The First Literary <i>Hamlet</i> and the Commonplacing of Professional Plays

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In memory of G. K. Hunter

It has been generally agreed that the 1603 quarto of Hamlet (Q1), which is scarcely more than half the length of the 1604/5 quarto (Q2), is an acting version of the play. Indeed, we are told as much on its title page: the play is printed “as it hath beene diuerse times acted by his Highnesse seruants in the Cittie of London: as also in the two Vniuersities of Cambridge and Oxford, and else-where.”¹ Not only is the text printed as the play had been acted, but also—if we are to believe the title page—this play has been acted in more, and more varied, places than any other play from the professional stage yet printed. Q1 Hamlet is the only printed professional play in the entire pre-Restoration period that claims on its title page to have been performed at any university—much less at both Cambridge and Oxford. Even as a London play, Q1 is advertised not as coming from the public playhouses in the suburbs but as inhabiting “the Cittie of London,” a city that was doing what it could to prevent professional actors from playing within its precincts.² While the publishers Nicholas Ling

¹ This article would not have been written but for the seminal essay that George Hunter published in 1952, “The Marking of Sententiae in Elizabethan Printed Plays, Poems, and Romances,” The Library, 5th ser., 6 (1951–52): 171–88. Hunter wrote this essay long before Early English Books Online (EEBO) and other electronic databases simplified such a project. We also thank Roger Chartier and Margreta de Grazia, whose work on commonplacing inspired us, as has the research of András Kiséry and Adam Hooks, who generously shared their important findings and clarified many of our ideas. We are grateful as well to Eric Rasmussen, Bill Sherman, and Paul Werstine, whose careful reading improved this essay and saved us from several embarrassing errors.

² The claim to performance at the universities may simply be puffy; see John R. Elliott Jr., “Early Staging in Oxford,” in A New History of Early English Drama, ed. John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia UP, 1997), 68–76, esp. 69. But even if the claim is only an advertising fantasy, it is the unique instance of such a fiction. Paul Menzer notes the rarity of the claim to playing within the city in “The Tragedians of the City? Q1 Hamlet and the Settlements of the 1590s,” Shakespeare Quarterly 57 (2006): 162–82.
and John Trundle were certainly advertising the performance history of their text, it was a particular kind of performance that they were publicizing, in which professional playhouses had no explicit role at all. This play does not need to deny its theatrical origins in order to make its assertive appeal to the discerning reader of literary drama because, so the title page assures us, the places of performance include the ancient centers of English learning.  

Exactly what it means to call drama “literature” or “literary” has been one of the central preoccupations of the New Textualism over the past several decades, as scholars have sought to trace the path of drama from “a subliterary form perhaps incapable of sustaining the burden of literary ambition” to its “gradual acceptance . . . into the literary culture” of Renaissance England. But Q1 *Hamlet* has rarely been considered a part of this process. With the hindsight provided both by Q2 and by nearly two centuries of bibliographic and literary analysis since Henry Bunbury discovered the first of the two now-extant copies of Q1 “in a closet at Barton” in 1823, the first quarto of *Hamlet* seems distinctly unliterary. For much of the twentieth century, this edition has been the archetypal “bad” quarto, a botched rendition of an acting version of the play—an illegitimate and practically illiterate offspring of the “good” *Hamlet* embodied by the texts of Q2 and the First Folio (F). And while Lukas Erne treats Q1 (and the other so-called bad quartos) subtly and compellingly in his important study *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, the first quarto of *Hamlet* nonetheless remains the unliterary acting version that, as a foil, sets off the literariness of *Hamlet* to be discerned in Q2.

The publisher Nicholas Ling himself could be seen as the first critic to label Q1 a bad text. When he published Q2, Ling took pains to emphasize on its title page that this “Newly imprinted” text was “enlarged to almost as much againe as it was” in his own earlier edition and that it had been printed

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“according to the true and perfect Coppie.” The Q2 title page stops just short of claiming what many editors have since claimed—that this true and perfect copy is Shakespeare’s own manuscript. But it nonetheless imagines Q2 as a more literary text than Q1 by reference to a manuscript original—the paradoxical meaning of copy in this usage—that truly and perfectly represents the intentions of the play’s makers (whether author or company) and that is truly and perfectly represented in the book printed from it. And by removing any reference to performance history while retaining the author attribution, Ling urged the purchasers of Q2 to see it as originating more in “William Shakespeare” than in any version performed onstage.

But as the publisher of Q1 as well as Q2—very probably with unsold copies that he still wanted to unload—Ling does not simply bifurcate his Hamlet into opposing “good” and “bad” copies, as most editors have since done. Indeed, the title pages of the two editions do far more to liken than to distinguish them. Not only does Ling’s device dominate the page in both, but the plays’ titles are also identical and virtually identically set (with the exception of the italic “THE” in Q2). Even more tellingly, the printer James Roberts’s compositors followed the unusual hanging-indent format, used first for the performance attribution in Q1, in order to set Q2’s advertising blurb about the “true and perfect Coppie” (Figures 1 and 2). When they set the title page of Q2, they were copying the distinctive visual features of the Q1 title page. For a browser in Ling’s shop, the immediate look of the two title pages would have been strikingly similar.

This is perhaps not surprising if we consider Ling’s position as the bookselling publisher of both editions. Ling’s title pages have it both ways. A book buyer with enough interest in Hamlet to pay close attention will be alerted to the newer edition’s superiority over the old—which, after all, such an interested reader could already have bought in 1603. This reader will thus be urged to buy the new version (as well). A more casual browser, on the other hand, might miss the distinction altogether, giving Ling a chance to sell off copies of Q1 (perhaps even at a discount) while still asserting the “new and improved” status of Q2. Ling’s title page for Q2 thus seems an ideal solution to a particular, local problem: how should a publisher market a new version of a text he had printed only a year earlier, enticing customers to buy the new edition without driving them away from the old?

If our reading of Q2’s title page makes sense, we should not accept too quickly that Q2’s claim to literary status is antithetical to Q1. But there is a

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The Tragical Historie of
Hamlet
Prince of Denmarke
By William Shake-speare
As it hath beene diverse times acted by his Highnesse ser-
uants in the Cittie of London: as also in the two V-
niuersties of Cambridge and Oxford, and else-where
At London printed for N.L. and John Trundell. 1603.
Figure 2: Title page of Q2 Hamlet. Huntington Library RB 69305. Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
further reason why Q1 _Hamlet_ has a good claim to being Shakespeare’s first literary drama. For it is the first play of Shakespeare’s to be printed with what was rapidly becoming a distinguishing feature of plays for the learned or scholarly reader—a feature central to early seventeenth-century attempts to forge a culture of literary drama and poesy in the vernacular: sententiae or commonplaces that are pointed out to the reader, either by commas or inverted commas at the beginning of each line or by a change in font (usually from roman to italic). As Ann Moss notes, a 1506 edition of Seneca’s tragedies printed in Florence by Filippo di Giunta may be the first book printed with commonplace markers, and in 1524, as András Kiséry shows, inverted commas appear beside both the Greek text and the Latin translation of two Euripidean tragedies printed at Basel. In England, a Greek edition of Euripides’ _Trojan Women_ printed by John Day in 1575 contains numerous lines marked with commas, as does Thomas Watson’s 1581 Latin edition of Sophocles’ _Antigone_, printed by John Wolfe. These printed commonplace markers seem to appear first in plays—but in the most prestigious plays in the most prestigious languages. In vernacular plays, the markers were first used to commonplace translations from the classics, translations from French neo-Senecan drama, or closet drama by the gentry elite.

Q1 _Hamlet_ was thus following a distinguished literary tradition for commonplace classical drama when it printed two of Corambis/Polonius’s speeches with marginal inverted commas (Figure 3). The first such passage occurs in Corambis’s advice to his son, Leartes/Laertes:

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Prince of Denmark.

Speakes from his heart, but yet take heed my sister,
The Charieft maide is prodigall enough,
If she vmsake hir beautie to the Moone.
Vertue it selfe scapes not calumnioues thoughts,
Believ't Ophelia, therefore keepe a loose
Left that he trip thy honor and thy fame.

Oph. Brother, to this I haue lent attentiue care,
And doubt not but to keepe my honour firme,
But my deere brother, do not you
Like to a cunning Sophister,
Teach me the path and ready way to heauen,
While you forgeting what is said to me,
Your selfe, like to a carelesse libertine
Doth giue his heart, his appetite at ful,
And little reckes how that his honour dies.

Lear. No, feare it not my deere Ophelia,
Here comes my father, occasion finishes upon a second leave.

Enter Corambis.

Cor. Yet here Leartes! aboord, aboord, for blame,
The winde fits in the shoulder of your failse,
And you are slaid for, there my blessing with thee
And these few precepts in thy memory.

"Be thou familiar, but by no meanes vulgare;
"Those friends thou haft, and their adoptions tried,
"Grapple them to thee with a hoope of steele,
"But do not dulle the palme with entertaine,
"Of every new vnfleg'd courage,
"Beware of entrance into a quarrell, but being in,
"Beare it that the opposed may beware of thee,
"Costly thy apparrell, as thy purse can buy,
"But not express in fashion,
"For the apparell oft proclaims the man.
And they of France of the chiefe rancke and station
Are of a most elec and generall chiefe in that:
"This above all, to thy owne selfe be true,
And it must follow as the night the day,

C2 Thou
“Be thou familiar, but by no meanes vulgare;
Those friends thou hast, and their adoptions tried,
Graple them to thee with a hoope of steele,
But do not dull the palme with entertaine,
Of evry new vnfleg’d courage,
Beware of entrance into a quarrell; but being in,
Beare it that the opposed may beware of thee,
Costly thy apparrell, as thy purse can buy.
But not exprest in fashion,
For the apparell oft proclaimes the man.

And they of France of the chiefe rancke and station
Are of a most select and generall chiefe in that:
This aboue all, to thy owne selfe be true,
And it must follow as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any one,
Farewel, my blessing with thee.

On the verso of the same leaf, Corambis’s advice to his daughter is similarly commonplace:

_Ofelia_, receiue none of his letters,
“For louers lines are snares to intrap the heart;
Refuse his tokens, both of them are keyes
To vnlocke Chastitie vnto Desire;
Come in _Ofelia_, such men often proue,
Great in their wordes, but little in their loue.”

These inverted commas alert the reader to sententious passages suitable for transcription into a commonplace book, a readerly practice deriving from humanist pedagogy and one that marks Q1 _Hamlet_ as a play for reading and even for study. Unlike Q2’s claim to be derived from the “true and perfect Coppie” of _Hamlet_, however, the commonplace markers in Q1 _Hamlet_ fashion a literary status for the playbook not by reference to the play’s origins—whether Shakespeare or the King’s Men—but instead by reference to its reception (and indeed, its preception) by readers.

**Disappearing Commonplace Markers and the Editorial Tradition**

The commonplace markers in Q1 have always been there, of course, and since Henry Bunbury’s miraculous discovery in that Barton closet, they have always been available to scholars and editors. But over the last century, they have repeatedly disappeared, or been made to disappear, while a single narrative about Q1 has ossified into orthodoxy. Numerous editions contain some version

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of the statement that Q1 “is one of the so-called ‘bad’ quartos, i.e. a memorialistically reconstructed version, made probably for some provincial touring company, perhaps by the actor who doubled in the roles of Marcellus and Lucianus.”

Because of its status as a “bad” quarto, as Paul Werstine notes in his critique of the theory of memorial reconstruction, Q1 Hamlet has long been “presumed to have some special relation to the stage.” If Q1 has any value at all, we are repeatedly told, it “lies in this: that through the fog, growing thicker as the play goes on and recollection becomes fainter, one catches glimpses of an acting version of the tragedy current in the seventeenth century.” And even as Erne breaks new ground, he still follows in the wake of this tradition in arguing that the variant texts of Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, and Henry V “record different stages on the trajectory from a predominantly oral to a heavily literate culture,” with the “short, theatrical texts” like Q1 Hamlet revealing to us “in admittedly problematic fashion the plays as they were orally delivered on stage to spectators.”

The odd result is that this playbook seems not to be a book at all; it is only a dim recollection of a performance through which we can glimpse the oral culture of the Elizabethan playhouse. Q1 Hamlet, it seems, is not for reading. We do not want to deny that Q1 testifies in some way to a version of the play as produced on the early modern stage (as do Q2 and F), and we accept that memory in some form has helped to produce this text. But the critical tradition that has found in Q1 Hamlet a particularly close connection to the theater has repeatedly obscured those printed commonplace markers, which tell a very different story. Reading Q1 Hamlet with the commonplace markers in mind suggests, in what may now seem a paradox, that if we want to historicize this playbook in its own


15 Erne, 220; thus, for instance, the varying depictions of Hamlet, Gertrude, and Laertes in Q1 and Q2/F exemplify, in a culture in transition between orality and literacy, “the respective kinds of characters orality and literacy tend to produce” (242).

