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Reconsidering *The Seven Deadly Sins*

Among the Henslowe-Alleyn papers at Dulwich College is a document long prized by theatre historians: the handwritten 'plot' of a play called *The Second Part of the Seven Deadly Sins* (Dulwich College MS XIX), apparently designed to be hung on a peg backstage at a playhouse. The text of this play does not survive, but it is usually thought to be identical with Richard Tarlton's 'famous play of the seauen Deadly sinnes', referred to in 1592 by Gabriel Harvey and Thomas Nashe.¹ The plot is extremely valuable for its scene-by-scene description of the play's action, which lists the characters and (most of) the players who played those characters in each scene. There are twenty players' names in all: Mr. Brian, Mr. Phillipps, Mr. Pope, R. Burbadg, W. Sly, R. Cowly, John Duke, Ro. Pallant, John Sincler, Tho. Goodale, John Holland, T. Belt, Ro. Go., Harry, Kit, Vincent, Saunder, Nick, Ned, and Will. In addition, two major roles (King Henry VI and Lydgate) and several minor ones are not accompanied by any player's name. Since this is the most complete cast list we have for any performance of a pre-restoration play, it has often been used as evidence in reconstructing the history of Elizabethan playing companies, as well as the careers of the individual players named therein.²

One problem is that the company which performed this play is nowhere named in the plot. For more than a century, most theatre historians have assumed that the company in question was some version of Lord Strange's Men performing in the early 1590s. F.G. Fleay ventured this opinion in 1890, going so far as to specify 6 March 1592 as the probable date of the performance, with the confident assertion that 'I cannot, in any case, be far wrong.'³ E.K. Chambers and W.W. Greg accepted Fleay's basic premise but argued that the performance must have been before May 1591, and they disagreed about the company; Chambers thought it might have been the Admiral's Men, while Greg thought it was an amalgamation of Strange's and the Admiral's.⁴ For the past seventy years or more, Greg's basic conclusions about the origins of the *Seven Deadly Sins* plot have been accepted with little dispute.

I suggest that those conclusions are mistaken. Scott McMillin has already questioned some of the basic assumptions underlying the scenario constructed by Fleay, Chambers, and Greg, and has tentatively suggested the possibility that this plot belonged not to Strange's Men, but to the Lord Chamberlain's Men later in the 1590s.⁵ As it turns out, McMillin's tentative suggestion is supported by a variety of evidence unknown to Greg, whereas no new evidence supports Greg's dating, and quite a bit undermines it. The weight of the evidence suggests that this plot was prepared for the Lord Chamberlain's Men in about 1597–8, around the same time this company was first performing such plays as *The Merchant of Venice* and *1 & 2 Henry IV*. This document thus assumes an even greater importance than theatre historians have realized, since it allows us to reconstruct the personnel of the company for which Shakespeare was writing in the late 1590s.

The history and provenance of the plot

One of the fundamental assumptions which Fleay, Chambers, and Greg all brought to the *2 Seven Deadly Sins* plot is that it could not have been written later than mid-1594, when the Lord Chamberlain's Men and the Lord Admiral's Men were established as the two primary playing companies in London. This assumption was based on the subsidiary assumption that Edward Alleyn must have belonged to the company which performed the play, combined with the fact that Richard Burbage's name appears in the plot. After 1594, Alleyn was acting for the Admiral's Men at the Rose (and later at the Fortune), while Burbage was acting for the Chamberlain's Men at the Theatre (and later at the Curtain and the Globe); therefore, the reasoning went, the plot must date from the period in the early 1590s when Alleyn acted with an amalgamated Strange's-Admiral's Men at the Theatre, owned by Richard Burbage's father James.

As McMillin has already noted, this chain of inference is surprisingly tenuous when set out against the few concrete facts which we have. Edward Alleyn's name appears nowhere in the plot, but he is assumed to have been involved primarily because the document now resides among the Henslowe-Alleyn papers at Dulwich College, and is thought to be a remnant of Alleyn's playing career. Richard Burbage's name does appear in the plot, but we have no firm evidence that he belonged to the amalgamated Strange's-Admiral's company of the early 1590s, or indeed to any specific playing company before the Lord Chamberlain's Men in March 1595.

It is instructive to trace how cautious speculation on these points hardens into alleged fact in Greg's account. Early on, he writes that the history of the plots 'lends colour to the *supposition* that they were all at one time in the possession of Edward Alleyn and from him *presumably* passed into the keeping of Dulwich College' (*Dramatic Documents*, 6). Later he writes that 'the *probability* that [the plots] were both at one time ... among Alleyn's papers *suggests* that they originally belonged to one of the companies with which he was associated' (*Dramatic Documents*, 16), and that the presence of Burbage's name 'would *most naturally* connect them with the Theatre, which his father James Burbage owned' (*Dramatic Documents*, 16–17). But in the subsequent discussion the 1590 dating is assumed to be true without question, and Greg is eventually able to write, without blinking, that 'the *fact* that the plot came into the hands of Edward Alleyn *proves* that it *must have been* in existence by the spring of 1594' (*Dramatic Documents*, 110; emphasis added in all cases).

In fact, the assumption of Alleyn's involvement is far shakier than Greg led his readers to believe, and there are good reasons to doubt that the plot came to Dulwich through Alleyn at all. Tracing the document's somewhat shadowy provenance leads us not to Edward Alleyn, but to a man who died 60 years later – William Cartwright the younger, the well-known restoration player.

The earliest known reference to the plot is in 1780, when Edmond Malone printed a transcription of what he called 'a very curious paper now in my possession, entitled, *The Platt of the Secound Parte of the Seven Deadlie Sinns*'. In the same volume, George Steevens wrote that 'this singular curiosity was met with in the library of Dulwich College, where it had remained unnoticed from the time of Alleyn who founded that society, and was himself the chief or only proprietor of the Fortune play-house. The Platt (for so it is called) is fairly written out on pasteboard in a large hand, and undoubtedly contained directions appointed to be stuck up near the prompter's station. It has an oblong hole in its centre, sufficient to admit a wooden peg; and has been converted into a cover for an anonymous manuscript play called *The Tell-tale*.' In a footnote, Steevens added, 'On the outside of the cover is written, "The *Book* and Platt, &c."'6

Both the *Seven Deadly Sins* plot and *The Tell-Tale* next show up on 24 May 1825 in a Sotheby's auction catalogue of the library of James Boswell the younger, Edmond Malone's literary executor. By this time the plot had been pasted onto a larger, thicker board, thus obscuring the writing which Steevens described on the verso ('the outside of the cover'). Dulwich claimed the plot and the MS play on the basis of Steevens' 1780 description, and the documents have been there ever since, as Dulwich College MSS XIX and XX respectively.

Interestingly, the same auction catalogue included two theatrical plots which contain Edward Alleyn's name (*Frederick and Basilea* and *The Battle of Alcazar*), and another (*The Dead Man's Fortune*) which contains the name of Robert Leigh, who had possible connections to the Admiral's Men. Dulwich, however, was unable to claim these other plots without any evidence of their provenance (cf. Greg, *Dramatic Documents*, 9–10). All three eventually ended up in the British Library, where they are collectively British Library Add. MS 10,449.

Despite the 45-year gap during which the *Seven Deadly Sins* plot was apparently in Malone's collection, there is no reason to doubt Steevens' statement that it was at Dulwich in the late eighteenth century. But does this mean it had necessarily arrived there through Edward Alleyn, as Steevens assumed? No, not necessarily. The library of the player-bookseller William Cartwright the younger (c.1606–86) arrived at Dulwich in the late seventeenth century, some six decades after Alleyn's death, and quite a bit of circumstantial evidence suggests that the plot came from this library, rather than from Alleyn's papers. More than seventy years ago, Eleanore Boswell provided the most complete account of Cartwright's life and death, including the disputes surrounding his will noted below.⁷ This account can now be supplemented with information discovered since Boswell wrote.

First, consider *The Tell-Tale*, the manuscript play for which the plot was serving as a cover when Steevens (or possibly Malone) found it. On stylistic grounds, this play is manifestly a work of the seventeenth century, written in a scribal hand which Greg estimated to belong to the 1630s. It was apparently intended for publication in 1658, but no edition is known; G.E. Bentley pointed out that 'Tell Tale: a Comedy' appears in a list of 'Books in the Presse, and ready for Printing' advertised by publisher Nathaniel Brook in Edward Phillips' *The New World of Words* (1658).⁸ These dates immediately raise suspicions, since Edward Alleyn died in 1626. Further suspicions are aroused by the fact that no other play manuscripts are to be found among the Henslowe-Alleyn papers, the closest thing being Alleyn's part from *Orlando Furioso* (Dulwich MS 1.138), dating from the 1590s.

