Shakespeare and Paradigms of Early Modern Authorship

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Abstract

This essay examines current thinking on early modern authorship within the competitive economies of the theatre and publishing industries. In the wake of Foucault's seminal essay, 'What is an Author?', there has been much investigation of the status, the branding, the proprietary and moral rights of the author in the early modern period and claims made for the emergence and birth of the author. The essay argues that, while authors were increasingly alert to authorship being wrongly claimed, the late sixteenth to early seventeeth century was in England a moment of transition and uncertainty. Unlike Ben Jonson not all authors vigorously identified with and laid claim to their work. The author's emergence was a slow and fluctuating process.

Keywords: Authorship, Collaboration, Jonson, Plagiarism, Shakespeare.

At the end of *Poetaster*, first performed in 1601, Ben Jonson appended a scene in which he appears on the stage *in propria persona*. The scene, as Jonson tells the reader in the published text of 1602, was meant as 'an apology from the author' and censored. 'Apology' here, of course, carries the meaning of defence, and in the following exchange between the Author, the sound critic, Nasutus, and the malicious one, Polyposus, the author defends *Poetaster* against those who have accused him of libel and stakes out his professional authority.[1] Jonson affirms, disingenuously or not, that his intentions were innocent but the play 'had the fault to be called mine' (Jonson 1995, 265). In a competitive and envious theatrical marketplace, proprietary authorship leads to over-determined reading of a play. Plays are interpreted and censured not according to their text, but according to their author. Polyposus alerts the Author to other slights on his authorship: he is known too much for his satirical railing and, moreover, he is slow at composition, scarcely bringing forth a play a year. In his defence, Jonson aligns himself with classical satirists, Aristophanes, Persius, and Juvenal, names, he asserts, glorified in the schools or, he scoffs, it is so pretended. As for his tardy production of plays, this occasions Jonson's scorn of playwriting and the theatre. He composes so little for the theatre because he takes so little joy in writing for it. The only way this might change is if the 'scribes', the copyists and imitators, who produce plays might be 'proscribed' (272) from so doing. As on other occasions, as an author Jonson dissociates himself from hacks and other scribblers and uses the 'apologetical dialogue', as he describes it, to promote his own canonical sense of authorship.

I preface this essay with Jonson's authorial representation because it impinges on questions about the status, the branding, the proprietary and moral rights of early modern authorship explored here. The resurgence of interest in the concept of authorship in the early modern period has in part been generated by Michel Foucault's seminal essay, 'What is an Author?' (1969). There is no doubt that whether scholars have fundamentally adopted Foucault's premise of what he terms the 'author function', qualified or questioned his historical view or fiercely contested his anti-humanist stance, his ideas have been influential in setting some of the parameters for the authorship debate in our period. Here I would like first to extricate ideas in Foucault's essay which inform current thinking on authorship and then see how they might be used to stimulate our understanding of authorship in a period when many authors were not, like Jonson, vigorously identifying with and laying claim to their work.

Foucault, of course, had little to say about Renaissance authorship. Collapsing the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, he asserts that only then were literary discourses accepted when endowed with the author-function. This historical narrative, Foucault's epistemic shifts, have been questioned even by those working from an anti-essentialist premise of authorship, that is accepting the author function instead of admitting authorial individuality and intentionality into a reading of the text. Ample evidence has been cited to demonstrate that there never was 'a privileged moment of individualization' (Vickers 2002, 506-541). Briefly and simply, books have been accredited with authors since antiquity. Ovid was banished for his lascivious and scurrilous works. Authors' names were given in the Middle Ages, and, as Stephen Dobranski (2008) has argued with particular reference to Philip Sidney, the Romantic notion of the author as hero can be traced back to an earlier period. Commerce played its part. With the growth of the book trade in the later sixteenth century writers became even more visible. Publishers used names to sell their books.

