

The Tamer Tamed: Dating Fletcher's Interactions with Shakespeare

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A physical system manifests itself only by interacting with another. The description of a physical system, then, is always given in relation to another physical system, the one with which it interacts.¹

John Fletcher's play *The Woman's Prize; or, The Tamer Tamed* has been described as a sequel, an adaptation, an answer, and a counter-part to Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*². All those descriptions recognize that the plays constitute a particularly interesting dramatic diptych, created by different playwrights at different times. Fletcher's play was undoubtedly written later than Shakespeare's. But *The Tamer Tamed* has, by various scholars over the course of the last

¹ Carlo Rovelli, *Reality Is Not What It Seems*, trans. Simon Carnell and Eric Segre, London, Allen Lane, 2016, p. 216.

² For 'counter-part', see Gerard Langbaine, *An Account of the English Dramatic Poets*, London, 1691, p. 217; for 'sequel', see Alexander Dyce, ed., *The Works of Beaumont & Fletcher*, London, Moxon, 1843-46, 11 vols, vol. I, p. lxiv; for 'answer', see E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1923, 4 vols, vol. III, p. 222; for 'adaptation', see Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier, eds, *Adaptations of Shakespeare: A Critical Anthology of Plays from the Seventeenth Century to the Present*, London-New York, Routledge, 2000, pp. 23-65.

century, been dated as early as 1603 and as late as 1617³. Depending on which of these dates is correct, Fletcher's play could have been written at the beginning of his theatrical career, or after Shakespeare's death, or after Shakespeare's retirement from the stage, or after Shakespeare and Fletcher collaborated on three plays (*The History of Cardenio*, *All Is True*; or, *Henry the Eighth*, and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*), or just before those three collaborations, or in the middle of them⁴. Which of these dates is correct will affect interpretations, not only of Fletcher's play and Fletcher's career, but also of Shakespeare's own biography, and the history of aesthetic and practical interactions between the two most popular and influential playwrights of the seventeenth century. One might therefore assume that Shakespeareans would take a keen interest in locating *The Tamer Tamed* more precisely between 1603 and 1617. But, in fact, the dating of *The Tamer Tamed* has been as neglected as the rest of Fletcher's chronology. The last full-length scholarly analysis of evidence for the play's date was an article by Baldwin Maxwell published in 1935⁵. That article originated the now-widespread association of *The Tamer Tamed* with the year 1611⁶. But Maxwell's dating of other plays in the

³ Alfred Harbage and Samuel Schoenbaum gave the "range" of possible dates for the play as "1604–c.1617" (see Alfred Harbage, *Annals of English Drama, 975-1700: An Analytical Record of All Plays, Extant or Lost, Chronologically Arranged and Indexed by Authors, Titles, Dramatic Companies & C.*, rev. Samuel Schoenbaum, London, Methuen, 1964, p. 98). Likewise, Chambers dated the play only "1604" or later (*Elizabethan Stage*, vol. III, p. 222). For 1603, see below.

⁴ For a summary and synthesis of scholarship on the dating of the three Fletcher-Shakespeare collaborations, see Gary Taylor and Rory Loughnane, "The Canon and Chronology of Shakespeare's Works", in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Authorship Companion*, eds Gary Taylor and Gabriel Egan, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 583-90.

⁵ Baldwin Maxwell, "*The Woman's Prize, or The Tamer Tamed*", *Modern Philology*, 32 (1935), pp. 353-64. A slightly revised and expanded version of this article was printed in Maxwell's *Studies in Beaumont, Fletcher, and Massinger*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1939, pp. 29-45.

⁶ The year 1611 is cited as most likely by: Harbage, p. 98; Gordon McMullan, "Chronology for the Plays of John Fletcher and His Collaborators", in *The Politics of Unease in the Plays of John Fletcher*, Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1994, p. 267; David Bevington, gen. ed., *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, New York, Norton, 2002, p. 1215; The Royal Shakespeare Company, ed., *The Tamer Tamed*, 2003; Meg Powers Livingston, ed., *The Woman's Prize by John Fletcher*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2008, pp. vii-viii. Lucy Munro does not explicitly commit herself to 1611, but her "1609-11" accepts it as an option, and her discussion

Fletcher canon has been contested, and, in the intervening eight decades, digital databases have made it possible to search comprehensively for phrases Maxwell interpreted as topical allusions⁷. A reconsideration of the evidence is long overdue.

How late?

Maxwell rejected the claims of Fleay and Gayley that *The Tamer Tamed* was written as late as 1613-16. Gayley argued that, being wholly Fletcher's, *The Tamer Tamed* must have been "written after [Beaumont's] retirement to the country in 1613". His only substantive argument is "the similarity of phrases in this play to those of *Wit without Money*", particularly the lines on "friperery" in III.i of *Tamer* and II.v of *Wit*, and "on the armies in the air at Aspurg in I.iv of the former and II.iv of the latter; as well as the mention of 'craccus', a favorite brand of tobacco at that time (cf. Middleton's *Faire Quarrel*, IV.i, of 1616)", which inclined him "to set the lower limit of composition at about 1615. Probably, as Fleay suggests, it was one of the plays acted by the Princess Elizabeth's men between 1613 and 1616"⁸. There is no reason to believe that Fletcher was incapable of writing a play on his own before Beaumont's retirement from the stage; *The Tamer Tamed* does not mention Aspurg; we don't know how long "craccus" was a London tobacco commodity; like other playwrights of the period, Fletcher often repeated himself verbally, and the repetitions can be separated by many years. Maxwell's strongest evidence against the years 1613-16 was the phrase "has worne / As many Servants out, as the Northeast passage / Has

and commentary seem to prefer it: see John Fletcher, *The Tamer Tamed*, ed. Lucy Munro, London, Bloomsbury, 2010, pp. xv-xvi.

⁷ On *The Noble Gentleman*, see Philip J. Finkelpearl, *Court and Country Politics in the Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1990, pp. 136-45, 249-55. See also Gary Taylor, "Thomas Middleton, *The Nice Valour*, and the Court of James I", *The Court Historian*, 6 (2001), pp. 1-36, and Gary Taylor, "Middleton and Rowley – and Heywood: *The Old Law* and New Technologies of Attribution", *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 96 (2002), pp. 165-217.

⁸ See Frederick Gard Fleay, *A Biographical Chronicle of the English Drama, 1559-1642*, London, Reeves and Turner, 1891, 2 vols, vol. I, p. 198, and Charles Mill Gayley, *Representative English Comedies*, New York, Macmillan, 1914-36, 4 vols, vol. III, pp. lxvii-lxviii.

consum'd Saylor's" (II.ii.66-68; II.i.67-69)⁹. As Maxwell observed, the fact that Fletcher referred here to the *northeast* passage "rather than the northwest passage as a consumer of men suggests that he was writing before September, 1611, when the survivors of Hudson's voyage to the northwest reached England with their tragic tale of how Hudson with eight others had by mutineers been set adrift in small boats to perish and how on the hazardous voyage home four of the mutineers had been killed by Eskimos and others had died of starvation"¹⁰.

The evidence against a later date is, in fact, even stronger than Maxwell realized. The simile "Venture as many kisses as the merchants / Do dollars in the East Indies" emphasizes the risks ("venture") and the high costs of investment ("as many [...] dollars") rather than profit (IV.iii.44-45; IV.ii.44-45). That simile can hardly have been written between 1612 and 1619. In 1612, the outflow of investment for East India Company ventures was far lower than in any other year between 1601 and 1640; in 1613, four East India ships returned with more than a million pounds of pepper, producing a massive profit for investors and beginning a period of six uninterrupted years of prosperity for Company investors¹¹.

This new evidence from the East India Company accounts confirms 1611 as the latest possible date for the play. Fletcher and Shakespeare's collaboration on *The History of Cardenio* must have been written at some time between mid-1612 and January 1613¹². We can

⁹ References to *The Tamer Tamed* quote the old-spelling text of *The Woman's Prize*, ed. Fredson Bowers, in *The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*, gen. ed. Fredson Bowers, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979, 10 vols, vol. IV, pp. 1-148, a text that conflates the seventeenth-century witnesses but also provides a full textual apparatus. I also supply (where the line numbers differ) a second set of references, citing the modern-spelling text in *The Tamer Tamed; Or, The Woman's Prize*, eds Celia R. Daileader and Gary Taylor, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2006; that text gives preference to the manuscript version. The present essay is a much revised and updated version of my unpublished "The Date and Original Venue of Fletcher's *Tamer Tamed*", which Daileader and Taylor cited as "forthcoming".

¹⁰ Maxwell, *Beaumont, Fletcher, and Massinger*, p. 35.

¹¹ See K. N. Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company: The Study of an Early Joint-Stock Company*, London, F. Cass, 1965, pp. 115, 148-56. The figure for 1612 (£1,250 of exported gold and silver, £650 invested in goods for export) is less than 25% of the second lowest year (1608), which is itself only 63% of the third lowest year (1603).

¹² For the earliest possible date, see David L. Gants, "The 1612 *Don Quixote* and the Windet-Stansby Printing House", in *The Creation and Re-Creation of Cardenio: Performing Shakespeare, Transforming Cervantes*, eds Terri Bourus and Gary Taylor,

therefore be confident that *The Tamer Tamed* was written at least nine months before Shakespeare and Fletcher collaborated. Given the small size of the Jacobean theatre community, Shakespeare must have been aware of *The Tamer Tamed* before he decided to collaborate with the younger playwright.

