

# Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Traces of Authorship\*

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This essay analyses the documentary evidence identifying Shakespeare and Marlowe as co-authors of the *Henry VI* plays and the alternative versions of parts 2 and 3. Drawing together studies in attribution, anonymity, biography, and the book trade, the essay offers a chronological analysis of various forms of evidence. In doing so, it seeks to situate and contextualise the early anonymous publication of the alternative versions, while providing external documentary support for the internal attribution evidence linking Shakespeare and Marlowe to these plays.

**Keywords:** Marlowe, Nashe, Attribution studies, Authorship, Anonymity, Book history, Biography, Publication, Textual studies

## *Authorship and Authority*

The compilers of *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies* (1623) made every effort to claim authorial authority for the thirty-six plays they collected, selected, and supplied for the 'First Folio' collection. In their prefatory address "To the Great Variety of Readers", John Heminges and Henry Condell state that they wish "the Author himselfe had liu'd to haue set forth, and ouerseen his own writings", but, as Shakespeare died seven years earlier, they have taken on the responsibility to "onely gather his

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works"<sup>1</sup>. The two men, actor friends of Shakespeare and sharers in his old company, were in a good position to judge the authority of the works compiled. In gathering these plays, they claim they have taken "care" and "pain" to publish versions that are "cur'd, and perfect of their limbes"; that is, versions qualitatively superior to earlier publications of Shakespeare's works: "stolne, and surreptitious copies, maimed, and deformed by the frauds and stealthes of iniurious impostors"<sup>2</sup>. The prefatory address thus acknowledges that many works attributed to Shakespeare already exist in different versions, a subject this essay will discuss, while marking a distinction between those versions which they include and which they claim have authority, and those which they exclude and which, by inference, have lesser or no authority. This simple binary construction understates a rather more complicated textual situation, as we shall see. Their prefatory address also clearly attributes all of the plays included to the hand of Shakespeare alone ("the Author himselfe [...] his own writings"). The works included, the compilers claim, have authority; they are, they insist, authoritative.

One of the best-known and most-often-repeated claims about the Folio collection is that half of its thirty-six plays were never printed before. The claim, like most broad statements about Shakespeare, needs further nuance. The Folio collection prints the only extant substantive version of seventeen plays: *The Tempest*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *As You Like It*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Winter's*

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<sup>1</sup> For Heminges and Condell's responsibilities in collecting, selecting, compiling, and supplying the texts for the First Folio, see Taylor 2017. Citations to Shakespeare's works, unless otherwise recorded, are from individual editions in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Critical Reference Edition* (Shakespeare 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Which plays, or set of plays, the actors are referring to remains in question. In the bibliographic tradition it had been assumed that Heminges and Condell differentiate between the 'good' and 'bad' early printings available, but David Scott Kastan argues that the actors simply mean *all* earlier printings are imperfect "perhaps because to men of the theater a cheaply published playbook could be nothing else" (Kastan 1999, 91). Lukas Erne suggests that they might be alluding to the Pavier Quartos: "the only Shakespearean playbooks published between Shakespeare's death and early 1622, when work on the Folio began" (Erne 2003, 258).

*Tale*, *King John*, *1 Henry VI*, *All Is True*, *Coriolanus*, *Timon of Athens*, *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Cymbeline*; that is, there exists no other earlier text or version for any of these plays. Twelve plays in the Folio collection are more or less substantively similar to earlier printed versions: *Merry Wives of Windsor*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Henry V*, *2 Henry VI*, *3 Henry VI*, *Richard III*, *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, and *2 Henry IV*; that is, each of these earlier versions follows, however roughly, the narrative outline of the Folio texts, often with significant verbal overlap. The Folio collection includes five plays in more or less substantively identical versions to those printed earlier for which there exists only one substantive version: *The Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Richard II*, and *1 Henry IV*; it includes three plays in more or less substantively identical versions for which there exist more than one version: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Richard III*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. There are, then, two anomalous cases. *The Taming of the Shrew* shares the same plot and sub-plot as *The Taming of a Shrew*. However, the two works are so fundamentally different in language and style that some scholars doubt whether *A Shrew* has any independent *Shakespearean* authority; it exists, more or less, in a category of its own. Then there is *Titus Andronicus*, which was printed earlier in three near-identical versions, the last of which forms the basis for the Folio text, but the 1623 printing includes an additional scene. As this summary indicates, it is not as simple as saying that half of the plays in the Folio had never been printed before; in fact, the Folio version of twenty-six plays (or twenty-seven if *Titus Andronicus* is included, with its added scene) are substantively new or variant; that is 75% rather than 50% of the works included.

Heminges and Condell are right then to foreground issues of authority in their prefatory address: the First Folio collection offers something that differs in substance from what was previously available to purchase piecemeal in earlier printed versions. But in foregrounding the authority of the printed texts that they include ("absolute in their numbers, as he conceiued the[m]"), they also incidentally or deliberately situate that authority in a model of solo authorship that the collection perpetuates through its possessive

title. Yet we now know that nine works included in the collection – that is, one quarter of the plays – include substantive writing by authors other than Shakespeare: (in Folio order) *Measure for Measure*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *1 Henry VI*, *2 Henry VI*, *3 Henry VI*, *All Is True*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Timon of Athens*, and *Macbeth*. Shakespeare is undoubtedly the primary author in the collection, but he is not the only author. There are also two categories of Shakespearean plays excluded from the collection. First, there are seven plays, all co-authored, in which Shakespeare's hand has been identified: *Arden of Feversham*, *Edward III*, *Sir Thomas More*, *Pericles*, *Prince of Tyre*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, *The Spanish Tragedy* (additions in the 1604 quarto), and *Cardenio*<sup>3</sup>. Second, there are the alternative versions of Shakespeare's plays that differ substantively from the versions included in the First Folio, the twelve plays plus *A Shrew* noted above. Each of the twenty ostensibly Shakespearean works excluded is subject to its own contingencies of composition and transmission, and it would be reductive to generalise about how and why some plays were included when others were not. But whatever the rationale for inclusion or exclusion – economic, marketing, availability of text, quality of text, (co-)authorship of text – these acts of selection by the compilers of the First Folio created a distinction, reinforced by Heminges and Condell's prefatory remarks, in the perceived authority of those plays and play versions that made the cut and those that did not. We live in a post-First-Folio world and therefore know which plays and play versions were included. It was not always like this. There was a time before its publication in 1623 when for many plays the only printed version that existed was the 'alternative version'; these were not 'alternative', they were the only versions mediated via, and preserved in, print. This essay returns us to a pre-First-Folio world, focusing in particular upon the authorship and authority of early alternative versions of *2 and 3 Henry VI: The First Part of the Contention* (first published in 1594) and *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York* (1595). It addresses authorship through a set of plays, first composed in the late

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<sup>3</sup> For the evidence supporting the attribution of these plays, see the relevant entries in Taylor and Loughnane 2017.

sixteenth century, for which early anonymous 1590s versions and later authoritative 1620s versions are preserved. It first offers a chronological reading of events connected with these plays, and the other two parts in the ‘first tetralogy’, *1 Henry VI* (first published in 1623) and *Richard III* (first published in 1597). To this discussion, I draw on more recent findings about the co-authorship of *1-3 Henry VI*, situating the chronological sequence in the context of not only the transmission of Shakespeare’s works but also writings by his co-authors, Christopher Marlowe, and, to a lesser extent, Thomas Nashe.

### *Plays about Henry VI: A Chronology*

1592

On 3 March 1592 a play titled “harey the vj” is entered in the account books of Philip Henslowe, an entrepreneur who owned the Rose playhouse in Southwark, on London’s south bank (Foakes and Rickert 1968, 16). The entry is marked “ne”, almost certainly indicating that it is a new play<sup>4</sup>. The debut performance took in a large sum, “iij<sup>ii</sup> xvj<sup>s</sup> 8 d” or 3 pounds, 16 shillings, and 8 pence. There were fourteen further performances of “harey the vj” by midsummer that year<sup>5</sup>. The playing company for each of these performances was the Lord Strange’s Men.

