

Shakespeare's Lack of Care for His Plays

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If Shakespeare really wanted his plays to be read, why did he allow the company to issue their version of *Henry V* rather than his own original manuscript? His original manuscript, which seems to have been used to print the well-known Folio text, was twice the staged version's length, and had many features that had disappeared when the company prepared and printed it in the 1600 Quarto¹. He must have known the superior value of his version compared with the much shorter Quarto text, which cut out all the choruses and the much-celebrated "Once more unto the breach, dear friends" speech. All subsequent generations of readers and stage audiences have thought the same. In spite of such evidence for his casual attitude to the acted texts, and the absence of any evidence for him taking a hand in the publication of the early Quartos, it has been claimed pressingly in recent years that Shakespeare must have wanted his plays to be read. Such a claim needs to be interrogated.

Tiffany Stern has asserted with some cogency that most early modern playbooks existed as one item in a lengthy process of production, subject to many different hands and inputs. What we have comes from a patchwork of papers, of which the press printed only one, and that was not necessarily the final, finished product. She declares:

every bit of a play as it was gathered together for a production was a paratext, in that every bit of a play was 'auxiliary' to every other bit: it

¹ Detailed information about the Quarto text of *Henry V* appears in Andrew Gurr's edition, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000. The view that it was prepared by members of the acting company for the press appears on p. 22.

was performance that made a text from those paratexts, with printed plays always falling a little short because always an incomplete reflection of that².

So why was it that Shakespeare's company chose to print the paratextual versions they themselves had put together, without him intervening? Thanks to the Folio compilation of so many of the original playbooks, including *Henry V*, we currently believe that many of the Folio texts were printed from his original manuscripts. Not Shakespeare but his fellow-players chose to issue all the Quartos from 1597 onwards. Half of what appeared in the Folio of 1623 were taken from these Quartos, the other half mostly from the initial manuscripts before they were drawn into Stern's complex gathering process. Most of the early Quartos appeared three or more years after their first success on stage, the 1600 Quarto of *Henry V* being the only one issued within a year of its original composition. Nothing says that Shakespeare took part in getting any of them printed, certainly not the last of the King Henry plays. That printed text does seem to have been designed for reading, but the manuscript from which Thomas Creede printed it was put together by members of the company, not its author. There is no evidence for his hand in any of the changes made to that text.

The idea that Shakespeare really did want his plays put into print for readers has been used to explain why some texts, such as Q2 *Hamlet*, *Richard III* and a few of the other histories, are so much longer in print than the norm of performance time for a play would have permitted. We know that originally plays on stage were expected to last little more than two hours, which is all that the 1740 lines of the *Henry V* Quarto would take. So the exceptional length of plays like the Folio version of *Henry V* does raise the question what Shakespeare might personally have wanted. Did he indulge himself by writing full versions for himself, then leaving it to his company to reduce them to an actable length? If so, why did he not insist on the longer versions coming into print for general access? Not even the different versions of *Hamlet* that came into print between 1603 and 1605 show any sign of Shakespeare intervening to see the longest version published.

² Tiffany Stern, *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 256.

Lukas Erne and many others have made the claim that the playwright saw himself as a "literary dramatist"³. The provenance of whatever manuscripts lie behind a few of the other early Quartos, like the first texts of *Merry Wives* (1602) and *Hamlet* (1603), might have come from other sources than the company itself, as *Q Henry V* did, but there can be no doubt that it was not Shakespeare but the company who chose to print the plays. It was their name on the titlepages. Shakespeare's own did not start to appear till 1598 and after. All the plays appearing in the 1623 Folio seem to have been in the company's possession. So the real enigma standing upright behind this evidence for authorial casualness is how we choose to read the evidence for what happened in May 1594. Why, until he joined the new Lord Chamberlain's Men, did Shakespeare choose to keep the ownership of his manuscript playbooks to himself? Was it he who kept them to himself until he handed them over to the Lord Chamberlain's Men, or was it Edmund Tilney, Master of the Revels, who had the authority to gather them all up from their first owners, in order to hand them over to the new company? How and why did the ten or more Shakespeare plays known to have predated 1594 come into the new company's hands? The thirty-six plays finally issued in the First Folio of 1623 include all of those we think preceded its existence. So what was it that made him change his policy, and hand all of his playbooks over to the Chamberlain's?

