ABSTRACT

Title of Document: THE PRIVATE THEATERS IN CRISIS: STRATEGIES AT BLACKFRIARS AND PAUL'S, 1606–07

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This study addresses the ways in which the managers and principal playwrights at second Paul's and second Blackfriars approached opportunities in the tumultuous 1606–07 period, when the two troupes were affected by extended plague closures and threatened by the authorities because of the Blackfriars' performance of offensive satires. I begin by demonstrating that Paul's and Blackfriars did not neatly conform to the social and literary categories or commercial models typically employed by scholars. Instead, they were collaborative institutions that readily adapted to different circumstances and situations. Their small size, different schedules, and different economics gave them a flexibility generally unavailable to the larger, more thoroughly commercial adult companies. Each chapter explores a strategy used by the companies and their playwrights to negotiate a tumultuous theatrical market. The first chapter discusses the mercenary methods employed by the private children's theaters. Occasionally, plays or play topics were commissioned by playgoers, and some performances at Paul's and Blackfriars may even have been

"private" in the sense of closed performances for exclusive audiences. In this context, I discuss Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (Blackfriars, 1607), in which Beaumont uses the boorish citizens George and Nell to lay open the private theaters' mercenary methods and emphasize sophisticated playgoers' stake in the Blackfriars theater. The second chapter discusses the ways private-theater playwrights used intertextuality to entertain the better sort of playgoers, especially those who might buy quartos of plays. Here I explore John Marston's *The Wonder of Women* (or *Sophonisba)* (Blackfriars, 1606) and Francis Beaumont's *The Woman Hater* (Paul's, 1606–07), private-theater plays with related titles and shared features that premiered within a year of each other at rival playhouses. The final chapter discusses the crosscurrents between tragedy at the public and private theaters and the ways playwrights looked to opportunities such as the King of Denmark's visit in the summer of 1606. In this context I discuss Thomas Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy* (King's Men, 1606), a highly Italianized version of *Hamlet* that originally may have been composed for Paul's, for whom Middleton wrote almost exclusively during the 1603–06 period.

THE PRIVATE THEATERS IN CRISIS: STRATEGIES AT BLACKFRIARS AND PAUL'S, 1606–07

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Introduction

St. Paul's, Blackfriars, and the London Theatrical Marketplace, 1599–1609

This study contextualizes plays written for the children's companies at St. Paul's and Blackfriars in the first decade of the seventeenth century, with particular focus on the tumultuous years of 1606–07, when these troupes were threatened by the authorities for performing dangerous satire; forced to cope with persistent outbreaks of the plague; and faced with the prospect of competition from a thoroughly commercial boy company at Whitefriars. It is an effort further to map out the place of the private theaters in a Jacobean entertainment industry in which the interests of playwrights, playing companies, patrons, and playgoers converged in a rich and varied drama. In my analysis I explore the ways particular plays from 1606–07 functioned in the Paul's and Blackfriars repertories, focusing on the forces shaping the composition, acquisition, and performance of play-texts. In the process, I hope to offer new insights into the methods of operation employed by Paul's and Blackfriars, and new insights into works often neglected by scholarship.

From at least the earliest years of the sixteenth century, the masters of the choristers at St. Paul's Cathedral and the Chapel Royal at Blackfriars cultivated among their charges a dramatic tradition that included performances at Court. Beginning in the 1580s, however, these officials, often working with other theatrical entrepreneurs, organized their choristers into semi-professional troupes that produced

plays before paying audiences at small indoor venues called "private" theaters. These companies achieved a measure of success during John Lyly's heyday, but after encountering difficulties they both had ceased operations by around 1590–91.[1]

New versions of these companies, often called "second Paul's" and "second Blackfriars," emerged in 1599–1600, and during the first decade of the seventeenth century they were significant players on the London theatrical scene. Second Paul's opened around 1599, organized by Master of the Choristers Edward Pearce, who generally worked in conjunction with a single playwright/stage manager but seems never to have relinquished control of his choristers' dramatic activities.[2] On the heels of Paul's apparent success, the second Blackfriars troupe was organized in 1600 by entrepreneur Henry Evans, Master of the Choristers Nathaniel Giles, and other partners. Shares of this enterprise were sold and resold over the years, and control of the troupe shifted several times. As with their predecessors, second Paul's and second Blackfriars produced plays at indoor private theaters that were significantly smaller than the "public" amphitheaters of the adult companies. These physical differences seem to have been accompanied by operational differences: later start times, higher admission prices, and fewer performances per week. Although some recent scholarship has emphasized the differences between Paul's and Blackfriars, this approach belies the fact that the Blackfriars venture was probably modeled on Paul's, and it unduly downplays the overlap in personnel and repertory, as well as the wealth of evidence about the special ways these troupes competed and cooperated with each other as "private theaters."

For all the things we know (or think we know) about Paul's and Blackfriars, our understanding of these companies' niche in the Elizabethan and early Jacobean theatrical marketplace is incomplete. Among the many topics of debate are problems of definition. What, for example, does it mean for a late Elizabethan or early Jacobean theater to be "private" or what, exactly, did contemporaries mean when they used terms such as "children," "boys," or "youths" to refer to the players? Even as we struggle to decode the words of early modern Londoners, there are problems created by the tags that scholars have attached to these theatrical enterprises over the years. An early example appears in *The Inns of Court and Early English Drama* (1931), where A. Wigfall Green explains that "the institutions of learning produced the classical drama, the private theaters the courtly drama, and the public theaters the sensational drama."[3] Green's description is typical: in the early twentieth century, scholarship on the private children's theaters often insisted on their privileged status or "courtliness." In staking such claims historians and literary critics established the children's theaters at Paul's and Blackfriars as considerably more upscale, and in many cases more literary, than their adult counterparts, often insinuating dubious links between the companies and Court itself. At the root of such claims are ideas about an orderly, stratified Elizabethan social structure. More recently, however, scholars have accentuated the chaos and diversity of London life. Hence, the latest trend has been to emphasize the manner in which the boy actors at Paul's and Blackfriars were used by their syndicates in money-making ventures that regularly competed with the suburban adult companies for the attention of London playgoers. In this view Paul's and Blackfriars function as more-or-less regular participants in

London's theatrical "marketplace." Both old and new scholarly perspectives on the children's theaters have their merits, but neither paints a complete portrait. It is my contention that a working synthesis of these views is needed.

The principal reason why the social and commercial status of the children's theaters have been difficult to pin down is the lack of complete and reliable evidence about their day-to-day operation and the identities of their patrons. Theater historians focusing on Elizabethan and Jacobean London always lament the paucity of evidence to work with, and much of what comes down to us is fragmentary and open to interpretation. Surviving plays are important, but they provide only a partial and static sense of the companies' repertories. Additionally, the things play-texts seem to tell us about the operation of theaters in metatheatrical moments, while important, must be approached with caution, and even the seemingly useful paratext of printed plays can be unreliable.[4] Other documentary witnesses, including political tracts, satires and other writings that reference the playhouses, patents, contracts, and legal depositions, are more scarce than play-texts, and they too must be subjected to careful scrutiny. There is also little way to know whether surviving clues about London's other theatrical enterprises—for example, what Philip Henslowe's diary seems to say about the operation of professional companies—are typical or extraordinary, and for this and other reasons it is often difficult to judge the degree to which such evidence is applicable to the children's companies.

Moreover, as a result of their situations in or around a large, busy, and diverse capital and international trade center, most London-based theater companies performed a variety of plays before an array of audiences. Playing and playgoing

experiences—even those involving the same play performed by the same troupe in the same theater—were inconsistent. Hence, we must look carefully at the available evidence, but not expect or force consistency where there is none.

Overall, then, a complicated pool of sometimes fragmentary or unreliable evidence must be sifted, and sometimes a frustrating lack of evidence confessed, in formulating theories about the private stages. Patching together an historical narrative is a difficult business, requiring guesswork on top of more guesswork.

My focus in this introduction is the material conditions of the enterprises at Paul's and Blackfriars and what they suggest about how the companies could position themselves in the London theatrical marketplace. A point of emphasis is the relationship between the public and private theaters in Shakespearean London. Scholars offering theories about the differences between the private and public stages have generally focused on audience composition. Evidence about specific playgoers in the period is rare, however, and where it does exist it is of limited use: in almost all cases, whether a surviving anecdotal account involves a visit to a private or public theater, the known patron is in some sense privileged.[5] Hence, scholars have relied heavily on what is the most often-cited piece of evidence in the topic of audience composition at the private stages. As Andrew Gurr states, "The strongest material basis for assuming that there was a divergence in the social composition of audiences at the different types of playhouse remains the price of admission," referring to the clear evidence that Paul's and especially Blackfriars charged significantly higher prices than the amphitheaters.[6] An emphasis on the cost of admission has led to the

logical conclusion that the private theaters had, on the whole, wealthier and more educated or sophisticated clientele than the public playhouses.

However, even Gurr recommends caution as he wades into this issue, and it is clear that overemphasizing the cost of admission to argue for truly and consistently privileged, elite, or courtly (often with implications of "artistically discerning" or "avant-garde") audiences at the private theaters belies the disposable wealth that circulated among people of diverse social pretensions and tastes in London. Further complicating scholarly conjecture about audiences at London's private theaters is a lack of evidence about the way audiences were solicited and controlled. Finally, issues such as the social standing of those involved in private-theater operations (including patrons, financiers, managers, poets, and players) and the impressiveness of the theater buildings have implications for our understanding of both the ways the companies positioned and marketed themselves and the social makeup, expectations, and objectives of those who were drawn to performances.

Paul Yachnin has argued that a "playing companies' status—whether high or low—was always changeable and contestable."[7] I think this is generally true, and it is imperative that we consider the flexibility and fluidity of the theatrical ventures at Paul's and Blackfriars as they struggled to prosper according to their operators' goals. As part of their efforts, the private-theater companies may have tried actively to promote their houses as elite spaces, but there is reason to question, first, whether this was a consistent goal, and, second, the degree to which they would actually be able to establish and/or maintain such a reputation. Equally, there is reason to interrogate the appeal of such troupes and venues in comparison with the adult companies.

This study emphasizes the flexible, opportunistic, and thoroughly urban nature of the private children's theaters in the first decade of the seventeenth century. Contrary to much of the scholarship attending to them, the private children's companies at second Paul's and second Blackfriars were neither strictly "courtly" in social status or presentation, nor as dependent upon the whims of the playgoing public as the larger, adult commercial theaters. Instead, the private children's companies and the playwrights who wrote for them created (or attempted to create) a niche among the purveyors of drama in London by utilizing and marketing certain features as occasions and opportunities warranted. The companies were ambidextrous, frequently working with an eye to popular theatrical trends but sometimes serving the interests of individuals, groups, or occasions, even at the expense of profit and/or the security of the enterprises. Their abilities to recognize and seize opportunities in a highly competitive environment, to negotiate patronage and the market in advantageous ways, to adopt sides in literary or political controversies but never seem to be committed to a side, were all, it seems to me, at the heart of their urbanity. Each chapter of this study situates a play or plays written by private-theater playwrights in 1606–07 in specific strategic contexts. Taken together, these analyses illustrate both the multiple methods by which company operators and playwrights worked and the different experiences available to audiences at the private theaters during this period.

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The central contention of this introduction is not simply that the private theaters in the first decade of the seventeenth century were not anchored to a

particular social position, but that they *could not* be. Instead, Paul's and Blackfriars should be thought of as distinctly urban institutions catering to varying audiences—audiences that generally shifted between "elite" and "middling"—in an expanding theatrical marketplace. As the letter "To the Reader" in the 1608 quarto of *The Family of Love* suggests:

> plays in this city are like wenches new fallen to the trade, only desired of your neatest gallants whiles they're fresh; when they grow stale they must be vented by termers and country chapmen.[8]

While the author is doubtless exaggerating for effect, he suggests that plays—even a private children's play like *The Family of Love,* which may have been performed at Paul's (1605?) and later at Whitefriars (1607?)—could begin their careers as celebrated favorites of fashionable people and end them as scraps for considerably less upscale and sophisticated audiences, all within a relatively short period of time.[9] The metaphor clearly indicates changing audiences between a play's premiere, subsequent performances, and revivals. Perhaps, as seems to have been the case with the public theaters, the price of admission at Paul's and Blackfriars changed depending on how "fresh" or "stale" their offering was.[10]

While it seems safe to say that the private theaters never hosted audiences consisting entirely of poor people or even typical amphitheater groundlings, the audiences were not uniformly elite. For this reason, I (like others in recent scholarship) find the old coupling of class-laden terms such as "courtly," "lordly," "privileged," "genteel" or "gentle" with the private theaters problematic. Depending upon the circumstances of the performance, the theaters could be dominated by

powerful elites one day or nouveaux riches the next, providing experiences that could be very different on different evenings. This changeability is an important consideration in conjecture about how plays for these companies were composed, performed, and received.

I begin my analysis here by canvassing the major scholarship on second Paul's and second Blackfriars. This review both acknowledges debts and indicates the extent to which theater historians and literary critics have been involved in pushing the elite status of these institutions on the one hand, or their regular participation in the marketplace on the other, at the expense of considering—or at least giving proper due to—their ability to solicit and accommodate different kinds of audiences on different occasions.

One of the first studies devoted exclusively to a private children's company was Charles William Wallace's *The Children of the Chapel at Blackfriars 1597–1603* (1908), in which Wallace concludes, "The private theater of first importance in origin and influence was the Blackfriars . . . It was in fact what may be called an aristocratic public playhouse."[11] Wallace leans quite heavily on the "aristocratic" part of "aristocratic public," and his reasons for doing so involve dubious interpretations of two pieces of evidence: Fredric Gershaw's description of the Blackfriars theater during a visit by Philip Julius, Duke of Stettin-Pomerania, in September 1602, and Dudley Carleton's letter to John Chamberlain in which he states that Elizabeth saw a play at "the Blackfriars."[12]

In regard to the Duke of Stettin-Pomerania's visit to Blackfriars in 1602, Frederic Gershaw, who kept a diary of the Duke's travels, wrote a description of the

experience that includes a brief history of the theatrical operation as it was explained to him by his hosts and/or those around him at the performance. Gershaw praises the singing and hour-long concert before the performance and notes the "large audience" that included many respectable women.[13] In all, Gershaw offers a glowing review of something that he clearly thought of as elite humanist entertainment, prompted in part by those who informed him of the "entertaining plot developments and many excellent teachings" that could be expected from Blackfriars plays. Gershaw's description firmly roots the playhouse in the scholastic rather than commercial tradition.

However, Gershaw may not have seen a typical performance. The Duke and his retinue spent three weeks in England and were entertained by "leading officials, statesmen, and scholars."[14] They dined with the Lord Mayor of London and were entertained at Court, although Queen Elizabeth was not present.[15] This was apparently no inconsequential visit by a foreign aristocrat, and the descriptions that appear in Gershaw's diary recall the kind of scripted entertainment to be expected for important foreign visitors. The Duke may have made an unanticipated visit to the theater on 18 September 1602, or he may not have—that is to say, what Gershaw records in his diary *may or may not* have been a typical performance by the players for a typical audience.

Gershaw's account of the Children of the Chapel's keeping and performances is more than a little bit suspicious:

> with reference to this Children's Theatre this is the state of affairs: The Queen maintains a number of young boys who are required to devote themselves

> earnestly to the art of singing, and to learn to perform on various sorts of musical instruments, also at the same time to carry on their studies. These boys have their special preceptors in all the various arts, and in particular excellent instructors in music . . . Now, in order that they may practice courtly manners, it is required of them to act a play every week, for which purpose indeed the Queen has established for them a special theatre and has provided them with a superabundance of rich apparel.

There is no doubt that the Chapel boys were well trained in music and singing, and theater operators and playwrights certainly made use of these skills.[16] But several of Gershaw's claims are extremely doubtful. First, we have no evidence that Queen Elizabeth was deeply involved in the establishment of the Children at Blackfriars; in fact, the preponderance of evidence points to the contrary.[17] Second, by this time the era of Lylian entertainment (apparently the kind preferred by Elizabeth) was dying and the "War of the Poets" was coming to a close.[18] The very subject matter of the play Gershaw describes seeing at the theater—"its plot deals with a chaste widow. It was the story of a royal chaste widow of England"—sounds passé when compared with the subject matter and content of the plays we know were creating a splash at the children's theaters during the 1601–03 period (i.e., the plays involved in the so-called "War of the Theaters"). It is reasonable to suspect that Gershaw witnessed a special performance. His account of it bears the markings of "putting on a show," and Gershaw's history of the company looks suspiciously like the kind of canned descriptions that interested parties superimposed on various Elizabethan and Jacobean institutions and traditions over the years.[19]

Wallace's confident assertion that Elizabeth saw a performance at the Blackfriars theater is also doubtful. Dudley Carleton's letter of 29 December 1601 states that "The Q: dined this day priuatly at my Ld Chamberlains; I came euen now from the blackfriers where I saw her at the play wth all her candidae auditrices."[20] As several scholars pointed out, it is more likely that the Queen saw the play at the Lord Chamberlain's residence in Blackfriars than attended one of the "aristocratic public" performances at the Blackfriars playhouse. Indeed, since no company is named, the play may have been performed not by the Children of the Chapel but by the Lord Chamberlain's Men.[21] Overall, Wallace's idea of a Blackfriars playhouse directly sponsored by the Queen who on at least one occasion attended a (regular?) performance is dubious.

If Wallace tends to press the "aristocratic nature" or "courtliness" of the Blackfriars theater, E. K. Chambers describes a more heterogeneous institution in *The Elizabethan Stage* (1923). Cautious in his approach to the private theaters of Shakespeare's day, Chambers states that James Burbage let the Blackfriars theater to Henry Evans "for what were practically public performances 'vnder the name of a private howse,'" and goes on to generalize about the private stages as follows:

> Many of the characteristics of the public theatres naturally repeated themselves at the Blackfriars, the Whitefriars, and Paul's. The distinctive features of these . . . arose from the structure of the buildings, from the higher prices charged, and in the beginning at least from the employment of singing boys as actors.[22]

Presumably because of a lack of evidence, Chambers devotes surprisingly little of his exhaustive work to the private stages, but when he writes of them he does so carefully, conveying a sense of their position between genuinely "private" and "public."

Many who followed Chambers were less cautious in characterizing the private stages. H. N. Hillebrand's *The Child Actors* (1926), which is particularly noteworthy for the pains Hillebrand takes to place the children's theater firmly in a long scholastic tradition, posits some strong conclusions about the social status of Paul's and Blackfriars. Emphasizing Court appearances, Hillebrand elevates the Blackfriars boys to greater heights than Paul's and insists that the most certain thing about the nature of the private stages is "the Blackfriars theatre belonged to the privileged class."[23]

Hillebrand offers little in *The Child Actors* about the situation at Paul's, lamenting a lack of evidence, and yet he is careful not to relegate the troupe to insignificance.[24] Of second Paul's he says, "though it is true they did not enjoy anything like the popularity of the major adult companies, or even so much as the Blackfriars boys had, yet they played at court with as much regularity as they had any right to expect" and "On Wednesday, July 30, 1606, the boys of Paul's were favored with a singular mark of esteem in being chosen to play before the visiting King of Denmark and James."[25] Thus, while Hillebrand imagines Blackfriars the privileged private house, he nonetheless raises Paul's from an obscure and little-discussed place in theater history.

In *Shakespeare's Blackfriars Playhouse* (1964), Irwin Smith, whose interest is mainly in Shakespeare and the King's Men, points to frequent Court performances and also concludes that "the prestige of the Chapel Boys was much greater than that of the Paul's Boys."[26] Important to Smith's claims are the fact that the Blackfriars troupe benefited from royal patronage while Paul's did not, but the Blackfriars theater's associations with Shakespeare's celebrated company are central to Smith's view of the institution.

Among the things Smith lists as important to the popularity of the Blackfriars theater during the children's run there are "the availability and comfort of their playhouse, their excellent dramatists, including nearly all the best men of the day except Shakespeare himself, their sophisticated plays, . . . the copious interspersion of their plays with spectacular effects, instrumental music, dance, and song," and "their audacity in skirting close to the danger line in political indiscretion."[27] Smith proceeds to say, "In their eight years as tenants of the Blackfriars Playhouse, the Chapel-Revels Children developed certain stage practices most of which had their origin in practices at Court, and all of which throve because they answered to the tastes of courtly audiences," noting that these customs "lasted until both Court and stage came to an end under Oliver Cromwell."[28] In Smith's view, the children's theater at Blackfriars adopted courtly practices that the King's Men continued: "the children were in several respects fathers to the men; when they left Blackfriars and the men took over, they left behind them a bequest of traditions and conventions that the King's Men gladly accepted and perpetuated."[29]

Some of the assumptions that underlie Smith's narrative about the evolution of the Blackfriars playhouse are, however, questionable. First, while some of the practices at Blackfriars may be traced to the long chorister-actor tradition (which always included Court visits), the Blackfriars syndicate's use of their players' talents for singing and music, and even classical dramatic theory, they might also be explained by the conditions of performance: they were practices essential to indoor playing. For example, something had to be done to pass the time during the maintenance of the tapers in the playhouse, which is one of the reasons Smith gives for dividing the plays into five acts and having music and song during the intervals.[30] Presumably the King's Men would have done something similar had they moved into the theater in 1596. Second, for all of the good and useful points he makes, Smith takes too literally pieces of evidence—especially the Duke of Stetten Pomerania's account of his visit to the Blackfriars theater and Shakespeare's often-cited "little eyases" passage in *Hamlet,* which doubtless exaggerates the children's popularity and overall effect on the adults—in claiming that the Blackfriars syndicate had an elite aura that Shakespeare's company was able to accommodate and sustain.[31] In fact, the effect of the transition from the boy troupe to the adult company is far less clear than Smith suggests. It is possible that the King's Men were able to promote and sustain the "elite" status of the theater more effectively than any of the purveyors of drama associated with the Blackfriars troupe before them. Doubtless Smith is correct in saying that the King's Men adopted some of the boys' customs when they moved into the theater in 1609, but the King's Men were no strangers to indoor playing, including at Court, at venues such as the Middle Temple, and while traveling. We also should

not lose sight of the fact that the King's (then-Chamberlain's) Men did build and have plans to use the Blackfriars theater in 1596 before they were turned away, and the decisions they took about the theater and how they might operate it might have been closely related to the practices they adopted and status they achieved after 1609. Overall, then, circumstances suggest the children and adults influenced each other in the evolution of the Blackfriars theater.

While scholars such as Hillebrand and Smith confidently conclude that from the beginning the second Blackfrairs playhouse was an especially "privileged" or "courtly" space in comparison with all of their public and private rivals in London, other important scholarly works blur the line between Blackfriars and the private stage at Paul's, insisting that they were similar in stature. In *Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions* (1952), Alfred Harbage analyzes the dynamics of the "War of the Theaters" and claims that both at Paul's and Blackfriars "the audience was a coterie. These theaters catered to the few."[32] Harbage's leveling of the children's companies derives from his conclusion that Blackfriars and Paul's had more-or-less equal footing in the War of the Theaters. He bolsters Paul's status by allying it with Shakespeare through the King's Men and Paul's sharing Thomas Dekker's *Satiromastix* (1601). Among Harbage's most insightful claims are his suggestions that the private theaters were "completely *urban*" and that playgoers were "not invariably courteous and discerning."[33] He writes that:

> The exclusion by economic means of the craftsmen, shopkeepers, and their families, who constituted the bulk of the audiences at other theatres, was indeed a chief *raison d'etre* for Blackfriars and Paul's . . . [But the] milieu of

> the private playhouses was not "lordly." Lords are not more apt to appear in the orbit of the boys than in that of the men . . . [The private theater audience] was a sector of the London playgoing public, which isolated itself on particular occasions and required plays calculated to its particular meridian. So far as the majority of its members can be placed in any familiar structure of society, they were precariously well-to-do. Only a tiny minority of them . . . could have been officially courtiers, but their eyes were turned toward Whitehall . . . The coterie audience was an amalgam of fashionable and academic elements, socially and intellectually self-conscious. Of the "publics" available in England at the time, it was the most *avant-garde,* the most sophisticated, the most interested in art as art.[34]

Harbage insists that the audiences at Paul's and Blackfriars were neither genuinely "courtly" nor "common," but always a coterie of cynical, sophisticated connoisseurs of drama. He sets this group of playgoers in sharp contrast to the diverse audiences at the popular public theaters.

Many of Harbage's claims ring true, but he overstates two points in particular.[35] First, as Lucy Munro recently has noted about the Blackfriars syndicate, "it seems extremely unlikely that all the . . . citizen-shareholders would have been willing to exclude other tradesmen on ideological grounds."[36] Additionally, Harbage overstates the degree to which the clientele of the private theaters was artistically inclined and sophisticated—this was only sometimes the case.[37] The attraction of the theater for people who wanted to *seem* sophisticated or, more important, for less artistically discerning Londoners or visitors with time to kill and disposable income,

especially on occasions when the play being presented wasn't particularly successful or was a revival, might make for audiences quite different from those Harbage describes. Certainly the depiction of indifferent playgoers in metatheatrical moments of plays by Marston, Jonson, and Day seems to run counter to Harbage's generalization.

Although Harbage's work offers the important suggestion that the private theaters were "urban" and "not 'lordly,'" a position with which I strongly agree, his conclusions did not discourage others from drawing strong connections between the private theaters and Court. For example, Michael Shapiro, whose work is extremely important to the history of the children's theater, wrote in a 1973 article, "those not invited to court performances could go to Paul's, Blackfriars, and later Whitefriars and still feel that they were participating in a traditional courtly and aristocratic form of entertainment."[38] Shapiro then goes to great lengths to describe the tensions between condescending "real or self-styled" aristocratic audiences and professional playwrights at the private theaters.[39] He later devoted an entire section of *Children of the Revels* (1977) to describing the "courtly ambiance" of these institutions.[40] In these works Shapiro seems to suggest that the audiences at Paul's and Blackfriars were generally either elites or poseurs playing their parts according to the understood privileged status of the theaters. Such conclusions were later bolstered by Ann Jennalie Cook's *Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London* (1981), in which she defines playgoers in general as broadly privileged (distinct from but including "courtly") and so reinforces ideas about the elite and sophisticated nature of the private stages.[41]

Meanwhile, other scholarship has emphasized the upscale status of the private theaters in less deliberate ways. For example, Keith Sturgess's *Jacobean Private Theatre* (1987) includes two main sections of analysis, one for the Blackfriars theater and one for Court theater, the latter including both professional plays and masques. Regardless of Sturgess's intent, the title and content of the book seem to suggest a *very* close relationship between the London private theaters and Court. This link, related in many different ways in important twentieth-century scholarship, is extremely misleading, implying an extraordinary social status that was unsustainable, if not entirely unattainable, for institutions that were, at least in part, about making money in London thoroughfares.

There is, however, one particularly fruitful angle some scholars have taken in order to emphasize the upscale pretensions of the private stages: stressing the theaters' proximity to and connections with the Inns of Court, where many courtiers surrounding Elizabeth and James and other well-to-do young men received legal training and frequently exercised their wits for sport. Green's aforementioned *The Inns of Court and Early English Drama* (1931) provides a strong basis for this association by exploring Inns of Court men's considerable influence on drama during the English Renaissance. Later, in *John Marston of the Middle Temple* (1969), Philip J. Finkelpearl says of Blackfriars and Paul's:

> The small size of these theaters, their close proximity to the Inns, their infrequent performances (usually only once a week), and the avidity of Inns' men for the theater—all of these factors suggest that the Inns provided by far the largest and most influential element in the audience. Occasionally . . . the

> references [in plays] to intramural matters at the Inns are so frequent or recherché that the playwrights seem to have directed their plays almost exclusively to the Inns' element in the audience.[42]

This kind of reasoning led M. C. Bradbrook to suggest that the Inns of Court actually gave birth to the private theaters.[43] Additionally, Lucy Munro recently has noted:

> Several of the writers and shareholders in the private theatres were Inns of Court men, notably John Marston, Francis Beaumont, Edward Sharpham and William Strachey. Since the average age at admission to the Inns was seventeen, the students may have had an attraction to or sympathy with the boys and young men of the children's companies.[44]

However, these important claims about Paul's and Blackfriars should not be pressed too far. Those at (or who had been at) the Inns contributed to the repertories of both public- and private-theater companies; some playwrights who had not been students at the Inns, such as Dekker and Middleton, wrote for the boy companies; and Inns connections may have been a factor in the printing and survival of some plays while others are lost. Yet, connections between the Paul's and Blackfriars theaters and the Inns of Court are strong, and they provide an important basis for seeing these stages as catering at times to coterie audiences who were interested in relationships with playwrights from within their circles along with (and perhaps sometimes more than) the literary merit and cultural currency of the plays.

Although there are a litany of scholarly works that have pressed the social and/or intellectual status of second Paul's and second Blackfriars upward, in the last two decades scholars have been destabilizing special links between the most

powerful, elite, and trendy aspects of society and the private theaters. In *Theater and Crisis* (1984), Martin Butler argues that:

> Early Stuart culture has been habitually equated with the culture of the early Stuart court, but this is profoundly misleading . . . As far as the theatres were concerned, the court stage was indeed elitist, exclusive, intimate, amateur, occasional, restricted, private in the tightest sense, but the professional theatres, both indoor and outdoor, were genuinely public—in the case of the popular theatres, fully and comprehensively so.[45]

Butler's concern is the Caroline Court in the years leading up to the Civil War—and therefore the political implications of drama in an increasingly fractured society—but his analysis can be applied to the private theaters in the early years of James's reign.

The pretense that productions at London's public and private theaters were rehearsals for Court performances, an argument made in official Elizabethan and Jacobean documents as a reason for licensing troupes to perform in the city, was probably never accepted at face value. Some plays were never intended for Court performance, and even plays that moved from the pay-per-auditor theater to Court were not necessarily performed exactly the same way. The private theaters' penchant for putting on plays that angered Elizabeth in 1590–91 and James in the early years of his reign illustrates this point; in fact, an astonishing series of Blackfriars plays from the 1604–08 period were counter-Court, or pitted one element of the Court against another, often targeting James and the Scots.[46] Obviously, some courtiers would have enjoyed these plays, but they were not designed for special Court occasions.

Performances by the London companies at Court, Paul's and Blackfriars included, were likely seen as traditional and expected diversions originating from the city rather than as marquee Court events. While the Jacobean Court showed favor to professional players, from the very beginning it was gravitating toward masques as the most looked-to events of the holiday season.[47] As Albert H. Tricomi states, "the masque became the great showpiece of the Jacobean court. Everybody with any status attended the court masque, and everybody else, it seemed, tried to. . . . Between January 1, 1604 and January 6, 1605, five court masques were shown, and on the first of these dates James let it be known that he had paid £40,000 for the main jewel used in 'The Masque of Indian and Chinese Knights.'"[48] These were the performances that Court had clearly marked off as its own, lavish displays that increasingly became bound with popular notions of "courtliness" in both positive and negative ways; the private stages were far removed from this kind of truly elite performance.[49]

The offerings at the private theaters often were not particularly "courtly" in the traditional or literal sense, and by the 1980s scholars had begun challenging ideas about homogenously elite audiences at the private playhouses as well. In *The Children of Paul's* (1982), W. Reavley Gair suggests that Paul's drew from its environs a large number of affluent middle-class patrons, making it a kind of a community theater.[50] In *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (1987), Andrew Gurr expresses uncertainty about public and private audience division, arguing for caution to an extent that had rarely been seen since Chambers: "The question of a division between the popular and the privileged, when it came into existence and what playhouses it separated people into, is the most knotty item in this whole history of

playgoing."[51] The issue of audience composition was muddied, and traditional assumptions were being reexamined. Finkelpearl, in his *Court and Country Politics in the Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher* (1990), emphasizes "the influx of affluent and educated people flocking to the nation's center of fashion, opportunity, and vitality" in arguing that "it is not accurate to say that the private theaters had a primarily courtly ambiance in the London of 1600."[52]

Hence, when the theaters of Shakespearean London recently began to be discussed as markets, such characterizations typically included Blackfriars and Paul's. Paul's in particular has been downgraded from the lofty position given it by scholars such as Harbage; the theater's proximity to the marketplace at Paul's is often thought to devalue its aristocratic pretensions. Gair describes St. Paul's Cathedral as "an Elizabethan version of an indoor shopping mall"—the churchyard was filled with shops, shoddy residences, and perhaps even bawdy-houses.[53] Thomas Dekker and other sixteenth- and seventeenth-century commentators described the wide variety of people who could be found at Paul's, including in their accounts the way that men walked the main aisle in the mornings and afternoons to discuss news or business, and the manner in which lawyers heard their clients' cases and took notes.[54] Gail Kern Paster asserts that "The decaying building and its yard was a semiotically hybrid ground, a site of physical labor for some and social labor for others; it was a place where social meanings and commercial enterprises proliferated in an intensely competitive, highly differentiated atmosphere."[55] St. Paul's Cathedral was a mixed bag, a haunt of fashionable and common sorts alike.

This hodge-podge quality has recently been attributed to the Paul's theater itself. In an essay for *The Drama of John Marston* (2000), Gair argues that for his early Paul's plays Marston wrote Inductions and allusions that show that he thought of himself as addressing an elite audience; however, soon "Marston seems to have realized that he needed to develop a form of entertainment less 'exclusive' in attitude, less aimed at a coterie, and more popular and current. . . . Marston seems to have come to realize that the audience has no rarified taste at all; it is 'common' rather than select."[56] Gair suggests that Marston's move from Paul's to Blackfriars in 1603 was at least partially motivated by his disillusionment with the Paul's audience and his sense of (hope for?) more sophisticated and elite patrons at Blackfriars. Similarly, although in *The Culture of Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (2000), Paul Yachnin suggests that London theaters like the Globe were "populuxe," or places where average people could indulge in "virtual courtliness," he has recently claimed that post-Lyly Paul's was "more deluxe than populuxe," that its "high center was urban, gentlemanly—but not courtly—cultural production and reception."[57]

The theater at Paul's is now often associated with the marketplace at the cathedral, and Blackfriars is increasingly associated not just with the inhabitants of the upscale neighborhood in which it was situated, but with the commerce within and surrounding the liberty.[58] Our new understanding of the private theaters' socioeconomic status enables us to see their market functions; words such as "courtly," "aristocratic," and "privileged" have given way to "exchange," to "consumption," and to "production." In *Drama and the Market in the Age of Shakespeare* (1992), Douglas Bruster argues that "Providing dramatic commodities

for public consumption, the Renaissance theater functioned as an institutionalized, profitable market" and "the theaters of Renaissance England (public and private) were both responsive and responsible to the desires of their playgoing publics."[59] In *Playing Companies and Commerce in Shakespeare's Time* (2001), Roslyn Knutson uses a pre-capitalist paradigm in emphasizing the cooperative nature of the theaters in London, claiming "commerce among the playing companies was built on patterns of fraternity, the roots of which were feudal hierarchies such as kinship, service, and the guild."[60] For Knutson, the London companies generally had a "shared commercial agenda," which included banding together against governmental pressure, using "cluster marketing" in building theaters, and performing highly allusive drama.[61] The traditional division between the "popular" public and the "courtly" private theaters is challenged by a marketplace model in which all of the theaters are fostering and competing over a large group of London playgoers, with entrance to the private stages only limited to some degree by their smaller size and higher cost of admission.[62]

Finally, the most recent book-length study of a private theater in this period, Lucy Munro's *Children of the Queen's Revels* (2005), offers a thorough survey of the many influences on the Blackfriars troupe from 1603–13.[63] Munro's emphasis on a broad repertory approach, and the company's commercial and literary evolution over a ten-year stretch, generally assumes the company negotiated the marketplace like other London playing companies, which—as I will argue—was only sometimes the case. Yet, the trends she highlights are important, and they form an essential part of the accumulated historical narrative upon which this study builds.

What we have, then, in the history of scholarship focusing on second Paul's and second Blackfriars, are an array of interpretations that press the status of the theaters both upward and downward. Some historians and literary critics have suggested that the private theaters generally attempted to cater to the tastes of elites, while others have argued that the private theaters generally competed with other dramatic institutions for "entertainment dollars," trying to draw off some of the wealthier portion of the playgoing public with their own variations on the popular drama of the day. I believe, however, that when all of the evidence is taken into account, we find something more complicated than, but generally inclusive of, these two viewpoints. We find an intermediary position, a highly flexible and opportunistic urban theater.

***

In order further to demonstrate Paul's and Blackfriars changeable positions in the London theatrical marketplace, I will reexamine some of the best available evidence about the operations. My emphasis here is on the material conditions of performances, including audiences, those involved in the enterprises, and the theater buildings themselves; other issues will be addressed in the chapters that follow.

The private theaters came into being and evolved during a period of intense urbanization.[64] The playhouses were situated at the heart of a busy and diverse city, and they were occupied by companies prepared to serve a variety of those who inhabited and visited London. The companies' success depended upon their taking smart choices from among the operational practices and dramatic elements at their

disposal, as well as incorporating appealing new innovations, to create a niche in London's entertainment industry.

Paul's and Blackfriars emerged in the 1570s as two of the first London theaters with a regular resident company. As Paul Whitfield White notes, "through the 1580s there is no evidence of any one company working exclusively in London and affiliated with a single playhouse."[65] Professional troupes that performed regularly in London, even those that had and traded on the names of the most powerful patrons, including the Queen's Men, spent a considerable amount of time touring and were seen by all manner of people throughout England. This kind of touring was a longstanding tradition that was carried on by London's major adult companies of the 1590s, among them, the King's Men. There is little evidence that the children's troupes under discussion were peripatetic.[66]

Furthermore, when the children's companies at Paul's and Blackfriars were resurrected in 1599–1600, they, like their predecessors, occupied the only playhouses located along the main thoroughfares of London proper. The relative situations of London's major theaters are vividly illustrated by Norden's panorama. The private theaters, occupied only by boy companies until 1609, were located in areas of tightly packed city residences and busy commercial districts, while the amphitheaters used by the adult companies (each operating with boy apprentices) were suburban, built in much less crowded, tree-dotted areas on the fringes of the city.[67]

The public and private theaters also derived from, and perhaps played to, different traditions. In the late 1590s, the amphitheaters were still newfangled, generally modeled after or reminiscent of inn-yards, and recalling prominent

commercial, political, and religious spaces.[68] John Orrell has argued for the influence of antiquity on theaters at Court and in the city, especially the large amphitheaters; he says of the first builders "the idea of the ancient Roman theater was what led their imaginations to the task," placing the public theaters squarely within the Renaissance's fascination with antiquity.[69] Meanwhile, the smaller, artificially lit private theaters were reminiscent of performance spaces in households reserved for elite intellectual enjoyment. These venues were also related in varying degrees to other indoor entertainments, including schoolhouse, guild hall, and great hall performances, and even performances at Court.

While the private and public theaters were clearly different enough to have earned different labels, they were also institutions similar enough to be lumped together in some documents of control during the reigns of both Elizabeth and James. They were both commercial institutions, although the public theaters ran almost every day they could, while the private theaters ran once or twice a week at first, perhaps more often later. Also, the public performances seem to have started in the early afternoon, the private in the late afternoon or early evening.[70]

How, then, are we to understand the difference between "private" and "public" in regard to these theaters? The flap over the idea of the Lord Chamberlain's Men moving into Blackfriars shortly before the Children of the Chapel actually did reminds us that in an upscale neighborhood such as Blackfriars, the relationship between the residents and professional players who perform "publicly" might be different from their relationship to child actors who might be said to perform "privately." "Private" as opposed to "public" was something more than just a legal

fiction to circumvent restrictions on public playing, as has long been suggested.[71] The difference instead may lie in frequent performances versus weekly or biweekly performances, but it also registers in the realm of ideas: open commercial performances versus cloistered art, a common diversion for spectators versus a refined joining of poetry and music for auditors, something that is a customary diversion versus a performance that could be described, generously or superficially, as an entertaining educational exercise in the humanist tradition.[72] The word "private" was used to suggest these distinctions, but it did not necessarily reflect the actual circumstances of theater operations—and yet, the word persisted, as did the modifier "children," which in some cases stuck with boy companies long after some of the young actors turned the corner of adulthood.

While it is true that title-pages repeatedly refer to texts performed by the boy companies at Paul's and Blackfriars as being played "privately," and Paul's and Blackfriars are clearly described as "private" playhouses in various documents, there are also important places where this label is not used. The 1596 petition against the Chamberlain's Men playing in the space James Burbage rented in the Blackfriars describes it as a "common playhouse," and in a 1612 legal deposition regarding the 1608 transfer of the Blackfriars lease from Henry Evans back to the King's Men, Richard Burbage and John Heminges claim that "the great hall [at Blackfriars] . . . was, and ever since hath been, a common playhouse for the acting and playing of interludes and stage plays."[73] The words "common" and "private" seem to be used interchangeably in such legal documents, although it might be argued that those involved in the Chamberlain's/King's Men had a vested interest in defining the

Blackfriars playhouse as "public" or "common." In *Kirkham and Kendall vs. Daniel* (Court of Chancery, 1609), Edward Kirkham and Thomas Kendall claim that beginning in 1604 they arranged to pay courtier and official censor of the Blackfriars company Samuel Daniel "every year 'one annuity or yearly sum of £10 . . . if the said Children should play or make any shows, either publicly or privately, the full time six months in every year.'"[74] Given what we know about the Blackfriars operation, it is tempting to read "private" as Court performances, and "public" as any performances at the Blackfriars theater, although this is not the only way to interpret this distinction—it could very well be that some performances in the Blackfriars theater were "private" and some were "public."

Perhaps the best example of what was really considered "private" theater comes from the aforementioned Daniel, who, when faced with punishment for the perceived relationship between his *Philotas* (Blackfriars, 1605) and the Essex rebellion, offered in his defense that he wrote it "purposing to have it presented in Bath by certain gentlemen's sons, as private recreation for the Christmas."[75] Daniel added that he was "not resolved to have had it acted, nor should it have been, had not my necessities overmastered me."[76] Clearly the performance he claims to have had in mind was truly "private" in the sense of exclusive; acting before paying audiences in London, even on a private stage, was something else altogether.

Indoor *private yet commercial* playhouses seem to have taken root with the opening of Paul's in 1575 and the first Blackfriars theater in 1576. The success (or potential for success) shown by these companies is probably what prompted James Burbage to think of a location in Blackfriars when struggling with his lease problems

at The Theatre in 1596. The new Paul's and Blackfriars troupes that emerged in 1599–1600 were physically related to two different "private" models. Paul's playhouse was based on—or most closely associated with—household or school performances, and Blackfriars on Court performances.[77] There are several reasons for making these claims. First of all, if Gair's well-reasoned conjecture is correct, Paul's playhouse was originally a private residence built in the Chapter House precinct of Paul's, situated against the cloister and extending out across the garth and up against the Chapter House itself.[78] It was turned into a theater that in Gair's estimation seated 50–100, with a small corner stage that didn't allow room for gallants on stools.[79] This was probably originally a makeshift operation, and its best claim to exclusivity or "privacy" was its size in combination with the higher cost of admission.

On the other hand, Blackfriars was a larger theater built by James Burbage, who knew a thing or two about building theaters. The Blackfriars district was an upscale neighborhood, and the high-ceilinged upper frater of the old priory was probably a fairly impressive structure; as several scholars have noted, Parliament had met there in the past.[80] Along with its relatively small size when compared to the amphitheaters, its claim to "privacy" came from the cachet of the location and the expense of admission to the best seats in the house.[81] Furthermore, unlike at Paul's, gallants could sit on stools on the stage at Blackfriars, which meant that the layout of the theater allowed the wealthiest, most self-important persons to sit almost unavoidably within everyone's sight. In this regard, the Blackfriars theater offered a *somewhat* similar configuration to Court performances, where the King sat in

everyone's line of sight, which made Court performances in many ways about watching the King watch a play.[82] Granted, gallants on stools are not the King by any stretch of the imagination, but we do have evidence (even if absurdly exaggerated for comic purposes) that the audience paid attention to what gallants did on stage and sometimes took their cues from them. The Induction to John Day's *Isle of Gulls* (1606) offers a helpful example: a gentleman sitting on a stool on the stage says he will have to leave before the play is over because he slept in until three o'clock and is hungry, but the boy-Prologue says, "Either see it all or none; for tis growne into a custome at playes, if any one rise (especially of any fashionable sort) about what serious busines soever, the rest thinking it in dislike of the play, tho he never thinks it, cry mew, by Iesus vilde; and leaue the poore hartlesse children to speake their Epilogue to the emptie seates" (A3r).[83] It seems very doubtful that this actually happened (the gentleman asks if the audience members are such sheep), but this does illustrate the way the dynamics of the playhouse may be imagined in relationship to Court performances.[84] That said, to emphasize the "courtly" layout at Blackfriars over the social situation of those actually attending performances is to skew conclusions.

We are left, then, with the difficult task of determining who went to the private theaters. London's playhouses were visited by a distinct group of people who can be defined generally only as "playgoers." These playgoers were often "privileged" insofar as they had the money and leisure to attend plays; however, they were not necessarily elite, and they had varied motives and means for attending plays.[85] While it is important to consider the limitations placed on audiences in certain

theaters by the price of admission, there are still a variety of people who might attend performances, and there must have been factions and differences within as well as between different social groups.

It is also doubtful that companies could effectively select or limit their audiences. Church officials could not control traffic in Paul's, London officials struggled to control the throngs who flocked to the city during term times, and the royal family could barely control the entrance to Court entertainments.[86] Additionally, as Frank Whigham discusses in *Ambition and Privilege* (1984), conduct books and other texts desperately attempted to delineate social and institutional boundaries in English culture that proved all too permeable in practice.[87] As a Duke's prodigal son in John Day's *Law-Tricks* (Blackfriars, 1607) says, speaking in this instance of the fashion world, "I cannot weare a sute halfe a day but the Tailors Iournyman creepes into't: I cannot keepe a block priuate, but every Cittizens sonne thrusts his head into it" (F3v).[88] Carving out individual and group identities in London, ranging from signature fashions to social and institutional boundaries, was difficult. An example of this problem in the context of theater may be seen in the chaos that occurred over seating at one small London hall in the mid 1570s: at the Merchant Taylors' School, the Masters of the Guild felt insulted by being crowded out of prime seating, and so they prohibited future open performances.[89]

If private-theater operators and writers were truly invested in establishing social markers and barriers, they might have made liberal use of Latin in performances, which would have frustrated less educated playgoers. However, in the early plays at Paul's and Blackfriars only a smattering of Latin is included, certainly

not enough to impede the ability to follow plots, and Latin seems to have more or less dropped out of the companies' play-texts during the years leading up to 1609. (Meanwhile, genuinely academic plays often featured a considerable amount of, if they weren't entirely in, Latin.[90]) When all of these factors are considered, just how "exclusive" the private theaters were—how exclusive they really could be and how exclusive operators really wanted them be—is difficult to say.

There was certainly audience overlap between the public and private stages. In fact, many of the plays of the first decade of the seventeenth century assumed or even depended on it. Surviving private-theater plays are particularly allusive to offerings both at rival private theaters and the public theaters; James P. Bednarz's *Shakespeare & the Poets' War* (2000) lays out some of the intertextuality and artistic rivalry apparent in plays at the different theaters at the turn of the seventeenth century, and this rich aspect of the drama would be lost on playgoers who only went to one type of theater.[91] Therefore, it should come as no surprise that in the commonplace book of a gentleman like Edward Pudsey, we find that he "copied quotations from plays performed at the Globe, the Rose or Fortune, Paul's, and Blackfriars."[92] It seems that regular playgoers could move easily from one London theater to the next, choosing a particular venue based on a variety of circumstances. As Rosyln Knutson insists, "the successful theatrical marketplace invited audiences diverse in class and taste to enjoy what they would of the variety available to them."[93] (Although it is equally important to recognize that the opposite was true too, that playing companies, especially those with small theaters and limited performances per week, could take advantage of the various audiences available to them.) The

crossover appeal of different types of drama at different venues is important. There was a running dialogue between writers and companies at the various public and private theaters, and without one or the other, only part of the conversation comes through.

The Family of Love furnishes an example of gallants who might migrate from one kind of theater to another:

> Gli[ster]. And from what good exercise come you three?
>
> Ger[ardine]. From a play, where we saw most excellent Sampson excel the whole world in gate-carrying.
>
> Dry[fat]. Was it performed by youths?
>
> Lip[salve]. By youths? Why, I tell thee we saw Sampson, and I hope 'tis not for youths to play Sampson. Believe it, we saw Sampson bear the town-gates on his neck from the lower to the upper stage, with that life and admirable accord, that it shall never be equalled, unless the whole new livery of porters set [to] their shoulders. (1.3.100–109)

This exchange shows two citizen characters asking two gallants about their theatrical experience. Lipsalve scoffs at Dryfat's question, as if it reveals an unfashionable lack of familiarity with the practices of the different theaters. Here we get a sense of gallants who might freely choose between public and private, adult and children's theaters, depending on circumstances.

Overlapping audiences do not give all of the public and private theaters the same social register, but the differences are complicated. Part of the playgoing experience might be captured in Paul Yachnin's claim that some of London's upscale

theaters were "populuxe," or spaces of "virtual courtliness," where imitations of Court allowed middle-class audiences to do a certain amount of "social masquerading."[94] Equally important is Anthony Dawson's response to Yachnin, as he notes Yachnin's "failure to recognize social masquerade is a two-way street—that the theatre offered an opportunity for young aristocrats to trade downwards . . . as well as for middle-class patrons to trade upwards."[95] Yet, even this statement furnishes a reductive dynamic for what were likely diverse and complicated audiences.

We must instead consider a range of people who may have attended the private theaters and their many motives. For example, the Prologue for *The Contention betweene Liberalitie and Prodigalitie,* probably an older play revived by Paul's or Blackfriars in 1601–02 and published in a 1602 quarto, states:

> The Prouerbe is, *How many men, so many mindes.*
>
> Which maketh proofe, how hard a thing it is,
>
> Of sundry mindes to please the sundry kindes.
>
> In which respect, I haue inferred this,
>
> That where mens mindes appeare so different,
>
> No play, no part, can all alike content. (A3r)[96]

The Prologue then proceeds to mention the different kinds of drama demanded by "the graue Diuine," "The Ciuell student," "The Courtier," and "The baser sort" (A3r), suggesting that any of these types of people could be in attendance at the theater. Later, in the Induction to John Day's *Isle of Gulls* (Blackfriars, 1606), we see that the audiences in the private theaters are still "confused" (A3v). The Prologue says,

"Neither quick mirth, inuective, nor high state, / Can content all: such is the boundlesse hate / Of a confused Audience . . . Yet this our comfort is, / The wise will smile to heare th' impartiall hiss" (A3v). These texts strongly convey the idea that the audiences at the private theaters were diverse in intellect and taste (and demanding and competitive about their demands), and suggest that they may have been socially diverse as well.

Among the few accounts of real playgoers in early modern London are several of particular interest. Gair explains that, "in 1589 James More, servant to William Darrell of Littlecote . . . went casually to a play [at Paul's] . . . at a cost of 6d."[97] There is a similar example from second Paul's: Sir William Cavendish's "household book records that his servant Hallam accompanied him to Paul's."[98] Thus, it seems possible that servants could find the means, as guests or otherwise, to attend performances at a private theater. On the other end of the social scale, there is the story of a visit to the Blackfriars theater by Richard Chomley, a young gallant who "claimed to be a little embarrassed to find himself so late for the performance that the only seat available for him was a stool on the stage."[99] Chomley's story suggests that not every person who had the money to sit on stage wanted to be highly visible or to be associated with the obnoxious gallants who did. Hence, while gallants' antics seem to attract most of the attention of playwrights and commentators, it is clear that some upscale playgoers were capable of discretion and even desirous of anonymity. These rare pieces of evidence involving servants and a gentleman suggest a wide range for the social status of those in attendance at the private theaters.[100]

Unfortunately, the ways in which the audiences were controlled both at and inside the door of these relatively small houses are unknown to us. What if the demand for seats exceeded the supply? Was seating in any way reserved, especially in such a class-conscious society? We know that tickets were sometimes used in this period to regulate crowds. They were used for James's coronation and offered "only to persons officially attached to the court."[101] This method also became necessary for Court entertainments. Keith Sturgess notes that attendance at Court masques in James' reign became so crowded that "at some stage it became customary to issue tickets to control entry. This too proved insufficient, and in the accounts of *Coelum Britannicum* we hear of some kind of turnstile being operated in conjunction with the tickets."[102] Of course, Court was (or was supposed to be) an extremely restricted social space. As Ann Jennalie Cook explains, "Court performances entertained only the favored few. Even with six hundred and more crowded in to see the plays at the great palace halls, thousands of gentlemen and would-be gentlemen in London could not hope to attend . . . The presentations at the Inns of Court and in the homes of the nobility were also restricted, both in number and in the size of their audience."[103] Given their location and at least semi-commercial status, we are left to imagine that the private theaters were far more accessible than London's most elite circles and venues, but the actual demand for seats from performance to performance, and the number of restrictions on entrance (and seating arrangement) beyond cost, are uncertain.

