

SAA TORONTO 2013

SEMINAR 4: COLLABORATIVE SHAKESPEARE

CONVENORS: HEATHER
HIRSCHFELD AND TON
HOENSELAARS

ABSTRACTS

I. “Collaborator or Co-Author?: Shakespeare’s Collaborative Practices in Modern Biography and Popular Fiction”

Clara Calvo, University of Murcia, Spain

In recent years, a turn to the study of Shakespeare’s collaboration with contemporary playwrights has become evident in Shakespearean scholarship. Has this interest trickled down to Shakespearean biography or popular representations of Shakespeare as fictional character? This paper sets out to examine both academic and non-academic biographies as well as some examples of popular fiction that construe Shakespeare as literary character to determine if any consistent patterns emerge in the treatment of Shakespeare as collaborator.

The working hypothesis is that whereas most popular representations of Shakespeare tend, as a rule, to ignore his collaborative activities, in many recent biographies, collaboration takes the shape of a narrative in which Shakespeare emerges as co-authoring plays with other playwrights at the start and the end of his dramatic career. This narrative often has the effect of implying that his collaboration was either the result of a mere period of apprenticeship that took place during the early years of his development as author or the logical conclusion of his maturity as writer, once he is a well-established playwright and he is resorted to as a first-class expert when another playwright leaves

a play unfinished (Wilkins – *Pericles*) or when a problem arises (*Sir Thomas More*).

Shakespeare is therefore seen generally as either a writer in his formative years during his pre-Chamberlain’s days or as a ‘play-doctor’ at the end of his writing career, ready to come to the rescue of less gifted playwrights. Otherwise, the central core of the canon (i.e. the second tetralogy and *Henry V*, the mature comedies, the five most celebrated tragedies and the better known tragicomedies) are intentionally foregrounded as solo work, reinforcing the romantic image of Shakespeare as isolated genius who worked on his own and downplaying an alternative possible image of the playwright as interacting with other authors in a rich medium in which authorship may have been understood as a more fluid notion.

The most immediate drawback of this all too frequent narrative that polarises collaboration into the early and late phases of Shakespeare’s writing career is that it allows little room for other kind of Shakespearean collaborative practices during the middle period of his dramatic production. For instance, this scenario clashes with the existing evidence, which suggests that Shakespeare is likely to have been the author of the additions to *The Spanish Tragedy*.

*

II. “Forms of Affiliation to the Profession of Dramatist”

Lacey Conley, Marquette University

In this paper, I plan to approach the various practices of authorial collaboration in the early modern theater as expressions of the authors’ individual backgrounds, experiences, and opinions about plays and playwrighting. Based on biographical details and the ideas expressed in the writing of the authors themselves, I have placed each of the twenty three playwrights who, within the years 1590-1625, I have identified as “professional” (informed by G.E. Bentley’s criteria) in one of the following four “forms of affiliation” to the playwrighting profession: Attached Dramatists, Commercial Professionals, Literary Dramatists, and

Gentleman Authors. In order to show how an author's affiliation to the profession affects his attitude towards and engagement in collaborative authorship, I will use the example of the *Poetomachia* of 1599 to 1601. This debate about theatrical value involved at least one member of each of the aforementioned "forms," so it is an ideal example of how conflicting perspectives about drama and authorship found ways to coexist—more or less amicably—in the very public forum of a *staged* debate. In this instance, the playwrights were able to engage in attempts at internal regulation of the bounds of their profession, while also facilitating audience recognition of individual authorial styles through the use of mocking and exaggerated impersonations of one another, enabling them to promote both themselves and the legitimacy of their craft. The Poet's War functions as a sort of meta-collaboration, where differing ideas are brought together not simply for the creation of a single text, but rather for the construction of the dramatic profession itself.

*

III. "The Passionate Pilgrim and Shakespearean Collaboration, with Musings Upon a ¶"

Francis X. Connor, Wichita State University

The Passionate Pilgrim includes a handful of known Shakespeare poems surrounded poems either unattributed or attributed to other hands. Yet this is rarely considered a collaborative work, in large part because Shakespeare's role in the production of the book remains unknown. Building upon recent criticism that has begun to acknowledge *Passionate Pilgrim* as a thematically coherent work, I consider some grounds upon which we may consider it a Shakespearean particular. To this end, I read an awful lot into a single piece of type in the 1598 *Loues labors lost*, wondering if a pilcrow that precedes a sonnet the play shares with *Passionate Pilgrim* may be key to understanding how Shakespeare may have considered his poetry collaborative.

