What is Early Modern Dramatic Collaboration?

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Abstract In this article we scrutinise the anti-theatrical bias implicit in attempts to distinguish between Shakespeare and his collaborators; we attempt a taxonomy of the many different forms that collaborative practice took in the early modern theatre; and we examine the extent to which scholarly attitudes to early modern dramatic collaboration, particularly the tendency to see it as a vertical hierarchy rather than horizontal partnership, are shaped by modern ambivalence to academic collaboration in the humanities.

Keywords: Shakespeare; Fletcher; Nashe; collaboration; authorship; theatre; co-authorship anti-theatrical bias

> 'European and North American readers are habituated to assume a single author… Only with explicit guidance does a text get read differently. (William Viney)[1]

It is hard to pinpoint the precise date at which collaboration became the latest buzzword for early modernists.[2] But it is not difficult to identify the methodological subfield the focus on collaboration has created: attribution studies. Nowhere is this more evident than in two landmark publications of 2016. The *New Oxford Shakespeare* identified more plays as co-authored than any previous edition, with fourteen attributed to Shakespeare and one or more other writers. A related volume provided the methodological underpinning to the identifications in the tellingly named *Authorship Companion* (contrast the title of the precursor volume in 1987: *Textual*

Companion; our emphases).[3] Thinking about collaboration has become synonymous with thinking about attribution. Our interrogation is prompted by two dramatic texts, *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (Q 1594) and *1 Henry VI* (composed c. 1592, revised 1595, F 1623). Both feature Thomas Nashe. The first is advertised as collaborative on its title page – 'Written by Christopher Marlow, and / *Thomas Nash. Gent.*' – but few editors accept the attribution because they (or rather, our current stylometric methods) cannot identify Nashe's contribution.[4] That is to say, this coherent, single-voiced play is not acknowledged as collaborative even when the title page says it is. (It is notable that the deeply-concerned-with-attribution Nashe never dissociated himself from this very public, permanent title page attribution.[5]) The second text, *1 Henry VI*, is included in that monument to single authorship, the 1623 Shakespeare First Folio, and so not self-evidently or declaratively collaborative, yet is now widely believed to be so.[6] But although these texts provided the springboard for our current investigations, they are not our focus in this article.[7] Instead, in asking 'What is Collaboration?', we use them as stimuli to survey current critical attitudes to collaboration. We offer three interventions. First, and perhaps most crucially, we suggest that critical responses to dramatic collaboration are implicitly, if inadvertently, anti-theatrical. Second, we suggest that current critical terminology is problematic: our embryonic taxonomy of dramatic collaboration in the early modern period (below) shows a variety of procedures concealed and undervalued by the one-size-fits-none term 'collaboration'. Finally, we suggest that contemporary attitudes are influenced (indeed, formed and reinforced) by universities and grant-giving agencies, who promote collaborative research even as they seem not to know how to evaluate it, and that we have retrofitted Elizabethan playtexts with current research attitudes and anxieties.

I: Collaboration in/and theatre

Contemporary debates about attribution and co-authorship of early modern plays tend to have an adversarial tone, with much of the scholarship explicitly *parti pris*. Especially where Shakespeare is concerned, it can be difficult to find disinterested accounts of collaboration, or a basis from which to begin any kind of methodological or critical overview. We begin with an article by MacDonald P. Jackson from Arthur F. Kinney's *Oxford Handbook to Shakespeare* (2011) – a volume that 'reflects on the current state of Shakespeare Studies, and suggests the likely future directions it will take'.[8] Jackson has a lifetime of research contributions to attribution studies and has done more than almost any other critic to establish Shakespeare as a collaborative author. His work on editions of Webster and of Middleton, his landmark study of the distinctive features of the Middleton canon, his careful analysis of *Pericles* and *Arden of Faversham* as collaborative texts:[9] all these make him an ideal scholar to reflect on the current state of the field of collaborative authorship and his article in *The Oxford Handbook* a relatively uncontroversial starting point to assess the field. Three points emerge from Jackson's snapshot of collaboration studies: the disjunctions in the text that signal collaborative work; the implicit sense of inevitable artistic hierarchy between collaborators; the surprisingly anti-theatrical bias of the descriptions of collaborative practice. The first is deemed a diagnostic truth of most collaboration arguments; the second is a frequent but unexamined rhetorical move that we want to probe; and the third seems to misunderstand the creative synergies that constitute successful theatre practice.

1. The sense that the product of collaboration is marked by the tell-tale signs of the distinctiveness of its authors, whether in function words, style or dramatic character, occurs in most discussions of collaboration. Analysing his major test case, the Fletcher-Shakespeare play *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, Jackson begins by emphasising the tonal and poetic differences

between the writers: Shakespeare is ‘sombre’, Fletcher adopts a ‘mix of comedy and pathos’; Shakespeare invests the language with ‘real gravitas’; Fletcher’s lesser poetic talent relies on cliché.[10] There are ‘inconsistencies in characterization’[11] – although Jackson’s identification of the contradiction between Palamon and Arcite’s bragging about sex (III.3) and their moralising (I.2 and V.2) does not seem, on the face of it, all that contradictory. In *All is True* ‘characterization is affected by the authors’ different verse styles’.[12]