At the same time, anonymity is not replaced by identity in a historical sequence (Griffin 1999; North 2003). Anonymity does not disappear with the emergence of the author from the collaborative process of material production. Apart for a brief period, from the Star Chamber Decree of 1637 to the Licensing Act of 1662, when law – frequently flouted – required the author's name on the title page, authors have the option of selecting what they sign (Griffin 1999, 887-888). Throughout the centuries authors have chosen for various reasons to hide their identities. The operative word here is, of course, 'choice'. Sixteenth-century anonymous dramatic publications, for example, may have been so published because they were very much communal or collaborative affairs and a publisher or printer was unaware to whom the text to which he had ownership should be attributed. The writers of the anti-episcopal Martin Marprelate tracts, on the other hand, concealed their

authorial identities because reprisal would certainly have followed if they had not (Black, ed., 2008, xxxiv-xlvi). However, when nineteenth-century novelists used pseudonyms in different contexts, as George Eliot and the Brontë sisters did to disguise their sex or, as in the case of Sir Walter Scott, because of the conflict between the social position of a writer and being an author of popular fiction (Griffin, 883-885), though the author's name is hidden, the use of the pseudonym indicates that a name is required. In short, there is no evolutionary theory of authorship.

One of the ideas in 'What is an Author?' which has had an enduring fascination is the connection of attribution with governmental needs to monitor transgressive writing. Speeches and books were assigned real authors, Foucault maintained, 'only when the author became subject to punishment and to the extent that his discourse was considered transgressive' (1988, 202). Jonson offers an interesting extension of this when he claims in the 'apologetical dialogue' of *Poetaster* that his play suffered through authorial association; *Poetaster* was indicted for libel because it was known as Jonson's work. There has been an attempt to apply the latter paradigm to Shakespeare. Douglas Brooks has ascertained that it was after the well-known controversy around *1 Henry IV* when Falstaff was originally named Oldcastle, thereby slighting the name of the influential house of Cobham, that Shakespeare's name first appeared on the title page of one of his plays (1998, 336; 2000, 71, 73, 80, 95, 103, 133). But Shakespeare's name and initials had appeared on title pages prior to *The Second Part of Henry IV* and as Lukas Erne has demonstrated there is no convincing evidence to link the objections to Shakespeare's injudicious naming of character with the emergence of his name on the title pages of his play books (2003, 57). The naming and branding of Shakespeare is more a commercial ploy, an indicator of a play that is the product of a successful playwright.

As has been increasingly recognized much early modern playwriting was collaborative in nature (see Masten 1997; Vickers 2002; Knapp 2005; Stern 2009). Shakespeare's texts have been disintegrated to argue for the contributions of co-authors. Henslowe's Diary illustrates many instances of payments to a consortium of playwrights. According to a frequently quoted remark of Thomas Heywood, he had a hand in over two hundred and twenty plays (1633, 'To the Reader', A3r). Authorship in this period may have been collaborative in nature, but this did not, *pace* Foucault, exclude punishment. At the same time it has to be said, with Foucault, that in such cases of collaboration it was possible to identify those involved and make them answerable. In the present context, we are talking about the playwright as author of a script. One play, in particular, exemplifies co-authorship, theatrical collaboration and punishment of transgressive writing. Following performances of *The Isle of Dogs* in 1597, the lodgings of Thomas Nashe, one of the writers associated with the play, were searched, presumably for a text of the play. Although the play is lost, its records are very revealing about the collaborative nature of theatre and how

this was viewed by the authorities. Nashe escaped to Great Yarmouth where he wrote *Lenten Stuffe*. In the preamble with the whimsical title 'The praise of the Red herring' Nashe evoked the 'generall rumour' spreading throughout England in the wake of the *Isle of Dogs*. Employing the familiar birthing metaphor for the travails of authorship, he comments: 'I was so terrified with my owne increase … that it was no sooner borne but I was glad to run from it'. In marginalia he blames the actors who created the last four acts 'which bred both their trouble and mine to' (Nashe 1958, 19). Jonson, referred to in a Privy Council brief to the intelligencer Richard Topcliff as 'the maker' of the play, was imprisoned with two actors in the Marshalsea prison. Indicative of the collaborative nature of dramatic practice, the actors were questioned about their part in devising the 'seditious matter'. Actors and dramatists suffered equally as the playhouses were closed for three months while investigations were underway (Clare 1999, 72-75).