*

IV. "Collaboration and Proprietary Authorship: Shakespeare, et al."

Trevor Cook, Trent University, Oshawa

Who in Shakespeare's lifetime deserved credit for a play like *Pericles*? The title page of the 1609 quarto lists the King's Men as the actors and William Shakespeare as the author, but the play was not included in the First Folio and many scenes were evidently written by George Wilkins, who had only a year prior published a prose version of the same story. Was it (or just parts of it) Shakespeare's work, Wilkins', or a joint property? Or as any one of the interested parties might have put it: yours, mine, or ours? Shakespeare was not as concerned with the question as some of his contemporaries were. In *The Spanish Gypsy* (1623), the work of four leading Jacobean dramatists (Ford, Dekker, Middleton, and Rowley), one player proposes to another that they be inspired together when preparing the play-within-the-play so as to protect his individual property: "we'll invoke them [the muses] together – so that you will not steal my plot." In this context, *The Spanish Gypsy* is as important for what it has to say about the significance of attribution as it has been as a test case for methods of attributing authorship, especially in light of the fact that scholars continue to be divided on the implications of collaboration for such concepts as literary property: some continue to cite the prevalence of collaboration as an historical alternative to the modern notion of authorial property, while others maintain that it was equally common for authors in the period to work independently and so be accustomed to receiving unique credit for their work. This paper considers how collaborators within *The Spanish Gypsy* negotiate these differences in ways that might also shed light on Shakespeare's working relationship with the likes of Wilkins.

*

V. “What is not collaborative about early modern drama in performance and print?”

Gabriel Egan, De Montfort University, Leicester, UK

This paper is concerned with the idea that Shakespeare’s plays are inherently collaborative because drama is a collective artform and that the processes of transmission by which the texts come down to us – scribal copying and printing – constitute additional layers of collaboration. On the assumption that Shakespeare welcomed or at least acquiesced to changes to his plays made by actors during rehearsal, the 1986 Oxford Complete Works edition attempted, where a choice existed, to reflect the plays as they were first performed rather than as first written. This paper reconsiders the extent to which Shakespeare’s plays may have been reshaped in the theatre, finding that it has recently been overstated and that his authority over his words is probably greater than usually supposed. The idea that textual transmission was thoroughly collaborative rose to prominence in the 1980s and 1990s as the sociology-of-texts movement reached Shakespeare studies. This approach stressed that writers do not produce books on their own, and that a constellation of other individuals and institutions constitutes the necessary condition that enables publication. The collaborative nature of publication also appears to have been overstated and editors ought to focus on undoing the effects of scribes and compositors to recover the authorial labour.

*

VI. “‘Seeming knowledge’: Stylometry and Data Visualization in *All’s Well that Ends Well* Attribution Studies”

Jennifer Forsyth, Kutztown University

Last year, Laurie Maguire and Emma Smith proposed that Thomas Middleton had collaborated with William Shakespeare on *All’s Well that Ends Well*. Although Brian Vickers and Marcus Dahl had already

responded to the claim and presented countering evidence on multiple objective and subjective points, their refutation generally treated the play as a whole rather than considering it on a scene-by-scene basis, as outlined in Maguire and Smith’s argument. Because of this discrepancy, further study seemed in order. This preliminary paper describes the results of a word, phrase, and collocation study based on the methodology employed by MacDonald P. Jackson, performed on passages selected from among the scenes in *All’s Well that Ends Well* considered most Middletonian in nature by Maguire and Smith. Evidence drawn from the seven analyzed samples corroborates Shakespeare as sole author of *All’s Well*, with Middleton attributes lagging behind even those of John Fletcher, used as a control. Finally, the paper glances at data visualization as an important, and underexplored, aspect of visual rhetoric in early modern studies and notes the opportunity for collaborative organization and dissemination of the multiple kinds of data required for stylometric studies (including peer-reviewed data on authorial, scribal, and compositorial practices and attributions throughout the entire corpus of early modern dramas, as well as bibliographic information).

*

VII. “Lego and Logos”

Jeffrey Kahan, University of La Verne, Southern California

In essence, mathematical approaches follow a lego block approach. That is, Shakespeare uses such and such a word or image, Fletcher uses another. We can therefore take all the Shakespeare blocks and count them up and all the Fletcher blocks and do the same. That sort of argument is obviously the outcome of industrial thinking. In an age of DNA decoding, perhaps something more organic is in order—for example, collaborative authorship as a blending of wines. While updating the approach might make the process more logical to us, we are merely

updating critical mystique, not solving its mystery.

*

VIII. “Collaboration and Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta*”

Robert Sawyer, East Tennessee State University

The debate over the collaborative process in the early modern theatre has been ongoing at least since G. E. Bentley’s work in 1971. Estimates of collaborative play scripts range from less than 20% to more than 35% (Jackson, Vickers et al.). Whatever the exact number, almost all experts agree that collaboration of some sort, due in large measure to the rapid expansion of the theatre-going public, occurred extensively during the era when the public theaters in London dominated the entertainment options. Moreover, most playhouse productions incorporated a large supporting cast, with many of the members working together in various ways, both on and off the stage.