16 See Laurie E. Maguire, Shakespearean Suspect Texts: The ’Bad’ Quartos and Their Contexts (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996). Maguire decides that “a case can be made for memorial reconstruction” of Q1 Hamlet (324), one of only seven plays in the period of which this can be said. But she also incisively points out that the “bad” quartos tend to be “characterized as ‘acting versions,’ even though ‘good’ quarto and Folio texts are acting versions too; New Bibliography thus subtly presents ‘good’ texts as ‘literature’ and suspect texts as ‘plays’” (57).
moment, we need to see it not simply as a theatrical abridgment but rather as a literary text for reading.

Indeed, when the rediscovered Q1 made its public debut in a reprint edition in 1825, the play was not linked predominantly to the theater, but rather to Shakespeare's writing process. The edition claimed to present the text as “originally written by Shakespeare, which he afterwards altered and enlarged.” For much of the first century after its rediscovery, Q1’s origins were multifarious, encompassing everything from Shakespearean first drafts and revisions, to lingering fragments of the ur-Hamlet, to actors’ memories, to spectators’ shorthand, to supplementary non-Shakespearean botching. This more heterogeneous understanding of the nature of Q1 is nowhere more evident than in the work of John Dover Wilson, who constructed an elaborate Rube Goldberg-like device to account for Q1’s origins. Dover Wilson’s argument is too complex to be summarized easily, but what is important here is that he recognized the crucial significance of the printed commonplace markers.

The markers form key evidence for Dover Wilson’s argument that Q1 was printed not from a stenographic transcript or memorial reconstruction of performance but rather from a dramatic manuscript: “Is it conceivable that any actor, reporter or publisher’s hireling would put part of his material into inverted commas? . . . Shakespeare, like other dramatists of the age, occasionally marked out his ‘sententious’ passages by placing inverted commas at the beginning of the line; and the appearance of this device in Q1 is conclusive indication of a dramatist’s hand, whether Shakespeare’s or another’s.”

Despite his acknowledgment here that the commonplacing dramatist might be someone other than Shakespeare, in practice Dover Wilson returns again and again to the confident assertion that beneath Q1 lies “a Shakespearian manuscript.” Nonetheless, he rightly sees the printed commonplace markers as a sign that something other than pure theatricality must have been involved in the production of the text that lies behind Q1. With the publication of George Duthie’s 1941 The “Bad” Quarto of “Hamlet,” however, memorial reconstruction came to reign as the dominant, and usually sole, explanation for Q1. The ur-Hamlet, Shakespeare’s rough draft, the hack poet—all fall away as Duthie seeks to explain all of Q1 as “a memorial reconstruction, made for provincial performance by an actor who had taken the part of Marcellus and perhaps

19 Dover Wilson, “Copy,” 163.
20 Dover Wilson, “Copy,” 167.
another part or parts in the full play, and who was able, when his memory failed, to write blank verse of his own in which he often incorporated reminiscences and quotations of countless passages scattered throughout the full text.”

Duthie’s argument won the day, in part because of its simplicity, but there remained the occasional voice of dissent. In his 1962 edition of Q1, Albert B. Weiner called the commonplace markers in Q1 “a blatant and undeniable manuscript peculiarity,” sarcastically remarking, “Surely the reporter never heard Corambis’ punctuation,” and more seriously, “It is difficult to imagine how this pointing could have originated anywhere but in the author’s manuscript.” Like Dover Wilson, Weiner finds in Q1’s printed commonplace markers evidence of writing, but he too confines that writing to Shakespeare: “These inverted commas would have appeared only in the author’s original ms.” But as we will argue, it is more likely that these marks were made by a reader, not a dramatist, and that they provide evidence of Q1 as a play for reading.

By the time of Harold Jenkins’s and G. R. Hibbard’s influential editions for Arden (1982) and Oxford (1987) and the landmark Oxford Complete Works (1986) edited by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, the printed commonplace markers in Q1 have again disappeared—or rather, they have been disappeared by the theory of memorial reconstruction. None of these editors mentions them anywhere in their editions. About Q1’s origins, Jenkins, following Duthie, concludes that the text is a memorial reconstruction for performance and that those “passages of non-Shakespearean blank verse” which are not paralleled by anything in Q2 or F, and which had previously been thought to derive from some other manuscript, in fact “were often put together from remembered scraps of Shakespeare’s play (and occasionally of other plays as well). From this it follows not merely that such passages do not represent some lost original but also that they were not the work of a hack poet who has sometimes been postulated as called in to make good the reporter’s gaps.” Wells and Taylor and Hibbard similarly follow Duthie, writing that it “is now generally agreed that the copy for

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21 George Ian Duthie, The “Bad” Quarto of “Hamlet”: A Critical Study (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1941), 273. Duthie resorts to circular logic in explaining away the commonplace markers; having decided that the relevant passages are “the work of a reporter,” he concludes that “thus the inverted commas throughout the scene may safely be attributed to him. We may assume that he was familiar with this device used by dramatists to mark sententiae” (145; see also 116).

22 Weiner, 42–43; Weiner also cited Corambis’s suggestion that Montano feel out potential informants about Lear: “I saw him yesterday...” (43). The abbreviation viz., Weiner argues, points towards a manuscript rather than a remembrance of performance: “Authors, not actors, use abbreviations” (43).

23 Weiner, 171.

Q1 was a memorial reconstruction of the play” and that the text is “a completely illegitimate and unreliable one, having no direct contact with any Shakespearian manuscript.”

In this account, virtually all connection of Q1 with textuality—whether the ur-Hamlet, Shakespeare’s early manuscript, or the hack poet’s writing—has been severed, and the play becomes entirely oral and theatrical: “acceptance of the memorial-reconstruction hypothesis . . . has produced the assumption that the ’bad’ quartos are self-evidently performance texts.” As Dover Wilson noted, however, Q1’s printed commonplace markers tell a different story, and so they must be repressed if the narrative of Q1’s origins is to be reduced to actors’ memories. Indeed, both Jenkins and Hibbard do gloss the commonplace markers that appear in Q2, a fact that makes only more striking their failure to mention the analogous markers in Q1. The Q1 commonplace markers must be ignored in order to produce an origin that quarantines within that edition the supposed corruptions and nonauthorial interventions of the playhouse—or that enables Q1 to offer a unique (if perhaps foggy) glimpse of the playhouse in action, to make Q1 into “the acting version that finally fulfills our desire to know more about Elizabethan or Jacobean performance practice.”

The close link between the idea that Q1 provides a glimpse of the Elizabethan theater in action and the disappearance of the commonplace markers can be seen, in relief, in the Arden3 edition of Hamlet. As the theory of memorial reconstruction has waned in influence, the commonplace markers reappear. The editors of the Arden3, Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, remain generally agnostic on the origins of the three texts. They therefore provide a “conservative edition of each text,” and because of their decision to treat Q1 as worthy of editing on its own, they do note its commonplace markers, although they do not print them. Writing that the “double quotation marks” indicate “sententious

26 Berstine, 329.
28 Dillon, 86. Dillon is critiquing this interpretation.
or memorable sayings,” Thompson and Taylor direct readers to Weiner’s once-scorned argument “that this implies a written rather than an oral source for the text.”

If a compositor working as quickly as possible would not introduce these commonplace markers himself, and if actors cobbling together a script from memory could have no reason for doing so, how did they find their way into the copy for Q1 Hamlet? Answering this question leads us to the patronage circle of the wealthy London Grocer and innovative literary critic, John Bodenham.

**Vernacular Commonplacing and the Bodenham Circle**

In 1598, the year that Shakespeare’s name first appeared on the title page of one of his plays, Francis Meres published a commonplace book in which “our English Poets” were directly compared to “the Greeke, Latine, and Italian Poets.” Meres praised Shakespeare among the English poets not only as the “mellifluous & hony-tongued” author of the narrative poems and the as-yet-unprinted “sugred Sonnets” circulating “among his priuate friends,” but also as a dramatist. As its title page announced, Meres’s *Palladis Tamia. Wits Treasury* actually constituted “the Second Part of Wits Common Wealth,” referring back to a commonplace book compiled and printed the year before by Nicholas Ling, the publisher and bookseller of both Q1 and Q2 Hamlet. As Ling made clear in his dedication to *Politeuphuia Wits Common Wealth*, all he had done was to take the selections from classical and Christian “authorities” that had been compiled by John Bodenham and organize them into a “methodicall collection of the most choice and select admonitions and sentences, compendiously drawne from infinite varietie, diuine, historicall, poetical, politique, morrall, and humane.”

Meres’s 1598 commonplace book was, as he claimed, a “stalke of the same stemme” as *Politeuphuia*. While Meres went further than Ling by explicitly...
putting modern vernacular poets on a par with the Greek and Roman classics, the collection itself is drawn largely from the ancient authors.

But at the same time that Ling and Meres were compiling “select admonitions and sentences” from accepted “authorities” such as Cicero and St. Augustine, Bodeham and his circle were also gathering a massive range of “sentences” from living vernacular writers. \(^{34}\) Here, the Bodenham circle had no earlier collections to fall back upon. They had to start by gathering the texts themselves—most of them recently printed but some still in manuscript. In the process, they brought together, for the first time, passages from writers who would later form the basis for “English literature.” At some point before 1600, Anthony Munday helped to edit the notes that Bodenham had gathered to create a commonplace book drawn entirely from contemporary vernacular writers.

The resulting book, *Bel-vedére or The Garden of the Muses* (1600), established a novel conception of commonplacing, no longer comparing living writers to the classics, as Meres had done, but taking “Moderne and extant Poets,” who wrote in the culturally and geographically marginal vernacular of English, as suitable authorities on which to base an entire commonplace book. \(^{35}\) Bodenham and Munday selected sententiae from a wide range of contemporary poets and from a variety of poetic forms, including 214 quotations of one or two lines from Shakespeare, 89 from his plays and 125 from his narrative poems *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. In fact, nearly half the quotations (91) are from *Lucrece* alone, the only text by Shakespeare prior to Q1 *Hamlet* that was printed with commonplace markers. Later in 1600, Nicholas Ling co-published Robert Allott’s *Englands Parnassus*, which similarly drew entirely on “Moderne and extant Poets.” \(^{36}\)


\(^{36}\) Although both books digested quotations under topical headings, there was a significant difference between them: in *Bel-vedére*, all the quotations are one or (at most) two lines long; none of them are attributed. *Englands Parnassus* is made up of longer extracts, attributed (sometimes wrongly) to specific authors. Robert Allott, *Englands Parnassus* or *The Choicest Flowers of Our Moderne Poets* (London: For N[icholas] L[ing], C[uthbert] B[urby] and T[homas] H[ayes], 1600). For the quotation counts, see Crawford, “Belvedere, or, The Garden of the Muses,” 206.
In the same year that *Bel-vedère* and *Englands Parnassus* appeared, plays from the professional theater were first printed with commonplace markers. But even before 1600, the printing of commonplace literary texts in the vernacular was already well established.\(^{37}\) Here is a sketch of how the practice developed prior to 1600:

**1570–1593**: Occasional printed commonplace markers in poems, plays, and prose written by aristocrats and gentlemen, including the 1570 second edition of *Gorboduc* (the earliest such English play we have found); several of George Gascoigne’s plays in the 1570s; four poetic works in the 1580s; and Philip Sidney’s *Arcadia*, Mary Sidney’s translation of Robert Garnier’s play *Antonius*, and *Tancred and Gismund* (“Compiled by the Gentlemen of the Inner Temple”) in the early 1590s.\(^{38}\)

**1594–1599**: The more systematic commonplaceing of vernacular poetry, with nine texts, mostly by authors who were trying to establish themselves as professional writers (Shakespeare, Michael Drayton, George Chapman, John Marston).\(^{39}\)

The literary texts printed with commonplace markers between 1594 and 1599 are of particular interest to us because we can follow a direct path from these books to the printed commonplaceing of professional plays and, specifically, of *Hamlet*. What links them are Nicholas Ling and James Roberts. Both Q1 and Q2 *Hamlet* were published by Ling, while the play was first registered by Roberts, who also printed Q2. Ling and/or his co-publisher John Busby brought out five of the nine vernacular literary texts printed with commonplace markers between 1594 and 1599, all of which were printed by Roberts.\(^{40}\)

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\(^{37}\) Our analysis of printed commonplace markers in books of vernacular poesy derives from and is deeply indebted to Hunter’s “Marking of Sententiae” (cited above in our acknowledgments). We have supplemented his list with our own search through all plays printed in England through 1642. Italicics, and occasionally marginal commas, were used to mark other kinds of text than commonplaces, and we exclude uses of these markers to indicate, for example, songs, letters, inset poems, reported speech, riddles, and epilogues. We also exclude instances in which italics set off the final couplet of the play: *Northward Ho* (1607), *Your Five Gallants* (1608), 2 *The Fair Maid of the West* (1631), *A Fine Companion* (1633), *The Bloody Brother* (1639), *The Coronation* (1640), *Wit in a Constable* (1640) (used at end of the second act, not the play as a whole), *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife* (1640), and *The Discontented Colonel* (1642).

