

# Christopher Marlowe and a Mashup of Stylometry and Theater History

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In the nineteenth century, editors of the works of Christopher Marlowe devoted a fair amount of attention to canon formation. Never in doubt were the plays printed with authorial attribution: *Dido Queen of Carthage* (Q1594), *Edward II* (Q1594), *The Massacre at Paris* (Q1594?), *Doctor Faustus* (Q1604), and *The Jew of Malta* (Q1633)<sup>1</sup>. The two-part *Tamburlaine the Great* was confirmed as canonical by way of forgery: John Payne Collier triumphantly announced in 1831 that he had discovered an entry of payment of 5 shillings for “a prolog to Marloes tambelan” in the diary of Philip Henslowe (Collier 1831, 3:113), but Collier himself had fabricated

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<sup>1</sup> *Lust's Dominion*, one issue of which was published in 1657 with a title-page attribution to “Christopher Marloe”, was considered canonical as late as 1821 (Bakeless 1942, 2:275); in 1850, Rev. Alexander Dyce confirmed its status as apocryphal by repeating John Payne Collier’s 1825 assertion that the play was “unquestionably not” Marlowe’s (Dyce 1850, 1:lviii; Collier 1825, 2:311). For the removal of “The Maiden’s Holiday” from Marlowe’s canon, see Steggle 2018.

the entry<sup>2</sup>. Toward the end of the century, as the history of English drama became a field of study, various scholars looked for Marlowe's hand beyond the canon. Some found evidence in plays whose authorial integrity had been enshrined in 1623 by their publication in *Mr. William Shakespeares comedies, histories, & tragedies*. Some found evidence additionally in anonymous plays such as *Arden of Faversham* and *Edward III*. However, the identification of passages outside the Marlovian canon had little effect on the field of theater history, which was being driven by the desire to make William Shakespeare the premier dramatist of England.

Marlowe's canon-builders were necessarily also his biographers. Drawing on material from Robert Greene (1588), Richard Baines (1593), Thomas Kyd (1593), Thomas Beard (1597), and Francis Meres (1598), they assembled a portrait of an unruly and iconoclastic figure. In the early decades of the twentieth century, researchers located documents that seemed to add a political narrative to what happened at the Widow Bull's in Deptford; as a result, the fatal quarrel became more about intelligence-gathering than play-making<sup>3</sup>. Theater historians, given a transgressive Marlowe, tended to set him and his plays apart from the commercial activities of companies, playhouses, and repertory-building except for the spawn of "*Tamburlaine's* weak sons"<sup>4</sup>. At the turn of the twentieth century, as F. G. Fleay (1890, 1891), W. W. Greg (1904-8), and E. K. Chambers (1923) were writing the history of the early modern English stage, A. W. Pollard and other New Bibliographers were winning the battle against textual disintegrators. Their collective work, though focused on Shakespeare, further stabilized Marlowe's canon for the next generation such that, by 1942 and the publication of *The Tragicall*

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<sup>2</sup> Francis Kirkman attributed *Tamburlaine* to Marlowe in the 1671 edition of his catalogue of printed plays, but there was no evidence of attribution from Marlowe's time until Collier's forgery was received as fact.

<sup>3</sup> The landmark publications were *The Death of Christopher Marlowe* (1925), by J. Leslie Hotson, who provided an accurate transcript of the coroner's inquest; and *Christopher Marlowe in London* (1934), by Mark Eccles, who provided details of the William Bradley affair.

<sup>4</sup> The phrase "*Tamburlaine's* weak sons" and its implicit contempt is Peter Berek's (1982, 73). For a correction to that perception of Marlovian influence, see Rutter 2018.

*History of Christopher Marlowe*, John Bakeless could assert with confidence that Marlowe influenced Shakespeare's plays but was not himself a co-author (Bakeless 1942, 2:214). In recent decades, scholars have learned more about Marlowe's post-Cambridge life, but these documents have not provided information on his personal or professional contact with other men who were writing plays for adult companies in the London theatrical market.

The advent of the digital age has given scholars new tools and user-friendly datasets with which to analyze Marlowe's authorship, not only in the canonical works but also in plays traditionally attributed to his contemporaries (including Anonymous). As a student of early modern drama, I am interested in the methodology and published results of those who practice stylometry; as a theater historian, I am interested in the implications of their claims not only for the business of adult playing companies in the early 1590s but also for the professional career of Christopher Marlowe. Here, I explore the mashup of these scholarly fields in order to set the claims of computational stylistics alongside the operation of the theatrical marketplace in Marlowe's time as I understand it to have been. I begin by laying out some basics about where Marlowe was after he left Cambridge in the summer of 1587, what he had written by the time he turned up at Deptford on 30 May 1593, who else was writing for the commercial stage in these years, and which companies were buying their wares. I continue by considering Marlowe's participation in the everyday business of playwriting through the lens of three plays for which opinions about authorship have been in flux for centuries: *Arden of Faversham*, *1 Henry VI*, and *Edward III*. I do not intend to assess the arguments of specialists in authorship attribution but rather to explore the pressure their claims put on my knowledge as a theater historian of Marlowe and the networks of theatrical commerce in England in the early 1590s.