Allegedly seditious writing in the early modern period was punished whether composed by single authors or a consortium. It is perhaps not surprising that Jonson with his 'bibliographical ego' clashed on more than one occasion with authority. Following the state reaction to *The Isle of Dogs* he was imprisoned again – this time with Chapman, one of his collaborators – after the performance of the satire of the Scots in *Eastward Ho* in 1605. On other occasions authors were singled out and questioned about their motives for allegedly seditious work as Jonson was for *Sejanus* in 1605, Daniel for *Philotas* in 1606 and Middleton for *A Game at Chess* in 1625. In each of these cases, authority identified an author with a text and to an extent judged that whether or not the writer was deemed manifest in the script or performance he was responsible and could be called to account. When a play about Richard II, probably by Shakespeare, was performed on the eve of the rebellion of the Earl of Essex and his aristocratic supporters, it was, however, the players and not the author of the play who were interrogated. Apparently, on this occasion, it was recognized that the author's intention was innocent, but that possibly did not extend to those who had assisted in the play's revival and appropriation.[2]

Collaboration – whether non-dramatic or dramatic – is a wide net, including the co-authoring of a script and a collaborative process of production. Dramatic collaboration includes authors, actors, an impresario like Philip Henslowe, book keepers, scribes and revisers. A published text is a collaborative act of author, publisher, printer, licenser and sometimes a patron. It is from these varied and intricate collaborations that the author's authority grew. Following John Wolfe's publication of John Hayward's *The Life and Raigne of King Henrie IIII*, for example, the work was brought to the attention of the Attorney General and the Lord Chief Justice and scrutinized (Hayward 1991, 17-34). The Lord Chief Justice prepared a series of questions intended to expose the motives of the author and his political sympathies. Why did Hayward include a preface to the reader claiming

that his history might offer precepts and patterns of conduct? Clearly it was thought that Hayward had deliberately included anachronisms in writing about Richard II and Henry IV which would prompt the reader to view his account as a gloss on the present. When, for example, asked Lord Chief Justice Popham, were any forces sent to Ireland in Henry IV's time? Why did he say that some of the nobility were in disgrace for their service there? What moved him to claim that subjects were bound for their obedience to the State, and not to the person of the King? What moved him to maintain with arguments never mentioned in the history, that it might be lawful for the subject to depose the King? And the final accusation: What moved him to allow that it might be well for a common weal if the King was dead? The Attorney General's notes for the interrogation leave in no doubt that Hayward was granted intentionality and in the official view intended an attack on the government. Yet again, it was not only the author who was interrogated: the publisher, Wolfe, and the play's licenser, Samuel Harsnett, were examined. Wolfe was keen to stress how much money he had lost from the seizure and burning of the history; before its suppression 'no book', he claimed, 'had ever sold better', and he managed to convince his interrogators that his involvement with Hayward was only commercial. Wolfe suffered economically for publishing an allegedly seditious work but, unlike Hayward, he escaped imprisonment (29-30).

Another strand in Foucault's definition of the 'author' function is its relation to ownership of texts and the establishment of author's rights which Foucault locates at the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Placed in a 'system of property', the writer restores danger to a writing 'now guaranteed the benefits of ownership' (Foucault 1988, 202). As has been said, there are numerous cases of authors writing transgressively independent of any legal rights in the work they produced. But the absence of pre-Enlightenment copyright does, of course, figure in assessments of authorship in the earlier period. It is commonly observed that early modern dramatists had no claim or proprietary interest in their plays. Playwrights wrote for the stage and once they handed over their plays – or part of a play in a case of collaboration – to a theatre company they ceded ownership voluntarily. Playwrights had no further moral claim or financial investment in their work. When plays reached print either they had been published surreptitiously, so a certain narrative goes, or, more generally, because the company had released them to a publisher. In this view of dramatic publication the author has no role and apparently little interest in the literary nature of his work. Certainly this accounts for a considerable number of Elizabethan plays, including *The Taming of a Shrew* and *The Troublesome Reign of King John* both re-imagined and re-constructed by Shakespeare. The plays were published anonymously with the names of their companies, respectively, Pembroke's Men and the Queen's Men, advertised on their title pages.

To identify the emergence of the author with the legal and economic protection of copyright is, however, to disregard a weight of evidence that suggests that long before copyright law authors did have a notion of their proprietary and moral rights and were sensitive to plagiarism. As a form of protection from unethical reproduction, allegations of plagiarism could be invoked. Joseph Lowenstein has traced the development of the rights of authors and publishers from the birth of the printing industry and in his study of what he terms the 'bibliographic ego' has produced an intricate study of early modern playwrights, foremost Jonson, in their struggle to control the presentation of their work (Lowenstein 2002b). Authorial property and charges of plagiarism are conceptually intertwined. Indeed, in the absence of authorial claim, there would have been no ground for a discourse of plagiarism. As Lowenstein has argued, boundaries between imitation and plagiarism were shifting (85-87). With print plagiarism became presumably a matter of mass culture or at any rate a more fully public issue than it could have been in most sections of manuscript culture. At the same time, it became possible for an author to appeal to a larger court of public opinion for adjudication. When in 1600 Nicholas Ling published the poetry miscellany *England's Helicon* he prefaced it with an appeal to the reader stating that if any of the poems had been wrongly attributed, the author, 'defrauded of any thing by him composed', he 'hath this benefit by this collection, freely to challenge his own in public, where else he might be robbed of his proper due' (A4r).[3] Whether or not this draws on ancient practice or indicates that authors were increasingly alert to authorship being wrongly claimed, Ling perfectly captures a moment of uncertainty and transition. He cannot be sure that all the poems have been correctly attributed, but he is sure that authors might wish '[their] proper due' to be publicly recorded and recognized.

