

The Abyss of Time:

The Chronology of Shakespeare's Plays

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The ... use of transcribing these things, is to shew what absurdities men for ever run into, when they lay down an hypothesis, and afterward seek for arguments in the support of it. Richard Farmer, *An Essay on the Learning of Shakespeare* (London, 1767, 1821), 30.

In 1930 Sir Edmund Chambers published the third and final version of his dating scheme for Shakespeare's plays in Volume I of his *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, his two earlier versions being found in his article on Shakespeare in the 1911 edition of *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* and in Volume III of his 1923 *The Elizabethan Stage*. In 1980 Ernest Honigmann, in *Shakespeare's Impact on His Contemporaries*, examined Chambers' chronology, noted that nobody had attempted to replicate the process, pointed out several flaws in it, and said that Chambers' start date was too late, that the plays really began earlier.

Honigmann's views on Chambers' lateness are supported by many other scholars; in fact virtually every post-1930 student of the dating issue agrees that Chambers' dates are too late. These dissenters include Peter Alexander,¹ Andrew Cairncross,² F.P. Wilson,³ John Crow, T. W. Baldwin,⁴ William Matchett,⁵ Oscar James Campbell and Edward Quinn,⁶ and Russell Fraser,⁷ — a list that could be expanded considerably. In fact, it is now completely orthodox to say that Chambers' chronology is too late, and to grant that his scholarship is a bit dated.

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In this article I will support Honigmann and the others, and it may be asked what I have to offer, given that I seem to be singing in a chorus of near unanimity. To begin with, I will add some new points to Honigmann's, both about the chronology as a whole and about some individual plays. Otherwise I wish to examine an astonishing fact — nearly every authority who discusses the subject agrees that Chambers' dates are too late, and yet those dates still stand.

Chambers spreads Shakespeare's plays fairly evenly across the period 1590 to 1613. John Crow revised Chambers' Shakespeare article in the *Britannica* around 1960, noting that recent "scholarship has found a tendency to push back the dates of the earlier plays [from the dates given by Chambers] ... As, however, Chambers' [*William Shakespeare*] remains the standard scholarly life of Shakespeare, it is convenient to retain his order and chronology."⁸ In the 1974 *Riverside Shakespeare*, G. Blakemore Evans moves *1 Henry VI* back to 1589-90 and *Merry Wives* back three years to 1597, but his dates for the other plays stay within one year of Chambers'. The *Britannica's* Shakespeare article was completely rewritten in the early 1980s by John Russell Brown and T. J. B. Spencer who move the start of the *Henry VI* trilogy back one year to 1589, shift *Twelfth Night* forward one year, and otherwise leave Chambers' scheme intact. The 1986 Oxford *William Shakespeare, The Complete Works*, edited by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, does not provide the usual chronological table of the plays, but estimates that Shakespeare's works begin in the late 1580s or early 1590s. However the prefaces to the individual plays simply rearrange Chambers' sequence slightly, moving *Titus Andronicus*, *Taming of the Shrew*, and *Merry Wives* around a bit; otherwise Wells and Taylor stick with Chambers.

Moreover, as Honigmann notes (55), no one has attempted to reconstruct the entire dating scheme as Chambers did. Anyone today who wants to see the dating evidence for one of Shakespeare's plays looks in an up-to-date work, such as a recent edition of the play in question, rather than at Chambers. But anyone who wants to see the standard dating scheme built up from scratch must still consult Chambers. This point is critically important because so many plays are dated with respect to one another. For example, most editors say that the date of *Hamlet* can be established partly by the fact that it is later than *Julius Caesar*. But when was *Julius Caesar* written? Attempts to date individual plays inevitably rest on assumptions about the solidity of the dating scheme for all of the plays, which carries us right back to Chambers.

In short, Chambers dead is stronger than his successors alive. And now we will look at Chambers' methods and at the flaws in those methods. We will then consider whether Shakespeare's plays may have begun in the 1580s and whether they continue until 1613. Finally

we will examine the dating evidence for a number of specific plays.

Chambers' "Given"

Chambers explains in his *Britannica* article that his chronology:

is certainly not a demonstration, but in the logical sense an hypothesis which serves to colligate the facts and is consistent with itself and with the known events of Shakespeare's external life.

In *Elizabethan Stage* Chambers offers the "conjecture" that:

Shakespeare's first dramatic job, which earned him the ill will of [Robert] Greene [in the 1592 *Greene's Groatsworth*], was the writing or re-writing of *I Henry VI*... in the early spring of 1592. (III.130)

In *William Shakespeare* Chambers again affirms his belief that Shakespeare's dramatic debut was recorded in *Greene's Groatsworth* (I.58-9), but research performed in the 1920s by Peter Alexander on 2 & 3 *Henry VI* forced Chambers to move back his start date. That Chambers was willing to change his widely publicized opinion is to his credit as a scholar,⁹ but he changed his start date as little as the new evidence allowed. He first moved the start to 1591, "the earliest year to which there is ground for ascribing any dramatic work by Shakespeare that we know of" (I.59). But then, in his table of dates, he puts the two *Henry VI* plays at 1590-1.¹⁰ In the same work, Chambers spoke of:

fitting this order [of the plays] into the time allowed by the span of Shakespeare's dramatic career (I.253).

He also writes of fitting pieces of evidence:

into the facts of Shakespeare's dramatic career as given in chapter iii. There is much of conjecture, even as regards the order [of the plays], and still more as regards the ascriptions to particular years. These are partly arranged to provide a fairly even flow of production (I.269).

In short, the bedrock of Chambers' chronology, the "given" to which all that follows must conform — as in a proof in geometry — is that the sequence of Shakespeare's plays must be spread across the years 1590 to 1613.¹¹ The unhappy result is the method of Procrustes,

described by Ben Jonson to William Drummond as, "that tyrant's bed, where some who were too short were racked, others too long cut short". This is what Chambers' dating scheme amounts to: an attempt to force the plays, in their proper sequence¹² — early, middle, late — into the span of 1590-1613.

I will argue that Chambers' dates for Shakespeare's plays are several years too late from start to finish. In other words, the plays started well back in the 1580s, and, as far as the evidence shows, ended well before 1613. Moreover, I will argue that only one play can be dated with reasonable firmness to a period as narrow as eighteen months, namely *Comedy of Errors* to mid 1587 to December 1588. Any table of dates that assigns each play to a particular year, no matter how environed with cautions and qualifications about the uncertainty of it all, is mere wishful thinking.

Chambers' Errors

Chambers committed four general errors in his construction of Shakespeare's chronology, all of which are neatly summarized by Honigmann (70-8). What is most notable about these four errors is that Chambers knew that he was in the wrong on three of them. Here are the four items: relying on Francis Meres' 1598 list; interpreting Philip Henslowe's "ne" as "new"; treating flimsy earliest possible dates as firm evidence; and assuming that Shakespeare improved other men's plays.

Francis Meres lists six comedies and six tragedies of Shakespeare's in his 1598 *Palladis Tamia*, and Chambers follows Edmond Malone in supposing that 1598 is the earliest possible date for plays not named by Meres. Consequently Chambers writes "No mention by Meres" against eight plays in his table of boundary dates (I.246-50), despite the fact that he knew or believed that the three parts of *Henry VI* and *Taming of the Shrew*, both omitted by Meres, were earlier than 1598. Moreover, as Chambers could hardly help but know, the symmetrically minded Meres devised his lengthy list of comparisons by balancing exactly so many works of one sort against exactly so many of another, e.g., six comedies against six tragedies. Now Meres maintains the balance of his entry on Shakespeare by lumping the two parts of *Henry IV* together as one tragedy, and so he could easily have listed *Henry VI* as another tragedy and *Shrew* as another comedy — unless he was unaware of these (and other) plays, or unless he was not pretending to be exhaustive.

Philip Henslowe, businessman and theater owner, kept a sort of account book from 1592 to 1603 in which are found hundreds of entries relating to the stage. Several score plays listed by Henslowe have beside

them the word "ne", including 1 *Henry VI* for 3 March 1592 and *Titus Andronicus* for 24 January 1594. Chambers and his contemporaries took Henslowe's "ne" to mean "new" in some sense or other, even though they were aware that the mysterious term sometimes appears next to plays that were not new, though they might conceivably have been newly revised. And so Chambers gained questionable earliest possible dates for two more of Shakespeare's plays, as well as for the non-Shakespearean plays so marked, thereby locking dozens of dramas into the period after 1591. But a more complete edition of Henslowe's account book than the version relied upon by Chambers was published in 1961, edited by R. A. Foakes and R. T. Rickert, which includes lengthy extracts from Henslowe's pawnbroking business. Henslowe frequently describes the condition of the pledges left with him by borrowers, often describing clothes and suchlike as "new" or "newe", but never as "ne". And so the plausible, if questionable, old assumption that "ne" meant "new" shifts into the category of implausible, particularly given that "ne" was still a current word in English, meaning approximately what it does in French, "not" or "nor". Henslowe's "ne" may mean no more than that something, probably connected with money, did not occur at the performances in question. More to the point, the enigmatic "ne" can no longer be considered to indicate an earliest possible date, and so dozens of plays, including two of Shakespeare's, lose their moorings and are free to drift backward.

It is often observed that the evidence available to scholars for dating plays from Shakespeare's period is of uneven quality. In particular, latest possible dates tend to be hard evidence, such as a record of performance, entry in the Stationers' Register, or a play's actual appearance in print with the year on the title page. Earliest possible dates, on the other hand, tend to be weak stuff, such as absence from Francis Meres' list, the presence of Philip Henslowe's "ne", dubious topical allusions (on which more later), possible echoes of one writer's words by another author when it is not at all clear who wrote first, and the like. Honigsmann (78) tactfully states that Chambers "failed to recognise" this very obvious fact, but Chambers did indeed know it:

As a rule the initial dates are much less certain than the terminal ones. (I.245)

Chambers goes on to provide examples of what he means, but he gives earliest possible dates to nineteen plays in his table of boundary dates. Ten are from Meres and Henslowe, and most of the others are no better. The exceptions to this rule are *Henry V* (on which see below), *Henry VIII*, and *Two Noble Kinsmen*. The last two plays are generally agreed to have

been begun by Shakespeare but finished by John Fletcher, and Chambers' earliest possible dates for the two refer to their completion by Fletcher. Unfortunately we have no evidence that the two men collaborated side by side, and so knowing when Fletcher worked on these plays is of no help in deciding when Shakespeare wrote his parts.