But Maxwell's evidence, combined with the East India Company documents, establishes only that August 1611 is the latest possible date for the writing of the play. It could have been written many years earlier. However, Maxwell argued that the latest possible date was also the actual date. In support of original composition between February and August 1611, Maxwell claimed that the phrase "Louder then Tom o' Lincoln" (III.iii.159, meaning 'louder than') was written after the great bell of Lincoln Cathedral was recast (in December 1610), then rehung and first rung (on January 27, 1611)¹³. This is Maxwell's only evidence for pushing the date of the play as late as "early 1611", and this claim is still cited as relevant to the play's chronology in the most recent edition of *The Tamer Tamed*¹⁴. However, Lincoln's great bell was famous long before it was recast and rehung. Thomas Nashe had written that "thou shouldst hear Tom a Lincoln roare" in 1592¹⁵. The first part of Richard Johnson's prose romance,

New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, pp. 31-46; for the latest possible date, see Gary Taylor, "The Embassy, The City, The Court, The Text: *Cardenio* Performed in 1613", in *The Quest for Cardenio: Shakespeare, Fletcher, Cervantes, and the Lost Play*, eds David Carnegie and Gary Taylor, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 286-308.

¹³ Maxwell, *Beaumont, Fletcher, and Massinger*, pp. 35-37.

¹⁴ Munro, ed., *Tamer Tamed*, p. 101 (also cross-referenced in her discussion of the play's date, p. xvi).

¹⁵ Thomas Nashe, *Strange Newes, Of the intercepting certain Letters* (1592), in *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, ed. Ronald B. McKerrow, rev. F. P. Wilson, Oxford, Blackwell, 1966, 5 vols, vol. I, p. 321. McKerrow's commentary on this passage refers to the "great bell in Lincoln Cathedral", citing Camden's *Britannia* (1586-1607): see McKerrow, vol. IV, p. 190. Fletcher himself, in *The Night Walker*, claimed that "Tom-a-Lincoln" could be heard "three miles off". Maxwell suggests that *The Night Walker* was written "immediately after *The Woman's Prize*" (*Beaumont, Fletcher, and Massinger*, p. 53). But that conjecture is also based, in part, on the re-hung bell. The most recent scholarship dates *The Night Walker* in 1615. For a summary of contemporary scholarship on Fletcher's chronology, see William Shakespeare, *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Critical Reference Edition*, gen. eds Gary Taylor et al., Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017, 2 vols, vol. I, pp. 3669-70. Maxwell's assumption that both *The Tamer Tamed* and *The Night Walker* topically refer to the recent re-casting of the Lincoln Cathedral bell contradicts his own evidence that *The Tamer Tamed* can have been written no later than September 1611.

The Most Pleasant History of Tom a Lincolne, written in 1599 and printed six times by 1631, also refers to “a great Bell” in Lincoln, “called Tom a Lincolne”. The second part, written (and probably printed) in 1607, also refers to “the great Bell (called Tom a Lincolne)” in the “sumptuous Minster” there¹⁶. Johnson’s romance was the primary source for an anonymous manuscript play associated with Gray’s Inn, which must have been written between October 1607 and 1616; it, too, refers to the hero’s donation of funds to build “a massy bell stilde by succedinge tymes / Great Tom a Lincolne”¹⁷. Given the regular reprinting of the romance, Fletcher could have alluded to “Tom o’ Lincoln” in any year of his writing life.

This leaves no explicit evidence linking Fletcher’s play to the year 1611. However, Maxwell also claimed that the play contains two allusions to events in 1610; although these do not in themselves prove that the play was written in 1611, events of 1610 might still have been topical in 1611. The first of the two alleged allusions to 1610 is the phrase “Contrive your beard o’th top cut like Verdugoes” (IV.i.55; IV.0.55). Maxwell endorsed Gayley’s claim that the word “Verdugoes” is evidence that Fletcher was influenced by the sentence “His great Verdugoship has not a jot of language” in *The Alchemist* (III.iii.70-71). Jonson’s play was performed in Oxford in September

¹⁶ Richard Johnson, *The Most Pleasant History of Tom a Lincolne*, London, 1631, sig. B4^v (Part I, chapter 2), sig. N2 (Part II, chapter 8). The romance was entered in the Stationers’ Register on December 24, 1599; the second part was entered on October 20, 1607. See Richard Johnson, *The Most Pleasant History of Tom a Lincolne*, ed. Richard S. M. Hirsch, Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, 1978, p. xix.

¹⁷ *Tom a Lincolne*, eds G. R. Proudfoot *et al.*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992, ll. 595-96. In discussing the date (pp. xix-xx), Proudfoot cites Maxwell’s argument for the “topicality” of the bell in 1611, though his own references to the bell in the prose romance make nonsense of Maxwell’s claim. Proudfoot’s list of alleged Shakespeare echoes (p. xxxviii) does not include any convincing links to plays after *The History of King Lear*. He compares “I that have bene ere since the world began” (123) to “The same I am, ere ancient order was, / Or what is now received” (*The Winter’s Tale*, IV.i.10-11): the two passages have only the words “I” and “ere” in common. Likewise, he compares “shee would soe beth[w]ack, & lay about them with her distaffe” (341-42) to Hermione’s “we’ll thwack him hence with distaffs” (*The Winter’s Tale*, I.ii.37). He compares “then did I shout, & Cry / flamde all the beacons, filde each place with fire” (2729-30) to Ariel’s “Now in the waist, the deck, in every cabin, I flamed amazement” (*The Tempest*, I.ii.197-99).

1610 and probably performed in London by November of that year¹⁸. If Fletcher were influenced by Jonson, *The Tamer Tamed* could not have been completed until late 1610. But Fletcher's alleged dependence on Jonson seems to me highly unlikely. Fletcher does not use the unusual form found in *The Alchemist*. The word Fletcher did use ("verdugo") occurs in at least five English texts between 1578 and 1600, in the anonymous play *A Larum for London* (1602), in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Scornful Lady*, and as the name of a character in Fletcher's *The Pilgrim*. The latter play is ten or more years later than *The Alchemist*, but it is not at all clear that *The Alchemist* precedes *The Scornful Lady* – and the more important point is that the word is much more common in Fletcher's canon than in Jonson's. As Gordon McMullan points out, Spanish literature fascinated Fletcher from the beginning to the end of his career¹⁹. Fletcher wrote more plays based on Spanish sources than any other early dramatist²⁰. This part of Maxwell's case must be thrown out.

The other alleged evidence for 1610 is equally dubious. Referring to the same lines about "the Northeast passage" which he had cited as evidence that *The Tamer Tamed* could not have been written after August 1611, Maxwell claimed that "the only period during the seventeenth century in which the English people could have been much interested in the search for a northeast passage was that of the four Hudson voyages from 1607 to 1610-11"²¹. This statement is doubly misleading. First and most important, Hudson's fourth voyage (1610-11) was *not* searching for a northeast passage. To circumvent this inconvenient fact, Maxwell was forced to conjecture that "[p]ossibly the two passages were at first confused in the popular mind, and it may have been assumed that the purpose of Hudson's fourth voyage was the same as that of his earlier attempts", and that

¹⁸ Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist*, eds Peter Holland and William Sherman, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, eds David Bevington et al., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012, 7 vols, vol. IV, pp. 544-45.

¹⁹ See Gordon McMullan, *The Politics of Unease in the Plays of John Fletcher*, Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1994, pp. 257-62.

²⁰ See Joan F. McMurray, "John Fletcher and His Sources in Cervantes", PhD dissertation, University of Rochester, 1987. See also Alexander Samson, "'Last thought upon a windmill'? Cervantes and Fletcher", in J. A. G. Ardila, ed., *The Cervantean Heritage: Reception and Influence of Cervantes in Britain*, London, Modern Humanities Research Association and Maney Publishing, 2009, pp. 223-33.

²¹ Maxwell, *Beaumont, Fletcher, and Massinger*, p. 35.

“it is possible that Fletcher had confused the object of this voyage with the original object of Hudson’s three earlier voyages”²². Like the assumption that Fletcher’s “verdugo” must have been influenced by Jonson’s “verdugoship” (rather than vice versa), this reasoning presupposes the dim view of Fletcher’s talent prevalent among literary critics of Maxwell’s generation. But Fletcher and his patrons took an active interest in European voyagers²³. There is no evidence for Maxwell’s conjecture that Fletcher, or anyone else interested in oceanic exploration, did not know the difference between east and west. Both extant seventeenth-century texts of *The Tamer Tamed* say “east”, and, in dating the play, we can hardly presuppose that ‘east’ means ‘west’.

More generally, Maxwell’s account of seventeenth-century English attitudes toward oceanic exploration assumes that they duplicated twentieth-century American attitudes. Every North American schoolchild of Maxwell’s generation learned about Henry Hudson, who was credited with discovering the Hudson River and Hudson Bay, and whose last voyage made him a retrospectively ‘American’ tragic hero. His voyages did not loom so large in the consciousness of the English at the time. There are no contemporary references to his voyages in the letters of that inveterate gossip John Chamberlain or that professional collector of important English news the Venetian ambassador in London (who was otherwise very interested in ships and their movements). Cawley’s extensive researches on the influence of voyages of exploration on English literature does not record a single early literary allusion to Hudson’s voyages to the northeast, and very few to his voyages to the northwest²⁴. Hudson’s first two voyages involved only a single small boat with a small crew (eleven men and a boy in 1607, fifteen men in 1608). Accounts of those first two voyages do not record any casualties and lend no support to the idea that the northeast passage

²² Maxwell, *Beaumont, Fletcher, and Massinger*, p. 35.