On the other hand, William Cartwright became a bookseller in the 1650s after the playhouses closed, and demonstrably owned manuscript plays. The one book he published – *The Actor's Vindication*, a reprint of Thomas Heywood's *Apology for Actors* with a new preface – was printed in 1658, the same year that the publication of *The Tell-Tale* was announced. When Cartwright died in December 1686, the detailed inventory of the estate he bequeathed to Dulwich College included 'about 100 MS of plaies', among many printed books of theatrical interest.⁹ Many items in the estate had apparently been

passed down from Cartwright's father, William Cartwright senior, who had been a contemporary and fellow player of Edward Alleyn in the early seventeenth century. Thus, while there is still a connection to Alleyn, it is a much less direct one, and as we will see below, the Cartwright collection also had connections to the Chamberlain's-King's Men.

Unfortunately, the books and manuscripts bequeathed by Cartwright were never integrated into the rest of the College's collection and are no longer at Dulwich, having mysteriously disappeared by the end of the eighteenth century. Immediately after Cartwright's death, two of his servants absconded with some of his goods, and disputes arose over the legality of his will. While various lawsuits wound their way slowly through the courts, Cartwright's library was kept under lock and key by the Master of the College, who was under a £1000 bond for due administration of the estate and wanted to prevent further embezzlement. In response to a complaint in 1695, the Master wrote that he was allowing Fellows of the College 'to have the use of any of the said Bookes and to take them to their Chambers upon giving a note under the hand of what booke they tooke'. Around the same time, John Aubrey wrote, 'Here [at Dulwich] is a Library, in which is a Collection of Plays, given by Mr. Cartwright, a Bookseller, who lived at the End of Turn-Stile Alley.'¹⁰ No catalogue of Cartwright's books had even been made at this time; a catalogue made the following year has since disappeared, presumably with the books themselves.

The few clues to the disappearance of Cartwright's books and manuscripts from Dulwich point toward two main suspects: the actor David Garrick and Edmond Malone. Malone wrote in 1780 that Garrick had obtained some of Cartwright's printed plays from Dulwich 'in exchange for other books', and Daniel Lysons wrote in 1792 that Dulwich's library 'formerly contained a very valuable collection of old plays, which were given by the college to Mr. Garrick when he was making his theatrical collection, in exchange for some more modern publications'. Two printed plays in the Garrick collection now in the British Library contain notes in Cartwright's handwriting, and a partial pencil annotation on the British Library MS of Simon Baylie's *The Wizard* (B.L. Add. MS 10,306) reads 'formerly in possession of Cartwright presented by him to Dulwich College then in Garrick's',¹¹

Several printed plays in Malone's collection, now in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, are also known to have come from Dulwich. J.P. Collier wrote in 1841 that 'the late Mr. Malone was lucky enough to induce the Master, Warden, and Fellows to exchange the old plays [bequeathed by Cartwright] for old Sermons, and the old Plays now form the bulk of the Commentator's

collection at Oxford'. Sir George Warner accepted this basic scenario, suggesting that the plays in British Library Egerton MS 1994 may have come from Cartwright's collection via Malone.¹² Since Malone was responsible for the disappearance of *The Tell-Tale* and the *Seven Deadly Sins* plot from Dulwich for forty-five years, this further bit of circumstantial evidence suggests that they were originally part of the Cartwright collection there before finding their way into Malone's papers.¹³

If the plot did come to Dulwich via Cartwright, then its connection to Alleyn is much less certain than most commentators have assumed. True, the senior Cartwright was a longtime member of the Admiral's-Prince's-Palsgrave's Men, and the plot *might* have come from his fellow Alleyn. But it might just as well have come from a member of the King's Men, since the younger Cartwright was also demonstrably friendly with that company. Among the few remnants of the Cartwright collection remaining at Dulwich are a group of portraits from the early seventeenth century, including several members of the King's Men: Nathan Field, John Lowin, Richard Burbage, and William Sly, the latter two being among the players named in the *Seven Deadly Sins* plot. Alleyn himself was also friendly with members of the King's Men; his diary of 1617–22 shows him dining with John Lowin and John Heminges, two of the leaders of that company.¹⁴ Once we examine the evidence of the plot without the restrictive assumption of Alleyn's direct involvement, the picture that emerges is rather different from the one promoted by Greg.

The players of the plot: part 1

The Second Part of the Seven Deadly Sins is divided into three playlets on the subjects of Envy, Sloth, and Lechery, surrounded by an Induction wherein the poet Lydgate shows King Henry VI these playlets to illustrate the various sins. Envy tells the story of King Gorboduc tragically dividing his kingdom between his sons Ferrex and Porrex, based on or influenced by Sackville and Norton's play *Gorboduc*. Sloth depicts the gluttonous Assyrian king Sardanapalus and his defeat by the general Arbactus, a story told in several contemporary sources, including George Whetstone's *English Mirror* (1586) and Thomas Beard's *Theatre of God's Judgement* (1597). Lechery tells the story (from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*) of King Tereus, who marries Procne but rapes her sister Philomela, and has his son Itis' head served to him on a dish.¹⁵ Presumably part 1 had contained playlets on Pride, Gluttony, Wrath, and Covetousness, and in fact personified versions of those sins appear near the beginning of this play, only to be vanquished by Envy, Sloth, and Lechery.

Some of the players in the plot are identified by ‘Mr’ and a surname (apparently senior members of the company); others are identified by a first name or initial plus a surname (mostly adult members of the company, but including some boys); others are identified by a first name only (including both boys and younger adults). Ten roles – Lydgate, King Henry, Mercury, and the seven sins – are not annotated with a player’s name at all. The eleven adult players with surnames are all otherwise known to have acted professionally in the 1590s or early 1600s. Only a few of them can be shown to have acted at all before 1594, but a large majority of them can be placed with the Chamberlain’s Men in the late 1590s, and none are known to have been with any other company during that time. New archival evidence shows that two of the boys named in the plot were apprenticed to John Heminges of the Chamberlain’s Men in 1595 and 1597. Commentators since Malone have plausibly identified several other first names in the plot with known players of the time, but such identifications only work if the plot is dated to the late 1590s. Taken together, all this evidence points strongly at the Chamberlain’s Men around 1597–8 as the company represented by the plot.

In the following list, I discuss each of the players in the plot: first those designated ‘Mr’, then the other adults with surnames, then the adults identified only by a first name, and finally the boys. I list the roles each player performed in *2 Seven Deadly Sins* (with the playlet each role belongs to in parentheses) and summarize what is known of his stage career, particularly in the 1590s. Where no reference is given, information comes from Edwin Nungezer’s *Dictionary of Actors* (1929), or sometimes from Greg’s discussion in *Dramatic Documents from the Elizabethan Playhouses* (1931), 43–50. I have also included information unknown to Nungezer and Greg when it is relevant, along with my own commentary.

Mr. Brian (George Bryan): *Damasus/Lord/Councillor (Envy); Warwick (Induction)*.

Mr. Pope (Thomas Pope): *Arbactus (Sloth)*.

Mr. Phillipps (Augustine Phillips): *Sardanapalus (Sloth)*.

These three men were among the senior members of the company, to judge by the important parts they played and their long stage histories. Bryan and Pope had acted with an English company in Denmark and Germany in 1586–7, and all three were listed in the traveling patent for *Strange’s Men* in May 1593, along with Edward Alleyn. All three also show up with the Chamberlain’s Men in the late 1590s. Bryan (along with John Heminges) was

paid on 21 December 1596 for court performances the previous Christmas, but he does not appear in records of the company, or any other acting company, after that. Pope appears as joint payee (also with Heminges) for court performances in 1597–9; both Pope and Phillips appear in the cast lists for Jonson's *Every Man In His Humour* (1598) and *Every Man Out of His Humour* (1599), and as original sharers in the Globe in 1599; and Phillips appears in the patent for the King's Men in 1603. Pope died in late 1603, Phillips in 1605, and Bryan in 1612. Solely on the basis of these three names, the plot might be dated any time in the 1590s, but only two other names below (Richard Cowley and Thomas Goodale) can definitely be traced on stage as early as 1593.

One question which must be addressed by any theory of the plot's origins is the significance of the title 'Mr' used with these three names and no others. Greg assumed, quite plausibly, that the three men so designated were sharers in the company, but he then went on to imply, much less plausibly, that the other seventeen players named in the plot were *not* sharers. He based this implication on his analysis of the use of 'Mr' in several plots belonging to the Admiral's Men in 1597–1602, an analysis which seems to show a close correspondence between the title 'Mr' and sharer status. But this correspondence is not perfect, as Greg himself recognized. The plot of *Frederick and Basliea* only irregularly uses 'Mr' to designate sharers, and the *2 Fortune's Tennis* plot, written by the same scribe who wrote *2 Seven Deadly Sins*, only applies the 'Mr' designation to one of the nine named players, even though more than one of these were probably sharers. Greg suggests that the 'Sam', 'Tho', and 'Cha' of *2 Fortune's Tennis* (all lacking the 'Mr' designation) are Samuel Rowley, Thomas Hunt, and Charles Massey, even though all three men appear with the 'Mr' designation in other plots from around the same time. Greg comes dangerously close to circular reasoning when he dismisses the notion that 'Tho' might be Thomas Towne or Thomas Downton, only because those men were sharers and thus (in Greg's mind) should have had the 'Mr' designation.¹⁶

Greg recognized that the company which performed *2 Seven Deadly Sins* must have included more than three sharers, but even with the unnamed performers who played King Henry and Lydgate, the result is only five sharers out of twenty-two players, fewer than the eight to twelve sharers typically found in a London company around this time.¹⁷ Greg notes that the traveling license granted to Strange's Men in 1593 lists six men, all presumably sharers (Bryan, Pope, Phillips, John Heminges, William Kempe, and Edward Alleyn). But apart from the fact that a travelling company might be expected to have fewer members than a London one, Greg's own lists of Admiral's Men sharers

between 1594 and 1602 contain between eight and eleven names each (cf. *Dramatic Documents*, 31). These figures are consistent with, for example, the nine men (presumably sharers) named in the patent for the King's Men in 1603.¹⁸ As such, it appears virtually certain that some of the players not given the 'Mr' title in the *Seven Deadly Sins* plot were nevertheless sharers in the company.

