Shakespeare and Middleton's Co-Authorship of *Timon of Athens*

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Abstract

The essay focuses on Shakespeare's collaboration with Thomas Middleton on *Timon of Athens* (1605-1606). It provides new evidence concerning the patterns of imagery in the play and argues that these support the authorial divisions established by earlier attribution studies. Beyond the issue of 'who wrote what' are questions about how Shakespeare co-wrote with Middleton. Previous analysis of the play has suggested that *Timon* was co-written consecutively, Shakespeare first, Middleton second. However, it is argued here that a mixture of consecutive and simultaneous co-writing would better explain the play as it stands. In the course of making the case, the essay reasserts the value of attribution evidence to the study of collaboration. Middleton's skill in writing cynical urban scenes for his city comedies is often cited as the reason why he and Shakespeare worked together on *Timon*; and it is argued that Middleton's early pamphlets should also be considered as evidence of his ability to satirise greed, and therefore as a reason why he was valuable to Shakespeare as a collaborator.

Keywords: Attribution, Collaboration, Middleton, Shakespeare, *Timon of Athens*

1. *Authorship of the Play*

Timon of Athens concerns itself with a man who becomes so disappointed by his false friends, so embittered with mankind in general, that he sends himself into exile: 'Timon will to the woods, where he shall find / Th' unkindest beast more kinder than mankind' (Taylor and Lavagnino 2007, 12.35-36). Timon's contempt for the flatterers who used him for his money leads him to seek solitude; his misanthropic view of the world means that he rejects even a genuine offer of friendship from his Steward. It is ironic, then, that *Timon of Athens*, with its protagonist who wants nothing more than to isolate himself, was brought into being through the co-operative efforts of two writers, Shakespeare and Thomas Middleton.

Evidence suggests that Shakespeare and Middleton composed *Timon* around 1605-1606. Since the connections between *Timon* and the work its co-authors were doing in the same period will come into play later in this essay, it is worth dwelling a little on its date of composition here. In his discussion of the play's chronology John Jowett looks to the fact that *Timon* was 'almost certainly' written for the King's Men (2007, 356). The company moved to Blackfriars Theatre in August 1608 and the plays written for them after this point included act divisions so the candles in this indoor venue could be tended; *Timon* has no such divisions. A date prior to 1608 agrees with the verdict reached by MacDonald P. Jackson, whose study compares rare words in the sections of *Timon* attributed to Shakespeare with other Shakespearean texts and proposes that the play was written around 1604-1605 (1979, 155). Linguistic analysis carried out by Gary Taylor pushes the date just slightly later; his colloquialism-in-verse tests put the date of composition for the Shakespearean parts of *Timon* between those of *All's Well that Ends Well* in 1604-1605 and *Macbeth* in 1606 (1987, 128).

The collaborative status of *Timon* was not recognised immediately: it was first published in 1623, as part of the First Folio, without mention of any co-author. The authorship of the play has been discussed for over one hundred and sixty years, a debate summarised only very briefly here.[1] Charles Knight (1849) was the first to propose that Shakespeare co-wrote *Timon* with an unknown contributor. Twenty-five years later, F.G. Fleay (1874) suggested that the co-writer was also the author of *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1606), at the time believed to be by Cyril Tourneur but now widely attributed to Middleton. William Wells (1920) and H. Dugdale Sykes (1924) worked separately using verbal parallels to identify Middleton as Shakespeare's *Timon* co-writer. However, the view that Shakespeare collaborated on *Timon* has not gone unchallenged. E.K. Chambers (1930) argues the play was not co-written but unfinished instead. He raises the possibility that the presence of inconsistencies in *Timon* imply that Shakespeare had been enduring stress or illness when he wrote the play, solo. Building on Chambers' argument, Una Ellis-Fermor (1942) concludes that *Timon* was a rough draft in which one sees Shakespeare (and him alone) in the midst of composing his verse. Years later, the same idea of solo composition was expressed by Giorgio Melchiori, who considered *Timon* an 'experimental' work because it was 'unfinished' (1978, 1063; my translation).[2]

[2] Melchiori proposed that *Timon* was unfinished 'not in the sense that it was not completed, but in the sense that many of its scenes are just jotted down, and seem to be waiting for revision as regards internal linguistic coordination' (1978, 1063; my translation).

Chambers and Ellis-Fermor's 'unfinished' theory held a lot of traction until the 1970s and the meticulous work of two separate attribution studies by David Lake (1975) and MacDonald P. Jackson (1979). Lake's study agrees with the theory that *Timon* is unfinished, he notes its 'theatrically unviable condition', but rejects outright Ellis-Fermor's view (1942) that this alone can explain inconsistencies in the play's verse style (279). Lake examines linguistic features such as contractions and oaths and concludes that the evidence is 'strong enough to justify a strong suspicion of Middleton's presence' although not adequate to 'resolve the problem of authorship' (285). Jackson's study is less equivocal in its conclusions. Like Lake, Jackson identifies the presence of several Middletonian features in *Timon*: contractions like *h'as*, *h'ad*, *'tas*, *'em*, and others which 'occur uniquely or with unusual frequency for Shakespeare'; higher ratios of particular word forms in certain scenes (*does* and *has* which Middleton prefers to *doth* and *hath*) and oaths like *Faith* and *Push* (1979, 58). For Jackson, the only satisfactory explanation for the presence of these markers in *Timon* is that sections of the play are indeed Middleton's work (63).