²³ On Fletcher’s and his patrons’ interest in colonization, see McMullan, *Politics of Unease*, pp. 197-256.

²⁴ Hudson does not appear at all in Cawley’s *Unpathed Waters: Studies in the Influence of the Voyagers on Elizabethan [sic] Literature*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1940; he quotes the passage in *The Tamer Tamed* but does not connect it to Hudson (p. 229). In *The Voyagers and Elizabethan Drama*, London, Oxford University Press, 1938, he notes a 1622 reference by Henry Peacham to Hudson’s explorations in the northwest (p. 281), but nothing for the northeast.

“consum’d Saylor’s”. Hudson’s third voyage (1609) was financed by the Dutch and departed from Amsterdam; there is no evidence that many people in London even knew about it. Moreover, although the third voyage began in the northeast, it soon abandoned that intention and sailed west, laying the foundation for Dutch claims to the area between Delaware and New York (which did not come under English control until the 1660s). The single recorded casualty on that voyage took place in America, not on the “Northeast passage”²⁵. Thus, none of the voyages of Hudson is relevant to Fletcher’s image or to the dating of *The Tamer Tamed*.

The source of that image might derive from the accounts of sixteenth-century exploration collected in the second edition of Hakluyt’s *Principle Voyages* (1598-1600), which gave expeditions to the northeast pride of place in the first section of the first volume. However, it might also have been influenced by Gerrit de Veer’s *True and perfect description of three voyages* (STC 24628), entered in the Stationers’ Register on May 15, 1609, and published in that year²⁶. William Phillip, the English translator of de Veer’s account, dedicated the volume to Sir Thomas Smith, Governor of the Muscovy Company (sig. A2) and of the East India Company. In order to acquire a sense of the number of sailors consumed by the Northeast passage, Londoners need only have read the title page of the 1609 account of the three Dutch voyages:

[...] with the cruell Beares, and the unsupportable and extreame cold that is found to be in those places. And how that in the last Voyage, the Shippe was so inclosed by the Ice, that it was left there, whreby the men were forced to build a house in the cold and desart Countrie of *Nova Zembla*, wherin they continued 10. monthes togeather, and never saw nor heard of any man, in most great cold and extreame miserie; and how after that, to save their lives, they were constrained to sayle about [...] 1000. miles English, in litle open Boates, along and over the maine Seas, in most great

²⁵ See G. M. Asher, ed., *Henry Hudson*, London, Hakluyt Society, 1860, and Donald S. Johnson, *Charting the Sea of Darkness: The Four Voyages of Henry Hudson*, Camden, Maine, International Marine, 1993.

²⁶ Maxwell mentions this text (*Beaumont, Fletcher, and Massinger*, p. 34) but de-emphasizes it, since it falls between the range of the Hudson voyages (1607-11), which is his primary focus, and is too early for 1611, his preferred date. He does not quote the title page or acknowledge the spectacular casualties.

daunger, and with extreame labour, unspeakable troubles, and great hunger.

Like other title pages, this one would have been posted in various public places as an advertisement²⁷. Even a browser who opened the book and glanced at its first page would have found immediate references “to the North-east” and “those North-east Partes” and the attempt to “to find a passage” (Aii). This is quickly followed by references to the eventual death of “our Pilote William Barents” (B2^v). Barents led much bigger expeditions than Hudson: four ships in 1594, seven in 1595, two in 1596. Even before the extended and detailed account of the disastrous third voyage advertised on the title page, there is a graphic account of two men being killed and eaten by a polar bear (F2^v) – which might have contributed to Shakespeare’s episode in *The Winter’s Tale*²⁸. It is impossible to prove that Fletcher knew this account of the Barents voyages; his reference to the Northeast passage could have been written in any year of his writing life, which was bounded by the accounts of northeast voyages printed in Hakluyt (1598) and Purchas (1625). But the 1609 volume at least corresponds to the facts of the passage in *The Tamer Tamed*, as do none of the Hudson voyages. Clearly, nothing here supports the claim that Fletcher’s play was written in 1611 or even 1610.

Against this absolute absence of evidence *for* 1611 stand two pieces of evidence *against* 1611. First, Maria responds to Petruccio’s feigned illness by urging everyone to “Get ye gone, / If you mean to save your lives. The sicknesse [...] Is i’th house” (III.v.25-28); “the City” sets a watch on the house (III.v.32-33), who “lock the doores up” (III.v.37); Maria claims that she has seen “the tokens” (III.v.71), and, although Petruccio has allegedly shown symptoms only for “three houres” (III.v.35), everyone – including the other men, who have been his friends and supporters – immediately urges him to pray (III.v.44, 80-

²⁷ See Tiffany Stern, “‘On each Wall and Corner Poast’: Playbills, Title-pages, and Advertising in Early Modern London”, *English Literary Renaissance*, 36:1 (2006), pp. 57-89, especially pp. 78-79.

²⁸ “The Beare at the first faling upon the man, bit his head in sunder, and suckt out his blood” (F2^v); later the bear, who “still was devouring the man”, was approached by others, and “fiercely and cruelly ran at them, and gat another of them from the companie which she tare in peeces” (F2^v); later the others rescue the bodies of “our two dead men, that had beene so cruelly killed and torne in peeces by the Beare” (F2^v).

81) and believes that “he’s a dead man” (III.v.93). This scene would be much more plausible and piquant immediately after an outbreak of plague, when many Londoners would have experienced exactly this sequence of events. Although London suffered high plague mortality from March 1603 to November 1609, there was no plague in London in 1611 and only about three months of relatively low mortality in 1610 (August through October)²⁹.

Secondly, on May 4, 1610 (according to the English calendar), Henri IV of France was assassinated by François Ravaillac; a translated account of the murder was entered in the Stationers’ Register in London on May 14 and presumably published almost immediately thereafter, but that text makes no reference to the execution of his assassin³⁰. However, on May 30, another text was entered in the Stationers’ Register; the spectacularly gruesome public execution of Ravaillac was its primary subject, emphasized by the title of the pamphlet. His four limbs were tied to four horses, which were then driven in different directions until his body was torn to pieces. This execution is not only verbally described in the pamphlet; it is illustrated by a specially created woodcut on the title page, which would have been used to advertise the pamphlet, and therefore would have made the nature of the execution known even to people who did not buy or read the text but simply saw it or spoke to someone who had seen it³¹. If Fletcher had wanted to cite an example of the punishment appropriate to assassins, then, at any time after May 1610, Ravaillac’s fate would have provided the most dramatic example. But Fletcher instead cites “his infliction / That kill’d the Prince of *Orange*” (II.ii.43-44; II.i.44-45), referring to an execution that occurred in 1584. Of course, one might conjecture that “Prince of *Orange*” was meant to suggest “King of France” or that the censor replaced “King of France” with “Prince of *Orange*”, but if the subject was too sensitive for the censor, we would expect the entire phrase to

²⁹ J. Leeds Barroll, *Politics, Plague, and Shakespeare's Theatre: The Stuart Years*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1991, pp. 173-86.

³⁰ Pierre Pelletier, *A lamentable discourse, vpon The paricide and bloody assasination: committed on the Person of Henry the fourth [...] King of France*, London, William Barrett and Edward Blount, 1610 (STC 19565).

³¹ *The terrible and deserued death of Francis Rauilliack, showing the manner of his strange torment at his Execution, vpon Fryday the 25. of May last past, for the murther of the French King, Henry the fourth*, trans. R. E., London, William Barley and John Baylie, 1610 (STC 20755).

have been cut. As it stands, Fletcher's play – in both texts – refers to an example twenty-six years earlier than May 1610, and the simplest explanation is that the example of May 1610 was not yet available to him or his audience. And this, in turn, eliminates the brief plague interval in August to October 1610 as a possible inspiration for the play's references to the plague.

The case against 1611 seems to me (and to Martin Wiggins) stronger than anything Maxwell, or anyone else, has cited to support composition of *The Tamer Tamed* in 1611 or at any time after May 1610³². But it still leaves open the question of how much earlier than 1611 the play was written.

How early?

A date of composition as early as 1603 or 1604 has been advanced on the basis of the play's allusions to military affairs outside England. Within less than thirty lines, *The Tamer Tamed* refers both to the siege of Ostend and to the commander of the forces that besieged it: "The chamber's nothing but a meere *Ostend*" (I.iii.89; I.iii.91) and "*Spinola's* but a ditcher to her" (I.iii.65; I.iii.67). The siege began on July 5, 1601, and Spinola took command of the army of Flanders in August 1603; these passages cannot have been written before late 1603 (when the theatres were closed due to plague) and cannot have been performed before spring 1604 at the earliest. Oliphant claimed that Fletcher's lines in I.iii must have been written before Ostend capitulated in September 1604, because "the events referred to" in early modern plays "are in nine cases out of ten those of the past few months"³³. But Ostend is the exceptional one case out of ten. It was as famous throughout the seventeenth century as Dunkirk would continue to be in the twentieth and early twenty-first. In 1620, John Taylor wrote of

³² Martin Wiggins also recognizes the importance of Ravaillac's execution in dating the play in *British Drama 1533-1642: A Catalogue*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011-18, 9 vols, vol. VI: 1609-1616 (2015), p. 54. Each of us reached this conclusion independently; I had noticed the connection and made it the basis for dating the play in Daileader and Taylor (2006), but Wiggins did not have access to my unpublished earlier version of the present essay. He does not discuss the 1610 pamphlets.