Scholars assumed from the late eighteenth century to the early twentieth that Shakespeare routinely rewrote plays by other authors, that is, that he was something of a plagiarist during the first half of his career. In particular, *2 & 3 Henry VI*, as we find them in the First Folio of 1623, were believed to be Shakespeare's upgrades of *The First part of the Contention*, published in 1594, and *The true Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke*, published in 1595; that Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, published in 1604, was a revision of what came to be called the *Ur-Hamlet*, a play written no later than 1589 and published in 1603; that Shakespeare's *King John* was based on *The Troublesome Raigne of John, King of England*, published in 1591; and that Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* was a new version of *Taming of A Shrew*, published in 1594. In these matters, Chambers was a man of his era, but scholarship moves on. *The First part of the Contention* and *The true Tragedie* were shown to be inferior versions of *2 & 3 Henry VI*; the 1603 edition of *Hamlet* was proven to be a piracy of Shakespeare's play, not of the mythical *Ur-Hamlet* (see below); Shakespeare's *Shrew* is overwhelmingly viewed by modern scholars as the source for the other *Shrew*; and though the debate still rages on the two plays of *King John*, the balance of opinion is swinging in favor of Shakespeare's play as the original (see below). In short, Shakespeare is now seen as the victim of imitators, and hence another support for Chambers' late dates crumbles.

We have been looking at the earliest possible dates that Chambers used to backstop his late dates, and we have seen that his props collapse one after another. But we gain further insight into his chronology by looking at the generally solid latest possible dates for thirty-three of Shakespeare's dramas (I.246-50).¹³ In order to cram Shakespeare's plays into the chosen bracket of 1590-1613, Chambers uses his flimsy earliest possible dates to force the great majority of the plays to within one or two years of their respective latest possible dates. More specifically, he assigns the composition of twenty-seven of those thirty-three plays to within two years of their latest possible dates. As the fragile props shatter, common sense tells us that most of those plays must have been written earlier than the dates given by Chambers.

Did Shakespeare's Plays Begin in the 1580s?

We will now turn to the 1580s. Chambers would not place any of Shakespeare's plays earlier than 1590, and the boldest post-Chambers

scholars generally do no more than place “?1589” next to one or two of Shakespeare’s earliest plays. And, indeed, Chambers might argue that no evidence exists of any Shakespearean activity from the earlier decade. We shall see that this is not entirely true, but first we need to establish the historical context. How much do we know about theatrical activities in the 1580s? If Shakespeare was active in that decade, what traces should we expect to find?

Edmund Chambers provides this description of our knowledge of the history of the English stage before 1592 (that is, Before Henslowe).

The fragmentary nature of the evidence makes a dramatic history of the period extremely difficult. The work of even the best-known writers is uncertain in extent and chronology, and much of it has come down in mutilated form. Marlowe’s authorship of *Tamburlaine* is a matter of inference; it is only by an accident that we know the *Spanish Tragedy* to be Kyd’s. (I.55)

F. P. Wilson offered this opinion in 1951.

Admittedly, few of the plays acted in the fifteen-eighties have survived. So serious are the losses that the historian of the Elizabethan drama — especially of this period, before the practice of printing plays to be read became popular — often feels himself to be in the position of a man fitting together a jigsaw, most of the pieces of which are missing.¹⁴

Twenty years later G. E. Bentley discussed why he began his examination of playwrights in Shakespeare’s era in the year 1590.

Perhaps I ought to explain the chronological limits which I have set [i.e., 1590-1642]. ... Before 1590 ... records are so scanty, and such a large proportion apply to amateur or semiprofessional theatrical activities, that conclusions about working conditions must be very shaky. One cannot even be sure that a profession of play-writing had yet developed.¹⁵

And so our difficulty in finding evidence of Shakespeare’s activities before 1590 is easily explained by the fact that, in terms of theatrical history, the 1580s are the Dark Ages. And yet we have real evidence that Shakespeare was writing in that decade, evidence that was known to Chambers, but which he ignored or distorted because it did not fit his preconceptions.

We may begin with the poem Ben Jonson wrote in praise of

Shakespeare for the 1623 First Folio:

For, if I thought my judgement were of yeeres,
 I should commit thee surely with thy peeres,
 And tell, how farre thou didst our Lily out-shine,
 Or sporting Kid, or Marlowes mighty line.

Jonson is saying that in the matter of years, or time, Shakespeare is a peer of Lyly, Kyd, and Marlowe; in other words, they were all contemporary. Most of Lyly's plays are from the 1580s, and though he lived until 1606, his involvement in the theater ended in 1590. Marlowe started as a writer in the 1580s and was killed in 1593. Kyd's plays began in the 1580s, and he died in 1594. Jonson had a strong sense of theatrical development, as indicated by his complaint in the Induction to *Bartholomew Fair* that *Titus Andronicus* and *The Spanish Tragedy* were out of date. In his "Ode to Himself" of around 1629 he made a similar sneer at *Pericles*. Lyly, Kyd, and Marlowe were men whose literary careers ended before Jonson's began, all were writers of the eighties, and these are the men Jonson chose to call Shakespeare's contemporaries.

Titus Andronicus is dated 1593-4 by Chambers, who calls it Shakespeare's sixth play, in which the 1985 *Encyclopaedia Britannica* concurs. The Induction to Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*, written for a performance before King James on "the one and thirtieth day of October, 1614", criticizes "He that will swear, *Jeronimo* [*The Spanish Tragedy*] or [*Titus*] *Andronicus*, are the best plays yet, shall pass unexcepted at here, as a man whose judgment shews it is constant, and hath stood still these five and twenty or thirty years." In other words, Jonson is proclaiming that those two plays were written between 1584 and 1589.¹⁶ Moreover, Jonson's sequence of titles and dates is *Spanish Tragedy*/twenty-five and *Titus Andronicus*/thirty, implying that the former was written around 1589 and the latter around 1584.

Chambers cannot accept Jonson's clear statement, so he dismisses it as "rather vague" (I.319). He and his followers rely on Henslowe's "ne" next to a record of performance of *Titus* in January 1594, but he acknowledges several problems. The title page of the first Quarto of *Titus* states that it was acted by Pembroke's Men, which collapsed in August 1593, being forced to sell their costumes and scripts. Further, *A Knack to Know a Knave*, known to have been performed in June 1592, has a clear reference to *Titus*.¹⁷ The lack of value of this particular example of Henslowe's "ne" is indicated by these items, known to Chambers, as well as by the fact that Henslowe put "ne" next to a performance of *Jeronimo*/*Spanish Tragedy* of January 1597.

Let us return to the alleged vagueness of Ben Jonson, a writer known as a stickler in matters of detail. We know the date of the royal

performance of *Bartholomew Fair* because Jonson put it in the Induction. We have little trouble dating Jonson's early plays because he put the year of first performance for each play in his *Works* of 1616. The Induction to Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels* of late 1600 implies that *The Spanish Tragedy* was then twelve years old, putting it back to 1588. This date is quite consistent with his 1614 statement that *The Spanish Tragedy* was then about 25 years old, and the best estimate of modern scholars is that it was written around 1588 or 1589. The Induction to *Cynthia's Revels* also says that it has been twenty years since "Monsieur" (the brother of the King of France) came to England. Monsieur made two trips to England in pursuit of the elusive hand of Queen Elizabeth, one in 1579, the other in 1581, and so, taking the average, Jonson is right on target. When Jonson died in 1637 he left an unfinished play, *The Sad Shepherd*, and his friend Lord Falkland confirmed that Jonson was working on it just before he died.¹⁸ Its Prologue opens with the announcement that the author has been writing public entertainments for 40 years, and from other sources we know that Jonson's first full play appeared around 1597. Jonson's dates are accurate, even from his deathbed.

In sum, objective scholarship would place *Titus Andronicus* no later than 1589.

I noted earlier that Honigmann refers to most of the earliest possible dates given by Chambers as "soft", while Chambers himself rates them as "much less certain" than his latest possible dates. But it is instructive to examine a number of solid earliest possible dates that Chambers excluded from consideration, as these reveal most clearly how he operated. I begin with a trivial example to provide contrast to the nontrivial examples that follow.

Romeo and Juliet is based on a poem that was published in 1562, but Chambers omits that datum from his table of earliest possible dates because neither he nor anyone else thinks that *Romeo and Juliet* could have been written anywhere near so early. This particular omission is reasonable, but the spirit behind it calls for ignoring evidence that does not fit one's preconceptions.

Most of Shakespeare's English history plays are based on Holinshed's *Chronicles* of 1587, which ought therefore to be the earliest possible date for *1, 2, & 3 Henry VI*, *Richard III*, *Richard II*, and *1 & 2 Henry IV*. But Chambers was unwilling to contemplate the possibility of Shakespeare writing in the 1580s, and so he left all but two of these plays without any earliest possible date. In other words, the earliest possible date is before 1590, therefore Chambers ignores it. Chambers does give an earliest possible date of March 1592 for *1 Henry VI*, but that date is based on Henslowe's uninterpretable "ne," Otherwise Chambers

offers 1595 as the earliest possible date for *Richard II* based on a weak theory that Samuel Daniel saw a performance that year. Unfortunately nothing whatsoever indicates that the performance Daniel may or may not have seen was of a new play or of one written some years earlier.

King John is likewise based on the 1587 edition of Holinshed, but Chambers believed that Shakespeare's play also used *The Troublesome Reign of King John*, published in 1591, as a source. We will return to the relationship between the two *King John* plays, but, given his assumptions, Chambers should have listed 1591 as the earliest possible date for *King John*. But Chambers believed that Shakespeare had written twelve plays before *King John*, and so he could not contemplate an earliest possible date of 1591, and so *King John* has no earliest possible date in Chambers' table.

And then there is the interesting case of *Pericles*, published in 1609, which shares two jests virtually word for word with John Day's *Law Tricks*, published in 1608. Chambers' own formidable scholarship proved that *Law Tricks* was written in 1604,¹⁹ and so the earlier assumption that the extremely imitative Day borrowed the two jests from Shakespeare was summarily reversed — Chambers' dating imperatives demanded that Shakespeare be the borrower. But that unsupported assumption should at least have provided Chambers with a good earliest possible date for *Pericles*, namely 1604 (see below for further discussion). But Chambers' view of the Bard's career required him to date *Pericles* as closely as possible to its publication date, so he put it at 1608-9, and omitted any earliest possible date from his table.