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<sup>4</sup> With multi-part plays, as Roslyn L. Knutson has demonstrated, Henslowe’s habit was to identify the first part by its basic unnumbered title, while indicating the part number for subsequent parts (see Knutson 1983). As Taylor and Loughnane note: “Thus, ‘Harey the vj’ could be *1 Henry VI*, but could not be the play that the Folio identifies as *3 Henry VI* [...]; it also seems unlikely to be the play which the Folio identifies as *2 Henry VI* [...] which we have no reason to believe was ever called the first part of *Henry VI*” (Taylor and Loughnane 2017, 515).

<sup>5</sup> The play was performed regularly over four consecutive months: March (7, 11, 16, 28), April (5, 13, 21), May (4, 7, 14, 19, 25), and June (12, 19) (Foakes and Rickert 1968, 16-19).

1593

The play “harey the 6” (or “harey the vj”) is revived by the Lord Strange’s Men at the Rose on 16 and 31 January 1593 (Foakes and Rickert 1968, 19-20)<sup>6</sup>.

1594

On 12 March 1594 “a booke intituled, the first parte of the Contention of the twoo famous houses York and Lancaster” was entered to the stationer Thomas Millington in the Stationers’ Register (Arber 1875-94, 2:646). Sometime later that year this work, a short play about episodes in the life of Henry VI, was printed in quarto format by Thomas Creede for Thomas Millington (London; STC 26099). The title-page for *Contention* does not indicate either author or theatrical provenance.

1595

Sometime this year a play titled *The true Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke, and the death of good King Henrie the Sixt, with the whole contention betweene the two Houses Lancaster and Yorke* was printed by P[eter] S[hort] in octavo format for Thomas Millington (London; STC 21006). The play was either not entered in the Stationers’ Register before publication or the record is lost. This short play portrays episodes in the life of Henry VI that roughly follow on in historical sequence from the events portrayed in *Contention*. The title-page for *True Tragedy* does not indicate author but notes that the play was “sundrie times acted by the Right Honourable the Earle of Pembroke his seruants”, that is, Pembroke’s Men.

In *True Tragedy* appears the line: “Oh Tygers hart wrapt in a womans hide?” (sig. B2<sup>v</sup>). This line connects the unidentified author of *True Tragedy* to a minor kerfuffle among London’s dramatists a few years earlier. The author of *Greenes, goats-worth of witte* (London, 1592; STC 12245), most likely Henry Chettle, plays on this passage in calling out another dramatist for plagiarism (“beautified

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<sup>6</sup> See Manley and MacLean 2014, 339. The total takings for the seventeen recorded performances of the play are the most of any Lord Strange’s Men play at 35 pounds and 8 shillings. The play is also the most frequently performed play by this company.

with our feathers”) and presumption (“with his *Tygers hart wrapt in a Players hyde*, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blanke verse as the best of you”)<sup>7</sup>. This offending dramatist is an “absolute *Iohannes fac totum*”, and “is in his owne conceit the onely Shakespeare in a country” (sig. F1<sup>v</sup>). Within months, Thomas Nashe (in *Pierce Penilesse* [London, 1592; STC 18378]) and Henry Chettle (in *Kind-harts Dream* [London, 1592/1593; STC 5123]) have denied their authorship of the passage in question.

### 1597

On the 20 October Andrew Wise entered “The tragedie of kinge Richard the Third” in the Stationers’ Register. It was published anonymously later that year, printed by Valentine Simmes and Peter Short, with the title-page noting that it “hath been lately acted” by the Lord Chamberlain’s Men (London; STC 22314). The published play continues, roughly speaking, the historical narrative sustained in *Contention* and *True Tragedy*.

### 1598

Andrew Wise re-issues *Richard III*, now attributed on its title-page to “William Shake-speare” and printed by Thomas Creede (London; STC 22315).

### 1600

Sometime this year Thomas Millington decides to re-issue both *Contention* and *True Tragedy*. We cannot know for certain which play he re-issued first, though it seems reasonable to assume that they appeared in their serial order (“first contention” to “whole contention”), with demand for *True Tragedy* possibly fuelled by the availability of *Contention*. The 1600 second quarto printing of *Contention* is undertaken by Valentine Simmes for Millington, principally set from the 1594 first quarto (London; STC 26100). The second printing of *True Tragedy* is undertaken by W[illiam] W[hite] for Millington and, although principally set from the 1595 octavo, it is now printed in the larger quarto format thereby matching the format for *Contention* (London; STC 21006a).

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<sup>7</sup> For Chettle’s authorship of the work, see Jowett 1993.

Also, in 1600, Samuel Nicholson picks up on the same passage from *True Tragedy* that had appeared in *Groats-worth*: “O wooluish heart wrapt in a womans hyde” (London; STC 18546; sig. C1<sup>v</sup>). Nicholson’s poetic work, *Acolastus*, also includes several passages which borrow from *Venus and Adonis*, the first work published in Shakespeare’s name and a best-selling poem of the 1590s (first published in 1593, it was re-issued in 1594, 1595, 1596, and 1599) and *Lucrece*, another literary sensation published in Shakespeare’s name (first published in 1594, and re-issued in 1598 and 1600)<sup>8</sup>. While these borrowings tell us nothing about the authorship of *True Tragedy*, it does indicate Nicholson’s familiarity with Shakespeare’s accredited works in print.

1602

On 19 April 1602, the Stationers’ Register records that Millington transfers the rights to the “ij books” of “The first and Second pte of henry the vj” to another stationer, Thomas Pavier (Arber 1875-94, 3:204). At the same time, Millington transfers to Pavier the rights to “Thomas of Reading” and “Titus and Andronicus”. The former had not yet appeared in print; the latter, generally accepted to be Peele and Shakespeare’s play, had been published anonymously twice, in 1594 and 1600. In 1598 Francis Meres identified Shakespeare as author of *Titus Andronicus* in *Palladis Tamia*, among other plays<sup>9</sup>. Meres never mentions any plays about the life of Henry VI.

1619

Thomas Pavier arranges for *Contention* and *True Tragedy* to be published together under a single title: “The Whole Contention between the two Famous Houses, Lancaster and Yorke”. The plays are printed by William Jaggard in an undated quarto (London; STC

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<sup>8</sup> For these borrowings, see Bemrose 1964.

<sup>9</sup> Meres notes: “As *Plautus* and *Seneca* are accounted the best for Comedy and Tragedy among the Latines: so *Shakespeare* among y<sup>e</sup> English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage; for Comedy, witnes his *Ge[n]tleme[n] of Verona*, his *Errors*, his *Loue labors lost*, his *Loue labours wonne*, his *Midsummers night dreame*, & his *Merchant of Venice*: for Tragedy his *Richard the 2*. *Richard the 3*. *Henry the 4*. *King Iohn*, *Titus Andronicus* and his *Romeo and Iuliet*” (London; STC 17834; sig. Oo2<sup>r</sup>).



26101). Both plays are principally set from earlier printed versions, with minor corrections, alterations, and additions introduced in an attempt to improve or cohere perceptibly faulty elements in the earlier versions. The title-page to the set makes three significant claims. First, it adverts to the serial nature of the plays saying it is “Diuided into two Parts”. Second, it claims that this version of the plays improves and expands upon earlier printed versions: “newly corrected and enlarged”. Third, it identifies an author for the plays: “Written by *William Shakespeare, Gent*”.

Pavier appears to plan initially for *The Whole Contention* to be printed as part of a larger volume. The serial plays were bound together with *Pericles* – the signatures for the histories run A-Q4<sup>v</sup>, *Pericles* runs R1-Aa<sup>4</sup>, Bb1 – and it seems likely that Pavier’s plan was to bind these with a further seven plays. Though the exact sequence of events is impossible to determine, on 3 May the Court of the Stationers’ Company ordered its members that “It is thought fitt & so ordered That no playes that his Ma<sup>tyes</sup> players do play shalbe printed w<sup>th</sup>out consent of some of them” (quoted in Murphy 2003, 40)<sup>10</sup>. This decree, barring publication of King’s Men plays without their consent, was prompted by a letter of complaint sent to the Court by the Lord Chamberlain, William, Earl of Pembroke, on behalf of the playing company<sup>11</sup>. Whether pre-empting, interrupting, or responding to Pavier’s plan, the other seven plays were not printed as a set (with continuous signatures): *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *King Lear*, *The Chronicle History of Henry the Fifth*, *Sir John Oldcastle*, and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Although the other seven plays were printed singly, these ten plays (total) were also sometimes sold as a bound-together set of quartos<sup>12</sup>. Only *The Chronicle History of Henry*

<sup>10</sup> It is generally assumed that the reason seven of the Pavier Quartos bear false dates represents the stationer’s attempt to somehow circumvent the ruling banning further printings. See Kirschbaum 1955, 198-99 and Kastan 1999, 84-85.

