was most willing to employ in collaboration. The somewhat quarrelsome Jonson may have found these occasions desirable opportunities for a bit of scandalous writing, but he would not have wanted his name sullied with responsibility for that offensive material. For him, the difference between being known as a writer and being known as a writer of scandal would have been an important one. And, to his mind, even his less controversial collaborative activities seem to have posed a threat to his reputation as a literary voice, again considering his unwillingness for it to be compromised in the example of *Sejanus*. True, *Eastward Ho!* was printed with the names of all three of its authors on the title page in 1605— but Chapman was quick to deny his and Jonson's responsibility for the controversial Scots references when he wrote to the King from prison, and his fellow inmate Jonson lamented paternal responsibility for the play as a whole in his letter to Salisbury (Gossett "Marston" 181).

Marston, the Gentleman Author, was by no means a frequent collaborator. Rather, as Gossett suggests, "it seems entirely possible that Marston had no effective experience of collaboration before he took part in the production of *Eastward Ho!*" ("Marston" 182). He also may not have taken part in punishment for the play's offensiveness— he was not imprisoned with Chapman and Jonson, and there is no concrete evidence of his being punished elsewhere. Despite his ability to avoid consequences for the finished work, the suggestion that Marston had the original idea for the play is convincing on the grounds that "it was Marston who owned a one-sixth share in the Blackfriars," and could see the
money-making potential provided by the opportunity to respond to the Paul's boys' production of *Westward Ho!*. And so, "[i]f Marston undertook to write the play in collaboration, it could have been the economic incentive, along with the need to complete and stage this provocative satire before the King's return from his progress, that drove him to work unusually closely with other men" (Gossett "Marston" 190). And that one of those other men was Ben Jonson, with whom Marston had a rather tempestuous relationship, suggests that the shareholder may have been willing to put aside his differences for the sake of expediting the production of a time-sensitive project, and to work with, rather than against, that equally talented writer of satire and city comedy.

The extent to which Marston was financially dependent on the theater is a contested point in scholarship. James Knowles takes for granted his "independent means," which "allowed him to disdain the search for patronage;" and, as noted by Gossett, "Philip Finkelpearl considers it 'fair to assume that Reader Marston's only son and heir was relatively wealthy after his father's death in 1599'" ("Marston" 183). However, "the consequences of his break with his father are sometimes assumed to account for his appearance in Henslowe's diary" (*ibid.*). We cannot know for sure the impact financial need had on Marston's engagement with the theater, but he did have enough money to purchase a share in the Blackfriar's some time in 1603-4, which argues against the idea that debtor's prison posed a looming threat to his survival (*ibid.*). Of course, by that time, he had been writing for the stage for at least four years, and was perhaps successful enough to have earned the money to purchase that share by writing plays. In any case, the virtues of speedy composition and financial benefit that came with his collaboration on *Eastward Ho!* were not sustainable motivations for Marston to set
aside his perpetually cantankerous attitude: "[t]he events of Marston's life demonstrate a constant tendency to reject cooperation or collaboration for competition and aggression" (Gossett "Marston" 196), and the mending of his relationship with Jonson was short-lived.

_Eastward Ho!_ works well as an example of the impact an author's form of affiliation can have on his involvement in works of multiple authorship. Chapman, Jonson, and Marston were not painstakingly combing through the text of this play to ensure its "seamlessness and excellency," or to pursue an ideal of artistic unity. Rather, as Literary Dramatists who probably preferred not to collaborate, Chapman and Jonson made no special efforts to refine this play because they did not have it in mind as a work that would represent their unique artistry (how could it, when so many hands were involved?). And Marston, the Gentleman Author who, it appears, did not like or need to collaborate,\(^\text{13}\) also did not need to work to create stable and amiable relationships in the profession with which his engagement was relatively brief and perhaps unsatisfying, since he left to become a clergyman only two years after _Eastward Ho!_’s controversial appearance on stage.

If, as Gossett suggests, this play is evidence of a particularly close collaboration, "more like those of Beaumont and Fletcher" ("Marston" 189), involving meetings between the authors and revisions and additions to each other's work, this was likely due to a need for speed, or even a result of mistrust rather than congeniality, especially between the ever-competitive Marston and Jonson. This intimate collaboration, then,

---

\(^{13}\) For him, collaboration may have been thought of in terms of “need,” since congenial relationships were anathema to his personality. I do not wish, however, to suggest that this was the common attitude for professional playwrights in general. As we have seen, collaboration was in fact preferred by many over sole authorship.
accounts for the quick composition of the play, but its "seamlessness" probably stems from the fact that Jonson seems to have written out the final copy (as Beaumont did for his most famous collaborations with Fletcher), and no doubt made revisions as he wrote. Though the content of this text is the product of the work of three authors, Jonson's supervisory role gave him ultimate control over the final shape and style of the play. Thus, it is not through authorial collusion to "fill their work with others' language in order to prevent the loss of their own" (Hirschfeld 44) that Eastward Ho! achieves its unity, but rather through the work of one author who took the time, even while in a hurry, to construct a final version of the text, perhaps without seeking the input of the other two.

The authors of Eastward Ho! could not have expected the play to last long on the stage, and the suggestion that Marston had already fled London even before the play reached performance looks potentially suspicious. It does not seem out of the realm of possibility that Marston effectively set himself up to earn money from the scandal, and set his co-authors up to get themselves in trouble—which makes him seem about as "Gentlemanly" in the modern sense of the term as Sir Petronel Flash is knightly in the way Gertrude imagines knights "of old time" to have been (V.i.28-37). As Gossett explains: "the play was presented, unlicensed, between 16 July and 31 August 1605 when James was on progress to Oxford with many of his courtiers. Suspecting that the unlicensed performances would rapidly be suppressed, the authors or the company quickly sold the script to the stationers Aspley and Thorpe, who in turn gave it to George Eld to print" (Gossett "Marston" 199n44). Whether it was "the authors or the company" selling the script, Marston, as shareholder, stood to gain from either circumstance. The play's popularity on the stage and on the page would benefit him directly. This
accusation is entirely conjectural, but Marston's willingness to risk his and his company's reputation and livelihood in the production of this scandalous play marks him as one with the kind of radical disregard characteristic of Gentlemen Authors, who, because less dependent on the profession as a means of survival, took chances in their writing that others might not have been willing or able to take. And the desire to be identified as an "amateur" author and incidental writer of plays, another characteristic of the Gentleman Authors, is revealed in Marston's distancing of himself from authorial responsibility for this play, because to be punished as a "playwright" would have been, to his mind, beneath him.

*Eastward Ho!* cannot be considered a representative example of some norm of collaborative authorship, and it is rather more interesting for what makes it a special case—namely, its lack of "seams" and "patchiness." In fact, the assumption that a norm existed at all is largely misleading and threatens a simplistic view of authorial activities in the period. Returning to a more general view of these activities, Stern explains that, over time, the term "play-patcher" came to be understood as an "unpalatable truth" (1) rather than a biting accusation; but modern critical opinion largely does not reflect that acceptance, as we see with the continued use of the term "hack" to describe exceptionally productive writers (and collaborators) like Chettle and Dekker. And the conclusion that this truth is "unpalatable" ought also to be questioned. When describing the techniques used for identifying collaborative works and the authors involved in their composition, Vickers begins with "the oldest method, which takes its origin when a reader familiar with the verse styles used in Elizabethan drama recognizes two or more different styles in a play. This immediate reaction responds to a whole range of elements which give verse
style an individual voice, and it depends on the complex workings of an attentive reader's memory” (47) Early modern audiences could certainly have had similar relationships with the styles of their playwrights, but their position as viewers of plays rather than readers of text means that they saw, heard, and experienced these styles in very different ways than we do now—and the additional elements of performance may even have made an author's stylistic voice more recognizable and appreciated by audiences.¹⁴

Jeffrey Masten argues that “the collaborative project in the theater was predicated on erasing the perception of any differences that might have existed, for whatever reason, between collaborative parts” (Textual 17), but this is not entirely convincing when one takes into account that fact that modern discussions of collaborative plays more often than not recognize “difference” (meaning it was not erased). It is more likely that many authors relied on the audience's ability to recognize their voices, even within a multi-authored text's performance. Bednarz explains that “ear catching quotations became authorial signatures. Not only vivid phrasing but also great characters like Falstaff and provocative new genres like comic satire made their inventors famous, recognized by their audience for their skill” (15). It would be hasty to assume that collaboration is so entirely different from single-authorship that playwrights would not seek to assert their individuality when writing with others, especially considering the frequency with which collaboration took place in the early modern playwriting community. Bednarz is certainly right that “even if we agree with Orgel that 'virtually all theatrical literature' is 'basically collaborative in nature,' that does not mean that poets and players were not

¹⁴ This may seem counter-intuitive at first, given that elements of performance such as improvising actors and decisions about staging were outside the author's control. But this is again an example of how an author's familiarity with a company, its actors, and its audience could allow him to tailor his stylistic voice to those in whose hands he entrusted it.
given special credit for their specific contributions” (14). Orgel's statement relies on an understanding of “collaboration” that is too broad. This term is in need of specification in order to be useful as a descriptor of authorial activities in the period because, while it is true that authors were not the only individuals capable of adding to, revising, or changing a text; it is also true that skilled authors who desired “special credit” for their “specific contributions” to a multi-authored text knew how to get it.

In print, the appearance of multiple popular names on a title page could have the same effect as the appearance of a prestigious acting troupe’s name, drawing in admirers from every possible angle. And if a text is bought because it contains the work of a favored author, the reader would no doubt look for signs of that author within the writing. One example stands out in particular, a title page that reads: “The Witch of Edmonton: A known true story. Composed into a Tragi-comedy by divers well-esteemed poets; William Rowley, Thomas Dekker, John Ford, etc.” Though Vickers jokes that “scholars could have done without the 'etc.'” (15), the page's admission of “divers well-esteemed poets” suggests that the particular names of these authors, and their “divers” contributions to the play might have been added incentive for a reader to purchase the text. That they are “well-esteemed” also means that they are recognized and appreciated as individuals. The collaborative nature of the play is proclaimed openly, and with language that implies nothing of flawed composition. Rather than thinking about collaborators, adapters, and revisers as second-rate—either servants or destroyers of single authors, or breeders of inconsistency and dissonance—we need to consider them as individual hands in the shaping of the text as we now receive it: contributors, not detractors of meaning. Examining the relationships between the contributors, and their individual ideologies and
goals for the production of a dramatic work, will help us to see how collaboration might have affected (or even reflected) those goals. The desire for “seamlessness” ought to be recognized as counterproductive to the act of interpretation, both of multi-authored texts and the writers who created them. It is only through the seams that we can get inside a text and observe the nature of its composition. It is with this in mind that the “forms of affiliation” outlined in this chapter will be used to examine specific cases of multiple authorship and collaborative relationships in the following chapters. While the category to which a playwright belongs will not tell us every detail of his role in relation to the collaborative endeavor at hand, it will give us a place from which to begin to understand that author's position as a member of a professional community. The “forms of affiliation” are perhaps the sub-groups wherein the professional playwrights' conflicting interests of self-promotion and group legitimation find some accord. Within the groups most invested in the establishment of the profession, similar interests can be identified and promoted by like-minded authors. Conversely, differences across categorical boundaries affected relationships between playwrights throughout the period, perpetuating the need for authors to question the purpose and value of dramatic writing.

Theatrical tastes constantly evolved because gifted authors were innovative and versatile—masters of creation, mimicry, and adaptation. Differences across categories could be amicable and lead to successful collaborative relationships like that of Beaumont and Fletcher; or the friendly, even playful, interaction between Chettle and Munday. But some dug in their heels more fiercely than others, leading to heated debate like that which took place in the Poetomachia of 1599 to 1601.

As with any profession, the community of playwrights required a system of
internal regulation. However, unlike other professions, playwrights often displayed their means of regulation in a very public way—on the stage rather than in the courtroom.

According to Bednarz: “At the beginning of the seventeenth century, long before courts of law established their rights, some vigilant poets monitored and policed one another's efforts through satire” (15). The “Poet's War,”15 or, as Dekker terms it in his address “To The World” in Satiromastix: “that terrible Poetomachia, that lately commenc'd betweene Horace the second, and a band of leane-witted Poetasters” (7-9) is a prime example of this regulation at work. At the turn of the century, a fierce battle was waged in the dramatic writing of Jonson, Dekker, Marston, and Shakespeare. Performance of their texts made this battle public, and also lucrative, since it appears that audiences were drawn to the opportunity to witness the acerbic exchange of ideas taking place between popular authors. According to Dekker's aforementioned address, written some time in the Fall of 1601, and so near the end of this long battle, the combatants “have bin at high wordes, and so high, that the ground could not serue them, but (for want of Chopins) haue stalk't vpon Stages” (9-11). The implication of Dekker's words is that this battle began as an offstage debate, but its matter was too “high” or important to be decided so privately, and so it needed to be elevated onto the stage in order for all to be able to weigh the argument.

The flattering idea for the audience would be that their response to the content of

---

15 Bednarz makes the important distinction between the names “Poet's War,” and “War of the Theaters,” another common title for the controversy. The latter, misleadingly, suggests a dispute based on the struggle for commercial dominance between the adult and the children's companies. Of course, rivalries existed between many of the companies at different times; but adult companies competed with other adult companies and boy companies with other boy companies as much as the adults did with the boys. And both Jonson and Dekker wrote plays to be performed by adult and boy companies in the two years the “war” took place (Bednarz 5-7). If this had been a “War of the Theaters,” then it would make no sense for Dekker's Satiromastix to have been performed both by the Children of Paul's and the Chamberlain's Men in 1601.
the Poetomachia might be somehow accounted in the determination of theatrical worth. This is to some extent true, since spectators had the power of choice over which plays to attend. Returning to Every Man Out of His Humour, the play that seems to have started it all, Asper tells us that he aims “To please—but whom? Attentive auditors, / Such as will join their profit with their pleasure, / And come to feel their understanding parts” (199-201). Jonson is, characteristically, interested in the capacity for his writing to educate and instruct others, those “attentive” members of the audience who will “come to feel their understanding parts” through his instruction. Asper, whose character is described by Jonson in the printed quarto, is “of an ingenious and free spirit, eager and constant in reproof, without fear controlling the world's abuses; one whom no servile hope of gain or frosty apprehension of danger can make to be a parasite either to time, place, or opinion” (2-5). Playing the part of the author presenting his play to the theater audience, Asper has “no servile hope of gain,” like that which might be felt by a professional willing to admit his financial dependence on the stage, but is rather an “ingenious and free spirit” sent to enlighten, rather than act as a “parasite.” The character descriptions, added by Jonson for the printed text in 1600, are a further sign of the author's attempt to exert as much control as possible over the understanding of his text; and in the case of Asper, perhaps an acknowledgment of the defensive stance the author felt himself forced to take as the Poet's War gained force and ferocity. Jonson endorses Asper's, and thus his own, credibility in print; but on the stage, Asper must encourage the capable members of the audience to verify it through their own awakened understanding.

Despite the unquestionable power of the audience in this staged debate, its initially private, and even personal, nature meant that the outcome was ultimately
determined by the poets themselves, whose skilled compositions were able to influence, rather than respond to, audience approval. The *Poetomachia* shows how these playwrights sought to control their profession's development by asserting strong opinions about the value (or lack thereof) of their adversary's style of writing. The sincerity and severity of the *Poetomachia* have long been questioned. In Bednarz's words: “At its most heated, the Poets' War converted three Bankside theaters—the Globe, Blackfriars, and Paul's—into military camps firing paper bullets at one another” (2). The “paper bullets” are, importantly, not real weapons, but performative ones. This battle, however fearsomely worded, was a show, a staged enactment of the contestation over territorial lines that marked the space to be filled by professional playwriting. It was also an argument over how that space was to be filled; by whom, and with what. The Poet's War can be thought of as another element of theatrical spectacle—though it carried significant meaning for the combatants, it also caught the eye and ear of audiences drawn to a scandal. It is significant that, as Bednarz admits, at the end of this war, “no decisive victor emerged” (2). Yet, what did prevail was the evolution of dramatic style—one result being the new genre of “comical satire” taking hold as a popular and profitable form. But this was not the result of Jonson's singular assertion of that form beginning with *Every Man Out* in 1599. Rather, as the war was “a series of literary transactions between writers of topically charged fictions who used their plays to master each others' language and drama” (Bednarz 8), the emergence of new dramatic style and content was the result of the “high words” of the conversation, and the abilities of the talented playwrights involved, who could adopt and adapt each other's ideas with engaging and often scathing deftness.
The authors involved in the *Poetomachia* each belong to a different form of affiliation: Jonson the Literary Dramatist entered into combat with Marston the Gentleman Author, Dekker the Commercial Professional, and Shakespeare the Attached Dramatist. This makes sense for a debate centered on the purpose and meaning of dramatic writing in the period. Knowles argues that “[a]lthough many of the motives for the ‘war’ are unclear, Weever's comparison of both Jonson and Marston as the heirs of Horace, and Thomas Dekker's devastating satire on Jonson as a false Horace in *Satiromastix* (1601), may suggest a genuine debate over the role and method of the satirist, perhaps combined with or fueled by the commercial rivalries between the boy companies.” But it is more than “the role and method of the satirist” under question; it is rather the role of the dramatist and of drama itself that rests at the heart of this argument.

As the Gentleman Author of the group, one whose combative personality may have drawn him to the fight as much as, if not more than, his personal investment in defining the terms of the playwriting profession, “Marston's role in the *Poetomachia*, [. . .] could be viewed generously as creating a kind of convivial intertextual rivalry. Probably more appropriate is its usual metaphor of war: the 'mentoring' was violent and public” (Gossett “Marston” 196). It was also violent and personal, since in his 1599 *Histriomastix*, “Marston's representation of Jonson as Chrisoganus prompted not only Jonson's parody of Marston in [additions to] *Every Man Out* but also Jonson's assault and robbing of him (as he twice bragged to Drummond)” (Bednarz 100). Bednarz argues that

---

16 Scholars have questioned Shakespeare's involvement in this debate, and his role does seem to me to be peripheral compared to the more deliberate attacks made by other playwrights. But, as a leading member of the profession of dramatist at this time, Shakespeare would have been aware of what was happening around him, and whether his works reflect an intentional “weighing in” of his opinion, or a sort of sub-conscious reaction to the ideas being traded around him, he must have been affected in some way by the *Poetomachia*.
Marston's animosity came from a lack of certainty about the value or purpose of his literary composition. Whether in combat with his previous foe Joseph Hall, or in this case of confrontation with Jonson, “What separates [Marston] from his two rivals is their unequivocal commitment to the idea of their own moral and literary authority. [...] He repeatedly rejected the philosophical certainty predicated by his rivals” (ibid.). The limited investment of a Gentleman Author in the establishment of the playwriting profession may account for Marston's uncertainty. Or he may have questioned the “certainty” of the others because he felt entitled to do so as their social superior, though he clearly had to look elsewhere for a claim to “moral authority,” given his move from the stage into the clergy. Conversely, we can see in his contributions to the Poetomachia that Jonson had no doubts about the centrality of the Literary Dramatist's role in society: “Each of the three comical satires ends with a scene of social harmony that unites the Jonsonian poet and his responsive monarch” (Bednarz 66). This happened quite literally in the first version of Every Man Out, with an actor appearing on stage impersonating the Queen. Jonson's over-confident move was protested against vehemently enough that he changed the ending and provided an “apology” for the first, an apology that was more of an attempt to justify his actions rather than regret them. For Jonson, it was not hyperbolic to present the joining of the poet and his Queen as a symbol of ultimate unity. But one cannot imagine that many playwrights presumed to share such a view, particularly those less interested in composing masques and entertainments, wherein the monarch might be impersonated without causing offense.

Dekker shows the signs of a Commercial Professional through the tone of his address “To The World.” Jonson is, of course, the “Horace the Second” mentioned,
which leaves his adversaries, including Dekker, to be named the “leane-witted Poetasters.” Dekker is not using self-deprecation as a rhetorical strategy here, but is rather insensitive to the negative connotation of the term “Poetaster” as it pertains to his own career. In other words, he is not primarily interested in value judgments about his poetry as “art,” or in himself as an “artist.” He is instead interested in having employment as a playwright—and his involvement in the Poetomachia allowed him to do this. Also, the fact that Dekker takes up the unflattering character of Demetrius Fannius, first ascribed to him by Jonson in Poetaster, for himself in Satiromastix suggests a good-humored acceptance of his role in the community of playwrights. By extension, he is also flouting Jonson's ideals of poetic composition and authorial identity: “Although Dekker writes copiously, Jonson argues, his work is substandard, even unmetrical, more laughable than dangerous” (Bednarz 213). But as a Commercial Professional, Dekker's “standards” were not the same as Jonson's, and from his perspective, the war may have of itself been more “laughable than dangerous.” This is not to say that Dekker was not interested in the subjects being debated, but his mind was rather more on the commerce of the event—while Asper, Jonson's authorial paradigm, may work with “no servile hope of gain,” Dekker undoubtedly had “gain” in mind when he undertook to write for the stage.

Shakespeare's contribution to the Poetomachia was what we might expect from one in his secure position of Attached Dramatist. He, more than any other of Jonson's combatants, found a means of engaging in the dispute that would prove theatrically productive and contributory to the evolution of dramatic taste and style. Though Jonson seems to aim somewhat below the belt when he mocks Shakespeare's social aspirations
by parodying his desire for a coat of arms in *Every Man Out*, Shakespeare responds by questioning Jonson's “art,” rather than his status (which admittedly, for Jonson, might mean the same thing, given his lofty goals as a literary artist). As a central member of the Chamberlain's Men, Shakespeare would have had a part in the decision to stage Jonson's *Every Man Out*, and so he must have recognized the potential value and appeal of its new genre. But this does not mean that he accepted “comical satire” as the only way to present comedy to an audience. Rather, Shakespeare responded to Jonson with an artistic confidence that the latter must have respected; first, with the festive comedy of *As You Like It* (Spring 1600), where Shakespeare “defended his embattled genre in a play whose title advertised its continuity with his prior successful comedies” (Bednarz 105). But Shakespeare did not simply move ahead without acknowledgment of Jonson's new style. Instead, Bednarz suggests, he brought Jonson's view into his own play in the character of Jacques, who represents the “melancholy satirist who rejects festive solutions” (107). It is also perhaps true that he later used the characters Ajax and Thersites in *Troilus and Cressida* (Fall 1601) to embody his rivals Jonson and Marston. Instead of a reiteration of his own successful formula for comedy, this play is evidence of the author's adaptability and innovation, since “through it Shakespeare repudiated festive comedy even as he demolished comical satire” (Bednarz 258). The innumerable differences in tone and style between *As You Like It*, written near the beginning of the Poet's War, and *Troilus and Cressida*, written near its end, reveal Shakespeare's intense engagement with the determination of dramatic value. As an Attached Dramatist, actor, and shareholder, he had much to gain or lose in this battle, both personally and financially. His willingness to engage in the debate was predicated on his investment in the profession of dramatist and
the power of the skilled playwright to articulate the trends and tastes of authorial style and audience approval.

The Poetomachia was an intensified debate that strove to determine what dramatic writing was meant to “do,” how it was meant to be done, and by whom. Clearly, none of the combatants had one correct answer to these questions, but such an outcome would have been entirely undesirable and counterproductive to the establishment of playwriting as a profession. Variety was vitality, and evolution in style, form, and content was necessary to the livelihood of the professional community. The Poet's War is an extreme example of how authors sought to control the development of their trade and assert their beliefs about and goals for the nature and function of their profession. However, this debate was not restricted to the years 1599-1601, or to the four authors involved in that particular conversation. We can, for example, also see in prologues and epilogues from the period numerous examples of playwrights' attempts to charge one another with wrongdoing, praise one another in hopes of advancing a certain theme or style of writing, or mock and antagonize a rival to create a sense of scandal that would be attractive to any audience. But the power of these orations was somewhat limited. As mentioned above, Stern has shown the ephemeral nature of prologues and epilogues and argues convincingly that they were almost always intended for first or occasional performance only (83). Furthermore, prologues and epilogues were often not written by the author of the play to which they were attached, and they were also frequently used multiple times for different plays when the content was independent of the drama being performed. They were thus an unstable medium through which an author might address his audience or colleagues.
However, these orations did have their purposes. They were especially useful to encourage audience approval of a new play, since “one of the reasons so many prologues are insecure is that they do not know whether they are fronting a play that will be loved or hated” (87). But such textual additions could go a long way in garnering the approval of first-performance audiences: “applause for the epilogue could easily be conflated with the final verdict reached on the playscript” (ibid.). For occasional performances and revivals of old plays, new prologues and epilogues were often desired, and the play's original author would sometimes not be available or interested in providing them. Bentley tells us that it was often the attached professional who picked up the added “chore” of composing prologues and epilogues under these circumstances (Dramatist 140-141). Given his broader use of the term “attached,” we can take this to mean that the Attached Dramatists as well as many of the the Commercial Professionals (as they have been identified here), who had continued relationships with specific companies, were the most likely to have been responsible for composing these orations, even for plays not their own. Therefore, they are in the position to be the most capable arbiters of taste in the authorial community. Added material provides the unique opportunity for playwrights to speak to the audience directly, even if for only a day, and a savvy author would use this to his full advantage.

Authors, to various degrees, identified their work with themselves, and audiences also recognized the trademarks of their popular poets being performed onstage. Individual authorial identity and personal style were thus valuable marketing tools, and authors invested in making a name for themselves as playwrights wielded these tools with great skill and self-awareness. As I have shown, an author's place within his “form
of affiliation” helped to determine his part in the broader conversation that constantly tested the boundaries of the profession's definition. The chapters that follow will continue to examine the way the characteristics of these authors' differing forms of affiliation influenced their collaborative relationships and manifested themselves in the form and content of multi-authored texts.
CHAPTER THREE

AUTHORIAL INTERACTIONS IN THE BOOK OF SIR THOMAS MORE

One of the most complicated examples of multiple authorship in all early modern dramatic writing, *The Book of Sir Thomas More* is a fruitful source of information about the dynamics of the theater's authorial community in the period. Questions about More lead to questions about collaboration in general. This chapter provides a concrete example of the effect an author's “form of affiliation,” as defined in Chapter Two, had on the method and content of his contribution to a collaborative text. The manuscript of *The Book of Sir Thomas More* is the product of the work of five authors with differing backgrounds and relationships within and outside the theater, but it also reflects the theatrical authority of the playhouse scribe, as well as the political authority of the Master of the Revels. Those involved did not all share the same goals for the text, and they contributed to the play with varied levels of awareness of its overall shape and content. What we “know” about More is very little, but what can be conjectured on the foundation of responsible scholarship will give us new insight into the common practice of collaboration in the early modern community of dramatic authors.

Though not unanimously agreed upon, scholarly consensus has largely come to accept that the playwrights involved in the writing of *The Book of Sir Thomas More* are
Anthony Munday (Hand S), Henry Chettle (Hand A), Thomas Heywood (Hand B),  
William Shakespeare (Hand D), and Thomas Dekker (Hand E). Hand C remains the only
unnamed contributor, and it is assumed that he was not a playwright, but a playhouse
scribe in the employ of the theater company that commissioned the revisions of the play
(the identification of that company is another contested mystery to which I will return).
This play has been the intermittent focus of scholarly interest primarily due to the
presumed presence of Shakespeare as a contributor of three pages (Folios 8a, 8b, and 9a,
with F9b left blank apart from two speech prefixes), and perhaps also part or all of two
partial sheet paste-ins that appear on Folios 11b and 14a, transcribed by Hand C.  
Until very recently, the play has been relegated to the margins of the Shakespeare canon, the
common practice in twentieth century Complete Works volumes being to print only the
additions thought to be written by the Bard himself. A parallel situation is found in
Fredson Bower's *Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*—now nearly sixty years old—which
prints only "Dekker's addition" to the play. However, with the inclusion of the entire
(2005), and that same editor's 2011 edition of *More* for the Arden Shakespeare third
series, attention is beginning to be paid to this play, and to collaborative works in general,
in new ways. With the relatively secure foundation of attribution, there is reason and
resource to assess, in depth, the possible relationships between contributors, and between

1 The identification of Heywood as Hand B is the least confident of the five; but I, following Jowett, find
the evidence sufficiently convincing to accept "provisionally" his involvement in the play's composition
(More 23).

2 I am following the method of page numbering used by John Jowett in his 2011 edition of the text for
The Arden Shakespeare. Hand D was first identified as Shakespeare in 1871 and 1872 by Richard
Simpson and James Spedding respectively, though some of their specific attributions have since been
rejected (Jowett *More* 437).
each contributor and the text as a whole.

While the majority of attention to this play has been given to the passages attributed to Shakespeare, my primary focus is the initial collaboration between Anthony Munday, in whose hand the entirety of the Original Text (OT) was written, and Henry Chettle, who is generally believed to have been his co-author, penning lines that were then copied by Munday into the manuscript that is now held at the British Library (Harley 7368). This manuscript, in the revised form it took with the contributions of Dekker, Shakespeare, Heywood, Hand C, and the Master of the Revels, is the only extant text of this play from the period. A number of years passed between the initial collaboration and the series of revisions, with censorship taking place some time soon after the Original Text was written. Thus, the manuscript of *The Book of Sir Thomas More* is misleading in its singularity. Its one text in fact represents multiple conceptions of a play that perhaps never reached a “final” form, since we have no evidence of *More* being acted on the early modern stage.

Insight into the long-time friendship and professional association of Munday and Chettle provides a new entry into the long-standing debate surrounding the dating of the play's OT, and the date one accepts for that text impacts his or her understanding of the careers of these two dramatists and their relationships to the profession of dramatist. One of the central problems pertaining to the Original Text of *More* is the determination of its date of composition. Scholars have widely accepted a dating of around 1593, but Jowett's most recent edition argues for a much later dating in 1600. The date of the revisions is far less contested, and they are generally believed to have taken place in
1603/4. There is no evidence that Munday was involved in the revisions at all, and so his engagement with *The Book of Sir Thomas More* is restricted to composition of the Original Text. In light of the evidence presented in this chapter, and despite Jowett's arguments, I find that there is a much stronger case for the more traditional dating of the Original Text to the early 1590s, and to 1593 in particular.

As explained in Chapter Two, Anthony Munday was, by and large, a “Literary Dramatist” because he had ambitions and occupations outside the playwriting profession, occupations that gave him social status, particularly as a contributing member of the civic body of the City of London. Munday's professional activities in and around 1593 and his activities in 1600 were of different kinds, and so the dating of the Original Text of *More* would color our understanding of his position within the playwriting community at the time he undertook to write this play. In Chettle's case, who I have identified as a “Commercial Professional” for his long, prolific, yet unattached role in the playwriting community, the more conventional early dating of the OT to c.1593 would be particularly meaningful because it would reveal a much earlier entry into playwriting than that which has been assumed or can otherwise be evidenced. Jowett suggests that “Chettle may well have been responsible for adding to the stage directions and dialogue of the 1597 First Quarto of *Romeo and Juliet* [. . .]. If the identification is right, [*Romeo and Juliet*] is Chettle's earliest datable dramatic composition” (*More* 17). “Datable” is the key word here, and as I will show, there is ample reason to believe that Chettle was contributing to dramatic texts long before 1597, which, again, affects our understanding of his relationship to the profession of dramatist. His entry into the profession would not be the
quick immersion into Henslowe's “stable of hacks” that has been assumed, but rather a career choice he had been considering, and perhaps working toward, since 1593. In both cases, these authors circumvented what seems to have been a fairly standard practice of apprenticeship within the profession if as inexperienced playwrights they undertook to write a play together in 1593 without the help of a more practiced professional. The independent operation of these dramatists may account for some of the central problems with dating the Original Text of *More*. As I will discuss, there are arguments against dating the Original Text to 1593 that can be countered by the claim that Anthony Munday and Henry Chettle were writing from the margins of the community of playwrights, but with an eye toward beginning to establish themselves as members of that community.

**Munday and the Date of the Original Text**

The early activities and associations of Anthony Munday (bap. 1560) align him primarily with the court. He worked as a spy and informant against Catholics in the 1580s, and “from 1588-1596 Munday signed his publications 'Anthony Munday, Messenger of Her Majesties Chamber'” (Bergeron), proudly proclaiming his connection with the crown. It can be said that Munday's ambitions shifted focus after this time. In the years 1597-1602, his primary activity seems to have been playwriting, but that professional focus was comparatively short lived, as his turn to civic engagement took full force in 1602 when he began writing Lord Mayor's shows, an occupation he would continue for many years with unmatched productivity. According to David M. Bergeron, “[r]egularly in his later printed texts [Munday] signs himself 'Citizen and Draper',” so we again see him proudly touting an affiliation to an established institution, this time a livery
company. This turn also resulted in a move away from playwriting for the public theater, which explains Munday's absence from the revisions of More in 1603/4. But even early in his career, when he was around sixteen years old, Munday was already involved with London's civic institutions. His father was a Draper who worked as a Stationer, and Munday was himself apprenticed to the printer John Allde in 1576. He only served about two of the eight years for which he had bound himself, leaving in 1578 to travel to France and Italy, eventually arriving at the English College in Rome, where he gained admittance by assuming the name of the son of a well-known English Catholic (Munday refuses to divulge this name in The English Roman Life [1582]) and operated as a spy. However, while still taking part in these governmental affairs, Munday did become a freeman by patrimony of the Draper's company in 1585, and possibly also a freeman of the Merchant Taylor's company in 1615. From this information we can conclude that London Citizenship was consistently a part of Munday's identity, though perhaps not always his first choice for self-identification.

As mentioned above, the years 1597-1602 were Munday's most productive as a playwright for the public stage. His position as Messenger of Her Majesty's Chamber ended in 1596, at which point he focused the bulk of his attentions on dramatic writing. In 1598, Francis Meres lists him as “our best plotter,” and Henslowe's Diary tells us that, in the years surrounding 1600, Munday and Chettle were participating in the largely collaborative practice of writing plays for the Admiral's Men. They worked together on some of these plays, but as Jowett points out, in the period 19 June 1600-31 March 1601, neither received payment for any work through Henslowe. Thus, “they were both
available to work for another company” (More 431). Jowett uses this coincidence as evidence for dating the OT to 1600, but it is by no means conclusive proof of the possibility that the two did use this “free” time to work together for another company; and even if they did, that the work they undertook was The Book of Sir Thomas More.

Much about the dating of the OT of More hinges on the dating of another play, Munday's John a Kent, John a Cumber. The vellum wrapping used to protect both manuscripts, thought to have been provided by Munday himself, is taken from the same document (Barnard of Pavia's Compilatio prima), and so it is probable that the two texts were composed at roughly the same time. Both texts are also folded horizontally, which suggests that they were stored together, either by Munday or by the company who owned them. The latter appears to be more likely since another text, the plot of 2 Seven Deadly Sins, is also folded in this way. Though this plot is not by Munday, the three documents do all contain the writing of Hand C. The titles of both More and Kent were inscribed on the wrappers by Hand C, and 2 Seven Deadly Sins is a plot entirely in the scribe's hand. The latter document is thought to have come from performance in 1590-91, rather than c. 1585 when the play was originally composed (Jackson “Deciphering”). It was acted at The Theater by members of Lord Strange's and the Admiral's Men. Given the many things these three texts have in common, the information we have about the date and company/ies associated with 2 Seven Deadly Sins is potentially useful for the dating of the other two plays as well. And we also learn that, at least in 1590-1591, Hand C was employed by one of the companies performing at The Theater. This will prove important in my later discussion of the possible company/ies responsible for the commissioning of
the Original Text of *More* and also of the revisions.

*John a Kent* should have been an easy case for dating, since it is signed by its author and also dated (though not by Munday himself [Jackson “Deciphering”]). However, there is dispute surrounding the correct reading of the written date—opinions are divided between “1590,” “1595,” and “1596.” I.A Shapiro convincingly concluded in 1955 that the date reads “1590,” but Jowett, supported by MacDonald P. Jackson's recent determination that *John a Kent*'s date is in fact 1596 (“Deciphering”), claims that 1596 is the “safer estimate of the earliest date at which the Original Text [of *More*] could have been prepared” (*More* 425). After Shapiro's reading of 1590 for the play's date, C.T. Wright points out that “The date is an upward one; in 1589, when Mundy was the Archbishop's chief officer against Martin Marprelate, his Catholic enemy may have punned in calling him 'John a Cant. His hobbie horse.' And since he was very busy as a pursuivant in 1589, he may have written *Kent* earlier” (“Young” 162). In fact, the date, whether 1590 or 1596, is still “an upward one,” or *terminus ad quem*; since it was not written in the author's hand, we must be wary of giving it too much credence. Wright's suggestion about the potential “John a Cant. his hobbie horse” pun is, however, a compelling addition to the argument for the play's early dating, and it is a point to which I will return.

