THE CANON AND CHRONOLOGY OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

LIKE children, works of art acquire a being independent of those who conceived them. We may judge and interpret and enjoy a poem or person, without knowing the author or the father. But poems, like persons, come in families: they have progenitors and siblings, contexts and consequences. Some critics discipline themselves, democratically, to regard each work on its own terms, or on their terms, or on any terms other than those imposed upon it by the accidents of birth and place. Such critics would ideally encounter works one by one, separately bound, in a material solitude which embodies the intellectual integrity the critic seeks. But other kinds of critical curiosity are less easily satisfied; like Coriolanus, some find it impossible to act as if a work were author of itself, and knew no other kin. For 'the biological school' of literary criticism, individuals cannot be fully or properly understood without some knowledge of the family and the culture to which they belong; such critics would ideally encounter works in groups, in collections bound together instead of apart, so that we might appreciate the similarities which foil and counterpoint their differences. In this sense a 'Complete Works' is the literary equivalent of a family reunion, the gathering of a clan of siblings born of the fruitful union of a unique artist and a unique society. In recognizing the existence of such literary families, we need not accept any exaggerated theoretical estimate of the power of one parent—the 'author'—to impose successfully and consistently his or her intentions upon the children: we simply accept that each parent had some influence, often unconscious, commonly unpredictable, upon the maturing of each individual creation. And in understanding the relationships within such a family (or any other), it will help to know the order of birth of the offspring.

In Shakespeare's case, no such family reunion occurred until after the death of both parents. Shakespeare did not personally oversee the publication of a collected edition of his works, and no autograph manuscripts survive of works attributed to him in his lifetime. The contents and chronology of his canon—the number of his literary children, and their order of birth—therefore remain, and will for ever remain, a matter of dispute. Editors must decide, because Shakespeare did not decide for them, what to include and how to arrange it; the decisions of any collected edition—from that printed by William Jaggard in 1623, to that published by Oxford University Press in 1986—are fallible, and may be challenged by those with better evidence or better judgement.

Scholars base their judgements about the date and authorship of works of art upon two kinds of evidence. 'External evidence' consists of early documentary witnesses: manuscripts and printed books which assert, for instance, that author X composed work Y. 'Internal evidence' consists of features of workmanship in the object itself: tricks of usage in work Y which betray the hand of author X. If you think of a work of art as a tin of food, 'external evidence' is the label around the tin, describing its contents; but sometimes such labels are missing, or misleading, and then we resort to 'internal evidence', opening the tin and testing its contents, by methods which range from simple taste to complicated chemical analysis. Both types of evidence have their value and their limitations.

Authorship: External Evidence

The chief external evidence for the works of William Shakespeare is the folio volume of *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies*, published in 1623 (STC 22273). This volume contains a dedication and an epistle (reproduced among 'Commendatory Poems and Prefaces' in the Oxford edition) signed by John Heminges and Henry Condell. Along with Richard Burbage (who died in 1619), Heminges and Condell were the only London figures mentioned in Shakespeare's will. Both were members of the Chamberlain's Men, later the King's Men, the theatrical company of which Shakespeare was a member from 1594 to his death in 1616. The Chamberlain's Men are first mentioned in June 1594, in the records of the theatrical entrepreneur Philip Henslowe; the first inkling of the company's membership occurs in the Accounts of the Treasurer of the Queen's Chamber, which records a payment on 15 March 1595 to William Shakespeare, William Kempe, and Richard Burbage for two performances by the company during the preceding Christmas season (reproduced in Schoenbaum, *Documentary Life*, p. 136). Heminges is first named as a member of the company in a document of December 1596, and Condell in one of 1598. The company must always have consisted of more than the three men named on 15 March 1595 as its representatives, and it has been widely and reasonably assumed that Heminges and Condell belonged to the company from its beginnings. It is even possible that they knew Shakespeare before the formation of the Chamberlain's Men; for that company seems to have taken over most of its members from Strange's Men. Heminges is named among members of Strange's Men in May 1593; less reliably, the plat of *2 Seven Deadly Sins*, which has been conjecturally dated in 1590–1, refers to an actor named 'Harry', who might have been Condell (see Greg, *Dramatic Documents*). Three of Shakespeare's plays are associated with Strange's Men in the early 1590s. The 1623 Folio also includes prefatory material by

Ben Jonson—who knew Shakespeare by 1598, and who later said 'I lov'd the man, and doe honour his memory (on this side Idolatry) as much as any' (*Discoveries*, ll. 654–5, in *Works*, viii. 583–4)—and by Leonard Digges, the stepson of Shakespeare's friend Thomas Russell (also mentioned in his will). Those associated with the 1623 edition thus possess exemplary credentials as witnesses to Shakespeare's dramatic output from at least the middle of 1594 on. Moreover, no one at the time objected to their choice of plays, in the way that Aston Cokayne complained about the Folio collection of *Comedies and Tragedies Written by Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher*: in *A Chain of Golden Poems* (1658: Wing C4894), Cokayne claimed that the 1647 collection included much work by Philip Massinger and little by Beaumont. Since Shakespeare's plays were collected only seven years after his death, at a time when the theatres were still thriving, someone would probably have objected if the collection were objectionable. We must assume, as the initial premiss of any investigation of the Shakespeare canon, that any play included in the 1623 Folio must have been written by Shakespeare in whole or at least part; equally, the claims of any play Heminges and Condell did not include must be treated with some scepticism.

We can evaluate the credentials of the 1623 edition in part because we know who was responsible for its contents. A number of other individuals, about whom we know a great deal, attest the authenticity of particular plays. John Weever (1599) testifies to Shakespeare's authorship of *Romeo* and of another play in which a character named 'Richard' featured prominently—presumably either Richard II or Richard III (see Honigmann, *Lost Years*, 50–8). Gabriel Harvey (1598–1603) testifies to his authorship of *Hamlet* (see Stern), Ben Jonson (1619) to his authorship of *The Winter's Tale* and *Julius Caesar* (*Conversations with Drummond*, ll. 208–10, *Works*, i. 138; *Discoveries*, ll. 662–5, *Works*, viii. 584). Weever and Jonson certainly, and Harvey probably, attributed these plays to Shakespeare before any edition was published bearing his name. Leonard Digges attributed to Shakespeare *Romeo*, *Henry IV*, *Much Ado*, *Caesar*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Othello*; although the poem in which he makes these claims was not printed until after 1623, given his personal connection with Shakespeare he probably had access to sources of information other than the First Folio itself. Likewise, a manuscript by Richard James which attributes *1 Henry IV* to Shakespeare post-dates the Folio, but James clearly had access to unpublished information about the play's original composition, and so constitutes an independent witness to the play's authorship (see Taylor, 'Richard James').

The most important such witness is Francis Meres. His *Palladis Tamia* was entered in the Stationers' Register on 7 September 1598, and published in an edition dated 1598 (STC 17834). Meres tells us that

> the sweete wittie soule of *Ouid* liues in mellifluous & hony-tongued *Shakespeare*, witnes his *Venus* and *Adonis*, his *Lucrece*, his sugred Sonnets among his priuate friends, &c.
>
> As *Plautus* and *Seneca* are accounted the best for Comedy and Tragedy among the Latines: so *Shakespeare* among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage; for Comedy, witnes his *Gentlemen of Verona*, his *Errors*, his *Loue labors lost*, his *Loue labours wonne*, his *Midsummers night dreame*, & his *Merchant of Venice*: for Tragedy his *Richard the 2. Richard the 3. Henry the 4. King Iohn*, *Titus Andronicus* and his *Romeo and Iuliet*.

Meres must have relied upon independent sources of information, for at least six of the works he mentions had not yet been printed, and of those in print only five named Shakespeare as author. Three of those five editions—*Love's Labour's Lost*, *Richard II*, and *Richard III*—were published in 1598, and therefore might post-date Meres's testimony. (For Meres, see Allen.)

It does not seem likely that Heminges and Condell were influenced in their choice of plays for the 1623 collection by a knowledge of Meres's comments, in an obscure book a quarter of a century old, or by Weever's equally old and equally unimportant poem, or by Harvey's manuscript jottings. These witnesses are apparently independent, and they corroborate one another. None of them has any obvious motive for dishonesty. Such personal attributions—by Weever, Harvey, Jonson, Digges, James, and Meres—ascribe to Shakespeare seventeen of the thirty-six plays included in the Folio.

A third category of documentary evidence is less secure. Shakespeare's name appears on a number of editions of individual works before the collected edition of 1623. It first occurs in print appended to the dedications of *Venus* (1593) and *Lucrece* (1594); in neither edition is it advertised on the title-page—which suggests that the publisher did not expect the author's credentials to increase sales. Shakespeare's name first appears on the title-page of a play in 1598, when it occurs in the three editions mentioned above—each a reprint of an earlier text. In all, nineteen of the thirty-six plays included in the 1623 collection were printed in separate editions before that date; those first printed after 1600 invariably named Shakespeare as author. Those title-page ascriptions are, however, of uncertain value. In the 1590s, when Shakespeare was a relatively obscure playwright, and when consequently the motive for falsely attributing works to him was slight, his plays were usually published anonymously; in the 1600s, when he had become famous, printed plays were frequently attributed to him, but those attributions might represent only the dishonest efforts of publishers to exploit his name.

Such scepticism is justified by the fact that the 1623 collection does not include every play attributed to Shakespeare in editions printed before that date: it excludes *The London Prodigal* (first attributed to Shakespeare in the edition of 1605), *A Yorkshire Tragedy* (1608), *Pericles* (1609), *1 Sir John Oldcastle* (1619), and *The Troublesome Reign of John, King of England* (1622). These disparities increase our confidence in the 1623 collection, and decrease our confidence in the testimony of individual editions before 1623. If Heminges and Condell had included every work previously attributed to Shakespeare in a separate edition, we might suspect that they merely accepted the assertions of earlier publishers. Their rejection of several such items confirms the independent value of their inclusion of others. Noticeably, all the works which they exclude were first attributed to Shakespeare early in the seventeenth century, when his reputation created incentives to dishonesty, and before the Folio itself ended the market for such fraudulence by providing the public with a reliable dramatic canon.

In evaluating the testimony of an early edition a great deal depends upon the evidence of authorial involvement in the publication. Epigraphs, dedications, prefaces, and commendatory poems by friends all demonstrate an author's ac-

tive engagement in preparation of the work for print; so does extensive correction and revision of the text in proof—as we find for instance in editions of some of Ben Jonson's plays, or in Barnaby Barnes's *The Devil's Charter* (1607: *BEPD* 254). But of works attributed to Shakespeare, only the narrative poems contain dedications signed by the author, and only the first of those sports an epigraph; those two poems were also better printed than any other work attributed to him, and must presumably have been proof-read with greater care than any of the editions of his plays. The absence of such proof of authorial presence deprives most of the early editions attributed to Shakespeare of any commanding authority, and forces an investigator back upon the testimony of the 1623 Folio. Of course, many of the attributions made in early editions are confirmed by the Folio; but if the Folio did not exist, we could not distinguish—without resorting to stylistic evidence—between the documentary testimony for *King Lear* (1608) and the documentary testimony for *A Yorkshire Tragedy* (1608): both look equally valid, and hence both are equally worthless.

Finally, one category of documentary evidence must be mentioned only in order to lament its absence. Theatrical companies kept records of their financial affairs, including the sums of money paid to playwrights for composing particular plays; the survival of such records from the theatrical entrepreneur Philip Henslowe establishes the authorship of many plays—including *1 Sir John Oldcastle*. Shakespeare's company must have possessed similar records, and indeed the ledger in which they were kept probably appeared on stage in performances of Philip Massinger's *Believe as You List*, which contains a stage direction calling for the use of 'the great booke: of Accomptes'. If this book survived it would presumably solve all our problems in determining what Shakespeare wrote, and when, from mid-1594 to 1616. Although Heminges and Condell almost certainly had access to such a book when determining what to include in the 1623 collection, that source apparently did not survive beyond the interregnum. Nor did the records of Sir Edmund Tilney or Sir George Buc, who were successive Masters of the Revels from 1579 to 1621, and who had to license every play before it could be performed. The only comparable theatrical document which does survive, naming the authors of certain plays, is a manuscript from the Revels Accounts of 1604–5, which specifies Shakespeare as the author of *Errors*, *Merchant*, and *Measure*. This document (PRO, Audit Office, Accounts, Various, A.O. 3/908/13; reproduced by Schoenbaum, *Documentary Life*, pp. 200–1) was once considered a forgery; its authenticity was defended by Chambers and Stamp, but has recently been challenged again by Hamilton (1985). Giles Dawson (privately) rejects Hamilton's palaeographical argument, and we have accepted the document as genuine.

In practice the 1623 Folio solves most of the canonical problems faced by Shakespeare's editors. However, no document is an island; no document stands alone, and even the Folio must be interpreted in the light of other literary and theatrical records of the period. In determining the contents of the Shakespeare canon, editors have acted upon two principles: (1) all works included in the 1623 collection should be included in any subsequent collection, and (2) any work excluded from that collection should be excluded from any subsequent collection. The first principle commands more confidence and has in practice commanded more allegiance than the second. For the reasons outlined above, we can and indeed must assume that any play included in the 1623 collection was written in whole, or at least substantial part, by Shakespeare, and any such work must be represented in a responsible edition of his complete works. When the Folio speaks, we must echo it; but when the Folio is silent, its silence cannot be so confidently interpreted or obeyed. Bibliographical analysis of the Folio has demonstrated that *Troilus and Cressida* was almost omitted, apparently because of problems over copyright; in consequence, *Timon* was included, although it may not have formed part of the original plan. All scholars accept that both plays belong among Shakespeare's works. *Pericles*, likewise, has been accepted as genuine since the late eighteenth century, though the Folio excludes it. An increasing majority of scholars in the twentieth century has accepted the evidence for Shakespeare's authorship of part of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and of three pages in the manuscript of *Sir Thomas More*, both excluded from the Folio. The Folio also omits two lost plays, *Love's Labour's Won* and *Cardenio*, which there is good reason to believe that Shakespeare wrote, in whole or part. Such exceptions, grudgingly accepted by the community of scholars over three centuries, collectively demonstrate that the mere absence of a play from the 1623 collection does not and should not irrevocably exclude it from the Shakespeare canon.

Nevertheless, the burden of proof rests upon any new candidate for inclusion in the dramatic canon. Of the exceptions catalogued above, *Timon*, *Pericles*, *Kinsmen*, *More*, and *Cardenio* all appear to have been collaborative works; only *Troilus* and *Love's Labour's Won* were, certainly or probably, entirely by Shakespeare. Of these, *Troilus* was, after all, fitted in, though at the very last minute—a measure, surely, of the scrupulousness of the 1623 editors. About the sole remaining exception, *Love's Labour's Won*, we know only two things: it was an early play, and it was in print by 1603. Either fact might explain its exclusion. Possibly the copyright belonged to a recalcitrant stationer, unwilling to relinquish it to the Folio syndicate; or perhaps, because the play had been written early in Shakespeare's career, Heminges and Condell could not locate a manuscript of its text. Of these two explanations, the first can be incorporated in the second, for if Heminges and Condell possessed a manuscript they could have printed the play from it, even without the consent of that hypothetically recalcitrant stationer—as they apparently did with *Troilus*, and other plays.

Two factors can thus be reasonably invoked as an explanation for exclusion of a 'Shakespearian' play from the 1623 collection: collaboration, or early composition. By the Jacobean period Shakespeare's verbal style had become so distinctive that, in any extended passage, it should be recognized. Although he could have contributed a few lines or a single speech to other men's plays without our being able to detect his presence, it seems highly unlikely that he wrote even as much as a scene in any extant Jacobean play other than those included in the Oxford edition and long recognized by scholars as probable or certain examples of his work. In practice, then, there seems little prospect of any significant addition to Shakespeare's Jacobean dramatic canon. But we cannot be so confident about the situation at the other end of his career. The authority of Heminges and Condell diminishes

the further back into the sixteenth century we go. *Love's Labour's Won* probably post-dates *Love's Labour's Lost*, and hence belongs to the mid-1590s; nevertheless, it failed to find a place in the Folio. The Folio certainly does include plays which Shakespeare wrote before 1594, when the Chamberlain's Men was formed; but we cannot be sure that Heminges and Condell knew every play that Shakespeare wrote in that earlier period, or would have been able to secure copies of every play they remembered. The plays that Shakespeare wrote for the Chamberlain's Men became and remained the property of that company, which survived without interruption until the publication of the 1623 Folio. But although that company clearly acquired some of the scripts that Shakespeare wrote before the company's formation, nothing in Elizabethan theatrical practice guarantees that they would have acquired all of them. The plays were not Shakespeare's property; he could not automatically bring them with him, when he moved into a new company—even if he had written the whole play. His claim upon collaborative early plays would be even more tenuous. If Shakespeare were a sharer in a company which broke up, he might ask for his proportion of the company's remaining assets to be paid in playscripts; but we have no evidence that he was a sharer in any early company. Shakespeare might well have written, early in his career, whole plays or parts of plays, lost or extant, which were not included in the 1623 collection.

The Folio cannot be relied upon to contain all Shakespeare's collaborative plays, or all his dramatic work from the late 1580s and early 1590s. Nor should we assume, as though it were an article of faith guaranteed by divine revelation, that the Folio excludes all collaborative plays. In evaluating the authority of the Folio in this regard we must answer two separate questions: did Shakespeare ever collaborate, and if so did the Folio editors on principle exclude such works?