2. While Jackson opens with an apparently neutral description of the play – ‘contrast is built into its organization’ – the authorial contrast soon reveals itself to be distinctly hierarchical. Thus the ultimate disparity between the collaborators is seen to be one of ‘poetic power’: Fletcher’s ‘epithets and similes tend to be predictable’, Shakespeare’s syntax and imagery are ‘varied and complex’, ‘a tour de force, difficult to read and understand’.[13] For Jackson it is axiomatic that Shakespeare is better than his collaborators: ‘Shakespeare could no more erase his poetic self from *Two Noble Kinsmen* than Fletcher could emulate it’.[14] When it comes to sources, Fletcher can only ‘echo their wording’, whereas Shakespeare ‘reshape[s]’.[15] Even when conceding collaborators’ talents, Jackson damns with faint praise. In *All Is True*, ‘Fletcher’s languid cadences, with their dying fall, are *not unsuited* to convey the changes in spiritual state’ (our emphasis) before Jackson concludes negatively that the effect is sentimental.[16] Only in *Timon of Athens*, jointly written with Middleton, does Jackson allow that there is material by a collaborator ‘that Shakespeare could not have written better himself’.[17]

3a. Curiously, these differences, and their hierarchy, begin to map onto a division between the poet and the dramatist. ‘Shakespeare wrote mainly poetic drama and his greatness as a dramatist is separable from his greatness as poet’.[18] This is not the case for Peele, Fletcher or Wilkins. Jackson describes the division of labour with Peele on *Titus Andronicus*, pinpointing

‘the flatness and sameness’ of Peele’s language; it is ‘only when Shakespeare takes over[,] that scenes […] are shaped to an emotional climax’.[19] Comparing a Shakespeare and a Fletcher passage, to the inevitable detriment of the latter, Jackson concedes that ‘on stage it would be clearly comprehensible and doubtless more immediately effective than the Shakespeare passage’ – praise, one might imagine, for a piece of theatre – but then goes on to condemn: ‘there is little to stimulate the imagination’.[20] Jackson prefers poetic writing that ‘is difficult to read and understand’.[21] These are the critic’s poetic priorities, not the stage’s dramatic ones. Later he charges Fletcher with ‘exploit[ing] his material for immediate theatrical effect’[22] – again, not necessarily a bad thing in a play. By contrast, Shakespeare is a poet whose intervention is ‘like an operatic aria: though integral to the drama, it can, in its own right, stir the imagination’, even though his dense poetry is ‘very demanding for an audience’.[23] Jackson observes something similar in *All is True*, where Shakespeare is imagined as resignedly ‘content to give his collaborator free rein’ with his distinctly ‘stageworthy’ Fletcheriness.[24] Something similar happens yet again with Wilkins, identified as Shakespeare’s collaborator on *Pericles*. Wilkins is in every way inferior to Shakespeare: his verse is ‘halting’, ‘his manner sententious and prolix, his dramaturgy crude’, contrasted with ‘Shakespeare’s superb poetry’; but nevertheless Wilkins’ Pentapolis scene has ‘surprising theatrical vitality’.[25] The contrast here is an unexpectedly familiar one, harking back to the eighteenth-century editors of Shakespeare and their disappointment that the poet had to write for the theatre.[26]

3b. Jackson’s privileging of poetry over dramaturgy leads him to another surprising bias, this time biographical rather than theatrical. When it comes to *Pericles*’ scene in the Mytilene brothel, Wilkins’ biography is unexpectedly pressed into critical service. His authorship of the scene draws on his familiarity ‘with bawdy-house trade’:[27] the assumption is striking, both that

the scene requires some special expertise from personal experience, and that, implicitly, this was not expertise that Shakespeare could possibly have.[28] The bias that was implicit in the poet/playwright division is more overtly replayed here biographically. Jackson's regrets that Fletcher/Peele/Wilkins are not Shakespeare actually identify, without recognising, successful collaborations. Each partner (a word rarely used in discussions of Shakespearean collaboration) brings different, complementary skills. Fletcher's stagecraft, Peele's choreography of different stage levels, and Wilkins' urban vitality alongside Shakespeare's 'gravitas', 'poetry' and 'pathos' seem an ideal combination, not a disjunctive mismatch. Jackson's article implicitly describes creative synergy in jointly authored works that are more than the sum of their parts. Only Middleton is fit to join Shakespeare, and that, briefly (Jackson does not allow that adaptation, such as Middleton's of *Macbeth*, *Measure for Measure*, or *All's Well that Ends Well*, should be grouped with collaboration). At the end of his article, he asks 'why, then, did Shakespeare collaborate?',[29] and finds himself unable satisfactorily to answer his question. This is partly because he is thinking about poetry rather than playwriting. But it is also because for him, as for many critics, collaboration reveals itself when a play is internally contradictory, or varies in poetic tone, characterisation, narrative, or especially aesthetic value. That is to say, collaboration is only identifiable when it is what might be called 'bad' collaboration.

Although attitudes to dramatic collaboration have changed, this assumption has not since, almost a century ago, E.K. Chambers anatomised the disintegrationists of the early 20th century. There are, writes Chambers (targeting J. M. Robertson in particular), three stages: 'impressionist judgements. Certain passages do not answer to his [Robertson's] conception of Shakespeare […] then he proceeds to confirm his impressions by applying what he calls the "inexorable" tests of treatment, style and metrics […] Finally he settles down to look for "clues" to the possible