R. Burbadge (Richard Burbage): *King Gorboduc (Envy)*; *Tereus (Lechery)*.

The earliest certain trace of Burbage as a player is in March 1595, when he, William Shakespeare, and Will Kempe were paid for performances the previous Christmas by the Lord Chamberlain's Men. He subsequently appears in the cast lists of *Every Man In* (1598) and *Every Man Out* (1599), in the list of original Globe sharers in 1599, and in many Chamberlain's/King's Men records after that. Burbage also appears in the plot of *The Dead Man's Fortune*, a play whose company and date are uncertain. Greg assigned it to the Admiral's Men in 1590, but he based this assignment on the same dubious reasoning he used for *2 Seven Deadly Sins* (ie, the presence of Burbage and the assumption of Alleyn's involvement).

The only players named in the *Dead Man's Fortune* plot besides Burbage are Richard Darlowe and Robert Leigh. Darlowe had three children baptized between 1596 and early 1600 at St Botolph Aldgate, the register of which identifies him as a player; he acted in France in the winter of 1598–9 and died before Michaelmas 1599. Leigh was a prominent member of Queen Anne's Men from 1604 onward, but his company affiliations before that are unknown, though he did sell a play to Phillip Henslowe in 1598. Neither Darlowe nor Leigh appears in the *Seven Deadly Sins* plot, but both had connections with Thomas Goodale, who does appear in the plot. Darlowe lived in the same parish as Goodale, St Botolph Aldgate, while Leigh joined with Goodale in 1593 as sureties for a bond made by John Alleyn, Edward Alleyn's brother.¹⁹ Darlowe is absent from Henslowe's Diary; Leigh appears only once, selling a play to Henslowe in 1598, but never as an actor. Thus both may well have been with Chamberlain's Men alongside Burbage at some point in the 1590s, or they may have been with him in an earlier company such as Strange's or Pembroke's.

Even though Burbage took the leading roles of King Gorboduc and Tereus in *2 Seven Deadly Sins*, Greg baldly asserted that he 'does not seem to have been a sharer', based on the absence of 'Mr' before his name.²⁰ But, as noted above, this criterion is severely flawed, and it is natural to believe that the

company's leading man would be a sharer. We now know, as Greg did not, that Burbage was baptized on 7 July 1568, and thus would have been about 22 years old in 1590 and 30 years old in 1598.²¹ It is perhaps more likely for a king to be played by a man of 30 than by a man of 22, though the latter is not out of the realm of possibility.

W. Sly (William Sly): *Porrex (Envy); Lord (Lechery)*.

On 11 October 1594, Sly bought a jewel from Philip Henslowe, suggesting that he may have been with the Admiral's Men at the time; at some point he definitely acted for the Admiral's Men, for an inventory of that company's apparel on 13 March 1598 includes 'Perowes sewt, which Wm Sley were'. He was with the Chamberlain's Men by 1598, when he appeared in *Every Man In His Humour* alongside Pope, Phillips, and Burbage. He remained with that company for the next decade, appearing prominently in numerous lists of Chamberlain's-King's Men until his death in 1608. If the *Seven Deadly Sins* plot originated with Strange's Men in the early 1590s, we must postulate that Sly left that company for the Admiral's Men, then returned to the Chamberlain's Men by 1598. This is far from an impossible scenario, but is perhaps more likely that he made a single move from the Admiral's to the Chamberlain's some time between 1594 and 1598, a scenario which is consistent with a date of 1597–8 for the plot.

R. Cowly (Richard Cowley): *Lieutenant (Induction); Soldier and Lord (Envy); Giraldus/Captain (Sloth); Lord (Lechery)*.

Although Cowley is not named in the patent for Strange's Men in 1593, he was associated with the company, for on 1 August of that year, Edward Alleyn wrote to his wife that 'I reseved your Letter att bristo by richard couley.'²² Cowley was with the Chamberlain's Men in the late 1590s, for the 1600 quarto of *Much Ado About Nothing* (written about 1598) substitutes Cowley's name for Verges in several speech-prefixes, indicating that Cowley played that role opposite Will Kempe as Dogberry. He was joint payee (with John Heminges) in March 1601 for court performances, was named in the King's Men patent of 1603, received a bequest in Augustine Phillips' will in 1605, and died in 1619.

John Duke: *Pursuivant (Induction); Attendant and Soldier (Envy); Will Fool (Sloth); Lord (Lechery)*.

Duke first appears in the theatrical record in 1598, in the Chamberlain's cast of *Every Man In His Humour* with Pope, Phillips, Burbage, and Sly. Two years later he was borrowing money from Henslowe, and by 1602 he was a member of Worcester's Men, who became Queen Anne's Men the following year. He remained with that company until his death in 1613. This sketchy record

(typical for a minor player of the time) leaves open the possibility that Duke was with Strange's Men in the early 1590s, but it directly confirms his presence with the Chamberlain's in 1598. The earlier we go before that first confirmed record, the more speculative the scenarios become.

John Sincler: *Keeper/Warder (Induction); Soldier (Envy); Captain/Musician (Sloth).*

John Sincler or Sinklo was apparently a very small man, to judge from the comments which are consistently made about the characters he played. He is often said to have been a member of Pembroke's Men in the early 1590s, based on the presence of his name in the folio text of Shakespeare's *3 Henry VI* and the fact that the so-called 'bad quarto' of this play, *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York* (1595) was performed by Pembroke's. The most recent editor of *3 Henry VI* argues, however, that the folio text originates in a revision made for the Chamberlain's Men in the mid-1590s, a scenario which would eliminate the connection with Pembroke's.²³ Sincler may have been acting with an English company connected with the Admiral's Men in Germany in October 1596, when Landgrave Maurice of Hesse made a payment to 'dem kleinen engellander Dinckenlo', but soon returned to England.²⁴

Sincler was with the Chamberlain's Men soon after 1596, for the presence of his name in speech-prefixes shows that he played a beadle in Shakespeare's *2 Henry IV* (written c.1598, printed 1600). His name also appears in the 1623 Folio texts of *The Taming of the Shrew* and (as noted above) *3 Henry VI*, but here dating is more problematic, due to uncertainty over the priority of the quarto vs folio texts of these two plays. Even if the folio texts came first, the copy from which the folio was printed may well have come from a later revival rather than the earliest productions. Sincler appears as himself, along with other King's Men, in John Webster's induction to Marston's *The Malcontent* (1604), after which there is no further record of him on stage.²⁵

John Holland: *Attendant and Soldier (Envy); Captain (Sloth); Warder (Induction).*

Holland appears in the 1623 Folio text of *2 Henry VI* playing a rebel who had been called 'Nick' in the quarto *First Part of the Contention* (1594).²⁶ As with Sincler, we cannot be sure exactly when or by what company the text with Holland's name was produced, but the Chamberlain's Men of the mid-to-late 1590s are one of the limited possibilities. A possible link with that company can be found in the 1603 will of Thomas Pope, which mentions 'the said dwelling hous: wer in Iohn holland now dwelleth'.²⁷ The name is too common

for us to be sure that this is the same John Holland, but the coincidence is suggestive.

Holland's name also appears in several stage directions of the manuscript play *John of Bordeaux*, indicating that he played the devil Asteroth and possibly (as Laurie Maguire has argued) John of Bordeaux.²⁸ The dating here is also uncertain; though the play is generally dated to around 1590, we cannot be sure that the surviving manuscript does not represent a later revival. To give a similar example, the manuscript play *Edmund Ironside* (British Library MS Egerton 1994, ff. 96–119) is datable to the early 1590s on stylistic grounds; Donald Foster has argued plausibly that the author was Robert Greene, who died in 1592, while Randall Martin argues in his 1991 edition of the play that it was written in 1593. Yet the surviving manuscript of *Ironside* contains prompter's notes from a revival in the 1620s, including the names of several players active in the 1620s and 1630s.²⁹

Ro. Pallant (Robert Pallant): *1 Warder (Induction); Attendant, Soldier, and Dordan (Envy); Nicanor (Sloth); Julio (Lechery)*.