It has often been assumed or asserted that Shakespeare did not collaborate. Leonard Digges praised him because he did not beg 'from each witty friend a Scene | To peece his Acts with' (Commendatory Poems, p. xlvi/lxii, ll. 16-17). But this claim must be understood in its context: a poem repeatedly contrasting Shakespeare with the most admired playwrights of the 1620s and 1630s. Digges elsewhere in the poem explicitly contrasts Shakespeare with Jonson, and here by implication contrasts him with Fletcher, who wrote almost entirely in collaboration with other playwrights. Of Fletcher one might reasonably say that he borrowed from 'each' witty friend a scene. Shakespeare collaborated less frequently, and with fewer partners, and by comparison to Fletcher (or most of the playwrights of Fletcher's generation) Shakespeare deserved Digges's praise. But that praise must be understood in relative terms. After all, Digges also claims that Shakespeare never borrowed material from Greek, Latin, or foreign authors, and never plagiarized from his own countrymen—claims which we know to be exaggerated.

It has been estimated that as many as half the plays written for the public theatres during Shakespeare's writing life were collaborative (Bentley, 199); in the companies which worked for Henslowe, the proportion is nearer two-thirds. According to contemporary documentary evidence, Greene, Marlowe, Nashe, Lodge, and Peele all collaborated; so did Jonson, Middleton, Webster, Tourneur, Chapman, Marston, Dekker, Beaumont, Fletcher, Massinger, Rowley, Heywood, Drayton, Chettle, Munday, Daborne, Field, and indeed every public playwright about whom we know anything. Shakespeare, recognized from the beginning of his career as a 'Johannes fac totum', seems intrinsically unlikely to have differed in this respect from all his contemporaries. We have no reason to believe that he shared Jonson's élitist classical disdain of collaboration—and even Jonson, who disdained it, did it. Those who advertised and those who bought the 1634 edition of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* apparently found nothing odd in the suggestion that Shakespeare might work alongside another playwright. Any objective perusal of Shakespeare's theatrical context strongly suggests that he must occasionally have collaborated—even if such collaborations are all lost. Anyone who wishes to assume otherwise must provide compelling evidence for that assumption, and no such evidence has ever been delivered.

But the near certainty that Shakespeare collaborated tells us nothing about the Folio's policy toward such collaborations. The absence of *Pericles*, *Cardenio*, and *Kinsmen* suggests that the Folio editors generally excluded late collaborative romances. Of course, such evidence is only relevant if one accepts that those plays were written in part by Shakespeare. Scholars who deny that Shakespeare wrote any of those works, or that any was a collaboration, cannot claim that the Folio excludes collaborations, for they have dismissed all the potential examples of such exclusion. But if we accept the growing consensus favouring collaboration in those three works, we must also accept that Heminges and Condell apparently excluded some works solely because Shakespeare was not sole author.

It does not follow, however, that they excluded any play which had been written in collaboration. One of the plays in which collaboration seems most certain, *Timon of Athens*, was apparently a stopgap addition to their original plan. Two others—*1 Henry VI* and *All Is True*—are chronicle plays, needed to round out the sequence of 'Histories' which forms one-third of the 1623 volume. Shakespeare's success in that genre distinguished him from most of the playwrights of the Jacobean period, and the Folio editors might reasonably have felt that Shakespeare's survey of English history represented a distinctive and coherent whole. The editors were apparently willing to change the titles of plays in order to present that section of the volume as a tidy survey of the reigns of English monarchs; it does not stretch the imagination to suppose that they were also willing to include plays in that genre which Shakespeare had written in collaboration. At least, we cannot assert that such conduct would be unthinkable or irresponsible. Like Shakespeare, Heminges and Condell, as veteran theatrical professionals, almost certainly did not regard dramatic collaboration as a crime against art.

In the case of late plays, Heminges and Condell must have known whether Shakespeare worked alone or had a partner. About early plays we can credit them with no such omniscience. Noticeably, with the exception of *Timon* (a stopgap) and *All Is True* (the culmination of the sequence of English history plays), all the Folio plays seriously suspected of dual or multiple authorship were written before the formation of the Chamberlain's Men: *Shrew*, *Contention*, *Duke of York*, *1 Henry VI*, and *Titus*. These plays all appear to pre-date Robert Greene's famous attack on Shakespeare as an 'vpstart Crow, beautified with our feathers' (September 1592). None

of the plays that Shakespeare wrote in the twelve years following that attack can be seriously suspected of multiple authorship; then around 1604, with *Sir Thomas More* and *Timon of Athens*, he again begins collaborating. This pattern does not seem to us fortuitous. Certainly, it would have been difficult for any young playwright, trying to establish himself in the professional public theatre of the late 1580s and early 1590s, to avoid writing collaborative plays. After a playwright had made his reputation, he might—like Jonson, or Shakespeare—generally avoid collaboration; but an apprentice could hardly afford such scruples. It therefore seems likely that some of Shakespeare's earliest works, like some of his latest, were written in collaboration. The very period of his career in which he was most likely to collaborate is also the period for which Heminges and Condell must have had the least information and the dimmest memory.

Heminges and Condell themselves do not explicitly tell us what attitude they adopted toward collaborative work; nor does any contemporary. We must therefore interpret their actions on the basis of what we know about attitudes toward dramatic authorship in the period. Even in the case of reputable editions of single plays, like *1 Honest Whore* (*BEPD* 204), the title-page identifies only the main author (Dekker), though theatrical documents demonstrate that he had a junior partner (Middleton). Shakespeare wrote, at a conservative estimate, at least 90 per cent of the words included in the Folio; the remainder was shared out between at least two major nameable dramatists and perhaps several minor unnameable ones. In the circumstances no one would have objected to the title, or the credentials, of the volume. We cannot say for certain, on the basis of the external evidence alone, that Heminges and Condell did include some collaborations, or that they did not include any. They might have included one or two collaborative plays in exceptional circumstances (*Timon*, *All Is True*); they might also have included others from Shakespeare's early period, not being sure of his sole authorship, but confident that he did write at least part of a play, and anxious 'to lose no drop of that immortal man' (as David Garrick wrote in the Prologue to his adaptation of *The Winter's Tale*). Sometimes, as with *1 Henry VI*, both motives might overlap. Of course, in a modern critical edition we would expect the editors' policy toward collaboration to be made clear, with any instance of collaboration explicitly labelled. But the Folio is not a modern critical edition, and no one in 1623 would have expected it to supply the pedantry of marginalia and apparatus to a collection of popular entertainments.

If the editors did not automatically or consistently exclude wholesale collaborations, they would be even less likely to eschew texts that had undergone minor theatrical adaptation. The Folio text of *Macbeth* calls for a song at 3.5.33/1200 and for another at 4.1.43/1334; the two specified songs appear in a manuscript of Thomas Middleton's play *The Witch* (Bodleian MS Malone 12). This manuscript contains a dedication by Middleton himself, and was apparently copied from his foul papers. Two reliable documentary witnesses therefore contradict each other as to the authorship of those two songs. In *Measure for Measure* the Folio prints one stanza of a song at 4.1.1-6/1647-52; the same song appears, with an additional stanza, in two independent editions of *Rollo, Duke of Normandy; or, The Bloody Brother* (1639, 1640: *BEPD* 565), attributed on the title-pages to John Fletcher and others. Again, an appeal to 'external evidence' cannot determine who wrote the song, for the external evidence contradicts itself. We know that songs were sometimes added to plays on the occasion of a revival. Did Shakespeare write the songs in *Measure* and *Macbeth*, or were they interpolated for a posthumous revival? Editors cannot solve such problems by invoking the authority of Heminges and Condell, for the authority of Heminges and Condell in such cases is the very point at issue. In *Measure*, the song and the passage of dialogue that links it to the rest of the play contain 196 words, out of 21,269: the suspect passage thus represents less than 1 per cent of the text printed in the Folio. In *Macbeth*, again, the suspect passages in the two scenes that call for the songs represent less than 2 per cent of the Folio text. In *Timon of Athens*, by contrast, Thomas Middleton appears to have written about one-third of the play. The Folio editors would be even more likely to accept adapted texts than collaborative ones. After all, assuming that they had no other text of *Macbeth*, would we thank them if they had decided to omit it altogether, just because the text they possessed had added a few speeches and a little extra spectacle, had transposed a scene or two, and made a few cuts? Shakespeare might have made similar changes himself, if he had lived to supervise the revival. Would it be better to print a cut text, or to cut the entire play out of Shakespeare's corpus? Obviously, in admitting *Macbeth* into the Shakespeare canon Heminges and Condell did a greater service to their dead friend's reputation, and a greater service to truth, than they would have done by omitting it.

In considering such possibilities the documentary evidence of the Folio itself must be interpreted in the light of other documentary evidence of theatrical practice in the period. We know, from reliable witnesses, that songs were sometimes added to plays on the occasion of a revival; so were epilogues and prologues (Bentley, 235-63). Other 'new additions' might expand the role of a clown, or introduce superfluous minor characters, or elaborate a scenic effect. Generally such adaptation did not interfere with the detail of the existing dialogue; it worked instead by means of discrete and substantial chunks—whole scenes or speeches or characters added or transposed or cut (*Division*, 195-205). The more successful the playwright, the more likely that his plays would be revived, and hence that some of them would undergo such adaptation. Shakespeare was the most successful playwright of his era.

Nevertheless, the amount of such adaptation has sometimes been exaggerated (Knutson, 1985). And until his retirement Shakespeare himself could have revised or adapted his own plays. Hence, when we find a scene added to *Titus Andronicus*, or a detachable monologue for the Fool added to *King Lear*, that fact does not in itself constitute evidence of posthumous adaptation. Indeed, in such cases we know that Heminges and Condell had access to an unadapted text, for one was already in print in a quarto edition; we cannot, as with *Macbeth*, excuse their inclusion of an adapted text by conjecturing that no other text was available. Since the clearest examples of posthumous theatrical interpolation occur in plays first printed in the Folio (*Measure* and *Macbeth*), and since Heminges and Condell's inclusion of such texts is best excused by the hypothesis that they possessed no other, we

might reasonably surmise that such interpolation is unlikely to explain the variants in Folio texts (like *Titus* and *Lear*) that had already been printed in quarto.

In summary, every play printed in the 1623 collection must be included in the Shakespeare canon; but it does not follow that Shakespeare wrote every word of every play so included. Some allowance must be made for collaboration and for late theatrical adaptation. The number of texts in either category will probably be small, and in adapted texts the number of lines not written by Shakespeare undoubtedly will be small. The 1623 collection presumably includes every Jacobean play that Shakespeare wrote on his own; but it probably omits a number of collaborative plays, and it also probably omits some dramatic material written by Shakespeare before about 1595. Our capacity to repair such omissions with confidence varies. Any edition of a play written after 1600 of which Shakespeare wrote a major share would almost certainly have advertised the fact; consequently the range of candidates for the Jacobean period can be limited to anonymous manuscript plays, or to printed plays attributed to Shakespeare. In both cases we are searching only for collaborative works. Within the range of works so defined, Shakespeare's presence should be easy to identify on the basis of internal evidence, because of the distinctiveness of his later style. But in searching for early dramatic work by Shakespeare, we face severe handicaps. Fewer plays from the 1580s and 1590s reached print, and Shakespeare himself had not yet achieved a reputation which would especially encourage publication of his plays. His early work is more likely than his late work to have perished. Even if such work survives, we might lack any external evidence linking it to Shakespeare. Plays published before 1598 almost certainly would not have identified him as the author, for such attribution occurs in none of his known plays printed before that date. Francis Meres is not known to have resided in London before 1597, and he was in Oxford until at least 1593; he does not mention four plays included by the Folio editors, and all four—*Shrew*, *Contention*, *Duke of York*, *1 Henry VI*—apparently belong to the period before 1593. All four may be collaborative, too. Like Heminges and Condell, Meres is least reliable for very early plays, especially early plays written in collaboration. Such limitations in the documentary record ensure that we will always know less, and be less confident of what we do know, about Shakespeare's beginnings than about the period of his artistic maturity.

Such limitations also ensure that our knowledge of the non-dramatic canon will always be less secure than our knowledge of the plays. The 1623 collection of *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies* does not include any of his narrative and lyric poems. The absence of a collected edition therefore forces an editor to rely upon potentially unreliable attributions in individual editions and manuscripts. The authenticity of the two narrative poems can hardly be challenged, given the clear evidence of authorial involvement in their preparation. But the immediate and sustained popularity of the two narrative poems created in publishers an incentive to dishonest attribution of poetry to Shakespeare before such an incentive existed for plays. Strange as it may now seem, Shakespeare was initially more famous among the reading public as a poet than a playwright. After the success of *Venus* and *Lucrece*, the next book of non-dramatic poetry attributed to him is almost certainly an example of publishing fraud: *The Passionate Pilgrim* (published in 1599, or earlier) contains twenty poems, of which four are attributed to other poets in other, apparently more reliable documentary sources. Another three had already appeared in print in *Love's Labour's Lost*, in an edition attributed to Shakespeare printed in 1598—leaving only two which are independently ascribed to Shakespeare in later sources. These facts induce considerable scepticism about the authorship of the eleven undistinguished poems which are included in editions of Shakespeare solely on the testimony of *The Passionate Pilgrim*. Shakespeare's name was again taken in vain in 1612, when an expanded edition of *The Passionate Pilgrim* added nine poems by Thomas Heywood. Heywood complained about the theft, and noted that Shakespeare himself was not very happy about it (*An Apology for Actors*, 1612: STC 13309; sigs. G4–G4^{v}):

> Here likewise, I must necessarily insert a manifest iniury done me in that worke, by taking the two Epistles of *Paris* to *Helen*, and *Helen* to *Paris*, and printing them in a lesse volume, vnder the name of another, which may put the world in opinion I might steale them from him; and hee to doe himselfe right, hath since published them in his owne name: but as I must acknowledge my lines not worthy his patronage, vnder whom he hath publisht them, so the Author I know much offended with M. *Iaggard* (that altogether vnknowne to him) presumed to make so bold with his name.

The publisher subsequently inserted a correction attributing the relevant poems to Heywood; even so, Shakespeare's name alone remained on the title-page. In 1640 an edition of *Shakespeare's Poems* (STC 22344) included the Heywood pieces as Shakespeare's. Some years later, a collection called *Cupid's Cabinet Unlocked* was published under Shakespeare's name: it does not contain a single authentic poem.

Obviously, the attribution of poems to Shakespeare in print after 1594 has little or no automatic value as evidence of his authorship. By contrast, manuscript attributions of poems to Shakespeare have, potentially, much greater value. Manuscript attributions may be honestly mistaken, but they need not be suspected of deliberate commercial fraud. Moreover, printed attributions of poems and plays are often contradicted by other, more reliable attributions; genuine manuscript attributions seldom, and perhaps never, are—the two potential exceptions may both be nineteenth-century forgeries (see Introduction to 'Various Poems', below). The manuscript attributions can be corroborated, in a satisfying number of cases, by biographical evidence: the miscellaneous poems on Alexander Aspinall, the Stanleys, Ben Jonson, Elias James, John Coombe, and King James all involve persons Shakespeare knew personally or professionally, and most of those connections cannot have been public knowledge in the 1630s. On the other hand, no exceptional knowledge of Shakespeare was required in order to attach his name in the late 1590s to 'sugred Sonnets' written on the theme of *Venus and Adonis*—his most popular printed work.

Whether or not all the manuscript attributions are correct, as a class they deserve far more respect than the attributions in *The Passionate Pilgrim*. Nevertheless, in the past printed attributions have generally been respected by editors, and manuscript attributions ignored. In part this tendency derives from the application to the non-dramatic canon of habits

acquired in editing the dramatic canon, which constitutes the bulk of Shakespeare's work (and of an editor's). As a class, dramatic works either reached print, or they did not survive at all; very few from the period of Shakespeare's working life are extant in manuscript. Of those few, only a small part of one may be by Shakespeare, and even in that case a decision must be based entirely upon internal evidence, for the manuscript itself does not identify its authors. By contrast, the lyric poetry of the period circulated more freely in manuscript than in print. The poetry of Sidney, Ralegh, Donne, Davies, Beaumont, and many others was never published in a collected edition by the author, and most of it was never printed at all until after the author's death. For Shakespeare's plays editors can rely upon a pre-constructed canon which they may supplement cautiously from other printed sources; for the poems they must, instead, retrospectively *construct* a canon, drawing entirely upon scattered printed and manuscript sources. Any editor will regret that situation, but regret does not relieve us of the necessity to survey the evidence and make choices as responsible as possible in the circumstances.

Hitherto, we have considered only documentary evidence which explicitly attributes a work to 'William' (or 'W.') 'Shakespeare' (in a variety of spellings). Such witnesses may be reliable or not, but at least we know what they mean. More difficult to evaluate are attributions to 'W.S.' Shakespeare was not the only man of his time with those initials. William Stanley (1561–1642), the sixth Earl of Derby, maintained a company of players from 1594 to 1618, and had written plays of his own by 1599 (Chambers, *Stage*, ii. 127, iii. 495). Wentworth Smith pops up among the financial records of Philip Henslowe in April 1601; over the next two years Henslowe paid him for two plays, and for part of thirteen others. Henslowe's records are interrupted in March 1603, and after that date we know nothing certain of Wentworth Smith. None of William Stanley's or Wentworth Smith's plays is known to survive. In 1615 the title-page of *Hector of Germany* (*BEPD* 329) tells us it was 'Made by W. Smith'; the author in an epistle mentions 'a former play' he had written, 'called the Freemans Honour, acted by the Now-Seruants of the Kings Maiestie'. This 'W. Smith' therefore wrote on occasion for Shakespeare's own company. He may be 'Wentworth Smith', but we cannot be sure. Warburton claimed to possess a lost manuscript play called *St. George for England*, written by 'Will Smithe', of uncertain date (Greg, 1911). Sir Henry Herbert licensed on 28 November 1623 a lost play called *The Fair Foul One* by one 'Smith', of unknown Christian name (Adams, p. 26). William Sampson is known to have written the lost play *The Widow's Prize*, completed in 1625, and *The Vow Breaker*, printed in 1636 (*BEPD* 510); he also collaborated in *Herod and Antipater* (*BEPD* 382), published in 1622 (see G. E. Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, v. 1042–7).