There are scattered allusions to plagiarism in the work of early modern authors although, as Richard Terry has observed, plagiarism is not ahistorical (2010, 1-23) and even confining study of plagiarism allegations to the early modern period demonstrates changing attitudes to the practice of appropriation. The dominant idea of early modern plagiarism, originating from Martial, is the wholesale passing of the work of one author by another rather than an ethics of composition. One of the earliest references to Shakespeare as a playwright carries a taint of plagiarism as we might understand the term.[4] The much-cited and much contested passage appears in Robert Greene's epistle to gentleman acquaintances 'that spend their wits in making plays', appended to his *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit Bought with a Million of Repentance* (1592) which is now thought to have been composed by Henry Chettle. Greene, allegedly, and on his deathbed, attacked the actors, 'those Anticks garnisht in our colours', for their disloyalty and singled out one, in particular, for turning from actor to playwright:

Yes trust them not: for there is an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his Tygers hart wrapt in a Players hide, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blanke verse as the best of you: and beeing an absolute *Johannes fac totum*, is in his owne conceit the only Shake-scene in a countrie. O that I might intreate your rare wits to be imployed in more profitable courses: and let those Apes imitate your past excellence, and never more acquaint them with your admired inventions … for it is pittie men of such rare wits, should be subject to the pleasure of such rude groomes. (Carroll, ed., 1994, 84-85)[5]

In his general warning against the parasitic nature of actors and his advice to fellow writers to turn away from writing for the theatre, Greene alludes to Shakespeare in the misquotation of the line from *3 Henry VI*, 'O tiger's heart wrapt in a woman's hide' and, by means of the epithet 'upstart crow', accuses him, at best, of imitation, though bereft of the positive sense it has in Renaissance theory, at worst, of theft. In contrast to the image of the bees, which transformed nectar into honey, in classical and Renaissance theory the crow was a superficial imitator. Horace had alluded to the fable of Aesop in which the crow disguised himself in peacock's feathers in order to become part of the company of the more magnificent birds, only to be denuded and scorned by them (White 1935, 18). According to Greene, Shakespeare is an upstart playwright who displays no originality of interpretation, merely copying the blank verse of contemporaries. He is classed as a 'Johannes factotum', variously interpreted as a Jack of all trades and master of none, or a person of boundless conceit attempting many things beyond the reach of his real abilities (Carroll, ed., 1994, Appendix G). As Terry has argued allegations of plagiarism as speech acts are often part of a wider rhetoric of literary detraction (2010, 4). Personal animosity might have motivated the slight, for which Chettle was to make later an apology, but the imputation remains that as a young dramatist, sometime actor, Shakespeare was perceived as an imitator using, without originality, the materials of others.

A much less cited charge of plagiarism appears in Thomas Lodge's riposte to Stephen Gosson's anti-theatrical polemic *School of Abuse*. Lodge searches for ammunition to direct against his adversary. He cannot use Gosson's earlier playwriting career against him and charge him with hypocrisy, since Gosson had anticipated such criticism in *The School of Abuse* by insisting that he had turned his back on his former profession and since repented of it. Instead, Lodge alights on one of Gosson's plays performed at the Theatre, a lost play apparently dramatizing Catiline's conspiracy, and accuses Gosson of plagiarism:

Tell me Gosson was all your owne you wrote there? did you borrow nothing of your neighbours? Out of what booke patched you out Cicero's oration? Whence set you Catulin's Invective. This is one thing, alienam olet lucernam, non tuam'; so that your helper may wisely reply upon you with Virgil; I made those verses, others bear the name. (Lodge 1853, 28-29)

Lodge alludes to Virgil's protest against plagiarism cited by George Puttenham in his *Arte of English Poesie* (1589, Book I, ch. 27, 44-45). Virgil attached an anonymous couplet in praise of Augustus to the palace gates which was appropriated by 'a sausie coutier'; Virgil retaliated by placing in the same place verse lines which were recalled by Lodge and other Renaissance writers, translated as 'I myself made the little verses, but someone else took away the prize' (Puttenham 2007, 143). Authorship is here closely associated with originality and this in its turn with uniqueness and primacy. It is from these notions at this juncture that authorial rights may be said to flow.