#### *Marlowe's London: 1587-1593*

Marlowe came to London from Cambridge in late summer 1587. By September 1589 he lived in Norton Folgate, a liberty across Bishopsgate Street from two playhouses, the Theater and the

Curtain in St Leonard Shoreditch<sup>5</sup>. Scholars generally agree that he had by this time written *All Ovids Elegies* and that *Tamburlaine the Great* was already on stage at the Theater with the Admiral's Men, its second part perhaps in progress (#784, #789)<sup>6</sup>. If this claim is correct, Marlowe (or someone) had already made a choice of companies and venues in London. The alternative to the Admiral's Men was the Queen's Men, who are known to have spent most of their commercial time on tour in the provinces after their formation in 1583 but, when in London, to have played at one of the city's inns: the Bel Savage, the Bull, the Cross Keys, and the Bell. If the Queen's Men had acquired *Tamburlaine*, Marlowe would have been in the company occasionally of Thomas Achelley, Thomas Kyd, and Thomas Watson, who wrote plays for the Queen's company (Dekker 1607, Kv)<sup>7</sup>, as did Robert Greene, George Peele, Thomas Lodge, Richard Tarlton, and Robert Wilson (and, no doubt, others). To these professional contacts and acquaintances, it is reasonable to add George Chapman, Henry Chettle, Samuel Daniel, Michael Drayton, John Lyly, Anthony Munday, Thomas Nashe, Matthew Roydon, and (by 1589?) William Shakespeare<sup>8</sup>. Scholars guess that the appeal of the Admiral's Men was their tall and talented player, Edward Alleyn, but the company also offered regular London performances at the Theater and Curtain, operational since 1576 across Bishopsgate Street from Marlowe's neighborhood. Without

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<sup>5</sup> I follow the practice of William Ingram (1992), who spells the name of the 1576 Shoreditch playhouse as "Theater".

<sup>6</sup> Opinions differ on whether *Lucans First Book* was also a school exercise or a product of Marlowe's mature style (Stapleton 2015, 201-2). I use the numbers assigned by Wiggins and Richardson in *British Drama 1533-1642: A Catalogue* (2011-18) to identify plays.

<sup>7</sup> Given the patronage of the Queen's Men, as well as the talent in players and dramatists at their disposal, why didn't Marlowe sell plays to them? Were their innyard venues a factor? Was touring? Could he have anticipated in 1587-88 their imminent decline?

<sup>8</sup> I take Jackson's point in "One-Horse Races" seriously, hence the names here of other 'horses' in London during Marlowe's residency (Jackson 2017a). However, as Burrows and Craig make clear in "The Joker in the Pack", the pool of eligible horses depends on canon (size and attribution) and provenance (Burrows and Craig 2017). Taylor (2020) expands the eligibility to Thomas Watson on the basis of his prose and non-dramatic poetry; if this practice gains proponents, perhaps Matthew Roydon (also a member of Marlowe's circle) will be considered. I do not pretend here to provide a definitive list of the men who were writing for the stage in Marlowe's time.

compelling evidentiary alternatives, most Marlowe scholars now assign the composition of *Dido Queen of Carthage* (#820), *Doctor Faustus* (#810), and *The Jew of Malta* (#828) to 1588-89. The former was acquired by the Children of the Chapel Royal, the latter two presumably joined the *Tamburlaine* plays as property of the Admiral's Men<sup>9</sup>. In 1592 the Earl of Pembroke's Men acquired *Edward II* (#927). This company played at court in the winter of 1592-93 and in London (its 1594 title page advertises its ownership by Pembroke's and performances "in the honourable citie of London"). The Rose playhouse was built on the Bankside in 1587, which was also the year Marlowe moved to London, but only *The Massacre at Paris* of his corpus made a debut there (on 30 January 1593 [#947]). Philip Henslowe, a financier and owner of the Rose, kept a book of accounts – familiarly known as Henslowe's "diary" – of performances (1592-97) and business transactions (1597-1603)<sup>10</sup>. For the period of Marlowe's lifetime, these accounts record not only the maiden run of *The Massacre at Paris* but also the presence of a now-old *Jew of Malta* in the offerings of Lord Strange's Men (thirteen performances, 26 February 1592 - 1 February 1593).

The likelihood that Marlowe was living in London by August of 1587 comes from two lawsuits published by David Mateer in 2008. The fact that his location was Norton Folgate comes from records published by Mark Eccles in 1934. Eccles's records detail a confrontation on 18 September 1589 between Marlowe and William Bradley, the son of an innkeeper (Eccles 1934, 9-31, 57-68). Thomas Watson came to Marlowe's rescue and killed Bradley. Marlowe and Watson were taken to Newgate prison, from which Marlowe made bail on the first of October and Watson (who had claimed self-defense) was released four months later. Mateer's documents cast indirect light on Marlowe's lifestyle in London but not his career; however, Eccles's documents link him not only to writers (Watson) but also to the Admiral's Men at the Theater because Bradley had previously been embroiled with John Alleyn, the brother of

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<sup>9</sup> W. W. Greg assigned *Doctor Faustus* to 1592 (Greg 1950, 5-10, 61). On the performance options for *Dido*, see Price 2018. Scholars used to assign *Dido* to Marlowe's school years, but Wiggins and Richardson's argument for 1588 has gained traction (Lunney 2015, 14-16).

<sup>10</sup> I use Foakes's 2002 edition of the diary; subsequent references are cited by *HD*.

Edward Alleyn<sup>11</sup>. Constance B. Kuriyama finds Marlowe still in London in 1591 (address unspecified), based on language in a petitionary letter sent to Sir John Puckering in June 1593 by Thomas Kyd in which he claimed that certain of Marlowe's papers were shuffled into his when the two had been "wrytinge in one chamber twoe yeares synce" (Kuriyama 2002, xvi; also, 229 [BL Harleian MSS 6848, F. 154]). By the end of 1591, however, Marlowe was in Flushing, in the Low Countries, where he was arrested for coining in January 1592 and sent back to London. J. Alan Downie itemizes subsequent arrests: "in May 1592 for threatening behavior in Shoreditch [...] [and] in Canterbury on 15 September 1592 for an assault on William Corkyn" (27)<sup>12</sup>. When *The Massacre at Paris* joined the repertory of Lord Strange's Men at the Rose in January 1593, Marlowe was spending time at Scadbury, the estate of Sir Thomas Walsingham in Kent. In mid-May, while Pembroke's Men were touring with *Edward II*, Marlowe was called before the Privy Council. On May 30 he was "in a room at the house of one Eleanor Bull" with three companions, and an argument broke out over the bill ("*le recknynge*"); he was stabbed above his right eye and died (Kuriyama 2002, 224-25 [PRO C260/174, No. 127]).