³³ E. H. C. Oliphant, *The Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher: An Attempt to Determine Their Respective Shares and the Shares of Others*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1927, pp. 151-53.

"Ostend whose siege all sieges did surpass / That will be, is, or I think ever was, / [...] Ostend endur'd (which ne'er will be forgot)"³⁴. In 1638, another Londoner proclaimed that the Spanish siege had made Ostend "for ever famous to Posterity"³⁵. These allusions demonstrate the continuing fame of the siege, and, not surprisingly, playwrights continued to allude to it long after 1604. Jonson mentions it in *Epicoene*, and so does Thomas Randolph in *Aristippus* (written in 1626, published in 1630). Jonson himself dated *Epicoene* "1609", and Randolph was not born until 1605. Fletcher could have alluded to Ostend at any time in his writing life. However, the reference to Spinola suggests a date later than 1604³⁶. Spinola was initially less famous than Ostend: the first reference to him in the *Calendar of State Papers Domestic* does not occur until July 28, 1605 (after the dazzling military maneuver by which he outflanked the Dutch and crossed the Rhine)³⁷. I have not found a literary allusion to him earlier than Jonson's *Volpone* (which cannot have been completed before January 1606)³⁸.

The Ostend/Spinola allusion in I.iii does not support a date in 1603-4. Nor does "These are the most authentique Rebels, next *Tyrone*, I ever read of" (I.iii.212-13). A. H. Thorndike claimed that this alluded to the appearance in London in 1603 of the second earl of Tyrone³⁹. Maxwell demonstrates that "Tyrone" was in the news circulating among Londoners from spring 1603 to autumn 1607, and again in spring 1608, late 1609, late 1610, and spring 1614⁴⁰. Consequently, a

³⁴ John Taylor, *An English-mans Love to Bohemia*, 1620, p. 8.

³⁵ Lewes Roberts, *The Merchants Mappe of Commerce*, 1638, p. 108.

³⁶ The earliest reference I have found to Spinola in an English printed book occurs in Edward Grimeston's translation of *A true historie of the memorable siege of Ostend* (1604), which was published after the town had fallen; Spinola does not enter the account until October 27, 1603 (p. 184), and all forty-one occurrences of his name are spelled "Spignola".

³⁷ *Calendar of State Papers: Domestic Series, of the Reign of James I, 1603-1610*, ed. Mary A. E. Green, London, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1857, p. 230.

³⁸ Ben Jonson, *Volpone*, ed. Richard Dutton, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, eds David Button et al., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012, vol. IV, pp. 4-5, 76. I have searched for Spinola (and "Spignola") in both *Literature Online* and *Early English Books Online-Text Creation Partnership*, and *Volpone* is the earliest literary allusion in either.

³⁹ Ashley H. Thorndike, *English Comedy*, New York, Macmillan, 1929, pp. 607-8.

⁴⁰ Maxwell, *Beaumont, Fletcher, and Massinger*, pp. 31-33. Maxwell's reference to late 1610 presumably lies behind Munro's claim that Tyrone "was much talked of in London in 1610, a fact which helps to date the play's composition" (Munro, ed., *Tamer Tamed*, p.

reference to him would have been 'topical' at any of these dates or in the months immediately following them. However, in the period between his submission to Elizabeth I in the treaty of Mellifont (March 30, 1603) and his flight from Ireland on September 4, 1607, Tyrone was not a rebel⁴¹. Fletcher refers to Tyrone specifically as a rebel who is "read of". This might refer to the proclamation of November 17, 1607, which three times calls Tyrone a "rebell"⁴². Many other texts about Tyrone followed during Fletcher's lifetime⁴³.

There is thus no evidence for composition in 1603 or 1604. The Spinola allusion cannot have been written until months after Tyrone submitted, and Tyrone was not again a rebel until late 1607. The two allusions, so close together textually, would not simultaneously have made sense to a London audience until 1607. The very allusions cited as evidence of composition in 1603-4 thus prove, on closer examination, that the play can *not* have been written *before* November 16, 1607⁴⁴. That date also postdates the Midland riots of 1607, which critics have cited as an inspiration for various details of the women's rebellion in *The Tamer Tamed*⁴⁵. That conclusion is important for three reasons. First, it establishes that *The Tamer Tamed* was not Fletcher's first writing for the stage. Second, it establishes that Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* cannot have been new when Fletcher wrote his

40). She also cites this passage in her discussion of the play's date (p. xvi), though she there mistakenly refers to "I.iii.22" (rather than I.iii.223, in the line numbering of her edition). But late 1610 seems ruled out by the "Prince of Orange" reference.

⁴¹ Nicholas Canny, "O'Neill, Hugh [Aodh Ó Néill], second earl of Tyrone", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004 (last accessed November 15, 2018).

⁴² *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, vol. I: *Royal Proclamations of King James I 1603-1625*, eds James F. Larkin and Paul L. Hughes, Oxford, Clarendon, 1975, pp. 176-79. The proclamation is dated November 15, but the Great Seal and the writ to the Mayor and sheriffs of London are both dated November 17. Tyrone had been pardoned by Elizabeth on March 9, 1603, and publicly rehabilitated and "received [...] into Grace and favour" on June 8 by "A Proclamation commaunding that no man abuse the Earle of Tyrone" (pp. 27-28), which does not describe him as a rebel.

⁴³ See, for example, the extended narratives in Fynes Moryson's *An Itinerary [...] The II. part. Containeth the rebellion of Hugh, Earle of Tyrone* (1617) and Thomas Gainsford's *The true exemplary, and remarkable history of the Earle of Tirone* (1619).

⁴⁴ Even without the evidence of *Epicoeone* (discussed below), the earliest possible date should be identified as late 1607. Wiggins gives the range as "1607-11" but does not explain why he considers 1607 the earlier limit; he may be accepting Maxwell's argument about Hudson's first voyage.

⁴⁵ Daileader and Taylor, eds, *Tamer Tamed*, p. 8.

reply. No one – not even Eric Sams – imagines that Shakespeare's folio play was originally written later than 1603⁴⁶. Third, it removes any reason for supposing that Fletcher revised the play six or seven years after he first wrote it.

The idea of revision was first floated to account for the contradiction between the alleged allusions from 1603-4 and an apparent allusion – in the same scene – to Jonson's *Epicœne; or, The Silent Woman*, which cannot have been performed earlier than December 1609. Gayley pointed out that Fletcher's character Moroso "may very well be a reminiscence of Morose" in Jonson's play *The Silent Woman*. Gayley compared the distinctive costuming of Jonson's Morose, "with a huge turban of nightcaps on his head, buckled over his ears" (I.i.115) to Fletcher's Moroso, whose "night-cap / [...] looks like halfe a winding-sheet" (IV.i.54-55; IV.0.56-57)⁴⁷. This is not just a literary allusion; it clearly refers to the same stage prop. But the case for a relationship between the two plays is stronger than Gayley realized. The name of Jonson's character was taken from his (obscure) Latin source for the plot of *The Silent Woman*⁴⁸. No other character in the drama of the period has the name "Morose", and Fletcher's unique "Moroso" comes closer to Jonson's name than any other character⁴⁹. Fletcher ends Act I with a moment of comic physical humiliation – Livia "wrings [Moroso] byth' nose" – that echoes Jonson's climactic comic humiliation of La Foole⁵⁰.

These are not the only links between Fletcher's *Tamer* and Jonson's *Silent Woman*. Fletcher's "I never will believe a silent woman. / When they break out they are bonfires" (I.iii.107-8; I.iii.110-11) quotes the

⁴⁶ Ignoring Maxwell's refutation, Eric Sams cites a "1603" date for Fletcher's play as part of his convoluted conjecture that Shakespeare's play was written in 1602-3: see "The Timing of the Shrews", *Notes and Queries*, 230 (1985), pp. 33-45.

⁴⁷ *Epicœne, or The Silent Woman*, ed. David Bevington, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, vol. IV, pp. 373-516.

⁴⁸ The clearest account of Jonson's source for the name is in Roger V. Holdsworth's New Mermaids edition of *Epicœne*, London, Ernest Benn, 1979, p. xxiii.

⁴⁹ See Thomas L. Berger et al., *An Index of Characters in Early Modern English Drama: Printed Plays, 1500-1660: Revised Edition*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 70.