Confidence in Middleton as the co-writer of *Timon* was bolstered by Lake and Jackson's evidence-based studies; the play was published under both Shakespeare and Middleton's names in the Oxford *Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (Wells and Taylor 1986, and again in the 2005 edition). In an essay for the *Textual Companion* to the *Complete Works*, Jowett cites the evidence of Sykes, William Wells, Lake, and Jackson in support of this decision (1987, 501). He also summarises the findings of what he calls 'the most detailed and comprehensive study' of *Timon*, R.V. Holdsworth's unpublished doctoral dissertation (1982), which provides large amounts of evidence for Middleton's presence in the play (Jowett 1987, 501). In *The Authorship of Shakespeare's Plays*, Jonathan Hope presents the results of his socio-linguistic analysis of *Timon*; he concludes that one of his tests, the 'auxiliary *do*' test, is in 'broad support' of the notion that *Timon* was co-written by Shakespeare and Middleton (1994, 104). The weight of evidence led Brian Vickers to argue in *Shakespeare: Co-Author* that Shakespeareans who deny Middleton's significant role in *Timon* 'risk forfeiting their scholarly credibility' (2002, 290). Yet more support for Middleton's claim came when *Timon* was published by Oxford in *Thomas Middleton: the Collected Works* (Taylor and Lavagnino 2007).[3]

Of course, lots of the scholarship concerned with proving that Middleton had a hand in *Timon* not only seeks to establish the fact of his involvement but also aims to discern where he made his contribution (Wells 1920; Sykes

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[3] Lene B. Petersen notes that the linguistic analysis she carried out on Shakespeare's canon places *Timon* closer to George Chapman than to either Shakespeare or Middleton. She observes that Chapman 'was conceivably in the right place and with the right sort of views to have had a hand in *Timon*' but acknowledges that it is 'perhaps unlikely' that he did so (2010, 182-183).

1924; Lake 1975; Jackson 1979; Holdsworth 1982; Jowett 2004a). In the *Collected Works*, Jowett offers an analysis of *Timon*'s authorship based on the wealth of attribution evidence outlined above, including his own earlier findings (2004a, 2; 2007, 356-358). Jowett's experience with *Timon* as well as the breadth and quality of the sources he employs makes his distribution of the scenes between Shakespeare and Middleton highly credible. His attribution of the play can be summarised as follows:

Scene	Authorship
1	Mostly S but with M hand at 38.1-41.1 and 276-86(?)
2	Middleton
3	Shakespeare
4	'Thoroughly collaborative'
5-10	Middleton
11	Mostly M (0.1-35(?) and 104.1-114.1) but with S hand in middle section
12	Shakespeare
13	Mostly S but with M hand at 0.1-29.1 and 30-51
14	Mostly S but with M hand at 66-9 and 459.2 to 538.1
15-19	Shakespeare

Table 1 – Jowett's Attribution of *Timon*

The largest single section of the play attributed to Middleton, Scenes 5 to 9 (almost all of Act 3 in editions with interpolated act divisions), are known as the 'dunning' scenes because they depict Timon's servants visiting his friends to borrow money so Timon can repay his creditors. Even though Timon has been generous to a fault, his friends refuse him the same help. Scene 10 (3.6) in some editions), also attributed to Middleton, is rather incongruous to the action of the play which surrounds it. It focuses on the story of Alcibiades, a Captain in the army who is banished when he offends the senators with his impassioned pleading on behalf of a junior officer. Scene 11 (3.7) moves back to Timon as he arranges a mock banquet to punish those friends who have disappointed him. The distribution of markers would suggest that Middleton wrote most of this scene but that Shakespeare was responsible for Timon's outburst in the middle of it. The large section attributed almost entirely to Shakespeare, Scenes 12-19 (Acts 4 and 5), focuses on Timon's self-imposed exile from Athens and his newfound hatred of mankind.

2. *Evidence in Support of Attribution: Imagery*

One method which has not been attempted by previous attribution studies is that of analysing the patterns of imagery in the play. The aim with this method

is to track examples of imagery, metaphors and similes, in a text and to cross-reference them against the authorial boundaries ascertained by other attribution methodology. The value of this approach lies in the way it allows for links between scenes to be identified. And, as will become clear, the technique builds on existing attribution work as a way to think about how playwrights wrote together.

The first stage with this method involves reading the play in question and noting every metaphorical, or non-literal, use of language. These figures of speech can then be grouped into categories based on the type of image being used in the comparison. In the case of *Timon* these categories were broad initially but narrowed as certain themes recurred often. For instance, the category 'animals' quickly became broken down into types (dogs, wolves, birds) to allow for more specificity. The categories which occurred most frequently were then identified. In the event that any examples had been missed in the manual reading, electronic searches were carried out on the First Folio edition of *Timon* available through *EEBO* and the *Text Creation Partnership*. The search function allows for spelling variations and variant forms (for instance, 'wolf' and 'wolves') to be identified and alternative words were also entered as search terms (so, 'cur' and 'mongrel' as well as 'dog'). Once confident that the lists were complete, the instances of these figures of speech and where in the play they appear were cross-referenced by author, using Jowett's attribution in the *Collected Works* (Wells and Taylor 1986, 883) as a guide.