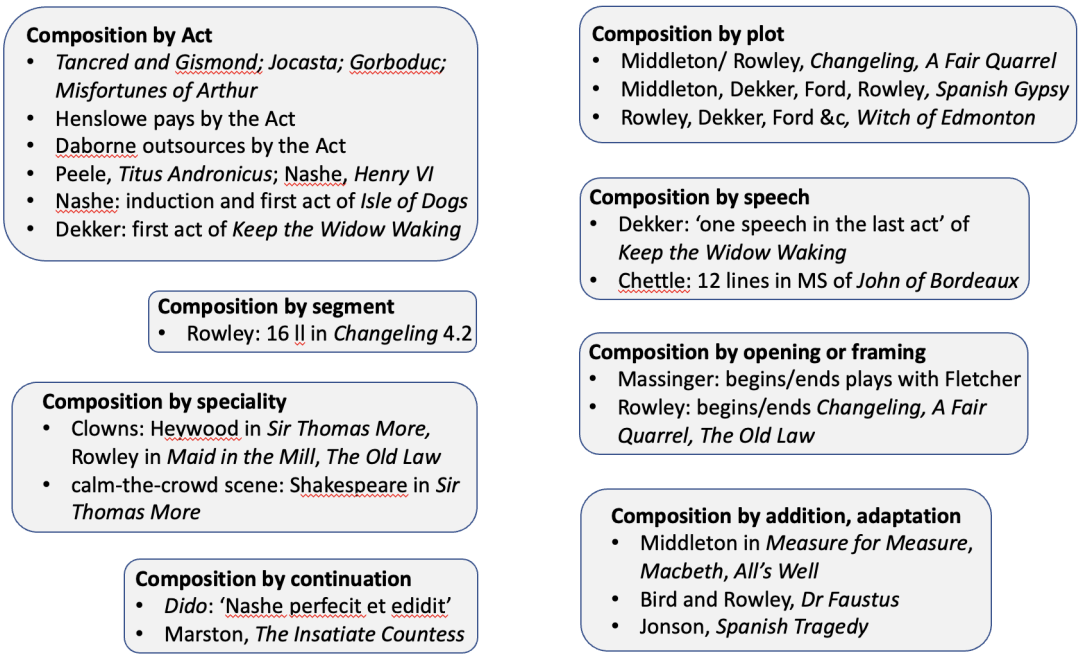
presence of alien hands'.[30] Even enthusiasts for collaborative authorship tend to use as a primary diagnostic tool some notion of aesthetic disjunction or disunity, as we saw above with Jackson and have been guilty of ourselves.[31] Introducing his Oxford edition of *Timon of Athens*, John Jowett explains that '[t]he oscillation between harsh but comic satire and vehement rage results in part from the shifts between Middleton and Shakespeare'.[32] David Nicol notes that characterisation and tragic attitudes in *The Changeling* differ between the two authors. 'Of course, this discrepancy might be part of the authors' collaborative design. But the close correspondence of the different methods of characterisation with the scenes believed to be by each author suggests that the play is a patchwork, not a perfectly interwoven text'.[33] Suzanne Gossett notes that '*A Fair Quarrel, though written collaboratively* by Middleton and Rowley, […] is a *cohesive*, powerful, and original tragicomedy'.[34] Of *Pericles* she admits that '[t]he persistent question has been how to account for the evident differences, in verse and imaginative density, between the first two acts and the remaining three'[35] – for most commentators, the easiest explanation is to posit two authors, Wilkins and Shakespeare.

This gives us the paradox that a work that is considered to display these problematic qualities is investigated fully for other signs of collaboration. Conversely, an apparently collaborative work that is not seen as disjointed tends to be reclaimed as a solo production. Back to the case of *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, with which we began, attributed clearly on its 1594 title page to Thomas Nashe and Christopher Marlowe. While few critics have been blown away by the play,[36] neither have they seen in it the apparently tell-tale inconsistencies that signal joint authorship; therefore its larger cultural and critical value as part of the fugitive Marlowe canon carries more weight than the title page attribution. This critical manoeuvre can overstate points of difference within a text, pathologising collaboration as, inevitably, the art of the broken, the

miscommunicated, and the committee.[37] Genevieve Love has brilliantly shown the ways in which the language of bibliography is often distinctly ableist; we can apply her observations to collaboration studies.[38] Collaborative drama is described variously as lame, broken-backed or flat-footed, with critics importing but reapplying early modern paratextual terms about textual transmission to collaboration. These critical attitudes would logically suggest that such collaboration was a deeply unsatisfactory model of playwrighting. Jeffrey Masten is almost alone in suggesting that the collaborative work ought to be invisible and that we ought not to try to disaggregate the contributions of different writers, since 'the collaborative project in the theatre was predicated on *erasing* the perception of any differences'.[39] Let us now try to shed the hierarchical thinking and attitudes to inconsistency and turn to the early modern.

II: Towards a Taxonomy of Collaboration

If we gather examples of early modern collaboration by types of composition, a preliminary taxonomy might look something like the diagram in figure 1. In this section we spell out the variety of co-authorship practices grouped (and concealed) under the blanket noun 'collaboration'.



Composition by act

Dividing a play by act — and attributing each act – is a feature of Inns of Court drama. *Gorboduc*, written in 1561, tells us on the title page of the first octavo of 1565 that 'three actes were written by Thomas Nortone [I-III], and the two laste by Thomas Sackvyle'.[40] George Gascoigne and Francis Kinwelmershe's *Jocasta* (performed 1566) advertises joint authorship on the title page, then identifies the individual authors at the end of each act: Kinwelmershe wrote acts I and IV, Gascoigne acts II, III and V, while the epilogue is credited to Christopher Yelverton. Thomas Hughes is identified as the author of *The Misfortunes of Arthur* (written 1587, Q1588) at the end of the last act, after which the quarto prints speeches '*penned by others*' as replacements for some of Hughes' material (the locations of the substitutions are identified), before further explaining that two Choruses were written by Francis Flowers and the dumb shows were 'partly devised' by others, who are listed.[41] The title page of the 1592 *Tancred and Gismond* says that it is 'compiled by the gentlemen of the Inner Temple'[42] and 'newly revived and

polished' by 'R[obert]. Wilmot',[43] whose initials follow act V, although acts I to IV are followed by the names of the original writers.