⁵⁰ Fletcher's action echoes Jonson's: see "tweaks by the nose" (IV.v.262), the stage direction "*Dauphine enters to tweeke him*" (272.1), and the advice "leave tweeking; you'll blow his nose off" (274). The wringing of Moroso's nose just before the act-break is described, just after the act-break, as "my nose blown to my hand" (*Tamer Tamed*, II.i.2; II.0.2), echoing Jonson's language.

title of Jonson's play and refers to the central reversal of its action, marked by Jonson with the sarcastic question, "Is this the silent woman?" (III.vi.29)⁵¹. Unlike *Epicoene*, Maria has not previously been called "silent", so the phrase lacks an obvious antecedent in Fletcher's own script. The only other use of the phrase "silent woman" in the drama of the period occurs in Robert Davenport's *A New Trick to Cheat the Divell* (1639), where it clearly refers to Jonson's play: "I'm like the man that could endure no noise / In'th silent woman, answer all in signs" (V.iii). The only other examples of the phrase "silent woman" in Literature Online, between 1590 and 1660 – by Francis Beaumont, John Taylor, and John Suckling – all three refer to Jonson's play. In the same scene, Fletcher's appreciative "she can talke, God be thanked" (I.iii.120; I.iii.122) echoes and revises Jonson's appalled "She can talk!" (III.iv.41) – also referring to the play's lead female character. The phrase "she can talk" appears nowhere else in English drama between 1580 and 1642.

I will return to the relationship between Fletcher's play and Jonson's, but, for the moment, the important point is that Fletcher's echoes of Jonson here are perfectly compatible with all the allusions to other events. *The Taming of a Shrew* was reprinted by Nicholas Ling in 1607 (STC 23669). The rebellious women's "public celebration of the pleasures of eating" has been cited as a deliberate contrast with "the severe food shortages and high prices of 1607-9", and their repeated invocation of "ale" would have been particularly resonant after the government proclamation of December 12, 1608, which restricted the manufacture and sale of beer and ale⁵². The book on a disastrous voyage to find the Northeast passage was published at some point in the last seven months of 1609; Hudson's third attempt to find the Northeast passage started from Amsterdam at about the time that book was published, and Hudson returned to England in November 1609. In the period between the beginning of the siege of Ostend (1601) and the 1612 low-point in East India Company investment, the single year of highest "venture" of "dollars" was 1609. As for Tyrone, Maxwell noted that he was again in the news in

⁵¹ In his conversations with Drummond, Jonson's only two references to the play called it "The Silent Woman", and the title page of the first quarto edition (1620) was changed from "Epicoene, or The Silent Woman" to "The Silent Woman". Clearly, this is the title by which the play was most widely known.

⁵² Daileader and Taylor, eds, *Tamer Tamed*, pp. 8-9.

late 1609; moreover, the earliest Jacobean book that repeatedly described Tyrone as a rebel was published (in two editions) in 1609⁵³. The first extended account of Spinola's Dutch campaigns published in English that uses the spelling "Spinola" – which occurs in both surviving texts of *The Tamer Tamed* – did not appear until late in 1608⁵⁴.

Spinola was also in the news again in 1609: this time, as one of the chief negotiators and signatories of the twelve-year truce between Spain and the Dutch republic. The treaty was signed on April 14, 1609 (in the presence of two English ambassadors), and news of it reached London readers in two texts, *A proclamation of the truce* on a single sheet (STC 18472a.5) and the more detailed but still affordable two-and-a-half sheet translation of *Articles of a treatie of truce*, which appeared in two 1609 editions (STC 18455.7, 18456)⁵⁵. The English were interested in the truce for the same reason English troops had helped defend Ostend: Holland was the chief continental Protestant power. After the peace between England and Spain negotiated by King James in 1604, the Dutch were the only Protestants actively fighting the Hapsburgs and the Counter-Reformation. The truce also had immediate implications for English trade. The high level of London interest in the truce can be gauged by the number of references to it – before and after it was signed – in the letters of John Chamberlain, the Venetian ambassador in London, and the *Calendar of State Papers Domestic*⁵⁶.

⁵³ See William Barlow [Bishop of Lincoln], *An Answer to a Catholike English-man*, 1609, pp. 135 ("the Rebell [...] Tirone"), 362 ("TYRONE the chieftaine and ringleader of the rest; whose Rebellious Insurrections"), 364 ("this Spartacus of these Fugitives (Tyrone by name) had his Rebels"). This book was an official reply to a critique of James I's *Apology*; the public controversy over the *Apology* was a major subject of diplomatic correspondence in 1609.

⁵⁴ Jean La Petite, *A Generall Historie of the Netherlands*, trans. Edward Grimstone (STC 12375), pp. 1299-1318, 1342-66, etc. Some copies of this text have a title page dated "1608", others "1609", suggesting that it did not appear until late 1608.

⁵⁵ Spinola is mentioned on sig. A3^v of *Articles*, the English ambassadors "Sir Richard Spencer and Sir Raphe Winwood" on sig. A4.

⁵⁶ John Chamberlain, *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. Norman Egbert McClure, Philadelphia, American Philosophical Society, 1939, 2 vols, vol. I, pp. 256 (February 11, 1608, including an account of Spinola's speech at the opening of the negotiations), 273 (December 9), 275 (December 16), 278 (December 23), 285 (February 21, 1609), 287 (March 3), 289 (April 20).

Fletcher seems to have been thinking of the Dutch truce when he was writing *The Tamer Tamed*. That would explain the play's superfluous references to Ostend and Spinola, to German troops (I.iv.30, "a regiment of rutters"), "the Flemmish channell" (V.ii.32), and "the Dutchman" who sells horses (III.iii.63-65) – an occupation otherwise not associated with that nationality. More tellingly, the 1609 truce explains Fletcher's curious allusion to "his infliction / That kill'd the Prince of *Orange*" (II.ii.43-44; II.ii.44-45). Why should a play that cannot have been written earlier than 1609, and was set in an obviously contemporary London, refer to an execution that occurred in another country twenty-five years before? Editors claim that the 1584 execution "was particularly gruesome"⁵⁷. But, in fact, it did not differ in any material particular from the standard execution of traitors in early modern Europe, including the much more recent London executions of the Gunpowder conspirators. No other play of the period alludes to it. But *A Generall Historie of the Netherlands* – the same 1608/9 book that gave the first extended account of Spinola's campaigns – refers to the Prince of Orange by name 521 times and includes his engraved portrait; its detailed account of his resistance to the Spanish culminates in the execution of his assassin⁵⁸. The articles of the 1609 truce, translated and published in London only a few months later, three times refer to "the Prince of Orange deceased" (B3^v, B4, C2). During the two decades of Fletcher's writing career, only in 1609 was the English public so particularly reminded of the death of the Prince of Orange.

These references – to Ostend, Spinola, Dutchmen, German troops, and the Prince of Orange – are not a random scatter of irrelevant topicalities but part of a sustained pattern of reference that shapes Fletcher's presentation of the play's gender conflict. The first two acts of *The Tamer Tamed* are dominated, verbally and visually, by the women's seizure, fortification, and successful defense of a walled urban upper space, from which they look down upon the men who besiege them. Maria "holds him out at pike's end, and defies him, and now is fortified" (I.iv.29-30); "She's fortified for ever", and those who try to enter her space are "beat back again" (I.iii.71; I.iii.73); the

⁵⁷ Bevington, gen. ed., *English Renaissance Drama*, p. 1240.

⁵⁸ Jean La Petite, *Generall Historie*, p. 858.

women are "entrenched" (I.iii.97; I.iii.101), and protected by "trenches" (I.iv.23-24).

Such imagery combines the theatrical convention for staging urban military sieges with the Petrarchan conceit of a woman's virginity as a castle under male siege. But it does not derive from the most important English sources for Fletcher's plot, Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* and Jonson's *The Silent Woman*. It has been plausibly linked to *Lysistrata*, which Fletcher could have read in one of several editions that provided a Latin crib for the difficult Greek of Aristophanes; Jonson owned such an edition, and Jonson was the first English dramatist to be significantly influenced by Aristophanic comic practice⁵⁹. In *Lysistrata*, as in *The Tamer Tamed* – and no other known play in the two thousand and twenty years between 411 B.C. and 1610 A.D. – a group of women seize an elevated space, defeat a group of male besiegers, and refuse to have sex until their conditions are accepted. In both plays, the male besiegers include old men who threaten to beat the women brutally if they continue to resist; in both plays, the men are literally doused by the women.

But *Lysistrata* is a play about war, written in a city really at war. But *The Tamer Tamed* is not about war; England was not at war in 1607-10; England had not been at war since 1603 and would not be at war again until the 1620s. England itself did not provide a political parallel for *Lysistrata*, and Fletcher needed to look elsewhere – beyond Aristophanes, Shakespeare, Jonson, or England – to find a military corollary for the women's resistance. He found it not in an ongoing war but in a recently declared peace. In *The Tamer Tamed* (unlike *Lysistrata*), the men's reaction to their women's seizure of territory is to "Beat a parley first" (I.iii.100; I.iii.99). The subsequent action consists entirely of negotiations on the "articles" (II.vi.127; II.v.126, and II.vi.171; II.v.170) and "conditions" (II.vi.115, 118, 150; II.v.115, 118, 149) of "the treaty" (II.vi.117; II.v.117) of "composition" (I.iii.237; I.iii.218), which will allow the women to "march off with conditions" (II.vi.93; II.v.93). Indeed, even before the audience sees the women ensconced in their "fortified" space, the text anticipates a settlement,

⁵⁹ See Coburn Gum, *The Aristophanic Comedies of Ben Jonson: A Comparative Study of Jonson and Aristophanes*, The Hague, Mouton, 1969, and David McPherson, "Ben Jonson's Library and Marginalia: An Annotated Catalogue", *Studies in Philology*, 71 (1974), pp. 25-26, item 8.

with the women “marching away with their pieces cocked” (I.iii.60-64; I.iii.60-61). This reiterated idea, that the women will “march off” (I.iii.274; I.iii.262), imagines the disengagement of forces and the associated movement of populations that actually occurred in the Low Countries in 1609; it is less obviously relevant to the sexual resolution (which will require Maria to *join* her husband, not leave him).

