

EARLY MODERN LITERARY STUDIES



Elevating Thomas Watson: An Investigation into New Authorship Claims

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This article investigates Gary Taylor's claim that the Elizabethan poet and Neo-Latinist Thomas Watson co-authored *Arden of Faversham* (1590) with Shakespeare,¹ with Watson responsible for around four-fifths of the text (i.e. all scenes of the play with the exceptions of 4-8 and possibly Scene 11). In an essay concerning intertextual links between early modern author canons, it will be useful to offer some paratextual information first, by which I mean some context on the ongoing scholarly feuds in the field of early modern attribution studies. *Arden of Faversham* was first attributed to Thomas Kyd in 1891,² and a consensus of scholars recognized him as sole author in the twentieth century.³ In the twenty-first century, a battery of modern statistical tests has

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¹ All dates of first performances are taken from Martin Wiggins, in association with Catherine Richardson, *British Drama 1533–1642: A Catalogue. Volume III: 1590–1597* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). I concur with Wiggins's conclusion that *Arden* was most likely written in 1590.

² See F.G. Fleay, *A Biographical Chronicle of the English Drama*, 2 vols (London: Reeves and Turner, 1891), 2, p. 26.

³ See Charles Crawford, 'The Authorship of *Arden of Faversham*', *Jahrbuch der deutschen Shakespeare-Gesellschaft*, 39 (1903), 74-86; *Collectanea: First Series* (Stratford-upon-Avon: Shakespeare Head Press, 1906); Walter Miksch, *Die Verfasserschaft des Arden of Feversham* (Breslau, 1907); H. Dugdale Sykes, *Sidelights on Shakespeare* (Stratford-upon-Avon: Shakespeare Head Press, 1919), pp. 48-9; T.S. Eliot, 'Hamlet and His Problems', in *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1920), pp. 87-94 (pp. 88-9); Philip Timberlake, *The Feminine Ending in English Blank Verse: A Study of its Use by Early Writers in the Measure and its Development in the Drama up to the Year 1595* (Menasha, WI: Banta, 1931), pp. 52-3; Paul V. Rubow, *Shakespeare og hans samtidige* (Copenhagen: Gyldendubidal, 1948), pp. 145-55; Félix Carrère, 'Introduction', in Félix Carrère (ed.), *Arden de Faversham. Etude Critique, Traduction et Notes*, (Paris: Montaigne, 1950), pp. 21-85.

validated the ascription. Analyses of Kyd's verbal self-repetition conducted by Brian Vickers,⁴ Martin Mueller,⁵ Pervez Rizvi,⁶ and myself⁷ have demonstrated that, in terms of both quantitative and qualitative analysis, the phraseology of the play is indistinguishable from Kyd's attested works: *The Spanish Tragedy* (1587), *Soliman and Perseda* (1588), and *Cornelia* (1594). Examinations of the play's prosody and versification habits have bolstered the attribution.⁸ Stylometric studies of the play's linguistic habits and vocabulary by Thomas Merriam⁹ and Albert Yang¹⁰ have also shown that the play was most likely written by Kyd. Having spent several years surveying the evidence, as well as recent counterevidence presented by scholars like Taylor, the attribution is in my view as solid as possible in the absence of documentary proof. The play will thus take its rightful place in a forthcoming edition of *The Works of Thomas Kyd*.¹¹

Brian Vickers revived arguments for Kyd's authorship in 2008.¹² Given that MacDonald P. Jackson has assigned the play in part to Shakespeare since 1963,¹³ it is perhaps to be expected that Vickers's claims should become 'the target' of 'scholars connected with the *New Oxford Shakespeare*, led by Gary Taylor',¹⁴ and with Jackson on the edition's attribution board. The *New Oxford Shakespeare* team denied Kyd's hand in several plays

⁴ See Brian Vickers, 'Thomas Kyd, Secret Sharer', *Times Literary Supplement*, 13 April 2008, 13-15; 'Is EEBO-TCP / LION Suitable for Attribution Studies?', *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 22.1 (2019), <https://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/journal/index.php/emls/article/view/488>.

⁵ See Martin Mueller, 'Vickers is right about Kyd'; 'N-grams and the Kyd canon: a crude test' (2009), <https://darrenfj.files.wordpress.com/2017/11/N-grams-and-the-Kyd-Canon-and-Vickers-is-right-about-Kyd.pdf>.

⁶ See Pervez Rizvi, 'Arden of Faversham and the Extended Kyd Canon' (2018), <http://www.shakespearetext.com/can/experiments>.

⁷ See Darren Freebury-Jones, "'Fearful Dreams" in Thomas Kyd's Restored Canon', *Digital Studies/Le champ numérique*, 9.1 (2019), <https://www.digitalstudies.org/articles/10.16995/dscn.309/>; 'Unique Phrases and the Canon of Thomas Kyd', *Notes and Queries*, 67.2 (2020), 220-3.

⁸ See Darren Freebury-Jones, 'In Defence of Kyd: Evaluating the Claim for Shakespeare's Part Authorship of *Arden of Faversham*', *Authorship*, 7.2 (2018), <https://www.authorship.ugent.be/article/view/9736/9375>; 'The Diminution of Thomas Kyd', *Journal of Early Modern Studies*, 8 (2019), 251-77.

⁹ See Thomas Merriam, 'New Light on a Possible Kyd Canon', *Notes and Queries*, 240 (1995), 340-1.

¹⁰ See Albert Yang, 'Validating the Enlarged Kyd Canon: a New Approach', *American Notes and Queries*, 33.2 (2020), 189-97.

¹¹ Brian Vickers (gen. ed.), *The Works of Thomas Kyd* (Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, forthcoming).

¹² See Vickers, 'Thomas Kyd, Secret Sharer'.

¹³ See MacDonald P. Jackson, 'Material for an edition of *Arden of Faversham*' (B.Litt. thesis: Oxford University, 1963).

¹⁴ Brian Vickers, 'Kyd, *Edward III*, and "The Shock of the New"', *American Notes and Queries*, 33.2 (2020), 172-88.

associated with him, including *Arden*, *1 Henry VI* (1592), and *Edward III* (1593). This team, ‘clearly threatened by the claims for Kyd’, according to Vickers,¹⁵ appear to be ‘more concerned with eliminating the candidates put forward by “rival” attributionists than moving us closer to the truth – even if that means providing false narratives of scholarship’.¹⁶ Taylor appears to confirm this evaluation when he claims that ‘Kyd has been ruled out by multiple stylometric studies’.¹⁷ However, in his article, ‘Shakespeare, *Arden of Faversham*, and Four Forgotten Playwrights’, Taylor ignores all of the works I have cited above in favour of Kyd’s authorship.