This might sound a little complicated but the first example should clarify the process. One image used throughout *Timon* is 'dog' ('dogge' in the Folio), which most often appears as a way for one character to insult another and occasionally with the idea of a man transforming into a dog. The Painter says to Apemantus, 'Y'are a Dogge' (Gg2v/1.204) while the Page says to the same character 'Thou was't whelpt a Dogge, and thou shalt famish a Dogges death' (Gg4v/4.83-84).[4] One notable example appears when Timon reveals to his disloyal friends the fake banquet he has prepared for them: 'Vncover Dogges, and lap' (hh1/11.84). The frequency of dog imagery makes sense in this play, having a strong connection to its concern with misanthropy. Timon's followers frequently aim the insult 'dogge' at Apemantus, the play's sole cynic at the outset, as a way to set themselves above him by saying that he is less than man. When Timon insults his false friends as 'Dogges', it implies that they too are subhuman. Once Timon reaches the depths of his hatred of mankind, the hierarchy of man and dog is flipped: Timon tells Alcibiades, 'I am Misantropos, and hate mankinde, / For thy part, I do wish thou wert a dogge, / That I might loue thee something' (hh2/14.53-55).

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[4] The quotes here are taken from the First Folio (1623). The relevant signature from the folio is given, followed by the scene and line reference from the *Collected Works* edition (2007) so as to show where the passage appears relative to the proposed authorship of the play.

The repeated use of 'dog' imagery, then, is a way of emphasising the play's concern with misanthropy but what is of more importance to my purpose is the distribution of this imagery relative to Shakespeare and Middleton's authorship. Here, the evidence overwhelmingly links the use of dog imagery to Shakespeare: of the twenty instances of the word 'dogge' in the Folio edition of the play, eighteen appear in scenes or sections of scenes attributed to Shakespeare. What is more, on the two occasions where the word 'dogge' appears in Middleton's scenes it is used in a different way, not as an insult or in the comparison of man and dog. Scene 2 has Apemantus' Grace with its lines 'Or a Harlot for her weeping, / Or a Dogge that seemes asleeping' (Gg3/2.66-67). In scene 14, Timon aims to show his Steward how little he now cares about people, advising him to 'let the famisht flesh slide from the Bone, / Ere thou releeue the Begger. Giue to dogges / What thou denysest to men' (hh4/14.529-531). The high frequency with which the image appears in the parts of *Timon* attributed to Shakespeare, coupled with the way the word is used in parts attributed to Middleton, leads me to conclude that the dog imagery was of Shakespeare's devising.

Linked to the use of dog imagery in *Timon* are references to wolves, again as a way to indicate distaste for people. 'Wolves' or 'wolf' ('Wolues' or 'Wolfe' in the Folio) is used five times and always by Timon himself. In the second banqueting scene, Timon describes his flattering 'Mouth-Friends' as 'affable Wolues' (hh1/11.88, 94). In scene 12 he shows his disdain for the citizens of Athens when addressing the city wall, saying 'O thou Wall / that girdles in those Wolues' (hh1/12.1-2). It is used again to put down mankind in another example of apostrophe whereby Timon addresses the planet earth as though it were a mother; he argues that she should prefer 'Tygers, Dragons, Wolues, and Beares' to men (hh2v/14.190). In Scene 14 Timon rails against Apemantus saying, 'still thou liu'dst but as a Breakefast to the Wolfe. If thou wert the Wolfe, thy greediness would afflict thee, & oft thou should'st hazard thy life for thy dinner' (hh3/14.335-336). As well as being similar to 'dog' in its use as an insult, 'wolves' is likewise strongly connected to Shakespeare's presence in *Timon*: it occurs only in scenes or parts of scenes attributed to Shakespeare.

On first appearance, metaphors of illness and disease seem to be woven through the whole of *Timon*, employed in scenes attributed to either Shakespeare or Middleton. Disease imagery works well in the play to reflect Timon's disgust with mankind; Timon himself does not use disease-related language until after he has been disappointed by his false friends. However, while language fitting into the broad category of 'disease' is present throughout the play, an examination of the specific lexicon used to create these metaphors reveals that Shakespeare and Middleton take different approaches.

Middleton prefers to use the term 'disease' while Shakespeare's preference tends towards words like 'plague', 'leprosy' and 'infection'. Of the five times

the word 'disease' appears in *Timon*, four are found in scenes or parts of them which have been attributed to Middleton. In Scene 5, Flaminius insults Lucullus for refusing to help Timon by calling him a 'disease of a friend' (Gg5/5.52). In an early part of Scene 13, attributed to Middleton, one of Timon's servants describes 'his disease, of all shunn'd pouerty' (hh1v/13.12-14). The example of 'disease' which appears in a part of the play attributed to Shakespeare occurs when Timon instructs two prostitutes to work amongst the people of Athens and 'giue them diseases' (hh2/14.85). However, with this command Timon is not using disease as a metaphor but rather attempting to organise a very literal revenge.