A play attributed to 'W.S.' might belong to any of these claimants, and the initials cannot be taken as external evidence for Shakespeare's authorship. Such attributions might be honest, or might be half-hearted attempts to capitalize upon Shakespeare's reputation. However, the reference to 'W.S.' in *Locrine* (1595) can hardly represent false advertising, for Shakespeare's name did not appear on the title-page of a play until 1598. After 1600, any published work actually written by Shakespeare would presumably say so unambiguously. The use of the initials on title-pages in 1602 (*Cromwell*), 1607 (*Puritan*), and 1611 (*Troublesome Reign*) suspiciously suggests Shakespeare, without actually perpetrating fraud. No play previously attributed to 'W.S.' was included in the 1623 collection, and for the dramatic canon the initials do not have much significance (Maxwell, 1956, pp. 1–21).

For the poems, as always, matters are more complicated. One of the manuscripts of Shakespeare's second sonnet explicitly, and another arguably, attributes it to 'W.S.' (see Taylor, 'Some Manuscripts'). The initials must in this instance stand for 'William Shakespeare', and they attribute the poem correctly. Furthermore, the use of initials to indicate authorship occurs far more commonly in manuscripts of poetry than on the title-pages of printed plays. The initials therefore intrinsically deserve more editorial attention when appended to a poem than when advertised at the front of a play, and given the uncertainty surrounding Shakespeare's non-dramatic canon such texts should be studied intensively and systematically. Unfortunately, no such survey has ever been attempted.

As with the plays, so with the poems the initials 'W.S.' might conceal a number of artistic personalities. William Smith wrote a sonnet sequence called *Chloris, or The Complaint of the passionate despised shepherd*, published in 1596 (STC 22872); his known works have been edited by Sasek (1970). William Strachey wrote occasional poems from about 1604 to his death in 1621; what we know of his life and work has been collected by Culliford (1965). William Strode, chaplain to the Bishop of Oxford and later a canon of Christ Church, Oxford, was one of the most popular minor poets of the Caroline period; his poems circulated extensively in manuscript, and were collected and edited by Dobell (1907). The playwright William Sampson (see above) had his long poem *Virtus Post Funera Vivit, or Honour Triumphing over Death* printed in 1636 (STC 21687), while a second, 'Love's Metamorphosis, or Apollo and Daphne', apparently disappeared without achieving publication. The Bodleian includes a manuscript poem by a William Snelling (*c.*1650; Crum N570) and others by Walter Stonehouse (*c.*1656?; Crum H571, N316). Most of the poems attributed to 'W.S.' can safely be attributed to a particular owner of those initials. For instance, the card index of manuscript attributions in the Folger Shakespeare Library catalogue includes 76 poems initialled 'W.S.'in one or more manuscripts; but in three of those (V.a.339, fols. 185^{v}, 197, 197^{v}) the initials are Collier forgeries, appended to poems from *The Passionate Pilgrim*. Another 71 of those poems are attributed to 'W.S.' in one or both of two particular manuscripts, with strong Oxford connections (V.a.170, V.a.245); almost all of the 71 can be confidently attributed, on the basis of other external evidence, to William Strode, and since the compilers of both miscellanies clearly used 'W.S.' to identify Strode we must take those initials as evidence that they thought (rightly or wrongly) that the remainder were also by Strode (and not by any other poet with the initials 'W.S.'). Thus, of 102 occurrences of the initials 'W.S.' in Folger manuscripts, only two may be regarded as genuinely ambiguous. Neither, in fact, could be by Shakespeare. One was written by Strode (V.b.43, fol. 16; Crum G120); the second is an epitaph on a man who died on 'Aprill the 18 1622' (V.a.103, Pt. I, fol. 22). Thus, on the evidence of its

card index, the Folger apparently does not contain a single poem genuinely attributed to 'W.S.' which can be assigned to Shakespeare. In her index of Strode poems Crum notes another sixteen 'W.S.' attributions, in the Bodleian or the British Library (B79, B251, F508, I430, L413, L415, M12, M333, P427, S215, S714, T2455, T2712, T2933, W1611); thirteen of these, again, occur in only two manuscripts (MS Eng. poet. 3. 97, MS Rawlinson Poet. 199). All but two (T2712, T2933) are attached to poems also attributed to 'W.S.' in the Folger.

Any particular manuscript attribution to 'W.S.' must first be tested against the unambiguous documentary evidence for the poetic canons of Sampson, Smith, Snelling, Stonehouse, Strachey, Strode, and Shakespeare. The corpus of ambiguous 'W.S.' attributions could thus be whittled down to a small number of cases where those initials constituted our only documentary evidence. Those poems would then have to be compared, stylistically, with the known works of all contemporary 'W.S.' poets, in order to determine which canon (if any) should most probably receive it. Even then, allowance would have to be made for the existence of other 'W.S.' poets about whom we know nothing, or for the possibility that a playwright named William or Wentworth Smith might occasionally write poems—as other playwrights certainly did. The final decision would have to be based upon internal evidence; but the external warrant of the initials 'W.S.' at least provides us with an indication of which poems merit further investigation. The Bodleian, for instance, contains three poems attributed in manuscript to 'W.S.' which Crum could not confidently assign, on the basis of other external evidence, to a specific writer.

The sources we have mentioned account for 82 poems attributed to 'W.S.' in manuscript. Foster says there are nearly one hundred such poems; we have not attempted to duplicate his unpublished survey, and a proper examination of the additional 'W.S.' poems he has found must fall to future scholars. But it is already clear that, if we exclude the two manuscripts in the Folger and the two in the Bodleian (which by any criteria represent a special case), 'W.S.' attributions of poems in miscellanies are not at all common, and genuinely ambiguous cases are rare indeed.

Easier to locate than manuscript attributions are those which occur in print. STC and Wing include dozens of non-dramatic works attributed to 'W.S.' Most of those works were written too late or too early, or their subject-matter discourages attribution to Shakespeare; but at least one long poem was published under those initials during his lifetime, and at least three short poems so attributed occur in various collections. We have included a brief notice of all such printed attributions known to us, and of the three ambiguous manuscript attributions in the Bodleian, among 'Works Excluded', below.

Finally, it remains likely that some—perhaps many—of Shakespeare's poems survive in manuscripts, or even in printed collections, which do not attribute them at all. Most of the manuscript texts of the sonnets, or of excerpts from the plays, do not identify their author. In general, most manuscripts do not declare the authorship of most of the poems they contain. The law of averages suggests that some of Shakespeare's poems, circulating in manuscript, survive only in such anonymous contexts. On the evidence of those poems which did reach print, most of Shakespeare's non-dramatic writing comes from the early and middle 1590s. Some of that poetry must have been lost, because it never reached print; some of it survived only in ambiguous ('W.S.') or anonymous texts. Such gaps in our understanding of Shakespeare's non-dramatic canon occur in the very period for which our understanding of his dramatic canon is also least secure.

Authorship: Internal Evidence

Like anyone else, Shakespeare had tricks of style which distinguish him from his fellow artists. In part he shared such proclivities with his contemporaries. The music or the poetry of one century can easily be distinguished, by any practised critic, from the music or the poetry composed one or two centuries later. The distinctions between two writers of the same epoch are less broad, but no less real. External evidence is a label attached to a literary product, identifying the mind in which it was manufactured; labels can be attached to the wrong product, fraudulently or accidentally. Internal evidence, by contrast, is inconspicuous but incorruptible. The title-page of the Pavier edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is external evidence; it states that the edition was 'Printed by Iames Roberts' in '1600'. But the study of internal evidence—of paper, recurring type, ornaments, headlines—established that the edition was in fact one of several printed by William Jaggard for Thomas Pavier in 1619 (see General Introduction, pp. 34–6). The bibliographer and the student of authorship both want to know who 'composed' a book, and when; both recognize that title-pages cannot always be trusted. Likewise, on 17 November 1595 Queen Elizabeth was entertained at Essex House by an interlude or dramatic 'device'; the Pierpont Morgan Library contains a manuscript (MA 1201, fols. 12–21^{v}) attributing the speeches to 'Mr Cuffe seruant to the Earle of Essex'. But the speeches also survive in a rough draft (Lambeth Palace MS 936, No. 274) and a fair copy (Lambeth Palace MS 933, No. 118), both in a handwriting identifiable as that of Francis Bacon (Beal, BcF 308, 309, 314). In such cases the internal evidence decisively contradicts and refutes the external evidence. Unfortunately, the relationship between the two categories of evidence does not always produce such satisfyingly final resolutions.

All modern editions of Shakespeare's works include *Pericles*; none include *A Yorkshire Tragedy*. But the explicit documentary evidence for Shakespeare's authorship is almost identical for the two plays. *A Yorkshire Tragedy* was entered in the Stationers' Register on 2 May 1608, attributed to 'Wylliam Shakespere'; a quarto text appeared later that year, claiming on the title-page that the play had been '*Written by* W. Shakspeare'. *Pericles* was entered in the Stationers' Register on 20 May 1608; the entry does not name Shakespeare. But the first edition, which appeared in 1609, assigned the play to 'William Shakespeare'. Though omitted from the 1623 First Folio, both plays were added to the second issue of the Third Folio (1664).

Both plays were thus explicitly attributed to Shakespeare during his own lifetime, at a period when he was still actively engaged in London theatrical life. That attribution was never explicitly denied. *A Yorkshire Tragedy* was described as Shakespeare's in the Register as well as on the title-page of the first

edition; there is nothing irregular about the Register entry or the subsequent history of the play's publication or the text published. By contrast, *Pericles* was printed (after some delay) in an execrable text, by a different publisher from the one who entered it. Moreover, the copyright for *A Yorkshire Tragedy* was owned by Thomas Pavier, who was not part of the syndicate of publishers which brought out the 1623 Folio, but who had instead attempted to bring out a rival Shakespeare collection in 1619. *A Yorkshire Tragedy* might therefore have been omitted from the 1623 Folio for legal, personal, or commercial reasons. If we confine ourselves to documentary evidence, *A Yorkshire Tragedy* has a claim at least as good as, and arguably better, than *Pericles*.

We do not mean to suggest that Shakespeare wrote *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, or to cast doubt upon his authorship of part of *Pericles*. We wish only to emphasize that both the inclusion of one, and the exclusion of the other, from modern collected editions rest in essence upon internal evidence. To most of us, parts of *Pericles* 'sound' like Shakespeare, and like Shakespeare only; *A Yorkshire Tragedy* does not. Such intuitions can be articulated, quantified, and verified, in ways subject to scholarly scrutiny. And if, on the basis of such internal evidence, editors are willing to accept some documentary claims and to reject others, then such internal evidence must be credited in other cases, too. One cannot concede that internal evidence distinguishes two styles in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, without also conceding that the same kind of evidence distinguishes two styles in *All Is True*. One cannot accept the stylistic evidence when it concerns minor plays by minor dramatists, and then reject it when the same scrupulous methods, scrupulously applied, challenge traditional attributions of masterpieces like *The Revenger's Tragedy* and *Timon of Athens*. Editors must either blindly accept all documentary attributions, or they must accept the validity of internal evidence in evaluating external claims; and once the validity of internal evidence is granted, its application to other cases cannot be avoided.

These simple and obvious propositions must be articulated at the outset, because for the past several decades internal evidence has been regarded with some suspicion. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century much of the Shakespeare canon was conjecturally redistributed among other playwrights on the basis of a little evidence and a lot of imagination. (Schoenbaum (1966) acidly chronicles the history of those follies.) Such speculation was magisterially rebuked by E. K. Chambers, who memorably characterized such efforts as 'The Disintegration of Shakespeare' (1924). Chambers set in motion a reaction which, like many reactions, went too far in the other direction. The fact that some Victorian and Edwardian scholars sometimes used little evidence, poorly defined and inconsistently applied, does not mean that studies of internal evidence conducted a century later will invariably be subject to the same criticisms. Acceptance of the cumulative modern evidence for Middleton's authorship of a third of *Timon of Athens* will not lead us to the pre-modern *reductio ad absurdum* in which 'Shakespeare' became an empty receptacle for the work of other playwrights. Internal evidence can only be accumulated and evaluated if one first accepts the validity and stability of a core of work of unquestioned authenticity, established by reliable external evidence and by its own stylistic integrity. Most of the plays contained in the 1623 Folio clearly belong in that category, as do the Sonnets and the two narrative poems. Around this radiant core circles a penumbra of less certain status. The individual works in that borderland are judged by criteria established by the acknowledged central works.

All studies of internal evidence, in any art form, depend upon the fact that artists repeat themselves. The more predictable and idiosyncratic the repetition, the greater its value as evidence of an author's presence. Such evidence can be conveniently divided into a number of discrete categories. The more categories which support a particular attribution, the stronger the attribution.

Biographical evidence cannot often be found, but cannot easily be dismissed when present. Connections with Stratford tend to confirm Shakespeare's hand in *Shrew* (the Induction), *1 Henry VI* (Sir William Lucy), *Richard III* (Sir James Blunt), *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* (both printed by Shakespeare's fellow-Stratfordian Richard Field). Sonnet 145 apparently puns on 'Hathaway' (Shakespeare's wife's maiden name). Kerrigan notes a parallel between Shakespeare's own successful petition for a coat of arms and *The Tragedy of King Lear* 3.6.9–14/1856–61 (*Division*, pp. 227–8). However, much of Shakespeare's biography remains conjectural, and biographical conjectures—that Shakespeare was a lawyer, or that Chapman was the rival poet, for instance—cannot provide a secure foundation for further conjectures about authorship.

Palaeographical evidence may be direct or indirect: direct when a work survives in manuscript, indirect when the character of the handwriting of a manuscript is inferred by characteristics of a printed text. Obviously the former justifies more confidence than the latter. However, only six generally authenticated Shakespeare signatures survive, all from later in his life; Hamilton (1985) attempts to multiply this evidence by claiming that many other extant manuscripts are holograph, but he has not initially convinced specialists in Renaissance palaeography. Given the paucity in the direct control sample, controversy remains inevitable about its significance for disputed cases (most noticeably *Sir Thomas More*).

Theatrical provenance is sometimes established by title-pages, or by theatrical documents of other kinds, but it can also be conjectured on the basis of internal evidence: the presence of certain scribal hands, specification of certain actors' names, presumption of a certain size of cast, roles or spectacle characteristic of certain actors or companies. For those years when we know that Shakespeare was a sharer in the Chamberlain's/King's Men, attribution of a play to some other company would contradict its attribution to Shakespeare. Such evidence has recently become a focus of debate in relation to *Sir Thomas More*. The combined external and internal evidence that *The Puritan* was performed by a company of boys reinforces other evidence that Shakespeare did not write it; but in other disputed cases such evidence seems inconclusive. The internal evidence for attribution of theatrical provenance is in general less varied and less reliable than the internal evidence for authorship itself, and conjectural provenance provides an insecure foundation for conjectural attribution.

Chronological evidence consists of the variety of internal

evidence—discussed below—which links a work, or part of a work, to a particular period of Shakespeare's personal stylistic development. Gross disparities in such evidence within a play, such as those between different parts of *Timon* and *Pericles*, demonstrate either (*a*) that the work was written at one date, and that part of it was thoroughly revised at another date, or (*b*) that it was written in collaboration. In general, the second hypothesis should always be favoured over the first, because it better reflects the practical norms of the Renaissance theatrical system. In practice, such ambiguous evidence will almost always be seconded by other evidence which decisively favours composite authorship, or will be self-contradictory: for instance, the metrical characteristics of the parts of *All Is True* usually assigned to Fletcher are in some respects characteristic of Shakespeare's earlier work, and in others characteristic of his very latest work.

Vocabulary can distinguish one writer from another, so long as attention focuses upon the overall structure and distribution of vocabulary, rather than upon individual words. Thus, the fact that the word 'palliament' (*Titus* 1.1.182/182) is only recorded elsewhere in the work of George Peele cannot be taken as reliable evidence that Peele wrote the first scene of *Titus Andronicus*. On the other hand, Hart demonstrated that Shakespeare's acknowledged plays consistently contain a larger vocabulary than works of similar length by other dramatists, and that Shakespeare is also unusual in his relative fondness for neologisms, certain kinds of compounds, and *hapax legomena*. Such criteria tend to confirm Shakespeare's authorship of *Kinsmen* and *A Lover's Complaint*—and *Edward III*. Such data can be rigorously defined, isolated, and verified; individual words might be imitated by other poets, but the whole pattern of vocabulary could not be. On the other hand, such methods may not always be able to distinguish a play entirely by Shakespeare from one which he wrote in collaboration. Thus, three playwrights, all with smaller individual vocabularies than Shakespeare, would also have vocabularies which differed from each other; if those three playwrights collaborated, the gross vocabulary of the resulting play would be artificially higher than the usual vocabulary of any one of the three contributors. If Shakespeare were himself one of the contributors, a mere vocabulary count would be unlikely to distinguish such a collaborative play from one of single Shakespearian authorship. Thus, more faith can be placed in Hart's evidence for Shakespeare's share of part of *Kinsmen* than in his evidence for Shakespeare's authorship of the entirety of the three 'Henry VI' plays. In *1 Henry VI*, such conclusions are further compromised by the fact that the chief contender for the authorship of Act 1 (Thomas Nashe) himself had one of the largest Elizabethan vocabularies outside Shakespeare.