The first definite theatrical record of Pallant shows him with Worcester's Men in 1602, alongside John Duke (see above) and Christopher Beeston (see below), both of whom had been with the Chamberlain's Men in 1598. Eccles suggested that Pallant had also been with the Chamberlain's Men around the same time, since in the spring of 1599 Robert Shaw of the Admiral's Men sought sureties of the peace against Pallant and Beeston.³⁰ A further connection with the Chamberlain's-King's Men can be traced to the fact that Pallant's son, also named Robert, was apprenticed to John Heminges on 9 February 1620 and played female roles with the King's Men.³¹ In any case, the elder Pallant was with Worcester's-Queen Anne's from 1602 to about 1612, putting in brief stints with Lady Elizabeth's and Prince Charles's before his death in 1619.

Tho. Goodale (Thomas Goodale): *Lucius/Councillor (Envy); Phronesius and Messenger (Sloth); Lord (Lechery)*.

Goodale was born around 1557, give or take a couple of years,³² and was with Berkeley's Men in 1581. He had five children baptized or buried in Allhallows, London Wall between 1584 and 1590, but he was living in St. Botolph Aldgate by 1593, when his infant son was buried as 'Thomas goodaul sonne to Thomas goodaul a player dwelling in Mr gaskens Rentts being in Hounsditch'. Simon, son of Thomas Gooddall, 'a player of Enterludes' dwelling in Mr Gasking's rents near the Flower de Luce in Hounsditch, was baptized at Aldgate in 1594 and buried there in 1595. A final son, Richard, was baptized at St. Botolph Aldgate in 1599 and buried three months later.³³ Goodale's affiliations after

1581 are unclear, since he appears never to have become a sharer in any company. Since he does not appear in Henslowe's diary, perhaps he performed with the rival Chamberlain's Men in the 1590s, especially as St Botolph Aldgate is closer to the Shoreditch playhouses than to Henslowe's Rose on the Bankside.

His name (as 'T Goodal', playing a messenger) appears in Addition V to *Sir Thomas More*, but the date and company of that play are much disputed. The original version is generally agreed to have been written around 1592–3, but the additions, including the one containing Goodale's name, have been variously dated between 1593 and 1603. Neither case offers a consensus about the company involved.³⁴ The hand which transcribed the section of *Sir Thomas More* containing Goodale's name (Hand C) apparently also transcribed the *2 Seven Deadly Sins* plot, as well as the plot of *2 Fortune's Tennis* (performed by the Admiral's Men around 1597–8) and some bookkeepers' directions in Anthony Munday's manuscript of *John a Kent and John a Cumber* (written in the early 1590s).³⁵ At first this identification seems like a promising lead, but the diverse provenances of these other documents makes it difficult to draw any firm conclusions. One might argue that the same scribe would not have transcribed plots in 1597–8 for both the Chamberlain's Men (*2 Seven Deadly Sins*) and the Admiral's Men (*2 Fortune's Tennis*), but on the other hand, he may have been a professional scribe employed by both companies around the same time.

* * *

Consider the evidence we have seen so far. The first eight players in the above list – Bryan, Pope, Phillips, Burbage, Sly, Cowley, Duke, and Sincler – are all known to have been active with the Chamberlain's Men in 1597–8, if we assume that Bryan remained with the company for at least a while after December 1596. The other three men on the list – Holland, Pallant, and Goodale – have links with the Chamberlain's Men and can be plausibly placed with that company in the late 1590s, and none is known to have been with any other company at the time. A date later than 1598 is possible but less plausible, given Bryan's absence from company records after 1596 and the fact that Duke and Pallant were with Worcester's Men by 1602. All this evidence is best accounted for if the plot originated with the Chamberlain's Men around 1597–8.

No other hypothesis comes close to accounting for the evidence so well, and several encounter significant problems. Nothing absolutely rules out Greg's proposal that the plot comes from Strange's Men in 1590, but such a scenario

requires numerous ad hoc assumptions. Only two of these eleven players (Bryan and Pope) are otherwise known to have acted that early, and two others (Duke and Pallant) are not documented on stage until eight and twelve years later. Sly and Sincler would have had to move from Strange's to other companies and back to the Chamberlain's, if indeed Sincler is the 'Dinckenclo' of the German records. On the face of it, the Chamberlain's 1597–8 hypothesis appears much more plausible, and this hypothesis is only strengthened when we look at the other players in the plot.

The players of the plot: part 2

The remaining names in the plot consist of three adults for whom only one name is given, plus the six boys who played the female roles. Identifying the players behind these names necessarily involve some guesswork, made easier by the fact that some of the names are relatively uncommon, and by the fact that information about individual players becomes more plentiful as we approach the end of Elizabeth's reign. Commentators from Malone through Greg proposed identifications for most of these names, but remained cautious because so little was known about the candidates. Since Greg wrote, much new information has been discovered which corroborates these identifications – but only if the plot is dated to the late 1590s, rather than a decade earlier.

Harry (Henry Condell?): *Ferrex (Envy); Lord (Lechery)*.

Kit (Christopher Beeston?): *Attendant and Soldier (Envy); Captain (Sloth)*.

Malone first suggested in 1780 that the 'Harry' and 'Kit' of the plot were Henry Condell and Christopher Beeston, and this suggestion struck both Fleay and Greg as a reasonable one. Condell and Beeston are known to have performed with several other men named in the plot; 'Harry' played the important role of Ferrex, which is consistent with Condell's later prominence in the King's Men; and no other professional players of any significance named Henry or Christopher are known in England before 1615.³⁶ But if we accept these identifications, we are led once again toward a late date for the plot: Condell and Beeston both make their first known stage appearance with the Chamberlain's Men in 1598, in the cast of *Every Man In His Humour* alongside Pope, Phillips, Burbage, Sly, and Duke. An earlier date is possible, but becomes less plausible the further back we go before 1598.

The case for a 1597–8 date is further strengthened by some data of which Greg was unaware: Condell's and Beeston's birthdates. Condell was baptized

on 5 September 1576 in Norwich; thus he was 21 years old in 1597–8, a good age to play Ferrex, but only 13 or 14 in 1590, much too young for such a role.³⁷ Beeston gave his age as 43 in 1623, and thus was born about 1580.³⁸ He would have been 17 or 18 in 1598, a plausible age for the minor male roles assigned to ‘Kit’, but he was a 10-year-old child in 1590. If we date the plot to 1590, we must posit two other players named Henry and Christopher, otherwise unknown, and it becomes a coincidence that Condell and Beeston were just the right ages for these roles in 1598.

Vincent (Thomas Vincent?): *Musician (Sloth)*.

There are several possibilities for the identity of ‘Vincent’. In 1592, the player Simon Jewell, apparently of Pembroke’s Men, left 45 shillings in his will to Thomas Vincent, possibly a fellow player. A George Vincent was a musician with a troupe of English players traveling through Germany and Poland in 1615–18; he thus would have been a natural choice to play a musician on stage. Finally, in 1638, John Taylor told an anecdote about the player John Singer and ‘one Thomas Vincent that was a Book-keeper or prompter at the Globe play-house’. This Thomas Vincent was thus associated with the Chamberlain’s-King’s Men between 1599 (when the Globe was built) and 1609 (when John Singer died), so he certainly might have played a bit part for the Chamberlain’s Men in 1597–8.³⁹

* * *

Before we consider the six boys of the plot – T. Belt, Saunder, Nick, Ro. Go., Ned, and Will – we must clear up misconceptions in some recent discussion of the ‘boys’ who took the female roles in Elizabethan playing companies. Some scholars have expressed doubt that boys (as opposed to adult sharers) played such roles.⁴⁰ In fact, a considerable wealth of documentary evidence demonstrates that the boys in question were teenagers, typically apprenticed to adult players who were free of London livery companies.⁴¹ For our purposes, it is enough to point out that in every instance where we can determine the age of the actor who played a specific female role on the pre-restoration stage, he was between 12 and 19 years old, usually no older than 17 or 18.⁴²

Confusion has also been generated by a misprint in the 1961 Foakes-Rickert edition of Henslowe’s Diary.⁴³ Appendix 3 of that volume, entitled ‘Actors’ Names in Dramaticplots’ (326–33), describes the seven known theatrical plots and lists the actors’ names in each one. The players of *2 Seven Deadly Sins* are listed on pp. 327–8: first the ‘Master actors’ Bryan, Phillips, and Pope, followed by ‘Adult actors,’ consisting of the other eight names described above, from Burbage through Vincent. However, no boys are listed; the six boys who do

appear in 2 *Seven Deadly Sins* are listed instead on the facing page (329) after the four boys named in the plot of *Frederick and Basilea*, performed by the Admiral's Men in 1597. Though clearly a printing error, this error has unfortunately been reproduced elsewhere. For example, in *The Shakespearean Playing Companies*, Andrew Gurr lists 'Kit', 'Harry', 'Sander', Robert Gough, and 'Nicke' as boys with the Admiral's Men, even though no evidence connects those names with the Admiral's Men apart from the error in Foakes-Rickert.⁴⁴

T. Belt (Thomas Belt): *Servant (Induction)*; *Panthea (Lechery)*.

The identity of the boy 'T. Belt' has always been a mystery, but new evidence sheds some light on the matter. John Heminges of the Chamberlain's-King's Men was a member of the Company of Grocers, and the Grocers' records show Heminges binding ten apprentices during his career, most of whom can be traced on stage with the King's Men. The first of these, bound on 12 November 1595 for a term of nine years, was Thomas Belte.⁴⁵ Assuming that Heminges's apprentice is the 'T. Belt' of the plot, this helps date the plot to some time after November 1595, providing another piece of evidence for the 1597–8 dating.