His plays had various performers before 1594. *Titus Andronicus* was recorded in the Stationers' Register on 6 February in that year. Its titlepage vaunted three different companies as performing it. That was followed on 12 March by the shortened, actor's version of *2 Henry VI*, listed on the titlepage as *The Firste Parte of the Contention betwixt the two famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster*. No company or author was listed, but its successor, the shorter version of *3 Henry VI*, was issued a year later as *The True Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke, and the death of good King Henrie the sixt, with the whole contention betweene the two Houses Lancaster and Yorke*. This time its titlepage declared "as it was sundrie times acted by the Right Honourable the Earle of Pembroke his servants". That was presumably the company said

³ The chief assertion of this view first appeared in Lukas Erne's *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003. It has been widely upheld since then.

to have broken up in August 1593. The repetition of "Contention" on its titlepage indicates that it was meant to be recognized as the sequel to the previous year's history play. Rather confusingly, its title echoed another play, the Queen's Men's *True Tragedie of Richard the third*, sold by William Barley. The bookseller for both versions of the Shakespeare plays was Thomas Millington, who had also sold *Titus*. Pembroke's company had previously been named on the titlepage of *Edward II*, entered by William Jones in the Stationers' Register on 6 July 1594, when Marlowe was named as its author. The other early play, containing the name of at least one Pembroke's player, was the version of *The Taming of the Shrew* usually now known as *A Shrew*, entered in the Stationers' Register on 2 May 1594.

The next Shakespeare play to be registered and published did not appear until 20 October 1597. *Richard III* boasted on its titlepage that it was performed by the Lord Chamberlain's Men, but again supplied no author. Perhaps also originally a Strange's play, to judge from the way it elevates the key role of Derby from the Strange family, in engineering the transition of the crown from Richard to Richmond. This was the first of a brief flow of Shakespeare's most popular early plays, including *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard II*, both *Henry IV* plays and the Quarto texts of *Henry V*, *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Merchant of Venice*. They all appeared under the Lord Chamberlain's Men's aegis, with its name on all their titlepages⁴.

Because it was usual in these early years to give only the performing company and not the author's name, it is not absolutely obvious who did own and sell these playbooks to the printers. Most of the plays printed up to at least 1597 appear to have been texts that emanated from the companies rather than their authors, though even that is not often entirely clear. The fact that the initial name on the titlepages cited the company rather than the author, and that all the extant Shakespeare playbooks remained in the company's hands until 1623, does make it appear that from 1594 onwards Shakespeare, having ceded their ownership to the company, chose not to retain them as his own property. Even when his name did begin to appear on their titlepages, the hyphen it acquired seems to have been a joke

⁴ A fairly detailed account of the history of the published Quartos is in chapter 1 of David Scott Kastan's *Shakespeare and the Book*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001.

set as part of the title by the company, rather than the author's own. 'Spear-shaker' was a common joke as the name for a player⁵. From this it seems clear that, as with the *Henry V* Quarto, the author chose to take no direct part in his company's decision to publish.

These early texts also suggest that Shakespeare's own allegiance to the companies he wrote for was variable. Some hints about who some of the original players were exist in several of these early play-texts. The diminutive John Sinckler, for instance, who was later a Chamberlain's man, was named in both *A Shrew* and the full version of *3 Henry VI*. John Holland, also later to be a Chamberlain's man, appears by his name in *2 Henry VI*, along with another player called "Bevis" (the shorter version has a reference to the legendary Bevis of Hampton as "Bevis of South-hampton"). He and Holland appear together in the manuscript 'plot' of *2 The Seven Deadly Sins*. He was also linked with a "humfrey", who was probably Humphrey Jeffes, later of the second Pembroke's at the Swan. The longer version of *3 Henry VI* also names a "Gabriel" who was probably the Gabriel Spencer of the later Pembroke's, killed by Ben Jonson in September 1598. The repetition of some of these names in more than one play suggests that the one company which printed these plays, Pembroke's, included all these players in the years up to May 1594. All this exists in spite of the quite good evidence to show that the first *Henry VI* plays, and even *Richard III*, were originally written for a different company, Lord Strange's Men.