Jackson draws attention to an important consequence of accepting an early date for *John a Kent*, which is that “the history of English dramatic verse needs modification if Munday's comedy was written in or before 1590. It has a higher proportion of feminine endings [. . .] than any other play known to have been written by 1590, so that if
John a Kent is indeed that early Munday deserves credit as a notable pioneer in the development of what was to become one of the most common blank verse variations” (“Deciphering”). There is, of course, no way to settle this debate with certainty, but there is no reason to believe that Munday could not have been responsible for this kind of innovation in dramatic writing. Jowett cites Philip Timberlake's 1931 *The Feminine Ending in English Blank Verse* as providing evidence that Shakespeare's plays of the early 1590s stand out for their frequent use of feminine endings (Richard III [16.8%], Two Gentlemen of Verona [15.7%], and Comedy of Errors [15.3%]). John a Kent weighs in at 13.7% and More 20.7% (More 418). Jackson explains that Timberlake “found [in More] a 'uniformly high percentage of feminine endings'—both in the original script and in all but one of the Additions, namely Chettle's short Addition I (A)” (“Deciphering”). Jackson uses this information to conclude that “the fact that the percentage of feminine endings in the original Munday–Chettle script is much the same as in the Additions suggests that it was not composed so many years before the revision as most modern scholars believe” (ibid.). But this conclusion overlooks an important question: how do we account for the fact that the only inconsistency in these calculations (Chettle's Addition 1) marks a difference in the writing of the only author to be involved in both the Original Text and the revisions? In other words, if the OT and the revisions were composed with much less interim time than has been generally assumed, why and how did Chettle's poetic style change so abruptly? It seems to me that if we are encountering the development of a trend in dramatic writing here, then there is reason to think that Munday could have written Kent some time in or before 1590, and, becoming
increasingly comfortable with a style that included heavy use of feminine endings, moved on in 1593 to compose *More*, with its even higher frequency, with the help of a man who was both his friend and an expert stylistic mimic, Henry Chettle.\(^3\) True, this same pattern could have taken place with dates of 1596 and 1600 for the two texts, but it is possible that Munday's potential innovation is discounted at least partially on the grounds of residual Bardolatry, where Shakespeare is given credit because he is Shakespeare.\(^4\)

Though we cannot be sure of a date for *Kent*, its chronological relationship to *More* is more easily determined. In Jackson's words:

> The date of *John a Kent* has a bearing on the date of the earliest form of *Sir Thomas More* because Thompson and Greg deduced from the evolution of Munday's handwriting over time that the basic *More* manuscript must have been penned after *John a Kent* and before *The Heaven of the Mind*, which preserves four pages of Munday's holograph plus a dedication, also in his hand and signed and dated 22 December 1602. Thompson and Greg agreed also that Munday's handwriting in *More* more closely resembled that of *John a Kent* than of *The Heaven of the Mind*, and so could probably be dated nearer the earlier than the later of the other two manuscripts. ("Deciphering")

If Thompson and Greg's findings are correct, then, at the very least, it makes more sense to accept a dating of *More* that is earlier than Jowett's proposed 1600. Even if *Kent's*

---

\(^3\) Chettle’s prowess as a mimic is discussed at length in the “case study” of Greene’s *Groatsworth of Wit* that appears at the end of Chapter One.

\(^4\) Another example of discrediting Munday and Chettle on grounds that seem only related to assumptions that they are “hacks” comes in Jowett's argument in support of a date of 1600 for the Original Text: “The years 1598-1600 saw a renewed vogue for English history plays such as Shakespeare's second tetralogy (1596-9) and Heywood's two-part *Edward IV* (printed 1599). These years were also the most intensive in the period for publication and reprinting of history plays in book form. At no point was the market for histories livelier in both the theatre and the bookshops” (*More* 425). The printing incentive is especially questionable since the play never even made it onto the stage. But what it more troubling is the assumed probability that Munday and Chettle wrote *More* in 1600 as latecomers to a trend, since the plays Jowett mentions were all written before that year. He suggests that *More* “builds on” the developing (in 1598-9) genre of City Comedy (*ibid.*). Also, the trend to which Jowett refers is a “renewed vogue,” a second round of popularity. The “market for histories” had been lively enough in the past, and *More* does not “fit” any better in 1600 than it does in 1593 unless we deny (for no particular reason) any possible originality on the part of Munday and Chettle.
terminus ad quem is 1596, a date of 1600 would put More much closer to The Heaven of the Mind than to Kent. Another point worth questioning, left unacknowledged by Thompson and Greg, is the potential difference between handwriting that reflects an author's own work, and that which is the result of his copying out the work of another. Given the scarcity of early modern texts in manuscript form, it may not be possible to undertake such a study, but it would be useful to consider the difference that familiarity can make. The entire OT of More is written in Munday's hand, but parts of the play are assumed to have been originally composed by Chettle. This might impact Munday's very handwriting. It seems only natural to assume that copying out someone else's lines (and perhaps making changes to them in the process) would require more pause and contemplation than might be required in copying out lines an author has already written himself, particularly since Munday did not have training as a scribe or compositor. Gabrieli and Melchiori mention one effect of copying another's work which appears in “a mistake on fol. 21” of the manuscript, where the word fashion is turned into fashis (V.iii.117). No author making a fair copy of his own script would confuse a final 'ō' (= 'on') with 's' in English script—a typical scribal error” (13). This page also show evidence of being “written in a hurry” (ibid.), so we see that both speed and unfamiliar handwriting or lines can impact the accuracy and form of a writer's hand when writing out the work of another.

In his argument for dating the Original Text of More to 1600, Jowett denies the likelihood that Munday and Chettle would have collaborated on a play in 1592-3. The first evidence of Munday's playwriting is his 1585 translation and adaptation Fedele and
Fortunio. But aside from that, the only plays we can attribute to him before December 1597 (when he and Michael Drayton appear in Henslowe's Diary as the recipients of payment for the lost play “Mother Redcap”) are John a Kent and (perhaps) More. Jowett also claims that “there is no evidence of Munday and Chettle collaborating on a play or any other work before 1598” (More 426). However, this conclusion depends upon how one defines “collaborating.” One could argue, for example, that a sort of collaboration took place in 1592 when Chettle wrote an epistle to Munday's *II Gerileon* and, intentionally misleadingly, signed it with the initials of the well-known author Thomas Nashe. They continued their antics in 1596 with another attempt to endorse Munday's abilities—this time as the translator of *II Primaleon*—through the creation of a nonexistent rival, Lazarus Pyott. Pyott was, in fact, Munday himself, and so Chettle's epistle to *II Primaleon*, where he insults Pyott and praises Munday, fans fabricated flames of scandal in order to promote the real Munday's work, at the expense of the fabricated Pyott. Though not dramatic texts, these schemes are examples of authorial co-labor between Munday and Chettle in years preceding Jowett's date of 1598.

Chettle's use of Nashe's name in support of Munday in *II Gerileon* is potentially far more significant than has been acknowledged, given that Nashe had, at that time, written *Pierce Penniless*, wherein the author proclaims the edifying attributes of stage plays. In fact, *II Gerileon* and *Pierce Penniless* were the only two books to be entered into the Stationer's Register on 8 August 1592, though not to the same publishers (Wright “Young” 161). In *Pierce*, Nashe attests that “no play [. . .] encourageth any man to

---

5 Wright (“Young” 161-62) explains in further detail the complicated circumstances surrounding the licensing and printing of Nashe's *Pierce*, involving the generally disliked and mistrusted printer Abel
tumults or rebellion, but lays before such the halter and the gallows; or praiseth or 
approveth pride, lust, whoredom, prodigality, or drunkenness, but beats them down 
utterly” (qtd. in Yachnin 1). It is tempting to see in these lines something of the play that 
Munday and Chettle may have already been working on, or at least thinking about, in 
August 1592, where tumults are suppressed and the rebellious Lincoln (and the 
disobedient More) are indeed shown to the gallows. Bringing Citizen interest into the 
theater would also have been controversial because “as letters from the Guildhall testify, 
the City fathers were indeed consistently inimical to playgoing and the disruptions it 
caused” (Clare 75). In More, Munday and Chettle are staging disruptive Citizen behavior 
that has nothing to do with instigation from raucous dramatic performances. However, in 
doing so, they present a stage show that could potentially instigate unruly action in the 
audience's Citizen members. But, more importantly, the play discourages such behavior 
by showing its dire consequences (as Nashe attests to be one of theater's functions). 
Though seemingly counter-intuitive, it is nonetheless true that the Original Text of More 
highlights the virtues of stage plays, in particular that they are useful tools for promoting 
and condemning certain behaviors. More's efforts to quell Citizen unrest might have 
been especially effective because this play, if it was performed, would have been acted 
before an audience composed of Citizens who, by being in that audience, were already 
showing signs of disobedience by taking part in an activity most often condemned by 
their Livery Company officials.

Jeffes. II Gerileon was printed by Thomas Scarlett, and the preface, with the notorious “T.N.” 
signature, attacks none other than Jeffes as the printer of the rival translation by the nonexistent Lazarus 
Pyott. Scandal seems to have followed Munday and Chettle wherever they went, or perhaps it is more 
accurate to say that Munday and Chettle consistently invited scandal to accompany them in their literary 
endeavors.
Munday's relationship to the theater had been inconsistent up to the point that he undertook to write *More*. He had intermittently been an actor in the late 1570s and early 1580s, had vehemently condemned the stage in *A second and third blast of retrait from plaies and theaters* (1580), and had provided only one text for the stage (aside from *John a Kent*), the aforementioned *Fedele and Fortunio* (1585). His contentious past may have been somewhat remedied by engaging the apparent support of a popular author speaking in praise of Munday (*II Gerileon*) and of plays (*Pierce*) at the same time (of course, the first praise comes from Chettle, but it is easy to see why Nashe's name would carry more weight in this situation). If, as there is ample reason to believe, Munday had written *John a Kent* by 1590, and he was considering another venture into writing for the public stage with his friend Chettle, then Nashe's would have been a timely endorsement indeed that would have connected Munday to the playwriting profession, toward which his ambitions were, in some part, aimed. Though Munday's and Nashe's works were entered into the Register on the same day, there is reason to believe that Munday saw Nashe's text before that time. *Pierce* had been approved by the Archbishop of Canterbury and Munday “had been that worthy's chief officer, and was traveling as a recusant hunter in 1592” (Wright “Young” 161), at which point he may have paid the Archbishop a visit and read Nashe’s work. Despite the fact that *Pierce* was approved by the Archbishop, Nashe publicly complained about the printing of its first edition in an epistle to the second edition, arguing that it had been “abroad a fortnight ere I knew of it, and uncorrected and unfinished it hath offered itself to the open scorn of the world” (49). Though it did meet with some “open scorn,” *Pierce Penniless* is rather better known for its considerable
popularity, appearing in five editions in three years. Clearly, Munday and Chettle had found the right voice to “parrot” in the epistle to *Il Gerileon*.

It would also have been known that this was not the first time “Nashe” had spoken out in support of Munday. He had defended him in 1590 during the Marprelate controversy when both Nashe and Munday had been employed to write for the anti-Martinist cause. In the 1589 Martinist tract *Just censure and reproofe of Martin Junior*, the author takes on the voice of Archbishop Whitgift and mockingly accuses Munday of not performing his duties as pursuivant: “thou Judas, thou that has already betrayed the Papists, I think meanest to betray us also” (qtd. in Hamilton 65). Nashe responded to this in *An Almond for a Parrat*, saying, “Beware Anthony Munday be not even with you for calling him Judas, and lay open your false carding to the stage of all mens scorne” (*ibid.*).

E.A.J. Honigmann suggests that this is precisely what Munday set out to do. What Wright argues was a pun in reaction to Munday's play *John A Kent* (“John a Cant. his hobbie horse”), Honigmann finds more likely to have been fuel for Munday's retaliatory fire; in other words, the name-calling was an instigation for the play: “the fact that [Archbishop] Whitgift was called 'John Cant.','. 'John a Cant.', etc. in 1589, in pamphlets that were very widely discussed, could have influenced Mundy when he devised the plot and title of a new play *circa* 1590: a play in which other traces of the 'Martin Marprelate' controversy also appear to survive” (289). Honigmann makes a strong case for the appearance of *John a Kent* in 1590, a year when attempts to make peace were underway: “If the bishops had already reversed their policy towards Marprelate, and silenced the anti-Marprelate hacks who besmirched their own cause, that would explain why the
topical hits in *John a Kent* are less bare-faced than in the tracts of 1588-89 and why

The case for dating *Kent* to 1590 is thus strengthened, and the circumstances
Honigmann describes are in keeping with an impression of Munday as one who paid close attention to the ever-changing climate of the audience for which he wrote. If Munday was one of the authors to have been commissioned by the bishops to write for the anti-Marprelate cause, then they may have even commissioned *Kent* (though a bit too late), in which case, Munday's first original dramatic composition (*Fedele and Fortunio* being an adapted translation) was the consequence of his engagement with the court and its political agenda. Even if it was not commissioned, it still reflects a desire on the part of the author to align himself with what he thought court interest to be at the time. This is worth mention simply because it highlights one of the key differences between Munday and other playwrights of his time. His entrance into the playwriting profession was not a matter of economic necessity, a sort of rebellion against his upbringing, or a consequence of having no other options. It was rather the unexpected result of his ambitious affiliations with the court. In writing *Kent*, Munday found he had talent as a playwright and perhaps enjoyed the occupation, which perhaps led him to try his hand at dramatic composition again in 1593, independent of instigation from the court.

Even with the assumption of a date of 1593 for More's composition, the Marprelate controversy was a thing of the past. The issue at hand in 1593 was the increasing unrest among London's Citizenry in response to what was considered

---

6 *Fedele and Fortunio* was also, in a sense, court-minded. The “Prologue before the Queen,” and the play itself, are clearly meant to flatter Elizabeth and garner her favor.
excessive tolerance of “strangers” living and trading in the city. In this play, rebellion meets with no tolerance, but a great deal of sympathy. The parallel deaths of Lincoln and More are treated with pity rather than scorn, to be sure, and there are practical and theatrical reasons why this would be the safer and more effective means of displaying the workings of justice and power in England's government. As Tilney's censorship of the Original Text shows, any potentially rabble-rousing scenes would have been especially dangerous on the stage at a time when the London Citizenry seemed itself poised on the verge of revolt. To present the death of either Lincoln or More without the encouragement of humane empathy would have been treacherously inflammatory. And in this we may see another reason for John a Kent's subdued topicality. The pamphlet-driven aspect of the Marprelate controversy highlights the important difference between two kinds of writing. Pamphlets, especially when printed in secret and unauthorized, could contain material that was considerably more provocative than what could be presented on the public stage. Material intended for the latter could be just as controversial, but more indirectly so, filtered through a lens of lampooning and mockery, or an ostensible change in context, time, or place for the play's action. This difference is crucial to our understanding of *More* because it helps to answer what has been one of the central objections to Munday's authorship of the Original Text; that is, the assumed Catholic sympathies of the play's author.

**Munday and Catholicism**

Though it is quite unlikely that Munday was a Catholic, as some scholars argue, the foregrounding of the debate about his religious beliefs has led to extensive
questioning, and often doubt, about the possibility that Munday would have written a play with a Catholic hero. But, at the risk of generalizing, Munday was never single-mindedly anything (apprentice, actor, spy, citizen, playwright). To suggest that his chosen affiliations—professional, religious, or social—were influenced by opportunism is not to pass judgment on the author, but simply to give an accurate appraisal of a man who was particularly aware of changing tides in favor and opinion. Donna B. Hamilton, who draws attention to “the occasionality that nearly always characterizes Munday's writings” (125), provides an early example of this: “On 23 July 1579, [. . .] Munday's *The admirable deliverance of 266 Christians by J. Reynard [J. Fox] Englishman from the Turkes* was entered to Thomas Dawson. Carrying a political perspective that would become one of Munday's trademarks, [it] represents a unified Christian world positioned against pagans, a position which, had the book been printed in the late 1570s when it was written, would have been recognizable as advocating the French match and the possibility it offered for a fruitful alliance with European Catholicism” (7). The book was not printed, and so Munday did not have to face possible charges of Catholicism for its content. But the fact remains that, regardless of his personal views, the nineteen year old Munday undoubtedly wrote it with the idea of advancement in mind. He wrote what he thought the Queen and court would want to read, but since he was wrong, he was fortunate not to have had to answer for it.

This attempt to grasp opportunity sounds precisely like the kind of author, and

---

7 Donna B. Hamilton's 2005 *Anthony Munday and the Catholics, 1560-1633* argues that Munday retained Catholic sensibilities and sympathies throughout his life, and that this was the impulse which led him to take dangerous risks in writing suspiciously pro-Catholic material. This conclusion seems to me far-fetched, and Munday's choices for writing material can more easily be explained by acknowledging the author's sometimes misguided opportunism.
Freeman of the Draper's company, who would capitalize on citizen unrest in or around 1593 by writing a play that would speak to the citizens themselves, honor their grievances, but also provide a clear message that violent action and disobedience are unacceptable forms of retaliation. In the words of Gabrieli and Melchiori, More is, “a well-planned play, conceived in five parts to illustrate in a sympathetic way the rise and fall of a Londoner who, in the popular view, was still considered a friend of the poor and the best Chancellor England ever had” (5). Evidence for this favoring of More is provided in a sermon that “the Bishop of London, Dr. John Aylmer, preached on 18 October 1584, in which More was offered as a commendable example of devotion, and concluding with the anecdote of More, when Chancellor, being found by the Duke of Norfolk serving Mass in Chelsea church” (Gabrieli and Melchiori 7). Even in Elizabeth's reign, Thomas More was remembered with respect and admiration as a devout civic official, despite the fact that his devotion was to the Catholic faith. Jowett points out that even the Master of the Revels was not forbidding of an approving depiction of More: “His insistence that More should be shown doing 'good service' indicates that Tilney was in favor of More being given a positive depiction” (More 27). Therefore, Munday's choice of More for the subject of his play need not be considered a declaration of religious affiliation. The “ill May Day” riots of 1517 would have been an ideal choice for the kind of contextual veil an author would need when writing a topical play about the discontented London citizens of 1593. More's purpose is to display the power of London's dedicated civic authorities to maintain order and justice against the threat of tumult. Catholicism, as an aspect of the hero's identity, is in fact concealed whenever
possible.

Even in one of his most virulent attacks on Catholics, *A discouerie of Edmund Campion* (1582), Munday shows himself capable of recognizing and respecting honorable behavior regardless of religious affiliation. After his long and pitiless description of Campion's death, Munday related the story of the priest Raphe Sherwin's execution: “Raphe Sherwin seemed a man of better judgement, more learned, and more obedient, [...] he likewise confessed him self a Catholique man, a Priest, intending to die in that faith. But when the Treasons were moued to him, he lykewise seemed to make deniall thereof. He asked the Queenes Maiestie forgiuennesse, and desired that shee might long liue and raigne ouer us” (O3v-O4r). While the death of Sherwin is, for Munday, a necessary consequence of his Catholicism, the author observes *and reports* his exemplary behavior in the face of death. As Gabrieli and Melchiori attest, “by stressing Sherwin's dignified and constant behavior on the scaffold, [this description] seems to foreshadow the execution of More as presented in the play” (15). Though composed at least eleven years later, *More* contains certain echoes of this event. And the fact that the name Sherwin is used for the goldsmith who is wronged by the “strangers” in *More* suggests further that the death of that particular Catholic priest made a lasting impression in Munday's memory.

Thomas Merriam emphasizes the pro-Catholic sentiment of *More* to such an extent that he is forced to make the claim that the author “knew that he, Anthony Munday, Messenger of the Chamber, was exempt from imputation of sedition consequent upon Tilney's perusal of *Sir Thomas More*” (547). But this is unlikely, since no one was
free from suspicion and persecution in the anti-Catholic court of Elizabeth. He goes further to suggest that, in working on More (he claims as only a copyist of the text), Munday “was acting, as he had done in Rome in 1579, as agent provocateur or projector, to maneuver others into traps of their own creation” (548), and that “Munday's motive in copying More was plausibly the implementation of a provocation implicating one or more of the following involved with the play: (a) the acting company; (b) the patron of the acting company; (c) the author(s) of the original; (d) the authors of the subsequent additions; or (e) the Master of Revels himself” (552). However, again, we must take into account that Munday witnessed first-hand the dangers of this kind of double-dealing when he saw his patron, the Earl of Oxford, condemn himself to a stint in the Tower when he admitted his own (former) Catholicism to the Queen while in the process of informing against his erstwhile friends Henry Howard (also his cousin) and Charles Arundel in 1580. (Wright “Young” 157). It would have been foolhardy for Munday to operate under the assumption that he would be free from suspicion when even Oxford, the Queen's sometime favorite, was not.

Jowett argues that Merriam's “resort to a conspiracy theory is a questionable attempt to explain away the obvious and undisputed fact that the MS is in Munday's hand” (More 417). But it is also an attempt to explain a self-made critical black hole that has been built into interpretations of this text. Munday's early antagonistic relationship to Catholicism should be considered as a facet of our reading of More, but emphasis on that point tends to ignore the evidence within the text itself that effort is made on the part of the author(s) to minimize the religious aspect of More's identity. As Gabrieli and
Melchiori explains, “The problem posed by this contradiction in the attitude to More was faced on the one hand by leaving rather vague the reasons of his imprisonment and execution—the refusal to sign unspecified 'articles' [. . .]—on the other by having recourse for the historical details to unimpeachable sources of Tudor and Protestant allegiance, mainly Holinshed and Foxe” (10). Regarding the first point, Jowett suggests in a commentary note that “the articles may possibly have been written into a separate theatre document to be read onstage, and so omitted from the playbook” (10.75n). This would mean that the articles were not intended to be unspecified in performance. But, as Jowett immediately admits, “the bill of government in Sc. 1 is written into the MS” (ibid.), so it would be strangely inconsistent for the contents of this document not to be included if they were meant to be disclosed. Even with the vague reference to “articles,” Tilney found this crucial interchange to be unacceptable, marking for deletion lines 80-104 of Scene ten and writing “all altr” in the margin next to More's lines announcing his resignation from office (though the note seems, by “all,” to refer to the entire marked passage, which includes Rochester's arrest for refusing to sign, More's request for “Some time for to bethink me of this task” (10.86), and Surrey and Shrewsbury's signing of the articles).

**Dangerous Topicality in the Original Text**

In making his case for a date of 1600 for the Original Text, Jowett suggests that the “obvious inference that the play reflects a particular event can be reversed by arguing that the play could not have been written at the same time because the event made any potential reference to it subject to censorship” (More 424). But the play was heavily
censored, and we have seen that Munday did not shy away from controversial topicality in his writing. Furthermore, Janet Clare has convincingly argued that “for playwrights of our period it was, then, never quite clear what was prohibited and what would be permitted. The ill-defined terms of censorship encouraged some playwrights to take risks (which sometimes succeeded)” (234). If written in 1593, as I believe is most likely, the Original Text of *More* would have been undeniably topical. As Margaret Tudeau-Clayton explains:

In March 1593 a bill was introduced for debate in the House of Commons 'against Aliens selling by way of retail any Foreign Commodities'. The debate broadened to address the place of 'aliens' in the city – whether to 'entertain' or expel them – as well as their impact on the economy – whether, for instance, they were to blame for the 'beggaring' of 'home' retailers and the draining of English coin from England. Adapting the classical topoi of *honestas* and *utilitas* – moral honour and expediency – ‘[a]rguments on both sides’ were made, for the bill on behalf of the shopkeepers and freemen of the ‘City of London’ who had introduced it, and against the bill on behalf of ‘the Strangers’. (1)

The bill, introduced at the request of the London shopkeepers, was rejected (Gabrieli and Melchiori 18). As livery company Freemen, Munday and Chettle would have had personal interest in this debate. Though Munday's professional affiliation seems primarily to have been with his position as Messenger of Her Majesty's Chamber at this time, he would still have been keenly aware, through his own experiences and those of his father, of the effects of the presence of foreign traders on the London Citizens' livelihood. The opening scene of *More* builds upon the anxieties described above and amplifies the presumed lawlessness of “aliens” to a dangerous degree. It shows disturbing examples of “strangers” taking advantage of and abusing London Citizens. Tilney's censorship of this scene begins with the deletion of specific words and lines
(“strangers” being one word of which he did not approve, choosing instead what would have been the less offensive term “Lombards”). But he appears to have given up after a time, resulting in his final command, written in the left margin next to the play's first lines, that the authors “leave out the insurrection entirely and the cause thereof” (Tilney 1-2). In other words, the entire scene was unacceptable and had to be omitted “and not otherwise, at your own perils” (5-6). It is easy to see why, in the context of the heated debate about the presence of “strangers” in London in 1593, Tilney would have considered this scene to be too incendiary for the stage.

The controversial scene begins with the Lombard de Barde dragging Doll Williamson by the arm, threatening, “Go with me quietly, or I'll compel thee.” The undaunted Doll responds, “Compel me, ye dog's face? Thou think'st thou hast the goldsmith's wife in hand, whom thou enticed'st from her husband with all his plate, and when thou turned'st her home to him again mad'st him, like an ass, pay for his wife's board,” to which de Barde proclaims, “So will I make thy husband too, if please me” (1.8-14). In this encounter, we are shown not just the sexual threat to the captured Doll; but perhaps more importantly, the confidence of the stranger that he has free license to control the commodities that are rightly owned by the London Citizens Williamson the carpenter and Sherwin the goldsmith. They have no power to defend either their wives or their plate as their property if de Barde chooses to confiscate them. This tyrannous usurpation of control over the system of commerce is reiterated in the next moment when Cavaler, a Frenchman, enters, followed by Williamson and Sherwin themselves. Cavaler has taken from Williamson two doves, though the latter insists, “I bought them in
Cheapside, and paid my money for them” (18-19). Cavalier defends his theft by saying, “If he paid for them, let it suffice that I possess them. Beefs and brewis may serve such hinds. Are pigeons meat for a coarse carpenter?” (23-25). Denying Williamson's right to the goods he has purchased symbolically bars the Citizen from taking part in the system of commerce, the system in which his status as Citizen is meant to give him the right to participate. The results of this injustice, then, mirror the concerns put forth by Citizens of London in the 1593 bill presented to the House of Commons.

Throughout this first part of the Original Text's initial scene, Citizens John Lincoln and George Betts have been peripheral observers of the action. Immediately following Cavalier's lines denying Williamson's claim to his own goods, Lincoln says, in an aside to Betts, “It is hard when Englishmen's patience must be thus jetted on by strangers, and they not dare to revenge their own wrongs” (1.26-29). At these lines, Tilney became especially agitated. The speech is “scored out line by line, and also marked with both a vertical line and a cross in the [left] margin” (Jowett More 357). The censor's concern is understandable—Lincoln's lines are a barely veiled call to arms for any Citizen of London who feels he has been “jetted on by strangers.” Tilney's censorship and its consequences will be discussed further below, but I bring it up here as indication of the likelihood that the Original Text was written *because* it was topical. Based on Munday's (and to some extent, as we will see, Chettle's) penchant for engaging with controversy and the response of the Master of the Revels to *More*, it is untenable to argue that the threat of censorship would have deterred these authors from composing the Original Text in 1593.
Chettle and the Date of the Original Text

While he did not shy away from literary contributions to contentious debates in his time, Munday was not foolhardy. His desire for personal advancement probably made him especially wary of attaching his name and reputation to a tide that might turn. It is possible, then, that collaborating on the Original Text of More was, at least in part, a means of deflecting responsibility for potentially controversial content. The same may also have been true of the revisions. Sharing them out among many writers would have had the dual benefits of speedy completion (if this was Hand C’s concern), and also a decreased possibility that authorities could easily find someone to blame, should they go looking. In the writing of the Original Text, Munday was joined by his friend and partner in (petty) literary crime, Henry Chettle. But assigning specific passages of the OT to Chettle is difficult. As Jowett explains, “the clearest potential evidence is too conflicting for confident pronouncement to be made on the pattern or even presence of collaboration. […] However, the more recent investigators agree that Munday has the strongest claim to Scs 2-5, 9, and 14-17; the scene most confidently attributable to Chettle is Sc. 13, which he himself revised” (More 423). There is also some indication that Chettle may have written at least part of the Original Text's version of Scene six, which was replaced by Shakespeare's Addition II. The potential evidence is small, but convincing. In that scene as it appears in Addition II, “More uses the striking image 'and you in ruff of your opinions clothed' (6.90) […]. The phrase 'in ruff of' is found nowhere

---

8 Each wishing not to be held responsible for the controversial content of Eastward Ho!, Chapman, Jonson, and Marston relied on the circumstances of collaborative composition to deny ownership of the offensive material. And in some sense, their evasions worked, since Jonson and Chapman were imprisoned, but did not receive the threatened punishment of having their ears and noses cut.
else in *Lion, EEBO,* or *KEMPE.* However, the phrase with the definite article, ‘in the ruff of’, occurs in Chettle's *Kind Heart's Dream*” (Jowett *More* 452). This raises the possibility that Addition II was revised from Chettle's original, and so “Chettle's diction influenced Shakespeare's revision of *Sir Thomas More*” (453). It also connects the Original Text of *More* with a pamphlet that Chettle wrote in 1592. It is far more likely that he would have used this anomalous phrase twice in close succession (1592 and 1593, perhaps) than that he would have used it once in 1592 and once, eight years later, in 1600, Jowett's proposed date for *More's* OT.

Chettle did not share Munday's social ambitions, and his motivation for professional activities—as a freeman of the Stationer's company, and as a writer of plays, non-dramatic poetry and prose, and translations—seems to have been toward the goal of financial gain rather than personal advancement in status. He did not ardently seek patronage, as Munday sometimes did, and he never took part in the writing of civic pageants or court entertainments. Born in 1560 (the same year as Munday) to a father who was a dyer, Chettle was bound to an eight year apprenticeship to the printer Thomas East in 1577 (one year after Munday began his brief apprenticeship to John Allde). Unlike Munday, Chettle completed the term of his position, becoming a Freeman of the Stationer's company in October of 1584 (Smith). The long-lasting friendship between Chettle and Munday is thought to have started during the period when they were both serving as printer's apprentices in London.

In 1591, Chettle entered into partnership with William Hoskins and John Danter,  

---

9 Many of the texts in *EEBO* are not, at this point, fully searchable, and so there is some limitation to its usefulness as evidence in this case.
the printers responsible for the 1597 “Bad Quarto” of *Romeo and Juliet*. From the start of what Emma Smith calls his “shadowy career,” Chettle looks to be one more concerned with the quickest way to profit than with any sort of ethical standard, as printer or as author. We have indication from later in his career that he was not a good manager of finances, since “Henslowe's diary [...] reveals that Chettle apparently lived in a constantly penurious state. He made a greater number of small borrowings from Henslowe than any other writer, including loans to release him from the Marshalsea prison in January 1599 and again from arrest in May of the same year” (Smith). His prolific work for Henslowe, with recorded involvement in “some forty-nine plays” in the years 1598-1603 (*ibid.*), suggests that his financial troubles were the result of overspending rather than a lack of adequate resources. One can only imagine that these profligate tendencies did not appear out of nowhere, and they likely created problems for Chettle in the early 1590s as well. This would certainly account for some of his more questionable dealings in those years.

After using Nashe's initials to sign the epistle to Munday's *II Gerileon*, Chettle admits the truth in his *Kind Heart's Dream* (1592), where he claims, “Neither was [Nashe] the writer of an Epistle to the second part of Gerileon, though by the workemans error T.N. were set to the end: that I confess to be mine, and repent it not” (A4r). The “that” he refers to is the epistle itself, not the “error.” But this is especially suspect, since Chettle's later epistle to Munday's *II Primaleon* (1596) condemns authors who blame mistakes on printers and compositors:

> The custome is common, when an Author or Translator (either ignorant or negligent) palpably erre, then the Printer (forsooth) as if hee had undesued
to stand with a paper on his head at euerie Stationers stall, must make a
great **Errata**, calling the Title, *Faults escaped in the Printing*: when (God
knowes) should he let but halfe the faults passe of manie such VVriters, he
should make them be as well laught at, as an upstart attourney lately was at
Leete: [. . .] Or, let [a translator] say he found [the error] so in the French
copie (for those Printers are far hence) and because he would be singular
for translating verbally, being an absurditie in French, he let it passe in
English. But for our Printers in *England* [. . .] I dare affirme there is none
of them will let so grosse a fault passe, except of purpose to make a grosse
Braggart ridiculous. (A3v)

Here, Chettle is speaking more as a printer than as an author, praising the English
practitioners of his trade for their diligence in producing correct and exact work based on
the copy they are given. Apparently, he has either forgotten his own previous accusation,
or he is hoping others have forgotten it, because it is unlikely that he would at this point
admit his own responsibility for the “misattribution” to Nashe made four years earlier.
And though he mentions French printers as being “far hence,” the implication of his
words is that French printers do, unlike English ones, make mistakes in their work.
Presumably, this accusation would apply to any French printers then working in London
(and taking work away from Citizen printers like Chettle himself). Chettle is not
attacking those foreign printers in this passage, but his words do reflect a deeply rooted
assumption about their inferiority to their English counterparts. Chettle's opinions are
those of one who certainly would have felt the impulse to defend Citizen interests during
the heated debates of 1593.

Chettle's crafty evasions of responsibility, which expand beyond those mentioned
here, make it seem as though he is always playing a game with his words, constructing
a public discourse in which he posits himself as a spectator. But he is far more involved

---
10 See, for example, the discussion of the authorship of Greene's *Groatworth of Wit* at the end of Chapter One.
than he admits. Turning back for a moment to the problem of unusually high percentages of feminine endings in *Kent*, and even more in *More*, Jackson asserts that “It is highly unlikely that both Munday and Chettle were using feminine endings at a rate of over 20 per cent of blank verse lines in the early 1590s” (“Deciphering”). But Chettle was an expert mimic who was obviously familiar with his friend Munday's writing; and furthermore, he was clearly paying close attention to Shakespeare's doings in 1592 when he attacked him in *Greene's Groatworth of Wit*. So, given the aforementioned authorial antics of Chettle and Munday, it is certainly possible that *More* was written with the intention of sounding like Shakespeare, the author whose plays have the highest incidence of feminine endings during that period. They may have even been making fun of the “upstart crow” who Chettle accused of “suppos[ing] he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you.”

Or, if Munday and Chettle were not poking fun, there is the equally tenable suggestion that *More* was written in a style most frequently used by another because the play's content was controversial. While Merriam draws the implausible conclusion that Munday merely copied out another's script in order to entrap that author, arguing the possibility that it was Shakespeare himself who originally wrote *More* (579), I rather suggest that Munday and Chettle adopted not another's words, but his literary mannerism. This would have the potential result of deflecting responsibility for the play's content if its author was not immediately identifiable. Similar efforts toward confusing the issue of attribution in a collaborative context can be seen in the composition of *Eastward Ho!* (1605) by Jonson, Chapman, and Marston, as I discuss in Chapter Two. No name was
attached to the Original Text of *More*, and given that Munday was not a practiced playwright in 1593, it is quite possible that the Master of the Revels would not have immediately recognized his handwriting.\textsuperscript{11} And if the playing company responsible for commissioning *More* was one with which Shakespeare was known to be associated, then he would have already been a “suspect” for the play's authorship. This last point is conjectural, and I will discuss below the various theories surrounding the problem of assigning *More* to a theater company.

From another perspective, we can entertain the possibility that Shakespeare's use of feminine endings was in response to Munday's successful employment of them in *John a Kent*. In this scenario, Munday and Chettle may have wanted to increase their use of this style in *More* in order to claim it as Munday's (or their) own. Playwrights certainly competed with one another to stake claims to innovative ideas, and Chettle accuses Shakespeare of being “beautified with our feathers” in the *Groatsworth*.\textsuperscript{12} In this case, the source of contention is not a matter of politics or religion at all, but a concern directly relating to the development of the playwriting profession. In 1593, Shakespeare was not yet the attached dramatist to the Chamberlain's Men (because that company would not

\textsuperscript{11} Jowett and others believe that Munday's handwriting would have been immediately recognized. As Jowett argues, “this is a document that would have appeared to have been composed by Munday even if he had merely copied it. [. . .] His penmanship is enough in itself to urge that he at least collaborated on the play” (*More* 419). Consensus can be reached by accepting that, even if the handwriting did immediately indicate Munday, the unique style in which the play was written would have raised questions about who else was involved in its composition, which would relieve Munday from sole responsibility for authorship.

\textsuperscript{12} Of course, Chettle writes the *Groatsworth* in the persona of Robert Greene, and so his griping about the “upstart” Shakespeare is meant to be read as a territorial complaint from the camp of the University Wits. However, Chettle's authorship of the pamphlet was so widely assumed that he felt the need to apologize and deny responsibility for the insulting portrayal of Shakespeare in his *Kind Heart's Dream*. Therefore, contemporary readers would have heard Chettle's voice in the attack, despite the claim that “Greene” wrote it.
form until the following year) and so he had not yet reached the comfortable status of that stable and influential role in the profession. Munday had translated one play and written another, but was also employed at court and busy pursuing other occupations. *More* may have been his first attempt to write original material for the stage in a capacity not directly related to his position (or ambition) at court. His, and Chettle's, desire to move from the periphery of the playwriting profession to a more established position within that group may have encouraged the two to try to make an impression on that community through the use of exaggerated innovative poetic style. At this point in his career, Shakespeare too had much to gain by asserting himself as an uniquely talented and creative playwright.

We can see through Munday's slow transition into playwriting—continuing as Messenger of Her Majesty's Chamber until 1596—that he was probably not wholly invested in that being his primary occupation in 1593. However, this would not have been the first time that Munday had looked outside his present circumstances in order to plant roots somewhere else that would not be immediately cultivated. We can, for example, remember that in 1585 he became a Freeman of the Draper's Company, though it would be years before he aligned himself any further with the civic body of London. It was in that same year that he translated and adapted *Fedele and Fortunio*, a play that was performed before the Queen and directly sought her favor. But Elizabeth was not the only recipient of flattery from this play. A special presentation copy was dedicated to Master John Hearsdon (or Herdson, as the name is most often spelled [Hosley 324]), a wealthy freeman (by patrimony) of the Skinner's company whose older brother Thomas
had become a Warden of the Draper's company in 1576. From this, Richard Hosley concludes that “in 1585, the year of publication of *Fedele and Fortunio*, Munday could not have failed to know Thomas Herdson, a prominent Draper, and it may well have been through this acquaintance that Munday was led to dedicate [the play] to Thomas' younger brother John” (325). Ingratiating himself with a prominent Citizen family like the Herdsons may have been, for Munday, an investment in his future as a prolific writer of civic entertainments. In any case, his gestures toward Elizabeth worked, because it was in the following year (1586) that Munday first began receiving payment as an employee of the court (Hamilton 62). From his multifaceted approach to creating opportunities for himself, it is clear that it would not have been at all out of character for Munday in 1593 to have made efforts to establish himself as a playwright long before he had any intention of taking up that occupation with any regularity.