The examples of illness-orientated language in the Shakespearean sections of *Timon* are even more clear-cut: all fourteen instances of the word 'plague' in *Timon* occur in parts of the play attributed to Shakespeare. It should be noted that not every example of 'plague' necessarily refers to disease: 'the Gods plague thee' (hh2/14.74), for instance, might refer to the more general misfortune wished by Timon on his enemies, with connotations of a Biblical plague. However, on the vast majority of occasions where 'plague' is used, it is surrounded by a vocabulary which makes it clear that it is disease which is under discussion. When Timon's fellow (if that word can be appropriately used here) misanthrope, Apemantus, makes himself scarce to avoid visitors, he says, 'The plague of Company light vpon thee: / I will feare to catch it, and giue way' (hh3/14.354-355). So, while 'plague' could mean various afflictions, 'catch it' in the next line confirms that 'company' is a disease. The word 'infect' and its various derivations are similarly confined to the Shakespearean sections of the play: all eight occasions on which it is used are in scenes or parts of scenes attributed to Shakespeare. As with 'plague', a couple of examples do not refer clearly to disease but most do. Timon's initial rage at his friends' betrayal is expressed in a long speech addressed to Athens' walls, in which he asks: 'Your potent and infectious Feauors, heape / On Athens ripe for stroke / … Breath, infect breath' (hh1v/12.21-22; 30). Timon wishes nothing but ill on the people of Athens at the same time as he imagines the city as a place ripe with disease. The line 'Breath, infect breath' has obvious connections to illness but might also allude to the speech of Timon's flatterers, whose empty words led him towards financial ruin.

There are some examples of figurative speech crossing the proposed authorial boundaries. However, there seems to be a high likelihood that the plot of the play has influenced the particular imagery which does this (in fact, a major reason for focusing on non-literal language in the first place is because there is less chance that it would arise from the action of the play). There are, for instance, examples of eating or cannibalistic imagery in parts of the play attributed both to Shakespeare and to Middleton. Such imagery appears in the opening scene in which Apemantus and Timon argue:

Apemantus. No: I eate not Lords.
Timon. And thou should'st, thoud'st anger Ladies.
Apemantus. O they eat Lords; So they come by great bellies. (Gg2v/1.208-211)

This part of Scene 1 has been attributed to Shakespeare; it contains his preferred form 'O' rather than Middleton's favoured 'Oh', a difference first identified by Jackson (1979, 215). There are some parallels to be found between this extract and a scene credited to Middleton. In this scene, Apemantus bemoans the way in which so many people take advantage of Timon's generosity, saying 'It greeues me to see so many dip there meate in one mans blood' (Gg3/2.40-41). Both these passages employ cannibalistic imagery to evoke a sense of people taking advantage of others: the first has a sexual undertone with women said to consume men sexually and the second implies that those who would drain Timon's wealth by feasting at his table might as well be eating the man himself. The coincidence of these examples is somewhat diminished when we remember that two of the key scenes in *Timon* involve banquets: an initial feast which demonstrates Timon's largesse towards his friends and then a second, mock, feast in which Timon takes revenge on those friends for their disloyalty. Given the significance of these feast scenes, it seems unsurprising that eating imagery occurs in scenes by both authors. While these examples do cross the Shakespeare-Middleton divisions of the play, the likelihood that such imagery would have been inspired by the action of the scenes means that this example does not contradict the authorial boundaries indicated by earlier attribution work.

It is important to be clear that the words and images under discussion here are not indicative of one or other author's presence by themselves. In order for the examples to be used as evidence of Shakespeare's presence, one would have to rule out the possibility that Middleton could have created the imagery. This involves a process called 'negative testing' whereby Middleton's work is searched for similar examples of the images. In this case, the testing shows that Middleton's characters in other plays compare people to dogs occasionally and that the trope of infection does appear in his work elsewhere.[5] Since it is not possible to rule out Middleton as the author of these metaphors by reference to his other works, the metaphorical language in *Timon* is useful as evidence of authorship only when considered alongside divisions established by other forms of attribution. As Harold Love observes, 'wording in a collaborative work belongs to no one unless the division of labour has

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[5] There are not many examples of 'dog' as an insult in Middleton but it does appear, for instance, in *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* when Allwit describes two Promoters, a type of professional informant, as 'pricking up their ears / And snuffling up their noses, like rich men's dogs / When the first course goes in' (2.2.57-59). In terms of illness, Middleton's *The Phoenix* (1603) has 'I cannot otherwise think but there are infectious dealings in most offices' (1.110-111).

been conclusively demarcated' (2002, 90-91). In other words, the dog, wolf, plague and leprosy imagery in *Timon* are not Shakespearean because they cannot be Middletonian, they are Shakespearean because they appear in only his parts of the play. What is revealing is not the particular word or image itself but rather its recurrence in patterns which coincide precisely with the authorship divisions previously established in *Timon*. Were the images to cross the established authorial boundaries, it would raise questions for further investigation: is the attribution correct? Did one of the authors redraft the whole play? Did Middleton and Shakespeare discuss metaphors in advance? Patterns of imagery can work to confirm or challenge the conclusions of other attribution work, but in the case of *Timon*, they support strongly the authorial divisions proposed by Jowett.