While numerous critics have focused on early modern authors collaborating with one another, and other scholars have noted the collaboration between actors and performance texts, I would suggest that specific cultural contexts may also be considered as a collaborative force. Using a model that borrows from all of these possibilities, my essay examines three versions of Christopher Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta*—Thomas Heywood’s in 1632, Edmund Kean’s in 1818, and F. Murray Abraham’s in 2006—in order to show that playwrights, actors, and the cultural milieu may work together in a collaborative enterprise to shape a performance, resulting in a product which sometimes highlights, but at other times hides, the additions cobbled on to Marlowe’s initial version of the play, first performed, according to Henslowe’s *Diary*, in 1591. Ultimately, this focus may also allow us to expand our definition of collaboration itself.

*

IX. “(Con)spiracy Theories: Inspiration and Collaboration in Early Modern Poetry”

Whitney Taylor, Northwestern University

In this paper, I explore ways that poetic inspiration conceives of composition and creative acts as fundamentally collaborative. Specifically, the etymology of inspiration, from the Latin “to breathe into,” suggests a flow of breath in and out of the self that relies on an idea of interdependent personhood. Invocations of inspiration in sacred poetry mobilize early modern notions of a body enlivened by an outside spirit to show that the act of shared breathing is foundational to crafting devotional verse. How might inspiration and collaboration function in a secular context? In order to take up this question, I turn to Shakespeare’s *Lucrece*, arguing that one of the tragedies of *Lucrece* is the failure of breath to circulate between characters. My reading of *Lucrece* develops a paradigm for understanding how inspiration entails collaboration as a precondition of early modern poetic composition.

*

X. “The Authorship of *Titus Andronicus* IV.i Reconsidered”

William Weber, Veterans Center for the Performing Arts

A scholarly consensus now holds that *Titus Andronicus* was co-authored by William Shakespeare and George Peele, with Peele usually ascribed scenes I.i, II.i, II.ii, and IV.i. While the attribution of the first act to Peele is supported by virtually every analysis performed on the text, the evidence supporting Peele’s authorship of IV.i does not enjoy a similar uniformity. In fact, the Peele attribution of this scene proves to have been founded on questionable precepts and to be contradicted by a significant number of otherwise-reliable authorship tests. Given this confusion, more study of the scene in particular is required before we can assert that a consensus exists for the play as a whole.

In response to this lingering uncertainty, this paper revisits the attribution of this scene by applying two new tests, one quantitative and one qualitative. The first of these compares the frequency with which collocations of two or more words from this scene match up with the known canon of one candidate but not the other, investigating the extent to which IV.i reflects the particular vocabulary and phraseology, or lexical fingerprint, of its potential authors. The second reads the scene's foregrounded intertextuality – a copy of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* appears on stage as a prop and provides a crucial catalyst for the play's revenge plot – alongside the two writers' highly divergent allusive practices. Contrary to the today's conventional wisdom, both of these analyses strongly suggest that the author of *Titus Andronicus* IV.i was William Shakespeare.

* * *

Working Bibliography:

Bednarz, James P. *Shakespeare and the Poet's War*. New York: Columbia UP, 2001.

Bentley, Gerald Eades. *The Profession of Dramatist and Player in Shakespeare's Time, 1590-1642*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1971.

Craig, Hugh, and Arthur F. Kinney, eds. *Shakespeare, Computers, and the Mystery of Authorship*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009.

Eden, Kathy. *Friends Hold All Things in Common: Tradition, Intellectual Property, and the Adages of Erasmus*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.

Hoenselaars, Ton, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Contemporary Dramatists*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012.

Jackson, MacDonald P. *Defining Shakespeare: Pericles as Test Case*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003. Print.

Knapp, Jeffrey. "What is a Co-Author?" *Representations* 89 (2005): 1-29.

Masten, Jeffrey. *Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, Authorship, and Sexualities in Renaissance Drama*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Stallybrass, Peter and Roger Chartier. 'Reading and Authorship: The Circulation of Shakespeare 1590-1619'. In *A Concise Companion to Shakespeare and Text*. Ed. Andrew Murphy. Blackwell, 2007.

Stern, Tiffany. 'Re-patching the Play.' *From Script to Stage in Early Modern England*. Eds. Peter Holland and Stephen Orgel. 151-77. Macmillan. 2004.

Vickers, Brian. *Shakespeare Co-Author: A Historical Study of Five Collaborative Plays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.