Taylor also neglects to mention the fact that every academic publication he cites claiming to eliminate Kyd’s authorship of the play has been challenged or refuted.¹⁸ The validity of the methods used by Arthur F. Kinney to rule out Kyd’s hand in *Arden*¹⁹ has been queried by myself,²⁰ Pervez Rizvi,²¹ and Rosalind Barber.²² All of the evidence presented by Jackson in his 2014 monograph, *Determining the Shakespeare Canon*,²³ has been contested by Vickers²⁴ and myself.²⁵ The methodological issues in Brett Greatley-Hirsch and Jack Elliott’s chapter in the *New Oxford Shakespeare: Authorship Companion*²⁶ have

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 177.

¹⁶ See Darren Freebury-Jones, ‘Unsound Deductions in Early Modern Attribution: The Case of Thomas Watson’, *American Notes and Queries*, 33.2 (2020), 164-71.

¹⁷ Gary Taylor, ‘Shakespeare, *Arden of Faversham*, and Four Forgotten Playwrights’, *Review of English Studies* 71.302 (2020), 867-95 (p. 875).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 867-8, n. 2.

¹⁹ See Arthur F. Kinney, ‘Authoring *Arden of Faversham*’, in *Shakespeare, Computers, and the Mystery of Authorship*, ed. by Hugh Craig and Arthur F. Kinney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 78-99.

²⁰ See Darren Freebury-Jones, ‘Augean Stables; Or, the State of Modern Authorship Attribution Studies’, *Archiv fuer das Studium der Neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, 255.1 (2018), 60-81.

²¹ See Pervez Rizvi, ‘The Interpretation of Zeta Test Results’, *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities*, 34.2 (2018), 401-18; ‘Shakespeare and Principal Component Analysis’, *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities* (forthcoming).

²² See Rosalind Barber, ‘Big Data or Not Enough? Zeta Test Reliability and the Attribution of *Henry VI*’, *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities* (forthcoming).

²³ See MacDonald P. Jackson, *Determining the Shakespeare Canon: Arden of Faversham and A Lover’s Complaint* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

²⁴ See Brian Vickers, ‘Kyd, Shakespeare, and *Arden of Faversham*: a (belated) reply to MacDonald Jackson’, *Research Opportunities in Medieval and Renaissance Drama*, 56 (2020), 105-34.

²⁵ See Freebury-Jones, ‘In Defence of Kyd’.

²⁶ See Brett Greatley-Hirsch and Jack Elliott, ‘*Arden of Faversham*, Shakespearian Authorship, and “The Print of Many”’, in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Authorship Companion*, ed. by Gary Taylor and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 139-81.

been scrutinized by Joseph Rudman,²⁷ Rizvi,²⁸ David Auerbach,²⁹ Joseph F. Stephenson,³⁰ and Vickers.³¹ Jackson's attempts to consolidate an attribution to Shakespeare in that volume³² have been challenged by Rizvi,³³ and I and others have exposed the flaws in Taylor's first article³⁴ claiming Watson's hand in the play.³⁵ I have also criticized the reasoning behind³⁶ my colleague Marina Tarlinskaja's shift from her original attribution of the play solely to Kyd,³⁷ but it should be noted that, in her most recent publication on the subject, Tarlinskaja concludes: 'Let us tentatively assume that the older collaborator of *Arden* was Kyd'.³⁸ It is therefore disingenuous of Taylor to claim that Tarlinskaja has eliminated Kyd as a candidate. 'Arguing in a way that ignores or omits any reference to important evidence unfavourable to one's position' gives 'the false impression that there is no significant evidence against it'.³⁹ In such cases, readers unfamiliar with the scholarly debates occurring in the field could be led to believe in an artificial consensus.

²⁷ See Joseph Rudman, 'Review of *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Authorship Companion*', *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities*, 34.3 (2019), 703-5.

²⁸ See Rizvi, 'The Interpretation of Zeta'.

²⁹ See David Auerbach, "'A cannon's burst discharged against a ruined wall": A Critique of Quantitative Methods in Shakespearean Authorial Attribution', *Authorship*, 7.2 (2018), <https://www.authorship.ugent.be/article/view/9737/9392>.

³⁰ See Joseph F. Stephenson, 'Review of *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Authorship Companion*', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 49.4 (2018), 1314-17.

³¹ See Brian Vickers, 'Authorship Attribution and Elizabethan Drama: Qualitative versus Quantitative Methods', *Authorship*, 7.2 (2018), <https://www.authorship.ugent.be/article/view/9734/9390>.

³² See MacDonald P. Jackson, 'A Supplementary Lexical Test for *Arden of Faversham*', in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Authorship Companion*, pp. 182-93.

³³ See Pervez Rizvi, 'Small Samples and the Perils of Authorship Attribution for Acts and Scenes', *American Notes and Queries*, 33.1 (2020), 32-3.

³⁴ See Gary Taylor, 'Finding "Anonymous" in the Digital Archives: The Problem of *Arden of Faversham*', *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities*, 34.4 (2019), 855-73.

³⁵ See Freebury-Jones, 'Unsound Deductions'. For subsequent critiques of Taylor's Watson claims, see Pervez Rizvi, 'The Unsoundness of the Stylometric Case for Thomas Watson's Authorship of *Arden of Faversham*', *American Notes and Queries* (forthcoming); Brian Vickers, 'Authorship Candidates for *Arden of Faversham*: Kyd, Shakespeare, and Thomas Watson', *Studies in Philology*, 118.2 (2021), 308-41; 'Arden of Faversham, the Authorship Problem: Shakespeare, Watson, or Kyd?', *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities* (forthcoming).

³⁶ See Freebury-Jones, 'In Defence of Kyd'.

³⁷ See Marina Tarlinskaja, *Shakespeare and the Versification of Elizabethan Drama 1561-1642* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), Table B.1.

³⁸ Marina Tarlinskaja, 'Shakespeare in *Arden of Faversham* and the Additions to *The Spanish Tragedy*: Versification Analysis', *Journal of Early Modern Studies*, 5 (2016), 175-200 (p. 193).

³⁹ T. Edward Damer, *Attacking Faulty Reasoning: A Practical Guide to Fallacy-free Arguments* (Wadsworth Learning: Boston, MA, 1980), p. 195.

It is significant when an anonymous play has a voluminous history of being attributed to a particular author by multiple scholars, as in the case of several plays assigned to Kyd. On the other hand, there is no precedence whatsoever for assigning the majority of *Arden* to Watson. Rather, Taylor joins Levin L. Schücking in interpreting intertextual links between Kyd and Watson as evidence for common authorship,⁴⁰ as I argue later. Having established that the overwhelming evidence for Kyd's sole authorship of the play has been disregarded by Taylor, I begin by evaluating the biographical and historical evidence he adduces for Watson's hand in the play.