Saunder (Alexander Cooke): *Queen Videna (Envy)*; *Procne (Lechery)*.

'Saunder' was the most important boy of the company, playing two leading female roles. Commentators since Malone have suggested plausibly that he was Alexander Cooke, who appears in lists of King's Men from 1603 to 1612. This plausibility is enhanced by the fact that Alexander Cooke was called 'Saunder' in the record of his daughter Rebecca's baptism at St Saviour's Southwark on 11 October 1607.⁴⁶ The only other players named 'Alexander' recorded before the restoration were Alexander Goughe, the son of King's Man Robert Goughe, who played female roles with the King's Men in the 1620s, and Alexander Foster, who acted with Lady Elizabeth's between 1611 and 1618. But neither of these is a plausible candidate for 'Saunder'; Goughe lived much too late, and Foster was never associated with the King's Men.⁴⁷

Alexander Cooke mentions 'my master Hemmings' in his will of 1614 – and, as it happens, the Grocers' records show that he was the second apprentice bound by John Heminges, on 26 January 1597 for a term of eight years. This was right on time to perform in *The Seven Deadly Sins* if my dating of the plot is correct, but at least six years too late under Greg's dating scenario. Cooke was freed as a grocer by Heminges on 22 March 1609, and bound an apprentice of his own, Walter Haynes, on 28 March 1610.⁴⁸ In his will, Cooke also mentions brothers Ellis and John (the latter apparently deceased, but with a living daughter) and five unnamed sisters. He may be the Alexander Cooke, son of Adrian Cooke, who was baptized on 15 December 1583 in Sandwich,

Kent along with a twin sister Anna, and who also had a brother John; if so, he would have been 13 years old when apprenticed, a fairly typical age.⁴⁹

Nick (Nicholas Tooley?): *Lady (Envy); Pompeia (Sloth)*.

The boy 'Nick' has been tentatively identified with Nicholas Tooley, who was with the King's Men from at least 1605 until his death in 1623. No record of his apprenticeship has been found, though in his will he refers to 'my late Mr [ie, master] Richard Burbage', suggesting that he was Burbage's apprentice. Mary Edmond has made a good case that Tooley was born in 1582–3 in Antwerp, the son of a wealthy merchant-adventurer and freeman of the Leathersellers who died when Nicholas was an infant.⁵⁰ If so, he would have been about 15 or 16 years old in 1597–8, just the right age to be playing female roles. If we date the plot to the early 1590s, Tooley's involvement becomes much less plausible, and we are once again forced to posit a different 'Nick' with no later connection to the other players listed.

Ro. Go. (Robert Gough?): *Aspatia (Sloth); Philomela (Lechery)*.

This boy played the key role of Philomela opposite Saunder's Procne. Greg believed there to be 'little doubt' that the 'Ro Go' of the plot was Robert Gough, and the identification seems reasonable enough. On 13 February 1603 at St Saviour's Southwark, Gough married Elizabeth, the sister of Augustine Phillips, and later that year he was a legatee in the will of Thomas Pope, who left Gough and John Edmans all his wearing apparel and arms. It has sometimes been said (e.g. by Honigmann and Brock, *Playhouse Wills*, 71) that Gough was apprenticed to Pope, but this is conjecture only, based only on Pope's bequest to Gough in his will. His close relationship with two senior Chamberlain's Men suggests that he had been connected with the company for some time, possibly as an apprentice, despite his absence from the fragmentary records before 1603. If this identification is correct, a later date for the plot would be more plausible than 1590, more than a decade before Gough's first appearance in the records.

Ned (Edmund Shakespeare?): *Rodope (Sloth)*.

Will (William Ostler? William Ecclestone?) – *Itis (Lechery)*.

The last two boys, 'Ned' and 'Will', are much more difficult to identify. The possibility that 'Ned' was Edward Alleyn was long ago abandoned, as was Malone's hopeful suggestion that 'Will' might be William Shakespeare – both men were in their mid-20s by 1590, and the character Itis is a small child. Nevertheless, there are plausible candidates for both names.

Fleay suggested that Ned might be Edmund Shakespeare, William's younger brother, and this suggestion deserves to be taken more seriously. Edmund

Shakespeare was baptized on 3 May 1580, so that he was in his late teens in 1597–8, at the upper end of the age range in which he might have played female roles. He was a professional player in 1607, shortly before his death, and it is reasonable to think that he had experience before that. A skeptic might object that Edmund Shakespeare was the same age as Christopher Beeston, who I suggest played minor male roles in the same production, but the ages of 17 and 18 were a gray area in which a boy might play either male or female roles, no doubt depending on his voice and physique. John Honeyman played his first male role at 17, but Ezekiel Fenn did not do so until he was 19.⁵¹ The Restoration actor Edward Kynaston was baptized on 20 April 1643, and thus was 17 when he played primarily female roles at the reopening of the theatres in 1660 before gradually transitioning into male roles.⁵² Still, the name Edward/Edmund is common enough that the identification of ‘Ned’ with Edmund Shakespeare must remain an interesting conjecture.

The name William is very common, but it belonged to several later members of the King’s Men. Fleay suggested that Will was William Tawyer, a player-musician who is named in the Folio text of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and died in 1625, but Greg rightly considered this grasping at straws.⁵³ William Ostler and William Ecclestone were both with the King’s Men by 1610; in fact, they make their debut appearances together in the Folio cast of Jonson’s *The Alchemist*, dated that year. Ostler had been with the Children of the Chapel in 1601, and was said to have been taken from them ‘to strengthen the King’s service’; thus, it seems unlikely, but not necessarily impossible, that he had been with the Chamberlain’s as a boy before that. No trace of Ecclestone as a player exists before 1610, though he may be the William Ecclestone who married Anne Jacob at St Saviour’s Southwark in 1603. If so, he might have played a young boy in 1597–8, if he married young. On the other hand, Mark Eccles identifies the player with the William Ecclestone who was born around 1591 (and thus a small child in 1597–8), the son of John Ecclestone, merchant tailor, and who received his portion in 1612.⁵⁴ These are tantalizing suggestions, but the identity of ‘Will’ is likely to remain unresolved in the absence of new evidence.

Collectively, these six boys’ names further support a 1597–8 date for the plot and undermine Greg’s 1590–1 date. If we accept the ‘T. Belt’ and ‘Saunder’ of the plot as Thomas Belte and Alexander Cooke, as appears very likely, then Cooke’s binding in January 1597 becomes a *terminus a quo*, before which the plot is unlikely to have originated. But this was only a month after George Bryan’s last recorded appearance as a Chamberlain’s man in December 1596, and dates after that become progressively less likely. The 1598 debut

performance of *Every Man In His Humour* recorded in the Jonson folio can serve as a rough *terminus ad quem*, since Bryan is absent from that cast list and appears in no later ones. Jonson used old-style dating, and so this performance would have been between 25 March 1598 and 24 March 1599 by modern reckoning; a date in the winter of 1598–9 is most consistent with Jonson’s practice with the other folio plays whose debut dates can be determined with any precision.⁵⁵ Thus, we can narrow the plot’s date down to the years 1597 or 1598, with the winter of 1597–8 perhaps being a good enough approximation. This date is further supported if we accept the boys ‘Nick’ and ‘Ro. Go.’ as Nicholas Tooley and Robert Gough, who first appear as adult players in 1605 and 1603 respectively. Five to eight years of documentary silence – between 1597–98 and 1603–5 – is more plausible than a gap of 12 to 15 years, as is necessary if we accept a date of 1590–1 for the plot.

* * *

Once we get through all the named players of the plot, we are left with ten roles for which no player is named: King Henry VI, Lydgate, Mercury, and the seven personified deadly sins. King Henry and Lydgate are major roles which cannot be doubled and apparently remained on stage during the entire play; perhaps this staging explains why the writer of the plot felt no need to add the players’ names. If we accept that the plot represents a performance by the Lord Chamberlain’s Men in 1597–8, we are left with three major members of that company who have not been named: John Heminges, William Shakespeare, and William Kempe. Even under Greg’s dating, these three need to be accounted for, since Heminges and Kempe were with Strange’s Men in the early 1590s, and Shakespeare may well have been.