Given such diversity, we must ask how they were all gathered into the repertory of the new Chamberlain's Men in 1594. We have seen that from 1597 onwards the leading sharers in the company owned all we have of his plays, from before and after that crucial time. Apart from *Titus Andronicus* and the few other early printings, from 1597 onwards they chose to publish about half of what Shakespeare gave them. Mostly the half appeared in print well after their first appearances on stage. Then in the 1620s the last two sharers surviving from the previous century devoted their final creative activities to issuing all the thirty-six or more plays the company still had, half of them never before in print, and quite a few dating from well before 1594. So we should ask not only why Shakespeare himself was unhelpful

⁵ See Andrew Gurr, "In-jokes about Spear-shakers", *Notes & Queries*, 58 (2011), pp. 237-41.

over getting so few of his plays into print in his own lifetime, but how it was that all those written for various companies previous to 1594 could have entered the company's repertory in that year.

Several possible answers to this question have been canvassed. He might have retained them in his own hands until then from his own choice, or, more likely, for their potential value as commodities, helpful in the business of acquiring an interest in a company of players. Alternatively, some authority, almost certainly the Master of the Revels, might have taken them from their former companies to establish the core of the new company's repertoire. In such a process, he might readily have chosen to assure the company's future by adding their author to the company's list of sharers. Was Shakespeare's continuing career as an actor chosen for him by the authorities? Was he a willing victim to such an act of authority? The evidence for any of these possibilities is less than easy to identify. No reasons for any of these events can be found that is not mere conjecture. The only firm evidence there is makes it clear that from 1594 onwards he gave up the ownership of his plays, old and new, in favour of the new company.

The chief alternatives that we can juggle with over this have major significance. The biggest is identifying what his own opinion of his work was. It seems quite likely that, in contrast to all the other writers of that time, at first he chose to keep his playbooks to himself, carrying them with him through those 'lost' and fluctuating years. If so, less plausibly, he must even have kept the ownership of plays that he was only the part-author of, such as *Titus* (with Peele), and *1 Henry VI*. It has been suggested that owning such playbooks would have given him share capital, a practical and cash-free contribution to each company's financial welfare. He could take his manuscripts with him while he moved from one short-lived company to another.

That possibility has its attractions, and for instance matches the evidence of the first Quartos quite perfectly. His first tragedy, printed early in 1594, advertised on its titlepage that it had already been played by three different companies, Strange's, Pembroke's, and Sussex's. The last of these three companies played it at the Rose in early 1594, as Henslowe's *Diary* affirms⁶. For its second edition in 1599 the publisher added to this sequence of users the by then

⁶ See *Henslowe's Diary*, eds R. A. Foakes and R. T. Rickert, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1961, p. 280.

famous fourth company, the Chamberlain's Men. If Shakespeare did keep all his plays to himself, the four companies listed on that second titlepage might well reflect his membership of them, however transient, presumably in the sequence listed on the 1599 titlepage. No other evidence about his early career is quite so tangible as this.

Yet there are strong counter-arguments. How, for instance, did he manage to keep to himself as he travelled between companies the crucial 'allowed book', the copy with the Master's signature authorizing it for performance?⁷ None of the manuscripts that Heminges and Condell had kept and used in 1622 for the Folio were 'allowed books'. Such valuable properties are far more likely to have been collected up in May 1594 by the authority of the Master himself. Authors lost their property, and their rights to their use, when they sold them. From then on the 'allowed books' were company property, as Shakespeare's earlier plays became.

Since the first three companies in the *Titus* list, Strange's, Pembroke's and Sussex's, had all died by mid 1594, it must be possible that ownership of the original play manuscripts might have remained in their author's hands. But surely they were not in the form of 'allowed books'. This makes it likely that the Master of the Revels, being ordered to assemble two new companies, was the figure who chose in May 1594 to make provision for each of the new companies by using his authority to gather up a range of the existing playbooks, including all of Shakespeare's and several from the Queen's Men, for the two new repertories.

The Shakespeare plays we know about. To the other company he must have given five or more of Marlowe's plays, written for three different companies up to 1593, along with Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* and some other of the existing popular creations. Some of the Marlowes, most notably *Tamburlaine* and *Faustus*, did not become available to the company for the first three months of their new career, while other Marlowes, notably *The Jew of Malta* and *The Massacre at Paris*, both current at the Rose, were available to them from the outset.

⁷ The 'allowed book' itself, authorized by the signature of the Master of the Revels on its final page, being of prime value to legitimize performances, would never have been passed on to a printer. Apart from one play-text, which was not printed until well through the long closure after 1642, the only 'allowed books' that survive are in manuscript. See Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespeare Company, 1594-1642*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 122-24.