This seems like a good place to summarize what we have seen so far. Chambers' 1930 chronology still stands, despite general agreement that it is too late, because no one has undertaken to redo his work. Moreover, Chambers' dates for individual plays, save for minor adjustments, are still found in the reference books. Chambers insists that Shakespeare's career began in 1590 or '91, despite the fact that he and subsequent scholars regard the 1580s as an unrecorded era in which major playwrights left few traces of their work. But Ben Jonson, a man who was extremely precise about the chronology of the English stage, gives us two very strong pieces of evidence that Shakespeare was writing in the 1580s. He classes Shakespeare with three dramatists whose careers ended between 1590 and 1594, and he testifies that *Titus Andronicus* was written between 1584 and 1589. The full implications of Chambers' *a priori* belief that Shakespeare's plays must be spread evenly across the period 1590 to 1613 become apparent as we examine his table of earliest and latest possible dates for Shakespeare's plays. Chambers buttresses his late dates with the useless evidence of Meres and Henslowe, and with the subsequently discredited belief that Shakespeare rewrote the plays of other dramatists, and hence necessar-

ily came after them. Chambers dismisses the earliest possible date of 1587 for most of Shakespeare's English history plays because that date violates his preconceptions. Likewise, and even more tellingly, he ignores 1591 as the earliest possible date for *King John* and 1604 as the earliest date for *Pericles*. We already saw Chambers' dismissal of Ben Jonson's comment on the date of *Titus Andronicus* on specious grounds of vagueness. We now understand exactly how Chambers' dating methods work. He begins his examination of the evidence with his conclusion already determined, namely that the plays were written from 1590 to 1613, and he discards any evidence disagreeable to this outcome. One last point — virtually everyone says that Chambers' chronology is too late, *but no one has ever said that Chambers' dates are too early*.

I observed that nearly every subsequent commentator agrees that Chambers' dates are too late, and so I should recognize the exceptions. In his 1991 edition of *Shakespeare's Lives*, Samuel Schoenbaum repeats a statement from the original edition of 1970. Noting that some of Chambers' scholarship is obsolete, Schoenbaum remarks:

His chronology has fared better. ... His findings with respect to the chronology have worn so well that J. G. McManaway, in "Recent Studies in Shakespeare's Chronology," *Shakespeare Survey* 3 (1950), could offer only a few modifications.²⁰

That is to say, in 1991 Samuel Schoenbaum, dean of American Shakespeare scholars, hailed Chambers' 1930 chronology as being pretty much intact as of 1950! I will rephrase that remark — Schoenbaum said in 1991 that Chambers' sixty-one year old chronology was in fairly good shape forty-one years ago! Schoenbaum's sentence on McManaway's article is impossible by its nature to falsify, but it blatantly ducks the problem, which has loomed ever larger since 1950. And yet Schoenbaum's first sentence on how well Chambers' chronology has fared is, in a sense, entirely correct. As I also observed earlier, Chambers' dates for Shakespeare's plays still stand.

Do Shakespeare's Plays Continue to 1613?

What are the implications for Shakespeare's chronology if his *King John* preceded *The Troublesome Reign of King John* that was printed in 1591, and if other arguments in favor of an early start for Shakespeare are accepted? Honigmann acknowledges that Shakespeare's earliest plays cannot be simply moved back a few years while "the rest of the chronology survives intact":

But it is not quite so simple: if the first plays are moved back into the 1580s, those of the middle period are also affected, and about half the canon must be re-dated. (54)

Honigmann never suggests that the latter half of the chronology would be unsettled by his strictures on Chambers' methods, but Andrew Cairncross took a more radical approach. Cairncross concludes *The Problem of Hamlet* by proposing a tentative chronology (182-3) that begins before 1589 and closes by placing *Tempest* after 1603. In this section we shall see that Cairncross' boldness in attacking Chambers' end date of 1613 is in full accord with the evidence that Chambers presents, and also with G. Blakemore Evans' 1974 review of that evidence.

Chambers follows his table of boundary dates with a discussion from which I have already extracted several quotes (I.250-69) on the difficulties of fixing Shakespeare's dramatic chronology. He starts by naming the four plays omitted from his table (see note 12), continuing with the remark that:

for many others, especially in the Jacobean period, a considerable range of dating remains open.

But earlier Chambers gives his opinion on the evidence available for dating the plays that follow *Timon of Athens*, which he places in theatrical year 1607-08:

The chronology of the plays becomes difficult at this point (I.86)

In other words, Chambers tells us that dating evidence begins to thin out after James I came to the throne in the spring of 1603, and it virtually dries up after 1607.

But perhaps subsequent scholarship has firmed things up, and so we turn to Evans' essay on "Chronology and Sources" in *The Riverside Shakespeare*. Evans (47) cites Chambers as providing the authoritative summation of all earlier scholars of the chronology, he also cites J. G. McManaway's 1950 review of Chambers' endeavors, while his table of dating evidence (48-56) includes the fruits of more recent scholarship. And Evans tells us that, "it will be noticed that the dating set forth below [in the table] becomes somewhat firmer beginning with *Richard II* (1595)" (47). As we glance over Evans' dating table after *Richard II*, he seems to be right. Leaving aside the quality of the evidence, we do find more, and seemingly more precise, material for dating *Romeo and Juliet*,

Midsummer Night's Dream, *Merchant of Venice*, and so on — until we come to *All's Well*, which Evans places at 1602-03, followed by *Measure for Measure* in 1604, and so on to the end, whereupon we realize that Chambers was absolutely correct. For *All's Well* Evans merely records publication in 1623; *Measure for Measure* performed 1604, published 1623; *Othello* performed in 1604, published 1622; *Macbeth* published 1623; *Antony and Cleopatra* registered in 1608, published 1623; *Coriolanus*, *Timon*, and *Tempest* were published in 1623.

One way or another Chambers, Cairncross, and Evans support the fading away of Shakespeare after about 1603 (not that the dynastic change seems to have had anything to do with it), and their testimony is reenforced by Kenneth Muir's 1978 *The Sources of Shakespeare's Plays*. Muir lists about 110 works as certain or probable sources for Shakespeare, of which slightly less than forty had appeared by 1575.²¹ Then come almost seventy works that were published or performed during the period 1576-1604. The most notable concentration within the latter group consists of twelve works published in 1586-90, twenty-one works published in 1591-95, and eleven works published in 1596-1600. Then we find four works from 1601-03, followed by six titles from 1604-11. I will now offer a general observation before going on to the post 1603 items. Shakespeare's reading shows a clear plateau for works published in the period 1586-1600. Even if we fully accept Muir's judgment, Shakespeare's reading or playgoing declined markedly after 1600. Other recent authorities on Shakespeare's sources, most notably Geoffrey Bullough, will be found to agree closely, if not perfectly, with Muir.

Now let us look at the six titles that appeared in 1604-11.²² Only John Day's *Law Tricks* (performed 1604, published 1608) is called a certain source, namely for two items in *Pericles*. Otherwise we find William Camden's *Remains* (completed by June 1603; published 1605), Samuel Daniel's *Arcadia* (written and performed 1605; published 1606), and three Bermuda shipwreck pamphlets written in 1610 and said to be sources for *The Tempest*. Camden's and Daniel's works are thought to be the sources for two small items in, respectively, *Coriolanus* and *Macbeth*. These five works are said to be probable sources for Shakespeare; none is called a certain source. We can now sharpen the general observation made in the previous paragraph. Muir's scholarship and judgment unite to portray an author who read avidly during the last two decades of the sixteenth century — but who then lost interest in new books and plays.

Muir and various other scholars argue that Shakespeare consulted Camden's *Remains* for one small aspect of the fable of the belly speaking to the other members of the body in the opening scene of *Coriolanus* (I.i.95-139). Shakespeare's version of the fable is believed by Muir and

others to represent a fusion of various versions of this tale, which was so well known that Sir Philip Sidney abbreviated it in his *Defense of Poesy* on the assumption that his readers would be familiar with it: "In the end, to be short (for the tale is notorious, and as notorious that it was a tale) ..." ²³ Be that as it may, Camden's work was completed by June 1603 (the date on its dedicatory epistle), and so, as noted in the Arden edition of *Coriolanus* (24), Shakespeare could have read Camden's manuscript. Further, Camden's source was *Policraticus*, written by the twelfth century bishop and philosopher John of Salisbury, printed in 1476 and later. And so Shakespeare may have known it directly or indirectly from John without the aid of Camden. Given that scholars credit Shakespeare with such extensive reading concerning this fable alone — the Arden edition names three other versions known to Shakespeare (29) — there is nothing improbable about such a contention.

Muir himself noticed a similarity between six lines in Daniel's *Arcadia* and six lines in *Macbeth*. But there are two problems with Muir's claim that Shakespeare "was apparently" echoing Daniel. First, the similarity is not so great as to compel any assumption that the two speeches are connected. ²⁴ Second, as is so often the case in these matters, Muir says absolutely nothing to justify his assertion that Shakespeare echoes Daniel, rather than Daniel echoing Shakespeare.

Muir's contention that Shakespeare relied on the 1610 Bermuda and Virginia reports for various incidents in *The Tempest* can only be sustained by ignoring all the other nautical literature available to Shakespeare. In the discussion below, I show that more parallels to *The Tempest* can be found in two chapters in the Book of Acts of the Apostles (concerning St. Paul's shipwreck) than are claimed for the most important of the Bermuda pamphlets. The same could easily be done with Richard Hakluyt's famous work on voyaging, which, like St. Paul, but unlike the Bermuda pamphlet, did not have to be read in manuscript.

A Statement of the Dating Problem

Everyone agrees that the sequence of composition of Shakespeare's plays — early, middle, late — can be determined with reasonable certainty by considering the evolution of the author's style. A fairly firm chronology could be established if that sequence could be anchored to the calendar at a few widely spaced points — say, one early play, one middle play, one late play — and this is what Chambers tries unsuccessfully to do. When Chambers' chronology is exposed to the full weight of evidence, his seemingly strongest anchors drag easily, and the flow of the current is always backward.

The evidence available for establishing the date of composition of even one of Shakespeare's plays tends to be maddeningly scrappy and unsatisfactory. Some pieces of evidence are strong but vague, for example, the year the play was first put in print, establishing a firm latest possible date, but where everyone is quite sure that the play in question was written years earlier. Other evidence is precise but weak, most notoriously, suggested allusions to the sort of topical events that repeat themselves — riots, storms, political happenings, and the like. As Chambers explains: "both equivocation and coronations were common phenomena, to which any dramatist might refer at any date. So, too, were the plague and tempests and even eclipses" (I.246). Where several items might suggest the earliest possible date for a play, all should be listed; Chambers only took the ones he wanted.