Yet, it seems that some combination of money and social mores had to factor into the seating arrangement at the theaters. Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the*

Burning Pestle (Blackfriars, 1607), in which a citizen and his wife take stools on the stage and ultimately direct the performance, is often thought to mock the very idea of wealthy citizens sitting on stage. The citizen complains to the Prologue, "This seven years there hath been plays at this house, I have observed it, you have still girds at citizens" (Ind. 6–8).[104] He implies that he has been at plays at the Blackfriars frequently, although he and his wife's squeezing in on stage amongst the gentlemen and interrupting the performance are portrayed as risible breaches of etiquette. As many scholars see it, the joke with these citizen stool-sitters is that they have tastes for non-satirical, romantic, city-flattering offerings; furthermore, they become too involved in the play, seeming to forget that it is fiction—a gross exaggeration of any condescending stereotype of the middling sort. The apparent failure of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, a play so often seen by scholars as mercilessly mocking citizens and "citizen tastes," might indicate that a fair portion of the audience was from among this group and offended by the play.[105]

Blackfriars playwrights did not, however, simply mock citizen playgoers (or certain types of citizen playgoers); they portrayed members of other social groups as equally disruptive or unsuited to their offerings. A good example appears in John Day's Induction to *Isle of Gulls,* discussed above, where a gentleman who takes a stool on stage clearly has no real desire to see the play to its close.

Yet another type of private-theater playgoer is represented in Beaumont's *The Woman-Hater* (performed circa 1606 at Paul's—which, as we have seen, didn't have room for stools on stage). A bored Count speaks of how:

> if I can find any companie, Ile after dinner to the Stage, to see a Play; where, when I first enter, you shall have a murmure in the house, every one that does not knowe, cries, what Noble man is that; all the Gallants on the Stage rise, vayle to me, kiss their hand, offer mee their places: then I picke out some one, whom I please to grace among the rest, take his seate, use it, throw my cloake over my face, and laugh at him: the poore gentleman imagines himselfe most highly grac'd, thinkes all the Auditors esteeme him one of my bosome friendes, and in right speciall regard with me. (1.3.65–73)

Though he says he's going to "the stage to see a play," the amusement the Count describes at the playhouse has little to do with the players and their performance. His plans show a deeply embedded class-consciousness in the theater, as we would expect, and suggest a custom of deference in seating according to social class (presented as an act of patronage), all embedded in the speech's fantasy of self-importance. The social hierarchy that informs the speech begins with "Nobles," followed by "gentlemen/gallants" and, finally, "all the Auditors." The Count's scenario suggests a theater audience comprising people who don't all know each other but judge each other on appearances and perceived social connections—the Count divides the audience between those who know him and those who don't but will presumably recognize him as a noble because of his dress, behavior, and (perhaps) entourage. If Blackfriars really had become more fashionable than Paul's, and if *The Woman-Hater* was written specifically for the latter venue, this could be a satire on the snobbiness of the elite among the Blackfriars audience. The speech also

indicates the extent to which confusion or uncertainty could reign among people of different social groups, enabling masquerade of all sorts in all directions.

The King's Men offered a satirical version of the private playgoer in John Webster's Induction to their version of Marston's *The Malcontent*, a play "stolen" from the repertory of the Blackfriars children around 1603–04. In the Induction, William Sly plays the part of a private theatergoer who intends to sit on stage at the Globe. As he seeks out an area to place his stool on stage, the following exchange occurs:

> TIREMAN: Sir, the gentlemen will be angry if you sit here.
>
> PATRON ["Sly" in the quarto]: Why? We may sit upon the stage at the private house. Thou dost not take me for a country gentleman, dost? (Ind. 1–3)

Part of the humor here seems to revolve around the fact that William Sly is recognizably one of the play's actors, but he is clearly mocking a certain kind of haughty private-theater playgoer. The Tireman's reference to "gentlemen" is unclear, but if the Tireman is referring to the gentlemen in the audience whose view would be obstructed by the Patron's position, then clearly the Patron feels that he is of such status (or is willing to pay so much) that the gentlemen in the gallery should grin and bear it. If the "gentlemen" the Tireman refers to in the first line are in fact the players, which is possible, then by "country gentleman" the Patron may be referring to men of status and means unfamiliar with the ways of London's theatrical scene, something he (ironically) claims not to be.

The Induction to *The Malcontent* may offer a playful attack on the disconnect between the marketing of the private theaters and the reality of their circumstances. Playing the part of a buffoon who is familiar with the protocol of the private theater but not the public, Sly undermines the private theater's loftiest claims for itself. This would-be gallant is apparently not a prominent courtier: on stage he entertains his cousin (played by John Sincklo), a usurer who has eaten the night before at his woolen-draper cousin's home (Ind. 22–23). The company Sly's character keeps is certainly meant to reflect poorly on him, at least insofar as it reveals his pretension. The social dynamics of the situation are further highlighted by the Patron's clear offense at the possibility that the Tireman might have mistaken him for a player (Ind. 4–5), a position he clearly feels is far beneath him. Later, the Patron's cousin says, "I durst lay four of mine ears, the play is not so well / acted as it hath been" (Ind. 89–90), suggesting that the children put on a better show, doubtless drawing laughter from the audience because of the ridiculousness of the assertion, or because of Sincklo's self-deprecating joke, or because of the character's lack of tact.[106] At the end of the Induction, Sly and Sincklo are led away to a "private room," moving them to the place in the public theater that was apparently most analogous to sitting on stage in the private theater, but the audience is left with the feeling that Sly and Sincklo don't really belong there either. The Induction to *The Malcontent,* then, is an important reminder that while more money was required to enter the private than the public theaters, money never equaled gentility, or honesty, or good manners, or understanding, or good taste.

Another text that deals with audiences' poor behavior (in the eyes of playwrights and players, at least) is Thomas Dekker's *The Gull's Hornbook* (1609). In the section of the satire devoted to playgoing, Dekker offers a catalogue of boorishness in his suggestions for a would-be gallant, including interrupting the prologue, railing against the author, laughing at sad scenes, showing disdain for the play as a waste of a "foolish houre or two," and attempting to "disrelish the Audience, and disgrace the Author."[107] The chapter in which this advice is dispensed, titled "How a Gallant should behaue himself in a Playhouse," is frequently cited as evidence about the state of affairs at the private theaters. But Dekker's text is a satire, leaving open the question of how much can be taken at face value, and then too, some of its representations are confusing or at least incongruous.[108] The exact playhouse Dekker is discussing—in fact, whether or not he is even discussing a particular playhouse—is unclear. Dekker speaks generally about paying "the gatherers of the publique or priuate Play-house," and yet he immediately recommends sitting on a stool on stage, "on the very Rushes where the Commedy is to daunce," a practice associated almost exclusively with the Blackfriars theater in this period.[109] Curiously, without making any obvious distinction between public and private playhouses, Dekker discusses sitting on stage as preferable to sitting in the "Lords roome, (which is now but the Stages Suburbs)," a seating arrangement normally associated with the public theaters.[110] Meanwhile, Dekker consistently refers to the actors as "boys," "children," and "infants," providing an almost irrefutable sense that he is writing about a private playhouse, and yet he speaks of the theater being:

> free in entertainment, allowing a stoole as well to the Farmers sonne as to your Templer: that your Stinkard has the selfe same libertie to be there in his Tobacco-Fumes, which your sweet Courtier hath: and that your Car-man and Tinker claime as strong a voice in their suffrage, and sit to giue iudgement on the plaies life and death, as well as the prowdest *Momus* among the tribe of *Critick*.[111]

Such a mixture of people is more commonly associated with the public rather than private playhouses.

Further complicating the interpretation of this document is its publication date. Dekker's text was never entered in the Stationer's Register, and the title-page claims it was published in 1609—if accurate, the earliest it could have been printed was 25 March 1609. Evans turned the Blackfriars theater over to the King's Men in August 1608, after which Robert Keysar moved the Blackfriars troupe to the obscure theater at Whitefriars.[112] This leaves us with an impossible-to-answer question regarding the composition of *The Gull's Hornbook:* was Dekker writing his satire during the children's occupancy of the Blackfriars, was he referring to the Whitefriars theater, or was he choosing freely among the features of different London playhouses as they served his satirical purposes? It may very well be that Dekker's work reflects the conditions of performance at the time he was writing, that the situation he represents in the apparently-private playhouse in question is merely the struggle and strain of a children's company trying to survive in a London marketplace in which for the first time a successful adult company, the King's Men, was preparing to occupy a private theater for regular performances. Perhaps the private and public stages were

becoming less distinct in 1608–09, providing a basis for Dekker's apparent blurring of playhouse features. Or perhaps the experiences in the public and private theaters were never as different as some playwrights and others described them.

The preponderance of evidence suggests that audiences at Paul's and Blackfriars were mixed. This is a crucial point, because regardless of how the private theaters in the 1599–1609 period attempted to represent or market themselves, having playhouses that approached the cachet of Court performances required truly elite audiences. While Gershaw provides an eyewitness account of a performance at Blackfriars in 1602 attended by people who seem to have been impressive, this was likely only one of the theater's guises. The most frequently mentioned of those in attendance at the private theaters were gallants, who could be seen in the galleries of the finer public theaters, if not walking about busy and popular areas such as Paul's aisle. If social commentators are to be believed, these men were constantly on display in every even remotely fashionable place about town—and they are often represented as being all show and no substance. Most evidence about Paul's and Blackfriars points to their having audiences that might include many different types of people, ranging from nobles to those from among the middling sort, people who indulged in a range of behavior, including displaying or concealing their true identities, and acting as noisy critics or passive observers. While it seems safe to say that one was likely to be among a more literate and literary audience at private rather than public theaters, it wasn't necessarily the case, and certainly private-theater audiences could be anything from attentive to rowdy. Most important, if the

audiences shifted in class and behavior, so too might the ambience and cachet of the theaters.

Another factor in gauging the cachet of the private theaters is the social status of those responsible for putting on the performances. We might first consider the weight that may be given to elite patrons or financiers at the private children's theaters. Although Gurr boldly suggests that second Paul's "had more specific backing from the nobility than any other company or playhouse ever received," and the Blackfriars company came under the patronage of Queen Anna in 1604, such relationships and protections were also traditionally extended to the public adult companies.[113] In fact, Paul's was the only major London company not to come under royal patronage by 1604. Additionally, while formal or informal elite patronage might elevate the status of Paul's and Blackfriars, the fact that they were commercial institutions that seem, like the other London companies, to have regularly pitched their plays to general audiences was equally obvious and important.

An additional consideration is the boy-players for these companies, "a nest of boys able to ravish a man."[114] Through 1606 the actors of the children's companies were largely comprised of choristers from St. Paul's Cathedral and the Chapel Royal at Blackfriars, but a major change occurred at Blackfriars after 1606, when Nathaniel Giles was forbidden from using the choristers as actors.[115] These prepubescent and older teenage actors had limited social status and were, especially the boys at Paul's, easily enough seen and encountered in other settings.[116] In fact, it is always impossible to ascribe a great amount of social status to players, whatever royal or noble patronage they may have had. Leeds Barroll has discussed how even the

King's Men—despite their royal patronage—were not an integral part of elite circles.[117] This is not to belittle the company's extraordinary contact with Court circles or any Court friends that the company (or individual sharers) may have had, nor is it to downplay the celebrity players might accrue in London, but actors had limited social status. Alvin Kernan states that "Playing was a part of ordinary working life in the palace, and payments to the players appear alongside those to the man who took care of King James's silkworms, the royal barber, acrobats, lutenists and other musicians, even the humble watermen and keepers of the royal hounds, and one of the king's fools."[118] John Cocke's often-cited 1615 satirical description of "a common player" is illustrative: "howsoever hee pretends to have a royall Master or Mistresse, his wages and dependance prove him to be the servant of the people."[119]

We must also consider the status and connections of the regular management at Paul's and Blackfriars. These companies differed from their adult counterparts in that they consisted of syndicate members and playhouse managers essentially using child labor to their benefit. Among those actually running the theaters at Blackfriars and Paul's, the most socially elite was perhaps Samuel Daniel, who was part of the Queen Anna's circle at Court, but then he does not seem to have been either deeply or long involved in the business. Edward Kirkham, who worked at both Blackfriars and Paul's, was a minor official, the Yeoman of the Revels, but the strength of any accompanying privileges or social connections is uncertain.[120] John Marston and Francis Beaumont, students at the Inns of Court and playwrights at both Blackfriars and Paul's, were well-connected but hardly, to use Harbage's term, "lordly." Many of the partners in the Blackfriars syndicate seem to have been citizens who as

members of a guild could take advantage of their ability to take apprentices for the theater: a merchant named William Rastell, a haberdasher named Thomas Kendall, and a goldsmith named Robert Keysar (others, such as James Robinson and Robert Payne, are obscure figures, but it is reasonable to suspect that they too may have been from among the middling sort).[121] Additionally, Thomas Woodford, who worked in some capacity for Paul's early in this period, and was involved with Blackfriars and Whitefriars later, was a grocer.[122] I find it likely that such investors in the private theaters looked to possible contact with social elites and especially Court as one of the major perks of the venture. In this scenario, some among the company management and playwrights have connections, but they have limited status when it comes to the upper echelons of society; meanwhile, the citizen-class portion of management might aspire to associate with prominent people through their work in the theater (which also reflects a major perk for the middling sort involved in the public adult companies). Ultimately, canvassing the principal figures in the day-to-day running of the children's theaters provides little upon which to base an especially elevated status.

There is yet another small but not insignificant issue at play when considering the possible pretensions of the private theaters: the construction and upkeep of the playhouses, especially as these issues relate to their impressiveness, splendor, or other physical qualities that might be read as social markers. Here too we may find the private theaters wanting. At the upper reaches of society, major performances at Court during the holiday season and other special occasions occurred in spaces that were elaborate, using stages and seating that were temporary. The costly preparations

of the Office of Works for royal performances constituted an important display of power and conspicuous consumption.[123] *This* was truly elite theater. James's ostentatious Court could and did far outstrip productions on London's public and private stages. In this vein, John H. Astington discusses records of some of the stage effects and contraptions that were built for Court performances, including stage shutters and moving platforms.[124] In 1606–07, James was fairly quick to rebuild the old Banqueting House at Whitehall because it was old and run down.[125] During Court performances, damage was done to the halls, especially damage caused by the lighting, and by all accounts the Crown spent a great deal of money for the repair and upkeep of royal spaces.[126]

Similarly, at the public amphitheaters repairs were a regular and costly part of business: Gurr writes that at the Fortune "It cost £120 a year in upkeep between 1602 and 1608."[127] Beyond attending to the necessary repair of damage caused by high traffic, the amphitheaters probably wanted to keep the galleries and stages splendid as a vital part of their charm.

When we compare the truly elite venues for Court performances and the apparent out lay for maintenance at the public theaters with what is known about the private theaters, the commercial and urban aspects of the private theaters become more apparent. Interestingly, while the second Blackfriars building was probably far and away the most impressive of the two early private stages in terms of location and structure, the trail of legal documents following the King's Men's reacquisition of the theater suggests that it was in a constant state of disrepair during the time of the Blackfriars boys. When Henry Evans took partners, one of the duties he described in

the condition for the £200 bond was "paying of the moiety of such charges as from time to time shall be laid out or disbursed, for, in, or about the reparations of the premises."[128] But in a 1609 deposition, Alexander Hawkins argued that around 1 July 1604:

> the said tenements . . . were then dilapidated in various parts and unrepaired, namely in the flooring lying on the eastern side of the same hall, and in the flooring at the eastern end of the Theatre (in English the Stage), in the said hall, and in the wall there above the steps (in English the stairs), and in the window glass, and in the wooden windows as well above as below on each side of the premises specified above in the Indorsement, and in the wall of each end of the said hall, and in the leaden gutters (in English gutters of lead), and in the roof of the premises specified above in the said Indorsement.[129]

Hawkins claims that Evans laid out £10 for repairs at that time, while Rastall and Kirkham deny that the playhouse was in disrepair at all.[130] Later, however, in a 1610 lawsuit by Robert Keysar seeking recompense for his alleged losses sustained in Evans' surrender of the Blackfriars lease in 1608, the King's Men say that at the time they canceled Evans' lease "the said premises lay then and had long lain void and without use for plays, whereby the same became not only burdensome and unprofitable unto the said Evans, but also ran far into decay for want of reparations done in and upon the premises."[131] None of these descriptions are reliable, but at the very least they suggest that it was unsurprising that the theater would be well worn. Since Evans seems to have been in enough financial trouble to broach the topic of canceling his lease in 1603–04, and since the plague was particularly virulent over the

next several years, it is not surprising that in the theatrical venture at Blackfriars one of the last things to be done was basic repairs. This certainly does not mean that the theater was an unfashionable haunt, but it does make it clear that the splendor of the accommodations neither was nor could be a primary concern of the Blackfriars syndicate.

In structure and layout Paul's probably never seemed particularly impressive or luxurious, and its location among the ramshackle shops and general chaos at St. Paul's Cathedral reinforces this impression. I am far more inclined to describe the apparently cramped theater at Paul's as a commercial version of a grammar school or university rehearsal space.[132] It still might provide the middling sort a window into elite culture, but what they would see was not far removed from what they could have seen at a typical citizen-school play. In fact, Adrian Weiss has discussed at length the way that John Marston emphasizes the grammar school nature of Paul's in the Induction to *Antonio and Mellida*.[133]

A review of what is known about the private theaters, including their audiences, their patrons, managers, and boy actors, and the physical conditions of the playhouses, suggests that by their second incarnation, the private theaters had evolved—whatever their origins may suggest, and whatever various playwrights and operators and patrons might have originally hoped for them—into socially fluid sites. But even this claim must be qualified. The fact that as far as we know the children's companies of 1599–1609 didn't or only very rarely performed plays outside of Court or their small and relatively expensive private theaters, which ran only one or two nights a week in the early years—possibly more frequently by 1606–07—might give

their performances a certain sense of exclusivity. And, as discussed above, by virtue of their higher prices, the theaters were not open to just anyone. Even if the cost of admission was sometimes reduced for the performance of older plays, we must conclude that the social range of those at the private theaters was not as wide as those at the public theaters. Consequently, while I have insisted that audiences at these theaters shifted on the social scale, I have indicated that they generally shifted between "upscale" and "middling." When Paul's and Blackfriars participated in London's theatrical marketplace, which they seem to have done frequently, they did so in a somewhat limited way. In short, the private theaters' cachet is best understood over and against the amphitheaters than as a general social phenomenon. And even so, I suspect that the opening afternoon of a major play by a famous playwright such as Shakespeare at the Globe had greater cachet on a day it went against, for example, the third performance of Day's *Law-Tricks* at Blackfriars or the fourth performance of Beaumont's *The Woman-Hater* at Paul's.

Throughout this introduction I have worked to demonstrate the many ways in which labels such as "courtly" and "commercial" are unsatisfactory for the private theaters. My point is that these terms reflect only two aspects of sophisticated operations. Instead, Blackfriars and Paul's might be thought of as flexible urban institutions that readily adapted to different circumstances and situations. This view emphasizes that these were savvy companies in the heart of a busy city that attempted to thrive, much like any savvy individual at market or at Court, by using different tactics to their advantage at different moments. And while this may also be said of London's other theaters, the small size, different schedules, and different economics

of the private theaters gave them a flexibility generally unavailable to the larger, more thoroughly commercial adult companies, where there were more sharers and employees, production costs were likely greater, and the long-term take of every play mounted must have been a greater consideration. The companies at Paul's and Blackfriars might commission or purchase a play that capitalizes on the success of a trend in the larger dramatic marketplace; they might pitch plays to literary-minded playgoers or music lovers; they might prepare a play that capitalizes on social tensions, scandal, or some other attractive feature to a certain group of playgoers; they might prepare a play specifically designed for Court performance; and they might cater to specific playwrights and their circles, including restricted performances that gave meaning to the theaters' "privacy." Ideally, they might produce plays that could fill two or more of these roles at once, but they were in an excellent position to mount niche, experimental, or occasional drama, and to reap rewards outside marketplace profit. My emphasis on the flexibility of the children's troupes and their playwrights provides the basis for new analyses of plays from 1606–07, some of which have received little detailed scholarly attention.

Before moving forward, however, I must address my approach to the complicated issue of agency with regard to company repertories. In general, it is virtually impossible to sort out whether a particular play found its way into a company's repertory because the company requested a play of a particular kind, or because the playwright offered it after having read the market, or some other arrangement. Roslyn Knutson discusses many scenarios in her *Playing Companies*

and Commerce in Shakespeare's Time, but ultimately says, "Scholars have opinions on these matters, but little conclusive documentation."[134]

In the chapters that follow, I often discuss plays in terms of what a playwright is trying to do with regard to, or what the playwright seems to tell us about, a company's repertory.[135] This is not, however, a denial of the collaborative process, and I generally assume that the playwrights mainly responsible for the surviving play-texts were playing to the needs of or otherwise cooperating with the companies for their mutual benefit.[136] But in the cases at hand, the decision to locate agency with the playwright is something more than mere convention or convenience. It is perhaps most easily justified in the case of John Marston, who was both playwright and sharer at Blackfriars during the period in question.[137] Another, Francis Beaumont, probably knew Marston and certainly knew others who worked (or had worked) for the private theaters. Beaumont is a crucial figure in my efforts to illuminate private-theater strategies during 1606–07 because during these years he was just breaking into the industry as a professional playwright and he wrote for both Paul's and Blackfriars. He likely was tutored and/or assisted by those in his literary circle, giving us good reason to suppose that he understood the marketplace, but he probably approached his earliest works as an outsider or novice, and I suggest that his plays offer particular insights (purposefully or inadvertently) because he writes from this perspective. Meanwhile, Thomas Middleton seems to have had a very close relationship with Paul's during the period in question, but he also did some collaborative work for the public stages, and he seems to have written a play or two for the Blackfriars company in 1606–08. Given the circumstances and experiences of the major subjects of this

study, I often locate the agency for the central plays of each chapter with the playwright.

However, as my analyses will show, I do not think this was the way things *always* worked at Blackfriars and Paul's. Each of the following chapters explores a strategy used by the playwrights/companies to negotiate a competitive, politically tense, and often plague-stifled theatrical market: 1) by demonstrating the value and danger of their practice of catering to cliques; 2) by creating commercially useful intertextuality that especially appealed to the most literary and sophisticated elements of the playgoing public; and 3) by following trends and anticipating opportunities in the larger London theatrical marketplace.

In the first chapter, I discuss the mercenary methods employed by the private children's theaters. Occasionally, plays or play topics were commissioned by playgoers; some performances at Paul's and Blackfriars may even have been "private" in the sense of closed performances for exclusive audiences. In this context, I discuss Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (Blackfriars, 1607). With the meddling of the boorish citizen characters George and Nell, Beaumont lays open the private theaters' mercenary methods; moreover, he emphasizes sophisticated playgoers' stake in the Blackfriars theater by vividly illustrating what might happen if unsophisticated playgoers were to gain too much influence.

The second chapter is a discussion of the ways private-theater playwrights used intertextuality to entertain the best of playgoers, those who were literary-minded and deeply interested in the theater industry, and especially those who might buy

quartos of plays. In this context, I discuss John Marston's *The Wonder of Women, or The Tragedy of Sophonisba* (Blackfriars, 1606) and Francis Beaumont's *The Woman Hater* (Paul's, 1606–07), plays that premiered within a year of each other at "rival" private playhouses. These plays not only have related titles, but they feature related exceptional-woman stories in alternate genres. My analysis shows the extent to which Marston and Beaumont targeted a core group of literary-minded playgoers with their intertextuality. I also discuss the ways in which this intertextuality represents a retreat to safer marketing strategies after the Blackfriars company's scandalous satires, and perhaps even a cooperative strategy for the two struggling private playhouses.

The final chapter examines the crosscurrents in tragedy at the private and public theaters. I discuss Thomas Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy* (King's Men, 1606) as a work that originally may have been composed for Paul's, for whom Middleton wrote almost exclusively during the 1603–06 period. I argue that *The Revenger's Tragedy* was a highly Italianized update of the popular Hamlet story formulated not only to capitalize on a trend in the larger theatrical marketplace, but also in anticipation of a performance during the visit of Christian IV, King of Denmark, in the summer of 1606. Both broadly commercial and occasional, *The Revenger's Tragedy* demonstrates the sophisticated and opportunistic approach to drama by a major playwright of the children's theaters during this period.

NOTES

[1] The Blackfriars troupe lost its theater through litigation in 1584, after which its career is largely a matter of speculation. Meanwhile, scholars often have suggested that Paul's was suppressed in 1590–91 for playing a role in the Martin Marprelate scandal. See W. Reavley Gair, *The Children of Paul's: The Story of a Theatre Company, 1553–1608* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982) 109–12; Michael Shapiro, *Children of the Revels: The Boy Companies of Shakespeare's Time and Their Plays* (New York: Columbia UP, 1977) 18; and Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1996) 225–26. However, Richard Dutton recently has argued that the Paul's closure largely may be attributed to fashion and economics. See "The Revels Office and the Boy Companies, 1600–1613: New Perspectives," *ELR* 32 (2002): 327–30.

[2] Gair, *The Children of Paul's* 173, 184–85 and Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* 349.

[3] A. Wigfall Green, *The Inns of Court and Early English Drama* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1931) 19.

[4] Zachary Lesser describes the way in which booksellers might use prefatory material to describe a play in terms of a marketing strategy as much as (if not more than) to document a play's actual performance history in "Walter Burre's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle,*" *ELR* 29 (1999): 22–43. This idea is greatly expanded upon by Douglas A. Brooks in *From Playhouse to Printing House: Drama and Authorship in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000). Brooks argues that "some playwrights and publishers in the first decade of the seventeenth century . . .

hoped to use the printing and selling of plays to erect a new and rather non-porous boundary between theater audiences and well-educated readers" (44). Lesser's and Brooks's arguments cast some doubt on texts scholars often must rely upon in reconstructing the stage history of a play.

[5] Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987) 59.

[6] Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* 75. As for pricing, Gurr states, "The boy companies, with their emphasis on offering 'private' performances as if they were playing to select gentry in great houses, made an explicit appeal to a more select social grouping and pushed the practice and the price up-market . . . Paul's seems to have started by charging twopence or fourpence for its hall. The boy company at the Blackfriars seems to have started by charging sixpence or more, and the Paul's soon followed suit . . . The early boasts of the boy-company playwrights about the less common character of the 'private' hall-playhouse audiences with their exclusively 'gentle' clientele reflect the difference in pricing even more than the social snobbery that they also appealed to" (*The Shakespearian Playing Companies* 366–67).

[7] Paul Yachnin, "Reversal of Fortune: Shakespeare, Middleton, and the Puritans" *ELH* 70 (2003): 764.

[8] All quotes from *The Family of Love*, *The Works of Thomas Middleton*, ed. A. H. Bullen, vol. 3 (New York: AMS, 1964). *The Family of Love* traditionally has been assigned to Thomas Middleton, although Thomas Dekker's name has also been attached the text. T. H. Howard-Hill explains, "The relationship of Middleton and

Dekker during Middleton's apprenticeship in the profession was unusually close so that for many works it is difficult to distinguish the contribution of one from the other's. Collaboration was the rule among the playwrights who looked mainly to Henslowe for commissions, and Middleton and Dekker seem to have worked together in almost seamless unity of style" ("Thomas Middleton," *Dictionary of Literary Biography 58: Jacobean and Caroline Dramatists,* ed. Fredson Bowers [Detroit: Gale, 1987] 203). Recently, however, Gary Taylor, Paul Mulholland, and MacDonald P. Jackson have argued that Lording Barry is the primary author of the play. See "Thomas Middleton, Lording Barry, and *The Family of Love,*" *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 93 (1999): 213–42.

[9] For a review of the early speculation about the play's performance history, see E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage,* 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1923) 3: 440–41. Shapiro, who tentatively attributes the play to Middleton and Barry, guesses that the play was in the Paul's repertory in 1602–03 and the Whitefriars repertory in 1607 (*Children of the Revels* 263, 266). Gair, who attributes the play to Middleton, places it in the Paul's repertory in 1605 (*The Children of Paul's* 187). Meanwhile, Taylor, Mulholland, and Jackson conclude "The play . . . seems to have been completed no earlier than the second half of May 1605," and they argue that Barry's sole authorship "explains the play's association with the Children of the King's Revels . . . The play might originally have been performed by some other company, late in 1605, and brought by Barry to the King's Revels; but it might also never have belonged to any other company at all, premiering late in 1606, perhaps as that company's first play" (224, 239).

[10] As Roslyn Lander Knutson explains, "Contemporary witnesses report that opening days were popular times for playgoing and that the admission price was doubled to two pence for these debuts" (*The Repertory of Shakespeare's Company, 1594–1613* [Fayetteville: U of Arkansas P, 1991] 25).

[11] Charles William Wallace, *The Children of the Chapel at Blackfriars, 1597–1603* (1908; New York: AMS, 1970) 6.

[12] Wallace 95–125.

[13] Citations from Gershaw's diary appear as translated from German by Wallace (106–07n). Primarily working from Gershaw's reference to ladies in the audience, Keith Sturgess suggests that "it was no doubt always easier for ladies to visit private than public houses. The gathering of prostitutes at the latter was well known, while at the private houses, the audiences was better controlled, the boxes became a kind of sanctuary, the coach made access comfortable and modesty was guaranteed, eventually, by the fashionable adoption of the mask" (*Jacobean Private Theatre* [New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987] 24).

[14] Wallace 106n.

[15] Wallace 106n. Wallace adds that at Court they were shown "the privacies of her Majesty,—her library, bedroom, prayer-book written in her own hand, &c., &c. Those who entertained them, though not named, must have been officials close to the Queen" (106n).

[16] For example, in the King's Men's Induction to *The Malcontent,* Burbage speaks of the changes wrought to the play in part because of the "not-received custom of music in our theatre" (85). Additionally, although music and song may

have become less prominent in the children's theaters over the decade (see, for example, Gair's discussion of Middleton's influence in *The Children of Paul's* 153–54), John Marston apologizes for the format of his *The Wonder of Women, or The Tragedy of Sophonisba* (quarto 1606–07), saying, "let me entreat my reader not to tax me for the fashion of the entrances and music of this tragedy, for know it is printed only as it was presented by youths, and after the fashion of the private stage." Citations from *The Malcontent and Other Plays,* ed. Keith Sturgess (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997) 346, 373.

[17] E. K. Chambers was perhaps the first in a series of scholars to take Wallace to task for accepting Gershaw's account at face value (2: 47–48). See also H. N. Hillebrand, *The Child Actors: A Chapter in Elizabethan Stage History* (1926; New York: Russell & Russell, 1964) 164–66. Irwin Smith states the case simply and succinctly: "the Duke was certainly mistaken in saying that the Queen had provided the Children with a theater, and was probably equally mistaken in saying that she had provided them with costumes. After all, a traveling foreigner should not be expected to be an expert witness as to the internal affairs of a playhouse that he visited only once" (*Shakespeare's Blackfriars Playhouse: Its History and Its Design* [New York: New York UP, 1964] 206n14).

[18] Lyly's efforts to appeal to Elizabeth's tastes and portray his plays and audiences at the first Blackfriars and Paul's theaters as "courtly" are key factors in the scholarly tendency to see private stages in this vein. Andrew Gurr states, "Lyly's concern to differentiate the behaviour of the playgoers attending boy company plays from the crowds at the amphitheatres is to some extent a reflection of the narrowness

of his ambitions. His eye was always on the Court rather than the commercial theatre. For years he manoeuvred to obtain the post of Master of the Revels which Edmund Tilney had secured in 1579. His plays at the first Blackfriars playhouse in 1583–84 and later at Paul's through 1587–90 were aimed precisely at courtiers and the gentry who were familiar with the Court's major preoccupations" (*Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* 120).

[19] Frank Whigham deals with this issue, ranging from conduct books to sumptuary laws, in his *Ambition and Privilege: The Social Tropes of Elizabethan Courtesy Theory* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1984).

[20] Wallace 95.

[21] Chambers states that the Queen "had dined with Lord Hunsdon at his house in the Blackfriars. The play may have been in his great chamber, or he may have borrowed the theatre next door for private use on an off-day. And the actors may even more probably have been his own company than the Chapel boys" (2: 48). Cf. Hillebrand 166 and Smith 206n14.

[22] Chambers 2: 508, 554. The quote is from the 1619 "Order by the Corporation of the City of London for the Suppression of the Blackfriars Playhouse." The full document appears in Smith 493–94.

[23] Hillebrand 157.

[24] Hillebrand 213.

[25] Hillebrand 211, 212.

[26] Smith 180.

[27] Smith 191.

[28] Smith 220.

[29] Smith 238.

[30] Smith 230.

[31] The germane lines from the Folio *Hamlet* occur when, after Rosencrantz and Guildenstern describe the "fashion" of the children's troupes and their method of operation, Hamlet asks, "Do the boys carry it away?" (2.2.344), and Rosencrantz responds, "Ay, that they do, my lord, Hercules and his load too" (2.2.345–46). Cited from *The Norton Shakespeare,* ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al (New York: Norton, 1997). For a detailed account of the references to the children's troupes (particularly Blackfriars) in the different versions of *Hamlet* published through 1623, see Roslyn Knutson, *Playing and Companies and Commerce in Shakespeare's Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001) 103–26. Lucy Munro discusses some of the ways in which scholars have situated and read this passage in *Children of the Queen's Revels: A Jacobean Theatre Repertory* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005) 14. For example, while Knutson traces the lines from the Folio to 1606 and suggests that the King's Men are criticizing the children's companies for their dangerous satires, Andrew Gurr has noted that "the comments are addressed to Hamlet, played by Richard Burbage, the owner of the Blackfriars theatre and the children's landlord, who may have been keen to protect his investment" (Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels* 14). Hence, "the same allusion may indicate commercial rivalry, political disruption, or shrewd marketing" (Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels* 14).

[32] Alfred Harbage, *Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions* (1952; New York: Barnes & Noble, 1968) 42. Gurr summarizes Harbage's position with the following:

"the 'coterie' playwrights of the boy companies wrote for an elite class, select, satirical and decadent in their theatrical tastes" (*Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* 3).

[33] Harbage 55, 53.

[34] Harbage 50, 55–56.

[35] Gurr discusses the "cultural oversimplifications" in Harbage's views in "'Within the compass of the city walls': Allegiances in Plays for and about the City," *Plotting Early Modern London: New Essays on Jacobean City Comedy,* ed. Dieter Mehl, Angela Stock, and Anne-Julia Zwierlein (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004) 109.

[36] Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels* 61.

[37] Cf. Philip J. Finkelpearl, *Court and Country Politics in the Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990) 61–62. Finkelpearl says, "scholars constantly refer to the private theater audiences as 'sophisiticated,'" but the failures of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* and *The Faithful Shepherdess* show that "even the best Jacobean audience . . . contained only a small number who could accept and comprehend the truly new" (*Court and Country Politics* 82). Additionally, as Munro recently has explained, the Blackfriars clientele "may have been richer than average but, judging by the many comments on failed plays, they were not especially discerning or cooperative" (*Children of the Queen's Revels* 65).

[38] Michael Shapiro, "Audience vs. Dramatist in Jonson's *Epicoene* and Other Plays of the Children's Troupes," *ELR* 3 (1973): 401.

[39] Shapiro, "Audience vs. Dramatist" 409. Shapiro claims "The two modes of self-dramatization most readily available to private theater spectators were

contemptuous silence and noisy disruption. If the spectator chose the first mode, he could preserve a haughty detachment and, by refusing to allow the play to put him out of his own role, demonstrate that the illusion it offered was less substantial than the one which he himself projected. If the spectator chose the second mode, he could disrupt the play in any number of witty or childish ways, thereby manifesting his wit and critical judgment, and exhibiting the potency of his presence. Whether he chose to be ice or fire, the aristocratic spectator was actually giving a counterperformance of his own in order to assert his social worth" (401–02).

[40] Shapiro, *Children of the Revels* 38–45. Shapiro is inclined to view the children's troupes in terms of "the usual blending of commercial enterprise and service to the crown" (*Children of the Revels* 20). Despite his discussion of "courtly ambiance" in *Children of the Revels,* Shapiro does suggest that "Around the accession of James I in 1603, the children's troupes began performing plays less suited to courtly audiences of the ritualistic Christmas revels, before whom they still performed regularly, and more suited to audiences of their own private theaters . . . audiences [that] now included large numbers of students at the nearby inns of court and many provincial aristocrats or gentry sojourning in London during the sessions of the law court" (*Children of the Revels* 51). Here Shapiro deviates from the Court paradigm to imagine upscale audiences of more disparate elements, although his idea of a major change in audiences around 1603 is highly questionable.

[41] See Ann Jennalie Cook, *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London, 1576–1642* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981), esp. 139–42, where she discusses "the elitist character of the private theater audiences" (140).

[42] Philip J. Finkelpearl, *John Marston of the Middle Temple: An Elizabethan Dramatist in His Social Setting* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1969) 27.

[43] M. C. Bradbrook, "London Pageantry and Lawyers' Theater in the Early Seventeenth Century," *Shakespeare's "Rough Magic": Renaissance Essays in Honor of C. L. Barber,* ed. Peter Erickson and Coppélia Kahn (Newark: U of Delaware P / London & Toronto: Associated UP, 1985) 257.

[44] Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels* 63.

[45] Martin Butler, *Theatre and Crisis 1632–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984) 284.

[46] Lee Bliss notes that "slighting references to James, his Scots followers and indiscriminate bestowal of knighthoods, or satiric portraits of court fops and flatterers, are common to a whole group of dramatists writing for both children's troupes. What seems pointed criticism may spring as much from fashion as conviction. Censure could in this period also coexist with a high valuation for the arts of civility and courtship, political as well as social" (*Francis Beaumont* [Boston: Twayne, 1987] 8–9). Yet, the fact remains that such plays would not be taken to Court, at least not with their politically incendiary aspects in tact.

[47] Shapiro notes that "The boy companies were less popular at court under James than they had been under Elizabeth, as the most fashionable form of court entertainment under the new sovereign became the court masque" (*Children of the Revels* 29).

[48] Albert H. Tricomi, *Anticourt Drama in England, 1603–1642* (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1989) 96–97.

[49] Additionally, while it is true that the children's companies operating at the private theaters performed at Court, so too did the popular adult companies. The King's Men were at Court far more than the most-called-upon children's troupe in the early years of James's reign, and regardless, it seems that the glamour or status a company could acquire as it occasionally traveled from the city to Court and back again was limited.

[50] Gair, *The Children of Paul's* 69–74.

[51] Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* 67. For Gurr's overall discussion of the issue, see *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* 72–79.

[52] Finkelpearl, *Court and Country Politics* 62.

[53] Gair, *The Children of Paul's* 31.

[54] See Gair, *The Children of Paul's* 28–33. In *The Deade Tearme or Westministers Complaint for Long Vacations* (1608), Thomas Dekker lists the large variety of people who might be found at Paul's: "For at one time, in one and the same ranke, yea, foote by foote, and elbow by elbow, shall you see walking, the Knight, the Gull, the Gallant, the vpstart, the Gentleman, the Clowne, the Captaine, the Appel-squire, the Lawyer, the Vsurer, the Cittizen, the Bankerout, the Scholler, the Begger, the Doctor, the Ideot, the Ruffian, the Cheater, the Puritan, the Cut-throat, the Hye-men, the Low-men, the True-man, and the Thiefe: of all trades & professions some, / [sic] of all Countreyes some" (*The Non-Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker,* ed. Alexander B. Grosart, vol. 4 [London: Hazell, Watson, and Viney, 1885] 51).

[55] Gail Kern Paster, "The Children's Middleton," *New Ways of Looking at Old Texts II* (Tempe, AZ: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1998) 104.

[56] Gair, "John Marston: A Theatrical Perspective," *The Drama of John Marston: Critical Re-Visions,* ed. T. F. Wharton (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) 35–36.

[57] Paul Yachnin, "The Populuxe Theater," in Anthony B. Dawson and Paul Yachnin, *The Culture of Playgoing in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001) 38–65 and Yachnin, "Reversal of Fortune" 765, 766. In "Reversal of Fortune," Yachnin tries to walk a fine line, describing Paul's as an "exclusive, expensive theatre" (763) yet "not highbrow" (764), trading "on a social cachet unconnected with the prestige of the court" (765). In comparison with Shakespeare's representations of Court at the Globe, Yachnin argues, "Playwrights like Marston and Middleton depicted an English community where the Children of Paul's, their audiences, and their playwrights, constituted the moral and artistic heart of the nation . . . In the company's repertory, anticourtliness is . . . of a piece with the representation of an ideal community of gentlemen, soldiers, and scholars" ("Reversal of Fortune" 766).

[58] For example, Janette Dillon discusses the complexity of the Blackfriars liberty with regard to its theater in *Theatre, Court, and City, 1595–1610: Drama and Social Space in London* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) 97–100.

[59] Douglas Bruster, *Drama and the Market in the Age of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992) 8, 10.

[60] Knutson, *Playing Companies* 10. Similarly, Bradbrook suggests a kind of friendly if not cooperative competition between the private theaters themselves, saying, "Competition between the two choristers' troupes developed, without

necessarily meaning hostility; for competition also existed between the four Inns, between the Twelve Great Companies of the City, and between factions of Court" (259).

[61] Knutson, *Playing Companies* 10, 35, 137–41.

[62] While acknowledging the differences, Knutson emphasizes the common features of the public and private theaters (*Playing Companies* 56). Recently, Heather Anne Hirschfeld has argued that two special features of the private theaters were that collaborative authorship was discouraged and serialized plays were unusual; these provocative theories are, however, difficult to substantiate with the limited available evidence. See *Joint Enterprises: Collaborative Drama and the Institutionalization of the English Renaissance Theater* (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 2004) 16–51.

[63] Munro explains, "The repertory system of production, organised around playing companies, created an environment in which texts and ideas were circulated between people from vastly different professions and backgrounds. Companies reacted to the plays performed alongside their own, with influences and sources bouncing back and forth between adult and children's companies alike, just as plays occasionally moved from one theatre to another" (*Children of the Queen's Revels* 165).

[64] See Lawrence Manley, *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995) 15.

[65] Paul Whitfield White, "Playing Companies and the Drama of the 1580s: A New Direction for Elizabethan Theatre History?" *Shakespeare Studies* 28 (2000): 268.

[66] Shapiro notes of the Children at Blackfriars that "Some scattered appearances in the provinces are recorded—Norwich and Ipswich in 1586–87 and Leicester in 1590–91—which suggest that the troupe may have acted outside of London when not serving in the Queen's Chapel" (*Children of the Revels* 17). He also notes that "Despite their suppression in London, the Children of Paul's performed in the provinces, playing at Gloucester in 1590–91 and perhaps at Archbishop Whitgift's palace in Croyden in 1592, where an unidentified children's troupe performed Nashe's *Summer's Last Will and Testament*" (*Children of the Revels* 18).

[67] Bruster suggests that the amphitheaters were built in the suburbs not simply to avoid political pressure, but because space was at a premium in the overcrowded city. He states that "the public theaters stood in direct competition with the business and businesses of the City. Among these, of course, was the business of housing the populace" (27).

[68] Andrew Gurr notes that amphitheaters were "versions of the animal-baiting houses and galleried innyards," adding, "In fact two later playhouses, the Boar's Head and the Red Bull, were converted from inns, and the square-built Fortune may have been similar to them" (*Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* 13, 15).

[69] John Orrell, "The Theaters," *A New History of Early English Drama,* ed. John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia UP, 1997) 105.

[70] Gurr discusses the "Playing-times at the Hall Playhouses as Compared with the Amphitheatres" with some uncertainty, admitting only that "The halls could evidently run till after dark more readily than the amphitheaters" (*The Shakespearian Playing Companies* 80–81).

[71] For example, Hillebrand discusses the way in which Burbage, in building the Blackfriars theater, was able "to evade a law aimed at common stages by calling his a private one. We are not called upon to explain that difference, but only to make clear that it did exist" (157). Andrew Gurr writes, "The public companies had to be licensed by the Master of the Revels, and it is possible that the 'private' companies at the 'private' playhouses were left free of this control by the fiction that they were not a commercial operation in the way that the adult companies were" (*The Shakespearean Stage 1574–1642,* 3rd ed. [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997] 53). James P. Bednarz states that "The distinction between 'public' and 'private' theater was a legal fiction. Nevertheless, the private theaters had five distinguishing characteristics that set them apart from their public counterparts: they were small indoor, rather than outdoor, venues; they charged relatively more for admission; their performers were exclusively boys, not men; their repertoires featured more satire and music; and they steered away from history plays" (*Shakespeare & the Poets' War* [New York: Columbia UP, 2001] 232).

[72] For discussions of the relationship between humanist education and drama, see Joel B. Altman, *The Tudor Play of Mind: Rhetorical Inquiry and the Development of Elizabethan Drama* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1978) and Kent Cartwright,

Theatre and Humanism: English Drama in the Sixteenth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999).

[73] Smith 480, 536.

[74] Smith 514.

[75] G. K. Hunter, *English Drama 1586–1642: The Age of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon P / New York: Oxford UP, 1997) 342.

[76] Hunter 342.

[77] See, for example, related claims in Frederick Gard Fleay, *A Chronicle History of the London Stage 1559–1642* (1890; New York: Burt Franklin, n.d.) 153 and Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* 13. For the relationship with Court theater, see John H. Astington, *English Court Theatre 1558–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999) 75.

[78] See Gair's efforts at locating and describing the Paul's theater in *The Children of Paul's* 44–69.

[79] Gair, *The Children of Paul's* 58–59, 66–69.

[80] See Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage* 156–57. Blackfriars was, of course, a fashionable neighborhood, and in the years immediately before Burbage purchased the lease for the rooms in Blackfriars in which he would construct a theater in 1596, the main paved parlor in that building was the site of the Italian Rocho Bonetti's fencing school. In *Paradoxes of Defence* (1599), George Silver claims that Bonetti "had benches and stooles, the roome being verie large, for Gentlemen to sit about his school to behold his teaching" (cited in Joseph Quincey Adams, *The Conventual Buildings of Blackfriars, London, and the Playhouses Constructed Therein* [1917;

New York: AMS, 1970] 23). Silver explains that Bonetti's lessons were expensive, as he only taught noblemen and gentlemen, and "He was verie much loved in the Court" (Adams 24).

[81] Scholars have estimated that the capacity of Blackfriars was between 500 and 700. For example, see Smith 296–97 and notes; and Gerald Eades Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage,* vol. 6: *Theatres* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1968) 11.

[82] In *The Gull's Hornbook,* Thomas Dekker claims a proper gallant should "aduance himselfe vp to the Throne of the Stage" (Chambers 4: 366). For a discussion of the position of the king during Court performances, see Astington 181–83.

[83] Citations from John Day, *The Ile of Guls* (London, 1606). Such behavior is also mentioned by George Chapman in *All Fools* (Blackfriars, 1604). See Shapiro, "Audience vs. Dramatist" 405.

[84] Astington writes of Court theater that "Once a monarch retired, the focus of a court audience was no longer there, and the king's removal was a sign for everyone to disperse, just as when for one reason or another he did not arrive for a scheduled entertainment, it did not proceed" (182).

[85] For a sustained argument on the generally "elite" nature of playgoers, see Cook.

[86] Gair, *The Children of Paul's* 32–33; Cook 60–61; and Sturgess, *Jacobean Private Theatre* 163–64.

[87] As Janette Dillon succinctly notes, "Frank Whigham has emphasized, in his book, *Ambition and Privilege*, early modern attempts to produce firm and exclusive

definitions of particular social classes or institutions typically emerge from groups under pressure, seeking to insist on boundaries that have already been crossed" (10). See note 19 above.

[88] John Day, *Law-Trickes or, Who Would Have Thought It* (London, 1608). In this instance "block" primarily refers to a hat style, but it could also signify an execution block or, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2nd ed., 1989), in a Scottish context it can mean "A scheme, contrivance; generally used in a bad sense" or "A bargain, bartering, exchange." *Law-Tricks* was entered in the Stationer's Register on 28 March 1608 and the title-page states that the play was "Acted by the Children of the Revels." It is unclear whether this is the Children of the Queen's Revels, stripped of their patronage as a consequence of their performance of controversial plays from *Eastward Ho* in 1605 to *Biron* in March of 1608, or the new Children of the King's Revels. Based on internal evidence, Chambers suggests that the play is from 1604, before the King's Revels existed, but Hillebrand and others disagree. See Chambers 3: 285–86 and Hillebrand 316. Of note is the fact that Day's *Humor out of Breath*, certainly a King's Revels play, was entered in the Stationer's Register on 12 April 1608 (Chambers 3: 287). However, since I see no reason that the printer would have left the Whitefriars company's patron off of the title-page of *Law-Tricks* and can fully understand doing so for the Blackfriars, I will operate under the reasonable assumption that the play was performed by the Blackfriars troupe. This follows the conclusion of Munro, although she follows Chambers in dating the play circa 1604 (*Children of the Queen's Revels* 174).

[89] The incident occurred in 1574. See Chambers 2: 75–76.

[90] See Chambers 4: 373–79.

[91] Bednarz claims that "The repertoires of the great hall and the amphitheater experienced such intense mutual influence during the sixteenth century that it is impossible to distinguish between their ideological perspectives" (232). And yet, Bednarz seems inclined to characterize the competition for audiences as a zero-sum game. For him, Shakespeare and the Globe's fight with Blackfriars concerned what "The First Quarto calls . . . 'the principall publike audience' not necessarily because they were in the majority (although it is possible that at some performances they were), but because their attendance was a benchmark for financial and artistic success of a particular kind The loss of these theatergoers would certainly have touched the Globe's credit, in both senses of the word" (249). However, it is unlikely that audiences would form such hard allegiances to particular theaters/companies. Indeed, the fluidity in audience composition that Bednarz identifies as a threat to the Globe was doubtless true of audiences at all the London theaters, with avid playgoers gravitating toward different offerings for different reasons. Consequently, it is disappointing that Paul's and the Fortune (built in 1600 to compete with the Globe) are often given short shrift with regard to the competition for distinguished audiences during this period.

[92] Knutson, *Playing Companies* 18.

[93] Knutson, *Playing Companies* 146.

[94] See Dawson and Yachnin 38–65.

[95] Dawson and Yachnin 91.

[96] Cited from *A Pleasant Comedie, Shewing the Contention betweene Liberalitie and Prodigalitie* (London, 1602).

[97] Gair, *The Children of Paul's* 72.

[98] Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels* 62–63.

[99] Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* 69.