Fleay suggested that Shakespeare played King Henry and Heminges played Lydgate, both of which seem like reasonable suggestions to me. One of the few contemporary comments on Shakespeare’s acting ability is John Davies’s reference to his playing ‘Kingly parts in sport’,⁵⁶ and the little we know about Heminges on stage suggests that he would have been suited to playing an older, dignified character such as Lydgate.⁵⁷ Kempe could have doubled as Mercury and one of the sins, with the six boys of the company playing the other six sins. The sins Envy, Sloth, and Lechery pass across the stage before each of the play’s three playlets, allowing for much potential mugging by a clown, and Mercury would seem to be an ideal role for the dancer Kempe.

On the basis of the *2 Seven Deadly Sins* plot, the evidence detailed above, and a dose of responsible speculation, we can tentatively reconstruct a detailed list of Chamberlain’s Men in 1597–8. The following list is divided into three

groups: nine sharers; eight hired men and older apprentices (ie, non-sharers playing adult male roles); and six boys.⁵⁸ The roles each performer played in *Seven Deadly Sins* are listed next to his name. The distinction between sharers and hired men is not always clear; Cowley and Condell, in particular, might fall in either group. I have included Condell among the hired men/older apprentices because of his age and the fact that, like four of the six boys, only his first name is used in the plot.

SHARERS:

George Bryan: *Damasus/Lord/Councillor (Envy); Warwick (Induction)*.

Thomas Pope: *Arbactus (Sloth)*.

Augustine Phillips: *Sardanapalus (Sloth)*.

Richard Burbage: *King Gorboduc (Envy); Tereus (Lechery)*.

John Heminges: *Lydgate (Induction)*.

William Shakespeare: *King Henry VI (Induction)*.

William Sly: *Porrex (Envy); Lord (Lechery)*.

William Kempe: *Mercury (Lechery); Sin (Induction)*.

Richard Cowley: *Lieutenant (Induction); Soldier and Lord (Envy);
Giraldus/Captain (Sloth); Lord (Lechery)*.

HIRE MEN / OLDER APPRENTICES:

Henry Condell: *Ferrex (Envy); Lord (Lechery)*.

Christopher Beeston: *Attendant and Soldier (Envy); Captain (Sloth)*.

John Duke: *Pursuivant (Induction); Attendant and Soldier (Envy); Will Fool
(Sloth); Lord (Lechery)*.

John Sincler: *Keeper/Warder (Induction); Soldier (Envy); Captain/Musician
(Sloth)*.

John Holland: *Attendant and Soldier (Envy); Captain (Sloth); Warder
(Induction)*.

Robert Pallant: *1 Warder (Induction); Attendant, Soldier, and Dordan
(Envy); Nicanor (Sloth); Julio (Lechery)*.

Thomas Goodale: *Lucius/Councillor (Envy); Phronesius and Messenger
(Sloth); Lord (Lechery)*.

(Thomas?) Vincent: *Musician (Sloth)*.

Boys:

Thomas Belte: *Servant (Induction); Panthea (Lechery); Sin (Induction)*.

Alexander Cooke: *Queen Videna (Envy); Procne (Lechery); Sin (Induction)*.

Nicholas Tooley: *Lady (Envy); Pompeia (Sloth); Sin (Induction)*.

Robert Gough: *Aspatia (Sloth); Philomela (Lechery); Sin (Induction)*.

Ned (Shakespeare?): *Rodope (Sloth); Sin (Induction)*.

Will (Ostler? Ecclestone?): *Itis (Lechery); Sin (Induction)*.

Conclusion

If the *2 Seven Deadly Sins* plot originated with the Chamberlain's Men in the late 1590s, as I hope to have shown, a whole new set of questions and possibilities are opened up. Obviously, there are biographical implications for the players involved, many of which have been discussed already. Some of the most interesting results of this research concern the hired men in the cast, several of whom have been virtual ciphers in the annals of theatre history. With a high degree of confidence, we can now place John Holland and Thomas Goodale among the Chamberlain's Men in 1597–8, rather than with Strange's Men at the beginning of the decade. This repositioning is significant for the dating and company assignment of the manuscript plays *John of Bordeaux* (which contains Holland's name in the stage directions) and *Sir Thomas More* (which contains Goodale's name). The fact that Hand C in the *More* MS is apparently the same scribe who wrote the *2 Seven Deadly Sins* plot as well as the plot for *2 Fortune's Tennis* (datable to 1597–8), also assumes new significance with the redating argued for here. This does not mean, of course, that either *John of Bordeaux* or *Sir Thomas More* must be assigned to the Chamberlain's Men in 1597–8, but any future arguments about the origins of those plays must take into account the evidence gathered in the preceding pages.

There are also biographical implications for the better-known players of the plot. Since this same company was the one for which Shakespeare first wrote such plays as *The Merchant of Venice*, *Henry IV Parts 1 and 2*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Henry V*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, studying the casting of *2 Seven Deadly Sins* in this new light yields fresh insights into how those plays may have been cast. For example, Richard Burbage played two leading roles, kings Gorboduc and Tereus, and we know from other sources that he played many lead roles in Shakespeare's plays, including such kings as Richard III. Given that Henry Condell and William Sly played the young male leads of Ferrex and Porrex in *2 Seven Deadly Sins*, we might plausibly hypothesize that

they originated such similar roles as Bassanio and Lorenzo in *Merchant*, Poin and Hotspur in the *Henry IV* plays (assuming that Burbage played Hal), and Claudio and Don John in *Much Ado* (assuming that Burbage played Benedick).

Then there are the boys. Alexander Cooke and Robert Gough were the two most important boys in this company, playing the major female roles of Queen Videna and Procne (Cooke) and Philomela (Gough). It seems reasonable to think that these two played other major female roles around that time, since talented boys were more scarce than talented adults; thus, I think it quite likely that Cooke and Gough played such roles as Portia and Jessica in *Merchant*, and Beatrice and Hero in *Much Ado*. 'T Belt,' previously a nonentity whom Greg could only describe as 'an otherwise unknown boy',⁵⁹ can now be positively identified. We can also stand on firmer ground in identifying 'Nick' as Nicholas Tooley, and (more conjecturally) 'Ned' as Edmund Shakespeare.

More broadly, the redating of the plot has implications for repertory. The new dating suggests that, even as Shakespeare was honing his skills and presenting the Chamberlain's Men with more and more sophisticated fare (by our standards) in the late 1590s, the public still had an appetite for old-fashioned, morality-style play such as *The Seven Deadly Sins*. This appetite is perhaps not so surprising. In her excellent study of the repertory of the Chamberlain's Men, one of the plays which Roslyn Knutson places in the 1597–8 season is *A Warning for Fair Women*, a domestic tragedy whose elaborate, didactic induction recalls *The Seven Deadly Sins*.⁶⁰ Personified Tragedy runs Comedy and History off the stage, and then intersperses the main plot of the play with dumbshows illustrating a personified Lust leading human beings astray.

In addition to all this, I hope to have shown the value of reexamining the assumptions of our forebears, especially in the light of new documentary evidence. Here we have a backstage theatrical document from Shakespeare's company, depicting the cast for which he wrote some of his greatest plays, but its significance has been obscured by mistaken assumptions made more than a century ago. Obviously, scholars such as Greg and Chambers did an incalculable amount of excellent work, providing a foundation upon which all of us build. But they were fallible human beings just like the rest of us, their opinions shaped by the time they lived in and the limited information available to them.⁶¹ Huge quantities of new information about the history of the English stage are being discovered, and many old assumptions are being challenged. It behooves us as scholars to poke and prod at every assumption, no matter how cherished, for the results can often be surprising.

Appendix: Transcription of the plot of 2 *Seven Deadly Sins*

The original is in two columns, with the second column beginning at the line of asterisks in the transcription below, and the title extending across both columns. This transcription preserves the original lineation. Crossed-out words or letters are enclosed in square brackets, and expanded abbreviations are indicated by italics, following REED practice. Surnames and character names are expanded when the full version appears elsewhere in the manuscript. Diamond parentheses enclose passages from earlier transcriptions which are no longer legible in the manuscript.

*The platt of The Secound parte of/
the Seuen Deadlie Sinns*

A tent being plast one the stage for Henry
the Sixt. he in it A sleepe to him The Leutenant
A purceuaunt R Cowly Io Duke and [2]1 warder[s]
[J Holland] R Pallant; to them Pride Gluttony
Wrath and Couetousnes at one dore. at an other
dore Enuie. Sloth and Lechery The Three put
back the foure. and so Exeunt

Henry Awaking Enter A Keeper I Sincler to him
a seruauant T Belt to him Lidgate and the
Keeper Exit then enter againe. Then Enuy
passeth ouer the stag Lidgate speakes.