The public theatres never identified collaboration in this way, although they followed similar compositional procedures. Thomas Nashe was contracted to write the induction and first act of *The Isle of Dogs*; Thomas Dekker wrote the first act of *Keep the Widow Waking*. The tardy Robert Daborne outsourced by the act and Philip Henslowe paid by the act.[44] Recent studies have identified George Peele as the author of act I of *Titus Andronicus* and Thomas Nashe as the author of act I of *1 Henry VI*.[45] The lost *Keep the Widow Waking* (probably a tragicomedy) appears in the Revels Accounts in 1624 as 'writt: by Mr Ford [and] Webster', although documents from the subsequent Star Chamber proceedings show it to be a collaboration by Dekker, Ford, Webster and William Rowley. Dekker testifies that he wrote 'two sheetes of paper conteyning the first Act of a Play called The Late Murder in White Chapell, or Keepe the Widow Waking'.[46] Dekker, like Daborne, talks in terms of both acts and sheets (Dekker's two sheets of paper constitute eight pages). When Daborne cites the number of sheets he has written, he seems to invoke sheets in the way we use word count. Although plays were not published with act divisions until 1609, commissions from Henslowe seem to be in terms of the act.

Composition by opening or by framing

Beginnings and endings are crucial. It is clear that some writers were hired to set up the first act of a play. Peele's talent for visual architectonics was appropriate to opening *Titus Andronicus* with its processions and displays. Nashe shows a superb sense of theatre in act I of *1 Henry VI*, exploiting visual contrast, costume colour, and military acoustics, and playing with the stage's different levels.[47] Other dramatists were commissioned to frame a play, providing both

first and last acts.[48] Massinger regularly begins and ends plays that he cowrites with Fletcher (*The Queen of Corinth, The Elder Brother, The Little French Lawyer, The False One, The Double Marriage, The Spanish Curate, A Very Woman*).[49] Rowley, too, begins and ends his joint compositions with Middleton: *A Fair Quarrel* (1616), *The Old Law* (1618-19), *The Changeling* (1622). Within this separation, there is overlap. Douglas Bruster notes that Middleton 'appears to have had a hand in [Rowley's] I.1, especially Alsemero's opening soliloquy' and R. V. Holdsworth attributes the first 121 lines of the last scene to him.[50] Rowley brought *The Old Law* to its conclusion in 5.1, 350ff although someone else, probably Heywood according to Gary Taylor, began the scene.[51] And although Rowley begins and ends *A Fair Quarrel*, Middleton is responsible for opening the play's dialogue with 93 lines of Russell plot, before Rowley takes over for the rest of the scene and act (lines 94-393).[52] Here this category interfaces with two other categories – 'composition by plot' and 'composition by speciality'.

Composition by plot

It has long been noted that Rowley wrote the subplot in *The Changeling*, the comic madhouse scenes, while Middleton engineered the tragic revenge plot of Beatrice-Joanna. This is a generically clear-cut division although, as we noticed in the previous category, Rowley also wrote the opening and closing scenes which set up and conclude the tragic plot.[53] Rowley was a co-author of *The Spanish Gypsy* where he can be detected in a Rowley specialism, comedy, in the character of Soto, 'a merry fellow'[54] and in the varied IV.3. In this play he had three other co-authors: Middleton and Dekker did not have specific plots, but Ford was 'responsible for the rape plot'.[55] In *The Witch of Edmonton*, by Rowley, Dekker, Ford and (according to the title page), the mysterious, anonymous '&c',[56] the division is primarily plot-related with Ford visible in the

bigamous Frank Thorney plot, Rowley in the comic Cuddy Banks scenes, and Dekker in the socially realistic Elizabeth Sawyer plot. Thus, plot division has boundaries which are at times sanitised and at times permeable. Most notably, the clear-cut plot division in *The Changeling*, where the plots are not only composed by separate authors but are remarkably separate dramatic entities, has a 16-line dialogue by Rowley in Middleton's main plot (IV.2.1-16) which links the two plots. We might call this category 'composition by segment'. Or perhaps it is an indication of project management: someone must have been putting these plays together. In *The Witch of Edmonton* 'the general consensus suggests that Dekker was the leader of the overall project'.[57]

Composition by speciality

It has long been argued that Shakespeare was brought in to *Sir Thomas More* because of his skill in writing speeches that calm a fickle crowd. Heywood was seconded for a similarly specialised reason. R.W. Chambers first identified the distinctly Shakespearean politics of More's speech but the idea of theatrical specialism was developed by Scott McMillin.[58] He notes, for instance, that Hand B (Heywood) was creating a new clown's role out of one of the two Betts brothers.[59] Clowns were also one of Rowley's major contributions to the *Maid in the Mill*[60] and *The Old Law* (IV.1 and V.1.350ff). Other specialists are chosen for tone rather than plot. Dekker's contracted contribution to *Keep the Widow Waking* constituted not just the first act but 'a speech in the Last Scene of the Last Act of the Boy Who had killed his mother'.[61] Presumably this was a repentance speech, a specialised commission requiring a dramatist with a gift for pathos. In the manuscript of Greene's *John of Bordeaux* (the sequel to *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*; unpublished, c.1590), the scribe left a gap for a speech by Bordeaux on fol. 11v. Bordeaux has just overheard two shepherds lament that his wife and Friar Bacon are sentenced to