<sup>11</sup> For the relationship between the Pavier Quartos and the injunction, see Murphy 2003, 39-41.

<sup>12</sup> The evidence for this lies in the unusual absence of stab-stitch holes for sewing and binding. As Zachary Lesser and Peter Stallybrass note, “Of the Folger’s nine copies or part-copies of *The Whole Contention*, only three have stab-stitch holes, while six do not (and were therefore sold not as pamphlets but as parts of bound

*the Fifth* failed to identify Shakespeare as solo author on its title-page. All of the plays had been published before, and the title-page attribution remained the same in the Pavier version for seven of the plays: *Pericles, A Yorkshire Tragedy, The Merchant of Venice, The Merry Wives of Windsor, King Lear, and A Midsummer Night's Dream* were all still attributed to Shakespeare<sup>13</sup>; while *The Chronicle History of Henry the Fifth* was still issued anonymously<sup>14</sup>. The plays newly attributed to Shakespeare are, therefore, *1 Sir John Oldcastle* and the two plays that form *The Whole Contention*.

1623

On 8 November 1623, two prominent London stationers, Edward Blount and Isaac Jaggard, enter into the Stationers' Register "Mr William Shakespeers Comedyes Histories, and Tragedyes" (Arber 1875-94, 4:107). In doing so, they enter the names of sixteen plays to be published that are "not formerly Entred to other men"; that is, that have not been entered previously by other stationers. Included among the "Histories" is "The thirde parte of Henry y<sup>e</sup> sixt". Later that month, *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies* is published. In the catalogue's second section on Histories, which run in historical chronological sequence from *King John* to *Henry the Eighth* there appear three plays together on the *First, Second, and Third Part of King Henry the Sixth*, followed by *The Life and Death of Richard the Third*. The *Second* and *Third* parts reveal much verbal and narrative overlap with, respectively, the earlier-printed *Contention* and *True Tragedy*. Indeed, the *Third* part includes the exact line

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books); of their six copies of *King Lear*, four have stab-stitch holes and two do not. Of the Huntington's nine 'Pavier Quartos', only two have stab-stich holes" (Lesser and Stallybrass 2015, 129n18).

<sup>13</sup> See William Shakespeare, *Merchant of Venice* 1600 Q1; William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* 1600 Q1; William Shakespeare, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* 1602 Q1; William Shakespeare, *King Lear* 1608 Q1; and William Shakespeare, *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* 1609 Q1.

<sup>14</sup> It did, however, repeat that "the Lord Chamberlaine his Seruants" performed it "sundry times", a possible indicator of the play's authorship and provenance; Shakespeare's company, for whom he was lead dramatist, performed under the aegis of the Lord Chamberlain from 1594 to 1603 (the same company was identified as The Lord Hunsdon's Men from late summer 1596 until 17 March 1597, when they reverted to the other title).

witnessed in *True Tragedy* that is played upon in *Groats-worth* and *Acolastus*: “Oh Tygres Heart, wrapt in a Womans Hide” (sig. o6r; 4.137). The *First* part is seen in print for the first time.

### *Anonymity*

Drawing strictly from the known early performance history and print publications, it is evident that Shakespeare-as-author is only first firmly connected in print in 1619 to a set of serial plays about the life of Henry VI. The two history plays, *The Whole Contention*, had been published separately earlier, both anonymously. In 1619 these history plays were published as part of a larger collection of plays, most but not all of which had been attributed to Shakespeare before. Only *1 Sir John Oldcastle* and the plays in *The Whole Contention* are newly attributed to Shakespeare in 1619. In terms of the documentary evidence outlined until 1619, there is no more reason to trust the attribution of *The Whole Contention* to Shakespeare than *1 Sir John Oldcastle* (he is as linked to the Wars of the Roses through *Richard III* as to Oldcastle through the *Henry IV* cycle), while the short true-crime play *A Yorkshire Tragedy* holds as strong a claim to Shakespeare’s authorship at this time as *Pericles* and *King Lear*<sup>15</sup>. If, in 1619, you were minded to trust Pavier’s attribution for *True Tragedy*, the *Groats-worth* business and the opaque allusion to “Shake-scene” could now be re-read as alluding to Shakespeare.

Much changes with the 1623 publication. Of the Pavier plays, *Pericles*, *1 Sir John Oldcastle*, and *A Yorkshire Tragedy* are all out. Near-identical versions of *The Merchant of Venice* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* are in. The Folio *King Lear* is slightly variant to the version already published, including some 300 new lines while lacking 100 lines found in the 1608 and 1619 quartos. The Folio

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<sup>15</sup> Francis Meres identifies both *The Merchant of Venice* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* as Shakespeare’s in 1598. Shakespeare’s authorship of 1 and 2 *Henry IV* is well attested in early editions (in 1599 Q2 and 1600 Q1, respectively), to which *The Chronicle History of Henry the Fifth* and *Merry Wives* bear a clear relationship. *Sir John Oldcastle*, given the strong likelihood that John Oldcastle was the original character name given to John Falstaff, would also suggest a plausible Shakespearean connection. See Taylor 1986.

versions of *Merry Wives* and *Henry V* vary much more radically from their respective earlier quarto versions. And, the focus of this essay, the Folio plays of 2 *Henry VI* and 3 *Henry VI* represent significant longer and highly variant versions of *Contention* and *True Tragedy*. That they are ‘versions’ of each other, as with the versions of *Merry Wives* and *Henry V*, is evidenced by overlap in narrative, character, and language. The identification of Shakespeare as author of the Folio *Henry VI* plays (as also Folio *King Lear*, *Merry Wives*, *Henry V*) leads to the default position that Shakespeare is also the author, or co-author, of the earlier published substantively similar versions. So, now, the opaque documentary evidence about the plays’ authorship above, which only first firmly connected Shakespeare to *Contention* and *True Tragedy* in 1619, must be re-read with Shakespeare’s authorship in mind.

If authoritatively Shakespearean, why is he not identified as their author until 1619? This question is essentially unanswerable, but we can at least contextualise this situation of anonymity. *Contention* (1594, 1600) and *True Tragedy* (1595, 1600) are both published anonymously twice in Shakespeare’s lifetime. The anonymous first publications of *Contention* and *True Tragedy* in 1594 and 1595 are actually not at all unusual in the context of Shakespeare’s early career. The first preserved play title-page to identify Shakespeare as author is *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, published in 1598 (London; STC 22294). Earlier anonymously published Shakespeare plays are *Arden of Faversham* (1592), *Titus Andronicus* (1594), *Edward III* (1594), *Richard II* (1597), *Richard III* (1597), and *Romeo and Juliet* (1597)<sup>16</sup>. The conditions of authorial composition do not seem to matter: the first three of these plays are co-authored; the cluster of 1597 printings are all considered solo authored. None mention Shakespeare, or, for that matter, anyone else.

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<sup>16</sup> The 1598 quarto of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* is almost certainly not the first edition of the play: its title-page adverts to the fact that it has been “Newly corrected and augmented By W. Shakespere”, and a book catalogue listing exists for a 1597 copy of the play. We cannot know whether this lost first edition had Shakespeare’s name on the title-page. The catalogue belonged to Edward, Viscount Conway. See Freeman and Grinke 2002.