This Dutch parallel adds a series of meanings to Fletcher’s play not present in Aristophanes, Shakespeare, or Jonson. Like the Dutch by the Spanish, Fletcher’s women are repeatedly described by the men as rebels (I.i.19, I.iii.212, 267, I.iv.16, II.vi.119, IV.ii.35, 120, 121, IV.iv.25; I.i.19, I.iii.212, I.iii.255, I.iv.16, II.v.119, IV.i.35, 120, 121, IV.iv.25). On the other hand, the women, like the Dutch, deny that they owe the other party any obedience (I.ii.130-36, I.iii.208-9, II.ii.120, II.vi.92, III.iii.95-105; I.ii.130-36, I.iii.195, II.i.120, II.v.92, III.iii.95-104); they describe their own objective as freedom (I.ii.37, 151-54, I.iii.161, II.ii.42; I.ii.37, 151-54, I.iii.153, I.i.42), liberty (II.ii.78, II.vi.134; II.i.78, II.v.134), and equality with their opponents (III.iii.101)⁶⁰. Moreover, and most profoundly, just as Dutch Protestants rebelled against their Catholic king, so Fletcher imagines the division between genders as a clash between rival faiths. When Maria first articulates her rejection of the idea of wifely obedience, Bianca is asked, “Are you of this faith?” and answers “Yes, truly, and will die in’t” (I.ii.146). From the beginning, the women’s resistance is described in terms of a religious belief, which departs from and challenges an older, traditional faith. “I have a new soul in me”, Maria declares (I.ii.77), and she sets out to establish “new customs” (II.ii.84; II.i.84). The men compare the women’s rebellion to that of the mythological titans against Zeus (II.iii.55); the women describe their own written statement of demands as “this creed” (II.vi.158; II.v.157). “What would this woman do”, one man asks incredulously, referring to Maria, “upon a new religion?” (IV.v.167-8; IV.iv.166-7). Another of the men asks Livia, “Why do ye break your faith?” (I.iv.53), and she later swears “by the little faith I have in husbands / And the great zeal I bear” for the women’s “cause”

⁶⁰ In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Kate at the end is obedient (Sc. 16/V.ii.67, 115, 116, 153, 156), declares that wives “are bound to serve, love, and obey” (162), and describes any wife who does not do so as “a foul contending rebel” (V.ii.157). But this language does not appear elsewhere in the play, or in the pattern deployed by Fletcher.

(II.ii.76-77; II.i.76-77). This language (zeal, cause) is often associated with Puritans – as is the women's preoccupation with "reformation" (IV.v.227; IV.iv.227) and "soundness" in a doctrinal sense (II.ii.113; II.i.113), their fear of "persecution" for their beliefs (II.vi.199; II.v.158), and their resistance to the authority of "churchwardens" (II.iii.69). Asked "Of what religion are they?", Roland describes men as "Good old Catholics" who "deal by intercession all", praying to idols and obeying "the old law" (III.i.51-55). In fact, the men, but not the women, refer to Catholic saints (I.iii.19, 25, 189, II.i.60; I.iii.18, 24, 190, II.0.59) and the Latin *misereri* (V.ii.27); they swear "by Saint Mary" (V.ii.24; V.i.25) and, in another reference to the Virgin Mary, "by'r Lady" (I.iv.28, IV.iv.34, 35; I.iv.28, IV.iii.34, 35).

Fletcher thus associates the explicitly 'old' defenders of patriarchal authority (Petruccio, Petronius, Moroso) with the old religion and the explicitly 'young' women who resist them with the Protestant reformation. Indeed, Maria's demand for a "fellowship" of equals (I.ii.141) articulates an emergent ideal of 'companionate marriage', which social historians have often associated with the rise and consolidation of Protestantism⁶¹. That sectarian imagery also aligns *The Tamer Tamed* (written by the son of the Bishop of London) with Protestantism, in explicit contrast to *The Taming of the Shrew* (written by a man accused of being a papist) and implicit contrast to *The Silent Woman* (written by a man who was a professed Roman Catholic until 1610)⁶².

All the foregoing evidence allows us to assign the original composition of performance of *The Tamer Tamed* to a narrow window of a few months. Fletcher's play cannot have been written after 1611; despite the wealth of topical allusions, there are none specifically pointing to 1611 or 1610, and plausible evidence pointing against composition after May 1610. It echoes or parodies Shakespeare's

⁶¹ Lawrence Stone, *Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500-1800*, New York, Harper & Row, 1977, p. 136, *passim*.

⁶² On the date of Jonson's conversion, see David Riggs, *Ben Jonson: A Life*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1989. The literature on Shakespeare's possible (but disputed) Catholic sympathies is extensive, but he was called a "papist" by John Speed in *The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine*, London, 1612 (STC 23041), p. 637: "this Papist and his Poet, of like conscience for lies, the one euer faining, and the other euer falsifying the truth". Speed in context is clearly referring to Shakespeare's portrayal of Oldcastle in the original, uncensored text of *1 Henry IV*: see Gary Taylor, "The Fortunes of Oldcastle," *Shakespeare Survey*, 38 (1985), pp. 85-100.

Hamlet, *Twelfth Night*, *King Lear*, and *Pericles* (1600-8), but scholars have not detected convincing allusions to Shakespeare's plays of 1610-11⁶³. It is much influenced by Jonson's *Volpone* and *The Silent Woman* (early 1606 to late 1609), but not by *The Alchemist* (summer to fall 1610). It has multiple connections with books and events of 1609, and no connections with books or events of 1610. It cannot have been written before Jonson completed *The Silent Woman*, which was first performed in December 1609 or January 1610. We can therefore be confident that the first performance of *The Tamer Tamed* occurred no earlier than the first week of December 1609 and no later than mid-May 1610.

Who and where?

The relationship of Fletcher's *Tamer Tamed* to Shakespeare (and Jonson) is intimately bound up with its date of composition, but also with the acting company that initially performed it and the theatre where it premiered. Neither the company nor the venue is self-evident. The earliest documentary references to the play date from 1633, after both Fletcher and Shakespeare had died.

In 1633, *The Tamer Tamed* belonged to the King's Men, and it is possible that they always owned it. But, by the 1630s, the King's Men also owned *The Silent Woman*. We know that *The Silent Woman* was first performed at the Whitefriars theatre by a reorganized company that had for the previous eight years played at the Blackfriars. We have no documentary evidence that they also performed *The Tamer Tamed*. But Fletcher, at this stage of his career, was writing for only two companies: the Blackfriars-then-Whitefriars boys and the King's Men. Fletcher had begun his career writing for boys; his association with the King's Men did not begin until *Philaster* (chiefly by Beaumont), which probably belongs to 1609. In 1611-12, the Whitefriars company performed at court Beaumont and Fletcher's *Cupid's Revenge* (1607) and *The Coxcomb* (1609); they also owned Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Scornful Lady* (1610) and Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess* (1608). By the 1630s, the King's Men had acquired

⁶³ For echoes of Shakespeare in Fletcher's plays, see D. M. McKeithan, *The Debt to Shakespeare in the Beaumont and Fletcher Plays*, New York, Collier, 1938. Editions of *The Tamer Tamed* have not provided any persuasive additional examples.

three of those four Fletcher titles – and *The Silent Woman* – and they could by the same means have acquired *The Tamer Tamed*, which they performed in 1633⁶⁴. In 1616, the Whitefriars company's leading actor, former child star Nathan Field, became a sharer in the King's Men (replacing Shakespeare), and Field could have taken some of his old company's texts with him. So it is entirely possible that the first connection between Fletcher's *Tamer Tamed* and what we call 'Shakespeare's company' (the King's Men) did not occur until after Shakespeare's death.

We can say two things confidently: (1) *The Tamer Tamed* was first performed by one of those two companies, and (2) without documentary evidence, we cannot definitively determine which. Nevertheless, some circumstantial evidence is worth considering.

First, the genre of *The Tamer Tamed* much better fits the repertory of the Whitefriars company. To our knowledge, the first city comedy set in contemporary London performed by the King's Men was Jonson's *The Alchemist*, which premiered in the summer or autumn of 1610, and is thus later than *The Tamer Tamed*. Although Jonson himself had been writing urban comedies since *Every Man in His Humour* (1598), he had not set a play in London until he collaborated with Marston and Chapman on *Eastward Ho* in 1605 – a play written for the Blackfriars boys' company, which later metamorphosed into the Whitefriars boys' company. That genre was entirely characteristic of the boys' repertory; indeed, the first evidence of the existence of the reorganized (post-Blackfriars) Whitefriars boys' company was their performance at court, on January 1, 1609, of Middleton's *A Trick to Catch the Old One*. In this as in other respects, *The Tamer Tamed* more closely resembles *The Silent Woman* (performed by the Whitefriars company) than *The Taming of the Shrew* (performed by the King's Men). Shakespeare's play is set in Italy, of course, not London, and the appearance of characters named Petruccio, Bianca and Tranio in Fletcher's London is rather odd. Its oddity is compounded by the fact that *The Tamer Tamed* is, on the dating established here, Fletcher's first play with an English setting; it is certainly one of his very few located

⁶⁴ For company repertories, see Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Playing Companies*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1996, pp. 356-60, 386-90. Like others, Gurr simply assumes that *The Tamer Tamed* always belonged to the King's Men, but Wiggins challenges that assumption. Wiggins is the source of dates for Beaumont and Fletcher plays here and elsewhere.

in London. It makes sense for Fletcher to set his play in London under the pressure of the established practice of the Whitefriars company and under the specific influence of Jonson's *Silent Woman*, which pointedly situates itself in the West End⁶⁵. It makes less sense for the King's Men to make their first venture into city comedy with a playwright inexperienced in the genre, who would have had no reason to change the locale of Shakespeare's play if he expected *The Tamer Tamed* to be performed by the same actors who were reviving *The Taming of the Shrew*, or who had been playing it as a regular part of their repertory for years.