death unless a champion comes forth in their defence, and the scribe leaves space for Bordeaux' reaction: 'her Iohn of Burdiox speake[s] his specth'.[62] The gap was later filled in by Henry Chettle with 12 lines (fol. 11v, MSR ll. 1090-1101). In Chettle's speech, Bordeaux resolves to free his wife, then poses practical objections before concluding, disconsolately, that 'great harts in want may purpose not effect' (MSR l. 1101). His son, Rossacler, enters and Bordeaux overhears him resolve to rescue his mother; as Rossacler exits, he catches sight of the tearful old man and gives him alms. The scribe again leaves a gap for Bordeaux's response; this time the gap was not filled in. So 'composition by speech' is a subsection of 'composition by speciality'. Edward Burns perceptively notes that attribution – 'who wrote which bit' – is 'complicated by what one calls a "bit"'.[63] He suggests that we think in terms of 'strands through the play that "belong" to a particular writer' and 'more locally, characteristic episodes that might be seen as a certain writer's speciality'.[64] The evidence above supports his suggestion.

Composition by addition or adaptation

Mac Jackson does not consider subsequent additions to, or adaptations of, a finished play by later dramatists to be collaboration, but this kind of play-mending is sufficiently notable for us to categorise it as such. Henslowe paid Bird and Rowley for additions to *Dr Faustus* in 1602 and Jonson for additions to *Jeronimo* in 1601 and 1602 (which may or may not be the five additions added to Thomas Pavier's 1602 edition.) Marston's *Malcontent* was published in 1604 with an induction by Webster. Middleton adapted Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, *Macbeth*, *All's Well that Ends Well* and *Titus Andronicus*, with alterations ranging from one scene (*Titus*) to systematic repurposing (*Measure*).

Composition by continuation

We include one further category of collaboration, 'composition by continuation', but it is rarer than the others above, having only one example: Marston's *The Insatiate Countess* (1613). Marston wrote the play before 1608 but seems not to have completed it. William Barksted and Lewis Machin revised it (c.1610) and it was published in 1613. The first quarto in 1613 names Marston as author, but a reissue in the same year omits Marston's name and substitutes those of Machin and Barksted. This 1613 revised version is relatively muddled and inconsistent if not still incomplete – character names and speech prefixes are contradictory , and one plot is so jumbled that it would be impossible to stage without further editing.[65] Here we might seem to be running up against our own complaints in section I of this article where we objected to those who see inconsistency as evidence of collaboration. But there is a world of difference between the minor and localised issues of Winchester's status (bishop or cardinal) in *1 Henry VI* or the fatal weapon (axe or sword) in Dekker and Massinger's *The Virgin Martyr* and the systemic confusions and contradictions in *The Insatiate Countess*. Martin Wiggins identifies Barksted as responsible for the tragic plot and Machin for the comic, with Marston's material limited to I.1 and II.1b ('though the former seems also to have been worked over by Barksted'[66]).We do not consider *Dido Queen of Carthage* to be a play in this category. Many do but it is a hypothesis designed only to account for Nashe's name on the title page and his perceived absence from the text itself. Bishop Tanner in the 18th century first confidently asserted that Nashe 'perfecit & edidit';[67] while this creative editorial function is not unknown in poetry and prose, it is not elsewhere evidenced in drama.[68]

These categories merely help to frame some questions and observations about early modern dramatic collaboration. Dramatists collaborate differently with different partners. The

key example here is Rowley who is active in different ways. But we see something similar in the Shakespeare canon: *Henry VI, Pericles, Two Noble Kinsmen,* and *All is True* have different patterns of author-contribution. Our assessment of a collaboration differs depending on which author's canon we include it: is *The Changeling* a part of Middleton's, or Rowley's, authorship trajectory?[69] What does it do to our narrative of early modern drama if we acknowledge Marlowe as a collaborative writer (*Dr Faustus, 1 Henry VI, Dido*)? Our current models of collaboration draw in part on models of friendship and of business or practicality: they are rarely informed by a sense of the aesthetic possibilities of artistic partnership. And the extent to which external evidence about collaboration – such as title pages – should be given credence, as opposed to the elaborate, quasi-scientific models of contemporary attribution studies, also needs reconsidering.

III: Scholarly Collaboration in the Twenty-First Century

When Ben Jonson boasted about having written *Volpone* unaided in five weeks, he did so in lines which illustrate the varieties of collaborative practice available to an early modern dramatist:

> *From his owne hand, without a* Co-adiutor,
>
> Nouice, Iorney-man, *or* Tutor.[70]