3. *How Did Shakespeare and Middleton Co-Write?*

The goal of understanding which author was responsible for which parts of a collaborative play has been criticised. In his oft-quoted treatment of co-written Renaissance drama, *Textual Intercourse* (1997), Jeffrey Masten argues that attributionists' pursuit of 'who wrote what' misrepresents collaborative writing by 'disintegrating' a co-written play into acts, scenes, passages and words before parcelling these off to authors. For Masten, this approach is not useful because co-written texts are more than the sum of their parts, or as he puts it, 'two heads are different than one' (19). Other scholars too believe that attribution involves erroneously mapping a model of individual authorship onto co-written plays by assuming that they are nothing more than Playwright A's contribution plus Playwright B's contribution (Hutchings and Bromham 2008, 34-35; Hoenselaars 2012, 113). I agree with the concept that two or more writers in collaboration produce work different from that which they would have created separately. However, it does not necessarily follow from this that co-writing involves the total effacement of every aspect of a writer's individual style. This is particularly true considering that many of a writer's personal tics (like using a particular form of an oath or contraction) are almost certainly unconscious.

   Not only is it possible to trace an individual author's presence in a collaborative text, it is also worthwhile. The true value of attribution evidence lies not in its utility for 'disintegrating' a text but in its power to provide clues as to how that text was written. In the case of *Timon* this approach is particularly interesting because the play was very likely printed from an authorial rough draft; it stands, therefore, as a textual witness to an early stage of joint composition. Identifying which parts are by Shakespeare and which are by Middleton is a step towards understanding their co-writing process. It is with this mind that the rest of this essay will focus on how Shakespeare and Middleton might have co-written *Timon* and why they did so. Critics of

attribution scholarship are correct when they say that the methods have the potential to exacerbate misunderstandings of collaborative writing by reducing it to its constituent parts. However, by using attribution evidence to discuss how writers collaborated, it is possible for a path to be negotiated between the text as a collaborative whole on the one hand and the role individual writers played in its creation on the other.

In his essay 'The Pattern of Collaboration in *Timon of Athens*', John Jowett uses attribution evidence to contend that Shakespeare drafted his parts of *Timon* first, with Middleton making his contribution soon afterwards (2004b, 194-202). Shakespeare is named as the initial drafter because of his seniority and his share in the King's Men, the acting company for whom *Timon* was in all likelihood written. Another factor is the influence of Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* (1579) on *Timon* since it is also a source for *Julius Caesar* (1599), *Anthony and Cleopatra* (1606) and *Coriolanus* (1608) (Jowett 2004b, 202). In raising the possibility that Middleton wrote his parts after Shakespeare, Jowett does not aim to imply that he was an adaptor or reviser of *Timon*, as some earlier scholars have proposed (Fleay 1874; Sykes 1924). Instead, Middleton's involvement is portrayed in this scenario as an act of collaboration planned from the outset.

Jowett's theory of what I will call 'consecutive collaboration' pays particular attention to the scenes of *Timon* which show signs of both Shakespeare and Middleton's presence: Scenes 1, 4, 11, 13 and 14.[6] His argument is that in most scenes of mixed authorship, 'Shakespeare supplied the core and Middleton added passages to it' (2004b, 202). For instance, the Middleton markers at the beginning and end of Scene 1 seem as though they have been added to an existing Shakespeare scene (Jowett 2004b, 185-189). Or, in the mock banquet scene (Scene 11) it is possible that Shakespeare supplied Timon's outburst which forms the centrepiece, with Middleton then writing the rest of the scene around it (Jowett 2004b, 195). The most intriguing pattern of co-authorship appears in Scene 4, in which Timon's creditors begin to demand repayment and he learns about the extent of his debt. The scene seems to have been written mainly by Shakespeare but there are signs of Middleton's presence throughout: his markers are intermixed with Shakespeare's at lines 4-115 and appear in a self-contained section at lines 116-160 (Jowett 2004b, 194). In an explanation he describes as 'conjectural', Jowett posits that Shakespeare wrote the scene originally, after which time it was transcribed by Middleton who made changes as he went (2004b, 194). Jowett is correct to pick this scene out as requiring special

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[6] Jowett's analysis in his essay refers to act and scene divisions but for the sake of consistency the scene numbers have been changed to those he supplies in the *Collected Works* (Taylor and Lavagnino 2007). These Scenes are given as 1.1, 2.2, 3.7, 4.2, 4.3.

attention because the mixture of markers is unlike anything seen elsewhere in the play. His analysis of the pattern of collaboration in *Timon* provides a sensible explanation of the scenes in which both Shakespeare and Middleton's markers appear. It also presents an opportunity to think about the act of collaboration in a pleasingly tangible way: an incomplete manuscript passed from one author to another; Middleton's hand filling in the deliberate gaps left by his co-writer but taking the time to copy one scene out in full so he could make more intricate changes.