Taylor bases his claims on a remarkably small extant sample of Watson's work in English, which should not necessarily surprise us, given that Watson was 'best known to his contemporaries as a Latinist, perhaps the foremost Latin poet of his nation and day'.⁴¹ His works include *Amyntas* (1585), a collection of Latin verse lamentations; *Meliboeus* (1590), a Latin pastoral; and another Latin pastoral titled *Amintae Gaudia* (1592). His extant work in English encompasses *The Hekatompathia, or, Passionate Centurie of Love* (1582), a collection of 18-line sonnets in the Petrarchan mode; *An Eclogue upon the death of Sir Francis Walsingham* (1590); *The First Set of Italian Madrigals Englished* (1590); and he contributed to *The Entertainment for Queen Elizabeth at Elvetham* (1591), although the possibility remains that the English speeches in the entertainment were 'not written for the performance by Watson, but subsequently supplied by the printer for the benefit of Latin-less readers'.⁴² His sole surviving dramatic work is a Latin translation of Sophocles' *Antigone* (1581). There is no firm evidence that Watson wrote for the public theatres. In his pamphlet, *A Knight's Conjuring* (1607),⁴³ Thomas Dekker linked Watson with Kyd, as well as the actor John Bentley and the poet Thomas Achelley, but 'Only Kyd is known to have written for the common stage among this group'.⁴⁴ Michael J. Hirrel notes that an 'upper time limit' for Watson's plays, according to Dekker's testimony (that is, if we accept that Dekker identifies Watson, along with Kyd and Achelley, as a commercial playwright; we should bear in mind that Dekker was born in 1572) 'is established by Bentley's death in 1585, but truly Dekker is thinking of plays written

⁴⁰ See Levin L. Schücking, *Die Zusätze zur 'Spanish Tragedy'* (Leipzig, 1938), p. 75; Lukas Erne, *Beyond 'The Spanish Tragedy': A Study of the Works of Thomas Kyd* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 47.

⁴¹ Arthur Freeman, *Thomas Kyd: A Study of Facts and Problems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 19.

⁴² <http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/watson/opuscula/text.html>.

⁴³ Thomas Dekker, *A Knight's Conjuring Done in Earnest: Discovered in Jest* (London: STC 6508, 1607), sig. K8^v-L1^r.

⁴⁴ Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean, *The Queen's Men and their Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 29.

before 1583'.⁴⁵ Dekker therefore provides no clear evidence that Watson was writing for the commercial stage in the late 1580s to 1590, when *Arden*, which was first printed in 1592, is dated by all scholarly authorities. Francis Meres, in his *Palladis Tamia: Wit's Treasury* (1598), named Watson as a notable tragic writer,⁴⁶ but the evidence is not clear-cut, given that Meres's compendium substitutes English names for those of Greek and Latin authors in J. Ravisius Textor's *Officina*. It is also conceivable that Meres had Latin tragedies by Watson in mind, as opposed to tragedies written in English for the commercial stage.

The most tantalising evidence for Watson as a commercial playwright comes from Sir William Cornwallis, who claimed that Watson 'could devise twenty fictions and knaveryes in a play, which was his daily practyse and his living'.⁴⁷ Dana F. Sutton points out that 'Cornwallis' words seem ambiguous: the antecedent of "which" could just as well be "the devising of fictions and knaveries such as one finds in plays" as "writing plays".⁴⁸ The documentary evidence is therefore painfully slight. Even if we accept Taylor's reiteration of the above evidence for Watson's playwrighting, we must acknowledge that the evidence for his hand in *Arden* would have to derive primarily from striking, measurable similarities in style between *Arden* and Watson's surviving corpus of English writing. Much of Taylor's case, however, is based on biographical parallels, in which case we do well to bear David Kathman's caveat in mind that 'biographical parallels are inherently suspect in the absence of independent evidence' and cannot 'override external documentary evidence; all they can do is add speculative flavour'.⁴⁹

Nevertheless, it is worthwhile investigating the solidity of some of Taylor's claimed parallels. Taylor states that Watson 'had an exceptional command of contemporary Italian literature and poetics',⁵⁰ having embarked on seven years of travel and study in Europe, and suggests that *Arden* reveals these influences. Taylor overlooks the fact that Kyd translated Torquato Tasso's *Padre di Famiglia*, known as *The Householder's Philosophy*

⁴⁵ Michael J. Hirrel, 'Thomas Watson, Playwright: Origins of Modern English Drama', in *Lost Plays in Shakespeare's England*, ed. by David McInnis and Matthew Steggle (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), pp. 187-207 (p. 200).

⁴⁶ D.C. Allen, "'Poetrie": A Critical Edition', *University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature*, 16.3 (1933), 77-8.

⁴⁷ See Mark Eccles, *Christopher Marlowe in London* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934), pp. 145-59.

⁴⁸ <http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/watson/index.html>.

⁴⁹ David Kathman, 'Shakespeare and Warwickshire', in Paul Edmondson and Stanley Wells, eds., *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt: Evidence, Argument, Controversy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 121-32 (p. 129).

⁵⁰ Taylor, 'Four Forgotten Playwrights', 879.

(1588). Lukas Erne suggests that ‘Kyd’s interest in complex stage action and a multitude of props may well have been fostered by the Italian comedies’.⁵¹ Erne also notes that ‘Several features’ of ‘Cinthio’s tremendously influential *Orbecche*’ are ‘reminiscent’ of *The Spanish Tragedy*,⁵² thereby highlighting Taylor’s concession that the evidence he presents ‘hardly proves that Watson wrote *Arden*. Watson is not the only Elizabethan author to... respond to Cinthio’.⁵³ Taylor also writes that Kyd ‘never cited’ the Roman poet Ovid, while *Arden* specifically advertises a debt to Ovid’s *Amores* (1.59),⁵⁴ but he acknowledges that ‘Anyone with a grammar school education could have read and translated passages of Ovid’s *Amores*’.⁵⁵ Taylor’s implication that Kyd never referred to Ovid is misleading: Cornelia’s recollection of the grief of Venus over the dead body of Adonis, ‘trans-form’d into a Rose’ (3.1.10),⁵⁶ derives from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, as Frederick S. Boas pointed out in 1901.⁵⁷ *Cornelia* in fact concludes with a colophon quoting *Metamorphoses*. Boas also noted that ‘the marginal notes added by Kyd’ in *The Householder’s Philosophy* ‘include a line from Ovid’s *De Medicamine Faciei*’.⁵⁸ Kyd is as likely as any other author with a grammar school education to have drawn from Ovid in *Arden*.