The anonymous publication of *Contention* and *True Tragedy* in 1600 is a bit more surprising. From 1598, Shakespeare's name begins to appear regularly on play title-pages: excluding *Contention* and *True Tragedy* for now, of the fourteen plays now attributed in part or wholly to Shakespeare published between 1598 and 1600, nine identify Shakespeare as author<sup>17</sup>. Three (or, possibly, four) are reprints of plays that had previously been published anonymously with the same title: Q2 *Richard III*, Q2 *Richard II* and 1 *Henry IV* (and, possibly, Q2? *Love's Labour's Lost*). That is, from 1598, there appears to be a conspicuous effort to identify Shakespeare as the author of new or heretofore anonymous plays. This is a trend that would continue. Of the twenty Shakespearean plays published between 1601 and 1616, including five first editions, all but two identify Shakespeare as author on the title-page (Q2 *Chronicle History of Henry the Fifth* in 1602 and Q3 *Titus Andronicus* in 1611).

We cannot say with any certainty why some of Shakespeare's works were published anonymously and others were not. What is evident, however, is that Shakespeare's name was marketed more conspicuously from the late 1590s onwards. Not only were previously anonymous plays now reprinted with Shakespeare's name prominently displayed, but plays were also falsely attributed to his pen. For example, play printings of *The London Prodigal* (1605; "By William Shakespeare"), *The Puritan Widow* (1607; "Written by W. S."), *A Yorkshire Tragedy* (1608; "Written by W. Shakspeare") and *The Troublesome Reign of King John* (second edition 1611; "Written by W. Sh.") each include false ascriptions to Shakespeare or plausibly

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<sup>17</sup> Sixteen printings of fourteen plays: Q1 and Q2 1 *Henry IV* (1598); Q(2?) *Love's Labour's Lost* (1598); Q2 and Q3 *Richard II* (1598); Q2 *Richard III* (1598); Q2 *Arden of Faversham* (1599); Q2 *Romeo and Juliet* (1599); Q3 1 *Henry IV* (1599); Q2 *Edward III* (1599); Q1 2 *Henry IV* (1600); Q1 *Henry V* (1600); Q1 *Much Ado About Nothing* (1600); Q1 *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1600); Q2 *Titus Andronicus* (1600); Q1 *The Merchant of Venice* (1600). Ten title-page ascriptions for nine plays: Q1 1 *Henry IV* (1598); Q(2?) *Love's Labour's Lost* (1598); Q2 and Q3 *Richard II* (1598); Q2 *Richard III* (1598); Q3 1 *Henry IV* (1599); Q1 2 *Henry IV* (1600); Q1 *Much Ado About Nothing* (1600); Q1 *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1600); and Q1 *The Merchant of Venice* (1600).

imply his authorial contribution<sup>18</sup>. Such title-page ascriptions to Shakespeare in his own lifetime, authentic and false, indicate that there was at least some value attached to marketing his name.

Persistently anonymous Shakespearean plays form, then, a rather curious sub-set within the accepted corpus. *Contention* and *True Tragedy*, along with *Arden of Faversham*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Edward III*, and *Romeo and Juliet* represent six of the seven Shakespearean plays published only anonymously in his lifetime. (I will turn to the seventh momentarily.) All six of these plays are printed more than once before his death, and all six are printed twice between 1592 and 1600. Neither *Arden of Faversham* nor *Edward III* make the Folio cut; perhaps notably, these are the only two of the six not reprinted or known to be revived between 1600 and 1623. The surviving printed texts for both *Arden of Faversham* (London, 1592; STC 733 and London, 1599; STC 734) and *Edward III* (London, 1596; STC 7501 and London, 1599; STC 7502) are relatively clean and unproblematic texts. That they, rather than *Titus Andronicus* or *Romeo and Juliet*, or the versions of the *Henry VI* plays, were omitted from the First Folio, may be as likely a product of circumstance (e.g., unavailable, forgotten, etc.) as choice. The other two plays are identified as Shakespeare's in print during his lifetime. Francis Meres, commending Shakespeare's "most excellent" skills in both comedy and history in *Palladis Tamia* (1598), lists *Titus Andronicus* and *Romeo and Juliet* alongside ten others<sup>19</sup>.

We need not search for a pattern to explain why a sub-set of Shakespeare's plays might be published anonymously: the explanation for each could be entirely different. However, it would be careless not to observe that five of these six plays (excluding *Romeo and Juliet*, momentarily) share two notable qualities: (1) each

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<sup>18</sup> One possible early example of this is *Lochrine* (1595: "Newly set foorth, ouer-seene and corrected, / By W. S."), though it is difficult to see the point, or to gauge the effect, of this given Shakespeare's near invisibility in print, outside of the two narrative poems, by this stage.

<sup>19</sup> The rest of list comprises six (or seven) plays attributed to Shakespeare in early printed versions (*Love's Labour's Lost*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Richard II*, *Richard III*, *Henry IV* [meaning either the first or both parts]), three plays only first published, and thereby attributed to Shakespeare, in the First Folio (*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Comedy of Errors*, and *King John*), and one unperformed or 'lost' play (*Love's Labour's Won*).

belongs to the earliest part of Shakespeare's career, almost certainly before the formation of the Lord Chamberlain's Men in 1594; and (2) each was co-authored. Either quality may factor into their anonymous publication, but I think the relative *earliness* of the five plays is more significant for several reasons. In all five cases, the reprints are based upon the earlier-published editions (rather than the underlying manuscript). The title-pages do not change significantly other than to either enhance the attraction of the play in question (e.g., the title-page to 1600 Q2 *Titus Andronicus* adds Shakespeare's playing company "the Lorde Chamberlaine[*s* Men]" to its list of companies) and to note any change in the stationers involved (indicating intellectual property rights to the work and also those involved in its production and sale). In each case, someone thought it was worthwhile re-issuing the play, but the content did not change. In some cases, the rights to publish the text changed (*Titus Andronicus*), in others it did not (*Contention*, *True Tragedy*). In either scenario one could suggest reasons for why a change might not be introduced: a retaining owner might not think to change what had already sold successfully, while a new owner might not know (or care) about the work's authorial provenance. But, I think most significantly, Shakespeare's contribution to these five plays – again, recalling that each is co-authored – pre-dates his joining the Lord Chamberlain's Men company. Of the twenty-seven canonical plays printed (and reprinted) in Shakespeare's name between 1598 and 1616, twenty-two identify both the name of the author and his company on the title-page. And the two non-canonical plays attributed or plausibly attributed in print to Shakespeare over this period – *Thomas Lord Cromwell* (by "W. S."; London, 1602; STC 21532 and London, 1613; STC 21533) and *A Yorkshire Tragedy* ("by VV Shakspeare"; London, 1608; STC 22340) – similarly record both author and company. Shakespeare and the Lord Chamberlain's Men/King's Men were, overwhelmingly in print, a package deal. His actions before 1594, primarily working on pieces with multiple authors and most likely for a variety of different companies, are much harder to pin down, and this is reflected in the print attributions for these early plays.

*Romeo and Juliet* is, perhaps, more of an outlier. It was only attributed to Shakespeare in the undated (1622?) fourth quarto

edition. The first quarto of 1597 is a highly variant version of the play to that found in later quartos and the First Folio. It is some 26% shorter in length than the 1599 second quarto (upon which subsequent printings are based), but follows the same general narrative, character trajectory, and with much verbal overlap. John Danter is identified as printer on its title-page. Danter is a largely overlooked figure who looms large in the early print trade associated with Shakespeare. He is one of the printers of the incendiary *Greenes, groats-worth of witte* (1592), which seems to slander Shakespeare. He also first enters *Titus Andronicus* in the Stationers' Register on 6 February 1594, appears to transfer the publishing rights soon after, but is retained as the printer of the anonymous first quarto which appears later that year<sup>20</sup>. There is no Stationers' Register entry for *Romeo and Juliet*, but it seems likely that Danter, as the only person identified, was both printer and publisher. He probably transferred his license to publish the play soon after. The also-anonymous 1599 second quarto, published by Cuthbert Burby and printed by Thomas Creede, offers a "newly corrected, augmented, and amended" version. While Danter's actions do not explain how or why *Titus Andronicus* and *Romeo and Juliet* were published anonymously, his quick transfer of license in both cases suggests that his priority was to capitalise quickly. The title-pages to both anonymous first quartos opt to highlight the popularity and theatrical provenance of the plays: "The most lamentable Romaine tragedie of Titus Andronicus As it was plaide by the right honourable the Earle of Darbie, Earl of Pembroke, and

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<sup>20</sup> The 1594 first quarto of *Titus Andronicus* was printed by John Danter for Edward White and Thomas Millington. The title-page to the 1600 second quarto printing of *Titus Andronicus* only records Edward White's involvement. Millington, however, transferred the rights of the play to Thomas Pavier on 19 July 1602. Curiously, the 1611 third quarto recorded White's name once more. Both Millington and White, therefore, thought that they had the rights to the play: Millington in transferring it to Pavier in 1602 and White in publishing it again in 1611. Discussing this issue, Lukas Erne concludes that "the explanation which best accounts for the evidence is that Danter transferred the rights in *Titus* to White and Millington after entering it but before the play was published" and that the two men functioned as publishers as well as book-sellers for the first quarto (Erne 2013, 139-40). Pavier later chose, for whatever reason (rights, economics), to not include it in his 1619 collection.