A rule should be laid down that topical allusions should not be taken seriously as dating evidence unless the rarity or particular appropriateness of the suggested allusion is examined. Failure to observe this rule has resulted in a proliferation of absurdly weak topicalities being identified in Shakespeare's plays, for example, *Coriolanus* glancing at a 1609 waterworks project (III.i.95-6). A survey of such trifles leads to the conclusion that Chambers' chronology could be shifted twenty years in either direction — to 1570-1593 or to 1610-1633 — and a bit of probing in the archives would produce an equally impressive (or unimpressive) list of topical correspondences to the plays, which is the whole point of Chambers' remark about common phenomena.

Another problem with topical references is that they were frequently added to revived plays, as will be discussed below under *Henry V*. In this case their dating implications can reverse themselves, with an earliest possible date becoming a latest possible date.

Likewise suggestions that Shakespeare borrowed from this or that contemporary English author deserve to be ignored unless the suggester squares up to the possibility that the borrowing went the other way. We have already seen two examples of failure to heed this rule, namely, Chambers' unsupported opinion that *Pericles* borrows from Day's *Law Tricks*, and Muir's equally unsupported finding that *Macbeth* borrows from Daniel's *Arcadia*, and I will offer yet another. Both *Troilus and Cressida* and Ben Jonson's 1601 *Poetaster* feature armed Prologues, and so, without a hint of argument as to why Jonson may not have borrowed from Shakespeare, scholars assert that Shakespeare was the borrower, and therefore *Troilus* is later than *Poetaster*. Kenneth Palmer in the 1982 Arden *Troilus* candidly explains that the latter's Prologue "is usually taken to be a reference to the Prologue of Jonson's *Poetaster*" (19), while Kenneth Muir in the 1984 Oxford *Troilus* remarks that, "There can be little doubt that the 'Prologue arm'd' (l. 23) is an allusion to the prologue

in Jonson's *Poetaster*" (5). That the junior writer might perhaps be expected to borrow from the senior, and that the armed Prologue of *Troilus* is natural in a play about real warfare, as opposed to a play about a squabble between writers, have no force against the inertia of Chambers' dating imperatives.

We have already looked at the evidence for putting a date on *Titus Andronicus*, finding that, at a minimum, it should be dated not later than 1589, but more likely several years before that. We will now consider ten more plays and will see that their conventional dates do not stick. As for the remaining twenty-seven plays — no precise dating is possible.

Comedy of Errors: France at War with her Heir

Comedy of Errors is dated 1592-3 by Chambers who calls it Shakespeare's fifth play. The 1985 *Encyclopaedia Britannica* dates and sequences it identically. Act III, scene ii includes this exchange: "Where France?", "In her forehead, armed and reverted, making war against her heir."²⁵ These words make sense for only one period of French history, spring 1587 to December 1588, or, at latest, to August 1589, and they constitute the strongest internal evidence for the date of any of Shakespeare's plays.

In 1584 Henry III of France lost his brother and heir, whereupon his brother-in-law and cousin, Henry de Bourbon, King of Navarre, became heir to the throne. Navarre was the leader of the Protestants in France's intermittent religious civil wars, but in 1584 he was residing in his mountain kingdom, at peace with the Catholics. Peace continued through December 1586, when Navarre rejected the King's demand that he change religions. The following spring Catholic armies massed against Navarre in what is known as the War of the Three Henries (the third Henry being the Catholic Duke de Guise), which culminated in Navarre's smashing victory at the Battle of Coutras in October. But the Catholics rallied and the war dragged on through 1588. In December of that year Henry III, seeking to escape domination by Guise and desiring peace, had Guise assassinated, whereupon the Catholic forces turned on the King. Catholic France was still at war with the heir, Henry of Navarre, but also with its king, Henry III. This situation continued until Henry III was murdered in August 1589, whereupon Henry of Navarre became Henry IV of France with the dying blessings of Henry III. The war continued until Henry IV became a Catholic in 1593, but from the Protestant, English, and moderate French Catholic point of view, France was at war with the King, not the heir. From the ultra-Catholic point of view, Henry IV was neither king nor heir; they selected his elderly uncle as king, with the brother of the murdered Guise as heir.

Shakespeare's words precisely fit the situation between mid 1587 and August 1589, though they would be far less appropriate after December 1588, when "making war against her king" would seem more natural.

And we find confirmatory evidence for this dating a few lines later: "Where America, the Indies?", "all o'er embellished with rubies, carbuncles, sapphires, declining their rich aspect to the hot breath of Spain, who sent whole armadoes of carracks." Some scholars see here a reference to the Spanish Armada of 1588, which seems very unlikely. Shakespeare is not associating Spanish carracks with war, with danger to England, or with defeat — surely the associations caused in England by the defeat of the Armada — and the word 'armada[o]' was in common use in England before 1588. Shakespeare associates carracks with treasure, which would be particularly appropriate after June 1587, when Sir Francis Drake captured the "San Felipe", an immensely rich carrack returning from the Indies loaded with jewels, gold, silver, spices, and silks. The "San Felipe" was carrying a double load of treasure because her sister ship developed a leak and transhipped her load to the "San Felipe". It took the English over a year to sell all the loot and fully realize the profit. The "San Felipe" was actually Portuguese, but Portugal was then ruled by the King of Spain, the carrack belonged to him, and her name is Spanish, not Portuguese.

I do not regard the capture of the "San Felipe" as clinching the case for 1587 as the year of composition of *Comedy of Errors*. And yet it perfectly meets Chambers' view that few topical references "are so definite as to be primary evidence; others at the most come in as confirmatory, after a provisional date has been arrived at on safer grounds" (I.245). As for the "San Felipe", the association of Spanish or Portuguese treasure carracks with jewels and with the Indies could be made at any time, while the English captured other treasure ships, but still, there it is in mid 1587, right as the forces of Catholic France were moving against the heir to the throne.

The trouble with Chambers' seemingly cautious position on topical references is that it encourages less meticulous scholars to ignore the background against which the validity of suggested topical allusions must be judged. For example, if we provisionally date *King Lear* at 1605-06, and we note Gloucester's remark about the "late eclipses in the sun and moon" (I.ii.107), and we further note that such eclipses were visible in Croatia in September and October 1605, being reported in England in February 1606, then we are apt to forget that eclipses occur in literally every year, that eclipses of both the sun and moon took place in 1601, and that astrology was a recurrent topic of discussion and concern in Shakespeare's age, in Shakespeare's plays, and in *King Lear*. Chambers'

argument on topical references as confirmatory evidence implies that the topical evidence is strengthened by the fact that it agrees with some other piece of dating evidence, that is, that the scholar of chronology need not closely examine the independent strength of the suggested topicality. But this implication is false; each piece of dating evidence must stand on its own merits.

Chambers and later scholars almost unanimously affirm that Shakespeare's words about France refer to the Catholic war against Henry IV between 1589 and 1593, a theory that can be dismissed out of hand. Shakespeare says "heir", not "king", and if Chambers was serious, he would have produced examples of the English describing Henry IV as the "heir" after August 1589 — that's what scholarship is all about. If he could have, he would have, but he couldn't.

But R. A. Foakes in the 1962 Arden *Comedy of Errors* (xix, note 1) gives it a try. Foakes counters Peter Alexander and H. B. Charlton, who state that Henry of Navarre was the heir between 1584 and 1589, by pointing to: "the tracts of the period [1584-9], which refer to Henry always as King of Navarre, not heir to the French throne". The obvious response to this statement is to note that Foakes conspicuously ignores the real point at issue, that is, the rank that English tracts bestowed on Henry after August 1589 — King of France, not heir to the throne. An example is found in a pamphlet to which we will return, Gabriel Harvey's 1592 *Four Letters and certaine Sonnets*: "That most valorous, and braue king [Henry] ... Thrise happy Fraunce; though how vnhappy Fraunce, that hath such a Soueraigne Head" (25-6). Otherwise we see exactly what Richard Farmer meant about the absurdity of putting hypotheses ahead of facts. English tracts during 1584-9 quite properly refer to Henry as King of Navarre because that was his highest title; "heir to the French throne" is not a title at all, it is a condition or status. Even if Henry had (improperly) been made Dauphin, he would still have been called King of Navarre, as the title of King outranks the title of Dauphin. Meanwhile, if we ask why Shakespeare refers to Henry as heir and not King of Navarre, we must trudge through matters that were perfectly well known to Foakes. To say that France is at war with her heir is to call attention to an anomaly, which would not be the case in saying that France is at war with Navarre. Moreover, Shakespeare was obviously punning on heir/hair, for which see any annotated edition of *Comedy of Errors*.

Royal France, like England, had the doctrine that the king never dies, for as soon as one king breathes his last, his heir becomes king. Proclamations and coronations are mere formalities, however symbolically important they may seem. Henry IV was immediately recognized by England, and in September 1589 Queen Elizabeth loaned him 20,000

pounds and agreed to send 4,000 troops to his assistance. Objective scholars would date *The Comedy of Errors* at 1587-8.

Romeo and Juliet: The Earthquake

Romeo and Juliet is dated 1594-5 by Chambers and the *Britannica*, and they make it Shakespeare's tenth play. Early in the play the Nurse announces that, "Tis since the earthquake now eleven years" (I.iii.24) and "And since that time it is eleven years" (I.iii.36). Late eighteenth and nineteenth century scholars noted that there was only one real quake in England in that period, in 1580, and so they dated *Romeo and Juliet* at 1591. Chambers acknowledges his predecessors' views, but cannot accept them, remarking that "This is pressing the Nurse's interest in chronology — and Shakespeare's — rather hard." (I.345) And yet Chambers will not deign to give evidence, beyond that odd statement. I call it odd because it amounts to saying that a character — and a playwright — who take the trouble to give a precise date — twice — can't really be interested in precise dates.

But Chambers' followers have done some scholarly homework, and are able to produce evidence of other seismic events in England. Unfortunately the said evidence only highlights the impact of the 1580 earthquake — the other scholars would have done better to have left well enough alone. The 1984 Cambridge *Romeo and Juliet*, edited by G. Blakemore Evans, tells us that there were landslips at Blackmore, Dorset in 1583 and at Mottingham, Kent in 1585, while a line in a book published in 1595 "seems definitely to imply" that an earthquake shook England in 1585, apparently meaning that we can be quite certain that an earthquake either did or did not occur in England in 1585. But an earthquake so feeble that its questionable effect on England is possibly implied in one line in one book is hardly the sort of cataclysm that one dates things by eleven years later (actually the 1585 quake was in Geneva). As for the two landslips, we may note that tremors so puny that their effects can be localized to single villages would also not have been exactly memorable to Shakespeare's London audiences.