\(^{38}\) *The Tragedie of Tancred and Gismund* (London: Thomas Scarlet, to be sold by R[obert] Robinson, 1591), title page.

\(^{39}\) These nine texts are those listed in Hunter, “Marking of Sententiae,” but there may well be others that Hunter did not find.

\(^{40}\) On Busby’s role less as an independent publisher than as the securer of literary manuscripts for other publishers and (in particular) Ling, see Gerald D. Johnson, “John Busby and the
was the compiler as well as the publisher of *Politeuphuiia*, which Roberts also printed and which was the first commonplace book produced by the Bodenham circle; Ling was also the co-publisher of *Englands Parnassus*. Here are the five commonplacèd texts published by Ling and/or Busby and printed by Roberts in these years:

1. Robert Garnier, *Cornelia*, translated by Thomas Kyd (James Roberts for Nicholas Ling and John Busby, 1594). Twenty-one quotations from this text were included in *Englands Parnassus (EP)*.

To publish those five books, which had never been previously printed, Ling and Busby must of course have had manuscripts of the texts—which were among the very texts that Bodenham, Allott, Ling, and their collaborators used to compile *Englands Parnassus* and *Bel-vedère*. It seems quite possible that the printers’ copies for these five commonplacèd editions, in other words, were the same manuscripts from which the Bodenham circle, including the publisher Ling in his capacity as compiler, were extracting sententiae for the two commonplace books drawn from vernacular poetry and plays that they published in 1600.

Indeed, it is possible that the printers’ copies for the other four commonplacèd texts from this period also came from the Bodenham circle, since all of the nine commonplacèd texts were used either for *Bel-vedère* or *Englands Parnassus* or both. *Englands Parnassus* includes no fewer than 195 quotations from those nine texts alone. This does not mean that Bodenham or someone else in his circle was necessarily responsible for marking sententiae in all of these manuscripts: as Kiséry argues, in the cases of the two translations of Garnier’s plays—Kyd’s *Cornelia* and Mary Sidney’s *Antonius*—the evidence suggests that the translators themselves marked up their manuscripts, since the commonplace markers in these editions correspond exactly to those in the French editions from which they were working. But barring other, similar evidence to the contrary, why should we imagine that anyone but the Bodenham/Allott/Ling circle was

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41 Kiséry, 155–56.
responsible for the appearance of commonplace markers in these nine books of vernacular poetry, given how heavily they were using the same texts for their own printed commonplace books?

The Social Stakes of Vernacular Commonplacing

The commonplacing of classical authors was central to Renaissance pedagogy, just as the citation and quotation of these authors were central to Renaissance writing, and both practices were simplified by the range of printed Latin commonplace books that were available. It was to this tradition that Bodenham tried to attach his vernacular commonplace books. In the prefatory material to Bel-vedére, he wrote dedicatory sonnets to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, the latter beginning:

Mother of Muses, and great Nurse of Art,
Which lent'st the roote from whence these sweets are grown,
Now with increase, receiue a bounteous part,
Which thou mayst iustly chalenge as thine owne.

Bodenham’s claim that Cambridge is the “roote” from which grew the “sweets” that he has gathered is a curious one. It is true that poets who had been to Cambridge are well represented in Bel-vedére, starting with Spenser and Samuel Daniel, who were responsible for the second and third most quotations in the book. But the single most quoted poet, Michael Drayton, seems not to have gone to university, and the fourth most quoted poet is William Shakespeare, a professional dramatist who had received no university education at all. Nor had the “Mother of Muses” made any contribution to Bodenham himself, another outsider to an institution that can, he claims, “iusly chalenge” whatever he has to offer as “thine owne.” Neither were Munday (a Draper) and Ling (a Stationer) university men; all three derived their credentials from the London livery companies, not from Oxford or Cambridge. Bodenham’s sonnet, in other words, reflects his own aspirations for his book rather than the reality of its production.

But Cambridge, it seems, had no desire to claim these fruits as its own. In 1601 or 1602, the students of St. John’s College, Cambridge, performed the second part of The Return from Parnassus, the final play in an anonymous trilogy of university satires that had begun with The Pilgrimage to Parnassus and the first part of The Return from Parnassus. The play was subsequently published in

42 See Moss, 186–214.
43 Bodenham and Munday, Bel-vedére, sig. A10’, emphasis removed.
44 Erne discusses the quotations from Shakespeare and other dramatists in Bel-vedére and Englands Parnassus as an index to the social respectability of plays from the professional theater (71–75). Bel-vedére includes twenty-three quotations from Edward III, and if the play is considered to be Shakespeare’s, then he trails only Drayton for most quotations. See Crawford, “Belvedere, or, The Garden of the Muses,” 204, 214.
1606, and its present fame rests on the fact that it contains one of the earliest evaluations of Shakespeare. It is not a particularly flattering one:

Who loues [not] Adonis loue, or Lucre's rape,
His sweeter verse contaynes hart robbing life,
Could but a grauer subiect him content,
Without loues foolish lazy languishment.  

As was already becoming an established cliché, Shakespeare's verse is “sweet,” but although it contains “hart robbing life,” it cannot rise above its trivial subject matter: “loues foolish lazy languishement.” Shakespeare’s later fame, however, has occluded the fact that the play’s evaluation of his poetry is only the byproduct of its evaluation of another man—John Bodenham.

In 2 Return from Parnassus, the critics of contemporary vernacular poetry are Ingenioso and Iudicio, two former Cambridge students. Ingenioso, now trying to make his way as a professional writer, and Iudicio, working as a press corrector, are appalled that the field has been usurped by writers not trained at university. Worse still, an illiterate (that is, unversed in Latin) London citizen has taken it upon himself to treat these ignorant hacks as if they were worthy of the same treatment as the classical authors whom university students read, study, and commonplace. In fact, the Cambridge students’ critique is organized around a single stage prop: a copy of Bel-vedére. As with any stage prop, we cannot know whether the actors playing Ingenioso and Iudicio used an actual copy of the printed commonplace book, but they certainly act as if they are perusing the book page by page:  

Iud. ... here is a booke ing: why to condemne it to [Cloaca], the vsuall Tiburne of all misliuing papers, weare too faire a death for so foule an offender.

[Bel-vedére: the book closed.]

Ing. What's the name of it, I pray thee Iud?
Iud. Looke its here Beluedere.

[Bel-vedére, title page (Figure 4).]

45 The Returne from Pernassus: Or the Scourge of Simony (London: G[eorge] Eld for John Wright, 1606), sig. B2'. The “not” that we have added in the first line appears in the surviving manuscript (Folger Shakespeare Library MS V.a.355), but it may have been cut because it produces an ungainly hypermetric line. In the second line, the manuscript has “hart throbbeinge line” instead of “hart robbing life”; J. B. Leishman conjectures “hart robbing lines” in his edition, The Three Parnassus Plays (1598–1601) (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson Ltd., 1949), 244.

46 The following extended passage is from 2 Return from Parnassus; see Returne from Pernassus, sigs. B1’–B3’. Our glosses, set in square brackets, follow each quotation; the excerpts do not necessarily follow immediately from each other. Our account of the place that Bodenham holds in 2 Return from Parnassus would not have been possible without Leishman’s pioneering work.
Bel-vedere
OR
THE GARDEN OF
THE MUSES.

Quem referens Muse vixet dum robora tellus,
Dum cælum stellas, dum vehet annis aquas.

Imprinted at London by F.K. for Hugh Asley, dwelling at
Saint Magnus corner. 1690.

Figure 4: Title page of Bel-vedere. Folger Shakespeare Library.
Ing. . . . what is the rest of the title?
Iud. The garden of the Muses.

[Bel-vedere, title page: the subtitle.]

Ing. . . . what follows?
Iud. Quem referent musæ, viuet dum robora tellus,
Dum cælum stellas, dum veh[e]t amnis aquas.

[Bel-vedere, title page: quotation from Tibullus ("He whom the Muses name, shall live, while earth bears oaks, while heaven bears stars, while rivers carry water.")]

Iud. . . . Then ( ) thy muse shall lie so long
As drafty ballats to thy praise are song.

[Bel-vedere, title page: the absent name of the author, marked as a blank space in the printed edition of the second Return.]

Iud. . . . But what's his devise? Parnassus with the sunne
and the lawrel? I wonder this owle dares looke on
the sunne and I maruaill this gose flies not the lawrell.

[Bel-vedere, title page: John Bodenham's device of a sun shining down on a laurel tree between two hills. The motto in the surrounding oval is “Digna Parnasso et Apolline” (Be worthy of Parnassus and Apollo).]

Iud. . . . his devise might haue bene better a foole going in
to the market place to be scene, with this motto scribimus indocti,47 or a poore beggar gleaning of eares
in the end of haruest, with this word, sua cui[que] gloria.

[Bel-vedere, sig. χ2r (the second of two added leaves, perhaps intended as cancels): “Sua cuique gloria” (To each his own glory) at the end of the dedicatory sonnet to the University of Cambridge.]

Iud. Turne ouer the leafe Ing: and thou shalt see the paynes
of this worthy gentleman, Sentences gathered out of
all kind of Poetts, referred to certaine methodicall
heades, profitable for the vse of these times, to rime
upon any occasion at a little warning.

[Bel-vedere, sigs. A3r–A4r, “To the Reader”: “Sentences” that have been “collected from so many singular mens works” and “subjected vnder apt and proper heads,” “all extending both to pleasure and profit.”]

Iud. ... Read the names.

Ing. So I will, if thou wilt helpe me to censure them.


Henry Constable. John Davis.

Thomas Lodge. John Marston.


Thomas Watson.

[Bel-vedere, sigs. A5r–v: the list of professional vernacular writers. Ingenioso and Judicio follow the order in which the poets are listed in Bel-vedere, which is as follows: “Edmund Spenser. Henry Constable Esquier. Samuell Daniell. Thomas Lodge. Doctor of Physicke. Thomas Watson. Michiell Drayton. Iohn Davies. Thomas Hudson. Henrie Locke Esquier. Iohn Marston. Christopher Marlow ....” Although Hudson and Locke are missing from Ingenioso’s list, they do appear in their “proper” place between Davies and Marston in the discussion that ensues. And the order in which Ingenioso and Judicio discuss the four poets who come after Marlowe in their list exactly follows the order in which those poets appear in Bel-vedere: Benjamin Jonson, William Shakespeare, Thomas Churchyard, Thomas Nashe. After the discussion of Nashe, Ingenioso “Reades the rest” (another ten poets in Bel-vedere’s list), to which Judicio responds: “As for these, they haue some of them beene the old hedgstakes of the presse, and some of them are at this instant the botts and glanders of the printing house.”]

Ing. ... this Beluedere, this methodicall asse, hath made me almost forget my time.

[Bel-vedere, closing the book at the end of the scene. The gibe at Bodenham as “this methodicall asse” is directed at his preface “To the Reader,” which emphasizes the labor involved in gathering “Sentences” under “methodicall heads.”]

If the whole scene is indeed a “censure” of contemporary poets, it is conducted relentlessly by how those poets are brought together by John Bodenham in a vernacular commonplace book. And while the name of the author whose muse “shall live so long” is replaced by a blank space in the printed edition of 2 Return, the surviving manuscript supplies it. The name, of course, is “Bodenham.”

Judicio also makes clear exactly why Bodenham is so obnoxious to him, to his Cambridge friend Ingenioso, and (presumably) to the Cambridge students who

48 Leishman, 233.
wrote and watched the original production. Judicio may hate the “lousy beggarly Pamphlet[s]” that a new breed of non-university writers are publishing, but he could “better endure” them if “they would keepe them from these English flores-poetarum, but now the world is come to that passe, that there starts vp every day an old goose that sits hatching vp those eggs which haue ben filcht from the nest of Crowes and Kestrelles.”

The Flores Poetarum was one of the most popular Latin commonplace books, but now, Judicio complains, we have English commonplace books. And, according to Judicio, the old geese like Bodenham who put such collections together are the plagiarists of plagiarists, gathering the lines of the “Crowes” who have themselves filched their lines from their betters.