Taylor observes that, unlike the source, ‘*Arden* gives the painter a name, “Clarke”, a common spelling of “Clerk” (which still had the sense “scholar, writer”)’. This name supposedly ‘invokes aesthetic theory’ and is thus characteristic of Watson.⁵⁹ Setting aside Taylor’s doubtful claim that Clarke’s name reveals the influence of Italian literature and poetics, we can take Taylor’s observation regarding *Arden*’s departure from the source much further. The handling of source material in *Arden* is comparable to Kyd’s dramatization of Henry Wotton’s novella, *A Courtlie Controversie of Cupids Cautels* (1578), in *Soliman and Perseda*. Kyd names and develops the characters of Lucina and Brusor so that they are fully integrated into the action of that play, whilst Soliman, who is ‘subordinate to the two lovers’ in Wotton, but ‘the most complex character’ in Kyd’s play,⁶⁰ enters the action much earlier. The fleshing out of unnamed figures like the painter

⁵¹ Erne, *Beyond ‘The Spanish Tragedy’*, p. 195.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 82.

⁵³ Taylor, ‘Four Forgotten Playwrights’, 880.

⁵⁴ All references to *Arden of Faversham* are from my forthcoming edition of the play in *The Works of Thomas Kyd*.

⁵⁵ Taylor, ‘Four Forgotten Playwrights’, 881.

⁵⁶ All references to Kyd’s attested plays are from *The Works of Thomas Kyd*, ed. by Frederick S. Boas (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901).

⁵⁷ See Boas (ed.), *The Works of Thomas Kyd*, p. xviii.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Taylor, ‘Four Forgotten Playwrights’, 879.

⁶⁰ Erne, *Beyond ‘The Spanish Tragedy’*, p. 178.

(Clarke) in Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1577; 1587) thus recalls Kyd's dramatization of his source material elsewhere. *Arden* introduces the major character of Mosby in the opening scene. The play creates parallel love triangles: the triangle of Alice-Arden-Mosby is akin to Perseda-Erastus-Soliman, whereas the Susan-Michael-Clarke triangle resembles Lucina-Ferdinando-Erastus in the lower plot of *Soliman and Perseda*.

Taylor argues that 'Watson's arrest in September 1589', which 'occurred when he and his sword intervened to defend Christopher Marlowe from an armed assailant... resembles an invented episode in *Arden* (13. 80–87, also described in 14. 51–69)'.⁶¹ The biographical evidence here strikes me as dubious and confused, especially as Watson's arrest occurred a year later than Taylor elsewhere dates *Arden*.⁶² It is also worth noting that the episode in which the conspirators attempt to murder Arden by luring him into a fray is not wholly invented. As I alluded to earlier, the reader first encounters Mosby later in Holinshed's narrative. He plans to 'picke some quarrel' with Arden at 'Saint Valentines faire' in order 'to fight with him'. The plot is abandoned by the conspirators when they remember that Arden had never previously allowed himself to be 'provoked by Mosbie to fight with him'.⁶³ We can see that the episode derives primarily from the source material, and not from Watson's biography. Taylor notes that the author of *Arden* 'apparently knew London much better than Kent' because the play refers to specific London locations, like the drinking inn, the Nag's Head (3.38; 3.121),⁶⁴ while Thomas Nashe relates an anecdote in which Watson told a joke 'in the company of divers Gentlemen one night at supper at the Nags head'.⁶⁵ However, in his preface to Robert Greene's *Menaphon* (1589), Nashe tells us that Kyd often visited booksellers in the 'inner parts of the city',⁶⁶ i.e. St Paul's, the publishing and bookselling centre of London. *Arden* refers to St Paul's on no less than six occasions – in scenes attributed to both Watson and Shakespeare by Taylor – and specifically to Paul's Walk, the central aisle of St Paul's Cathedral, a common meeting place (3.6). Both Watson and Kyd were born in London and either author would be equipped to offer references to specific London locations. Taylor rightly points out that 'Marlowe could have supplied his friend Watson with some

⁶¹ Taylor, 'Four Forgotten Playwrights', 885.

⁶² See Gary Taylor and Rory Loughnane, 'The Canon and Chronology of Shakespeare's Works', in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Authorship Companion*, pp. 417-602 (p. 487).

⁶³ M. L. Wine (ed.), *The Tragedy of Master Arden of Faversham* (London: Methuen, 1973), p. 154.

⁶⁴ Taylor, 'Four Forgotten Playwrights', 883.

⁶⁵ Thomas Nashe, *Have with you to Saffron-Walden* (London, 1596), T3v-T4.

⁶⁶ For a comprehensive argument that the target of Nashe's attack was Kyd, see Erne, *Beyond 'The Spanish Tragedy'*, pp. 146-50.

information about Kent not found in Holinshed',⁶⁷ but the same applies if we accept Kyd as author of *Arden*. After all, Kyd and Marlowe shared a room in London. Put simply, none of Taylor's evidence here necessarily favours Watson over Kyd.

Taylor observes that *Arden* mixes comic and tragic elements 'in a remarkably powerful way',⁶⁸ and that 'the froth of witty Tom Watson's jests' was praised by contemporaries.⁶⁹ Taylor deduces that Watson is likely to have contributed to *Arden* because, 'Unlike any plausible candidate but Shakespeare', he was celebrated as 'both a tragic and a comic writer'.⁷⁰ However, Ben Jonson's epithet, in his eulogy on Shakespeare published in the 1623 First Folio, 'sporting Kyd', suggests that Kyd was known for comedy as well as tragedy.⁷¹ As Alfred Harbage put it, 'Kyd's greatest innovation was to employ comic methods with tragic materials, thus creating a species of comitragedy',⁷² and the black comedy of *Arden* corresponds to that exhibited elsewhere in Kyd.⁷³ Taylor repeatedly ignores the evidence in favour of Kyd's dramatic methods on the false basis that stylometric evidence renders him an implausible candidate.

Taylor claims that 'Watson's major texts are dominated by women', and argues that '*Arden* would fit the canon of the Elizabethan writer most focused on, or obsessed with, the representation of women. Watson and *Arden* are both unique in this respect'.⁷⁴ But the dominant female figure in *Arden*, Alice, is characteristic of other female roles in Kyd's plays. She is a strongly portrayed woman who is governed by passion and complicit in murder. In light of her structural prominence, we can assume that the company for which the play was written had a tremendous boy actor at their disposal. Brian Vickers points out that, when attending a performance of *The Spanish Tragedy* for the first time, an Elizabethan audience would have found it 'startling to learn that they would shortly see a woman killing a man in revenge',⁷⁵ as occurs when Bel-Imperia, in the role of Perseda, exacts revenge against Horatio's murderers in the play-within-a-play. Indeed, women

⁶⁷ Taylor, 'Four Forgotten Playwrights', 884.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 882.

⁶⁹ See Eccles, *Christopher Marlowe*, p. 8.

⁷⁰ Taylor, 'Four Forgotten Playwrights', 882.

⁷¹ David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson (eds.), *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, 7 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 5, p. 639.

⁷² Alfred Harbage, 'Intrigue in Elizabethan Tragedy', in *Essays On Shakespeare and Elizabethan Drama in Honour of Hardin Craig*, ed. by Richard Hosley (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1962), pp. 37-44 (p. 37).