Oaths and exclamations constitute a special sub-category of a playwright's vocabulary. Lake (1975) and Jackson (1979) have demonstrated that some Jacobean playwrights can be consistently distinguished by the type and frequency of such oaths found in their plays. Shakespeare's use of oaths, and their treatment in sixteenth-century plays, have not been systematically investigated.

Imagery cannot be defined so easily as some of the preceding categories. Spurgeon, in the first systematic study of the imagery of Shakespeare, claimed that in certain respects it differed consistently from the work of his contemporaries—for instance, in the frequency of images of natural and rural life drawn from personal observation (not simply imitated from previous authors). Waldo and Herbert have made similar claims about his use of musical imagery and terminology; as early as the eighteenth century, Malone noticed his exceptional fondness for legal terms. Unfortunately, most such claims, however valid, have never been systematically substantiated, making it difficult to evaluate the exact weight which should be accorded to the presence in a play (or a scene) of a certain number of a certain type of image. Moreover, unlike other kinds of internal evidence, images can be imitated. Such evidence supports Shakespeare's authorship of the whole of *Shrew*, and to the same degree supports theories of collaboration in *Contention*.

Image clusters were first identified and discussed by Armstrong, who was not a literary critic but a psychologist. Rather than count mere categories of image, Armstrong observed the irrational associations between one image and another: thus, a goose often appears in Shakespeare's acknowledged works as part of a chain of associated ideas including disease, bitterness, culinary seasoning, and restraint. Such patterns of association can be identified as a 'cluster' of images, dependent upon an idiosyncratic process of imaginative reflex. The more complex, irrational, tightly packed, and frequent the cluster, the greater its value as evidence of Shakespeare's hand. Such clusters confirm Shakespeare's authorship of part of *Kinsmen* and of all of *A Lover's Complaint*—and of *Edward III*. Several such clusters have been found in Shakespeare's share of *Timon*; none in the share attributed to Middleton. The weakness of such clusters, as positive proof of Shakespeare's hand, is that scholars have been more assiduous in tracing their recurrence throughout Shakespeare's work than in systematically surveying the work of his contemporaries for possible examples. Jackson (1963), for instance, noted an occurrence of the 'beetle' cluster in Shelley. However, the Romantic poets read and studied Shakespeare so assiduously that their works teem with conscious and unconscious echoes (Bate); a parallel from the Romantics does the evidence of image clusters less harm than would similar parallels from the Renaissance. Although we can say with confidence that these particular clusters seldom occur outside the Shakespeare canon, we would like to be able to say that they never occur outside that canon. Moreover, we would like to know what idiosyncratic image clusters characterize the work of other playwrights, so that the presence of a collaborator might be spotted not only by the absence of Shakespearian clusters but by the presence of (say) Fletcherian or Middletonic clusters. Finally, in evaluating the evidence of clusters one must beware of elastic definitions of the key terms of the cluster, and of expansion of the field in which such terms occur—a field of ten lines obviously constituting better evidence than a field of two hundred.

Verbal parallels have been used, misused, and abused more often than any other species of internal evidence. As a scientific method for determining authorship, they have two great disadvantages: they cannot be mechanically counted or measured (what qualifies as a parallel?), and they may be due to causes other than shared authorship (imitation, coincid-

ence, joint derivation from some third source). Despite these weaknesses, their utility should not be casually dismissed. In his edition of the apocryphal plays Malone seized upon *Pericles* as the only Shakespearian text solely on the evidence of verbal parallels—a conclusion which has never been seriously challenged, and which has subsequently been supported by other tests. A large part of the evidence which links three pages of *Sir Thomas More* to the Shakespeare canon consists of verbal parallels, and Littledale (edn., 1876; 1885) first made a persuasive case for Shakespeare's share of *Kinsmen* on the basis of such parallels. Holdsworth convincingly reinforces other evidence for Middleton's share of *Timon* by analysing systematically verbal parallels in both canons. In such cases parallels have been trusted because most informed readers have accepted that the parallels are both genuine and plentiful; that their presentation is scrupulous and (within the limits of the technology of the time) systematic; that they seem unlikely to result from sustained imitation or from the mere exploitation of commonplaces of the period. The conviction resulting from such communal subjective assessments cannot be statistically measured, but it is nevertheless real.

One weakness of verbal parallels specific to the Shakespeare canon has not been paid as much attention as it deserves. Shakespeare, unlike most of his contemporary playwrights, was an actor; he therefore acted in many plays which he never wrote. An actor must memorize speeches, and Shakespeare must therefore have memorized many lines written by other dramatists. A verbal parallel between a work attributed to Shakespeare and a play attributed to some other writer, in which Shakespeare might have acted, is therefore of no conceivable significance in undermining Shakespeare's claim to the work conventionally assigned to him. Early efforts to disintegrate the Shakespeare canon usually overlooked this simple principle, which is particularly relevant to Shakespeare's early work—written at a time when he probably did more acting, and when we are less sure of the relationship between Shakespeare, an acting company, and its repertoire. Many of the parallels between Shakespeare's early plays and the canons of Greene, Peele, Marlowe, Kyd, etc., might be due to such causes. (Later in his career Shakespeare acted less, and his probable collaborators—Fletcher and Middleton—wrote more for other companies, and wrote many plays after Shakespeare's retirement and death, which Shakespeare consequently could not have imitated.) On the other hand, playwrights who were not actors would have no reason to remember multitudes of lines from Shakespeare's plays. Just as one should be naturally suspicious of the use of verbal parallels from other men's plays in efforts to disintegrate the early Shakespeare canon, so one should be equally suspicious of claims that other men's plays show everywhere the signs of intimate familiarity with and imitation of Shakespeare's work. This caveat applies, again, particularly to the early period, when Shakespeare's plays were not in print and he had not yet achieved a pre-eminent reputation.

Structural parallels were pioneered in an effort to reclaim several early plays for Shakespeare. Sampley showed that the acknowledged plays of George Peele consistently displayed weaknesses of structure absent from *Titus Andronicus*, and hence concluded that Peele could not have been the author of that play; Price showed that parallels could be found in acknowledged works of Shakespeare for the structure of certain episodes and characters in *Titus* and other disputed early plays. Although this technique of analysis was pioneered as an alternative to verbal 'parallelography', if anything it suffers from greater weaknesses than the study of verbal parallels. Larger patterns of structure and organization may be remembered by a spectator, and hence may consciously or unconsciously influence another playwright, far more easily than minutiae of phrasing. Jones has demonstrated that Shakespeare exploited and echoed the structure of scenes from early plays, like *James the Fourth*, which no one imagines that he wrote. We also know, from Henslowe's records and from other theatrical documents, that the scenario for a play might be written by one playwright, even though the play itself was shared out among two or more collaborators (Bentley, p. 239): even if we could be confident that Shakespeare designed a play or a scene, that would not prove that he actually executed it. In any case, what constitutes 'structure' is as problematic as what constitutes a 'parallel'. This method has usually been founded upon the critical premiss that a successful structure implies the presence of Shakespeare, while the presence of any other playwright implies an inadequate structure—a shaky syllogism upon which to base an attribution. One would have more confidence in the method if it discerned different techniques of scene construction, both equally valid, but associated with different playwrights: attribution must depend upon methods of analysis which are descriptive, not normative.

Metrical evidence has generally fallen out of favour, because some metrical characteristics are not easily defined, and because poets may consciously vary their metrical technique. Despite these theoretical and practical objections, some metrical evidence commands assent. Timberlake demonstrated that in respect to feminine endings (one of the most easily defined of all metrical phenomena in Renaissance blank verse) Shakespeare can be readily distinguished from most of his Elizabethan contemporaries. Oras, using three independent measures of mid-line pause, demonstrated a similar individuality in Shakespeare's treatment of the placing of syntactical breaks within verse lines. Similar techniques have proven useful in identifying spurious classical works, and Jackson (1979) shows that metrical evidence isolates certain features of *The Honest Man's Fortune* (*BEPD* 662) when linguistic evidence fails. Although unusual metrical features in very small areas of text may result from artistic choice or from the natural fluctuations which in total comprise any norm, anomalies sustained over hundreds of lines cannot be so explained: the unusual mixtures of rhyme, irregular verse, and prose in the suspect scenes of *Timon*, or the metrical disparity between the two parts of *Pericles*, or the two verse styles evident in *All Is True* and *Kinsmen*, resist rationalization. The availability of computerized Shakespeare data bases could overcome earlier objections that metrical tables present only conclusions, without documenting the individual choices and identifications on which they depend; in future, scholars should be able to define metrical characteristics more precisely, and signal specific licences systematically on computer-readable texts. Such procedures would permit detailed constructive criticism (which stimulates improved research), in place of the prevailing abstract scepticism (which inhibits it).

satisfy. With the exception of *Sir Thomas More*, no anonymous work has ever been successfully elevated into the Shakespeare canon. Even those pages remain a matter of controversy, after more than a hundred years of study. Moreover, the stylistic evaluation of those pages can be supplemented by palaeographical evidence, which is not available for most anonymous plays, simply because most of them survive in print rather than in manuscript.

On the other hand, if we want to establish that Shakespeare did *not* write a play, or part of it, we need only prove that it does not contain an idiosyncrasy characteristic of all his other work. If such idiosyncrasies crop up consistently, invariably, in every single one of his acknowledged works, without regard to date or genre or mode or theme or character or style, then we may reasonably infer that they are subconscious constants, imprinted patterns of association beyond the author's control, ruts in the roadways of his mind. The authors of *Ironside*, or of parts of *Timon* and *Pericles*, moved in a different rut from Shakespeare's.

One limitation of this test, and indeed of most others, is that as the verbal sample gets smaller, the verbal evidence gets less reliable. We have already noticed the possibility that this factor may distort the figures for 'A Lover's Complaint' (2,563 words); it might also account, in part, for some of the discrepancies in Shakespeare's share of *1 Henry VI* (3,846 words). The suspect portions of *Timon* (6,538 words) and *Pericles* (7,906)—more than a third of a play of average length—should not be affected by sample size; and, of course, Middleton's share of *Timon* and Wilkins's share of *Pericles* harbour deviances greater than any in the smaller samples. But when we move from whole plays, or large fractions of plays, to scenes, or poems, statistical evaluation becomes increasingly difficult, and perhaps impossible. Ule (1979, 1982), using a battery of such tests, increases existing doubts about Marlowe's authorship of 'I walked along a stream for pureness rare'; but although his methods display a statistical sophistication sadly lacking in most studies of the Shakespeare canon, in their application to a sample so small they remain open to serious objection.

Consequently, in judging Shakespeare's claims to short poems we are at present, and perhaps for ever, forced back upon kinds of internal evidence which resist confident statistical formulation or evaluation: primarily, verbal parallels, imagery, and certain formal features—all subject to imitation, or to conscious artistic variation in lyric contexts. About such matters differences of judgement cannot be banished, or resolved. If we except poems called forth by private and public occasions (chiefly epitaphs), most of Shakespeare's short poems were probably written in the 1590s, before his verbal style had achieved the rich particularity evident in the seventeenth-century plays and in such late poems as *The Phoenix and Turtle* or 'A Lover's Complaint'. Even the Sonnets, though no doubt mostly written in the 1590s, seem to have been revised at a later date, and if we want a true measure of Shakespeare's lyric style in his first decade we must look instead at sonnets incorporated in the dialogue of *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Romeo*, and *Henry V*, or at the apparently unrevised first versions of some sonnets, or at songs and lyric passages in the early plays. This is a small body of poetry, and not a particularly distinguished one. Shakespeare worked best with dramatic materials, or with narratives which could be treated dramatically; what distinguishes the Sonnets as a sequence is the unfolding dramatic and psychological relationship between the principals. Shorn of such support, relatively few of Shakespeare's poems capture in isolation that singular wholeness and finish visible in the verse of some of his contemporaries. The fact that the rather mediocre poems in *The Passionate Pilgrim* continue to be included in editions of Shakespeare testifies to the difficulty of identifying his early verse: for either he did write those poems (in which case he demonstrably could write weakly), or he did not write them (in which case his admittedly genuine verse is not so different from such weak poems that we can distinguish genuine from spurious).

When evidence runs out, opinion runs in, and in the case of Shakespeare opinion will generally equate accomplishment with authenticity. But arbitrary taste cannot be made the arbiter of authorship. One may admire Act 3 of *Timon of Athens*, or disdain Act 1 of *Titus Andronicus*, without believing that such critical judgements, however confident, however warranted, have any pertinence to the problem of who wrote either. The poems, far more than the plays, still attract such critical pronouncements, only because we lack the kind of reliable multiple internal evidence which might replace them. More such stylistic evidence has been accumulated in support of Shakespeare's authorship of 'Shall I die?' than for any other short poem in the canon; yet, in spite of it, most critics apparently remain sceptical, simply from an intuitive conviction that the poem does not 'sound' like Shakespeare. The sceptics may be right in their disparagement of the available internal evidence, but if so one can only conclude that in the study of Shakespeare's uncollected poetry internal evidence remains, as yet, a tool too crude to trust. Where we cannot trust internal evidence, we have little choice but to credit external evidence. The Oxford edition accordingly includes all those poems—and only those poems—attributed specifically to 'William Shakespeare' in contemporary documents which are not contradicted by other contemporary documents. As editors, we can only modestly defer to the testimony of the extant witnesses, when we lack any other evidence more substantial than our own aesthetic judgement.

Chronology: External Evidence

The same categories of documentary evidence which establish authorship may also establish date of composition. A play must have been written before it could be printed or performed. The publication of a text, or even the entry of a text in the Stationers' Register, proves that it existed by that date. Explicit references to a play, or records of its performance, serve the purpose equally well, so long as the play we mean is the play our informants meant—an equation by no means always so evident as editors would wish.

Such documentary evidence suffers from two abiding and insuperable weaknesses: paucity and incompleteness. We do not have enough of it, and it tells us only half of what we need to know. We can identify the first performances of only two plays: *All Is True* and *1 Henry VI*—the latter depending upon a disputable interpretation of the word 'ne', combined with an equally disputable identification of 'harey the vi'. If more theatrical records of the period had survived, we would know on which day each play was completed by the author(s),

handed over to the company, and paid for; but the meagre documents in our possession in some cases do not even specify which decade. Even when explicit references to a play do survive, they only fix one end of a chronological continuum: a closing bracket, without an opening one. The knowledge that a person had been born by 1598 does not tell us that person's age in 1598, and references to a play usually only establish its existence, not its age. As a result, we can always say 'not later than' more confidently than we say 'not earlier than'.

Beyond these general weaknesses, particular species of external evidence create particular kinds of difficulty. Titles, for instance, are sometimes mentioned in early documents, and then appear later affixed to printed texts; one naturally assumes that the text attached to the title in an edition is the text implied by that title in the documentary allusion. That assumption is usually justified, but plays were sometimes adapted, and the published edition might represent a play in its post-adaptation or pre-adaptation form, depending on the kind of manuscript from which it was printed. Since we can only determine the kind of manuscript which lies behind an edition by examining certain minutiae of its text, our interpretation of the chronological significance of the 'external' evidence of an edition's existence will depend upon the 'internal' evidence afforded by bibliographical and textual analysis. Alternatively, the same abbreviated title might be affixed to more than one play of the period. We know that the Admiral's Men in November 1595 performed a 'ne[w]' play which Henslowe's records identify as 'harey the v'; no one supposes that it was the play on the same subject, written by Shakespeare, which was later performed by the Chamberlain's Men; but a reference to 'Henry the Fifth', out of context, could refer to either. Similar ambiguities arise, more contentiously, in relation to two texts which dramatize the taming of 'a' or 'the' shrew: the variant article seems designed to signal inconspicuously a difference which the identity of the rest of the title conspicuously conceals—a subterfuge no doubt designed to tease or deceive audiences, and which continues to bemuse scholars.

Francis Meres helps fix the chronology of the early dramatic canon as well as its contents. *Palladis Tamia*, in which he mentions twelve of Shakespeare's plays by name, was entered in the Stationers' Register on 7 September 1598; hence, those twelve plays must have been written before that date. Elsewhere in his book Meres mentions Edward Guilpin's *Skialetheia* (STC 12504), entered in the Stationers' Register eight days after *Palladis Tamia* itself; scholars often take Meres's knowledge of Guilpin's book as proof that his summary of Shakespeare's canon was similarly up-to-date. But the two cases are not similar: Guilpin's book might have circulated in manuscript before its sale to a publisher, but Shakespeare's plays would become known only through public performance. In terms of performance, the exact date of the entry of *Palladis Tamia* matters less than the pattern of London theatrical seasons.