The history of the companies who staged Marlowe's plays is only a little less complex than those for which Shakespeare wrote. The most obvious explanation for the travels of the two *Tamburlaines* and *Faustus* is that the old Admiral's Men, still performing them, were out of reach touring the country through the first months of the transitional period. The new Admiral's Men launched their other Marlowes at the Rose from May onwards, including the two that Alleyn or Henslowe owned. The 'allowed books' of his two most famous plays must have stayed with the old Admiral's company that owned them until it returned to London. Somebody then made it possible for Alleyn to resume his former roles. The first "*Tamburlen*" did not join "*the Jewe of malta*" and "*the masacar*" at the Rose until 28 August 1594, and "*docter ffostose*" not until 30 September 1594.

These celebrated plays went through plenty of different hands up to 1594, in total contrast to what happened after that year's reformation. During his short play-writing life, between 1587 and 1593, Marlowe sold his six plays to at least three different companies. On the evidence of the *Titus* titlepage, Shakespeare did much the same over this period, although Marlowe, not being a player like Shakespeare, had less reason to keep the ownership of his plays to himself while the different companies performed them. It makes sense to see someone in the know authorizing the delivery of all the dead Marlowe's plays to the one new company and all the living Shakespeare's to the other. Worryingly, though, it also seems certain that, if Shakespeare truly had retained possession of all his playbooks, it must have been authority's decision in 1594 that forced him to give up his previous practice of keeping to himself the ownership of his plays. Unless under pressure from above, why should he give up the previous practice of keeping his plays in his personal possession?

What the many questions that these readings of the limited evidence raise is above all what they might signify about Shakespeare's private attitude to his plays. Was he happy to concede ownership of them once he became committed to being a sharer in the new company? Or did he do it under pressure, because such a concession was demanded by authority? While making his way up the career ladder, did he keep them for job security, and only surrendered their ownership once he was secure with the new and officially-licensed

company? If so, why was he confident that this company would last longer and more happily than any of the previous companies of the tumultuous years up to 1594? Most pointedly, did he, now or ever, take any care for them as the basis for his reputation, or did he regard them as no more than a commercial commodity?

His use of the press in 1593 and 1594 for his epyllions shows him trying hard to launch a new career for himself, not that of player and playwright. Through the plague-ridden years up to May 1594 he dedicated his publications to a wealthy and possibly a rewarding new patron, the earl of Southampton. That in itself suggests that he valued his older plays less highly than his poems. Was it this low valuation that made him hand over both his existing and new plays to the company he worked for? Given that the Master (presumably) allocated Marlowe's plays to the Lord Admiral's and his to the Lord Chamberlain's in the same month that his second epyllion appeared from the press of his friend Richard Field, did its reception by Southampton make him doubt that he would have a prosperous future as a poet under such a patron?

Apart from what might be inferred from the sonnets, we know nothing about what was in his mind at this crucial time, nor even whether he felt there was any choice between continuing as a common player or glorying in his reception as a great new poet. That dark space impacts heavily on the question of how he valued his plays. It is the chief reason why we should ask how he could leave it to the players to publish his plays, and why he never took any care to get them published properly, least of all to have them carefully proof-read, as he did with his two epyllions. The so-called 'stigma of print' is hardly enough to explain why from 1594 onwards he never gave any of his plays to the press. The only publications he might have taken any direct interest in after May 1594, *The Phoenix and the Turtle* of 1601⁸, and the *Sonnets* in 1609, seem to have been freakish and in every sense occasional exceptions. Besides the public scorn that Robert Greene lavished on him in 1592 for wearing his player's hide, several of the sonnets, especially 29, 37, 110 and 111, explicitly advertise his humiliation at having to undergo the means that pub-

⁸ Even that wonderful, celebrated, and yet wholly enigmatic occasional poem came into print with the company's former joke-version of his name, "William Shakespeare", attached to it. See note 5.

lic manners bred in him, and in consequence to live with his dyer's hand perpetually stained from his trade. The stigma of playing was far worse than that of print. It is easy to make a case from the sonnets that he suffered from the social inhibition of being a mere play-maker, unable to make himself a true poet like Spenser.