Ingenioso has usually been taken to represent Thomas Nashe; like Nashe, he is a Cambridge graduate who goes to London to “liue by the printinge house,” and in 1 Return from Parnassus, we learn that, like Nashe, he earns a meager living by churning out pamphlets. Even more to the point, the Parnassus plays are a revival by Cambridge students of the complaints that Nashe had launched a decade earlier against non-university-trained playwrights, and in particular actor-playwrights, whose bombast has drowned out the wit of their learned betters. In his 1589 preface to Greene’s Menaphon, Nashe addressed “the Gentlemen Students of both Vniuersities”—gentlemen students who were expected to sneer along with Nashe at professional players “who (mou[n]ted on the stage of arrogance) think to outbraue better pens with the swelling bumbast of a bragging blanke verse.” Nashe continued:

It is a co[m]on practise now a daies amongst a sort of shifting companions, that runne through every arte and thriue by none, to leaue the trade of Nourint whereto they were borne, and busie themselves with the indevors of Art, that could scarcelie latinize their nekke-verse if they should haue neede; yet English Seneca read by candle light yeeldes manie good sentences, as Bloud is a begger, and so foorth: and if you intreate him faire in a frostie morning, he will affoord you whole Hamlets. I should say handfulls of tragical speaches.

A year later, Greene wrote his own version of Nashe’s attack upon professional playwrights who, unable to read Latin, could nevertheless steal all that they needed from an English translation of Seneca. Greene took as his nominal target Roscius, the most famous Roman actor. When Greene’s Roscius dares to compare himself to Cicero, Cicero responds: “why Roscius, art thou proud

49 Returne from Pernassus, sig. B1’.
50 See Leishman, 71–79. The quotation is from The First Part of the Return from Parnassus, 1.1.375 in Leishman’s edition.
with *Esops* Crow being pinct with the glorie of others feathers? of thy selfe thou canst say nothing . . . [W]hat sentence thou vutterest on the stage, flowes from the censure of our wittes; and what sentence or conceipte of the inuention the people applaud for excellent, that comes from the secrets of our knowledge." The title page of *Francescos Fortunes*, in which this attack appears, clearly emphasizes the gulf between the university-trained author and the player-botcher: although a mere pamphlet, it is written, like the earlier *Menaphon* in which Nashe's attack appeared, by “Robertus Greene in Artibus Magister.”

But the most famous attack upon the actor-turned-playwright, then as now, was the 1592 attack upon “those Puppets . . . that spake from our mouths, those Anticks garnisht in our colours” published in Greenes Groats-Worth of Witte, and in particular, the attack upon Shakespeare, which was a reworking of Greene's account of Roscius, “pinct with the glorie of others feathers” like “*Esops* Crow”: “there is an vpstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his *Tygers hart wrapt in a Players hyde*, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blanke verse as the best of you: and beeing an absolute *Iohannes fac totum*, is in his owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in a countrey.” The “*Tygers hart wrapt in a Players hyde*” is, of course, a parody of Shakespeare's “Oh Tygers hart wrapt in a womans hide.” The accusation that Shakespeare is “an absolute *Iohannes fac totum*” likens him to a small woodblock used by compositors in the printing house, since a factotum is an ornamental frame in which any piece of type could be inserted so as to make a decorative capital for the beginning of a section, chapter, or book. In other words, far from concealing a tiger's heart, the ornamental appearance of the overpaid and overdressed actor-playwright holds only a blank space, waiting to be filled up by the letters of his betters.

Given the attacks upon vernacular commonplacing and actor-playwrights (specifically, Bodenham and Shakespeare) that issued from Cambridge and its alumni from 1589 to 1606, it is all the more remarkable that in this same period a Cambridge don, famous for his Greek and Latin learning, singled out *Hamlet* as exactly the sort of play suitable for commonplacing. Some time

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52 Robert Greene, *Francescos Fortunes: Or, The Second Part of Greenes Neuer Too Late* (London: Thomas Orwin for N[i]cholas L[ing] and John Busby, 1590),igs. B4r–C1r (here, roman typeface has been substituted for black letter and italics for roman).


55 Jowett, “*Johannes Factotum*,” 482–83.
shortly before or after the publication of Q1 Hamlet, Gabriel Harvey wrote in his copy of Thomas Speght’s 1598 edition of Chaucer’s Works: “The younger sort takes much delight in Shakespere’s Venus, & Adonis: but his Lucrece, & his tragedie of Hamlet, prince of Denmark, have it in them, to please the wiser sort.” Astonishingly, Harvey, who had already been mockingly staged by the students of his own university as “Pedantius” and attacked in print by a former Cambridge student as a puritan who scorned the theater, singled out Hamlet as the only play among “owre best Inglish” to be fitting company for the new vernacular “classics”: Chaucer himself, “the Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia, & the Faerie Queene . . . & Astophil, & Amyntas.” 56

In pairing Hamlet with Lucrece, Harvey brought together the only two texts by Shakespeare that were printed with commonplace markers prior to 1609. Most critics have sided with Nashe in his satirical attacks upon Harvey’s pedantry. But it was Nashe, the brash Cambridge graduate, who sneered at what he considered the pretensions of plagiarizing actor-poets, while Harvey was the first university scholar of note to treat a play written for the professional theater as a literary text to set beside Chaucer and Spenser and Sidney. It took the London Grocer John Bodenham, however, to appreciate and appropriate the whole range of Shakespeare’s work, Venus and Adonis as well as Lucrece, Love’s Labor’s Lost as well as Richard II, Romeo and Juliet, and 3 Henry VI. And most striking of all is that in Bel-vedere, Bodenham commonplaced Shakespeare more than any other English dramatist.

For the Wiser Sort: Commonplacing Professional Drama

The second part of The Return from Parnassus presents Shakespeare as a poet, the author of Venus and Adonis and Lucrece, not as a dramatist. And indeed, before 1600, the only Shakespeare text to appear with printed commonplace markers—and hence perhaps the only Shakespeare worthy of notice by “the wiser sort”—was Lucrece, printed and reprinted with extensive commonplace markers from 1594 to the end of the century. 57 But 1600 saw an extraordinary


57 On the commonplacing of Lucrece, see Sasha Roberts, Reading Shakespeare’s Poems in Early Modern England (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 102–42.
transformation, one that redefined Shakespeare’s plays and professional drama more generally as worthy of, and indeed particularly suitable for, commonplacing. In that year, as shown above, the Bodenham circle continued to extract heavily from the poets whom they had been commonplacing throughout the second half of the 1590s, but for the first time, with Bel-vedére and Englands Parnassus, they also drew extensively upon plays from the professional theaters. In these two books, Shakespeare is still predominantly a narrative poet, but his plays are also well represented: Bel-vedére includes forty-seven quotations from Richard II, thirteen from Richard III, thirteen from Romeo and Juliet, ten from The True Tragedie, five from Love’s Labor’s Lost, and one from 1 Henry IV; Englands Parnassus has thirteen quotations from Romeo and Juliet, seven from Richard II, five from Richard III, three from Love’s Labor’s Lost, and two from 1 Henry IV. In fact, as we will show, Bodenham and Allott were reading and commonplacing a wide range of professional plays both in print and in manuscript.

In the same year that these two innovative commonplace books were published, Ben Jonson’s Every Man Out of His Humor became the first professional play to be printed with commonplace markers that pointed out vernacular “sentences.” In the years immediately following, there was a sea change in the kinds of vernacular poesy printed with commas, inverted commas, or a change in font to demarcate sententiae: a large number, probably the great majority, of those books originated as plays from the professional theaters. From 1600 to 1613, of all the first editions of dramatic texts with printed commonplace markers for vernacular sentences, forty-eight were plays from the professional stage, while another four were entertainments by professional dramatists (Ben Jonson’s part of King James’s royal entry, his masque Hymenaei, his Masque of Blackness, and Thomas Dekker’s Troia Nova Triumphans). And the forty-eight first-edition professional plays actually understates the number of dramatic manuscripts being commonplaced and playbooks being printed with commonplace markers, since Q1 and Q2 Hamlet are commonplaced quite differently, as (to a lesser extent) are QA, QB, and QC of Marston’s Malcontent.

That the commonplacing of professional plays first emerged from the Bodenham circle is suggested by the fact that they were collecting and presumably

58 Two other commonplaced professional plays, the anonymous Wisdom of Doctor Dody-poll and Thomas Nashe’s Summer’s Last Will and Testament, were also published in 1600, but Jonson’s play was entered in April while Doctor Dodypoll and Summer’s Last Will were both entered in October.

59 According to Hunter’s figures, about twice as many professional plays were printed with commonplace markers as other kinds of literary texts, but since Hunter’s survey is not complete—and since we have completed it only for dramatic texts—it is difficult to say precisely what the true proportions are. It seems likely, however, that plays do in fact comprise a majority of new books printed with commonplace markers during this period.
marking up manuscripts, as well as printed plays. Jonson’s *Every Man In His Humor* was published with commonplace markers in 1601, but Bodenham and Allott were printing extracts from it the previous year. In Jonson’s play, Thorello says to his wife:

by Iesus I am not iealous, but resolued I haue the faythfulst wife in Italie.
For this I finde where iealousie is fed,
Hornes in the mind, are worse then on the head.  

Bodenham had already included the two italicized lines in his 1600 *Bel-vedere*, under the heading of “Jealousie”:

This still we find, where jealousie is bred,
Hornes in the mind are worse than on the head.  

The change to the beginning of the quotation is a necessary adaptation in order to turn Thorello’s lines into a commonplace. But “where jealousie is bred” makes as much sense as “where jealousie is fed,” so it is at least possible that Bodenham was following a different manuscript reading.

Bodenham’s quotation from Jonson, like all his quotations, is unascribed. But when, later the same year and still prior to the publication of Jonson’s play, Allott cited the same two lines under “Jealousie” in *Englands Parnassus*, they were, like nearly all of Allott’s quotations, assigned an author:

Where jealousie is bred,
Hornes in the mind, are worse then hornes in the hed.

B. Johnson.  

Allott is presumably following Bodenham here (*bred*, not *fed*), although he misquotes the second line, destroying the meter. But that Allott may have drawn on Bodenham does not mean that he was unable to make use of literary manuscripts himself—some, no doubt, passed on by Bodenham. Indeed, Allott must have had a manuscript of *Every Man In His Humor*, because under the heading of “Jealousie” he also included a significantly longer passage from the play that does not appear in Bodenham:

A new disease? I know not; new, or old;
But it may well be term’d, poore mortall plaine.
For like the pestilence, it doth infect
The houses of the braine: first it begins

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60 *Every Man In His Humor . . . by Ben. Johnson* (London: [Simon Stafford] for Walter Burre, 1601), sig. M2’.
Solely to worke vpon the phantasie,
Filling her seat with such pestiferous aire,
As soone corrupts the iudgement, and from thence
Sends like contagion to the memorie,
Still each of other taking like infection,
Which as a searching vapour spreads it selfe,
Confusedly through euery sensiue part,
Till not a thought or motion in the minde,
Be farre from the blacke poyson of suspect.

B. Johnson.  

Allott may have had some difficulty in reading his manuscript, because his text is somewhat garbled. What was printed a year later in Jonson’s play as “poore mortals Plague” had appeared in Allott as “poore mortall plaine,” and the play’s “Be free from the blacke poison of suspect” had been printed by Allott as “Be farre from the blacke poyson of suspect” (our italics). “The inaccuracies of some of Allott’s transcriptions, however, should not obscure the crucial fact that he mainly used manuscripts when he was quoting Jonson.”

Given that Jonson had published only a single play by the time that Englands Parnassus was printed, it is striking that he is represented by Allott primarily as a dramatist. Every Man Out of His Humor provided Allott with exactly half of the quotations that he drew from, or attributed to, Jonson. Thus, even before the publication of Every Man Out launched the publishing boom of professional plays with printed commonplace markers, Bodenham and his circle were actively commonplacing professional drama. In addition to the Shakespeare and Jonson plays listed above, Bel-vedere and Englands Parnassus include extracts from a host of other professional plays: George Chapman, The Blind Beggar of Alexandria (first performed 1596 / first published 1598); Thomas Dekker, Old Fortunatus (1599/1600); Robert Greene, Orlando Furioso (1591/1594), Friar Bacon and Friar Bongay (1589/1594), James the Fourth (1590/1598), and 1 Selimus (1592/1594); Thomas Lodge, Marius and Scilla (1588/1594); Thomas Lodge and Robert Greene, A Looking Glass for London and England (1588/1594); Christopher Marlowe, The Massacre at Paris (1593/1594); George Peele, The Battle of Alcazar (1589/1594) and David and Bathsheba (1594/1599). Allott also includes a passage from an unprinted play on Cupid and Psyche that he...
attributes to Dekker. If it were not for this passage, indeed, we would not suspect that these lines, which were published in 1636 in *Love’s Mistress* under the name of Thomas Heywood, must have come from the play for which Henslowe paid Dekker, Henry Chettle, and Richard Day on 14 May 1600. Considering how active the Bodenham circle was in commonplacing professional drama in the years leading up to 1600, it seems logical to see their activity as a major cause of the ensuing publishing boom, particularly given the role played in that boom by Bodenham’s collaborator, Nicholas Ling.