Second, the number and difficulty of female roles points in the same direction. A company of 'boy' actors could perform plays with more female roles than a company like the King's Men, dominated by adult males. *The Silent Woman* has speaking roles for six females, each necessarily played by a different actor (because they all appear on stage together). Shakespeare never wrote a play that required so many capable boy actors⁶⁶. *The Tamer Tamed* has eight female characters on stage in II.v: five who speak and another three "maids" who have spoken briefly in the immediately preceding scene. Lucy Munro rightly points out that plays written for the King's Men that are "roughly contemporaneous" with *The Tamer Tamed* "regularly require five boy actors to appear in speaking roles in the same scene, often in the company of an unspecified number of 'Ladies'"⁶⁷. But her definition of "roughly contemporaneous" seems based on the assumption that *The Tamer Tamed* dates from as late as 1611. The plays

⁶⁵ See Emrys Jones, "The First West-End Comedy" (1982), in *British Academy Shakespeare Lectures 1980-89*, ed. E. A. J. Honigmann, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. 85-116.

⁶⁶ The apparent exception, *Macbeth*, survives only in a version adapted by Thomas Middleton after Shakespeare's death. For Middleton's additions to the extant text, see Gary Taylor, "Empirical Middleton: *Macbeth*, Adaptation, and Micro-attribution", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 35 (2014), pp. 239-72, and "Middleton and *Macbeth*", in William Shakespeare, *Macbeth: The Norton Critical Edition*, ed. Robert Miola, New York, W. W. Norton, 2014, pp. 294-303; for Middleton's expansion of the number of boys' roles, see Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino, eds, *Thomas Middleton and Early Modern Textual Culture: A Companion to The Collected Works*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 383-98.

⁶⁷ Munro, ed., *Tamer Tamed*, p. xvi. Munro was responding to the brief discussion of the word-count for the three lead female roles in Daileader and Taylor, eds, *Tamer Tamed*, p. 26. My other evidence for performance by the Whitefriars company is published here for the first time.

she cites as examples – *Philaster* (dated by Wiggins in 1609), *The Maid's Tragedy* (dated by Wiggins in 1611), and *Valentinian* (dated by Wiggins in 1614) – do not match *The Tamer Tamed* in the demands they make on those boy actors. Maria speaks 4193 words⁶⁸. Shakespeare occasionally wrote plays with such a big role for a boy actor: Cleopatra (written in 1607) speaks 4686 words, and Innogen (written in 1609-10) speaks 4393⁶⁹. But these roles occur in exceptionally long plays, and it has been argued that the full texts were never performed or intended for performance⁷⁰. Moreover, little was expected of the boys playing the secondary female characters in them. The second largest female role in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Charmian, speaks only 625 words, and all the roles played by boy actors together amount to only 5740 words (24% of the dialogue); likewise, the boy actor roles in *Cymbeline* speak a total of only 5772 words (22%)⁷¹. By contrast, Fletcher wrote 2026 words for the second boy in *The Tamer Tamed*, playing Bianca, and 1702 for the third boy, playing Livia; altogether, Fletcher wrote 8404 words for female characters played by boy actors (37% of the full text; 38% of the 'cut' text)⁷². By contrast, the longest role in the three "contemporaneous" Beaumont and Fletcher plays for the King's Men, cited by Munro, is Evadne in *The Maid's Tragedy* (with

⁶⁸ I counted words in *The Tamer Tamed*; those for *Philaster*, *Valentinian*, and *The Maid's Tragedy* were computed by Keegan Cooper. Both of us produced the word counts by downloading online transcripts of the early editions, creating a separate file containing each character's speeches, then running a word count using Microsoft Word (for the whole play and for specific characters).

⁶⁹ Word counts for Shakespeare's female characters are based on Marvin Spevack's *A Complete and Systematic Concordance to Shakespeare*, Hildesheim, Georg Olms, 1968, 9 vols, especially vol. III, pp. 1186-1257 (*Antony and Cleopatra*) and pp. 1313-89 (*Cymbeline*). Names of Shakespeare's characters, dates and texts of his plays are cited from William Shakespeare, *The New Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works: Modern Critical Edition*, gen. eds Gary Taylor et al., Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016.

⁷⁰ See Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

⁷¹ For *Antony and Cleopatra*, I count Cleopatra, Charmian, Octavia, Iras, and the "Song" presumably sung by a boy; in *Cymbeline*, Innogen, Queen, Mother, "Song", and the Ladies.

⁷² The full text (22883 words) is the conflated text printed by Bowers and other modern editors; the cut text (21146) is printed in Daileader and Taylor, eds, *Tamer Tamed*, based on the manuscript, representing (we argue) the version initially performed. Maria's part is not affected by the cuts; Bianca speaks 272 fewer words and Livia 13 fewer. Besides Maria, Bianca and Livia, the play's other women include the three maids, the City Wife and Country Wife, and the "Song" sung by unspecified women (483 total words).

3002 words, over 1100 words less than Maria); the largest percentage of words for characters played by boy actors is 30.5% (in *Philaster*); the largest number of words for the third boy actor is 944 (in *Philaster*)⁷³. In all these respects (size of the lead boy actor's role, size of the third boy actor's role, percentage of words given to female characters), the three alleged parallels in the repertory of the King's Men (between 1609 and 1614) fall significantly short of the demands placed on boy actors by *The Tamer Tamed*. The distribution and structure of female roles in *The Tamer Tamed* suggests that it is more likely to have been written for the Whitefriars company.

Third, the play's allusions to the repertories of the two companies point in the same direction. *The Tamed Tamer* foregrounds its rivalry with, and revision of, *The Taming of the Shrew*. Fletcher goes out of his way to contradict Shakespeare's happy ending, repeatedly insisting instead that Petruccio's first wife remained shrewish until her death. Three of Fletcher's characters have the same name as three of Shakespeare's: one of those three (Petruccio) is clearly meant to be the same person, and arguably so are the other two (Bianca, Tranio). These two plays are the only ones in early modern English drama to contain a character named "Tranio"⁷⁴. The stance Fletcher adopts toward Shakespeare here resembles that adopted in the Admiral's Men's *Tragedy of Sir John Oldcastle*, which recycled the characters and events of *1 Henry IV* but denied the veracity of Shakespeare's representation of Oldcastle. Maria's besting of Petruccio (and disdain for his first wife) figures Fletcher's besting of Shakespeare. We would expect such a rival play to be acted by a rival company. By contrast, Fletcher's allusions to *The Silent Woman* look like advertisements: not necessary to the plot, never explicitly critical of Jonson's play, never using exactly the same names or claiming to present the same characters, they are as gratuitous as product endorsements in modern films. They resemble the epilogue to *Henry V*, with its plug for the

⁷³ *Philaster*: 21444 total spoken words; 6543 words spoken by female characters (30.5%); 2682 by Eufrasia/Bellarion, 2167 by Arethusa, 944 by Megra. *Valentinian*: 24,892; 4,478 (18%); 2210 by Lucina, 681 by Eudoxa, 603 by Ardelia. *Maid's Tragedy*: 21,852; 5,803 (26.6%); 3002 by Evadne, 1887 by Aspatia, 533 by Cynthia.

⁷⁴ See Berger *et al.*, p. 97.

same company's 'Henry the Sixth' plays, or the allusion in *The Spanish Gypsy* to the same company's *The Changeling*⁷⁵.

As Daileader and Taylor note, Fletcher's play is perfectly intelligible without any knowledge of Shakespeare's: "all the information we need about Petruccio's tempestuous first marriage is laid out in the first few lines of Fletcher's play"⁷⁶. But there is at least one episode in Fletcher's play that is hard to understand without knowledge of Jonson's play. In the influential 2003 Royal Shakespeare Company revival of *The Tamer Tamed*, one scene in particular – according to Gordon McMullan – offered particular interpretive challenges to the actors and director, who were never certain that they had understood its practical meaning in performance, even after much dedicated rehearsal time⁷⁷. That scene was the first part of IV.iv, when Pedro tells Petruccio that Maria "is mad" and then explains that "If any speak to her, first she whistles, / And then begins her compass with her fingers, / And points to what she would have". When Maria enters, she says nothing for sixty lines, though she is insistently addressed and questioned continuously all that time. Instead of speaking, she "deal[s] by signs and tokens". Petruccio tells her to "Leave your mumping", and Sophocles wonders, "Do you think she's sensible" of what they are saying. Nothing in *The Taming of the Shrew* helps audiences or actors understand this scene. But if you had seen *The Tamer Tamed* at the Whitefriars theatre in December 1609 or early 1610, you would have recognized here an echo of another play performed at the Whitefriars theatre in December 1609 or early 1610: the memorable second scene of Jonson's *The Silent Woman*, where Morose and his servant are both on stage, but only Morose says anything, because he orders his servant to "answer me, by signs", "speake not, though I question you [...] answer me not, by speech, but by silence", and "answer me not but with your legge, unless it be otherwise; if it be otherwise, shake your head, or shrug". Jonson's play does not actually contain a silent woman: even before she is married, Epicoene is never silent; she speaks few words, and she

⁷⁵ Gary Taylor, "Thomas Middleton, *The Spanish Gypsy*, and Multiple Collaborators", in *Words That Count*, ed. Brian Boyd, Newark, University of Delaware Press, 2004, pp. 241-73.