⁷³ See Vickers, 'Kyd, Shakespeare, and *Arden of Faversham*', 123-5.

⁷⁴ Taylor, 'Four Forgotten Playwrights', 884-5.

⁷⁵ Brian Vickers, 'Kyd's Authorship of *King Leir*', *Studies in Philology* 115.3 (2018), 433-71 (p. 448). See also Vickers, 'Kyd, Shakespeare, and *Arden of Faversham*', 125-8.

were more likely to be portrayed as victims in plays of the period, rather than agents. Earlier in the play, however, Bel-Imperia castigates Hieronimo for not taking action against his son's murderers:

Is this the love thou bear'st Horatio?
Is this the kindness that thou counterfeitst?
Are these the fruits of thine incessant tears?
Hieronimo, are these thy passions? (4.1.1-4)

Kyd almost invariably reserves the anaphoric formulation, 'Is this the', for female characters. We find the same thought process when Alice reprimands Mosby for wavering from his motive of murdering her husband in *Arden*: 'Is this the end of all thy solemn oaths? / Is this the fruit thy reconciliation buds?' (1.184-5). Perseda in *Soliman and Perseda* is similar to Kyd's other female characters in that she is a violent woman who requests Basilisco to 'work revenge' on her 'behalf' (2.1.76), in the mistaken belief that Erastus has been unfaithful to her. Later in the play she seeks vengeance for the murder of her husband. She avenges Erastus through disguising herself in a man's apparel and tricking Soliman into kissing her poisoned lips. In the shocking moment that Arden is murdered, Alice demands, 'Nay, then give me the weapon!' (14.229), which recalls Perseda's imperative: 'give me the dagger then' (5.3.49). Whereas Holinshed says that Alice stabbed her husband after he was already dead, the character in the play delivers the *coup de grâce*, murdering the man who was responsible for 'hind'ring Mosby's love and mine' (14.230). Kyd therefore seems to have established the rights of female characters to be considered equal with men as on-stage revengers.

Taylor's most eye-catching claim involves the fact that *Arden* consists of 18 scenes and Franklin's Epilogue has 18 lines. He observes that 'Watson's *Hekatompathia*, famously and idiosyncratically, consists of 100 "sonnets" that are 18 lines long'.⁷⁶ Taylor calls this 'a kind of private, self-referential joke',⁷⁷ and it is startling to encounter a scholar of his standing treating an early modern dramatic text like 'a code to be broken'.⁷⁸ Taylor claims that 'Franklin the character, speaking the Epilogue, looks a lot like Watson the poet, speaking one of his signature 18-line poems'.⁷⁹ There are, however, striking affinities between Franklin's Epilogue and the ways in which Kyd closes some of his other plays, particularly the fact that, like the Ghost of Andrea in *The Spanish Tragedy* and Death in

⁷⁶ Taylor, 'Four Forgotten Playwrights', 892.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 893.

⁷⁸ Matt Kubus, 'The Usual Suspects', in *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt*, pp. 49-62 (p. 54).

⁷⁹ Taylor, 'Four Forgotten Playwrights', 893.

Soliman and Perseda, Franklin provides a list of the dead. The epilogues in *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Arden* emphasize that divine retribution has been accomplished, for Andrea and Franklin describe the punishments that the villains will go on to suffer. Kyd's dramas often place special emphasis on divine justice, and *Arden* is no different.

Other biographical claims include Taylor's linking the ahistorical role of Protector Somerset in *Arden* to Watson's relationship with the Earl of Hertford. Taylor points out that 'Somerset's son and heir, also named Edward Seymour' was the Earl of Hertford, 'for whom Watson wrote, at short notice, the dramatic verse for the royal entertainment at Elvetham'.⁸⁰ We might pause at Taylor's phrase, 'dramatic verse', here, given that *Elvetham* is a royal entertainment, not a play, and it is worth noting that none of the evidence Taylor presents links Watson to Somerset prior to 1591. No scholar dates the composition of *Arden* as late as 1591. The fact that Somerset's wife, Frances Howard, was a cousin of Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel, to whom Watson dedicated *Antigone*, does not constitute a direct connection. Taylor also suggests that 'Watson's legal background may be relevant' to *Arden*.⁸¹ Watson states in the dedication to *Antigone* that he studied law, specifically Roman civil law. But Taylor seems unaware of Charles Crawford's observation that some of the 'language' of the play 'can only be properly appreciated by persons acquainted with the drafting of legal documents', as Kyd likely was, being 'the son of a scrivener', Francis Kyd, who was a Writer of the Court Letter.⁸² Having shown that the historical evidence Taylor presents in favour of Watson's, rather than Kyd's authorship of *Arden*, does not bear scrutiny, I now turn to Taylor's internal evidence for Watson's as the main authorial hand in the play.

Taylor's primary stylistic evidence for Watson's hand derives from a method known as 'microattribution', which involves recording n-grams (contiguous word sequences) and collocations (discontinuous word associations)⁸³ in tiny samples of dramatic text (in this case, a sample of just 274 words) and testing them for rarity in online databases. The author whose canon (adjusted according to size) features the most word fragments, such as 'hours the' and 'Sol' followed by 'well', is purportedly responsible for writing the sample selected for analysis. It is difficult to imagine a more arbitrary and unrepresentative method for early modern drama and it has been rejected by numerous

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 889.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 890.

⁸² Crawford, *Collectanea*, p. 105.

⁸³ Taylor's usual parameter of analysis for collocations involves a window of ten intervening words. But at one point in the article he provides an absurdly large window of 100 words to claim an additional match with Watson. See Taylor, 'Four Forgotten Playwrights', 887.

attribution specialists outside the *New Oxford Shakespeare*.⁸⁴ Taylor and his associates have ignored or dismissed any criticisms of this method, such as the fact that small fragments of text cannot represent the linguistic elements of which a whole play is constituted; the figures for verbal matches are far too small for reliable results; and reproductions of the method have led to entirely different findings. The main issue with Taylor's examination of a sample from Scene 10 of *Arden*⁸⁵ is that matches with Watson are concentrated in its first few lines, while, as Taylor's own data reveal, Kyd's unique phraseology dominates the remainder of the sample.⁸⁶ Over half of the matches Taylor records with Watson are concentrated in the first 27 words, less than 10% of the text examined. Taylor's numerical argument relies almost exclusively on the fact that the classical reference in Scene 10 of *Arden*,

See how the Hours, the guardant of heaven's gate,
Have by their toil removed the darksome clouds
That Sol may well discern the trampled pace
Wherein he went to guide his golden car (10.1-4)

finds a parallel in Watson's account in *Elvetham* of how obstacles to the Queen's happiness are being removed:

And lightfoote Howrs, the guardians of heav'ns gate,
With joyned forces doe remove those blocks.⁸⁷ (56-7)

The fact that these verbal links are concentrated in just a couple of lines suggests an instance of *parodia*,⁸⁸ as opposed to a single author drawing from his own linguistic resources as a phrase-maker. Other references to the sun-god Sol (whom Taylor equates with Queen Elizabeth) and his chariot in Kyd's works include *The Spanish Tragedy*'s 'Ere Sol had slept three nights in Thetis' lap, / And slaked his smoking chariot in her

⁸⁴ See Darren Freebury-Jones and Marcus Dahl, 'The Limitations of Microattribution', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 60.4 (2018), 467-95; Pervez Rizvi, 'The Problem of Microattribution', *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities*, 34.3 (2019), 606-15; David Auerbach, 'Review of *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Authorship Companion*', *American Notes and Queries*, 33.2 (2020), 236-41; Vickers, 'Kyd, *Edward III*, and "The Shock of the New"'; Warren Chernaik, 'Theatrical Companies and Their Plays: Shakespeare and Marlowe', *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England*, 33 (2020), 167-87.