Perhaps it is not surprising, given what we know of Ben Jonson’s literary aspirations, that he was the author of the first professional playbook to mark English sentences, or that *Cynthia’s Revels* was similarly printed the following year. But the practice spread rapidly and widely, as can be seen in Figure 5. The period from 1600 to 1613 included fully two-thirds of all the first-edition professional plays to mark English sentences through 1642. This brief span of about a decade and a half, then, saw a burst of activity, with forty-eight such plays; the remaining thirty years of professional drama saw only half this number. This is not to say that the practice died out, but it continued at a much lower rate not only in terms of total numbers but also as a percentage of all first editions of professional drama (Figure 6).

*Figure 5: Number of first-edition professional plays with printed commonplace markers for English sententiae, 1576–1642.*
While Jonson certainly makes his presence felt in these years, he by no means dominates the list. John Marston equals his total of ten plays, and in all, twenty-one dramatists (plus the author of *The Revenger’s Tragedy*, if it was not by Thomas Middleton) were responsible for these forty-eight plays. In other words, not once before Bodenham and his circle began their project of vernacular commonplacing did any publisher or playwright think to print a professional play with English commonplaces marked by a change in font, commas, or inverted commas; but immediately after the publication of *Bel-vedére* and *Englands Parnassus*, a wide range of authors, publishers, and printers began to practice such commonplacing. Rather than leading this project of transforming professional plays into poetry worthy of standing alongside classical authorities, as has often been imagined, Jonson was only one player—an important one, to be sure—in the larger project initiated by the London Grocer.66

**Figure 6:** Percentage of all first-edition professional plays that contain printed commonplace markers for English sententiae.

In his pioneering essay, G. K. Hunter brilliantly illuminates the printing of commonplace markers in literary texts. Hunter treats the three main ways in which commonplaces were marked as essentially equal and discrete:

Printing in a type different from that used in the body of the work . . .

By inverted commas at the beginning of the gnomic passage, or each of the lines which contain it . . .

By commas at the beginning of the gnomic passage, or each of the lines which contain it.  

We believe, however, that the choice of commas or inverted commas to indicate sententiae is of little significance and results from the vagaries of compositorial habit, especially since the same piece of type was used for both, with the comma (or two separate commas) simply set upside-down to produce the inverted comma. We will therefore refer to these two forms together as “marginal commas.” With one important exception discussed below, marginal commas, we will argue, usually correspond to a reader’s marks in the margin of his copy (whether or not that reader is also the author), for the text itself is not affected, the markings being confined to the margins.

As William Sherman has shown, “manicules” or hands with pointing fingers were one of the commonest reader’s marks in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and these were extensively copied by printers in the mid-sixteenth century in, for instance, bibles. Manicules continued to be used to mark commonplaces in the seventeenth century, and Thomas Speght’s 1602 edition of the Workes of Chaucer, which advertises on its title page that “Sentences and prouerbes [are] noted,” still marks such sentences with the printed pointing fingers used in editions since 1561. Following the tradition for marking up classical drama and translations of that drama, however, marginal commas, rather than manicules, were nearly always used in both aristocratic and professional plays to render the wide range of manuscript signs in margins. Compositors tended to follow earlier printed commas when they reprinted a play, with only occasional corrections or, as in the case of Jonson, authorial interventions.

Hunter, 180: Hunter lists several other methods for indicating sententiae—by an asterisk, a marginal hand, or a colon—but these are all rare.

We thank Eric Rasmussen for noting that there was no distinct piece of type for the “quotation mark” in the early modern compositor’s case (personal communication, 18 August 2008). Compositors would have found the comma ideal for this purpose, since they were relatively plentiful in the case, far more so than the asterisks, flowers, or pointing hands that readers often wrote into the margins of their books to indicate sententiae. We are not arguing, therefore, that printed marginal commas necessarily reflect precisely the same marking in the manuscript from which the book was printed, merely that compositors set these commas habitually when they encountered some form of marginal notation in the manuscript in order to point to sententiae.

important exception to this rule is when a printer used a different manuscript (as in the case of Q1 and Q2 Hamlet, and perhaps of certain plays in the First Folio). On such occasions, old commonplace markers disappeared and new signs of readerly practices might be recorded in print.

By contrast to compositorial interpretations of marginal markings, a shift in font—usually from black letter to roman or from roman to italic—seems to correspond to an alteration to the body of the written text, whether by underlining or by a change of hand, usually from secretary to italic. The latter technique was particularly common among professional scribes, who typically copied plays in secretary hand but used an italic hand for some or all of the following: speech prefixes, stage directions, quotations in a foreign language, and vernacular sententiae. Extant examples of Renaissance printer’s copies allow us to follow such common scribal practices from the manuscript copy to the printed text that the compositor set. In the case of italics indicated by a change of hand, this marking corresponds to the act of the writer of a manuscript, whether that writer is the author or scribe. On the other hand, a reader might have been just as likely as an author to underline a particular passage, which would cause it to be set in a different font. Jonson, for instance, underlined passages in his own manuscript of The Masque of Queens that a professional scribe would have usually marked with a change of hand and that a compositor would have usually set in italics. But as a reader, he also underlined poem after poem in his copy of Martial, as well as adding manicules and flowers in the margin. In general, it is not possible to determine precisely who made the marks on a manuscript that resulted in printed commonplaceing, and neither system can be strictly associated with either authors or readers, but we would suggest that the use of marginal commas—which seem more clearly to point to the activity of reading the text rather than to the act of writing—is far less likely to be authorial than the use of italics.

There are two interesting types of commonplaceing, however, that each suggest somewhat more strongly the author’s hand. First, commas or inverted commas that occur in the middle of a line, when the commonplace passage begins midline and continues onto the line below (Figure 7), seem more likely to be authorial,

70 For some excellent reproductions of the way in which compositors followed changes of hand and underlining in seventeenth-century Dutch printing houses, see Wytze Gs. Hellinga, Copy and Print in the Netherlands: An Atlas of Historical Bibliography (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1962). For changes of manuscript hand reproduced as changes in font, see plates 59–60, 91–92, 93–94. For manuscript underlining reproduced as printed italic in a field of roman type, see plates 107–8, 121–22, 147–48, 149–50, 151–52. For manuscript underlining reproduced as printed roman in a field of italic, see plates 117 and 119.

as they require more than the marginal manicules, dashes, flowers, and asterisks that readers commonly made. This suspicion gains support from the fact that only five first-edition professional plays contain midline commas, and three of these plays are by Jonson. The Jonsonian origin of this technique is even more apparent if we count the individual instances of midline commonplacing, rather than simply the playbooks in which they appear: Jonson accounts for twenty-seven of the thirty total uses of this technique in first-edition professional plays. No playbook contains more than Sejanus (1605), which includes nineteen instances of midline inverted commas, and we know that Jonson was heavily involved in the printing and the material appearance of this text. But in such cases, the author—Jonson above all others—may actually have learned the technique from readers before incorporating it into his writing practice.

Tellingly, all of the passages that Allott quotes from Every Man Out, and only those passages, are marked as commonplaces by marginal commas in the quarto. Jonson's play was entered into the Stationers' Register earlier in 1600 than Allott's commonplace book, so Allott could simply have been excerpting the lines that had already been commonplaced in the printed text. But the opposite may be the case: the copy that the compositors used for printing Every Man Out could have been a manuscript that had first been marked up by Allott while preparing England's Parnassus. Indeed, this latter possibility strikes us as

Figure 7: An example of the use of midline inverted commas to mark sententiae, from Ben Jonson, Sejanus (1605), sig. H2', detail. Folger Shakespeare Library.

72 The other playbooks to include midline commonplace markers are Jonson's Poetaster (1602), one instance of midline inverted commas; Jonson's Catiline (1611), seven instances of midline inverted commas; Marston's Dutch Courtesan (1605), one instance of midline commas; and Ford's Perkin Warbeck (1634), two instances of midline inverted commas. On the complex typography of Ford's plays, see N. W. Bawcutt, "Renaissance Dramatists and the Texts of Their Plays," Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama 40 (2001): 1–21.
more likely given that the printed *Every Man Out* also includes a number of sententious phrases, in both English and Latin, set off by a change in font from roman to italic. If Allott were drawing his commonplaces from the quarto of the play, why would he not also include the italicized passages? Given that all the other quotations from Jonson that Allott selected for *Englands Parnassus* must derive from manuscript copies (including a manuscript of *Every Man In*), it is certainly plausible that he had access to a manuscript of *Every Man Out* as well. If so, Allott or someone else in the Bodenham circle may have been the first to mark up a play by Jonson so as to draw attention to its sententiae, well before the author himself began to do so.

The second kind of printed commonplace markers suggesting an author’s involvement are those also indicated in the text itself by a word such as “maxim” or “proverb.” In all, thirty-five of the English sentences marked in plays (both professional and nonprofessional) are textually noted as a “proverb” (15 instances), “saying” (4), “axiom” (4), “rule” (4), “saw” (3), “lesson” (2), “sentence” (2), or “maxim” (1). In these cases, the author has already “marked” the lines as a commonplace in the dialogue of the play. What is striking is how strongly these words are associated with a shift in font to mark the commonplace in print. Of these thirty-five commonplaces, thirty-three use the font-change method, one uses both a font change and marginal commas, and only one uses marginal commas alone. This remarkable correspondence suggests that, in these cases, the change in font derives from a shift in the writer’s manuscript hand rather than a reader’s underlining. A reader encountering a “saying” or “proverb” in the text would be just as likely, if not more likely, to mark the commonplace with a marginal notation as to underline it, resulting in marginal commas but not a font change. Of course, this manuscript hand need not necessarily be authorial, but the correspondence with the author’s own commonplacing word suggests that it might well be, since the incidence of a change in font is so much higher when the commonplace follows a textual indication of a “proverb” than it is overall. Indeed, even the single instance in which marginal commas alone are associated with one of these words is less exceptional than it initially appears, for the passage occurs in Jonson’s *Sejanus* and so the marginal commas are likely the author’s.

That Jonson was actively involved in the project of commonplacing his plays is shown not only by his use of midline commas but also by the reprinting of some (but by no means all) of the commonplace markers from the quartos in the 1616 folio. 73 Jonson may have overseen the reproduction of his own

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73 Among Jonson’s quartos that are reprinted in the folio, all of the lines marked with marginal commas in *Every Man Out of His Humor* (1600), *Cynthia’s Revels* (1601), *Poetaster* (1602), *King James His Royal and Magnificent Entertainment* (1604), *Hymenæi* (1606), and *Two
manuscript commonplace marks in print, as John Marston certainly did in the first two reprints of *The Malcontent* in 1604 and in the reprint of *The Fawn* in 1606. Moreover, in some of Jonson’s and Marston’s plays—especially *Sejanus*, *Catiline* (1611), and *The Dutch Courtesan* (1605)—marginal commas occur frequently and throughout the book rather than sporadically.

Thorough commonplacing in the manner of Jonson or Marston is unusual. Other dramatists are less likely to have played any significant role in the process, and we would suggest that readers like Bodenham and reader-publishers like Ling were the driving force behind the printing of commonplace markers. In George Chapman’s plays, for instance, commonplacing, whether by marginal commas or a change in font, occurs rarely: two lines are marked with marginal commas in *The Gentleman Usher* (1606), two with a font change in *The Conspiracy of Byron* (1608) and in *The Tragedy of Byron* (1608), and a single line with italics in *All Fools* (1605). In both Middleton’s *Blurt, Master Constable* (1602) and John Mason’s *The Turk* (1610), only three lines are marked with marginal commas; and in Thomas Heywood’s *The Golden Age* (1611) and the anonymous *The Puritan* (1607), only a single line is italicized.

*Hamlet* is an even more striking case. Why, if Shakespeare himself was commonplacing the play, did he add marginal commas beside fourteen of Coramnbi’s lines in Q1 but beside three of Laertes’ and four of Gertrude’s lines in Q2? Why would he have commonplaced only a single leaf in Q1 and just two pages in Q2? This looks more like the spotty practices of two different readers than the work of an author overseeing his own work. For Shakespeare, as for most other playwrights, the literary elevation provided by commonplacing is more likely to have been thrust upon him than to have been a self-conscious authorial strategy.

