# "JOHANNES FAC TOTUM"?:

## SHAKESPEARE'S FIRST CONTACT WITH THE ACTING COMPANIES

BART VAN ES

It is generally assumed that William Shakespeare began his theatrical career as a player. Famously, there is no record of him for the seven years between 1585 and 1592, but it is widely accepted that Shakespeare spent at least the latter part of this period as a professional actor. The playwright's supposed progression from performing to play-patching to independent authorship has shaped scholarly argument and popular biography alike. Many scholarly books observe this trajectory in passing. Terence G. Schoone-Jongen's recent work, which assesses the competing claims about Shakespeare's company affiliations, starts from the accepted position that "Shakespeare was an actor before he was a dramatist" and "must therefore have started acting some time before 1592."[1] In the same way, Tiffany Stern and Simon Palfrey's recent examination of the practical resources of the working dramaturge begins with the statement that Shakespeare was "already and always" an actor "before he ever got close to getting one of his own plays on the main stage."[2] This is the standard biographical position: accounts of the life by respected scholars—such as those by Park Honan, Katherine Duncan-Jones, and Stephen Greenblatt—feature imaginative reconstructions based on this accepted fact.[3] Shakespeare's arrival in London in the muddy ruts of a playwagon is an established feature of most accounts of his "lost years."

Thus, the belief that the playwright was, chronologically and temperamentally, a player first and an author second is a governing axiom in Shakespeare studies. Yet the

basis for this confidence hardly figures in critical debate. The evidence for Shakespeare's early employment as an actor is cited as *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit*, a pamphlet concerning players, attributed to Robert Greene and published shortly after his death in September 1592.[4] It is easy, however, to forget that a vast edifice of biographical inference rests on a single sentence of just fifty-nine words:

> Yes trust them not: for there is an vpstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that 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: and beeing an absolute *Iohannes fac totum*, is in his owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in a countrey.
>
> (sig. F1v)

This sentence falls in the middle of a long tirade against players, signed Robert Greene, that is appended to *Groatsworth*. The authorship of its main fable and its concluding epistle is now much contested.[5] Even so, the tirade's position in Shakespeare's biography remains firmly entrenched. Samuel Schoenbaum's authoritative *William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life* is characteristically cautious, but it upholds the consensus that "Greene was complaining because Shakespeare, a mere uneducated player, had the effrontery to compete as dramatist with his betters."[6] Peter Holland's judicious account in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* is likewise emphatic; on the basis of *Groatsworth*, it concludes, "Whatever else Shakespeare may have been doing between 1585 and 1592 it is clear that he had been and was still an actor, [and] that he had now become a playwright."[7] The progression from player to playwright, grounded in the "Shake-scene" allusion, achieves canonicity as a "clear" fact.

It is clear that the upstart-crow passage describes Shakespeare; it is also probable that it alludes to the playwright's appearance on the stage. But the rest of the standard history is far less secure. Shakespeare may well have performed in a playhouse at the time that *Groatsworth* was written. Yet are we right to think that Shakespeare was, in any sustained professional sense, a player? Is he likely, for example, to have traveled the country with a particular company? Is it probable that he had served an acting apprenticeship? Did he perform regularly, and was this work a primary source of income? Was his first affiliation with the performers (rather than the writers) of plays?

There can be no absolute certainty by answering the question "Did Shakespeare start out as a player?" I suggest that the answer is "no." By reexamining *Groatsworth*, investigating the careers of other early modern playwrights, and drawing attention to the distribution and composition of Shakespeare's early plays, I challenge the orthodox story of the playwright's beginnings. Shakespeare, I argue, is more likely to have become a player after he became a writer. It was playwriting that brought him into contact with actors, not the reverse. With this alteration to the standard narrative, significant aspects of our thinking about Shakespeare will also have to be reconsidered. This is not merely a matter of biography; remaining vestiges of an uneducated Shakespeare, of the playwright as cultural outsider, and of Shakespeare's natural inclination to drama must also be altered. Scholarly thinking on the dating of Shakespeare's plays, the playwright's ambition as a literary playwright, coauthorship, and artistic development are all colored by our assumptions about his early years. There is a great deal at stake.

## I. The Context of the *Groatsworth* Text

The well-known sentence about *Johannes fac totum* appears in an addendum to the main fable of *Groatsworth*; that fable is a cautionary tale about the bad effects of low living and (still lower) playwriting. It is perhaps useful to begin by describing its composition and context. In large part, *Groatsworth* is the biography of young "Roberto." His life, the authorial persona reports, is "in most parts agreeing with mine" (sig. E3r). It tells of the young scholar's exclusion from his father's will and of a failed attempt at a confidence trick by Roberto upon his brother. At this point of utter penury, Greene's alter ego is recruited by the sharer in an acting company. As a playwright, Roberto is by no means poorly rewarded or regarded: "his purse like the sea somtime sweld, anon like the same sea fell to a low ebbe; yet seldom he wanted, his labors were so well esteemed" (sig. E1v). Yet even when lodged "at the Townes end in a house of retayle" at the company's expense and "famozed for an Arch-plaimaking-poet" he remains distant from his employers (sig. E1r). Above all, he makes clear that they do not control his output; "what euer he fingerd afore hand, was the certaine meanes to vnbinde a bargaine" (sig. E1v). Roberto's employment to write plays, the story concludes, only worsens his bad character. Destroyed by drink, deep in debt, his talents spent, and no longer employable, he ends by offering a groat's worth of true wit in the form of some moral maxims.

When the author of *Groatsworth* talks about players, he describes a powerful but ill-educated body. The actor who hires Roberto was once a poor, traveling entertainer—"faine to carry my playing Fardle a footebacke"—but he now has the appearance of a "substantiall man . . . reputed able at my proper cost to build a Windmill" (sig. D4v). The player's education ranges little beyond the "Almancke" (sig. E1r). And he is easily

impressed by Roberto's "learning" as a "scholler" (sig. D4v). All the same, it is ultimately the actor who calls the shots. In the pamphlet, such performers are set fundamentally in opposition to scholars and poets. Although the players may originally have composed their own material, they can no longer able to compete in terms of art and knowledge. The figure who hires Roberto was himself a "countrey Author" who has "pende the Morall of mans witte, the Dialogue of Diues, and for seuen yeers space was absolute Interpreter to the puppets" (sig. E1r). Today, however, "*The people make no estimation, / Of Morrals teaching education*" and demand more sophisticated oratory (sig. E1r).

*Groatsworth* is full of such resentful distinctions. Stylized though it is, it provides an anchor point on the aesthetics and economics of late sixteenth-century dramatic authorship. Its narrative—crammed with the idealized social fabrications of an educated class and the authentic detritus of day-to-day living—provides an angle on the shift that occurred as dramatic performers moved toward the use of outside sources for the composition of their plays.[8] Behind the bravado lie economic realities: Henslowe's papers show literary men of education working for set fees and suffering frequently from debt.[9] Payment was not necessarily bad, but dramatic success did not guarantee a steady income. Once a playwright submitted a manuscript, his control over that copy ceased; the poets were not asset-holders in the business.[10]

In the early 1590s, the lines of demarcation between acting companies and authors were relatively strong, stronger than they had been a few decades earlier and stronger than they would be by the time of King James. At an earlier stage, troupes like the Queen's Men had contained writers within their corporation, but the kind of work

produced within the companies had to compete with a more fashionable, aureate mode.[11] A Queen's Men play such as *Three Lords and Three Ladies of London*, written in what McMillin and MacLean call the "medley" style, may be assigned to this older class of drama. A defense of the emblematic art of such work can be made, but it was in a different literary mode from that practiced by the new writers such as Greene, George Peele, and Christopher Marlowe. R.G.'s mocking quotation from the player's extempore composition is clearly a jibe at Robert Wilson and his kind.

The coming of a new generation of classically educated writers generated friction between authors and performers.[12] The cultivated antitheatricality of R.G.'s publication is also found in the writings of Stephen Gosson. In *Plays Confuted in Five Actions*, Gosson admits he has produced a number of plays ("the one was a cast of Italian deuises") but insists he has written no drama since turning against the stage.[13] This awkward complicity is also found in the translator and author of the *Second and Third Blast of Retreat from Plays and Theaters*; the author of the third part (who, the preface claims, is an established English playwright) confesses that "ere this I haue bene a great affecter of that vaine art of Plaie-making."[14] If this author was Anthony Munday, he was soon to turn to that employment again.[15] This combination of dependence and resentment is evident in the student-generated *Parnassus* trilogy, where Richard Burbage and William Kemp are depicted as crude exploiters of the graduates' wit.[16] Although stable patterns of cooperation were well established, early seventeenth-century university audiences could still be rallied to this separatist flag.