⁸⁵ See Taylor, 'Finding "Anonymous"'.
⁸⁶ See Freebury-Jones, 'Unsound Deductions'.

⁸⁷ All references to Thomas Watson's works are from Dana F. Sutton, ed., 'Thomas Watson, The Complete Works. A Hypertext Edition' (2011, 2019),
<http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/watson/index.html>.

⁸⁸ I am indebted to Brian Vickers for this observation. Email correspondence, 7 June 2019.

flood' (1.1.23-4) and *Cornelia's* 'the golden sun where ere he drive / His glittering chariot' (1.1.73-4).

We might ask ourselves what the 'microattribution' method would make of Kyd's generous tribute to Watson in *The Spanish Tragedy*, in which he borrows extensively from 'Sonnet 47' of *Hekatompathia*:

In time the savage Bull sustaines the yoake,
In time all haggard Hawkes will stoope to lure,
In time small wedges cleave the hardest Oake,
In time the flint is pearst with softest shower,
And she in time will fall from her disdaine,
And rue the sufferance of your freendly paine.
No, she is wilder and more hard withall,
Than beast, or bird, or tree, or stony wall (2.1.3-10).⁸⁹

The parallel text in *Hekatompathia* is as follows:

In time the Bull is brought to ware the yoake;
In time all haggred Haukes will stoope the Lures;
In time small wedge will cleave the sturdiest Oake;
In time the Marble wears with weakest shewres.
More fierce is my sweete *love*, more hard withall,
Than Beast, or Bird, than Tree or Stony wall (1-6).

Such striking connections in print between Kyd and Watson are not entirely surprising, given that Dekker associated them in *A Knight's Conjuring*, while Meres linked Kyd and Watson as notable English authors and tragic writers; they were also coupled by Thomas Heywood in his *Hierarchy of the Blessed Angels* (1635). T.W. Baldwin inferred that Kyd was a friend of Watson's.⁹⁰ It would therefore be deeply flawed to base an attribution on verbal correspondences between two contemporary writers who appear to have been close associates, and the techniques of *parodia* and *imitatio*, prevalent in Elizabethan drama, fundamentally undermine stylometric analyses of textual fragments. It is difficult to tell who the borrower is in *Arden*, but it is possible that Watson was repaying the tribute to

⁸⁹ I have omitted speech prefixes in this instance.

⁹⁰ See T.W. Baldwin, *On the Literary Genetics of Shakespeare's Plays* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1959), p. 178.

Kyd in *Elvetham*. Either way, we can safely reject Taylor's primary internal evidence for Watson's hand in *Arden*.

Taylor draws attention to the fact that Watson's speech and the parallel passage in *Arden* use 'assonantal half-rhymes (gate/pace/away, maids/gate/highway)',⁹¹ but the evidence for rhyme points to Kyd. *Arden* shares Kyd's distinctive use of rhyme, in which we find the 'sporadic appearance' of 'unusual and whimsically varied rime schemes set at random in the texture of the verse',⁹² such as 'aca, where c is an unriming line; abab; and aaa'.⁹³ By my count, *Arden* contains eighteen instances of the aca scheme, which we can compare to the total of eleven in *The Spanish Tragedy*; the play features one instance of the triple rhyme aaa, which also co-occurs with all plays assigned to Kyd as sole author; and one instance of acaa, the same total we find in *The Spanish Tragedy* (*Soliman and Perseda* contains two instances). Watson's extant poetry is not comparable to Kyd's unique facility for writing blank verse speeches interspersed with distinct rhyming patterns.

The evidence for oaths, expletives, and colloquialisms that Taylor presents for Watson's part authorship of the play does not really constitute evidence at all. Taylor notes that *Arden* contains the 'polite exclamations "Tush" and "Tut"', but he does not provide a single example in Watson's corpus. It should be noted that Kyd displays a propensity for the exclamation 'Tush': it occurs four times in *The Spanish Tragedy*, twice in *Soliman and Perseda*. Taylor's claim in respect to 'Tut' is factually incorrect: I cannot find a single example in *Arden*. Taylor mentions that Watson uses 'Ay ("I")' three times in his works,⁹⁴ but fails to acknowledge that Kyd also uses 'Ay' and that the colloquialism 'Ay, but' occurs frequently in his plays.⁹⁵ There are nine instances of 'Ay, but' in *Arden*, which we

⁹¹ Taylor, 'Four Forgotten Playwrights', 886.

⁹² James E. Routh Jr., 'Thomas Kyd's Rime Schemes and the Authorship of *Soliman and Perseda* and of *The First Part of Jeronimo*', *Modern Language Notes*, 20.2 (1905), 49-51 (p. 50). See also Brian Vickers, 'Kyd's Authorship of *King Leir*', 467-71.

⁹³ Routh Jr., 'Thomas Kyd's Rime', p. 49.

⁹⁴ Taylor, 'Four Forgotten Playwrights', 874, n. 47.

⁹⁵ For an analysis of Kyd's debts to John Lyly, in terms of this colloquialism and the Euphuistic language of Balthazar in *The Spanish Tragedy* and Michael in *Arden*, see Darren Freebury-Jones, 'Exploring Verbal Relations between *Arden of Faversham* and John Lyly's *Endymion*', *Renaissance and Reformation*, 41.4 (2018), 93-108. In his examination of proposed literary influences, Taylor does not acknowledge the striking affinities between Michael's letter in Scene 3 of *Arden* and Kyd's Balthazar in terms of the author's use of Lyly's love language for the purposes of characterization. See Taylor, 'Four Forgotten Playwrights', 881.

can compare to the totals of six in *The Spanish Tragedy* and eight in *Soliman and Perseda*.⁹⁶ Taylor also points out that

Michael's letter to Susan contains the phrase 'Thus hoping you will let my passions penetrate, or rather impetrate mercy' (3. 11–12). The verb 'impetrate' is rare in literary texts; OED notes that it is more common in Latin than English, and chiefly theological, but that it was also used in '*Roman Law*'. Watson was the only Elizabethan poet or playwright who was a student of Roman law, which he had studied in Italy and France.⁹⁷