This collation of biographical details and theatrical work reveals a period of time when Marlowe was in London and thus available to collaborate on dramatic scripts. The title page of *Dido Queen of Carthage*, which advertises "Written by Christopher Marlowe, and Thomas Nash. Gent.", is the only evidence in print that Marlowe *did* co-author a play, yet Nashe's hand has long been questioned (Lunney 2015, 16)<sup>13</sup>. Few title pages advertise the practice of

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<sup>11</sup> The Mateer documents concern Marlowe's acquisition of a horse and tackle which he did not return and a loan he did not repay. Like his brother, John Alleyn was associated with the Admiral's Men at the Theater. Not mentioned above as identified in the Bradley documents is Hugo (or Hugh) Swift, a lawyer whose sister Anne married Watson (Kuriyama 2002, 87). The presence of John Alleyn in the Bradley encounter is a loose end. Eccles guessed that Bradley owed Alleyn money (Eccles 1934, 68), but how Marlowe is connected to that (if at all) has not been determined.

<sup>12</sup> Kuriyama provides the date of May 9 for the Shoreditch arrest (Kuriyama 2002, xvii); she claims further that "Marlowe was out of London because of the plague [...] during September and at least part of October of 1593" (87).

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Merriam (2000a) argues for the collaboration; Lunney and Craig (2020) find no evidence of it.

collaboration even though it was commonplace<sup>14</sup>. One that does is *A Looking Glass for London and England* (1594), which announces the writers, Thomas Lodge and Robert Greene. The title page of *The Tragedie of Gorboduc* in 1565 not only advertises the authors but claims further that “three actes were wrytten by Thomas Nortone, and the two laste by Thomas Sackuyle” (STC 18684). Had the revised manuscript of *Sir Thomas More* reached the print shop, its title page might have advertised as follows: “by Anthony Munday, perhaps with others, and revised with scenes or parts of scenes by Thomas Heywood, William Shakespeare, Thomas Dekker, Henry Chettle and a scribe”. Henslowe’s diary provides voluminous evidence of teamwork in payments from 1597-1603. Those records also provide a model for the work habits of a frequent collaborator in the person of Henry Chettle. In 1598 alone Chettle wrote three plays solo and eleven with others. Sometimes he partnered with a single dramatist; sometimes he partnered with more. Two entries for “Chance Medley” suggest that the play may have had as many as five authors<sup>15</sup>. On 19 August 1598, Henslowe recorded a partial payment of 85 shillings to Robert Wilson, Anthony Munday, and Thomas Dekker that further specified a distribution in which Wilson and Chettle received 30 shillings each and Wilson received 25 shillings. Five days later (24 August 1598), Henslowe paid Michael Drayton 35 shillings “in fulle payment” for the play (*HD* 97)<sup>16</sup>. Specific as this information is, it does not say what Chettle’s assignments were for the composition of “Chance Medley”. Scholars engaged in authorship studies likewise have not discovered a consistent pattern in the division of scripts by scenes, characters, or some other logic.

### *Marlowe’s Collaborations*

The identification of Marlowe’s hand in works outside his traditionally assigned canon is not new. Looking for Shakespeare in every anonymous play, scholars through the centuries have

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<sup>14</sup> According to Lukas Erne, “[f]or the total forty-year period from 1584 to 1623, only 13 of the 111 plays attributed to a playwright or playwrights acknowledge multiple authorship” (Erne 2003, 44).

<sup>15</sup> I use quotation marks to indicate lost plays and italics for extant ones.

<sup>16</sup> Henslowe’s usual total payment for scripts was 120 shillings.

found the next best thing: Kyd and/or Marlowe. An illustrative case is *Arden of Faversham* (#846), registered at Stationers' Hall on 3 April 1592 and published in that year without title-page advertisements of authorship, company ownership, or venue. In 1926 E. H. C. Oliphant was convinced "of the presence of more than one hand in the play" (Oliphant 1926, 85). Ceding a share to Kyd, Oliphant considered the "superior passages" to carry "the authentic voice of Marlowe" (86). Even so, he acknowledged that parts of *Arden* were "quite beyond the reach of Kyd, as we know him – beyond, in fact, the reach of every dramatist of the time, save Marlowe and the young Shakespeare" (85-86)<sup>17</sup>. F. S. Boas in 1940 found passages with "a distinctively Marlovian stamp" in *Arden* (Boas 1940, 199), but Bakeless in 1942 could not persuade himself that Marlowe would "take any great interest in domestic tragedy and its necessarily homely dialogue" (Bakeless 1942, 2:290). Granting that "[t]he verse is often much like Marlowe's and much better than Kyd could write" (2:286), Bakeless settled for Marlovian influence: "there is something of him in the play" (2:289). Nonetheless, in recent authorship studies of *Arden*, Marlowe has remained a worthy contender, in part no doubt because he has the largest package of well-attributed, single-authored, and provenance-identifiable plays of any dramatist from the 1590s other than Shakespeare<sup>18</sup>. Arthur Kinney, who set out specifically to test the co-authorship of Kyd and Marlowe, found evidence of neither (Kinney 2009); using different methods, Elliott and Greatley-Hirsch found from a Zeta test of "comparatively infrequent and rare words" that a segment of *Arden* including the murder of Arden has

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<sup>17</sup> Oliphant toyed with the possibility that Marlowe might have created "those two amusing ruffians, Black Will and Shakebag" (Oliphant 1926, 89).