Earl of Sussex their seruants” and “An excellent conceited tragedie of Romeo and Juliet As it hath been often (with great applause) plaid publicly, by the right Honourable the L. of Hunsdon his Seruants”.

That the new-and-improved second and third quartos of *Romeo and Juliet* were published anonymously is hard to explain. One curious overlap is that the same stationer, Cuthbert Burby, arranged for the anonymous publication of *Edward III* (1596 and 1599) and the second quarto of *Romeo and Juliet* (1599). Above, I noted that two plays, *Richard III* and *Richard II* (and, possibly, *Love’s Labour’s Lost*), were first issued anonymously before being identified as Shakespeare’s in his own lifetime, contrasting these with the persistently anonymous *Contention* and *True Tragedy*. Both of the *Richard* plays were only first published in 1597 and re-issued within a year with the Shakespeare attribution included. The biggest change with these re-issued plays, which were substantively reprints of the first editions, was the inclusion of Shakespeare’s name on the title-pages. In other words, Shakespeare’s name was added to enhance the commercial appeal of these works. With *Romeo and Juliet* and *Edward III*, Burby does not seem to recognise the attraction of Shakespeare’s name. This is all the more surprising given that the first play ever attributed to Shakespeare in print, *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, is published by Burby the year before. Looking at Burby’s catalogue of published plays in the 1590s, only Robert Wilson’s *The Cobbler’s Prophecy* also identifies an author on its title-page. The other six, including *Romeo and Juliet* and *Edward III*, are all anonymous: *Mother Bombie* (1594, 1598; attributed to John Lyly), *A Knack to Know an Honest Man* (1596; author unknown), *Orlando Furioso* (1599; attributed to Robert Greene), *George a Greene* (1599; author unknown<sup>21</sup>). Q2 *Romeo and Juliet*’s anonymous printing may then be better explained by the stationer

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<sup>21</sup> *George a Greene* is published anonymously (London, 1599; STC 12212). Two inscriptions on the title-page to a copy of the play quarto held by the Folger Library, made by the Master of the Revels, George Buc, attribute the play variously to an unidentified minister who played the title role (the claim is attributed to Shakespeare: “Teste W. Shakespeare”) and Robert Greene (as identified by Edward Juby). See Nelson 1998.

involved; a Burby play-text at that time is more likely than not to be published anonymously.

The seventh Shakespearean play only to be published anonymously during Shakespeare's lifetime is *The Chronicle History of Henry the Fifth*, which was first printed in 1600 and reprinted in 1602, and, as we have seen, 1619. This play is a shorter, substantively alternative version of Folio *Henry V*. The quarto text is roughly half the length of the version included in the Folio, omitting the Folio text's Prologue, Epilogue, and Choruses and greatly cutting Henry's extended speeches, while following a similar narrative arc. Again, there is little doubt that both texts are versions of one another, and the broad consensus is that the quarto text, however transmitted, post-dates the Folio; that is, that it is a cut version of the text that underlies the Folio text. Indeed, that both plays are versions of each other was recognised early: a title-page inscription on a copy of the quarto text possibly made by George Buc, then Master of the Revels, notes that the play is "much ye same w[i]th y[a]t in Shakespeare"<sup>22</sup>. If by Buc, this must have been written between 1610 (when Buc became the Master) and 1622 (when Buc appears to have gone insane), and therefore precedes the publication of the Folio text. Again, if by Buc, it demonstrates the Master of the Revels' awareness of the existence of, and correspondence between, different versions of the play. It firmly attributes another unpublished version to Shakespeare alone (i.e., "that in Shakespeare"), while simultaneously announcing the correspondence between it and the printed version (i.e., "much the same"). Whether the author of the inscription had read the other version or seen it performed or both is unknown. What is known is that the author was able to distinguish the authorial authority of one version from another, while still observing a correspondence between the versions that we can recognise today.

As with Burby above, there is another stationer figure who connects several of these anonymously printed Shakespearean

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<sup>22</sup> Alan H. Nelson records this inscription in a copy held at the Huntington Library; he notes that the inscription may be in Buc's hand but it is not certain. The inscription was recorded at <http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~ahnelson/BUC/quartos.html>, but this website is now retired. For further discussion of this inscription, see Dutton 2016, 174.

plays. Thomas Millington was involved with the publication of the first and second editions of *Contention* (1594, 1600) and *True Tragedy* (1595, 1600). Millington, as we have seen, is also one of the stationers involved with the publication of the anonymous *Titus Andronicus* (1594, 1600) and the publisher of *The Chronicle History of Henry the Fifth* (1600). These are the only Shakespearean plays which Millington publishes. Three are shorter, substantively alternative versions of plays that would later appear in the First Folio. The fourth, *Titus Andronicus*, most likely dates from the very beginning of Shakespeare's career (c. 1589) and has passed through at least four company hands at this stage. All are anonymous. The author who connects these four works, Shakespeare, seems in all instances fairly distant.

### *Shakespeare and Others*

So far, I have been searching for connections to Shakespeare in the trace documentary history of the *Henry VI* plays. I do so because this has to be our default position. The *Henry VI* plays are included in the First Folio, and there is no reason to distrust the authority of its compilers. Heminges and Condell, sharers in Shakespeare's old company, and evidently close friends of the author (the author left both men money in his will, along with Richard Burbage, to purchase rings in his memory), lend authority to those works included in terms of both their authorship and text. From the Stationers' Register to title-page ascriptions to the First Folio preliminaries, I have sifted through the documentary evidence that connects one man, Shakespeare, to a set of plays about the life of Henry VI that exist in multiple versions. I then situated the anonymous publication of the early versions of these plays in the context of Shakespeare's early career and the publishing industry. The plays' earliness was considered one significant factor, but so too their anonymity seems to be tied to the nature of the texts. Of the set of seven play-texts that were persistently published anonymously in Shakespeare's lifetime, five were either excluded (*Arden of Faversham*, *Edward III*) or appeared in substantively different versions (*Contention*, *True Tragedy*, *Chronicle History of Henry the Fifth*). The other two plays had already been confirmed as

Shakespeare's by Francis Meres in 1598. *Titus Andronicus* appeared in the First Folio with a newly added scene. *Romeo and Juliet* appeared in its hastily re-issued longer version in 1599; this version had again been re-issued in 1622 with Shakespeare's name on the title-page.