[100] There have been a few unconvincing attempts to place royalty at the private theaters in the 1599–1609 period. Wallace's questionable view that Elizabeth attended a regular performance at the Blackfriars is discussed above, pp.9–11. Some scholars have argued that Queen Anna visited the Blackfriars in the later period. While Leeds Barroll is largely silent on this issue in his *Anna, Queen of Denmark, Queen of England: A Cultural Biography* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2001), Tricomi discusses the Blackfriars theater and says that "the queen began to attend performances there, responding enthusiastically to the satiric jibes at James' court" (11). However, the evidence for this claim is not very strong. The first is an often-cited 14 June 1604 letter from the French ambassador-extraordinary, Christophe de Harlay, comte de Beaumont, that tells of James's queen attending plays "in order to enjoy the laugh against her husband" (Tricomi 11). However, the Queen's favoring the Spanish ambassador over Beaumont made him bitter, giving us good reason to believe his reports home may be exaggerated (see Barroll, *Anna, Queen of Denmark* 88). Furthermore, Beaumont doesn't mention a specific theater or company, referring to the "comedians of the metropolis" (Tricomi 11) who represent the King. Anna became the patron of the Children of the Chapel at Blackfriars on 4 February 1604. The first recorded Court performances for Paul's and Blackfriars, both of which seem

to have had satirical representations of James in their repertories, are 20 and 21 February 1604. Beaumont's oblique message is dated 14 June 1604. The Queen may have gone out with her circle to a London playhouse despite politics and plague (the theaters were closed in 1604 through at least April, and Barroll notes that as late as 8 February 1604, Shakespeare's company was compensated for their inability to play, and that plague deaths rose sharply in May 1604 [*Politics, Plague, and Shakespeare's Theater: The Stuart Years* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991) 114–15, 122]), but I think it unlikely. She could easily and much more safely call players to her for genuinely "private performances," especially the Children of the Queen's Revels or the former Worcester's Men, who performed at Court as the Queen's Majesty's Men on 19 February 1604. The second piece of evidence offered in support of Tricomi's position, Arbella Stuart's letter that indicates the re-enactment of "childeplayes" among the Queen's circle (presumably she is referring to private children's theater plays) is even more problematic (see *The Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart,* ed. Sara Jayne Steen [New York: Oxford UP, 1994] 190–93). At the time of Arbella Stuart's letter (8 December 1603), the Queen had spent very little time in plague-stricken London (perhaps only for the July coronation), and the theaters were closed from the time of her arrival in England through April 1604 (Barroll, *Politics, Plague, and Shakespeare's Theater* 173). Hence, if "childes playes" is about children's theater plays, then at this point the reference reflects the tastes of Anna's English ladies rather than the Queen herself. Indeed, Lucy Munro explains, "There is no evidence to indicate whether Anna actually attended the theatre, as her successor, Henrietta Maria, was to do" (*Children of the Queen's Revels* 33).

[101] Barroll, *Politics, Plague, and Shakespeare's Theater* 105.

[102] Sturgess, *Jacobean Private Theatre* 164.

[103] Cook 124.

[104] Citations from *The Knight of the Burning Pestle,* ed. John Doebler (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1967).

[105] The dedicatory epistle to the printed text claims of the audience, "for want of judgment, or not understanding the privy mark of irony about it (which showed it was no offspring of any vulgar brain) utterly rejected it" (7–9). Gurr suggests that there could have been too many citizens at the play who took offense to its depiction of the grocer (*Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* 74).

[106] The Induction to *The Malcontent* also may satirize the private theaters as sites of homosexual desire or pedophilia when Sly offers to let Sincklo sit between his legs on the stool, leading Sincklo to claim "No indeed, cousin; the audience will then take me for a viol de gambo, and think that you play upon me" (19–20), to which Sly replies, "Nay, rather that I work upon you, coz" (21).

[107] Chambers 4: 368.

[108] Shapiro notes that "while Dekker may be overstating for satiric effect, the point would be lost were he not exaggerating a real phenomenon" ("Audience vs. Dramatist" 402). At the same time, it seems unlikely that playwrights would persist in their endeavors if they never elicited reactions that brought them satisfaction.

[109] Chambers 4: 366.

[110] Chambers 4: 366. However, citing Dekker's *Satiromastix* (5.2.303–07), Smith suggests that in the Blackfriars playhouse, the enclosed compartments in the

lowest galleries closest to the stage, commonly referred to as "boxes," were sometimes called "lord's rooms" (294–95). Nevertheless, it is unclear whether Dekker's satirical allusion to Jonson fraternizing with gallants in the "lord's rooms" after plays refers to the Blackfriars theater. For James P. Bednarz, Dekker's satire of Jonson is both about his career at Blackfriars and also more broadly conceived (256). Indeed, Bednarz points out Jonson's return to writing for the public stages in 1601, probably by the time Dekker was writing *Satiromastix,* which clouds the issue. See Bednarz 221.

[111] Chambers 4: 366.

[112] For concise discussions of the Whitefriars theater, about which little is known, see Bentley 115–17 and Hillebrand 220–21. Mary Bly offers a history of the theater and its previous occupants, the Children of the King's Revels, arguing that their repertory targeted a community bound by an interest in erotic, and specifically homoerotic, literature. See Mary Bly, *Queer Virgins and Virgin Queans on the Early Modern Stage* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000).

[113] Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* 339. Gurr bases this claim on a letter indicating that William Stanley, the sixth earl of Derby, was involved in setting up Paul's (*The Shakespearian Playing Companies* 339). The relationships between Paul's and Blackfriars and Court circles, dabbling noble playwrights, and/or noble financiers, relationships that don't place the companies above the status of "hired hands" but may have affected their status or cachet vis-à-vis the public theaters, is taken up in detail in chapter 1.

[114] Middleton's description of the Blackfriars troupe from *Father Hubburd's Tale* (1604), cited in Chambers 2: 50.

[115] For a discussion of the ages of Paul's boys, see Shen Lin, "How Old Were the Children of Paul's?" *Theatre Notebook* 45 (1991): 121–31. For a discussion of the ages of the actors at Blackfriars, see Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels* 37–41. The reissue of Nathaniel Giles' patent forbidding him from using the choristers as actors was drawn up in August 1606 and confirmed November 7. See Hillebrand 196–97.

[116] Gair discusses the way the choristers haunted Paul's aisle in *The Children of Paul's* 28–29.

[117] See Barroll's chapter titled "Shakespeare without King James," in *Politics, Plague, and Shakespeare's Theater* 23–69.

[118]Alvin Kernan, *Shakespeare, the King's Playwright: Theater in the Stuart Court 1603–1613* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1995) 12.

[119] Chambers 4: 256.

[120] Kirkham's position, which he had held since 1586, put him in the employ of the Master of the Revels and Lord Chamberlain, and "he controlled all costumes and properties used at court" (Dutton, "The Revels Office" 333). The fact that he was able to insinuate himself so thoroughly in the private-theater industry is intriguing, but in the Blackfriars litigation he comes across as a businessman desperately fighting his former partners for dubious losses.

[121] For a detailed discussion of the role of apprenticeship in London's theatrical ventures, see David Kathman, "Grocers, Goldsmiths, and Drapers: Freemen

and Apprentices in the Elizabethan Theater," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 55 (2004): 1–49. Documentation of a boy's apprenticeship to Kendall in 1606 has survived. See Hillebrand 197–99.

[122] For Woodford's work at Paul's, see Gair, *The Children of Paul's,* esp. 147–151. For contemporary allusions to Woodford's dealings (of uncertain capacity and duration) with the Blackfriars syndicate, see Mark Eccles, "Martin Peerson and the Blackfriars," *Shakespeare Survey* 11 (1958): 102–03. Woodford's considerable involvement in the Whitefriars venture is discussed by William Ingram in "The Playhouse as an Investment, 1607–1614; Thomas Woodford and Whitefriars," *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 2 (1985): 209–30.

[123] Providing a sense of the versatility of these structures, Astington says that "On balance, I consider that most of the evidence suggests that scaffolds used for court theatre were commonly built anew for each occasion, and that they were built in such a way that the lumber could have been re-used for other jobs when they were taken apart again" (82). Additionally, on some occasions, Court groups had even more "private" performances, using small royal halls as theatrical spaces. Astington says, "While the large court chambers continued to be used for large assemblies to see plays, the desire to enjoy entertainment in the company of more intimate, 'private' audiences, formed from the immediate members and guests of a particular court group, led to the conversion of court rooms which had never been used as theatrical spaces before" (117).

[124] Astington 93–94.

[125] Astington writes of the Banqueting House at Whitehall's "fitting architectural dignity in which the king *does* seem to have taken some personal interest. A new wooden building, to replace 'the old, rotten, sleight builded banqueting house' erected in 1581, was begun in 1606 and finished the following year" (112). He goes on to discuss the elaborate décor of the Banqueting House, noting that "The Works accounts reveal a great deal of very detailed decorative work on the building," concluding that "The masque and its physical setting were designed to work together in creating an effect of royal splendour and generosity" (114).

[126] Astington: "one aftermath of theatrical events: blackened and scorched ceilings, which required washing or repainting" (115).

[127] Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage* 139.

[128] Smith 509.

[129] As translated from Latin by Smith 517.

[130] Mark Eccles cites legal depositions from 1606 indicating that there may have been a £22 layout for repairs in 1604, around the time the company came under the patronage of the Queen (103). These repairs seem to have been ordered by Cuthbert Burbage, who "evidently looked after the property for Richard" (103). This scenario is likely, as the company began a fresh start after being on the verge of collapse, and Richard Burbage certainly may have taken the opportunity to protect his investment, but it may be the last time the playhouse received such attention.

[131] Smith 522.

[132] Alan Nelson explains how the tiring/repeating chambers adjoining great halls were sometimes used as rehearsal spaces. See *Early Cambridge Theatres:*

College, University and Town Stages, 1464–1720 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994) 43, 59.

[133] See Adrian Weiss, "A Pill To Purge Parody: Marston's Manipulation of the Paul's Environment in the *Antonio* Plays," *The Theatrical Space,* ed. James Redmond (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987) 81–97. Similarly, Andrew Gurr notes that Marston's *What You Will* includes "a school scene," although he claims that it "reflects and perhaps was designed to advertise the privileged and 'private' status of the boy players" (*The Shakespearian Playing Companies* 342).

[134] Knutson, *Playing Companies* 50. Lucy Munro also discusses this issue in "Early Modern Drama and the Repertory Approach," *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 42 (2003): 1–33.

[135] This falls in line with the long-held belief that poets had particular control and presence at the private theaters, a theory discussed in chapters 1 and 2.

[136] John Fletcher's hand is sometimes seen in small portions of Francis Beaumont's *The Woman Hater,* and perhaps musician and composer Martin Peerson's arrival in the Blackfriars company influenced the unusually heavy use of music in John Marston's *The Wonder of Women, or The Tragedy of Sophonisba.*

[137] The issue of Marston's stake is discussed in Smith 195–96; Hillebrand 202; and Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels* 28. The exact date that Marston sold his share to Robert Keysar is unclear. Hillebrand suggests "about 1607" (202), while Munro says "probably . . . early 1606" (*Children of the Queen's Revels* 28).

Chapter 1

Mercenary Methods: The Private Theaters and Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*

One method of operation employed by second Paul's and second Blackfriars was to promote themselves as "theaters for hire." Although it is impossible to know the frequency with which the boy companies operated in this manner, evidence of their catering to playwrights and their friends and other groups or coteries appears in the historical record and in surviving play-texts. This method of operation could be highly advantageous for the companies, guaranteeing audiences (and perhaps audiences of a certain caliber) and strengthening and/or expanding useful social connections. The practice also made the theaters sites of collaborative sport, places of social, intellectual, and artistic contest. In terms of the larger theatrical marketplace, the companies' mercenary practices enabled them to emphasize throughout their repertories the stake that audiences had in their direction and survival. In the second half of this chapter, I will show this dynamic at work in Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (Blackfriars, 1607).

In recent years there has been a tendency to view the operators of second Paul's and second Blackfriars as greedy entrepreneurs trying to, as Michael Shapiro characterizes it, "get rich on the backs of a juvenile labor force."[1] However, arguably the best evidence of this kind of acquisitive attitude appears in the context of Paul's

and Blackfriars' short-lived competition in the private children's theater industry, the Whitefriars troupe that formed around 1606–07. The Whitefriars company seems to have been a more thoroughly commercial venture than their counterparts. It stood apart from the chorister tradition, and the Whitefriars syndicate's articles of agreement (dated 10 March 1608) laid out detailed terms and conditions for the operation, including strict rules governing the selling of play-texts and—perhaps hoping to avoid the other boy companies' plague troubles—stipulations for travel.[2] William Ingram says of the participants in the Whitefriars venture: "I would like to know what tempted a tallow-chandler, a silk-weaver, a haberdasher, and other artisan types—some of them apparently frustrated playwrights—to think that they could make a quick profit in such a venture. My own bias . . . is that . . . ideas about the theater's being a source of easy wealth were commonplace at the time."[3]

Although the theater industry may have engendered money-making fantasies in Shakespeare's London, I am not convinced that the sole catalyst for second Paul's and second Blackfriars in 1599–1600 was the riches that could be earned from random paying playgoers. In fact, the history of children's troupes in London seems to have provided little encouragement to potential investors—certainly nothing indicated that such ventures provided "easy wealth." Alfred Harbage suggests that "in the whole history of chorister drama Sebastian Wescote is the only master who indubitably prospered," doing so at Paul's from the 1560s to his death in 1582, playing in a London that featured less competition and less variety of drama.[4] If Wescott did prosper financially from using his choristers as actors, he was greatly assisted by a large number of lucrative Court appearances.[5] After Wescott's death,

the Earl of Oxford used his influence to assist the survival of the children's theater in London, but the 1580s seems to have been a period of struggle and collapse. Hence, when the children's troupes re-emerged at the turn of the seventeenth century, they did so from failure. John Lyly failed to earn the coveted position of Master of the Revels through his work with Blackfriars and Paul's; the first Blackfriars theater was lost through legal wrangling in 1584; and, although we cannot be certain what happened, by 1591, political pressure and/or financial concerns put an end to boy companies for almost a decade.[6]

Hence, while the private children's theaters may have held out some hope to investors, I would argue that Paul's in 1599 and Blackfriars in 1600 had questionable profit potential, and I suspect that people were generally aware of how risky these ventures were. In the early years, at least, the Paul's and Blackfriars troupes performed probably only once or twice a week and toured rarely; consequently, they were not only susceptible to the usual political pressures, but they were especially vulnerable to financial ruin by plague closures.[7] The investments that could be expected in the maintenance of the players, costumes, props, and play-books, rent at Blackfriars and property upkeep at both venues, represent a considerable sum of money. Paul's, which probably only seated around a hundred spectators and had no room for lucrative seating on stage, seems a financially hopeless business.[8] Blackfriars, which probably seated 600, was more tenable, but even it could expect extremely difficult periods.[9]

Interestingly, for institutions just trying to survive under challenging circumstances, there is substantial evidence of Paul's and especially Blackfriars

running afoul of the authorities with controversial plays.[10] Harbage claims that "The sensational nature of the chorister plays from 1600 to 1613, and possibly of some before 1590, must be partly attributable to the difficulty of recruiting audiences to see boys perform at the prices charged."[11] But it is difficult to understand how getting stage managers, playwrights, and players arrested and the theater closed down, if only temporarily, makes good business sense. In fact, Thomas Heywood indicated that the children's theater operators and writers placed the entire theater industry at risk when he famously wrote:

> The liberty which some arrogate to themselves, committing their bitternesse, and liberall invectives against all estates, to the mouthes of children, supposing their juniority to be a priviledge of any rayling, be it never so violent, I could advise all such to curbe and limit this presumed liberty within the bands of discretion and government.[12]

In this vein, Roslyn Lander Knutson has connected the Folio version of the "little eyases" passage in *Hamlet* to 1606–08, citing the theatrical community's concern about the antics of the Blackfriars boys, who caused the brief closure of all the London theaters in 1608.[13] Hence, it seems that there was even pressure from within the theater industry against the boys' methods.

It is, then, difficult to imagine that the Blackfriars company repeatedly performed risky plays as part of a strategy for drawing crowds in order to maintain its financial health. Even if such a strategy was equal parts profitable and costly in the marketplace, it imperiled the entire enterprise, perhaps even the entire theater industry. If the Blackfriars company was struggling financially, we have little reason

to assume that theater operators suffering from empty seats would be so rigid as to refuse to adjust prices to help recruit audiences, a much safer alternative to bringing the whole enterprise down on their heads with unrestrained satire. There is also no reason to believe that the children's theater was falling out of fashion: if that were true, theatrical entrepreneurs' creation of the Whitefriars troupe around 1606–07 involved an incredibly gross misreading of the marketplace.[14]

While theater operators at Paul's and Blackfriars doubtless wanted and needed to draw income from playhouse attendance, there were sometimes considerations beyond immediate financial success in the theatrical marketplace. Philip J. Finkelpearl takes us in a useful direction when he says of the private theaters, "Economically, they were always unprofitable, and the course they persisted in following was a hazardous one. Is it not plausible to assume for these theaters . . . the same mixture of motives that is involved in most new artistic ventures—that along with economic there were aesthetic, ideological, perhaps even idealistic motives?"[15] In his recent revisions to his theories about the children's theaters, Michael Shapiro explores the ways that "Early modern theatre illustrates the blurring of distinctions and intertwining of service and profit, gift-giving and commodification."[16] He goes on to confess, "What I once saw as a 'harmonious blend' of opposing forces now seems to me to be an even more complex site of conflicting impulses, never fully resolved and constantly in flux."[17] I would like to press this idea still further.

Instead of thinking about second Paul's and second Blackfriars as making every move to draw casual playgoers to the theater to maximize short-term profit, we should consider other motives and strategies obscured by hundreds of years and

vague, misleading, or ambiguous evidence. Among these motives was forming advantageous working relationships with powerful, fashionable, or simply affluent individuals or groups. I believe that the companies did this by occasionally operating as work-for-hire enterprises, catering to those who wanted to commission a play or inject a play of their own making into the repertory. This provided opportunities not simply for financial reward, but for cementing useful social connections for the companies and/or individuals involved with them. Alliances forged through this method of operation also might have afforded a measure of insulation from the authorities regarding censorship and punishment for transgressions.

Sometimes the plays spawned through arrangements with individuals or groups were risky in terms of political content or didn't have broad or long-term appeal. And yet, even when such efforts were not commercially successful, indeed, even when they seemed damaging, the overtly mercenary method of operation that facilitated them, a method alluded to in extra- and metadramatic moments of many plays, served as a useful marketing strategy. Broadcasting the idea that the theater company and their repertory could be directly affected by segments of their audiences made ordinary playgoers feel that they had a stake in the theater and its offerings, which might keep them coming back to the theaters on a regular basis, ready to assume the roles of friends or rivals of the play being performed. In short, these theaters were deliberately operated and advertised as sites of social and artistic contest.

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In 1599 Paul's entered a London theatrical marketplace that had been without boy companies for almost a decade. The Blackfriars troupe ramped up the following year, presumably on the heels of Paul's success. I believe that the pool of surviving evidence about these companies obscures some of the circumstances surrounding their beginnings and their methods. Hence, I will begin here by laying out what is known about the start of these companies, providing a glimpse of the hidden hands that might have influenced ordinary business affairs.

When Edward Pearce was appointed Master of the Choristers at Paul's on 11 May 1599, he was keenly aware of the theatrical efforts of his predecessors. Although Pearce quickly restarted chorister performances at his location, if Roland White's letter to Robert Sidney is accurate, it is William Stanley, sixth Earl of Derby, who "put up the playes of the children in Pawles to his great paines and charge."[18] This letter prompts Andrew Gurr to say that Paul's "had more specific backing from the nobility than any other company or playhouse ever received."[19] Given the gaps in our knowledge about Elizabethan and Jacobean theaters, this is a difficult claim to support. And yet, the evidence does suggest the possibility that left to his own devices, Pearce might never had started public playing at Paul's again. That is, Pearce may have brought his operation into effect not simply because it held some promise of bringing a profit (however small), but because the theater was very much in demand by influential people.

Pearce's involvement in the theater, and his level of control over it, is unclear. Pearce did, however, offer a dubious (because highly self-interested) denial of direct involvement in the theater company during questioning over the *Old Joiner of*

Aldgate (1603) scandal (about which, more later).[20] Reavley Gair suggests, "Pearce never seems to have been content to run the playhouse alone: his interest was music; he needed a manager for the plays."[21] John Marston (1599–1603), Thomas Woodford (1603–04), and Edward Kirkham (1604–06) are the people Gair sees occupying this role.[22] Only the surviving reference in White's letter provides evidence of aristocratic patronage for the private theater at Paul's. Without it, we might be more inclined to suppose that Pearce's primary motive was profitable negotiation of the marketplace With it, we have reason to suspect otherwise.

The operation a few city blocks away at Blackfriars is even harder to read. Henry Evans, the scrivener who took on the Blackfriars lease in 1600 with an eye to restarting the tradition of chorister-actors there, had been a "deere friende" of Sebastian Wescott and was involved briefly in the battle for control of the first Blackfriars theater; he had even been payee at Court for a 27 December 1584 performance by "the children of Therle of Oxforde," generally considered to be the combined Paul's and Blackfriars boys.[23] That Evans had clear ideas about what he wanted to do with the Blackfriars theater when the lease was drawn up in September 1600 is clear; that Richard Burbage was skeptical about its success—because of cost of operations, or the limitations imposed on the venture in order to keep up the appearance of "privacy," or because of expected troubles with the authorities or the neighborhood—may be deduced from the £400 bond that Evans and his son-in-law Alexander Hawkins had to enter into for payment of the rent. Gurr characterizes second Blackfriars as "a far bolder and riskier venture than . . . [second] Paul's," although he seems to assume that Evans first took the Blackfriars lease and then made

arrangements with business partners, a questionable order of events.[24] Evans certainly knew the vicissitudes of the children's theaters; it is difficult to imagine that he did not understand how risky his venture was. Yet, it is also clear from the terms to which he agreed with Richard Burbage that he was champing at the bit to embark on it.

At question, then, is the amount of, and perhaps even the nature of, the profits Evans expected to reap from the company. Unfortunately, the events that unfolded soon after the company began performing, and the type of evidence surrounding them, makes this a difficult question to answer. If Burbage was indeed skeptical about Evans's ability to run a successful theatrical venture at Blackfriars, his doubts were confirmed just three months after start-up, when the Blackfriars syndicate, consisting of Evans, Hawkins, Master of the Children of the Chapel Royal Nathaniel Giles, and the obscure James Robinson, came under heavy scrutiny for attempting to impress the son of a wealthy and influential gentleman named Henry Clifton. Clifton was outraged that his boy was snatched up and placed "amongst a company of lewd and dissolute mercenary players."[25] The Privy Council immediately interfered and ordered Clifton's son released. Evans and perhaps Giles and Robinson too were censured.

It seems possible if not likely that by the time a decision was taken on Clifton's complaints by the Court of Star Chamber in 1602, a major shake-up in management and changes in policy (especially where impressments were concerned) were well underway. Around this time Evans seems to have established Hawkins as a stand-in for himself and sold a half share in the company to Edward Kirkham,

William Rastall, and Thomas Kendall after they, according to Evans, "earnestly labored with and entreated" him to "suffer them to have and enjoy some part of the demised premises."[26] The company soldiered on in this new configuration for a year or so. Then, at some point during the long 1603–04 closure of the theaters for Elizabeth's death and the plague, Evans unsuccessfully approached Burbage about the cancellation of the Blackfriars lease, trying to unburden himself of a theater that was costing money and not generating income.[27] It is likely that the Burbages were in no position financially to allow Evans out of his lease, but the King's Men also may not have become comfortable with the idea of using the theater themselves until after the increasingly professional Blackfriars troupe paved the way at the end of their run there in 1607–08.

Regardless, it seems that shortly after these early lease negotiations between Evans and Burbage, word of royal patronage put wind in the sails of the flagging boy company. Courtier-poet Samuel Daniel entered the Blackfriars mix through the 1604 royal patent, which restyled the troupe the Children of the Queen's Revels and named Daniel the official censor of the company.[28] Daniel's post may have been little more than nominal; the evidence is scant and ambiguous. Daniel claims that he acquired the royal patent by his "earnest suit, means and endeavor . . . performed with . . . great labor, costs and expenses," although Kirkham and Kendall state that they agreed to pay him £10 a year "in regard of the pains to be taken . . . about the approbation and allowance of . . . plays."[29] By 1605, however, Daniel's own play at the Blackfriars, *Philotas,* upset people close to King James, who saw allusions to the Essex

conspiracy, and Daniel quickly rid himself of his part in the company, signing the remuneration for his sinecure/post off to one John Gerrard.[30]

Through legal documents we also know that John Marston bought a share of the company—apparently part of Evans's stake—which he then sold to London goldsmith Robert Keysar.[31] Whatever Evans's original plan was, he found it best to sell pieces of the pie over his tenure at Blackfriars. The enterprise was either not as profitable or much more burdensome than he first surmised—it certainly does not seem to have been a financial windfall.

Further complicating matters are the unreliable surviving legal documents from the Blackfriars syndicate, which paint a portrait of large investments, large profits, and continuous animosity among its partners. They are a series of accusations and denials, competing versions and interpretations of events. The most certain conclusion that can be drawn from the legal wrangling is that all of those who invested in the Blackfriars property and the children's troupe that performed there are highly unreliable witnesses.[32] Additionally, the context of the documents casts doubt on their applicability to the early years of the venture: the vast majority of the "facts" the various depositions provide about the economics of the Blackfriars troupe come from statements made after the King's Men had moved into the theater part-time and had presumably illustrated the profitability of the place from a commercial perspective, or at the very least illustrated its usefulness to a highly successful adult company.[33]

Finally, claims of losses by Blackfriars members made after 1608 may be colored by the fact that the aging boys were basically a professional troupe playing

more frequently than in the early years. At some point after the troubles of 1606 there was a shift in the dynamics of the Blackfriars operation: the company lost the patronage of Queen Anna, Nathaniel Giles was strictly forbidden from using choristers as players, and the company came under the control of London goldsmith Robert Keysar.[34] Keysar continued to manage the troupe at Whitefriars after 1608, a year in which some of the young actors were thrown in jail for the performance of plays that offended first the French Ambassador, then James and others at Court. This imprisonment is likely indicative of the fact that some of the "boys" had obtained their majority. In a 1610 legal deposition, Keysar claims that he:

> had a company of the most expert and skillful actors within the realm of England, to the number of eighteen or twenty persons, all or most of them trained up in that service in the reign of the late Queen Elizabeth for ten years together, and afterwards preferred into her Majesty's service to be the Children of her revels by a patent from his most excellent Majesty.[35]

Keysar's likely exaggerated "ten years together" is probably a reference to the passage of time between the startup of the company in 1600 and the time of the deposition; it clearly indicates that some of the players in the company were in their late teens and early twenties by 1610.[36]

When all of the evidence about the Blackfrairs company is taken into account it becomes clear that many of the "facts" conveyed in the often-cited trail of legal documents pertaining to the venture are not particularly connected to the visions that motivated the start-up of the company. Since the company was at least partially inspired by the early success of second Paul's, it might be logical to consider the

ways in which its opening was modeled after or otherwise related to that of its predecessor. We might, then, be inclined to think that Evans had encouragement from an aristocratic patron or otherwise influential individual or group (or that he expected to attract some), but there is no hard evidence from the 1599–1600 period to support such speculation. Only the acquisition of royal patronage and brief involvement of Samuel Daniel in 1604 suggests the kind of aristocratic backing for which there is better evidence at Paul's.

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So far, then, the historical record provides only a few clues about the involvement or influence of those outside Paul's and Blackfriars management. However, other evidence can be called to account that better illustrates the ways the troupes marketed themselves and the ways in which coteries and rival groups used the theaters. The strongest indicators involve the influence of playwrights and their friends on playhouse affairs. Certainly there was always a symbiotic relationship between professional playwrights and theater companies, who depended upon each other's success. But because of their smaller size, more intimate feel, and immature players, Paul's and Blackfriars fostered an unusual dynamic in which playwrights were given particular control and influence. Hence, although E. K. Chambers was cautious in his assessment of the private stages, he does "venture to conjecture that the boys' companies were much more under the influence of their poets than were their adult rivals."[37] In that vein, Andrew Gurr suggests, "[Ben] Jonson . . . obviously valued the children because he could order them to do what he wanted more easily than his adult employers."[38]

These claims correlate with a very real sense one gets about the private theater from canvassing the extant plays. In the inductions to the earliest new plays for second Paul's and second Blackfriars, John Marston's *Antonio and Mellida* (1599) and Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels* (1600), an effort is made to introduce the audience to the young actors. In both cases, the players are essentially represented as school children, characterized by both immature squabbling and an eagerness to have the best parts and do their best with them.[39] In the Induction to *Cynthia's Revels,* Jonson presents a boy player who denies being controlled by the play's author (i.e., Jonson himself), yet he also suggests that this is the normal order of affairs: "wee are not so officiously befriended by him [the author of *Cynthia's Revels*], as to haue his presence in the tiring-house, to prompt vs aloud, stampe at the booke-holder, sweare for our properties, curse the poore tire-man, raile the musicke out of tune, and sweat for euerie venaill trespasse we commit, as some Authour would, if he had such fine engles as we. Well, tis but our hard fortune" (Ind.160–66).[40] Both Jonson and Marston relate the idea that the boy players on stage are ready and eager to do the bidding of the playwrights who spur them to action. Clearly, then, in the earliest days of both companies, the young actors at least were presented to audiences as immature, eager, talented, and malleable (or as malleable as children and adolescents can be).

But the playwrights didn't simply have a great deal of control over the boy players and the production of their works. Published plays provide an abundance of important evidence of playwrights and their friends forming social circles that are expected to be present and highly active during performances.[41] For example, during

the so-called Poets' War, Thomas Dekker suggests that Ben Jonson stacks audiences with his friends, sending gallants to the theater to hiss at the plays of his rivals:

> Asin[ius]. . . . Crispinus and his Iorneyman
> Poet Demetrius Fannius too, they sweare they'll bring your life
> and death vpon'th stage like a Bricklayer in a play.
> Hor[ace]. Bubo they must presse more valiant wits than their own to
> do it: me ath stage? ha, ha, Ile starue their poore copper-lace
> workmasters, that dare play me: I can bring (and that they quake
> at) a prepar'd troope of gallants, who for my sake shal distaste
> euery vnsalted line, in their fly-blowne Comedies.
> Asin. Nay that's certaine, ile bring a hundred gallants of my
> ranke (1.2.137–46)[42]

In the Induction to *What You Will* (Paul's, 1599–1600), Marston depicts three gallants, Atticus, Doricus, and Phylomuse, and Phylomuse apparently has brought the others because of his relationship with the author. Doricus speaks of "the loue you [Phylomuse] haue procured mee to beare your friend the Author" (A2r), and later Phylomuse speaks of "some halfe a dozen rancorous breasts" who "Should plant them-selues on purpose to discharge / Impostum'd malice on his [the author's] latest Sceane" (A2r–A2v).[43] Similar circumstances are represented in later plays, even as the troupes became increasingly professional. One of the gallants in the Induction to John Day's *Isle of Gulls* (1606) asks where the poet's friends are: "And where sits his friends? hath he not a prepared company of gallants, to aplaud his iests, grace out his

play?" (A2r)[44] The Prologue denies this practice (perhaps "playing dumb"), but the gentleman insists that it is commonplace.

Such metatheatrical moments indicate a private-theater audience partly composed of authors' supporters and detractors engaged in a kind of literary gang warfare in which people uninterested in the actual quality of the play applaud or condemn it based on their relationship with its author. It is clear that the companies and their playwrights were intent on repeatedly advertising this dynamic to generate interest in their productions. These moments provide a window into an important feature of the private theaters—that they were facilitators of collaborative sport, generating allegiances and conflicts on artistic, intellectual, and social grounds.

The instigators of this sport, however, were not always professional playwrights or company management. Individuals or groups who were not necessarily an integral part of the theater industry could affect the Paul's and Blackfriars repertories. The private children's theaters made themselves available as "work-for-hire" servants for patrons, groups of playgoers, and amateur playwrights who had the social or financial capital to command them. I suspect that these arrangements roughly corresponded to the companies' advertised relationships with professional playwrights and were factors in the perceived (but always changeable) social status or agenda of the companies.[45]

This method of operation had a paradoxical effect: it afforded opportunities to bolster the companies' claims to "privacy" and their upscale pretensions, even as it was a commercial tactic or act of prostitution. Clifton's use of the word "mercenary" in his description of the company that absconded with his son was neither original nor

accidental, but (whether he knew it or not) it had particular significance for the target of his attack. In fact, printed plays from the repertories at Paul's and Blackfriars (both prefatory material and play-text) are commonly laced with the language of prostitution. Jonson and others' use of the word "ingle," while understandably of interest to scholars dealing with gender issues and queer theory, also operates in terms of theatrical service and an economy according to which the boy-as-actor did the manager/playwright/patron/audience's bidding on stage.[46] This kind of language and imagery squares nicely with the Letter to the Reader in the quarto of *Family of Love* (1608), in which the author compares plays with prostitiutes.[47] It also meshes with "The Book to the Reader" in the quarto of Day's *Law-Tricks* (1608), which is provocative because there is slippage between the book and the author, and the signature strongly suggests the mercenary nature of each:

> For my owne part I reuerence all modest aduertisements, and submit my selfe to any iudicious censurer, protesting I neuer held any irregular course, but my Inke hath beene always simple, without the iuice of worm-wood, and my pen smooth without teeth, and so it shall continue.
>
> Farewell,
>
> Thine or any mans for a testar. (A2r)[48]

All of these texts resonate with traditional comparisons between bawdy houses and theaters, but they are of particular importance here because they place the private theaters, their writers, and their plays squarely in the realm of the mercenary.[49]

If at times Paul's and Blackfriars sold their services to individuals or groups, then we might better understand why it has been difficult to determine who controlled

the repertories of Paul's and Blackfriars, especially when it comes to their more sensational or scandalous plays. In *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, Gurr mentions the difficulty of determining who was the driving force behind the Blackfriars repertory as opposed to the common assumption about the order of affairs at Paul's:

> In the boy companies a single controller looked after the boys, hiring and feeding them, and making the decisions about what the repertory should offer. . . . Edward Pearce did [this] for the second Paul's Boys. It is less easy to find an equivalent figure working for the Blackfriars Children. Evans started them going . . . But whether it was he who ran the repertory, and whether he stayed on in the company making the daily decisions even when the Star Chamber troubles made him retreat into the background, is not at all clear . . . There is actually something rather like a hole at the heart of the Blackfriars company's management. Nobody was ever named as the man who handled its repertory.[50]

Gurr's uncertainty about the Blackfriars troupe is warranted, but—as we will see in a moment—there is reason to question the assumption that Pearce always had strict control over his company's product. Then, too, there has been difficulty in finding a consistent agenda in the Blackfriars and Paul's repertories, as well as among the playwrights who regularly wrote for these companies.[51] Also unclear is the level of external control exerted on the children's theaters; Gurr is typical in expressing uncertainty about whether either of the children's companies were subject to the scrutiny of the Master of the Revels, and especially whether or not Samuel Daniel

actually performed the function of censor at Blackfriars.[52] Richard Dutton recently has explored the relationship between the Master of the Revels and the children's companies during this period, arguing that Edmund Tilney or his agents regularly licensed plays and meddled in affairs, but there are clearly anomalies and there is much we don't know or understand—for example, Yeoman of the Revels Edward Kirkham's involvement with both Blackfriars and Paul's in the 1602–08 period, and whether it should be attributed to personal or official motives.[53]

Indeed, the history of the Blackfriars boys suggests that little was done to make sure the company would not offend well-connected people who might be in the audience on any given night. Hence, there was a series of performances deemed "offensive": the three earliest for which we have strong evidence are Daniel's *Philotas* (1604), Jonson, Chapman, and Marston's *Eastward Ho* (1605), and Day's *Isle of Gulls* (1606). At first punishment was directed at the writers: Daniel was questioned by the Privy Council, and Jonson and Chapman were jailed, with Marston apparently escaping that fate by going into hiding. Of the fallout from *Isle of Gulls,* we only know that "Sundry were committed to Bridewell" and the company was stripped of its royal patronage and right of impressment.[54]

Although the preponderance of evidence suggests that Pearce was more cautious about the Paul's repertory, his troupe also waded into controversy. Philip J. Finkelpearl identifies potentially dangerous satire at Paul's as early in the venture as *Jack Drum's Entertainment* (1600).[55] Later, Pearce and his stage manager Thomas Woodford were interrogated by authorities because of the production of George Chapman's *Old Joiner of Aldgate* (1603), a play that seems to have been

commissioned by a bookbinder named John Flaskett in order to influence a legal case regarding the legitimacy of his prior betrothal to Agnes Howe, a woman with a sizeable dowry who was married to John Milward, "Preacher at Christchurch in Newgate Street."[56] The evidence in this case, like much of the evidence about affairs at Blackfriars, is difficult to sort. When questioned by the authorities, Woodford, Chapman, and Flaskett were doubtless desperately trying to show that there was no collusion or malicious intent in the composition and performance of the play.[57] I suspect too that accusations about Paul's management threatening to perform a prologue attacking anyone who "hindred the playinge threof" (and even asking for "fortie pounds" or one will be produced) are exaggerated, or possibly the result of a rogue participant, perhaps Woodford, trying to gain money through extortion.[58] If Woodford was the one who facilitated the use of Paul's as a political weapon, or at least was guilty of doing so recklessly, Pearce may have expressed his displeasure in an uncivil way: "on 2 December 1604 Edward Pearce caused Thomas Woodford 'grevious bodily harm' and in Easter Term 1606 he was sued and fined £13 6s 8d."[59] The fight between Pearce and Woodford challenges Gurr's conclusion that the Paul's repertory was always tightly controlled by Pearce.[60]

Rather than conclude that the management of second Paul's and second Blackfriars hoped to earn great sums of money by regularly drawing throngs to their theaters through dangerous controversy, we should consider that in some of these instances catering to certain playwrights, patrons, and groups was valued more than the safety of restraint. The dangerous plays at Paul's and Blackfriars open one window into an established and advertised practice that could culminate in less

sensational performances. Just as the private-theater companies accommodated those for whom we have the strongest collection of evidence, feuding professional playwrights and their friends and followers, they also made their services available to wealthy or even aristocratic dabblers in drama and their circles, people who could manipulate the companies from a position of privilege and other well-to-do people who might write or commission a play.

The largely circumstantial evidence that Paul's and Blackfriars may have operated as "work-for-hire" theaters involves socially prominent and more ordinary people and different kinds of performances orchestrated for different purposes. The often-discussed links between the Inns of Court and the private theaters could have been forged in part through "work-for-hire" practices brokered through playwrights and company management.[61] Derby, the man who "put up" Paul's, already had his own company of adult players who performed at Court during the Christmas seasons of 1599–1600 and 1600–01 and unsuccessfully tried to gain a foothold in London in the 1599–1602 period.[62] His involvement with Paul's in 1599 may have stemmed from the tenuous position of his professional players and his desire to have a (or another) traditional outlet available for the plays he had been "penning . . . for the common players."[63] But Derby, who lived at Lincoln's Inn in the 1590s and none of whose plays have survived (or can be identified), may very well have had more intimate performances in mind.[64] For example, Gair argues that Marston brings portraits of himself and Derby on stage in *Antonio and Mellida,* possible evidence of an early coterie performance, and perhaps an advertisement of the company's method of operation.[65] Meanwhile, William Percy, the "third son of Henry Percy, eighth Earl

of Northumberland," wrote some unremarkable academic-style plays from 1601–03, naming Paul's as a potential place of performance.[66] These works have survived only in manuscript. According to Chambers, "Percy was . . . educated at Gloucester Hall, Oxford. He was a friend of Barnable Barnes, and himself published *Sonnets to the Fairest Coelia* (1594)."[67] Perhaps Percy hoped for a private performance at Paul's, which might have opened up the possibility of a Court performance for one of his plays.[68] Of course, the most vivid example of the commissioning of a play or play topic, George Chapman's *Old Joiner of Aldgate* (1603), which Gair describes as a "prostitution of the theatre," is a considerably less upscale, more "community theater" example of the practice, with Flaskett drawing up a plot, Chapman composing the play, and Paul's presenting it.[69] While scholars have traditionally viewed this episode in Paul's history as an anomaly, an isolated incident, I think it is well worth considering in light of Paul's mercenary strategy and attitudes about the availability of the children's theaters for purposes such as pursuing personal agendas.

The earliest possible evidence of the "hiring" of the Blackfriars theater is admittedly tenuous. Charles William Wallace cites Dudley Carleton's letter of 29 December 1601 in which he states that "The Q: dined this day priuatly at my Ld Chamberlains; I came euen now from the blackfriers where I saw her at the play wth all her candidae auditrices."[70] Wallace firmly believed that Elizabeth had attended a regular performance at the Blackfriars. Several scholars subsequently have pointed out that it is more likely the Queen saw the play at the Lord Chamberlain's residence, and since no company is named it is quite possible that the Lord Chamberlain's Men were the performers. For example, Chambers says that the Queen "had dined with

Lord Hunsdon at this house in the Blackfriars. The play may have been in his great chamber, or he may have borrowed the theatre next door for private use on an off-day. And the actors may even more probably have been his own company than the Chapel boys."[71] Regardless, if the private theaters sometimes operated in the manner I have suggested, it is certainly within the realm of possibility that the Lord Chamberlain commissioned a special performance by the Blackfriars troupe for the Queen.

A stronger piece of evidence of outside influence at the Blackfriars theater exists in Frederick Gershaw's glowing account of a particularly orderly and decorous performance during the Duke of Stettin-Pomerania's visit in 1602.[72] The Duke and his retinue spent three weeks in England; they were entertained by "leading officials, statesmen, and scholars," including the Lord Mayor of London, and they were received at Court, although Elizabeth was absent.[73] Gershaw, an attendant of the Duke who kept a diary of his travels, says of the Blackfriars theater, "there is always present a large audience, including many respectable women, because entertaining plot-developments and excellent teachings, as we were informed by others, are expected to be presented." The performance Gershaw claims to have seen—"its plot deals with a chaste widow. It was the story of a royal widow of England"—sounds very different from the irreverent and rowdy plays from the so-called Poets' War that were creating a splash during the 1601–03 period. In fact, Gershaw's glowing account of the theater and its audience bears the markings of "putting on a show" for an important foreign visitor. It is reasonable to suspect that Gershaw witnessed a special performance, possibly one commissioned by his hosts.

Additionally, the sustained thread of dangerous anti-James, anti-Court satires in the later years has provided opportunities to see the Blackfriars theater catering to the needs or desires of particular groups. For example, Albert H. Tricomi sees the performance of Samuel Daniel's *Philotas* as "a political act in keeping with the larger picture of dissident dramatic activity at the Blackfriars Theater in the early Jacobean period. The performance also conforms to a broad pattern of cultural activities undertaken at the time by estranged pro-Essex supporters"[74] By this time, of course, Daniel had insinuated himself into company affairs, but he may have facilitated the use of the company by others of his ilk.[75] In fact, Tricomi believes that Queen Anna and her circle (of which Daniel was a part) took an active role in the direction of the Blackfriars company that briefly bore the Queen's name; similarly, Barbara Kiefer Lewalski claims that "the Queen gave active as well as passive support to oppositional theater and encouraged anti-Jamesean satire."[76] While I think claims about the Queen's direct involvement or influence on the Blackfriars theater are exaggerated, it is likely that powerful people, perhaps in the Queen's circle, encouraged and contributed to the Blackfriars repertory.

That those outside company management exerted some influence or control, occasionally interjecting themselves into the repertory—something we only get hints of when lines are crossed and authorities step in—is therefore an important consideration. Dutton has noted that in the later period, "One effect of the growing identification of the leading companies with the court . . . was the emergence of gentlemen or courtier playwrights, who were in a position to challenge the authority of the Master of the Revels."[77] I think that such influences were a factor in the

children's theaters in the first decade of the seventeenth century, and that given the decreasing but still significant stigma of participating in a professional endeavor, it is perhaps unsurprising that only trace evidence is left of this aspect of affairs (and that the most direct evidence we have of it involves a bookbinder).

At the very least it seems safe to say that the children's theaters were positioned to accommodate amateur dabblers in drama. The very nature of their performances recalled the circumstances of scholastic drama and the small (or relatively small) size of their venues meant that a play could be put on before a circle of friends who could dominate the audience. Furthermore, although Paul's and Blackfriars regularly offered plays to a general audience as part of London's larger theatrical marketplace, some performances may have been genuinely "private," that is, unadvertised to the general public or restricted as much as possible. In *Kirkham and Kendall vs. Daniel* (Court of Chancery, 1609), Edward Kirkham and Thomas Kendall say that they agreed to pay Daniel £10 per annum for his role as censor for every year that the children played "publicly or privately" for at least six months.[78] It could be that "private" means Court performances and "public" means any performance at the Blackfriars theater, but it is also possible that some performances in the Blackfriars theater were "private" and some were "public." Hence, amateur or semi-commercial plays—perhaps like Percy's efforts—may have been performed "privately" at the theaters but remain unknown and lost to us today.[79]

This method of operation suggests that for citizen-class investors in these ventures, sharers such as haberdasher Thomas Kendall, Thomas Woodford, or obscure partners such as James Robinson and Thomas Payne, opportunities to rub

elbows with important people may have been part of the attraction. From the beginning, the private theaters at both Paul's and Blackfriars subscribed to the tradition of entertainment aimed at and designed to carry courtly ambitions, and both companies did provide ambitious courtier-poets an opportunity to have a play performed at Court. Evans had certainly learned from his dealings with Paul's after Wescott's death that ambitious courtiers like Oxford and Lyly were eager to use and protect a resource like the Chapel Children. Additionally, the patron-servant dynamic may explain how the Blackfriars company tried to survive its scandalous performances. Tricomi may be correct when he suggests that in its dangerous satire "the company capitalized on its relationship with the well-to-do courtly audiences."[80] It is certainly possible that some of the management at the children's theaters felt insulated from serious harm because of relationships they had cultivated among their clientele, courtly or not.

The children's companies needed such insurance because it is abundantly clear that not everyone in attendance was guaranteed to be friendly to the playwright, company, or play, or of a similar mind to the majority of the other playgoers. Even in theaters that may have courted the commissioning of plays or happily accommodated special, intimate performances, it is unlikely that audiences could be so tightly controlled as to avoid some mixture of target audience and onlookers.[81] In fact, for some the thrill of participating as an outsider in a kind of coterie theater, perhaps even "spying," might have been an important part of their theatrical experience. By virtue of their capacity, lower cost of participation, and different seating arrangement, the public theaters could not foster these dynamics as easily or as intensely.

Vivid evidence of antagonistic relationships in the playhouse appears in a reference to spying in the Prologue to Beaumont's *The Woman-Hater* (Paul's, 1606), which refers to "any lurking amongst you in corners, with Table bookes, who have some hope to find fit matter to feed his ——— mallice on, let them claspe them up, and slinke away, or stay and be converted" (6–9).[82] These lines suggest that the private theaters were policed by audiences: if the companies went too far with any particular topic or representation, someone among the audience could send word through the proper channels, as seems to have happened on more than one occasion. Given the turmoil caused by private-stage plays seen to be attacking authority or otherwise viewed as *romans á clef*, Beaumont's concern is certainly justified.

In claiming that the children's companies sometimes operated as "work-for-hire" ventures, then, I am not suggesting that the theater operators (members of the syndicates, etc.) happily relinquished control of the companies in which they invested so much. Rather, I am suggesting that in the case of the private theaters a top-down model with the theater operators always in tight control, ever-mindful of the marketplace, is no more applicable than the sharer model familiar to us from the adult companies. The Essex conspiracy's commissioning of the Chamberlain's Men's performance of *Richard II* is perhaps an episode from the public stage that brings us close to the way the children's theaters operated with some degree of regularity, although in the case of the children's theaters we have some evidence that entire plays were injected into their repertories through such arrangements. A fully professional company such as the King's Men would have measured the value of a play with an eye to how long it might stay in the repertory; a company that performed much less

frequently to smaller audiences would have been more opportunistic, mounting drama for specific groups or occasions, achieving many short-runs and an occasional, requisite marketplace success.

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Overall, then, the social and business components of Paul's and Blackfriars' mercenary strategy afforded several possible positive outcomes. But because they were also commercial theaters and because London crowds were very difficult to control, when they took sides in cultural conflicts they created the circumstances for a powder-keg effect. This was a double-edged sword: the potential problems are obvious (and a matter of record), but it was also a significant selling point for the enterprises, and not simply as a result of pandering to a fascination with controversy.

It is my contention that Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (Blackfriars, 1607) shows the manner in which the private children's companies could use their "work for hire" status to their advantage in the larger theatrical marketplace by emphasizing the stake that audiences had in their offerings. That is, Beaumont's play suggests that if certain types of playgoers want a certain type of theater with certain types of plays, it is their responsibility to involve themselves in that theater at least by showing up regularly—and possibly by even more direct involvement in the production of plays.

Walter Burre, the publisher of the 1613 quarto of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle,* describes the play's fate in an often-cited dedicatory epistle to Robert Keysar: "This unfortunate child . . . was by his parents . . . exposed to the wide world, who for want of judgment, or not understanding the privy mark of irony about it (which

showed it was no offspring of a vulgar brain) utterly rejected it."[83] While it seems certain that the play failed when it was first performed in 1607, Zachary Lesser has argued that Burre's description of the play's early reception may be colored by a marketing strategy designed to rehabilitate a failed play for a literary, book-buying audience.[84] Burre's claims about the conditions of the play's performance are therefore probably unreliable.

The Knight of the Burning Pestle traditionally has been said to offer—with varying degrees of intent—an absolute opposition between a middle class with bad taste in drama and a more sophisticated, elite audience. For example, in *Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions,* Alfred Harbage suggests that the play failed not "so much because it satirized citizens as because it did so without animosity."[85] However, such claims are based on a reductive view of playhouse dynamics, a "cultural oversimplification" that Andrew Gurr has recently located at the heart of Harbage's analysis.[86] Both well-to-do citizens and elite Londoners attended the private theaters, and in the world outside the theater these two groups intermingled and depended on each other in a variety of ways, even when there was tension between them. Hence, although G. K. Hunter may be right in claiming that "*The Knight of the Burning Pestle* enacts the issue of the social status of dramatic performances," it is imperative that we situate this in the larger context of private-playhouse operations.[87]

While *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* does use stereotypes and can readily be seen as playing to anti-citizen, anti-Puritan prejudices, the real significance of the play's doltish citizen-playgoers lies elsewhere: the play is less motivated by broad social concerns than it is concerned with the private-theater industry. Strategically

open to outside influences, the private theater companies welcomed cultural tugs-of-war, and Beaumont's comedy is emphatically built on such a scenario. What if middle-class boors, people with much more money than sense, became involved in Blackfriars repertory decisions?

Citizen George and his wife Nell, the two people who take seats on stage and direct and comment upon the action, are clearly put forward for the sport of the crowd, but it is difficult to believe that they are meant to represent citizens in general. The play does not seem to satirize them for being at the Blackfriars theater, but rather for not knowing or understanding their place there. When he interrupts the Prologue, George says, "This seven years there hath been plays at this house, I have observed it, you have still girds at citizens" (Ind. 6–8) and claims that the boys "study for new subjects purposely to abuse your betters" (Ind. 18–19). That George has visited the theater in the past would be likely enough, but Beaumont probably intends most of his claims to be suspect. He doesn't seem to understand what he sees on stage, struggling along with his wife to suss out the motivations of Jasper and Humphrey and to distinguish hero from heel. His lack of sophistication helps to explain his level of offense at the theater's repertory.[88] George is right to suspect satire at citizens'/merchants' expense (so too should he expect satire of others), but his reaction to this satire is inappropriate.[89]

Additionally, the participation of George's wife Nell, who makes her way on stage at the beginning of the play, is both extraordinary and an important signal to the audience about the kind of characters who are interrupting this play. George is constantly saying to Nell "be patient" (1.204) and "Hold thy tongue" (1.235). At one

point he seems to become agitated at her for speaking to the characters as if they were real; at another, he says, "By my troth, cony, if there were a thousand boys, thou would'st spoil them all with taking their parts" (1.386–88). At other times, however, George coaxes her or simply responds to her comments, and at still other points he seems to dote on her. Several times Nell asks to see their apprentice-turned-player, Rafe, do something specific or play a particular role, and often her husband backs her up, bullying the boy actors when necessary. Hence, George teeters between scolding his wife and ridiculous patience, even uxoriousness. While Beaumont certainly intends for Nell's influence to further erode George's stature, her very presence also underscores their parts as unsophisticated playgoers. Andrew Gurr suggests that in *What You Will* (Paul's, 1599–1600), John Marston indicates that male audience members are "auditors" while women are "spectators." According to Gurr, "Marston implies that only the respected gentlemen are attending for the poetry."[90] This stereotype of "women spectators" pertains to Beaumont's representation of Nell. As Lee Bliss explains, "Nell's almost stream-of-consciousness responses betray latent sexual preoccupations and an all too overt demand for violence as well as spectacle."[91] Her domineering presence, especially on a stool on the boards of the stage, is a marker of the crudeness of the playgoers that Beaumont is portraying.