<sup>18</sup> Craig considers "known provenance" to be a qualifying feature of plays used as data in computational stylistics in "The Three Parts of *Henry VI*" (Craig 2009, 58); Burrows and Craig add "well-attributed single-author" plays (Burrows and Craig 2017, 197). Will Sharpe implies that Marlowe came in second in tests published by Gary Taylor in 1987 and by MacDonald P. Jackson in 1993 (Sharpe 2013, 655). On the integrity of Marlowe's text-package, Burrows and Craig confess that their Zeta test was a "spectacular failure" in identifying Marlowe as the sole author of *The Jew of Malta* (Burrows and Craig 2017, 210). Jackson, raising the issue of textual contamination due to company ownership, looks at Pembroke's repertory and observes wryly that "[w]e would scarcely guess that the author of *Edward II* was Marlowe from the list of nine plays with which it uniquely shares nine or more tetragrams" (Jackson 2017b, 128).

signs of Marlowe's hand (Elliott and Greatley-Hirsch 2017, 172, 175). Recently, however, Gary Taylor has eliminated Marlowe, ascribing *Arden* to Thomas Watson and Shakespeare, though not exclusively (Taylor 2020).

In the same spring that *Arden of Faversham* was moving from the stage to the shops of men in the book trade, a play called "harye the vj" in Henslowe's diary made its debut at the Rose playhouse (3 March 1592)<sup>19</sup>. The identification of this offering as prequel to a pair of plays published as *The First Part of the Contention betwixt the two famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster* (#888, 1594) and *The True Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke* (#902, 1595) and depicting events in the reign of King Henry VI has been solidified by recent studies that focus on the texts in Shakespeare's First Folio of the three parts of *Henry VI*. For a variety of reasons, these three plays – especially the Folio's "The first part of King Henry the Sixt" (#919) – have long been challenged as single- and Shakespearean-authored plays, making the trilogy "the thorniest problem in attribution in the Shakespeare canon", according to Hugh Craig (2009, 40). The number and identity of collaborators, as well as their respective shares, remain unsettled. From the perspective of Marlowe, however, current studies on the authorship of the "First Part" complicate further the stories told by theater historians about the authorship and company ownership of "harye the vj" at the Rose on 3 March 1592. The initial scholarly achievement was to identify the diary item as "The first part of King Henry the Sixt". That honor belongs to Edmond Malone who, adding a transcription of "some curious Manuscripts relative to the stage" to his nearly-in-press edition of *The Plays and Poems of William Shakspeare*, tagged the entry of "harye the vj" in Henslowe's list as the Folio play but noted as well his confidence that it was not originally written by Shakespeare "but of another poet" (I, Part II, 291). His opinion was shared by his generation of Shakespeareans, and through the centuries the number of hands in *1 Henry VI* expanded to include just about everyone who was writing plays in 1592: Greene, Kyd, Lodge, Marlowe, Nashe, and Peele. As the list of collaborators

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<sup>19</sup> It received fifteen performances through 19 June and another two when Strange's Men returned to the Rose at Christmastide for a month (29 December 1592 - 1 February 1593 [HD 16]).

grew, Shakespeare's participation shrank; indeed, his role changed from author to reviser. In 1926 Allison Gaw argued that Shakespeare "strengthened the unity and coherence of the trilogy" in 1594 for the use of his new company, the Chamberlain's Men; he added further that in 1599, after completing the "Henry V" trilogy, Shakespeare returned "to the crudest of the earlier series [...] to make it more worthy of its place in the sequence" (Gaw 1926, 157). In 1995 Gary Taylor demoted Marlowe "as a serious candidate" for previously attributed parts of *1 Henry VI* and promoted Nashe "as a more probable candidate than Shakespeare (or any other dramatist)" for Act I (Taylor 1995, 178, 176). Craig (speaking also for Kinney) confirms Shakespeare for the garden scene of choosing roses plus Talbot scenes with his son and promotes Marlowe for "the middle part of the strand of the play involving Joan of Arc" (Craig 2009, 68). Taylor and Loughnane agree that Marlowe was "one of the play's co-authors" (Taylor and Loughnane 2017, 515).

The location of "harey the vj" in the repertory of Lord Strange's Men in 1592 makes the issue of company ownership an irresistible topic of conjecture in authorship studies. Taylor asks the obvious question: "why did the company not perform any other Shakespeare plays that spring, or after?" And he answers it: "Either Strange's Men did not possess those other early Shakespeare plays because [...] they had not yet been written, or because [...] Shakespeare had been working for another company" (Taylor 1995, 183). That other company in 1592 was the Earl of Pembroke's Men. It is best known by scholars for its failure: on 28 September 1593, Henslowe, replying to Edward Alleyn's query in a letter about Pembroke's Men, wrote that they had left touring some five or six weeks before because they could not meet their expenses on the road and "weare fayne to pane the(r) parell for ther carge" (*HD* 280). Against this narrative are facts that suggest a normal company. Pembroke's Men played at court twice during Christmastide in 1592-93 (26 December, 6 January). They traveled widely in 1593, playing at traditionally welcoming towns including Ipswich, Rye, Bath, Shrewsbury, Leicester, and York (MacLean 2003). Their venues included Caludon Castle in Coventry. They had a first-class repertory including *Titus Andronicus* (S. R. 6 February 1594, Q1594, #928), *The First Part of the Contention betwixt the two famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster* (S. R. 12 March 1594, Q1594,