This search for traces of Shakespeare is complicated by recent work in attribution and textual studies. It is now thought that all three plays about the life and times of Henry VI are co-authored. In the *Authorship Companion* to the *New Oxford Shakespeare*, Gary Taylor and I set out these findings at length<sup>23</sup>. For *2 Henry VI*, we argue that an original version of this play was written by Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, and most likely another author, as-yet-unidentified. An important caveat is that we do not claim that this original version is represented by *Contention*. Our 'best guess' date for this original version is 1590. For *3 Henry VI* we propose that an original version of the play was written by Shakespeare, Marlowe, and most likely another author, also as-yet-unidentified. Again, importantly, we do not claim that this original version is represented by *True Tragedy*. Our 'best guess' for that original version is 'late 1590'; that is, after the original version of *2 Henry VI*. For *1 Henry VI*, we argue that an original version of the play was written by Thomas Nashe, Marlowe, and another as-yet-unidentified author. Shakespeare may or may not have been an original co-author, but his most substantive contribution to the play seems to belong to a slightly later period. An original version of this play was completed by March 1592, taking into account the entry in Henslowe's account book. And we argue that Shakespeare revised all three parts, of which at least two he was an original co-author, at some period between 1594 and 1597, but likely soon after the formation of the Chamberlain's Men, which happened sometime in the second half of 1594 – our 'best guess' for the Shakespearean revisions and/or adaptation is 1595 – and he did so to create a unified tetralogy of plays, along with *Richard III*, for the newly formed company. The First Folio versions of all three *Henry VI* plays therefore include stratified writing in multiple ways in terms of authorship and chronology. They each bear textual

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<sup>23</sup> See Taylor and Loughnane 2017, 493-99, 513-17.

witness to a time, before 1593 (when Marlowe died), when two or more authors produced a version of the plays that were later revised by Shakespeare.

I must now not only search for Shakespeare, but Marlowe, Nashe, and any trace of other unknown authors too. The *Groats-worth* business provides an entry point. As *3 Henry VI* has always been primarily associated with Shakespeare in modern scholarship, in full knowledge of its inclusion in the First Folio, there has been little consideration given to how oddly targeted the allusion is. An author writing in 1592 assumes that a reader could connect to Shakespeare an adapted version of a phrase they can only have heard onstage: modernised as “tiger’s heart wrapped in a woman’s hide”. Perhaps it makes better sense when one considers that this section of *Groats-worth* is explicitly addressed “To those Gentlemen [...] that spend their wits in making plaies”, and that others obliquely referred to, “thou famous gracer of Tragedians” and “yong Iuuenall, that byting Satyrist”, have been traditionally identified as, respectively, Marlowe and Nashe (sig. E4<sup>v</sup>-F1<sup>r</sup>). Another “fellow” scholar “about this Cittie”, who is “in nothing inferiour” to Marlowe and Nashe, is, like the author-persona of Greene, “driuen [...] to extreme shifts” (sig. E4<sup>v</sup>-F1<sup>r</sup>). This dramatist has been plausibly identified as George Peele, the co-author of *Titus Andronicus*<sup>24</sup>. As I argue elsewhere, the implied charge of plagiarism against Shakespeare (“beautified with our feathers”) may allude to Shakespeare’s use of a partial script by Peele to complete *Titus Andronicus* (Loughnane 2016). But it may also allude just as plausibly to something suspect in Shakespeare’s dealings with Marlowe and Nashe: as we have seen, both men’s writing has been detected in the *Henry VI* plays.

The fall-out to the *Groats-worth* allusion is familiar territory: Nashe denies authorship of this “triuiall lying Pamphlet” in an epistolary preface to the second edition of his *Pierce Penilesse* (1592; sig. ¶v), while Chettle, now considered the genuine author of the piece, denies his involvement, writing “it was all *Greenes*, not mine nor Maister *Nashes*, as some vniustly haue affirmed” in *Kind-harts Dream* (1592; sig. A4<sup>r</sup>). He notes how the piece caused offence to

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<sup>24</sup> The author, perhaps pointedly, swears “by sweet S. George” in this passage.

“one or two” of the “play-makers” alluded to. Chettle says he knows neither man, and that he is especially glad he does not know one of them (presumably Marlowe, though it could be Peele; Chettle makes it clear that he knows Nashe), but he expresses regret for allowing the publication of such offensive material about the other:

I am as sory, as if the originall fault had beene my fault, because my selfe haue seene his demeanor no lesse ciuill than he exelent in the qualitie he professes: Besides, diuers of worship haue reported, his vprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in witting, that aprooues his Art. (sig. A4<sup>r</sup>)

This passage is generally assumed to refer to Shakespeare. The support of “divers of worship” (meaning those of gentlemen status) is as plausible in 1592 for Peele, a university-educated scholar, as Shakespeare. But Peele seems less likely to have taken offence at the comments in *Groats-worth*, which largely paint him as a victim of sorts.

I draw attention to the *Groats-worth* kerfuffle to highlight its foregrounding of issues of authorship. One author is offended by another author, and the identity of both the offended and offender is in question. Nashe denies authorship. Chettle denies authorship. And Greene, most importantly, cannot decide the matter from beyond the grave. Shakespeare, almost certainly the “onely Shake-scene”, seems to take offence at whatever duplicitous action is implied by “beautified with our feathers”.

For modern readers the allusion to Shakespeare might seem so oblique as to make Shakespeare’s response appear overly-sensitive, yet the publisher of *Groats-worth*, William Wright, appears to have recognised its libellous danger: the entry for the Stationers’ Register reads “uppon the perill of Henrye Chettle” (Arber 1875-94, 2:620). Shakespeare appears to have registered his offence among friends soon after publication, and Chettle must make pains to play down his role. (Greene dies on 3 September; *Groats-worth* was entered in the Stationers’ Register on 20 September; and both responses by Nashe and Chettle are published before the year is out.) By doing so, Shakespeare, as author, draws an explicit link between the line

parodied from *True Tragedy*/3 *Henry VI* and himself. In rejecting the perceived insult, he identifies as author of this line from the play.

But just how readily would anyone have identified Shakespeare with this line from a then-unpublished stage play? Living in a world where *True Tragedy* and the First Folio exist, scholars can identify the line in question, but it beggars belief that this one mid-scene line would be instantly familiar to readers in 1592. Relatedly, would any reader in 1592 have identified Shakespeare as author of this line, that scene, or the entire play? The author of *Groats-worth* seems to recognise that Shakespeare is the author of this line from this play. By parodying it, he, the author, is making an explicit connection between the line and Shakespeare-as-author. An attentive reader in 1592, working through this gossipy section about London's dramatists, might have caught the pun on Shakespeare in "Shake-scene", might just possibly have recognised and remembered the line from a stage play she or he had seen, and put two and two together. Yet there is something of an insider's game about the *Groats-worth* business. After all, the reference to "Shake-scene" comes *after* the parodied line from the *Henry VI* play. Rather the allusion seems intended for those who might immediately recognise the frame of reference for the parody, and who might know who wrote this specific line in this co-authored play. Otherwise, after all, the allusion fails to work; modern scholars only recognise it because of the subsequent print tradition. It is a joke about an actor-dramatist for actors and dramatists that foregrounds the role of authorship.

Shakespeare's authorship of the "tiger's heart" line is supported by recent attribution scholarship. Both the studies of Craig and Burrows (2012) and Segarra et al. (2016) firmly attribute the fourth scene of Folio 3 *Henry VI* to Shakespeare. (As the line is the same in *True Tragedy* as in 3 *Henry VI* – and indeed almost all of York's 39-line speech is identical or broadly similar – we can assume shared authorship.) It is striking that the charge of plagiarism against Shakespeare is in connection to the third part of the tetralogy from 1 *Henry VI* to *Richard III*. Attribution and dramaturgical evidence suggest that Shakespeare took over an incomplete script by Peele in completing *Titus Andronicus*, which could at least be interpreted as a form of plagiarism: passing off a co-authored composite work

as one's own; indeed, interestingly, it is the only coauthored work that Meres identifies as Shakespeare's own in 1598. So, why not quote from *Titus Andronicus*, especially in a text where the titular author of *Greene's Groatsworth* identifies with Peele's struggles? The recent attribution studies that identify multiple hands, including Marlowe's, in the *Henry VI* plays, direct our attention to the modes of co-authorship that produced each of the plays in the set of works.