The London season, in Shakespeare's time and for centuries after, usually coincided with the legal calendar, running from the beginning of Michaelmas Term in the autumn to the end of Trinity Term in early summer. During the summer the smart set left London for their country estates; indeed, by law landowners were required to spend a certain amount of time each year on their estates. Queen Elizabeth chose the summer months for her periodic progresses through the country, and for similar reasons the actors toured the provinces then: during the summer the weather was better, and better weather made for easier transportation and larger audiences in the makeshift provincial venues. The exact dates no doubt fluctuated—as the end of term did—but we know of no public performances in London by any company with which Shakespeare was associated after 29 June (*All Is True*) or perhaps 3 July (Chambers, *Shakespeare*, ii. 322–3), and of none before 13 September (*Shakespeare*, ii. 328). For mid-September to June we have records of many performances in London or at court (in and around London). By contrast, if we ignore times of plague, the summer months account for almost every datable reference to a provincial performance by a London company with which Shakespeare was—or may have been—associated. Moreover, accounts of provincial performances by Strange's Men (1591–3) and the Chamberlain's/King's Men (1594–1613) have been found for almost every year of Shakespeare's professional career. (For performance records see Chambers, *Shakespeare*, ii. 303–45; his account of provincial records has since been supplemented by Malone Society Collections II.3, VII, VIII, IX, XI, and REED volumes for Chester, Coventry, Cumberland, Gloucestershire, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Norwich, Westmorland, and York.) John Aubrey also recorded (in 1681) that Shakespeare returned home to Stratford each year, and since the trip took three days each way he would probably not have made it frequently, or for short stays, and the summer interims would have provided the most natural opportunities for a prolonged stay in Stratford. Although we cannot often be certain of Shakespeare's whereabouts, what evidence we have does not discourage the assumption that he left London when the company did, during the summers: he to go home, they to tour. He was undoubtedly in London on 15 March 1595 and 1603, on 10 and 31 March 1613, on 11 May 1612, and on 15 October 1598; all these dates fall within the regular London theatrical season. His presence at Stratford is harder to demonstrate because we do not know how many of his business dealings were executed by his father, mother, wife, or friends. However, he was involved in major business transactions finalized at Stratford on 1 May 1602, 4 May 1597, 24 July 1605, and 11 September 1611; his daughter Susanna was married on 5 June 1607. Noticeably, only in early May is there any overlap between these Stratford dates (May to mid-September) and the London dates (mid-October to mid-May). Of course, the dates of Shakespeare's Stratford visits, like the limits of the London season itself, must have fluctuated slightly, but it is reasonable to assume that Shakespeare was usually in Stratford for July and August at least. The company would not be likely to rehearse one of his new plays in his absence, nor would they be likely to open a new play in the last week of the season, and consequently it would be safest to assume that none of his plays was given a first performance in July, August, or the first half of September.

At some time after the acquisition of the Blackfriars indoor playhouse (August 1608), this pattern apparently changed: James Wright in his *Historia Histrionica* (1699) claimed that, before the closure of the theatres, the King's Men owned 'The Black-friers, and Globe on the Bankside, a Winter and Summer House'. Once the company had acquired two

theatres, it could use the more comfortable indoor venue during the 'season', when it depended upon a wealthier clientele, and the cheaper, more popular, open-air Globe during more temperate months. However, in April 1610 Prince Lewis Frederick of Württemberg saw *Othello* at the Globe, and in April 1611 Simon Forman saw two plays there: if the Globe had already become a 'summer' house', 'summer' was liberally defined. It seems likely that Wright was describing developments which post-dated Shakespeare's retirement from the theatre.

This evidence from Shakespeare's own company may be supplemented, cautiously, by evidence from Henslowe's records of companies at the Rose playhouse. In 1595, 1596, 1599, and 1600 gaps in Henslowe's records indicate a break in London playing over the summer. In 1594 no such break occurs—which is hardly surprising, given the fact that plague had prevented public performances in London for most of the preceding two years. For 1597 and 1598, however, playing also appears to have continued during the summer, for reasons which are harder to fathom. We know that the Chamberlain's Men broke for the summer in 1597, because we have records of provincial performances at Faversham in August and Bristol in mid-September. But 1598 is one of the few years for which we do not (yet) have positive evidence of a summer tour by the Chamberlain's/King's Men; so it is possible that they stayed in town, along with their rivals at the Rose. On the one hand, Henslowe's records tend to confirm that companies usually toured in the summer. On the other hand, the long season of 1594–5 reminds us that touring was a matter of custom and convenience, not law; during the early years of James I's reign, when plague so often foreshortened the regular season, we should not assume that the King's Men automatically left London in the summer, if mortality rates were low enough to allow them to play in the capital.

The shape of the London seasons affects inferences about dating throughout Shakespeare's writing life. To return to the example which prompted this digression: because *Palladis Tamia* was entered on 7 September, during the usual interim between London seasons, Francis Meres could hardly have anticipated the new plays of the autumn season. Thus, unless the Chamberlain's Men uncharacteristically stayed in London in the summer of 1598, Meres's mention of *The Merchant of Venice*, though printed in a book entered on 7 September, actually sets an earlier limit than the play's own entry in the Stationers' Register on 22 July.

Scholars dispute the significance of Meres's omissions. For instance, he does not mention *Shrew* or the *Henry VI* plays, which all modern editors place early in Shakespeare's career. Such gaps might be explained by the fact that Meres was still in Oxford in 1593 (when he took his MA), and is first recorded as living in London in 1597. But Meres does mention other plays which most modern scholars place in the same early period; Honigmann, indeed, would assign to those years over half the plays which Meres does name (*Lost Years*, 128–9). In the list as it stands Meres includes six comedies and six 'tragedies' (serious plays, including four based upon English chronicles); symmetry may have mattered more than comprehensiveness. But Meres could have added *Shrew* as a comedy, and *Henry VI* as a tragedy, without disturbing the balance of his encomium. The omission of those plays may have more to do with their authorship than their chronology. On the other hand, no one seriously doubts Shakespeare's sole authorship of *Merry Wives*, *Much Ado*, *As You Like It*, or *Julius Caesar*, and no one believes that these plays were written at the beginning of Shakespeare's career, and so Meres's failure to include them must have other causes. Honigmann proposes that the three comedies were new, and that Meres could not find room for three more comedies without fatally unbalancing his symmetries (*Impact*, p. 76). But surely anyone facing such a rhetorical dilemma would jettison an old play, never remarkably popular, like *Two Gentlemen*, in favour of a new, immediately and perennially successful play like *Much Ado*. We therefore suppose, as have most other scholars, that Meres does not name *Much Ado* and its companions because he did not know them, and that he did not know them because they had not yet appeared on the London public stage.

Finally, the items Meres does mention create some ambiguities. We cannot be sure whether '*Henry the 4.*' covers one play or two; 'his sugred Sonnets' may allude specifically to poems of fourteen lines, arranged in a particular rhyme scheme, or more generally to 'a short poem or piece of verse; in early use especially one of a lyrical and amatory character'—a wider definition 'very common' between 1580 and 1650 (*OED sb.* 2). '*Loue labours wonne*' probably identifies a lost play, but conjecture has happily attached it as an alternative title to almost every other comedy. Curiously, Meres enumerates the comedies in a sequence which corresponds to our own chronological arrangement—a coincidence we only noted after deciding upon our own order, and to which we attach no overwhelming significance. However, his catalogue of the non-dramatic poems also obeys what we know of the chronological sequence, moving from *Venus* to *Lucrece* to the Sonnets. On the other hand, his list of 'Tragedies' cannot plausibly be wrested into any semblance of chronological coherence. He begins with four English histories, followed by two foreign tragedies; the two tragedies do, coincidentally or not, appear in the order in which all scholars would agree they were written (*Titus* before *Romeo*). But the list of English chronicle plays does not correspond with historical chronology or chronology of composition or even alphabetical order: instead it seems organized by an irrational numerical progression, from 'Richard the *second*' to 'Richard the *third*' to 'Henry the *fourth*' (our italics), with the numberless *King John* tacked on at the end. Alternatively, the first three histories might have been listed in their order of publication, followed by the as yet unpublished *King John*. Whatever the logic that led Meres's pen, it cannot help us to determine the order in which Shakespeare composed his histories.

Meres, almost comprehensively, defines the boundaries of Shakespeare's early period, but he does not map for us the territory within those boundaries: he collects, but does not arrange. This deficiency is compounded by a peculiarity in the distribution of the other external evidence. In the period after 1598, we have records of specific performances for *Caesar* (1599), *Twelfth Night* (1602), *Measure* (1604), *Othello* (1604), *Lear* (1606), *Pericles* (1606–8), *Macbeth* (1611), *Winter's Tale* (1611), *Cymbeline* (1611), *Tempest* (1611), *Cardenio* (1612–13), and *All Is True* (1613). In some cases those performances took place several years after we believe that Shakespeare finished the play, but in every case they preceded

publication or any other explicit reference to the play. By contrast, for works written before 1598 we know of such performances of only four: *1 Henry VI* (1592), *Titus* (1594), *Errors* (1594), and *Love's Labour's Lost* (1597?). The interpretation of all four is disputed. For the later period, performance records are plentifully and evenly distributed, creating in themselves a minimal chronological gradation; for the earlier period, the same records are hard to find and hard to interpret.

The same lopsidedness afflicts the record of publication. The first publication of a play included in the 1623 collection did not occur until 1594 (*Titus* and *Contention*), though Shakespeare was mentioned as a playwright in 1592 and can hardly have begun his career later than 1591. Another dramatic publication followed in 1595 (*Duke of York*), then three in 1597 (*Romeo*, *Richard II*, *Richard III*). Before the watershed year of 1598, although Shakespeare must have been writing for at least seven years, only six of his plays had reached print, and those publications are weighted heavily toward the later end of the scale. By contrast, after 1598 records of works published or entered for publication multiply and diversify: *2 Henry IV* (1600), *Much Ado* (1600), *Henry V* (1600), *As You Like It* (1600), *Merry Wives* (1602), *Troilus* (1603), *Hamlet* (1603), *Lear* (1608), *Antony* (1608), and *Pericles* (1608)—and the list would be longer if we included works mentioned by Meres but not published until afterwards. Such sources dry up again at the very end of Shakespeare's career, but the presence of performance records compensates for their absence. Indeed, by an uncanny felicity all too rare, in the second half of Shakespeare's career publication records almost invariably plug the holes in performance records, and vice versa: every play after 1598 except *All's Well*, *Timon*, and *Coriolanus* is covered by one sort of document or the other. No such luck operated in preserving documentary references to his early work.

In those few records which do survive from the 1590s, two suffer from the apparent ambiguity of 'ne'. Henslowe affixed those letters to the records of certain performances, and they have been naturally interpreted as a spelling of the word *new*. However, this interpretation, though it will satisfy the overwhelming majority of cases, is embarrassed by two occasions on which the play in question appears not to be, in the usual senses of that word, 'new' (*Henslowe's Diary*, pp. xxx–xxxi). It might, at such times, mean 'newly adapted' or 'newly submitted to the censor'—in which case, 'ne' would in fact on some occasions mean 'old', for only an old play can be newly adapted. It contributes little to the solution of chronological problems to be confidently informed that a play is 'either new or old'. However, the number of apparent exceptions to the straightforward interpretation of 'ne' has been exaggerated, and few plays were heavily adapted for the purposes of revival (see Knutson, 1985). We therefore incline to take 'ne' literally, as 'new'. But for Henslowe, as for modern metropolitan managements, 'new' means 'new in London': a play that had been touring the provinces for eighteen months might still be news to Londoners.

Of course, plays normally began their theatrical life in London; but at times the acting companies were driven out of London by plague. A severe outbreak closed the London theatres for all but a few weeks from June 1592 to May 1594. The plague then subsided until just after the death of Queen Elizabeth, but from June 1603 until December 1610 it seriously and consistently curtailed the annual London season, in some years probably abolishing it altogether (Barroll). At such times the acting companies became increasingly dependent upon private patronage, at court or at the Inns of Court, and to the same degree upon provincial audiences, before whom—in the absence of a London season—they would have to try out and perfect the plays which they would eventually offer at court. During such periods, interpretations of the documentary record must always take account of the constricted theatrical season. Indeed, although for the most part new external evidence is discovered only by chance (and increasingly infrequently), our knowledge of the shape of theatrical seasons in London will expand systematically in the coming years, as a result of the continuing survey of provincial theatrical records: we know the Chamberlain's Men were not in London when we find them in Oxford or Dover.

The shape of the London season may have affected Shakespeare's own patterns of composition as much as it affects our interpretation of the documentary record. John Ward (1629–81), who was vicar of Stratford in the last twenty years of his life, recorded in a notebook from the years 1661–3 that Shakespeare 'supplied y^e^ stage with 2 plays every year' (Schoenbaum, *Documentary Life*, p. 155). A simple calculation of the length of Shakespeare's career and the number of his plays produces roughly the same figure. But his productivity must have fluctuated. However we arrange the evidence, in the Jacobean period he wrote fewer plays, and of those few wrote more in collaboration. A certain relaxation often enough attends age and success; a corresponding excess of energy may accompany youth, indigence, and ambition. Shakespeare might have been particularly industrious in the first years after the Chamberlain's Men was formed, laying the foundations of the stability and prosperity of the new company to which he had allied himself. The Admiral's Men, who were in a comparable position after the reopening of the theatres, put on twenty-one new plays in 1594–5, nineteen in 1595–6, and only fourteen in 1596–7. A comparable bunching of new work in mid-1594 to 1596 can be seen in our proposed chronology for Shakespeare's plays. But the plays written in this period are, besides being more frequent, shorter: *Errors* is Shakespeare's shortest play, *Dream* comes third in the brevity stakes, *King John* is the most compact of the histories, and as a group the seven plays which precede *1 Henry IV* have only about as many words as the next six. Moreover, *King John* uncharacteristically takes over the plot of another play, scene by scene—a labour-saving method of composition employed, so far as we know, nowhere else in the canon.

Shakespeare's patterns of composition must have been influenced by the commercial needs of his company, perhaps at all times, but especially after he became a leading member of the Chamberlain's Men. Chambers (1930), Evans (edn., 1974), and indeed most other scholars assume a sequence of four early history plays (the 'first tetralogy'), uninterrupted by comedies or tragedies; Gurr, in his edition of *Richard II* (1984), presumes that it immediately preceded the two Henry IV plays; most critics assume that all four final romances belong to an undisturbed chronological group. We think such prolonged indulgence in a single genre unlikely. We know that *Henry V* was separated from the other plays of the 'second

tetralogy', and written four years after *Richard II*; in 1598–1600, when we can discern the sequence of composition with unusual clarity, we see a remarkable mixing of comedy, English history, classical and Christian tragedy; a similar variety proclaims itself in the so-called 'lyrical' group (*Love's Labour's Lost*, *Richard II*, *Romeo*, *Dream*), which seem to belong—in no certain order—to the same year or two. Like actors, dramatists of the period were expected to turn their hand to any genre, depending on the demands of the current repertoire. Consequently, although we have not wantonly disrupted generic groupings when we find no reason to do so, we have not respected them when the little evidence in our possession encourages an alternative order. Where we keep them—as in the 'Henry VI' plays, or the three 'Sir John' plays, or the two narrative poems—we do so by default, not design.

On at least one occasion, we know that Shakespeare did not have a new play available when the company wanted one. Walter Cope, in a letter to Robert Cecil endorsed '1604' (old style), wrote that 'Burbage ys come, & Sayes ther ys no new playe that the quene hath not seene, but they have Revyved an olde one, Cawled *Loves Labore lost*, which for wytt & mirthe he sayes will please her excedingly. And Thys is apointed to be playd to Morowe night at my Lord of Sowthamptons'; other documents make it likely that this performance took place between 8 and 15 January 1605 (Chambers, *Shakespeare*, ii. 331-2). *Othello* had been played at court on 1 November 1604, and *Measure* on 26 December 1604; otherwise, between November 1604 and February 1605 the King's Men only performed old plays at court (*Errors*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Merchant*, *Merry Wives*, and *Henry V*). We do not know what play they 'provided And discharged' on 3 February 1605. *Othello* and *Measure* are the only named plays from this court season which could be new, and since it is likely enough that Shakespeare had written two plays during the year since the last court season, it seems reasonable to assume that both were indeed brand new—a conclusion in any case independently warranted by other evidence. Cope's letter, in conjunction with other documentary evidence, thus virtually establishes that Shakespeare completed only two plays between the end of the previous court season (19 February 1604) and the beginning of January 1605. By fixing Shakespeare's output for one year, it creates a watershed, on either side of which the Jacobean canon must be distributed. With the exception of *Sir Thomas More*, every play which precedes *Measure* in the Oxford edition (and the following chronology) can be confidently fixed before February 1604. Of those which follow *Measure* and *Othello* in the Oxford chronology, only five might theoretically precede February 1604: *All's Well*, *Timon*, *Antony*, *Winter's Tale*, and *Cymbeline*. Of these five, only the first two seem at all possible as candidates for such an early date—and neither, in our judgement, is likely. We do not know which plays the King's Men offered the court in their nine performances between 2 December 1603 and 19 February 1604, although *Dream* was apparently one of them; the fact that, in the next court season, the company had to reach back to a series of plays written before 1600 suggests that in their first court season for the new monarch they offered their most successful plays of 1600–3. But the Oxford chronology—like that of Chambers—leaves 1603 empty of new plays: between the completion of *Troilus* (before 7 February 1603) and the completion of *Measure* and *Othello* in 1604 only a minor contribution to *Sir Thomas More* seems probable. For most of that year, the death of Queen Elizabeth and then plague closed the London theatres, and the accession of James I meant that plays already seen by the old monarch could now be shown again to the new. It is tempting to suppose that during this interim, as in the previous interim of 1592–3, Shakespeare briefly turned his attention to non-dramatic poetry.

Chronology: Internal Evidence

The internal evidence can be divided into two categories: relationships between the canon and things outside it, and relationships within the canon itself.

Theatrical provenance can help to establish a play's date, if the company to which a play belonged was born or died at a known time. Since after mid-1594 Shakespeare's plays were all written for a single company, such evidence affects the chronology of his canon only (*a*) for the early plays, or (*b*) when the name of his company changed, due to a change of patron, or (*c*) when the text calls for a particular actor, known to have died, or to have left the company, or to have joined it, at a particular time. But Shakespeare's early theatrical affiliations themselves remain obscure and conjectural, and the movements of particular actors cannot always be traced with the exactitude which chronological nicety requires.

Quotations from a play, or unmistakable allusions to its characters or scenes, or parodies of it, establish its existence as clearly as does explicit documentary evidence. However, scholars have disagreed, and will always disagree, about what constitutes a genuine or unambiguous allusion; there can be no consistent standard of validation.