A Senitt. Dumb show.
Enter King Gorboduk with 2 Counsailers. R Burbadg
maister Brian. Th Goodale. The Queene with ferrex and
Porrex and som attendaunts follow. Saunder W Sly
Harry I Duke. Kitt. Ro Pallant. I Holland
After Gordbeduk hath Consulted with his Lords he
brings his 2 sonns to to seuerall seates They
euaing on on other ferrex offers to take Porex his
Corowne. he draws his weapon The King Queen and
Lords step between them They Thrust Them away
and menasing [ecc] ech other exit The Queene
<and Lords depart> Heuilie. Lidgate speakes

Enter ferrex Crownd with Drum and Coulers and soldiers
one way. Harry. Kitt. R Cowly Iohn duke. to them
At another dore. Porrex drum and Collors and soldiers
W Sly. R Pallant. Iohn Sincler. I Holland.

Enter [Gorb] Queene. with 2 Counsailors. *maister* Brian
Tho Goodale. to them ferrex and Porrex seuerall waies
with [his] Drums and Powers. Gorboduk entreing in
The midst between Henry speaks

A Larum with Excurtions After
Lidgate speaks

Enter ferrex and Porrex seuerally Goboduke
still following them Lucius and Damasus *maister* Bryan
T Goodale.

Enter ferrex at one dore. Porrex at an other The
fight ferrex is slayn. to them Videna The Queene
to hir Damasus. to him Lucius.

Enter Porrex sad with Dordan his man. R P. W Sly
to them the Queene and A Ladie Nick Saunder.
And Lords R Cowly *maister* Brian. to them Lucius Running

Henry and Lidgat speaks Sloth Passeth ouer

Enter Giraldus Phronesius Aspatia Pompeia Rodope
R Cowly Th Goodale. R Go. Ned. Nick.

Enter Sardinapalus Arbactus Nicanor and
Captaines marching. *maister* Phillipps *maister* Pope R *Pallant*
Kit J Sincler. J Holland.

<Enter> A Captaine with Aspatia and the Ladies Kitt

Lidgat speake

Enter Nicanor with other Captaines R *Pallant*.
I Sincler. Kitt. I Holland R Cowly. to them
Arbactus. *maister* Pope. to him Will foole. I Duke
to him Rodopeie. Ned. to her Sardanupalus
Like A woman with Aspatia Rodope Pompeia
will foole to them Arbactus and [2]3 musitions
maister Pope I Sincler. Vincent R Cowly to them
Nicanor and others R P Kitt

Enter *Sardanapalus*. with the Ladies to them A
Messenger. Th Goodale. to him will foole
Runing A Larum.

Enter Arbactus pursuing *Sardanapalus*
and The Ladies fly After Enter *Sardanapalus*
with as many Jewels robes and Gold as he ca<n>
cary. A Larum

Enter Arbactus Nicanor and The other Captai<ns>
in triumph. *maister* Pope. R *Pallant*. Kitt I *Holland* R *Cowley*. I *Sincler*

Henry speaks and Lidgate Lechery passeth
ouer the stag

Enter Te<reus> *Philomele* <Julio>
R *Burbadg*. Ro <R *Pall.*> J <Sink>

Enter *Progne* *Itis* and Lords *Saunder* will
I Duke w *Sly Hary*.

Enter *Philomele* and *Tereus* to them *Iulio*

Enter *Progne* *Panthea* *Itis* and Lords. *Saunder*
T *Belt* will w *Sly Hary* Th *Goodale* to them
Tereus with Lords. R *Burbadg*. I Duk R *Cowly*

A Dumb Show. *Lidgate* speakes
Enter *Progne* with the *Sampler* to her *Tereus*
from *Hunting* with his Lords to them *Philomele*
with *Itis* hed in a dish. *Mercury* Comes and all
Vanish. to him 3 Lords Th *Goodale* *Hary* W *Sly*.

Henry speaks to him *Leiutenant* *Purseuaunt*
and warder R *Cowly* I Duke. I *Holland* *Iohn*
Sincler. to them *Warwick*. *maister* *Brian*

Lidgate speaks to the
Audiens and so
Exitts.

FINIS

Notes

- 1 W. W. Greg, *Dramatic Documents from the Elizabethan Playhouses: Documents* (Oxford, 1931), 107–13.
- 2 An appendix to the present paper contains a photograph of this document, accompanied by a transcription. Photographs of the plot can also be found in Greg, *Dramatic Documents*, and in Ian Wilson, *Shakespeare: The Evidence* (New York, 1994).
- 3 F. G. Fleay, *Chronicle History of the London Stage, 1559–1642* (London, 1890), 83.
- 4 E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage* (Oxford, 1923), 3.497; Greg, *Dramatic Documents*, 19.
- 5 Scott McMillin, ‘Building Stories: Greg, Fleay and the plot of *2 Seven Deadly Sins*’, *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 4 (1989), 53–62.
- 6 Edmond Malone (ed.), *Supplement to the Edition of Shakespeare Published in 1778* (London, 1780), 1.58, 61.
- 7 Eleanore Boswell, ‘Young Mr. Cartwright’, *Review of English Studies* 24 (1929), 125–42. McMillin (‘Building Stories,’ 62n3) mentions in passing the possibility that the *Seven Deadly Sins* plot might have come from Cartwright, but does not pursue the matter.
- 8 Greg, *Dramatic Documents*, 339–41, and G. E. Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage* (1956), 5.1418–9.
- 9 The inventory is Public Record Office PROB4/3022, and is transcribed by E.A.J. Honigmann and Susan Brock, *Playhouse Wills, 1558–1642* (Manchester and New York, 1993), 238–44. Its existence was apparently unknown to Boswell and to other earlier scholars writing about Cartwright’s library.
- 10 Boswell, ‘Young Mr. Cartwright’, 141; John Aubrey, *Natural History and Antiquities of the County of Surrey* (London, 1719), 5.356. Aubrey died in 1697.
- 11 Malone, *Supplement* 1.49n; Daniel Lysons, *The environs of London* (London, 1792), 1.111–12; George Morrow Kahrl, *The Garrick Collection of old English plays: a catalogue with an historical introduction* (London, 1982), 18, 75n25; Boswell, ‘Young Mr. Cartwright’, 141.
- 12 Kahrl, *The Garrick Collection*, 18; J. P. Collier, ‘Introduction’, *An Apology for Actors: in three books* (London, 1841), xiii; F. S. Boas, *Shakespeare & the Universities, and other Studies in Elizabethan Drama* (Oxford, 1923), 97.
- 13 Malone was known for borrowing irreplaceable manuscripts for lengthy periods of time; while working on his biography of Shakespeare, he kept the 16th-century Stratford Chamberlain’s accounts for a dozen years, only return-

- ing them to the Stratford Corporation in 1805 after the threat of legal action. See Samuel Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives* (Oxford, 1993), 171–2.
- 14 Boswell, 'Young Mr. Cartwright', 139; Bentley, *Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, 2.346–9. The younger Cartwright's autograph catalogue of the paintings in his collection (Dulwich College MS XIV) lists 239 paintings, but only 76 of these are now at Dulwich. Item 109 in this catalogue is 'mr Sly's picture of an Actor in a gilt frame'. In the late eighteenth century, Daniel Lysons identified this description with the painting now listed as number 26 among the Cartwright paintings, but in 1987 Giles Waterford and Nicola Kalinsky cast doubt upon this identification in 'Mr. Cartwright's Paintings', the catalogue for an exhibition of the paintings at Dulwich.
- 15 Greg, *Dramatic Documents*, 118–22, discusses the various character names in the plot and their sources. The Sardanapalus story in particular is discussed by Lawrence Manley, 'Playing With Fire: Immolation in the Repertory of Strange's Men', *Early Theatre* 4 (2001), 115–29.
- 16 See Greg, *Dramatic Documents*, 28–40, 51–66.
- 17 Greg, *Dramatic Documents*, 20–1.
- 18 E.K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of the Facts and Problems* (Oxford, 1930), 2.72.
- 19 See Mark Eccles, 'Elizabethan Actors I: A-D', *Notes and Queries* 236 (1991), 45, and 'Elizabethan Actors III: K-R', *Notes and Queries* 237 (1992), 296–7.
- 20 Greg, *Dramatic Documents*, 44.
- 21 William Ingram, *The Business of Playing* (Ithaca, NY and London, 1992), 102.
- 22 Carol Chillington Rutter (ed.), *Documents of the Rose Playhouse*, 2nd ed. (Manchester and New York, 1999), 75.
- 23 Randall Martin (ed.), *Henry VI, Part Three* (Oxford, 2001), 123–32.
- 24 Willem Schrickx, *Foreign Envoys and Travelling Players in the Age of Shakespeare and Jonson* (1986), 130–1; June Schlueter, 'English Actors in Kassel, Germany, during Shakespeare's Time', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 10 (1998), 238–61; and Willem Schrickx, 'English Actors at the Courts of Wolfenbüttel, Brussels and Graz during the Lifetime of Shakespeare', *Shakespeare Survey* 33 (1980), 153–68. The butchering of 'Sincklo' as 'Dinckenclö' is entirely typical of the misspellings of German scribes attempting to render English names at this time.
- 25 Alison Gaw, 'John Sincklo as One of Shakespeare's Actors', *Anglia* 49 (1926), 289–303, surveys Sincklo's playing career, and Mark Eccles, 'Elizabethan Actors IV: S–Z', *Notes and Queries* 238 (1993), 168–9, discusses non-theatrical records which may refer to the player.