Before the closing of the theaters, a total of seventy-two first-edition professional plays and forty first-edition nonprofessional plays used printed commonplace markers to point out English sentences to readers (Table 1). Professional plays were commonplaced almost twice as often by a change in font (fifty-nine plays) as by marginal commas (thirty-two plays), although

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Royal Masques (1608) are so marked in the folio as well. With *Sejanus* (1605), however, only 21 of the 170 lines marked in the quarto are also marked in the folio; with *Catiline* (1611), only 2 of the 61 lines. Furthermore, seven lines of a folio-only scene in *Poetaster* are marked with marginal commas, and one unmarked line in the quarto of King James His Royal and magnificent entertainment is newly marked in the folio.

Table 1: First-edition plays with printed commonplace markers for English sententiae through 1642 (asterisks indicate professional drama).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Font change</th>
<th>Marginal commas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1573</td>
<td><em>The Masque for Lord Montacute</em></td>
<td>Gascoigne, George</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1573</td>
<td><em>Jocasta</em></td>
<td>Gascoigne, George</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1573</td>
<td><em>Supposes</em></td>
<td>Gascoigne, George</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1581</td>
<td><em>The Conflict of Conscience</em></td>
<td>Woodes, Nathaniel</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1585</td>
<td><em>The Queen's Entertainment</em></td>
<td>Gascoigne, George (?)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>at Woodstock</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1588</td>
<td><em>Andria</em></td>
<td>Kyffin, Maurice</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1591</td>
<td><em>Tancred and Gismund</em></td>
<td>Wilmot, Robert, and others</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1592</td>
<td><em>Antonius</em></td>
<td>Sidney, Mary</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1594</td>
<td><em>Cornelia</em></td>
<td>Kyd, Thomas</td>
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<tr>
<td>1600</td>
<td><em>Every Man Out of His Humor</em></td>
<td>Jonson, Ben</td>
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<tr>
<td>1600</td>
<td><em>The Wisdom of Doctor Dodypoll</em></td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
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<td>1600</td>
<td><em>Summer's Last Will and Testament</em></td>
<td>Nashe, Thomas</td>
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<tr>
<td>1601</td>
<td><em>Cynthia's Revels</em></td>
<td>Jonson, Ben</td>
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<tr>
<td>1601</td>
<td><em>Jack Drum's Entertainment</em></td>
<td>Marston, John</td>
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<tr>
<td>1601</td>
<td><em>Every Man In His Humor</em></td>
<td>Jonson, Ben</td>
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<tr>
<td>1602</td>
<td><em>Il Pastor Fido, or The Faithful Shepherd</em></td>
<td>Dymoke, John (?)</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>1602</td>
<td><em>The Contention between Liberality and Prodigality</em></td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>1602</td>
<td><em>Poetaster</em></td>
<td>Jonson, Ben</td>
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<tr>
<td>1602</td>
<td><em>Antonio's Revenge</em></td>
<td>Marston, John</td>
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<tr>
<td>1602</td>
<td><em>Antonio and Mellida</em></td>
<td>Marston, John</td>
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<tr>
<td>1602</td>
<td><em>Blurt, Master Constable</em></td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
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<tr>
<td>1602</td>
<td><em>Satiromastix</em></td>
<td>Dekker, Thomas</td>
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<tr>
<td>1603</td>
<td><em>Hamlet</em></td>
<td>Shakespeare, William</td>
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<tr>
<td>1604</td>
<td><em>The Magnificent Entertainment</em></td>
<td>Jonson, Ben</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>1604</td>
<td><em>The Malcontent</em></td>
<td>Marston, John</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1605</td>
<td><em>All Fools</em></td>
<td>Chapman, George</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>1605</td>
<td><em>Eastward Ho!</em></td>
<td>Jonson, Ben; Chapman, George; Marston, John</td>
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<tr>
<td>1605</td>
<td><em>The Dutch Courtesan</em></td>
<td>Marston, John</td>
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<tr>
<td>1605</td>
<td><em>Philotas</em></td>
<td>Daniel, Samuel</td>
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<tr>
<td>1605</td>
<td><em>Sejanus</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1606</td>
<td><em>Hymenaei</em></td>
<td>Jonson, Ben</td>
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<tr>
<td>1606</td>
<td><em>The Wonder of Women, or Sophonisba</em></td>
<td>Marston, John</td>
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<tr>
<td>1606</td>
<td><em>Parasitaster, or The Fawn</em></td>
<td>Marston, John</td>
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<tr>
<td>1606</td>
<td><em>The Gentleman Usher</em></td>
<td>Chapman, George</td>
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<tr>
<td>1606</td>
<td><em>2 If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody</em></td>
<td>Heywood, Thomas</td>
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<tr>
<td>1607</td>
<td><em>Lingua</em></td>
<td>Tomkis, Thomas</td>
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<td>1607</td>
<td><em>Cupid's Whirligig</em></td>
<td>Sharpham, Edward</td>
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<td>1607</td>
<td><em>Michaelmas Term</em></td>
<td>Middleton, Thomas</td>
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<td>1607</td>
<td><em>The Puritan</em></td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
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Table 1 (continued).

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
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<td>1607 *</td>
<td>The Phoenix</td>
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<td>1607 *</td>
<td>The Fleer</td>
<td>Sharpam, Edward</td>
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<td>The Miseries of Enforced Marriage</td>
<td>Wilkins, George</td>
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<td>The Revenger's Tragedy</td>
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<td>The Travels of the Three English Brothers</td>
<td>Day, John; Wilkins, George; Rowley, William</td>
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<td>1607 *</td>
<td>Volpone</td>
<td>Jonson, Ben</td>
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<td>1607 *</td>
<td>What You Will</td>
<td>Marston, John</td>
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<td>1608 *</td>
<td>The Masque of Blackness</td>
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<tr>
<td>1608 *</td>
<td>The Conspiracy of Byron</td>
<td>Chapman, George</td>
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<td>1608 *</td>
<td>The Tragedy of Byron</td>
<td>Chapman, George</td>
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<td>1608 *</td>
<td>The Family of Love</td>
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<td>1608 *</td>
<td>A Trick to Catch the Old One</td>
<td>Middleton, Thomas</td>
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<td>1609 *</td>
<td>Mustapha</td>
<td>Greville, Fulke</td>
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<td>1609 *</td>
<td>The Case Is Altered</td>
<td>Jonson, Ben</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td>1609 *</td>
<td>Troilus and Cressida</td>
<td>Shakespeare, William</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td>1610 *</td>
<td>The Turk</td>
<td>Mason, John</td>
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<td>Histriomastix</td>
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<td>1611 *</td>
<td>Ram Alley</td>
<td>Barry, Lording</td>
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<td>The Atheist's Tragedy</td>
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<td>1611 *</td>
<td>The Golden Age</td>
<td>Heywood, Thomas</td>
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<td>Catiline His Conspiracy</td>
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<td>Troia Nova Triumphans</td>
<td>Dekker, Thomas</td>
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<td>1612 *</td>
<td>The White Devil</td>
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<td>The Alchemist</td>
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<td>The Brazen Age</td>
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<td>The Hector of Germany</td>
<td>Smith, Wentworth (?)</td>
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<td>1615 *</td>
<td>The Valiant Welshman</td>
<td>A., R.</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>1616 *</td>
<td>Love Restored</td>
<td>Jonson, Ben</td>
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<td>1616 *</td>
<td>The Honest Lawyer</td>
<td>S., S.</td>
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<td>1617 *</td>
<td>A Fair Quarrel</td>
<td>Middleton, Thomas; Rowley, William</td>
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<tr>
<td>1619 *</td>
<td>Two Wise Men and All the Rest Fools</td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>1620 *</td>
<td>The World Tossed at Tennis</td>
<td>Middleton, Thomas; Rowley, William</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>1621 *</td>
<td>The Sun in Aries</td>
<td>Middleton, Thomas</td>
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<tr>
<td>1621 *</td>
<td>The Entertainment at Bunhill on the Shooting Day</td>
<td>Middleton, Thomas</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>1621 *</td>
<td>The Entertainment of the Lords by Sheriff Dacie</td>
<td>Middleton, Thomas</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>1621 *</td>
<td>The Entertainment of the Lords by Sheriff Allen</td>
<td>Middleton, Thomas</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1621 *</td>
<td>The Entertainment at the Conduit Head</td>
<td>Middleton, Thomas</td>
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<tr>
<td>1621 *</td>
<td>The Entertainment for the General Training</td>
<td>Middleton, Thomas</td>
<td>✓</td>
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</table>
individual plays often include both systems and, largely because of the heavily marked *Sejanus*, more individual lines are marked by marginal commas than by a change in font. With the exception of the midline commas noted above, there is no strong correlation between either one of the two systems and specific authors, publishers, or printers. Thomas Thorpe, the most frequent publisher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Font change</th>
<th>Marginal commas</th>
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<tr>
<td>1621</td>
<td><em>The Entertainment at Sir Francis Jones’s at Easter</em></td>
<td>Middleton, Thomas</td>
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<tr>
<td>1621</td>
<td><em>The Entertainment at Sir William Cokayne’s in Easter Week</em></td>
<td>Middleton, Thomas</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1622</td>
<td><em>Herod and Antipater</em></td>
<td>Markham, Gervase; Sampson, William</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1623</td>
<td><em>The Triumphs of Integrity</em></td>
<td>Middleton, Thomas</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1623</td>
<td><em>Measure for Measure</em></td>
<td>Shakespeare, William</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1623</td>
<td><em>Cymbeline</em></td>
<td>Shakespeare, William</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1623</td>
<td><em>Two Gentlemen of Verona</em></td>
<td>Shakespeare, William</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1623</td>
<td><em>The Duchess of Malfi</em></td>
<td>Webster, John</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1627</td>
<td><em>The Andrian Woman</em></td>
<td>Newman, Thomas</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1629</td>
<td><em>The Lover’s Melancholy</em></td>
<td>Ford, John</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1631</td>
<td><em>Tempe Restored</em></td>
<td>Townshend, Aurelian</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1631</td>
<td><em>The New Inn</em></td>
<td>Jonson, Ben</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1632</td>
<td><em>The Rival Friends</em></td>
<td>Hausted, Peter</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1632</td>
<td><em>Londini Artium et Scientiarum Scaturigo</em></td>
<td>Heywood, Thomas</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1632</td>
<td><em>The Northern Lass</em></td>
<td>Brome, Richard</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1633</td>
<td><em>Orestes</em></td>
<td>Goffe, Thomas</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1633</td>
<td><em>Londini Emporia</em></td>
<td>Heywood, Thomas</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1633</td>
<td><em>Alabam</em></td>
<td>Greville, Fulke</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1633</td>
<td><em>Love’s Sacrifice</em></td>
<td>Ford, John</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1633</td>
<td><em>’Tis Pity She’s a Whore</em></td>
<td>Ford, John</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1633</td>
<td><em>A New Way to Pay Old Debts</em></td>
<td>Massinger, Philip</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1634</td>
<td><em>A Match at Midnight</em></td>
<td>Rowlie, William</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1634</td>
<td><em>Perkin Warbeck</em></td>
<td>Ford, John</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1635</td>
<td><em>Adrasta</em></td>
<td>Jones, John</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1636</td>
<td><em>The Entertainment at Richmond</em></td>
<td>Sackville, Edward (?)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1637</td>
<td><em>Jupiter and Io</em></td>
<td>Heywood, Thomas</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1637</td>
<td><em>1 The Cid</em></td>
<td>Rutter, Joseph</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1638</td>
<td><em>Porta Pietatis</em></td>
<td>Heywood, Thomas</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1638</td>
<td><em>The Martyred Soldier</em></td>
<td>Shirley, Henry</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1638</td>
<td><em>Aglaura</em></td>
<td>Suckling, John</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1639</td>
<td><em>A New Trick to Cheat the Devil</em></td>
<td>Davenport, Robert</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1640</td>
<td><em>The Knaves in Grain, New Vamped</em></td>
<td>R. J.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1640</td>
<td><em>The Rebellion</em></td>
<td>Rawlins, Thomas</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1640</td>
<td><em>Messalina</em></td>
<td>Richards, Nathaniel</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1641</td>
<td><em>Mercurius Britannicus</em></td>
<td>Braithwaite, Richard</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of professional plays on the list, used the font-change method in six of his eight marked playbooks, but he also used marginal commas in four. Likewise, no consistent pattern can be found in any individual printer. Thirteen of the sixteen marked playbooks printed in the shop of George Eld employ a change in font, but Eld also used marginal commas in six, which is in line with the overall trends. Among authors, all of Marston’s ten playbooks use the font change method, but four of these books also feature marginal commas, and marginal commas appear in six of the eleven Jonson playbooks, while font changes are used in eight.