Now let us turn our attention to the quake of 1580. The event, the damage, and the terror it caused among a populace unused to violent tremors are minutely described in the chronicles of Holinshed and Stow. A volume of letters between Edmund Spenser and Gabriel Harvey was published entitled "Three proper and wittie familiar Letters: lately passed betwene two Universitie men: touching the earthquake in Aprill last, and our English reformed versifying." At least four ballads were written on the subject; one begins "Quake, quake, 'tis tyme to quake, When towers and townes and all doo shake."

Another noted, as did Holinshed, that many people were in the theater that Sunday, instead of in church: "Come from the playe, come from the playe, The house will fall so people say." Arthur Golding, a noted translator, was so shocked that he composed a "Discourse upon the Earthquake that hapned through this realme of England and other places of Christendom, the first of April 1580 ...", warning that the quake was God's punishment of wickedness.

Evans and other modern editors argue that, at any rate, *Romeo and Juliet* cannot be earlier than 1593 because Shakespeare's language was influenced by a 1592 work by John Eliot and a 1593 poem by Samuel Daniel. But the similarity is slight, and, as usual, Evans and the others say absolutely nothing to justify the theory that Shakespeare was borrowing from Eliot and Daniel, rather than the more sensible idea that they were borrowing from him. One of the implications of defending Chambers' late dates is that everybody else influenced Shakespeare, while he influenced nobody.

I do not believe that the earthquake reference proves that *Romeo and Juliet* was written in 1591; as Chambers would say, it was a phenomenon to which a dramatist might refer at any date. But that date would be taken as rock solid if it suited Chambers' needs.

King John: A Question of Priority

The Troublesome Reign of King John (TR) was first published anonymously in 1591, reprinted as by "W. Sh." in 1611, and reprinted as by "W. Shakespeare" in 1622. Shakespeare's *King John* was mentioned by Francis Meres in 1598 and was first published in the Folio of 1623. The two plays are so close in plot and characters that one must have borrowed from the other (unless we suppose a common lost source). Back in the days when everyone felt that Shakespeare regularly improved the plays of other men, it was natural to assume that Shakespeare was the borrower, which had the further advantage of agreeing with Chambers' dating scheme.

But the first half of the twentieth century saw judgment reversed, with Shakespeare seen as the victim of pirates. Peter Alexander and Andrew Cairncross both argued in books published in 1936 that *King John* came first and *TR* was the borrower, and, therefore, *King John* was written not later than 1591. In 1954 the second Arden *King John* appeared, edited by Ernest Honigmann, who proved that Shakespeare did extensive research for this play in the chronicles, and who went on to make a full blown case for the priority of *King John*. In 1963, William Matchett's Signet edition supported Honigmann with additional arguments on why Shakespeare's play came first. In *The Sources of Shakespeare's*

Plays and elsewhere, Kenneth Muir has strongly supported the traditional view that *TR* came first. In 1974, R. L. Smallwood's New Penguin edition supported Muir against Honigmann and Matchett. In 1982 Honigmann published *Shakespeare's Impact on His Contemporaries*, which includes further arguments for the priority of Shakespeare's play over *TR*. Honigmann also states in his Preface (x-xi) the interesting fact that he abandoned the whole controversy for twenty-five years because (though this is not how he put it) he was warned by higher powers in academia to stop causing trouble. A. R. Braunmuller's 1989 Oxford edition sides with the traditional priority of *TR* over Shakespeare's play. L. A. Beaurline's 1990 New Cambridge edition supports Honigmann's view that Shakespeare's play came first. The most recent contribution to the debate that I have noticed is "*King John* and *The Troublesome Raigne*: Sources, Structure, Sequence" by Brian Boyd, *Philological Quarterly* (Winter 1995), which argues that Shakespeare's play came first. The battle is fairly joined.

King John is usually listed as Shakespeare's thirteenth play, based on stylistic considerations. If it must be moved back from Chambers' date of 1596-7 to 1591 or earlier, then about twelve other plays must be moved back earlier still, and Shakespeare must start his career around 1585 (which, in my opinion, is about right). But now we have a gap in the standard dating scheme between 1591 or earlier and 1596-7, and so, as Honigmann notes, later plays must be moved back to cover the gap.

I do not pretend that it is proven that Shakespeare's *King John* preceded *The Troublesome Reign*. The jury remains out, and the traditionalists make some valid points, but victory for the progressives on this play alone would finish whatever is still left of Chambers' chronology.

1 *Henry IV*: Gabriel Harvey's Pamphlet

1 & 2 *Henry IV* are put at 1597-8 by Chambers and the *Britannica*, and are said to be the Bard's fifteenth and sixteenth plays. But Gabriel Harvey's *Four Letters and certaine Sonnets* of 1592 uses the epithet "hotspur" three times and also says that, "some old Lads of the Castell, haue sported themselues with their rappinge bable",²⁶ which indicates that 1 *Henry IV* may have been in existence in 1592. We will compare these two terms and a couple of others, all taken from Harvey's third and fourth letters, to some expressions from the first two acts of 1 *Henry IV*.

The fat knight's original name was Oldcastle, but was changed to Falstaff out of deference to the descendants of the real Oldcastle, a

proto-Protestant martyr. In *1 Henry IV* Hal refers to Falstaff as “my old Lad of the Castle” (I.ii.41), meaning a roisterer. Several editors note that John Stow’s 1598 *Survey of London* mentions a brothel called the Castle in Southwark, and therefore think that Hal is jesting about Falstaff visiting prostitutes. But Stow says that the twelve brothels of Southwark, including the Castle, were shut down by Henry VIII in 1546. And Stow speaks of these brothels in the past tense, saying he has heard of the prostitutes from “ancient men”, so the jest would not have meant much in the 1590s.

Harvey’s three uses of “hotspur” in his diatribe against Tom Nashe are all derogatory references to railers: “hypocritical hoat spurres”, “I ... who have made Comedies of such Tragedies; and with pleasure given such hoatspurres leave, to run themselves out of breath”, “wrangling, & quarreling hoatspurres”. Hotspur was the nickname of the historical character portrayed in *1 Henry IV*; the name is used thrice in the first two acts of the play,²⁷ and, according to the *OED*, the term was pretty much restricted to the real character until about 1590 when it became a general term for a hothead or rash person.

The use of one of the two terms, “hotspur” or “old lad of the castle,” in Harvey’s pamphlet might not mean much, but both together seem significant, and they are joined by two other expressions that recall Hal and Falstaff. Harvey’s first mention of hotspurs is in a series of insults which includes “buckram Giants” (54), meaning false or pretended giants, and that term recurs on the following page (55), while four pages later we find “heir apparent” (59). Shakespeare uses “buckram” once, in *2 Henry VI*, but otherwise has that word only in the first two acts of *1 Henry IV*, where it appears seven times, all concerning the disguises worn by Hal and Poins when they ambush Falstaff and the other three robbers. Falstaff, of course, justifies his cowardice by turning his two buckram clad attackers into four, then seven, then nine, then eleven, and the repetition of the word — used six times in twenty-six lines — certainly imprints it in the auditor’s memory.

Save for one place in *2 Henry VI*,²⁸ Shakespeare only uses “heir apparent” in *1 Henry IV* where it crops up four times in the first two acts, always in the mouth of Falstaff.²⁹ As with “buckram”, the repetition sticks in one’s mind. Harvey’s use of “heire apparant” (59) is in no sense idiosyncratic, and would hardly be worth mentioning, except that it comes between his first two mentions of “hotspur”.

These few paragraphs on Harvey’s *Four Letters* and Shakespeare’s *1 Henry IV* merely skim a topic that could be developed at greater length. Dr. Gabriel Harvey was a man of whom some good words could be said, but he was also a humorless Puritan bigot and a sycophant toward those in authority. At a guess, I imagine that he stormed out of

a performance of *1 Henry IV* at the end of the second act, enraged both at the slander of a man he regarded as a martyr, and at the portrayal of England's hero king as a youthful rakehell — but that the Bard's words remained in his memory. I do not pretend that this evidence of Harvey borrowing from Shakespeare is conclusive — far from it! But it is better than the evidence frequently offered by Chambers and others to support their dates for Shakespeare's plays.

Henry V: Essex in Ireland

The Chorus to Act V of *Henry V* contains six lines to "the general of our gracious empress" who is engaged in suppressing rebellion in Ireland (29-34). I share the overwhelming opinion that the general almost certainly must be the Earl of Essex and that those lines were written in 1599, but is this argument strong enough to date the play to that year? May this passage have been a revision? That the Essex passage is an addition to a play written earlier is indicated by the following. The six appearances of the Chorus in *Henry V* are not found in the edition of 1600 and its reprints in 1602 and 1619, but only in the First Folio of 1623. Some lines in the choruses were manifestly revised or added after the play was first written. The Chorus to Act V is corrupt in the lines immediately following the mention of Essex. Furthermore topical revisions were regularly added to revived plays in that age, with prologues and epilogues being the favorite location for such topicalities, while *Henry V* is a patriotic play that is regularly revived in years of national crisis — years like 1599.

The most obvious indication that the choruses of *Henry V* were revisions is found in the last line of the Chorus to Act II: "Unto Southampton do we shift our scene"; these words immediately precede a scene set in London. Much scholarship has been focused on this and other inconsistencies in the choruses, for which the simplest explanation is that Shakespeare wrote or rewrote the choruses after he had forgotten the details of his plot. Moreover lines 34-41 of the Chorus to Act V, which immediately follow the mention of "the general of our gracious empress" are almost universally agreed to contain textual corruption, which could simply indicate incompetent copying of Shakespeare's manuscript, but could also result from an imperfect revision being made at that particular point. In short, the choruses themselves, and the lines concerning Essex in particular, point to very probable revision.