This is the content, and context, of the *Groatsworth* fable. Its addendum, attributed to a dying Greene, is a letter to three unnamed playwrights. It counsels moral reform and warns them not to depend on players. These "Puppets," "rude groomes," and "buckram Gentleman" are clearly of a piece with the players who employed Roberto (sigs. F1v, F2r). They are the sharers in the major companies, but the attack might also be said to address their apprentices and the hired men who form a regular part of the acting fraternity. These actors, R.G. warns, abandoned him once his talents were spent, and they will likewise abandon the younger poets. The key sentence for Shakespeare's biography—"Yes trust them not: for there is an vpstart Crow"—appears at this point in the diatribe. Because "Shake-scene" has his tiger's heart wrapped in a "*Players hyde*," scholars have generally assumed that he must be one of the perfidious players himself. That, however, is a questionable assumption.

For the bulk of his career, Shakespeare would be both player and playwright. In 1594, he became a shareholder in the newly formed Lord Chamberlain's Men; in this capacity he performed, for example, in Ben Jonson's dramas. In 1602, when there was a disagreement involving Shakespeare's application for a coat of arms, the complaining herald referred contemptuously to his profession: "Shakespear y$^{e}$ Player by Garter."[17] Although Schoenbaum concludes that the poet's commitment to acting seems to have been limited and was perhaps reluctant, there can be no doubt that Shakespeare eventually became a player and shareholder in a deep institutional sense.[18]

My question, however, concerns Shakespeare's beginnings. In 1592, was he a player who was becoming a writer? Or was he a classically educated playwright who eventually took up with actors? The specific context of the *fac totum* passage in R.G.'s

epistle is the first frame through which we should assess this problem. Immediately preceding the key sentence, R.G. addresses his old friends, the playwrights currently in fashion:

> Base minded men all three of you, if by my miserie you be not warnd: for vnto none of you (like mee) sought those burres to cleaue: those Puppets (I meane) that spake from our mouths, those Anticks garnisht in our colours. Is it not strange, that I, to whom they all haue beene beholding: is it not like that you, to whome they all haue been beholding, shall (were yee in that case as I am now) bee both at once of them forsaken?
>
> (sig. F1v)

The point of the ensuing sentence is to illustrate the fickleness of the players' patronage. "Shake-scene" is a newcomer. But is he necessarily a player? The sentences that precede and follow concern the players, *plural*. If Shakespeare were one of them, he might be the subject of sustained, and much more specific, attack. He could be described as "among them" or "among their number," but he is not. A paragraph later, there is mention of "other new-commers" who are left "to the mercie of these painted monsters" (sig. F2r). Following the logic of the argument, "Shake-scene" might be a recent favorite of this kind.

## II. "JOHANNES FAC TOTUM"

If we concluded that Shakespeare in 1592 was simply a new fashionable author and not an overambitious actor, we would still need to account for other parts of the

famous sentence. "Vpstart Crow," "*Players hyde*," and "*Johannes fac totum*" have all been seen to describe Shakespeare as a player. I will address each in turn; the last, because it is actually presented as an occupation, is probably the most important. Schoenbaum glossed "*Johannes fac totum*" as "universal genius." If that were correct, then it might indeed be possible to argue that the phrase denotes an established actor who believes himself to be a playwright. When we trace the usage of *fac totum*, however, we find that "universal genius" is never what it means. There are seventy-one recorded uses of the phrase *fac totum* in English books before 1700.[19] Paired with *dominus*, *fac totum* was widely used to refer to an all-powerful operator; most commonly, it was used in anti-Catholic polemic to refer to the Pope. John Jowett notes that a *factotum* was a printing term for an ornamental surround that will take any capital letter in its middle; metaphorically, it describes an unreliable turncoat.[20] The phrase occasionally means "intriguer," although not before the seventeenth century. More commonly, *fac totum*, when used without *dominus*, describes a general organizing household servant or butler. This is the only way in which *fac totum* is used in isolation before the reign of King James. Two of the foremost candidates for the authorship of *Groatsworth*—Greene himself (if he is the author of *Tarlton's News out of Nowhere*) and Thomas Nashe (in *The Unfortunate Traveller*)—use it exclusively of a servant given responsibility for a wide range of menial tasks.[21] All recorded sixteenth-century uses are of this kind. The only early modern text to use the phrase more than twice (a 1620 translation of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, which contains eleven instances) deploys it in precisely this way.[22]

Far from denoting universal genius, therefore, "*Johannes fac totum*" suggests a turncoat, intriguer, and a basely employed servant. In context, then, the phrase seems

most likely to refer to a lowly hired position, rather than one of special privilege. Having set himself up as a poet, a "Shake-scene" might thus be lowering himself to scribal work, play-patching, and even bit-part acting. Such a situation would match the one other instance we have of a literary playwright who became an acting company sharer. This is Thomas Heywood, a classically educated and established playwright who, at the turn of the century, was hired to perform "as a covenante searvante" at the Rose Theatre. The contract recorded in Henslowe's *Diary* was witnessed by a set of Admiral's Men shareholders and runs as follows:

> m$^{do}$r that this 25 of marche 1598 Thomas hawoode came & hiered hime seallfe w$^{th}$ me as a covenante searvante for ij yeares by th*e* Receuenge of ij syngell pence acording to th*e* statute of winshester & to begin*n*e at th*e* daye aboue written & not to playe any wher publicke a bowt london not whille these ij yeares be exspired but in my howsse yf he do then he doth*e* forfett vnto me th*e* Receuinge of these ij d fortie powndes.[23]

This text is part of a section of the *Diary* where Henslowe is contracting a series of hired men for the company.[24] Heywood was undoubtedly being employed, at least in part, as a performer. In contrast to Shakespeare, Heywood is never referred to by modern scholars as an actor who later wrote plays. His career has much in common with other "university playwrights," such as Greene, Peele, or Marlowe. In 1591, he had matriculated at Cambridge and saw the performance of many student plays. Following the death of his father and a subsequent loss of funds in 1593, Heywood gravitated to London's literary scene where, in 1594, he published *Oenone and Paris*, an Ovidian neoteric poem in the mode that was a common marker of poet-playwrights of the time.[25] By 1596, he was

writing drama; Henslowe's *Diary* for 14 October records a payment of thirty shillings "for hawodes bocke."[26] Not until 1601 did he join the new Worcester's company as a shareholder, becoming the only major playwright to follow Shakespeare's precedent. Heywood's trajectory was from poet and playwright to playhouse hired man to eventual adoption as a shareholder in the Earl of Worcester's Men.

The key passage in *Groatsworth* should not lead us to conclude that anything different happened to Shakespeare. Before turning to the other key phrases in the sentence, it is worth exploring the evidence that Shakespeare had a Heywood-like early career. The earliest accounts of his theatrical employment, for example, parallel what we know of Heywood's experience. John Dowdall, in 1693, reported that Shakespeare "was received into the playhouse as a serviture," and "Malone (1780, 1790) had heard from the stage that he was originally employed as a prompter's attendant or call-boy."[27] These descriptions suggest an initial, lowly *fac totum* position. As Neil Carson puts it: "Everyone in a company who was not a sharer or an apprentice was 'hired' whether he earned his salary by acting, opening trap-doors, making costumes, playing a musical instrument, or collecting money for admission."[28] A "hired man" based at a London theater could be someone very different from a traveling, apprenticed, or otherwise vocational player.[A] It was the kind of role into which Heywood, Shakespeare, and (later) Jonson could easily drop.

That Shakespeare became a *fac totem* by being a established, long-term player is improbable. Unlike Heywood, he had not gone to university, but this fact cannot be considered a significant difference in their careers. Heywood had attended Emmanuel College only briefly, and there is no sign that his level of educational attainment differed

[A] Please clarify what a "vocational" player would have been in this period—i.e., hired man?

significantly from Shakespeare's.[29] Plenty of other non-university-educated men found employment in London writing plays, including Munday, Drayton, Kyd, Dekker, and Jonson. None of these writers started out as players, yet several, like Heywood, appeared on the stage on an ad-hoc basis once they had become involved in the composition of plays.[B] In terms of education and social background, Shakespeare looks very much like these contemporaries. We would need good reason to conclude that he alone started out as a professional player and moved to writing sophisticated poems and plays.

## III. Upstart Crow

I have suggested that Shakespeare, described as a *fac totum* in 1592, was a literary writer also employed as a playhouse "serviture." He was doing scribal work and perhaps some acting, but he should not to be considered a player in any sustained or vocational sense. Such a role would place him in the mainstream of literary playwrights. The phrase "vpstart Crow," however, is clearly intended as an insult (even if that insult is only a minor aside from the main business of attacking the "Puppets" who make all the profit from the plays). Why, if Shakespeare was principally a writer and not a player, should he be described as an "vpstart Crow"? Here, his lack of a university education, which did not in practice exclude him from the poet-playwright community, may be relevant.