A striking pattern in these two systems of commonplacing does emerge, however, when we look at all the marked lines in both professional and nonprofessional English drama. While italics are used indiscriminately to mark both vernacular and Latin commonplaces, marginal commas are used almost exclusively for the vernacular. Out of the hundreds of commonplaced lines, only once is a Latin adage marked with marginal commas, and even here the line is immediately translated into English:

„Ieiunus raro stomachus vulgaria temnit,„
„Meane cates are welcome still to hungrie guests."

Given the otherwise total absence of Latin (or, indeed, of any language other than English) in commonplaces marked with this method, it is likely that this line was so marked (perhaps accidentally) because it was immediately translated. Significantly, the Latin line is “double-marked” by a shift to italics as well. In no case, then, is a Latin line marked in an English play without being set off by a shift in font. This is not to say that English lines could not be marked by a font change; on the contrary, they were often marked in this way, without marginal commas. But marginal commas were used (with this single exception) exclusively for vernacular lines.

The rise of printed commonplace markers to draw readers’ attention to English sentences in professional plays was thus accompanied by the development of a compositorial practice that existed alongside the more pervasive font-change method and that became specifically associated with vernacular commonplacing. This compositorial practice, in other words, provides a kind of material correlative to the Bodenham circle’s vernacular project. And within the corpus of professional plays printed from 1600 to 1613, more than four times as many English lines were commonplaced as lines in other languages (primarily Latin), further suggesting the connection between the rapid emergence of marked playbooks and the vernacular commonplacing project of the Bodenham circle. If Bodenham and his colleagues were engaged in a battle with, and a bid

for acceptance by the universities, this corpus of playbooks clearly puts the vernacular sentence on a more than equal footing with the Latin sententia.

Some of these playbooks tell a story about literary drama that has become familiar, above all through Erne’s *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, according to which professional drama becomes literary by becoming worthy of an Author who distances the play from its origins in the collaborative conditions of the theater. The process is literalized in the changes between the Q1 and Q2 title pages of *Hamlet*: in Q2, the performance blurb of the earlier edition is replaced by the unusually detailed comment about the text’s origin in “the true and perfect Coppie.” This origin becomes associated exclusively with William Shakespeare, as the King’s Men and the university performances at Oxford and Cambridge of Q1 are erased. Similarly, Jonson’s *Every Man Out* tells us that it is printed “AS IT WAS FIRST COMPOSED by the Author B.I. containing more than hath been Publickely Spoken or Acted,” thereby asserting individual authorship over theatrical performance. Just as Ling changed the title-page advertisement between Q1 and Q2, so too did Richard Bonian and Henry Walley change the authorial claims in the two issues of the 1609 *Troilus and Cressida*, the only other Shakespeare quarto to contain printed commonplace markers in its first edition. Bonian and Walley replaced theatricality with authorship not between editions, as Ling had done with *Hamlet*, but in the middle of the print run. They removed the title-page performance attribution and inserted the famously antitheatrical preface that praises the author as the modern equal of Terence and Plautus, while claiming that the play had never been performed.⁷⁶

But such disclaimers of the relation between printed playbook and theatrical performance are exceptions in the 1600–13 corpus of commonplace plays. Overall, about three-quarters of these playbooks (thirty-five of forty-eight) advertise theatricality and performance on their title pages—by naming the playing company or the venue, or both—and these performance blurbs generally appear alongside an author attribution. These playbooks are marked as literary, but not by being distanced from their origins in the professional theaters. Indeed, as we have noted, it is professional plays above all other kinds of poetic texts that are being printed with commonplace markers during this period. The Bodenham circle and other readers like them, whose activity, we argue, lies behind these printed editions, seem not to have seen any contradiction between the literary status of plays and their theatricality.

⁷⁶ See Lesser, *Renaissance Drama*, 1–4. Marston’s *The VVonder of VVomen Or The Tragedie of Sophonisba* . . . (London: John Winder, to be sold by [William Cotton], 1606) follows the same pattern as *Troilus and Cressida*, as it was first issued with a title page that touts its performance at Blackfriars, and then reissued with a cancel title page containing no performance information.
We are now prepared to understand more fully Q1 Hamlet’s right to be considered Shakespeare’s first literary drama. As part of the large group of commonplace playbooks in this period, Q1 Hamlet, like much of the output of the Bodenham circle, asserts the worth of the professional stage and of vernacular poetry by literally pointing out the proverbial wisdom and extractable sayings that it contains. And like Bel-vedére, Q1 Hamlet explicitly links this poetic capacity of the vernacular to the traditional locus of commonplace—the universities. Just as Bodenham prefaces his commonplace book with sonnets to both universities, so too Q1 Hamlet claims to have been performed at both Oxford and Cambridge. In both cases, we might detect an overeagerness that marks these texts as literary parvenus, socially climbing books that seek the stamp of approval from the traditional centers of learning and from the Latinate literary culture exemplified by scholarly commonplaceing. If the second part of The Return from Parnassus is any indication, Bodenham’s eager bid for acceptance into the Oxbridge community was sharply rebuked; for Hamlet, we have only the testimony of Gabriel Harvey, but he may well have been the exceptional scholar who proved the rule.

In 2 Return from Parnassus, however, Shakespeare appears only as a poet, not a dramatist, and the vitriol in the attack on Bodenham centers on his commonplaceing of vernacular poetry, not drama. In other words, the university wits who wrote and performed in 2 Return were themselves behind the times, as Bodenham and his circle—and the actual printing of vernacular texts with commonplace markers—had shifted markedly toward the professional stage. Ironically, the defensive condescension of Parnassus misses its mark: the Bodenham circle and London stationers not only succeeded in transforming vernacular poetry into literature through commonplaceing but also turned their energies to an even more lowly form of vernacular writing—professional plays.

Q1 Hamlet can thus be seen as a literary publication, participating in a localized social struggle over the worth of vernacular poetry and vernacular drama. This struggle was rooted on the one hand in Bodenham’s bid for acceptance by the universities for his innovative vernacular commonplace books and on the other in the material practice of publishers and printers who used marginal commas to mark vernacular sententiae, thus extending a practice that had been first employed to commonplace classical drama. In this cultural conflict, a broad range of readers, professional dramatists, and London stationers used commonplace markers as a way to elevate their playbooks and to indicate their suitability as serious reading matter. What the marginal commas in Q1 tell us, then, is that this Hamlet cannot be considered simply a performance text, as opposed to a written or a reading text. The commonplace markers also reveal that—as paradoxical as it may now seem—Q1 Hamlet was offered to readers at
the moment of its production as an early example of the professional theater’s capacity to produce literature and as the first play of Shakespeare’s to assert such a literary claim.

But what kinds of lines in vernacular plays were considered literary in this way? In fact, they fall into the typical categories employed by commonplace books, ranging from topics such as Death:

\[ \text{Death is the end of woes, and tears relieve.}^{77} \]

„Wee cease to grieue, cease to be fortunes slaues,
„Nay cease to dye by dying.”^{78}

to Fortune or Opportunity:

„Potentiall merit stands for actuall,
„Where only Opportunity dooth want,
„Not Will, nor Power: both which in him abound.”^{79}

“and Impudence must know (tho stiffe as Ice,)
“That fortune doth not alway dote on Vice.”^{80}

to Justice or Law:

the law (Our kingdomes golden chaine)\(^{81}\)

\[ \text{Force should be right or rather right and wrong,} \]
\[ \text{(Betweene whose endless iarre Justice resides)} \]
\[ \text{Should loose their names, and so should Justice to.}^{82} \]

Perhaps not surprisingly—since we often think of maxims as concerned with wisdom, virtue, and serious matters of state—by far the most common topic is Policy or Government, a category that more than doubles its closest competitor in number of lines:


And yet, while such politic matter dominates in terms of a line count, well over half of all these lines are taken from Sejanus, a play that had apparently landed Jonson in some trouble with powerful readers who saw contemporary application in it, “common Torturers, that bring all wit to the Rack.” Jonson seems to have responded by filling his books margins with citations to his classical authorities, deflecting any blame by claiming that he was simply following the historical record. His massive use of commonplace markers should probably be understood along the same lines: by setting off these lines on kingship, tyranny, and rebellion as commonplace, Jonson seeks to prevent a topical reading of them. The commonplace, after all, is the opposite of the topical: suitable in any period, always potentially applicable but never specifically rooted in any given moment or political situation.

Since the Sejanus playbook thus appears to be a special case, it is worth considering how our imaginary commonplace book of lines derived from these professional playbooks might look without it. The balance of interest shifts considerably, as matters of state policy no longer dominate but instead lag behind the topic of Women and Love:

Offer no loue-rites, but let wiues still seeke them,
For when they come vnsought, they seldome like them.88

Loue should make mariage, and not mariage Loue.89

83 Jonson, Cynthias Revels, sig. M1v.
84 Ben Jonson, Seianus His Fall (London: George Eld for Thomas Thorpe, 1605), sig. C2v.
86 Jonson, Seianus, sig. E2v.
88 Jonson, Every Man Out, sig. G1v.
"When wom[an]'s in the hart, in the soule hell."  

"Wiues are but made to go to bed and feede."

None search too farre th'offences of their wiues.

Of course, these categories are hardly fixed, and one might easily recategorize any number of lines. Our point here is not to tally up the lines in any given category, but rather to look broadly at the topics thought worthy of marking. Excluding Sejanus, maxims associated with the querelle des femmes and with women's beauty, chastity, or sexual vice are at least as important as the serious political matter that has often been considered the proper subject of sententiae. In other words, the very subject denigrated by both Gabriel Harvey and 2 Return from Parnassus—women and love, epitomized by Shakespeare's Venus and Adonis—is one of the most important commonplace topics in professional plays printed from 1600 to 1613. Iudicio in 2 Return from Parnassus hopes that Shakespeare will turn to a more serious topic; Shakespeare himself says in the dedication to Venus and Adonis that he hopes soon to turn to "some grauer labour"; and Gabriel Harvey praises the more "politic" Lucrece and Hamlet, in contrast to Venus and Adonis, as suitable "for the wiser sort." In the archive of marked lines in professional plays, however, no such teleological narrative of poetic development from low erotic matters to high matters of state and philosophy can be discerned. Both subjects seem to have interested the writers, scribes, readers, and stationers involved in the production of these playbooks. And both subjects are marked as literary in Q1 Hamlet: Corambis's lines to Leartes are typical wise sentences, a counselor's politic philosophy for his son, while his advice to Ofelia deals with erotic concerns.

**Shakespeare between the Commonplace and the Literary**

Our argument about the emergence of literary drama bears important similarities to Erne's argument in *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*. We agree with Erne that a kind of literary status was being asserted for professional drama far earlier than either the 1616 Jonson or the 1623 Shakespeare folio. The literary drama constructed through printed commonplace markers emerged

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90 Marston, *Dutch Courtezan*, sig. F3v.


while Shakespeare was most active as a playwright, and while his plays were being printed exclusively in quarto.

But we disagree with Erne about both the origin of this literary value and its nature. For Erne, literary drama originates in the author himself, from “what an emergent dramatic author wrote for readers in an attempt to raise the literary respectability of playtexts.”\(^94\) We argue that literary drama as it was created through printed commonplace markers emerged primarily through the activity of readers, not authors, beginning with the circle of John Bodenham and widening to include a host of other readers, including the London stationers who published these playbooks. Where authors self-consciously use this technique—as Jonson, for instance, clearly does with _Sejanus_—they may well be following the lead of these readers. But in the five Shakespeare plays that contain commonplace markers in their first printings (Q1 _Hamlet_, Q1 _Troilus and Cressida_, and the Folio texts of _Two Gentlemen of Verona_, _Measure for Measure_, and _Cymbeline_), there is little evidence of the author’s hand, and much to argue against it.

The strongest case for Shakespeare’s own authorial commonplacing occurs in _Troilus and Cressida_, where one line is pointed out by Shakespeare himself as sententious:

> Therefore this _maxim_ out of loue I teach,
> “Atchieuement is command; vngaind beseech.”\(^95\)

Here, both the italics and the marginal commas give further emphasis to a line that has already been singled out as a “maxim”—or rather, a “maxim,” since the compositor has set the word itself in italics. The line is thus triply marked: by the author as a “maxim”; by the scribe as a “maxim” by underlining or italicizing the word and the whole following line; and by the reader who has added a marginal notation of some kind, which has been set as inverted commas. (In fact, this is the only playtext line we have found that is triply marked in this way.) The “author,” the “scribe”, and the “reader” could be three people, a single person (Shakespeare) fulfilling three discrete functions, or some other combination. As we noted above, the striking association of the font-change method with words like “maxim” may make it somewhat more likely that the author himself was responsible by underlining or by a change from secretary to italic hand, leading the compositor to set the printed line in italics. What is clear, however, is that here Shakespeare himself draws the reader’s attention to the sententious nature of his writing, with its radical condensation of Cressida’s critique of the inequities of a “love” in which men only “beseech” a woman who is “vngaind,”

\(^94\) Erne, 220.