Even though he is a crucial part of the focus of this chapter, Henry Chettle has thus far remained somewhat enigmatic. But this fact might have pleased Chettle himself. As I mentioned above, his greatest efforts in the early 1590s seem to have been spent in constructing the personas of other writers, sometimes to boost a career (Munday) and sometimes to hinder one (Shakespeare). Sometimes he wrote as himself, sometimes he used the more popular names of other writers (Nashe and Greene) to bolster the credibility and impact of his words. He functioned like the lowest kind of tabloid, or the least ethical of publicists. Though we have no evidence of Chettle's playwriting from this period aside from *More* (accepting a dating of the Original Text to 1593), we must remember that a lack of evidence does not result in undeniable proof. Without the aid of
Henslowe's *Diary*, it is possible that we would know nothing of Chettle as a playwright at all, since “between 1598 and 1603, the diary connects him with some forty-nine plays. Thirty-six of these seem to have been in collaboration. [. . .] Of these plays, only [five] were printed; none mentions Chettle as part author” (Smith). Furthermore, “thirteen plays in Henslowe's diary are attributed to Chettle alone. Only one, The *Tragedy of Hoffman*, was ever printed, in 1631; again, Chettle is not identified as the play's author” ([ibid.]). Aside from his likely involvement with the 1597 “Bad Quarto” of *Romeo and Juliet*, we have no other indication of Chettle's engagement with the playwriting profession. But there is no reason to think that he was not engaged. In his early partnership with Danter, which lasted from 1591 until at least 1596, one of his many duties was apparently to act as a “patcher of texts” (Jowett “Notes” 385-6). And Jowett goes further to describe Chettle in 1592 as a “compositor, editor, epistle-writer, scribbler, printer's reader, patcher, playwright, plagiarist, and would be man of letters” (“Johannes” 483). At this point, we do not know for sure the extent to which Chettle was involved in the writing of the Original Text of *More*, but the information we do have connects him with that text, with Munday, with playwriting and the playwriting profession, and with the interests of the Citizens of London who felt victimized by the presence of foreign tradesmen in the city in 1593. This information points strongly to a dating of the Original Text of *More* to that year.

**Tilney's Encounter with the Manuscript**

Edmund Tilney, “the most socially elite of those whose hands are found in the
manuscript” (Jowett *More* 26), became Master of the Revels in 1578, but it was in 1581 that his influence over the public theaters was solidified. In that year, he was granted special commission by the Crown, outlining his duties and powers, which included the following:

we have and do by these presents authorize and command our said servant, Edmunde Tilney, master of our said Revels, by himself, or his sufficient deputy or deputies, to warn, command, and appoint in all places within this our realm of England, as well as with franchises and liberties as without, all and every player or players, with their playmakers, either belonging to any nobleman, or otherwise, bearing the name or names or using the faculty of playmakers, or players of comedies, tragedies, interludes, or what other showes soever, from time to time, and at all times, to appear before him with all such plays, tragedies, comedies, or shows, as they shall have in readiness, or mean to set forth, and them to present and recite before our said servant, or his sufficient deputy, whom we ordain, appoint, and authorise by these presents, of all such shows, plays, players, and playmakers, together with their playing places, to order and reform, authorise and put down, as shall be thought meet or unmeet unto himself, or his said deputy in that behalf. (qtd. in Gurr 73).

Tilney was also granted the power to imprison any offenders or disobeyers of his commands and to determine the length of their imprisonment himself (*ibid.*). He was given a great deal of autonomy to act as a figure of authority over an industry that often thrived by testing the boundaries of permissibility. One would assume that, as a consequence of that autonomy, the Master of the Revels would be subject to punishment in the event that unacceptable material reached the stage on his watch. But there is no indication that this ever happened. In famous cases like Jonson and Nashe’s *The Isle of  

---

13 As Dutton explains, Edmund was “the only son of Phillip Tilney (d. 1541), an usher of the privy chamber to Henry VIII, and his wife, Malyn Chambre, a chamberwoman to Queen Katherine Howard. His paternal grandfather, Sir Philip Tilney, was closely attached to Thomas Howard, second duke of Norfolk, who married first his cousin Elizabeth and later his sister Agnes. These marriages allied the Tilneys to virtually every important family on the country, including the royal family.” Edmund benefited greatly from these associations, and “It was Charles [Howard, his cousin] who secured Tilney the post of master of the revels.”
Dogs (1597) and Middleton's A Game at Chess (1624, licensed by Henry Herbert), we hear of authors, companies, and players being punished, but not the authority who failed to prevent the performances. Scholars have largely focused their attention on the effect of censorship on early modern playwrights and their texts, but much less has been said about what was at stake for the Master himself. In her conclusion to 'Art made tongue-tied by authority', Janet Clare explains that “Tudor proclamations regulating the stage and the commission which invested the Revels office with its extended responsibilities were vague but all-encompassing” and so the position “developed not according to predetermined formulae, but from the individualistic responses of a Crown servant anxious to justify his novel privileges. The generality of his commission allowed the Master of the Revels to wield his authority selectively according to his perception of the Crown's interests” (232). To ensure the continued and uninterrupted success of the public theater, the Master had to prevent offenses to the Crown because the monarch supported the theater against the sometimes vitriolic objections of the Civic authorities—and the Revels Office needed the public theater to do well. Richard Dutton observes that Tilney

14 Clare argues that, for Isle of Dogs, “Nashe's account of the play's composition further suggests a degree of improvisation in the playhouse, so that there may well have been no official play book to submit to Tilney before performance” (74). But, if improvisation is the culprit, then it could also be true that Tilney was shown a play book, found no particular quarrels with its contents, and licensed it, so that the play only became controversial in performance. In either case, it is obvious that Tilney's control could be and was subverted at times. Nashe escaped imprisonment for the offensive play, but Jonson did not. He and two other actors were incarcerated, one of whom was Gabriel Spencer, the man Jonson killed one year later. On 27 July 1597, the Privy Council ordered theater owners “to pluck down quite the stages, galleries and roomes that are made for people to stand in, and so to deface the same as they maie not be imploied agayne to suche use” (qtd. in Clare 72). This demand was not enforced, but the theaters did close down for a time. When they re-opened in November 1597, Francis Langley the owner of The Swan (where Isle of Dogs had been performed), was denied a license for performances, and so that theater fell into disuse. The Swan's resident company, Pembroke's Men, broke and its members scattered to other playing companies. The Privy Council responded to this play quickly and forcefully, but conspicuously absent from the list of those held responsible is Tilney, whose job it was to prevent precisely this kind of trouble.
“was [the playing companies’] protector as much as their overseer.” But, in a sense, he was also their dependent. Companies had to pay for Tilney’s licensing services, and he made “an estimated £50 per annum” from those fees (ibid.). The companies had no real power over Tilney, of course, but he had a vested interest in their success and productivity because, for him, more plays meant more money. According to Dutton, “between fees for attendance at court, his salary (£100 in 1595), and his income from theatrical licensing [. . .], he perhaps earned £200 per annum beside rents from his estates, making him a wealthy man. Even so, by 1601, he was in financial difficulty, and his cousin Thomas agreed to pay 50 marks per annum against the expectation of inheriting his property.” It seems that Tilney could not afford to lose the licensing fees to which his position entitled him.

The Book of Sir Thomas More is one of the most well known examples of how Tilney operated as the official censor of playtexts; and in this case, it is clear that he took his work very seriously. However, as Clare contends, “the system of actual and discursive censorship which operated under Elizabeth I and James I was dynamic, unstable, and unpredictable” (ix). Therefore, Clare argues, “taken separately, [this case tells] us little about the nature of restrictions imposed on the playwrights at each particular time” (ibid.). The majority of scholars have accepted a date of 1593-94 to be the most likely point at which Tilney encountered the More manuscript in its Original Text form. Of course, this conclusion must be adapted if one proposes a later date for the composition of the Original Text. In any case, two things can be established with relative certainty: the first is that Tilney's censorship took place before the revisions (c.1603-04), because
“there is no distinguishable mark in Tilney's hand in the revisions to suggest that he read them” (Jowett More 359); and the second is that there must have been a significant span of time between the play's censorship and its revision. Many of Tilney's demands were not met in the revisions, and in a number of cases it is easy to see why. For example, when he asks for the alteration of the interchange that includes More's refusal to sign the “articles” in Scene ten and his consequent resignation, the playwrights were faced with a formidable roadblock to the plot of the story. The articles and More's response to them had to be mentioned in order for More's execution to be understood. Impasses like this explain why a good deal of time must have passed between the Original Text and the revisions, since Hand C and the authors could not have expected to get away with ignoring Tilney's commands without hoping that he had perhaps forgotten, or that his reaction to the play's content might be different in a later time and political setting. Clare has shown that “the scale of the disorders in London during 1592 and 1596-7, among the most serious in the decades preceding the Civil Wars, similarly dictated the censor's prohibition of scenes ranging from popular discontent and riot in The Book of Sir Thomas More to deposition in Richard II. To some extent, the shackles restraining such material were eased under James” (233). Those responsible for resurrecting and revising More in 1603/4 must have done so with the expectation or at least hope that the censor's restrictive view of stagings of “popular discontent” in Elizabeth's reign would be less ardently imposed under the new king.

Jowett is correct that “If one accepts any dating of the Original Text up to, say,
1601, this would place the revisions several years later, and they would have been written under the rule of a new monarch” (More 361). However, it is far more likely that Tilney's strong reaction to the controversial content of the Original Text is the result of its particular topicality in 1593, rather than a general uneasiness with questioning the policies of Queen Elizabeth's father in Jowett's proposed date of 1600. For it is not just the “articles” to which Tilney responds with fervent forbidding: his signed instruction written in the margin next to the play's first lines orders the playwrights to “leave out the insurrection wholly and the cause thereof” (1-2). This is the only place in the manuscript where he gives such detailed commands, and that their focus is the Citizen's actions and not More's suggests that the censor's primary concern was to avoid the staging of the kind of resistance to authority that was most evident in Citizen behavior in 1593. Alongside a change in the monarchy, the revisions would also have been written at a time when changes were taking place within the Revels office. As Scott McMillin explains, “Early in the new reign, on 23 June 1603, Sir George Buc received a grant of the reversion of the Master's office to Tilney, and on the same day, he was issued a new commission for the office, repeating the terms of the commission under which Tilney had operated since 1581, but replacing Tilney's name with Buc's” (70). Apparently, Buc did not take over entirely, but responsibilities were split between the two men until Tilney's death in 1610. The possibility of avoiding Tilney entirely while still having their text licensed by the Revel's office would perhaps have been strong motivation to resurrect More under a new monarch and a new censor.

Jowett claims that “there remains an apparent contradiction between Tilney's
severe part-prohibition and his willingness to contemplate a revised play reaching the stage. Perhaps this helped the revisers, some time later, in altered circumstances, to envisage that a revision would be feasible” (More 27). What is unclear in this statement is the “apparent contradiction” in Tilney's actions. As Master of the Revels, his job was, in the words of the 1581 commission, “of all such shows, plays, players, and playmakers, together with their playing places, to order and reform, authorise and put down, as shall be thought meet or unmeet unto himself.” Contradiction was thus built into the definition of his position. He was not simply there to say no when he “thought meet” to do so; but rather, he was a facilitator as much as a regulator. And as we see in the text of More, his first impulse seems to have been to “reform” and not to “put down.” His actions do not seem contradictory. He enables more than he forbids, and, in Jowett's own words, “formulates a plan of action whereby the dramatists can retrieve the play” (More 27). It must have been the playwrights or the company who, in 1593-94, decided that the post-censorship Original Text of More was not worth revising (and given what they would have been required to cut, this is not surprising). Or perhaps it was simply the 1593 closure of the theaters due to an outbreak of plague that caused this text to be abandoned for a time. But Tilney's initial prohibition of “the insurrection wholly and the cause thereof” is followed immediately by a proposed plan of action meant to aid the dramatists in their re-working of the play: “begin with Sir Thomas More at the mayor's sessions, with a report afterwards of his good service done being sheriff of London upon a mutiny against the Lombards – only by a short report, and not otherwise, at your own perils” (2-6). Tilney spends nine words saying no, and forty describing what needs to happen for
him to say yes.

How, then, do we define Tilney's role as a contributing hand to the text of More? Jowett concludes that, “although he contributed to the text of the manuscript, he can scarcely be accounted a collaborating author” (More 27), a statement made with such confidence that it begs the question, why not? The term “censorship” is almost uniformly associated with negative concepts such as oppression, suppression, silencing, and forbidding. But these terms do not accurately describe what Tilney does in his treatment of the Original Text of More. Would Jowett's opinion be different if the play had gone through an immediate process of revision that incorporated all, or at least most, of Tilney's demands? The trouble with finding accurate terminology to describe Tilney's work with the manuscript speaks to a very basic question about the definition of “collaboration” in the period. It would be rash to assume that playwrights always honored the wishes of their co-authors, and the many forms of collaboration—from the intimate interactions of Beaumont and Fletcher, to the removed and almost autonomous composition of Timon of Athens between Shakespeare and Middleton, and everything in between—suggest that, even had they wanted to, it might not always have been possible. The nature of the manuscript of More makes it difficult to determine the extent to which Tilney affected the form and content of the play because “where the two largest sections of the Additions, Add. II and IV, are inserted, leaves have been removed from the Original Text” (Jowett More 347). And it would make sense that those pages would have been marked by Tilney for revision, perhaps as extensively as he marked F3a with his suggestions for the (never revised) first scene.
As the Master of the Revels, Tilney's intentions are ostensibly different from those of Munday and Chettle, the authors whose work he is scrutinizing. Tilney would, in Clare's words, “wield his authority selectively according to his perception of the Crown's interests.” He was a servant of the court, but, in 1593, so was Munday as Messenger of Her Majesty's Chamber. Though, as I have said, in writing *More*, Munday seems to be aligning himself with the interests of the Citizenry of London rather than the Crown, he had, in his previous two dramatic compositions, written with court approval and perhaps preferment in mind as a desired result. These circumstances make Tilney seem like less of an outsider, not the disengaged voice of Authority, but rather a contributor to an imagined end product. His concerns may be political, but they are also theatrical because they reflect his anxiety about audience responses to the play's content. He shares with the Original Text's authors the goal of a performance-ready play suitable for the London stage. In the strictest sense, Tilney does not contribute authorially to the text of the play, because he does not write any lines. However, would we be so hasty to exclude one who acted as "plotter" of a play, but did not write any of the scenes himself? What if an author contributed a scene that was then revised by another, but still based on the original author's work? At what point does that original author cease to be considered a collaborator? It seems to me that Tilney made every effort to act as a collaborator in *The Book of Sir Thomas More*, but that his intentions were thwarted by the decision of the authors or the playing company not to continue developing More for performance in 1593-94.
Collaborative Revision, 1603/4

We are unfortunately unable to construct a detailed account of the kind of collaboration that took place between Munday and Chettle when composing the Original Text of More, largely because that document is written entirely in Munday's hand. However, that is not the case for the collection of revisions and additions made to the text some ten years later, in 1603/4. Munday was not involved in the revisions at all, but Chettle had a hand in annotating and making changes to the Original Text “in the earliest phase of revision” (Jowett More 370), though Jowett convincingly argues that he dropped out soon thereafter. Chettle's contributions to the text seem to have a particular eye toward avoiding censorship, which makes good sense since he is the one author involved at this point who, as a collaborator in the Original Text, would have been familiar with Tilney's concerns and aware of their debilitating consequences. He is the strongest candidate for authorship in the reworking of Scene five, and from that cautious attribution, and what happens to the scene during revision, we may be able to see why Chettle's involvement in the process was short-lived. In Jowett's words:

It is sometimes thought that the scene was [...] augmented only with Sir John Munday's account of the riot. This opening passage summarizes the events of the earlier prentice scene, abandoned after Tilney marked Sc. 4 and the prentice scene itself for alteration or deletion. The prentice scene would have been the most violent representation of rioting in the play, showing prentices attacking a senior city alderman. Sir John's speech might have been designed to replace the staged events. But it was finally deleted, either out of concern about possible censorship or in acknowledgment that the incident no longer had any part in the play. (More 370)

Chettle was probably brought into the revisions because he already had thorough knowledge of the Original Text of the play. But this may also be the reason he did not
stick it out through the revision process. Simply put, Chettle may have been paranoid. Or, in practical terms for a financially unstable professional dramatist, he may have decided that *More* was more trouble than it was worth. Jowett's account suggests that Chettle attempted to solve the problem of the prentice riot, but that effort was frustrated somehow. Furthermore, in this case, unlike in the Original Text, we have Chettle’s handwriting, which is meaningful because “Chettle's addition offers an illuminating example of authorial thought-processes manifested in ink. He made numerous alterations as he wrote, and marked two passages for omission within his draft, 13.57-70 and 105-12.” Because both of these passages “contain politically controversial material,” Jowett believes that “his agitation about the subject-matter perhaps contributed to his anxiety as writer, which may be reflected too in the passage's contorted syntax” (*More* 17-18). It is quite possible that Chettle was anxious about culpability for the play's content, or the dramatist may just have been fed up with this text that, now ten years later, was still presenting him with problems that seemed nearly impossible to solve.\(^\text{16}\) In any case, Chettle's role as a “collaborator” in the revisions of *More* is, it seems, primarily informed by his involvement in the composition of the Original Text, and he did not have much to do in collaboration with the revising authors at all. His belief that the text could be recovered for performance may have been motivated by financial incentives, but he did not hold to that belief for long.

The terms “revision” and “addition” are themselves meaningful, and should not be used interchangeably. The difference between them, that a “revision” is made when

\(^{16}\) The latter option begins to seem more convincing when one considers, as Scott McMillin has pointed out, that “an insurrection scene rather like More's was incorporated in Chettle's *Hoffman*, written in 1602, apparently without fear of censorship” (71).
existing text is changed by the same or another author, and that an “addition” occurs when entirely new content is added, is simple enough to understand. Yet, when an author is contributing to a pre-existing text, there is always some amount of re-vision taking place if that author has even the slightest knowledge of the story to which he is contributing. Thus, even in the seemingly simplest of distinctions, blurring of definitional boundaries can easily occur. The case of More exemplifies this difficulty. For example, Adds. II and IV, as mentioned above, replace pages from the Original Text, so we no longer have the first text that would tell us whether or not the material in the additions is entirely original. Still, scholars have made efforts to determine the extent to which those authors who contributed to the play in 1603/4 were aware of the Original Text's overall plot and content and the demands made by the censor on that document. The conclusions one accepts on these matters impact the way the contributing dramatists' authorial actions are defined, whether those individuals are termed collaborators, revisers, contributors, or some combination of the three. Chettle, for instance, was a collaborator on the Original Text, but his role in 1603/4 is that of a reviser who probably did not “collaborate” in any real sense with the other authors who were or would be contributing to More at that time.

The “Additions” made to More in 1603/4 are perhaps termed so for the fact that they are physical additions to the Original Text of the play, but in describing the content of these “additions,” it would be more accurate to use the term “revisions.” Written almost entirely on new sheets that replace the old, or half-sheets pasted in to cover the text of the original manuscript, the contributions of the revising authors are immediately
recognizable as different from the original document. In examining the manuscript of
*The Book of Sir Thomas More* (Harley 7368) firsthand at the British Library, I became
aware that no critical edition or facsimile copy can provide the same impression of
fragmentation one gets from studying the manuscript, particularly now that the half sheet
paste-ins from Folios 11b and 13a have been soaked off to reveal the content of the
Original Text underneath. From Heywood's sprawling script to Chettle's more cramped
hand, one sees immediately what multiple authorship can look like. And in *More*, the
results are not the “rich conceptions” of “twin-like brains” for which Beaumont and
Fletcher are credited. Instead, the document reveals visually what seems to be true about
the circumstances of its revision, which is that the authors in 1603/4 did not really
collaborate with one another. Instead, the process of revision was orchestrated by Hand
C, who served as intermediary between the authors themselves as well as between the
authors and the play.

In any discussion of multiple authorship in the period, “collaboration” as an
authorial action must carry a specific meaning; otherwise, it is a useless descriptor. As I
have just shown, the actions of Beaumont and Fletcher as co-authors and the actions of
the contributors to the revision of *More* are drastically different, so they should not both
be called “collaboration.” This is also true of texts that have been contributed to by
multiple hands, because to call a work a “collaboration” should imply the specific

---

17 The most recent facsimile available to the public is the 1910 *Tudor Facsimile Texts* edition. The paste-ins have been removed since this facsimile was produced, and it is, unsurprisingly, of poor quality by modern standards. The British Library has high-quality digital images of the document available in their manuscript room. These images are immensely helpful, since they capture details of the text that can be seen in magnification, but there is simply no substitute for the manuscript itself to get a true sense of its sometimes piecemeal construction.
conditions of its composition. There needs to be clear difference between the terms “collaboration,” “adaptation,” and “revision” when describing a text, and further modification to those terms to assign more specific meaning to what they describe (for example, “close collaboration,” “loose adaptation,” “minor revision”). More provides many examples of this point. Jowett concludes that, of the authors involved in the revisions (Dekker, Heywood, and Shakespeare, excluding Chettle for his unique involvement in both versions of the text), Shakespeare's additions are the most original: “On the evidence presented so far, [the Hand D] passage is more thoroughly rewritten than any other revision in the play, for it demonstrably and repeatedly resembles the writing of Shakespeare,” while “passages in Dekker's and Heywood's hands are transcripts of the equivalents in the Original Text with some limited additions and alterations” (More 452). If we accept this conclusion, then this difference ought to call for some kind of distinction between the terms we use to identify Shakespeare's authorial actions compared with those of the other two. However, given that we have no Original Text equivalent to compare to the Hand D passage, and that an echo of Chettle's language can be heard in Shakespeare's composition (“in the ruff of,” see above), we should not be too hasty to accept that the Hand D passage is as original as we would like to assume.

While we cannot with certainty determine the originality of Shakespeare's contributions to The Book of Sir Thomas More, it still seems as though his involvement with the text was of a different kind from the other contributors. As a collaborator, Shakespeare is particularly remote, much as he would later be in his collaboration with
Middleton on *Timon of Athens* (1606), as I discuss in Chapter Four. In *More*, Shakespeare “was the only revising dramatist who did not write on pre-existing script [. . .]. In this respect at least, Shakespeare seems a little removed from the process” (Jowett *More* 394). Shakespeare did not work closely with other dramatists in this endeavor—none of them seems to have worked closely with one another, in fact—but this is not because he was incapable or unwilling to work with others, as his later close collaborations with Fletcher show. Rather, the nature of Shakespeare's involvement in the *More* revisions is best understood in relation to his role as Attached Dramatist for the King's Men. But this is a contentious issue, because there is no way to be sure that *The Book of Sir Thomas More* was the property of Shakespeare's company, and in fact, “there are reasons for thinking that another company, Queen Anne's Men, may have been the actors in question” (Jowett *More* 394).

Despite Jowett’s recent claims, there is significant reason for the belief that the Chamberlain's/King's Men was the company in ownership of *More* at the time of its revision. We have no other indication that Shakespeare went outside his company affiliation to work on other plays for other companies, and as a shareholder in Chamberlain/s/King's, it would make little sense for him to do so. Jowett points out that “if the present dating of the revisions is correct, it is necessary to suppose that either Shakespeare or Heywood or both transgressed their company loyalties as both

---
18 *More* and *Timon* have something else in common. Both plays feature “a role of over 800 lines and [have] more than twenty speaking characters in the first 500 lines.” According to McMillin, they “are the only (presumably) public theatre plays, 1580-1610, which combine these characteristics” (75 n.12). Both traits are found in the Original Text of *More*, and so the coincidence only goes so far, and says nothing about Shakespeare's involvement in *More* in revision. But it is an interesting coincidence, nonetheless.
playwrights and sharers” (More 100). Heywood was attached to Worcester's/Queen Anne's Men in 1601, for whom he both acted and wrote plays. But he did not remain with that company for his entire career (either due to a desire for autonomy, interest in other kinds of writing, or the fact that his company was not as stable as Shakespeare's). His loyalties may not have been as firmly established as Shakespeare's, particularly as a playwright who claimed in 1633 to have “had an entire hand or, at the least a maine finger” in “two hundred and twenty” plays for a variety of companies (5). His contributions to the text of More are primarily intended to provide comic relief in the play. Heywood establishes the character of Clown Betts, and he makes other additions to the Original Text which function similarly to lighten the play's tone. As Jowett says, “Heywood's added speeches for Clown Betts are therefore typical of his provision of a hand or main finger, and characteristic of the kind of role he typically created” (More 25). Dekker's revisions and additions are similar to Heywood's in form and function. They “involved only limited fresh writing,” and are restricted to the restructuring (early in the revision process) and adding of a new ending (later) to Scene eight (23). In the case of More, both Heywood and Dekker seem to have been employing their formidable experience and expertise as syndicate writers for Henslowe, using their own authorial styles and specialties to build upon the pre-existing text, and also create new material, in order to bolster the play's theatrical appeal. They are, in other words, acting as Commercial Professionals, the Form of Affiliation to the profession of dramatist in which I placed them in Chapter Two.

Shakespeare's contributions to More can be characterized differently: “his work
constituted more than a single intervention” (Jowett More 394), and he seems to have done something that other revisers did not do, which was to write with the expectation that Hand C, the playhouse scribe, would clarify and organize the material for him. In his part of Addition II (Folios 8 and 9), Shakespeare “failed to provide an entry for the scene's main role, More himself” (Jowett More 379), and Hand C also “altered eight SP's, thus securing roles for Clown Betts and Williamson, whom Shakespeare had not identified at all” (382) but had instead used the vague “other” or “oth” as stand-in speech prefixes. Jowett notes that the absence of a direction indicating More's entrance “is especially striking as the direction Shakespeare supplied after 6.31 for the entry of the Mayor, Surrey, and Shrewsbury is unusually specific in its information and generous in its layout on the page. The plentiful space around the direction was probably left precisely because Shakespeare anticipated that Hand C would clarify the staging and so would need space for his annotations” (379). His reliance on the scribe makes it seem likely that these two were familiar with each other's working habits, a relationship that could have formed from years of working together as the Attached Dramatist and resident theatrical scribe for the Chamberlain's/King's Men. In some sense, these two were perhaps the closest “collaborators” of all in the process of revising More.

Scott McMillin argues for the Original Text having been written for Strange's Men, and Taylor builds on this to say that, in 1594 when Strange's split, it is possible that the play became the property of the Chamberlain's men (106-7). 19 Strange's Men is one

19 Taylor is not willing to comment on the likelihood of this scenario: “In the current state of our ignorance, I do not believe it is possible to arbitrate over which company revived the play” (125). It is certainly easiest, and therefore desirable, to assume that Shakespeare would not have broken his allegiance to Chamberlain's/King's to contribute to a play for another company. But unfortunately,
of the companies whose actors performed *2 Seven Deadly Sins*, the plot written out by Hand C, at The Theater in 1590-91. Though it is possible that Hand C was not “attached” to the company for which he oversaw the revisions of *More*, it is just as possible that he was. And perhaps he, like the Original Text of *More*, moved from Strange's Men to the Chamberlain's in 1594 when that first company was dissolved. Hand C's role in the revisions was central. He “controlled the dispersal of work, then gathered back the revision from the separate contributing poet-playmakers, laying claim to the assembled text as a theatre work controlled by the company who presumably called for the revisions in the first place” (Jowett *More* 29). The nature of the collaboration that resulted in the revised text of *More* was thus determined by the scribe's actions, rather than the dramatists'. Though he was probably not a co-author in any real sense—for similar reasons that Tilney is excluded from that designation—Hand C can be thought of as a collaborator in this endeavor.\(^{20}\) Since he transcribed “about half” of the revised passages (*More* 453), it is likely that he made small changes to the dramatists' work while transcribing, though we do not know the extent to which this might be true. For that reason, there is perhaps an even stronger case for him as a collaborator than there is for Tilney.

---

wishing and proving are two different things, and at this point, we can only wish. We have no other indication that Shakespeare ever wrote for another company once he became attached to Chamberlain's/King's. But other playwrights, such as Richard Brome, did break allegiances, so the lack of evidence in Shakespeare's case is not tantamount to proof.

\(^{20}\) The distinction between co-author and collaborator is an important one, particularly given the focus in recent scholarship on non-authorial collaborators within the early modern theatre (Paul Werstine's “Close Contrivers,” for instance). Both Tilney and Hand C consistently engaged with the community of playwrights in the period—their occupations required them to do so—but they would not identify themselves as playwrights (certainly Tilney would not, and there is no indication that Hand C was a dramatist). However, they did, as we see in *More*, contribute to the form and content of dramatic documents, and so their roles as collaborators cannot be denied.
It is probably because Hand C functioned so adeptly as an intermediary that the authors involved in the revisions of More did not interact with one another in the process of contributing to the text. Though attribution is a passionately contested issue for some scholars of this play, there is seemingly a great deal more individual authorial style that comes through in the writing of the revisions and additions. It is perhaps circular to argue that we can “hear” Shakespeare, Heywood, or Dekker in the passages that have been attributed to them, because, unfortunately in this case, it is not true that “thinking makes it so” (Hamlet 2.2.251). But attribution studies, while constantly developing as a sort of literary science, has reached a level of sophistication that makes it a foundation upon which I believe we can stand. It enables informed discussion of texts like More that can be, in their complexity, otherwise incapacitating to scholarly inquiry. The removed authorial collaboration in the revisions and additions to More enabled the contributing authors to maintain their own unique styles (perhaps the reason that they were approached to contribute in the first place) because they did not have to think about the other side of the paradox that informed collaborative endeavors in the period. In other words, professional playwrights had to strive for the often contradictory goals of self-promotion and of group-legitimation by foregrounding their own specific abilities as dramatists while also creating collaborative texts that would be successful on the stage. But when there is a playhouse scribe responsible for the second goal, playwrights interested in “showcasing” themselves, would be particularly able to do so. And to some extent, since it seems likely that the contributing authors in the revisions did not have access to the whole of the Original Text (therefore being ignorant of parts of its content),
they may have had no option but simply to write “as themselves” with no thought toward consistency with other parts and hands.21

Although playwrights certainly belonged to a professional community, there are real and significant differences between the level of engagement each author had with that community and with the texts to which he contributed, differences that can be better understood by considering each author's Form of Affiliation to the profession. In More, the early collaboration between Munday and Chettle was probably the closest relationship, and the only real authorially “collaborative” one to have existed in the play's construction. As a Commercial Professional, Chettle remained engaged with the text through the start of the revisions, probably for the simple reason that he was paid to do so. But, since he did not stand to gain or lose by the success of the play past that point, he did not find sufficient reason to see it through to completion. By 1603, the Literary Dramatist Munday had already departed from dramatic writing for the public theater to take up the more prestigious occupation of composing Civic entertainments, and so his attitude toward and engagement with the profession of dramatist informed his

21 Recently, some scholars have made efforts to forge a relationship between the dynamics of collaboration and the social tensions in the play itself, suggesting that contention between authors/contributors mirrors the contention between citizens/city/strangers. Nina S. Levine has argued that, “in its presentation of citizenship and in its own collaborative playwriting, More indeed registers the complex relations between individuals and the collective, relations that depend as much on differentiation as on consent” (50). Taking this a step further, Tudeau-Clayton claims, “True then, we might say, to the dramatist's ethical vocation, Shakespeare's contribution, I want to suggest, addresses itself to fellow hands, calling upon them to see strangers differently, to, that is, a change of perception/heart and, perhaps, of 'hand' (i.e. further revision)” (6). Because it does not rely upon a direct mirroring of playwrights to political debates, Levine's claim is far more convincing. But Tudeau-Clayton not only insists upon playwriting as an “ethical vocation,” which is itself problematic, but also bases her claim on the assumption that the revising authors of More saw each other's work and had the time to respond to it. Most scholars now believe that the revisions took place over a matter of mere weeks, and we have already seen that the playwrights had little to no communication with each other in the process, so to think they affected one another in any real way ignores the model of collaboration that this play represents.
involvement (or lack thereof) with the revisions of *More*. Acting, like Chettle, as Commercial Professionals, Dekker and Heywood were involved in the revisions for specific reasons relating to their particular abilities as "jobbing" dramatists, and their contributions are therefore somewhat isolated interpolations. Shakespeare, on the other hand, as the only (firmly) Attached Dramatist of the group, shows his professional engagement with dramatic writing and with the theater industry both in the kind and content of his revisions and in his collaboration with Hand C. His relationship to his professional community and with the seasoned scribe contribute to the likelihood that the revisions of this play were commissioned by the King's Men in 1603/4.

The text of *More*, in its revised form, is the product of a total of seven contributors, at the very least, and it shows us collaboration as a business practice taking place across multiple professional communities: the playwrights, the company/ies, and the court affiliated Revel's office. Though for many reasons *The Book of Sir Thomas More* appears to be a strange and unique case of early modern authorship and censorship, we do not know that this is true—a lack of evidence does not mean that evidence never existed. Perhaps there are other texts that have equally complicated histories, either lost or yet to be discovered. But even from this "strange case," we can gain insight into how dramatists worked together, and separately-together, within and outside their professional community, and begin to see how the participants from different communities are connected with one another by the common goal of producing performance-ready texts for the early modern stage.
CHAPTER FOUR
“SO NOT ASSUME MY LIKENESS”

MIDDLETON, COLLABORATION, AND THE DIFFERENCE DIFFERENCE MAKES

Recent scholarship focusing on early modern dramatists other than Shakespeare has allowed for considerable reevaluation of the career and canon of Thomas Middleton. It is undeniable that Middleton's contribution to the corpus of early modern literature is vast and diverse; but what I will discuss here is how his literary output, especially in collaboration with other dramatists, can help us to characterize the nature of his membership in the professional community of playwrights in his time, and how the professional associations of his co-authors impacted those collaborative relationships. In chapter two, I categorized Middleton as a Literary Dramatist, along with Jonson, Chapman, Kyd, Drayton, and Munday. The members of this group are characterized by an interest in forms of writing other than drama, particularly those that confer status upon their authors and might lead to court and civic appointments. Consequently, these authors would have been less willing to self-identify as career playwrights, instead using the stage as a means of financial subsistence while pursuing other professional goals. But unlike many of his co-occupants in this category, Middleton probably did not always think of himself in these terms. Particularly in the beginning years of his career, Middleton made choices that brought him into sustained contact with the group of Commercial Professionals, among whom he found his two most productive collaborative
relationships—first with Thomas Dekker, and later with William Rowley. However, despite these close personal and professional ties, Middleton's career as a writer both in and outside the theater, and his habits in collaboration and publication, reinforce the conclusion that, though he may not have had personal connections with them, professionally, Middleton has the most in common with the Literary Dramatists with whom I have grouped him.

The first record of Middleton's connection to the world of the theater is dated 8 February 1601, when Middleton is reported to be “in London, daily accompanying the players” (qtd. in Works 35). At that time, and in the ensuing year or so when we have the first record of his dramatic activity (the collaborative Caesar's Fall in 1602), professional dramatists were part of a thriving commercial entertainment industry. Institutionally, Middleton remained on the fringes of that industry in the sense that he avoided ties of all kinds: he was not an actor, shareholder, or resident dramatist for any company at any point in his more than twenty-year career in dramatic authorship. He did, however, eventually accept an extra-theatrical institutional tie when he became City Chronologer in 1620. He also did a great deal of other writing outside the commercial theater; composing non-dramatic poetry and prose, pageants, Lord Mayor's Shows, and translations. All of these other occupations were undertaken while Middleton was also writing plays, which suggests that his pursuit of other, more prestigious affiliations was a consistent ambition that could be supported financially by dramatic authorship. The fact that he seems to have made a point of never committing himself to any sustained, professional obligations adds further support to this idea. The conclusion that emerges again and again in studying Middleton's writing habits is that the theater was for him a
place where he could make money on his own terms as a talented free-lance playwright; but perhaps even more importantly, it was a place where he discovered friends with whom he could work while still pursuing other, more prestigious professional affiliations for himself. Thus, Middleton probably did not always, or even often in his later career, think of himself primarily as a professional playwright.

Much can be learned about an author's attitude toward his writing when we can determine his level of interest and involvement in the printing of his texts. However, there are many extenuating circumstances that may prevent us from knowing to what extent an author played a part in the publication of his own work. For unattached playwrights especially, it was more often than not the case that, once a text was sold to a company, the author had no say in what happened to it. Changes were made by multiple agents in the theater and, if the company chose to print the text, the printshop, without authorial consultation. For multi-authored texts, tracing responsibility for publication decisions becomes even more tricky, since determining the presence of an author in the process still may not tell us which author was involved. But with some careful speculation, we can consider how what we know about Middleton’s habits and choices when publishing his own works can help us to understand his more general opinions about dramatic authorship.