Taylor does not cite a single example of the verb 'impetrate' in Watson's corpus, so this proposed vocabulary link is irrelevant. The word is not rare, as Taylor claims, either. *EEBO-TCP* records hundreds of instances, so the author of *Arden* could have drawn it from multiple works.⁹⁸

Moreover, Watson's verse style is utterly unlike Kyd's, who is unique among Shakespeare's predecessors in admitting a large number of feminine endings (eleventh, unaccented syllables in verse lines). In his study of English blank verse drama up to 1595, Philip Timberlake recorded an average of '6.2 per cent of feminine endings' in *Arden*, 'with a range in long scenes of 0.9-12.9 per cent. *Soliman* has 10.2 per cent, and a range of 5.3-14.8 per cent', while Kyd's *Cornelia* averages 9.5% feminine endings.⁹⁹ Timberlake endorsed the attribution of *Arden* to Kyd on the basis of this metrical evidence, noting that the high rate was 'not entirely surprising. Kyd was a gifted playwright with a keen perception of dramatic values, and his metrical development may find its explanation in that fact'.¹⁰⁰ Conversely, Sutton points out that a reliance on 'feminine endings to pentameter lines' is 'largely foreign to Watson (his 1590 English eclogue on Sir Francis Walsingham's death, for example, contains only four such lines, 230, 232, 299 and 301, out of a total of 424)'.¹⁰¹ 424 lines is a large sample size, affording us an insight into Watson's prosodic habits around the time that *Arden* was composed. Sutton rejects Taylor's arguments on the basis that 'nothing in either the contents of *Arden of Faversham* or the way in which it is written... resembles Watson's published work', citing the 'recent stylometric analysis of iambic versification' conducted by myself 'to

⁹⁶ See Merriam, 'New Light on a Possible Kyd Canon'.

⁹⁷ Taylor, 'Four Forgotten Playwrights', 881.

⁹⁸ I am grateful to Pervez Rizvi for pointing this fact out to me. Email correspondence, 12 April 2020.

⁹⁹ Timberlake, *The Feminine Ending*, p. 52, pp. 61-2.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

¹⁰¹ <http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/watson/opuscula/text.html>.

support this'.¹⁰² Taylor nevertheless notes that the 1591 royal entertainment at Elvetham 'contains Watson's longest extant sample of blank verse. The 62 lines of "The Poet's Speech to Her Majesty" contain nine feminine endings (14.5 per cent), which is likely to surprise anyone familiar only with the rhymed verse of the much earlier *Hekatompathia*'.¹⁰³ But 62 lines in a royal entertainment (not a play) is not a reliable sample for the feminine ending test, presuming, of course, that we accept the English translations as Watson's work in the first place. Elsewhere Taylor would appear to agree with me: in his analysis of a scene in Shakespeare and George Peele's *Titus Andronicus* (1592) that he assigns to Thomas Middleton, Taylor argued that the 'scene is only 84 lines long, and scholars agree that this is too little for feminine endings to be a reliable attribution marker'.¹⁰⁴ It seems that Taylor's views on sufficient sample sizes are apt to alter depending on which attribution he seeks to make. Only two of the nine words that occupy the final syllabic positions of verse lines in Watson's speech co-occur as line endings in *Arden*: 'body' (1.41; 14.402) and 'perish' (1.233). Taylor notes that 'Marina Tarlinskaja characterizes the verse style of the bulk of *Arden* as the work of a poet "older" than Shakespeare',¹⁰⁵ but this establishes nothing, given that Kyd was born six years earlier than Shakespeare, while Watson was born in 1555.

Taylor's argument that because Watson 'sometimes mixes substantial amounts of prose with his verse',¹⁰⁶ and because one-fifth of *Arden* is written in prose, Watson is a plausible authorial candidate, is particularly weak. Kyd's plays often mix prose and verse: he gives lower-ranked or comic characters, like the Page in *The Spanish Tragedy*, prose speeches; characters like Pedringano and Piston often lapse into prose. *Arden* merely observes the decorum governing the use of prose in drama, although it is worth mentioning that the percentage of prose in Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda* is practically identical to *Arden*: just under 20%.

Some of Taylor's evidence is of the qualitative kind. For instance, he dismisses other unlikely authors as candidates, such as Richard Hathway and Thomas Achelley, because their 'bland' poetic 'lines' are 'unlike *Arden* – utterly unoriginal and unremarkable',¹⁰⁷ or because their poetry features 'drab sententiae, full of abstract nouns, without metaphor or

¹⁰² Ibid. Sutton cites Freebury-Jones, 'Unsound Deductions'.

¹⁰³ Taylor, 'Four Forgotten Playwrights', 879.

¹⁰⁴ Gary Taylor and Doug Duhaime, 'Who Wrote the Fly Scene (3.2) in *Titus Andronicus*?: Automated Searches and Deep Reading', in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Authorship Companion*, pp. 67-91 (p. 72).

¹⁰⁵ Taylor, 'Four Forgotten Playwrights', 875.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 881.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 871.

description'.¹⁰⁸ One would therefore expect Watson's poetry to equal that of primary candidates for *Arden*, such as Kyd, Marlowe, or a young Shakespeare. But few sensitive readers are likely to agree that Watson's extant English poetry reads anything like *Arden*, and indeed no scholar has anticipated Taylor's judgement in the history of early modern studies. For instance, W.W. Greg noted that Watson's eclogue on Walsingham's death is of 'tedious length. The usual transition from the dirge to the pæan is managed with more than the usual lack of effect',¹⁰⁹ while Herbert E. Cory criticized 'Watson's dull English version of his dull Latin elegiac eclogue on Francis Walsingham'.¹¹⁰ Daniel Cook notes that Watson's earlier 'Sonnet 7', in *Hekatompathia*, is 'poor: the conceits are clumsy and improbable, the prosody heavy-handed and needlessly repetitive'.¹¹¹ It is difficult to imagine Watson transforming the 'ponderous verse'¹¹² exhibited throughout his extant work – be that work earlier or dated around the same time *Arden* was written – into the idiosyncratic fusion of lyrically elaborate verse and colloquial, naturalistic dialogue of Kyd's plays, as well as the fluidity of linguistic register with which a wide range of dramatic voices are conveyed in *Arden*. In short, Taylor's argument that 'Watson aspired to be a new kind of English poet. *Arden* is a new kind of English play' is fatuous.¹¹³ Literary quality is, of course, subjective, but it is one of the linchpins of Taylor's argument. Unfortunately, there is little to nothing to link Watson's poetic style with that of *Arden*.