#888), *The Taming of a Shrew* (S. R. 2 May 1594, Q1594, #955), *Edward II* (S. R. 6 July 1594, Q1594, #927), and *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York* (O1595, #902)<sup>20</sup>. Largely because Pembroke's seems to be the only alternative to Strange's Men in the marketplace of 1592-93<sup>21</sup>, scholars have made the assignment of plays to its repertory something of a parlor game: Play-X, if not in Henslowe's diary, must have been with Pembroke's. Aiding such gamesmanship, Alfred Hart created a "Pembroke Group" based on verbal similarities he called "inter-play borrowings", which he considered evidence of bad quartos and consequently also membership in Pembroke's repertory (Hart 1942, 352). That logic – inter-play borrowings in bad quartos – persuaded MacDonald P. Jackson in 1965 to assign *Edward III* to Pembroke's Men on the strength of Shakespearean echoes in *The Contention*. Richard Proudfoot was thinking of Shakespeare too in his British Academy address in 1985 when he toyed with the assignment of *Edward III* to Pembroke's Men (Proudfoot 1986, 182). In current authorship studies, the identification of Marlowe as co-author of *Edward III* is moribund. It was always a stretch, if only because the play may well have been written after Marlowe died<sup>22</sup>. F. G. Fleay, the most vocal scholar

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<sup>20</sup> Wiggins and Richardson (2011-18) rename *The True Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke as Richard, Duke of York* (#902); Taylor and Loughnane follow suit (2017, 496). I use the old-fashioned title and abbreviate it as *True Tragedy*; for its earlier part, I use a conventional abbreviation of *The Contention*. A word on this pair of Pembroke texts: as Burrows and Craig explain, their tests on the octavo and folio versions of the third part of *Henry VI* come out much the same (Burrows and Craig 2017, 213). For theater historians, however, the fact that Pembroke's company owned the quarto of *The Contention* and octavo of *True Tragedy* makes these texts discrete repertorial items from the versions published in the First Folio.

<sup>21</sup> There was a viable playing company known as the Earl of Sussex's Men in 1592-93, but it is discounted as an alternative because its repertory, when the company leased the Rose from 23 December 1593 to 6 February 1594, shows so little overlap with the known repertory of Strange's or Pembroke's. Sussex's Men did offer *Titus Andronicus* as "ne" [new?], sharing that play according to its title page also with Strange's Men (the Earl of Derby's Men as of 25 September 1593) and Pembroke's, as well as *The Jew of Malta*, which Strange's Men had performed in 1592-93.

<sup>22</sup> Scholars who date *Edward III* post-1593 sometimes cite its inclusion of the line from Shakespeare's *Sonnet 94* as evidence ("Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds", line 14). Of course it is possible that Shakespeare borrowed from the play rather than the other way around.

from the Victorian period who supported Marlovian authorship in 1886, has been discredited on so many fanciful claims that his endorsement carries no weight. The lone voice now to see Marlowe's hand in *Edward III* is Thomas Merriam. His argument – that *Edward III* “was revised by Shakespeare from an original (military) play by Marlowe” – requires the conjuration of an Ur-play (Merriam 2000b, 159)<sup>23</sup>. And yet, no hand other than Shakespeare's has gained traction<sup>24</sup>. *Edward III* remains a puzzle because the construction of its provenance leans heavily on decisions about who collaborated with whom for which company at which time.

### *Theater History Narratives*

I welcome further rehabilitation of Pembroke's Men. The narrative of their otherness, grounded in Henslowe's report of an aborted tour and sale of company stock (while Strange's Men ended their touring on the upswing as the Earl of Derby's Men), has been undergoing revision since the 1970s. A major contributor to that revision is the scholarship on provincial touring funded by a project known as the Records of Early English Drama (REED), which was founded in 1976 at the University of Toronto. Two topics are relevant to Pembroke's Men: the relationship of touring routes to a patron's territories and the commercial viability of touring<sup>25</sup>. During the same period of time that REED research was being

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<sup>23</sup> Positing an Ur-play has long been a solution for scholars who cannot explain problems they see in an extant text (see Knutson 2014). There were, of course, scripts now lost for every play written, but it is tricky to make arguments about authorship based on their content and language.

<sup>24</sup> There was a stage in the tests reported by Timothy Irish Watt that looked promising for Marlowe's hand in scenes III.i to IV.iii of *Edward III*, but further testing did not confirm that promise (Watt 2009, 132).

<sup>25</sup> The value of research funded and directed by REED to theater history narratives cannot be overstated. It has, quite simply, changed the fact of provincial performance from a negative in company commerce to a positive. The signature beneficiary of REED research is *The Queen's Men and Their Plays* (1998), in which Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean erase the perceived mismatch of a company that had the best patron, hand-picked players from the top companies of the time, the premier clown in England, and a repertory of innovative drama, yet spent its time on the road rather than in a London playhouse. On Pembroke's Men and touring, see Somerset 1988 and Knutson 2001.