In “Thomas Middleton: Lives and Afterlives,” Gary Taylor argues that, because Middleton “did not, as Spenser and Milton did, elect himself England's laureate; he did not, as Jonson did, build a monument to himself in his own lifetime, by publishing his works in folio; he did not, as Donne did, stage-manage his own death,” we can conclude that he cared little for “the future of his texts” (Works 49). But a dramatic author's desire
to control his texts—that is, the printed representations of his work—is not the only
evidence by which we can identify his interest in securing a name for himself both in his
time and for the future. There are aspects of Middleton's career that argue for his careful
cultivation of an authorial persona; and though the future may not have been first on his
mind, it is doubtful that the man who was eventually to become Chronologer of the City
of London would have imagined himself not to be a part of that city's story. He may not
have followed the same path as Spenser, Milton, Jonson, or Donne; nor did he secure his
“literary estate” by Shakespeare's method of occupying the position of attached dramatist,
making his plays the property of one prestigious company that could collect and preserve
them in one place. Middleton's texts were rather scattered among the many companies
for which he wrote, but it does not follow that he had no interest in his literary reputation.
To be clear, since the phrase “literary reputation” is somewhat vague, a necessary
distinction must be drawn between two aspects of its meaning: an author's “living
reputation” and what Taylor calls his “attitude toward posterity” (ibid.), which are very
different concerns. The convenient storage of Shakespeare's plays cannot be
convincingly attributed to the author's desire to “make it easy for others to improve the
value of his literary estate after his death” as Taylor implies (ibid.), but is rather a
consequence of his position as attached dramatist to one company that held his plays in
their repertory, and the same is true of the similar circumstances that allowed for the
production of the posthumous Beaumont and Fletcher folio. What Shakespeare's
continued affiliation with the King's Men does reveal is his success as a leading dramatist
and theatrical businessman. But Middleton did not have these same professional goals,
and so his living reputation was formed by different means.
Jonson, of course, wanted recognition both living and lasting, and his highest praise of Shakespeare comes in his poem “To the memory of my beloved, the Author” printed in the 1623 folio. There Jonson makes the double, and almost contradictory, assertion that the deceased dramatist was the “Soul of the age!” (17), but also that, “He was not of an age, but for all time!” (43). These lines express more about the values and ambitions of their author than they do about the author for whom they were written. Jonson honors Shakespeare by describing him in terms that depict how Jonson himself would most like to be remembered. Middleton, on the other hand, may have been reluctant to make grand claims about his impact on future generations of readers and viewers, but, as I will show, he was certainly interested in asserting his own literary and social status, as well as his personal ideas and opinions, in his own time. What makes him an interesting case is that he seems to have been frequently uncertain about what position he wished to occupy in relation to the playwriting profession, and what other means he might use to establish himself as a popular and profiting writer.

As Taylor points out, the choice to work with Dekker on The Patient Man and the Honest Whore in 1604 made a strong statement about Middleton's personal and professional affiliations:

Middleton began 'accompanying the players' during the War of the Theatres [. . .], and it was almost impossible not to be situated within the attendant rivalries and personal pairings. By collaborating with Dekker, he aligned himself against Jonson, and that alignment soured relations between Jonson and Middleton for the next quarter-century. But Middleton's early partnership with Dekker represents more than a personal rejection of—or by—Jonson. After all, young Middleton (whose father had been a bricklayer) might seem to have more in common with the satirical Jonson (whose stepfather was a bricklayer, and who was himself a dues-paying member of that company) than with the good-hearted Dekker; he might seem to have even more in common with the satirical educated
gentleman Marston. But Dekker, like Shakespeare and Rowley and Heywood after him, by his very difference complements Middleton. Jonson rejected difference; Middleton collaborated with it. (38)

The “attendant rivalries and personal pairings” Taylor describes need fuller description to explicate better Middleton's choice of collaborators. The use of “choice” here should not be taken to mean that the decision was one-sided, or that Middleton had ultimate power in deciding with whom to work. It is also important to remember that the collaborative relationship between Dekker and Middleton did not begin with *The Patient Man and the Honest Whore*. Dekker may very well have sought out the comparatively fledgling (and around eight years his junior) dramatist in 1604 because he saw potential in Middleton to be a useful co-author of plays (as their previous work together on plague pamphlets and *The Magnificent Entertainment* might suggest). And the two had already worked together on *Caesar's Fall* in 1602, where they were also joined by Drayton, Webster, and Munday. The play is lost, so we know little about the circumstances of its composition; but since the four seasoned dramatists of the group had been working together for Henslowe in “syndicates” for years (Carson 59), it is likely that Middleton's role in the collaboration was minor, or at least under the guidance and supervision of the others. Further support for Middleton's subordination to the others comes from an entry in Henslowe's *Diary*, which reads, “Lent vnto the company the 22 of majj 1602 to geue vnto antoney monday & mihell drayton webster & the Rest in earneste of A Boocke called sesers fälle.” But interlined above the word “Rest” is the name “mydelton,” as if this specification were an afterthought (201). Thus, in all likelihood, Dekker was the more dominant force in the establishment of his collaborative relationship with Middleton, but one always has a “choice” whether or not to undertake a project, and Middleton would
have of course had the option not to contribute to *The Patient Man and the Honest Whore*.

In the Poet's War (or War of the Theatres in the above terms), Jonson asserts himself as a dramatic artist whose purpose is to educate and edify his understanding audience. His message carries with it a basic assumption about the literary and social value of dramatic composition and the central role of the dramatist in representing and regulating his society. Dekker's response to these high claims comes in the form of playful scoffing. Just as the Epistle Dedicatory of Middleton and Dekker's collaborative pamphlet *News from Gravesend, Sent to Nobody* (late 1603) shows the authors' dismissal of the unreliable system of patronage that required authors to heap disingenuous flattery on the targets of their appeals;¹ Dekker reveals himself to be also unwilling to stake his playwriting career on an unquantifiable potential (artistic) value. For him, plays are meant to entertain an audience as broad as can be found, because the more commercially successful his compositions are, the more likely he is to be employed in the future based on his and his work's reputation.

¹ The epistle, which takes up nearly as much space as the poem to which it is attached, is dedicated to “Sir Nicholas Nemo; alias Nobody” (9) and signed only “Somebody” (440). It “appears to have been written entirely by Dekker” (Companion 346), and condemns the formality, function, and fashion of what might be called the common authorial practice of “patron-fishing”:

> Shall I creep like a drowned rat into thy warm bosom, my benefic patron, with a piece of some old musty sentence in my mouth, stol'n out of Lycosthenes' *Apophthegms*, and so accost thee? Out upon't! The fashions of such dedications is more stale than kissing. No, no, suffer me, good Nobody, to dive, like a Whitefriar's punk, into thy familiar and solid acquaintance at the first dash, and instead of 'Worshipful Sir' come upon thee with 'Honest Jew, how dost?' Wonder not that out of the whole barrel of pickled patrons, I have only made choice of thee, for I love none really but thee and myself. For us two do I only care, and therefore I conjure thee, let the payment of thine affection be reciprocal. (10-22)

The satirical edge of this epistle is sharp, but not specifically directed. It says as much about unresponsive dedicatees as it does about the self-important and excessively flattering authors who address them. By spending so much time and effort on this empty dedication, Dekker shows the futility of all dedications, and thus a complete mistrust of, and disinterest in, the system of patronage that authors like Jonson pursued as a prestigious means of asserting literary authority, despite its unreliability.
Middleton's alignment with Dekker, then, may reveal an early-career uncertainty about the artistic or social value and purpose of dramatic composition. His earliest known work, the non-dramatic *Wisdom of Solomon Paraphrased* (1597), though considered by most to be of poor poetic quality, is far more ambitious as a literary endeavor. As Debora Shuger explains, “[o]ne might more accurately describe the poem as a creative misreading than a strict paraphrase” (*Works* 1915), and this intentional misreading “gives the poem a generally Calvinist structure” (1917) that is all Middleton's own. Furthermore, this publication is not “sent to Nobody,” but instead bears a dedication to the Earl of Essex, which pleads for “the forces of [his] favour” (“Epistle” 13). Although Middleton clearly had hopes of literary patronage at this point, they were not entirely confident ones; and though not sent to Nobody, that seems to be who responded to *Wisdom*—and the same is true of *The Ghost of Lucrece*, printed in 1600 and dedicated to a probably unresponsive William, second Baron Compton (*Works* 1989).^3^ That Middleton was, at this early stage, already mistrustful of literary patronage is evidenced by the tone of his address “To the Gentlemen Readers,” which immediately follows the Essex dedication in *Wisdom*. Here, Middleton admits himself to be susceptible to vicious critics: “While I thus argue, Momus and Zoilus, those two ravens, devour my seed because I lack a scarecrow” (34-36). The flattering language of a plea

---

^2^ Unless otherwise stated, all Middleton authored (or co-authored) texts are taken from *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works* (Oxford, 2007).

^3^ G.B. Shand argues that “[w]hile there is no indisputable sign that the dedication produced favour, the wording sounds like gratitude, implying that bounty from Compton had preceded publication. Nonetheless Adams speculates that Middleton received nothing for his pains, and that he subsequently pilloried Compton as Sir Christopher Clutchfist in *Hubbard*” (*Works* 1989 2n). Given the lack of evidence, one’s conclusion on this matter must be the result of speculation. I find the latter argument more convincing, since the language of “gratitude” Middleton employs could just as easily be based on expectation of or feigned confidence in the patron’s potential support—a sort of rhetorical counting of chickens before they hatch.
for patronage found in the Essex dedication, a plea for a safe place where the author's poetic “seeds” might lodge “like infants upon the lap of a favorite, waiting the budding springtime of their growth” (16-17) is replaced by the image of the patron as a stuffed up and false illusion of a man, whose only power lies in the crows' ignorance of his impotence. Middleton would continue to lack a “scarecrow,” and so it makes sense that he joined forces with a freelance professional like Dekker, who had figured out a way to make a living with his pen that did not rely on the unstable and rather outmoded patronage system. Where Jonson was idealistic, Middleton was more pragmatic. They shared similar ambitions for advancement of themselves and their works, but the young Middleton seems to have been less reluctant to subordinate himself to the expertise of others, and was thus more willing to learn from men like Dekker. These skills of observation are perhaps what made him such an uniquely talented “recorder” of his world.

While commercially advantageous, Middleton's affiliation with the “good-hearted Dekker” could have been just as personal as it was professional: Middleton appears to have found in Dekker a friend with whom he enjoyed writing; and furthermore, as will be discussed later in this chapter, Middleton and Dekker found common, or at least complimentary, ground in matters of religious belief. With imperious Jonson and crabby Marston as Taylor's proposed alternatives for personal and professional relationships, it is not a great surprise that Middleton went another way. The “difference” to which Taylor refers is not just one of background and upbringing. The collaborative relationships

---

4 Dekker, of course, was sent to debtor's prison a number of times over the course of his career; however, as mentioned in Chapter two, his financial troubles are generally assumed to have been the result of over-spending rather than being under-paid.
between Middleton and Dekker and Middleton and Rowley did not have to be rooted in competition, because each author had his own specific strengths and preferences in genre and style, as well as his own authorial and professional goals. But Jonson was jealous of and threatened by Middleton's status as gentleman, his similar abilities in the genre of city comedy, and perhaps even his comparatively speedy rate of composition. Their likeness was not the source of amicable cooperation, but may have rather been, at least on Jonson's part, a problem of one too many cooks in the city comedy kitchen.

In the early years of his career especially, Middleton does not seem to have been, or want to appear to be, noticeably involved in the printing of his plays, with one year of publication offering a potentially strange exception. In 1608, three of Middleton's plays were published for the first time and each had some indication of their author on the title page. Of the three, *Your Five Gallants* stands out in that it bears the author's full name, proclaiming it to have been “Written by T. Middleton.” The only other two printed plays to reference their author before *The Roaring Girl* (1611) are *A Trick to Catch the Old One* and *A Mad World, My Masters*, which give only his initials, reading, “Composed by T. M.”\(^5\) But given that, in the years 1607-08, two plays we now know to be by Middleton (*The Puritan Widow* and *The Yorkshire Tragedy*) were printed with mis-attributions on their title pages—"W.S." and "VV. Shakespeare,” respectively (Rasmussen 229)—we must conclude that Middleton's interest in and control over the printing of his texts was not substantial at that time. As Taylor explains, “[n]ine of Middleton's plays were printed between 1604 and 1608, but there is no evidence that he participated in their publication”

---

5 The second edition of *Trick*, printed in 1616, expands the attribution by spelling out “By T. Midleton,” perhaps suggesting that the author's name had become increasingly recognizable and had therefore gained selling-power in the eyes of the publisher.
(Works 43). Furthermore, the companies that had performed the city comedies that were printed with correct attributions in 1608 (Paul's Boys and the Children of the Chapel/Revels/Blackfriars) “broke up between 1606 and 1608” (ibid.), and so it makes sense that they would sell their texts for publication in a last effort to make money from them. Given Middleton's productivity and popularity as a writer of city comedy for the boys, it is not rash to conclude that the publishers might have seen financial benefit in including the author's name on the title page—just as the mis-attributions to Shakespeare of the other plays seem to be a marketing strategy based on the popularity of that celebrated author.

Taylor concludes that “Middleton himself was clearly involved in the publication of The Roaring Girl in 1611” (Works 43) and cites this as evidence of a change of heart about the publication of his dramatic compositions, influenced by “a larger gradual shift in the literary status of plays” (43). Middleton wrote the epistle, addressed to “the comic Play-readers, Venery and Laughter,” an empty dedication that echoes the style of Dekker's epistle to News from Gravesend. But in this dedication, it is “the fashion of play-making” (1) under scrutiny, as well as the profession of playwright; for Middleton claims that “tis the excellency of a writer to leave things better than he finds 'em; though some obscene fellow [. . .] would have ripped up the most nasty vice that ever hell belched forth, and presented it to a modest assembly” (22-24, 28-29). He explains that “This book I make no question but is fit for many of your companies, as well as the person itself [Mary Frith], and may be allowed both gallery-room at the play-house and chamber-room at your lodging” (17-20). The epistle's final lines give the authors' objectives for presenting this account of the controversial Roaring Girl: “we rather wish
in such discoveries where reputation lies bleeding, a slackness of truth, than fulness of
slander” (30-31). “Fulness of slander” is, then, against the “excellency of a writer,” but
so is truth when it threatens “reputation.”6 In the lines of this epistle, we can see that
Middleton is imagining a future for his text, a place for it in the “chamber-room” of his
readers’ homes. But though he was clearly involved in the text’s publication, we still do
not know if publication was his idea. As I have shown, his relationship with Dekker
formed as an apprentice-like association wherein the older, more experienced writer
undertook to teach Middleton the workings of the playwriting profession. By 1611, the
dynamic of that relationship must have changed, since Middleton had been writing plays
for nine years or so, but he still had little to no experience with the printing of plays, and
so it could have been under Dekker’s supervision that this occasion for the printing of The
Roaring Girl came about.

According to Taylor, Middleton took great pains to establish status for his printed
texts—though he never went quite as far as Jonson with his 1616 Works. In Taylor's
words:

Middleton actively exploited the potencies of print. […] The Black Book, printed twice in 1604, sported a special black title-page, and this use of original visual designs would characterize every Middleton play published from 1611 until his death. The Roaring Girl was not the first commercial play printed with a title-page woodcut […] but Middleton became the only dramatist of his time to make such illustrations a regular feature of printings of his plays. (42)

The claim for Middleton's active exploitation of “the potencies of print” is somewhat
heavy handed, as I will discuss later in the chapter, but it is clear that Middleton did have

---

6 The conflation of “truth” and “slander” might be considered a characteristic concern in Middleton's writing, given the critical bite firmly embedded in his view of urban life (a point to which I will return), and the trouble he made for himself with his final dramatic composition, A Game At Chess in 1623.
an interest in the production of some of his printed works. By 1611, our author had firmly established himself as a voice to be reckoned with, not just as a writer for the satirical boy companies where his dramatic career began, but also as a formidable contributor to the adult actors' stage and a publishing author of non-dramatic works. While Jonson asserted his authority and artistic merit and expected opinion to follow, Middleton earned his place in the literary world by trial, found his strengths, and then sought to be known and recognized for them. 7 Perhaps also on trial for him was the literary value of plays, as Taylor suggests, and the decision, if his, to attach his name and status to some dramatic works in publication would mark his acceptance of participation in the playwriting community, since he had not been so reluctant to print the non-dramatic *Black Book* in 1604 with an Epistle to the Reader signed “T.M.”. However, Middleton's difference is still asserted with reminders of his status: “gentleman” is “a distinction regularly advertised on his title pages” (*Works* 38). We cannot know if Middleton was always, or even often, the one to insist on this distinction when it appears, but the fact that “gent.” is a part of his identity even in the minds of the publishers who might have been responsible for attaching it to his name tells us something about Middleton's persona as an author—how he was known to others reflects, at least to some extent, how he would have wished to be known by others.

Taylor's argument for Middleton's development into a playwright interested in the

---

7 Jonson's first three published plays, *Every Man Out of his Humour* (1600), *Every Man In his Humour* (1601), and *Cynthia's Revels* (1601) identify the author on their title pages. The title page of *Every Man Out* attributes the play to “The Author B. I.,” but *Every Man In* and *Revels* give the full name “Ben Jonson.” In so many ways unable or unwilling to divorce himself from his texts, Jonson authoritatively asserts his presence as a part of the reader's experience of these early, and successful, plays. He could divorce himself from some texts: his early collaborations for Henslowe were dismissed and denied by their author because they did not fit into he persona Jonson wished to compose for himself. The need to control his image as a dramatist came early for Jonson, but publicly proclaimed pride of ownership of any of his dramatic texts took much longer for Middleton to acquire.
printing of his plays contradicts his own suggestion that Middleton had little interest in “the future of his texts.” Though printed quartos were, because comparatively inexpensive, ephemeral documents by nature, Taylor himself argues that Middleton made efforts to ensure that his texts would stand out visually, and this suggests that he understood and took advantage of the meaning expressed by certain kinds of print representation. The author must have wished for some texts to be considered special or worthy of more consideration and care, evidenced, for instance, by the “six-columned complexity of The Two Gates of Salvation” (Works 42), written in 1609 and printed with Middleton's initials on the title page. But this is not a dramatic work, and as Paul Mulholland explains, it “would appear to have come into existence as a measure designed to relieve Middleton's pecuniary woes” (Companion 369) during the plague outbreak of 1609-10. Furthermore, “[t]he work's unusual collection of different titles and running titles may in this light represent a strategy aimed at eliciting more money from a number of prospective patrons” (ibid.). Thus, the complex presentation of this work is certainly meant to attract a specific kind of eye, that of a potential patron who might be impressed by the formidable appearance of Two Gates's visual rhetoric. However, the visual cues Middleton and Dekker supply on the title page of The Roaring Girl two years later are aimed somewhere else entirely.

The Roaring Girl's title page woodcut is an image of the play's titular character, a woman in men's clothing with pipe in mouth and sword in hand. The image takes up approximately two-thirds of the page. Information is given about the play in

8 The 1620 reissue of the text, under the new title of The Marriage of the Old and New Testament, includes a dedication that is signed by Middleton and also gives his (at that time new) professional occupation as City Chronologer (Companion 369), expressing another kind of extra-theatrical authorial status for the writer.
performance, “As it hath lately beene Acted on the Fortune-stage by the Prince his Players;” its authors are named, “Written by T. Middleton and T. Dekkar;” and so is the text’s printer and bookseller Thomas Archer, but these details are visually subordinated to the overwhelming presence of the woodcut and the comparatively oversized text of the play’s title, which is two or more times the size of any other text on the page. Given the explicitly topical and controversial nature of the play’s subject, Mary Frith, the printed quarto overtly appeals to a readership seeking scandal and tabloid-esque gossip. Plays may have begun to have more “literary status” by 1611, but Middleton and Dekker are taking advantage of their continued potential to be sensational and non-literary (in the sense that salacious documents like broadsides and ballads, with which Roaring Girl has much in common, would not be considered “literary” compositions). In fact, even though the aforementioned epistle claims a certain level of respectability for the text, because it does not contain “the most nasty vice that ever hell belched forth,” this very assertion of credibility is undermined by the fact that the dedicatees of this epistle are “Venery and Laughter,” leaving the reader with unsettling uncertainties about what the joke is, and who is in on it.

Thirteen years later, Middleton probably put an end to his own dramatic career with a play that, in print, employed similar tactics to those used in the marketing of the printed edition of The Roaring Girl, though his chosen subject matter made all the difference in the meaning conveyed by this style of presentation. A Game at Chess (1624, printed 1625) “stimulated more immediate commentary than any play, masque, or pageant of its age” (Works 1773). According to Taylor, “The scandalous theatrical success of the play generated immediate demand for copies of the text.” But since the
playbook was, at least for a brief time, in use in the theater, Middleton commissioned the scribe Ralph Crane to make copies from his own authorial manuscript (*Companion* 842). From there, the texts of *Game*—authorial, scribal, and theatrical—begin to overlap and intermix. Middleton was imprisoned in late 1624 for writing the play, but seems to have been released “by 1 January 1625” (844). Apparently undaunted by that punishment, he continued to be involved in creating copies of the text, and “[n]ear the point where Crane ceases to be an important agent of transmission for *Game*, Middleton becomes increasingly prominent” (844). In 1625, the play was printed by two different stationers, almost simultaneously, leading Taylor to propose: “the fact that two different printed editions of the play were produced at about the same time—OKES and MATHEWES/ALLDE—at least opens the possibility that Middleton may have deliberately sold manuscripts to two different stationers” (*Companion* 847), probably to capitalize on the play's significant money-making potential. Given his involvement, it is possible that Middleton had some say in choices made about the title pages of these printed texts. His name does not appear on either edition, though it would have been widely known that he was the author, given his imprisonment for that offense. Upon release from incarceration, he surely thought it wise to distance his name from the controversial material even as he continued to be involved in its transmission. He still went to some lengths to ensure that the text would be printed by two stationers and, in both cases, be adorned with special engravings commissioned for that play in particular. Probably for similar reasons of self-preservation, the names of the printers and the engraver are also absent from the title pages of both texts.

As Taylor points out, *A Game at Chess* “was the first individual play published
with an engraved title page” (*Works* 1773). The play's brief, nine-day run of performance (5-14 August 1624 [*Companion* 842-3]) would have been anticipated, since it was deliberately scheduled to take place while the King was away from London; and so it is no surprise that soon thereafter, “Game began to be regarded as a literary text, rather than a play. Middleton himself, at some unknown point in the last four months of 1624 apparently abridges the play, producing a succinct reading version” (*Companion* 843).

The point of such speedy transmission into multiple print editions was, no doubt, to capitalize on the play's immediate popularity and controversy, and to make money in print on what had been banned in performance. Taylor argues that Middleton was able to sell it to multiple stationers because “the banned play could not be licensed and therefore could not be registered at Stationer's Hall” (*Companion* 847). One question that arises from these circumstances is, why take the time to commission title page engravings for time-sensitive texts that are in little danger of not selling? There are perhaps many possible answers, but the fact that the only identifiable persons on these title pages are images of the figures of the play themselves—suggesting their real life, often royal counterparts—transforms the play into something more real, less fictional. While the woodcut figure resembling Mary Frith makes the title page of *The Roaring Girl* look something like a scandal-sheet, the visual representation of the players of this chess game speaks to the importance and truth of the play itself. The special engravings enhance the significance of the text as something like an historical document, written by the man who was, at that time, City Chronologer of London.

Taylor proposes that, with *A Game at Chess*, “Middleton transformed ephemera into art” (*Works* 1776). Just as the stamping of the king's head on a coin marks it as
“real,” the engraving of the king's person (or at least a king who is undeniably meant to represent the king) on the title page of Game makes it appear to be something more authentic, and more valuable, than other dramatic works. It is perhaps not so much “art” that Middleton is creating out of the ephemeral quarto play, but rather a kind of validity and cultural legitimacy for the document, ironic attributes for a banned text, but appropriate descriptors considering the unprecedented popularity of the play. Though his method is far different from Jonson’s, Middleton again shows himself a Literary Dramatist by insisting upon a value for his dramatic text that is higher than what would have been the general opinion of printed plays, even as their “literary status” increased to some degree. Middleton was perhaps simply more market conscious, or more willing to be overtly so, choosing to spin scandal with fact and temper art (both literary and visual) with truth in a way that was dangerous and exciting, yet informative and real for the public. His approach is markedly different from Jonson’s, whose haughty assertions of the primacy of classical artistry could be alienating in their relentless didacticism. But since Middleton is employing tactics apparently intended to make his dramatic works look like something else—in this case an historical account—one gets the impression that he is not proposing the value of this printed work as a play, but as literature. And though similar methods of presentation are used for The Roaring Girl, the effect is opposite.

Of course, with early collaborations like Isle of Dogs and Eastward Ho!, Jonson does take on dangerously topical subject matter, and is punished for it. But his work on these texts, and his unwillingness to claim them as his own in the long term (not including them in his Works), show his investment in this kind of controversial writing to be halfhearted in comparison to Middleton’s flagrant dismissal of consequence in writing Game, of which his authorship was well known, even though he did not proclaim it on title pages. Jonson did engage with controversy in some of his masques, but the difference between public theater and private performance is significant. The comparatively elite status of masques makes direct comparison between the implications of their content and that of plays impossible.
reinforcing Taylor's claim that Middleton was particularly savvy in his ability to “actively [exploit] the potencies of print” when he so chose. For *A Game at Chess* at least, his outlook begins to seem quite similar to that expressed in Jonson’s dedication to the Folio edition of *Every Man Out of his Humour*, where he tells the Inns of Court men that “the printer [. . .] thinks [the play] worthy a longer life than commonly the air of such things doth promise” and suggests that “when the gown and cap is off and the Lord of Liberty reigns, then to take it in your hands perhaps may make some bencher, tincted with humanity, read and not repent him” (383-84).

What these examples show is that Middleton did not maintain a single or consistent opinion about the meaning and function of dramatic writing over the course of his career. Returning to *The Roaring Girl* in 1611, we can perhaps conclude that, by that time, Middleton was more willing to allow at least some of his printed plays to reflect an authorial identity. But by that time he had already written all or part of at least 10-15 plays, and so we must look back to some of this earlier work in order to see how that identity was formed.10 By looking at the first of Middleton's dramatic collaborations with Dekker as his sole co-author, *The Patient Man and the Honest Whore* (1604), we can begin to see this author's contributions to multi-authored texts as expressions of his unique style, and also find evidence of his opinion about the purpose and function of dramatic writing at the time the play was written. This endeavor is deeply indebted to the work in attribution studies that has already been performed on this text by scholars such

---

10 The breadth of this estimate is based on the fact that there are five plays that the *Collected Works* identifies as “the lost plays”: *Caesar's Fall: or, Two Shapes; Randall, Earl of Chester; The Viper and Her Brood; The Conqueror's Custom*; and *The Puritan Maid, the Modest Wife, and the Wanton Widow*, all probably written before 1611. See *Works* 328-333 for a discussion of the authorship and dating of these plays.
as Cyrus Hoy, MacDonald P. Jackson, and David J. Lake. From what can be concluded about the circumstances of this collaboration—that interaction between the authors was close and involved, and that Dekker probably revised and reworked parts of the text originally written by Middleton—determinations of authorial property based on linguistic evidence are blurry (Companion 351-2). But through interpretation of the content of this play, of the subject matter, genre, and style expressed therein, we can become attuned to the tones of Middleton's individual voice, a voice that is not suppressed or silenced by the act of collaboration or revision by his co-author, but rather gives the text a harmony of style that is the result of two authors working together to create a multi-purpose theatrical experience. They did not have to agree about what the play was meant to do, because the play could do more than one thing at once for its audiences—potentially accomplishing authorial goals as widely disparate as were the lives and interests of the audience members.

The authorship of The Patient Man and The Honest Whore is a long contested problem for scholars of both Middleton and Dekker.11 Beginning with the misleading attribution of the play to Dekker alone upon its first publication, Middleton's part in the writing has been, until fairly recently, assumed to be minimal, making the play

---

11 The title one uses to refer to the play is itself a choice that implies a certain attitude about the significance of the work as a product of collaboration. To call the play 1 Honest Whore or Honest Whore Part 1 places the work squarely within the Dekker canon as the first half of a story that is not complete without the second Part (which Middleton had no share in the writing). The Patient Man and the Honest Whore, however, is the title by which the play was known to its first audiences, since “Henslowe's diary records between January and March 1604 an advance of £5 to Dekker and Middleton for 'the pasyent man & the onest hore'” (Ure 189 emphasis in original). Therefore, as the introduction to the play in the Oxford Middleton points out, this title is more accurate in a historical sense and also encourages study of the play as a complete work in its own right—a work written by two authors that does not necessarily anticipate a sequel (280-1). I will use the designation PMHW to refer to the play, with the understanding that it is employed as an abbreviation of the complete title I believe to be most appropriate: The Patient Man and the Honest Whore.
predominantly a product of Dekker's conception and execution. However, MacDonald P. Jackson argues that, although “Middleton's exact share in the writing of _I Honest Whore_ is impossible to determine,” the nature of the collaboration “might best be resolved [. . .] by supposing that Middleton wrote the first draft of some scenes and perhaps even a large portion of the play, but that Dekker was largely responsible for its final form” (102-3).

Cyrus Hoy goes further to suggest that “[t]he collaboration was obviously very close, though one suspects that it took various forms: some scenes seem to have been written largely by one or the other dramatist, with occasional hints from his fellow; others seem to contain a good deal of joint writing; and it is possible that some of Middleton's work was revised by Dekker” (5). The textual companion to the 2007 Oxford Middleton observes that “[r]ecent studies of Middleton's involvement allot him a substantial share of the writing as well as a probable hand in its shaping” (351). These conclusions are based on textual evidence that reveals “the way in which several Middleton expletives and linguistic forms tend to appear within a steady stream of Dekker's expletives and linguistic forms” (Jackson 103). In other words, Middleton's now generally accepted involvement is not restricted to specific scenes or characters, but is rather noticeable throughout the play as a whole.

The uncertain nature of the collaboration that resulted in this play understandably leads many scholars to shy away from analyses of the text that involve assumptions about authorial intention. This is particularly true of those writing about Middleton, given the

---

12 In 1952, S. Schoenbaum went to far as to claim that Middleton played no part in the composition at all (3), though his opinion is not often, if ever, supported. In the same year that Jackson published his _Studies in Attribution_ (1979), George E. Rowe Jr. excluded this play from his discussion of Middleton's comedies, where he provides the reasoning that his book does not “examine plays that contain Middleton's work but predominantly reflect the vision of another author” (23). Though one might hope
long-standing propensity to minimize his involvement in the composition of the play.

Indeed, when Middleton's contribution is acknowledged, it is most often in relation to the Candido plot. The double-plot structure of the play seems almost to set a trap for oversimplified views about multiple authorship; but particularly in the case of a close collaboration like this one, to conclude that a plot is a unit that cannot be broken down and contributed to by multiple hands is hasty and irresponsible. Still, some scholars come dangerously close to such a misstep, despite the fact that more than thirty years have passed since Jackson initially, and rightly, questioned this assumption. He admits that internal evidence “is hardly such as to shake the orthodox view that the play is essentially Dekker's and the Middleton's main contribution, if any, was to the scenes of the testing of Candido. But it seems possible that, whatever the nature of the collaboration, Middleton had a larger share in it than is usually supposed” (102). If Middleton, as Jackson proposes, “wrote the first draft of some scenes and perhaps even a large portion of the play,” then it is dangerous to assume that any one part of PMHW “belongs” solely to a distinct author.

Critical opinions about PMHW are directly affected by uncertainty about its status as a work of collaboration, and we can see how an acceptance of multiple authorship drastically changes potential ways of reading and understanding a work's style and purpose. An example comes in Larry S. Champion's expressions of dissatisfaction that these exclusionary tactics would by now be out of fashion, given the evidence for Middleton's greater involvement in the composition of PMHW, two recent examples argue the contrary: neither Julia Gasper in her study of Dekker's works, The Dragon and the Dove (1990), nor Herbert Jack Heller in Penitent Brothellers: Grace, Sexuality, and Genre in Thomas Middleton's City Comedies (2000) enter into an analysis of this play. Both books avoid discussions of multi-authored texts (though Heller does discuss Roaring Girl), and they are not alone in this practice of condemning collaborative plays to the outskirts of an author's canon—thus excluding a major aspect of his authorial activities and ignoring the communal aspect of the playwriting profession in the period.
concerning the play's tone, particularly its relationship to the genre of comedy. Writing seven to eight years before the convincing evidence provided by Hoy and Jackson made it nearly impossible to ignore the likelihood of Middleton's involvement in the writing of *PMHW*, Champion alleges that, in this play, “the structure is indeed loose, the effect disorderly” (194), “shortcomings” he attributes to the fact that “the power of evil is genuine; and the characters, struggling on the fringe of comedy, must cope with the actual consequences of crime and sin” (193). It is hardly fair to accuse a narrative of ineffectiveness on the grounds that its characters are too easy to identify with, but this is precisely what Champion does: “the playwright [. . .] has no difficulty in achieving a comic tone for 'flat' characters who make no ethical decisions. On the other hand, with greater character complexity, the spectator is easily provoked into emotional identification with character and situation, and the comic perspective is blurred” (Champion 194, emphasis mine).

A large blind spot in Champion's argument is that he treats *PMHW* as a single-authored work, there is in fact no mention of the name Middleton in his essay at all. Thus, when he compares *Honest Whore* Part I to Part II, which he finds far more satisfactory because “the structure is firm, the comic perspective carefully controlled throughout; the result is a stage-world in which, from a position of knowledgeable security, the spectator observes the development of characters obsessed with greed and lust but ultimately purged and presumably restored to a richer life” (194), he is neglecting a basic difference between the two, which is that Middleton was involved in the first, but not the second “part” of the story. It may come down to something as simple as the idea that Champion does not like the Middletonian tones of the first play, preferring Dekker's
more straightforward, comedic voice; but this very basic inclination cannot even be articulated unless Middleton's presence in the play is acknowledged. This is not to say that Middleton is to blame for the “shortcomings” of this text. On the contrary, the point is that the mixed tone of *PMHW* is just as pleasing to some as it is disliked by others.

Arguments for a text's value, or lack thereof, based on the extent to which its authors adhere to conventional generic boundaries are far too subjective to be useful. Middleton did not make this play bad or inconsistent; he made it partly his own. It is indeed his presence, his individual style and objectives for his work, that creates the sort of blurred comic perspective of which Champion is so critical. But contemporary audiences were not turned off by the incorporation of difference in their comic experience. Rather, this play was so well received on the early modern stage and in the bookstalls that its “popularity [. . .] in its own time renders the play exceptional in the canons of either of the collaborating playwrights” (*Works* 280). Written so early in his dramatic career, it is unlikely that Middleton's name had anything to do with the play's success, though Dekker's may have had some effect on sales. But more than a name is needed to make a play's popularity “exceptional,” so Middleton's contribution of content to the play can certainly be credited with provoking widespread audience approval. Dekker then capitalized on the lasting success of the first, collaborative composition by continuing the story a year or two later with a second “part.”

In order to discover Middleton's presence in *PMHW*, we must return to a discussion of “difference” between Middleton and Dekker. While some of the more common generalizations about Dekker are that his writing is “infuriatingly uneven” and he is “vulgar,” Julia Gasper asserts that “[a]s a playwright, Dekker most certainly had
principles, and their imprint is to be found throughout his work, even in the plays he writes in collaboration” (13, 2). She employs the term “militant Protestant” to describe Dekker's role in the religious-political climate of the age, and defines “militant Protestants” as “those Protestants who were determined to defend the Reformation and made this their highest political priority” (ibid.). Under this grouping Gasper includes to varying degrees, “Marlowe, Chapman, Heywood, Webster, Fletcher, and Massinger” (9), but not Middleton. It is through this categorization that I wish to draw a distinction between Dekker and Middleton, who both have “principles,” albeit slightly different ones, in order to reveal a potential example of Middleton's thematic contribution to *PMHW* outside the Candido plot. If religion can indeed be divorced from politics in any real sense in the period in which this play was written, then this distinction is a fine line, and one I intend to tread carefully. Gasper concludes that ”Dekker [. . .] must have been a Calvinist, but it is difficult to find any explicit statement of this in his writings” (7). On the other hand, Middleton's Calvinist beliefs are present in his writing, as we have seen from his “Calvinizing” of his source for *The Wisdom of Solomon Paraphrased*. Gasper acknowledges the politically controversial nature of the kind of beliefs she attributes to Dekker when she explains, “[b]oth Elizabeth and James realized that militant Protestantism, if taken far enough, was as much a threat to monarchical principle as the notorious teaching of the Jesuits” (4). But it is far more difficult to recognize specifically “political” arguments in Middleton's early plays; though of course, one need only think of *A Game At Chess* to be reminded that this did not remain true throughout his career. In his early, as well as his later, dramatic writing, he did work to convey a religious, specifically Calvinist, message to his audience. In *PMHW*, that message is delivered in
Bellafront, the seemingly paradoxical “honest whore.”