As a grammar-school man, Shakespeare would have been vulnerable to a charge of being an "vpstart Crow" involved with playwriting. But in this, too, he was not unique. When playwrights competed for income from acting companies, tension between writers was inevitable. R.G.'s epistle "to those Gentlemen his Quondam acquaintance, that spend their wits in making plaies" (sig. E4v) is fundamentally a complaint about the fortunes of

[B] Is there evidence for the ad-hoc stage appearances discussed in sentence "None of these writers"?

writers in this cutthroat world, where authors are keen to hold on to their capital. In this context, university-educated playwrights might well attack their grammar-school brethren.

The "penniless" Nashe had already hit out at less-educated newcomers who "leave the trade of Noverint, whereto they were born, and busy themselves with the endeavours of art."[30] A "noverint" is a scrivener or law clerk, and in this line from the preface to Greene's *Menaphon* (1590), Nashe was probably attacking Kyd, a figure who provides another plausible model for Shakespeare's early career. Like Shakespeare, Kyd was educated at a grammar school and had not gone to university. He easily could still be described as a "scholler." Merchant Taylor's had given him considerable grounding in Latin, French, and Italian, and he clearly had significant literary ambitions, as demonstrated by his neoclassical translation *Cornelia*.[31] All the same, having started out as a menial administrator, by writing plays Kyd provoked the resentment of the university man.

Shakespeare and Kyd's education could not have been very different, and the attacks upon them are remarkably similar.[32] Nashe's snide reference to "the *kid* in Aesop," for example, is rather like "Shake-scene" in its pun on the name of an author.[33] Similarly, in the preface, Nashe is concerned with a jack-of-all-trades proficiency: "It is a common practice nowadays," he complains, "amongst a sort of shifting companions, that run through every art and thrive by none" to turn to playwriting.[34] Kyd is also thought to have been an actor, and there may perhaps be a hint of this in the mention of "every art."[35] The preface's principal concern, however, is with plagiarism. Logically, this is

also what is alluded to when R.G. writes of an "vpstart Crow, beautified with our feathers."[36]

Because commentators assume that Shakespeare was a professional actor, they have underplayed the concern with plagiarism in the *Groatsworth* sentence. Schoenbaum, for example, associates the phrase "upstart crow" with acting by way of Macrobius's attack on the Roman player Roscius. He finds the implication of plagiarism implausible because a "novice" like Shakespeare would not have been capable of adapting the work of others: "More reliable authorities," he reasons, "think that Greene was complaining because Shakespeare, a mere uneducated player, had the effrontery to compete as a dramatist with his betters; not because the same base fellow pilfered his wares from others."[37] This logic, however, is circular.

In itself, the connection between Roscius and the upstart crow is not impossible. Yet the case for it is weakened if we accept that *Groatsworth* was not actually written by Greene. Schoenbaum grounds his claim that the author of *Groatsworth* is thinking of Roscius on a parallel with Greene's *Francescos Fortunes* from 1590.[38] If a different pen was responsible for *Groatsworth*, then the logic of this association becomes stretched.

The obvious source for the crow analogy, in any case, is not the obscure Macrobius; Horace's well-known third *Epistle* had used the image without theatrical association of any kind. Schoenbaum, assuming Shakespeare is presented as an actor, thinks the Horace connection tangential. Yet Horace's attack on the imitative poet—"when the flock of birds return to claim their plumage, / the poor little crow will be stripped of all the colours he stole"—has stronger connections to the *fac totum* sentence.[39] Its stress on literary competition is stronger than an allusion to Roscius because of the

image of "our feathers" immediately following. "Vpstart Crow," understood as an allusion to Horace, makes the key sentence a case of rivalry between poets. It fits within a context in which established authors resent the competition of less socially elevated men.

## IV. Players Hyde

"Vpstart Crow," then, need not have anything to do with acting; being wrapped in a "*Player's hyde*" probably does. But if one actually is a player, it makes little sense to be wrapped in another's skin. What is the meaning of this image? Once again, it is helpful to look at the wider theatrical economy of late sixteenth century England to see in what circumstances the insulting word "player" might be thrown in the direction of a writer of plays.

In the difficult financial climate of autumn 1592, with the plague shrinking everyone's custom, it was likely for accusations to fly. To call a playwright a player was an easy dig. And if we look at the early years of the professional theater, we find repeated instances of this kind of attack. In 1582, for example, Munday became embroiled in religious controversy. Inevitably, his opponents slurred his good name. Munday, it was claimed, "first was a stage player (no donbt a calling of some credit)."[40] The author of the *True Report of the Death of M. Campion* (written in refutation of Munday's *Discovery of Edmund Campion*) went on to elaborate: "howe this scholler new come out of Italy did play extempore, those gentlemen and others whiche were present, can best giue witnes of his dexterity, who being wery of his folly, hissed him from his stage."[41] Quite possibly Munday had appeared upon the stage in the same way that Shakespeare or Heywood did later; we have only Alfield's attack on which to judge such a claim. Yet Munday was no

player. He was a traveler, writer, controversialist, spy, and much more. But there is no sign of the primary career as an actor that Alfield describes. His frequent appearances in Henslowe's *Diary* are solely as an author, and if he was the translator and coauthor of *A Second and Third Blast of Retreat from Plays and Theaters* he was even (briefly) a polemicist against the stage.

Munday was educated in Latin, French, and Italian, and he worked throughout his life in a multitude of literary contexts. He began as a printer's apprentice and a member of the Draper's Company. Since he lacked a university's endorsement for his role as scholar, the tag of player (associated, as *Groatsworth* shows, with low social origins) was likely to hit home. But Munday's is not the only instance. Ben Jonson, still more vulnerable on account of his early stint as a bricklayer and certainly as a bit-part actor, would be mercilessly pursued on these fronts.[42] Thus, when Dekker mocks Jonson as "the humorous poet" in *Satiromastix*, his primary persecuting character, Tucca, repeatedly forces the aspirant Jonson / Horace to remember his time in a player's cloak:

> I ha seene thy shoulders lapt in a Plaiers old cast
> Cloake, like a Slie knaue as thou art: and when thou ranst mad for the death of Horatio: thou borrowedst a gowne of *Roscius* the Stager, (that honest Nicodemus) and sentst it home lowsie, didst not?[43]

It is Jonson's pretention to write elevated verse (combined with an accusation of plagiarism) that brings out an insistent assertion of these origins:

> thou call'st *Demetrius* Iorneyman
> Poet, but thou putst vp a Supplication to be a poore Iorneyman

> Player, and hadst been still so, but that thou couldst not set a good face vpon't: thou hast forgot how thou amblest (in leather pilch) by a play-wagon, in the high way, and took'st mad Ieronimoes part, to get seruice among the Mimickes: and when the Stagerites banisht thee into the Isle of Dogs, thou turn'dst Ban-dog (villanous Guy) and euer since bitest.[44]

Jonson is mocked as a member of the lowest form of actor. Yet he, like Munday, was not really a player, if by this we mean either a shareholder or someone with an established place within the acting fraternity. His player's "old cast Cloake" is what I suggest is intended by Shakespeare's player's hide: an exterior layer covering an impoverished core. This much is clear even within *Satiromastix*, where Jonson's actorish activities are deliberately exaggerated for satiric effect but where his lowly, hired-man dependence on the fellows is also stressed. Referring to the infamous incident of Jonson's murder of actor Gabriel Spenser, Dekker has Tucca declare:

> Thou art the true arraign'd Poet, and shouldst haue been hang'd, but for one of these part-takers, these charitable Copper-lac'd Christians, that fetcht thee out of Purgatory, (Players I meane) Theaterians pouch-mouth, Stage-walkers.[45]

Jonson thus suffers the double indignity of being mocked not only as a player but also as the lowly dependent of that financially powerful group.[46] Both Munday and Jonson were well educated but socially insecure authors who had made some forays onto the stage. But we do not think of them as players who eventually began to act. For the same reason, it makes little sense to think in this way about Shakespeare in 1592.