published, textual scholars were questioning the theory behind “bad quartos”, a label that grew out of judgments about Shakespearean texts such as *The Contention* and *True Tragedy*. Because these versions were shorter than their counterparts in the Folio and seemed flawed, scholars at the turn of the twentieth century settled on the opinion that players in touring companies filled out a repertory with scripts they reconstructed from memory of plays they had already staged<sup>26</sup>. Practitioners of stylometry, by erasing further the stigma of memorial reconstruction from texts believed to have been touring versions, provide additional evidence that the repertory of Pembroke’s Men was not a backwater of defective, secondhand, and orphaned plays with the one exception of the single-authored *Edward II*<sup>27</sup>. Indeed, given the number of hands in *The Contention* and *True Tragedy* alone, the company becomes an incubator of theatrical creativity. Andrew Gurr adds to the narrative of Pembroke’s Men further by assigning them a playing venue in London during the winter of 1592-93. He proposes that James Burbage had a vacancy at the Theater when Strange’s Men took up residence at the Rose. That vacancy was filled with a lease to Pembroke’s Men, who were “very likely led by the son of the Theatre’s owner”, that is, Richard Burbage (Gurr 1996, 269). Lawrence Manley and Sally-Beth MacLean augment Gurr’s supposition. Pointing to testimony in a lawsuit concerning renovations at the Theater, they suggest that “James Burbage may have been undertaking his own improvements”, not only upgrading to match Henslowe’s investment in the Rose but also to accommodate the occupancy of Pembroke’s Men (Manley and MacLean 2014, 62). By endorsing the addition of *Edward III* to

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<sup>26</sup> For the intertwining of bad quartos and touring, see Werstine 1990.

<sup>27</sup> In 1996 Laurie E. Maguire drove a stake in the heart of memorial reconstruction as a blanket explanation for textual differences across variant extant play texts. She put no texts in the category “Unquestionably Memorial Reconstruction” (324). Of the Pembroke texts she addressed, she claimed that *The Taming of a Shrew* (1594) fell in the category, “Strong Case [...] For Memorial Reconstruction” (324); she categorized *Arden of Faversham*, *The Contention*, and *True Tragedy* as “Not Memorial Reconstruction” (324-25). Practitioners of stylometry treat memorial construction as a formerly popular aspect of the study of textual history (Jackson 2017a, 57). For an overview of theories of textual corruption regarding *The Contention*, see Kirwan (2018, 134-36). For a provocative recent argument on players’ memories and texts, see Menzer 2008.

Pembroke's repertory (Knutson 2017), I have myself meant to contribute to their rehabilitation.

Although tempting, the assignment of plays to companies on the basis of authorship is problematic. In asking where other Shakespearean plays were in 1592 if Lord Strange's Men did not have them, Taylor suggests that Shakespeare "had been *working* for another company" (Taylor 1995, 183, emphasis mine). Proudfoot, musing over the company home of *Edward III*, offers the "romantic hypothesis" that "Shakespeare wrote the play [...] for Pembroke's Men" (Proudfoot 1986, 182, emphasis mine). Thomas Kyd connected authorship and companies by way of patronage. In June 1593, in one of his petitionary letters to Sir John Puckering, Kyd distanced himself from Marlowe by saying that "his [Marlowe's] L[ordshi]p never knewe his service, but in writing for his plaiers" (Kuriyama 2002, 229 [BL Harleian MSS 6848, F. 154])<sup>28</sup>. Probably because Shakespeare was not only playwright and player for the Chamberlain's Men but also sharer, scholars often interpret expressions such as "working for another company" and "writing for his plaiers" to mean that the dramatist was in some sense 'with' a company. Would Marlowe then have been 'with' the Admiral's Men when he wrote the pair of *Tamburlaine* plays? Was he 'with' Pembroke's when they acquired *Edward II*? Or 'with' Strange's Men in January 1593 when they acquired *The Massacre at Paris*? Theater historians and Marlovians have not suggested the kind of withness in company relations that is suggested by the withness of Shakespeare due to his player-sharer connection to the Chamberlain's Men. If a similar withness now applies to Marlowe due to his recently reinforced collaborations on "harey the vj" and Pembroke's *Contention* (less clearly so for *True Tragedy*), then the integration of Marlowe into the workaday activities of commercial

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<sup>28</sup> In an appeal to Sir Robert Sidney for help against a charge of counterfeiting, Marlowe claimed the good will not only of Lord Strange but also the Earl of Northumberland (Kuriyama 2002, 209-10 [PRO SP 84/44]). Kyd does not identify the lord; most scholars agree that it was Lord Strange (Manley and MacLean 2014, 162), but Arthur Freeman makes a case for Henry Radcliffe, fourth Earl of Sussex (Freeman 1967, 32-37).

playing companies is taken further than the scholarly community has been willing to go<sup>29</sup>.

I welcome also evidence that locates Marlowe in working relationships with men who supplied the adult commercial companies of the early 1590s. The Marlowe known to Victorian editors was a solitary figure. Stories about his life and death did not suggest to them extensive networks with other writers. Boas in 1931, writing about Marlowe in London, observed with a tinge of regret that there was “little positive evidence [...] of Marlowe’s association with other prominent playwrights” (Boas 1931, 68). He knew about the slam in *Groatsworth of Wit* attributed to Robert Greene, and he believed that Henry Chettle (associated with the *Groatsworth* project) “did not wish to know” Marlowe (78). Boas did not think there was evidence that Marlowe had “worked together” with Thomas Nashe on *Dido* or George Chapman on *Hero and Leander* (68). He believed that “any dramatic collaboration” between Marlowe and Shakespeare had “to be inferred purely on internal evidence” (68). Boas knew about the chamber shared with Kyd but took Kyd’s denial of Marlowe in the Puckering petitions as a denial also of their fellowship (78). Eccles set up a counter-narrative about Marlowe in 1934 in commentary on the documents concerning the affray with William Bradley and the intervention of Thomas Watson, but Boas skipped the opportunity to write that narrative in 1940, leaving the impression that Watson and Marlowe were little more than “neighbors” (Boas 1940, 103).