The idea that he valued his plays highly enough to want them in print as readable texts upholds a view of the plays quite contrary to what he lamented in the sonnets. One of the few things certain in this grey morass of hints is that Ben Jonson, intimate with Shakespeare from at least 1598, took such a radically different view about plays appearing in print from his friend. His attitude was quite distinct from all his predecessors. As Joseph Lowenstein put it, it was Jonson who established the concept of "possessive authorship" for his published plays⁹. Several other playwrights subsequently, such as Barnabe Barnes and John Webster, both of whom proudly announced on the titlepages of their King's Men's plays that this was their own version rather than a theatre or company copy, chose to copy Jonson's declared position¹⁰. Such an exhibition of pride in play authorship is notably absent from Shakespeare. One could almost say that he opted deliberately to avoid the route pioneered by Jonson. We know him to be strikingly independent, as he was before 1594 if he really did retain the ownership of his early plays to himself. He never shared Jonson's pride in what he wrote.

Jonson's first two Chamberlain's Men's plays, *Every Man In* and *Every Man Out of His Humour*, were printed (in reverse order of their staging) in 1600 and 1601. He copied the flurry of play Quartos that began to appear in 1597. The second of his plays, *Every Man Out*, was radically innovative. It appeared at the same time as several other Chamberlain's Men's plays, including Shakespeare's, were going through the press. It was the company that sent all of them, other than Jonson's, to the printers. Jonson's was all his own work. *Every Man Out's* titlepage reversed the now-standard priorities, ignoring the company that performed it and asserting instead that its text con-

⁹ Joseph Lowenstein, *Ben Jonson and Possessive Authorship*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002.

¹⁰ For a sound overview of the reception of early plays in print and especially Jonson's contribution, see Alan B. Farmer, "Print Culture and Reading Practices", in *Ben Jonson in Context*, ed. Julie Sanders, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 192-200.

tained the author's own "first composed" text, with "more then hath been publikely spoken or acted". Alan Farmer is hardly extreme when he writes "Beginning with the first edition of *Every Man Out of His Humour* in 1600 Jonson radically altered how professional plays were sold to readers"¹¹. His added paratexts make him the first to assert the author's primacy rather than that of the performing company, and the first to supply information about the play for the reader. All previous Quartos, including Shakespeare's, had been published as play-texts simply reproducing what was spoken on stage. It was Jonson who began to issue plays designed for readers, not audiences. Pride in authorship of his plays was Jonsonian. It does not seem to have been Shakespearean.

The fact that Shakespeare never copied Jonson's practices in publishing his plays is basic here. In part, of course, his policy may have differed from his colleague's out of loyalty to his company. When he became a sharer, very likely his existing plays served as the cash for his share in the company's finances, for all the later rumours that the earl of Southampton laid the money out for him. From 1594 the company owned all his contributions to the repertory, including his rewrites of five or more old Queen's Men's plays that seem to have been added along with his own to the new company's resources (see below). So we should ask, if up to 1594 he had indeed kept the ownership of his plays to himself, why did he give the practice up? Even after the first disastrously brief and erratic version of *Hamlet* appeared in 1603, the replacement source for the better version was simply a spare manuscript of the original playbook held in the company's hands. The third version in the Folio probably came to the press from somewhere close to the 'allowed book', as regularly used by the company. Since allowed books were far too precious to be handed over to a printer, the texts of the plays eventually published in the 1623 Folio that originated in the author's own hand were the spare copies that the company could afford to release. This needs consideration not only because it confirms who owned the plays, but as another indication of the little care Shakespeare himself took for them. In this light, the insistence that Shakespeare did want his plays to be read appears more of a modern neurosis than an early reality.

¹¹ Farmer, p. 194.

One of the better contributions to this matter has come from Richard Dutton, one of the first to ask seriously why Shakespeare never published his own plays. In his essay "The Birth of the Author"¹² he began by noting that Richard Field, Shakespeare's fellow Stratfordian and publisher of his two epyllions in 1593 and 1594, never published any of the plays. From that thought Dutton went on to consider other major questions, of copyright, of the known social objections to poets issuing their own work, and finally what he considered to be the main likelihood, that they might have circulated in manuscript. The flurry of articles later appearing in *Shakespeare Studies* 2008 about the so-called 'Return of the Author' was part of a fairly concerted attempt to uphold the idea that, like us, Shakespeare valued his own plays highly. Awkwardly, this has left most of its many strings dangling. Some of them even flaunt the balloon claiming Shakespeare did want to see his plays in print. Others such as Patrick Cheney found a variety of ways to identify what they consider to be his pride in his work for the acting company¹³. This hope led to such extreme arguments as Jeffrey Knapp's, in *Shakespeare Only*, where he asserted the primacy of authorial pride throughout, claiming firmly that Shakespeare "expected his plays to be read as well as performed"¹⁴.