Overall, then, whatever their endearing qualities may be, George and Nell are naïve, stupid, and tactless—in short, "bad playgoers," and not simply because of their social origins or a matter of their enthusiasm for so-called popular drama. For example, Sheldon P. Zitner concludes, "*The Knight* is better described as a delighted sharing of popular taste than as a moral or intellectual rejection of it, or as class-

conscious satire of the popular audience."[92] Lee Bliss argues that Beaumont's satire is "not simply a matter of class" but rather "cuts both ways."[93] She claims that "Beaumont's mockery is genial, its target ultimately human nature rather than strictly citizen folly. Boorish behavior and the demand that the playhouses serve private preference were hardly uniquely citizen failings. Indeed, one of the Induction's surprises, for a Blackfriars audience, would have been its substitution of imperious shopkeeper for the usual rude gallant or Inns-of-Court man."[94] Following a similar train of thought, Roy J. Booth suggests that for Beaumont, George and Nell are not simply ill-behaved citizens, but surrogates for disruptive "gallants who chose to sit on stage, and through them, all ignorantly critical or distracting members of what had apparently become a difficult audience."[95]

Alexander Leggatt has recently argued that *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* shows "what happens when one element in the mixture that makes theatre gets out of control," with the situation approximating "the displacement of the aristocratic patron by the paying public."[96] However, the aristocratic patron was often the paying public, and those in the paying public could have an influence resembling that of aristocratic patrons.[97] If, as I have suggested, the children's theaters were discreetly advertised and thought of as companies open to the influence of patrons, groups of playgoers, and dabblers in drama, then there was always a danger, however unlikely, of their being employed and overrun by a fringe element.[98] In Beaumont's play, this remote danger is portrayed on stage and ultimately represents a threat to the Blackfriars playgoers that is less about class than it is about taste and influence.

When the vain citizen George interrupts the planned performance of *The London Merchant* with his request for a play that flatters citizens and features a character of his own trade, the Prologue replies "O, you should have told us your mind a month since. Our play is ready to begin now" (Ind. 32–33).[99] Metadramatic moments in the inductions to plays often feature players speaking politely and officiously to bossy or otherwise condescending playgoers, so the above lines may simply be Beaumont's representation of the Prologue trying to put off the Citizen; yet, this moment is particularly important because it lays bare the "prostitution" of the theater at Blackfriars. The Prologue in effect says, "We would have done your bidding, if only you'd given us enough prior notification." Beaumont highlights both the subservience of the players and the company's openness to outside influences on playhouse affairs (points of emphasis in plays at the opening of second Paul's and second Blackfriars). The private theaters' method of operation is put to the test when Beaumont represents the reworking of a play in progress by unsophisticated people with crude taste in drama and little regard for theatrical conventions.

Beaumont's play features illuminating references to the business of playing at Blackfriars. When in a change of scene in act 3 Nell protests the entrance of the character Mistress Merrythought, wishing instead to see the battle between Rafe and the Barber/Giant, the Citizen interferes on her behalf, calling for a boy and saying "Send away [i.e., out] Rafe and this whoreson giant quickly" (3.292–93). The Boy says, "In good faith, sir, we cannot. You'll utterly spoil our play and make it to be hiss'd, and it cost money. You will not suffer us to go on with our plot.—I pray, gentlemen, rule him" (3.294–97). Keenly aware of the economics of playing, the boy

is trying to protect the Blackfriars company's investment in the play—presumably the play-text, properties for its performance, and time spent rehearsing it—and clearly there is concern for the success of the play and the satisfaction of the prominent playgoers near the stage. When the boy calls for the gentlemen's support, he is calling on them to protect "their" playhouse and their own social and artistic stake in its orderly running. When the Citizen says, "Let him [Rafe] come now and dispatch this, and I'll trouble you no more" (3.298–99), the intentions of the company and the presumed expectations of its genteel audience are further undermined.

Revealing a keen understanding of their reputation as a theatrical venture open to outside instruction, the players try their best to accommodate the Citizen, Nell, and Rafe, as long as it doesn't interfere with their main plot or violate their sense of artistic or social decorum, especially with regard to their sense of the rest of the audience's tastes. For example, at a break in the action in act 4, the Citizen asks, "What shall we have Rafe do now, boy?" (4.27). The Boy replies, "You shall have what you will, sir" (4.28). However, when the Citizen asks for the reenactment of a scene from John Day, Samuel Rowley, and John Wilkins's *The Travels of the Three English Brothers* (published in a 1607 quarto), the Boy protests: "Believe me, sir, that will not do so well. 'Tis stale. It has been had before at the Red Bull" (4.31–32). Similarly, when the Wife suggests an elaborate romantic meeting between Rafe and the Princess of Cracovia, the Boy agrees only to show the characters parting, saying "it will show ill-favoredly to have a grocer's prentice to court a king's daughter" (4.45–46). When the Citizen reacts angrily, the Boy says, "It shall be done. —It is not our fault, gentlemen" (4.52).

Later, when the Citizen requests Rafe in a May Day scene at the end of act 4, the Boy again protests, saying, "You do not think of our plot; what will become of that, then?" (4.378–79). When the Citizen demands the scene, the Boy says, "Well, sir, he shall come out. But if our play miscarry, sir, you are like to pay for't" (4.385–86). How, exactly, the Citizen would pay for it is left unsaid. Perhaps the players expect him to defray the cost of his "failed play." There may also be an implicit threat that the Citizen will be mocked by the playwright and/or the child actors in future plays at the theater. Or perhaps just as the Citizen threatens the players, the "gentlemen" occupying the stage might express their displeasure with the play through violence. The Citizen has already expressed an inclination to threaten people physically when he doesn't get his way. In act 1 he says, "—Sirrah, you scurvy boy, bid the players send Rafe, or by God's—and they do not, I'll tear some of their periwigs beside their heads" (1.439–41); later, he says "I'll ha' Rafe come out. I'll make your house too hot for you else" (2.267–68). Beaumont couples the tension between the two plays on stage—the one the company has allegedly prepared and the one directed by the citizens—with "real" tensions among the audience in the playhouse in terms of taste, desires, and expectations. In this, Beaumont stresses a dynamic inherent in the private-theater tradition.

Roughly three years before the Blackfriars troupe's representation of a clownish citizen playgoer in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle,* the King's Men offered a satirical representation of a type of private-theater playgoer in John Webster's Induction to their version of John Marston's *The Malcontent* (1604). Interestingly, although their targets would seem to be different, the two plays'

satirical jabs at playgoers are remarkably similar. Both plays emphasize the playgoers' pride, condescension, enthusiasm for drama, and lack of manners. At the time, Webster was an emerging playwright who had worked collaboratively with more established writers.[100] During the 1604–05 period he worked with Thomas Dekker on *Westward Ho* (1604) and *Northward Ho* (1605) for Paul's boys. The first of these plays inspired, and the latter responded to, George Chapman, Ben Jonson, and John Marston's *Eastward Ho* (1605) at Blackfriars. Hence, Webster was presumably familiar with operations at the Globe, Paul's, and Blackfriars.

In Webster's Induction to *The Malcontent* a snobby but socially dubious "Patron" attempts to sit on stage at the Globe. His unfamiliarity with the way things work at the Globe and his insistence that he has "seen this play often" (Ind.14) and has "most of the jests here in my table-book" (Ind.15–16) establish him as a regular at Blackfriars.[101] He is not, however, a character portrayed in a flattering light. His language features the pat and apparently fashionable phrase "for mine ease" (Ind. 35) of Osric from *Hamlet,* and the company the Patron keeps, his cousin Doomsday, suggests that he hails from a less-than-sophisticated circle of the city's *nouveaux riches.*[102] Furthermore, the Patron wishes to sit on stage at the Globe. Not only is this a violation of protocol at the public theaters, but the stage-sitters at the private theaters, or at least the particularly pretentious or flamboyant of their kind, were a target for ridicule even among private theatergoers. An additional signal of the Patron's pretensions is the fact that he immediately falls in line with private-theater propaganda, echoing the complaints of Planet in Marston's *Jack Drum's Entertainment* (1600), who is happy that at Paul's "A man shall not be choakte / With

the stench of Garlicke, nor be pasted / To the barmy Iacket of a Beer-brewer" (H3v).[103] From his perch on stage at the Globe, the Patron of *The Malcontent* says, "seeing all this company" at the Globe makes him wonder, "if some fifty of the Grecians that were crammed in the horse-belly had eaten garlic, do you not think the Trojans might have smelt out their knavery?" (Ind. 113, 115–18). In the end the Patron is politely ushered off stage to a "private room" (Ind. 127), but his snobbish buffoonery is meant to have a lasting impression.

Overall, then, while the Inductions to *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* and *The Malcontent* would seem to introduce playgoers out of their elements in opposite ways, these playgoers share many characteristics. Beaumont and Webster are satirizing a type of playgoer present in both private and public theaters. In the Induction to *The Malcontent,* Webster and the King's Men are clearly measuring the pretensions of at least some private theatergoers against the reality of their circumstances. Like Beaumont, Webster deftly employs class stereotypes to foster a satirical attack that is less interested in class than personal qualities such as tact, taste, and sophistication.

A major difference between the portrayals of George and Nell in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* and the Patron of *The Malcontent,* however, points to a major difference between the public and private theaters. Webster's patron comes to the theater knowing what to expect. This attitude is doubtless largely derived from the fact that the King's Men are reviving a familiar play, but we cannot discount the fact that under the circumstances changes in the text and performance are expected.[104] While the patron's behavior is unruly, and he shows signs of being willing to criticize

the performance, he shows no signs of intending to inject new material into the plot, and the players are able to usher him away, containing the threat to public-theater protocol.[105] Conversely, as I have shown, the boy players in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* try to accommodate the demands of the boorish citizens; their only efforts to constrain them involve trying to get other audience members to support them. To some extent, these tactics speak to the adult-child dynamic, although by 1607 at least a few of the "boys" were practically adults. Regardless, Beaumont's play foregrounds the private theater's deference to its audience both in repertory formation and control of the playhouse environment.

Although the inductions to *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* and *The Malcontent* indicate essential differences between the private and public theaters, they share a defensive posture with regard to audience interpretation. When the Patron insists that *The Malcontent* is "bitter" (Ind. 52, 62), Harry Condell, playing himself, says "there are a sort of discontented creatures that bear a stingless envy to great ones, and these will wrest the doings of any man to their base, malicious applyment. But should their interpretation come to the test, like your marmoset they presently turn their teeth to their tail and eat it" (Ind. 54–59). This is the party line of all dramatists and actors—when an auditor interprets a play as satirizing a specific person, it merely reflects the prejudices and ill temper of the auditor himself, never the intentions of the writer or actors.

The Prologue for the play-within-a play in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle,* the first three lines of which are spoken twice thanks to the interruption of the Citizen, is similar:

> From all that's near the court, from all that's great
> Within the compass of the city walls,
> We now have brought our scene. Fly far from hence
> All private taxes, immodest phrases,
> Whate'er may but show like vicious:
> For wicked mirth never true pleasure brings,
> But honest minds are pleased with honest things.
> —Thus much for that we do, but for Rafe's part you must
> answer for yourself. (Ind. 111–19)

The Prologue's insistence that the play's setting is appropriately distanced from Court and the powers that be in the city has particular significance for 1607.[106] The Blackfriars company was most recently in trouble in the spring of 1606 for their performance of *Isle of Gulls,* for which they lost the Queen's patronage and "Sundry were committed to Bridewell."[107] The disclaimer for the parts of the play that will be inserted by the Citizen and his wife is in one sense expected, since the troupe has no idea what those parts of the drama will entail, but it also hints at the standard survival instincts of theatrical enterprises like Blackfriars—when they get in trouble for a play, they desperately try to blame their transgressions on audience (mis)interpretation, reducing the whole thing to a "misunderstanding," the safest of all strategies, certainly better than indicting themselves or the patrons and writers who are essential to their survival. Not by accident does Heywood, in *Apology for Actors,* obliquely accuse "some" of using child-actors bitterly to attack people or types of people. In writing a defense of professional players, Heywood clearly had a vested interest in

showing the troublesome boys to be mere servants for a select group of theater operators, patrons, and playwrights, but his comments are genuinely revealing: that is, sometimes the private theater companies were "put up to it."

In Beaumont's metadrama, aspects of *The London Merchant/The Knight of the Burning Pestle* are directly under the control of George, Nell, and Rafe. When the Prologue, probably looking angrily, perhaps nervously, at the citizen stool-sitters nearby, exclaims "for Rafe's part you must answer for yourself" (Ind. 118–19), he reveals an extremely exaggerated example of an aspect of business at the theater.[108] Beaumont has built into the play an excuse for the theater's bad behavior, that they are sometimes just following orders; but rather than fix the blame on the more elite of the Blackfriars' patrons, he blames it on easier targets.

Beaumont further underscores the mercenary aspects of the private theater through his portrayal of the young actors on stage. Early in the play Beaumont alludes to the private theater's roots in the academic tradition when Nell stops one of the boy actors and says, "Sirrah, didst thou ever see a prettier child? how it behaves itself, I warrant ye, and speaks, and looks, and pearts up its head! —I pray you, brother, with your favor, were you never none of Master Monkester's scholars?" (1.92–96).[109] George and Nell's interference with *The London Merchant* consists of their interjection of Nell's "man," the orphaned youth named Rafe, into the plot as a major character, a quixotic grocer/knight errant. According to Nell, Rafe "will act you sometimes at our house that all the neighbors cry out on him" (Ind. 67–69) and "he hath play'd before, my husband says, Mucedorus, before the wardens of our company" (Ind. 83–84). This insertion of an untrained apprentice (but an

experienced amateur actor) in among the Blackfriars boys reflects the real origins of some of the actors performing the play. By 1607, approximately a year after James's renewed 1606 patent for Nathaniel Giles expressly forbid the use of choristers as actors, many of the actors at Blackfriars were probably apprenticed, and it was common to find boy actors technically apprenticed in a guild.[110] The play's emphasis on apprentices (rather than chorister-students) highlights the subservient position of the actors on stage and underscores Beaumont's representation of affairs at the Blackfriars theater.

Many people have speculated about why the first performances of this play, English drama's first burlesque, failed.[111] One element of the play that I have tried to show is Beaumont's complete undressing of the theater in his satire. Beaumont exposes the essence of private theaters that variously highlighted their academic roots, their relationship to aristocratic patronage and circles of elites, and their status as commercial theatrical enterprises. Over the course of their careers, the companies chose the guise or mode that best served them at any given moment—but they were essentially mercenary ventures. When Beaumont emphasizes the mercenary nature of the Blackfriars theater by showing its overthrow by unsophisticated citizens, the part of the audience inclined to see itself and the theater they are patronizing in opposition to such boorish playgoers might become uncomfortable.

After all, satirizing elements of a particular social set is not likely to cause a play to fail. The Blackfriars troupe clearly put on plays aimed at satirizing portions of a factious Court, and *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* merely moves in the opposite direction. In the Induction to *The Malcontent,* to the Patron's claim that Marston's

play is "bitter," Burbage says "Sir, you are like a patron that, presenting a poor scholar to a benefice, enjoins him not to rail against anything that stands within compass of his patron's folly" (63–65). Neither the King's Men nor the Blackfriars boys (nor other contemporary companies) were afraid to tweak their audiences, and although they may have done it differently and in different degrees, audiences probably came to expect it.

If anything, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* actually seems to stress the importance of the audience to the theatrical experience. Through the mingling of *The London Merchant,* which many critics have found utterly conventional, and the outlandish "popular" scenes commissioned by George and Nell, Beaumont emphasizes the way that audiences watch variations of the same plays over and over again, inclusive of the fare at both public and private theaters.[112] As Booth argues, "Beaumont had a strong sense of theatre's absurdities . . . The fully metatheatrical *Knight of the Burning Pestle* evidently aimed to entertain its audience with mockery of both those theatrical modes they did not accept, and those they did, as both dramatic satire and theatrical sabatoge."[113] Although George and Nell are held up as ridiculous playgoers, Beaumont nevertheless foregrounds audience participation as a source of theater's liveliness and unpredictability.[114] As a serious and ambitious playwright, Beaumont does not, I think, operate out of a desire to yield the playhouse to theater-savvy (or any other) audiences, but for all that, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* is a rather stark admission of the collaborative nature of the theater, and a reminder to the audience of their stake in playhouse affairs.

Over the course of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle,* Beaumont peels back layer after layer of the private-theater experience. The Blackfriars theater was a site of social and artistic debate, and if, as I have suggested, the Children of the Revels operated sometimes as a kind of "theater for hire," it needed to call attention to itself as a worthy investment for London playgoers of different persuasions. Thus, the company and those involved with it sought to insure its survival in an increasingly competitive theatrical marketplace. With *The Knight of the Burning Pestle,* Beaumont insists that nobody owns the theater, but he emphasizes the fact that the theater is—in a sense—up for bid.[115] When viewed in this light, the play might be said to show the cost of wealthy and discerning playgoers' indifference to or neglect of the Blackfriars operation.

NOTES

[1] Shapiro discusses this attitude in terms of statements made by Alfred Harbage and Andrew Gurr in "Patronage and the Companies of Boy Actors," *Shakespeare and Theatrical Patronage in Early Modern England,* ed. Paul Whitfield White and Suzanne R. Westfall (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002) 283.

[2] The articles of agreement are reproduced in full in H. N. Hillebrand, *The Child Actors: A Chapter in Elizabethan Stage History* (1926; New York: Russell & Russell, 1964) 223–25.

[3] William Ingram, "The Playhouse as an Investment, 1607–1614; Thomas Woodford and Whitefriars," *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 2 (1985): 217.

[4] Alfred Harbage, *Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions* (1952; New York: Barnes & Noble, 1968) 46.

[5] W. Reavley Gair explains that Wescott's "company between February 1575 and December 1581 appeared at court ten times, with the Master being paid, in total, £129 0s 4d with an additional bonus of 10 marks in 1575. An additional £20 per annum for court appearances as well as profits, between 2d and 6d per head, for 'rehearsals' before the general public was a significant addition to the emoluments of the Master of Choristers" (*The Children of Paul's: The Story of a Theatre Company, 1553–1608* [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982] 94–95).

[6] Gair argues that Lyly provides "a drama much more, rather than less, specifically related to a special context. His eye is on the court and the sophistication of only a relatively small group of influential members of court . . . It is clear from

later Prologues, and perhaps from the plot of *Mother Bombie* itself, that Lyly was not a successful dramatist in the playhouse whatever his success at court might have been" (104). Regarding the date the troupes stopped performing, for Paul's and "the Children of the Q. Chappell" there is one recorded instance each of touring in 1590–91 (Michael Shapiro, *Children of the Revels: The Boy Companies of Shakespeare's Time and Their Plays* [New York: Columbia UP, 1977) 17–18). However, the companies could have been dissolved and counterfeit patents could have been used by other troupes. In fact, a company liquidating its assets might sell their patent for the use of unscrupulous touring troupes. For such behavior, see Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1996) 37–38, 48–50. Indeed, Shapiro recently has posed the stolen or forged-patent scenario in "Patronage" 286. For speculation on the closing of first Paul's, see Gair 109–12; Shapiro, *Children of the Revels* 18; Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* 225–26; and Richard Dutton, "The Revels Office and the Boy Companies, 1600–1613: New Perspectives," *ELR* 32 (2002): 327–30.

[7] David Farley-Hills' idea that the children's companies performed much more frequently than once a week is provocative, but he fails to explain why the children were able to perform at Blackfriars while Shakespeare's company was prevented from doing so. A major factor must have been frequency of performance, which was part of the conventions of "privacy." See David Farley-Hills, "How Often did the Eyases Fly?" *Notes and Queries* 38 (1991): 461–66. Additionally, I find the often-repeated idea that the children's companies played a shorter season than the adult troupes doubtful. Alfred Harbage awkwardly attempts to make the various

scraps of evidence about Paul's and Blackfrairs generally follow the example of a 1611 reference to the boys at Whitefriars performing "about three oclock, but only from Michaelmas to Easter" (44–45). The best evidence for a shorter season at Blackfriars appears in *Kirkham and Kendall vs. Daniel,* Court of Chancery, 1609, in which Kirkham and Kendall claim that they were "to pay Daniel every year 'one annuity or yearly sum of £10 . . . if the said Children should play or make any shows, either publicly or privately, the full time six months in every year; and if the said Children should not play or make any shows the full time of six months in every year by reason of any prohibition or pestilence in the City of London, that then the said Kirkham and Kendall should pay unto the said Daniel after the rate of 16s. 8d. a month, for such longer or shorter time as the said Children should present or do any plays or shows, either publicly or privately as aforesaid, being not the full time of six months in one year" (cited from Irwin Smith, *Shakespeare's Blackfriars Playhouse: Its History and Its Design* [New York: New York UP, 1964] 514). However, the last portion of this quote would seem to indicate that six months was a baseline for the payment of Daniel, not necessarily the limit of the theatrical season for the troupe.

[8] Gurr succinctly characterizes the difficulties of keeping Paul's financially afloat (and brings up the Blackfriars troupe's financial difficulties in the process) in *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* 344–45.

[9] Gerald Eades Bentley writes, "Nowhere is the capacity of the second Blackfriars precisely stated, though vague references describe each of the private theatres as small . . . Wallace estimated the capacity of the second Blackfriars as 558 to 608 . . . ; Harbage estimated 696, 800, and 955, depending upon the number of

galleries and the use of the upper or lower floor . . . I see very little solid evidence for the claims of one set of figures over another, but in the light of repeated allusions to the small size of the theatre I should incline toward the lower ones" (*The Jacobean and Caroline Stage,* vol. 6: *Theatres* [Oxford: Clarendon P, 1968] 11).

[10] The boy companies seem to have been involved in some particularly harsh satire, or satire on particularly sensitive topics. These performances apparently contrasted with the tradition of satire that was closer to what we might call "roasting" or was acceptable in the context of topsy-turvy festivities. Perhaps such gentler satire was involved when, according to Alan Nelson in his discussion of Clare College plays, "The seventeenth-century Cambridge historian Thomas Fuller reports that *Club Law* was performed (in 1599–1600) before town dignitaries who were themselves the target of the play's satire" (*Early Cambridge Theatres: College, University, and Town Stages, 1464–1720* [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994] 74).

[11] Harbage 47.

[12] From Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors* (1612), excerpted in E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage,* 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1923) 4: 253. Chambers suggests that the tract was written in 1607–08 (4: 250).

[13] Roslyn Lander Knutson, *Playing Companies and Commerce in Shakespeare's Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001) 103–26.

[14] Analyzing the short career of the Whitefriars troupe, Mary Bly concludes that "[i]n essence the company died of the plague" (*Queer Virgins and Virgin Queans on the Early Modern Stage* [Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000] 129). This may be true, but the articles of agreement for the Whitefriars troupe clearly state that "if at any tyme . .

. the . . . Company shalbe restrayned from playenge in the said howse by reason of the plague, or otherwise, and that thereby they shalbe inforced to travell into the Countrye for the vpholdinge of their Company, That then the said Martyn Slatyar duringe the tyme of such his travell shall have allowance of one full share and a half" (Hillebrand 225). Clearly provisions were made in the expectation of being forced to travel from the very beginning, and the troupe was known as the Children of the King's Revels, a title that would seem to be quite marketable on the road. Yet, traveling was a hard business, and an apparent effort by a troupe (the King's Revels? the former Blackfriars boys?) to perform at Whitefriars during a plague closure in November 1608 speaks to the desperation of theater companies during this period. See Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* 90.

[15] Philip J. Finkelpearl, *Court and Country Politics in the Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990) 67.

[16] Shapiro, "Patronage" 275.

[17] Shapiro, "Patronage" 294.

[18] Gair 118.

[19] Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* 339.

[20] In a deposition related to the *Old Joiner of Aldgate* scandal, Edward Pearce "disclaimed any responsibility for the dramatic side of their [the children's] activities," claiming "that he does not 'att any tyme disbourse anye money for buyeinge the playes which usually are acted by the Children of Powles, but his care is other wyse ymployed for the Educacion of the . . . Childrene'" (Gair 54).

[21] Gair 173.

[22] Gair 184–85. Middleton is mentioned as another possible stage manager (Gair 160).

[23] Description of Evans from Wescott's will (Hillebrand 330). The entire document appears in Hillebrand 327–30. For the Treasurer of the Chamber accounts recording the payment to Evans, see Chambers 4: 160. The Revels accounts name the company as "the Earle of Oxenford his boyes" (Chambers 4: 160). The histories of Paul's and Blackfriars following the deaths of the manager of the Chapel Children, Richard Farrant, in 1580 and Master of the Chorsters at Paul's, Sebastian Wescott, in 1582 is muddled. On scant evidence Gurr insists that the "Oxford's Boys, the Chapel, and Paul's" named in court records "was really the one company, operating an almost exclusively commercial programme and keeping no allegiance to its former chorister and schooling pretensions" (*The Shakespearian Playing Companies* 223). For discussions of the evidence about this period, see Hillebrand, who argues that the Oxford boys were entirely or mainly Paul's (132–37); Smith, who believes that Paul's and Blackfriars were amalgamated under Oxford and Lyly (151); and Gair. Gair explains the amalgamation of Paul's and Blackfriars as stemming from Thomas Gyles' probationary period before officially attaining the mastership at Paul's (which prevented him from devoting time to the theatrical venture), and the ambition of Henry Evans, who took the Blackfriars lease "possibly with the intention of trying to move the Children of Paul's to . . . larger premises and set up a monopoly: Paul's were the most successful company, whereas William Hunnis had had difficulty in paying his rent" (98–99).

[24] Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* 347.

[25] Smith 183.

[26] Smith 527.

[27] Smith 189–90.

[28] Robert Payne also appears in place of William Rastall. See Smith 488.

[29] Smith 514–15.

[30] See *Kirkham and Kendall vs. Daniel,* Court of Chancery, 1609, excerpted in Smith 514–15. Daniel signed away his bond on 28 April 1605. After this action, as Lucy Munro explains, Daniel claimed that he "'neaver intermeddled or had to doe wth the said Compltes [Edward Kirkham and Thomas Kendall] or L*ett*res Patttent*es* or eaver demaunded any thinge of the Compltes' . . . It is difficult, however, to be sure exactly when Daniel ceased to be involved with the company" (*Children of the Queen's Revels: A Jacobean Theatre Repertory* [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005] 20). See also Dutton's account of Daniel's work as licenser ("The Revels Office," 334–37).

[31] Others, such as Inns-of-Court man William Strachey and musician/composer Martin Peerson entered the mix in the 1604–06 period, further illustrating company turnover. See Munro 183.

[32] Harbage makes many illuminating remarks about the court records: "Considerable sums of money are mentioned in the litigation among the partners at the second Blackfriars and at Whitefriars, but the sums mostly represent hypothecation: new partners hopefully bought their way in only to find the assets intangible. Partnerships at these theatres tended to wind up in a scramble for the costumes . . . Although the earnings at Blackfriars between 1600 and 1608 are named

by litigants from time to time, the problem is less to interpret the sums than to identify the hardier liars" (46–47).

[33] Scholars often have assumed that the King's Men began performing in the Blackfriars theater shortly after Henry Evans surrendered the lease to a six-member syndicate from among the King's Men on 9 August 1608. However, Leeds Barroll recently has argued that the playhouse was closed from this time through January 1610. See "Shakespeare and the Second Blackfriars Theater," *Shakespeare Studies* 33 (2005): 156–70.

[34] New limitations were placed on the Blackfriars troupe in a reissued patent to Nathaniel Giles, Master of the Children of the Chapel. According to Hillebrand, it is, "so far as I recall, the solitary instance of the revocation of a former writ issued to the same person. The Privy Seal was drawn up in August 1606; the Patent confirmed on November 7" (196). The patent carefully defines and limits Giles's power of impressment. Especially important is the line that states "we do straightly charge and comaund that none of the said Choristers or Children of the Chappell so to be taken by force of this Com*m*ission shalbe used or imployed as Comedians or Stage players or to exercise or act any stage plaies Interludes Comedies or tragedies for that it is not fitt or decent that such as should sing the praises of God almightie should be trayned up or imployed in such lascivious and prophane exercises" (Hillebrand 196–97). The evidence provided by *Kendall vs. Cook,* King's Bench, 1608, which shows that "Alice Cooke apprenticed her son to Thomas Kendall, on November 14, 1606, to remain three years with him as an actor in the company," may be indicative of the Blackfriars syndicate's response to Giles's reissued patent (Hillebrand 197). For the

loss of patronage and Keysar's role, see Hillebrand 195, 201–02 and Munro 21, 182. A detailed discussion of Robert Keysar's involvement with the Blackfriars company appears in William Ingram's "Robert Keysar, Playhouse Speculator," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 37 (1986): 476–85.

[35] Smith 523–24.

[36] Many scholars have noted that Blackfriars boys William Ostler and John Underwood joined the King's Men as adult players in 1608. Another known actor for the Blackfriars troupe, Nathan Field, was twenty years old in 1608. See Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage 1574–1642,* 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997) 54.

[37] Chambers 2: 50.

[38] Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage* 51. Cf. Heather Anne Hirschfeld, *Joint Enterprises: Collaborative Drama and the Institutionalization of the English Renaissance Theater* (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 2004) 22. G. K. Hunter goes still further, saying, "The boys' theatre offered more space to realize the Humanist image of an author as the agent of civilization, the conscience of his culture" (*English Drama 1586–1642: The Age of Shakespeare* [Oxford: Clarendon P / New York: Oxford UP, 1997] 285).

[39] Adrian Weiss discusses the schoolroom aspects of the Induction to *Antonio and Mellida*, including Marston's display of the rhetorical sophistication of the young actors, in "A Pill to Purge Parody: Marston's Manipulation of the Paul's Environment in the Antonio Plays," *The Theatrical Space,* ed. James Redmond (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987) 81–97. The Induction to *Cynthia's Revels* features the children

fighting over who gets to speak the prologue, a demonstration of the children's memories, and it both flatters and mocks the author and audience.

[40] Citation from *Cynthia's Revels, Ben Jonson,* ed. C. H. Herford and Percy Simpson, vol. 4 (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1954).

[41] Michael Shapiro offers the best analysis of this dynamic to date in his "Audience vs. Dramatist in Jonson's *Epicoene* and Other Plays of the Children's Troupes," *ELR* 3 (1973): 400–17.

[42] Cited from *Satiromastix, The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, ed. Fredson Bowers, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1953).

[43] John Marston, *What You Will* (London, 1607).

[44] Cited from John Day, *The Ile of Guls* (London, 1606).

[45] Paul Yachnin argues that a "playing companies' status—whether high or low—was always changeable and contestable" ("Reversal of Fortune: Shakespeare, Middleton, and the Puritans," *ELH* 70 [2003]: 764).

[46] Bly, in her discussion of Jonson, Middleton, and others' use of the word "ingle," explains that "ingle clearly resonated, within the theatrical community at least, as a sexually available boy attached to the theatre. In other words, ingles may have been less catamite and more actor: still a sodomitical boy, but a boy with ties to the theatrical, literary community" (123).

[47] The letter "To the Reader" suggests that "plays in this city are like wenches new fallen to the trade, only desired of your neatest gallants while they're fresh; when they grow stale they must be vented by termers and country chapmen" (*The Family of*

Love, The Works of Thomas Middleton, ed. A. H. Bullen, vol. 3 [New York: AMS, 1964]).

[48]John Day, *Law-Trickes, or Who Would Have Thought It* (London, 1608).

[49] As Gurr notes, "The Puritan attacks on the stage . . . saw no difference between bear-baiting, fencing matches, playing and prostitution" (*The Shakespearean Stage* 32). Henry Crosse, in *Vertues Common-wealth : Or The High-way to Honor* (1603), insists that playwrights "prostituted" their work to profit players: "it were . . . to be wished, that those admired wittes of this age, Tragædians, and Comædians, that garnish Theaters with their iuentions, would spend their wittes in more profitable studies, and leaue off to maintaine those Anticks, and Puppets, that speake out of their mouthes : for it is pittie such noble giftes, should be so basely imployed, as to prostitute their ingenious labours to inriche such buckorome gentlemen" (Chambers 4: 247). The reference to "buckram gentleman," indicating men who are shadow and not substance, is likely a reference to players, but perhaps also to their profiteer managers.

[50] Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* 349.

[51] Gurr recently has claimed, "a short history of the plays the Paul's boys and the Blackfriars boys performed suggests that their writers kept shifting their own positions over their social allegiances and their satirical targets, and their product placement" ("'Within the compass of the city walls': Allegiances in Plays for and about the City," *Plotting Early Modern London: New Essays on Jacobean City Comedy,* ed. Dieter Mehl, Angela Stock and Anne-Julia Zwierlein [Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004] 115). Lucy Munro argues these shifts inhere in the "repertory

system": "The Queen's Revels plays were created not only by the dramatists, but also through the ideas and desires of the company's shareholders, licenser, patrons, actors and audience. The repertory system of production, organised around playing companies, created an environment in which texts and ideas were circulated between people from vastly different professions and backgrounds" (164–65).

[52] Gurr, *The Shakepearian Playing Companies* 349–50.

[53] Dutton, "The Revels Office" 324–51.

[54] Smith 192–93. Smith also claims that in the early years of second Blackfriars, "Ben Jonson's *Poetaster* . . . incensed the military and legal professions, and Chapman's *Sir Giles Goosecap* had contained scurrilous scenes that needed to be expunged when the play was published" (192).

[55] Finkelpearl claims that the character of Sir Edward Fortune was created as a satire on Sir William Cornwallis. He writes, "Marston began his career as a professional dramatist with a clear portrayal of a well-known public figure. The private theaters soon became notorious for their personal and political satire, and Marston was one of the leading offenders" (*John Marston of the Middle Temple: An Elizabethan Dramatist in His Social Setting* [Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1969] 129).

[56] Gair 147. For detailed discussions of the episode, see Gair 147–51 and Charles Jasper Sisson, *Lost Plays of Shakespeare's Age* (1936; New York: Humanities P, 1970) 12–79.

[57] Sisson says, "It is well to beware of Elizabethan evidence, in respect both of *suppressio veri* and *suggsetio falsi,* as well as of more flagitious false gods," and of the participants in the *Old Joiner of Aldgate* affair, "They were, of course, bound to

deny it all, because to admit it would be evidence of a conspiracy to produce the play" (63, 68).

[58] Cited in Gair 151. Gair explains, "Both Pearce and Woodford were asked 'whether . . . have yow threatened anie in this sorte, That yf they hindred the playinge thereof [*The Old Joiner*] there would be and was a plogue [prologue] made to the Spectators in excuse of the nott playinge ytt that woulde disgrace them [Howe and the others] muche more, and that they or some of them weare better give fortie pounds then ytt shoulde soe be" (150–51).

[59] Gair 151.

[60] After the *Old Joiner of Aldgate* scandal, Pearce (unlike his counterparts at Blackfriars, who were performing provocative plays as late as 1608) seems to have become averse to risking the harassment and penalties that came with pushing topical satire too far—it is likely that he asserted his authority and began dealing with those he trusted to be more circumspect, mainly Thomas Middleton. It may very well be that as Master of the Choristers at Paul's, Pearce felt he had too much to lose. After the plague difficulties of 1606–07 and the scandalous Blackfriars performances of 1608, Pearce was content finally to take a dead rent of £20 per year from the Children of the Revels and the King's Men in order to keep the theater at his disposal unused. This "dead rent" is discussed in *Keysar vs. Burbage et al.,* Court of Requests, 1610, although the precise date at which it commenced is unclear. See Smith 525–26. Of the closing of Paul's, Gurr says, "With managers like Pearce who could turn to other things, their motivation was . . . a major factor" (*The Shakespearian Playing Companies* 345).

[61] Philip J. Finkelpearl says of Blackfriars and Paul's, "the small size of these theaters, their close proximity to the Inns, their infrequent performances (usually only once a week), and the avidity of Inns' men for the theater—all of these factors suggest that the Inns provided by far the largest and most influential element in the audience. Occasionally . . . the references [in plays] to intramural matters at the Inns are so frequent or recherché that the playwrights seem to have directed their plays almost exclusively to the Inns' element in the audience" (*John Marston* 27). M. C. Bradbrook has argued that the Inns of Court essentially gave birth to the theaters at Paul's and Blackfrairs, claiming that "the satiric winter games of the Inns of Court were institutionalized at two indoor theaters for which the young lawyers provided scripts" ("London Pageantry and Lawyers' Theater in the Early Seventeenth Century," *Shakespeare's "Rough Magic": Renaissance Essays in Honor of C. L. Barber,* ed. Peter Erickson and Coppélia Kahn [Newark: U of Deleware P, 1985] 257).

[62] Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* 265–66.

[63] Gair 116.

[64] Gair 116; Chambers 3: 495. Of Derby's Men, Gurr says that there is no "evidence that they staged any of the plays that their lord was said to be busy penning" (*The Shakespearian Playing Companies* 266).

[65] Gair 122–23. Gair explains, "As part of his intensive campaign to familiarize his audience with the new theatre, the new company and its talents, Marston does not hesitate to include himself and his Italian background: to show the audience a portrait of the patron of Paul's is a natural extension of this policy" (123).

[66] Chambers 3: 464. The plays of note here are *Arabia Sitiens or A Dream of a Dry Year, The Cuck-Queanes and Cuckolds Errants or The Bearing down the Inn, The Faery Pastoral, or Forest of Elves, Cupid's Sacrifice or a Country's Tragedy in Vacuniam,* and *The Aphrodysial or Sea Feast.* See, for example, Gair's discussion of Percy's *Arabia Sitiens or A Dreame of a Dry Yeare* and the Paul's playhouse (61–66). The history of Percy's plays, which have survived in manuscript only, is obscure. He wrote them with instructions for both "Powles" and "Actors," although what exactly is meant by "Actors"—whether academic or professional—is unclear. (Chambers 3: 464–65). Hillebrand offers the following evaluation of the plays: "I think it is . . . likely that these are school plays, possibly done at Oxford, where Percy resided in Gloucester Hall. Their academic sound lends weight to that suggestion, as well as the evidence that up to the time of revision they had had only one performance. Certainly nothing more amateurish has come down to us from the days of Elizabeth" (219).

[67] Chambers 3: 464. According to Chambers, Barnes "dedicated his poems *Parthenophil and Parthenophe* (1593) to William Percy" (3: 214).

[68] As Hillebrand notes, "*The Fairy Pastoral* begins with "The Prologue for the Court" (217n22). Shapiro is unduly dismissive of the evidence about Derby's and Percy's involvement with Paul's, as well as the significance of Marston's participation in the venture. See "Patronage" 291.

[69] Gair 151.

[70] Charles William Wallace, *The Children of the Chapel at Blackfriars, 1597–1603* (1908; New York: AMS, 1970) 95.

[71] Chambers 2: 48. See also Hillebrand 166 and Smith 206n14.

[72] The relevant portion of Gershaw's diary is translated from German by Wallace (106–107n1). This evidence is discussed in detail in introduction pp. 9–11 and notes.

[73] Wallace 106n. See introduction p. 60n15.

[74] Albert H. Tricomi, *Anticourt Drama in England, 1603–1642* (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1989) 66.

[75] Munro discusses the known connections between the Blackfriars company and Queen Anna's and the pro-Essex circles at Court, which largely center around Daniel and the patronage of playwrights such as Jonson and Chapman (33–34).

[76] Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Writing Women in Jacobean England* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993) 24. The dubious arguments that the Queen actually attended the Blackfriars theater are discussed in introduction pp. 76–77n100.

[77] Richard Dutton, "Licensing and Censorship," *A Companion to Shakespeare,* ed. David Scott Kastan (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999) 387.

[78] Smith 514. See introduction pp. 29–30.

[79] That Kirkham and his associates might plausibly complain that in violation of their contract and to their loss Evans kept locked a room at the Blackfriars referred to as the "Schoolhouse" and the chamber over it, rooms that were apparently prepared by Evans "to dine and sup in," might indicate that such rooms were or could be used for the wining and dining of patrons as an ordinary part of theater business (Smith 528, 529). See *Evans vs. Kirkham,* Court of Chancery, 1612, in Smith 527–33.

[80] Tricomi 43. Tricomi also finds the Blackfriars troupe's ability to survive despite its dealings in dangerous material "partly in the decentralized exercise of

Jacobean censorship, partly in the inconsistency of James's own policy toward the offending company" (43).

[81] London crowds proved difficult to control throughout the period: the authorities could not control the traffic at Paul's, city officials struggled to control the throngs who flocked to the city during term time, and the royal family could barely control the entrance to Court entertainments. See Gair 32–33; Ann Jennalie Cook, *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London, 1576–1642* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981) 60–61; and Keith Sturgess, *Jacobean Private Theatre* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987) 163–64.

[82] *The Woman Hater, The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*, ed. Fredson Bowers et al., vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1966). This quote suggests that even at Paul's as late as 1606 audiences might come looking for controversy.

[83] All citations are from Francis Beaumont, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle,* ed. John Doebler (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1967).

[84] Zachary Lesser, "Walter Burre's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle,*" *ELR* 29 (1999): 22–43. In general, it is important to acknowledge that the strategies of those in the business of selling books may color our views of the theaters, since much of our evidence about the theaters comes from printed play-texts.

[85] Harbage 107. In fact, critics such as Barbara Knight Degyansky have emphasized George and Nell's imagination, their friendlier and more compassionate moments, and their apparently congenial relationship with the other playgoers at the

end of the comedy ("A Reconsideration: George and Nell of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*," *English Language Notes* 23.3 [1986]: 27–32).

[86] Andrew Gurr, ""Within the compass of the city walls'" 109.

[87] Hunter 338.

[88] George is an example of a repeat playgoer who doesn't seem to have learned anything from the experience beyond paranoia and defensiveness.

[89] In his discussion of the children's troupes' satires of all social classes, Shapiro notes, "the intended victim can turn the insult to his own advantage by applying it to those around him while exempting himself. Since showing pain or annoyance would be admitting the validity of the taunt, it is in the spectator's interest to tolerate the abuse" (*Children of the Revels* 41).

[90] Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987) 94.

[91] Lee Bliss, *Francis Beaumont* (Boston: Twayne, 1987) 43. While Laurie E. Osborne usefully calls attention to gender issues in the play, arguing that Nell "complicates and compromises the patriarchal conventions which the internal play [*The London Merchant*] expresses" by "manipulating her roles as wife and as mother," her reading is complicated by Nell's less-than-flattering features (beyond those cited by Bliss, there is, for example, her hypocrisy on the issue of tobacco) ("Female Audiences and Female Authority in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*," *Exemplaria* 3 [1991]: 495, 505).

[92] Sheldon P. Zitner, Introduction, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle,* by Francis Beaumont (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1984) 31.

[93] Bliss 43, 54.

[94] Bliss 37. She goes on to say, "And if the Blackfriars audience laughed at the Citizens' attempt to replace satiric city comedy with chivalric romance, it might have been sensed that here, too, the author's aim was a bit uncomfortably inclusive" (37).

[95] Roy J. Booth, "'Down with Your Title Boy!': Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* and Its Insurgent Audience," *Q/W/E/R/T/Y: Arts, Litteratures & Civilisations du Monde Anglophone* 5 (Oct. 1995): 52. Booth's analysis, however, is heavily informed by what he describes as "the eternal lower middle class incomprehension of progressive art" (53). Writing about *The Knight of the Burning Pestle,* Finkelpearl also emphasizes the idea of the "difficult audience" when he claims: "scholars constantly refer to the private theater audiences as 'sophisticated.' The nearly simultaneous initial failure of Fletcher's *The Faithful Shepherdess* indicates that even the best Jacobean audience, like every other one in the history of drama, contained only a small number who could accept and comprehend the truly new" (*Court and Country Politics* 82).

[96] Alexander Leggatt, "The Audience as Patron: *The Knight of the Burning Pestle,*" *Shakespeare and Theatrical Patronage in Early Modern England,* ed. Paul Whitfield White and Suzanne R. Westfall (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002) 303. Leggatt reads the play as a defense of the author-position and "a warning . . . about the excessive power of the audience as patron" (311). David A. Samuelson similarly argues that "Beaumont is faithfully creating a lively account of what just might be the experience of a given day in a private playhouse if a challenge from the real world

were physically planted on the stage" ("The Order in Beaumont's *Knight of the Burning Pestle,*" *ELR* 9 [1979]: 303). However, audience dynamics—including audience interference with or participation in the play—were, of course, as much a part of the playhouse experience as anything else, and the playhouse was certainly part of the "real world."

[97] Osborne briefly notes "the play's preoccupation with the practical demands of theatrical representation reveals the potential power of the paying audience . . . over what is represented on stage" (492). Bliss describes *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* as "Beaumont's anatomy of art's corruption by commerce" (43). There was, however, no wall between drama and commerce in this period, at least with regard to plays performed at London playhouses. In his analysis of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle,* Samuelson discusses the way that the "fictional actors" manage "to save the day by deflecting the intrusion into its proper place as well as finishing their own work. To accomplish this order, the players rely on their own wit and good taste as well as some biting irony, some decorum, and an amazing measure of restraint. These are virtues that apply both to the aesthetics of play-making and to the ethics of sophisticated civility" (317). Samuelson's evaluation, however, focuses on the art of the play, which is not Beaumont's primary concern. In some ways Roy J. Booth synthesizes Bliss and Samuelson's approaches. He emphasizes Beaumont and his friend Ben Jonson's insistence on their writing as art and their apparent contempt for some of their audiences. He then discusses the ridiculous way that "Grocer George treats the actors as purveyors of a commodity, to be negotiated with directly," believing with "crude confidence that while he is paying, the players must entertain

him" (Booth 55, 56). For Booth, George ultimately represents "that anti-aesthetic bully, theatre's paying audience" set against the high-minded author (55). Yet, I would argue that Beaumont actually emphasizes the servility that inheres in being an actor or running a theater. As Meredith Anne Skura succinctly notes (albeit in the context of royal household performances as portrayed in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), "The show—or 'sport'—was always subordinated to the social occasion which framed it; the players were hired help" (*Shakespeare the Actor and the Purposes of Playing* [Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993] 32–33).

[98] Hence, Richard Madelaine, in discussing the play's failure, refers to how Beaumont's "audience is . . . apparently at the mercy of a grocer and groceress . . . George and Nell's visibility and audibility might seem to underprivilege the alternative position, making . . . audience members insecure about their superiority . . . George's apparently being able to buy what he wants may be a sticking point" ("Apprentice Interventions: Boy Actors, The Burning Pestle and the Privy Mark of Irony," *Q/W/E/R/T/Y: Arts, Litteratures & Civilisations du Monde Anglophone* 5 [Oct. 1995]: 77).

[99] A month may represent the amount of time it takes to launch a requested play. Beyond interfering with the play itself, the Citizen also offers instructions for the music for the performance (Ind. 97–107), although his demands do not seem to be met.

[100] John Webster makes several appearances in Philip Henslowe's diary, which indicates that in 1602 he worked with writers such as Thomas Middleton, Thomas Dekker, Thomas Heywood, Anthony Munday, and Michael Drayton. See

Henslowe's Diary, ed. R. A. Foakes, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002) 201–02, 218–19.

[101] All citations from John Marston, *The Malcontent and Other Plays,* ed. Keith Sturgess (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997). The Induction appears in the notes (343–47).

[102] Osric utters this phrase at 5.2.102 (*Hamlet, The Norton Shakespeare,* ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. [New York: Norton, 1997]). Nell utters the same phrase at the beginning of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*: when she nestles in among the gallants on stage, she says, "Sit you merry all, gentlemen. I'm bold to sit amongst you for my ease" (Ind. 109–10).

[103] John Marston, *Jacke Drums Entertainment: or the Comedie of Pasquill and Katherine* (London, 1601).

[104] The patron inquires about the nature of the additions at Ind. 82.

[105] The patron says, "I am one that hath seen this play often and can give them ["Harry Condell, Dick Burbage, and Will Sly" (Ind. 11–12)] intelligence for their action. I have most of the jests here in my table-book" (Ind. 14–16).

[106] Gurr argues that George's reaction can only be explained by placing a comma after the word "great" at the end of the first line in the Prologue, thus making the speech claim: " 'All that's neere the Court', and great, is splendidly remote from all the grossly inferior activities that he reckons take place 'within the compasse of the City wals'" ("'Within the compass of the city walls'" 116). I, however, see no reason why the Citizen's reaction should make perfect sense in this context; we might be required, then, to try to make his many odd reactions, misapprehensions, and

assumptions make sense when clearly Beaumont intends him to be a ridiculous character making a rash assumption about what kind of play *The London Merchant* is.

[107] Smith 192.

[108] In fact, the mercenary nature of the operation is accentuated through many of George's actions beyond directing the players. As Booth notes, "He pays for the waits of Southwark, who never seem to arrive, hands over real money for Rafe's impossible overnight stay at the Bell tavern, and provides funds for Rafe's knightly largesse to servants of the Princess of Cracovia" (56). However, I think Booth misses the point when he says, "The ease with which the company makes money out of George might be used to rationalize what is surely one of the play's most remarkable features, that the players seem infinitely malleable, ready to become anything" (56).

[109] Janette Dillon notes, "As Andrew Gurr has suggested to me, this joke may have been very specifically targeted, if the part of Rafe was taken by Nathan Field. Field was a leading actor with the Children of the Queen's Revels (Blackfriars Children) and had been a student of [Richard] Mulcaster's at St Paul's School" (*Theatre, Court, and City, 1595–1610: Drama and Social Space in London* [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000] 166n8).

[110] See David Kathman, "Grocers, Goldsmiths, and Drapers: Freeman and Apprentices in the Elizabethan Theater," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 55 (2004): 1–49. Madelaine reads *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* as an "apprentice play," focusing on the roles of Rafe and Jasper as competing heroes in the plot(s) of the play and in the context of parts used for training actors—that is, he suggests that each role "made a suitably-testing private theatre apprentice-piece" (76).

[111] Bliss calls the play "the best as well as the first dramatic burlesque in English" (2).

[112] Ronald F. Miller suggests that *The London Merchant* is "a rather insipid little merchant comedy" and refers to it as a "drab play" ("Dramatic Form and Dramatic Imagination in Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*," *ELR* 8 [1978]: 69). Theodore B. Leinwand writes, "our overriding sense is that *The London Merchant* does not count for much. Tired, uncritical city comedy with its predictable intrigue and conventional romance is at best a secondary concern for Beaumont" (*The City Staged: Jacobean Comedy, 1603–1613* [Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1986] 65). Zitner says *The London Merchant* "does not provide a radical or even very amusing burlesque of conventional love comedy" (26).

[113] Booth 51, 52.

[114] Zitner explains how modern directors have accentuated the positives George, Nell, and Rafe bring to the play: "The conventional wisdom of directors of *The Knight* is that the rosiness of the love plot invites discolouration. They have it played as lamely as possible. This strategy gives us a delicious implied triumph of fictive audience over fictive actors by further contrasting the vitality of Rafe and the Citizens and their concerns with those of tame authors and stage lovers" (26). However, it is the citizens' lack of sophistication that is accentuated by their wildly incongruous insertions into a conventional plot. The audience certainly does not come away thinking George and Nell would make excellent playwrights. Instead, the audience may be expected to find something lively in the challenge issued to them by the citizens' inappropriate usurpation of the theatrical space, especially the implicit

invitation to openly judge or scorn the characters for it. This scenario redounds to the other cultural contests hosted at the private theaters.

[115] As Guildenstern explains in the Folio *Hamlet,* "the nation holds it no sin to tarre them to controversy. There was for a while no money bid for argument unless the poet and the player went to cuffs in the question" (2.2.338–40). These difficult lines may mean something like, "whenever someone was willing to lay out the money, the poets and players went into battle on an issue." If Knutson is correct in dating this passage around 1606, then it could refer to how the boys' mercenary methods got out of hand during a time just before *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* was written and performed.

Chapter 2

Private-Theater Intertextuality:

John Marston's *The Wonder of Women (Sophonisba)* and Francis Beaumont's *The Woman Hater,* Exceptional-Woman Plays at Blackfriars and Paul's, circa 1606–07

Among the undesirable playgoers targeted for satire by private-theater playwrights such as Ben Jonson, John Marston, Francis Beaumont, and John Day were indifferent or obnoxious gallants and oafish citizens. There was, however, a better sort of playgoer, those who might hang on the poet's words and enjoy interpreting his play. Playwrights working with an eye to the marketplace were keenly aware that a successful play, one with the potential for a reasonably long (hence profitable) run, had to please what Day called a "confused Audience" of people who variously wanted to see "gall" or "baudie" or "high written" works.[1] But playwrights also sought ways to appeal to the most sophisticated auditors, those who treated each play as cluster of codes and derived pleasure from the interpretive games afforded by regular trips to London playhouses. Such playgoers would have taken pride in being able to hash out the meaning of obscure references, identify topical or personal allusions, or compare the different treatments of similar themes or features in competing plays. In this chapter I focus on the relationship between two plays with

shared features that were produced at rival private theaters in 1606–07, analyzing the works with reference to the larger marketplace, but especially from the perspective of those playgoers most aware of the literary scene and eager to judge new plays.