Jonson's terms are clearly technical; and, although they are not arranged hierarchically, they are obviously hierarchical ('tutor' is at the opposite end of the scale from 'novice').[71] Critical terminology has reduced Jonson's variety to a binary: minor and major, lesser and celebrated, apprentice and expert. We saw this in section I with Jackson's view of Shakespeare as tolerating Fletcher, but this attitude has a long history. Tucker Brooke, who believed that Nashe was 'connected' with *Dido Queen of Carthage*, used in support of his argument the fact that the

publisher would not have called attention to the 'minor dramatist' [Nashe] as partner of 'the more celebrated author' unless it was a valid claim.[72] (It is not at all obvious that Nashe was less celebrated than Marlowe in 1594.) Irving Ribner felt that 'Middleton's genius was the guiding spirit' in *the Changeling*, David M. Holmes that Rowley was a 'pupil-assistant to Middleton', and R.H. Barker that Rowley was 'invited to collaborate with the more distinguished writers of the age'.[73] Of *Pericles*, Trevor Cook wondered why 'the celebrated author of *Hamlet* would willingly partner with the inferior author of *The Miseries of Enforced Marriage*'.[74] The *New Oxford Shakespeare*, the most recent champion of a more collaborative Shakespeare, notes that a number of Shakespeare's plays 'were written collaboratively, usually with one other playwright as the subordinate partner': 'subordinate' seems to mean more here than 'contributed less than half of the text'.[75] These hierarchical attitudes become self-validating when arguments for critical value are linked to arguments for single authorship. Of *1 Henry VI*, Edward Burns writes: 'editors and critics who have valued the play have tended to present it as by Shakespeare, those who haven't see it as by a group of writers who may or may not have included him'.[76] In 1995, Jonathan Bate, in manoeuvres and rhetoric with which we are now familiar, wrote of *Titus Andronicus* that 'the play's tight structural unity suggests a single authorial hand, in contrast to the form of such broken-backed collaborative plays of the time as *Sir Thomas* More'.[77] In 2018, he acknowledged that his defensive 'case for excellence blurred into the case for authorship solely by Shakespeare'.[78]

It is no coincidence that similar hierarchical attitudes are evident in collaborative research funding where grant-giving agencies operate a pyramid structure. Collaboration is a recent phenomenon in humanities research and its enthusiastic adoption and promotion is roughly contemporaneous with the development of attribution studies in early modern collaborative

drama. The European Research Council Advanced Grant scheme requires its pyramid to have one PI providing the intellectual lead, then a subordinate team of senior researcher, post-docs, and graduate students. In the sciences, collaboration is hierarchised with a non-alphabetical placing of names: the all-important first- and last-author positions. Funders regularly issue calls for new collaborative streams but institutional enthusiasm for collaboration is not yet in sync with evaluation of its outcomes. As Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford note, 'success in the academy depends largely on having one's work recognised as an individual accomplishment' and we are 'more comfortable theorising' about dispersal of authorial agency than we are about turning post-modern theory into praxis.[79] Scholars are not awarded tenure or PhDs on the basis of collaborative work. In fact, Ede and Lunsford's survey of PhD requirements revealed that nowhere is collaboration expressly forbidden; the notion that knowledge can only be advanced and evaluated through the lone-scholar model is so built into our understanding of research that PhD regulations do not even need to articulate it.

We are, it seems, deeply uncomfortable with collaboration. In politics or public life, collaboration is always negative, a source of shame. The scholarly tradition of using '*et al*' in bibliographies effaces multiple authorship. A recent job advertisement at Oxford University asked candidates to submit two items of written work and cautioned them: 'single-authored pieces are preferred whenever possible'.[80] Although we encourage collaboration, we do not know how to evaluate it or value it. This institutional attitude affects all aspects of our attitudes to early modern collaboration. As we saw in section I of this article, we can only think in terms of the visibly disjunct, the unharmonised, the broken-backed; we see vertical structures, not horizontal; we deplore inconsistency (the two different characterisations of Katherine, or Sir John van Olden Barnavelt or of Timon of Athens); and we turn the plural into the singular with an ampersand, the

corporate identity of the house-, bed- and-wench-sharing Beaumont & Fletcher, which enables us to sidestep the collaborative altogether by treating it as single authorship.[81] These systemic negatives have more in common with Bakhtin's parasitical model of parody than they do with collaboration – 'a second voice, once having made its own in the other's discourse, clashes hostilely with its primordial host'.[82] Our universities have not yet reconciled theory – the death of the author, the socially constructed nature of writing, intertextuality – with our research, even though technology has made the concept of single ownership of authorship hard to sustain. Our own experience as collaborating scholars does not give us a better perspective on these practices, but it does mean that our blind spots may be different from those that the lone-scholar model of scholarship has long privileged.

Notes

[1] William Viney, *Twins* (London: Reaktion Books, 2021), 175.

[2] Key moments might include D. F. McKenzie's 'sociology of texts' in 1986 (see *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)), Jeffrey Masten's *Textual Intercourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) and Brian Vickers' *Shakespeare, Co-Author* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). See also Gabriel Egan, 'A History of Authorship Attribution', in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Authorship Companion*, ed. Gary Taylor and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 27–47.

[3] Gary Taylor and Gabriel Egan, eds, *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Authorship Companion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Stanley Wells, John Jowett, William Montgomery and Gary Taylor, *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

[4] See for example, Ruth Lunney and Hugh Craig, 'Who Wrote *Dido, Queen of Carthage*?' in *Marlowe Studies* 1 (2020), 1–31, https://doi.org/10.7190/jms.v1i0.92. Spoiler alert: Marlowe.

[5] He denies that he is the author of *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit,* refers to pamphlets of 'uncertain authorship', and worries about the reputation of authors with names 'baffled [disgraced] on every book-seller's stall' (*Pierce Penniless,* in Thomas Nashe, *The Unfortunate Traveller and other Works*, ed. J.B. Steane (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), 50, 94, 90).

[6] Taylor and Egan, *Authorship Companion*, 513–517.