## V. Shakespeare's "Quality" and the Response to *Groatsworth*

*Groatsworth* famously caused offence, and its publisher, Henry Chettle, issued an apology.[47] The nature of that apology shows no sign that Chettle regards Shakespeare primarily as a performer. Indeed, the hint that Shakespeare might in some sense be a player is likely to have been a key part of the initial offence. Chettle writes:

> About three moneths since died M. *Robert Greene*, leauing many papers in sundry Booke sellers hands, among other his Groatsworth of wit, in which a letter written to diuers play-makers, is offensiuely by one or two of them taken, and because on the dead they cannot be auenged, they wilfully forge in their conceits a liuing Author: and after tossing it to and fro, no remedy, but it must light on me. How I haue all the time of my conuersing in printing hindred the bitter inueying against schollers, it hath been very well knowne, and how in that *I* dealt I can sufficiently prooue. With neither of them that take offence was I acquainted, and with one of them *I* care not if *I* neuer be: The other, whome at that time I did not so much spare, as since I wish I had, for that as *I* have moderated the heate of liuing writers, and might have usde my owne discretion (especially in such a case) the Author being dead, that *I* did not, *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 have reported, his vprightnes of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facious grace in writting, that approoues his Art.[48]

In *Kind-Harts Dreame*, Chettle also views Shakespeare as a writer.[49] First, Shakespeare and Marlowe (the other figure insulted by *Groatsworth*) are addressed together as members of the same profession, that is, "play-makers." Chettle writes as if the address to "those Gentlemen his Quondam acquaintance" in *Groatsworth* means Shakespeare, as well as Marlowe, making both men in the same camp as gulls of the pernicious shareholders. In the ensuing sentence, that camp would appear to be that of "schollers," since Chettle protests he has always resisted attempts to insult them.[50] It is also on Shakespeare's grace and art as a writer that the preface concludes its apology.

Katherine Duncan-Jones argues that the word "quality" hints at an association with actors in this passage.[51] The only pre-1629 citations in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), however, are those that make no mention of the stage.[52] "Quality," in these cases, refers to a collective body in the sense of "fraternity" and describes the rivalry among the "quality" of bakers, goldsmiths, tailors, and the like. Grammatically, this use of "quality" as a collective noun does not fit Chettle's sentence; even if it did, it need not have been the theatrical fraternity that was meant. Chettle's likely meaning of "quality" is simply "good character"—overwhelmingly, the most frequent way in which the word was used. Taken in context, "qualitie" is part of a section praising Shakespeare's demeanor. It is quite far-fetched to see the word as denoting theatrical performance; it runs counter to the thrust of the apology and involves a usage that, in 1592, was unprecedented.[C]

[C] Would it be useful to check EEBO for the usage of "qualitie"/ "quality"?

## VI. The Wider Context of Shakespeare's Early Work

Neither the apology in *Kind-Harts Dreame* nor the original "Shake-scene" insult in *Groatsworth* provide a good reason to think that Shakespeare was primarily a player in his early years (any more than Kyd, Munday, Jonson, or Heywood). The phrase "*Players hyde*" does suggest that the author felt that Shakespeare had an undue closeness to the "Puppets," and these words may well constitute a cutting reference to his appearance on the stage. This fact, however, would not separate Shakespeare from his contemporaries. We know that other educated literary men, such as Munday, Jonson, and Heywood, could be drawn into performance. Heywood also provides a concrete instance of an established playwright who eventually became a company shareholder. Several playwrights were mocked by their rivals as would-be players. R.G.'s mocking aside about the upstart crow is certainly no different from those attacks on Shakespeare's contemporaries.

Another area we might examine for evidence of Shakespeare's early career as a player is the ownership of his dramatic compositions. If Shakespeare's involvement with performance was something different from the experience of Munday, Jonson, or Heywood, one would expect this to be evident in the distribution of his plays. The evidence of Shakespeare's earliest dramatic work, however, provides no sign of such an exceptional position, which would be marked by close connection to a particular troupe. From what we can reconstruct, Shakespeare initially shifted between employers in a way that was common among literary writers.[53] There is a chance that he began by working for the Queen's Men, the most likely targets of *Groatsworth*'s attack. Yet Shakespeare plays were also owned by the Earl of Pembroke's players: *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York, and the Death of Good King Henrie the Sixt* was first published in quarto

as played by that company.[54] And the Folio names actors who would later be part of the Admiral's Men and who seem certain to have come from Pembroke's.[55] Plays by Shakespeare, probably including *1 Henry VI*, were performed by Lord Strange's Men at Henslowe's Rose Theatre.[56] It is likely that Shakespeare had a working relationship with this company, a significant number of whose sharers would form part of the foundation of the Lord Chamberlain's Men. Yet *Titus Andronicus* was performed at the Rose by the Earl of Sussex's company.[57]

This distribution among multiple companies is characteristic of the work of professional authors in the period.[58] Heywood wrote his early plays for Admiral's and Derby's Men; at least some of those works were—as were Shakespeare's—eventually transferred to the company that the playwright joined.[59] That Shakespeare's early plays were widely distributed contradicts the idea that he was an attached performer. Indeed, Shakespeare had a conspicuous lack of contact with the Queen's Men, the troupe that is often forwarded as his likely original company. Duncan-Jones confidently titles the second chapter of her Shakespeare biography "The Queen's Man." Yet "the Quenes men & my lord of Susexe to geather" perform no plays connected with Shakespeare's name at the Rose Theatre.[60] Although Shakespeare later wrote new plays that had a basis in old Queen's Men productions, his earlier history play *Richard III* showed little connection with the Queen's Men version. He either worked hard to avoid duplication or simply knew little of the earlier play.[61]

The evidence, then, is against Shakespeare having started his connection with theater as a professional player. We have no parallel case of a literary playwright entering the profession in this way. Like his contemporaries, Shakespeare is instead likely to have

come to London with the intention of making his living by means of his literary talent and grammar-school education. It is probable that his earliest sonnets had already been composed by this time.[62] Such a plan would combine poetry with basic, educated wage labor, such as tutoring or scribal work. His fellow Warwickshireman Michael Drayton apparently first worked as a tutor and secretary. Given his father's financial problems, Shakespeare's initial employment might have been in one of these minor professions. The story of him as schoolmaster may be connected to some early role as a tutor; scribal work is also a possibility, and Jonathan Bate recently forwarded a possible association with Clement's Inn.[63] In London, movement from such jobs to writer and hired actor was always a possibility. Both university and nonuniversity playwrights came to the profession in this way. In the *Parnassus* plays, written at Saint John's, Cambridge, two young intellectuals bounce from pillar to post finding exactly such professions; eventually, it is as bit-part authors and performers that the theater shareholders think of employing them.

## VII. "A Player's Hyde" and Literary Style

One final argument for Shakespeare's early player status is based on the literary style of his writing. The phrase "*Tygers hart wrapt in Players hyde*" is a deliberately twisted misquotation from Shakespeare's own composition. In *3 Henry VI*, the Duke of York rages at Queen Margaret who, scorning his ambition, has crowned him upon a molehill:

> Thou art as opposite to every good
>
> As the antipodes are unto us,

Or as the south to the septentrion.

O tiger's heart wrapp'd in a woman's hide!

How couldst thou drain the life-blood of the child

To bid the father wipe his eyes withal,

And yet be seen to wear a woman's face?

(1.4.134–40)[64]

This is ambitious oratory, a memorable speech that lends itself to a recognizable parody of Shakespeare's style. But the style is not really Shakespeare's. Both the theater of suffering orchestrated by Margaret and its vocabulary of cosmic transgression take their cue from Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*. The "upstart crow, beautified with our feathers" is being attacked for exactly this kind of plagiarism.

There is irony in the way that the satirist's twisting of the language of *3 Henry VI* reflects Shakespeare's own habits of composition. Two scenes earlier in the play, Richard rouses his father's ambition with a matching Marlovian oration:

Therefore to arms! And, father, do but think

How sweet a thing it is to wear a crown,

Within whose circuit is Elysium

And all that poets feign of bliss and joy.

(1.2.28–31)

Marlowe's Theridimas had inspired ambition in Tamburlaine with just such a description:

A god is not so glorious as a king.

I think the pleasure they enjoy in heaven

Cannot compare with kingly joys in earth:

To wear a crown enchased with pearl and gold,

Whose virtues carry with it life and death.

(*1 Tamburlaine*, 2.5.57–61)[D]

Here, as on other occasions throughout the *Henry VI* trilogy, the mirroring is strikingly direct.

It might seem logical that the transparently imitative writing we find in Shakespeare's early plays matches the narrative of his beginnings as a player. In Stephen Greenblatt's *Will in the World*, Shakespeare arrives from the provinces "raised on a diet of moralities and mysteries" to be suddenly stunned by the achievements of Marlowe. *Tamburlaine,* Greenblatt speculates, "may indeed have been one of the first performances he ever saw in a playhouse—perhaps *the* first—and, from its effect upon his early work, it appears to have had upon him an intense, visceral, indeed life-transforming impact." In Greenblatt's assessment, the experience of seeing *Tamburlaine* drove Shakespeare's decision "not to make his living as an actor alone but to try also to write for the stage on which he performed—under Marlowe's influence." [65] It produced an aesthetic crisis, the evidence for which can be found in the undigested gobbets of Marlovian imitation that abound in Shakespeare's early plays. Shakespeare's early imitative style (mocked in the "*players hyde*" allusion) is testament to his impressionable outsider status. Because he was first a player and not a literary author, the young Shakespeare was unable to resist the influence of the great author Marlowe.