In 1606 the private theaters at Blackfriars and Paul's were struggling with plague closures, and the Blackfriars company had been in trouble for performing mocking satire, especially Ben Jonson, George Chapman, and John Marston's *Eastward Ho* (1605) and John Day's *Isle of Gulls* (1606), both of which offended powerful people at Court.[2] During this year John Marston composed, and the Blackfriars boys performed, *The Wonder of Women, or the Tragedie of Sophonisba* (S.R. 17 March 1606; published 1606), an historical tragedy that relies more than was usual on the singing and musical skills traditionally associated with the chorister troupes.[3] Shortly thereafter, Francis Beaumont wrote *The Woman Hater* (S.R. 20 May 1607; published 1607), which, according to the title page of the 1607 quarto, was "lately acted by the Children of Paules."[4] Beaumont's work shares important features with Marston's play, but it is, in essence, a satirical city comedy of the type prevalent on the boards of the private theaters throughout the first decade of the seventeenth century. Despite obvious links between the plays, their playwrights, and the companies that produced them, there is no sustained scholarly comparison of the plays, nor has an effort been made to situate them in a larger historical narrative.

During this period Marston and Beaumont fully understood the personal and institutional threats posed by earlier performances of satires—or, as those at the private theaters often claimed in self-defense, by the "misapplication" of plays to actual persons or current events. With *The Wonder of Women,* Marston set out to

redeem himself after the *Eastward Ho* fiasco, and he chose to do so with a politically cautious tragedy that in style recalls old-fashioned, formal academic or courtly drama, such as Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton's *Gorbuduc* (1561–62), but also includes spectacle and sensationalism.[5] Advertised as a serious endeavor (and therefore inviting judgment), Martson's play is a remarkable departure from the satire for which he was famous. Meanwhile, in *The Woman Hater,* Beaumont generally follows the dominant satirical trend of the private theaters, but he carefully insulates himself from trouble, especially by making preemptive strikes against easily offended playgoers. In the Prologue, in which he directly refers to the Blackfriars troupe's most recent troubles, Beaumont insists that he intends no barbs at specific people. He even includes in his plot a satire on intelligencers who intentionally misinterpret innocent people's speech. In part, then, *The Wonder of Women* and *The Woman Hater* are different reactions to contemporary circumstances in the private-theater industry.

Of course, both *The Wonder of Women* and *The Woman Hater* had antecedents among, and responded to, other contemporary plays, but several factors invite us to isolate them for detailed comparison: 1) they are private-theater plays with related titles; 2) they likely premiered within a year of each other and may have been in production simultaneously; and 3) they feature sexually bold but virtuous heroines who suffer trials and are heralded as exceptional women. The relationship between the two plays starts with their main titles: *The Wonder of Women* and *The Woman Hater.* Keith Sturgess explains that while the full title of Marston's play begins with *The Wonder of Women,* "the running title (which heads each page of text)

is *The Tragedy of Sophonisba.* We have no notion by what title the play was known to its first audiences and it is the unadorned *Sophonisba* that has been universally adopted in later editions and critical discussions."[6] For the purposes of this essay, I will refer to the play as *The Wonder of Women,* the title by which it was principally advertised in bookshops, and by which I assume it was advertised generally, even if the title was sometimes abbreviated to *Sophonisba.* The sparring indicated by the titles *The Wonder of Women* and *The Woman Hater* was beneficial for Paul's and Blackfriars. Playgoers visited the theaters expecting intertextual dialogue about the nature of women—especially exceptional women—and about men's corrosive obsessions and appetites regarding them. Attentive playgoers would have observed that in *The Woman Hater,* Beaumont culls from *The Wonder of Women* major characters, plot elements, and even specific lines, tweaking or inverting them for comic purposes. In effect, he initiates a literary-aesthetic debate designed to lure repeat audiences. This may even represent a cooperative strategy for the difficult times: if *The Woman Hater* draws people to Paul's, it gives the cash-strapped Blackfriars troupe good reason to revive or continue performing Marston's tragedy, which presumably could be done with little new investment of time or money. Such an agenda falls in line with the "cooperative repertory approach" Roslyn Lander Knutson discusses in her *Playing Company and Commerce in Shakespeare's Time* (2001).[7]

A final justification for isolating *The Wonder of Women* and *The Woman Hater* for comparison resides in a fundamental difference between the private and public theaters. While repertory approaches often deemphasize authorship, scholars

have long looked at private-theater plays and suggested that authors had special presence and control in this setting.[8] We also know that there was a sizeable contingent of Inns of Court students and other literary-minded Londoners at the private theaters. Hence, while we are well advised to consider the place of private-theater plays in the larger theatrical marketplace, we also must grant them their special status. I believe that the relationship between *The Wonder of Women* and *The Woman Hater* would have been of particular interest to enthusiasts, and to the playwrights' friends among them. These were the "special spectators" who, according to James P. Bednarz, were particularly interested in "the Poets' War" at the turn of the century and who closely followed later literary competition such as the *Ho* plays at Paul's and Blackfriars in 1604–05.[9] Playwrights catered to these literary-minded playgoers with veiled references and in-jokes.

For example, while Beaumont's reaction to Marston's work is—in comparison with the hardest-hitting plays from the more sensational rivalries of the age—largely void of personal attacks, a subtler level of interplay between *The Wonder of Women* and *The Woman Hater* is based on Marston's self-representation and his positioning of his work on stage and in print. In particular, Beaumont subtly touches on Marston's personal and literary squabbles with Ben Jonson stemming from *Eastward Ho*. Such literary games confirm the coterie quality of the private-theater performances. Topical references of this sort may have enhanced demand for the play-texts among playgoers, and therefore among those publishers, printers, and booksellers inclined to trade in such works. My focus on this level of interplay, and the group of literary-minded playgoers it indicates, is bolstered by recent scholarly

attention to the publishing of plays. For example, Lukas Erne counters performance-oriented criticism by arguing that "Shakespeare and his contemporaries were aware that, as John Marston put it, 'the life of these things consists in action,' but they also realized that reading a play allowed valuable insights into other, more literary aspects of their art . . . our work may profit from an increased awareness that, from the very beginning, the English Renaissance plays we study had a double existence, one on stage and one on printed page."[10]

As I work through the contexts and content of Marston's and Beaumont's plays, I try to proceed much like the original informed auditors (and readers of) the plays, asking why the playwrights chose to write the particular plays they wrote, what their points of reference are, and how two plays with similar titles running at "rival" playhouses are related. In essence, I wish to tap into the mindset of the most sophisticated playgoers of Marston's and Beaumont's time, those unlikely to find themselves subject to ridicule in prologues and inductions. Measuring *The Wonder of Women* and *The Woman Hater* against each other not only sheds light on some of the tactics employed by the private theaters and their playwrights fending off the authorities and generating interest during sporadic and tenuous periods of playing, but also on the ways they sought to engage and entertain those playgoers whom Marston in *The Wonder of Women* refers to as "worthier minds" (Pro.19).[11]

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In order fully to comprehend the relationship between *The Wonder of Women* and *The Woman Hater,* we must establish the circumstances in which they were written. The first piece of business is sorting out their dates of composition and

situating them in terms of events at Blackfriars and Paul's and the London theater industry at large. We must also consider the aims of the individual playwrights and identify playgoers they especially targeted. Because the evidence suggests that Marston's *The Wonder of Women* was staged before *The Woman Hater,* I begin by discussing the date and context of that play, which provide a basis for understanding Beaumont's choices in *The Woman Hater.*

The private theaters, especially the troupe at Blackfriars, were something of an endangered species in 1606, and the events that put them in this precarious position affected Marston's and Beaumont's approaches to playwriting in 1605–06. As I have noted, there were extended plague closures that must have been devastating to non-traveling children's troupes. Then, too, Jonson, Chapman, and Marston's *Eastward Ho* (S.R. 4 September 1605; published 1605) made for one of the most serious political transgressions by a London theater company during the first decade of the seventeenth century. Jonson offered an account of these events to William Drummond in 1619; although his story is suspect, being partially contradicted by other surviving evidence, it seems that James Murray complained to the King about the play's anti-Scot flavor, and Chapman and Jonson were arrested and threatened with having their "eares cūtt & noses."[12] T. H. Wharton notes that while "[i]t seems that Jonson and Chapman, from prison, tried to pin the blame on Marston for the parts of the play that contain the anti-Scots satire that was so offensive to King James . . . J. D. Lake's linguistic analysis of the play indicates that they were lying, and Marston had no part in the offending passages."[13] Regardless, Marston—who had 1/6 share in the Blackfriars syndicate between approximately 1604 and 1607—seems to have fled

(or conveniently found a reason to be out of town).[14] Given "Anthony Nixon's attack on Marston in *The Black Yeare* (1606) 'for bringing in the *Dutch Courtezan* to corrupt English conditions, and sent away *Westward* for carping both at Court, Cittie, and countrie,'" Wharton suggests that "Marston's retreat on this occasion might have been to Oxford."[15] Although surviving letters by Chapman and Jonson provide clear evidence of their imprisonment, its duration is uncertain. Van Fossen writes, "Since we know that on 9 October of that year [1605] Jonson was one of the guests at a party given by Robert Catesby (one of the conspirators in the Gunpowder Plot), the imprisonment cannot have lasted more than twenty weeks—probably much less."[16]

Apparently this episode was not enough of a deterrent for the Blackfriars company: in the spring of the following year, John Day's *Isle of Gulls* (S.R. 12 November 1606; published 1606) perhaps caused problems perhaps even more serious. Sir Edward Hoby, writing to Sir Thomas Edmondes on 7 March 1606, said "At this time (c. 15 Feb.) was much speech of a play in the Black Friars, where, in the 'Isle of Gulls,' from the highest to the lowest, all men's parts were acted of two divers nations: as I understand sundry were committed to Bridewell."[17] Hoby's reference to "two divers nations" indicates that this play, like *Eastward Ho,* was found objectionable for anti-Scot satire. Precisely who was committed to Bridewell is unclear, but the Blackfriars syndicate had to understand that the patience of powerful people at Court was wearing thin. Whatever measure of protection was afforded to the Blackfriars company through relationships with influential people at Court or in the city, the stakes were getting higher and higher with each dangerous satire.

It is likely that *The Wonder of Women* was performed on the heels of the *Isle of Gulls* scandal. The evidence for this dating derives from the publishing history of Marston's *The Fawn* (S.R. 12 March 1606), which first appeared in a 1606 quarto that was followed by a second, revised edition that same year. The title page of the first edition reads, "Parasitaster, or The Fawne, as it hath bene diuers times presented at the blacke Friares, by the Children of the Queenes Maiesties Reuels. Written by Iohn Marston," while the second edition adds that the play was acted "since at Powles . . . And now corrected of many faults, which by reason of the Authors absence, were let slip in the first edition."[18] The second quarto seems to have been printed shortly after the first.[19] In lines added to the end of "To my Equal Reader" in the second quarto, Marston seems to turn an apology for the way *The Fawn* comes across in print into an advertisement for *The Wonder of Women:* "Comedies are writ to be spoken, not read: remember the life of these things consists in action; and for your such courteous survey of my pen, I will present a tragedy to you which shall boldly abide the most curious perusal" (65–69). *Sophonisba* is printed in the margins of some surviving copies, clarifying Marston's statement.[20]

Marston's advertisement in the second quarto of *The Fawn* poses a difficult question that bears on the dating of the production of the play: is it a teaser for a forthcoming play at Blackfriars that will also eventually be printed for "curious perusal," or is it an advertisement for a current or recently retired play that is soon to be printed (i.e., an advertisement for a forthcoming quarto)? Scholars have assumed that Marston's announcement of *The Wonder of Women* preceded the play's performance at Blackfriars.[21] Then, working from this assumption, they often infer

that the 1606 publication of the play means that it had a short run and consequently was a failure.[22] If we follow this theory, the fact that *The Wonder of Women* was licensed just five days after *The Fawn*—probably at least a month or two before the second quarto of *The Fawn* appeared—suggests that Marston's tragedy was licensed for printing *before* it was performed. This is possible, but it would have been unusual. Conventional thought on such matters places play production in a six-to-twelve-month (or more) window before registration by a publisher.[23] Then again, this standard may not apply to the handling of Blackfriars plays in extraordinarily turbulent times. So perhaps the play was entered into the Stationer's Register before its production; but even if this were the case, there is little reason to assume that *The Wonder of Women* failed spectacularly on stage. While 1606 publication may seem rushed, it could represent Marston and the Blackfriars company's desire to get the play into print during a period in which they could not perform. As it happens, *The Wonder of Women* found its way into the Stationer's Register in mid March 1606, around what seems to have been a brief but ominous March–April plague closure. The theaters were closed from mid June 1606 through the rest of the year, and the closure may have continued well into 1607. If *The Wonder of Women* had a short run, plague not popularity may be to blame.

It is also possible that Marston's advertisement in *The Fawn* refers to the forthcoming quarto of a play whose initial run is either coming to a close or over. Such an order of events may explain Marston's emphasis on *reading* his tragedy. Marston begins by apologizing for printing *The Fawn* because it is a comedy, echoing sentiments he had expressed in his address "To the Reader" of the 1604 quarto of *The*

Malcontent; however, he is "bold" to present a tragedy in print.[24] Following up on his advertisement, Marston demonstrates special concern for the reader's experience in his odd apology in the "Author's Note" at the end of *The Wonder of Women:* "After all, let me entreat my reader not to tax me for the fashion of the entrances and music of this tragedy, for know it is printed only as it was presented by youths, and after the fashion of the private stage."[25] And yet, *The Wonder of Women* is actually quite different from other, roughly contemporary quartos of children's theater plays, which do not include such detailed descriptions of interact music and rarely indicate entrances (and dumb-show actions) in such detail.[26] There is, then, some question as to whether *The Wonder of Women* is representative of "the fashion of the private stage" at all.[27] Perhaps Marston's apology in the "Author's Note" is related to the earlier advertisement and to his desire that the play be treated as a dramatic poem or closet drama, where stage directions would have been minimal and unobtrusive.[28] Finkelpearl notices that in "To The General Reader," Marston "describes *Sophonisba* not as a play but, for the only time in his work, as a *'poeme.'*"[29] That is, Marston may apologize for printing the play *as it was staged* instead of as a dramatic poem, leaving us to wonder who was responsible for a quarto that emphasizes the play's dramatic roots, its music and spectacle.

It is also possible that *The Wonder of Women* was delivered to the Blackfriars company and performed in Marston's absence. In this case, the "Author's Note" might refer not only to his earlier advertisement promising a rewarding reading experience, but discreetly (without calling undue attention to his recent troubles) to his lack of participation in the production of the play. We know very little about the

nature or duration of Marston's absence (or absences) from London during this period. Nixon's lines about Marston loom large, but they may be unrelated to his absence when *The Fawn* was being prepared for printing. Anthony Caputi writes of Marston's "enforced exile after the *Eastward Ho* scandal," but acknowledges that "we have no clear proof of the duration of his exile. We know he was out of London when the first edition of *The Fawn* appeared, sometime after March 12, 1606 . . . and for all we know he may have been in continuous exile until he returned sometime before July 31, 1606, for the *City Pageant* [a short occasional piece in Latin written for the King of Denmark's visit], an event that indicates that King James had forgiven him."[30] Was Marston really continuously absent from London from the production of *Eastward Ho* in early 1605 through the appearance of the second quarto of *The Fawn* in mid 1606? I find this context for the "Author's Note" unlikely.

However these events unfolded, we can hazard an educated guess about *The Wonder of Women's* appearance vis-à-vis the *The Isle of Gulls* scandal. It seems likely that *The Fawn* quarto in which Marston advertised his forthcoming tragedy appeared in late spring or early summer 1606. *The Wonder of Women* was performed either in the months immediately prior or in the months immediately afterward, but certainly before the 1606 printing of the play that advertises that it was performed "sundry times" at the Blackfriars theater. Since Hoby's letter indicates that punishment for the Blackfriars company's performance of *Isle of Gulls* was meted out in February 1606, it is likely that Marston's play was staged shortly after the *Isle of Gulls* scandal—either just before or just after the March–April 1606 plague closure. Given the scholarly consensus about a plague closure beginning around mid

June 1606 that lasted through the rest of the year (and possibly well into 1607), the production of Marston's tragedy would have been either in early March or May–June 1606. Hence, *The Wonder of Women* probably followed the Blackfriars company's second big scandal in two years, one of which involved Marston personally.

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To whom was Marston pitching his new play? That *The Wonder of Women* and *The Woman Hater* seem to have been published shortly after they were performed furnishes a clue about a crucial segment of the plays' audiences. Peter W. M. Blayney argues that "printed plays never accounted for a very significant fraction of the trade in English books" since printing plays was rarely profitable.[31] Rather than cling to playbooks, Blayney reasons, companies probably sold scripts for "'publicity' or 'advertising.'"[32] Recently, this position has been challenged by Alan B. Farmer and Zachary Lesser, who argue that "Plays were, in fact, among the most successful books in which an early modern stationer could choose to invest. They turned a profit more reliably than most other types of books, and this profit would not have been paltry, as many have claimed, but rather would have been fairly typical for an edition of books."[33] The debate over the size of the market for playbooks continues—but there clearly *was* a market.

Among the plays that were printed, a significant proportion came from the private children's theaters. Charles William Wallace observes:

> It strikes us as somewhat astounding when we look over the list of extant plays written and acted within this period of dramatic splendor and see that fully one-half were produced for and enacted by . . . children-companies. In

> the reign of James I up to 1613, the ratio is greater than one-half. If we take the period from 1604 to 1608, we find the balance even more considerable on the side of the children.[34]

One logical explanation for this disproportion is that there were devoted and well-heeled private-theater playgoers who were likely to buy printed copies of plays. This book-buying subset of the playgoing public is important: while playgoing in London was a common diversion, and while many different types of people visited even the more expensive and trendy private theaters at Paul's and Blackfriars, there clearly was a group of educated Londoners who were devotees of the city's theatrical scene. They were not only attentive at performances, but they were also among the most likely to buy and share quartos of plays. This is the audience that has been associated with the private theaters at least since Alfred Harbage's *Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions* (1952).[35]

In *The Wonder of Women* and *The Woman Hater,* Marston and Beaumont paid attention to this select group of literate playgoers, an audience whose familiarity with, and love of, drama was at least partially nurtured through academic pursuits. Scholars such as Joel B. Altman and Kent Cartwright have discussed the way that playing was an important part of the humanist education. Cartwright explains that "In the Tudor humanist educational program at grammar schools and universities . . . students studied and performed plays to a degree difficult to explain."[36] Altman argues that "The origins of such a drama are to be found in the study of formal rhetoric, which in the sixteenth century was considered to be not only an art of persuasion, but also an art of inquiry, in which the methods of logic were employed

with greater amplitude than that permitted the dialectician."[37] Given these circumstances, it is unsurprising that, according to H. N. Hillebrand, "In the first half or two-thirds of the sixteenth century, grammar school boys were clearly predominant in play-acting outside London. All of the truly significant performances were from them, and on one or two occasions . . . they even invaded the court."[38] We also know that school performances were opened to the paying public in the early 1570s at the Merchant Taylors School in London, which doubtless helped pave the way for the semi-professional organization of the chorister troupes at Paul's and Blackfriars.[39] Since Paul's and Blackfriars showcased boy players who were being trained in music and song, they were especially linked with the long tradition of scholastic theater.

Indeed, all of London's commercial stages could claim a link with the humanist tradition. Consequently, in his defense of the London theater industry, *Apology for Actors* (1612), Thomas Heywood asks of playing, "Do not the Universities, the fountaines and well springs of all good arts, learning, and documents, admit the like in their colledges? . . . In my time of my residence at Cambridge, I have seen tragedyes, comedyes, historyes, pastorals, and shewes, publickly acted, in which the graduates of good place and reputation have bene specially parted."[40] William Shakespeare draws upon this relationship in *Hamlet* (circa 1600), where the arrival of the players from the city spurs discussion and evaluation of drama among Hamlet, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and Polonius.[41] A high level of student engagement with the London theatrical scene is also evident in *The Return from Parnassus* (1601–02), a student production at Cambridge that

offers an evaluation of the jabs exchanged between the poets in London's "War of the Theaters."[42]

Both Marston and Beaumont first learned their craft in academic settings, and they were enmeshed in literary circles that included many others from similar backgrounds and with similar experiences. Marston and Beaumont both were students at Oxford and then at the Inns of Court in London: Marston entered the Middle Temple in 1595, while Beaumont entered the Inner Temple in 1600.[43] Both men had witnessed or been involved in literary activity at the Inns, and both emerged as professional playwrights at the private theaters.[44] For the most part, Marston wrote for either Paul's (1599–1603) or for Blackfriars (after 1603). Meanwhile, Beaumont launched his career by writing plays for Paul's and Blackfriars in 1606–07 under the influence of, among others, Ben Jonson, whom Lee Bliss describes as "an admired friend but no absolute mentor."[45] As Bliss notes, "Marston . . . moved in the circle of poets and dramatists Beaumont soon joined."[46] Because of their similar circumstances, Marston and Beaumont were likely acquaintances if not friends. Bliss confesses, "Of a personal friendship between Marston and Beaumont we lack concrete evidence."[47] Finkelpearl allows, "That Beaumont and Marston were well-acquainted is as certain as such matters can be."[48]

Beaumont and Marston's immediate friends and peers—though perhaps a minority among private-theater audiences overall or over the entire run of any individual play—were doubtless among the most reliable and avid patrons of London's theaters. This group was joined by other Londoners from different walks of life who were particularly attuned to theatrical traditions and trends, and who

generally kept abreast of relationships between companies, plays, playwrights, and players on the London scene.[49] Dramatists catered to, and sported with, such playgoers by working into their plays inside jokes and sophisticated allusions, a practice that bolstered auditors' sense of being in an elite subset of the playgoing public. This is an important basis for differentiation because, as Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (Blackfriars, 1607) indicates, non-coterie or unsophisticated playgoers could and did regularly go to productions at the private theaters.

This returns us to Marston's strategic announcement about the upcoming performance and/or publication of *The Wonder of Women* in the second quarto of *The Fawn.* He must have been addressing a core group of literate playgoers, people who both saw and read his plays. Recently, scholars such as Zachary Lesser and Douglas A. Brooks have discussed the manner in which "some playwrights and publishers in the first decade of the seventeenth century . . . hoped to use the printing and selling of plays to erect a new and rather non-porous boundary between theater audiences and well-educated readers."[50] This view is based on the fact that failed plays were sometimes pitched to educated readers precisely because they were rejected by "ignorant audiences" during their performance. Brooks makes a compelling case for this marketing strategy and its place in the formation of authorship, beginning with Ben Jonson's *Sejanus* (published 1605) and including John Webster's *The White Devil* (published 1612).[51] However, this sales pitch was essentially a new phenomenon in 1606, it was only one strategy for selling quartos, and it does not mean that those who bought quartos of plays generally had not seen the plays

performed. We might expect considerable overlap between audiences at the performance of a play and those who bought the quarto. In his address to the readers in the quarto of *The Malcontent* (published 1604), Marston asks that printer errors "may be pardoned for the pleasure [the play] once afforded you when it was presented with the soul of lively action" (32–33). Clearly Marston saw his theater audiences and readers as one and the same. In *The Fawn,* he explains that he has been "fortunate in these stage-pleasings" (5–6), and, after confessing his "over-vehement pursuit of these delights" (11), goes on to say, "If any shall wonder why I print a comedy, whose life rests much in the actors' voice, let such know that it cannot avoid publishing" (20–22). Marston's letters to readers clearly indicate that stage success leads to printing—or, at the very least, stage success is offered as an excellent excuse for publication. A couple of years later, in "To the Reader" in *The Family of Love* (Paul's 1605?; Whitefriars 1607?; quarto 1608), the author suggests that the window of opportunity for a play to succeed in print is directly tied to the success of its performance: "too late this work is published . . . for that it was not published when the general voice of the people had sealed it for good, and the newness of it made it much more desired than at this time."[52] Furthermore, evidence of playgoers recording lines of plays in commonplace books may indicate a demand for play-texts among playgoers that could obviously be satisfied by the press.[53] Finally, a large number of play quartos had no prefatory material. The fact that most quartos announce the performance history of the play on the title-page means that many readers must have been buying the plays as souvenirs. While what links a play

to playgoers and to readers may vary, many private-theater playgoers must have been readers.

When Marston advertised *The Wonder of Women* in *The Fawn* quarto, he was addressing literate playgoers in paratext for a play that, according to Finkelpearl, offered some of his heaviest borrowings from Inns of Court revelry.[54] According to Finkelpearl, the *Fawn*'s Duke Gonzago, a foolish self-styled scholar, represents a "direct satire against the King and his Court"—although if this is true, it does not seem to have been handled in such a way as to cause Marston any trouble.[55] If Finkelpearl is right, then Marston's advertisement for *The Wonder of Women* called attention to the radical new direction he was taking in his next drama. This in turn might have generated buzz about the forthcoming performance/quarto. Given its two 1606 printings, there seems to have been significant demand for *The Fawn.*[56] As dramatic property, it was apparently in the possession of Edward Kirkham, a member of the Blackfriars syndicate after 1603 who began working for Edward Pearce at Paul's around 1605–06. This, at least, explains how, between the first and second printings of the 1606 quarto, the play had been performed "since at Paules."[57] The performance history of *The Fawn* indicates that it was enough of a success during its initial run at Blackfriars around 1604–05 that it was worth reviving at Paul's a year or two later. The play's Inns-of-Court inspiration and the apparent demand for an accurate printing of the play point to a crucial segment of the audience for *The Fawn:* those sophisticated reading playgoers to whom Marston pitched *The Wonder of Women* as a work "which shall boldly abide the most curious perusal."

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So what kind of play was Marston pitching to these readers? In style *The Wonder of Women* is unlike any other surviving private-theater play from 1605–07, indeed, it is unlike the vast majority of surviving original plays from second Paul's and second Blackfriars.[58] It appeared during a period in which few new Roman-history plays seem to have been produced in London, but it does have an important antecedent in Ben Jonson's *Sejanus* (King's Men, 1603; S.R. 2 November 1604; published 1605), a play to which it is often compared in subject matter and tenor, and another kind of experimental theater.[59] In fact, the stage and print histories of *Sejanus* and *The Wonder of Women,* and of Jonson and Marston during this period, intersect in ways that help to explain Marston's motivation for *The Wonder of Women* and to indicate historical events and literary issues to which Beaumont later reacted in *The Woman Hater.*

Just as Marston seems to have advertised *The Wonder of Women* in a preceding quarto, Jonson seems to have advertised his work on *Sejanus* in the prefatory poem for the 1602 quarto of *Poetaster,* saying he "will trie / If *Tragœdie* haue a more kind aspect" (The Persons 223–24) than comedy.[60] Of course, as Roslyn Lander Knutson notes, "Contemporary witnesses of *Sejanus* on stage, including Jonson himself, attest to the play's failure to please audiences."[61] In the 1616 Folio, Jonson recalled that, "*It is a poeme, that (if I well remember) . . . suffer'd no less violence from our people here, then the subiect of it did from the rage of the people of* Rome" (9–12).[62] The precise reasons for this reaction are, however, difficult to discern, especially because for the printed version of the play Jonson eliminated or replaced the sections written by a collaborator.[63] We do know, however, that

Sejanus was investigated by the authorities for topical allusions, so this could have been a factor in its reception.[64]

Like Marston with *The Wonder of Women,* Jonson seems to have been concerned about impressing readers with his quarto of *Sejanus.*[65] Brooks identifies this quarto as perhaps the first to market a failed play by attempting to portray prospective readers as better than the foolish masses who rejected the play in the theaters.[66] Among the features marking the text as literary is the lack of any indication of performance on the title page, here replaced with a Latin epigram, and a series of commendatory verses by established writers and friends.[67] Additionally, the play-text features marginal notes indicating the Roman histories that served as Jonson's sources.[68] Finally, *Sejanus* is generally presented as a dramatic poem, meaning that stage directions are "scarce."[69] Yet, despite its literary presentation, in "*To the Readers,*" Jonson confesses that his play is "no true *Poëme,* in the strict Lawes of Time" and explains that it is not "needful, or almost possible, in these our Times, and to such Auditors, as commonly Things are presented, to obserue the ould state, and splendour of *Drammatick Poëmes,* with preseruation of any popular delight." Jonson's lament about "such auditors [to whom] commonly things are presented" was hardly limited to his experiences at the public theaters: he complained about private-theater audiences as well. For example, in his defensive Prologue to *Poetaster* (Blackfriars, 1601), he refers to the "base detractors, and illiterate apes, / That fill vp roomes in faire and formall shapes" (9–10). Jonson had tried to set the tone for the children's theaters at Blackfriars during the Poets' War, with *Cynthia's Revels* (1600–01) and *Poetaster,* but he may have been so frustrated with his

reception during that literary battle that he gave up on this venue as his primary outlet, afterwards contributing rarely to children's repertories.[70] Clearly Jonson was targeting particularly literary-minded playgoers, but he seems to have found them either scarce or not to his liking at both the public and private theaters.[71]

Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge suggest that Marston may have embarked on *The Wonder of Women* not only because "he was seeking to acquire the gravity and authority of a classical subject," but perhaps also to "enter into competition with Jonson whose *Sejanus* had been published in 1605."[72] Marston was keenly aware of *Sejanus* and its stage history. He was among the writers who contributed commendatory verses for the 1605 quarto of *Sejanus,* furnishing a six-line epigram about the quality of the play and the way it speaks to the author's merit, written in typically hyperbolic terms.[73] Presumably these lines, representing by far the shortest of the commendatory verses that precede *Sejanus,* were composed before the fallout from the *Eastward Ho* scandal.[74] Marston may have been addressing his relationship with Jonson as early as his letter to the readers of *The Fawn,* where he seems to take the high road: "As for the factious malice and studied detractions of some few that tread in the same path with me, let all know I most easily neglect them, and (carelessly slumbering to their vicious endeavours) smile heartily at their self-hurting baseness. My bosom friend, good Epictetus, makes me easily to contemn all such men's malice" (29–34).[75] However, by the time the 1606 quarto of *The Wonder of Women* was being assembled, as Wharton explains, Marston took an opportunity in "To the General Reader" "to snipe at Jonson and particularly his pretentious scholarly annotation of his Roman plays."[76] Marston explains to his readers, "Know that I have

not laboured in this poem to tie myself to relate anything as an historian, but to enlarge everything as a poet. To transcribe authors, quote authorities, and translate Latin prose orations into English blank verse hath, in this subject, been the least aim of my studies." In fact, Wharton situates much of *The Wonder of Women* in the context of Marston's tumultuous relationship with Jonson.[77] The evidence clearly indicates that with his Roman-history tragedy, Marston was inviting comparison with, and attempting to distinguish his play from, Jonson's *Sejanus*. Stagecraft alone is sufficient to make this point. Whereas Jonson sternly announces in the epigram on his title page, "MART. Non Hic *Centauros,* non *Gorgonas, Harpyasq',* / Inuenies : Hominem pagina nostra sapit." ("Not here will you find Centaurs, not Gorgons and Harpies: Our page smacks of man"), and whereas *Sejanus* has been characterized as a "somewhat clinical analysis of power," Marston revels in spectacle throughout *The Wonder of Women,* including an erotic scene, an attempted rape, a gruesome witch, and a ghost.[78]

So yes, Marston's thoughts were bent on Jonson, but I believe that *The Wonder of Women* was written in large measure as a deliberate, if temporary, retreat to safety for both Marston and the Blackfriars company. In this context, they may have intended the play to function as a kind of apology for their offenses. Marston may have hit upon the idea himself, or he may have been encouraged by his fellow shareholders in the imperiled Blackfriars syndicate or his new father-in-law, Reverend William Wilkes. "[A] favorite chaplain of James I," Wilkes is credited with sponsoring Marston's "ordination as a deacon in September 1609, and as a priest on Christmas Eve of the same year."[79] That Marston was commissioned to write the

Latin *City Spectacle* for James and Christian IV, King of Denmark, in July 1606, suggests that *The Wonder of Women* may have helped to rehabilitate his reputation (or otherwise elevate his profile).[80]

The genre, tone, and style of *The Wonder of Women* all demonstrate a deliberate break from the mode responsible for Marston's and the Blackfriars company's transgressions. Up to 1606, Marston's fame had been earned largely through irreverent satire in verse and in comedies. As early as the 1604 quarto of *The Malcontent,* and then especially the 1606 quartos of *The Fawn,* he expresses concerns about "misapplication."[81] But in *The Wonder of Women* he takes a completely different tack, producing a formal tragedy based on Roman history. Like Jonson in *Sejanus,* Marston depicts a corrupt world and a cast of characters with Machiavellian and stoical features. *The Wonder of Women* tells the story of Lybian king Massinissa and his virtuous Carthaginian bride, Sophonisba. Massinissa and Sophonisba's wedding night is interrupted by treachery and treason led by Massinissa's former rival for Sophonisba's hand, Syphax. The couple must separately endure a series of trials: Massinissa fights on the battlefield, while Sophonisba endures political efforts to corrupt her, followed by a series of violent assaults on her chastity by Syphax. Eventually, Sophonisba escapes and Syphax is defeated, but at the end of the play Massinissa finds himself caught between a promise of loyalty to his ally Scipio, who has been coaxed by Syphax into demanding Sophonisba as prisoner, and Sophonisba, to whom Massinissa has promised freedom from Rome's bondage. When Sophonisba commits suicide to protect her husband's honor, she cements her stature as the "wonder of women."

Marston's play is written in verse that can be dense and syntactically difficult, as we may see in the following exchange between Hanno Magnus and Sophonisba's father Astrubal, who has joined the league against Massinissa:

Hugo Magnus. . . . 'Tis well in state

To do close ill, but 'void a public hate.

Astrubal. Tush, Hanno, let me but prosper; let routs prate,

My power shall force their silence or my hate

Shall scorn their idle malice. Men of weight

Know, he that fears envy let him cease to reign;

The people's hate to some hath been their gain.

For howsoe'er a monarch feigns his parts,

Steal anything from kings but subjects' hearts. (2.3.39–47)

Marston's stiff, artificial verse is especially evident in Massinissa's opening lines to Scipio in 3.2:

Let not the virtue of the world suspect

Sad Massinissa's faith; nor once condemn

Our just revolt. Carthage first gave me life,

Her ground gave food, her air first lent me breath:

The earth was made for men, not men for earth.

Scipio, I do not thank the gods for life,

Much less vile men, or earth. Know, best of lords,

It is a happy being breathes well-famed,

For which Jove fees thee thus. Men, be not fooled

With piety to place, tradition's fear:

A just man's country Jove makes everywhere. (1–11)

Finkelpearl finds it "hard to imagine that even the most select auditors could have comprehended many of the speeches unless they had first given the quarto a most 'curious perusall.' Regardless of the speaker, the language tends to be elliptical, condensed, and sententious. The diction is plain and the members are brief, but connectives and articles are frequently omitted. The effect can be grave and sententious, but it is always more or less obscure."[82] Corbin and Sedge think that Finkelpearl "exaggerate[es]," but they agree that "the play has affinities with such closet dramas as Fulke Greville's *Mustapha* and *Alaham* where the expectation of readership rather than theatre-performance allows a compression in the speeches demanding and repaying close study."[83]

Then there is the subject and tenor of the play. R. W. Ingram explains that *The Wonder of Women* is "a tragedy of a more orthodox kind than anything else [Marston] wrote . . . the overall impression that the play leaves is one of formality and of steady-paced ceremonial."[84] Marston's subject is appropriate for traditional, refined courtly entertainment, especially the kind that might tap into a vein of nostalgia. According to Marion Colthorpe, a Latin play titled *Massinissa and Sophonisba* was performed before Queen Elizabeth in 1565.[85] But it may be defensiveness no less than nostalgia that explains the decision to retell a story from a well-known ancient source that could provide a measure of protection from accusations of "application." Trouble was stirred up when Jonson wrote *Sejanus;* by Samuel Daniel, who was harassed by the authorities for his *Philotas* (Blackfrairs,

1604); and when the Blackfriars boys performed John Day's *Isle of Gulls* (based on Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*), but with *The Wonder of Women,* Marston steered clear of topical allusions. He handles his source material—Appian's *Roman History* Book VIII—in an original way, fleshing out characters and inventing scenes that enhance the drama.[86] Perhaps mindful of the supernatural elements in some of the most successful tragedies of the period, and perhaps in consideration of royal interests, Marston presents a Jacobean witch.[87] He also stages the sort of feminine erotics that, as Mary Bly argues, evolved into a key feature in the repertory of the emerging children's troupe at Whitefriars (of this, more later).[88] But if Marston is sometimes adventurous in *The Wonder of Women,* he is never politically daring.

Marston's prevailing conservatism in this instance is also evident in the way he addresses his audiences in production. In a serious and formal tragedy such as *The Wonder of Women,* we have reason to take the Prologue and Epilogue more seriously than we would in a comedy, where we might expect irony and playfulness from a satirist such as Marston. Marston's apology in *The Fawn,* where he grants tragedy greater literary value than comedy, as well as the way he trivializes his comedies in other quartos (in the Prologue to *The Dutch Courtesan* he calls his work an "easy play" [1]; in "To The Reader" for the 1604 quarto of *The Malcontent* he calls the work "a trifle in reading" [32]), indicate the different ways he approached the two genres. *The Wonder of Women* Prologue establishes the seriousness of his labor even as it shows us a playwright teetering between confidence and fear. Mindful of Jonson's failure, conscious of his own reputation among playgoers as a "[r]ude,

crude, and theatrically unglued" dramatist, and perhaps remembering the *Eastward Ho* scandal, Marston ends his Prologue on a defensive note:[89]

> . . . And now, ye worthier minds,
> To whom we shall present a female glory,
> The wonder of a constancy so fixed
> That fate itself might well grow envious,
> Be pleased to sit, such as may merit oil
> And holy dew 'stilled from diviner heat.
> For rest thus knowing, what of this you hear,
> The author lowly hopes, but must not fear:
> *For just worth never rests on popular frown,*
> *To have done well is fair deeds' only crown.* (19–28)

An earnest Marston sets out to establish the seriousness of his play: as Michael West and Marilyn Thorssen suggest, "oil" and "holy dew" speak to the "greater labour required for tragic inspiration," a tradition that may be traced back to Horace.[90] Marston requests his audience's attention with a degree of apparent modesty, expressing the hope that he will be understood and his efforts rewarded; but he also boldly claims that the value of a play will not, ultimately, be determined by its reception in the theater.

Marston's Epilogus for *The Wonder of Women* is still more deferential than the Prologue, even though it features one line of trademark Marston wit. At the end of the play Massinissa turns to the audience and says:

> And now with lighter passion, though with most just fear,

I change my person, and do hither bear

Another's voice, who with a phrase as weak

As his deserts, now willed me, thus formed, speak:

If words well sensed, best suiting subject grave,

Noble true story may once boldly crave

Acceptance gracious; if he whose fires

Envy not others nor himself admires;

If scenes exempt from ribaldry or rage,

Of taxings indiscreet, may please the stage,

If such may hope applause, he not commands,

Yet craves as due, the justice of your hands.

But freely he protests, howe'er it is,

Or well or ill, or much, not much amiss

With constant modesty he doth submit

To all, save those that have more tongue than wit.

Marston poses modestly (describing himself as a man who neither envies others nor admires himself), notes his fear of failure, and emphasizes the play's gravitas and its lack of offensive material (more playfully and irreverently, Beaumont will mention these same things in the Prologue for *The Woman Hater*). Marston then submits "with constant modesty" to the "worthier minds" he references in the Prologue—all but "those that have more tongue than wit." As Corbin and Sedge note, in the Epilogus, Marston "shows a marked anxiety about the reader's judgement of the play, together with a confidence that he has achieved 'words well sensed, best suiting

subject grave.'"[91] Both the Prologue and the Epilogus of *The Wonder of Women* tell us that Marston expected his work to be judged by "worthier minds," and that he was concerned about the way his play would be received.

The paratextual material in *The Wonder of Women* quarto gives us a more aloof Marston than we encounter in the Prologue or Epilogus. In "To the General Reader," Marston adopts a cavalier attitude toward his audience: "equal reader, peruse me with no prepared dislike; and if ought shall displease thee, thank thyself; if ought please thee, thank not me: for I confess in this it was not my only end." An epigraph following the Prologue in the margin of the 1606 quarto reads "*Nec se quaesiverit extra*" ("Nor will he have looked outside himself"), an adaptation of Persius that emphasizes Marston's assertion in the Prologue that "*just worth never rests on popular frown.*" [92] This Marston is decidedly more confident and nonchalant in his attitude toward his audience.

Sophisticated readers would recognize that Marston's paratextual material in *The Wonder of Women* mainly represents his response to Jonson's posturing in the quarto of *Sejanus*. In his letter "To the Readers," Jonson writes:

> Fare you well. And if you read farder of me, and like, I shall not be afraid of it though you praise me out.
>
> *Neque enim mihi cornea fibra est.*
>
> But that I should plant my felicity, in your generall saying *Good,* or *Well,* &c. were a weaknesse which the better sort of you might worthily contemne, if not absolutely hate me for.
>
> BEN. IONSON. and no such,

Quem Palma negata macrum, donata reducit opimum. (49–57)

Marston's Persius emphasizes his inner strength and self-sufficiency. Jonson pays tribute to the same ideal but confesses, also via Persius ("certainly my innards are not made of horn"), that he really is affected by the evaluations of his readers (this despite his Horatian flourish that he is "no such, whom the denial of the palm sends home lean, its bestowal plump").[93] For all of their stoical self-presentation, Jonson and Marston hint at their own insecurities. Marston's final position in the quarto of *The Wonder of Women* may seem by degrees the more determined of the two, or it may simply be that he has out-Jonsoned Jonson.

Marston's glance at Jonson is, I think, noticed in general terms by Beaumont in *The Woman Hater.* Although there is no marker for a certain link to any specific playwright, Beaumont's hungry courtier Lazarello anticipates a rare dish by saying: "There is no Poet acquainted with more shakings and quakinges, towardes the latter end of his new play, when hee's in that case, that he standes peeping betwixt the curtaines, so fearefully, that a bottle of Ale cannot be opened, but he thinkes some body hisses, then I am at this instant" (2.1.134–38).[94] Here Beaumont suggests the vulnerability of poets, especially ambitious poets, and foregrounds the insecurities that Marston and Jonson subordinate to self-confidence or stoicism. Beaumont emphasizes an anxiety that Jonson and Marston downplay but doubtless felt, especially given the scandals that likely brought increased scrutiny of their activities and their works.

Jonson, Marston, and Beaumont kept recalibrating their places in the theatrical marketplace as well as their relationships with select groups of literate playgoers.

Jonson takes advantage of the quarto of *Sejanus* to denounce playgoers and focus on readers. Marston hoped that his formal tragedy, at least, would meet with better stage success than Jonson's Roman tragedy. But in the quarto of the play, which he promised would "boldly abide the most curious perusal," he apologizes for the stage directions and descriptions of music. Unlike Jonson, Marston appears to want to strike a balance between his roles as playwright and published poet. Finally, Beaumont must have expected at least some portion of his audience to be familiar with Marston's and Jonson's works and their authorial personas, probably including those conveyed in print. He was just beginning his career, and consequently had yet to establish an authorial persona of his own. His work was published with no authorial attribution or extradramatic material and survives strictly as a stage souvenir (this does not mean, however, that book-buyers didn't know who the author was). The complex relationships we see within and surrounding these plays indicates the degree to which playwrights such as Marston and Beaumont were mindful of those playgoers who knew them well personally or knew their public personas from playhouses and books, those who were literary-minded and deeply invested in theatrical culture.

***

Out of a desire to seem chastened after the *Eastward Ho* affair, Marston made a calculated move, a radical change in direction: he designed *The Wonder of Women* as a updated throwback, a formal, traditional tragedy stocked with popular stage devices. Then he "boldly" invited the play's scrutiny as high art. He probably did not need or intend to eclipse his reputation as an irreverent satirist; he needed only to

prove that he was capable of writing in a different vein. Meanwhile, if Marston was taking on Jonson, his *Sejanus* in particular, then Beaumont, who certainly knew them both, took notice as he wrote the play that became *The Woman Hater.*

It is impossible to know for certain when Beaumont's play premiered, but the fourteen-month difference between the entries for *The Wonder of Women* and *The Woman Hater* in the Stationers' Register is deceptive. *The Woman Hater* could have been played during the end of *The Wonder of Women's* run, or, given the generally accepted plague closure dates of July–December 1606, and possible closure through March 1607, it is quite possible that *The Woman Hater* was ready in the fall or winter of 1606 but not performed at Paul's until the spring of the following year.[95] Either way, the play's many subtle and overt allusions to Marston and *The Wonder of Women* suggest that it is the second of the two plays.

Thematically, there is little doubt that Beaumont had *The Wonder of Women* in mind as he was writing, but it is equally clear that it was not the only play he was considering. Unlike Marston's Roman tragedy, *The Woman Hater* is in the vein of contemporary city comedies that involved characters who are among social elites, including Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* (King's Men, 1604–05), Thomas Middleton's *The Phoenix* (Paul's, 1603–04), Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton's *The Honest Whore* (Prince Henry's Men, 1605), and John Day's *Law-Tricks* (Blackfriars, 1606–07). In fact, Beaumont makes clear references to Middleton's *The Phoenix* and Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* in the opening scene when the Duke asks the courtiers around him, "Why thinkes your Lordship I am up so soone?" (1.1.9), and Arrigo responds, "I doe thinke, to cure / Some strange

corruptions in the common wealth" (1.1.11–12), while Lucio says, "I thinke your grace / Intendes to walke the publique streetes disguised, / To see the streets disorders" (1.1.23–25). Citing these lines and others, Bliss suggests that Beaumont's play not only "abounds in recognizable character types and dramatic devices," but also features "direct borrowings and parodied speeches at least some auditors would recognize."[96] Bliss sees evidence of intertextual connections between *The Woman Hater* and many different plays, including Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (King's Men, 1606–07), *Othello* (King's Men, 1604–05), and *Much Ado about Nothing* (Chamberlain's/King's Men, 1598–99), Chapman's *The Widow's Tears* (Blackfriars, 1605?), and Marston's *The Fawn* (Blackfriars, 1604–05; Paul's, 1606).[97] For his part, Finkelpearl argues that Beaumont was particularly influenced by Jonson and Marston: "*The Woman Hater* displays an obvious debt to Ben Jonson's humors characterizations," but "[t]he indebtedness to John Marston . . . is so pervasive that it would be more accurate to call *The Woman Hater* 'Jonsonian' as filtered through and modified by Marston. There are echoes of at least six of Marston's works, particularly *The Dutch Courtesan.*"[98] Connections between *The Woman Hater* and *The Wonder of Women* remain largely unexplored.

In 1606 Beaumont, like Marston, was keenly aware of the precarious position of the private theaters, and as an aspiring professional playwright he was doubtless concerned for their welfare. Consequently, he does a significant amount of defensive posturing in *The Woman Hater.* He begins his Prologue by taking a possible swipe at Marston's play when he mentions that "a Prologue in Verse is as stale, as a blacke Velvet Cloake, and a Bay Garland" (1–2). Then Beaumont proceeds to offer a

strongly worded Prologue in "plaine Prose" (Pro.3) that predicts the disappointment of those who expect offensive material in his play: "if there bee any lurking amongst you in corners, with Table bookes, who have some hope to find fit matter to feede his ——— mallice on, let them claspe them up, and slinke away, or stay and be converted. For he that made this Play, meanes to please Auditors so, as he may bee an Auditor himselfe hereafter, and not purchase them with the deare losse of his eares" (Pro.6–12).[99] Beaumont undoubtedly refers to the crisis at Blackfriars and the punishment with which Jonson, Chapman, and perhaps Marston were threatened because of *Eastward Ho.* He goes on to explain that in his play, at least, "you shall not find . . . the ordinarie and over-worne trade of jesting at Lordes and Courtiers, and Citizens, without taxation of any particular or new vice by them found out, but at the persons of them" (18–21). Unlike his predecessors, Beaumont advises us, he will ridicule types without hitting too close to home for any powerful playgoer. As we have seen, such a disclaimer was necessary: episodes such as the Poets' War, Jonson's troubles with *Sejanus,* and the *Eastward Ho* and *Isle of Gulls* fiascos all remind us that more than a few playgoers were devoted to "application." Like Marston, Beaumont's generic choices are also tinged with defensiveness. He playfully says, "I dare not call it Comedie, or Tragedie; 'tis perfectly neyther: A Play it is, which was meant to make you laugh" (12–13). If not a comedy, then comic effect.[100] And if not entirely familiar, then familiar enough: "Some things in it you may meet with, which are out of the common Roade: a Duke there is, and the Scene lyes in *Italy,* as these two thinges lightly wee never misse" (Pro.16–18).[101]

As if further to disarm those spoiling for a fight, Beaumont builds into his play an important subplot focusing on "Intelligencers" and "misapplication." Intelligencers in Beaumont's Milan trump up charges of treason by willfully misinterpreting the passionate speeches of Lazarello, the harmless "hungry courtier," and it is not difficult to see the way in which this aspect of the plot glances at charges that the theaters, especially the private theaters, were offering "public" attacks on important people. Count Valore describes one intelligencer as a man who "brings me informations, pick'd out of broken wordes, in mens common talke, which with his malitious misapplication, hee hopes will seeme dangerous" (1.3.173–76). At the end of the play, Valore dismisses the intelligencers, saying, "our healthfull state needs no such Leeches to suck out her blood" (5.2.102–03). In a preemptive strike of his own, Beaumont decries the devious misapplication of speeches in and at plays.[102]

All of these defensive moves are important because Beaumont chose to write a satirical city comedy. Satirical comedy was an important—in fact, during the period in question, the dominant—mode in the repertories at Paul's and Blackfriars. Michael Shapiro relates coterie satire to "institutionalized forms of 'misrule,' such as the Feast of Fools and the Boy Bishop Ceremony" performed by "lower clerics, choirboys, and schoolboys."[103] According to Shapiro, "Under the dual protection of saturnalian misrule and juvenile impunity, the children's companies were free to insult their audiences," but "the intended victim can turn the insult to his own advantage by applying it to those around him while exempting himself. Since showing pain or annoyance would be admitting the validity of the taunt, it is in the spectator's interest to tolerate the abuse."[104] Still, playwrights and companies needed

to be careful; they were always vulnerable to offended individuals with the means for retribution through legal and/or political channels.

If Beaumont made his theatrical debut with *The Woman Hater,* it is unsurprising that he would work "out of the common Roade" and contribute to the proliferation of satirical jest. But he was relatively cautious: the play's satire is largely generalized, traditional, derivative of recent successful plays, or based on the antics of particularly absurd characters. Beaumont depicts a humorous general (Gondarino), a humorous courtier (Lazarello), a foolish shopkeeper (the Mercer), and a licentious Court similar to that of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure,* which had been performed at Court in 1605–06.

Critics have disagreed about *The Woman Hater*'s ability to raise the ire of the politically powerful. Finkelpearl (who assumes that John Fletcher had a hand in the play) senses something a bit dangerous about it:

> It is true that almost all the topics in *The Woman Hater* can be found in Tudor satire from at least the time of Skelton. But the mixture and emphasis of the elements in *The Woman Hater* have a special Jacobean flavor. At a time when the reigning monarch was notorious for his susceptibility to flattery, his reckless and irresponsible awarding of titles, land, and money, and his taste for handsome faces "on the suddaine," Beaumont and Fletcher began their dramatic career with their eyes on a particular court while keeping the language general enough to avoid "his ——— mallice."[105]

Other critics, however, have found the play much more innocuous. W. Reavley Gair believes that "*The Woman Hater* was almost certainly a disappointment to those who

had their 'table books' ready, as it is a play at which it would be difficult to take offense."[106] And Bliss suggests that "Satiric thrusts at common targets pepper the play: new knights and upstart courtiers, royal favorites, government informers. It also jests evenhandedly—in this, perhaps unusually—at 'Lords and Courtiers, and Citizens,' for though its lords 'borne' may prove finally 'wise' and happy, a good deal of noble folly is exposed along the way."[107] Ultimately, Bliss concludes, "*The Woman Hater* never becomes a serious political play or, after its opening scenes, even a consistently satiric one."[108]

Perhaps these critics' views about the hazards of performing *The Woman Hater* attest to Beaumont's success with the play: he writes in a satirical vein without doing anything blatantly offensive. Beaumont inoculates himself by offering relatively restrained or generalized satire while mocking those inclined to take offense at the theater, especially those who parse words unfavorably. Hence, Beaumont's response to recent private-theater scandals is a careful extension of a familiar comic trend, a toned-down version of the types of plays that had recently provoked the authorities.