[7] See our essay 'Nashe and Cultures of Collaboration', in the *New Oxford Edition of the Works of Thomas Nashe*, ed. Andrew Hadfield and Jennifer Richards (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

[8] The description of the volume is taken from the abstract published on the Oxford Academic website (https://academic.oup.com/edited-volume/28184). MacDonald P. Jackson, 'Collaboration', in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 31–52.

[9] Macdonald P. Jackson, *Studies in Attribution: Middleton and Shakespeare* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1979); *Defining Shakespeare:* Pericles *as Test*

Case (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino, eds, *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007); *Determining the Shakespeare Canon*: Arden of Faversham *and* A Lover's Complaint (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); D.C. Gunby, David Carnegie, and MacDonald P. Jackson, eds, *The Works of John Webster: An Old Spelling Critical Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

[10] Jackson, 'Collaboration', 34; 35; 37.

[11] Jackson, 'Collaboration', 39.

[12] Jackson, 'Collaboration', 41.

[13] Jackson, 'Collaboration', 34; 36; 37.

[14] Jackson, 'Collaboration', 38.

[15] Jackson, 'Collaboration', 43.

[16] Jackson, 'Collaboration', 41.

[17] Jackson, 'Collaboration', 51.

[18] Jackson, 'Collaboration', 51.

[19] Jackson, 'Collaboration', 46; 47.

[20] Jackson, 'Collaboration', 38.

[21] Jackson, 'Collaboration', 37.

[22] Jackson, 'Collaboration', 39.

[23] Jackson, 'Collaboration', 39; 37.

[24] Jackson, 'Collaboration', 42.

[25] Jackson, 'Collaboration', 44.

[26] See, for example, Alexander Pope's 'Preface' to his edition of 1725 which excuses Shakespeare's 'great defects' with the explanation that he was directing his work to an unworthy audience: 'Stage-Poetry of all other is more particularly levell'd to please the *Populace*, and its success more immediately depending upon the *Common Suffrage*'. Alexander Pope, *The Works of Shakespear* vol. I (London: Tonson, 1725), iv-v.

[27] Jackson, ‘Collaboration’, 44.

[28] In *The Lodger* Charles Nicholl also suggests that Wilkins brought a seedy expertise to the collaboration, suggesting ingenuously that he was ‘a man who knows this seedy brothel world from the inside, a man who lives this world which the other writers only look in on’. Charles Nicholl, *The Lodger* (London: Allen Lane, 2007), 220.

[29] Jackson, ‘Collaboration’, 52.

[30] E.K. Chambers, *The Disintegration of Shakespeare* (London: British Academy by H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1924) 7. See also John Jowett, ‘Disintegration 1924’, *Shakespeare* 10, no. 2 (2014), 171–187, https://doi.org/10.1080/17450918.2013.833981.

[31] See Vickers, *Shakespeare, Co-Author*; Laurie Maguire and Emma Smith, ‘Many Hands: A New Shakespeare Collaboration’, *Times Literary Supplement* 19 April 2012, 13–15; David Nicol, *Middleton and Rowley* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 64.

[32] John Jowett, ed., *Timon of Athens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1.

[33] Nicol, *Middleton and Rowley*, 64.

[34] Suzanne Gossett, ‘A Fair Quarrel’, in *Thomas Middleton*: *The Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007*)*, 1209–1212, here 1209, our emphasis.

[35] Suzanne Gossett, ed., *Pericles* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2004), 62.

[36] Roma Gill, for example, considers it a ‘translation’ in volume I of the *Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), xi. [please add page number here].

[37] The inflated importance of the confusion in *1 Henry VI* over whether Winchester is a cardinal or a bishop, and therefore quite what kind of hat he wears, is instructive: similar points of confusion, authorial second thoughts, or hiccups in textual transmission could be adduced for pretty much any early modern play, whatever its authorship status. On what he calls the ‘utter confusions’ of Winchester’s clerical status, see C.A. Greer, ‘Revision and Adaptation in *1 Henry VI*’, *Studies in English* (1942), 110–120, here 116.

[38] Genevieve Love, *Early Modern Theatre and the Figure of Disability* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), 103–112.

[39] Masten, *Textual Intercourse*, 17.

[40] Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville, *The Tragedie of Gorboduc* (London, 1565), [IV-V].

[41] Thomas Hughes, *The Misfortunes of Arthur* (1588), F4v, G2r.

[42] R[obert] W[ilmot], *The Tragedie of Tancred and Gismund* (London, 1592), [unnumbered page]. 'Compiled' can refer to the activity of writing an original composition. See Tamara Atkin, *Reading Drama in Tudor England* (Milton: Routledge, 2018), 121–122.

[43] Wilmot, *Tancred and Gismund*, [unnumbered page].

[44] For Daborne and Tourneur see 'Article 078 – Letter from Robert Daborne to Philip Henslowe about his collaboration with Cyril Tourneur on The Arraignment of London, June 5, 1613' (The Henslowe-Alleyn Digitisation Project, 2023), 1r, https://henslowe-alleyn.org.uk/catalogue/mss-1/article-078/01-recto/.

For act payments, see R.A. Foakes and R.T. Rickert, eds, *Henslowe's Diary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 100, 103.

[45] On *Titus* and Peele, see Vickers, *Co-Author*, chapter 3. On Nashe and *1 Henry VI*, see Gary Taylor, 'Shakespeare and Others: The Authorship of *Henry the Sixth, Part One*', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 7 (1995), 145–205.