The old notion that Shakespeare falls under the powerful influence of Marlowe has some truth in it. Critics such as Harold Bloom and Marjorie Garber have written on the intellectual conflict of two preeminent geniuses.[66] Yet the idea that this influence

[D] Please supply edition of Tamburlaine used in quotation.

matches Shakespeare's supposed origins as a player is questionable. In fact, the reverse is true. Imitation, especially imitation of *Tamburlaine*, was the hallmark of the professional "Arch-plaimaking-poet."

Shakespeare in the early 1590s was certainly influenced by Marlowe, but so were his contemporaries—Nashe, Greene, Peele and others. Greene, in whose name Shakespeare was attacked for intellectual theft, was himself equally proficient in that art. His own *Alphonsus, King of Arragon* stands out as a Marlovian imitation from beginning to end.[67] Alphonsus claps "*Fortune* in a cage of gold, / To make her turne her wheele as I thinke best" (4.31, 481–82), a transparent reworking of Tamburlaine's "I hold the Fates bound fast in iron chains, / And with my hand turn Fortune's wheel about" (*1 Tamburlaine*, 1.2.173–74).[68] Like the tiger's-heart passage in *Henry VI, Part III*, such transference is not merely one of timbre and imagery but also character, relationship, and spectacle. Greene's Alphonsus enters "with a Canapie carried over him by three Lords, hauing over each corner a Kings head, crowned" and vaunts his power over the established Moslem ruler Amuracke in an explicit revisiting of Tamburlaine's triumph over Bajazeth.[E]

Marlowe's style and dramatic incidents were imitated by many of his contemporaries. Peele's *Battle of Alcazar* openly proclaims its task of bringing "Tamburlaine into our Afric here" (1.2.35) and is likewise dominated by the language and visual icons of Marlowe's world.[69] *Alcazar* and *Tamburlaine* are littered with cases of scene-for-scene correspondence. In *2 Tamburlaine*, for example, Celebinus boasts that if his father's chair "were in a sea of blood" he "would prepare a ship and sail to it," a claim answered still more grandly by his brother who "would strive to swim through

[E] Also, please clarify if Collins edition is used for quotations from *Alphonsus*.

pools of blood, / Or make a bridge of murdered carcasses" (1.3.89–90, 92–93). In *Alcazar* we find a comparably absurd family conversation.[70] Muly Mahamet's declaration that "through the stream and bloody channels deep / Our Moors shall sail in ships" is immediately answered, "And of those slaughtered bodies shall thy son / A hugy tower erect like Nimrod's frame" (1.2.58–59, 61–62). The overlap is both visual and rhetorical; *Alcazar* literally borrows *Tamburlaine*'s chariot; items for the productions appear side by side in Henslowe's accounts.[71]

Marlowe's authorial presence reverberates through the theatrical world of the early 1590s, influencing Shakespeare and other contemporaries. But even that is not quite right. Marlowe's plays, like those of his contemporaries, are intercut with the work of others. Nashe, who possibly wrote the Marlovian imitation at the opening of *1 Henry VI*—"Hung be the heavens with black" (1.1.1)—was listed as Marlowe's coauthor in *Dido, Queen of Carthage*.[72] Yet scholarship has found no way of distinguishing Nashe's contribution from Marlowe's in this work. Similar questions surround the authority of *Doctor Faustus*; *Tamburlaine* was not published under Marlowe's name until 1820.[73] Marlowe's work, like that of his contemporaries, is touched by the additions of unknown writers. In some ways, only through retrospective attribution does he emerge as an authorial voice. In all likelihood, influence did not work one way; Peele's *Alcazar* may even predate *2 Tamburlaine*.

Professional writing in the 1590s was alive with a culture of imitation and coauthorship. Shakespeare's texts are entirely compatible with that pattern; the last thing that this suggests is that he is an outside player somehow excluded from the literary game. That impression is strengthened if we look solely at the printed texts of this period.

Like most of his contemporaries, Shakespeare appears in his own name as author only in his nondramatic poems, publications that are themselves self-consciously imitative works of art. He, Marlowe, Thomas Lodge, Drayton and others produced both epyllia and historical verse that formed part of a kind of open conversation. The imperatives that drove this kind of contact were not unlike those governing Peele and Marlowe's scenes of filial boasting. One celebrated instance of this interconnection is the way that Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* opens with a description of its heroine's sleeves, whose "lawn" is bordered with "a grove, / Where Venus in her naked glory strove, / To please the careless and disdainful eyes / Of proud Adonis that before her lies."[74] That scene is the subject of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*. We are not sure which of these works was completed first—whether Shakespeare is lavishly expanding a detail, or Marlowe making a trinket out of a poem of over a thousand lines. Either way, there is a playfulness in allusion here that is profoundly characteristic of the writing of the period. The early poems, which can sometimes feel removed from the main body of Shakespeare's dramatic output, offer strong connections with the early plays on this front.[F]

Everything about Shakespeare's early texts places him in the mainstream of 1590s literary culture. For it is not only in the *Henry VI* plays that we find the conspicuous presence of other shaping voices. In the world of popular drama, humanist poetics fused easily with a more mercantile instinct for formulas and sequels. The bombastic rhetoric we now associate with Marlowe, just as much as Seneca, was quickly accommodated to the common stock. Nashe condemned those who "bodge up a blank verse with ifs and ands" by compounding Seneca with popular sources.[75] *Groatsworth* castigates the crow

[F] Can you supply some examples of the "strong connections" between the early poems and early plays?

who "beautified with our feathers . . . supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blanke verse as the best of you." In reality, this was common theatrical practice.

The strong evidence that has emerged in recent years for Shakespeare's early participation in coauthorship strengthens the case for his primary integration with the playwright fraternity. Working together on *Titus Andronicus,* Shakespeare and Peele found a subtle and flexible medium in their collaborative vocabulary of dramatic arrangement, rhetoric, and character. A nodal point for their shared lines of literary connection comes at the beginning of Act 4, where the Andronici read Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Titus quotes lines from a Senecan tragedy. It is a scene that Brian Vickers and MacDonald P. Jackson alike ascribe to Peele.[76] Pointing to the "tragic tale of Philomel," Titus explains Lavinia's fate as "pattern'd by that the poet here describes" (4.1.47)—both the initial crime and the revenge for it are knowing expansions of classical precedent.

There is much of that patterned quality throughout the play's narrative. Titus himself follows closely the feigned madness of the wronged father in Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*.[77] In such a composition, we find a characteristic moment of synergy between doctrines of imitation and theatrical pragmatism. As author of *The Battle of Alcazar*, Peele had already created a black African villain capable of fiendish betrayal and high Marlovian rhetoric. Aaron's opening soliloquy of plotting, which Vickers attributes to Peele, is thus replete with what we might call the Marlovian cadences of Peele's Mahamet. Shakespeare is as consistently imitative as his contemporaries. Like Peele, we find him searching for scenic correspondences, exploiting and innovating in relation to an

established rhetorical mode. Aaron's burlesque catalogue of evil-doing is a good example:

> AARON Even now I curse the day—and yet I think
> Few come within the compass of my curse—Wherin I did not some notorious ill:
> As kill a man, or else devise his death,
> Ravish a maid, or plot the way to do it.
>
> (*Titus Andronicus*, 5.1.125–29)

There is a knowing gesture of connection at the close of this oration. In the speech beginning "I walk abroad a-nights / And kill sick people groaning under walls," Marlowe's Barabas closes upon his suicidal victim's body, "pinning upon his breast a long great scroll / How I with interest tormented him" (*Jew of Malta*, 2.3.199–200). In Shakespeare's version, the Machiavel overgoes his predecessor: Aaron has "on their skins, as on the bark of trees, / carved in Roman letters, / "Let not your sorrow die, though I am dead'" (*Titus Andronicus*, 5.1.138–40). This is a specific allusion, yet the connections in this scene extend more widely. Aaron's boasts of orchestrating the play's carnage, for example, relate equally to Muly Mahamet's speech in *Alcazar* beginning, "Now have I set these Portugals awork / To hew a way for me unto the crown" (4.2.70–71). The diabolic, black-skinned outsider of *Titus Andronicus* is a close match with Peele's villain, as is the play's final exemplary punishment: "Set him breast-deep in earth and famish him, / There let him stand and rave and cry for food" (*Titus Andronicus*, 5.3.179–80). In *Alcazar*, Muly Mahamet's corpse is the object of a similar macabre public admonition, with the play ending on the stuffed body of the African villain

(5.1.249–54). The fate of Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* is similar, although Peele's is likely to be the earlier work.[78] On both fronts, Aaron's depiction leans heavily on earlier drama. This was a play that was performed by multiple conjoined companies. At every level, it shows Shakespeare's closeness to the writers, not the performers, of plays.