Taylor states that 'A unique feature of *Arden* is its systematic use, not in one passage but throughout the play, of "Here" at the beginning of stage directions, especially at the beginning of scenes, an old-fashioned convention found in no other play from the 1580s or 1590s'.¹¹⁴ Yet the opening stage directions of *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (1588) and 1.7 of *I Henry VI* (1592) begin 'Here'. Taylor's memory seems to have failed him here. In 1995 he used the evidence for stage directions containing 'Here' to argue for Thomas Nashe's authorship of the opening act of *I Henry VI*, noting that 'No other playwright between 1580 and 1595 bears such a close resemblance to act 1 of *Part One* in its treatment of stage directions'. Having searched other dramatic texts for comparison, he observed that in 'the anonymous *Pedlars Prophecy*, the word appears in eight of the

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 877.

¹⁰⁹ W. W. Greg, *Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama* (London, 1906), p. 111.

¹¹⁰ Herbert E. Cory, 'Spenserian Pastoral', *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association*, 25 (1910), 244.

¹¹¹ Daniel Cook, 'Shakespeare vs. Thomas Watson' (2016), <https://www.secondary-authorship.com/single-post/2016/06/12/Shakespeare-vs-Thomas-Watson>.

¹¹² Freeman, *Thomas Kyd*, p. 20.

¹¹³ Taylor, 'Four Forgotten Playwrights', 879.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 888.

play's fifteen directions' but rejected three instances because 'these are Latin (*Hic*: 375, 461, 990)'.¹¹⁵ *Fair Em, the Miller's Daughter of Manchester* (1590) contains four instances of directions beginning with the formula, 'Here enters'; there are 64 instances in *Arden*. *Fair Em* has been attributed on entirely different evidentiary grounds to Kyd¹¹⁶ and will be included in *The Works of Thomas Kyd*, edited by Ian Burrows. Taylor elaborates that 'it does occur in three works by Watson. In *Hekatompathia* "Here" begins one marginal note and begins seven prose headnotes'.¹¹⁷ But, as Taylor rightly notes, '*Hekatompathia* is not a play, of course, and the headnotes are not stage directions'. Taylor's evidence is even more shaky (and contradicts his rejection of Latin directions elsewhere) when it comes to the fact that in 'Watson's 1581 *Antigone* the Latin *hic* (meaning "here", and found in earlier English dramatic texts) begins five marginal notes, including two that are recognizably stage directions', and that 'in *Elvetham*, Watson's only known surviving English dramatic text' (again, it is a royal entertainment, not a play) 'an inset prose stage direction in Roman type interrupts Neaera's italicized verse speech: "Here her Maiesty named the Pinnacle the *Bonaduenture*"'.¹¹⁸ If Taylor believes that stage directions beginning 'Here' provide evidence for common authorship, then surely he must agree that the links between *Arden* and *Fair Em* are stronger than the non-English or non-dramatic links with Watson.

Taylor's observation that 'In *Arden*, use of "Here" at the beginning of stage directions is sometimes combined (uniquely) with "Then" at the beginning of subsequent stage directions in the same scene' also points towards Kyd's hand, rather than Watson's.¹¹⁹ As Lukas Erne puts it: '*Arden of Faversham* and *Soliman and Perseda* share a distinctive feature unique to play texts of the period, a high number of stage directions starting with "Then", which may encourage further speculation in favour of common authorship'.¹²⁰ In an article titled, 'Corresponding Stage Directions in Plays Attributable to Kyd',¹²¹ I show that *Arden* contains five instances of stage directions beginning '*Then they*'. No other publicly performed play of the Elizabethan period matches this count, with the exception

¹¹⁵ Gary Taylor, 'Shakespeare and Others: The Authorship of *Henry the Sixth Part One*', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama*, 7 (1995), 145-205 (p. 174).

¹¹⁶ See Vickers, 'Thomas Kyd, Secret Sharer'; Tarlinskaja, *Shakespeare and the Versification*, p. 93, p. 102; Darren Freebury-Jones, 'The Diminution', 256-8, 265-8.

¹¹⁷ Henry Woudhuysen counts eight: before sonnets 26, 32, 36, 46, 52, 57, 73, 92. Email correspondence, 1 May 2020.

¹¹⁸ Taylor, 'Four Forgotten Playwrights', 888.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Lukas Erne, 'Introduction' in *Soliman and Perseda [1592/93]* (Manchester: Malone Society Reprints, 2014), pp. vii-xxix (p. xvi).

¹²¹ See Darren Freebury-Jones, 'Corresponding Stage Directions in Plays Attributable to Kyd', *American Notes and Queries*, 32.1 (2019), 16-17.

of Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda*. Furthermore, I show that only one other Elizabethan play contains a stage direction beginning with the formulation, 'Then they', and that is *The True Chronicle History of King Leir* (1589),¹²² which is to be edited by Eugene Giddens for *The Works of Thomas Kyd*. Taylor's argument that 'the unique treatment of stage directions in *Arden* is more likely to have originated with Watson than with any other known playwright' seems specious.¹²³

We can see therefore that the internal evidence for Watson's hand in *Arden* is friable, while Taylor's deductions in respect of the poet's profile amount to biographical conjectures, especially in light of the scant surviving documentary evidence linking Watson to commercial drama at the time *Arden* was written. In favour of his attribution, Taylor cites E.H.C. Oliphant,¹²⁴ who suggested that scholars 'might want to steep' themselves 'in a knowledge of Watson's poetry' in order to determine 'his presence' in anonymous plays written before 1592.¹²⁵ Oliphant rightly noted that any evidence that an 'anonymous play of the period is wholly or mainly his work' would rely on a knowledge 'of Watson's style only on his poems'.¹²⁶ We have seen that there is little to link the style of *Arden* to Watson's poetry, and Taylor makes no mention of Oliphant's judgement that '*Arden*'s claim to rank among the Shakespeare apocrypha is on external evidence absolutely *nil*; nor is it his on the internal evidence'. Conversely, Oliphant found that other twentieth-century scholars had made 'a strong case for' Kyd's participation, and himself concluded that 'Kyd was concerned in it'.¹²⁷ The elevation of Thomas Watson in modern attribution studies will hopefully garner more attention for this largely forgotten, major poet. However, having taken up Taylor's offer to subject his evidence to 'rigorous testing and critique',¹²⁸ it seems claims that Watson had a hand in plays associated with Shakespeare and/or Kyd are misplaced.

¹²² For an overview of the wide range of evidence presented by scholars for Kyd's authorship of this play, see Vickers, 'Kyd's Authorship of *King Leir*'; Freebury-Jones, "'Fearful Dreams'".

¹²³ Taylor, 'Four Forgotten Playwrights', 888.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 895.

¹²⁵ E.H.C. Oliphant, 'The Problem of Authorship in Elizabethan Dramatic Literature', *Modern Philology*, 8 (1911), 411-59 (p. 439).

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 420.

¹²⁸ Taylor, 'Four Forgotten Playwrights', 894.