Herbert Jack Heller suggests that one of the aspects of Middleton's writing that sets him apart from his contemporaries is that he “shows more interest in investigating dramatically the implications of ideas and the ranges of experiences accounted for in his theology” (33). The fact that he chooses to undertake these investigations in the form of drama is itself an exploration of his theology, given the Calvinist concept of the *theatrum mundi* wherein “the greater part of mankind, enslaved by error, walk blindfold in this glorious theatre” (Calvin qtd. in Heller 18). If “all the world's a stage,” and yet one where man walks “blindfold,” then Middleton may have seen the commercial theater as a place where spectators paid attention and took the time to consider what was being presented to them. The other site of attentive spectator-ship would have been the church; but in *The Religion of Protestants*, Patrick Collinson cites a number of contemporary sources that indicate fears about decline in church attendance and the presence of religion in everyday life. These writers “complained that it is easier to fill the theatres than the churches” (204). Peter Lake, with Michael Questier, dedicates a chapter of his *Antichrist's Lewd Hat* to the “adversarial” relationship between the pulpit and the stage, particularly regarding performances on the Sabbath, which threatened to draw attendees away from the churches and into the playhouse (425-79). And Paul Whitfield White suggests that by the late 1570's, “The popular theater now began to be perceived as a kind of alternative church or anti-church” (qtd. in Streete 131). The connection between the church and the theater, while threatening to some, was for Middleton an opportunity to present a theological argument to a viewing and listening multitude.

One of the greatest problems Middleton faces in his writing is the integration of
religion in a world he sees as deeply mired in the pursuits of corporeal pleasure and gain. The society he depicts is almost irrevocably fallen, and there seems little hope for anyone's salvation. However, salvation does occasionally occur, often where it is least expected. The tension of this integration of the secular and religious is evident already in *The Wisdom of Solomon Paraphrased*, written when he was just seventeen. The outlook of this work is bleak, showing very little hope for the future:

Content is happiness because content.
Bareness and barenness is virtue's grace:
Bare because wealth to poverty is bent,
Barren in that it scorns ill fortune's place.
The barren earth is barren of her tares,
The barren woman barren of her cares. (4.7-12)

Because “Only man differs from his maker's will, / Undoing what is good, and doing ill” (2.257-8), the only “virtuous” pursuit seems to be no pursuit at all. In this early theological exploration, Middleton's vision is of a slow apocalypse where reproduction is halted and the eventual death of those already living will mark the end of humanity, because the only good that can come is death, which “Begins immortal peace, ends mortal strife” (3.40).

Despite this initial tone of hopelessness for fallen man, Middleton's theatrical career reflects a “willing[ness] to ask and consider how his beliefs work” (Heller 33). He does this by integrating himself and his work in the society of his time through localized enactments of the Calvinist *theatrum mundi*. Middleton models unexpected moments of spiritual gravity, in the form of repentance and conversion, within otherwise comic plots, and these moments destabilize the viewers' expectations and shake them from the role of observers of frivolous entertainment. Alizon Brunning observes that “most critics have
focused on the insincerity and incongruity of the repentances in city comedy;” however, “the audience might be caused to think carefully about the sincerity of the conversion; to examine its truth as they might examine themselves” (151). With this in mind, it becomes clear that the very “emotional identification with character and situation” that Champion criticizes as destructive to the comic form of “Dekker's” play, is in fact what gives the story its characteristically Middletonian didactic force. George E. Rowe Jr. observes that “Middleton questions almost all important comic values and assumptions, but he reserves special emphasis for two: New Comedy's affirmation of a unified human community and the form's celebration of man's ability to renew himself and his society” (10). Middleton's cynical view of his society and denial of “man's ability to renew himself” are both products of his Calvinist belief that the only salvation possible is through individual, personal introspection and the bestowal of divine grace according to God's will, not man's. Though his outlook may not venture far from the slow apocalypse of *The Wisdom of Solomon Paraphrased*, the moments of hope represented by the gift of divine grace for some and the presentation of these moments to the crowded theater audiences certainly reveal something more than the defeatist inclination to embrace “Bareness and Barenness.”

Middleton's Calvinist views are perhaps most evident in the many instances of the

13 Derek B. Alwes makes the opposite argument, claiming that “the world of the play is one that God has apparently abandoned to its own devices. The only way spiritual values can be present in the plays is paradoxically by virtue of their absence, a void that the audience has to fill” (6); and furthermore, “If there is any possibility for redemption for the world of the play, it lies in the human will, not in the divine will” (10). In answer to this, it is perhaps most effective to borrow Brunning's view, which depends on Norman Rabkin's complementarity: “The conversion of these sinners may be read then as sincere or insincere and as Rabkin argues we are forced 'to choose one of the opposed interpretations it requires of us'” (161). Clearly I have chosen to take these conversions for truth and accept them as indications of the very significant presence of God's will in Middleton's plays, whereas Alwes has chosen the opposite.
bestowal of divine grace in the form of repentance and conversion in his characters.

Belief in the doctrine of election is a key feature of Calvinism, and a Calvinist “conversion” is easily recognizable because it possesses unique attributes:

Effectual calling was to be distinguished from the outward call by the word, which was common to both elect and reprobate, because it was exactly what it described: effectual—an inward calling by the Holy Spirit that included an inner renewal of the elect by the Grace of God. Effectual calling was therefore spoken of by the spiritual writers as a regeneration by the inward working of the Holy Spirit, [...] referred to as conversion, a new birth or rebirth, and being a ‘new creature.’ (Wallace 49)

A Calvinist conversion can best be described as an awakening of divine grace within the elect. It is not brought on by any outward influence from church, clergy, or even scripture, but is internal, invisible, and sudden. Its abrupt appearance does not, however, mean that the elect are immediately consumed with grace and therefore impervious to the temptation of sin. As William Pemble explains in his 1627 *A Plea for Grace*:

> grace comes into the soule like light into the aire, which, before darke, is in all parts at once illuminated; [...] not by degrees but all at once infused, and giving life to every part. So is our new man borne at once, though he grow by degrees; that is, the soule in our conversion is at once reinvested with the Image of God in all its faculties; so that howsoever the actions of grace doe not presently appeare in each one, yet the habite, the seede, the roote of all divine virtues is firmly reimplanted in them, and by the strength of this grace given, they are constantly disposed to all sanctified operations. (F2r)

For seventeenth-century Calvinists, introspection was essential. Each person was encouraged to constantly scrutinize his or her own soul in search of evidence of election, of the “seede, the roote” which must be cultivated by choosing “sanctified operations” over sinful actions. Those seeking this evidence would “follow by intense introspection the working of predestination within their own souls. Theoretically there was nothing they could do but watch” (Haller qtd. in Brunning 161). Faith alone is not enough, and
indeed, faith is a result of election, since “effectual calling precedes faith” (Wallace 50). “One must undergo self-examination to make sure that faith was not a mere ’carnal securitie,’ an outward call only, without true signs of grace. One should not rashly judge of another’s reprobation, but remember that there is no one who might not turn out finally to repent and be numbered among the godly” (47). All are unworthy of God's grace, but the elect, through Christ's sacrifice, have been chosen to receive the gift of faith in spite of their sinful nature. The fact that all men are sinful, all undeserving, means that divine grace can come to anyone at any time. This idea is emphasized in Middleton's consistent “demonstration of grace upon the undeserving” (Heller 33), since it is often his most despicable and depraved characters who experience conversion in his plays, characters like Penitent Brothel, Sir Walter Whorehound, and Bellafront.

It is, of course, impossible to determine to what extent Middleton had a hand in the construction of the Bellafront plot in *PMHW*. However, her story is certainly one that destabilizes the conventions of the comic genre, and the scene of her conversion is constructed in a way that encourages the Calvinist virtue of introspection and self-awareness in both characters and audience. These, as I have shown, are both prominent attributes of Middleton's “comedies,” and their presence in this plot suggests that we should, at the very least, entertain the possibility that Middleton's contribution to this part of the play is more significant than has been previously assumed.14 The fact that Bellafront's conversion in *PMHW* takes place so early in the play, in scene six of fifteen,

14 While Gasper is convinced that Dekker “must have been a Calvinist,” the fact that she also admits, “it is difficult to find any explicit statement of this in his writings” suggests that, though their beliefs were complementary, Dekker and Middleton expressed them differently. Dekker's “Militant Protestantism” was politically charged, and therefore public, while Middleton's depictions of spiritual matters are primarily internal and personal. Therefore, I believe that Dekker would have been less likely to stage the sort of religious experience Bellafront has without Middleton's involvement.
is another indication of its adherence to Calvinist doctrine: “Because sin remains even in
the elect believer, the process of sanctification is a struggle between the regenerating
grace at work sanctifying the believer and the remnants of the old nature, a warfare of
flesh and spirit” (Wallace 51). This warfare is external as well, and many believed that
persecution was a sign of election. Thus, Bellafront's trials throughout the remainder of
the play become indications of her spiritual and social struggle to maintain her gift of
faith in the face of persecution and self-loathing. Those who might have initially
questioned the validity of her conversion, assuming, like Matteo that “for a harlot to turn
honest is one of Hercules' labors. It was more easy for him in one night to make fifty
queans than to make one of them honest again in fifty years” (9.106-9) come to realize by
the end of the play that they have in fact witnessed the creation of an honest whore, not
through the physical trials of the mythical Hercules, but through the spiritual trials of a
repentant sinner on whom the gift of election has been bestowed.  

When staging a Calvinist conversion, one very large obstacle arises. If a
conversion is always internal, sudden, and unexpected; then how can the audience know
if and when it has happened? In the case of Bellafront, this is accomplished by the
creation of an external agent of introspection—an oxymoron not inappropriate for the
oxymoronic honest whore. This figure is Hippolito. Even before his appearance, the

---

15 Matteo's reference here to classical myth deserves further consideration. As Rowe
suggests, "Middleton's examination of New Comedy is the product of the same distrust of inherited
conventions and of the same unwillingness to accept the literary kinds handed down from antiquity. [. . .]
Middleton does not revise tradition in order to create new syntheses which express the marvelous
unity in diversity of the world. He revises it in order to reject it" (17). Matteo's reference to Hercules
takes on increasing significance in relation to Rowe's observation because it represents Middleton's
rejection of classical conventions and forms represented by Hercules' super-human labors. Hercules is
part man/part God, but he is not Christ, so he certainly would not be able to turn a harlot honest. The
scene from which these lines are drawn contains “evidence of both dramatists” throughout, so
authorship is indeterminable on stylistic grounds (Companion 352).
audience is shown that Bellafront cannot see herself unless someone is there to assist her. As she is putting on her makeup, she must have Roger hold her candle and looking glass (6.31 SD). As soon as he does this, Bellafront sings the lines “Down, down down down, I fall / Down, and arise I never shall” (32-3). By holding the mirror, Roger allows Bellafront to see herself, though only her physical self, and what she discovers is her own damnation, perhaps because the mirror does not allow her to see inside herself. Thus, when Hippolito appears and asks her, “Shall I teach you how to loathe yourself?” (368), and his first “lesson” is “You have no soul” (373), it becomes apparent that he is there to reveal the real, internal Bellafront, both to her and to the audience. Her responses to Hippolito's lengthy invective, which anatomizes the sins of harlots and their customers, are increasingly internalized reflections on her spiritual status. She begins in response to Hippolito's initial offer to teach her, “I am content; I would fain loathe myself, / If you not love me” (370-1), reflecting her inability to separate from external influences and desires (in this case, Hippolito's love). Then as he begins to guide her through her introspection, she first responds, “O me unhappy!” (404), then after a bit more of the “lesson,” expresses “Misery. / Rank, stinking, and most loathsome misery” (410-1) as she becomes increasingly aware of herself as one of what he calls the “miserablest creatures breathing” (415). Then, when Hippolito threatens, “I'll read no more” (449) because she is “weep[ing] to hear [her] story read” (448), she desires that he continue because “Indeed, 'twill do me good to weep indeed” (450). As soon as Hippolito leaves, Bellafront is forced to employ what she has just been taught. At first she does not seem to understand: “why should sweet Hippolito shun mine eyes, [. . .] Am I not fair?” (482,

16 This scene is also of mixed authorship: “Against the clear signs of Dekker [. . .] a number of particularly distinctive Middleton spellings crop up” (Companion 352).
85), and the audience might begin to worry that this lesson has been lost on her because she is still interested in external appearance. However, Bellafront is not lost, and as she continues to examine her situation, and herself, she realizes that “I am not pleasing, beautiful, nor young” (492). She shuns her attributes of physical beauty and finally concludes, “I am foul” (494), because she finally recognizes “‘Harlot! Ay, that's the spot that taints my soul” (495). Bellafront proves here that she has learned the value of introspection. She is now able to recognize the “ugly blemish” of sin within herself, and therefore there is hope that she will also find within her the “seede” and “roote” of divine grace.

Bellafront's frantic impulse to commit suicide with Hippolito's rapier, that “fit instrument / To let forth all the poison of my flesh” (496-7) is less a result of her unrequited love, and more a function of what Wallace describes as the “struggle between the regenerating grace at work sanctifying the believer and the remnants of the old nature, a warfare of flesh and spirit” that is the necessary result of conversion. Hoy suggests that “Bellafront's conversion [has] at least as much to do with her attraction to the man who converts her as it has with anything he says; what he says by way of depicting the foulness of the life of a courtesan impresses her chiefly because it makes clear how unacceptable she must be in her present state to such a virtuous figure as Hippolito” (13). Though I agree with the second part of Hoy's statement, in that Hippolito as a figure of virtue makes Bellafront aware of how sinful she is by comparison, I believe it significantly, and incorrectly, reduces the impact and sincerity of her conversion to suggest that she is only listening to Hippolito in order to learn how to be good like him so that he will in turn love her. The struggle Bellafront faces immediately after Hippolito
leaves is a result of her conversion, not her love. As Barbara Lewalski explains, “As an essentially passive instrument acted upon by God's grace, [the converted] experiences a purging or mollifying, or breaking of the heart which prepares it for the gifts of repentance and saving grace” (qtd. in Brunning 153). It is only through this moment of near despair that Bellafront will be able to truly cultivate the seeds of faith—her desire to destroy the flesh is also a desire to repair the spirit, since the action of spilling her blood would, in her mind, prove to Hippolito that she is now virtuous, too. Speaking to the rapier, she says, “Thy master hates me, 'cause my blood hath ranged; But when 'tis forth, then he'll believe I'm chang'd” (498-9).

The next time Bellafront and Hippolito meet, it is after she has been through the various and scathing abuses of Madame Fingerlock, Roger, Castruccio, Fluello, Pioratto, and Matteo, who tells her, “Thou'rt damned: for alt'ring thy religion” (9.125). This seemingly ironic statement, that her salvation in fact damns her, can be explained through recognition of the different systems these characters are operating within, which Brunning describes as the “double coding of religious reading which perceives the presentation of conversion as serious, but at the same time acknowledges the undermining of this seriousness by the capitalist context” (150). In other words, when Bellafront takes herself out of the economic equation by refusing to sell herself as a prostitute, she acts against the “religion” of the other characters of the play—which is the capitalist pursuit of exchange and gain. She is “damned” for this alteration according to the values of the society of the play17 (which are perhaps also the values of the society of

17 This is also true of a number of Middleton's converts, including Sir Walter Whorehound and The Colonel in A Fair Quarrel, who are both effectively removed from society after their conversions.
the audience, values which are presented here in hopes that they will be questioned).
Thus, she experiences the suffering and trial of social damnation as she simultaneously
experiences spiritual sanctification through her virtuous actions in the face of abuse.
Hippolito “abuses” her as well, calling her “devil”\(^\text{18}\) (10.128) at their meeting, but his
abuse is of a different sort. He wants nothing to do with Bellafront because he has sworn
to love only Infelice, which the other characters she has just encountered are all furious at
her refusal to engage with them. Hippolito tells her to “Let it suffice / I ha' set thee in the
path” (10.172-3). His advice is far less callous than might at first appear when taken in a
Calvinist context. Hippolito recognizes that Bellafront is in fact “in the path”—she is
elect. Therefore, she must be left to her own introspection in order to continue down that
path toward salvation. Hippolito has no power to help her because her spiritual journey is
internal.

The next time we encounter Bellafront, it is in the madhouse, where she is
disguised as a madwoman. Her position within society has been marginalized almost to
the point of nonexistence. She has no place in the society of the play: “Bellafront's
exceptional outsider's role as the strumpet who turns chaste [. . .] vaguely fits her for her
appearance amongst the wonders of nature in Bedlam” (Ure 202). From whore, to
madwoman, to wife, Bellafront's social movement is, on the surface, extraordinarily
active. However, these positions are not particularly different, in that they are all
marginalized or subjected positions within the social order. In the end, she is not far from

\(^\text{18}\) The names used to refer to Bellafront in this scene are particularly interesting as they move through a
process of gendering and humanizing (She moves from “Devil” to “woman” in a painfully slow
progression), which is certainly worthy of further consideration in relation to her spiritual progression
through the process of conversion. In this scene “Lake discerns relatively little support for Middleton”
linguistically (Companion 352), though some indications are present.
where she started, at least socially. Many scholars strive to see some resolution for Bellafront at the end of the play in her marriage to Matteo; Brunning suggests that she “receives the traditional comic reward in the marriage to her first client” (157). Champion goes so far as to suggest that it is possible to “sympathize with Matheo as the victim in a ploy from which there is no honorable escape,” referring to Bellafront's “stratagem by which she gains Matheo as a husband” (199). However, to see Bellafront's marriage as a “reward” in any real sense is to miss the point of her spiritual achievement entirely. Hoy is correct that “Bellafront as converted whore infatuated with a young man who is himself enamored of a duke's daughter, and who must finally content herself with marriage to the ruffian who first seduced her, is the object of the dramatist's uncritical pity and admiration” (Hoy 14). Bellafront's marriage is quite unlikely to be a good one, given Matteo's belief that he has been “Cony-caught, gulled! Must I sail in your fly-boat / Because I helped to rear your main-mast first? / Plague 'found you for't” (15.474-6), and his more than begrudging acquiescence. However, when we remember that, for Calvinists, persecution and struggle in life are often signs of election, and endurance leads to salvation, then it is not Bellafront's getting the marriage that is an accomplishment, but her necessary suffering through it. Her ending is a spiritually happy one, but only because it is a corporeally unhappy one; it is both comic and not comic.

Although there is no way to “prove” that Middleton was directly involved in the character development of Bellafront, or that he “intended” to present to his audience an instructive example of the bestowal of grace on the most depraved of characters, there are undeniably aspects of Bellafront's story that can be connected with other moments in

---

19 Scene fifteen contains “the strongest evidence of Middleton's presence in the play's final three scenes,” while “[v]arious traits of Dekker are sprinkled through the scene” (Companion 352-53).
Middleton's writing when his “principles” seem to be revealed. It is possible that both questions about collaboration and problems of generic identification can be addressed through looking at the unsettlingly uncomic parts of Bellafront's plot as intentionally destabilizing moments in the play (which seems to be a particularly Middletonian strategy). If we take this to be true, then Champion's accusation that the play's “structure is indeed loose, the effect disorderly” can be countered by the belief that this incongruity in intentional, that the purpose of these moments is didactic, and they are meant to inspire introspection in the audience members, who should be looking within themselves to discover the state of their own souls. The presence of Calvinist religious instruction in the play is what makes it less easily identified as a comedy, but perhaps more easily identifiable as a work involving the contributions of a playwright like Middleton. In any case, it is inarguably worthwhile to reexamine critical assumptions about this play if we are to consider the breadth of interpretive possibility that stems from the invaluable textual work that has been done to uncover the complex nature of collaboration in The Patient Man and the Honest Whore.

In print, this play “was released in what may for convenience be described as three editions in quarto form in a relatively brief span of time” (Companion 507). Paul Mulholland argues that many, though not all, of the press corrections made between editions “appear to call for the authority of an author” (510), and it is more than likely that that author was Dekker. That Dekker probably had the controlling hand and went over Middleton's work both for the stage and in print shows to some extent a greater investment in the marketability of the text on Dekker's part, or at least a more confident knowledge of the market to which the play was to be sold. It seems likely also that the
decision to publish the play under Dekker's name only was one that Middleton would have agreed to happily, if his opinion was even sought. In this sense, Middleton's contribution was perhaps less fueled by an interest in proclaiming himself to be a commercially ambitious member of the playwriting community. He had a message to convey, or part of a story to tell, and he willingly relied on Dekker's expertise to shape that message into a successful dramatic commodity for adult theater audiences. At least eight years older, and much more experienced with syndicate-style writing for Henslowe, Dekker was already very much a Commercial Professional. By not involving himself in the printing of this play, and by allowing Dekker to revise and be assigned credit for the work in print, Middleton shows the ambivalence of the Literary Dramatist, if, of course, he had any say at all as the junior partner in the collaboration. But while his fingerprints are far less distinct in this text than they might come to be in other, later collaborative compositions, Middleton's voice is audible throughout *PMHW*, even, and perhaps especially, in the character of Bellafront. The words we read may not always look like his in the linguistic details that could be the result of Dekker's overseeing and revision of the text, but in their overarching meaning and message, they certainly sound like him.

Middleton collaborated again with Dekker on *The Bloody Banquet* in 1608-9 and *The Roaring Girl* in 1611; then, their work as co-authors seems to have tapered off. After twelve years of no evidence of authorial partnership, they joined together for the last time on *The Spanish Gypsy* with Rowley and Ford. By that time, the dynamic of their relationship had changed, since Middleton was no longer the junior, subordinate member of the syndicate, but rather seems to have taken a leading role as “plotter” of the play (*Companion* 437). While still working fairly regularly with Dekker, Middleton entered
into another collaborative relationship as well. In 1606, Middleton joined with a different kind of professional, the Attached Dramatist William Shakespeare, to write *Timon of Athens*. Heather Hirschfeld discusses what “appealed institutionally” to Middleton about working with professionals like Dekker and Rowley, forming relationships that “allowed him to maintain the prerogatives of a freelance playwright unconstrained by rigid allegiances to a single company, exercising an authorial agency and intentionality within the intensely collective, communal environment of the early modern theater” (“Collaboration” 223 emphasis in original). If this is the case, then we should consider what appealed institutionally to Middleton about working with the “rigid allegiances” of the King’s Men’s man Shakespeare in 1606.

James Bednarz describes *Timon* as a “provocative experiment in satirical tragedy” (“Collaboration” 212); and by considering the play in those terms, it is possible to reach some answers to the above questions. Suzanne Gossett notes how Middleton’s dramatic output, throughout his career, has a tendency to “push against formal limits” (“Genre” 236). But what is the source of this resistance? According to Gossett:

Middleton’s violations of conventional genre appear to come from two different impulses. The first is literary, a flaunting of originality that repeatedly defies reader expectations. Whether doubling the final masque in *Revenger* or assisting in turning heroic tragedy toward satire in *Timon*, Middleton persistently stretches the ‘coded structures.’ But equally important is the dominance of other ‘fields of association.’ Calvinism, topical comment, and attitudes toward gender link plays across the

---

20 Dating this play is notoriously problematic, since it was never printed before the 1623 Folio, and there is no record of its being acted, either. A probable allusion to the Gunpowder Plot at 3.3.33-4 suggests that the play was not written before very late in 1605 (Dawson and Minton 12-13). The *Oxford Middleton* gives the range “1605-1606” for the play's composition (*Companion* 356). John Jowett, in his 2004 single volume edition for *The Oxford Shakespeare* proposes “a suggested date of early 1606” (4); while Anthony B. Dawson and Gretchen E Minton, in their 2008 edition for *The Arden Shakespeare* third series, “lean toward a date of 1607, though it is possible that the play was written a little earlier” (12). Considering each of these arguments, I am inclined to agree with the 1606 dating, which is to me most convincing, and not directly opposed by any of the above editions.
tragic/comic divide, connecting sections of the canon by content rather than by structure or form. (“Genre” 237)

We have already seen how both of these “impulses” are at work, in tandem, in *PMHW*, where Middleton simultaneously resists comic expectations and promotes Calvinist dogma in the character of Bellafront. But to what extent is the exercise of these impulses conscious or intentional? Is he “playing with the genre” or “losing control of it” (*ibid.*)? In collaboration, which is by nature polyphonic, this is even more difficult to determine, for a comparison of two of the most formulaic of single-authored comedies from the canons of two different authors would result in great similarity, but not sameness. No two authors will have an identical sense of what comedy is, even in its “purest” form. To think of *Timon* as an “experiment” means that we accept its testing of generic boundaries as intentional, and that the experiment is one of genre means that *Timon* gives us both Shakespeare's and Middleton's unique understanding of what “satirical tragedy” is. But they are not just adhering to or deliberately straying from a set of “coded structures,” because “satirical tragedy” is a subgenre without strict definition. And it is in this forging of new ground that Shakespeare's powerful position of attachment was particularly useful, or at least would have been expected to be. His knowledge of and success in the dramatic market would have allowed him to take greater chances in his writing, and the relatively low expected output of two plays a year (as Bentley proposed was the standard for an Attached Dramatist [*Dramatist* 121]) would have permitted experimentation, because failures were recuperable or replaceable. This is perhaps what “appealed institutionally” to Middleton. Dekker, on the other hand, did not have Shakespeare’s level of job security, and apparently could not afford to fail, as indicated by his repeated
visits to debtor's prison. As an Attached Dramatist, Shakespeare had different goals and attitudes about dramatic writing from the Commercial Professional Dekker, and these differences reveal themselves in the nature of the collaborative relationships these authors had with Middleton in the early stages of his career.

Despite the fact that an author's conception of genre is somewhat relative, there is little question that *Timon of Athens* would have looked to its authors like a “provocative experiment in satirical tragedy.” Perhaps for Shakespeare, by the time it was finished, it looked too provocative and experimental to have hopes of successful production onstage, which is a possible reason for the lack of any evidence that it was ever acted during its writers' lifetimes. Unlike *PMHW*, the closeness of this collaboration is questionable for many reasons, and the fate of the play in (non)performance and also in print (it was never printed before 1623, and probably only then included in the Folio because space was opened up by the temporary exclusion of *Troilus and Cressida* due to problems over copyright), makes a close collaboration appear less likely. Shakespeare was, at the time this play was written, “the foremost playwright of the time” (Dawson and Minton 4), and one powerfully aware of and influential in the dramatic market. Writing approximately two-thirds of *Timon*, he clearly began the project with the intention of creating a play that would be acted. But it is possible that once Middleton's one-third contribution was added to the text, Shakespeare's company- and commerce-oriented mind had changed. There is also the possibility that the play was not originally intended to be a collaboration. Perhaps Shakespeare worked himself into a dead end or had some other reason to need to cease work on *Timon* and Middleton was sought out by dramatist or company to pick up where Shakespeare left off. In either case, the result is a multi-authored text that, for
whatever reason, was apparently never deemed stage-worthy by the King's Men.

Shakespeare's position as Attached Dramatist mattered differently in this collaborative relationship than it would for his later work with Fletcher. He was not taking on Middleton with him in mind as a successor; but was instead, for the experimental Timon, taking advantage of the unique skills of the dramatist who had just begun writing plays for the King's Men. If Middleton valued his autonomy, as it seems he did, then there would be no reason to think that Shakespeare would take special care to “train” or “oversee” him as he wrote. Indeed, it is more convincing to think that, as Jowett suggests, “Middleton wrote his contributions after Shakespeare had stopped working on his, sometimes, as most clearly in Scs. 1, 11, and 14, adding material to Shakespeare scenes” (Companion 357).21 There is, of course, no way to know for sure how much, if at all, these authors worked together as Timon came into being, but it is tempting to imagine that the King's Men were later willing to entrust revisions of Macbeth and Measure for Measure to Middleton on the grounds that he had already been involved in the similar circumstance of taking work already composed by Shakespeare and adding his own voice or, in Gossett's phrase, “topical comment.” This is the impulse that finds greatest expression in Timon, where Dawson and Minton credit Middleton for the fact that “the Athens of the play resembles Jacobean London more than it does the

21 There is by no means critical consensus on this point. Dawson and Minton propose the contrary: “It seems to us that Timon is more likely to be an example of this closer collaborative process [like that of Beaumont and Fletcher], since there is evidence of cross-fertilization” (4). However, these editors earlier state that Shakespeare and Middleton's “separateness is sometimes blurred or complicated by the process of working together and adapting to the other's habits” (2). Their argument is less convincing than Jowett's because the “and” here could just as easily be an "or," meaning that awareness of “the other's habits” does not require an intimate working relationship. Given Shakespeare's prominence at the time, Middleton would have known his writing well, and given that Middleton had provided at least one play for the King's Men (A Yorkshire Tragedy; incidentally, later attributed to Shakespeare upon first publication), Shakespeare, in turn, would have heard Middleton's tragic voice before.
city of Aristophanes or Plato,” because it reveals “a vivid attention to the grittiness of city life” (3).

The near exclusion of this play from the Folio is consistently mentioned, but rarely considered by scholars. As Jowett points out in the Oxford Middleton's Companion volume, the conclusion that Timon was initially excluded from the Folio based on its status as a collaboration does not hold water because “Henry VI Part One and All Is True (Henry VIII) are other examples of Folio plays that can similarly be ascribed to Shakespeare and others; Titus Andronicus may be another” (356). But on the other hand, “[c]ases of dual authorship were clearly troublesome to the [Folio] editors, who opted in favour of the collaborations mentioned above but, on what criteria we do not know, rejected Pericles, The Two Noble Kinsmen, Cardenio, and perhaps other authorially variegated plays” (357). A simple reason for its near exclusion might just be that the play is “unfinished” (Companion 704), though that word must be used very carefully. The idea that a play reaches a “complete” or “finished” form only when it displays evidence of some unification, coherence, or polish is evidence of a modern tendency to privilege unity and the single author, to give sole responsibility for a work to one “shaping” hand. That this cannot be done for Timon does not mean that the play is incomplete on some artistic level, but rather that its authors probably did not work together as closely as other collaborative partners did, and this resulted in a product with many more distinct seams between authorial contributions. This need not be thought of as a shortcoming, however. We should remember Jeffrey Masten's useful caution that “two heads are different than one” (19) and resist the urge to hold any multi-authored text to the same expectations and standards we have for single-authored works. Though not
performed, the text of *Timon* was preserved, and so Dawson and Minton may be right that it was “set aside for revision and then neglected;” but they are hasty to call the play “abandoned” (10), as if that term is synonymous with being “set aside.” Something kept *Timon* from performance and pre-Folio publication, but something also prevented it from being destroyed by the authors or the company. And it was clearly “finished” enough to be an acceptable part of the Folio, even if not a first choice.

Perhaps the reason for *Timon*’s preservation is the same thing that “appealed institutionally” to Middleton about working with Shakespeare. The work of that most celebrated of dramatists—including that which he did not write entirely on his own or even approve in the form it took after it left his hands—was valuable because it was his, and was therefore more likely to survive in some way, especially since the company already owned it *because* it was the work of their dramatist and shareholder. Though Middleton does not seem to have wanted to follow Shakespeare's example professionally and become an attached dramatist himself, he certainly must have seen the benefit of testing his skills alongside those of the leading playwright of his time. And it is quite possible that his interest in the text was, aside from the obvious monetary compensation he would receive for his work, fuelled by a desire for literary experimentation in a new subgenre for which his strengths as an author were already particularly attuned.

*Timon*, then, can be read as a collaboration that walks toward the borders of adaptation. It is doubtful that Shakespeare completely washed his hands of the play after his contributions had been written, but it also seems that if there was any simultaneous, face-to-face work done on the text, it was minimal. Thus, this collaboration is quite different from that which resulted in *The Patient Man and the*
Honest Whore. Middleton's role looks more like that of a playwright commissioned to “make additions” to a pre-existing text—much like what Jonson undertook when he was paid by Henslowe in 1601 and 1602 for his additions to The Spanish Tragedy (Henslowe 182, 203)—than that of a collaborating co-author. The difference is that Shakespeare saw the results of Middleton's additions, and was in a position of power within his company that allowed him to respond to them, if in no other way than by being part of the decision not to produce the play onstage. If there was a debate amongst the King's Men about the fate of Timon, we have no way of knowing which side Shakespeare was on, but those in favor of not performing the play clearly won. Because Shakespeare had a hand in final decisions about Timon at the time it was written—the weight of his opinion predicated on his position as sharer in the company as well as its attached dramatist—the play should be considered a collaboration, but is perhaps best described as a “removed collaboration.”

For Middleton “satirical tragedy” is the ferocious cousin of farce. It is emotionally vacant; and while farce makes us laugh at others' misfortunes because it allows us to forget the human vulnerability of its characters, satirical tragedy urges us to despair because there is no hope that the characters will recognize one another as human. It is a joke taken too far, and unlike farce, there is potential for devastating consequences. Shakespeare, on the contrary, might define the subgenre as a place where emotional depth is very real, but incommunicable because muted by self-interest and the distraction of external desires. For both, emotional engagement between characters is impossible, but the reasons for this are quite different. As I will show, Middleton's and Shakespeare's respective views of the meaning of satirical tragedy are seen clearly in the words of and responses to Apermantus/Apermantus in Timon. The distinct expression of both of these
views in the text provides a particularly strong example of the contention between group interests and individual interests that characterizes the development of the professional community of playwrights in the period. As I discussed in Chapter One, in collaboration, playwrights had to strive toward the often contradictory goals of self-promotion (asserting their individual authorial styles) and group legitimation (creating multi-authored texts that would make sense and be pleasing to audiences in order to perpetuate the market for new plays). If Middleton was sought out by Shakespeare or by the King's Men for his strengths as a satirist, then he would have had particular interest in expressing his unique conception of “satirical tragedy” in Timon in order to promote himself. And Shakespeare, who was already successful and his style well-known, may have resented the “upstart” in Middleton for trying to out-shine him in generic invention (a resentment one might argue he felt toward Jonson's innovation in “comical satire” at the start of the Poet's War). Competition amongst a profession's practitioners is necessary for the continuance of that profession, and I do not mean to impose a battle of artistic one-upmanship on this play's circumstances of composition, but I do believe in the possibility that individual interests won out in the case of Timon, and that the lack of compromise between Shakespeare and Middleton in their distinct expressions of “satirical tragedy” could be a reason that this play was never performed in its authors' lifetimes.

Stylistically, Timon's multi-vocality is often less subtle that it might be in other collaborative works because the text itself is overtly multi-authored, revealed, for example, in its use of variant spellings for the names of some characters. To reach some conclusions about what Shakespeare and Middleton respectively understood to be
“satirical tragedy,” and what that subgenre was meant to express or accomplish, it is useful to consider one of these variously spelled characters, Apemantus (or Apermantus, according to Middleton). As Brian Vickers explains, “[o]ne of the recurring experiences of studying co-authored plays is to discover that the same character seems to be quite different from one scene to the next” (247), and to illustrate this point, he uses the example of Timon’s great cynic, a character whose multiple personalities were first noted by Charles Knight in his 1849 Studies of Shakespeare. As the cynic, Ape(r)mantus is the relentless expression of tragic satire in the play, but there are two understandings of what counts as “satirical tragedy” at work in this text, and so Apemantus and Apermantus seem to be, as the double-name suggests, almost two different characters—one Shakespeare’s, the other Middleton’s. To emphasize this distinction, and also for clarity, I will use the spelling “Apemantus” when describing the character represented in lines believed to be written by Shakespeare, the spelling “Apermantus” when Middleton is the attributed author, and “Ape(r)mantus” when authorship is mixed or cannot be confidently determined.22

In Scene one of the play, written almost entirely by Shakespeare, Apemantus is spoken of before he is seen. The initial description of his character is given by the Poet, who is either intentionally incorrect, or simply a poor observer of human behavior, since he says:

All sorts of hearts; yea, from the glass-faced flatterer To Apemantus, that few things loves better Than to abhor himself—even he drops down The knee before him, and returns in peace, Most rich is Timon’s nod. (59-63)

22 I have followed the attributions listed in Companion (357), unless otherwise indicated.
While the Poet is correct to oppose the “churlish philosopher” (as he is called in the list of “the persons of the play”) to a “glass-faced flatterer,” we see rather quickly that Apemantus does anything but “[drop] down the knee” before Timon. Instead, he responds to Timon's “Good morrow to thee, gentle Apemantus” (1.183) with “Till I be gentle, stay thou for thy good morrow— / When thou art Timon's dog, and these knaves honest” (184-5). And furthermore, Apemantus is less inclined to “abhor himself” than he is to abhor all others. He rather comes off as self-gratulatory in his criticism of the decadence with which he surrounds himself in the company of the Athenians. When Timon tells him, “Thou art proud, Apemantus” (192), he responds, “Of nothing so much as that I am not like Timon” (193-94). It is only when Apemantus exclaims, “Heavens, that I were a lord!” and Timon asks, “What wouldst do then, Apemantus?” that the cynic express potential self-loathing: “E'en as Apemantus does now: hate a lord with my heart” (230-33).

Throughout the first scene, Apemantus remains a part of the conversation, interacting with Timon, the Jeweller, the Painter, the Poet, the Merchant, the First, and the Second Lord. He insults all of them pointedly, but he is not silenced, ordered away, or excluded from the upcoming banquet at Timon's home. In other words, Apemantus is a part of Athenian society, and though none express liking for him, they do not ignore or shun him as one might expect. Timon calls him “gentle Apemantus,” and the Second Lord responds to his insults with a dismissive but kind “Fare thee well, fare thee well” (265). Conversation implies an attempt to connect; but Apemantus's belief that, in Athens, “The strain of man's bred out / Into baboon and monkey” (254-55) precludes him from being able to converse beyond insult with these “knaves” and “fools” (264) who
have, through their greed and flattery, debased themselves to the status of animals.

However, at the banquet in Scene two, Middleton takes over, Apermantus becomes
Apermantus, and some noticeable changes occur to his role in Athenian society.