\(^95\) Shakespeare, _Famous Historie of Troylus and Cresseid_ (1609), sig. B3r.
whereas they “command” her when she has been achieved. In this case, whoever was responsible for the commonplace markers (both italics and marginal commas), Shakespeare has urged them to commonplace his line.

Overall, however, Shakespeare’s agency in the commonplacing of his plays seems far less likely. Only a small number of lines (and in the case of Q1 and Q2 Hamlet, different lines) are marked as sententiae in his first-edition plays: fourteen in Q1 Hamlet, five in Troilus and Cressida, four in Cymbeline, two in Measure for Measure, and one in Two Gentlemen (Table 2). The sporadic nature of these markings points towards readers, just as the thorough commonplacing of Sejanus points towards the author. Furthermore, Folio 1 Henry IV and Henry V contain only two and one italicized line(s), respectively, none of which were marked in the earlier quartos. If Shakespeare had wanted to assert his literariness through the fashionable means of marking up the commonplaces in his plays, why did he not, in these cases, do so in the editions that appeared during his lifetime? As with the first editions marked in the Folio, the belated nature of these markers does not rule out Shakespeare’s hand—they might attest to manuscript markings made at any point from the plays’ initial composition to their printing—but it certainly makes it less likely.

We also differ with Erne about the nature of literary drama. For Erne, the difference between Q1 and Q2 Hamlet (as between different versions of Henry V and Romeo and Juliet) reveals the literary hand of Shakespeare insofar as it reveals an emergent sense of novelistic character: “the long texts . . . invite us to inquire into a character who conveys a strong sense of interiority and psychological complexity.” But in our narrative, the trajectory is almost precisely the opposite. Rather than demonstrating the depth of any character, lines marked as sententiae are deliberately designed to be extracted from the dramatic situation and from the character who speaks them. And they are

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96 There is a tendency in Troilus and Cressida to print parenthetical lines in italics; it is therefore possible that “(Betweene whose endlesse iarre Iustice resides)” (sig. B4r) should not, in fact, be counted as a commonplace, but we have erred on the side of inclusion here. Of the five commonplace lines in the quarto of Troilus and Cressida, only one is marked in the Folio (sig. E1r). No commonplace markers appear in Folio Hamlet.

97 The Folio Merry Wives of Windsor contains two lines that are both italicized and marked with marginal commas (sig. D5v); Folio 2 Henry IV contains one line that is both italicized and marked with marginal commas (sig. g3r). However, none of these lines appears in the texts printed in the earlier quartos of these plays and so they cannot provide any basis for comparison.

98 The situation is complicated by the fact that Folio Henry V probably derives from a different manuscript tradition than the earlier quartos. The presence or absence of commonplace markers must often have resulted from the vagaries of textual transmission, with different manuscripts passing through the hands of different owners and readers.

99 Erne, 236.
Table 2: Printed commonplace markers for English sententiae in Shakespeare editions, 1603–1660.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title, folio</th>
<th>Edition</th>
<th>Font change</th>
<th>Marginal commas</th>
<th>Number of lines</th>
<th>Signature(s)</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1603</td>
<td>Hamlet</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>C2', C2''</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1604</td>
<td>Hamlet</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>C3', K4'</td>
<td>Marks different lines than Q1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1611</td>
<td>Hamlet</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>C3', K4''</td>
<td>Follows Q2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1625</td>
<td>Hamlet</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>C1', K1'</td>
<td>Follows Q2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1637</td>
<td>Hamlet</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>B4', K1''</td>
<td>Follows Q2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1609</td>
<td>Troilus and Cressida</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>B3', B4', K3'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1623</td>
<td>Troilus and Cressida, F1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>C1''</td>
<td>Retains only one line from Q1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1632</td>
<td>Troilus and Cressida, F2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>aa3''</td>
<td>Follows F1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1623</td>
<td>Two Gentlemen of Verona, F1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>C4'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1632</td>
<td>Two Gentlemen of Verona, F2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Follows F1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1623</td>
<td>Measure for Measure, F1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>F3', F5'</td>
<td>Follows F1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1652</td>
<td>Measure for Measure, F2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>F3', F5''</td>
<td>Follows F1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1623</td>
<td>Cymbeline, F1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>aaa6', bbb3'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1632</td>
<td>Cymbeline, F2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>ccc4', ddd1'</td>
<td>Follows F1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1632</td>
<td>Cymbeline, F2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>D5''</td>
<td>Marked lines are F-only text not present in earlier quartos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1630</td>
<td>Merry Wives of Windsor</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>D3''</td>
<td>Follows F1, deviating from earlier quartos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1632</td>
<td>Merry Wives of Windsor, F2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>D5''</td>
<td>Follows F1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1623</td>
<td>Henry IV, F1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>d6', e5''</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1632</td>
<td>Henry IV, F2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>d6', e5''</td>
<td>Follows F1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1623</td>
<td>Henry IV, F1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>√</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>g3''</td>
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<tr>
<td>1632</td>
<td>Henry IV, F2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>g3''</td>
<td>Follows F1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1623</td>
<td>Henry V, F1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>h2'</td>
<td>Marked line is unmarked in all quartos</td>
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<tr>
<td>1632</td>
<td>Henry V, F2</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>I4'</td>
<td>Follows F1</td>
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pre-marked as extractable precisely because they testify not to individuality but to the commonplace—to what can be taken up by any speaker in a wide range of contexts and for all sorts of rhetorical effects. Literariness does not deepen dramatic character here, because character is not what is at stake. On the contrary, what matters is the ability of an emergent vernacular literature to reproduce the timeless and impersonal authority attributed to sententiae in classical texts. The distance between Erne’s analysis and ours can perhaps be seen most starkly by the fact that, for him, it is the differences between Q1 and Q2 Hamlet that exemplify literary drama. For us, the crucial fact is what Q1 shares with Q2: the printed commonplace markers that link Q1 and Q2 Hamlet as Shakespeare’s first literary drama—but almost certainly not because of Shakespeare himself.

Before Shakespeare’s death, when many plays by Jonson and Marston were being published with commonplace markers, only Hamlet and Troilus and Cressida included a few such markers. By contrast, Lucrece had appeared in six editions in the same period, each of them heavily and thoroughly commonplaced. It is worth recalling that it was Lucrece, not any of the plays, that was by far Shakespeare’s most quoted text in Bel-vedère. The Bodenham circle were successful in promoting Shakespeare as a literary poet, but Shakespeare himself seems to have had little interest in competing with Jonson and Marston as a literary dramatist whose lines were on a par with classical sententiae. With only two commonplaced first editions during the crucial period from 1600 to 1613, the plays of Shakespeare played a decidedly minor role in the establishment of this kind of literary drama in the vernacular.

Indeed, we would argue that Hamlet and Troilus and Cressida mapped out the path that Shakespeare did not take. Sometime around 1607, he decided to become an apprentice again in the popular theater, learning his trade from the ground up as a writer of tragicomedy, with George Wilkins and John Fletcher as his masters in the new trade. That Shakespeare seems to have turned his back on sententious plays like Hamlet, Sejanus, or The Malcontent to write romances does not mean that he opted for the stage over the page, but rather that the kinds of pages he now produced were far less likely, whatever their classical sources, to be considered literary in the sense defined by the commonplace tradition. Jonson could mark out his own literary path by explicit contrast to “some mouldy tale, / Like Pericles.”

Between 1600 and 1605—the period of the writing, performance, and publication of Hamlet and Sejanus—it would have been possible to believe

that both Shakespeare and Jonson would construct themselves (or be constructed by publishers) as dramatists whose sententious style could rival the classics. Even in 1609, when Pericles first appeared in print, the publication of the sententious and satiric Troilus and Cressida as closet drama, “neuer stal’d with the Stage, neuer clapper-clawd with the palmes of the vulger,” might have suggested the development of a literary Shakespeare who would indeed reject the theater (as Jonson finally did) or at least transform his plays into vernacular classics in terms that would have been recognizable to Latinate gentlemen and scholars.

But by 1609, Shakespeare had written a collaborative hit that was as popular on stage as it was in the bookshops. In that year, an anonymous pamphleteer wrote:

Amazde I stood to see a Crowd  
Of Ciuill Throats stretched out so lowd:  
(As at a New-play) all the Roomes  
Did swarme with Gentiles mix’d with Groomes.  
So that I truly thought, all These  
Came to see Shore, or Pericles.  

The same year, two editions of Pericles were published, to be followed by further editions in 1611, 1619, 1630, and 1635. Shakespeare had cowritten a play that was at least as popular as Hamlet, but in a radically different mode. And it was the anti-classical Shakespeare who, however classical his subject matter, would be proclaimed by many as the superior of Jonson, although only after Shakespeare’s death.

For Hamlet to become an English classic, in the anti-classical sense that Leonard Digges defined in 1640, it had to be detached from the commonplace tradition and indeed from any relation at all to knowledge acquired through reading. If Shakespeare was now, as Digges put it, “the patterne of all wit,” it was because “Poets are borne not made.” “Nature onely helpt him” (our italics). In reading through “[t]his whole Booke” (literally Benson’s 1640 edition of Shakespeare’s Poems, but clearly originally meaning the 1632 Folio of the plays), Digges writes,

101 Shakespeare, Troilus and Cresseid, second issue, sig. ¶2.
thou shalt find he doth not borrow,
One phrase from Greekes, nor Latines imitate,
Nor once from vulgar Languages Translate,
Nor Plagiari-like from others gleane,
Nor begges he from each witty friend a Scene
To preece his Acts with, all that he doth write,
Is pure his owne, plot, language exquisite. 104

Here, the entire commonplacing tradition—so central to John Bodenham’s project of turning vernacular poetry in general and professional drama in particular into literature—has become theft, the crutch of those who “Plagiari-like from others gleane.”

For Digges, to define Shakespeare’s genius, it was necessary to deride the learned Jonson. Paradoxically, Digges was a scholar who not only was educated at University College, Oxford, but also died and was buried there. Yet the greatness of his Shakespeare is defined by opposition to “well laboured” Jonson, whose Sejanus was “irkesome” and who was only able to produce “tedious . . . Catilines.” Shakespeare was the writer he was because he had not gone to Oxford or Cambridge. Digges was “ravish’d” by a Shakespeare whose “Art [was] without Art.” 105 We have come a long way from the Shakespeare who could be scorned by Cambridge undergraduates for having been included in a vernacular commonplace book, or who could be praised by a Cambridge don because his Hamlet was for “the wiser sort.”

In Digge’s account, Shakespeare is the origin of art and rhetoric rather than the skilled employer of them. And by the 1640s, even an aristocrat could only dream of imitating Shakespeare’s Hamlet. Within a year or two of the publication of Digges’s poem, Sir John Suckling had his portrait painted by the most famous artist working in England, Sir Anthony Van Dyck. In the painting, Suckling in theatrical costume leans against a rock, a wild and romantic landscape behind him. In his hands he holds an open copy of either the First or the Second Folio. The text is not legible but the running title is: it reads “HAMLET.” 106 On the rock on which Suckling leans, a Latin phrase is inscribed: Ne te quaesiveris extra—“Don’t seek outside yourself.” The phrase is taken from Persius’s First Satire, yet what it tells the reader is not to take anything from anyone. According to Nicholas Rowe’s 1709 life of Shakespeare, Suckling had listened with irritation to Jonson “reproaching [Shakespeare] with the want of Learning, and Ignorance of the Antients,” and had heatedly replied “That if Mr. Shakespeare

104 Digges, sig. *3r.
105 Digge, sigs. *3r–v.
had not read the Antients, he had likewise not stollen any thing from ‘em; (a Fault the other [i.e., Jonson] made no Conscience of).”

Van Dyck’s portrait of Suckling appears on the dust jacket of Erné’s *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, and it did indeed help to define a new notion of what a vernacular classic might be—namely, a rejection of the classics and of the whole tradition of imitation and commonplacing. But this Shakespeare was the construction of the mid-seventeenth century, not of its first decade, when Shakespeare was still alive and Q1 *Hamlet* was newly arrived in the bookshops of London. In the decade after 1600, literary drama was constituted through the aggressive assertion that professional plays were worthy of commonplacing alongside the works of the ancient and the learned, a project initiated by the reading and publishing practices of John Bodenham, Nicholas Ling, and their circle.

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