Marston aimed for rehabilitation in the form of serious tragedy. Beaumont writes a safe version of a satirical comedy. Different individual circumstances may help to explain Marston's and Beaumont's approaches to play writing. That they were writing for different theaters is also significant. To our knowledge, Beaumont had not been personally in trouble for writing offensive satire, and the company for which he was writing *The Woman Hater* (assuming that he knew for whom he was composing the play), Paul's, had at times pushed the envelope but not run seriously

afoul of Court powers since the 1590s.[109] In fact, during these years Paul's seems to have been relatively restrained or cautious, even as they regularly produced satirical comedies. Thomas Middleton was the dominant playwright there after 1603, and he cranked out a number of inoffensive city comedies for the troupe—including *A Trick to Catch the Old One* (1604–06), *A Mad World, My Masters* (1604–06), and *Michaelmas Term* (1605–06). Middleton does not seem to have run afoul of the authorities during this period, and he later became "*Poeta & Chron: Londinensis.*"[110] Hence, the house in which Beaumont presented his play was probably somewhat safer than Marston's. Yet, while a play produced at Blackfriars may have been subject to particular scrutiny, a threat to the Blackfriars company was also a threat to Paul's—indeed, as the uproar following the Blackfriars' 1608 satires suggests, a threat to the entire London theater industry.[111] Marston's and Beaumont's interest in the survival of the theaters was a shared agenda that they advanced differently.

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With their marked differences in style, *The Wonder of Women* and *The Woman Hater* might seem to be plays fit for two very different kinds of repertories and audiences. However, the managers at Blackfriars and Paul's in 1606–07 seem to have felt that plays as different as *The Wonder of Women* and *The Woman Hater* had a good chance of success with their overlapping audiences. The apparent diversity in the Paul's and Blackfrairs' repertories corresponds to the cross-fertilization among plays being staged in London's public and private theaters and on display in London's bookshops. Intertextuality (and the competition or coordination it signals) was a key strategy across the industry.[112] Roslyn Lander Knutson argues that

playwrights "recognized the commercial implications of the game: playgoers could be drawn to the playhouse again and again to enjoy serial quarrels," forming a "sociable commerce, in which companies might participate merely by joining the current game or starting another."[113]

What is arguably unusual in this case of reportorial interplay is the degree to which Beaumont engages Marston's tragedy in a work completely different in tone and genre, especially since Beaumont's play is not out to lampoon Marston's. Instead, the two plays stage a literary debate of particular interest to the sophisticated and *literate* playgoers. This idea is an important part of Beaumont's agenda.

Although we cannot know when Beaumont became aware of *The Wonder of Women,* he clearly decided to work up a response to both the play and the circumstances surrounding it. Of course, Beaumont did not write *The Woman Hater* thinking only of Marston's play, but he (and Paul's) did take advantage of it for marketing purposes and because he must have relished the literary game. He would have expected the plays' intertextuality to be to their advantage in the theaters and subsequently in bookshops.

It is even possible that such intertexutality was part of a cooperative strategy. If so, Beaumont's emergence onto the professional (or semi-professional) stage may have approximated Marston's. Katherine Duncan-Jones suggests that the novice Marston and the celebrity Shakespeare developed a friendship at the turn of the seventeenth century, and that in *Hamlet* and *Antonio's Revenge,* both of which premiered in the 1599–1601 period, "there are extraordinarily close links in imagery, style and dramatic structure that suggest that the plays were written simultaneously,

with each man regularly looking over the other's shoulder."[114] She concludes that "Audiences who watched both Marston's miniaturized tragedy at St. Paul's and Shakespeare's very large-scale one at the Globe or 'else-where' could admire the ingenuity with which the younger and older writer had deployed many such verbal parallels and variations on a theme. Both plays were powerful in their own terms, offering studies of tyranny and vengeance in full-size . . . and in miniature."[115] In the case of *The Wonder of Women* and *The Woman Hater,* celebrity Marston and novice Beaumont may have employed this proven intertextual strategy with a new twist: a change in genre.

The main titles of the plays in question, *The Wonder of Women* and *The Woman Hater,* invite comparison. Any playgoer aware of the first play would automatically think of the second as a possible response to it. The very title of Beaumont's play immediately signals an inversion of Marston's: an exceptional woman is exchanged for a misogynist. The settings are equally chiastic: while Marston's play centers on an heroic woman in a corrupt military world embroiled in regional conflict, Beaumont's centers on a villainous military man in a corrupt world of sexual frivolity. Beaumont further secures the relationship between his play and Marston's with his heroine, Oriana. Like Sophonisba, Oriana couples sexual boldness with confidence in her own virtue. These qualities are part of a trend in the marketplace that Mary Bly has identified as central to the boy company at Whitefriars that came into existence around 1607. Also, like Marston's "wonder of women," Oriana survives an attempted rape, emerging from her trial a celebrated "exceptional woman."[116]

For those who may have missed the interplay, Beaumont ends *The Woman Hater* with lines that explicitly echo the concluding lines of Marston's play. Marston's play features a false happy ending, while Beaumont gives us a "tragic scene" before advancing to the wedding appropriate for a comedy. This generic mingling suggests that both plays are pointing to the emergence (or codification) of tragicomedy. They are prepping their audience. And they do this, not by flirting with political controversy, but by appealing to literary-aesthetic considerations. If Marston's play pulls the boys' theater toward safety with a formal tragedy graced by spectacle and a plot twist, Beaumont' points the way to tempered satire, and toward tragicomedy.[117] If a debate about these strategies did not arise among avid private-theater patrons, they could still compare the treatments of "the woman question" or "the exceptional-woman story."

Such comparisons might have begun with the two plays' main characters. Sophonisba, Marston's "wonder of women," is, as the warrior-king Massinissa announces early in the play, a "Wondrous creature! Even fit for gods, not men. / Nature made all the rest of thy fair sex / As weak essays to make thee a pattern / Of what can be in woman" (1.2.224–27). Marston's plot bears this out. Sophonisba's heroism begins when she encourages her husband to forego their wedding night, an experience for which she has longed, in order to attend to affairs of state. This involves dealing with the rival Lybian king Syphax, who, having been jilted by Sophonisba for Massinissa, has joined Scipio and attacked Carthage, hoping to claim Sophonisba in the process. In 2.1, the politicians and military leaders of Carthage attempt to convince Sophonisba that to betray her marriage vows and to join Syphax

would be an honorable sacrifice for the good of the state. Sophonisba, however, refuses to betray her husband, and for this stand another representative of the play's moral center, Senator Gelosso, describes her as a "very angel" (2.1.117). In fact, during this scene Sophonisba and Gelosso express mutual admiration for refusing to collude in the Machiavellian schemes of the politicians. Sophonisba later successfully escapes the clutches of Syphax, who has used lies, attempted rape, and witchcraft to have his way with her. At the end of the play, when Massinissa is hopelessly caught between his pledge to protect Sophonisba from Rome's bondage and his pledge to obey Scipio, Sophonisba commits suicide to preserve her husband's honor. For this, Sophonisba is declared by Massinissa to be "Woman's right wonder, and just shame of men" (5.4.59). At the end of the play Sophonisba has become, as Finkelpearl puts it, a "virgin martyr."[118]

The driving force behind the events of *The Wonder of Women* is Syphax's desire to revenge his failed courtship of Sophonisba, and so to assuage his lust. Syphax vividly expresses his passion throughout the play, and he is doubtless one reason Morse S. Allen, in the first book-length study on Marston, *The Satire of John Marston* (1920), called *The Wonder of Women* "an ultra-romantic melodrama . . . motivated by crude lust."[119] Early in the play Syphax explains that:

> . . . while kings are strong,
> What they'll but think, and not what is, is wrong.
> I am disgraced in and by that which hath
> No reason—love, and woman. My revenge
> Shall therefore bear no argument of right:

Passion is reason when it speaks from might. (1.1.71–76)

We hear more of this from Syphax throughout the play: "my strong blood boils" (3.1.24); "Achilles' armour could not bear out lust" (3.1.27); "Seven-wallèd Babel cannot bear out lust" (3.1.208); "A wasting flame feeds on my amorous blood / Which we must cool or die" (4.1.90–91); and "Blood's appetite / Is Syphax' god . . . that's lawful which doth please" (4.1.187–88, 190). The extraordinary violence of Syphax's passion is demonstrated in 3.1, when he drags Sophonisba onto the stage "*in her nightgown-petticoat*" with "*his dagger twined about her hair.*" When Sophonisba resists him, Syphax exclaims, "Look, I'll tack thy head / To the low earth, whilst the strength of two black knaves / Thy limbs all wide shall strain. Prayer fitteth slaves, / Our courtship be our force" (3.1.10–13). Syphax even gruesomely suggests he would violate Sophonisba's corpse if she committed suicide (4.1.58–62). By the beginning of act 5, Syphax has learned that he was tricked into having sex with the witch Erictho, but this knowledge does not bring an epiphany or otherwise cause him to reform his behavior. Instead, at the end of the play a thoroughly defeated Syphax simply rounds out his villainy by spitefully lying about Sophonisba, describing her to Scipio as treacherously seductive so that, as he tells the audience, "What I cannot possess / Another shall not: that's some happiness" (5.2.99–100). Syphax's final lines lead to the suicide of the "wonder of women." In Marston's source Syphax dies from grief after Sophonisba's death, but, as Peter Ure explains, in Marston's play "Syphax becomes the blackest of villains, with three attempts to rape Sophonisba and no credit given to him for his touching end."[120]

Beaumont's villainous woman hater, Gondarino, is a warrior figure like Syphax and Massinissa. The Duke describes him as "the sadde *Gondarino,* our generall" (1.1.44), and, as if to reinforce this occupation, Oriana later notes how she has seen him "chafe nobly like a Generall" (3.1.217–18) and describes him as "*Millaines* Generall" (3.1.246). But Gondarino's world is hardly martial; the Milan he inhabits is filled with sexual intrigue. We learn in 1.1, that the Duke is up late at night not because of some "waightie State plot" (9), but "to see a wench" (29). Count Valore, the play's cynic, frequently speaks of the sexually corrupt Court and even takes two opportunities to suggest that the Duke might have fathered illegitimate children (2.1.139–41; 2.1.185–86).[121] The courtier Arrigo, an intimate of the Duke, expresses his own familiarity with a bawdy house (4.2.353–56). In a reversal of Marston's play, then, a humorous general inhabits a world of sexual intrigue.

Circumstances and events also link Beaumont's Gondarino to Marston's warrior-king Massinissa and his villainous counterpart, Syphax. Gondarino's villainy involves his personal war against womankind. He indicates the genesis of his hyper-misogyny when he first appears on stage: "Was ther ever any man that hated his wife after death but I? and for her sake all women" (2.1.16–17). Later, the Duke explains, "I doe know, / Before his slaine wife gave him that offence, / He was the greatest servant to that sexe, / That ever was" (2.1.117–20). Beaumont is extremely obscure here, but Finkelpearl reasonably suggests that Gondarino's wife's offense, adultery, provides a plausible reason for his humor.[122] Gondarino, a military figure perverted into a humors character by his wife's betrayal, is an inversion of the warrior/lover/aspiring stoic Massinissa, himself enhanced by a faithful wife. It is

unsurprising, then, that Gondarino loosely follows the path of Massinissa's foil, Syphax. Like the angry, jealous, and lustful Syphax, Gondarino vividly expresses his misogyny and takes it to shocking extremes: "I will be a scourge to all females in my life, and after my death, the name of *Gondarino* shall be terrible to the mighty women of the earth" (3.1.278–80).

Syphax's failed courtship of Sophonisba and his desperation to possess her at any cost motivate Marston's play; Gondarino's misogyny and his desire to expose a young woman as a whore at any cost motivate *The Woman Hater.* Offended by Gondarino's bitter misogyny, Beaumont's young heroine Oriana boldly courts him as a form of vengeful torture. Appalled by her behavior and predisposed to believe she is sexually promiscuous because she is a woman, Gondarino decides to strike back. He schemes to portray her as a whore to her brother and the Duke. The great risk in Gondarino's slander becomes clear when the Duke tells him, "look it / Be true you tell mee, or by our countries Saint / Your head goes off" (3.1.204–06). Gondarino forfeits whatever honor and dignity he possesses—in fact, implicates himself in debauchery and risks his life—in order to disgrace Oriana. In this regard, he is similar to Syphax, who sacrifices his honor, stature, and all he possesses to revenge the loss of his "Reputation" (1.1.7) and indulge his lust for Sophonisba. Syphax slanders Sophonisba and Gondario slanders Oriana. When the two plays are viewed or read in conjunction with one another, Gondarino develops the comic potential of Syphax's extraordinary passion, while Syphax drives home the tragic potential of Gondarino's.

In act 4, during one of Gondarino's rants, Beaumont alludes directly to Marston's play:

> the women of this age, if there bee any degrees of comparison amongst their sexe, are worse than those of former times; for I have read of women, of that trueth, spirit, and constancy, that were they now living, I should indure to see them: But I feare the writers of the time belied them, for how familiar a thing is it with the Poets of our age, to extoll their whores, which they call mistresses, with heavenly praises? but I think their furies, and their craz'd braines, beyond beleefe: nay how many that would faine seem serious, have dedicated grave works to ladies tooth-lesse, hollow-ei'd, their haire shedding, purple fac'd, their nayles apparently coming off; and the bridges of their noses broken downe; and have called them the choyse handy workes of nature, the patterns of perfection, and the *wonderment of women* (my italics) (4.1.14–26)

Gondarino echoes Marston's title and even his sales pitch for his play (in his Prologue, Marston describes Sophonisba as "The wonder of constancy so fixed / That fate itself might grow envious" [21–22]). By the end of his speech, Gondarino has vehemently denied the feminist heroics of Marston's play: his is a fallen world utterly incapable of producing a Sophonisba. Moreover, in Gondarino's reference to "poets of our age," savvy auditors could not help but hear Beaumont glancing at Marston, perhaps to his "craz'd" brain as well.

Gondarino is an important part of Beaumont's response to Marston's play, but the character who really cements the relationship between the plays is Oriana, Beaumont's city-comedy version of Marston's Sophonisba. Instead of a "virgin

martyr" in tumultuous ancient times, Oriana is introduced as a frivolous and seemingly naïve contemporary virgin who wants nothing more than to be introduced at Court. Of course, Beaumont confirms Oriana's virtue, even when she chooses to engage in reckless, sexually bold behavior to torment Gondarino for his misogyny. At the end of the play, Oriana is tested in a manner that clearly recalls the rape scene in *The Wonder of Women,* and she stubbornly defends her virtue in a manner similar to her tragic counterpart, drawing the admiration of the men of the play. With Oriana, Beaumont deftly demonstrates that he can achieve the effects of Marston's tragedy in a lively city comedy. Rejecting Marston's staid and heavy hand, especially evident in *The Wonder of Women's* lack of comic relief, Beaumont orchestrates a complex comedy that couples tragic elements with a comic resolution.

At the very beginning of *The Woman Hater,* Beaumont sets the stage for the appearance of his heroine. The Duke describes the "Sister to Count *Valore*" (1.1.37) as the object of his affection: "She's a maide / Would make a Prince forget his throne and state, / And lowly kneele to her: the generall fate / Of all mortalitie, is hers to give; / As she disposeth, so we die and live" (1.1.37–41).[123] The Duke's hyperbolic praise sets the standard by which she will be judged as the play unfolds. When the audience first sees Oriana, she states her goal of being introduced at Court, where "they say one shall see fine sights" (1.3.11). Her brother, Count Valore, at first sternly refuses, fearing her sexual corruption. When Oriana says, "I would goe, if it were but only to shew you, that I could be there, and be mov'd with none of these trickes" (1.3.43–44), the Count acquiesces, saying, "Well, if you come off cleere from this hot service, / Your praise shall be the greater" (1.3.47–48). Before her arrival at

Court, however, Oriana endangers herself by sporting with the humors character: offended, amused, and challenged by Gondarino's wild behavior, she hatches a plot to "torment him to madnes" (2.1.397). She decides to court Gondarino boldly and, if successful, get her revenge by then rejecting him. She explains, "The more he hates, the more Ile seeme to love" (2.1.399). When Gondarino begins a tirade saying, "I will not love; if I doe—" (3.1.83), Oriana explains in an aside: "Then ile hate you" (3.1.84). Yet, even as she persists with this plan, she demonstrates an awareness of the trouble she could be making for herself: "if this should be told in the Court, that I begin to woe Lords, what a troop of the untrust nobilite should I have at my lodging tomorrow morning" (3.1.125–27).

Oriana's insincere pursuit of Gondarino calls to mind Sophinisba's sexual frankness. While Marston claims that his play features "scenes exempt from ribaldry" (Ep.9), he indulges in some visual sexual titillation in his dramatization of Sophonisba's wedding night. Sophonisba's language can also be highly suggestive. In 1887, A. H. Bullen described Sophonisba as "too masculine; she talks too much and too bluntly, and is too fond of striking an attitude."[124] For his part, in his Prologue, Beaumont says, "If there be any amongst you, that come to heare lascivious Scenes, let them depart: for I doe pronounce this, to the utter discomfort of all two peny Gallerie men, you shall have no bawdrie in it" (3–6). Beaumont's play is no more "lascivious" than the average city comedy, but it does draw attention to the key erotic scene in Marston's play, and his own virtuous heroine boldly courts a man.[125] Marston's and Beaumont's sexually aggressive but essentially virtuous women look forward to an important strategy of the boy company at Whitefriars, which seems to

have begun operations around 1607 and continued for approximately one year.[126] In fact, Mary Bly distinguishes surviving Whitefriars plays from the scandalous plays at Blackfriars and Paul's by insisting that, "[b]y staging bawdy virgins, Whitefriars authors challenge verbal taboos rather than royal authority . . . a market in which female-spoken bawdy puns had, for at least one year, a remarkable economic value seems to me to best explain the Whitefriars repertory."[127] But Sophonisba and Oriana show that in 1606–07, Marston and Beaumont had already suggested a shift away from political scandal toward an interest in virgin sexuality, although their heroines' bold behavior is less reliant on puns, and perhaps less sustained, than their counterparts at Whitefriars. Regardless, a delicious irony in *The Wonder of Women* and *The Woman Hater* is that although they claim to present exceptional or wonderful women, models of feminine virtue, they test the limits of feminine modesty.

Early in Marston's play, Sophonisba is open about the sexual desire she feels on her wedding night, although her openness signals her honesty, not lust. Speaking to her maid, she says:

> I wonder, Zanthia, why the custom is
> To use such ceremony, such strict shape,
> About us women. Forsooth, the bride must steal
> Before her lord to bed; and then delays
> Long expectations, all against known wishes.
> I hate these figures in locution,
> These about-phrases forced by ceremony.
> We must still seem to fly what we most seek

And hide ourselves from that we feign would find.

Let those who think and speak and do just acts

Know form can give no virtue to their acts

Nor detract vice. (1.2.6–17)

What follows is a titillating scene, complete with Massinissa (slowly?) disrobing Sophonisba until he is interrupted by Carthalo. The entire scene moves to an event that never occurs: Sophonisba enters the stage in her "*night attire,*" Zanthia removes Sophonisba's shoes, then Massinissa enters, after which curtains are drawn to reveal Sophonisba in her bed, and "Massinissa *draws a white ribbon forth of the bed as from the waist of* Sopho[nisba]." To emphasize this last action onstage, Massinissa says, "Lo, I unloose thy waist!" (1.2.40), and Sophonisba responds:

A modest silence, though't be thought

A virgin's beauty and her highest honour;

Though bashful feignings nicely wrought

Grace her that virtue takes not in, but on her;

What I dare think I boldly speak.

After my word my well-bold action rusheth;

In open flame then passion break!

Where virtue prompts, thought, word, act never blusheth. (1.2.43–50)

As Genevieve Love explains, "Marston saturates the scene with striking visual and aural effects that heighten playgoers' anticipation of the consummation of Sophonisba and Masinissa's marriage—night attire, music, a 'phantastique measure,' a 'discovery' in a 'faire bed'—and then defers that consummation. He draws his

audience in with 'a white ribbon' that turns out to lead nowhere."[128] The audience anticipates an erotic scene even though they know it will not actually occur onstage. It falls to Sophonisba to tell her husband to "Vent thy youthfull heat / In fields, not beds" (1.2.213–14).

It is part of the game that in *The Woman Hater,* Beaumont has the hungry courtier Lazarello recall this scene from *The Wonder of Women* in his musings about the fish-head. He says, "there is no young maide, upon her wedding night when her husband sets first foot in the bedde, blushes, and lookes pale againe, oftener than I doe now" (2.1.132–34). Outside of the blushing, which Sophonisba dismisses as mere convention, Lazerello offers a description directly out of Marston's play. In fact, Lazarello's "wedding night" description immediately precedes his reference to nervous poets (2.1.134–38). This whole speech could apply to Marston and his tense circumstances as the author of a serious tragedy designed to offset his involvement in a scandalous episode.

If Sophonisba is uncommonly frank, so is Oriana. However, Beaumont takes *his* heroine's unorthodox behavior to amusing extremes. In 3.1 we see Oriana physically pursuing Gondarino. She swears to him that she knows women's usual tricks for attracting men, "yet to you my Lord, / My Love, my better selfe, I put these off / Doing that office, not befits our sex, / Entreat a man to love" (3.1.66–69). Still more suggestively, she asks him:

> Are ye not yet relenting, ha' ye bloud and Spirit
> In those veines, ye are no Image, though yee bee as hard
> As marble; sure ye have no lyver, if ye had,

’Twould send a lively and desiring heate

To every member; is not this miserable,

A thing so truley form’d, shapt out by Symetry,

Has all the organs that belong to man,

And working to, yet to shew all these

Like to dead motions moving upon wyers;

Then good my Lord, leave off what you have beene,

And freely be what you were first entended for:

A man. (3.1.70–81)

When Gondarino tells the Duke, “She ha’s imbrac’d this body, and growne to it / As close, as the hot youthfull vine to the elme” (3.1.195–96), he can partially justify his lie with the rhetorical question, “are women growne so mankind? Must they be wooing?” (3.1.208–09).

Again like Sophonisba, Oriana is confident in her virtue. Her “conduct throughout demonstrates an independent, commonsensical idea of virtue and what constitutes true propriety . . . She values personal integrity over social form and thinks honesty the guardian of virtue. . . her directness and adherence to principles rather than the accidentals of ‘proper’ behavior is singular.”[129] In act 4, Oriana’s Waiting Woman begins to express her fear that they are imprisoned in a brothel but pauses out of modesty, saying, “I am loath to tell it Madam” (4.2.278). Oriana responds, “Out with it, ‘tis not true modesty to feare to speak that thou doest thinke” (4.2.279–80). The Waiting Woman worries that “it be one of these same bawdy houses” (4.2.281), but Oriana calmly explains that, “’Tis no matter wench, wee are

warme in it; keepe thou thy minde pure, and upon my word, that name will doe thee no hurt: I cannot force my selfe yet to feare any thing" (4.2.282–84). This Oriana is an avatar of Sophonisba. Beaumont's "wonder of women," like Marston's, is a virtuous character who tests the limits of feminine modesty.

Both playwrights delight in melding feminine sexual frankness with virtue. Marston plays it mostly safely. His heroine's bold sexuality, a product of her brutal honesty and hatred for pretense, occurs within the context of her marriage. Only Syphax's slander places Sophonisba's alluring sexuality outside these bounds (he tells Scipio of her "moving graces to allure" [5.3.75] and says, "Her hymeneal torch burnt down my house, / Then was I captived when her wanton arms / Threw moving clasps about my neck" [5.3.79–81]), and his lies ultimately bring about Sophonisba's suicide. Oriana's extramarital boldness puts her in jeopardy, setting up the play's flirtation with tragedy.[130] Unlike Marston, then, Beaumont partially implicates his exceptional woman in her near-downfall.

Regardless, each heroine's chastity is tested in the same brutal manner. As Beaumont's play draws toward its conclusion, Oriana, like Sophonisba, faces unwanted sexual advances and a rape attempt. While the Duke, Valore, and Gondarino watch from above, Arrigo approaches Oriana and tells her that the Duke has ordered her execution, for she is "held unhonest; / The Duke, your brother, and your friends in court, / With too much griefe condemne ye" (5.4.25–27). Arrigo offers to save her if she will have sex with him, but she sternly refuses to yield. Then, in a scene that recalls Marston's rape scene between Syphax and Sophonisba, Arrigo says, "if thou refuse to yeeld, heare what I have sworn unto my selfe; I will injoy

thee, though it be betweene the parting of thy soule and body" (5.4.68–70). After Oriana again refuses, the Duke halts the scene from above by screaming, "Hold, hold, I say" (5.4.73). Oriana answers, "What? Have I yet more terror to my tragedy?" (5.4.74). Beaumont's metatheatrical moment is very similar to the suspenseful rape scene in *The Wonder of Women,* and it elicits a response from its onstage audience remarkably similar to the sentiments expressed by the characters in *The Wonder of Women:*

> *Duke.* Thou woman which wert borne to teach men virtue,
> Faire, sweet, and modest maid forgive my thoughts,
> My trespass was my love.
> Seize *Gondarino,* let him wait our doomes.
>
> *Gondarino.* I doe begin a little to love this woman; I could indure her already twelve miles off.
>
> *Count.* Sister, I am glad you have brought your honour off so fairely, without losse: you have done a worke above your sexe, the Duke admires it; give him faire encounter.
>
> *Duke.* Best of all comforts; may I take this hand
> And call it mine?
>
> *Oriana.* I am your grace's handmaid. (5.4.77–87)

Beaumont's rape scene leads to the exaltation of his "exceptional woman" (and a genuinely funny line from Gondarino of the sort Marston's play does not allow) and the wedding appropriate for his genre. The Duke leaves the punishment for Gondarino's false accusations to Oriana, who orders a group of ladies to tease and

taunt Gondarino. This gives Oriana a chance to be merciful and to show "my sexe the better" (5.4.219). An exceptional woman, an impending wedding, and a proper comic ending.

But neither *The Woman Hater* nor *The Wonder of Women* follows a straight and predictable path to its ending. Marston and Beaumont complicate their plots, demonstrating their keen awareness of genre-bending trends in the dramatic marketplace. For a brief moment Sophonisba seems to have survived her trials at Syphax's hands; then, Syphax's lie and Scipio's demand bring about her suicide. Peter Ure cites readings of the play according to which, "the final sacrifice of Sophonisba is a conventional trick, tacked on to the otherwise successful issue of her struggles so that the tragedy shall not 'want deaths,' a surprising and ingenious twist in the plot."[131] And, indeed, we might well wonder how satisfied audiences would have been with Sophonisba's suicide, or Massinissa's willingness to furnish her with the poison that kills her, or with Oriana's impending marriage to a Duke of questionable character.

Genre was something to which literary-minded audiences at the private theaters would have been alert, especially given the ongoing development of tragicomedy. The most popular play of the period, *Mucedorus* (likely revived by the King's Men in 1605–06), features an Induction and an Epilogue in which an argument occurs between Comedy and Envy, the latter of whom stands on the side of tragedy.[132] Comedy explains the divide between them:

Comedy is mild, gentle, willing for to please,

And seeks to gain the love of all estates,

Delighting in mirth, mixt all with lovely tales,

And bringeth things with treble joy to pass.

Thou, bloody, envious disdainer of men's joy,

Whose name is fraught with bloody stratagems,

Delights in nothing but in spoil and death,

Where thou mayst trample in their lukewarm blood,

And grasp their hearts within thy cursed paws. (Pro. 37–45)[133]

As described here, the distinction between comedy and tragedy centers on the effect plays have on audiences, with comedy eliciting joy and tragedy eliciting fear or despair. These lines speak to one generally understood difference between the genres even as comedy was being complicated by life-threatening situations and dubiously happy endings, and tragedies by heavy doses of comic relief or even comic violence. As it is, the unresolved verbal sparring between Comedy and Envy in the Induction to *Mucedorus* emphasizes the play's potential to go either way, although readers would have known that the quarto title-pages advertised it as "A most pleasant Comedie."[134]

Both denigrated as "mongrel" and endorsed as a legitimate form in Philip Sidney's *The Defense of Poesy* (published 1595), "tragicomedy" is a term that had long been in the vocabulary of the London literati. An oft-cited definition of the genre appears in the preface to the quarto of John Fletcher's *The Faithful Shepherdess* (Blackfriars, 1609): "A tragie-comedie is not so called in respect of mirth and killing, but in respect it wants deaths, which is inough to make it no tragedie, yet brings some neere it, which is inough to make it no comedie: which must be a representation of familiar people, with such kind or trouble as no life be questiond, so that a God is as

lawfull in this as in a tragedie, and meane people as in a comedie."[135] Verna A. Foster describes this as "the first adequate English definition of tragicomedy," and suggests that Fletcher was influenced by Italian poet Battista Guarini, whose works defending and even promoting tragicomedy, combined under the title "Compendio Della Poesia Tragicomica," were published with his tragicomedy *Il Pastor Fido* in 1602.[136] Guarini controversially went "beyond defending tragicomedy to proclaim its superiority over tragedy and comedy for modern audiences."[137] *Il Pastor Fido* was published in English in 1602, including a prefatory poem by Samuel Daniel, who published his Oxford play *The Queens Arcadia: A Pastorall Trage-Comedie* in 1606.[138] Foster argues that Guarini's works, and presumably the debate they sparked, influenced commercial plays such as Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* and Marston's *The Malcontent*.[139] Lucy Munro also discusses the influence of Guarini but cautions that "the origins of the form of tragicomedy emerging in the first decade of the seventeenth century cannot be found in any one play or author. The development of tragicomedy was propelled by the collaborative practices of the playing companies."[140]

Whether they were more or less tragicomic, *The Wonder of Women* and *The Woman Hater* are intentionally complicated plays offered to genre-alert playgoers at a time when the value of tragicomedy was being debated.[141] As we have seen, when he advertised *The Wonder of Women* in the quarto of *The Fawn,* Marston privileged tragedy as the more serious and more literary endeavor. In the Prologue to *The Woman Hater,* Beaumont would have it that his play is neither a comedy nor a

tragedy, even though he indicates that he wants to make his audience laugh. Both playwrights were enjoined in a reconsideration of genre.

Even at the very end of his play, Beaumont is still relating his work to what he found in Marston's play, and still directly addressing genre. In the final moments of *The Wonder of Women,* Massinissa adorns the body of Sophonisba and declares his grief: "O, thou for whom I drink / So deep of grief, that he must only think, / Not dare to speak, that would express my woe; / Small rivers murmur, deep gulfs silent flow. / My grief is here [*Pointing to his heart.*] not here. [*Pointing to* Sophonisba*'s body.*]" (5.1.54–58). Surely these lines constitute Marston's summary of the hoped-for effect of his tragedy. Beaumont's Duke resorts to similar imagery in the couplet that ends *The Woman Hater:* "Thus through the doubtfull Streams of Joy and griefe, / True love doth wade, and finds at last releefe" (5.4.222–23).[142] While Marston calls attention to the grief caused by his tragedy, presumably heightened by his flirtation with a happy ending, Beaumont calls attention to the darker moments of his comedy. In each case, the final responses of audiences are to be heightened by the hint of the opposite ending: Marston's play offers relief followed by grief, Beaumont's grief then relief. Right to the end, Beaumont sets his exceptional-woman play against Marston's, highlighting genre.

But he does not attack. Beaumont's references to Marston and *The Wonder of Women* seem to be good-natured: his intertextuality entails no desire to chastise Marston for substantive flaws or absurdities. In fact, Beaumont clearly shows that some of the elements and effects of Marston's tragedy are amenable to comedy. This, I think, would have been especially evident to the best of playgoers, particularly

playgoers who became the readers of plays. And I believe this intertextuality indicates a cooperative strategy between Blackfriars and Paul's, especially when we consider that Beaumont soon seems to have joined Marston in working for the Blackfriars theater, where Beaumont's *Knight of the Burning Pestle* was staged in or around 1607.

Beaumont's appeal to literary-aesthetic considerations reveals one strategy that the private theaters relied upon in 1606. Given the spike in plague deaths that likely caused a brief March–April closure in 1606, the companies were probably wary of any political controversy that might cause a punitive interruption of business.[143] But we might also consider the possibility that the repertorial strategy revealed by *The Wonder of Women* and *The Woman Hater* was forced upon Blackfriars and Paul's by a Revels Office clamp-down. Dutton has argued that "the whole system of a factional court, supported by a complex interweaving of patronage, conspired in most circumstances to 'allow' a wide range of comment on contemporary affairs, so long as this was properly licensed, suitably veiled and not slanted with offensive particularity at a powerful constituency."[144] But *Eastward Ho* and the *Isle of Gulls* ran afoul of whatever operational understanding was in place, and I think we have every reason to suspect that plays at the private theaters, especially Blackfriars, were under increased scrutiny. Hence, the playwrights and companies proceeded with caution and resorted to new twists on safe and proven repertory. Perhaps this is why the private theaters seem to have stayed out of trouble from mid February through June 1606. While it is true that there seems to have been very little playing allowed in London for the rest of 1606 and 1607, a private theater would not again draw fire

for bad behavior until the spring of 1608.[145] With *The Wonder of Women* and *The Woman Hater,* Marston and Beaumont played important roles in this period of relative tranquility.

NOTES

[1] Cited from the Induction and Prologue of John Day's *The Ile of Guls* (London, 1606) A3r–A3v. In the Induction, each of the three gallants who take stools onstage wants to see a different kind of play.

[2] Leeds Barroll offers an extremely bleak plague scenario for the London theaters, with enforced closures in October–December 1605; mid March–mid April 1606; and from mid June 1606 through 1607, with only a brief period of playing in April 1607. See *Politics, Plague and Shakespeare's Theater: The Stuart Years* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991) 173. Andrew Gurr, who is more sympathetic toward F. P. Wilson's analysis in *The Plague in Shakespeare's London* (1927) , and who gives more weight to the profit motives of the playing companies over the public health concerns of city authorities, suggests that the theaters were open a little more than Barroll indicates. See *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1996) 87–92, esp. 90n35.

[3] For the publishing history of the play, see E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage,* 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1923) 3: 433. Michael Shapiro describes the play as "unusually rich in incidental music and in specifications for the instruments to produce it" (*Children of the Revels: The Boy Companies of Shakespeare's Time and Their Plays* [New York: Columbia UP, 1977] 252).

[4] *The Woman Hater* (London, 1607). For the play's publishing history, see Chambers 3: 219–20.

[5] Philip J. Finkelpearl says, "it is surprising to find an author with some degree of general popularity writing a play in 1606 which has more affinities with *Gorbuduc*

than with the nearly simultaneous *King Lear*" (*John Marston of the Middle Temple: An Elizabethan Dramatist in His Social Setting* [Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1969] 251). In his analysis of the children's theaters' repertories, Michael Shapiro compares *The Wonder of Women* with Christopher Marlowe and Thomas Nashe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (Blackfriars, circa 1585–88). He describes *Dido, Queen of Carthage* as a pathetic-heroine play featuring "traditional elements of children's plays, such as vocal music, formal disputation, and spectacular effects," and adds that "in all of these categories [Marlowe and Nashe] were to be outstripped by Marston's *Sophonisba*" (170–71); Shapiro also pairs *The Wonder of Women* with *The Contention Between Liberality and Prodigality* (mid 1500s?; revived at Blackfriars in 1601) as examples of "novelties"—"old plays" or "forays into an obsolete mode"—in the repertories of the children's theaters (228).

[6] Keith Sturgess, Introduction, *The Malcontent and Other Plays,* by John Marston, ed. Sturgess (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997) xxvii. On the vast majority of title-pages of surviving quartos, "The Wonder of Women" is the main title, in much larger type than the "Tragedie of Sophonisba" subtitle. (This may be compared with the title page of Marston's *The Fawn* [London, 1606], where the title is *Parasitaster, or The Fawn,* but "The Fawn" is emphasized typographically; Marston seems to have taken an interest in the publication of his texts, so this may be authorial.) However, MacDonald P. Jackson and Michael Neill note that, "One copy, in the National Library of Scotland, has a cancel title-page, omitting the first title, *The Wonder of Women,* and the reference to performance at the Blackfriars" (*The Selected Plays of John Marston,* ed. MacDonald P. Jackson and Michael Neill [Cambridge: Cambridge

UP, 1986] 397). H. Harvey Wood reproduces this "remarkable" (2: xi) title-page as the frontispiece of the first volume of *The Plays of John Marston,* ed. H. Harvey Wood, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1934–39). William Kemp recounts some of the speculation about the two title pages (for example, E. K. Chambers noted the closeness of Marston's title to that of The Admiral's Men's 1595 *Wonder of a Woman*), but concludes that "there is simply no evidence which firmly indicates exactly why there are two title pages for the *Sophonisba* quarto" (Introduction, *The Wonder of Woman or The Tragedy of Sophonisba,* by John Marston, ed. Kemp [New York: Garland, 1979] 39). It is my guess that in production the play was primarily marketed as *The Wonder of Women;* then, when Marston began seriously to target Jonson and his *Sejanus* in print (as discussed below), *Sophonisba* became his preferred title. It so happens that the lack of reference to performance on the unique title page parallels Jonson's title page for *Sejanus.* Kemp's edition of the play uses *The Wonder of Women* as the main title on the title page, although Kemp discusses the play as *Sophonisba.*

[7] Knutson argues that, given the difficulties of producing plays in London, especially dealing with the authorities and the plague, "the companies stood to gain much from cooperation and little from rivalry" (*Playing Companies and Commerce in Shakespeare's Time* [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001] 20).

[8] Knutson uses the guild model as the starting point for a vital discussion of the pitfalls of arranging theater history according to personality and perceived personal rivalries (*Playing Companies* 1–20). The importance of this warning is illustrated in specific case studies, especially her compelling argument divorcing

Marston from *Histriomastix* (*Playing Companies* 75–102) . Following in Knutson's footsteps, Lucy Munro has emphasized a "repertory approach," based in part on the fact that:

> It is impossible to locate a historicised study of the creative process purely in the intentions of dramatists, for the simple reason that they were unable, or in many cases unwilling, to exercise sole authority over their plays. Plays were generally commissioned by particular companies and were, once sold, the property of those companies. Moreover, it was equally impossible for a dramatist to maintain control over a play in performance, or to control an audience's response to that performance. The aim is not, however, to write dramatists out of the picture, but to locate the writing of plays within the authority of the theatre company. ("Early Modern Drama and The Repertory Approach," *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama,* 42 [2003]: 27–28)

While there is much of value in this approach, I still want to stress the importance of authorship in historically situating many private-theater plays in their first runs. E. K. Chambers suggests that "the boys' companies were much more under the influence of their poets than were their adult rivals" (2: 50). Heather Anne Hirschfeld goes several speculative steps further: "Writing for the boy companies was an invitation to exercise authorial force on the more malleable child actors; and it was an invitation that was likely to be realized in stagings more faithful to the script than those of the adult performers" (*Joint Enterprises: Collaborative Drama and the Institutionalization of the English Renaissance Theater* [Amherst: U of Massachusetts

P, 2004] 22). Charles Cathcart provides some corroboration, arguing that the single-author profile taken in the paratext of Whitefriars plays (circa 1607–08) imitated the posturing of playwrights such as Jonson and Marston at the other private theaters: "The authorial 'he' [evident in prologues of Whitefriars plays] is likely to mark an attempt by inexperienced playwrights to assert an authorial status appropriate for the indoor playhouse at Whitefriars, and the ingenuousness of their attempt exhibits a certain gaucherie. The commercial enterprise clearly sought to build upon the achievements of its predecessor boys' companies at Paul's and Blackfriars" ("Authorship, Indebtedness, and the Children of the King's Revels" *SEL* 45 [2005]: 368).

[9] According to Bednarz, "By 1599, the first permanent playhouses built in London were attracting a vast following, including an inner circle highly attuned to questions of theatrical politics. It was to this knowledgeable audience that the Poets' War was addressed, as the contenders ripped each other apart to bring these special spectators together" (*Shakespeare & the Poets' War* [New York: Columbia UP, 2001] 7). The rivalry between Paul's and Blackfriars in their production of the *Ho* plays is summed up by Michael Shapiro: "Even before the Children of Paul's could follow up on its . . . success [with Thomas Dekker and John Webster's city comedy *Westward Ho*] by producing Dekker's and Webster's *Northward Ho!* (1605), the Children of the Queen's Revels echoed the title in *Eastward Ho!* . . . The Prologue of the play suggests how eager the Children of the Queen's Revels was to cash in on the success of its rivals at Paul's:

Not out of Envy, for there's no effect

Where there's no cause; nor out of Imitation,

For we have evermore been imitated;

Nor out of our contention to do better

Then that which is opposed to ours in Title,

For that was good; and better cannot be.

The polite bow to the competition clashes with the specious insistence that '*we* have ever more been imitated' (my italics) and fails to conceal a raid on their rivals' clientele" (216).

[10] Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003) 23. Erne also discusses playbooks' status as literature: "Far from indicating that playbooks were read and discarded like modern newspapers or other ephemera, the extant evidence suggests that playbooks started being read, collected, bound, and catalogued from the beginning of the seventeenth century" (14).

[11] All citations are from John Marston, *Sophonisba, Three Jacobean Witchcraft Plays,* ed. Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1986).

[12] Cited in R. W. Van Fossen, Introduction, *Eastward Ho,* by George Chapman, Ben Jonson, and John Marston, ed. Van Fossen (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1999) 4. For a detailed account of these events, see David Riggs, *Ben Jonson: A Life* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1989) 122–26. Richard Dutton suggests "what really exposed Jonson and Chapman to serious threats of mutilation was that the play proved not to have been licensed at all," a fact indicated by a letter from Chapman to the earl of Suffolk ("Censorship," *A New History of Early English Drama,* ed. John

D. Cox and David Scott Kastan [New York: Columbia UP, 1997] 302). Chapman's desperate appeal is one piece of evidence in the impossibly complicated issue of licensing for the Blackfriars troupe.

[13] T. F. Wharton, *The Critical Fall and Rise of John Marston* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1994) 16. J. D. Lake's analysis appears in "*Eastward Hoe:* Linguistic Evidence for Authorship," *Notes and Queries* 28 (1981): 158–60. Van Fossen transcribes Chapman and Jonson's letters from prison in the appendix of his edition of *Eastward Ho* (218–25). In one of his letters from prison, Chapman complains that his and Jonson's "chiefe offences are but two Clawses, and both of them not our owne; Much lesse the vnnatuarall Issue of our offenceles intents" (Van Fossen 218). In his own letters, Jonson says of his accusers, "they deale not charitably, Who are too witty in another mans Workes, and vtter, some times, theyre owne malicious Meanings, vnder or Wordes" (Van Fossen 221). Jonson sputters, "our offence a Play, so mistaken, so misconstrued, so misapplied, as I do wonder whether their Ignorance, or Impudence be most, who are our aduersaries" (Van Fossen 223).

[14] About Marston's stake, see Irwin Smith, *Shakespeare's Blackfriars Playhouse: Its History and Its Design* (New York: New York UP, 1964) 195–96; H. N. Hillebrand, *The Child Actors: A Chapter in Elizabethan Stage History* (1926; New York: Russell & Russell, 1964) 202; and Lucy Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels: A Jacobean Theatre Repertory* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005) 28. The exact date that Marston sold his share to Robert Keysar is unclear, with guesses ranging from Munro's "probably early 1606" (*Children of the Queen's Revels* 28) to

Hillebrand's "about 1607" (202). The scenario of Marston fleeing or being forced to leave London because of his part in *Eastward Ho* would not be entirely unprecedented, especially when we consider that Marston was both a playwright and part of the Blackfriars management at the time the play was produced and if there was some issue with the licensing of the play (see note 12). Although the evidence is difficult to sort, in 1602, Henry Evans seems to have transferred much of his property to his son-in-law and temporarily left London, fearing the fallout from the Clifton affair (his attempt to impress the son of an influential gentleman named Henry Clifton). Of course, Evans's troubles involved a different (and perhaps more serious) violation of the spirit of the company's license, and the case was taken up by the Star Chamber. See Smith 182–90.

[15] Finkelpearl, *John Marston* 197; Wharton 16.

[16] Van Fossen 5.

[17] Cited in Chambers 3: 286.

[18] All citations are from *Parasitaster or The Fawn,* ed. David A. Blostein (Baltimore: Manchester UP/The Johns Hopkins UP, 1978). Facsimiles of the tile pages appear on 63–64. The reference to "the author's absence" may be about Marston's post-*Eastward Ho* exile.

[19] According to David A. Blostein, "Most of Q2 corresponds to Q1 line by line." He concludes that "the inference is warranted that the printing of Q2 followed swiftly upon that of Q1 (even overlapping at points)" (Introduction, *Parasitaster or The Fawn* 44–45).

[20] Blostein 71n70. The other marginal notes are the names of the Roman writers Marston quotes. I attribute the use of the shortened title (or mention of the title character) to considerations of space and uniformity. The marginal note seems to be a late and somewhat haphazard addition to the text, appearing next to different lines in different copies.

[21] Caputi is typical in taking into account the publishing history and evidence available from the two 1606 editions of *The Fawn* and assuming that *Sophonisba* would not have been performed in Marston's absence. See *John Marston, Satirist* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1961) 269–70. Caputi concludes that "*Sophonisba* was first acted in the late spring of 1606 and published in the summer" (270).

[22] Wharton speculates that *The Wonder of Women* was poorly received, noting that MacDonald P. Jackson and Michael Neill have suggested that "its 'first performance season may well have been its last,'" and adding, "This almost instant oblivion of a play that was Marston's own favorite [according to George C. Geckle] occurred despite his evident care in its preparation" (18). Working with similar assumptions, Sturgess surveys the play and concludes, "it is difficult to imagine it was ever liked, rather than admired" (xxiv).

[23] Cf. Roslyn Lander Knutson, who provides the rationale for her methodology of assigning a play to "a year that is about eighteen months before its appearance in the hands of stationers, either to be registered or published" (*The Repertory of Shakespeare's Company, 1594–1613* [Fayetteville: U of Arkansas P, 1991] 10). She claims that "stationers did not as a rule acquire plays that were still in a maiden production at a London playhouse," but notes that "A glaring exception is *A*

Knack to Know an Honest Man, [marked as "ne," or new, in Henslowe's diary on 22 October 1594] which was registered at Stationers' Hall on 26 November 1595 and which continued in production at the Rose until November of 1596" (*The Repertory* 10). Since Knutson bases her methodology on Henslowe's diary, some caution is necessary. We generally have much more evidence for dating plays that appear in Henslowe's diary than any other plays of the period, but we ought not to apply the Henslowe template across the board: an exceptional move by Henslowe may have been more commonplace among others or more common at a different point in the development of the London theater industry.

[24] In his prefatory letter to *The Malcontent,* Marston suggests that the publication of his comedy is beyond his control, and here too he indicates that comedies are not meant for reading: "only one thing afflicts me, to think that scenes invented merely to be spoken should be enforcively published to be read" (24–26). All citations from *The Malcontent* are from *The Malcontent and Other Plays,* ed. Sturgess. The prefatory material appears in the notes (325–26).

[25] Sturgess claims that Marston characteristically "fretted over the artistic loss involved in the transfer of the plays from stage to page, from the theatrical to the literary experience," especially citing the quartos of *The Malcontent* and *The Fawn* (ix). Genevieve Love notes, "Marston . . . repeatedly addressed his readers on . . . the relationship between the play in the theater and in the hands of readers" ("'As from the Waste of Sophonisba'; or, What's Sexy about Stage Directions," *Renaissance Drama* 32 [2003]: 6).

[26] See, for example, the stage directions in Marston's *The Dutch Courtezan* (London, 1605), or (to compare it with another children's theater tragedy) George Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois* (London, 1607), which is replete with curt stage directions such as the opening "*Bussy solus.*"

[27] It is possible that *The Wonder of Women* is the rare play printed with little cutting or alteration of stage directions, but the evidence suggests that it was not a typical play. Of note here is the fact that musician and composer Martin Peerson entered the Blackfriars syndicate around 1606 (remaining involved until December of that year), and his presence may have influenced the staging of Marston's play. See Mark Eccles, "Martin Peerson and the Blackfriars," *Shakespeare Survey* 11 (1958): 100–06 and Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels* 28, 38, 183.

[28] Zachary Lesser has argued that visual features such as Latin epigrams and "continuous printing" were part of a marketing strategy by publishers/printers and playwrights to sell play quartos to educated readers. See "Walter Burre's The Knight of the Burning Pestle," *ELR* 29 (1999): 22–43. Regarding the presentation of the text, MacDonald and Neill explain, "Marston has for this tragedy adopted the neo-classical and Jonsonian practice of placing speech prefixes within the line when a new speech continues a pentameter" (397).

[29] Finkelpearl, *John Marston* 249. Similarly, Sturgess says Marston "styled the play, uniquely for him, 'a poem'" (ix).

[30] Caputi 269.

[31] Peter W. M. Blayney "The Publication of Playbooks," *A New History of Early English Drama,* ed. John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia UP, 1997) 385.

[32] Blayney, "The Publication of Playbooks" 386. Roslyn Lander Knutson, who has surveyed the Stationer's Register, concludes that "there is no single reason why the companies sold some of their playbooks at particular times" (*Playing Companies* 70).

[33] Alan B. Farmer and Zachary Lesser, "The Popularity of Playbooks Revisited," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 56 (2005): 6; Blayney's response, "The Alleged Popularity of Playbooks," follows Farmer and Lesser's essay (33–50). Farmer and Lesser continue the debate with "Structures of Popularity in the Early Modern Book Trade," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 56 (2005): 206–13.

[34] Charles William Wallace, *The Children of the Chapel at Blackfriars, 1597–1603* (1908; New York: AMS, 1970) 12. Alfred Harbage writes that "Fifty-five extant plays can be assigned with confidence to the coterie theatres between 1599 and 1613, two-thirds of them written by half a dozen playwrights—Jonson, Marston, Chapman, Middleton, Beaumont, and Fletcher" (*Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions* [1952; New York: Barnes & Noble, 1968] 71).

[35] See Harbage 56.

[36] Kent Cartwright, *Theatre and Humanism: English Drama in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999) 1.

[37] Joel B. Altman, *The Tudor Play of Mind: Rhetorical Inquiry and the Development of Elizabethan Drama* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1978) 3. It seems

that even the youngest players could show remarkable sophistication. Leah Sinanoglou Marcus explains that:

> sixteenth-century children of all social classes were expected to acclimate themselves to the company of adults from a very early age, and . . . upper-class children in particular were encouraged to put away childish things and acquire classical learning and social finesse which would be essential to them in later life. Intelligent children placed under the humanist regimen often did reach a formidable level of accomplishment in relatively few years. Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, went off to Oxford in 1595 at the age of twelve, already proficient at logical disputation and advanced in the study of Greek. That he was by no means exceptional is attested by numerous other historical examples and the plea of the pedagogue Jon Brinsley that children be *prevented* from entering the university until the age of fifteen. (*Childhood and Cultural Despair: A Theme and Variations in Seventeenth-Century Literature* [Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1978] 7)

Marston was fifteen when he entered Brasenose College, Oxford, where he was in residence from 1591 to 1594 (Finkelpearl, *John Marston* 86). Meanwhile, Beaumont was admitted at Broadgates College, Oxford, in 1596–97 at the age of twelve, but he seems to have left a year later. See Finkelpearl, *Court and Country Politics in the Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990) 18 and Lee Bliss, *Francis Beaumont* (Boston: Twayne, 1987) 3.

[38] Hillebrand 22.

[39] See Chambers 2: 75–76. Richard Mulcaster was the headmaster at the Merchant Taylors School at the time, but he resigned in 1586 and began working at Paul's grammar school a decade later. Mulcaster is thought to have played a major role in the resurgence of chorister drama at the turn of the century.