Inherent scepticism should make us ask what real evidence there is to justify the claim that Shakespeare did value his plays as much as we do now. Why should there be nothing to show that after 1594 he did keep copies of his plays to himself, yet never published them? Only the sonnets can have any claim to that distinction. Even the Folio came from the last of the sharers who once were fellows with the Bard. It was they who still possessed all the company's manuscripts. If he really did value them enough to retain his own copies, why have they never been seen, either in manuscript or print, nor mentioned by any of the friends who read them?

¹² Richard Dutton, "The Birth of the Author", in *Texts and Cultural Change in Early Modern England*, eds Cedric C. Brown and Arthur Marotti, New York, St Martin's Press, 1997, pp.153-78.

¹³ See Patrick Cheney, *Shakespeare's Literary Authorship*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, and elsewhere; and W. B. Worthen, *Drama: Between Poetry and Performance*, Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, and "Intoxicating Rhythms: Or, Shakespeare, Literary Drama, and Performance (Studies)", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 62 (2011), pp. 309-39.

¹⁴ Jeffrey Knapp, *Shakespeare Only*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2009, p. 166.

In large part these hopeful thoughts were prompted by Lukas Erne's well-received *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*¹⁵. The balloons he helped to float are partly gas-filled by two older aspects of the case. One is the continuing struggle between page and stage. The main objective of the 'Return' movement is to assert that the original staging tended to alter the plays to such an extent that the author was drawn into the habit of keeping his own precious versions to himself, chiefly for that select few who Francis Meres, writing about the sonnets, called his "private friends". Dutton has given the best summary of this theory¹⁶. The other aspect is inflated by the assumption that Shakespeare must have valued them roughly as we do. From this, it follows that he must have felt the texts his company printed were, like the early Quartos of 2 and 3 *Henry VI*, of such poor quality that he chose to keep his own unabridged copies to himself. Nobody, however, has managed to show how these versions somehow got back into the company's possession, so that they eventually reached the world in 1623. If they had remained in Shakespeare's hands, we might at least expect them to have been mentioned in the will of 1616.

The airiness of such balloons demands that we re-scrutinize the evidence. First, if like us he did rate his plays as his best work, we must ask why, knowing that from 1597 the company was prepared to sell so many of them to the press in the rough forms of the early Quartos, did he never make any attempt to get better versions of them into print. When his name began to creep onto titlepages (including several plays he clearly did not write)¹⁷, it was not Shakespeare that issued them. The company added his name to them, complete with its joking hyphen.

Many variant approaches to this are possible. In a careful article on the unhappy condition of the printed play-texts, Ernst Honigmann delivered his own version of the 'Return of the Author', arguing that

¹⁵ See note 3.

¹⁶ Richard Dutton, *Licensing, Censorship and Authorship in Early Modern England*, Houndmills, Palgrave, 2000, and "Not One Clear Item but an Indefinite Thing Which Is in Parts of Uncertain Authenticity", *Shakespeare Studies*, 36 (2008), pp. 114-21.

¹⁷ The so-called 'apocrypha' that exploited Shakespeare's celebrity by adding his name as author include *The London Prodigal* (1605), and *A Yorkshire Tragedy* (1608). *The Troublesome Raigne of King John* was reissued as by Shakespeare in 1611, and the Pavier Quartos of 1619 added *Oldcastle*.

he may have been involved in planning for the Folio before he died, seven years prior to its eventual publication¹⁸. Such a theory may help to explain why Ralph Crane was employed to make transcripts of the first five plays in the new book, but it provides no evidence for the diverse origins of the texts for the other thirty-one plays in the Folio, many of which, like *Romeo* and *Richard II*, were simply reprinted from the old Quartos. Shakespeare's failure to secure properly corrected and proof-read versions of his plays, quite unlike what he did when he worked with Richard Field to publish his poems, is a consistent omission, an act of avoidance that should seriously inhibit the idea that he ever wanted his plays to be issued in a readable form. Honigmann acknowledges the dubious origins of the earliest Quartos, especially Danter's *Titus* and Q1 *Romeo*. He even argues that the 'corrected' Quartos of *Romeo* and probably *Love's Labour's Lost* show no sign that the author intervened to correct either text, an absence to which he might have added the second Quarto of *Hamlet*. He quotes from *Sonnet 55* to show how proud Shakespeare was of his verses ("Not marble, nor the gilded monuments / Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme"), but this valuation is never shown in the printed texts of any of the plays.