When Timon first notices Apermantus at the banquet, he greets him kindly: “O, Aper[m]antus! You are welcome” (2.23). But it is not long before the generous host wearies of the philosopher's ill-humour. When Apermantus claims, “No, / You shall not
make me welcome. / I come to have thee thrust me out of doors” (23-25), Timon responds, “Go, let him have a table by himself; / For he does neither affect company / Nor is he fit for't indeed” (30-32). There is no stage direction to tell us whether or not Apermantus is in fact given “a table by himself;” but since the cynic's reply to Timon's threat is, “Let me stay at thine apperil, Timon. / I come to observe, I give thee warning on't” (33-34), there is no reason to assume that he is actually moved away from the other guests. Timon responds to the warning with, “I take no heed of thee” (35), and, unlike in Scene one, this claim is true. Apermantus continues to be present at the banquet and continues to rail at the decadence he observes, but he is almost entirely ignored by the banqueters. In fact, Apermantus speaks a good deal more in this scene than he did in the first. In Scene one, Apemantus's longest speech is five lines (251-55), and beginning with the Oxford Shakespeare in 1986, identified as an aside. But the rest of what he says predominantly takes the form of one to two lines of quick banter-like dialogue with other characters. However, in Scene two, Apermantus has five speeches of five or more lines. The three longest of these go unacknowledged by other characters. After the first (38-52), Timon re-directs attention by toasting to a Lord (53). After the second, which includes Apermantus's “grace” (55-72), Timon again re-directs the conversation by
immediately addressing a question to Alcibiades (73). The third speech, commenting on
the masque of Amazons (129-43), happens while that spectacle takes place; and after the
speech, the guests all begin to dance with the performers, paying no mind at all to
Apermantus's fourteen lines of criticism and warning that “men shut their eyes against a
setting sun” (143).

One wonders why none of these speeches are given the designation of “aside”
when modern editors have almost unanimously done so for Apemantus's longest speech
in Scene one. The content of the speeches is similarly caustic, and it is certainly unlikely
that Apemantus desires to censor himself in front of the Athenians in one scene, only to
insult them openly and even more elaborately in the next. Or, if that is the impression
editors wish to give, such a decision ought to be justified by an analysis like that which I
undertake here. In fact, accepting Apemantus and Apermantus as something like two
different characters could lead to interpretive stage directions like Scene one's “[aside];”
but without making it clear why one speech is an aside and one is not, editors are
imposing interpretation without justification or explanation. It is beyond the scope of this
discussion to consider editorial practice in the treatment of this text, but it is worth calling
attention to the fact that editors are taking part in the characterization of
Apermantus/Apermantus by making choices about the nature of his speech in relation to
other characters.

In Scene two then, Apermantus is all verbal action without interaction. He makes
the choice not to partake in the food provided (“Rich men sin, and I eat root” [71]) or the
entertainment, but it is the other members of Athenian society who decide to refuse to
engage in conversation with him. Denial of human interaction makes Apermantus the
animal in this case—he is given no more consideration than a dog growling in the corner might receive. To be human in Middleton's Athens is to be a voracious consumer of opulence, and because Apermantus is not so, he is not human. And while Shakespeare's Timon in Scene one attempts repeatedly to incorporate Apermantus into his materially driven social world by asking him to appraise the artistic value of the Painter's work (199) and the monetary value of the Jeweller's jewel (213), the Timon of Scene two dismisses him almost immediately and reiterates his refusal to engage with the cynic at the end of the scene: “Nay, an you begin to rail on society once, I am sworn not to give regard to you” (248-49).

Apemantus/Apermantus is so “opposite to humanity” (1.276) that, in Scene four, he is given an accompanying Fool, who is the one to banter humorously with the servants. This is the only scene involving the Fool, and, as Dawson and Minton point out, “it is difficult to ascribe this awkward sequence to either author with any confidence,” though “[w]hat linguistic markers there are tend to suggest Middleton” (404). The characterization of Apemantus/Apermantus in this part of the scene, I believe, supports the claim that it is “thoroughly collaborative” (Companion 357). The Fool functions as an alternative mouthpiece of satire, a “light” version of Ape(r)mantus's sharp-toothed insults. He is the one that the servants seek to interact with, so much so that when Ape(r)mantus tries to respond to a question posed to the Fool, Varro's Servant retorts, “I speak not to thee” (4.51). There is, however, one character who does interact with the philosopher, and receives a strikingly mixed response. When the Page enters,

---

23 This line is part of a small section at the end of Scene one that has been, albeit cautiously, attributed to Middleton, though the rest of the scene is thought to be almost entirely by Shakespeare (Companion 357).
his first speech seems to address the fool and then the cynic: “Why, how now, captain? What do you in this wise company? How dost thou, Apemantus?” (72-73). It is unclear whether “wise company” is a sarcastic or a flattering appraisal of Ape(r)mantus, but he responds first with a threat: “Would I had a rod in my mouth, that I might answer thee profitably” (74-75). The Page, undaunted, asks Ape(r)mantus for assistance with delivering the two letters he carries (letters that we never hear of again in the play), because he admits that he cannot read. Surprisingly, the cynic complies, though not kindly: “This is to Lord Timon, this to Alcibiades. Go, thou wast born a bastard and thou'lt die a bawd” (81-82). Having gotten what he needs, the Page drops all pretense of civility and responds, “Thou wast whelped a dog, and thou shalt famish a dog's death. Answer not; I am gone” (83-84).

In the brief interaction with the Page we see characteristics of both Apemantus and Apermantus. As in Shakespeare's Scene one, social interaction is attempted, even to some extent by the cynic himself, who shows some human compassion when he gives the asked-for help to the illiterate Page. But the Page's swift dismissal of and refusal to converse with him is much more like the Middletonian treatment of Apermantus in Scene two. And that the Page stands out as the only one, aside from the Fool, of the many characters present who is willing to interact with Ape(r)mantus, only to dismiss him eventually as “a dog,” suggests that we have something more of Middleton's conception of “satirical tragedy” here than of Shakespeare's. Any bit of hope we might have had for Apermantus's ability to connect with another character becomes, like the undelivered letters, yet another frustrated opportunity for interpersonal communication.

Apemantus appears once more in the play. He visits Timon in the wilderness in
Scene fourteen, but refuses to acknowledge any emotional depth or truth in the proclaimed misanthrope's condition. He rather accuses him of falsehood: “Men report / Thou dost affect my manners, and dost use them” (199-200), and then insists, “Do not assume my likeness” (219). Apemantus believes that Timon is no more worthy of his pity than are the greedy Lords of Athens, because Timon's sorrow and misanthropy are as disingenuous as the others' flattery, and, as Apemantus tells him, “Thou'dst courtier be again / Wert thou not beggar” (242-43). But the cynic misunderstands Timon, much in the same way that the Poet misunderstands Apemantus when he describes him in Shakespeare's Scene one. Timon is not a “beggar,” he asks for nothing from his visitors except that they leave. He is constantly giving throughout the scene—distributing gold, insults, and stones with equal passion. Apemantus attempts to place Timon in a social position, making him a part of society, but Timon's choice to be a self-exiled misanthrope prevents the assignment of a role to him in relation to others.

As in Scene four, Apemantus shows a flash of human compassion when he sees Timon feed upon a root (Apemantus's chosen fare at the banquet in Scene two). He, it seems, offers food: “Here, I will mend thy feast” (14.285). Timon's response is forcefully dismissive, but ineffective. He insists, “First mend my company, take away thyself” (286). The act of ordering away company is one that the sociable Timon never would have done, but his desire for solitude is at the very least half-hearted, since he and the cynic go on to have more than an hundred lines of conversation before Apemantus finally leaves. Their conversation is by no means kind, however. It includes both the quick and scathing banter Apemantus preferred in Scene one, but also involves longer speeches for both characters, though more so for Timon by far. Responses to these speeches are
mixed, from Timon's detailed insult of Apemantus's parentage and social inferiority (250-77), which provokes in Apemantus only the question, “Art thou proud yet?” (278), to Timon's delineation of the hierarchy of the kingdom of beasts (329-47), to which Apemantus replies, “If thou couldst please me with speaking, thou mightst have hit upon it here” (348-49). Perhaps the length and varied depth of their conversation can be attributed to the fact that the part of the scene written by Shakespeare is uniquely asocial. Aside from the Steward, no one else is alone when visiting Timon in the wilderness.\footnote{This distinction becomes even more meaningful when one considers the nature of the interaction between Timon and the Steward, a meeting thought to be the only part of this scene written by Middleton. Here is perhaps the only time Timon is able to see the potential for human connection when he says:}

```
Had I a steward
So true, so just, and now so comfortable?
It almost turns my dangerous nature mild.
[. . .]
Forgive my general and exceptless rashness
You perpetual sober gods! I do proclaim
One honest man—mistake me not, but one,
No more, I pray—and he's a steward. (14.491-93, 496-98)
```

It is only without society that humanity is able to emerge and emotional connection seems tantalizingly close. But Timon also recognizes that the Steward must re-enter society, and so his only recourse is to urge him to use the gold he gives him to “build from men, / Hate all, curse all, show charity to none” (527-28). The belief that the receipt of wealth could and would make this “one honest man” into such an heartless creature makes honesty not an aspect of humanity, but one of poverty, which explains why Timon must point out that “he's a steward” in order to reconcile his perplexing goodness.
His distaste for Timon's present circumstances comes from the fact that he is forced to reappraise his own philosophy. When Timon asks him, “What wouldst thou do with the world, Apemantus, if it lay in thy power?”, he claims he would “Give it the beasts, to be rid of the men” (323-25), and agrees that he would “remain a beast with the beasts” (327). But Timon is quick to point out the central problem with this scenario, asking, “What beast couldst thou be that were not subject to a beast? And what a beast art thou already, that seest not the loss in thy translation?” (345-47). Apemantus's choice to “remain a beast with the beasts” is a choice for society, since, as he says, “The commonwealth of Athens is become a forest of beasts” (349-50). He would rather be among them than alone, accepting the tragic truth that man in society is limited and incapable of sincere and selfless emotional connection. This is the pure expression of Shakespeare's “satirical tragedy,” a sisyphean struggle for reciprocity and accessible human emotional connection. Facing Timon's desire to be alone forces Apemantus to face his own desire to be engaged in this endless social struggle.

The differences between Apemantus and Apermantus are certainly not so radical as to be irreconcilable, but they are noticeable indications of the results of a collaboration like the one undertaken by Shakespeare and Middleton in this “provocative experiment in satirical tragedy.” Because they were working separately in a subgenre without strict definition, it is no wonder that two distinct voices emerge in this character and in the play as a whole. Middleton and Shakespeare never worked together on a play again, if they worked together on Timon at all; but Middleton continued to have a close relationship to Shakespeare's work in the role of adapter of his texts—a role that is not so different from that he undertook when working on Timon, though what difference there is is perhaps
telling: the fact that his work in adapting *Macbeth* and *Measure for Measure* took place after Shakespeare's death places Middleton in a position of control over those texts that might not have been as powerful when he was working on *Timon*. In that situation, whether or not Shakespeare oversaw the process, he certainly saw the results and had a say in what happened to them.

Perhaps Hirschfeld is right to conclude that Middleton preferred friendship over stability, that “[t]he fact that Middleton made the choice of Dekker and Rowley consistently over stretches of time suggests that, even if he was skeptical of permanent professional commitments, he was respectful of personal loyalties developed over swaths of time” (“Collaboration” 223). There is no reason to think that he did not get along with Shakespeare personally, though, so there must have been some reason that this collaborative relationship did not develop into a continued association. It may simply be that there was no relationship to maintain if the two did not really work “together” in this case, if this really was a remote collaboration wherein Middleton was paid to “make additions” to Shakespeare's work. Or, if this was a short-lived partnership, perhaps its end can be attributed to differences in professional attitudes about playwriting. Middleton may have felt that working with Shakespeare would not give him the kind of sustained job experience he desired. If he did not himself want to be an attached dramatist and theatrical businessman, then working with or under one would be professionally limiting, especially since he was, around the time *Timon* was written, composing plays for both adult and boy companies. At this point, Middleton seems to have been gaining some confidence in his own skills as a dramatist, and so a position of subordination may have begun to look less desirable than it had been when he first began
working with Dekker in 1602. His varied personal and professional relationships make it look as though Middleton valued experience in all forms—no doubt for reasons both financial and literary—particularly in the early years of his career before he had achieved literary status in his own right, both within and outside the theater world. But the final substantial collaborative relationship Middleton formed neither marks a return to partnership with the “freelance” professional affiliations held by Dekker, nor the “rigid allegiances” of an attached dramatist like Shakespeare. He rather chooses something in-between when he begins writing plays with the actor/dramatist William Rowley in 1613.

Middleton's professional relationship with Rowley started at a time when Dekker was just beginning a seven year stint in debtor's prison (Twyning). It had been two years since Middleton and Dekker's *Roaring Girl* hit the stage and bookstalls, and the two would not work together again until 1623 when they returned to where they began in a syndicate-style collaboration with Rowley and Ford on *The Spanish Gypsy*. Though Dekker's imprisonment may have been a reason for Middleton to look elsewhere for a writing partner, Rowley is by no means a stopgap with whom Middleton worked to pass the time until Dekker's release. If this had been the case, then Middleton surely would have returned to working with Dekker once the latter was freed from prison; but the fact is that he did not (except for *Gypsy*; but of course, Rowley was present in that endeavor as well). The writing relationship between Middleton and Rowley is considered by many to be “one of the most successful collaborations of the Jacobean era” (Shaw qtd. in Hirschfeld “Collaboration” 226) and one of the reasons for this may be that Middleton's role as collaborator, and thus his position within the community of playwrights, is different in this relationship than it had been in his work with Dekker or Shakespeare.
For here, Middleton is not the fledgling or subordinate partner to a man like Dekker, whose financial troubles were a prime motivator in his prolific writing and publishing habits. Nor was he the recipient of a two-thirds completed dramatic work begun by the leading playwright of his time. Instead, with Rowley, Middleton's partnership was equal, if not one that placed Middleton in the dominant role as the elder (by five or so years) and more experienced dramatist, and also because Rowley's professional interests were first to be an actor, and sometimes to be a playwright.

While Rowley's career goals cannot be equated with those of attached dramatists like Shakespeare, Fletcher, and Massinger, he did, between the years 1608-1623, occupy a position of attachment to the Duke of York's/Prince Charles' company, where he was an actor, shareholder, and resident playwright, which on the surface, does closely resemble Shakespeare's professional affiliation. But Rowley left that attachment to become an actor for the King's Men, making it easy to conclude that acting, not playwriting, was his primary professional interest. Institutionally, then, Rowley falls somewhere between Dekker and Shakespeare during the time he and Middleton collaborated (1613-1623). He was attached to a company, but also clearly had an eye out for better opportunities where he might further his career as an actor. And he was, like Dekker, a more frequent collaborator than Shakespeare. In fact, as David Gunby explains, “of the sixteen or so extant plays with which Rowley's name is associated, only two (or at most three) are his unaided work. By preference, clearly, he worked collaboratively, and this reinforces the sense gained of a man concerned chiefly with acting and managing a theatre company.” Five of these plays, nearly one-third of his entire dramatic output, were written in collaboration with Middleton: *Wit at Several Weapons* (1613), *A Fair Quarrel* (1616),
An/The Old Law (1618-19), The Changeling (1622), and The Spanish Gypsy (1623).

T.H. Howard-Hill adds to this argument that “the fact that [Rowley] paid little if any attention to the publication of his plays suggests that he regarded himself primarily as an actor who occasionally wrote plays rather than as a dramatist.” This appears to be largely true. Yet, in the case of A Fair Quarrel (1616, published 1617), “Rowley was involved enough in the publication to write a dedication,” which supports the conclusion that “the lack of errors [in the printed text] may suggest authorial proofreading” (Companion 633). Furthermore, the second issue of the play's first edition in 1617 advertises on the title page, "new Additions of Mr. Chaughs and Trimtrams Roaring, And the Bauds song," which refers to the inclusion of a new scene at the end of the fourth Act, written, it seems, entirely by Rowley and perhaps even added without Middleton's consultation (Companion 633). Rowley probably acted the part of Chough, and it would not be unreasonable to assume that his own observation of the success of the existing roaring scene caused him and the company members to see that the addition of more of that style would be a worthwhile means of boosting ticket (and book) sales.

While Middleton is thought to have been more interested in the printing of his plays by the time A Fair Quarrel was written, and his name, along with Rowley's, appears on the title page of the 1617 quarto: “Written by Thomas Midleton and William Rowley. Gentl.” A Fair Quarrel is the only one of the five dramatic works on which these two collaborated to be printed in their lifetimes. Changeling and Gypsy were not printed until 1653, Old Law not until 1656, and Wit at Several Weapons not until 1647, and then as part of the Beaumont and Fletcher folio. It is interesting that Middleton has garnered a reputation for “actively exploiting the potencies of print,” as Taylor puts it,
and that Rowley is characterized by the claim that he “paid little if any attention to the
publication of his plays;” and yet, the one collaborative play of theirs to be printed with
either author involved seems to have been overseen by Rowley, even to the exclusion of
Middleton from the dedication as well as the added scene of the second issue. But the
very assertion that Middleton had a significant interest in printing his plays ought to be
questioned, since not one of the six plays for which he is now credited with sole
authorship in the years 1613-1623 was published in his lifetime.  It rather makes sense
to conclude that neither Middleton nor Rowley was particularly interested in printing
plays, which makes sense if they both had other, though vastly different, professional
goals beyond playwriting. The performance-minded actor and company shareholder
Rowley was concerned with what went on the stage, and Middleton was, especially after
1620, invested in his position as City Chronologer; and even before that, as writer of
masques and pageants. These were often published, and with their author's name on the
title page. Again, we have no evidence that Middleton was the driving force behind the
decision to print these texts, but the vast difference in frequency of publication between
his plays and these civic and royal entertainments is worth acknowledgement and
consideration as a possible expression of the author's attitude about the literary status of

---


26 *The Manner of His Lordship's Entertainment* and *The Triumphs of Truth* (1613) were published together with Middleton's name on the title page. In *Civitatis Amor* (1616) Middleton's name is not on the title page, but it is written within the text after “The Entertainment at Whitehall.” The dedication to *The Triumphs of Honor and Industry* (1617) is signed “T.M.”, The title page of *Masque of Heroes* (1619) bears Middleton's full name, and in that same year, *The Triumphs of Love and Antiquity* is attributed to “Tho. Middleton Gent.” on its title page. The title page of *The World Tossed at Tennis* (1620) reads “by Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, Gentlemen.” *Honorable Entertainments* (1620-21) bears a title page that proclaims the work to be “Invented by Thomas Middleton.” In 1622, the pageants *The Sun in Aries* and *The Triumphs of Honour and Virtue* give “Tho. Middleton Gent.” as their author, and *An Invention* is printed with “Tho. Middleton” on its title page.
While the writing of *A Fair Quarrel* gives the “general impression of close collaboration throughout, with the involvement of both authors in both major plots” (*Companion* 399), its printing is a different story. We can perhaps understand Rowley's motivation for printing *A Fair Quarrel* by examining circumstances involving the Prince's Charles' Men around the time this play was published. It seems that, beginning some time in 1614 or 1615, Prince Charles' and the Lady Elizabeth's Men joined forces “under Henslowe's direction” (Bentley *Jacobean* 1.198), a relationship that lasted until Henslowe's death in January 1616. At that time, the companies split, at least in name, though Bentley argues that there was “an amalgamation of at least the principal members of the two companies” who stayed in London under the name of Prince Charles' Men (*ibid.*). Upon Henslowe's death, Rowley's company signed an agreement with Jacob Meade and Edward Alleyn. According to Bentley, in “the articles of 20 March 1615/16, the players of the Hope—the old Elizabeth's-Prince's-Queen's Revels association—arrange with Meade and Alleyn a settlement of their old debts to Henslowe and a continuation of the enterprise” (199). Rowley was one of the men to sign this agreement, but problems arose quickly with the arrangement, “for in a letter to Alleyn, probably written in the winter of 1616-17, [Prince Charles' Men] complain that Meade has taken their day from them—presumably for his bear-baiting—and thus forced them to leave the Bankside. They ask for more money and beg Alleyn to find a theatre for them” (200-01). What this information suggests is that the company was in trouble; they had to share their theater space with bear-baiting events, which would exacerbate any preexisting financial concerns about limited opportunities to make money on performances. We know that
they owed Alleyn “£200 from their gallery takings” (202), and it seems likely that this is not the only example of a debt that needed to be paid. Since he was a leading member of the company, their trouble was Rowley's trouble, and the printing of *A Fair Quarrel* may be the result of particular financial need, which would also be good reason for the inclusion of new material both on the stage and in print.

The title page of the play's first issue asserts prestige, reading: “A Faire Quarrell. / As it was Acted before the King / and diuers times publikely by the Prince his Highnes Seruants,” and proclaiming its two authors to be “Gentl.” as well. The presence of a dedication also stands out as somewhat old-fashioned and strange coming from the attached Rowley in a collaboration with Middleton, who had long been skeptical of the reliability and desirability of patron-fishing. The dedication is signed only by Rowley and is written in the first person singular. It is addressed to Robert Grey, a groom of Prince Charles' bedchamber, and thus closely connected to that patron of Rowley's company. The tone of the dedication is self-consciously pleading. Rowley claims, “I did not mean to write an epistle of praise to you, it looks so like a thing I know you love not, flattery” (16-18). The author then lays paternal responsibility for the play on its dedicatee (appropriate enough for the emphasis on familial bonds throughout the text itself):

“Whoever begat it, 'tis laid to your charge, and for aught I know you must father and keep it too, if it please you” (21-23). But the play is, as Rowley explains, like what Captain Ager fears himself to be—a bastard—and it is only the charitable and selfless act of adoption that can protect it, for “a play is but a butt, against which many shoot many arrows of ency” (1-2). Like the company for which the play was written, the text is in danger of homelessness, and Rowley's attempt to ingratiate himself with one so close to
the young prince serves the dual function of potentially making money for himself and
gaining more support for his company from the household of their royal patron.

Despite Rowley's autonomous actions in publication based on personal interest in
the financial success of this particular play, the collaboration of which it is a product
appears to have been very close. In the text's introduction, Gossett argues that "A Fair
Quarrel demonstrates how shared attitudes and authorship may blur distinctions and
create mutual influence between collaborators" (Works 1212). Hirschfeld expands this
idea with the claim that "the power of [Middleton and Rowley's] relationship is based on
a collaborative ideal. [. . .] This ideal, then, defined as the mutually desired intention to
share words and plots, informs the canon of Middleton’s plays. Whether or not it was
ever completely achieved, it was and remained important to him” (“Collaboration” 228).
Middleton clearly did value collaborative relationships, but to call “the mutually desired
intention to share” a collaborative “ideal” is a suspect assumption, since he was also
interested in asserting his own opinions and achieving his own goals, even in the closest
of collaborative endeavors (just as Rowley does in publishing and adding to this play). A
Fair Quarrel reflects the interests and goals of Middleton and Rowley as co-authors, but
it also reflects the desires, beliefs, and styles of Middleton and Rowley as individual
professionals. This balance of the personal and the professional is part of what makes
Middleton and Rowley such a successful collaborative pair.

The discernible stylistic differences between Middleton and Rowley help to create
the sort of tonal discontinuity one finds in what is often called their most successful
collaboration, The Changeling, where, although the two plots are in many ways parallel,
and Rowley probably wrote part of the main plot as well as the hospital plot, the two
authors approach similar problems in very different ways. Middleton's penchant for dark social satire and tragic grotesque, recognizable in so much of the castle plot, works with Rowley's madhouse comedy in the sense that both deal with the popular issues of marriage, sex, corruption, and madness; however, these audience-engaging topics are approached from radically different angles. Written at a point in both authors' careers when they each already had an established reputation as a "playwright" (though this is only one of multiple possible professional descriptors in both cases), The Changeling's double plot presentation of each author's unique style is perhaps a clever marketing strategy. Alexander Leggatt argues that Francis Beaumont, in Knight of the Burning Pestle, attempts to capitalize on the idea that "an audience comes expecting, not a carefully crafted total experience, but a series of favorite ingredients" (305), and perhaps a similar conclusion can be drawn for plays like A Fair Quarrel and The Changeling, to which audiences may have come in order to see the familiar styles of two popular playwrights brought together in one theatrical experience.

At least part of Rowley's personal motivations regarding A Fair Quarrel has already been discussed, and to see an aspect of Middleton's contribution, we can turn again to the concept of Calvinist conversion, which played such an important role in Bellafront's development in The Patient Man and the Honest Whore. In A Fair Quarrel, the gift of salvation is bestowed upon the Colonel after he is wounded while dueling with Captain Ager. Though he is physically close to death, in Act four, scene two (attributed entirely to Middleton)\(^\text{27}\) he claims that he is “In soul, never better / I feel an excellent

\[^{27}\text{All lines referred to in the following discussion are drawn from sections of the play attributed to Middleton in the Oxford Companion volume (399).} \]
health there, such a stoutness!” (43-4). He is armed with “pardon and repentance” and “ghostly valour” (49,50), which allow him to forgive the Captain and lead him to give all his earthly goods to his sister, under the condition that she marry Ager. Unable to conceive of such generosity and forgiveness, the sister is suspicious that “the sickness and infirmity of your judgment / Is to be doubted now, more than your body's” (77-8). She is angered by her brother’s strange behavior, and only yields to his demands after he puts them in terms she can understand—the language of debt and transaction:

I've wronged that worthy man past recompense,  
And in my anger robbed him of fair fame,  
And thou the fairest restitution art  
My life could yield him. (101-4)

The gift of his sister, and by extension his goods and wealth, not only allows the Colonel to feel as though he has repaid his worldly debt, but also acts as a moment of separation between him and the things that tie him to the (characteristically Middletonian) corrupt society that he desires nothing more than to leave.

Like the Colonel's sister, Captain Ager is disarmed by the forgiveness and generosity of his converted Colonel. His first response to the news, delivered by the gift itself, the sister, is joy, although tempered with a hint of envy: “O, heaven has touched him nobly! How it shames / My virtue's slow perfection!” (4.3.114-5). His initial reaction is uniquely positive, perhaps because he is the only character who entirely benefits from another's conversion. Instead of creating monetary or emotional turmoil, as Bellafront's conversion seems to do for those around her, and the Colonel's does for many around him, the Colonel's conversion makes Captain Ager a wealthy and seemingly

28 One must also, of course, consider the latent threat that she will end up with nothing if she does not comply to her brother's stipulation.
happily married man. Another reason for his happiness, and certainly the reason for his envy, is the assumption he seems to be making about the eventual certainty of his own gift of divine grace. His virtue's perfection is “slow,” and it appears that he feels shame because the Colonel got there more quickly than he—Ager lost the race to spiritual purity. When the recovered Colonel reappears at the end of the play, Ager is unable to face him: “I never knew how poor my deserts were / Till he appeared. No way to give requital?” (5.1.419-20). Doubts about his own spiritual state make the Captain unable to understand the generosity of the Colonel's insistence that he not only keep all that has already been given, but also take more goods. It seems that the initial argument over who is the better man is settled, but not in the way we are led to think. Ager's silence at the end, after he tells the Colonel, “You have a goodness / Has put me past my answers. You may speak / What you please now, I mist be silent ever” (5.1.441-3), gives the Colonel the last word, and submits to his superiority. Furthermore, although the Colonel tells us in the final line of the play, “Fair be that quarrel makes such happy friends,” we must remember that the Captain is left silent, and cannot join with the Colonel in the valor of the battlefield because he has promised his mother never again to leave. He is rich and married, but rather powerless nonetheless. His gift of divine grace has not yet come, and the fact that he is so mired in the commercial urban society of worldly possessions at the end of the play does not leave a strong sense of hope that it will.

By looking at these particular products of the major collaborative relationships in which Middleton took part, we can see that institutional affiliations did matter to some extent, but were more often than not reasons for individual, autonomous action—whether in Shakespeare's case of handing off or “setting aside” Timon, or Rowley's involvement
in the publication of and additions to *A Fair Quarrel*. But in the constantly evolving professional community of early modern playwrights in London, even the most freelance of dramatists (Dekker, for example) had personal interests that guided his actions, whether in collaboration or not. So too did Middleton. Perhaps it is true then that Middleton recognized the benefit of working with the unattached Dekker; or with Rowley the actor/playwright. These relationships could, as Hirschfeld claims, allow him to “[exercise] an authorial agency and intentionality within the intensely collective, communal environment of the early modern theater” (“Collaboration” 223). They were certainly more fruitful and lasting partnerships than that which occurred with Shakespeare in 1606. The institutional affiliations of Middleton's co-authors could be potentially beneficial, but they could also be hindrances—a strong company affiliation could be like another voice in the collaborative process, because that institution would bring another set of needs and interests into consideration at least for the attached author. If publishing their plays was not a major concern for Middleton and Rowley—*A Fair Quarrel* being the “special case” or exception—then it is easy to conclude that Middleton's preference was to work with friends with whom writing was an interactive and mutually lucrative endeavor. As has been shown, however, this does not mean that the individual gets lost in the collective: Middleton, Dekker, Shakespeare, and Rowley each maintain audible voices no matter the closeness of their collaborative activity.

While there is ample evidence that Middleton had an interest in the presentation of some of his plays in print, it also seems that printing was not a primary interest for him. Dekker may have been giving him another lesson in professional development by showing him how to use publishing as an opportunity for further financial gain from a
play's success when they published *Roaring Girl* together, but there is no indication that
Middleton continued this practice with any regularity. That this was the final
collaboration between these two authors may point to the fact that Middleton had
outgrown his “apprenticeship” and come to realize that the differences between him and
Dekker in their professional ambitions would soon become limiting rather than
productive. The circumstances surrounding the printing of *A Game at Chess* also make it
a special case, since Middleton saw the additional financial incentive of being able to sell
the text to two printers, doubling his money on a controversial, banned play that he had
made efforts to increase in “literary” value. In the passages from “Thomas Middleton:
Lives and Afterlives” discussed at the start of this chapter, Taylor implies a great deal of
consistency in Middleton's persona in print after 1611, but it is my belief that this is a
radical oversimplification. Middleton's inconsistency in publication reveals uncertainty
on the part of the author about how to cultivate a literary identity for himself that would
be conducive to the professional goals to which he aspired. In the case of his
collaborative plays published under the supervision of a co-author, we cannot know to
what extent he desired or resisted the inclusion of his name on title pages. We also
cannot know for sure, even in single-authored texts, if he requested this identification or
if it was the decision of the printer or publisher. But since his two most productive
collaborative relationships were with men he clearly considered to be friends rather than
merely colleagues, it is unlikely that either Dekker or Rowley would have made a choice
about printing that he knew Middleton would dislike—a benefit of intimacy that was not
always possible with the men running the printshop.

Free of institutional responsibilities, Middleton's clearest contribution to the
collaborative texts discussed here is a consistent interest in testing the boundaries of genre and of dramatic writing. He is able to make personal experience performative and often painful, changing Bellafront's traditionally comic ending into an arduous spiritual trial; turning what first appears to be Apemantus's choice to be the “churlish philosopher” into a corrupt society's choice to dismiss Apermantus's very existence by denying him interaction, thus providing one of two distinct definitions of “satirical tragedy” within one play; and finally, converting physical injury into spiritual awakening for the Colonel and social achievement into spiritual danger for Captain Ager (another comic ending called into question). Aside from genre-bending, Middleton also tested the boundaries of function and meaning for dramatic writing itself. From the tabloid-esque Roaring Girl to the political documentary thinly veiled in allegory of Game at Chess and many uncharted territories in between, Middleton experimented. Whether that experimentation was a product of uncertainty or confidence about himself as an author, or an attempt to question the very validity of dramatic authorship itself, the result is a canon so heterogeneous in subject matter and style that it would be hard to imagine a writer more willing to explore, in Heller's words, “the implications of ideas and ranges of experiences” he encountered in the rapidly changing society of early modern London and the community of playwrights working therein.

Middleton's choice to remain on the fringes of the professional community of playwrights by pursuing institutional ties outside the theater is what makes him a Literary Dramatist, part of a group whose members, more or less unwillingly, played a substantial role in the continued re-definition of the nature and function of the profession of dramatist through their very skepticism about the literary value of plays and the status of
the men who wrote them. As a collaborator, Middleton experienced apprenticeship to a Commercial Professional, experimented with freelance associations with different kinds of professionals, and eventually entered into a collaborative relationship where he was the more gifted and experienced dramatist. The likelihood that Middleton was banned from dramatic writing after *A Game at Chess* precludes us from seeing a natural end to his dramatic career, but from what we can see from the choices he made in collaboration and as a “free agent” in and outside the theater, we can conclude that his ties to the theater were just as personal as they were professional but that, in the end, his extra-theatrical literary ambitions were a consistent motivation behind his professional associations.
CHAPTER FIVE

“WITHOUT THE PROTESTATION OF A SERVICE”

THE PLACE OF THE GENTLEMAN AUTHORS IN THE COMMUNITY OF PLAYWRIGHTS

In the preceding chapters, I have shown many of the ways an author's Form of Affiliation to the profession of dramatist impacted the nature of his contributions to multi-authored texts in the early modern theater. I have approached this subject by examining the composition of a particularly complicated text (The Book of Sir Thomas More) and by considering the perspective of an individual author (Thomas Middleton) whose engagement with the profession, and thus with his co-authors, changed over time. In this final chapter, I will focus on the group of dramatists I have termed the Gentleman Authors in order to show how the authors so identified functioned in relation to the larger community of professional playwrights, both as writers of single-authored texts and as collaborators. The purpose of this approach is to highlight the important differences between the Gentleman Authors and the other three categories of dramatists (Attached Dramatists, Commercial Professionals, and Literary Dramatists), and thus to show how this group, though comparatively peripheral to the “profession,” contributed significantly to the development of drama, and the role of the dramatist, in the period.

Those I have identified as Gentleman Authors are Francis Beaumont, John Marston, and John Ford. These men began writing drama with awareness that they were
different from most of the members of the playwriting community. With the exception of John Webster and Thomas Lodge, Beaumont, Marston, and Ford were the only professional playwrights in the period 1580-1625 to hold membership at the Inns of Court. As a member of the older generation of “University Wits,” Lodge predates the grouping of Gentleman Authors as I have constructed it. Webster has a great deal in common with the other three, but his professional associations and relationship to the theater industry align him more with the Commercial Professionals.¹ The Gentleman Authors also all attended Oxford University, though Marston was the only one of the three to receive a degree. In fact, Marston and Fletcher, who earned a BA and MA at Cambridge, are the only professional dramatists working in the years 1580-1625 outside of the category of “University Wits” to have earned a degree. Chapman, Middleton, and Massinger all attended Oxford for some time, but did not graduate, and John Day was expelled from Cambridge in 1593 for stealing a book (Parr). While attendance at university is, as we see, not a biographical detail unique to the Gentleman Authors, it is an indication of status and formal education that contributes to their characterization as a

¹ Webster, unlike Beaumont, Marston, and Ford, did not attend university. Also, M.C. Bradbrook suggests that his time at the Middle Temple was intended to prepare him not for a career in the law, but “to qualify him for helping with large mercantile ventures, and for dealing with distinguished customers” (qtd. in Gunby) so that he would be well-prepared to take care of the office work associated with his father's coachmaking business. Webster, his father, and his brother, were all Freemen of the Merchant Taylor's company, and seem to have worked together in the family business. Gunby suggests that this other occupation is probably the reason for Webster's slow rate of composition. Webster frequently collaborated with Commercial Professionals like Dekker, with whom he wrote *Westward Ho!* (1604) and *Northward Ho!* (1605, in response to Chapman, Jonson and Marston's *Eastward Ho!*). Finally, though he had other options for income aside from playwriting, they were not those of one with a noble background—both coachmaking and playmaking are commercial professions. Leah Marcus proposes that “Webster's constant need to negotiate between two professions [. . .] appears to have made him more sophisticated than most in understanding that drama had to be marketed like any other commodity” (6), a view of dramatic composition that would have been shared by the more pragmatic and financially dependent Commercial Professionals.
group. Of the other three Forms of Affiliation, 9% of the Commercial Professionals, 33% of the Literary Dramatists, and two of the three Attached Dramatists—Heywood and Fletcher—went to university.² Shakespeare, who for all intents and purposes created the position, is the only member of the group of Attached Dramatists, as I have constructed it, not to have attended Oxford or Cambridge.³

Membership at the Inns of Court is a meaningful characteristic of the Gentleman Authors. Philip J. Finkelpearl has shown that the Inns were, for many of the younger members especially, a place for play as much as they were a place for serious study. He explains that “during the last thirty years of the sixteenth century, only fifteen percent of those admitted to the Inns of Court pursued their studies far enough to be admitted to the bar” (Marston 10). Inns of Court members were a rapidly growing population in a rapidly growing city with a rapidly growing entertainment industry. In just the last five years of the sixteenth century, the Inns saw a thirty percent increase in attendance that “was achieved only by extensive building and renovation” (Marston 5). Located quite near London's theaters and other attractions, it is unsurprising that the Inns were often treated as convenient and reputable quarters where young men of means could live safely

² It is interesting that Fletcher's two most sustained and successful collaborative relationships were with his fellow university educated Attached Dramatist Massinger, and the also educated Gentleman Author Beaumont. However, the fact that Nathan Field probably would have been Fletcher's successor had he not died quite young in 1619/20 (around the age of 32) shows the variety of Fletcher's consistent collaborative relationships. Field was born in London and had no formal education beyond his training at St. Paul's school. At twelve or thirteen, he began his career in the theater as a boy actor for the Children of the Chapel Royal. From there, he went on to become a celebrated actor and dramatist, and eventually a shareholder in the King's Men in 1619. Had he lived, he might have become that company's principal dramatist upon Fletcher's death in 1625.