⁷⁶ Daileader and Taylor, eds, *Tamer Tamed*, p. 15.

⁷⁷ Gordon McMullan, personal communication, May 2005, confirmed November 16, 2018. (McMullan was the dramaturg for the 2003 production).

speaks them softly, but she does speak. Fletcher's scene combines Morose's interview with his silent signaling servant and Morose's job-interview with Epicoene: Fletcher's scene gives us exactly the silent woman, the speechless sexual object, that Morose seeks. In 2003, the very accomplished and experienced RSC artistic team was confused by this scene, because they were performing it in repertoire with *The Taming of the Shrew*, not *The Silent Woman*.

Fourth, *The Silent Woman* provoked government intervention and may have been suppressed very soon after its first performances; Fletcher must either have been influenced by a performance before February 8, 1610, or he must have read the play in manuscript. But why would he allude repeatedly to a suppressed play, not in print and no longer in the repertoire, and familiar only to people who had seen it in the relatively small indoor theatre at Whitefriars? Fletcher could have expected such references to be topical only if the play had been very recently suppressed, or if it had not yet been suppressed, when he began writing. Fletcher's references to *The Silent Woman* would be most topical if *The Tamer Tamed* were performed in the same theatre by the same company that had performed or was performing *The Silent Woman*.

All this evidence suggests that *The Tamer Tamed* was acted by the Whitefriars company soon after their performances of *The Silent Woman*. In fact, Fletcher's play could have been in the repertory with Jonson's from the first week the theatres re-opened in December 1609. The impresario Robert Keyzar claimed that he spent £500 to support the company during the long closure of 1608-9, in the hope of playing "upon the ceasing of the generall sicknes"⁷⁸. Naturally, no acting company could know when plague deaths would decline enough to permit performances again, so they had to be prepared and ready to open their doors as soon as the opportunity arrived; it would be in their economic self-interest to have more than one new play in waiting. After all, they could not predict which play would take an audience's fancy – or which might be suppressed by the authorities. (They had a long record of getting into trouble.) If it was written for the Whitefriars company as a companion to *The Silent Woman* and in anticipation of "the ceasing of the generall sicknes", *The Tamer Tamed* could have been written late in 1609; if it was begun after Jonson's

⁷⁸ Chambers, *Elizabethan Stage*, vol. III, p. 57.

play opened, it was almost certainly started before Jonson's play was suppressed at the beginning of February 1610.

In either case, *The Tamer Tamed*; or, *The Woman's Prize* is a response to two of the most misogynist plays in the English canon: *The Taming of the Shrew* and Jonson's *The Silent Woman*. Fletcher's play was not written as half of a diptych; it was the middle panel of a triptych, between Shakespeare's play and Jonson's. It links together the three playwrights that the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries regarded as the holy trinity of English Renaissance drama.

The Shakespeare connection has always been recognized, but the critical importance of the Jonson connection has been ignored (even by those who have used it to date Fletcher's play). The Shakespeare connection has, as a result, been consistently misunderstood. As Chambers noted, "an answer to *The Taming of the Shrew* would have more point the nearer it came to the date of the original"⁷⁹. But almost all scholars agree that *The Taming of the Shrew* was written at least ten and perhaps twenty years before 1609. It might still have been revived, occasionally or regularly, but there was nothing new or controversial about it. By contrast, in 1609 and the first months of 1610, *The Silent Woman* was brand new.

Fletcher deftly dissociated himself from the elements of Jonson's work that would have offended aristocratic women, like his patroness the Countess of Huntington⁸⁰. Fletcher did not want to antagonize Jonson. In 1609 or 1610, Jonson wrote a commendatory poem for the first edition of Fletcher's failed *Faithful Shepherdess*, and, in 1611, Fletcher returned the favor with a commendatory poem for Jonson's failed *Catiline*. Unlike Beaumont, Fletcher did not write a poem in praise of *The Silent Woman*. Nevertheless, Fletcher's criticism of Jonson's misogyny – unlike his criticism of Shakespeare's – is entirely implicit. In *The Woman's Prize* as in *The Silent Woman*, the husband is crushingly defeated by his wife (who, in both plays, was performed by a boy actor). Jonson could, if he liked, interpret Maria as just another candidate for his College of unendurable semi-educated females, just another Cecilia Bulstrode. After all, the obvious target of Fletcher's satire was not Jonson, but Shakespeare. Although *The Silent*

⁷⁹ Chambers, *Elizabethan Stage*, vol. III, p. 222.

⁸⁰ For more on the play's connections with and differences from *The Silent Woman*, see Daileader and Taylor, eds, *Tamer Tamed*, pp. 11-13.

Woman was almost certainly the more immediate stimulus, *The Taming of the Shrew* was a safer target. In literary London in 1609, Jonson was the rising star; Shakespeare was the setting sun⁸¹. And even Shakespeare might not be too offended, precisely because Fletcher's target was such an old play (and probably a collaborative one)⁸².

Fletcher's sensitivity to these issues of male rivalry should not surprise us. His entire career is a triumph of homosocial collaboration. *The Tamer Tamed*, in particular, is as much a play about the complicated alliances of men with men as it is a play about men's conflicts with women. But what is remarkable about the play's connections to *The Silent Woman* and *The Taming of the Shrew* is Fletcher's strongly interactive relationship with Jonson and the complete absence of any evidence of a relationship to Shakespeare. Fletcher was certainly familiar with Shakespeare's work, and it is unlikely that two professional playwrights both working in the small scene of the London commercial theatre from 1606 to 1611 could have completely avoided meeting each other. But Shakespeare had probably stopped acting by 1609, when the King's Men performed *Philaster*, their first play by Beaumont and Fletcher. *The Tamer Tamed* gives us no reason to believe that Shakespeare and Fletcher were actively working together, or personally interacting, in 1609 or at any time before their collaboration on *Cardenio* in 1612. Shakespeare had experimented with two or three possible collaborators from 1603 to 1607 (Middleton in *Timon of Athens*, Wilkins in *Pericles*, and possibly Jonson in the lost original version of *Sejanus*), but none of those collaborations was repeated⁸³. Fletcher might have imagined *The*

⁸¹ For the decline of Shakespeare's market value in the Jacobean book trade, see Gary Taylor, "Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies (and Tragicomedies and Poems): Posthumous Shakespeare, 1623-1728", in *New Oxford Shakespeare: Critical Reference Edition*, vol. II, pp. xlix-lxi.

⁸² For a survey of evidence indicating that Shakespeare was not responsible for the Bianca subplot in *The Taming of the Shrew*, see Taylor and Loughnane, pp. 502-3, and John V. Nance, "Early Shakespeare and the Authorship of *The Taming of the Shrew*", in *Early Shakespeare*, eds Rory Loughnane and Andrew Power, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, forthcoming.

⁸³ For Shakespeare as the collaborator with Jonson on the original *Sejanus*, see Taylor and Loughnane, pp. 446-47, 538-42, and Gary Taylor, *The Tragedy of Sejanus*, in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Critical Reference Edition*, vol. I, pp. 1229-30.

Tamer Tamed as an audition for the role of Shakespeare's co-writer or successor, but if so, it did not succeed.

Our sense of the strong connection between *The Tamer Tamed* and *The Taming of the Shrew* may, in fact, have been retrospectively, posthumously constructed as a marketing ploy. If, as I have argued, Fletcher's play was originally written for the Whitefriars, it almost certainly did not come into the repertory of the King's Men until after Shakespeare's death. In 1633, our first documentary evidence of their ownership of the play pairs its revival, in a court performance, with Shakespeare's play. It is thus possible that the title *The Tamer Tamed* originates with that pairing and thus postdates Shakespeare's death. The alternative title "*The Woman's Prize*" would, instead, have connected it to "*The Silent Woman*".

And if the title of Fletcher's play was retrospectively modified in order to link it more clearly to Shakespeare's, it is possible that Shakespeare's play was also retrospectively modified to link it to Fletcher's. The King's Men might have owned Fletcher's play for six years between Shakespeare's death (1616) and the typesetting of *The Taming of the Shrew* (1622) for the First Folio, completed and published in 1623. That Folio text is full of contradictions and complications that have puzzled editors. One puzzle is a reference to one of the traveling players in the Induction having performed the role of "Soto" (i.80-85), which seems to fit the circumstances of a character with that name in Fletcher's *Women Pleas'd* – a play which Wiggins and almost all other scholars assign to the year 1620. Is *The Taming of the Shrew*, the text that we assume inspired Fletcher, instead, at least in some of its details, actually also a text later modified in response to Fletcher?