Honigmann tries to explain the arrival through the press in 1608-9 of *King Lear*, *Pericles*, *Troilus and Cressida* and the *Sonnets*, plus the entry of *Antony and Cleopatra* in the Stationers' Register in 1608, as occasioned by his departure back to Stratford, allowing what Honigmann calls "pirates" the opportunity to print them all. Yet nothing says that Shakespeare had retained the original manuscripts himself, nor that the plays were stolen, nor that they were sold to the press by anyone but the company. The survival of all the Folio's plays from the Globe's fire in 1613 must mean that the company's sharers had their own copies of the play manuscripts, and rescued them before the flames caught them. That must have helped Heminges and Condell to issue all of them in 1623. Honigmann is right to note the difficulties behind getting so many of the Quartos into print, but he should not ignore the absence of any authorial correcting hand from all of them.

¹⁸ Ernst A. J. Honigmann, "How Happy Was Shakespeare with the Printed Versions of His Plays?", *Modern Language Review*, 105 (2010), pp. 937-51.

So it seems impossible to deny the likelihood that Shakespeare always saw his work for the Chamberlain's and later the King's Men as a duty that never matched his own earlier interests. The prime consequence of this found him putting any high value on the work he thereafter did for his employers. The deal of 1594 brought into the new company, besides Shakespeare's own existing plays and his new comedies, a group of old Queen's Men's plays. The players evidently commissioned Shakespeare to rewrite them. His *King John* was an immediate and direct revision, most likely done in 1595, of the Queen's Men's *Troublesome Raigne* of 1590 or so. He made freer use of *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, carefully composing his own prequel, *Richard II*, in 1595, and planning two more plays based on the same story. The invention of Falstaff made him extend the one on Prince Hal into two halfway through its composition, telling the story up to his triumph as the prodigal king. In the end he extended the single old *Famous Victories of Henry V* into three new plays. More rewrites followed. In 1600 his *Hamlet* copied the lost ur-*Hamlet* of the Queen's Men that Nashe first noted as early as 1589, and Lodge in 1596. Similarly in 1605 he adapted the former Queen's Men's *King Leir*. These revisions were done as company duties, whatever we now make of the glories we find in the new plays that emerged from them. The comedies he wrote through the same years acquired fairly dismissive titles, *As You Like It*, and *Twelfth Night, or What You Will*.

The evidence is quite consistent that Shakespeare always held a markedly lower valuation of the business of his play-writing and its products than we do now. Being persuaded, or coerced, in 1594 into remaining a player rather than to become the poet that his dedications to Southampton proclaim, he had to re-employ himself as an actor. He used his share in the new company and later in its playhouses chiefly to make money, investing almost all of it back in Stratford. Buying his father's right to the status of armiger in 1596, and the purchase in 1597, with the help of Richard Quiney in London, of New Place for his family (probably also accommodating his father, after the fire in Henley Street)¹⁹, were features in a

¹⁹ For his purchase of New Place, and Quiney's likely involvement, see Robert Bearman, "Shakespeare's Purchase of New Place", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 63 (2012), pp. 465-86.

process of business investments, all made locally in Stratford, that continued throughout his later years. It seems that his profits from the business of writing plays supplanted his ambition as a poet.

It is true that by 1609 he owed a substantial loyalty to his fellow-players, enough to make him continue helping the newcomer John Fletcher by writing plays in collaboration. Later still he invested in buying a property adjoining the Blackfriars playhouse, and in 1616 he left the three most senior of his company's fellows money for memorial rings. He must have sold his shares in the two playhouses in 1613, after the first Globe burned down, because neither is mentioned in his will of 1616. He must have refused to help pay for the rebuilding of the Globe in 1614. There is nothing in his will in 1616, or in his life or his actions that can help us to believe that he wanted his plays to immortalize him in the way he once thought his poems and sonnets might. Aged thirty when he joined, or was joined up to, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, he had already fought his way a long distance up the ladder of celebrity. From then on, tied to being a player, whose public means bred only public distaste, he seems to have valued his plays at the same low level as he did his status of common player. In the end, it seems, his highest ambition became that of Stratford landowner.

Shakespeare spent his twenty years in London ignoring the chance to get forty or more of his plays into print. Such a substantial body of negative evidence about his valuation of his own plays should not be ignored.