³ Both Thomas Heywood and William Rowley, neither of whom attended university, occupied positions of attachment to a company at some point in their careers. However, because they did not maintain these positions, and instead returned to freelance associations as playwrights, I have placed them in the category of Commercial Professionals.
under the auspices of an educational environment to which no parents would object. If the Inns were the “third university” in England, many seem to have treated them like what we might today call a “party school.” As Finkelpearl explains, “for many, probably the majority, the Inns were a finishing school: a place to mingle with the ‘creame o’th kindome,’ to sample the glories of the great capital city, and perhaps incidentally to acquire some useful knowledge, including the law” (Marston 11). The accelerated growth of the Inns was no doubt a contributing factor to this change in its function—there simply would not have been enough demand for the number of lawyers and judges that would have emerged from training there, had they all completed their studies. It is no wonder then that some members of the Inns found other occupations, as Beaumont, Marston, and Ford did when they began writing plays for the public theater.

The Gentleman Authors were not the only literary figures to emerge from the Inns of Court. On the contrary, the Inns already had a long history of fostering great writers, and Finkelpearl describes them as “the literary center of England” in the period 1550-1575 (Marston 24). He goes on to suggest that writings by Inns of Court members have certain recognizable attributes, stemming from “youthful, self-conscious cynicism, nurtured in the catalytic atmosphere of the law schools; a sense of belonging to an elite of wits in a world of gulls; a tradition of free and candid speech; upper-class condescension to the taste of professional writers; a tradition of plain style in language which tended to be associated with the Inns and the courtly writers; and perhaps the dominance of one powerful and admirable figure in Donne” (Marston 73). However, there is a clear difference between the “amateur” poetic endeavors of John Donne in his Inns of Court
days (1592-96?), when he wrote a great deal of verse that circulated privately, in manuscript, amongst friends, and a career of writing plays for money in the public theater (Colclough).\(^4\) The dramatic work of Beaumont, Marston, and Ford was the exception to the standard literary pursuits for Inns of Court men. And their engagement with the public theaters complicated the operation of some of the traits Finkelpearl associates with Templar authors, particularly their “upper-class condescension to the taste of professional writers,” and their “sense of belonging to an elite of wits in a world of gulls,” since that “world of gulls” would have made up part, if not most, of the audiences for which their plays were being performed.

Participation by these three in the activities undertaken by “professional writers,” who were engaged with, and part of, the “world of gulls,” no doubt ruffled the feathers of the families of the Gentleman Authors. Beaumont's father was a judge in the court of common pleas, and his three sons ”seem to have been slated to follow the paternal path,” (Bliss 3), which would have led Francis Jr. up the ranks of the Inner Temple. But, like his poet brother John, Francis strayed from that path onto a literary one. Their father died in 1598, and so did not live to see his son as a playwright. Ford's was “a prosperous and well-established gentry family,” and his father was “a Devon landowner and justice of the peace” (Neill). Ford's father died in 1610, before his son entered the playwriting profession. Because his father was not a resident of the Inns of Court, the son was perhaps less closely watched than the other two Gentleman Authors, but his background

---

\(^4\) Donne was also never called to the bar, but though he did not practice law professionally, “its language and modes of thought remained crucial to him throughout his life, and lend much of his writing its distinctive character” (Colcough). His knowledge of legal matters and language also aided him in his professional life, particularly when he served as secretary to the lord keeper, Sir Thomas Egerton from 1597 until the discovery of his secret marriage to Egerton's niece in 1601 lost him the position (ibid.).
and upbringing indicate that his family would have had similar expectations for him to those of the other two. And if the reaction of Marston's father to his own son's literary pursuits is any indication, it seems likely that, had they lived to see it, Beaumont's and Ford's fathers would not have been pleased about their sons spending time at the theater rather than the Inns.

John Marston Sr. was a prominent lawyer and clearly had high hopes and expectations for his son to follow in his footsteps. In 1592, while serving a term as Reader in the Middle Temple, Marston Sr. had his son admitted to that institution “specially,” even though the latter would spend two more years at Oxford before taking up residence (sharing quarters with his father) at the Inns (Knowles). In an early draft of his will, written in 1599 (the same year his son was working for Henslowe), Marston Sr. bequeathed his books to “him that deserveth them not, that is my wilful disobedient son, who I think will sell them rather than use them, although I took pains and had delight therein; God bless him and give him true knowledge of himself, and to forgo his delight in plays and vain studies and fooleries” (qtd. in Jackson and Neill x). Apparently hopeful to the last that his son would mend his rebellious ways, Marston Sr.’s more practical fear is that his son will sell his beloved books. This might tell us something about the financial circumstances of Marston Jr., but it seems likely that any need of funds that he might have had would have been for the “vain fooleries” in which he spent his time. The father seems concerned that his son will not appreciate or benefit from his books, which is a matter more personal than financial. The revised and final draft of the will is much softer in tone: the father leaves, “to my said son John my furniture etc. in my chambers in
the Middle Temple, my law books etc. to my said son, whom I hoped would have profited by them in the study of the law, but man proposeth and God disposeth etc” (ibid.). In this version, Marston Sr. has accepted his son's waywardness and chosen occupation, and his dissatisfaction does not lead to disinheritance.

Given the details from his father's will, it is quite unlikely that Marston Jr. turned to playwriting out of financial necessity, as some scholars have argued. As Finkelpearl puts it, “inherited wealth is a useful cushion for a scourge of villainy” (Marston 84), suggesting that it was Marston's secure financial status that enabled him to write sometimes brutal depictions of his fellow playwrights and the London populace. As Marston claims in his preface “To the Reader” of The Malcontent (1604), “I am an ill orator and, in truth, use to indite more honestly than eloquently, for it is my custom to speak as I think and write as I speak” (1-3). The self-deprecating statement that begins this preface is certainly disingenuous, but Marston's admission that he does not censor himself when he writes appears to be accurate. This attitude exists in his earliest non-dramatic writing as well. Marston begins his Scourge of Villainy (1598) with a verse dedication “To Detraction,” in which he writes:

Know that the Genius, which attendeth on
And guides my powers intellectual,
Holds in all vile repute Detraction;
My soul an essence metaphysical,
   That in the basest sort scorns critics' rage
   Because he knows his sacred parentage.

A partial praise shall ne'er elevate
My settled censure of my own esteem;
A canker'd verdict of malignant hate
Shall ne'er provoke me worse myself to deem.
   Spite of despite and rancour's villainy,
I am myself, so is my poesy. (7-12, 19-24)

Both this publication and the collection of verse satires *The Metamorphosis of Pygmalion's Image*, written and published just before *Scourge* in 1598, were published anonymously. Yet, from the lines quoted above and the dedication of *Pygmalion* “To the World's Mighty Monarch, Good Opinion,” described as the “only giver of honour, great procurer of advancement, the world's chief balance, the all of all, and all in all, by whom all things are that that they are” (2-5), it seems that Marston would have expected to be identified as the author of both, and in the final line quoted above, there is the same seemingly uninterrupted connection between the self and the work that is seen in the preface to *The Malcontent*. In these addresses, and throughout his written works, Marston flaunts the “tradition of free and candid speech” that Finkelpearl associates with Inns writers. The fact that he does so in the context of works that are being presented to the public—rather than to a private circle like Donne’s—seems to bring out in full force the tone of arrogant condescension that is also a common attribute of Templar authors.

There is also a feeling of contradiction between the two prefatory addresses of Marston's early prose works. In *Scourge*, Detraction is unable to affect the author's knowledge of his and his work's value, and in fact, “a partial praise” has no power to “elevate” his “settled censure of [his] own esteem” either. The author and his poem stand unaffected by any outside response to the work. However, in the dedication of *Pygmalion*, Good Opinion is the thing that makes “all things that that they are,” and is the “only giver of honour.” Since *Pygmalion* and its dedication were written and published first, it can perhaps be concluded that Marston had fostered high hopes for his first foray
into published poetics, but that he had instead encountered the bite of Detraction, and chose to lash out in his preface to *Scourge* in retaliation. In 1599, both of these collections of verse satires were ordered by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London to be burned (Bosmajian 188). Though it is unclear precisely when Marston began writing for the stage—and so we cannot conclude, as has often been suggested, that it was as a result of the burning of his poems—this event marks a turn from non-dramatic writing. Perhaps he saw playwriting, in particular for the boys' companies, who returned to the stage in 1599/1600, as a means of expression that could more easily subvert the rules imposed by the censor—though he did not always get away with his cavalier challenges to authority.

When Marston began playwriting—the first of the Gentleman Authors to do so—he entered a largely collaborative world.\(^5\) Collaborative writing required some level of engagement with the community of playwrights, though it did not require friendship or even extensive interaction. This is perhaps why Marston was not interested in writing alongside others. He was “notoriously quarrelsome” (Knowles) and condescending, with a razor-sharp wit that he did not hesitate to use. It is likely that he never worked *with* other dramatists, even on the multi-authored texts to which his name can be assigned. His brief appearance in Henslowe's *Diary* in 1599, which was long understood as

---

5 All three Gentleman Authors entered the literary world by writing non-dramatic poetry and prose. Neill explains that “Ford launched his literary career in 1606, during his rustication from the Middle Temple, with the publication of two non-dramatic works, evidently designed to secure aristocratic patronage” (Neill). Perhaps at the point, Ford was concerned that a career in law was not going to happen for him, and so he began to consider other options, but it would be another twenty-three years before Ford became the published author of a dramatic text. Beaumont’s first foray into poetics shows him to have been influenced by Marston from the start. The latter’s *Metamorphosis of Pygmalion’s Image* (1598) served as a model for the younger Templar’s 1602 epyllion *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus.*
evidence of his collaboration with Chettle, Dekker, and Jonson on a lost play called *The King of Scots*, has since been reassessed with the conclusion that, even in the predominantly collaborative community of Henslowe's writers, Marston worked alone (probably on *Lust's Dominion*, not *The King of Scots*) (Gossett “Marston” 183). To Marston, there would have been a difference, real or imagined, between collaborating on plays for adult and boy actors, and writing single-authored texts for the boys; and then managing a company, especially a company of boys (as he would do some time after 1604), was another level of engagement altogether. For him, “The Children of Paul's, like the rival boy company at the Blackfriars to which Marston transferred his talents in the new reign, maintained a protective and comforting fiction of amateur status” (Jackson and Neill xii). The reason for that “fiction” can be found in the close relationship between the private theaters and the Inns of Court.

The Inns were closely connected with the theater industry, especially the private indoor theaters that were frequented by Inns of Court members. Marston especially seems to have capitalized on this connection by writing as if for an audience of Templars, to the point of excluding the rest of the audience: “Occasionally, as in the two private theater plays by Edward Sharpham of the Middle Temple and *The Fawne* [1606] by Marston, also of the Middle Temple, the references to intramural matters at the Inns are so frequent or recherché that the playwrights seem to have directed their plays almost exclusively to the Inns' element in the audience” (Finkelpearl *Marston* 27). Both Marston and Beaumont began writing plays for the boys' companies performing at the private theaters (after the former’s short-lived tenure with Henslowe). Marston remained
in that ostensibly more prestigious milieu until the end of his playwriting career.

Beaumont only moved to writing for the King's Men after first collaborating a number of times with Fletcher for the boys and also writing alone his failed *Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1607). The fact that that same adult company staged Marston's *Malcontent*, even though it was presumably owned by the boys' company who first performed it, suggests that the King's Men would have welcomed Marston's dramatic skills writing for their stage. However, perhaps because he had a shareholder's interest in the Children of the Blackfriar's/Queen's Revels, or simply because his own sense of self may not have permitted him to become a true “professional” by writing for the adult stage, he chose not to leave the boys.

Ford's dramatic career began much later than the others', after the boys had fallen out of favor for numerous offenses to the king (some of which came from Marston himself), and adult actors took over performances in the indoor theaters. Ford's first certain dramatic composition was *The Witch of Edmonton*, written with Dekker and Rowley in 1621. 6 His career is also different from that of the other two in that, though we do not know details of the date and circumstances of his death, Ford seems to be the only Gentleman Author who continued to work as a professional dramatist until the end of his life. Perhaps his rebellious streak made him less inclined to maintain a semblance of “amateur status”: he was expelled from the Middle Temple in 1605-1608 for not paying his buttery bill, and was again in trouble in 1617 for being part of a group of forty

---

6 It has been suggested that “a lost play entitled *A Bad Beginning Makes a Good Ending*, staged by the King's Men in 1612-13, may well have been the same as *An Ill Beginning has a Good End*, assigned to Ford by the Stationers' Register in 1660, but [...] there is no certain record of Ford as a dramatist on his own account before he emerges as a collaborator with a number of well-established playwrights in the early 1620's” (Neill).
Inns members who refused to wear the traditional lawyers' caps. Yet, there is reason to believe that Ford practiced law, unlike Marston and Beaumont, because he continued a resident of the Middle Temple long after he began writing plays (at least until 1638) (Neill). Ford also probably did not “need” to write plays, since, on top of what he earned practicing law, in 1616 he was granted an annuity of £20 upon the death of his brother Henry (Lomax xxxii). Thus, Ford seems to have led a sort of double-life, maintaining a sometimes troubled professional relationship with the Inns of Court, but also wholly integrating himself into the playwriting profession through collaborating with some of the most prolific of the Commercial Professionals.

Though he worked with professionals from a variety of backgrounds, Ford's independent dramatic compositions were written for the private theaters, primarily the Cockpit (Phoenix) and occasionally for the King's Men at Blackfriars.\(^7\) While it is true that, “during the Caroline period, the private – or rather enclosed, indoor – theatre became less the exception than the rule” (Farr 2), Ford was already producing plays, in collaboration, for the Cockpit before Charles I ascended the throne. *The Witch of Edmonton* was performed there, despite the sensational, tabloid-like nature of its story, which would more often suit the crowd at the Red Bull. That the private theaters became the “rule,” during Ford's most productive years as a dramatist may also help to explain his relative comfort with participating in the playwriting profession while still continuing his professional association with the Inns—perhaps the illusion of “amateur status” was,

---

\(^7\) Three of Ford's collaborations, all written with Dekker, were not performed at the private theaters. The lost plays *The Fairy Knight* (1624) with Dekker and *Keep The Widow Waking* (1624) with Dekker, Rowley, and Webster, were performed at the Red Bull. *The Bristow Merchant* (1624), written with Dekker, was performed at the Fortune.
to some extent, important to him.

That Ford strove to maintain at least a fictive distance from identification as a “professional” playwright can be seen in the prefatory material attached to his first published dramatic work, which is also probably the first play he wrote alone, *The Lover's Melancholy* (1628, published 1629). In his 1985 Revels edition of the text, R.F. Hill observes that “Ford shows a snobbish queasiness about his first venture in having a play printed” (2). The author dedicates the text “To my worthily respected friends, Nathaniel Finch, John Ford, Esquires; Mr Henry Blunt, Mr Robert Ellice, and all the rest of the Noble Society of Gray's Inn” (3), in a gesture that reminds readers of the author's close associations to that institution. He begins his address by explaining to his friends and colleagues that “the account of some leisurable hours is here summed up and offered to examination” (1-2). Wishing it to be understood that this dramatic composition is the result of leisure not work, Ford goes on to describe what he expects of his readers:

> As plurality hath reference to a multitude, so I care not to please many; but where there is a parity of condition, there the freedom of construction makes the best music. This concord hath equally held between you the patrons, and me the presenter. [. . .] My presumption of coming in print in this kind hath hitherto been unreprouvable, this piece being the first that ever courted reader; and it is very possible that the like complimint with me may soon grow out of fashion. A practice of which that I may avoid now, I commend to the continuance of your loves the memory of his, who, without the protestation of a service, is readily your friend. (4-14).

Ford sounds anxious, perhaps even uncomfortable, in these lines. He begins by using the kind of language that is often employed by authors seeking patronage for their work, going so far as to describe his friends as “patrons.” But Ford is not speaking to an aristocrat from whom he would like to receive financial compensation for his literary

---

8 This John Ford was a cousin of the dramatist, and a very minor poet in his own right (Hill 45n1).
efforts, nor is he concerned with pleasing the “multitude;” he is instead speaking to those with whom he has “a parity of condition.”  By the end, he has given up the idea of patronage and seems ready to scorn the very act of publishing dramatic works that allows for it.  This is not the first text Ford published, but it is the first of his dramatic texts “that ever courted reader.”  The “courting” is the source of his unease, and he would rather “avoid” that debased pleading “now,” by offering only his love, as one who “without the protestation of a service, is readily your friend.”  Here we see quite clearly the conflict between the two worlds inhabited by Ford.  He begins in language common to the dedication of a dramatic work, but ends in what sounds more like a private letter to his intimate acquaintances.  Ford seems almost to be pretending that his writing will circulate only among like-minded friends, or he is at least hoping that his friends will see his work in that way, rather than as the commercially-minded pursuit of a dramatist engaged with the playwriting marketplace. 9

The rhetoric of friendship is crucial to the prefatory material of The Lover’s Melancholy, as we have seen in the author's dedication.  The first of four commendatory poems is written by George Donne, son of the Inns of Court man and poet, and by this time clergyman, John Donne.  He writes to Ford, “I, as a friend / That knows thy worth, do only stick my name, / To show my love, not to advance thy fame” (6-8).  Donne’s tone is self-deprecating, referring to himself as a “barren quill” whose “liking is no praise” (4, 2).  That he writes this poem anyway, despite claims of insufficiency as a “true critic” (5),

9 Sonia Massai reaches a similar conclusion when discussing the circumstances of the printing of Lover's Melancholy, arguing that the dedication shows that “Ford used print not for its unprecedented ability to reach a ‘multitude’ of readers, but to replicate the ‘coterie’ circulation of literary works in manuscript form” (72).
reiterates the feigned intimacy of this play's circulation. The second poem, by William Singleton, begins by claiming “I write not to thy play: I'll not begin / To throw a censure upon what hath been / By th' best approved; it can not fear, nor want / The rage, nor liking of the ignorant” (1-4). Singleton asserts that Ford's poem is above judgment because it has already been approved “by th' best.” The parallel construction of “not fear, nor want” and “the rage / nor liking” seems to say that Ford does not need to worry about negative opinions, nor seek for positive ones from “the ignorant.” Or, since “want” may also mean “lack,” these lines could be read to mean that Ford is not going to lack in either positive or negative opinions, but since they come from “the ignorant,” they are equally meaningless. Singleton also claims, “Nor seek I fame for thee, when thine own pen / Hath forced a praise long since from knowing men” (5-6). Again, the word “fame” is used to describe something these authors are not going to promote for Ford. As a dangerously general term, “fame” says nothing of the quality of those who create it by approving of an author. It is better, then, that Ford receives praise from “knowing men” specifically. Finally, Singleton compares Ford to other playwrights, only to illustrate the important differences between them:

I speak my thoughts, and wish unto the stage
A glory from thy studies; that the age
May be indebted to thee for reprieve
Of purer language, and that spite may grieve
To see itself outdone. When thou art read,
The theatre may hope arts are not dead,
Though long concealed; that poet-apes may fear
To vent their weakness, mend, or quite forbear. (7-14)

Ford's “purer language,” which seems to derive “from [his] studies” is posited as the means by which “art” will be resuscitated in the theater. It is interesting that many, if not
all, of the men with whom Ford had already collaborated on plays would have fallen under the category of uneducated “poet-apes” in Singleton's estimation. But this play, written by Ford alone, will be “read,” and that seems to be the means by which it will affect others' opinion of the artfulness of dramatic composition. Playwrights had frustratingly little control over the reception of their plays on the stage, but they, and those contributing commendatory verses, could at least construct attempts to regulate the reading of their texts by outlining the system of values that informed their taste and opinion. Jonson seems to have known this better than any, and Ford's self-consciousness in becoming a published playwright comes through in the manner he chose to present *The Lover's Melancholy*.

Of course, an author's control over his printed texts was far from absolute, though Massai has shown that Ford must have had more control over the printing of his plays than most of his playwriting predecessors. ¹⁰ The title page of the 1629 quarto of this play immediately signals the reader as to what is most important about the text he or she is holding. Under the play's title, the page reads:

```
ACTED
AT THE PRIVATE
HOVSE IN THE BLACKE
Friers, and publickely at the Globe
```

¹⁰ Massai claims that in publishing his non-collaborative plays, Ford “was more likely to have sought [the stationers'] services as and when he needed them, rather than vice-versa,” and so it is “likely that Ford approached them simply to secure his exclusive right to publish his own plays through them” (70). Furthermore, Ford's interest in printing his plays was directly related to his desire to present his persona as an author in a specific way: “Ford's engagement with the publication of his non-collaborative plays is confirmed by the inclusion of signed dedications. […]. All of the early editions of Ford's non-collaborative plays, except *The Queen*, include dedications signed by the author and none includes an address to the reader, except for the short note appended at the end of *Q*. Ford's preference for dedications over addresses to the reader is a clear indication that he was primarily interested in seeking patronage and literary reputation through print rather than commercial success” (71), which was the central concern of more openly “professional” playwrights.
Clearly, whoever created this title page expected readers to be more drawn to, or impressed by, a text that had been performed “at the private house” rather than the public, showing that, even if indoor theaters were becoming the “norm,” there was still a definite status-related difference between the two kinds of playing spaces. There is no indication of Ford's name on the title page, but he is soon identified in the signed dedication on the next page. And those readers who knew the play because they had seen it at Blackfriars may very well have known the play's author already—perhaps even known him personally, given that Inns of Court members made up a large proportion of Blackfriars audiences. In this case, the printer's choices reiterate the illusion of “privacy” that the author seems to have wanted for his first foray into printing dramatic works.

Despite his suggestion that “the like compliment with me may soon grow out of fashion,” in other words, that he would not continue to publish after this first attempt, three of Ford's plays were published in 1633, and one each in 1634, 1638, and 1639 respectively. (Lomax xxxiii). Hill suggests that “having mastered his scruples, he may have been the readier to go into print” (2) with his later plays. *The Broken Heart* (pub. 1633), *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (pub. 1633), and *Perkin Warbeck* (pub. 1634), for example, all feature dedications to specific aristocrats, showing Ford's increased comfort with the act of seeking patronage as a dramatist. However, *Love's Sacrifice* (pub. 1633) is dedicated to Ford's cousin of the same name, and shares with *Lover's Melancholy* the emphasis on personal relation and friendship rather than the financial system of patronage. True to the attributes I have outlined of the Gentleman Author, Ford's
ambivalence about playwriting is apparently not entirely quelled.

Shared backgrounds and experiences are not the only things linking the Gentleman Authors together. The radical choices in content and style made by Beaumont, Marston, and Ford reflect the desire to affect the common understanding of and expectations for plays, and perhaps even the playwriting profession. Their behavior, in and outside the theater, shows a common willingness and perhaps even propensity to test boundaries and arrogantly flout convention, and the ability to do so was certainly facilitated by their relatively privileged social positions and family ties. Their entrance into the playwriting profession had the dual benefit of showing resistance to their families’ expectations for them, and also providing an outlet for their creative impulses outside the confines of the strict rules and regulations of the Inner and Middle Temple. They are by no means the only individuals to challenge convention as playwrights, but they arguably do so most forcefully and with least care and consideration for consequence, particularly in the dramatic endeavors they undertook as single-authors.¹¹ Even Jonson fortifies his own choices with classical precedent, and his strongly voiced condemnations of the practices of other playwrights are largely based on their “failure” to adhere to the ancient rules of unity and the art of polished and controlled poetic form.

¹¹ Christopher Marlowe is an obvious example of an exceptionally innovative playwright who can be credited with creating many elements of dramatic form and style that would become the very “convention” that the Gentleman Authors, and others, challenged. It seems likely that, had he not died in 1593, he would have continued to be an influential member of the playwriting profession. His background is somewhat similar to that of Webster: both were educated, Marlowe at university, Webster at the Inns (a difference that was probably meaningful). Both were also sons of livery company Freemen, Webster’s father a Merchant Taylor and Marlowe’s a Shoemaker. However, again, there is an important difference here in that Webster took up his father’s trade, while Marlowe did not. We of course have no way of knowing how Marlowe would have fit into the playwriting profession, but if his early work is any indication, his role probably would have been central and powerful.
Beaumont, Marston, and Ford instead promote innovation in its own right, and their “right” to do so derives from their position on the margins of the playwriting profession.

Marston's shockingly innovative style is described in clear detail in the Cambridge University play *Return from Parnassus; or, The Scourge of Simony* (c.1601, printed 1606):

What *Monsier Kinsayder*, lifting vp your legge and pissing against the world, put vp man, put vp for shame.  
Me thinks he is a Ruffian in his stile,  
Withouten bands or garters ornament,  
He quaffes a cup of frenchmans Helicon.  
Then royster doyster in his oylie tearmes,  
Cutts, thrusts, and fornes at whomsoeuer he meets.  
Give him plaine naked words stript from their shirts  
That might beseeme plaine dealing *Aretine*:  
I there is one that backes a paper steed  
And manageth a pen-knife gallantly.  
Strikes his poinado at a buttons breadth,  
Brings the great battering ram of tearms to towne  
And at first volly of his Cannon shot,  
Batters the walles of the old fustie world.  (B2r-v)

The person described in these lines is the opposite of what one might expect of an Inns of Court man of respectable parentage. Marston's “stile” is that of a “Ruffian,” lacking any “ornament” that might denote status or respectability. He performs with language what a Roaring Boy might act out in the streets of London: his “oylie tearmes” are aggressively and indiscriminately violent. Yet, the attitude toward Marston appears to have changed somewhat by the end of this speech. He “manageth a pen-knife gallantly,” upon the back of a “paper steed.” From this image, we might even term him the Knight of the Burning Satire. Most importantly, Marston's writing “Batters the walles of the old fustie world.”

---

12 Marston used the pseudonym Kinsayder in the publication of his *Scourge of Villainy*. 
What he destroys is convention that has passed its “sell by” date. As Rick Bowers observes: “Aggressive, offensive, daring, risqué, even avant-garde, Marston is set apart from all the other contemporary poets described in Parnassus by virtue of the fact that no positive classical references are made in relation to him” (16). This makes him, by the lack of such classical references, unprecedented, but this does not seem to be an entirely negative appraisal when precedent is associated with a “fustie” old world.

Marston was an undeniably volatile figure during his relatively brief literary career, and his risk-taking, or disregard of risk, gained him recognition within the playwriting profession, though responses were by no means uniformly positive. According to Bowers, “Marston's extreme pitch of dramatic situation within his plays, relentless linguistic faddishness, and crazed disregard for appropriate tonal balance, seems calculated to put conservative critics – Jonson among them – on edge, if not disturbingly off balance” (17). Yet, probably much to Jonson's dismay, Marston's influence on dramatic form and style is undeniable: “Part of the success of Beaumont and Fletcher derived from following Marston's lead in The Malcontent and separating the [tragicomic] form from pastoral and traditional romance” (Gossett Philaster 57).

Beaumont and Fletcher continued to build upon Marston's innovative example, and “with Philaster they took tragicomedy to the King's Men and together with Shakespeare made it the most popular form of the next few years” (58). That his reputation extended outside the theater, and in fact opened doors for him to other venues can be seen in the fact that in 1607, near the end of his literary career, Marston was chosen by the Huntingdons to write his “Ashby Entertainment,” a choice that Finkelparl believes was “a sign of a
commitment at Ashby to new and sophisticated art that a figure like Marston, the Angry Young Man of the London theater, would have been selected for this family celebration.” He accounts this choice to have been based on an “experimental impulse” in that family that would later lead them to “employ the young Milton” (Court 36-7).

Marston, like the Huntingdons, seems to have been driven by an “experimental impulse,” though one far more extravagant than that family could claim. Ironically, Marston's lack of respect for the role of the dramatist and the potential uses of dramatic composition, issues of dire import to artists like Jonson, seem to be what made him such a powerful figure within the profession. Bower's claim that “to take Marston seriously is to understand that his thrust is basically sensational, not moral; a matter of contemporary theatrical and popular culture, not ethical consistency excavated from the classics” (14), perhaps gets to the heart of why Marston was unable or unwilling ever to treat playwriting as a communal activity. His tendency was to dismiss the professional aspect of playwriting, caring nothing for the idea of building or establishing a respectable professional group, and so his goals worked in direct conflict with those of the majority of the community of playwrights. Though his level of productivity and almost decade-long involvement with playwriting argue for Marston to be considered one of the “professional” playwrights of the early modern period, his attitude never transcends that of the disdainful amateur who believes himself to be different from everyone around him.

Perhaps emboldened by the innovative efforts of Marston who, if imitation is indeed the sincerest form of flattery, he certainly admired, in 1607, Beaumont undertook to write a play alone. It is likely that he had already worked with Fletcher on Love's Cure
(c.1605) and *The Woman Hater* (c.1606) for Paul's Boys, though the dating of both plays is tentative. But these collaborations are different from the ones for which the pair is best known. Hoy believes that the first play was “in its original state almost certainly a product of Beaumont's sole authorship, but revised in five scenes of its extant text by Fletcher” (85). Similarly, he says of *The Woman Hater*, “it is essentially Beaumont's, and in all probability represents an early work of his unaided authorship. Beyond any doubt, however, at least five scenes had been revised by Fletcher by the time the play was printed [1607]” (98-99). Whereas in *Philaster* (1609), *The Maid's Tragedy* (1610), and *A King and No King* (1610/11), Beaumont was the one to be in control of putting together the final product, here, it seems that Fletcher was the one to provide “finishing touches” to his friend's early work. Perhaps Beaumont began these plays with the intention of completing them alone, but was then unsure about the result, or was not invested enough to see them through to completion, at which point Fletcher entered into the process. The success of these early combined efforts no doubt laid the groundwork for the later and probably closer collaborations between the two after each had failed to compose a successful single-authored work for the stage.

Beaumont appears to have shared Marston's refusal to take seriously the potential for dramatic compositions to serve an instructive or moral purpose. In the prologue to *The Woman Hater*, he “claims no didactic justification for his play; like Marston, Beaumont defends himself by emphasizing his work's status as entertainment” (Bliss 20). He describes his intentions to his audience: “he that made this Play, meanes to please Auditors so, as hee may bee an Auditor himselfe hereafter, and not purchase them with
the deare losse of his eares: I dare not call it Comedie, or Tragedie; ‘tis perfectly neyther: A Play it is, which was meant to make you laugh, how it will please you, is not written in my part” (9-14). In these lines, Beaumont rejects the use of scandal or political commentary as a means to “purchase” auditors, because he will not risk the “loss of his eares” (part of the threatened punishment for Jonson and Chapman when they were imprisoned for *Eastward Ho!*). Beaumont also resists the rules of generic identification by refusing to classify his play as “a comedie” or “a tragedie,” and does not make an effort to define what the play is, as Fletcher would do by defining “pastoral tragi-comedy” in the printed text of *The Faithful Shepherdess*. Beaumont considers playwriting to be an enjoyable exercise, free of consequence and implication. As the author, he is playing a “part,” creating distance between his actual self and the person that has written this play. While Marston's method seems to have been to use his position of detached disinterest from the profession to heap scorn upon any target that came within his sights, Beaumont took a more good-natured approach and chose to play with plays.

While he sought “to make [his audience] laugh,” Beaumont was still selective about who ought to be in that audience: “if there be any amongst you, that come to heare lascivious Scenes let them depart: for I doe pronounce this, to the utter discomfort of all two peny Gallerie men, you shall have no bawdrie in it” (3-6). Clearly, the desire for “bawdrie” is, for Beaumont, associated with the occupants of the “cheap seats” in the private theater where the play was performed. The author also shuns convention when he begins by claiming, “Gentlemen, Inductions are out of date, and a Prologue in Verse is as stale, as a blacke Velvet Cloake, and a Bay Garland: Therefore you shall have it plaine
Prose thus” (1-3). That this prologue is addressed to “Gentlemen,” makes it appear that Beaumont is imagining his audience to be far more homogeneous than it was; or rather, that he only cares to address the gentlemen present, dismissing the rest as not worth his consideration. Not only do these lines celebrate the plain speech characteristic of the Inns of Court writer, but they also claim tradition and precedent to be unfashionable and stale. The first thing this author wants his audience to know is that his play is doing something different from what has been done, and overdone, before. Although less violently that the Gentleman Author who preceded him into the playwriting industry, Beaumont still shows signs of the kind of flagrant disregard that helped Marston to “[batter] the walles of the old fistie world.”

Beaumont was interested in pleasing a certain kind of auditor, but only on his own terms. His obvious contempt for parts of his audience helps to explain the utter failure of the only play he wrote entirely alone. According to Keith Sturgess, in comparison to the outdoor public theaters, in the smaller private theaters:

> the play is less ritual and more art. The performers . . . are now less important than their material and the audience, a group of value-sharing individuals [who] validate the performance. Its participation is less obtrusive . . . but more pervasive in that an awareness of its critical acumen is built into the play and its production . . . [T]he private theaters favoured wit in the dialogue, poetry in the passion and artful plotting. (qtd. in Hirschfeld 33)

While there was almost certainly some difference between the expectations of audiences at the indoor theaters and those of the outdoor, Sturgess assumes an audience unified in taste and opinion, which would perhaps come from “a group of value-sharing individuals.” But the playwrights themselves argue against such a view with their
repeated expressions of distaste for the “common” element in the audience and some of the more vulgar tastes of playgoers. *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* in fact relies upon audience heterogeneity while at the same time mocking it. In his staging of failed attempts to produce two plays on one stage—a chivalric romance alongside a citizen comedy—Beaumont seems to be drawing attention to the varied tastes of his audience only to make fun of them. Neither Rafe's story nor *The London Merchant* works as drama, not because they continue to interrupt and sabotage one another, but because they are, as examples of well-established and formulaic genres, equally passé in the eyes of the author. The Boy, who acts as a sort of director for the originally intended performance of *The London Merchant*, tries desperately to maintain the rigidity of generic boundaries between the plays, but is forced to give in to the interpolation of the Citizen when he commands, “Let Rafe come in and fight with Jasper” (II.269), to which the Boy responds “Sir, you must pardon us; the plot of our play lies contrary, and 'twill hazard the spoiling of our play” (271.72). After the Citizen threatens violence, exclaiming, “Plot me no plots. I'll ha' Rafe come out. I'll make your house too hot for you else” (273-4), the Boy has no choice but to acquiesce: “Why, sir, he shall; but if anything fall out of order, the gentlemen must pardon us” (275-6). Here, the conflict becomes a matter between the desires of the Citizen as audience, and those of the “Gentlemen” (sitting in their proper seats) and watching the play(s).

Audiences at Blackfriars may have liked predictable story lines, but they probably did not like being made fun of for being predictable themselves. As Lee Bliss explains, “audiences at the private theaters were frequently accused of intolerance for any but a
few favored kinds of drama” (20). Beaumont certainly knew this, and was himself one of the accusers. Masten proposes that “The Knight of the Burning Pestle is quite literally, in Barthes' famous phrase, 'a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture’” (24). Alexander Leggatt seems to agree, suggesting that Beaumont's Knight keys into the idea that "an audience comes expecting, not a carefully crafted total experience, but a series of favorite ingredients" (305), which is a quite different appraisal of the private theater audience from what is proposed by Sturgess. But Leggatt also assumes that Beaumont's goal was to gain the approval of his audience, while I believe the failure of his play derives from the fact that he was more interested in being antagonistic than accommodating. He is showing what might happen if a playwright did try to please the entirety of his audience, and the result is disastrous in a way that probably “was meant to make [them] laugh” (at themselves), but unfortunately did not. In the creation of such a radical experiment in dramatic form, Beaumont's attitude seems to be that he has nothing to lose, and nothing to gain, from audience responses to his play. Of course, he must have hoped that the audience would get, and appreciate, the joke on them, but the fact that they did not only supports Beaumont's condescending view of their poor taste. His detached perspective was possible because he was an author who did not imagine himself to be a “professional” playwright in any real sense. Further evidence for this appears in that the absence of an author is effectively built into Knight's construction. Beaumont removes himself from the position of author by letting control of the play be fought for amongst its characters. His is not a paternal relationship to his play; we are rather watching its creation in real time on the stage, and the pangs of childbirth were
clearly too much for the Blackfriars audience in 1607. His detached position is perhaps the reason Beaumont continued to write for the stage after what might have been a crushing blow to a more invested author. Because he did not need to write plays to make a living, he could have just stopped when it did not seem that it was going well for him. But, with Fletcher, he continued to write, perhaps because his lack of engagement allowed him to be unaffected by the disapproval of an audience whose judgment he clearly found to be questionable.

Like Beaumont's, Ford's radical style depended upon awareness of what had preceded it on the early modern stage. As Neill explains, Ford:

- borrowed not only tricks of style, but characters, episodes, and sometimes entire plots. While these borrowings reveal a certain anxious belatedness, they are seldom merely parasitic, however: Ford's characteristic preference is to defamiliarize the appropriated material by exposing it to disconcerting switches of tone and context, combining it in unexpected ways with adaptations from quite disparate sources, or exposing it to strange generic dislocations.