And, as fairly recent scholarship has shown, topical revisions were quite common in Shakespeare's day, and the easiest way to transform an old play into a "new and improved product" was to insert the additional material where it was least likely to foul up the plot and

dialogue, namely, in prologues, epilogues, and choruses. G. E. Bentley observes that: "New prologues and epilogues for revived plays and for court performances were already commonplace in [the 1590s]". On the frequency of revision of revived plays, Bentley states that: "As a rough rule of thumb one might say that almost any play first printed more than ten years after composition and known to have been kept in active repertory by the company which owned it is most likely to contain revisions by the author or, in many cases, by another playwright".³⁰

So far I have argued that Shakespeare's reference to Essex in Ireland in 1599 bears the marks of revision of an earlier text, but I have offered no positive evidence for an earlier date for the play. And yet one more item argues that the *Henry V* of 1599 was a revival. The stage history of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries shows that *Henry V* becomes popular when England is threatened or at war, most famously in Laurence Olivier's 1944 movie, made at the request of Winston Churchill and dedicated to Britain's airborne forces. And, as it happened, England faced an extraordinary triple threat in the year 1599. England had been at war with Spain since 1585, but in May 1598 her ally France made a separate peace, leaving England and the Netherlands to fight on alone. Meanwhile Tyrone's simmering rebellion in northern Ireland threatened to engulf the entire island after the destruction of an English army in August 1598. Essex's departure for Ireland with a new army in 1599 must be seen against the backdrop of the twin disasters of 1598. But then, with most of England's military power deployed to Ireland and the Netherlands in the summer of 1599, a fourth Spanish Armada assembled and the likelihood of invasion loomed. This last Armada's purpose was actually defensive, but England was seized with a sense of crisis that summer.³¹ And, as Gary Taylor explains: "Revivals [of *Henry V*] have almost always coincided with wars, rumours of wars, and attendant military enthusiasms; ... But *Henry V* has not only been consistently revived in times of national crisis; it has also been, at such times, consistently rewritten"³². In short, the theory that the reference to the Earl of Essex was an addition to a play revived during the crisis of 1599 exactly fits the future pattern of *Henry V*.

As You Like It: The Death of Marlowe

Chambers dates this play at 1599-1600, but it contains two references to the death in 1593 of Christopher Marlowe: "Dead shepherd, now I find thy saw of might, / Who ever lov'd that lov'd not at first sight?", and "it strikes a man more dead than a great reckoning in a little room".³³ Shakespeare's ascertainable references to contemporaries are so rare, the Earl of Essex being the only other nonroyal Englishman to merit a clear notice, that they deserve close examination. The obvious

point about Shakespeare's tribute to the dead shepherd is this: we exclaim upon a man's death when it happens; six or seven years later we simply refer to him in the past tense.

Hamlet: The Question of the Earlier Version

Hamlet is put at 1600-1 by Chambers and the 1985 *Britannica*, both naming it Shakespeare's twenty-second play. A tragic work called *Hamlet* is alluded to in 1589, a performance of a play of *Hamlet* is recorded in 1594, and a play of *Hamlet* is mentioned in 1596. And so nineteenth century scholars supposed that all of these references are to a lost play dubbed the *Ur-Hamlet*, written by some other dramatist, possibly Thomas Kyd, which Shakespeare adapted into the *Hamlet* we know. Moreover the hodgepodge first edition of *Hamlet* of 1603 was regarded as a descendant of the *Ur-Hamlet*. This hypothesis made perfectly good sense up to the 1920s, as Shakespeare was believed to have been a regular reviser of other men's plays. But that belief has been reversed for other plays of which Shakespeare was formerly believed to have been an imitator. Furthermore, during the 1920s and 30s, the work of several scholars showed that the inferior 1603 edition of *Hamlet* was not descended from the *Ur-Hamlet* at all, but was a corrupt version of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. After all, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (II.ii.336-42) mentions controversy caused by child actors, and we know that the War of the Poets — Ben Jonson versus John Marston and Thomas Dekker around 1601 — involved the Children of the Chapel. And so may we not be reasonably confident in the approximate correctness of the conventional date for *Hamlet*? The trouble with this theory is that the Children of Paul's caused such controversy in 1588-9 that they were suppressed in 1590.³⁴ And so the props upholding the existence of the *Ur-Hamlet* fall away, one after another; only the necessity of keeping a mature play by Shakespeare near the middle of Chambers' bracket of 1590-1613 remains to date *Hamlet* at 1600-1, when it might better be placed at 1596 or 1594 or 1589.³⁵

Macbeth: Equivocation and Gunpowder

Chambers dates *Macbeth* at 1605-06, associating it, as do most scholars, with the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 and the resultant trial of the Jesuit Father Henry Garnet in 1606. And yet Chambers regards that date as probable, rather than certain, in which he is joined by Kenneth Muir in the 1951/84 *Arden Macbeth* and by Nicholas Brooke in the 1990 *Oxford Macbeth*. I will not argue here that an earlier date is indicated for this play (Muir, xvii-xix, summarizes views on this question), but that the alleged connection between *Macbeth* and Gunpowder is fragile.

The best known allusions to Gunpowder in *Macbeth* lie in the word "equivocation", especially in the Porter's scene, II.iii, an apparent reference to the Jesuit doctrine brought up at Garnet's trial. The weakness of this dating argument was fully recognized by Chambers, who notes that: "the Jesuit doctrine of equivocation had been familiar, at least since the trial of Robert Southwell in 1595" (I.474). Pre-1606 dramatic references to equivocation can be found in Thomas Dekker's *Satiro-mastix*, where the word is not used, but the doctrine is unmistakably enunciated: "there's no faith to be helde with Hereticks and Infidels, and therefore thou swear'st anie thing" (IV.ii.90-1), and also in *Hamlet*: "We must speak by the card or equivocation will undo us" (V.i.133-4). A footnote to the latter passage in the Arden *Hamlet* gives a nondramatic example from 1584.

But it is often maintained that the entire play of *Macbeth* contains matters concerning James I, most especially that its plot about the murder of a Scottish king repeatedly echoes themes from the Gunpowder Plot to murder a King of Scotland who had become King of England. However Arthur M. Clark offers a strong case in *Murder under Trust* (1982) that *Macbeth* was written in 1601 in response to the 1600 Gowrie conspiracy against James' life. The detailed points presented by Clark are far too lengthy to be considered here, but their strength is attested to by Muir: "If Clark had read H. N. Paul's *The Royal Play of 'Macbeth'* he could hardly have thought that the Gunpowder Plot was less relevant to the play than the Gowrie conspiracy" (xviii). In other words, Muir's judgment is that Clark's arguments for Gowrie are about equal to Paul's arguments for Gunpowder.

In sum, the firm belief that *Macbeth* glances extensively at the Gunpowder plot withers away when its details are placed in the context of the age.

Pericles: John Day's Law Tricks

Pericles was published in 1609 and is dated at 1608-9 by Chambers and the *Britannica*, who call it Shakespeare's thirty-third play.

Pericles contains this passage in II.i, which, unlike the other scenes in Act II, is credited to Shakespeare rather than to a collaborator.

3rd Fisherman. ... Master, I marvel how the fishes live in the sea.

1st Fisherman. Why, as men do a-land: the great ones eat up the little ones. ... Such whales have I heard on a'th'land, who never leave gaping till they swallow'd the whole parish, church, steeple, bells, and all.

3rd Fish. But, master, if I had been the sexton, I would have been that day in the belfry.

2nd Fish. Why, man?

3rd Fish. Because he should have swallow'd me too; and when I had been in his belly, I would have kept such a jangling of the bells, that he should never have left till he cast bells, steeple, church, and parish up again.

Law Tricks has these passages in two different scenes, I.ii and II.i:

Joculo. ... But, Madam, do you remember what a multitude of fishes we saw at sea? And I do wonder how they can all live by one another.

Emilia. Why, fool, as men do on the land; the great ones eat up the little ones ...

Adam. I knew one of that faculty [lawyers] in one term eat up a whole town, church, steeple, and all.

Julio. I wonder the bells rung not all in his belly.

These items were noticed by Day's 1881 editor, A. H. Bullen, who knew that *Law Tricks* was published one year before *Pericles*, and who also noted that Day borrowed heavily from Shakespeare, "Day had evidently made a close study of Shakespeare's early comedies, and studied them with profit",³⁶ as well as from Sidney, Spenser, and Lyly. So Bullen concluded that Day had seen the manuscript of *Pericles* or remembered that passage from a performance.

Chambers subsequently proved that *Law Tricks* was written in 1604, which he felt to be impossibly early for *Pericles*, and so he reversed the borrowing. No later editor of *Pericles* has added any justification as to why Bullen was wrong, other than that 1604 is too early.

Let us return to the imitative habits of John Day. In his conversations with William Drummond, right after opining "That Shakespeare wanted art", Ben Jonson charged, "That Sharpham, Day, Dekker, were all rogues and that Minshew was one." What Ben meant by "rogue" becomes evident with a little study. Edward Sharpham was an imitator of John Marston. John Minshew's Spanish dictionary and grammar were based on the earlier work of Richard Percival, which Minshew took over and called his own. Jonson wrote a whole play, *The Poetaster*, against Thomas Dekker and Marston, accusing them of plagiarizing his work. In other words, Jonson was classifying Day as an imitator or plagiarist, and with good reason. *Law Tricks* borrows on a large scale from Jonson's *The Case is Altered*, and borrows from or echoes *Faerie*

Queene, Venus and Adonis, 2 Henry IV, Julius Caesar, Much Ado, Hamlet, and Measure for Measure. Most of these borrowings are small scraps, but when you see several from the same play, you are justified in claiming borrowing.

Law Tricks is a lively play of some merit, but it is also a motley of shreds and patches filched from better writers. How likely is it that Shakespeare would sit through a performance and decide to imitate the imitator? The presumption must be that Day borrowed the items about the great fish eating the little ones from Shakespeare, in which case 1604 becomes the latest possible date for *Pericles*.

Tempest: Is Bermuda Necessary?

Chambers places *The Tempest* at 1611-12, making it Shakespeare's thirty-sixth play, followed only by *Henry VIII* and *Kinsmen*, and he and others list two or three accounts of a 1609 shipwreck in Bermuda as important sources, especially a long letter by William Strachey and a shorter one by Sylvester Jourdan. *The Tempest* is by far the most important anchor for the latter end of Chambers' chronology, and yet he is cautious when discussing Jourdan's letter in his *Britannica* article: "this or some other contemporary narrative of Virginia colonization probably furnished the hint of the plot" (my emphases). Meanwhile, Muir lists the three Bermuda pamphlets as probable sources for *Tempest*, but warns: "The extent of the verbal echoes of these three pamphlets has, I think, been exaggerated. There is hardly a shipwreck in history or in fiction which does not mention splitting, in which the ship is not lightened of its cargo, in which the passengers do not give themselves up for lost, in which north winds are not sharp, and in which no one gets to shore by clinging to wreckage".³⁷

Nevertheless Chambers, Muir, and virtually every other scholar who discuss *The Tempest* believe that Shakespeare was influenced by the pamphlets on the Bermuda wreck of 1609, especially Strachey's. In particular, a detailed case for Shakespeare's use of the latter source is offered in Louis Wright's reprint of Strachey's and Jourdan's letters.³⁸ But did Shakespeare have any need of these sources? Bermuda's evil name was well established in the sixteenth century; St. Paul's shipwreck at Malta makes a better source for *The Tempest* than any or all of the Bermuda pamphlets, and Richard Hakluyt's popular work on voyaging must be taken into account.