Recent Marlovian scholars have paid more attention. David Riggs spins the connection with Watson toward intelligence networks and recusancy. Noting Watson’s work for “the adult acting companies”, he adds that Watson “kept this fact out of the public eye” (2004, 187). He characterizes the bond between Watson and Marlowe as an “interest in libertine and oppositional writing” (187). Emphasizing the adversarial aspects of Marlowe’s connection with Robert Greene (222-23, 228-29), Riggs pairs Marlowe and Kyd based on the originality and influence of *Tamburlaine* and *The Spanish Tragedy* (225-26) rather than friendship or a working relationship. Regarding the other original and

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<sup>29</sup> Bakeless believed that Marlowe and Shakespeare would not have collaborated because they wrote “for rival companies” (Bakeless 1942, 2:214, emphasis mine).

influential playwright in the early 1590s, Riggs says Marlowe and Shakespeare “must have been aware of one another” (282)<sup>30</sup>. Kuriyama implies a genuine closeness between Watson and Marlowe, emphasizing the former as a mentor with valuable contacts. Noting that they “wrote plays for the same companies” (Kuriyama 2002, 88), she implies further that Marlowe stood to profit from Watson’s broad networks with musicians and – through the Earl of Northumberland – with Matthew Roydon, George Peele, George Chapman, as well as Thomas Harriott and Walter Warner (88-92). Michael J. Hirrel assesses Watson’s participation in and influence on the networks of drama and dramatists around 1590 by way of Dekker’s *A Knight’s Coniuring* (1607). He reads the ending in which the group of Marlowe, Greene, Peele, Nashe, and Chettle follow the group of Watson, Kyd, and Achelley as a tribute to Watson and his fellows as “English popular drama’s original source” (Hirrel 2014, 202). Robert A. Logan challenges the tradition in scholarship of a rivalry between Marlowe and Shakespeare that is both “professional” and “contentious” (Logan 2007, 5)<sup>31</sup>. Characterizing that rivalry more as partnership, Logan envisions a “working milieu” in which Marlowe and Shakespeare saw “each other on something of a daily basis at the theater” and knew one another’s plays in performance (4).

None of these suppositions put Marlowe in the room where bits and pieces of plays were being constructed. None address the selection of Marlowe to craft the murder of Arden and some (or all) of the Joan of Arc story line. According to Elliott and Greatley-Hirsch, the “scholarship [by practitioners of stylometry] suggests that collaborating playwrights apportioned the labour by act, scene, main plot and subplot(s), and perhaps even by character” (Elliott and Greatley-Hirsch 2017, 151). That variety of options is compatible with the many hands in the manuscript of *Sir Thomas More* as well as the entries by Henslowe of payments for two, three,

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<sup>30</sup> Bakeless repeated “a kind of rumor, not very well founded but persistent, that Marlowe and Shakespeare were friends” (Bakeless 1942, 2:213); he cited Tycho Mommsen as believing that the two were “unfriendly rivals” (n. 38).

<sup>31</sup> Logan has in mind works including James Shapiro’s *Rival Playwrights: Marlowe, Jonson, Shakespeare* (1991) and Jonathan Bate’s *The Genius of Shakespeare* (1998).

four, or more collaborators on numerous playscripts<sup>32</sup>. In the day of E. K. Chambers, the dramatists in Henslowe's book of accounts who did this sort of piecework were disdained as "extremely out-at-elbows men of letters" (Chambers 1923, 2:162); their product, nearly all of which is now lost, was assumed to be inferior to the single-authored products of Marlowe and Shakespeare. If Marlowe is to be perceived as the occasional author of a scene, a subplot, or a character, he either sinks in reputation to the level of those out-at-elbows men in Henslowe's diary or lifts them to his, elevating also the piecework dramas they wrote. This, for a student of repertorial commerce and lost plays, is a very positive development.

There are additional assumptions in narratives of theater history about Marlowe that coexist uncomfortably with data from stylometric tests. One concerns professional standing. At the turn of the twentieth century, Marlowe scholars witnessed the rising popularity of Shakespeare that was intensified by scholarly societies, competitions in the Public Record Office for biographical documents, and arguments among bibliographers. They had an advantage, though, because Marlowe preceded Shakespeare with solo compositions that were literary and commercial winners. Bakeless, considering the possibility of collaboration, granted that a "promising beginner from Stratford" was likely to have had "some kind of acquaintance with the most brilliantly successful playwright of the day" (Bakeless 1942, 2:213), but he could not accept that the two also had a working relationship. Current scholars of authorial attribution use the language of hierarchy to make distinctions among members in a team of dramatists. Gary Taylor, for example, labels Thomas Watson "the senior and dominant playwright" (Taylor 2020, 22) compared to Shakespeare in the composition of *Arden of Faversham* "between late 1588 and 1590" (3)<sup>33</sup>. In the same article, Taylor distributes the labor of *Titus Andronicus* in 1589 between Shakespeare and George Peele; he

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<sup>32</sup> The manuscript of *Sir Thomas More* is valuable evidence on the fact of collaboration but not as helpful on patterns of collaborative relationships. Scholars have not yet determined whether the teamwork of the initial collaborators was similar to that of the revisers.