[46] For the Revels Accounts see Folger Shakespeare Library, MS W.b.156. For the Star Chamber proceedings see C.J. Sisson, *Lost Plays of Shakespeare's Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), 257, and 'Late Murder in Whitechapel, or Keep the Widow Waking', in *Lost Plays Database*, ed. Roslyn L. Knutson, David McInnis, Matthew Steggle, and Misha Teramura, https://lostplays.folger.edu/Late_Murder_in_White_Chapel,_or_Keep_the_Widow_Waking (accessed 8 August 2023).

[47] He obviously conferred closely with the authors of Acts II-V, or the plot from which they worked was helpfully detailed, as the remaining acts develop the themes and structures initiated by Nashe.

[48] The term ‘framing’ is Michael Mooney’s, in ‘“Framing” as Collaborative Technique: Two Middleton-Rowley Plays’, *Comparative Drama* 13 (1979), 127–141.

[49] For dates of composition and details of collaborative shares, see entries #1829, 1866, 1941, 1948, 2007 and 2025 in Martin Wiggins and Catherine Richardson, *British Drama 1553-1642: A Catalogue* Vol. VII (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[50] Douglas Bruster, ‘*The Changeling*’ in Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino, *Thomas Middleton and Early Modern Textual Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 423, citing Holdsworth.

[51] Jeffrey Masten, introduction to *The Old Law* in Taylor and Lavagnino, eds, *Collected Works*, 1333; Masten cites Taylor.

[52] The final, short Russell sequence that ends act I (ll.394–425) is too short to be attributable, as is the end of the last act.

[53] Nicol, *Middleton and Rowley*, 8.

[54] *The Spanish Gypsy*, ed. Gary Taylor in Taylor and Lavagnino, eds, *Collected Works, dramatis personae*, 1727.

[55] Taylor and Lavagnino, eds, *Collected Works*, 1723.

[56] Although written and first performed in 1621, the play was not published until 1658. The title page lists the authors as ‘*William Rowley, Thomas Dekker, John Ford, &c*’.

[57] Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge, eds, *Three Jacobean Witchcraft Plays* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 21.

[58] R.W. Chambers, ‘The Expression of Ideas’ in *Shakespeare’s Hand in Sir Thomas More*, ed. A. W. Pollard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923), 142–188 and Scott McMillin, *The Elizabethan Theatre and The Book of Sir Thomas More* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

[59] McMillin, *Elizabethan Theatre*, 139.

[60] For a table of contributions to this play by specialism see Nicol, *Middleton and Rowley*, 28.

[61] Dekker’s response as defendant in the Star Court proceedings, 3 February 1625, reproduced in Sisson 256-7 and in

https://lostplays.folger.edu/Late_Murder_in_White_Chapel,_or_Keep_the_Widow_Waking (accessed 8 August 2023).

[62] *John of Bordeaux*, ed. W.L. Renwick (Oxford University Press: Malone Society, 1935), l.1089.

[63] Edward Burns, ed., *1 Henry VI* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2000), 79.

[64] Burns, *1 Henry VI*, 80.

[65] See Martin Wiggins and Catherine Richardson, *British Drama 1533-1642: A Catalogue*, vol. VI (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 44.

[66] Wiggins and Richardson, *British Drama*, vol. VI, 43.

[67] Thomas Tanner, *Bibliotheca Britannico-Hibernica* (London: Society for the Promotion of Letters, 1748), 512.

[68] It was sometimes adduced as a version of composition by act/framing, with the assumption that an author who wrote only the first act or so must have had his unfinished work completed later by another writer. See *Titus Andronicus*, ed. Jonathan Bate (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1995, revised 2018), 134–136.

[69] We discuss this in relation to *Timon of Athens* as a part of Middleton's, rather than Shakespeare's, career in Laurie Maguire and Emma Smith, '"Time's Comic Sparks": The dramaturgy of *A Mad World My Masters* and *Timon of Athens*' in *The Oxford Handbook of Thomas Middleton*, ed. Gary Taylor and Trish Thomas Henley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 181–195.

[70] Ben Jonson, *Volpone* (1605), sig. A4v.

[71] W.J. Lawrence notes a dialogue in Thomas Randolph's *The Jealous Lovers* (1632) when two aspiring poets are warned not to 'work journeywork / Under some playhouse poet, that deals in / Wit by retail' (*Pre-Restoration Stage Studies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927), 343). The journeyman is to writing what the hired man is to acting.

[72] Christopher Marlowe, *The Works*, ed. C. Tucker Brooke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930), 388.

[73] Quoted in Nicol, *Middleton and Rowley*, 21.

[74] Trevor Cook, ‘Collaboration and Proprietary Authorship: Shakespeare et al.’, *Shakespeare Survey* 67 (2014), 44–59, here 56.

[75] *The New Oxford Shakespeare Complete Works: Modern Critical Edition*, eds, Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 57.

[76] Burns, *1 Henry VI*, 73.

[77] Bate, *Titus Andronicus*, 83.

[78] Bate, *Titus Andronicus*, 123.

[79] Lisa Ede and Andrea A. Lunsford, ‘Collaboration and Concepts of Authorship’, *PMLA* 116, no.2 (2001), 354–369, here 357, 356.

[80] The link, no longer active, was https://www.magd.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Dean-for-Welfare-2022-further-particulars-final.pdf.

[81] See Heather A Hirschfeld, *Joint Enterprises* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004) and Nicol, *Middleton and Rowley*.

[82] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 193; see Per Sievefors, ‘Underplayed Rivalry: Patronage and the Marlovian Subtext of *Summer’s Last Will and Testament*’, *Nordic Journal of English Studies* 4, no.2 (2005), 65–87, here 73.