Bermuda's reputation for storms, wrecks, and demons was common knowledge long before *The Tempest* was written. Bermuda is cited as a place of many shipwrecks in Walter Raleigh's 1591 pamphlet about the last voyage of the "Revenge". Donne's 1597 poem, "The Storme"

includes this couplet: "Compar'd to these stormes, death is but a qualme, / Hell somewhat lightsome, and the Bermuda calme." Fulke Greville's Sonnet 59, probably written in the early 1580s, makes a similar comment on Bermuda.

Muir notes that "Strachey's account of the shipwreck is blended with memories of St. Paul's — in which too not a hair perished"³⁹, so we may ask how much Acts of the Apostles 27-8 shares with *The Tempest*. And, without any trouble at all, we find about thirteen items. First, a voyage within the Mediterranean with Italy as the destination. Second, discord and mutiny among the voyagers; the sailors against the passengers. Third, the ship driven by a tempest, that is, forced to abandon course. Fourth, utter loss of hope. Fifth, a supernatural being — an angel in St. Paul, Ariel in *Tempest* — visits the ship. Sixth, desperate maneuvers to avoid the lee shore of an unknown island. Seventh, the ship grounds and splits. Eighth, detailed descriptions of some techniques of seamanship. Ninth, St. Paul gathers wood, like Caliban and Ferdinand. Tenth, a plot against St. Paul's life. Eleventh, the island has barbarous inhabitants, like Caliban. Twelfth, supernatural oversight of the whole episode. Thirteenth, a stay on the island, seeming miracles (St. Paul immune to snakebite), followed by a safe trip to Italy.

So any argument that Shakespeare relied on Strachey for items in his plot can be topped by St. Paul. Furthermore, Strachey's account is quite lengthy, 99 pages in Wright's reprint, while the average Bible covers St. Paul's shipwreck in less than two pages. Thus St. Paul gives a very compressed set of events, making him superior as a potential source; Shakespeare would not have had to wade through 99 pages extracting a detail here, a detail there. Finally, we don't have to speculate about how Shakespeare may have had the opportunity to read his source in manuscript, as with Strachey; we know Shakespeare read his Bible.

But Wright claims that Shakespeare followed Strachey so closely in certain items that we can virtually see the Bard in the act of borrowing: "When William Shakespeare sat down to write *The Tempest* he had fresh in his memory a vivid description of a hurricane and shipwreck The author was William Strachey".⁴⁰ Wright's footnotes to Strachey's text allege about six details borrowed by Shakespeare. For the sake of brevity we will examine only the best known example. Here are the descriptions of St. Elmo's fire from *The Tempest* and Strachey, followed by two descriptions from Volume III of Hakluyt's *Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques & Discoveries*, published in 1600.

Now on the beak, / Now in the waist, the deck, in every cabin, /
 I flamed amazement. Sometimes I'd divide / And burn in
 many places; on the topmast, / The yards, and boresprit would

I flame distinctly,/ Then meet and join. (*Tempest*, I.ii.196-201)

An apparition of a little¹, round light², like a faint star, trembling and streaming along with a sparkling blaze, half the height upon³ the main mast⁴ and shooting sometimes from shroud to shroud⁵ 'tempting to settle, as it were⁶, upon³ any of the four shrouds⁵. And for three or four hours⁷ together, or rather more, half the night, it kept with us, running sometimes along the main yard⁸ to the very end and then returning... (Strachey)

In the night there came upon³ the top of our mainyard⁸ and main mast⁴, a certain little¹ light², much like unto the light² of a little¹ candle, ... This light² continued aboard our ship about three hours⁷, flying from mast to mast, & from top to top: and sometime it would be in two or three places at once. (From Robert Tomson's account in Hakluyt)

We saw upon³ the shrouds⁵ of the Trinity as it were⁶ a candle, which of it self shined, and gave a light², ... it was the light² of Saint Elmo which appeared on the shrouds⁵ ... (From Francisco de Ulloa's account in Hakluyt)

As the underlined, numbered words show, Strachey resembles Hakluyt far more than Shakespeare resembles any of the other three descriptions. But the similarity of Strachey to Hakluyt goes further, in that the fire is confined to the upper part of the ship: the masts, yards, and rigging. Only in Shakespeare does the fire travel through the hull: beak, waist, deck, and cabins. Technically speaking Shakespeare could be charged with error, as St. Elmo's fire visits only the higher parts of a ship. But then Shakespeare is describing Ariel's supernatural activities rather than the science of atmospheric. Moreover, Muir (280) argues that Strachey's words on St. Elmo's fire are probably based on a passage in Erasmus' colloquy.

In conclusion, St. Paul's shipwreck works better than Strachey as an overall source for *The Tempest*. Furthermore any argument that Shakespeare borrowed St. Elmo's fire from Strachey is, *a fortiori*, an argument that Strachey borrowed from Hakluyt.⁴¹ That being the case, and given the much greater availability of Hakluyt's best-selling work than Strachey's unpublished letter, it should be presumed that Hakluyt rather than Strachey was Shakespeare's source — if, indeed, Shakespeare needed a source.

Conclusions

Sir Edmund Chambers' *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems* was a truly revolutionary book in its effect on Shakespeare's biography. It demolished the mythology and wishful thinking of many earlier scholars, who produced fantasies based on liberal use of the word "doubtless", and it forced a return to the primary evidence, no matter how scanty. Chambers' chronology is also of real value, as it represents the strongest case that can be made for the hypothesis that Shakespeare's plays were written between 1590 and 1613. Chambers begins by using biographical considerations to establish his boundary dates, and he then uses the chronological evidence on the plays to spread them between those boundaries. In this regard Chambers follows the methods of Edmond Malone (see note 11), and both of these scholars explicitly state the assumptions behind their methods.

That said, Chambers' chronology falls apart under inspection.

Chambers' errors, as given by Honigmann, are these. Supposing that Francis Meres' 1598 list of Shakespeare's plays is complete, even though Chambers knew that it was not complete. Assuming that Philip Henslowe's "ne" means "new", even though Chambers was aware that Henslowe wrote that word against plays that were not new. Treating weak earliest possible dates as strong evidence, even though Chambers discusses that very problem. Believing, in agreement with most scholars of his day, that Shakespeare routinely rewrote other men's plays, a verdict reversed by more recent scholarship.

But Chambers' mistakes do not stop there. He treats Shakespeare's absence from the theatrical archives of the 1580s as evidence that the Bard had not yet begun to write, despite his knowledge of the emptiness of those same archives. He ignores or casually dismisses the disagreeable evidence of the punctilious Ben Jonson that Shakespeare was active in the 1580s, specifically, Ben's naming Shakespeare as a contemporary of Lyly, Kyd, and Marlowe, as well as Ben's very precise statement about the date of *Titus Andronicus*. He disregards inconvenient earliest possible dates such as Holinshed's 1587 *Chronicles*. More strikingly Chambers ignores earliest possible dates dictated by his own logic: 1591 for *King John* and 1604 for *Pericles*. And Chambers also fails to consider the implications of his own words to the effect that, in terms of useful dating evidence, Shakespeare starts fading away around 1603, and is virtually gone by 1607-08.

But Chambers' chronological arguments still rule, despite the opinion of so many leading scholars that his dates are too late. On this matter we have the authority of James McManaway in 1950, G. Blakemore Evans in 1974, most especially Ernest Honigmann in 1980, and Samuel Schoenbaum in both 1970 and 1991. But this point need not rest on

voices of authority, for examination of chronologies of Shakespeare's plays published in the last several decades shows only trivial alterations to Chambers' chronologies of 1911 and 1930.

And the errors continue. The last fifty years have yielded impressive comprehensive works on Shakespeare's sources, but these works are invariably organized play by play, as with Kenneth Muir and Geoffrey Bullough, or, for that matter, in the sections on sources in the Arden, Oxford, and Cambridge editions of Shakespeare's plays. Virtually nothing has been done to arrange Shakespeare's certain and highly probable sources in the order in which they appeared, and then to examine that list closely for chronological significance. As for supposed topical references, all the caution of scholars like Chambers and Muir seems to have been wasted, as everyday events in Shakespeare's plays are linked to everyday events in the archives of the age. As Fluellen might have put it: "There is a treason in *Macbeth*, and there is also moreover a treason in 1605-06, and there is equivocating in both". Also moreover, the implications of Bentley's notice of the frequency of topical allusions being added to revisions seem not to have sunk in. And finally, whenever Shakespeare writes something similar to something by another author, it always seems that the Bard was the borrower, as with armed Prologues in *Troilus* and *Poetaster*, or the jests in *Pericles* and *Law Tricks*.

Where do we stand? The implications of the evidence presented in this essay are: *Titus Andronicus*, circa 1585; *Comedy of Errors*, 1587-8; *King John* circa 1590; *Romeo and Juliet*, 1591; *1 Henry IV*, by 1592; *Henry V*, 1592-9; *As You Like It*, 1593-4; *Hamlet*, ?1594; *Macbeth*, perhaps 1600-01, *Pericles*, by 1604. And yet, though some of the pieces of evidence underpinning this list are strong, others are weak. We have two different ways to propose dates for Shakespeare's plays. We can present evidence of earliest and latest possible (or probable) dates for each play, carefully analyzing every item, or we can exhibit a table assigning each play to a particular year (with, of course, some prefatory caveats on our lack of complete certainty). The latter method soothes our vanity by allowing us to avoid confessing ignorance. But the reality of the evidence now available favors the former method, and, as someone said, awareness of ignorance is the first step on the road to knowledge. Any attempt to present a list of Shakespeare's plays, assigning a year of composition to each, no matter how qualified, is pretending to know more than we do.