However, there is one aspect of the *Timon* text which does not sit comfortably with this version of events: its inconsistencies. Shakespeare and Middleton preferred different spellings for some characters' names: Shakespeare used 'Apemantus' (abbreviated as 'Ape' in the Folio) and 'Ventidius' to Middleton's 'Apermantus' (abbreviated as 'Aper') and 'Ventigius' (Jackson 1979, 231). In his work on the printing of the First Folio, Charlton Hinman (1963) demonstrated that *Timon* was printed by one compositor, thus ruling out the possibility that the discrepancies in spelling were introduced by the typesetting process. Another inconsistency is the value of a 'talent', the currency used in the play. In Shakespeare's sections of the play, the talent is given a significant value while in Middleton's sections it seems to be worth much less (Jackson 1979, 214). In Scene 1 (mostly by Shakespeare), a messenger tells Timon that Ventidius is in prison for a debt of 'five talents' and an Old Man explains that his daughter's dowry of 'three talents' means he is unwilling to let her marry Timon's servant (1.97; 145). However, when in Scene 6 (by Middleton) Timon's servant requests money from his friends, the amount under discussion is 'fifty-five hundred talents' (6.38). Such inconsistencies are not surprising in a rough draft of a co-written play but they do imply that Middleton was not fully aware of the way in which Shakespeare had spelt certain character's names or the value he had ascribed to a talent. This could imply a scenario whereby Middleton wrote at least some parts of *Timon* before he received Shakespeare's scenes. What is more, had Middleton read Shakespeare's sections before writing his own, it is possible we would see the movement of metaphors and imagery across authorial boundaries. This might have happened deliberately, with Middleton striving for a unity of imagery, or subconsciously as he was influenced by what had already been written.

Jowett's claim that Shakespeare wrote first, followed by Middleton is convincing for the scenes of mixed authorship in *Timon* but less so elsewhere, given the play's inconsistencies. These lead me to wonder if there were not two different methods of co-writing at work in *Timon*. It is possible that Shakespeare and Middleton began by working simultaneously then, as time went on, Shakespeare could have passed his completed sections on to Middleton, who wrote around his work in certain scenes. Simultaneous co-writing of the sort I am proposing for the individually written scenes would

have been enabled by a 'plot' or 'plot scenario'.[7] Tiffany Stern has provided evidence which shows that plot scenarios were documents which, despite some differences, shared key common elements such as a list of characters and a plan of how the action would be divided between scenes (2009, 8-35).[8] Her examination of these contemporary sources explains how the use of a 'plot-scenario' composed ahead of time would have given writers a way to negotiate co-writing a play. One such document seems to be the subject of a letter written by the dramatist John Day about the play *The Conquest of the West Indies* (1601, lost). Day makes a request of his co-writers: 'I have occasion to be absent about the plot of the Iyndes therfre pray delyver it to will hauton' (Greg 1904-1908, II, 57). The letter implies that even though Day could not be present for the construction of the plot, an act presumably carried out by the play's co-writers William Haughton and Wentworth Smith, he expected a copy of it to be passed on to him. The plot, then, was a document, a copy of which would be held by each co-writer (Stern 2009, 23). It is plausible that Shakespeare and Middleton began work on *Timon* simultaneously using, like their contemporaries, a plot-scenario to guide their work. The value of a talent would most likely not have been discussed beforehand and the discrepancy in the spelling of names could be explained easily by mistakes made in the copying out of the character list, in which the names would have appeared only once.

4. *Why did Shakespeare and Middleton Co-write?*

If Shakespeare and Middleton used a plot-scenario to enable some simultaneous writing, then it may have helped them accelerate the production of *Timon*. Another letter, this time from the dramatist Robert Daborne to the theatre impresario Philip Henslowe, supports the idea that playwrights used co-writing in this way. Daborne advises that he has 'given Cyrill Tourneur an act of the Arreignment of London to write that we may have that … ready' (Greg 1904-1908, II, 75). In his description Daborne shows himself to be using co-writing as a means to finish his play more quickly. Working swiftly was advantageous to playwrights because it meant they would get paid (either for the play in full or a final instalment) and could move on to their next piece. However, while the notion of earning money as soon as possible might

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[7] For further discussion of plot-scenarios, including the distinctions between them, other kinds of theatrical plots, and the *scenari* of *commedia dell'arte* see Pugliatti 2012, 117-136.

[8] The plots Stern examines are those of Ben Jonson's *Mortimer* (which found its way into the 1641 edition of his *Works*), an unpublished manuscript plot of an English tragedy by the amateur playwright Sir Edward Dering, and a plot to *Paradise Lost*, a mystery play abandoned by John Milton.

satisfy as an explanation for co-writing in general, it is insufficient as a way to explain specific combinations of writers: why Shakespeare and Middleton?

Shakespeare and Middleton themselves were most likely responsible for the decision to work with one another. As Grace Ioppolo's comprehensive survey of documents from the period has led her to conclude, 'dramatists seem to have chosen their own collaborators rather than accepting those forced on them by Henslowe or other entrepreneurs' (2006, 32). Daborne's letter to Henslowe (quoted above) emphasises this point: the entrepreneur was not informed about the playwright's decision to give an act of the play to Tourneur until after the event. In the case of Shakespeare and Middleton, the argument that a dramatist would not have had co-writers forced upon him is all the more compelling. Shakespeare's role as a sharer in the King's Men would have given him the power to partake in the management decisions of the company (Gurr 2004, 87-89). Middleton, on the other hand, was not tied at all to any particular company. By 1605 he had already worked for the Lord Admiral's Men, the Children of Paul's and the King's Men and he would go on to work for others. These two, the sharer and the freelancer, were as likely as any two playwrights to have had a say in their writing partners.