- 26 See Ronald Knowles (ed.), *King Henry VI Part II* (London, 1999), 4.2.0.1n. Knowles mistakenly says that Holland's name also appears with Sincklo's in the Folio text of *3 Henry VI*, but the name there is actually Humphrey.
- 27 Honigmann and Brock, *Playhouse Wills*, 69.
- 28 Laurie Maguire, 'John Holland and *John of Bordeaux*', *Notes and Queries* 231 (1986), 327–33.
- 29 See Donald Foster, review of Eric Sams, *Shakespeare's Lost Play: Edmund Ironside*, in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 39 (1988), 118–23; Randall Martin (ed.), *Edmond Ironside and Anthony Brewer's The Love-Sick King* (New York and London, 1991), 378–83.
- 30 Eccles, 'Elizabethan Actors III', 299.
- 31 The younger Pallant's career is summarized by Bentley, *Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, vol. 2 (1941), 519–20; his apprenticeship to Heminges is recorded in Guildhall Library MS 11571/10, fol. 381v.
- 32 He gave his age as 42 in 1598, implying a birthdate of 1556, but as 45 in 1604, implying a birthdate of 1559; see Mark Eccles, 'Elizabethan Actors II: E–J', *Notes and Queries* 236 (1991), 456. Such discrepancies are actually quite common in depositions of the time, since many people were not sure exactly how old they were.
- 33 Eccles, 'Elizabethan Actors II', 455–6.
- 34 The issues are discussed in Vittorio Gabrieli and Giorgio Melchiori's Revels edition of the play (1990), and in T. H. Howard-Hill (ed.), *Shakespeare and 'Sir Thomas More': Essays on the Play and its Shakespearean Interest* (1989).
- 35 Greg, *Dramatic Documents*, 240.
- 36 Harry Tottnell, player, had a daughter baptized at St Saviour's, Southwark on 20 March 1591, and was himself buried there on 28 January 1593 (Nungezer, 376). He might be considered a candidate, but his early death goes against all the other evidence for the plot's later date. Christopher Simpson, father of the musician of the same name, toured the great houses of Yorkshire with a company of recusant players under the patronage of Sir Richard Cholmley during the first two decades of the seventeenth century, but he is not known to have ever been in London. (See Margaret Urquhart, 'Sir Robert Bolles Bt. of Scampton', *Chelys* 16 (1987), 16–29.)
- 37 David Honneyman, 'The Family Origins of Henry Condell', *Notes and Queries* 230 (1985), 467.
- 38 C.J. Sisson, 'The Red Bull Company and the Importunate Widow', *Shakespeare Survey* 7 (1954), 59.
- 39 Mary Edmond, 'Pembroke's Men', *Review of English Studies*, n.s.25 (1974), 129–36; Willem Schrickx, "'Pickleherring" and English Actors in Germany',

- Shakespeare Survey* 36 (1983), 139–40, 147; Nungezer, *Dictionary of Actors*, 328.
- 40 Such doubts have most notably been expressed by James Forse, *Art Imitates Business* (Bowling Green, Ohio, 1994), 71–99, and Marvin Rosenberg, ‘The Myth of Shakespeare’s Squeaking Boy Actor – Or Who Played Cleopatra?’, *Shakespeare Bulletin* 19.2 (2001), 5–6.
- 41 I discuss this evidence (much of it newly discovered) at length in two forthcoming papers: ‘Freemen and Apprentices in the Elizabethan Theatre’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, and ‘The Ages of Shakespeare’s Boy Actors’, *Shakespeare Survey*. For two examples of players formally binding apprentice players in London livery companies, see William Ingram, ‘Arthur Savill, Stage Player’, *Theatre Notebook* 37 (1983), 21–2, and Jane Belfield, ‘Robert Armin, Citizen and Goldsmith of London’, *Notes and Queries* 225 (1980), 158–9. I have found at least a dozen further examples.
- 42 See Bentley, *Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, 2.433 (Ezekiel Fenn), 2.446 (Alexander Goughe), and 2.476–7 (John Honyman) for examples of boys acting female roles as teenagers but graduating to male roles in their late teens.
- 43 R.A. Foakes and R.T. Rickert (eds), *Henslowe’s Diary* (Cambridge, 1961); a reprint with a new introduction by Foakes was published by Cambridge University Press in 2002, but did not correct the error described in this paragraph.
- 44 Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Playing Companies* (Oxford, 1996), 253. On the same page, Gurr unaccountably lists Richard Cowley as a sharer with the Admiral’s Men in 1597, even though there is no evidence to connect Cowley with that company at any time.
- 45 Guildhall Library MS 11571/8, fol. 508r. This boy may have been the son of Thomas Belte, a Norwich city wait who was expelled from the city along with his wife and children on 16 November 1594; see David Galloway (ed.), *Records of Early English Drama: Norwich, 1540–1642* (Toronto, 1984), 107.
- 46 G.E. Bentley, ‘Shakespeare’s Fellows’, *Times Literary Supplement* (November 15, 1928), 856.
- 47 Alexander Goughe was baptized at St. Saviour’s Southwark on 7 August 1614, six months after Alexander Cooke had been buried in the same parish, and may have been named after his father’s deceased colleague.
- 48 Guildhall Library MS 11571/8, fol. 545v (for Cooke’s binding); Guildhall Library MS 11571/9, fol. 291v (for Cooke’s freedom); Guildhall Library MS 11571/9, fol. 340v (for Haynes’ binding).
- 49 Cooke’s will is transcribed by Honigmann and Brock, *Playhouse Wills*, 94–6. An Alexander Cooke, son of John Cooke and Joan Winter, was baptized on

- 26 December 1583 in Broad Chalk, Wiltshire, but this man had six surviving brothers and only three sisters. Neither Alexander Cooke born in 1583 appears to have had a brother named Ellis according to the online International Genealogical Index (<http://www.familysearch.org>), but that index is far from complete. Further research may unravel these conundrums.
- 50 Mary Edmond, 'Yeomen, Citizens, Gentlemen, and Players: The Burbages and Their Connections', *Elizabethan Theatre: Essays in Honor of S. Schoenbaum* (Delaware, 1996), 36–9.
- 51 Bentley, *Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, 2.476–7, 433.
- 52 Kynaston's baptism date is confirmed by the record of his apprenticeship to John Rhodes, the theatrical entrepreneur and a freeman of the Drapers, which I discuss in 'Freemen and Apprentices in the Elizabethan Theatre' (forthcoming in *Shakespeare Quarterly*). Kynaston was three months short of 18 years old on 7 January 1661, when Samuel Pepys saw him play both male and female roles in the same production of *Epicoene*, being both 'the prettiest woman in the whole house' and 'the handsomest [man] in the house'; see Robert Latham and William Matthews (eds), *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1970), 2.7.
- 53 Fleay, *Chronicle History*, 84; Greg, *Dramatic Documents*, 50.
- 54 Nungezer, *Dictionary of Actors*, 261–2, 127–8; Eccles, 'Elizabethan Actors II', 454.
- 55 For example, *Volpone* is dated 1605 in the folio, but appears to have been written in the first two months of 1606, new style. See Brian Parker (ed.), *Volpone, or The Fox* (Manchester and New York, 1999), 7–8. *Sejanus*, dated 1603 in the folio, is similarly dated to the 1603–4 Christmas season by its most recent editor. See Philip J. Ayers (ed.), *Sejanus His Fall* (Manchester and New York, 1990), 9.
- 56 Quoted by Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, 2.214.
- 57 Heminges was called 'old' in 1613 and 1616 (when he was 47 and 50 years old), and his only known role was Corbaccio, 'an old Gentleman', in a production of *Volpone* around 1616–19, admittedly two decades later than the date I propose for the *Seven Deadly Sins* plot. See James A. Riddell, 'Some Actors in Ben Jonson's Plays', *Shakespeare Studies* 5 (1969), 285–98.
- 58 Nine men, presumably the sharers, were listed in the royal patent for the King's Men in 1603 and the grant of cloth for the royal procession the following year. Apprentices were bound until their early 20s, and would typically play younger male parts toward the end of their apprenticeship after they had graduated from female roles.
- 59 Greg, *Dramatic Documents*, 44.

- 60 Roslyn Knutson, *The Repertory of Shakespeare's Company 1594–1613* (Fayetteville, Arkansas, 1991), 68–9.
- 61 Laurie Maguire, *Shakespearean Suspect Texts* (Cambridge, 1996), 21–71, has an excellent discussion of the ways in which the work of Greg and the New Bibliographers was shaped by their Victorian, British, imperialist social background, often in ways which are apparent only in retrospect.