Echoes can be roughly distinguished from quotations: authors assume or desire that readers will recognize the source of a quotation or allusion, but authors either remain unconscious of an echo, or consciously wish readers to remain unconscious of it. By definition, echoes are harder to spot, and to the same degree easier to imagine. Alleged echoes in allegedly memorial texts should be regarded with particular suspicion. In the first place, memorial texts are not easily identifiable unless an alternative authoritative text exists, and outside the Shakespeare canon such clarifying duplication seldom occurs. Nor can memorial texts easily or confidently be identified if we do not know the play's author, or alternatively if we know the author but possess little or none of his work in authoritative texts; in either situation, we cannot define defective texts by comparison with whole ones. Even in the Shakespeare canon, where the conditions for identifying memorial texts might be considered ideal, a minority of scholars continues to deny their existence, or denies the applicability of the hypothesis to particular individual texts. By characterizing a text as a memorial reconstruction, scholars create a presumption that it echoes Shakespeare, as a result of its imperfect method of transmission; but that imperfect method of transmission itself remains a hypothesis, and sometimes a rather wobbly one. In the second place, the alleged echoes have seldom been collected or tested objectively. Those who collect them always know Shakespeare's works better than they know the works

of his contemporaries, and sometimes they go to such sources specifically seeking echoes of a particular play or plays. Not surprisingly, they often find what they seek, but having found it they do not bother to check whether it might be an echo of some Elizabethan or Jacobean work less familiar than Shakespeare's play, or consider that it might be an echo of one of the multitude of plays from the period which are now lost. Fuzzy parallels randomly piled upon a wobbly foundation do not a proof construct.

In determining the direction of influence (who echoes whom?), critics sometimes argue for Shakespeare's priority on the grounds that his use of an image or idea is 'apter' or 'more original' than its corresponding use by another writer. Such arguments can never be trusted. Shakespeare often improved what he stole.

Sources, when they can be securely identified, establish more clearly than any other evidence the earliest date by which a work can have been written. But in some cases we cannot be sure whether Shakespeare was influenced by, or himself influenced, another work; in others, the books which Shakespeare pillaged were written many years before the plays themselves, and hence provide only a distant chronological horizon.

Topical allusions within the work to events outside the work create a presumption that the passage in question was written after the event in question. Some passages unmistakably refer to specific identifiable contemporary persons or events outside the text; others unmistakably refer to such extra-textual matter, but the specifically intended referent remains unclear, or cannot itself be confidently dated; in other cases, we cannot even be sure whether the text does or does not allude to anything outside its fictional world. Even when we can be sure of an allusion, we can seldom fix a date by which it would have ceased to be topical.

The foregoing categories of internal evidence—which might be called 'extrinsic', because they point outside the canon itself—usefully narrow the range of chronological possibilities. But all require the exercise of judgement, and all can be abused. The same obvious limitation applies to the remaining categories of internal evidence—which might be called 'intrinsic', because they depend upon the relationships of one canonical work to another. Intrinsic evidence does not determine a work's date in relation to the world's date (a certain number of years after the hypothetical birth of Christ), but instead defines an ideal order among and between works, a sequence of relationships based upon measurements of affinity and dissimilarity, charting the movement of a mind and the evolution of a style. Such studies have a value all their own, beyond chronological utility, in alerting us to the detail and maturing of Shakespeare's art; they should interest us even if we knew the very day and hour, place and weather, when each of Shakespeare's compositions was conceived or completed. But in the absence of such certainties, they can, in compensation, offer probabilities, probabilities no less (if no more) trustworthy than those generated by sources, echoes, and topical allusions.

As in problems of authenticity, such stylistic evidence can only usefully be applied to problems of chronology if we already possess a core of reliable external evidence. If we know the actual relative order of some works, we can extrapolate from them patterns of development, and then relate works of unknown or uncertain date to those patterns. If we know the real historical dates of A, C, and E, we can create a line of development, and fix on to that line the appropriate positions for B and D; we may then conjecture that the stylistic pattern corresponds with an historical one, and that B came between A and C in the world's sequence, as well as the canon's.

In order for such reasoning to carry conviction, our anchor points in the external evidence must be not only securely dated, but securely attributed. Since we are tracing patterns of stylistic development in a single author, that pattern could be confused, or distorted, if the evidence included matter from another mind. In fact, such stylistic evidence often helps us to isolate a collaborator's contribution; but in establishing our initial profile of Shakespeare's habits, we must first eliminate any material of dubious authenticity. This restriction, unfortunately, affects the beginnings of the Shakespeare canon most severely. In our present ignorance, we must suspect collaboration (or at least countenance such suspicions) in several early plays, without being able to isolate the other author confidently, as we usually can in the late collaborations. Such suspicions further deplete the already sparse external signposts to the early chronology.

As in so many other respects, the early canon creates special problems of its own in the evaluation of stylistic evidence. After 1598 there are enough fixed points in the relative dating of Shakespeare's works for it to take little effort to construct or to justify a skeletal chronology from which to extrapolate stylistic trends. Among the earlier works such fixed points are hard to find. In the following summary, we have set out the minimum framework, established by external evidence and by convincing 'extrinsic' internal evidence, upon which must be stretched any stylistic analysis of Shakespeare's early canon. Works of uncertain authorship are followed by a query; a group of works, all demonstrably later (or earlier) than another, but of uncertain relationship to each other, is bracketed together. Thus, *Duke of York* and *1 Henry VI* may both be collaborative, but both are certainly earlier than *Venus and Adonis*, which is certainly earlier than *Lucrece*, which is certainly earlier than *Richard II* or *Henry IV*.

1. (*Duke of York?*, *1 Henry VI?*) ⇨ *Venus* ⇨ *Lucrece* ⇨ (*Richard II*, *Henry IV*)
2. *Titus?* ⇨ *Lucrece*, or *Titus?* = *Lucrece*
3. (*Titus?*, *Duke of York?*, *1 Henry VI?*, *Shrew?*, *Errors*, *Venus*) ⇨ (*Dream*, *Merchant*)

Although the traditional assumption rests on precious little external evidence, it also seems probable that *Contention*, *Duke of York*, and *Richard III* were written in a sequence which corresponds to the historical sequence of their subject-matter, and that this group of plays was followed by another group, from *Richard II* to *Henry V*, also written in historical sequence. We might therefore add the following proposition:

4. *Contention?* ⇨ *Duke of York?* ⇨ *Richard III* ⇨ *Richard II* ⇨ *1 Henry IV* ⇨ *2 Henry IV* ⇨ *Henry V*

If we accept this proposition, among the histories only the relative positions of *1 Henry VI* and *King John* remain uncertain.

The limited value of these conclusions should be obvious. Although we know the relative position of most of the histories, that knowledge tells us little about their actual time of composition, because so few of the individual histories can be confidently dated: we know that the first two were probably written between 1587 and 1592, and that *Richard II* and *1 Henry IV* were written between 1595 and 1598, but that only tells us that *Richard III* comes between 1588 and 1595. What is worse, this limited knowledge of the sequence of the histories cannot be related to the sequence of the comedies and tragedies. The history sequence can be related chronologically to the narrative poems, but that knowledge may not produce reliable internal evidence of stylistic development, because differences of genre may distort the results. Brainerd (1979) has shown that even the frequencies of very common words can be affected by genre. Such disparities seem to matter less in Shakespeare's later work, when his verbal style had settled down to a certain assured homogeneity; but they can hardly be ignored in the early work, and they further weaken our confidence in the little evidence we possess. The most confidently datable of all the early works are the narrative poems; yet they also differ most obviously from all the others.

Given these limitations, it should hardly surprise us that editors have, over the centuries, disagreed radically about the distribution of the early canon: about the relative order of the early comedies, about the relation between the composition of works in different genres, about the year when Shakespeare began writing plays. Without the discovery of more external evidence, such disputes will never end. Nevertheless, without exaggerating the level of appropriate complacency, we may acknowledge that the shape of the problem is perhaps better understood now than it has been in the past, and that modern editors have at their disposal the gleanings of evidence and ingenuity accumulated by their predecessors. Several categories of evidence and reasoning have influenced the chronology of the early plays adopted in the Oxford edition.

The size of cast envisaged by a script usefully divides Shakespeare's plays into two groups. *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Titus Andronicus*, and the three plays on the reign of Henry VI all—even with the doubling of actors normal in the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre—presuppose casts much larger than those required to perform the remaining plays. Noticeably, all five plays can be assigned, on reliable external evidence, to the period before 1594; all were performed, or at the very least might have been written in whole or part, before the closure of the theatres in mid-1592. Such large casts are also presumed in some other plays of this pre-plague period (McMillin, '*More*'). It therefore seems reasonable to suppose that these plays were written at a time when a playwright could count, as a matter of course, upon a company larger than the later Chamberlain's Men. This change in company structure cannot easily be dissociated from the devastating effects on the London acting profession of the long interregnum caused by plague. Of course, not every play written before mid-1592 required a large cast. But it does seem to us significant that Shakespeare's later histories and tragedies, though they dramatized similar sorts of material, call for smaller casts than the demonstrably early histories and tragedies (Ringler), and we assume that those later plays therefore post-date 1592. Honigmann (*Impact*; 1985) wishes to push *Richard III* and *King John* back to 1591; but we do not see why Shakespeare should, in that year, suddenly have started writing history plays for a smaller company. It seems more economical to relate the change of theatrical requirements to a change in theatrical opportunities.

The use of rhyme was taken by Malone, in one of the first attempts to apply internal evidence to chronological problems, as a symptom of early composition. If we understand this proposition in relation to the canon as a whole, it is obviously true: the plays with a high proportion of rhymed verse cluster conspicuously in the first decade of Shakespeare's career. But it by no means follows that Shakespeare's *earliest* plays contain the *most* rhyme. Indeed, that proposition seems to be self-evidently false, for none of the plays which can be confidently placed before the 1592 interregnum contains much rhyme. Columns 1–3 in Table 8 give the proportions of rhymed verse to total verse in Shakespeare's plays; these proportions are displayed visually in Graph 1. In both the table and the graph, the plays are listed in the chronological order adopted here; but that order was in fact chosen before its relevance to the pattern of rhyme was realized. What causes the sudden increase in the use of rhyme? Apparently, the event which immediately precedes that increase is the composition of the 1,194 rhymed lines of *Venus and Adonis*, followed within the year by composition of the 1,855 rhymed lines of *Lucrece*; at about the same time Shakespeare probably began writing large numbers of rhymed sonnets. No other explanation so readily and naturally accounts for Shakespeare's fondness for rhyme in comedies, histories, and tragedies, all most probably dating from the years 1594–5. The composition of that large quantity of non-dramatic rhymed verse has, in turn, a natural source and origin in the prolonged suspension of theatrical activity caused by the London plague of 1592–3. The plague for a time made Shakespeare rhyme for a living, just as it made him write plays for a smaller company.

Biographical evidence offers another explanation for the pattern of distribution of the early plays. On 20 September 1592 *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit* was entered in the Stationers' Register; it was published in an edition dated 1592 (STC 12245), and contains the first explicit reference to Shakespeare as a member of the theatrical profession:

> there is an upstart 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.

The exact purport of this attack, and even its author, have been disputed for two centuries, and any interpretation must remain speculative. But this passage occurs in the context of a warning '*To those Gentlemen his Quondam acquaintance, that spend their wits in making plaies*', and Shakespeare is one of the persons of whom the author warns them to beware. We can confidently assign only five plays in the Shakespeare canon to the period before publication of *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit*: *Shrew*, the three plays on Henry VI, and (less confidently) *Titus*. In all five reasonable modern scholars have suspected collaboration. Such doubts can be reasonably entertained for no other play earlier than 1603–4. One need not believe that all five early plays where collaboration is

TABLE 8
Rhyme and prose

	Verse lines	Rhymed lines	Rhymed (%)	Prose (%): Spevack
Two Gentlemen	1,638	128	8	25
Shrew	2,022	151	7	18
Contention	2,611	96	4	16
Duke of York	2,901	128	4	0
1 Henry VI	2,675	318	12	0
Titus	2,482	130	5	1
Richard III	3,536	152	4	2
Venus	1,194	1,194	100	0
Lucrece	1,855	1,855	100	0
Errors	1,533	378	25	12
LLL	1,734	1,150	66	32
Richard II	2,757	529	19	0
Romeo	2,567	466	18	13
Dream	1,544	798	52	20
K. John	2,570	132	5	0
Merchant	2,025	142	7	23
1 Henry IV	1,683	76	5	45
Merry Wives	240	26	11	87
2 Henry IV	1,492	72	5	52
Much Ado	720	76	11	72
Henry V	1,562	58	4	42
Caesar	2,301	32	1	8
As You Like It	1,143	217	19	57
Hamlet	2,579	135	5	27
Twelfth Night	938	176	19	61
Troilus	2,251	186	8	30
Measure	1,666	89	5	39
Othello	2,631	103	4	19
All's Well	1,482	279	19	47
Timon (S)	1,056	37	4	
Timon (M)	617	123	20	
Timon	1,673	160	10	23
Lear (QF)	2,403	169	7	25
Macbeth	1,800	64	4	7
Antony	2,772	40	1	8
Pericles (S)	803	22	3	(30)
Pericles (W)	802	197	25	(15)
Pericles	1,605	219	14	17
Coriolanus	2,577	28	1	22
Winter's Tale	2,166	59	3	28
Cymbeline	2,729	122	4	15
Tempest	1,509	64	4	20
True (S)	1,160	6	1	(1)
True (F)	1,532	20	1	(5)
True	2,692	26	1	2
Kinsmen (S)	1,074	24	2	(5)
Kinsmen (F)	1,486	44	3	(6)
Kinsmen	2,560	68	3	6

Notes: Figures for total verse lines and for rhymed lines are taken from Chambers, *Stage*, ii., App. H; they exclude verse which Chambers characterized as 'external' (prologues, epilogues, choruses, interludes, masques, Pistol's bombast and the play's speech in *Hamlet*). Spevack's figures for total verse lines include such material, and also count many incomplete verse lines separately, thus consistently producing larger totals. By contrast, Spevack's figures for prose are based upon the number of words of prose, a more accurate measurement than the number of lines, since it is not affected by differences in page or column width. Percentages in brackets, for parts of collaborative plays, are taken from Chambers; comparable Spevack figures are not available.

suspected were indeed collaborative, in order to grant that there is good evidence of *some* collaboration before Greene's posthumous attack, and no good evidence of *any* collaboration for a full decade after. Again, the shape of Shakespeare's early career seems to have been determined by events in 1592: by abandoning collaboration, and writing a serious classical narrative poem, Shakespeare demonstrated that he did not need to adorn himself with anybody else's feathers.

The foregoing interpretation of Shakespeare's biography is, and will always be, conjectural; it cannot withstand contradiction by any convincing external or internal evidence. But in the absence of better evidence, we believe that the interrelationship of these three factors—the change in company size apparently caused by the plague, the turn to rhyme apparently caused by the plague, and the attack on Shakespeare coincident with the plague—do establish that the second half of 1592 represented a watershed in Shakespeare's career. The Henry VI plays, *Shrew*, *Titus* almost certainly, *Two Gentlemen* perhaps, were written before that watershed; everything else, after. This conclusion is not contradicted by any of the existing stylistic evidence, which instead tends to reinforce it; moreover, unlike other stylistic evidence, it cannot be distorted by the possibility of collaboration in certain early plays, for neither the relatively large casts nor the relative paucity of rhyme in the earliest plays can be attributed to collaborators.