The rhetorical and dramatic aping of Marlowe that is mocked through *Groatworth*'s tiger's-heart quotation cannot be taken as a sign of Shakespeare's outsider status. Quite the opposite. It indicates Shakespeare's closeness to the professional milieu. That closeness is confirmed in the nature of Chettle's combined address to the two authors in *Kind-Harts Dreame.* Indeed, had Shakespeare died along with Marlowe in the months following Chettle's apology, the two men would have looked very similar to later times. Their output was split between dramatic writing, verse history, and epyllion; coauthorship was common to both; each had apparently worked with Nashe. Plays by the two men were distributed across a number of companies, and both probably wrote plays with the lead actor Edward Alleyn in mind.[79] Each seems likely to have attracted the attention of a major literary patron (Southampton and Walsingham). Each had produced an outstanding tragedy with the figure of an overreaching, supremely eloquent, antihero at the center. Neither appeared by name in any theatrical document.

*Groatsworth*, in addition to its value as a depiction of theatrical business, provides a window onto a culture of imitative art. Quite likely it is written by a non-university-educated dramatist (Chettle) under the designation of a university wit. The characters to which it alludes (dying sinner, atheist tragedian, fiery satirist, upstart crow) are as much types as individuals. Shakespeare as a "Johannes fac totum"—just as much as Marlowe is a "pestilent Machiuilian" or Nashe the "yong Juvenall"—fits easily into this scene. At

some point in the early 1590s, he must have acted; he could not have gone into the Lord Chamberlain's Men partnership without experience of any kind. Yet it would be odd to claim this as Shakespeare's primary profession. He might easily have taken Jonson or Munday's trajectory away from employment as a performer, supplying dramatic material to a range of companies. Instead, in 1594, Shakespeare became a shareholder and a player in the proper sense.[80] This is the first time that a published poet is known to have taken such a decision. With the partial exception of Heywood in 1600, the event is unique.

As a coda, the words "beautified" and "quality," so important in *Groatsworth* and *Kind-Harts Dreame,* do come together in a Shakespeare play. They appear in Act 4, scene 1 of *Two Gentlemen of Verona,* a work composed in the early 1590s and almost certainly revised by the time it was printed in the Folio of 1623. They are spoken by one of the outlaws as he welcomes Valentine to join his "fellows":

> But to the purpose, for we cite our faults
> That they may hold excused our lawless lives;
> And partly, seeing you are beautified
> With goodly shape, and by your own report
> A linguist, and a man of such perfection
> As we do in our quality much want.[81]

As he wrote this scene Shakespeare was conceivably thinking of Chettle and smilingly asserting his status as a playwright of superior rank: "a linguist, and a man of such perfection." As the Arden3 editor suspects, if the play was substantially revised following

Shakespeare's 1594 adoption into a fellowship, he was reflecting on that development. It is just possible that Shakespeare saw himself as a type of Valentine as he moved into this wealthy but socially dangerous fraternity. As the third outlaw observes, "this fellow were a king for our wild faction" (l. 37).

The episode in *Two Gentlemen,* if we read it allusively, presents an educated and gentlemanly figure somewhat reluctantly joining the fellows of a company. Shakespeare as a literary poet-playwright would have been doing just such a thing by becoming a shareholder in 1594. Besides *Groatsworth*, there is no hint of Shakespeare-the-actor in the first half of the 1590s.[82] The author who presents himself in the prefaces to *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* also shows no company associations; he is a would-be servant to his patron the Earl of Southampton—clearly not a player and thus a servant to the Lord Admiral or other patron, as the established actors would style themselves. Some of his sonnets were already in circulation. Shakespeare appears as a man who looks to make connections on his own account, and the direction of travel in his drama also connects him with the erudite literary world. If we follow Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor's dating, then in the years before he became a shareholder, Shakespeare produced, in probable succession, *Titus Andronicus*, *Richard III*, *Venus and Adonis*, *The Rape of Lucrece*, and *The Comedy of Errors*.[83] These compositions, which all echo existing literary models, are Shakespeare's most explicitly erudite works. Elsewhere, the poems display a residual anxiety around the writer's participation in the world of theater. Sonnet 111 bewails "the guilty goddess of my harmful deeds, / That did not better for my life provide / Than public means which public manners breeds" (ll. 2–4). We should be

cautious of drawing biographical inference from literary reference, but these do not read like the sentiments of a man attracted from the outset to appearance on the public stage.

The dig at Shakespeare "*wrapt in a Players hyde*" should not be seen as evidence for any extraordinary connection with the players. It certainly provides no basis for the romantic story of the young man who fell in love with the Queen's Men's players when they passed through Stratford in 1587. It is much more likely that Shakespeare was like other classically educated, literary men who joined the theatrical profession as employees of theater owners or company shareholders. They might occasionally have acted, but they were not players by conviction or origin. By writing their most polished work in carefully printed, nondramatic poems addressed to patrons, such poets kept their options open.[84] In some cases, they seem to have sought an escape. The distance between Shakespeare and university-educated playwrights such as Greene, Nashe, Marlowe, Peele, and Heywood was not great. If anything, it was the disappearance of this distinction that *Groatsworth* was designed, desperately, to resist.

[1] Terence G. Schoone-Jongen, *Shakespeare's Companies: William Shakespeare's Early Career and the Acting Companies, 1577–1594* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2008), 12.

[2] Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern, *Shakespeare in Parts* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007), 3.

[3] Park Honan, *Shakespeare: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), 92–111; Katherine Duncan-Jones, *Ungentle Shakespeare: Scenes from his Life* (London: Arden, 2001), 27–53; and Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), 183–88.

[4] Greene died on 3 September and *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit* was entered in the Stationers' Register on 20 September; see [Robert Greene,] *GREENES, GROATS-VVORTH of witte, bought with a million of Repentance* (London, 1592). Citations will be made parenthetically in the text by sigla.

[5] On the authorship of *Groatsworth* and especially its concluding epistle, see John Jowett, "Johannes Factotum: Henry Chettle and *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit*," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 87 (1993): 453–86, which defendsWarren Austin's conclusion that Chettle wrote the entire text. Duncan-Jones argues that the epistle is by Thomas Nashe and cites scholarship that argues for an attribution to Chettle; see *Ungentle Shakespeare*, 43–48. For my purposes, attribution is not vital, but the overlaying of authorial agency, imitation, and parody that is characteristic of the professional writing of the early 1590s is an important topic in the final part of my essay. Jowett's description of this culture (with numerous authors writing as Greene after his death and their work coming to the press through a complicated process of editing and piracy) is exceptionally helpful. In this discussion, I use "R.G." (the initials appearing at the head of the addendum) to denote the "I" figure within the pamphlet.

[6] S. Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 116.

[7] Peter Holland, "Shakespeare, William (1564–1616)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004; online edition, 2010), http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25200?docPos=8 (accessed 8 October 2010).

[8] Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean write about the "watershed" years of 1590 to 1594, where the move to Marlovian blank verse and rhetorical drama put the Queen's Men's practices under strain; see *The Queen's Men and Their Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), 6, 166–67, *passim*.

[9] For basic sources, see R. A. Foakes, ed., *Henslowe's Diary*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002); Neil Carson, *A Companion to Henslowe's Diary* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988); Walter W. Greg, ed., *Henslowe Papers: Being Documents Supplementary to Henslowe's Diary* (London: A. H. Bullen, 1907); and Gerald Eades Bentley, *The Profession of Dramatist in Shakespeare's Time, 1590–1642* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1971).

[10] On this legal situation and the exception of boys' companies, see Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, 4th ed. (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2009), 19; and Bentley, 62. As Bentley notes, John Lyly in the 1580s, Samuel Daniel in 1604, and Robert Daborne in 1610 did have authority over the children's companies that performed their work. John Marston also had a spell in this position. The degree of control and potential income varies across these cases. Lyly's writing, first for the Earl of Oxford's Boys and then for Paul's Boys, would seem to have involved the most sustained connection.

[11] Robert Wilson is the revealing instance here; his lament for Richard Tarleton in *Three Lords and Three Ladies of London* is an intriguing instance of reference to a fellow player; see R[obert] W[ilson], *The Three Lords and Three Ladies of London* (Edinburgh: AMS Press, 1970). See also David Mann, *The Elizabethan Player: Contemporary Stage Representation* (London: Routledge, 1991), 54–59, for further exploration of this and other early instances.

[12] McMillin and MacLean provide one fairly recent reaffirmation of this decisive shift in style (166). Martin Wiggins is more skeptical about generalizations concerning the earlier drama, thinking the seven surviving 1570s plays unrepresentative; see *Shakespeare and the Drama of His Time* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), 9.