[40] Chambers 4: 252. Based on internal evidence, Chambers claims that "the treatise was probably written in 1607 and touched up in 1608" (4: 250).

[41] See act 2, scene 2 (*Hamlet, The Norton Shakespeare,* ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. [New York: Norton, 1997]).

[42] Bednarz 20–21.

[43] Finkelpearl, *John Marston* 86; Bliss 3.

[44] Finkelpearl discusses a surviving satirical speech by Beaumont for the 1605 Inner Temple Christmas revels (*Court and Country Politics* 18–20). Katherine Duncan-Jones offers a sense of the importance of the Inns of Court to the literary community, including a complex network of patronage, familial relationships, and friendships, in her *Ungentle Shakespeare: Scenes from His Life* (London: Arden, 2001) 134–60. In fact, Duncan-Jones suggests that Shakespeare set out at the turn of the seventeenth century "to please newer, larger, younger audiences, both in London and elsewhere, and the struggle was stimulating and fruitful. As a playwright, he now took his cue not so much from the need to gratify individual aristocratic patrons, as from the pressing need to draw large audiences to the Globe, and above all to capture the lively 'Inns of Court' market, from which others would follow" (136). She goes on to posit a personal and working relationship between Marston and Shakespeare that developed especially through Middle Templar Thomas Green, who was

Shakespeare's cousin (137–38). General and specific links between the Inns of Court and Renaissance drama have been discussed in studies ranging from A. Wigfall Green's *The Inns of Court and Early English Drama* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1931) to Anthony Arlidge's *Shakespeare and the Prince of Love: The Feast of Misrule in the Middle Temple* (London: Giles de la Mare, 2000).

[45] Bliss 15.

[46] Bliss 5–6.

[47] Bliss 5.

[48] Finkelpearl, *Court and Country Politics* 36. Among the evidence most germane to 1606 that Finkelpearl garners is "Marston came from nearby Warwickshire, he and Beaumont lived for some years in contiguous Inns of Court—Marston at the Middle Temple, Beaumont at the Inner Temple. Both had prominent Inns of Court fathers . . . Both were intimates of Jonson, and in a verse letter to Jonson . . . Beaumont seems to be speaking in guarded but concerned tones about the disastrous final chapter in Marston's career as a playwright" (*Court and Country Politics* 36). Additionally, Finkelpearl argues that early in his career "Beaumont's work is strongly influenced by Marston" (*Court and Country Politics* 36).

[49] There was a sizeable pool of people residing in or around London from which such playgoers might come. Ann Jennalie Cook explains, "Between meeting the needs of its own citizenry and supplying specialized training for the whole of England, London supported an immense educational complex, attracting the privileged for training of every sort at every level. Over half the male population were literate, and a truly astonishing number were men of intellectual, cultural, or

social sophistication" (*The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London, 1576–1642* [Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981] 73).

[50] Lesser, "Walter Burre's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*"; Douglas A. Brooks, *From Playhouse to Printing House: Drama and Authorship in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) 44.

[51] See Brooks 14–65. If the claim of failure, coupled with the literary presentation of the text, comprised a sales pitch, it should probably be treated with suspicion. When a playwright emphasizes theatrical failure as a badge of honor, it must be a claim of opportunity: surely companies didn't invest in plays they thought would fail, and surely no experienced playwright intentionally aimed over theater audiences' heads in order to promote his play in print, a strategy that would undermine his vital relationship with the company.

[52] *The Family of Love, The Works of Thomas Middleton,* ed. A. H. Bullen, vol. 3 (New York: AMS, 1964). The authorship of this work has long been disputed, with Middleton, Thomas Dekker, Lording Barry, or some combination of the three offered as candidates. For an overview of these claims, see Cathcart 372n40.

[53] In this context, Munro discusses the popularity of jest-books in early modern London (*Children of the Queen's Revels* 57–58). Hirschfeld describes the "popular notion that lines from plays, and the 'acute jests' they contain, were available to be taken by audience members" (31). In the Induction to the King's Men's version of *The Malcontent,* the private-theater Patron attempts to mark himself as a sophisticated playgoer with his claim that he has most of the play's "jests here in my table-book" (Ind.16). Similarly, Knuston notes how Edward Pudsey, "a

Derbyshire gentleman," had a commonplace book that features scraps culled from plays performed at such diverse playhouses as the Rose, the Globe, the Boar's Head, Blackfriars, and Paul's, and the contents suggest that he was "looking for sententiae, witty similes, and cultural opinion on clothing, jewelry, baldness, music, women, and boorish behavior" (*Playing Companies* 143, 146). In *The Gull's Hornbook* (1609), Thomas Dekker advises his reader to "hoard vp the finest play-scraps you can get, vpon which your leane wit may most sauourly feede for want of other stuffe, when the *Arcadian* and *Euphuisd* gentlewomen haue their tongues sharpened to set vpon you" (Chambers 4: 369). Additionally, clever insults and phrases could prove particularly useful to young men who put on their own plays and pageants, such as those at the universities and Inns of Court. That is, plays on London's professional and semi-professional stages could provide a stockpile for academic fun and games. Hence, not only were jests an appealing part of comedies in general, but they were an important commodity for a select portion of private-theater audiences.

[54] Finkelpearl writes, "Marston drew on the Middle Temple's 'Prince d'Amour' revels for a substantial portion of the fifth act [of *The Fawn*] . . . Although there is no evidence that Marston wrote this play for the Middle Temple's revels, it certainly would have possessed a special appeal for those able to recognize how cunningly Marston wove standard ingredients from the revels into the fabric of the play. His employment of this material is one more piece of evidence suggesting the degree to which a writer like Marston conceived of the audiences at the private theaters and at the Inns as essentially identical" (*John Marston* 227–29).

[55] Finkelpearl *John Marston* 221. He goes on to say that "*The Fawne* is Marston's first play in the Jacobean period which did not involve him in some trouble, probably because it is the first one in which he did not inject any overt gibes at the Scotch" (227).

[56] Blayney says that "Fewer than 21 percent of the plays published in the sixty years under discussion [1583–1642] reached a second edition inside nine years" ("The Publication of Playbooks" 389).

[57] Chambers 3: 432.

[58] Sturgess writes, "little else in Marston's *œuvre,* or in Elizabethan/Jacobean drama generally, prepares us for this strange play" (xxiii). G. K. Hunter, however, claims that George Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois* (Paul's, 1604) points "to a separation of inner and outer worlds not dissimilar to that found in *Sophonisba*" (*English Drama 1586–1642: The Age of Shakespeare* [Oxford: Clarendon P / New York: Oxford UP, 1997] 349).

[59] *The Wonder of Women* and Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (King's Men, 1606) are among the few surviving new Roman-history plays from the London theaters in the 1604–07 period, although *Antony and Cleopatra* was part of a string of such plays Shakespeare wrote around 1607–08 (depending on the dates of *Timon of Athens* and *Coriolanus,* both of which are at least partially sourced from Plutarch's *Lives,* and the latter of which has clear parallels with Jonson's *Sejanus*). Daniel's *Philotas* (Blackfriars, 1604) and Heywood's *Rape of Lucrece* (Queen's Men, 1607) must also be mentioned in this group. During this stretch of time English (or

Scottish) history plays seem to have been in vogue at the Fortune and the Red Bull in particular. See Knutson, *The Repertory* 111–12, 125–26.

[60] Cited from *Poetaster, or His Arraignment, Ben Jonson,* ed. C. H. Hereford and Percy Simpson, vol. 4 (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1954).

[61] Knutson, *The Repertory* 127. In 1616, William Fennor, writing about *Sejanus,* explained that "With more than humane art it was bedewed, / Yet to the multitude it nothing shewed; / They screw'd their scurvy jaws and lookt awry, / Like hissing snakes, adjudging it to die; / When wits of gentry did applaud the same, / With silver shouts of high loud-sounding fame; / Whilst understanding-grounded men contemn'd it, / And wanting wit (like fools) to judge, condemn'd it" (cited in Philip J. Ayres, Introduction, *Sejanus His Fall,* by Ben Jonson, ed. Ayres [Manchester: Manchester UP, 1990] 38). Whether Fennor was an eyewitness or simply embellishing Jonson's account is unclear. Ayers adduces "a third, anonymous, witness who 'a monst others hissed Seianus of the stage, yet after sate it out, not only patiantly, but with content, & admiration'" (38).

[62] Except where otherwise indicated, all citations are from *Sejanus His Fall, Ben Jonson,* ed. Hereford and Simpson, vol. 4.

[63] In "*To the Readers,*" Jonson explains, "this Booke, in all numbers, is not the same with that which was acted on the publike Stage, wherein a second Pen had good share: in place of which I haue rather chosen, to put weaker (and no doubt lesse pleasing) of mine own, then to defraud so happy a *Genius* of his right, by my lothed vsurpation" (43–48).

[64] Jonson told Drummond that "Northampton was his mortall enimie for beating, on a St. George's day, one of his attenders; He was called before the Councell for his Sejanus, and accused both of poperie and treason by him" (Chambers 3: 367). Precisely when this occurred is unclear; apparently nothing came of the accusations. Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth acknowledge the general uncertainty about what in the play was found objectionable, but list some of the possibilities:

> Jonson may have intended an analogue between the reigns of Tiberius and the recently deceased Elizabeth, in which case the Sejanus figure whould be the earl of Essex, who had been executed only two years before the play's production. Conversely, the playwright may have intended for the audience to recognize similarities between Sejanus and Robert Cecil, the earl of Salisbury, the rival of Essex. Or the play may have been conceived as a more generalized warning to the newly crowned King James of the danger of favorites and of authoritarian rule. Jonson may have been more daring still and intended his play to reflect on the recent and notorious miscarriage of justice that was Sir Walter Ralegh's show trial on trumped-up charges of treason in late 1603." (*Ben Jonson Revised* [New York: Twayne, 1999] 113)

The last of these possibilities has been examined at length by Philip J. Ayres in his edition of Jonson's play. See Ayers 16–22. How much any of these allusions might have been understood by audiences at the Globe, and what effect they might have had, is difficult to say.

[65] Ayres says that of the plays George Eld published for Jonson, none were "as meticulously and attractively presented . . . Very few errors were made, even in Jonson's copious marginal notes, and most of those were put right in proof, a testimony to the care of Eld and of Jonson, who not only presented his printer with a scrupulously prepared fair copy but clearly supervised the printing process itself, altering in the proof tiny details that to a printer could hardly seem to need changing" (2). Brooks discusses Jonson and Marston as perhaps the first two playwrights (as opposed to publishers/printers) to directly address readers in the quartos of plays (208–09). They did so between 1602 and 1605 with *Poetaster, The Malcontent,* and *Sejanus.*

[66] While I think Brooks's characterization of the *Sejanus* quarto is accurate, he is wrong when he states "Jonson . . . complained in the dedication to the 1605 quarto text . . . that the play in performance had 'suffered no less violence from our people here than the subject of it did from the rage of the people of Rome'" (46). That dedication only appeared in the 1616 Folio, although editors such as Ayres invariably include it in their editions of *Sejanus.* However, in "*To the Readers,*" Jonson says, "The following, and voluntary Labours of my Friends, prefixt to my Booke, haue releiued me in much, whereat (without them) I should necessarilie haue touchd" (1–3), and the last two commendatory verses, which appear on the page opposite the argument, reference Jonson's troubles with audiences and specifically the play's failure in the theater, including the "Peoples beastly rage, / Bent to confound thy graue, and learned toile" (*Sejanus His Fall* [London, 1605] A3v).

[67] The quartos of *Cynthia's Revels* (1601)*, Poetaster* (1602), and *Eastward Ho* (1605) all indicate performance.

[68] In the quarto Jonson apologetically explains that the marginal notes indicating the sources of his work are not affected, but rather designed to "shew my integrity in the *Story,* and saue my selfe in those common Torturers, that bring all wit to the Rack" (28–30). Nevertheless, Richard Dutton suggests that it may have been the quarto that alarmed the authorities: "*Sejanus* would seem to be the first occasion on which any dramatist was made to answer *by the government* for his text—that is, treating a play-text as if it were a printed book . . . Indeed, the possibility that the examination followed the *publication* of the play in 1605 rather than its 1603 *performance* should not lightly be discounted" (*Mastering the Revels: The Regulation and Censorship of English Renaissance Drama* [Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 1991] 164). This is possible, but the quarto seems to feature allusions to Jonson's troubles, including a commendatory verse that not only touches on those who "are not moou'd" by the play, but that disparagingly mentions those who "will spy / Where later Times are in some speech enweau'd" (Jonson, *Sejanus His Fall* A3v), suggesting that the trouble may have already occurred.

[69] Ayres 6. Ayres notes that stage directions are added to the play in the 1616 First Folio (6). Brooks also discusses *Sejanus* as a "continuously printed play," a particularly literary way of presenting the text (45).

[70] Jonson wrote part of *Eastward Ho* for Blackfriars in 1605 and *Epicoene* for the Children of Her Majesty's Revels at Whitefriars in 1609–10. Jonson never wrote for Paul's; his 1602–05 absence from the Blackfriars repertory may be attributed to

his defeat in the Poets' War, and his 1605–08 absence may have been related to his strained relationship with shareholder Marston.

[71] Jonson's inconsistent antitheatricality (i.e., his denunciation of audiences versus the interest in stage history displayed in his 1616 *Workes*) is understood to be a function of his social and literary aspirations by Paul Yachnin in *Stage-Wrights: Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton and the Making of Theatrical Value* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1997), esp. 45–64. Cf. Jonas Barish, *The Anti-Theatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1981) 132–54.

[72] Corbin and Sedge, Introduction, *Three Jacobean Witchcraft Plays* 5. Finkelpearl also infers that Marston was attempting to "surpass" *Sejanus* (*John Marston* 251). Sturgess says Marston "certainly had one eye on Jonson, whom he alternately admired and despised" (ix).

[73] "*Amicis, amici, noſtris digniſsimi, digniſsimis* / Epigramma. / *D.* / JOHANNES MARSTONIVS / YEE ready Friendes, ſpare your vnneedfull Bayes, / This worke diſpairefull Envie must euen praiſe: / *Phœbus* hath voic'd it, loud, through echoing skies, / SEIANUVS FALL *shall force thy Merit rise.* / *For never Engliſh shall, or that before* / *Speake fuller grac'd.* He could say much, not more" (Jonson, *Sejanus His Fall* A3r).

[74] For example, Chambers writes "Marston's verses were presumably written before his renewed quarrel with Jonson over *Eastward Ho!*" (3: 367). According to Morse S. Allen, "Nothing is known of this fresh quarrel save these references [in the prefatory material for *The Fawn* and *The Wonder of Women*], to which Jonson made

no public reply" (*The Satire of John Marston* [1920; New York: Haskell House, 1965] 78).

[75] According to Blostein, Epictetus was a "Stoic philosopher whose inclination to resignation rather than to firm-jawed endurance was becoming more attractive to Marston" (69n33). The letter to the reader in the quarto of *The Fawn* was doubtless affected by the *Eastward Ho* scandal, and it may be the place Marston began to target Jonson, especially if Jonson was counted among the dismissed "few that tread the same path with me." If so, Marston may even have lorded his social status over Jonson at the end of the letter: Blostein explains that "Marston reminds us that he is a gentleman, and not, like other men of his 'addiction,' one that must write for a living" (70n59–60).

[76] Wharton 103.

[77] Wharton 10–17, 103–04.

[78] Translation and characterization of *Sejanus* from G. A. Wilkes, Introduction, *Five Plays,* by Ben Jonson (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988) ix.

[79] R. W. Ingram, *John Marston* (Boston: Twayne, 1978) 19, 20. Marston married Wilkes's daughter Mary "[s]ometime in 1605 or 1606" (19). Munro notes that Marston "Was living with his father-in-law from *c.*1605–6, and forfeited his chambers at Middle Temple on 21 November 1606" (*Children of the Revels* 182).

[80] Caputi offers a concise description of this occasional piece and its genesis: "The pageant consists of some seventy lines of Latin dialogue delivered by the Recorder of the City (Sir Henry Montague) and allegorical figures named Concordia, Londinum, and Neptunis . . . . [Author of *The Progresses . . . of James the First*

(1828) John] Nichols' remark that 'workmen and plotters' of the pageant had only twelve days in which to prepare it indicates that Marston worked on it in the last two weeks of July. The British Museum manuscript (Royal Mss. 18A, xxxi) is signed with Marston's name" (276–77).

[81] In *The Malcontent,* Marston writes, "I understand some have been most unadvisedly overcunning in misinterpreting me, and with subtlety as deep as hell have maliciously spread ill rumors . . . For . . . my supposed tartness, I fear not but unto every worthy mind it will be approved so general and honest as may modestly pass with the freedom of satire" (12–14, 21–23). In *The Fawn,* he says, "be pleased to be my reader, and not my interpreter, since I would fain reserve that office in my own hands, it being my daily prayer: *Absit a jocorum nostrorum simplicitate malignus interpres.* ["May the frankness of my jests find no malicious interpreter" (Blostein 68n18–19)]—Martial" (15–19).

[82] Finkelpearl, *John Marston* 249. Since the first quarto indicates that the play had already been performed at Blackfriars, early audiences would have had no opportunity first to peruse the quarto. Echoing Finkelpearl's assessment of the language of the play, Michael West and Marilyn Thorssen assert, "careful perusal is . . . what *Sophonisba* demands . . . the deliberately contrived and elliptical style of the play is uniquely obscure" ("Observations on the Text of Marston's *Sophonisba,*" *Anglia: Zeitschrift für Englische Philologie,* 98 [1980]: 348).

[83] Corbin and Sedge 7–8. Sturgess too suggests that Marston "set himself to write the kind of tragic text, careful, literary, less dependent on the players' animating skills and presence, that might in fact be effectively read in the study" (ix).

[84] Ingram 137.

[85] Marion Colthorpe, "A Play Before Queen Elizabeth I in 1565," *Notes and Queries* 32 (1985): 14–15.

[86] According to Peter Ure, "Marston somewhat alters" Appian's history, "but all the main historical events of his play appear to be firmly founded on Appian. The dramatist, however, expands and enriches the characters, their relationships, and those of Appian's incidents which were potential dramatic scenes: such as Hasdrubal's abortive attempt to poison Massinissa, the single combat between Syphax and Massinissa, and the death of Sophonisba. Syphax becomes the blackest of villains . . . , Hasdrubal a personal enemy of the ennobled Massinissa. Marston also develops some interesting scenes in which the Carthaginian councilors, led by Hasdrubal but opposed by the upright Gelosso, debate how Syphax may be encouraged and Massinissa crushed" ("John Marston's *Sophonisba:* A Reconsideration," *Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama: Critical Essays,* ed. J. C. Maxwell [New York: Barnes & Noble, 1974] 76–77).

[87] Corbin and Sedge note that "Marston's most radical departure in dramatising his source material is the incorporation into his plot of the Erictho episode from Lucan's *Pharsalia,* Book VI . . . Erictho . . . is essentially a witch of the classical tradition to which Marston has added a number of seventeenth-century beliefs and practices . . . Marston's Erictho is therefore an amalgam, a successful mixture of classical and exotic authority which contributes to the overall gravity of the play together with an adjustment to contemporary attitudes which would make her immediate and recognizable to the Blackfriars audience" (6–7).

[88] Mary Bly's detailed study of sexuality in the repertory of the Whitefriars company appears in her *Queer Virgins and Virgin Queans on the Early Modern Stage* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000).

[89] Rick Bowers, "John Marston at the 'mart of woe': The *Antonio* Plays," *The Drama of John Marston: Critical Re-Visions,* ed. T. F. Wharton (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) 15.

[90] West and Thorssen 349–50. In a dedicatory epistle in the *Sejanus* quarto, "Ev. B." speaks of how *Sejanus* "cost [Jonson] so much sweat, and so much oyle" (Jonson, *Sejanus His Fall* A3v).

[91] Corbin and Sedge 4.

[92] Translation by Sturgess, who suggests—I think rightly—that this epilogue was not part of the Prologue's speech but rather "an addition for the printed text by the author" (373).

[93] These are Wilkes's translations (Jonson, *Five Plays* 105).

[94] All citations are from *The Woman Hater, The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon,* ed. Fredson Bowers et al., vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1966). The only claim I have encountered about an allusion to a specific person in *The Woman Hater* is Andrew Gurr's argument that Beaumont takes a veiled jab at Shakespeare as "heire apparent legges to a Glover, these legges hope shortly to bee honourable." For some reason, however, Gurr erroneously discusses *The Woman Hater* as a Blackfriars play. See "A Jibe at Shakespeare," *Notes and Queries* 49 (2002): 245–47 and *The Shakespeare Company, 1594–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004) 53.

[95] Bliss writes that *The Woman Hater* was "most likely [acted] in the first half of 1606, before the summer plague restrictions on playing and that troupe's collapse" (19). Part of Bliss's reasoning seems to be based on the collapse of Paul's in 1606, but, as W. Reavley Gair has argued, "Paul's playhouse ceased operation in mid to late 1608, possibly as a direct consequence of [Puritan divine William] Crashawe's attack [on Paul's, in an apparent reference to Middleton's *The Puritan,* during a 1607–1608 St. Valentine's Day sermon]" (*The Children of Paul's: The Story of a Theatre Company, 1553–1608* [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982] 173). See also Gair 163–64. *The Puritan* was entered in the Stationer's Register on 6 August 1607 and printed that year as having been "Acted by the Children of Paules" (Chambers 4: 41–42).

[96] Bliss 19.

[97] See Bliss 24–27. As for the date of *The Widow's Tears,* which was not published until 1612, Ethel M. Smeak explains, "there is a general agreement among scholars that Chapman composed the play sometime in late 1605 or early 1606" (Introduction, *The Widow's Tears,* by George Chapman [Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1966] xi). Smeak believes that "The satire on justice in the last act is probably an attack on the imprisonment of Chapman, Marston, and Jonson over the *Easward Ho* affair in 1605" (xii).

[98] Finkelpearl, *Court and Country Politics* 71. He goes on to say that from *The Dutch Courtesan*, Beaumont (and Fletcher, as Finkelpearl sees it) "borrowed the name of the prostitute (Francischina), the pursuit of a succulent fish, and the manner in which the double plot is linked (in each part a character is led to believe he is going

to be executed)." (*Court and Country Politics* 71). Finkelpearl also discusses the relationship between Oriana and Marston's Crispinella (see note 125 below).

[99] Finkelpearl conjectures that the dash stands "for some such word as Majesty's'" (*Court and Country Politics* 72).

[100] Munro discusses the "ambiguous" relationship between comedy and laughter in the period, including Sidney's argument for a tenuous relationship between delight and laughter, and the idea espoused by Jonson (following Aristotle) that comedy should not encourage laughter. See *Children of the Queen's Revels* 55–56.

[101] Munro briefly discusses Beaumont's Prologue as demonstrating how "playwrights and companies often portrayed themselves as rejecting genre altogether when particular categories became outmoded or politically dangerous" (*Children of the Queen's Revels* 9). For Munro, "The refusal to write a play according to a previously defined genre or popular mode—or, rather, the refusal to *admit* to having done so—is politically, rather than artistically, motivated" (*Children of the Queen's Revels* 9). While Beaumont may be making a witty reference to the tragedy and two comedies for which the Blackfriars company recently had been in trouble (and perhaps Jonson's Globe tragedy too), it is difficult to imagine that "comedy" and "tragedy" became inherently dangerous labels because of earlier scandals in those modes.

[102] Lawrence B. Wallis draws a connection between the subplot involving Intelligencers and the Gunpowder Plot (*Fletcher, Beaumont & Company: Entertainers to the Jacobean Gentry* [Morningside Heights, NY: King's Crown P,

1947] 134). Of note here is Jonson's role as agent of the state/intelligencer in interviews following the discovery of the Gun Powder Plot (See Riggs 127–130).

[103] Shapiro 40.

[104] Shapiro 41.

[105] Finkelpearl, *Court and Country Politics* 73. Regarding the authorship of *The Woman Hater,* Bliss writes, "In first performance it was probably Beaumont's alone; yet since recent scholars agree that some scenes in the printed text are either original Fletcher or heavily revised by him, the young friends apparently still consulted each other. The way in which these scenes are distributed, however, suggests that *The Woman Hater* is Beaumont's in conception and, largely, in execution. It remains the first dramatic composition that can be discussed as his" (19). Fletcher's hand has been traced in several places, especially 3.1, 4.2, 5.2, and 5.4, with much slighter evidence elsewhere. See George Walton Williams, "Textual Introduction," *The Woman Hater, The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon,* ed. Bowers et al., vol. 1, 147–155.

[106] Gair 167.

[107] Bliss 21.

[108] Bliss 30. Arguing for dangerous anti-Court satire in many contemporary plays, Albert H. Tricomi largely ignores *The Woman Hater.* See *Anti-Court Drama in England, 1603–1642* (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1989).

[109] The most significant example of Paul's getting into trouble with the authorities in the period was with the *Old Joiner of Aldgate* scandal in 1602–03 (see Gair 147–51).

[110] See his signature on the encomiastic poem in the quarto of John Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* (1623) (John Webster, *Three Plays,* ed. D. C. Gunby [New York: Penguin, 1972] 172). According to Gunby, "Middleton was appointed City Chronologer in 1620" (435).

[111] According to Hillebrand, after the Blackfriars company's performance of a lost play on the Scottish mines and Chapman's Byron plays in March 1608, "M. de la Boderie, the French ambassador, wrote to M. de Puisieux at Paris on April 8" explaining that "[a]s a result of both plays . . . the king waxed exceeding angry, ordered the players to be punished, and even went to the length of closing all the London theatres; whereat four other companies were offering 100,000 francs to lift the ban, and might possibly be successful, but only on the understanding that they should never again treat of modern events or any living person" (199). The relevant portion of the letter is reproduced by Chambers (3: 257–58). A letter by Sir Thomas Lake, Clerk of the Signet, dated 11 March 1608, verifies the severe punishment for the Blackfriars troupe (See Chambers 2: 53–54; Hillebrand 200; and Smith 193).

[112] See "Repertory Practice and Company Commerce," in Knutson, *Playing Companies* 56–63.

[113] Knutson, *Playing Companies* 148.

[114] Duncan-Jones 144.

[115] Duncan-Jones 147.

[116] Beaumont may also be inverting Marston's supernatural elements with his Mercer subplot. Syphax turns to a witch to catch Sophonisba, and the Mercer turns to

a scholar and the "black arts" to acquire an honest wife. Both characters are gulled and neither changes as a result.

[117] Eugene M. Waith writes, "The general tone of *The Woman-Hater* is light, but the situation of Oriana in the last two acts is serious enough to make this part of the play tragicomic rather than purely comic . . . It is plain that Beaumont departs knowingly from the accepted norms of tragedy and comedy, even though he does not specifically call his play a tragicomedy, as Fletcher does *The Faithful Shepherdess*" (*The Pattern of Tragicomedy in Beaumont and Fletcher* [New Haven: Yale UP, 1952] 4–5).

[118] Finkelpearl, *John Marston* 248.

[119] Allen 161.

[120] Ure 77.

[121] Bliss notes how "Valore . . . suspects the Duke . . . for he assumes him capable of assignations and bastard children" (29). Finkelpearl finds the Duke especially distasteful, describing him as "amoral" and disturbingly "candid" about his arbitrary gifting and his shallow appreciation of flattery (*Court and Country Politics* 72–73). While I think Beaumont's Duke is a dubious character, what Finkelpearl finds offensive, I find amusing.

[122] Finkelpearl, *Court and Country Politics* 76n43. A more generous reading is that Gondarino's wife's having been slain (in the non-punitive sense of the word)—her having left him without her—is her offense. But Finkelpearl's reading better reflects the usage of the word "slain" in the period, the degraded environment of the play, and Beaumont's inversion of the Massinissa-Sophonisba dynamic.

[123] Although the Duke's character is suspect, and there is an obvious sexual pun at the end of these lines ("As she disposeth, so we die and live"), his comparison between the rising sun and the blushes of "modest vertuous women" (1.1.8); his insistence that he is stirring for the good of his subjects (1.1.16–18, 20–23); and his prayer that Oriana be inspired to love or his desire lessened (1.1.91–92) indicate that he is out for a wife. This both sets up the comic plot and lends credence to his appraisal of Oriana.

[124] Cited in Ejner J. Jensen, *John Marston, Dramatist: Themes and Imagery in the Plays* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, U of Salzburg, 1979) 105.

[125] Finkelpearl argues that "The model for the heroine Oriana, in part at least, was Marston's virtuous but 'liberated' Crispinella, an outspoken advocate of frank speech: 'lets neere be ashamed to speake what we be not ashamd to thinke, I dare as boldly speake venery as think venery.' These and similar sentiments, sometimes adopted verbatim from Montaignes' 'Upon Some Verses of Virgil' in Florio's translation, helped to shape characters in several of Marston's plays: Dulcimel in *The Fawn,* the title figure of the tragedy *Sophonisba,* as well as Crispinella" (*Court and Country Politics* 71). This demonstrates how Marston worked his way to Sophonisba, and the opportunities Beaumont had to see the development of this type of character.

[126] According to Chambers, "the boys were playing at least as early as the first half of 1607 . . . They were probably broken before the end of 1608" (2: 66, 67). Hillebrand believes that the company "acted . . . in the period 1607–9 . . . I do not

think the company can have been organized much before the early part of 1607" (221, 229). Bly essentially agrees with Chambers (33).

[127] Bly 36, 44. Bly explores the "desirous virgin / desirous boy actor construction," arguing that "Whitefriars puns focus attention on the desirability of the male body" (84).

[128] Love 3.

[129] Bliss 30.

[130] Threatened by Syphax, Sophonisba uses tricks to escape, especially in 3.1, where she pretends to believe that Massinissa is dead and then pretends that she is going to give in to Syphax (with feigned resignation rather than lust); conversely, Oriana voluntarily jests with her play's comic villain and draws herself into serious trouble.

[131] Ure 91.

[132] Knutson, *The Repertory* 197. Quartos of the play were published in 1598, 1606, 1610, 1611, 1613, 1615, 1618, 1619, and 1621; the 1610 quarto attributes the play to the King's men. Knutson argues for a 1605–06 revival "on the basis of revisions in the text of the quarto in 1606" (*The Repertory* 197).

[133] Citations are from *A Contextual Study and Modern-Spelling Edition of Mucedorus,* ed. Arvin H. Jupin (New York: Garland, 1987).

[134] Chambers 4: 34.

[135] Cited from *The Faithful Shepherdess, The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon,* ed. Bowers et al., vol. 2.

[136] Verna A. Foster, *The Name and Nature of Tragicomedy* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004) 31. For Guarini's greater influence on Renaissance drama, see Foster 17–22, 45–51.

[137] Foster 18.

[138] Battista Guarini, *Il Pastor Fido or The Faithful Shepherd*, trans. anon. [a relative of Edward Dymocke] (London, 1602). In the poem Daniel indicates that he met Guarini during a trip to Italy (Munro 102). Munro suggests that "In the early 1600s Daniel made a sustained effort to introduce the latest Italian forms into English" (*Children of the Queen's Revels* 102). She also notes that "a growing vogue for Italian pastoral can be seen in . . . plays performed at Cambridge," and asserts that "In this context it is unsurprising to find that one of Daniel's early Jacobean works was a Guarinian pastoral, *Arcadia Reformed,* performed before Anna and Prince Henry during the royal visit to Oxford in August 1605 . . . [a]lthough Daniel did not write a play in this mode for the commercial stage" (*Children of the Queen's Revels* 102–03). John Chamberlain attests to the success of *Arcadia Reformed* before its elite audience at Oxford, saying the other plays "were dull, but Daniel's 'made amends for all; being indeed very excelent, and some parts exactly acted'" (Chambers 3: 276).

[139] Foster 45–51. *The Malcontent,* in fact, is described in the Stationer's Register (5 July 1604) as "An Enterlude called the Malecontent, Tragicomoedia" (Chambers 3: 431). Munro explains that "In the early seventeenth century the introduction of Italianate pastoral tragicomedy into England was giving dramatists an additional flexibility in their use of pastoral and political forms," and she discusses

The Malcontent, The Widow's Tears, and other plays in this context, suggesting that they integrate "Italianate tragicomedy with native pastoral and satire" (*Children of the Queen's Revels* 100–02, 116).

[140] Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels* 96. Munro argues that this development was ushered in by "one group in particular: The Children of the Queen's Revels" (*Children of the Queen's Revels* 96).

[141] In this, Marston and Beaumont may have been at the forefront of a trend: Munro examines plays from the 1609–11 period, many of which she describes as focusing on "gender relations," and argues that they demonstrate the "interaction between genres and the recycling of narrative and generic material in the developing tragicomic genre" ("Early Modern Drama" 19, 27).

[142] This is a subtle version of John Day's Epilogue for the roughly contemporary (but I think slightly later) *Law-Tricks* (Blackfriars, 1606–07): "Who would have thought, such strange euents should fall / Into a course so smooth and comicall?" (*Law-Trickes or, Who Would Have Thought It* [London, 1608]). For a brief discussion of the questions surrounding this play's production history, see introduction 74n88.

[143] Cf. Barroll: "During the second week of April 1606, as Lent was coming to an end, plague deaths rose to 27—then dropped to 12. 'The sickness is well abated to twelve this last week,' wrote Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain . . . on April 17, three days before Easter, showing by his remark that there was some concern about these figures" (144).

[144] Dutton, *Mastering the Revels* 178. Dutton has since argued that Paul's and Blackfriars had a more or less regular relationship with the Revels Office. See "The Revels Office and the Boy Companies, 1600–1613: New Perspectives" *ELR* 32 (2002): 324–51.

[145] As Dutton explains, "The boy companies appear to have operated without serious trouble for two years, until Chapman once more overstepped the mark with his two-part *Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles, Duke of Byron,* based on the career of the Marshal of France whom Henri IV had executed in 1602 for treasonable correspondence with Spain" (*Mastering the Revels* 182).

Chapter 3

Reading the Market: Thomas Middleton and the Composition of *The Revenger's Tragedy,* circa 1606

This chapter focuses on the way in which a private-theater playwright negotiated the theatrical landscape. Specifically, it is an effort to chart the way in which Thomas Middleton, who established himself in London as a writer committed to the children's theater, evaluated the marketplace and determined to write *The Revenger's Tragedy,* which was performed by the King's Men in 1606–07. This is a complex issue that requires consideration of the popularity of revenge tragedy, the status of tragedy in the Paul's and Blackfriars repertories, the 1606–07 plague closures and the date Paul's ceased operations, and the visit of Christian IV, King of Denmark in the summer of 1606. I will argue that *The Revenger's Tragedy* reformulated the popular Hamlet story not only to capitalize on a trend in the marketplace, but also in anticipation of a Paul's performance during the King of Denmark's visit. Middleton reworks the signature features of Shakespeare's play by Italianizing the setting and characters, thereby voiding negative references to Denmark and enhancing its propriety for the historical moment. A commercial and an occasional play, *The Revenger's Tragedy* demonstrates a sophisticated and opportunistic approach to theater by a major playwright of the children's theaters during this period.

The Revenger's Tragedy was entered in the Stationer's Register on 7 October 1607, and the quarto appeared in 1607–08.[1] The play was originally assigned to Cyril Tourner, following Edward Archer's attribution in his list of plays appended to the 1656 quarto of Philip Massinger, Thomas Middleton, and William Rowley's *The Old Law*. However, in 1926, E. H. C. Oliphant ascribed the play to Thomas Middleton, and, as H. V. Holdsworth explains, "Recent research has . . . put [Oliphant's] finding beyond reasonable doubt. In particular, we have to thank the painstaking labours of David J. Lake and MacDonald P. Jackson, who, working independently of one another, applying different tests, and using a largely different sample of non-Middleton plays as a control, are united in their certainty that Middleton wrote *The Revenger's Tragedy*."[2]

Middleton did so in 1606, when he had been working almost exclusively for the children's theater.[3] Like many London playwrights, as Middleton emerged in the profession he wrote plays for Philip Henslowe. But Middleton became the principal playwright at Paul's between 1603 and 1606, and W. Reavley Gair suggests he even may have been a manager.[4] Certainly Middleton's contribution of five or more plays to the Paul's repertory in a three-to-four-year stretch indicates an important connection to that company. This successful run at Paul's extends to at least five plays: *The Phoenix* (1603–04; S.R. 9 May 1607; published 1607), *A Mad World, My Masters* (1604–06, S.R. 4 October 1608, published 1608), *A Trick to Catch the Old One* (1604–06; S.R. 7 October 1607; published 1608), *Michaelmas Term* (1605–06; S.R. 15 May 1607; published 1607), and *The Puritan* (1606–07; S.R. 6 August 1607; published 1607).[5] *The Phoenix* was performed at Court, the goal of any ambitious

playwright, possibly on 20 February 1604.[6] Two other plays assigned to the Paul's repertory sometimes have been attributed to Middleton, *Blurt, Master Constable* (1602; S.R. 7 June 1602; published 1602) and *The Family of Love* (1605?; S.R. 12 October 1607; published 1607); although in each case the attribution is doubtful, and Gary Taylor, Paul Mulholland, and MacDonald P. Jackson recently have made a strong argument against Middleton's authorship of *The Family of Love.*[7] Middleton also engaged in collaborative work for the adult theaters, a common practice among professional playwrights. Around 1603 he worked with Thomas Dekker in the composition of *1 Honest Whore* for Prince Henry's Men, and around 1606–07 he wrote *A Yorkshire Tragedy,* a short drama that may have been "one of four plays that were performed together as a set" by the King's Men.[8] Around the same time, he worked with Shakespeare on *Timon of Athens*.[9]

But Middleton's surviving noncollaborative work through the first decade of the seventeenth century suggests the degree to which his growing reputation as a playwright was bound up with the children's theaters. *A Trick to Catch the Old One* was circulated after its career at Paul's to the Blackfriars repertory, and they seem to have performed the play at court during the 1608–09 holiday season. And toward the end of Paul's run, Middleton wrote at least one, and perhaps two, plays for the Blackfriars company. This seems to demonstrate Middleton's ability to trade on his success at the similar venture at Paul's, and it might demonstrate a commitment to the private theaters, a desire to be a "private-theater poet."

Many scholars assume that Middleton's work for the Blackfriars company coincides with the closing of Paul's, supposedly in late 1606 or early 1607.[10] Richard

Dutton is typical when he notes, "The last we hear of the Paul's operation as a going concern is a performance at Greenwich before King Christian of Denmark on July 30, 1606; ten of their plays became available for printing in 1607/8, a reasonably sure sign that they had gone out of business."[11] Paul's must have closed in the 1606–08 period, but I think a later date is appropriate. By mid 1606, Edward Pearce was the only children's theater manager still responsible for chapel duties. Given that plague closures meant that there was little playing in late 1606 and all of 1607, and given that Paul's was a small operation still relying on choristers, it seems possible that Pearce began selling plays in his possession to publishers to make up for lost income (in Easter Term 1606, Pearce was fined over £13 for having beaten his former stage manager Thomas Woodford; this would have been an extra drain on his resources).[12] It also follows that Pearce would have been extremely cautious about purchasing new plays and devoting time to getting them ready. As far as evidence for a later date of closure is concerned, the last Paul's play sold to printers was entered in the Stationer's Register in October 1608 and printed in a 1608–1609 quarto as "lately in Action by the Children of Paules."[13] Moreover, Gair notes that a Valentine's Day 1608 Paul's Cross sermon by William Crashaw features a reference to Middleton's *The Puritan* and the admonition that "*hee that teacheth children to play, is not an instructor, but a spoiler and destroyer of children.*"[14] Gair concludes that "Paul's playhouse ceased operation in mid to late 1608, possibly as a direct consequence of Crashawe's attack."[15] Indeed, if Pearce had given up on his theater and sold off all of his playbooks and stage properties in late 1606 or early 1607, I think it unlikely that the competition would have felt compelled to pay Pearce for the "cessation" of plays

at Paul's in 1609.[16] Instead, it seems that Pearce had experienced actors and the ability to ramp up quickly. Perhaps political pressure, such as that exerted by Crashaw, and the Blackfriars' disastrous 1608 performances that seriously endangered the London companies, caused Pearce to lay low—but he probably intended only to pause his nearly decade-old side business.[17] I also think that Middleton intended to continue his relationship with Paul's. He may have sold them *The Puritan* in 1607 (or it may have been performed during the brief opening in spring of that year), but the difficulties of 1606–07 and Pearce's fiscal and political caution would have forced him to seek other opportunities for his plays.[18]

Perhaps the only play Middleton actually sold to the Blackfriars syndicate was *Your Five Gallants* (1607–08; S.R. 22 March 1608; quarto undated), which Chambers suggests "may have been in preparation for Paul's when they ceased playing and taken over by Blackfriars."[19] There is evidence, however, that Middleton sold a play to the Blackfriars company around May 1606, depending on how one interprets a legal deposition discovered by H. N. Hillebrand.[20] In a Trinity Term 1609 suit brought against Middleton by goldsmith and Blackfriars partner Robert Keysar, Middleton claims to have given Keysar a tragedy titled *The Viper and Her Brood* as the payment of a £16 debt.[21] Hillebrand supposes, "There is every reason to think that Middleton was dealing with Keysar not as a money broker but as a theatrical manager, and that the debt he incurred was in earnest of a play."[22] This is possible, but Keysar clearly disagreed with Middleton's account, and while "we have no reason to believe that [Middleton] was irregular in his professional dealings," we have little basis for crediting one party more than the other.[23]

Indeed, the circumstances surrounding the lawsuit are complicated. Robert Keysar may have taken over the management of the Blackfriars operation after their scandalous February 1606 performance of the *Isle of Gulls*, as a result of which, "Sundry were committed to Bridewell."[24] Word may have gotten around that the Blackfriars company could no longer use choristers, a prohibition officially established by a reissued patent of August 1606 forbidding the impressment of choristers "as Comedians or Stage players."[25] This was only the first in a series of problems Keysar encountered between assuming the role of manager and his lawsuit against Middleton.[26] The extended plague closures of 1606–07 made life very difficult for all of the London companies, the Blackfriars troupe was severely punished for their 1608 performances of the *Byron* plays and a satire about English mines, and later that year Keysar was apparently fighting Richard Burbage and Henry Evans over Evans's decision to return the Blackfriars theater to the Burbages.[27] The resulting financial stress and strain may have prompted Keysar to call in Middleton's debt, which, despite Hillebrand's suggestion to the contrary, may have been a simple case of moneylending (while our knowledge of these things is limited, £16 would seem to be over twice the expenditure for the average play).[28] Or conversely, if the debt did derive from theater business, Keysar may have grown tired of waiting for Middleton to deliver a play or plays—and by mid 1609 he may have been contemplating getting out of the business. As Lucy Munro explains, Keysar "was payee on 10 May 1610 for five court performances over Christmas 1609/10, [but] this was his last recorded involvement with the company."[29]

As for Middleton, we know that in 1606 he was writing *The Revenger's Tragedy,* which itself may furnish a basis for his claim about *The Viper and Her Brood,* whatever its veracity. This is because it has been suggested that *The Viper and Her Brood* was an alternate title for *The Revenger's Tragedy.* But to accept this explanation is to believe that Middleton would name his play after an aspect of the subplot—and rather loosely at that.[30] Hence, Brian Jay Corrigan says, "I have difficulty identifying a venomous matriarch at the center of [the] play. The only possible candidate, the duchess with her three sons, is neither the focus of the play nor of Vindice's wrath."[31] Regarding Middleton's testimony, Foakes notes that, "If [*The Viper and Her Brood*] had been identical with *The Revenger's Tragedy,* printed in 1607, Middleton could presumably have pointed to the printed title."[32] But if *The Revenger's Tragedy* is *The Viper and Her Brood,* the printed version of the play divorces it from Keysar by attributing it to the Kng's Men, so any legal advantage Middleton could gain by pointing to it is unclear. If Middleton did write a tragedy titled *The Viper and Her Brood,* there is no other evidence of its existence, and Keysar presumably felt his claim that he never received it would hold up under scrutiny. While literary critics have been loathe to impugn Middleton, it could be that he was lying about *The Viper and Her Brood,* perhaps motivated by financial desperation. He could, for example, have told Keysar that he was working on a play to procure the loan and then sold that play to another company. *The Viper and Her Brood* may never have existed.

Still, Middleton's claim that he had delivered a tragedy to an agent of the Blackfriars troupe in 1606 is important. It gives us reason to suspect that Middleton

may have had a children's company in mind when he was writing *The Revenger's Tragedy*. As do questions that have been raised about the attribution of the play to the King's Men in the 1607–08 quarto. David L. Frost explains that the publisher of *The Revenger's Tragedy,* George Eld, printed only four plays on his own behalf, and of these, three were certainly originally Paul's plays (only *The Revenger's Tragedy* is attributed to "the King's Majesty's Servants"), and three of the four plays are by Middleton.[33] Frost then notes that Eld attributed Middleton's Paul's play *The Puritan* "not . . . to the King's Men, but to their leading dramatist, one 'W.S.' As a result, Eld's attribution to Shakespeare's company of *The Revenger's Tragedy* cannot inspire confidence."[34] While we lack hard evidence contradicting Eld's title page, we still have reason to think that Middleton considered the children's theaters prospective buyers as he was writing the play.

Scholars have typically argued that the second Paul's and second Blackfriars repertories were heavily weighted toward satirical comedy.[35] Of course, they have acknowledged that tragedies were performed at the private theaters between 1599 and 1607, but the seemingly absurd elements of Marston's *Antonio's Revenge* (Paul's, 1600–01) have been highlighted, and *Bussy D'Ambois* (Paul's, 1603–04), *Philotas* (Blackfriars, 1604–05), and *The Wonder of Women, or the Tragedy of Sophonisba* (Blackfriars, 1606) are often ignored, dismissed as anomalies, or otherwise marginalized.[36] The Blackfriars troupe is even thought to have performed one of the period's most famous tragedies, Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy.* In the Induction to their version of *The Malcontent,* the King's Men proclaim that they are producing "Malevole in folio" as revenge for "Hieronomo in decimo-sexto."[37] Lucy

Munro recently has suggested that "In the Queen's Revels tragedies performed before 1609, we can trace successive attempts on the part of the Queen's Revels to accommodate tragedy as a genre appropriate to the children's company."[38] This is certainly true, but there is no reason to single out the Blackfriars troupe's production of tragedy: during the 1599–1607 period, only two tragedies are *safely* identified with Blackfriars. Since this is the same number as at Paul's, the two companies were probably equally hospitable to tragedy.[39]

Scholars typically also have underestimated the abilities of child actors, and hence they have doubted that their companies or audiences would want or expect serious tragedies. In *Children of the Revels* (1977), the only thing that Michael Shapiro can suggest "may . . . have allowed the children's troupes to perform tragedy in a serious manner" was their "declamatory style [their speechifying rather than their verisimilitude]."[40] And while in his 1997 survey of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, G. K. Hunter describes the children's tragedies as a "minor yet significant part of their activity," he insists that they were of necessity different from those of adults: "To aim at the highest degree of emotional power (or *pathos*) would seem to be particularly inappropriate to the talents of the boys."[41] There is a twenty-first century logic to these opinions, but not much more. We might take note of Leah Sinanoglou Marcus's suggestion that "sixteenth-century children of all social classes were expected to acclimate themselves to the company of adults from a very early age . . . upper class children in particular were encouraged to put away childish things and acquire classical learning and social finesse which would be essential to them in later life."[42] Children could well have performed in serious and sophisticated ways at

relatively early ages (and the boy actors were hardly toddlers). Consider *The Seven Deadly Sins* (1606): Thomas Dekker, who had written plays for Paul's, refers to the city looking "like a private Play-house, when the windowes are clapt downe, as if some *Nocturnall*, or dismal *Tragedy* were presently to be acted."[43] Not only does this line suggest that children's theaters put on serious tragedies, but it implies that there was, among theater insiders and regular playgoers, at least, a generally understood schema for their performance.

For all that, scholars who link *The Revenger's Tragedy* with the children's repertories often emphasize the features it shares with private-theater comedies and tragicomedies. For example, when he acknowledges the possibility that *The Revenger's Tragedy* "was originally commissioned by the Children of the Revels but ultimately became the property of the King's men," Samuel Schoenbaum notes that the play shares much with Middleton's early city comedies "in its point of view, and . . . in dramatic technique."[44] Similarly, Holdsworth suggests the play may have been intended for "a company of boy actors at a smaller, indoor, 'private' theatre, and acquired by the King's Men only later," emphasizing the play's satirical tone and use of a "law of ironic repayment" or "biter-bit law" from the city comedies.[45] Swapan Chakravorty suggests that *The Revenger's Tragedy* contains "motifs familiar from the Paul's plays," and, discussing the way "the children's theatres and the dramatists who wrote for them formed a major influence in determining the course of English drama," Foakes argues that *The Revenger's Tragedy* is particularly influenced by Marston's satirical plays.[46] For Foakes, *The Revenger's Tragedy* represents "a new mode of satirical tragedy, in which the protagonist's sardonic stance is made to take

effect fully as part of the play's serious action."[47] Nicholas Brooke also describes *The Revenger's Tragedy* as greatly indebted to Marston, whom he describes as "satiric, violent, comic, tragic, romantic, parodying and self-parodying by turns, and in consequence oddly detached, objective even if we cannot quite be so sure what the object was."[48] Other features of *The Revenger's Tragedy* also have been traced to the private-theater tradition: Holdsworth points to "the opening torchlit entry, a device copied from Marston's private-theatre plays, and the masque in Act V, scene iii. Of the nineteen plays containing masques first performed between 1599 and 1610, all but two (one of them *The Revenger's Tragedy*) were written for boy companies."[49]

In short, then, there is indeed considerable evidence that Middleton had a private theater in mind as he was writing *The Revenger's Tragedy.* External evidence consists of Middleton's close relationship with Paul's in the 1603–06 period and the 1609 Keysar lawsuit indicating that Middleton may have written a tragedy for Blackfriars around the time he was writing *The Revenger's Tragedy.* Internal evidence includes the play's relationship with both Middleton's city comedies for Paul's as well as Marston's tragedies and tragicomedies for Paul's and Blackfriars.