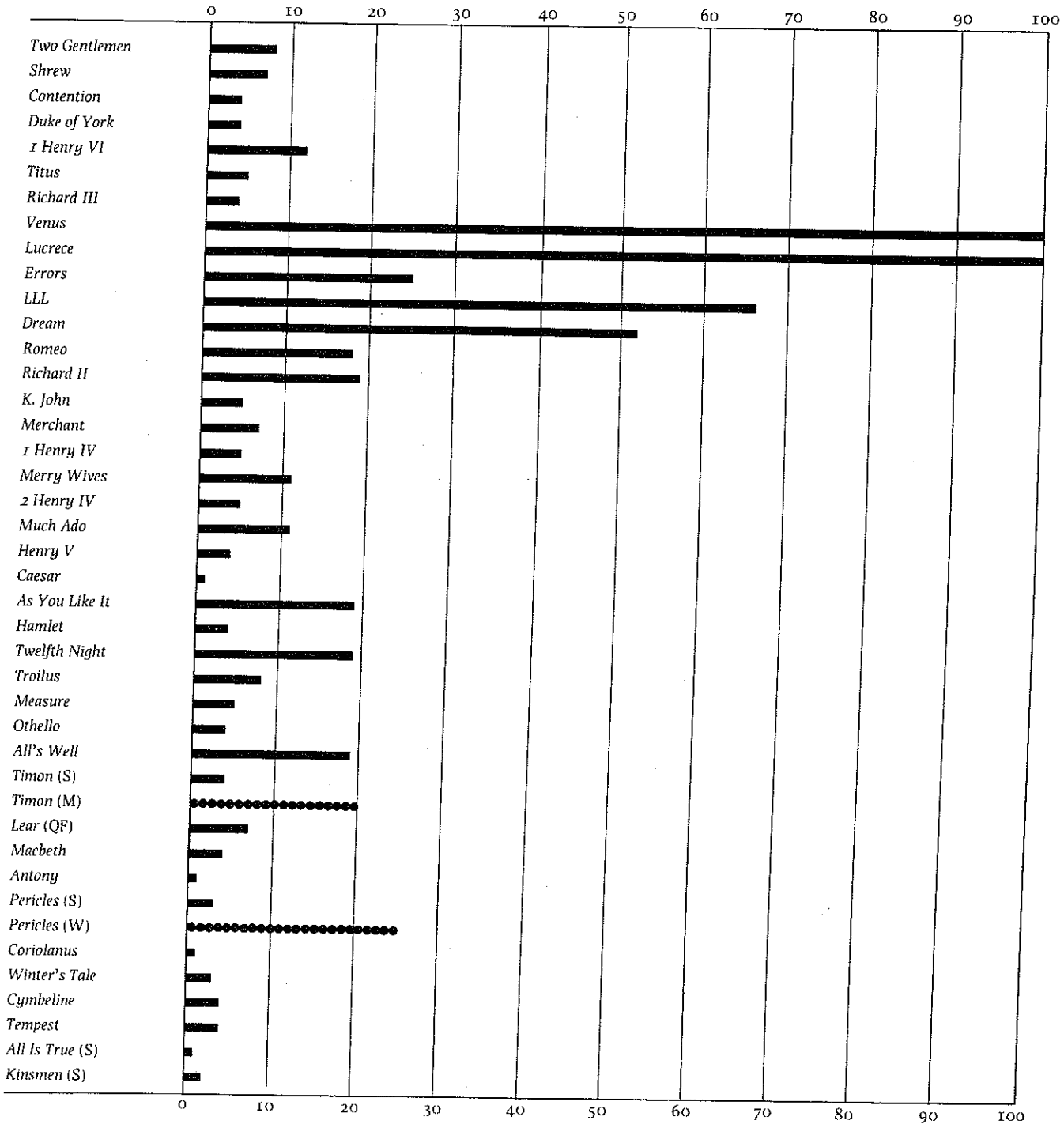
Rhetorical evidence supports the same arrangement of the early canon. Studies of internal evidence have generally been confined to vocabulary (which words the author uses) or to metre (the verse forms into which he fits those words); but an author's style is also shaped by rhetoric (the tropes by which he arranges words). Clemen, in a study instantly recognized as a classic, described *The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery*, and Mincoff, in a series of investigations of early plays, worked out in detail some of the chronological implications of Clemen's analysis, tracing Shakespeare's use of extended similes, compound adjectives, and other rhetorical schemes. Such studies—and Brooks's related discussion, in his edition, of the style of *Dream* and the other so-called 'lyrical' plays—demonstrate in detail that Shakespeare did not begin his career writing rhetorically and artificially, and then by a steady and uninterrupted progression become more and more 'naturalistic'; instead, in certain respects the verse in Shakespeare's middle plays is more artificially and self-consciously patterned than anything we find in the earlier work. *Errors*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Richard II*, *Romeo*, and *Dream* are, like the narrative poems, displays of virtuoso verbal exhibitionism.

By such interrelated criteria, combined with the existing external evidence and the 'extrinsic' internal evidence, we can define two distinct groups of early plays: *Shrew*, the Henry VI plays, and *Titus*, on the one hand, and on the other *Errors*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Richard II*, *Romeo*, and *Dream*. *Richard III* seems clearly to belong between the two groups; only *Two Gentlemen* and *King John* remain—as yet—ambiguous. Unfortunately, we still cannot discern with any confidence the chronological relationship *between* the items in each group.

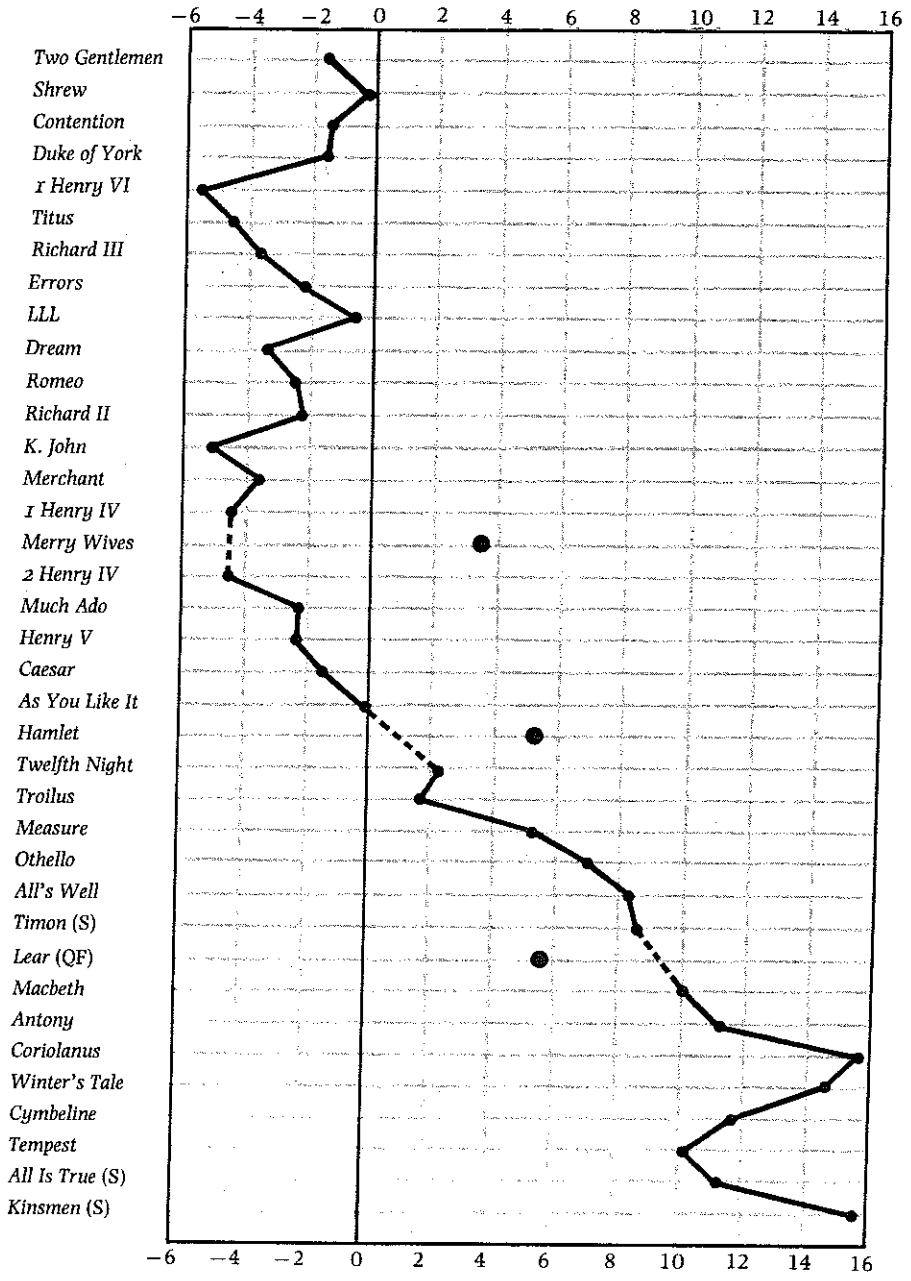
However, this structuring of the early canon does take us some distance toward locating the source of Shakespeare's Nile, the beginnings of his dramatic career. If Shakespeare had written only five, or at most six, extant plays by 1592, it would be rather surprising if he had been writing plays since 1586, as Honigmann believes. Of course, many plays from that earliest period might be lost; but if we confine ourselves to the surviving work, we have little reason to suppose that Shakespeare began writing in 1586. Moreover, Honigmann's alternative 'early chronology' creates a number of general problems, beyond those incident to the dating of particular plays (discussed below, under 'Works Included'). First, Honigmann supposes that *The Troublesome Reign of John, King of England* was written in 1590–1, then published in 1591. Why was it published, anomalously, so soon after its composition? Because, he tells us, the Queen's Men were in trouble. But *Troublesome Reign* is the only play belonging to the Queen's Men published at that time; several were published in 1594. *Troublesome Reign* thus becomes the only evidence for the alleged cause of its own case, the sale of new plays to publishers by a financially troubled company. Secondly, Honigmann's chronology, by pushing back the traditional dating of the early histories, creates a large gap between *King John* (early 1591) and *Richard II* (1595), in which Shakespeare purportedly wrote no history plays at all—a genre which, on Honigmann's account, he had created almost single-handed, and which had been the staple of his early success. Likewise, after resounding and early successes in tragedy (*Titus* 1586?, *Romeo* 1591?), we are to suppose that Shakespeare did not write another tragedy for eight years. All of Shakespeare's histories, with the possible exception of *Contention*, must postdate publication of Holinshed's *Chronicle* (1587: STC 13569), and most scholars have believed that the sudden popularity of the genre owes something to the swell of nationalism associated with the defeat of the Spanish Armada (August 1588). In pushing Shakespeare's beginnings back to the mid-1580s Honigmann must therefore fill the gap with plays which cannot be confidently dated on the basis of their sources: *Titus Andronicus* (1586?), *Two Gentlemen* (1587?), *Shrew* (1588?), and *Errors* (1589?). It is suspiciously convenient to suppose that Shakespeare confined himself, in the 1580s, to plays which could not be confidently dated by their dependence upon recent materials, and which therefore permit any investigator to date them as early as he likes; it would be more plausible to suppose that such undatable materials were more evenly scattered through his writing life. Finally, Honigmann's early dating asks us to believe that Shakespeare was not mentioned by name in any surviving document for the first seven years of his playwriting career—years in which he allegedly dominated theatrical life, writing a series of plays so successful that they were busily echoed and pillaged by all his elders and contemporaries. Most young writers imitate older writers; in Shakespeare's case, Honigmann asks us to believe that, unnaturally, age knelt to youth, and the upstart crow was lionized.

Curiosity abhors a vacuum, and the urge to push Shakespeare's first play farther and farther back into the 1580s is palpably designed to fill the black hole of our ignorance about those years; but since we must then spread the same number of plays over a larger number of years, by filling one big vacuum in the 1580s we simply create other vacuums elsewhere. Moreover, by a kind of artistic gravity, the power of any single great reputation tends to attract, absorb, and eclipse lesser reputations, and consequently Shakespeare's unquestionable artistic brilliance leads easily to the assumption that he can be credited with every accomplishment of his

GRAPH 1
Percentage of rhyme to verse



GRAPH 2
Colloquialisms



KING LEAR

King Lear exists in two substantially different editions. The first is a quarto (Q1), whose title-page identifies it as 'Printed for *Nathaniel Butter*, and are to be sold at his shop in *Pauls* Church-yard at the signe of the Pide Bull neere St. *Austins* Gate. 1608' (*BEPD* 265). This quarto was printed by Nicholas Okes; it had been entered in the Stationers' Register on 26 November 1607:

> Na. Butter / Io. Buſby — Entred for their copie vnder thande of Sr Geo. Buck knight & Thwardens A booke called. Mr Willm̃ Shakeſpeare his hiſtorye of Kinge Lear as yt was played before the Kinge maieſtie at Whitehall vppon St Stephans night at Xp̃ſm̃s Laſt by his maties ſervante playinge vſually at the globe on the Bankſyde

A second quarto edition (Q2) reads simply 'Printed for *Nathaniel Butter*. 1608'. The priority of Q1 was not established until 1866; between 1908 and 1910 Greg, Pollard, and others demonstrated that Q2 was one of a group of plays printed in 1619 by William Jaggard for Thomas Pavier. (See General Introduction.) Though Q2 played an important part in the history of the text's transmission, it reprints Q1 with no apparent access to independent manuscript authority. A third quarto (Q3) appeared in 1655.

King Lear was also included among the Tragedies in the First Folio; that text (F) was reprinted in the derivative folios of 1632, 1663, and 1685, and in Rowe's three editions (1709–14). The Folio text contains about 100 lines not printed in Q; it does not contain about 300 lines (including one whole scene) which are present in Q; it also differs from Q in hundreds of substantive readings, and divides the play into acts and scenes.

In 1723 Pope became the first editor to incorporate readings from Q into the text of F; in 1733 Theobald carried the process further, producing an edition based upon full-scale conflation of the two early sources. No eighteenth-century editor provided a sound hypothesis which would justify such massive emendation of the Folio (or the Quarto), but Theobald's procedure has been followed in all subsequent editions. In the twentieth century editors have most often described Q as a reported text, and F as an abridged theatrical adaptation; but no such hypothesis has succeeded in satisfying, in all of its features, even the adherents of conflation, let alone those who oppose it.

Although earlier scholars sometimes raised the possibility that F represents a revision of the original play (represented by Q), until recently that hypothesis had not been seriously or systematically explored. In 1931 Madeleine Doran (*The Text of 'King Lear'*) argued that Q was set from Shakespeare's foul papers, and hence that many verbal variants between the texts were authorial (although in 1941, reviewing Greg, she retracted some of her earlier conclusions). In 1976 Michael Warren's 'Quarto and Folio *King Lear* and the Interpretation of Albany and Edgar' reopened the issue, claiming that the two texts presented these two characters in significantly different ways; since 1976, studies by Urkowitz, Stone, Taylor ('The War in *King Lear*', *SSu 33* (1980), 27–34), Blayney (*The Texts of 'King Lear'*), Honigmann, and other scholars have argued at great length the case for the artistic integrity and independence of the two early versions.

The hypothesis that we possess, in Q and F, Shakespeare's original version and Shakespeare's revision of *King Lear* necessitates a radical departure from traditional editorial practice; but traditional editorial practice itself represents a radical departure from the early texts. Because the editorial tradition has never been justified by a coherent or credible textual hypothesis, a conservative editor would have to reject it, even if the possibility of revision did not exist. On the other hand, even those editors who accept the essential independence of the two texts might only reprint one: either the original (Q), or the revision (F). For other plays which we believe Shakespeare to have revised, we have attempted to provide edited texts which, so far as possible, represent the text as it stood after Shakespeare revised it, and a similar procedure might have been adopted here. But scholars have generally agreed that the variants in *Lear* represent a special case: attempts to dismiss Q as a 'bad quarto' derive in part from the perception that it differs from F in ways not paralleled by other collateral texts (like the good quartos of *Hamlet*, *Troilus*, and *Othello*), and scholars who have supported the hypothesis of revision have generally spoken of Q and F as different 'versions' of the play. Moreover, the Folio revision probably took place several years after the original composition. These considerations, combined with the play's importance, make it desirable to prepare edited texts of both early 'versions'.

The following Textual Notes to the two versions do not attempt to discuss or justify every variant between them. *Division* contains a useful 'Index of Passages Discussed' (pp. 471–82) keyed to the analysis of such variants in *Division* itself and in four major discussions which preceded it (Stone, Taylor 'War', Urkowitz, Warren); Blayney's volume contains its own index. Since 1982 the discussion of variants, increasingly in critical studies chiefly devoted to other matters, has proliferated; the paperback reprint of *Division* (1986) contains a bibliography of such studies up to the end of 1985 (p. x)—to which should be added the chapter on *King Lear* in Gary Taylor's *Moment by Moment by Shakespeare* (1985).

G.T./(S.W.W.)

THE HISTORY OF KING LEAR
(BASED ON THE QUARTO OF 1608)

BLAYNEY demonstrates that Q1 was probably printed in December and January of 1607–8; it was set seriatim by two compositors (Okes's B and C): C set Sc. 17.0–Sc. 18.30/2203–88; Sc. 20.95–205/2424–2533; Sc. 20.264–Sc. 21.55/2590–2659; and Sc. 24.118/2901 (after 'summons') to the end. B set the remainder of the play. *Lear* was apparently the first play Okes had printed, and it would have made heavy demands on his limited supply of type: type-shortage probably accounts, in part, for some of the text's deficiencies, particularly the peculiarity of the punctuation and lineation. Even after every allowance has been made for the possibility that Quarto variants may be authorial alternatives rather than errors, Q1 remains exceptionally unreliable in its distinctions between prose and verse, and in its arrangement of verse. Shortages in the type case, unfamiliarity with this kind of material, compositorial error, ambiguity and alteration in the manuscript can probably account for all such errors of lineation, though it may be difficult to differentiate between these causes in any particular instance.

The twelve extant copies of Q1 contain an exceptional number of press variants: full lists and discussions of these can be found in Greg (1940) and Blayney (1982). From these variants, and from the many evident errors in Q, it is apparent that the handwriting of the printer's copy was not easily legible, and that the manuscript was particularly subject to kinds of misreading associated with the 'Hand D' addition to *Sir Thomas More* and with the quartos apparently set from Shakespeare's foul papers. In the frequent inadequacy of its stage directions and the inconsistency of its designation of characters the manuscript also resembles an author's draft rather than a scribal fair copy or a prompt-book. Such evidence suggests that Q was set from foul papers, and that it may in fact reproduce certain features of such manuscripts more faithfully than any other Shakespeare quarto. Such 'bibliographical' evidence tends to confirm the literary arguments, advanced by a number of recent critics, that the Quarto represents a legitimate early version of the play. But, as noted in the preface to *Division*, 'any comprehensive defence of the Quarto's authority would have to provide . . . a detailed critical consideration of many individual variants' (p. vii). The following Textual Notes attempt to provide the beginnings of such a defence. The preparation and explanation of a text of the Quarto itself constitutes an important part of the case for the existence and integrity of the two versions.

Unlike the Folio, Q contains many readings which are obviously nonsensical or inadequate, and the chief problem for an editor is the extent to which it should be corrected by reference to F. Naturally, we have retained Q wherever we could make defensible sense of it; but having decided in any specific case that Q is probably corrupt, one must still decide whether to accept F's reading, or to adopt an editorial conjecture. Acceptance of F is always easier, and in one respect safer: if an editor accepts that F represents Shakespeare's own revision, then the F reading in such cases is presumably Shakespearian, even if Shakespeare did not intend it to stand in Q. However, the entire purpose of editing Q and F separately is to preserve the separate integrity of each, and such a purpose is not well served by importing revised readings into an unrevised fabric. Moreover, one chief weakness of the policy of wholesale conflation was its inability to provide plausible explanations for the great bulk of variation between the two texts; a coherent editorial alternative cannot reasonably resort to dozens of emendations which leave the apparent corruption in Q wholly unexplained. We have therefore attempted, as far as possible, to emend Q—where emendation seems desirable—as though F did not exist, seeking in every case the most plausible explanation of the apparent error, and the most economical restoration of sense.