Shakespeare was far more experienced than Middleton when they co-wrote *Timon* in 1605-1606; he had been working as a dramatist for around sixteen years and had written more than thirty plays. By contrast, Middleton was very near the beginning of his professional life. The earliest record of his being involved with the acting companies comes from February 1601 when he was described as being 'in London, daily accompanying the players' (Taylor 2007, 35).[9] Middleton likely began writing for the theatre in 1602 when, along with Munday, Drayton, Dekker and Webster, he worked on the lost play *Caesar's Fall* for the Admiral's Men.[10] Given this difference in their experience, one possibility worth exploring is that Shakespeare co-wrote with Middleton because he wanted to train the more junior playwright.

The idea of co-writing as a teaching process is aired in the Prologue to Ben Jonson's *Volpone* (1606). Jonson implies there was a hierarchy amongst those writing plays, claiming that he wrote his play 'without a coadjutor, / Novice, journeyman, or tutor' (16-17). Novice and tutor are fairly clear categories: the former would have been an inexperienced writer, 'a kind of apprentice' in Stanley Wells' words, while the latter was 'a master craftsman guiding a novice' (2006, 26). The definition of 'journeyman' is more contentious: according

[9] This reference to Middleton in London comes from the testimony of Anthony Snode, given in a family lawsuit. The phrase provided the title for *'Accompaninge the Players': Essays Celebrating Thomas Middleton, 1580-1980* (Friedenreich 1983).

[10] Henslowe's diary notes: 'Lent unto the company the 22 of ma[y]1602 to geve unto antoney monday & mihell drayton webester & the Rest [interlined: mydelton] in earneste of a Boocke called sesers ffalle the some of v[li]' (Greg 1904-1908, I, 166).

to Ioppolo, they are 'writers who are newly qualified having finished their apprenticeship' but Wells perceives them as 'hack[s] brought in perhaps to supply a comic subplot' (2006, 32; 2006, 26). Jonson's Prologue itself does not support such a negative reading of the term; the word 'hack' is pejorative in a way that 'journeyman' is not because it lacks the connotation of being trained in a particular trade. Ioppolo's definition of 'newly qualified' writers therefore seems more fitting here, although Wells' idea of them being 'brought in' could be usefully added since a journeyman worked as a hired servant in his trade.

The term 'co-adjutors' is more problematic still: Ioppolo goes with 'helpers or assistant writers' but Wells says a coadjutor was 'an equal collaborator'. While 'adjutor' does indeed mean a 'helper' or 'assistant', the prefix 'co-' suggests that it refers to work which is joint or shared (which Wells acknowledges). However, Jonson's list may provide a clue to the meaning of 'co-adjutor' in the way that it is ordered. The word's position at the end of its own line separates it from the rest of the list; the comma afterwards and the rhyme with 'tutor' also force a pause. In light of this, 'co-adjutor' could be read instead as a general term for a co-writer, which is to say anyone who assists with writing regardless of their status. The three roles given on the following line would then refer to three specific types of co-writing relationship. This would mean that the list moves in an orderly way from the least to the most experienced co-writers (novice, journeyman, tutor) rather than jumping from 'assistant' (or 'equal collaborator') in the first line to the surely most junior category of 'novice' in the next.

With their different levels of experience, it might seem as though Shakespeare and Middleton would slot easily into the roles of 'tutor' and 'novice', but those parts are not entirely fitting. The fact that Shakespeare had been a playwright for much longer only tells us so much. Worth considering are the types of writing in which these dramatists had experience. In the period immediately preceding the *Timon* collaboration, Middleton had written five city comedies: *The Phoenix* (1603), *The Honest Whore* (1604) with Thomas Dekker, *Michaelmas Term* (1604), *A Trick to Catch the Old One* (1605) and *A Mad World, My Masters* (1605). The many parallels between these plays and the dunning scenes in *Timon* hint that the younger playwright brought his comedic experience to the table. William Wells, who was the first to identify Middleton as Shakespeare's co-author, notes several of these parallels in his article on *Timon*'s authorship (1920, 267). Wells notes Middleton's frequent use of the word 'occasion' and unexpected verbs when he talks about money in *Mad World* and *Michaelmas Term*, and observes that these appear also in *Timon* (1920, 267). He provides several examples, such as, 'Let them both rest till another occasion … go to Master Quomodo, the draper, and will him to *furnish* me instantly' (*Michaelmas Term*, 2.1.96-99; emphasis is Wells', as with the examples to follow), and 'I would we could rather *pleasure* you otherwise' (*Michaelmas Term*, 3.4.221-222). He compares these instances to