Notes

1. Peter Alexander, *Shakespeare* (London, 1964), 97, and *Shakespeare's Life and Art* (1939, rev. ed. 1964), 57-69 ff.

2. Caincross, *The Problem of Hamlet* (London, 1936, 1970) , 179-85.
3. F.P. Wilson, *Marlowe and the Early Shakespeare* (Oxford, 1953), 113.
4. T.W. Baldwin, *Shakespeare's Five-Act Structure* (Urbana, Illinois, 1947), 776-84.
5. William Matchett, ed., *King John*. Signet Classic edition combined with *Henry VIII* (New York, 1986), "Textual Note," 148.
6. Oscar James Campbell and Edward Quinn, *The Reader's Encyclopedia of Shakespeare* (New York, 1966), article on "chronology," 113.
7. Russell Fraser, *Young Shakespeare* (New York, 1988), 145-8.
8. John Crow's astonishingly candid statement deserves careful consideration. He is saying, in effect, "I and most scholars think these dates are too late, but they have become the conventional wisdom, the dramatic history of the age has been adjusted to them, and therefore we will keep them," which, of course, is the whole problem.
9. Indeed, as I hope the quotations in this section show, Chambers also fully meets the scholarly requirement of clearly stating his a priori assumptions, and the same is true of Edmond Malone (see note 11).
10. Edmund Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems* (Oxford, 1930), Vol. I, 270. Further quotations from this work will simply be followed by the volume and page number, thus (I, 270). Chambers dates Shakespeare's plays to theatrical years, so 1590-1 means fall 1590 to summer 1591, not January 1590 to December 1591.
11. In this matter, Chambers is in full accord with Edmond Malone's 1778 essay, "An Attempt to ascertain the Order in which the Plays of Shakespeare were written." Malone conjectures, to use his own word, that Shakespeare began writing plays in 1591, based on the apparent lack of notice of those works prior to Greene's *Groatsworth*. Moreover, Malone asserts that:

The plays which Shakespeare produced before the year 1600, are known, and are seventeen or eighteen in number. The rest of his dramas, we may conclude, were composed between that year and the time of his retiring to the country [which Malone put at 1611]. Malone's *Shakespeare*, Third Variorum Edition (1821; AMS reprint, New York, 1966), II.291-302.

12. I agree with Chambers and every other authority that the approximate sequence or order of composition of the plays can be determined on stylistic grounds with reasonable certainty. I further agree with Chambers that attempts to determine an exact sequence by the use of quantitative methods are probably hopeless (I.253). Such methods assume, for example, that Shakespeare's stylistic development was

- monotonic, to use a mathematical term, that it always proceeded in the same direction, as from more rigid versification to freer versification.
13. Chambers, I.246-50. Chambers' table of boundary dates omits *Shrew*, *All's Well*, *Coriolanus*, and *Timon*, and gives no latest possible date for *Two Noble Kinsmen*.
 14. Wilson, *The Clark Lectures*, Trinity College Cambridge, 1951, published as *Marlowe and the Early Shakespeare* (Oxford, 1953), 106. See also Wilson, "Shakespeare's Reading," *Shakespeare Survey* 3 (Cambridge, 1950), 14-21, esp. 16.
 15. Gerald Eades Bentley, *The Profession of Dramatist in Shakespeare's Time 1590-1642* (Princeton, 1971), viii. Bentley later notes (14-5) that Philip Henslowe's business diary, listing hundreds of performances between 1592 and 1602, names about 280 plays, of which about 40 survive today, while "at least 170 would now be totally unknown—even by title—had Henslowe's accounts been destroyed." Our knowledge of the Elizabethan stage is so dependent on Henslowe's 1592-1602 diary that Schoenbaum calls it "the most valuable single document relative to the early stage" (1991 ed., 127) and "that most precious of Elizabethan playhouse documents" (1991 ed., 256). As far as the Elizabethan stage is concerned, pre-Henslowe is virtually prehistoric.
 16. This argument on *Titus Andronicus* originates with Honigsmann, *Shakespeare's Impact*, 67.
 17. On the reference to *Titus* in *Knack to Know a Knave*, as well as other indications that *Titus* was written before 1593, see the 1953 Arden, the 1984 Oxford, or the 1994 Cambridge edition.
 18. C.H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson, eds., *Ben Jonson* (Oxford, 1925-52), II.213-7 and XI.436.
 19. Edmund Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage* (Oxford, 1923), III.285-6. See also *The Works of John Day*, "Reprinted from the collected Edition of A.H. Bullen (1881) with an Introduction by Robin Jeffs" (London, 1963), xiv-xv.
 20. Samuel Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives* (Oxford), p. 517 of 1991 ed., p. 713 of 1970 ed. Incidentally, Schoenbaum modified the paragraph in which this passage occurs, and he made a minor stylistic change to the passage itself. Therefore the passage as quoted reflects his considered opinion in 1991, rather than simple failure to review what he wrote in 1970.
 21. It is impossible to give a precise count of the titles named by Muir without making arbitrary decisions about how to count an original work and a translation of the same work, or how to count difference editions of the same work, or works by one author that are conventionally lumped together as one work. My own count is 113; anyone else's ought to be quite close to that number. I should also note that Muir was not concerned with chronology in this book, while his dating assump-

tions are pretty much in line with Chambers'. Consequently, when Muir considered a work by another English author that was written slightly before he believed the Shakespearean play in question was written, he naturally assumed that any borrowing was by Shakespeare, when, in fact, the influence could have gone the other way. See my note, "The Dates of Shakespeare's Plays," *The Shakespeare Newsletter* (Fall 1991), XLI 3, No. 210, 40.

22. I omit Samuel Rowley's *When You See Me, You Know Me* (performed 1604, published 1605), a probable source for the sub and Prologue of *Henry VIII*, and also John Speed's *History of Great Britaine* (1611), a probable source for items in the latter part of *Henry VIII*, III.ii. These portions of *Henry VIII* are usually attributed to John Fletcher rather than to Shakespeare.

23. Sir Philip Sidney, *Selected Prose and Poetry*, ed. Robert Kimbrough (San Francisco, 1969), 126. *The Defense of Poesy* was first published in 1595, and its version of the fable begins: "There was a time when all the parts of the body made a mutinous conspiracy against the belly." Shakespeare's equivalent words are: "There was a time, when all the body's members Rebell'd against the belly," which gives some idea of the difficulty of sorting out influences in any author's version of this well known parable.

24. Muir's theory about Daniel's Arcadia is ignored by Nicholas Brooke in *The Oxford Shakespeare Macbeth* (1990) in his sections Dates and Sources, as well as in the footnotes to the lines in question.

25. III.ii.120-2; this and all subsequent citations from Shakespeare's plays are from the second Arden edition.

26. Gabriel Harvey, *Four Letters and Certain Sonnets* (New York and London, The Bodley Head Quartos, 1923), "hotspur" is on 54, 63, and 81; "old Lads of the Castell" is on 74.

27. I.i.52, 70; II.iv.100.

28. I.i.151; the term is also found in the Chorus to Act III of *Pericles*, but those lines are generally not attributed to Shakespeare. *2 Henry VI* uses "buckram" at IV.vii.23.

29. I.ii.56; II.ii.42; II.iv.265, 362.

30. G.E. Bentley, *The Profession of Dramatist and Player in Shakespeare's Time, 1590-1642* (Princeton, 1971, 1984), 136 and 263. More generally, see 135-6 and 259-63.

31. A synopsis of reports of the invasion scare and the forces raised to meet it in August 1599 can be found in G.B. Harrison, *The Elizabethan Journals* (Ann Arbor, 1955), "A Last Elizabethan Journal," 13-38.

32. Gary Taylor, ed., *The Oxford Shakespeare Henry V* (Oxford and New York, 1984), 11. See also Andrew Gurr, ed., *The New Cambridge Shakespeare Henry V* (Cambridge, 1992), 39 and Oscar James Campbell and Edward G. Quinn, *The Reader's Encyclopedia of Shakespeare* (New

York, 1966), article on *Henry V*, Stage History.

33. III.v.81-2 paraphrases a couplet from Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* (I.175-6): "Where both deliberate the love is slight;/Who ever lov'd that lov'd not at first sight?" III.iii.11-12 echoes a passage from *The Jew of Malta* (I.i.36-7): "inclose/Infinite riches in a little room"; Marlowe was killed in a tavern room during a quarrel over the reckoning.

34. Caincross, 105-6.

35. I should note that a date of 1589 or earlier for Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as we know it is not in line with my own views of the evidence on chronology, but I don't believe that awkward facts can be swept away by the mere existence of a plausible alternative explanation. On the other hand, a date of, say, 1594 is perfectly reasonable for Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and the mention from 1589 could be to an earlier version of Shakespeare's play. My main point is that Chambers' modern followers have no right to treat the hypothesis of a non-Shakespearean *Ur-Hamlet* as an established fact. That hypothesis is still tenable, but twentieth century scholarship has rendered it far less powerful than it was in the last century, a fact that twentieth century scholars have yet to face.

36. From Bullen's article on Day in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

37. Muir, *Sources*, 280. That the stereotyped behavior of passengers in a storm was a byword in those times is seen in an item in Harvey's useful *Four Letters*, where he compares Fabius Maximus to: "an experte Pilot, that in a hideous tempest regardeth not the foolishe shrickinges, or vaine outcries of disorderly passengers, but bestirreth himselfe, and directeth his mariners, according to the wise rules of orderly Nauigation" (74-5).

38. Louis B. Wright, ed. *A Voyage to Virginia in 1609* (Charlottesville, 1964).

39. Muir, op cit.

40. Wright, op cit, ix.

41. Here are the other items that Wright says Shakespeare borrowed from Strachey (with Wright's page numbers in parentheses)—followed by my responses. Mutinies at Bermuda (xiv) suggested mutinous sailors in *Tempest*—Hakluyt reports several English mutinies, a common occurrence in that turbulent age. Cries of terrified passengers in Strachey (6) suggested the same in *Tempest*, I.i.35-7—a commonplace in nautical literature; see note 37. Strachey speaks of "the glut of water" (7), while *Tempest*, I.i.58, has "to glut him," Shakespeare's only use of g-l-u-t—Strachey uses glut as a noun, Shakespeare as a verb, as he does with glutted in *1 Henry IV*, and as he does with englutts in *Othello* and englutted in *Henry V* and *Timon*. Strachey discusses a drink made from cedar berries at Bermuda (24), while Caliban speaks of "water with berries in it," I.ii.336—Strachey lists over forty items of food found at Bermuda, Shakespeare mentions about a dozen wild foods in *Tempest*,

and berries are the only common item. Strachey speaks of taking birds at night by "lowbelling" (31), while Sebastian mentions "batfowling," II.i.180, which Wright says "was another name for 'lowbelling'"—see the *OED* on the difference between batfowling, scaring birds with light, then clubbing them; and lowbelling, scaring birds with noise, then netting them.