In a very real sense, the Quarto version of the play has never been edited: Rowe did not know of Q's existence, and editors from Pope onwards have simply used Q to supplement F. Blayney's unpublished 'reference text' of Q (1979) was the first critical edition of Q itself; we are, as the notes reveal, often indebted to that edition, and grateful for Dr Blayney's generosity in allowing us access to his text before its publication.

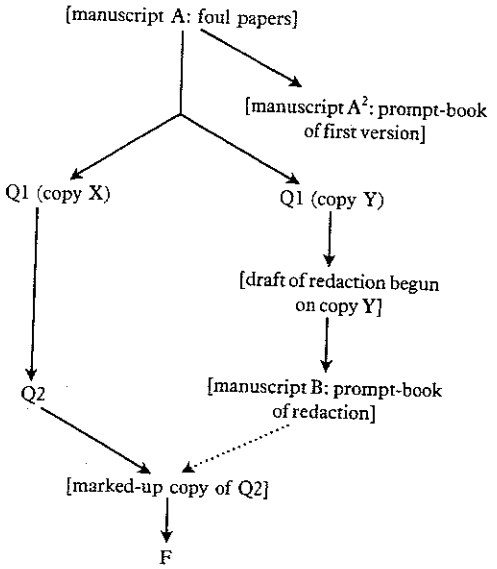
Q does not contain act or scene divisions, and like most of Shakespeare's other plays it was written for continuous performance. Since Q stands outside the eighteenth-century editorial tradition, no convention of act-scene reference to this text has been established; nor does it seem desirable that any such misleading convention should now be imposed upon it. We have therefore simply numbered the scenes continuously, without interpolating act divisions. The Folio divisions belong to the revision, and cannot be retrospectively imposed on a different structure. The scene divisions themselves create no problem, except at the point where Kent falls asleep in the stocks (7.167/1174). In both Q and F, Kent remains on stage—asleep—during Edgar's soliloquy, waking up shortly after Edgar exits and Lear enters. The stage is not cleared; F marks no scene division before Edgar's entrance or after his exit; both texts envisage the same sequence of action, and F's division of scenes is elsewhere complete. Eighteenth-century editors were nevertheless troubled by the apparent reappearance of the fugitive Edgar before Gloucester's residence, and by the apparent compression of time; Steevens therefore made Edgar's soliloquy a new scene, followed by yet another scene in which Lear and his party discover Kent in the stocks. This arrangement, followed by all subsequent editors, makes unwarranted assumptions about consistency

THE TRAGEDY OF KING LEAR
(BASED ON THE FOLIO OF 1623)

HINMAN demonstrated that Folio *Lear* was set by Compositors B and E; Howard-Hill (*A Reassessment*) has since shown that E set rather more of the play than Hinman thought. Werstine ('Folio Editors'), on the basis of a thorough survey of the work of both compositors elsewhere in the Folio, analysed the kinds and quantities of error we should expect in their stints here. The editorial usefulness of compositor study has probably been demonstrated more effectively in Folio *Lear* than in any other play.

Identification of the compositors has been crucial in determining the nature of the printer's copy. Greg's examination of press variants in Q1, by demonstrating a clear link between F and printing-house errors in different exemplars of Q, made it clear that F in some way derives from Q. Greg, committed to the view that Q represented a debased text, could only explain such derivation by assuming that Q served as printer's copy for F, and he identified two key variants (at 1.4.322/828 and 5.3.45/2685) which suggest the use of Q1 rather than Q2. The assumption that Q1 served as printer's copy for F, which governed the editing of *Lear* for four decades, was thus based entirely on evidence of textual derivation (transmission of readings) rather than bibliographical dependence. This unexamined assumption depended upon the belief that Q and F were both defective reproductions of a single lost archetype, and collapsed with it. Stone, Taylor ('Folio Compositors'), and Howard-Hill ('The Problem') have demonstrated clear links in punctuation, spelling, and substantive variants between Q2 and Compositor E's stints. Such links are less remarkable in B's stints, and Stone proposed that B worked directly from manuscript. But the difference seems more likely to reflect E's exceptional conservatism in retaining features of his copy, than any difference in the copy itself. Taylor's more thorough study of B's stints suggests that the number of links in spelling and punctuation between F and Q2 is, in terms of B's practice elsewhere, what we should expect if Q2 were his copy. The proposed allocation of different kinds of copy to the two compositors would be an exceptional procedure which creates more problems than it solves, and it seems reasonable to assume that, here as elsewhere, both men worked from the same materials.

The compositors' Q2 copy must have been annotated by reference to an independent manuscript. Yet this manuscript itself apparently derived from Q1: F repeats press-variant errors present in Q1 but not Q2 (1.4.320/826, 1.4.322/828, 5.3.45/2685). It thus seems probable that the revision began initially on a copy of Q1, and this conclusion is compatible with the evidence of sources, style, vocabulary, act divisions, and topical allusions (including possible censorship), which



all suggest that the revision took place several years after the original composition (see Taylor, 'The Date and Authorship' and 'Act Intervals').

Howard-Hill (1985) has challenged F's alleged dependence upon Q1. If Q1 influenced F, then it did so indirectly, because the document immediately behind F is—as everyone now agrees—either Q2 or a manuscript. The key piece of evidence for Q1 influence (though not the only one) is the phrase 'and appointed guard' (5.3.45/2685), omitted from F and from the uncorrected state of Q1. We assume that Shakespeare, working from an exemplar of Q1, simply failed to rectify this omission, because Q1 makes sense without it; Howard-Hill offers alternative explanations (p. 172). All of these alternatives, however—including his ingenious suggestions about manuscript insertion—postulate coincidental omission of the same phrase by widely separated agents of transmission. Such a coincidence seems to us, as it did to Greg, unlikely, though we cannot claim that such coincidences are 'necessarily' impossible. Textual critics always deal in relative probabilities, and in constructing our own stemma for *King Lear* we committed ourselves to the assumption that coincidental omissions of a complete, identical phrase should not occur in two unrelated documents fifteen years apart. If we accept that assumption—as did Greg and all subsequent editors, none of them committed to the hypothesis of authorial revision—then Q1 must have influenced F, and can hardly have done so unless it influenced the manuscript which was the source for

F's variants. If we reject that assumption, and allow improbable coincidence to play such a large part in textual transmission, then it is hard to see how textual hypotheses can be constructed at all.

The complicated derivation of F creates several complex editorial problems. The Quarto has a simple derivation (printed directly from foul papers) but contains much evident error, error which apparently results from misreading of a difficult authorial manuscript: emendation is therefore obviously necessary and difficult, but rewarding. The Folio by contrast offers a clean and intelligible text, with a complicated history of derivation and sophistication: emendation is easy, but not obviously necessary, and not at all rewarding.

Because F was (we believe) set from Q2 copy, it would have been possible to treat it in the way we have treated *Troilus*, *Othello*, and *Hamlet*: accepting Q1 as copy-text for incidentals, but inserting into that tissue of incidentals actual substantive variants from the control-text F. Such a policy would have the advantage of emphasizing F's very limited authority for incidentals: F's spelling and punctuation are almost wholly the result of normal compositorial sophistication of Q2's own (derivative) incidentals. However, Q's incidentals are already recoverable from the edited Quarto version (and its textual apparatus); Q1's erratic incidentals, particularly its punctuation, have in any case to be often emended by reference to Q2 or F; and the two texts in parallel serve as a useful illustration of the dramatic extent to which Folio incidentals reflect late printing-house rather than early authorial practice. Finally, Howard-Hill continues to argue (1985) that an intermediate transcript intervened between Q2 and F. Werstine has provided yet further evidence for F's dependence upon Q2, in its treatment of lineation (1984, p. 121); nevertheless, logically, no amount of correspondence between the substantives and incidentals of Q2 and those of F can *prove* that F was set from Q2, rather than from a remarkably faithful transcription of Q2. In discounting such a transcription one is arguing from economy of hypothesis—but the real world is not always economical. Moreover, while no amount of correspondence can prove direct dependence, significant departures from correspondence might disprove it, and hence it is always possible that a future investigator will discover some important disparity between Q2 and F, hitherto overlooked, which would definitively establish the presence of an intervening transcript. Hence, although at this time Howard-Hill's hypothesis of an intervening transcript seems to us unnecessary, it cannot be disproven, and might yet be proven, and the uncertainty it generates increases the desirability of preserving the Folio incidentals.

We have therefore treated F as both copy-text and control-text for the Folio version. However, in order to allow readers to reconstruct all F readings which may result from consultation of manuscript, we provide a complete collation of Q2 variants. The list includes Q2 departures from Q1, as well as a record of unauthoritative Q1 press variants reproduced in Q2. Any Q2 departures from Q1 which recur in F are recorded in the Textual Notes; nonsensical literal errors in Q2 are excluded.

F divides the play into acts and scenes. We have accepted F's division of Act 2 into only two scenes rather than four: see the Introduction to Q. F mistakenly numbers 4.6 as 'Scæna Septima'. Because Shakespeare seems to have revised the play at a time when intervals had become normal theatrical practice, act-breaks are here given the same prominence reserved for the late plays. In purely chronological terms F *Lear* should probably be placed between *The Winter's Tale* and *Cymbeline*, but it has seemed preferable to juxtapose the two versions of the play.

It is necessarily difficult to determine much about the nature of the manuscript consulted in annotating the compositors' Q2 copy. A number of apparent misreadings, apparently transferred from the manuscript on to Q2, suggest that it may have been a scribal, not an autograph, transcript—though the paucity of such errors, in contrast for instance with Folio *Troilus*, is within the range of an author copying his own work. The apparent efficiency of the manuscript in identifying characters and supplying businesslike stage directions suggests that it may have been the prompt-book, a supposition which would also explain why the publishers went to the trouble of annotating Q2 rather than printing directly from a clean manuscript. However, in the absence of actors' names, duplicated directions, or warnings for the use of properties, confidence about the use of a prompt-book, or a transcript of one, is unattainable.

However, a number of details of the stage directions of F suggest that the manuscript consulted by the printers was scribal. Storms occur often enough in Shakespeare's plays, but they are usually cued by directions for 'lightning' (nine times) and/or 'thunder' (twenty-one times), in a variety of texts set from both scribal and autograph copy; only Folio *Lear* uses the stage direction '*Tempest*' (2.2.457.1/1471.1) or '*Storme*' (2.2.457.1/1471.1, 3.1.0.1/1495.2, etc.). Folio *Lear* also calls for characters to enter '*seuerally*' three times (2.1.0.1/884.1, 2.2.0.1/1013.1, 3.1.0.1–2/1495.2–3). This formula occurs only another three times in the entire canon—*Shrew* 4.1.164.1/1724.1, *K. John* 5.6.0.1–2/2410.1–2, and *Kinsmen* 1.5.16.1/544—and of these parallels that in *K. John* occurs in a scribal text, while those in both *Shrew* and *Kinsmen* might be scribal. By contrast, characters are directed to enter '*at seueral doores*' or '*seueral ways*' thirteen times, in texts of varied provenance; and the formula 'at one doore . . . at another' also occurs frequently. Although not so unmistakably anomalous as '*Tempest*' and '*Storme*', the Folio's '*seuerally*' is relatively unlikely to be Shakespeare's own formula. The word '*here*', in the stage direction at 2.2.299.1/1313.1, is also extremely rare in autograph texts (see Taylor, 'Shakespeare and Others'). Although Shakespeare might conceivably have phrased stage directions in a 'literary' transcript differently from in his foul papers, it would be simpler to assume that such uncharacteristic locutions testify to the presence of a scribe—a scribe perhaps more interested in the convenience of readers than in preparing a text for use in the theatre. (For comparable anomalies see *The Tempest*.)

The use of variant forms of the word *does* may also be revealing. In the acknowledged good quartos, the form 'does' occurs 42 times, the form 'do's' only 5 times. Only in *Troilus* does 'do's' predominate (4 occurrences, to only 1 'does'). In *Kinsmen* 'does' predominates in Shakespeare's stints, 'do's' occurs consistently in Fletcher's. The same pattern can be observed in the Folio, where 'does' predominates, with the following exceptions:

	does	*do's*
Tempest	1	13
Measure	2	7
Merry Wives	2	16
Winter's Tale	0	23
Cymbeline	2	6
As You Like It	0	1
Contention	0	1
Macbeth	8	16
Lear	1	14
Othello	0	15

In *As You Like It* and *Contention* the number of occurrences is too small to warrant confident conclusions—although *As You Like It* is generally regarded as a scribal text, and the line in *Contention* occurs in a scene which may not be by Shakespeare. But in eight plays the anomaly cannot be easily dismissed, and in all eight cases it probably derives from scribal interference. Five of the undoubtedly anomalous plays were probably set from Ralph Crane transcripts; in the six Folio texts probably set from Crane transcripts, 'do's' predominates over 'does' by 65 to 8. All editors agree that *Macbeth* and *Othello* were set from scribal copy, although the identity of the scribe has not been determined. If we disregard the Crane plays, *Macbeth*, and *Othello*, the remaining Folio plays set from manuscript copy contain 118 occurrences of 'does' to only 39 of 'do's'. These proportions are not so striking as those in the good quartos, probably because more of the Folio texts were set from scribal copy; but they still demonstrate a strong preference for 'does', a preference which is presumably Shakespeare's own. The overwhelming predominance of 'do's' in Folio *Lear* therefore suggests scribal interference.

The preference for 'do's' cannot, in *Lear* or in most other Folio plays, be attributed to the compositors. Compositor B in the Folio as a whole prefers 'does'; in his stints 'do's' only predominates when he is working on one of the plays (listed above) which have a strong preference for that form, a preference extending through the work of more than one compositor and hence presumably reflecting the manuscript copy. Compositor E preferred 'does' in *Antony* and *Hamlet*, where it predominates overall, and 'do's' in *Othello* and *Cymbeline*, where it predominates, thus suggesting that in this—as in so many other respects—he accurately reproduced the incidentals of his copy. In eight cases in Folio *Lear* Compositor B set 'do's' when the quartos had nothing, or some other word; in two cases Compositor E set 'do's' in a similar situation. Thus, ten of the Folio's fourteen uses of 'do's' apparently reflect either the preference of the manuscript, or of the annotator who transferred readings from the manuscript on to an exemplar of Q2; yet another 'do's' could come from quarto copy. These examples thus do not help us to establish the nature of the copy the compositors used, but they do confirm that the use of 'do's' almost certainly reflects the preferences of someone other than the compositors or Shakespeare himself.

However, at TLN 2411 Compositor B set 'do's' where the quartos read 'does'; at TLN 163, 2762, and 2976 Compositor E set 'do's' where the quartos read 'does'. In these four cases the anomalous form cannot be due to the activities of an annotator, transferring readings from a manuscript on to Q2, for such an annotator would have no reason to interfere with Q2 at all: the variant is not substantive. Either these four examples must be attributed to the four compositors, imposing a preference (which we have little reason to suppose), or they reflect a scribal preference in the manuscript itself—in which case the compositors were working from a transcript, as Howard-Hill conjectures, and not from Q2 itself.

The use of apostrophes in the word *has* also lends some support to Howard-Hill's interpretation. The usefulness of 'h'as' as a clue to scribal interference is discussed in the Introduction to *All Is True*. Here, we may note that both Compositor B's uses of the apostrophied form in *Lear*, and three of Compositor E's, occur in substantive variants, and hence might be due to an annotator; but Compositor E also set 'ha's' once (1.5.28/861) where the quartos have 'has'. On the evidence of Compositor E's work elsewhere, the departure from Q is unlikely to reflect a preference of his own—though single anomalies of this kind can never be ruled out.

Five apostrophes hardly constitute decisive evidence of the existence of an intervening transcript, but they do at least hint at that conclusion. The survey of these forms also isolates another un-Shakespearian feature of the incidentals of F, and tends to cast doubt on the hypothesis that the manuscript authority for F was holograph. But if what lies behind F is a transcript, merging features of Q2 and of some other (manuscript) source, then it becomes even more difficult than before to characterize the manuscript which, at one remove, provided the authority for Folio variants. The features of the Folio which suggest scribal interference could originate in the intervening Q2-based transcription; the manuscript which the scribe was copying might have been authorial, might have been a prompt-book, or might have been neither. In short, if Howard-Hill is right about printer's copy for the Folio, then we find ourselves in a situation very similar to that prevailing in the Crane texts, where the presence of an interfering scribe for the most part successfully obscures the kind of copy the scribe was himself copying. Certainly, no 'bibliographical' evidence exists which allows us to determine the provenance and authority of the underlying manuscript; everything depends, in such situations, upon an analysis of the variants themselves. All in all, although in the last five years an extraordinary amount of new data has been brought to bear on the problem of the printer's copy for F, a confident solution still eludes us. However, for an editor of the Folio version an exact definition of the copy, though desirable, matters rather less than the knowledge that it was heavily influenced by Q2, either directly or at one remove, and that its incidentals have little authority.

Our account of Folio press variants has been informed by the work of Michael Warren, in his forthcoming *The Complete King Lear*; Warren, working with Blayney, at a number of points revises Hinman's interpretation of the evidence. As in *The History of King Lear*, we have been given access to Blayney's edited text of the Quarto version, which has occasionally affected our interpretation of Folio variants; specific debts are recorded among the Textual Notes. When emending F by importing into it a variant from Q, we have noted whether such emendations were made in the later folios or by Rowe. These later editions have no independent authority, but they were prepared without access to Q, and hence