examples from *Timon*: 'I come to entreat your honour to *supply*, who, having great and *instant occasion* to use fifty talents, hath sent to your lordship to *furnish* him' (*Timon*, 4.16-18), and 'I count it one of my greatest afflictions, say, that I cannot *pleasure* such an honourable gentleman' (*Timon*, 6.55-57). Wells gives these examples as evidence of Middleton's presence in *Timon* but they also serve to draw attention to where the writer's skills and interests lay at the point he came to work on that play. Further, several other scholars have observed connections between Middleton's city comedies and *Timon*. Laurie Maguire and Emma Smith note *Timon*'s urban setting, its use of character types found in city comedies (such as false friends) and the lack of context provided for the character of Timon (for instance, we are told nothing of his family or profession). Maguire and Smith argue the dramaturgical parallels between Middleton's *A Mad World* and *Timon* mean that the 'initiative' for the latter play would be 'at least as logical' from him as it is from Shakespeare (2012, 190). John Jowett and Stanley Wells connect *Timon*'s cynical, satirical edge to Middleton's previous writing of city comedies (2004b, 203; 2006, 184) while James Bednarz argues that Middleton's experience in this area allowed him to impart 'a contemporary urgency' to the otherwise classical *Timon* by transporting the worries of London life to Athens (2011, 212). Accordingly, it may be the case that rather than co-writing with Middleton to train him, Shakespeare worked with the younger writer to benefit from his experience in a particular style of writing. After all, even though Shakespeare was in a great many respects Middleton's senior, he had no experience in the city comedy genre.

It is very likely that Middleton's value as a collaborator on *Timon* was connected to his familiarity with the city comedy genre but it would be a mistake to focus on only his dramatic experience. In 1603-1604, the playhouse closures occasioned by the death of Elizabeth I and an outbreak of the plague interrupted Middleton's theatrical career. During the shutdown Middleton wrote four pamphlets: two with Thomas Dekker, *News from Gravesend: Sent to Nobody* (1603) and *The Meeting of Gallants at an Ordinary* (1604a), and two on his own, *Father Hubburd's Tales* (1604a) and *The Black Book* (1604b). It is unfortunate that the pamphlets' connections to *Timon* have been largely overlooked, particularly since in 1605-1606, they formed a fairly significant proportion of Middleton's output and his experience as a writer. Like his city comedies, Middleton's pamphlets share many tonal and thematic similarities with *Timon*; they tend towards cynicism and convey disdain towards money lenders. The most immediate link is a parallel which draws on a marker identified by William Wells (1920): in *The Black Book* Middleton uses the phrase 'she was *furnished* of the money for a twelvemonth, but upon large security and most tragical usury' (272-273; emphasis added). Beyond the verbal similarity in this description, Middleton's pamphlets are full of a concern with debt and greed which would have served him well in *Timon*'s

dunning scenes. *The Black Book* describes a usurer whose fire remains unlit even though the Thames 'was half frozen with the bitterness of the season'; the moneylender's customer wonders why 'a usurer should burn so little here, and so much in hell?' (277; 283-284). *Father Hubburd's Tales* tells two stories: one is of a ploughman who can only look on helplessly as the new heir to the land he works sells it off to buy clothes and play dice; the other concerns a soldier who returns home injured to be met only with 'frost-bitten Charity' (1015). The profligacy of the young heir and the lack of kindness shown to the soldier would both seem at home in *Timon*. Even Middleton's sections of *News from Gravesend* and *The Meeting of Gallants*, pamphlets whose main focus is the plague, use usury metaphors to depict the spread of the disease. In *The Meeting of Gallants* the personified figure of Pestilence describes how she infects a usurer:

When I have changed
Their gold into dead tokens ...
They have left counting coin, to count their flesh,
And sum up their last usury on their breasts. (78-83)

The usurers 'count' their flesh as they once counted coins; perhaps they are counting each plague sore or perhaps they are taking account of their flesh, recognising the transience of both their bodies and their wealth in contrast to the spiritual aspects of life which they have neglected. The next image builds upon this when the usurers 'sum up their last usury on their breasts'; their bodies have become account sheets on which sins can be tallied. These few excerpts from Middleton's early pamphlets indicate that the connections between them and Middleton's role in *Timon* is an area deserving of further investigation.

5. Conclusion

The examples given here speak to the idea that, although Middleton was less experienced than Shakespeare when they collaborated on *Timon*, he was very well equipped to write the scenes focused on debt collection. Importantly, Middleton's experience in this respect came not only from his dramatic work but also his pamphlets. To return to Jonson's term, when it came to the dunning scenes Middleton was far from a 'novice'. Middleton's familiarity with plays and pamphlets on this topic is a key reason to think he wrote some scenes of *Timon* without reading Shakespeare's scenes first. Middleton would have needed no help from the elder playwright's work when it came to writing about matters of debt, dunning, and greed.

A process of co-writing which combined simultaneous and consecutive stints would also explain *Timon*'s mixture of Shakespeare-only, Middleton-only, and Shakespeare-Middleton scenes. This approach would have made

use of Middleton's experience as a writer of debt whilst allowing the play to benefit from Shakespeare's greater experience elsewhere, with him taking the lead role in the scenes where both writers were to have a hand. Although positing this potential (and it can only ever be potential) scenario has involved using attribution evidence, both existing and my own, the aim has not been to 'disintegrate' *Timon*. Far from undermining the play's collaborative status, attribution evidence has been used to highlight it and celebrate it, even, by shedding light on the ways two individual writers could bring their own skills to bear on a shared project.

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