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What opportunities did Middleton see for his new play? Of the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean theatrical marketplace, Roslyn Lander Knutson has argued that "a paradigm of cooperative business such as the guild is a fruitful way of perceiving the relationship of the companies to one another."[50] Knutson reasons that theater companies' "recognition of marketable features of their own repertory and the repertory of their competitors—as well as their readiness to best each other's

offerings in subject, genre, and style—provided a creative environment for playwrights who might duplicate or improve the latest hit on a rival stage."[51] If there really was a *Viper and Her Brood* and if it was performed at Blackfriars, Middleton may have written *The Revenger's Tragedy* in an attempt to offset the tragedy he submitted to the Blackfriars management. He could have profited from similar plays for different companies. But this only would have been to do on his own what playwrights in general were doing: the early seventeenth century featured a proliferation of revenge plays that reflected and built on each other. *The Spanish Tragedy* (1586) was regularly revived. *Hamlet* (1599) became a lightning rod, and soon Shakespeare had many imitators. John Marston's *Antonio's Revenge* (1600) was a version of the Hamlet story at Paul's. As Katherine Duncan-Jones explains, "Audiences who watched both Marston's miniaturized tragedy at St Paul's and Shakespeare's very large-scale one at the Globe or 'else-where' could admire the ingenuity with which the younger and older writer had deployed many . . . verbal parallels and variations on a theme."[52] Next came Henry Chettle's *Hoffman, or Revenge of a Father* (circa 1603–04), the Admiral's Men's *Hamlet*-like offering at the Fortune. The extent to which *Hamlet* underpinned Chettle's play is indicated by Henslowe's apparent description of the unfinished play as a "danyshe tragedy" even though the completed *Hoffman* is set in Germany.[53] Schoenbaum aptly describes the relationships among *Hamlet, Antonio's Revenge, and Hoffman:* "In *Hamlet* Shakespeare centered the entire action around the personality of the revenger. Chettle made his central character, Hoffman, the villain, and substituted a skeleton for the ghost. In *Antonio's Revenge* Marston elaborated the intrigue to include a whole series

of revenges and counter-revenges, and made disguise an essential part of the avenger's plans."[54]

The extended theater closure of 1603–04 may have slowed the momentum of this trend, but Middleton's work on *The Revenger's Tragedy* tells us that the appetite for *Hamlet* knock-offs was not quite exhausted. Fredson Bowers describes *The Revenger's Tragedy* as "one of the last of the great tragedies composed under the specific influence of the Kydian formula."[55] Schoenbaum describes Middleton's work:

> By the time of *The Revenger's Tragedy,* the conventions of the form, essentially a narrow one, had already hardened with tradition, the possibilities for innovation virtually depleted. Yet what Middleton contributed to the pattern is significant. He emphasized savagery . . . [and] introduced . . . the self-deluded avenger who is not aware that his own character is tainted . . . Most important, Middleton adapted to the revenge tragedy formula the ironic method that he had perfected in the City comedies.[56]

Corrigan confirms Schoenbaum's notion that there was little room for innovation in the revenge-tragedy genre but argues that Middleton saw this as an opportunity:

> a dismissive, parodic tone . . . seems to indicate that the author has grown tired of a style or has recognized a change in the literary winds which has been occasioned either by innovation within the literary community or by a craving for novelty from his audiences. Middleton characteristically responds to the actual or perceived need for change by dismissing the old form in a parodic, often excelling work.[57]

But was Middleton really dismissing a worn-out genre? He was doubtless reworking *Hamlet,* which was still popular as he was writing in 1606. While *Antonio's Revenge* was published in early 1602 and never reprinted, and *Hoffman* remained unpublished until 1631, *Hamlet* was published in 1603, 1604–05, and 1611. Furthermore, there are a rash of surviving allusions to *Hamlet* from 1605, the most well known being the parodies of aspects of the play in Chapman, Jonson, and Marston's *Eastward Ho* at Blackfriars.[58] Shakespeare was already known as one of England's leading tragedians, and *Hamlet* played an important role in sustaining this reputation, making it a prime target for imitation, commentary, and parody.[59]

Middleton examined *Hamlet* (and probably the other plays it directly influenced) and shuffled the deck to create a different sort of revenge tragedy, but the link to Shakespeare was meant to be obvious. E. A. J. Honigmann asks, "How many distinct imitations of *Hamlet* can we trace in *The Revenger's Tragedy*? The hero's character, his confidant, the closet scene, the revenge theme, Yorick's skull—the list is endless."[60] Among the most frequently discussed intertextual links are Hamlet's and Vindice's musings on a skull, their treatment of the women in their lives, especially the ways they threaten their mothers, and both plays' pervasive metadrama.[61] According to Felperin, at the outset *The Revenger's Tragedy* establishes that it is about *Hamlet:* "Vindice moralizing upon his betrothed's skull is . . . Hamlet wittily meditating upon Yorick's skull. This sense of *déjâ vu* is compounded by a sense of *déjâ entendu,* as Vindice's language repeatedly presses close to Hamlet's only to draw back while still remaining within earshot of it."[62] There are also many thematic echoes derived from the medieval morality and revenge

tragedy traditions. Among those Frost identifies are the revenger's "revulsion from sexuality and his preoccupation with death," a "grim jesting at decay," an emphasis "on the vanity of human concerns and values," and the equation of lust and death.[63] But Frost goes even further:

> it is not merely for a few episodes, a chance phrase, or even a general attitude that Middleton is indebted to Shakespeare. The whole movement of the verse, its freedom, its nervous irritability, the lightning jumps from one image or idea to another, and the cramping brevity which produces a harsh, knotted sense; the preponderance of verbs, the sudden, terse epigram or the probing epithet together with the pregnant ambiguities; all these qualities derive ultimately from the master.[64]

Would not early-modern playgers have drawn similar connections between *Hamlet* and *The Revenger's Tragedy*?

Middleton understood the theatrical marketplace, and he may have determined that there was a place for a radical new version of the "revenge of a father" tragedy. Of the companies he is known to have worked with, Blackfriars seems to have gone without this kind of "blood tragedy," although Marston's *The Wonder of Women, or The Tragedy of Sophonisba* was staged in spring 1606, perhaps before *The Revenger's Tragedy* was written (and almost certainly before the date Middleton claims to have offered *The Viper and Her Brood* to Keysar). Indeed, there is remarkable similarity in the use of torches and the dumb-show display of the principal characters at the openings of *The Wonder of Women* and *The Revenger's Tragedy,* and both plays feature wildly passionate villains and unsuccessful attempts

to corrupt virtuous women. It is unclear whether the Blackfriars troupe would have wanted or needed two such new plays running concurrently. Meanwhile, the Paul's version of the Hamlet-story, *Antonio's Revenge,* was some six years old. The fact that the 1602 quarto was never reprinted might indicate that it had fallen out of their repertory. Middleton may have felt that Paul's needed a replacement for *Antonio's Revenge,* a tragedy different in tone from the one they may still have been staging, *Bussy D'Ambois,* a spectacular tragedy to compete with *The Wonder of Women* at Blackfriars. At the public theaters, the King's Men were still playing *Hamlet,* and Prince Henry's Men were probably still playing *Hoffman,* but Middleton probably knew these companies too might want or need a play like *The Revenger's Tragedy* to complement (and enliven) their similar offerings. If, as Corrigan suggests, "For Middleton, 1606 was a time of crisis," a time when he may not have been able to rely on his old connections, then flexible and opportunistic might best describe his approach to the theatrical marketplace.[65]

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But Middleton also may have been thinking of something more specific. In July of 1606, James's brother-in-law, Christian IV of Denmark, visited England, stoking the fires of British nationalism. The Danish monarchy, which included "a large collection of other Scandinavian and German territories," was wealthy, powerful, and prestigious.[66] In April 1606, "the Venetian ambassador wrote to the Doge, 'The visit of the King of Denmark is announced.'"[67] J. W. Binns and H. Neville Davies set the scene:

> Everyone with something to contribute seems to have been busy in the summer of 1606 helping James I to entertain . . . Christian IV of Denmark. Wrestlers competed in contests of physical prowess; Oxford students vied in the composition of Latin verses; shipwrights worked round the clock to prepare the fleet for a naval review; divines preached sermons on texts of diplomatic significance; city goldsmiths were busy embellishing royal gifts; palace cooks contrived sumptuous feasts, and officers of state laboured incessantly to ensure the success of the visit.[68]

Doubtless the London literati anticipated opportunities for reward and recognition. Several London writers were called upon to write pageants for the occasion, including Ben Jonson and John Marston. Playwrights and playing companies knew that plays would be performed before the two kings, and advice for those who were inclined to write or tailor a play for the occasion was close at hand. Not only had some of the King's Men been in Elsinore in 1586, but English actors had been at Christian IV's coronation in 1596. Similarities in details in Augustus Erich's Danish account of Christian's coronation, published in Copenhagen in 1597, and Shakespeare's representation of Denmark in *Hamlet,* have prompted at least one scholar to suggest that Shakespeare's information about his setting came at least in part from traveling English players.[69] Although at the turn of the century Middleton was busy fashioning himself as a writer, Judith Cook reminds us that, "In 1600 it was said of him that 'he remaineth here in London daily accompanying the players' . . . Indeed he may have become an actor for a short while, for he appears in the cast list of a play called *Caesar's Fall,* on which he collaborated with Dekker."[70] Did Middleton meet some

of the players who had been to Denmark? Certainly the opportunistic playwright whose Paul's plays had probably already been performed at Court would have considered ways to make himself useful to theater companies for the entertainments to come.

In fact, Middleton's regular company at Paul's may have been unusually well positioned when it came to entertaining Christian and his entourage. The Blackfriars troupe had been in a great deal of trouble in these years for their handling of sensitive political matters. Samuel Daniel was interrogated over the perceived relationship between his *Philotas* (1604) and the Essex affair. In mid to late 1605 Chapman, Jonson, and Marston got in trouble for the political satire in *Eastward Ho.* There is a letter reporting the buzz created by John Day's *Isle of Gulls* that is dated 7 March 1606, meaning that just three months before Christian's visit to England the Blackfriars troupe was once again in trouble for political satire.[71]

It was unlikely, then, that the Blackfriars troupe would be given the lucrative opportunity to perform during Denmark's visit. However, Court records indicate a possible performance on July 29. The entry by the Treasurer of the Chamber reads as follows: "To Thomas Keysar vppon the Councelle wart dated xxxmo marcij 1607 for twoe playes presented before his matie the xxixth of Iulye and the firste of Ianuarye…xx li."[72] Curiously, this is the only entry in a fourteen-year span not to name a specific company. The easy conclusion is that "Thomas Keysar" is an error for Robert Keysar of the Blackfriars troupe, but this cannot be established with any certainty.[73] This entry is also unique in that it fails to note that the July performance, if it was indeed "before his majesty," would have been before both James and

Christian—other entries recording their entertainment explicitly mention the King of Denmark. According to an anonymous pamphleteer, the kings and "their moste ample Traines" spent July 29 and 30 at Greenwich "in hunting, feasting, and other private delights."[74] Another pamphleteer, Henry Roberts, notes that the royal parties passed their time at Greenwich "in solacing themselves, with her gracious Majesty, the Prince and Nobles of his court."[75]

Before Denmark's arrival, the Queen's patronage had been withdrawn from the Blackfriars troupe, leaving them the Children of the Revels.[76] And in August 1606, shortly after Denmark's departure, James emphatically reinforced his displeasure with the Blackfriars company by reissuing their patent with a new clause forbidding the use of choristers as actors. This suggests that the company was still not in the King's good graces (or that people close to the King still had it in for them). Yet, Christian seems to have brought a large number of people with him, and James seems to have employed almost everyone at his disposal for hospitality and entertainment. If "Thomas Keysar" is Robert Keysar, the Blackfriars troupe may of necessity have been given a role—perhaps a *minor* role—in the festivities. Perhaps the Blackfriars company was involved in lesser entertainments not before the main party at Court, but before a portion of Denmark's entourage and their hosts. They may also have been paid merely for being at the ready.

Given the Blackfriars troupe's troubles, and the long tradition of using children's plays for courtly entertainment, the Lord Chamberlain or Master of Revels may have sent word to Paul's boys, who were infrequently at Court, that their services would be needed. If such an arrangement had been made, Middleton was

certainly in a position to know about it. Paul's did perform before the James and Christian at Greenwich on 30 July 1606. H. N. Hillebrand says that this was an occasion on which "the boys of Paul's were favored with a singular mark of esteem."[77] The play that they performed was apparently called *Abuses,* and all that we know of it, thanks to an anonymous pamphleteer, is that it contained "both a Comedie and a Tragedie, at which the Kinges seemed to take delight and be much pleased."[78] Paul's boys are the only company whose performance is documented in pamphlets commemorating Christian's visit.[79]

This Paul's performance is relevant to the composition of *The Revenger's Tragedy.* We might suppose that an English theater industry that that took pride in its drama turned to representative plays for the Danish prince and his entourage. Middleton's version of a dramatic treasure such as *Hamlet* would have been appropriate for performance before the kings, or for performances in the theaters while important Danish visitors were afoot.[80] Choices of plays for Court performance are sometimes difficult to understand at this distance. King James seems to have appreciated or overlooked certain kinds of jabs at himself, and while plays such as *Measure for Measure* and Barnabe Barnes's *The Devil's Charter* deal with some thorny issues for a royal audience, the generally cautious King's Men performed them at Court, apparently without incident.[81] As Albert H. Tricomi notes, "When the king was moved to action, invariably it was because others had provoked him."[82] Barring James's presence at the London theaters, it is difficult to know how it might be otherwise: powerful people—whether English courtiers or foreign ambassadors—who took offense at a play could be the catalyst for serious trouble. Arguably

companies needed to be more careful about royal friends and guests than the king himself.

Hence, what Middleton accomplishes in *The Revenger's Tragedy* has a good deal to do with its possible performance before the visiting Danes. Denmark receives rather unflattering treatment in *Hamlet,* but in *The Revenger's Tragedy,* as Albert H. Tricomi suggests, "the locale is imaginatively generic, 'A duchy of Italy.'"[83] While some critics, such as Tricomi and L. G. Salingar, have seen Middleton's Italy as a surrogate for a corrupt England, Felperin has asked why, if the author of *The Revenger's Tragedy* writes

> out of a coherent satirical tradition to reflect the debasement and commercialization of Jacobean life, why does he do so in terms of a fantastic, farcical, and Italianate world, the very stylization of which must give us pause before identifying it . . . as an imitation of an historical England? It was just such a problem of blurred satiric focus, after all, that led Ben Jonson to shift the scene of his comedies from Italy to England, thereby insuring that their moral and satiric point would not be missed.[84]

Schoenbaum explains:

> The scene of *The Revenger's Tragedy* is that Italy which Elizabethans regarded with mingled horror and fascination. "O Italie," exclaims Nashe, "the Academie of man-slaughter, the sporting place of murther, the Apothecary-shop of poison for all Nations: how many kind of weapons hast thou inuented for malice?" . . . "It is now a priuie note amongst the better sort of men," declares Nashe, "when they would set a singular marker or brand on

> a notorious villaine, to say, he hath beene in *Italy." Inglese Italianato è un diavolo incarnate* runs the Italian proverb which gained currency in England and appeared in the writings of Ascham, Greene, Howell, Parker, and Sidney.[85]

This stereotype is referenced in John Ford's occasional poem "The Monarchs Meeting," "intended to be recited or sung as [James and Christian] greeted each other on July 18," and later included in the publication of Ford's *Honor Triumphant* (1606), verse written "to accompany the tiltings of August 3 to 6 at Greenwich."[86] In his welcoming poem Ford proclaims the superiority of the English and Danes over other nationalities, including the "Trothlesse Italian."[87]

Middleton plays up the darkest popular notions of Italy and Italians in *The Revenger's Tragedy.* Brooke, who builds upon Salingar's argument that "The Duke and his court are simply monstrous embodiments of Lust, Pride, and Greed," emphasizes Middleton's use of Italian allegorical names.[88] In this context, the characters that make up the "nest of dukes" (5.3.125) that has been dispatched at play's end not only function as allegories, but as sensational *Italian* allegories.[89] Furthermore, the basic events of *The Revenger's Tragedy* follow from stories of the infamous early-sixteenth-century Florentine Duke Alessandro de' Medici.[90] Accounts of the lecherous Alessandro, whose murder was plotted and executed by a trusted kinsman who was serving as his pander, circulated throughout Europe in languages including Latin, French, Italian, and English, and his story was used as a source by other English playwrights during the period.[91]

A corrupt Italy represented a stock foil for both the English and the Danes, even though the latter two had not always been on friendly terms. In fact, Ford's celebratory joining of the English and Danish in *Honor Triumphant* belies their turbulent history. In *History of Great Britain in the Reign of James I* (1653), Arthur Wilson, who was approximately ten years old in 1606, suggests that on his arrival in England, Christian

> beheld with admiration the *stately Theatre,* whereon the Danes for many hundred of yeares had acted their bloody parts: But how he resented their *Exit,* or the last *Act* of that black *Tragedy,* wherein his Country lost her interest, some *Divine Power,* that searches the capacious hearts of *Princes* can onely discover.[92]

Henry N. Paul explains, "the significance of the quotation is the disclosure of the consciousness of the Englishman of the time of James that the Danes had once been the mortal enemies of the English," and he suggests that "It was felt that a special effort must be made to prevent any discourtesy to Christian."[93] Indeed, Paul argues that Shakespeare wrote or modified *Macbeth* for the occasion. As Alvin Kernan explains, "Consideration for the queen's Danish sensibilities and those of her brother required replacing the Danish invaders of Scotland in Shakespeare's primary historical source, Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles,* with 'Norweyan banners [that] flout the sky' (1.2.49)."[94] Shakespeare's caution here probably reflects the general approach to the occasion.

In the summer of 1606, then, *Hamlet* had several important marks against it, features that could not easily be altered, especially in a play so well known to the

English portion of the audience.[95] One problem was the play's tragic ending, most of which came not from the Amleth legend derived from Saxo, but was the invention of Shakespeare (or another English playwright whose ending Shakespeare followed).[96] One of the reasons Christian was eager to visit England was to drum up support for a Danish war against the Swedes, who had won their independence from the Danish-controlled Scandinavian union in 1526.[97] Under the circumstances, a play portraying a corrupt Danish Court giving way to Norwegian invaders might seem like a particularly bad choice. And certainly a play in which a corrupt Danish King asks an English King to execute his nephew, the Prince of Denmark, would have been inappropriate.

Of course, Danish drinking customs play a prominent role in Shakespeare's play, from Hamlet's disgust at Claudius's carousing (cf. 1.4.8–18) to the tragic action of the final scene, which is centered around drinking healths.[98] Thomas Nashe in *Pierce Penniless His Supplication to the Devil* (1592) continues a longstanding stereotype when he describes the Danes as "bursten-bellied sots."[99] Although he was hardly a model of temperance, Christian it turns out, was sensitive about this issue. As Henry Roberts explains in one of his pamphlets describing Christian's visit:

> For the gouernment of his followers of all sorts, according to his Kingly pleasure, he ordained a Marshall, who had vnder Marshals many, with great charge from his Maiestie, that if any man of his company should be drunke, or otherwise to abuse himselfe in any maner towards Englishmen, or his owne followers, to be punished sharply, such is the royall care and honor of his excellencie, which is duely executed.[100]

The condescending, anonymous author of *The King of Denmarkes Welcome* (1606) admires the way the Danish handled themselves, given their reputations for drunkenness.[101] However, John Harington, who witnessed the festivities at Theobalds, wrote in a letter that "I have been well nigh overwhelmed with carousal and sports of all kinds…I think the Dane hath strangely wrought on our good English nobles; for those, whom I never could get to taste good liquor, now follow the fashion, and wallow in beastly delights. The ladies abandon their sobriety, and are seen to roll about in intoxication."[102] Christian certainly violated his own commandment: he became drunk and insulted Lady Nottingham by making a joke at her expense.[103] Long before this gaffe, however, those involved in writing entertainments for Christian and his royal entourage likely would consider the stereotypical Danish fondness for drink a dangerous topic that should be carefully avoided. The explicit association of drunkenness with Denmark in *Hamlet* might not only offend the Danes, but it would probably make many English members of the audience uncomfortable under the circumstances. Middleton's play avoids such references just as it thoroughly Italianizes its depictions of vice.

Finally, *The Revenger's Tragedy* is a play that, if its plot were reduced to dumb show, might make sense and prove entertaining with minimal narration. This is important because Christian and many in the Danish company apparently knew little English. The allegorical names are particularly useful in this context. And while *The Revenger's Tragedy* borrows from *Hamlet,* it has a simpler dynamic centering around what Jonas Barish has described as "good and bad families."[104] Also relevant is Scott McMillan's observation that *Hamlet* features much musing on time and history while

The Revenger's Tragedy is characterized by immediacy and a lack of interest in history.[105] And while Middleton's play certainly relies on language, it is replete with visual cues and spectacle.[106] The revenger's main and secondary targets stroll across the stage during the revenger's soliloquy at the outset of the play. While Vindice mentions the death of his father from neglect as one of his motives, his malice seems mainly to derive from the Duke's murder of his betrothed, vividly illustrated by the skull. And when Vindice accomplishes the revenge he announces at the outset of the play in act 3, using the skull as the instrument of death, and then continues gleefully to plot against the court, it is visually obvious that he has overstepped his bounds. In fact, since Vindice and Hippolito become overzealous, demonstrating that they are clever murderers who take great pleasure in their schemes, the play has a normative ending in which they are punished for their actions.[107] Michael E. Mooney notes that after Vindice's unprovoked confession/boast about the murders and Antonio's order for the execution of Vindice and Hippolito, Antonio's final lines—"How subtly was that murder clos'd! Bear up / Those tragic bodies; 'tis a heavy season. / Pray heaven their blood may wash away all treason!" (5.3.126–28)—"seem absolutely conventional and supererogatory."[108] The consequences of murder, especially the murder of rulers, is demonstrated. There is, then, a kind of tidiness to the narrative. While the play is not uncomplicated, it does have features that diminish the language barrier.

So *Hamlet* may have been one of England's most popular tragedies, and the period's most Danish play in any genre, but common sense dictated that it couldn't be performed during the King of Denmark's visit. To play it, a company would have

had to hope that the Danish entourage would tolerate its story because it was loosely based on legend and would forgive its allusions to stereotypical Danish vices. I don't think they would have taken the risk. In any case, Middleton had a safer alternative ready by late July 1606, an alternative that may or may not have been performed.

It is impossible to know if or why Middleton's regular partners at Paul's passed on *The Revenger's Tragedy,* but as we have seen, Pearce may have been under some financial and political pressure in the spring of 1606 stemming from the Woodford lawsuit. And at Blackfriars, Keysar may have passed on a version of Middleton's play under the title *The Viper and Her Brood* in May 1606. That the King's Men would ultimately acquire *The Revenger's Tragedy* makes sense from several perspectives. It would have cemented a working relationship between London's most successful company and an already experienced and successful playwright. If the King's Men thought the play was good, one motivation for acquiring it might have been to keep it out of rivals' hands. But another motivation might have been that they planned to use it much as Middleton intended, as a temporary replacement for *Hamlet.* If Shakespeare wrote or modified *Macbeth* for the summer of 1606 festivities, and if the King's Men knew that they needed several plays for the occasion, might this not have been a good moment to purchase a politically safe play that also happened to rework their warhorse, *Hamlet*? As it happens, they performed a total of three plays at Court.[109]

As Knutson writes, "In a political environment where an innocuous passage in one play might be taken on a Tuesday as welcome praise of an adored public figure and on a Saturday as treason, [theater companies] shared the need to exercise as much

control as possible over long-established protocols of pointing at topical events and persons."[110] At a time in which there were honored and powerful foreign guests in London, repertories might have been carefully considered and controlled by the companies. When he turned to *The Revenger's Tragedy,* Middleton scanned the horizon, aiming to satisfy the immediate needs of his business partners, perhaps first thinking of Paul's, then shopping his script around. His methods in this instance demonstrate all of the flexibility and opportunism of a private-theater playwright.

NOTES

[1] E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage,* 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1923) 4: 42.

[2] H. V. Holdsworth, Introduction, *Three Jacobean Revenge Tragedies*—The Revenger's Tragedy, Women Beware Women, The Changeling: *A Casebook* (London: Macmillan, 1990) 11–12. See David J. Lake, *The Canon of Thomas Middleton's Plays: Internal Evidence for the Major Problems of Authorship* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975) 136–63; MacDonald P. Jackson, *Studies in Attribution: Middleton and Shakespeare* (Salzburg: U of Salzburg, 1979) 33–40, 159–78; and Jackson, "Compositorial Practices in *The Revenger's Tragedy,* 1607–08," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 75 (1981): 157–70. In the *PBSA* article, Jackson insists that "the case for Middleton's authorship of the play is stronger than any other case that has ever been made out on internal evidence for the authorship of an anonymous Renaissance play" (157–58). M. W. A. Smith offers a statistical analysis using Marston as a test and concurs with the conclusions of scholars such as Lake and Jackson; see "The Authorship of *The Revenger's Tragedy,*" *Notes and Queries* 38 (1991): 508–13. Brian Jay Corrigan offers a concise, up-to-date review of the evidence for Middleton's authorship in his "Middleton, *The Revenger's Tragedy,* and Crisis Literature," *SEL* 38 (1998): 281–85.

[3] On dating *The Revenger's Tragedy,* see Mark Hutchings, "A Theatrical Allusion to *The Revenger's Tragedy* in 1607," *Notes and Queries* 46 (1999): 246–48.

[4] W. Reavley Gair, *The Children of Paul's: The Story of a Theatre Company, 1553–1608* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982) 160.

[5] Chambers 3: 439–40.

[6] Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1996) 346. Gair guesses a 1606 Court performance (160).

[7] Chambers 3: 439, 440–41. See Gary Taylor, Paul Mulholland, and MacDonald P. Jackson, "Thomas Middleton, Lording Barry, and *The Family of Love,*" *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 93 (1999): 213–41.

[8] Quote from Roslyn Lander Knutson, *The Repertory of Shakespeare's Company 1594–1613* (Fayetteville: U of Arkansas P, 1991) 129. *1 Honest Whore* was entered in the Stationer's Register 9 November 1604 and published in a 1604 quarto, and *A Yorkshire Tragedy* was registered 2 May 1608 and published in a 1608 quarto. See Chambers 3: 294–95, 4: 54–55.

[9] *Timon of Athens* did not appear in print until the 1623 Folio and scholars have only guessed at its date, usually choosing 1606–08. See Chambers 3: 488. Gary Taylor and Stanley Wells argue that "The major passages [in *Timon of Athens*] for which Middleton seems to have taken prime responsibility are Act 1, Scene 2; all of Act 3 except parts of Scene 7; and the closing episode (4.4.460–537) of Act 4" (*The Complete Works: Compact Edition,* by William Shakespeare, ed. Wells and Taylor et al. [Oxford: Clarendon P, 1988] 883).

[10] For example, Taylor, Mulholland, and Jackson explain, "Middleton wrote consistently for Paul's . . . until their demise encouraged him to switch to the rival boys at the Blackfriars" (240).

[11] Richard Dutton, "The Revels Office and the Boy Companies, 1600–1613: New Perspectives," *ELR* 32 (2002): 343. Cf. Chambers 2: 22 and H. N. Hillebrand,

The Child Actors: A Chapter in Elizabethan Stage History (1926; New York: Russell & Russell, 1964) 214.

[12] See chapter 2 p. 214n2. Especially important is Leeds Barroll's argument that the theaters were briefly closed in mid March–mid April 1606, and then they were closed from mid June 1606 through 1607, with only a brief period of playing in April 1607 (see *Politics, Plague and Shakespeare's Theater: The Stuart Years* [Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991] 173). Regarding Pearce's beating of Woodford and the fine, see chapter 1 pp. 102–03 and notes.

[13] Chambers 3: 439–40.

[14] Gair 164.

[15] Gair 173. Gair explains, "*The Puritaine* was licensed for publication on 6 August 1607 and it appeared shortly before [the] sermon by Crashawe. The Children of Paul's, therefore, were still operating in February 1608, for there would be no point in attacking an institution which was already defunct" (165). While Gurr suggests that "The decision was taken some time [in 1606] to close down [Paul's] playing activities," he nonetheless cites Crashaw's sermon and notes that "by 1608 he was closing the stable door" (*The Shakespearian Playing Companies* 344–45).

[16] Irwin Smith, *Shakespeare's Blackfriars Playhouse: Its History and Its Design* (New York: New York UP, 1964) 195 and Hillebrand, *The Child Actors* 214–17.

[17] See Chambers 2: 53–54, 3: 257–58; Hillebrand, *The Child Actors* 199–201; and Irwin Smith 193–94.

[18] Chambers notes that Fleay sees an "almanac allusion [in *The Puritan*] . . . to Tuesday, 15 July, which fits 1606" (4: 42). Even if this is an accurate way to date the play, it suggests that it was composed or set for staging during the long July 1606 through 1607 plague closure.

[19] Chambers 3: 440.

[20] H. N. Hillebrand, "Thomas Middleton's *The Viper's Brood*," *Modern Language Note* 42 (1927): 35–38.

[21] For a recent overview of the transaction and its implications, see Holdsworth 105–07.

[22] Hillebrand, "Thomas Middleton's *The Viper and Her Brood*" 36.

[23] Samuel Schoenbaum, *Middleton's Tragedies: A Critical Study* (New York: Columbia UP, 1955) 166.

[24] Irwin Smith 192. William Ingram pieces together a biography of Robert Keysar through 1611–12 in "Robert Keysar, Playhouse Speculator," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 37 (1986): 476–85. Ingram claims that by mid 1605 Robert Keysar was "a careless and at times troublesome member of the brotherhood [of goldsmiths], but such behavior should not be thought of as singling him out; rather, it served to place him within a subset of brethren of the company, reports of whose inappropriate conduct make regular appearances in the court books" (481). But Ingram also notes "the intensity of Keysar's commitment to his enterprise [at Blackfriars] . . . He must, at least initially, have drawn real satisfaction from his business affairs at Blackfriars" (484).

[25] Hillebrand, *The Child Actors* 197. Hillebrand explains, "The Privy Seal was drawn up in August 1606; the Patent confirmed on November 7" (*The Child Actors* 196). This action may have motivated the group of actors/playwrights/entrepreneurs who set up a new children's company—the most carefully planned, commercially-motivated yet—at Whitefriars. For the articles of agreement for the Whitefriars company, see Hillebrand, *The Child Actors* 223–25.

[26] Keysar clearly took a leadership role in the company, appearing as payee at Court and apparently negotiating with Burbage on behalf of other partners. However, Ingram suggests that Keysar "was . . . merely a tool of the syndicate; perhaps he was not shrewd enough to notice this. He may have been happiest during the year or two when, by common consent, everyone supported the new fiction that he was in charge of the company. When the syndicate collapsed, and fiction became fact, his bitterness began" (484).

[27] See note 17 above. The struggle over the Blackfriars theater resulted in a lawsuit, *Keysar vs. Burbage et al.,* Court of Requests, 1610 (see Irwin Smith 520–26).

[28] Regarding Middleton's financial circumstances, Norman A. Brittin explains that "it seems likely from the evidence of borrowings and a lawsuit that he endured periods of struggle and debt" (*Thomas Middleton* [New York: Twayne, 1973] 16). This issue and its effect on Middleton's works is discussed by Paul Yachnin in *Stage-Wrights: Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, and the Making of Theatrical Value* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1997) 55–58. M. C. Bradbrook finds that "[t]hroughout [*The Revenger's Tragedy*] there is a feeling of great bitterness against poverty" (*Themes & Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy* [Cambridge: Cambridge

UP, 1960] 168). Regarding fees for scripts, "According to Henslowe's accounts, the Admiral's men and Worcester's men paid £6 for a new playbook" (Knuston, *The Repertory* 35). See also Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* 102. It is possible, however, that the private-theater companies paid more.

[29] Lucy Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels: A Jacobean Theatre Repertory* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005) 31.

[30] This idea was first suggested by W. D. Dunkel, who writes, "If *The Revenger's Tragedy* were titled after the minor action, a not uncommon procedure, the Duchess would be the Viper, and she has a brood" ("The Authorship of *The Revenger's Tragedy,*" *PMLA* 46 [1931]: 785). In this context, David L. Frost notes that "Middleton's plays were sometimes named after their subplot (e.g. *The Mayor of Queenborough, The Changeling*)." See *The School of Shakespeare: The Influence of Shakespeare on English Drama 1600–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1968) 39. See also Schoenbaum 166–67 and Holdsworth 106.

[31] Corrigan 295n29.

[32] R. A. Foakes, "On the Authorship of *The Revenger's Tragedy,*" *Modern Language Review* 48 (1953): 135.

[33] Frost 260–61.

[34] Frost 261.

[35] Roslyn Lander Knutson, at least, writes that the children's "repertories (from the titles of various plays) appear to have offered audiences a variety of genres, not a specialization in one kind of comedy" (*Playing Companies and Commerce in Shakespeare's Time* [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001] 56).

[36] The 1607–08 quarto of *Bussy D'Ambois* says "As it hath been often presented at Paules," but, as Nicholas Brooke explains, "since Chapman wrote most of his plays at that time for the rival boys' company, the Queen's Revels, [T.M.] Parrott conjectured that *Bussy* had also been theirs, perhaps taken over to Paul's by the manager Kirkham, who transferred in 1605–06" (Introduction, *Bussy D'Ambois,* by George Chapman [Manchester: Manchester UP, 1999] liv). See also Hillebrand, *The Child Actors* 304–05. This argument ignores the fact that Chapman's *The Old Joiner of Aldgate* was produced at Paul's in 1603, around the time *Bussy D'Ambois* is thought to have premiered. Still, Chapman was closely affiliated with the Blackfriars troupe in this period, and *The Old Joiner of Aldgate* may have been composed under special circumstances.

[37] Citations from John Marston, *The Malcontent and Other Plays,* ed. Keith Sturgess (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997) 346. Compelling arguments have been made advancing the burlesque *1 Jeronimo* (published 1605) as the "stolen" play. See John Reibetanz, "'Hieronimo in Decimosexto': A Private Theater Burlesque," *Renaissance Drama* 5 (1972): 89–121 and Lukas Erne, *Beyond* The Spanish Tragedy: *A Study of the Works of Thomas Kyd* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2001) 14–46. Reibetanz's argument is heavily informed by the belief that the children were best suited for satirical comedy, while Erne suggests that the 1605 quarto of *1 Jeronimo* features both corrupt portions of an old play of the same title originally by Kyd and new burlesques of Kydian material specific to the children's theater. In Erne's view, the play features "a 'tragical-comical-historical-pastoral' in the words of Polonius" and "an intentional burlesque" (20).

[38] Munro 137.

[39] The Blackfriars troupe offered tragicomedies, such as *The Malcontent,* and Paul's proved that it too could work in this vein with comedies featuring dark life-threatening moments and false deaths, such as in Thomas Dekker's *Satiromastix* (1601–02) and Francis Beaumont's *The Woman Hater* (1606–07).

[40] Shapiro, *Children of the Revels: The Boy Companies of Shakespeare's Time and Their Plays* (New York: Columbia UP, 1977) 118.

[41] G. K. Hunter, *English Drama 1586–1642: The Age of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon P / New York: Oxford UP, 1997) 340.

[42] Leah Sinanoglou Marcus*, Childhood and Cultural Despair: A Theme and Variations in Seventeenth-Century Literature* (Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1978) 7.

[43] Thomas Dekker, *The Seven Deadly Sins* (London, 1606) 19. The entire passage reads as follows: "No sooner was he [Candle-light] advaunced up into the moste famous Streetes, but a number of shops for joy beganne to shut in: Mercers rolde up their silkes and Velvets: the Goldsmithes drew back their plate, & all the Citty lookt like a priuate Play-house, when the windowes are clapt downe, as if some Nocturnal, or dismall Tragedy were presently to be acted before all the Trades-men." In *Keysar vs. Burbage et al.,* Court of Requests, 1610, Richard Burbage and his fellow defendants submit that there are "but only three private playhouses in the City of London," naming Blackfriars, Whitefriars, and Paul's, all of which were occupied by children's troupes in 1606–07. See Irwin Smith 525.

[44] Schoenbaum 166–67. Schoenbaum compares *The Revenger's Tragedy* with other Middleton plays 167–74.

[45] Holdsworth 106, 85, 88. Alternately, he suggests that the King's Men, who "were deliberately shifting the complexion of their repertory towards that of the private theatres," may have commissioned the play "as part of [a] strategy of stealing the thunder of the children's troupes" (107).

[46] Swapan Chakravorty, *Society and Politics in the Plays of Thomas Middleton* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1996) 75; R. A. Foakes, "Tragedy at the Children's Theatres after 1600: A Challenge to the Adult Stage," *The Elizabethan Theatre II,* ed. David Galloway (Ontario: Archon, 1970) 39.

[47] Foakes, "Tragedy at the Children's Theatres" 51. For Marston's influence, see also Frost 39–40.

[48] Nicholas Brooke, *Horrid Laughter in Jacobean Tragedy* (London: Open, 1979) 10. Leslie Sanders more generally argues that *The Revenger's Tragedy* "spoofs and satirizes the revenge play tradition" ("*The Revenger's Tragedy:* A Play on the Revenge Play," *Renaissance and Reformation* 10 [1974]: 34).

[49] Holdsworth 106.

[50] Knutson, *Playing Companies and Commerce* 148.

[51] Knutson, *Playing Companies and Commerce* 149.

[52] Katherine Duncan-Jones, *Ungentle Shakespeare: Scenes from His Life* (London: Arden, 2001) 147. The scholarship on Marston's play has featured much quibbling over whether the play is bad, a parody, or a serious attempt at tragedy. See T. F. Wharton's account of Marston criticism though the early 1990s in *The Critical Fall and Rise of John Marston* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1994), esp. 61–90. These positions have been synthesized in the idea that, as G. K. Hunter suggests,

Antonio's Revenge "is tragedy with one foot in the ambiguous soil of tragicomedy" (352).

[53] In his diary Henslowe records that he "Lent vnto thomas downton the 7 of July 1602 to [Lend] geue vnto harye chettell in earneste of A tragedy*e* called A danyshe tragedy the some of . . . xx s" (*Henlsowe's Diary,* ed. R. A. Foakes, 2nd ed. [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002] 203); later Henslowe records that he "Lent vnto Thomas downton the 29 of desembз 1602 to geue vnto harey chettell in pte of paymente [o]for A tragedie called Hawghman the some of . . . v s" (207). The play does not appear in performance records in Henslowe's diary and therefore may not have been staged until as late as 1604, given the long closure of the theaters for Elizabeth's death and the plague. *Hoffman* features a foolish prince named Jerom who has been studying at Wittenberg and who confidently issues a challenge, bragging that "I have practis'd these two dayes" (*The Tragedy of Hoffman, or A Revenge for a Father* [London, 1631] C1r).

[54] Schoenbaum 16.

[55] Fredson Thayer Bowers, *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy 1587–1642* (1940; Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1959) 132.

[56] Schoenbaum 17.

[57] Corrigan 288.

[58] *Eastward Ho* features a footman named Hamlet whose "madness" (3.2.7–8) is mentioned; it also features a foolish character named Gertrude who attaches herself to Sir Petronel Flash because she believes he is rich and powerful (George Chapman, Ben Jonson, and John Marston, *Eastward Ho,* ed. R. W. Van Fossen [New York:

Manchester UP, 1979]). Other blatant allusions occur in the anonymous *Ratseis Ghost, or The second Part of his madde Prankes and Robberies* (1605) and Sir Thomas Smith's *Voiage and Entertainment in Rushia* (1605). In 1607, there are additional references in Dekker and Webster's *Westward Ho!* and a recorded performance of *Hamlet* aboard the ship the Dragon as it sailed to the West Indes in September 1607. The relevant passages in these texts are quoted in full in *Dictionary of Literary Biography 263: William Shakespeare, A Documentary Volume*, ed. Catherine Loomis (Detroit: Gale, 2002) 166–67, 169–71, 179–80.

[59] Francis Meres described Shakespeare as "most excellent" in both comedy and tragedy in his *Palladis Tamia: Wit's Treasury* (1598). See Chambers 4: 246–47. In 1605 a twenty-year-old Englishman in Paris named John Poulett explains in a letter that he and his companions have been indulging in the sport of hunting and "the danger in these sports makes them seeme good, men seeme in them as actors in a Tragedye, and my thinkes I could play Shackesbeare in relating." See *DLB 263* 165–66. Howard Felperin insists on the importance of "Shakespeare as an inescapable presence within the poetic consciousness of the popular dramatists who succeed him" (*Shakespearean Representation: Mimesis and Modernity in Elizabethan Tragedy* [Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977] 169).

[60] E. A. J. Honigmann, *Shakespeare's Impact on His Contemporaries* (London: Macmillan, 1982) 31.

[61] Regarding the plays' metadrama, R.A. Foakes argues that "Hamlet can involve himself imaginatively in play-acting or dramatising the act of cruelty, but cannot do it," only approaching it in his verbal assaults on his mother and Ophelia,

while "Vindice so falls in love with his art as to commit himself entirely to it" ("The Art of Cruelty: Hamlet and Vindice," *Shakespeare Survey* 26 [1973]: 26, 30). Sanders emphasizes the manner in which "*The Revenger's Tragedy* is self-consciously and insistently theatrical," including its "echoes from other revenge plays, especially Shakespeare's *Hamlet*" (25). Felperin writes, "What distinguishes Vindice from Hamlet . . . is the degree to which he exceeds even Hamlet in his abandonment to the theatricality inherent in the role they share" (167). Richard T. Brucher, who reads *The Revenger's Tragedy* as "a wish-fulfilling fantasy of annihilation," argues that its author "uses Vindice's self-conscious artistry to evoke a sense of fantastic release, but Shakespeare uses Hamlet's consciousness of art and the theater to promote a sense of the horror of murder" ("Fantasies of Violence: *Hamlet* and *The Revenger's Tragedy,*" *SEL* 21 [1981]: 263, 265). Michael E. Mooney writes, "if self-conscious theatricality in *The Revenger's Tragedy* is not turned into creative philosophical inquiry, as it is in *Hamlet,* it nonetheless springs from the same attention to a play's life in the theater" ("'This Luxurious Circle': *Figurenposition* in *The Revenger's Tragedy," ELR* 13 [1983]: 164). See also Mark King, "The Theatricality of Rot in Thomas Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy* and William Shakespeare's *Hamlet,*" *The Upstart Crow* 20 (2000): 58–67.

[62] Felperin 163.

[63] Frost 189–90.

[64] Frost 46.

[65] Corrigan 292.

[66] Leeds Barroll, *Anna of Denmark, Queen of England: A Cultural Biography* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2001) 6.

[67] Henry N. Paul, *The Royal Play of* Macbeth*: When, Why, and How It Was Written by Shakespeare* (1948; New York: Octagon, 1971) 318n.

[68] J. W. Binns and H. Neville Davies, "Christian IV and *The Dutch Courtesan,*" *Theatre Notebook* 44 (1990): 118.

[69] See Gunnar Sjögren, "*Hamlet* and the Coronation of Christian IV," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 16 (1965): 155–60.

[70] Judith Cook, *The Golden Age of the English Theatre* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995) 155.

[71] The letter is from Edward Hoby to Thomas Edmondes, and it indicates that the production of *Isle of Gulls* occurred in mid February. See Chambers 3: 286 and Hillebrand, *The Child Actors* 194.

[72] "Dramatic Records in the Declared Accounts of the Treasurer of the Chamber, 1558–1642," *Collections VI*, ed. David Cook and F. P. Wilson (Oxford: The Malone Society/Oxford UP, 1962) 45.

[73] For example, Munro writes that this is "probably a slip of the pen" (31). Some scholars view the entry with some skepticism, while others assign these performances to the Blackfriars troupe without hesitation. See Gurr's tentative listing of these performances in *The Shakespearean Playing Companies* (363) and John H. Astington's unequivocal assignment of the plays to Blackfriars in *English Court Theatre 1558–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999) 240. In Edmund Bolton's Latin poem *Tricorones sive soles gemini in Britannia. Carmen de Christiani IV regis*

adventu in eandem (1607), there is an oblique reference to James and Christian laughing at "the seller of bad wines," which Binn and Davies trace to Cocledemoy in *The Dutch Courtesan* (119). This is possible, but hardly certain: their argument infers much from very little, and assumes that Marston was the only playwright to produce such a character.

[74] From *The King of Denmarkes Welcome: Containing His Ariuall, Abode, and Entertainement, Both in the Citie and Other Places* (London, 1606) 16.

[75] *The Most Royall and Honourable Entertainement, of the Famous and Renowned King, Christiern the Fourth, King of Denmarke, &c* (London, 1606) 16. Queen Anna had given birth on June 22 to a child who died the next day, and during this time she was still "lying-in" before being "churched." While Anna and Christian were able to spend time together in private at Greenwich, she was unable to join him publicly until August 3. See Barroll, *Anna of Denmark* 104–07.

[76] Munro argues that, "controversy resulted in the loss of the Queen's patronage as early as 1606; printed editions of *The Isle of Gulls* (1606), *The Fleer* (1607), and *Law Tricks* (1608) call the company 'the Children of the Revels'" (21). The February 1606 performance of *Isle of Gulls* was probably the final straw.

[77] Hillebrand, *The Child Actors* 212.

[78] *The King of Denmarkes Welcome* 16. The pamphleteer describes the company as "the Yourthes of Paules, commonlye cald the Children of Paules," which has led to speculation that Paul's was an aging troupe. Clearly the writer wants to make some distinction between "youths" and "children," but Shin Lin discusses how

fine that distinction may be in "How Old Were the Children of Paul's?" *Theatre Notebook* 45 (1991): 123–24.

[79] Curiously, there is no record in the Chamber accounts, cited above, regarding payment for the Paul's performance before the Kings.

[80] Gurr takes note of the "foreign visitors, who took in the playhouses much as they took in the river and a view of royalty, and noted their impressions accordingly" (*Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987] 64). He also discusses ambassadorial visits to playhouses (*Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* 70–72). Munro offers a list of foreign aristocratic visitors to London playhouses (62).

[81] For example, David Riggs speculates that Ben Jonson was able "to recognize that the King was more likely to trust and reward a poet who could jest with him about his private follies" (*Ben Jonson: A Life* [Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1989] 113). *Measure for Measure* was performed on 26 November 1603 and *The Devil's Charter* on 2 February 1607. See Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* 304. Dieter Mehl discusses the similarities between *Measure for Measure* and *The Revenger's Tragedy,* especially the fact that each play is set in "a thoroughly corrupt society, a society without effective authority, where evil has been allowed free rein without fear of just punishment" ("Corruption, Retribution, and Justice in *Measure for Measure* and *The Revenger's Tragedy,*" *Shakespeare and His Contemporaries: Essays in Comparison,* ed. E. A. J. Honigmann [Manchester: Manchester UP, 1986] 115).

[82] Albert H. Tricomi, *Anticourt Drama in England, 1603–1642* (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia) 43.

[83] Tricomi 102. Middleton's court play *The Phoenix,* which shares with *The Revenger's Tragedy* characters named Lussurioso and Castiza, is set in Ferrara; but it is a play of a different kind: as Holdsworth explains, *The Phoenix* "expresss[es] a view of vice as more of a temporary infection than an incurable disease" (89).

[84] Felperin 161. See L. G. Salingar's 1938 essay "*The Revenger's Tragedy* and the Morality Tradition," reprinted in *Elizabethan Drama: Modern Essays in Criticism,* ed. R. J. Kaufmann (New York: Oxford UP, 1961) 208–24, esp. 219–20. Tricomi includes the play in his analysis of "anticourt" drama (102–09).

[85] Schoenbaum 6, 8. Bowers would have it that Marston, Webster, and Tourneur, to whom he attributes *The Revenger's Tragedy,* are "the most Italianate of Elizabethan dramatists in the sense that [they] more correctly portrayed the Italian scene and character as the Italians themselves would have recognized it" (124).

[86] Paul 324–25.

[87] John Ford, "The Monarchs Meeting, or The King of Denmarkes Welcome into England," *Honor Triumphant: or the Peeres Challenge, by Armes Defensible, at Tilt, Turney, and Barriers* (London, 1606) 37.

[88] Brooke, *Horrid Laughter* 14.

[89] Citations from *The Revenger's Tragedy, Four Revenge Tragedies,* ed. Katharine Eisaman Maus (Oxford & New York: Oxford UP, 1995).

[90] Schoenbaum 9–11.

[91] See N. W. Bawcutt, "The Assassination of Alessandro de' Medici in Early Seventeenth-Century English Drama," *The Review of English Studies* 56 (2005): 412–23.

[92] Cited in Paul 330.

[93] Paul 330–31.

[94] Alvin Kernan, *Shakespeare, The King's Playwright: Theater in the Stuart Court 1603–1613* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1995) 76. Paul also notes that Shakespeare portrays Siward the Dane as heroic (37).

[95] Paul suggests that "*Hamlet, Prince of Denmark,* then at the height of its popularity and with Burbage in the title role, was probably one of the plays . . . given by the King's players at Greenwich. Even if the Danes could not understand the English verse, they would have enjoyed seeing the ghost of the Danish King on the platform at Elsinore and the pictures of the Danish kings in the gallery" (328). It is astonishing that Paul, who takes such pains to establish the likelihood that *Macbeth* was carefully written or altered for performance before James and Christian, glosses over the obvious problems that *Hamlet* would have presented the King's Men.

[96] See Harold Jenkins's discussion of Shakespeare's sources in his introduction to *The Arden Shakespeare: Hamlet* (Walton on Thames, Surrey, UK: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1997) 82–103.

[97] Kernan writes, "King Christian also came to firm up his relations with England in anticipation of a war with Sweden, which his more practical council managed to delay until 1611" (72).

[98] Lines per *The Norton Shakespeare,* ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York & London: Norton, 1997). A 22-line digression on drinking by Hamlet that appears in the 1604 quarto was deleted from the Folio version, "perhaps in deference to the English queen, Anne of Denmark" (1.4.18 n3).

[99] Cited by Jenkins 104.

[100] Roberts, *The Most Royall and Honourable Entertainement* 5. Roberts also mentions this in his other pamphlet about the visit*, Englands Farewell to Christian the Fourth, Famous King of Denmarke* (London, 1606), saying "of all other Vices, their charge was to keepe them from being druncke: and withal, inflicted vppon them a heuy punishment, for any that should offende, contrary to his commaundement" (C4r–C4v).

[101] "I gathered and obserued this note, that how euer the Kingdome of Denmarke hath in precedent times, been either commended or accused, for the free-hearted entertainment, or to great delight in drinke, yet these (I mean the meaner sort of this royall Kings followers, in whom euer is soonest discerned the most common errour) did showe at this great feast, where they could but wish and have it effected. Nay where many men of many Nations, I knowe, would have esteemed it more barbarous to have refused drinke, then disgrace to bee drunke: such discreete temperance, refusing with such modest courtesie, and shunning surcharge, with such pleasing affability, that in my conceit they exceeded the seuearest Italian" (*The King of Denmarkes Welcome* 8–9). Note the appeal to a different stereotype of Italians here, although given the many negative references to Italians cited above, it may imply duplicity.

[102] Cited in Kernan 73.

[103] Christian made the cuckold's horns at Charles Howard, earl of Nottingham and Lord Admiral, who made a May-December match. When Lady Nottingham took offense, Christian hoped Arbella Stuart would defend him. See *The Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart,* ed. Sara Jayne Steen (New York: Oxford UP, 1994) 211–12. It is unclear whether Christian made his command against drunkenness before his visit or during it: Alvin Kernan suggests that it occurred after things got out of hand at Theobalds (74), but Henry Roberts suggests that Christian made his declaration and appointed marshals to police his entourage before he even left Denmark (*The Most Royall and Honourable Entertainement* 5).

[104] Jonas Barish, "The True and False Families of *The Revenger's Tragedy,*" *English Renaissance Drama: Essays in Honor of Madeleine Doran & Mark Eccles,* ed. Stannish Henning et. al. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1976) 143. Far from being Machiavellian schemers, Barish explains, for Vindice and Hippolito "revenge is all they are after. They desire nothing in the way of tangible reward: they do not seek money, power or pleasure" (151).

[105] Scott McMillan, "Acting and Violence: *The Revenger's Tragedy* and Its Departures from *Hamlet,*" *SEL* 24 (1984): 275–91. McMillan explains that

> The entire action, filled with the most elaborate violence, seems unsecured to previous events . . . The process of deciding to take revenge, for example, which fills out the plots of earlier revenge plays, has already been completed here. The graveyard has already been entered, the skull has been found—and there is the hated Duke too, passing over the stage, unaware that the vengeful

> eye has spotted him. It is a difficult and brilliant way to begin a play, the revenger having already found his death object and having already solidified his murderousness, for the main business is not to expose the process by which a situation has developed ("exposition") but to expose the situation itself, already formed and as distinct as that skull . . . In *Hamlet,* revenge is an act of remembering, of balancing the present against the past, of connecting the dimensions of time . . . but *The Revenger's Tragedy* drives revenge into the concentration of "now" that fills the play. (278–79, 283)

Cf. Holdsworth, who discusses Middleton's "comparative lack of interest in revenge as an issue of complex debate . . . Middleton robs the revenge element of *The Revenger's Tragedy* of much of its dramatic potential. The main crime has been committed before the play begins, and there is no process of detection and verification to be gone through, since the identity of the murderer is certainly known, as is that of the other criminals as they emerge" (99–100).

[106] Mark King notes that "Theatricality in *The Revenger's Tragedy* is both quieter and more extravagant than the theatricality of *Hamlet*" (62).

[107] Conversely, as Frost notes, Paul's early Hamlet play, Marston's *Antonio's Revenge,* "endorses Shakespeare's sympathetic treatment of revenge to the point of absurdity. A revenger who includes innocent children among his victims ends in monastic retirement" (190–91).

[108] Mooney 181. While some critics have seen Antonio as opportunistic, Holdsworth makes a strong case for Antonio's integrity. He explains:

[Antonio] is kept apart from all the play's revenges, not joining in the lords' oath in I iv (which will, he is assured, only come into force if legal remedies fail), and not appearing among Vindice's followers in V ii who plan to attack the ducal family. The Fourth Noble whom he condemns may not have killed Lussurioso, but he has formed part of the "*masque of intended murderers*" (v iii 48), and he has killed Spurio . . . There is nothing in the text to show that Antonio is aware of the old Duke's villainy (or for that matter Lussurioso's), so his death would really seem to him to be murder. Moreover, Vindice clearly has become an unguided missile, liable to launch himself at anyone, rulers included, in the future. (16)

[109] "Dramatic Records" 44.

[110] Knuston, *Playing Companies and Commerce* 20.

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