[13] The kind of plays described by Stephen Gosson (and noted in the performance lists in Henslowe's *Diary*) suggests the two modes of genre coexisted for a considerable time. See Steph[en] Gosson, *Playes Confuted in fiue Actions* (London, 1582), sig. A7r; Gosson's explanation for the staging of these plays, which he claims were written two years previously, is (tellingly) that he has no control over their dramatic production.

[14] *A second and third blast of retrait from plaies and Theaters* (London, 1580), 49.

[15] It is possible that Gosson and Anthony Munday are the "two more" playwrights condemned in R.G.'s epistle, whose "owne workes serue to witnesse against their owne wickednesse, if they perseuere to maintaine any more such peasants"; see *Groatsworth*, sig. F2r.

[16] Bentley provides a survey of contemporary attitudes to dramatic authorship, including discussion of the *Parnassus* plays (38–40). He charts an upward movement but argues for the relatively low status of the profession. Mann tends to endorse a picture of relative

hostility between authors and players, again suggesting a gradual change with the turn of the century (93–100). Grace Ioppolo argues that the careers of dramatists Robert Daborne, Thomas Heywood, and Richard Brome "demonstrate here the artistic and financial interdependence and interconnection of the theatrical business throughout the early modern period" and should not be considered anomalous; see *Dramatists and Their Manuscripts in the Age of Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton and Heywood: Authorship, Authority, and the Playhouse* (London: Routledge, 2006), 12–13.

[17] Schoenbaum, 172.

[18] Schoenbaum, 148–51.

[19] These results are obtained through a full-text search for "fac totem" on Chadwyck-Healey's Early English Books Online database (http://eebo.chadwyck.com). I have examined all uses in context.

[20] Jowett, 482.

[21] See Richard Tarlton, *Tarltons Newes Out of Purgatorie* (London, 1590), 6; and Thomas Nashe, "*Preface to Greene's* Menaphon," in *The Unfortunate Traveller and Other Works*, ed. J. B. Steane (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1972), 361. On the attribution of Tarlton's *News* to Greene, see Jeremy Dimmick, "Gower, Chaucer and the Art of Repentance in Robert Greene's Vision," *Review of English Studies* 57 (2006): 456–73, esp. 458.

[22] [Giovanni Boccaccio,] *The Decameron* (London, 1620).

[23] For the contract, see Foakes, ed., 241. Subsequent references are to this edition and are cited in the text.

[24] On these contracts, see Carson, 33.

[25] Thomas Heywood, *Oenone and Paris* [London, 1594].

[26] Foakes, ed., 50.

[27] See Clement Mansfield Ingleby, *Shakespeare's Centurie of Prayse; Being Materials for a History of Opinion on Shakespeare and His Works* (London: Trübner & Co., 1874), 310; and E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), 1:60.

[28] Carson, 37.

[29] We have moved beyond the notion that Shakespeare was an untutored child of nature. On Shakespeare's education, the classic study remains T. W. Baldwin, *William Shakspere's Small Latine & Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols. (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1944). Jonathan Bate offers one of many recent studies that show Shakespeare's deep engagement with the humanist literary culture of his age; see *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

[30] Nashe, 474. Nashe's *Pierce Penniless* was entered in the Stationers' Register on 23 August 1592, only a few days before *Groatsworth*.

[31] Ro[bert] Garnier, *Pompey the Great, his faire* Corneliaes Tragedie*: Effected by her Father and Husbandes downe-cast, death, and fortune*, trans. Thomas Kid (London, 1595).

[32] Baldwin (448) notes that similar educational programs were followed by all grammar schools "which give any inkling of what they are about."

[33] Nashe, 474 (emphasis added).

[34] Nashe, 474.

[35] On the likelihood that Kyd acted, see Lukas Erne, *Beyond "The Spanish Tragedy": A Study of the Works of Thomas Kyd* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2001), 162.

[36] The drift of the preface's attack is on those who create "whole Hamlets, I should say handfuls, of tragical speeches" by copying Seneca; see Nashe, 474.

[37] Schoenbaum, 116.

[38] Schoenbaum, 116.

[39] Horace, *Satires and Epistles*; Persius, *Satires* (London: Penguin Books, 1997), 136.

[40] [Thomas Alfield,] *A true reporte of the death & martyrdome of M. Campion Iesuite and priest, & M. Sherwin, & M. Bryan preistes, at Tiborne the first of December 1581* [London, 1582], sig. D4v.

[41] [Alfield,] *True reporte*, sig. E1r.

[42] The second part of the *Return from Parnassus*, for example, harps repeatedly on Ben Jonson's status as "the wittiest fellow of a bricklayer"; see M. C. Bradbrook, *The Growth and Structure of Elizabethan Comedy* (London: Cambridge UP, 1979), 103. Munday, in *True reporte*, is comparably mocked as a printer's apprentice.

[43] Thomas Dekker, *Satiromastix*, in *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, ed. Fredson Bowers, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1953), 1:326 (1.2.354–58).

[44] Dekker, 1:351 (4.1.127–34).

[45] Dekker, 1:365 (4.3.202–5).

[46] Jonson's outsider status in comparison with the actors is confirmed by Henslowe's correspondence on the incident. In a letter to Edward Alleyne, Henslowe reports that a member of his company, "gabrell" (that is, Gabriel Spencer), had been killed at "the hands of bengemen Jonson bricklayer." Alleyn Papers, MS vol 1 f. 35 (printed *Mem Ed*

*All* p. 50. **[Au/ Please give full publication information for edition of Alleyn papers cited here.]** On one occasion, the *Diary* refers to Ben Jonson as a "player," but otherwise he is identified as a writer; see Henslowe, 238.

[47] See Schoenbuam, 117; and Jowett, 494.

[48] Schoenbaum, 117.

[49] H[enry] C[hettle], *Kind-Harts Dreame: Conteining fiue Apparitions, vvith their Inuectiues against abuses raigning* (London, [1607]).

[50] Lukas Erne questions whether the apology can be to Shakespeare at all, given his sense that Shakespeare is not to be classed as a scholar; see "Biography and Mythography: Rereading Chettle's Alleged Apology to Shakespeare," *English Studies* 5 (1998): 430–40. Erne's subsequent reappraisal in *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003) may make him more sympathetic to my own picture of Shakespeare's career. Other references to Shakespeare by his contemporaries, such as those by Francis Meres in *Palladis Tamia* or Heywood at the end of his *Apology*, show that high literary ambition was attributed to him.

[51] Katherine Duncan-Jones, "Shakespeare, the Motley Player," *Review of English Studies* 60 (1999): 723–43. I am grateful to Professor Duncan-Jones for her generosity in sharing this article with me, especially as she is aware that I argue against her case. In it, she contends that the lines "*Adon* deafly masking thro, / Stately troupes rich conceited, / Shew'd he well deserved to" in Thomas Edward's *Narcissus*, entered in the Stationers' Register on 22 October 1593, allude to Shakespeare's employment in a "troop" of actors. In contrast, I suggest these lines confirm an early tendency to see Shakespeare through his nondramatic work.

[52] *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989), s.v. "quality, *noun*." *OED Online*, http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50194223 (accessed 8 October 2010). Uses 1 to 5 in the *OED* all convey high value and personal integrity. Definition 1a describes "character, disposition, nature"; 1b "excellence of character, good nature"; 2a "a personal attribute, a trait, a feature of a person's character"; 3a "title, description, character, capacity"; 4a "rank or position in (a) society"; and 5a "nobility, high birth or rank, good social position." For all of these definitions, the early modern citations refer to character alone. The *OED*'s definition of "quality" for 6a (b) cites the Scottish poet William Dunbar for the first recorded use of the word in this sense.

[53] It is possible that Shakespeare was writing for three companies in the period 1592 to 1594; see Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, 1:61. On this stage of Shakespeare's career, see also Gurr, *Shakespearean Stage*, 263, 271. Gurr thinks it evident from Greene's gibe that Shakespeare was a player in the summer of 1592, although in what capacity is not known.

[54] William Shakespeare, *The true tragedie of Richard Duke of York and the death of good King Henrie the Sixt* . . . (London, 1595).

[55] See Scott McMillin, "Casting for Pembroke's Men: The *Henry VI* Quartos and *The Taming of A Shrew*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 23 (1972): 141–59, which explores some of the difficulties of casting the play's thirteen distinct male roles. A second set of Pembroke players joined the Admiral's Men in 1597 after the failure of their enterprise at the Swan Theatre.

[56] Foakes, ed., 16. There is no absolute certainty that this "harey the vj" is Shakespeare's play, but the lack of another candidate, plus a match with Nashe's claims about the play's

success, make this identification a likely; see Edward Burns, ed., *King Henry VI, Part 1* (London: Thompson Learning, 2000), 1–9.

[57] See Foakes, ed., 16–21. The play was printed "As it was Plaide by the Right Honourable the Earl of *Darbie*, Earle of *Pembrooke*, and Earle of *Sussex* their Seruants"; see William Shakespeare, *THE MOST Lamentable Romaine Tragedie of Titus Andronicus* (London, 1594), sig. A2r.