While, as we have seen, Marston's personal and vicious style “seems calculated to put conservative critics [. . .] on edge, if not disturbingly off balance” (Bowers 17), Ford appears to have been trying to put entire audiences “off balance” by leading them toward expectations, only to pull the rug out from under them at the last moment. This “characteristic preference to defamiliarize” is certainly operative in Ford's most controversial independent work, 'Tis Pity She's a Whore (printed 1633). In this play, the audience is confronted with what seems like a familiar story. We are shown star-crossed lovers, a colluding nurse, and a seemingly helpful friar. But the stars of the lovers, Giovanni and Annabella, are not crossed by conflict from “two households,” but one, for
they are brother and sister. The fact that the play depends on audience familiarity with
Shakespeare's work makes Ford's adoption of many of *Romeo's* elements appear
somewhat irreverent. The title of his play reinforces the point, though Ford halfheartedly
excuses himself in his dedication to the Earl of Peterborough, where he argues that “The
gravity of the subject may easily excuse the lightness of the title” (11). He does not
explain why, but to put so “light” a title on a play containing matters of “gravity” seems
in keeping with Ford's propensity to undermine expectation. Of course, it is difficult to
divorce modern sensibilities in the estimation of “irreverence,” but that *'Tis Pity* was
written between 1629-1633 means that the Shakespeare Second Folio (1632) was either
in the process of being or had already been printed, which shows that a certain reverence
did exist for the works of that dramatist in those years. It is hard to imagine that
audiences would not have found Ford's “twists” shocking. If not being irreverent, Ford
was certainly calling on his audience's knowledge of that play—and their resultant
assumptions of what they might find in his—in order to destabilize them.

Farr describes *'Tis Pity* as reflecting “a new kind of realism which [Ford] seems
centered to establish in the contemporary theater” (36). Perhaps this interest in realism
is what had already led Ford to collaborate on potboilers like *The Witch of Edmonton* and
*Keep the Widow Waking*, both of which were based on recent scandals in England. And
though this play is set far away in Parma, the circumstances of the lovers in *'Tis Pity* do
force a response that is grounded in realism (in contrast to the romantic ideals spoken of
by Shakespeare's couple). The Gentleman Authors were all confrontational in their own
way, and Ford's particular way was to display a situation that ought to be easily judged
based on common moral codes, but then through the development of plot and character, to make the judgment impossibly complicated. In the one commendatory poem affixed to this play in print, Thomas Ellice tells Ford, “Secure / Rest thou, that thy name herein shall endure / To th' end of age; and Annabella be / Gloriously fair, even in her infamy” (7-10). The seemingly contradictory conclusion that Annabella can be both “gloriously fair” and in “infamy” is precisely the problematic complication of reality that Ford compels his audiences to confront. In Farr's words, “Giovanni is Ford's angry young man, but his anger is concerned less with values than with a basic principle of constancy to a conviction, a loyalty to the self which is rather outside the moral law than contradictory of it” (37). The prerogative of the self might have been particularly important to the rebellious law-practicing playwright who, though trained in an institution built upon the necessity of rules, seems to have made up his own for himself in his professional life.

I have shown that Beaumont, Marston, and Ford composed single-authored texts that are characterized by radical innovations in style and content. However, when contributing to multi-authored texts, the Gentleman Authors have in common a tendency to adapt to the styles of their co-authors, or at least to allow their contributions to be adapted stylistically by others. But why? The answer is perhaps that they sought to efface themselves as playwrights. In the most well-known of collaborative relationships, Beaumont and Fletcher were able to find a balance that was commercially successful, but that balance involved the suppression of Beaumont's individual linguistic style, and to some extent, Fletcher's as well. As Cyrus Hoy explains:
[Beaumont's] use of such forms as *ye, o'th*, and 's for *his* is a case in point: these he neither employs regularly and to a fairly consistent degree, as does Fletcher, nor does he avoid using them altogether, as does Massinger. His linguistic "preferences" -- if they can be termed such -- are, in a word, nothing if not eclectic, and the quality of his writing gains accordingly, for his language is flexible and various. But it is this very protean character which makes it, in the end, quite impossible to establish for Beaumont a neat pattern of linguistic preferences that will serve as a guide to identifying his work wherever it might appear. (87)

What Hoy finds troublesome about Beaumont's inconsistent use of language—that it makes it difficult to identify his work as a co-author—seems to me to be evidence of the playwright's lack of awareness of, or interest in, the need to promote his own individual style in order to “make a name” for himself within the playwriting and theatrical community of early modern London. The comparison between his “flexible and various” linguistic style and the consistency of choices made by Fletcher and Massinger is telling because it would have been important for a dramatist concerned with establishing himself as a commercially successful professional playwright to *have* a stylistic identity. The styles of Fletcher and Massinger are recognizable to modern scholars working in attribution studies because, as invested members of the playwriting profession, they strove to be recognizable to their contemporary audiences. Beaumont did not.

Jeffrey Masten questions some of the basic premises of Hoy's study when he suggests that “writing in this [collaborative] theatrical context implicitly resists the notion of monolithic personal style Hoy presumes: a playwright im/personates another (many others) in the process of writing a play-text and thus refracts the supposed singularity of the individual in language. At the same time, he often stages in language the *sense* of distinctive personae, putting 'characteristic' words in another's mouth” (17). Rather than
“refracting” (altering or deflecting) the “supposed singularity of the individual,” the sort of mimicry Masten describes reflects and reinforces the individual's style by emphasizing its distinctiveness. Masten here proposes that collaboration creates an almost paradoxical destruction and fictionalization of individual stylistic self-hood. However, the “im/personation” he describes would and could not exist if “monolithic personal style” (in his unflattering terms) did not. The individual is reiterated when his style is acknowledged and appropriated, even when it is used in ways that are less than desirable or complimentary.

When collaborating with Fletcher, Beaumont appears to have been interested in creating the linguistic coherence for which their most celebrated collaborations (Philaster, The Maid's Tragedy, and A King and no King) are known. In these plays, Hoy finds that “Beaumont's share is much the greater, and his hand is the controlling one” (85). But Beaumont's aim in revising Fletcher's work was not to remove his co-author's stylistic preferences in order to foreground his own, because he doesn't seem to have had any. Instead, put simply, the play was the focus, rather than potential competition for control and self-promotion between the hands contributing to it. For instance, when Beaumont seems to have excised what Hoy calls “The Fletcherian ye” from their collaborations, it was “in the interest of a single harmony of language” (86). This is not

---

13 Masten raises the point that “the pronoun forms ye/you [...] are, as the OED suggests, actually class-related differences” and so it is worth investigating “the extent to which they reflect not an individual's linguistic preferences or habit, but rather a subject inscribed in and constituted by specific linguistic practices” (18). He is certainly correct, and it would be worthwhile to investigate the relationship between Fletcher's “preference” for “ye” and Beaumont's resistance to its use in the context of each author's background and social status, though they are not so different as Masten seems to suggest. Jonathan Hope supplies another possibility by arguing that linguistic habits like Fletcher's “ye” may be a reflection of regional dialect—more to do with location than social status (Beaumont was born in Leicestershire, Fletcher in Rye, Sussex). Whatever the cause of these authorial tendencies, Masten
to say that Beaumont was intentionally attempting to remove the signs of co-authorship in his revisions of the texts, as Jonson would in his removal of the “second Pen” in Sejanus. Rather, Beaumont's position as a Gentleman Author means that he came to the act of collaboration with different goals and concerns than authors from other Forms of Affiliation might. His connection with his dramatic compositions appears to have been less personal when compared to Jonson's view of playwriting as self-expression, a view that becomes apparent in the careful self-construction for which Jonson labored in the publication of his Works.

For Beaumont, collaboration was an activity wherein the self was subsumed by the mutual and cooperative process of creating one text out of two conceptions of its form and content. His “controlling” hand can be credited for much of the lasting reputation of these two dramatists who, in commendatory verses to the 1647 Folio, are described by John Webb as having “twin-like brains” (8), and whose works caused George Lisle to conclude: “For still you Fancies were so wov'n and knit / 'Twas Francis Fletcher, or John Beaumont writ” (17-18). Had Beaumont been a different kind of dramatist, one interested in promoting himself publicly as an influential and gifted member of the playwriting profession, he might not have so willingly “woven” his “fancies” with Fletcher’s. The characteristics of the Gentleman Author help to explain the apparent

---

14 The only Beaumont and Fletcher collaboration to be published while the younger dramatist was still
closeness of the Beaumont and Fletcher collaborations just as much as does their often idealized and speculated-upon friendship and personal relations. It is perhaps no surprise that Beaumont's great friend and collaborator is also the only dramatist aside from Marston and the “University Wits” to have completed a university education. The elitist tendencies of the Gentleman Authors might have led Beaumont to gravitate toward the almost uniquely educated Fletcher.

Of course, commendatory poems like the ones quoted above are a form in and of themselves, with specific goals and intentions. The 1647 Beaumont and Fletcher Folio followed in the footsteps of Jonson's 1616 Works and the 1623 Shakespeare Folio. It was novel because it did not claim to present the works of an individual, but rather a collaborative team. Yet, it is not just the work of this “dynamic duo” that makes up the Folio. As Gossett explains, “the 'Beaumont and Fletcher' plays are more accurately the canon of 'Fletcher and everyone with whom he collaborated,' including Beaumont, Shakespeare, Philip Massinger, Nathan Field, Middleton, and several lesser dramatists” (Philaster 15). Collaboration apparently presented problems for the establishment of canons even in these first attempts to do so. In his Folio address, “The Stationer to the Readers,” Humphrey Moseley claims that “it was once in my thoughts to have printed Master Fletcher's works by themselves, because single and alone he would make a just volume; but, since never parted while they lived, I conceived it not equitable to separate

---

alive is The Woman Hater (pub. 1607). But this play's first edition was released with no authorial attribution, and the second quarto, not published until 1648, bore only Fletcher's name. While we cannot assume that the lack of publication was the choice of the authors—it was more likely the King's Men who did not wish to release the plays to the press—the result is that, in his lifetime, Beaumont's name never appears in a printed dramatic document. It is possible, and I think likely, that he preferred it this way.
their ashes” (ix). This sentimental gesture, along with the rhetoric of the commendatory poems that conflates the minds, souls, and pens of Beaumont and Fletcher, serves to minimize the “dispersal of author/ity,” as Masten would term it (19), in the service of the paradigm of the single author, around which Folios containing dramatic works had up to that point been designed. It seems important to Moseley that the readers know of Fletcher's ability to “stand alone” in deserving an expensive Folio volume. And in one sense, he does appear alone, since, as Moseley laments, he was not able “to have got Master Beaumont's picture” (ix) to print with (next to? On the page preceding/following?) Fletcher's.

Much of our understanding of the relationship between Beaumont and Fletcher comes from the prefatory material to the Folio, along with a well-known anecdote from John Aubrey's *Brief Lives*, written near the end of the seventeenth century by a man who was born the year after Fletcher's death. Aubrey writes of the two, “I think they were both of Queen's college in Cambridge,” which is false (Beaumont attended Oxford). More famously, he claims that “They lived together on the Banke side, not far from the Play-house, both batchelors; lay together; had one Wench in the house between them, which they did so admire; the same cloathes and cloake, &c.; betweene them” (21). I do not mean to suggest that the closeness of Beaumont and Fletcher is a posthumously constructed myth, but it does seem that their intimacy facilitated a view of them as an indivisible creative entity. Instead of attempting to solve the questions of attribution that collaboration always presents, the Folio of 1647 reiterates the singular figure of the Author. Even as it acknowledges the presence of two writers, it presents them as one
voice. But it was not just their intimacy that allowed for such cohesion—Beaumont's disinterest in establishing himself as an individual playwright made it much easier to envision the pair's unity. And it seems to have been “those noble families whence [Beaumont] was descended” and “those gentlemen that were his acquaintance when he was of the Inner Temple” (ix) who Moseley approached to find a picture of Beaumont to print in the Folio, but he was denied. Thus, even after his death, Beaumont's background and upbringing affected his engagement with professional playwriting.

By asking questions about attribution, we discover that this best known of collaborative relationships was not an “equal” partnership in the meting out of responsibilities. Beaumont took on the majority of the work, in both writing and revision, for their most celebrated plays. But Fletcher's contributions mark crucial moments in the plays themselves. For example, he is the one to have written the scenes in *The Maid's Tragedy* involving Evadne's charge to kill the King (IV.i), and also her accomplishment of that deed (V.i) (Hoy 94). While the harmony of their language may be credited to Beaumont's “controlling” hand, the harmony of their authorial cooperation no doubt stems from their intimate knowledge of one another as friends and co-authors, which begat in each an awareness of the other’s strengths and abilities. They must have enjoyed working together simply for the sake of working together, and Beaumont must have enjoyed playwriting for the sake of playwriting, since his work does not reflect a desire for self-promotion. He rather seems to treat engagement with the playwriting profession as many young men of his time treated membership at the Inns of Court—as a pleasant way to pass the time with limited responsibilities and the added benefit of the
potential to learn new things.

Though he has much in common with Marston and Ford, Beaumont was quite different from them as a collaborator. Marston probably did not “collaborate” at all, with the possible exception of *Eastward Ho!* (1605), and Ford's tendency was to work with many different playwrights from a wide variety of backgrounds, including Fletcher, Middleton, Dekker, Rowley, and Webster. Beaumont also seems to have been less rebellious than the other two, who were both punished for rule-breaking and misbehavior in their Inns of Court days. But Marston and Ford were both active critics of drama (Ford) and authorship (Marston), commenting in shocking ways that show a detached, at times supercilious, attitude toward the profession to which they belonged (whether they liked to admit it or not). What the three do have in common is that their contributions to multi-authored texts are often hard to identify. Separating their work from that of their co-authors is especially difficult, at least in part because the Gentleman Authors viewed collaboration differently than did playwrights from other Forms of Affiliation.

A harmony of language was achieved when Marston worked with Jonson and Chapman on *Eastward Ho!*, but the reasons for that harmony could not be more different from those which created Beaumont and Fletcher's unified style. This text is discussed at length in Chapter Two, but I address it here specifically as an example of Marston's attitudes toward collaboration and the playwriting profession, which are informed by his insistent elitism, which is in turn informed by his background and status as an Inns of Court man and Gentleman Author. *Eastward* was performed by the Children of the Queen's Revels (the company for which Marston was a manager and shareholder), and
was written in response to Dekker and Webster's *Westward Ho!* (1604), performed by the Children of Paul's. Heather Anne Hirschfeld argues that the authors of *Eastward* viewed their collaborative endeavor as an attack against the “encroachment of primarily public theater dramatists into the realm of the indoor houses, as well as an encroachment of the collaborative mode into the very arena that had seemed an enclave of a particular kind of individual rhetorical expression” (34). Collaboration was, at that point, anomalous in the private theaters. Hirschfeld explains:

> From 1599-1606/7, the time when Beaumont and Fletcher started what would become their regular teamsmanship and when adult companies came to inhabit private theaters, [...] just three of thirty plays for children's companies are documented as collaborative—and these three were the members of the *Hoe* trilogy. After the reopening in 1599, that is, Dekker and Webster's *Westward Hoe* was the first joint play written for and performed by one of the city’s two boy companies at a private theater. A collaborative play for the adult companies, by contrast, would have been one of a majority. (34)

As leading dramatists for the children and their private theaters, Marston, Jonson, and Chapman must have felt threatened by the appearance of this new play by Dekker, a prolific collaborator and Commercial Professional in the public theaters, and the “*Playwright, Cart-wright*” Webster, who, though he was an Inns of Court man, was also a proud member of the Merchant Taylor's company and made no secret of his active participation in the coachmaking trade; whereas Jonson, through his activities as an author and his forging of associations with men whose backgrounds he no doubt envied, sought to distance himself from identification as a bricklayer.\(^{15}\)

---

\(^{15}\) This description of Webster comes from a poem entitled “Notes from Blackfriars” (printed 1618), where he is described as “Crabbed (Websterio) / The Play-wright, Cart-wright: whether? Either? ho-” (qtd. in Marcus 6) which Leah Marcus interprets to be “implying that his dual professions undercut one another and make him impossible to categorize” (*ibid.*)
While they may have shared distaste for the entrance of collaboration and “commercial” playwriting into their private theater territory, Marston and Jonson, who spent most of their careers being actively combative toward one another, did not have much else on which to establish an amicable collaborative relationship. As Jackson and Neill explain, “With the prickly Jonson, as conscious of his professional dignity as Marston of his amateur detachment, any friendship was likely to be turbulent” (xiii), and turbulent it was. The two had traded insults most publicly in the Poet's War of 1599-1601—also discussed in Chapter Two—but that debate was of a different kind from that which took place with the Ho! plays. The Poetomachia involved both the private and the public theaters, but it was not a war between public and private. In scholarship, the name Poet's War has largely replaced the previous title of War of the Theaters, and for good reason, because this debate was primarily about and between the dramatists themselves, and not the institutions for which they wrote. In that battle, Marston, Jonson, Dekker, and to some extent Shakespeare, asserted their opinions about the proper role and function of drama and of the dramatist, and they did so by appropriating and then mocking and dismissing one another’s individual styles. “Style” should not just be taken to mean a collection of linguistic choices, but also choices in form, genre, and content that were constantly being experimented with and questioned by professional playwrights in the period. What the Poet's War shows us, above all, is that playwrights had styles for which they were known; and while Hirschfeld sees this as a danger, believing that ”one of the paradoxes of stylistic ownership” is that “possession always heralds its own loss” (41), I rather find that there is no such thing as bad press. Though to be publicly mocked
would not be anyone's first choice, Marston, Jonson, and Dekker emerged from the Poet's War as influential and recognizable figures in the world of dramatic composition because their voices had been reiterated not only in their own plays, but in the plays of their rivals.

What Hirschfeld terms the “anti-style” of *Eastward Ho!* (46), may be better understood, then, as a reflection of Jonson's personal taste, since he was likely the one to have copied out the final text, and no doubt made revisions along the way. Jonson preferred to write alone, as Gordon McMullan explains: “Jonson avoided [. . .] joint activity as soon as he could afford to, attempting to apply the same strictures to the authorship of a play as to the texture of a poem, which, for him, should be 'like a Table, upon which you may runne your finger without rubs, and your style cannot find a joynt; not horrid, rough, wrinckled, gaping, or chapt’” (134). There is some irony in the fact that Jonson chose this particular simile to describe literary construction, since it is one that compares a written work to a well-built commodity made by a gifted tradesman. He is not far from describing ideal texts as well-constructed brick structures, though he would be horrified at the thought of such a comparison. In any case, what is important to note here is that the choice to create a single style in *Eastward Ho!* one full of allusions, proverbs, and commonplaces, masks the individual, and well-known, styles of the play's authors. With the voices of the authors suppressed, the potential for self-promotion is removed from the result. Though we cannot know the extent to which Jonson revised the material of his co-authors, we can see reason for him to do so. Already in competition with Marston, Jonson clearly did not approve of the “foul-mouthed, licentious
troublemaker” (Finkelpearl Court 35), and though he did not, or could not, prevent the appearance of his name alongside Marston's (and Chapman's) on the title page of the 1605 quarto of Eastward, he could ensure that his personal style did not appear alongside one which he did not respect.¹⁶ This is not a fear of loss, but rather a fear of having others believe that he approved of Marston and his style by allowing it to co-exist with his own. Though I do not agree with Jeffrey Masten's general claim that “the collaborative project in the theater was predicated on erasing the perception of any differences that might have existed, for whatever reason, between collaborated parts” (17); it does seem that, in the case of Eastward Ho! at least, the goals Masten describes may be accurate, though the “erasure” seems antagonistic rather than cooperative.

Marston, for his part, quite literally disengaged himself from the collaborative endeavor by escaping punishment for Eastward's offensiveness. While Jonson and Chapman sat in jail and wrote letters to the King asking forgiveness for “two Clawses, and both of them not our owne; Much lesse the vnnaturall issue of our offenceles intents” (Chapman and Jonson 218) and sought aid from influential aristocrats like the Earls of Salisbury and Suffolk, Marston was nowhere to be found. As co-author, shareholder, and manager of the company that performed the play, it would stand to reason that Marston should have appeared the most culpable for the controversial material. Yet, he must not have thought so. It is possible that he escaped and left his co-authors to shoulder the

¹⁶ On the other hand, Jonson had great respect and admiration for Chapman. He told Drummond that he voluntarily imprisoned himself with his co-author in the aftermath of Eastward's performance, and he also reported that “Chapman and Fletcher were loved of him,' and 'next himself, only Fletcher and Chapman could make a mask” (qtd. in Gossett “Marston” 195). Jonson was thus both personally and professionally fond of Chapman, but Marston was not easy company either personally or professionally, so it is easy to see how he might have muddied the waters of this collaborative endeavor for all.
blame simply out of self-preservation, further enabled by his clear lack of friendly feeling for Jonson especially. But we need not be so harsh in our appraisal of him if we consider the possibility that he had never really been engaged in the collaborative process that resulted in this text. There is difficulty in determining the scope of his contribution: “attempts to break down the authorship of the play have come to widely varied conclusions about the extent of Marston's participation, some critics finding Marston only in the first act, others detecting his hand intermittently throughout the play” (Gossett “Marston” 181-2). It is possible that Jonson was in control, not just of the final copying out of the text, but of the overall process. Or perhaps Jonson and Chapman, who had worked together before (if we accept the likely conclusion that Chapman is the “second Pen” edited out of the text of Sejanus), worked closely together and themselves incorporated Marston's contributions, consulting him little, if at all, about details and changes. This manner of detached contribution was not unusual in collaborative endeavors, particularly when a text needed to be composed with speed and by a group that was not necessarily friendly. The need for haste may be the only reason Marston, the shareholder, contributed at all, in order to ensure that the play would be ready for performance during the time that the king was away from London on progress. Perhaps his attitude of “amateur detachment,” as Jackson and Neill describe it, allowed Marston to convince himself that the play was not “his” in any real sense that might warrant punishment.

Jonson was ashamed to be punished for playwriting in particular, as his letter to Salisbury indicates, in fits and starts: “I am here (my most honored Lord) unexamined, or
unheard, committed to a vile prison . . . The cause (would I could name some worthier) . . .

. is, a (the word irks me that our fortune hath necessitated us to so despised a course) a play, my Lord” (qtd. in Yachnin 46-7). Marston avoided taking responsibility for his actions as a playwright because for him, it was not a professional affiliation. Jonson admits the “necessity” of his professional engagement, but because of his comparatively secure financial position, Marston may not have been able to argue such a need. He was by choice doing what others claimed to do, reluctantly, out of financial exigency, and so he acts with more flagrant disregard for the results. For him, “acting out” was itself a form of play, and his privileged upbringing and means allowed him to do so without care.

While it is true that “by July 1606, whatever had happened to him in the intervening months, Marston was restored to favor and writing a city pageant” (Gossett “Marston” 181), had he not been “restored to favor,” Marston had enough connections and opportunities to pursue a career elsewhere, as he did when he left London in late 1606 eventually to become a priest in 1609. If Eastward Ho! was written as a statement of protest against the presence of collaboration in the private theaters, then Marston, intentionally or not, certainly proves a point about the dangerous anonymity of collaborative playwriting, for we still do not know who wrote those scandalous “two Clawses;” and though the other two were punished anyway (not with the severity they had feared), Marston seems to have gotten away scot-free.

Ford, as a collaborator, seems to have been interested in the fast-paced activity spread out over a number of contributing hands that was called for when a play needed to be produced quickly. This is most clear in his involvement in the writing of The Witch of


In what was probably his first attempt at dramatic authorship, contributing to *The Witch of Edmonton* may have been a sort of trial for Ford, or an opportunity to learn the tricks of the trade from the seasoned professionals Dekker and Rowley. These plays did not call for artful craftsmanship, and they must have had a pleasingly ephemeral quality to them, since gossip and scandal is of the moment, and not likely to hold popular interest for long. Scandal was apparently of interest to Ford, both in his personal life—where he repeatedly rebelled against the rules and regulations of the Middle Temple—and in his writing. But he might also have been drawn to that sort of “low stakes” writing for the theater because it would allow him to maintain some level of authorial anonymity, and the potential to do so would have been increased by the fact that he was working with two well-known dramatists in whose shadow he might safely hide. This would have been appealing particularly if he was unsure about his own desire to be a playwright—which he seems to have been.

Thomas Dekker was Ford's most frequent collaborator, and they worked as a pair on four plays and one “moral masque” (*The Sun's Darling*) in 1623-4 (Neill). Near the end of his playwriting career, Dekker undoubtedly had plenty to teach Ford, and Sidney R. Homan argues that, in *The Witch of Edmonton* especially, “Dekker's unabashed moralizing, which delighted most in sentimental studies of virtuous men and women, fused perfectly with Ford's interest in those lonely souls who defy a secure morality” (276). If Ford was drawn to Dekker's “moralizing,” it was probably not because it “fused” with his own mistrust of universal codes of morality, but rather because it presented for Ford an extreme of opinion—a rule to which he was eager to point out the
exception. Edmonton's bigamist Frank Thorney, whose story is believed by most scholars to be the product of work by Dekker and Ford (Onat 116-17), in many ways prefigures Giovanni in *Tis Pity She's a Whore* in his struggles between accepted morality and the prerogative of the self. Constructing Thorney with Dekker no doubt forced Ford to compromise; but his later work, particularly in *Tis Pity*, shows that as a single author, Ford was unaffected by Dekker's moralistic perspective. Homan argues that Thorney is “substantially different [from Giovanni] because his play contains yardsticks by which he may be measured,” whereas, in *Tis Pity*, Ford's “purposeful withholding of our sympathy for the characters surrounding the hero” (275) leaves audiences unsettled and unsure about who or what is objectively “right.”

In the early 1620s, we have no evidence that Ford worked on any plays on his own. However, with *The Lover's Melancholy* in 1628, he stopped working as a collaborator and began writing a series of solo authored plays. It may be that his work as a collaborator was something like an apprenticeship—Henslowe's *Diary* makes it clear that it was fairly common practice for younger new dramatists to be teamed up with more seasoned professionals in order to help them learn the profession (and also perhaps as a precautionary means to ensure that they were capable of writing plays at all). But it seems more fitting with Ford's character and background that this period of collaboration is evidence of his ambivalent interest in playwriting. He perhaps struggled with idea of taking it seriously as an occupation, and so enjoyed the limited responsibilities of an occasional, often piecemeal contributor. His last known collaborative effort was *The Fair Maid of the Inn* (1626), which he, Webster, and Massinger took over and completed after
Fletcher (who began the play) died in the plague of 1625. In the next two years, Ford apparently came to terms with the idea of writing plays on his own, and he does not seem to have collaborated again after that point.

Since they were writing texts that would be presented in front of the “world of gulls,” audiences could be a particular annoyance for the Gentleman Authors. However, because they worked to maintain an illusion of “amateur status” as playwrights, Beaumont, Marston, and Ford tended not to respond directly to audience disapproval of their own works, operating under the fiction that they were above such concerns.

Beaumont's and Jonson's respective responses to the fate of Fletcher's *The Faithful Shepherdess* (1608), found in their commendatory poems affixed to the printed play, have in common the expression of distaste for what Jonson sarcastically calls “The wise, and many headed Bench, that sits / Upon the Life, and Death of Playes, and Wits” (1-2). In 1611, in one of his numerous commendatory verses to Jonson's works, this time the poorly received *Catiline*, Beaumont writes:

> If thou had'st itch'd after the wild applause  
> Of common people, and hadst made thy laws  
> In writing, such, as catch'd at present voice,  
> I should commend the thing, but not thy choice.  
> But thou hast squar'd thy rules by what is good,  
> And art three ages, yet, from understood:  
> And (I dare say) in it there lies much wit  
> Lost, till the readers can grow up to it.  
> Which they can ne'er out-grow, to find it ill,  
> But must fall back again, or like it still.

The very fact that Fletcher's and Jonson's plays were published with such ardent defense against the valueless, but nonetheless strong, opinions of the “common people” tells us that commercial failure was a concern, and one probably based largely on the financial
consequences of that failure. The playwrights' reputations were as much at stake as were their plays', and the two were intimately connected concerns for any dramatist whose livelihood was dependent upon playwriting. In contrast to these unsuccessful works of Fletcher and Jonson, both published in the same year they were performed, Beaumont's box office disaster, *Knight of the Burning Pestle*, was not printed until 1613, six years after its initial performance, and even then with no authorial attribution. I do not meant to suggest that Beaumont did not care or need to care about the failure of his play, but efforts were not made to recuperate the potential damage to his reputation through the use of commendatory verses that blame the audience's understanding, rather than the playwright's shortcomings. The differences between Beaumont's and Jonson and Fletcher's responses to their respective failures are certainly meaningful indications of their differing relationships to playwriting as a professional occupation.

Beaumont is unlikely to have had a say on whether or when his play was published, but he may have been consulted regarding the presence (or absence) of his name on the title page. 1613 was the year in which he married and presumably retired to the country, so it is possible that he was not involved in the publication at all (though it is tempting to speculate when the year of his retirement and the publication of his only solo-authored play coincide). If he was still present, he may have been particularly unwilling to be reminded in that year of his dramatic activities, failed or not. Clearly, this group of friends were keen to produce commendatory verses when defense against the “world of gulls” was needed, but no such verses adorn *Knight*; for with no author, who is to be commended? In a similar move, 25 years after he retired from playwriting to become a
priest, Marston intervened in 1631 when a collection of his plays was to be published with his name on the title page. He insisted upon having his name removed, clearly resisting the identification of himself as a playwright (Jackson and Neill xvi). Whatever power these Gentleman Authors had in the printing of their texts, they seem to have used it to maintain their own anonymity, resisting any lasting proof of their short-lived professional engagement with the community of playwrights.

The opposite of self-effacing, Fletcher asserts his authority in the preface “To the Reader” of Shepherdess, which serves as an introduction to the play that the author “would wish had been the prologue” when it was performed (6). In this preface, Fletcher famously defines the genre of “pastoral tragi-comedy,” and after he has done so, concludes, “Thus much I hope will serve to justify my poem, and make you understand it; to teach you more for nothing, I do not know that I am in conscience bound” (7). Even more elaborately, Jonson adds to Catiline not only a dedication to the Earl of Pembroke wherein he asks for protection for himself and his “legitimate Poem”: “In so thick and dark an ignorance, as now almost covers the age, I crave leave to stand near your light, and by that to be read,” but also includes an address “To the Reader in Ordinary,” and one “To the Reader Extraordinary.” In the first, Jonson's tone is much like Fletcher's exasperated eye-rolling at the ignorance of his audience:

The muses forbid that I should restrain your meddling, whom I see already busy with the title, and tricking over the leaves: it is your own. I departed with my right, when I let it first abroad; and now, so secure an interpreter I am of my chance, that neither praise nor dispraise from you can affect me. Though you commend the first two acts, with the people, because they are the worst; and dislike the oration of Cicero, in regard you read some pieces of it at school, and understand them not yet; I shall find the way to forgive you. (272).
While the author claims to have separated himself from his text in the act of “[letting] it first abroad,” the rest of his address reveals the extent to which this is simply not true. The “ordinary readers” are “meddling” in the play, even though it is ostensibly now theirs. He claims, as Marston did in his preface to *Scourge of Villainy*, that the opinion of common readers cannot affect his self-image. Yet, what the plea for patronage and the elaborate call to a specific kind of reader tell us is that, if it did not affect his self-image, it certainly threatened his image within the theatrical community. The trouble with audiences, for Jonson and for Fletcher, was that they did have power over the career of a professional playwright. Beaumont, Marston, and to some extent Ford, were also vexed by the idea that, in the theater industry, the common people were able to judge them and their friends. But for the Gentleman Authors, this was a matter of pride and elitism. It was personally offensive to them to be subject to the opinions of their inferiors. For playwrights like Fletcher and Jonson, the matter was both personal *and* professional, because audience disapproval threatened their livelihood as well as their sense of social standing.

As I have shown, because they were not concerned with playwriting professionally, the Gentleman Authors wrote with sometimes flagrant disregard for the standard expectations of audiences and other playwrights. Ironically, this radical innovation significantly influenced the form of drama and the profession of dramatist in the period. The first is evidenced by, for one thing, the popularization of the tragi-comic form by Marston, and then by Beaumont and Fletcher. The second point, that the Gentleman Authors influenced the shape of the playwriting profession, can be seen in the
way their position in relation to that profession became decreasingly peripheral in the first three decades of the seventeenth century. Had Marston and Beaumont not slowly, perhaps even unintentionally, integrated the “Gentleman” presence of Inns of Court men within the playwriting community, it is likely that Ford would not have had such a relatively easy time balancing his double life as lawyer and dramatist for the adult, primarily private, theater. This integration seems to have been most difficult for Marston, or rather, he was most resistant to it. Beaumont began much like the man by whom he was greatly influenced, but his amicable involvement with Fletcher helped to bring him into the public theater, where Marston would not go. Finally, Ford wrote largely for the indoor theaters, though some of his collaborations were performed at the amphitheatres, and he never had the opportunity to work for the childrens' companies. He was, of the three, the most thoroughly integrated in the playwriting profession, and he spent the most time engaged there. Continuing to live at the Middle Temple and practice law, Ford was at the same time also the most thoroughly integrated in the Inns of Court community, despite the fact that his familial ties to that institution were arguably the weakest of the three Gentleman Authors.

It is difficult to distinguish between personality and professional attitude, particularly when discussing collaboration, which often, though not always, involved personal interaction in a professional atmosphere. However, these playwrights seem to have had fairly consistent tendencies regarding personal and professional affiliations. Marston left the Inns for the theater, and the theater for the priesthood, and does not seem to have maintained lasting ties in either case. Beaumont also left the Inns for the theater,
but perhaps not entirely, since “his selection to write the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn masque for Princess Elizabeth's wedding in 1613 suggests some kind of tie to the Inner Temple throughout his career” (Finkelpearl “Beaumont”). When he left London to retire to the country in 1613, he continued to write letters to his friend Ben Jonson, reminiscing and remaining connected to the world he had once inhabited. Ford managed to maintain his chosen affiliations with balance and consistency, and was able to engage in multiple and various collaborative relationships in the theater. We do not know a great deal about his personality, but he must have been well-liked to have been welcomed by both communities at once. Regardless of their varied abilities or desires to forge lasting connections, the Gentleman Authors, as individuals and as a group, brought significant and often shocking innovation to the playwriting profession. Despite their ambivalence about belonging to the community of playwrights, their influence had a lasting impact on dramatic form and style in the early modern theater.

From the final decades of the sixteenth century to the early Caroline period, the profession of playwright continued to develop; sometimes in response to external changes in London's political and social climate, sometimes in an effort to effect changes in popular thought, taste, and opinion, and sometimes because playwrights challenged one another's concepts of drama and dramatic authorship through public criticism or innovative one-upmanship. Civil War and theater closure under the new Puritan regime ended the market for plays that had allowed for the profession's continued existence under the monarchy, and “playwrights” in the Restoration period were largely of a different kind from their early modern predecessors. Yet, in its relatively brief heyday,
the professional community of dramatists in the early modern theater was an especially vibrant and productive group of gifted and opinionated individuals often from disparate backgrounds. In drawing attention to the different ways playwrights engaged with dramatic writing, both as single-authors and as contributors to multi-authored texts, it becomes clear that the “boundaries of a profession develop out of conflict—conflict between producers and consumers and […] between groups of producers” (Melnikoff and Gieskes 13). But it is also true that a profession can only develop when some level of cooperation occurs between these individuals and groups. The paradoxical need for both contention and alliance facilitated the variety and vitality of the corpus of early modern drama produced by professional dramatists of all “forms of affiliation” in the period.
WORKS CITED


Blayney, Peter W.M. “The Publication of Playbooks.” *A New History of Early English 297*


Bliss, Philip. Athenæ Oxonienses: An Exact History of All the Writers and Bishops who have has their Education in the University of Oxford. Vol. 1. London: J. Booth, 1813.


---. *'Tis Pity She's a Whore.* *'Tis Pity She's a Whore and Other Plays.* Ed. Marion Lomax. Oxford: OUP, 1995. 165-240.


Homan, Sidney J., Jr. “Shakespeare and Dekker as Keys to Ford's 'Tis Pity She's a Whore.” Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900. 7.2 (1967). 269-76. Web.


Honigmann, E.A.J. “John a Kent and Marprelate.” Yearbook of English Studies. 13


Jackson, MacDonald P. "Deciphering a Date and Determining a Date: Anthony Munday’s John a Kent and John a Cumber and the Original Version of Sir Thomas More." EMLS 15.3 (2011). Web.


Munday, Anthony. *A discoverie of Edmund Campion, and his confederates, their most horrible and traiterous practises, against her Maisties most royall person and the realme*. London, 1582. EEBO. Web.


Schoenbaum, S. “*Middleton's Share in 'The Honest Whore' Parts I & II.*” *Notes and


Tudeau-Clayton, Margaret. “‘This is the strangers' case’: the Utopic Dissonance of Shakespeare’s Contribution to *Sir Thomas More*.” Forthcoming in *Shakespeare Survey*, 2012.


van Es, Bart. “‘Johannes fac Totum’?: Shakespeare's First Contact with the Acting Companies.” *Shakespeare Quarterly*. 61.4 (2010). 551-77.


VITA

Lacey Ann Conley attended high school at the Norwich Free Academy in Norwich, Connecticut. In May, 2005, she received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English from George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. She then entered a Master of Arts program in Medieval and Renaissance Literature at University College Cork in Cork, Ireland, and completed that degree in December, 2006. The next six months were spent in Corinth and Tripoli, Greece, first to receive a Certificate in Teaching English as a Foreign Language, and then to work as an English Language teacher at the Damianou English School. In August, 2007, she entered the Doctorate program in English at Loyola University Chicago. While there, she received a number of honors, including a Clayes Essay Award and the Gravett-Tuma Research Award, and was selected to serve as one of the Graduate School’s Teaching Scholars for the 2011-2012 academic year.