Gary Taylor offers an exhaustive account of the evidence for why *1 Henry VI* post-dates the two other plays (Taylor 1995). In brief, the plays 2 and 3 *Henry VI* do not require any reader or audience familiarity with *1 Henry VI*, while the first part intermittently assumes a reader or audience's knowledge of the later parts. Shakespeare's contribution to *1 Henry VI*, the only extant version of which is the Folio copy, actually appears to be fairly limited: scenes II.iv, IV.ii, and IV.v (traditionally IV.iv). It is largely agreed that Nashe is the author of the opening Act (I.i-vii), while Marlowe's hand has been most persuasively identified in III.ii-viii (traditionally III.ii-iv) and V.iii-v. The authorship of the rest of the play is contested. As noted above, all three Folio texts of the *Henry VI* plays appear to have been revised by Shakespeare sometime after the formation of the Lord Chamberlain's Men playing company in late 1594. As a project for Shakespeare, this makes good sense: the newly formed company has four plays, including Shakespeare's *Richard III*, about the Wars of the Roses that could be performed serially if parts of it were slightly revised to allow for greater continuity.

The play represented by Folio *1 Henry VI* is commonly associated with the performance of a play recorded ambiguously as "hary the vj" in Philip Henslowe's 'Diary' or account book. As we have seen, Henslowe marked the play as "ne" in his account book, meaning it debuts on 3 March 1592<sup>25</sup>. If the original composition of "hary the vj" post-dates the original composition of the two other parts, and Shakespeare was involved in writing the other parts, then why was he not part of the consortium of authors who wrote the prequel? There are only two options for this: either Shakespeare was not asked to be involved or Shakespeare did not want to be

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<sup>25</sup> See note 4.



involved. Both scenarios are intriguing to consider. With the former, Shakespeare's involvement was not wanted, required, or facilitated for whatever reason: proximity, company involvement, social network, reputation, etc. With the latter, Shakespeare himself chose to opt out for whatever reason, which might be the same: proximity, company involvement, social network, reputation, but also his own schedule and agenda. What is striking is that in 1592 two new plays in this specific Wars of the Roses cycle debuted: one, "Harey the vj", a prequel to two plays already in existence; and two, *Richard III*, a sequel to the same two plays in existence. Shakespeare was likely uninvolved in the original composition of former collaborative enterprise, while he is the sole author of the latter. The furore of late 1592, clearly about authorial practices, may emerge into sharper focus: is the author of *Groats-worth* alluding to Shakespeare striking it out alone with *Richard III*, with a play that builds upon earlier collaborative serial work ("beautified with our feathers")? This is just a conjecture, but one that foregrounds issues arising from collaboration, giving consideration to how and why authors choose who they work with or do not.

One of the authors of the prequel, Nashe, describes the writing of history plays such as those in this Wars of the Roses cycle in the earlier-cited *Pierce Penilesse*. This is the same text in which he denies authorship of *Groats-worth*. In a passage defending plays (and the activity of play-going) as "a rare exercise of vertue", he clearly alludes to the history prequel in which he has recently had a hand, noting:

How would it haue ioyed braue *Talbot* (the terror of the French) to thinke that after he had lyne two hundred yeares in his Tombe, hee should triumphe againe on the Stage, and haue his bones newe embalmed with the teares of ten thousand spectators at least, (at seuerall times) who in the Tragedian that represents his person, imagine they behold him fresh bleeding. (sig. F3<sup>r</sup>)

With the phrase "the terror of the French", Nashe is quoting from his own section of the prequel (I.vi.20), yet he never explicitly identifies himself as author. This self-quotation is not without irony, as Sarah Neville astutely observes. The speaker in the play,

Talbot himself, is repeating a phrase spoken by his French captors: “By explicitly quoting not only himself and Talbot, but also Talbot’s ironic repurposing of others’ words, Nashe’s commendation of history plays suggests that he saw a kind of symbiosis existing between ‘buried’ sources and ‘living’ performance” (Shakespeare 2017, 2:2389). Perhaps an attentive reader of *Pierce Penilesse* in 1592 would have recognised the quotation from a play they had seen performed? Perhaps they knew the same author they were reading had contributed to that play? Perhaps they connected the quotation to the author? Perhaps, or perhaps not. Given the hasty retreat beaten by Chettle and Nashe, we can only be certain that at least one attentive reader certainly did.

There are no known allusions in either Marlowe’s own work or that of others that connect him to the *Henry VI* plays. He dies before any version of these plays appears in print. Given Marlowe’s involvement, the anonymous early printings of *Contention* (1594) and *True Tragedy* (1595) are more surprising. Marlowe’s death in 1593 was a *cause célèbre* among those of a literary and/or puritanical bent, producing several accounts in the years that follow. See, for example, George Peele’s description of “Marley [...] unhappy in [his] end” in *The Honour of the Garter* (London, 1593; STC 19539; sig. A1<sup>v</sup>), or Thomas Beard’s *Theatre of God’s Judgement*, where “Marlin”’s (“Marlow” in the annotation) death is a result of his “atheisme & impiety” and he is described as “a Poet of scurrilitie” (London, 1597; STC 1659; sig. K5<sup>r</sup>)<sup>26</sup>. Marlowe’s death, as well as the punishment and fall of his ex-housemate, the dramatist Thomas Kyd, was likely notorious. This rise in Marlowe’s prominence either coincides with, or translates into, the sudden visibility of his name in print. Three of his plays are first published in 1594 and

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<sup>26</sup> See also William Rankins’ *Seven Satires* where he alludes to Marlowe’s atheism in a passage that refers to Machiavelli and Turks: “such as haue hell-borne Atheisme taught” (London, 1598; STC 20700; sig. B4<sup>r</sup>). Francis Meres in *Palladis Tamia* (1598) picks up on Beard’s criticisms explicitly and claims “so our tragical poet *Marlow* for his Epicurisme and Atheisme had a tragicall death” (London, 1598; STC 17834; sig. Oo7<sup>v</sup>-8<sup>r</sup>). William Vaughan in *The Golden Grove* (1600), in a section about atheists, recounts Marlowe’s death in Deptford and cautions the reader to “see the effects of Gods iustice” (London, 1600; STC 24610; sig. C4<sup>v</sup>-C5<sup>r</sup>).

Marlowe's name is prominently displayed on each title-page: *The Massacre at Paris* ("Written by Christopher Marlow"; London; STC 17423), *Edward II* ("Written by Chri. Marlow Gent"; London; STC 17437), and *Dido, Queen of Carthage* ("Written by Christopher Marlowe, and Thomas Nash. Gent."; London; STC 17441). If Marlowe's involvement with the plays underlying *Contention* and *True Tragedy* was well known – that is, if authentically *Marlovian* – it is surprising in this context that Thomas Millington did not attempt to capitalise upon this upturn in interest in this author.

After the burst of Marlowe-attributed publications in 1594, things get a little quieter in the years that follow. *1 & 2 Tamburlaine* are re-issued in 1597, once more anonymously. Then, in the years 1598-1600, there develops an interest in Marlowe's poetry. His *Hero and Leander* is published on its own in 1598 ("By Christopher Marloe"; London; STC 17413), while, in the same year, *Hero and Leander* is published with a continuation by George Chapman ("begun by Christopher Marloe"; London; STC 17414). Henry Petowe also publishes his own continuation of the poem ("penned by that admired Poet *Marloe*"; sig. A3<sup>v</sup>), which does not include Marlowe's part (London, 1598; STC 19807). In 1600, Marlowe's translation of Lucan's *Pharsalia* is first published ("by Chr. Marlovv"; London; STC 16883.5), and, in a separate edition, Marlowe's incomplete *Hero and Leander* is published with *Pharsalia* ("by Christopher Marloe"; London; STC 17415). Thus, by 1600, of the eleven authentically Marlovian works published, only *1 & 2 Tamburlaine* were published anonymously. This can be explained, however, in that they were the only plays by Marlowe published during his lifetime (and before the furore surrounding his death), and subsequent reprintings were based upon the first copy; indeed, the only subsequent publications of *Tamburlaine*, which divided the two parts, *1 Tamburlaine* (London, 1605; STC 17428) and *2 Tamburlaine* (London, 1606; STC 17428a), were also published anonymously. The only subsequent substantively Marlovian texts to be issued, *Doctor Faustus* (A-Text 1604 "by Ch. Marl" [London; STC 17429]; B-Text 1616 "by Ch. Marklin" [London; STC 17432]) and *The Jew of Malta* (1633; "by Christopher Marlo" [London; STC 17412]) all identify the author by name.