[58] Robert Greene and Thomas Lodge's *A Looking Glass for London and England* (London, 1594) was played by Strange's Men. Greene's *New Historie of Orlando Furioso* (London, 1594) had Edward Alleyn (at that point Worcester's man) in its title role, and *A Pleasant Conceyted Comedie of George a Greene, the Pinner of VVakefield* (London, 1599) was printed as performed by Sussex's company. On the continuing patterns of composition for multiple companies (for Dekker, John Day, Richard Hathaway, Wentworth Smith, Jonson, and many others), see Carol Chillington Rutter, *Documents of the Rose Playhouse*, rev. ed. (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1999), 26.

[59] On Heywood's early employment and the transfer of the two parts of *Edward IV*, see Richard Rowland, ed., *The First and Second Parts of King Edward IV* by Thomas Heywood (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2005), 2–6.

[60] Rutter, 30.

[61] On the relationship between Shakespeare's version and the *True Chronicle*, see Geoffrey Bullough, ed., *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, 8 vols. (New York: Columbia UP 1957–75), 3:238–40.

[62] On the dating of Sonnets 127 through 154, especially the very early "Hathaway" Sonnet 145, see Colin Burrow, ed., *The Complete Sonnets and Poems* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002), 105.

[63] The claim that Shakespeare had been a schoolmaster in the country was made by the actor William Beeston to John Aubrey. Aubrey notes that the playwright "came to London I guesse about 18," though he is not specific about his employment at that time; see Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, 2:253; and Schoenbaum, 88–89. Bate's arguments are based on the bill of complaint in Queen's Bench, *Shakespeare v. Lambert* in Order for Trial, 9 October 1589; see Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, 2:35–41.

[64] Unless otherwise indicated, quotations from Shakespeare's works are taken from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2nd ed., gen. ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).

[65] Greenblatt, 191, 189, 192.

[66] See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997), xxviii–xlvii; Marjorie Garber, "Marlovian Vision / Shakespearean Revision," *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 22 (1979): 3–9; and James Shapiro, *Rival Playwrights: Marlowe, Jonson, Shakespeare* (New York: Columbia UP, 1991). All of the discussion of the Shakespeare-Marlowe relationship below is based on well known cases of overlap; many were identified earlier in M. C. Bradbrook, *English Dramatic Form: A History of Its Development* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965); and M. C. Bradbrook, "Shakespeare's Recollections of Marlowe," in *Shakespeare's Styles:*

*Essays in Honour of Kenneth Muir*, ed. Philip Edwards, Inga-Stina Ewbank, and G. K. Hunter (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1980), 191–204, esp. 191–93.

[67] R[obert] G[reen], *THE COMICALL HISTORIE OF Alphonsus, King of Aragon* (London, 1599).

[68] On *Alphonsus* as "an extravagant imitation of the two parts of *Tamburlaine*," see J. Churton Collins, ed., *The Plays & Poems of Robert Greene*, 2 vols. (1905; repr., Freeport, ME: Books for Libraries Press, 1970)1:72–73; and J. S. Cunningham, ed., *Tamburlaine the Great* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1981). **[Au/ Please provide page number(s) for Cunningham citation.]**

[69] Parallels between Peele and Marlowe are ubiquitous, and influence does not necessarily run one way. For analysis of a series of overlapping passages, see Charles Tyler Prouty, gen. ed., *The Life and Works of George* Peele, 3 vols. (New Haven: Yale UP, 1952–70), 2:50–53.

[70] The presence of the Queen (as with Zenocrate in *Tamburlaine*) as part of this group is not indicated in the printed quarto, but it is indicated in the manuscript plot (which records the entrances of actors, *et cetera*) surviving at Dulwich College; see Charles Edelman, ed., *The Stukeley Plays* (Manchester UP, 2005), 72n; and David Bradley, *From Text to Performance in the Elizabethan Theatre: Preparing the Play for the Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), 23–24.

[71] See Foakes, ed., 318, 320, containing references to "Turckes hedes" (which Foakes connects to *The Battle of Alcazar*) and a "Tamberlyne brydell." The plot of *Alcazar* specifically points to the use of a chariot and whips (both features of *Tamburlaine*) and confirms Alleyn in the role of Muly Mahamet. A facsimile of the plot is printed in Greg;

for further discussion, see Bradley. Clearly, Henslowe's theater continued to produce plays in this genre for a long time; *Lust's Dominion* (1599), on which Dekker, William Haughton, and John Day collaborated, draws on a scheming Moor as a Machiavellian lead villain, capable of great force and Marlovian rhetorical grandeur, who is eventually caught up in his own plot. **[Au/ Please provide citation(s) for information on *Lust's Dominion*.]**

[72] On the possibility of Nashe as Shakespeare's coauthor here, see Burns, ed., *King Henry VI, Part 1*, 74–75. See also Christopher Marlowe, *THE Tragedie of Dido Queene of Carthage* (London, 1594).

[73] On the possible collaborative authorship of *Doctor Faustus*, see David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen, eds., *Doctor Faustus: A- and B-Texts (1604, 1616)* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1993), 70–77. The first edition of *Tamburlaine* attributed to Marlowe was W. Oxberry's; on the history of that play's attribution, see Cunningham, ed., *Tamburlaine the Great*, 6–9. **[Au/ Should date of Oxberry's edition be supplied here?]** Richard Jones, printer of "the two tragical discourses of the Scythian shepherd Tamburlaine," had already altered the playtext by removing "some fond and frivolous jestures, digressing and, in my poor opinion, far unmeet for the matter"; see Cunningham, ed., *Tamburlaine*, 111. These "jestures" may or may not have been Marlowe's; either way, they illustrate the lack of unmediated authorship in *Tamburlaine*.

[74] *The Collected Poems of Christopher Marlowe,* ed. Patrick Cheney and Brian J. Striar (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006), ll. 11–14.

[75] Nashe, 475.

[76] On the division of labor in this play, see Brian Vickers, *Shakespeare, Co-Author: A Historical Study of Five Collaborative Plays* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002), 449. Attribution in Shakespeare's early work is an area of particular contention; continued uncertainty here supports a key part of my argument. Vickers's conclusions about Peele's part in the play are investigated at the close of MacDonald P. Jackson's *Defining Shakespeare: Pericles as Test Case* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003), 195–203. Jackson's methods are quite widely considered state-of-the-art, and they endorse Vickers's conclusions in the sample examined, although they have not been employed for the whole of the play. Jackson provides an overview of reviews and responses on the *Titus Andronicus* attribution question (195n).

[77] On the wider influence of Kyd's play, see Erne, *Beyond "The Spanish Tragedy,"* 5, passim. Erne sees "tightly dramatised causality" (4) as the most important of Kyd's innovations to influence Shakespeare.

[78] Alfred Harbage dates *Battle of Alcazar* to 1588 to 1589 and *The Jew of Malta* to 1589 to 1590; see Alfred Harbage, *Annals of English Drama 975–1700*, 3rd ed., rev. S. Schoenbaum and Sylvia Stoler Wagonheim (London: Routledge, 1989), 54.

[79] Harbage (52–58) has Marlowe producing work for the following companies: *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, "Chapel"; *1 and 2 Tamburlaine* and *Doctor Faustus*, Admiral's Men; *Jew of Malta* and *Massacre at Paris*, Strange's Men; *Edward II*, Pembroke's Men.

[80] In his complaints about the unwarranted recognition of coats of arms in 1602, the herald Peter Brooke complained about the distinction granted to "Shakespear y$^{e}$ player"; even then, Schoenbaum notes that "the appellation *player* is no doubt pejoratively intended," but it would now be based on institutional fact (172). Whether Shakespeare

ever became a noted performer is another question. He appears in the acting lists of Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour* (1598) and *Sejanus* (1603) but is absent from lists thereafter and is not among those in the company, such as Richard Burbage, William Kemp, William Slye, Henry Condell, or Robert Armin who left contemporary records of their fame as performers. **[Au/ Please provide citation(s) for information in this sentence.]**

[81] William C. Carroll, ed., *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (London: Thompson Learning, 2004), 4.1.1, 52–57. On the play's probable revision, see 116–30.

[82] On this absence from theatrical documents, see Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 270; and Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, 1:60.

[83] On dating, see Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor with John Jowett and William Montgomery, *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987). **[Au/ Please provide page(s) for this citation.]**

[84] It may well be that the Ovidian model of the poet-playwright provided a preconceived career track for such professionals. This career trajectory has been the subject of a number of studies by Patrick Cheney. Writers such as Lodge, Marlowe, Heywood, John Marston, and Daniel would parallel Shakespeare here. **[Au/ We suggest supplying a few representative titles by Cheney here.]**