<sup>33</sup> Will Sharpe, watching with increasing skepticism in 2013 as the date of *Arden of Faversham* slips toward 1588, quips that it might be "one of the finest plays that a young Shakespeare, possibly, never wrote" (Sharpe 2013, 657).

attributes “most of” the play to Shakespeare, labeling Peele a “subservient collaborator” (6). This language – “senior and dominant”, “subservient” – is a flashing red light for scholars who have historically been hyper-sensitive to arguments that undermine Marlowe’s standing in regard to Shakespeare’s. They know how such labels might be applied in arguments that Marlowe was a collaborator in Shakespeare’s plays<sup>34</sup>. What they cannot know is Marlowe’s own sense of authorship and fellowship. By the winter of 1591 Marlowe had already been senior *and* junior poet on five plays that continued in performance despite changes in patronage, company, and venue (unless *Doctor Faustus* belonged to 1592 as W. W. Greg believed [1950, 61]). What did he think, then, when he was approached by a team of dramatists to contribute the upstart Jack Cade to *The Contention*? Was he already planning to join others composing “harey the vj” by contributing to a tertiary story line in the war with the French? As he conceived *Edward II* that summer, perhaps with an eye toward the company of Pembroke’s Men, would he – based on his experience with collaborators on the Wars of the Roses plays – consider acquiring collaborators? And did he then turn to the composition of *The Massacre at Paris* late in 1592 and work alone?

Another angle on a hierarchy among playwrights is evident in Bakeless’s emphasis on Shakespeare’s youth and provincial origin compared to the London in-crowd of Watson, Peele, Greene, and Marlowe with their university degrees and established record of professional achievements. But, as I have argued elsewhere (Knutson 2018), the way the results of some stylometric experiments are characterized in authorship studies elevate Shakespeare’s contributions to plays in the three-part *Henry VI* and subordinate Marlowe’s. For example, in *1 Henry VI* (the only evidence surviving of “harey the vj”), Craig’s tests give Shakespeare the heroic parts: “the Temple Garden and Talbot scenes” (Craig 2009, 53); Marlowe is given the character of Joan (67). Craig argues that the identification with Marlowe enriches the

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<sup>34</sup> Marlowe scholars will not appreciate my unsubtle hint here of a John-the-Baptist syndrome, but that position is further under threat from the scholarship now trending on “young Shakespeare”, which will likely challenge more of Marlowe’s claims to priority and seniority.

dramatic moment: “Her alliance with fiends and witches, her scoffing rhetoric, her acting under disguise, are then those of a Marlovian villain” (67). But there is a point at which it is condescending to assess Marlowe’s value to fellow dramatists in terms of his ability to imitate himself. When Shakespeare replicates his style in *3 Henry VI* (as identified by Burrows-Craig tests), he is assigned “the most memorable [parts] in the play” (Burrows and Craig 2017, 217). Marlowe’s parts, in comparison, are almost self-parody: “the opening scenes where, as in *1 Tamburlaine*, groups of characters stand on either side of the stage and shout defiance at each other” as well as a less-than-rhapsodic version of the “sweet fruition of an earthly crown” (217). The issue here for Marlowe scholars, I suggest, is not the *fact* of Marlowe’s collaboration but the perception of his contributions as derivative. Others – Shakespeare, especially – are presented as if engaged in professional development in 1592, but Marlowe is made to look like he was plagiarizing his own box office hits.

The likelihood that Marlowe worked with other playwrights on scenes or characters for plays with storylines still under development is a serious blow to his “technicolour biography” (the phrase is Mateer’s [2008, 13]). That biography was built with phrases from men Marlowe knew: “daring God out of heaven” (Greene), “they that love not Tobacco & Boies were fooles” (Baines), “never cold my LP endure his name, or sight” (Kyd). Nineteenth-century scholars used those opinions to create a Marlowe who anticipated Shakespeare yet was his antithesis. As documents were published about Marlowe’s imprisonment at Newgate (Eccles) and companions at the Widow Bull’s (Hotson), those writing Marlowe’s history such as Boas were further convinced that he was “a propagandist, provocative, explosive force” (Boas 1931, 78). Despite an insistence on facts in the biographies of Downie and Kuriyama, the sensational Marlowe survives in the conspiracy-theory novel, *The Reckoning*, by Charles Nicoll (1992). In a New Historicist biopic, David Riggs calls Marlowe a “landmark figure in the history of atheism” with a “lengthy criminal record” (Riggs 2004, 6). Having assured his readers that Marlowe “spent the better part of his adolescent and adult life at school and university, where

[...] he probably shared his bed with other boys and men" (77), Riggs puts him in bed with Baines (259) and Kyd (262).

Marlowe's story for me as a theater historian has not been that of a social or political maverick but of a playwright apart in significant ways from the routine business networks of adult professional companies in the London marketplace. He has appeared to have had no particular loyalty to a company, though perhaps to the player, Edward Alleyn. The companies that acquired his plays – the Admiral's Men, the Children of the Chapel Royal, Lord Strange's Men, the Earl of Pembroke's Men – provided them with a repertorial context in his lifetime. That context can be partially reconstructed from court documents, records from the book trade, and the playlists in the diary of Philip Henslowe for 1592-93, but no records survive from 1587 to confirm (for example) the assumed contemporaneity of Marlowe's two-part *Tamburlaine* and Thomas Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*<sup>35</sup>. Scholars of early English drama know that it matters "who lives, who dies, who tells your story"<sup>36</sup>. Since the nineteenth century, Marlowe's professional biography has been written in the shadow of the one who lived. Recent arguments of authorship attribution put Marlowe in a story where he is more like his fellows, as flexible as they in writing solo or in teams. When evidence of his hand becomes more precisely identifiable by the methodology of stylometry, I will welcome a revised narrative that accounts also for Marlowe's signature originality.

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<sup>35</sup> Henslowe's playlists show that Lord Strange's Men had *The Jew of Malta* in repertory at the Rose with *The Spanish Tragedy* but not *Tamburlaine* (HD 16-20).

<sup>36</sup> "Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story", *Hamilton: An American Musical*, music, lyrics and book by Lin-Manuel Miranda, directed by Thomas Kail, Public Theater, New York, 20 January 2015.

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