*Conclusion; or, Searching in Jaggard's Shop*

That Thomas Millington's first publications of *Contention* and *True Tragedy* neglected to identify either Shakespeare or Marlowe as author requires some explanation. Looking back, it would seem economically prudent for the publisher to have done so. When Millington chose to make an investment in the plays, as he also did with *Titus Andronicus* and *The Chronicle History of Henry the Fifth*, he must have assumed there was some market for them and therefore probably knew of a version of these plays in performance. This need not necessarily mean he knew the identity of the authors involved, not least given the murky co-authorship of the plays underlying *Contention* and *True Tragedy*. But that said, Millington seems to have taken a curiously particular interest in publishing Shakespearean titles. That Shakespeare's name did not appear on the title-pages might then seem odd, but it is not inexplicable. Versions of *Contention* or *True Tragedy* might have been performed often; certainly, the one (non-Shakespearean) play in this cycle we do have records for, "harey the vj", was performed regularly. That the earliest of these plays in the (later established) cycle, first written c. 1590, were popular seems certain – inspiring, as they did, both a prequel in "Harey the vj" and sequel in *Richard III* – but that does not mean they were readily associated with Shakespeare or Marlowe or anyone else c. 1594-95 when Millington made his investment. As we have seen, Shakespeare's name did not appear on any printed play-text until 1598, so an attribution in 1594 or 1595 would have been an outlier. Marlowe's involvement as co-author of the plays underlying *Contention* and *True Tragedy* may have simply been unknown<sup>27</sup>. Shakespeare's adaptation of the three parts, post-1594 for Chamberlain's Men, probably made the connection between that specific author and this play-cycle much clearer. That Millington re-issued the plays in 1600 without emending the title-pages to add Shakespeare or anyone else's name could have been simply pragmatic; while the printer ornaments

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<sup>27</sup> The attribution evidence for the text underlying the Folio copies of *2 Henry VI* and *3 Henry VI*, albeit adapted by Shakespeare, suggest Marlowe was never the dominant hand in either collaboration. See Taylor and Loughnane 2017, 496, 498.

and details change between the mid-1590s and 1600 editions, the title-wording and layout is almost identical in both reprinting jobs. That reprints often failed to correct or augment relevant title-page details is common in the period<sup>28</sup>.

As we have seen, Shakespeare's earliest works, and particularly his early co-authored works, are those most likely to be published anonymously in his lifetime. These persistently anonymous works, or versions of works, are also those most likely to be excluded from the First Folio. Like *Contention* and *True Tragedy, Arden of Faversham* and *Edward III* are early co-authored plays that are published anonymously in Shakespeare's lifetime and excluded from the First Folio. Where *Contention* and *True Tragedy* differ from these other early anonymously printed co-authored works is that other versions of these plays are preserved in the First Folio. All modern scholars, working as we do in this post-First-Folio world, read *Contention* and *True Tragedy* with their respective Folio versions in mind. Reading one against the other, as we do now, we can tell that these are versions of the same play(s) and that the 1623 versions are not only longer but also superior. Before 1623, readers could only compare what they could purchase with what they might have seen on stage. Frequently disparaged by scholars as 'corrupt' or 'bad' quartos, *Contention* and *True Tragedy* were for a time the only versions of something that could otherwise be enjoyed intermittently in performance<sup>29</sup>. Given both plays were reprinted twice, for many readers this must have sufficed. But does this mean that *Contention* or *True Tragedy* had any authority in their own day?

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<sup>28</sup> For example, the title-page to the fourth quarto of *Richard III*, printed in 1605 (London; STC 22316), recorded that the play "hath bin lately acted by the Right Honourable the Lord Chamberlaine his seruants. Newly augmented, by William Shakespeare", a word-for-word reprint of the 1598 second quarto title-page description (London; STC 22315). The change in company title, post-1603, to "the Kings Maiesties seruants" is only first reflected in the 1612 fifth quarto (London; STC 22318).

<sup>29</sup> As this essay suggests, the perceived inferior quality of these highly variant shorter versions does not adequately explain their anonymous publication. See also Terri Bourus' "The Good Enough Quarto: *Hamlet* as a Material Object" (Bourus 2019), whose formula about 'good enough quartos' could be usefully applied here. The relative 'badness' of these texts, and especially *Contention*, is the subject of another forthcoming study by the present author.

No-one has found a George Buc (or someone similar) for *Contention, True Tragedy* and their First Folio counterparts – someone who compared the versions and said they are “much ye same w[i]th y[a]t in Shakespeare”. But, in fact, that missing figure has been hiding in plain sight. In 1987 William Montgomery demonstrated that the compilers of the First Folio consulted the 1619 third quarto printing of *The Whole Contention* for certain passages in what was to be *2 Henry VI* (Montgomery 1987, 175-78). As both the Pavier quarto and the Folio text were printed at Jaggard’s printing shop, that quarto text may have been readily available for consultation. So, too, it seems likely that those in Jaggard’s printing shop consulted the same quarto for passages in *3 Henry VI*, thereby acknowledging that it also represented a version of the same play. These actions seem almost incidental, but in their activity of remembering, searching, consulting, and inserting, the compilers of *2 Henry VI* recognised that the plays were versions of one another. Of these, remembering seems most significant. That they remembered the other texts, and how they acted upon this memory, tells us that they, too, recognised that the play-texts were versions of one another. Faced with corrupt passages in the manuscripts underlying the Folio texts, they had two choices: print what they could of the corrupted material, placing their trust in those textual witnesses, or substitute material in their place. Someone remembered the 1619 quartos and someone connected the versions. That someone did this may seem obvious to us today – we can all recognise that one text is a version of the other – and perhaps it was for those in the printing shop, too. But through their series of actions in the printing shop, beginning with someone remembering, we know that those early texts were granted at least some authority.

### *Coda*

Roland Barthes’ claims about the death of the author (1967), from which this volume takes its theme, have long held an influence in western criticism. Barthes’ critical position was that a literary work could and should be approached without consideration of the social and biographical context which produced it; that our

understanding of the author, and our conception of his or her intentions, actually imposes limits upon our reading of the text<sup>30</sup>. This chapter, in a more pragmatic way, is about the deaths of authors and what happens posthumously to their works. Marlowe is dead by the time *Contention* and *True Tragedy* are published anonymously. Shakespeare is dead by the time Heminges and Condell claim Shakespearean authority for the versions of these plays printed in the 1623 First Folio. We cannot know how readers between 1594/1595 and 1619 read and understood *Contention* and *True Tragedy*; whether they read these works biographically with the lives of the infamous Marlowe or the leading dramatist of the Chamberlain's/King's Men in mind; whether they found the printed texts flawed or in some way unauthoritative; whether they marked any connection between the texts available and those performed by Shakespeare's company. From 1619, readers may have felt more assured in connecting these versions to Shakespeare. From late 1623, readers of both the early versions and the Folio texts may have recognised their textual correspondence, conflating the Shakespearean authority of both versions. Until the last decade, at least within the Shakespearean critical complex, the early versions have helped sustain various arguments about Shakespeare's early career, company involvement, transmission via print, and so on. Now, with the recent attributions, these versions must be re-read with the other author figure of Marlowe in mind. These anonymous sixteenth-century texts, the sorts of works for which the authors are dead in both a real sense and, *à la* Barthes, theoretical sense, have, over a series of claims, counter-claims, and investigations, from the seventeenth to the twenty-first century, become the works of known authors. Or, approaching the situation from another angle, the actions of these sixteenth-century authors in co-producing these plays (however they might be transmitted into print) are revealed through the traces that they and others have left behind. The de-anonymised texts – partially, at least – reveal the actions and interactions of the dead to the living. Whether that imposes new

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<sup>30</sup> Signing the essay, Barthes likely appreciated the innately paradoxical situation of a named author asserting this critical position. See Seán Burke's *The Death and Return of the Author* for a critique of its ahistorical foundations among other things (Burke 1992).

limits on our interpretation of these sixteenth-century texts is left for those who take Barthes' claims at face value, but, at least, it makes these anonymous textual artefacts recuperatively and commemoratively social.

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