As others have argued, Foucault's notion of authorship as contingent on copyright is not borne out by the evidence of a pre-copyright discourse of possessive authorship and sensitivity to plagiarism. However, Foucault's idea of the author as made not born has had a far more pervasive effect. In recent works by Lukas Erne, Joseph Lowenstein, Jeffrey Masten, Douglas Brook, amongst others, authorship is a contingent rather than a natural process. Authorship is not in this view seen as simply an act of writing, but a complex role or function construed from a range of institutions. Although the supporting material invoked is quite different, Lukas Erne, in his study of Shakespeare's literary authorship, and Joseph Lowenstein, in his study of Jonson's possessive authorship, have both argued that institutional competition between printing house and playhouse converged with individual desires for literary as distinct from theatrical authorship.

Shakespeare and Jonson came to prominence in a market eager for named authors. Jonson, as is commonly acknowledged, took an active role in the publishing of his plays. He oversaw his 1616 *Works* and also the earlier publication of his Quarto texts. Jonson was not the first to publish an edition of his plays and poems; in 1601 Simon Waterstone published *The Works of Samuel Daniel*. Jonson however was the first to use the term works in relation to the author and so asserting authorial possession. Jonson claimed authorship in his theatrical works by – to use Lowenstein's phrase – 'editorial repossession' (2002b, 133-214). Thomas Heywood, on the other hand, professed indifference to publication. We do not know what Shakespeare might have done to promote his literary career. He was already recognized as a poet and dramatist in 1598 when Francis Meres recorded for posterity that in comedy and tragedy 'Shakespeare among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage' and then listed a number of his early plays (1598, 282). As Erne has commented *Palladis Tamia* is a 'fascinating attempt at the formation of an English literary canon *avant la lettre*' (2003, 65). At least before 1600 Shakespeare's plays were published at a fairly regular gap of two years and the print trade, keen to cash in on Shakespeare's growing reputation, exploited his name on title pages. Consolidating the work of earlier editors, Erne has inferred from the longer versions of published plays that Shakespeare purposively wrote for publication. Shorter stage versions of the plays which

did reach print are more communal texts emerging from the collaborative working practices in the playhouse.

In their address to the reader of the Shakespeare 1623 Folio the actors John Heminge and Henry Condell express regret that 'the author' had not lived 'to have set forth and overseen his own writings' (A3). Whether, as has been surmised, Shakespeare and the King's Men withheld many of his later plays for publication because they were anticipating publication of a collected edition must remain an open question. Unlike Jonson, who promoted the publication of his work and Thomas Hayward who apparently did not, there is little concrete evidence of Shakespeare's view of literary authorship. This apparent lack of a 'bibliographic ego' has led to interpretations of Shakespeare's plays which, it has been argued, allude to and thematize authorship. Shakespeare's very reticence about authorship is seen as indicative of his counter-laureate convictions. Beginning by ingeniously fixing on Prospero's image 'printless foot' used in Prospero's valediction to magic art as indicative of an 'invisible poetic authorship', Patrick Cheney argues that throughout Shakespeare's work there is a self-concealing counter authority to the claims of a poet such as Spenser (2008, 1-28). Through intertextual references Shakespeare presents himself in the company of Spenser, Virgil and Ovid and sets himself apart from them, thereby eschewing classical models of authorship. That Spenser, as Richard Helgerson has argued, attempted to model his authorial programme on that of Virgil is persuasive (1983, 85-100), but can we use this method and methodology for Shakespeare? Any such plans by Shakespeare seem scarcely formulated. He does not announce his career. Shakespeare certainly never attempted to establish such a chronology or genealogy for posterity. He died with only a few plays performed by the King's Men in print.

The varying history of Shakespeare's plays in publication indicates that writing for the theatre was in a transitional phase. Several of Shakespeare's plays, *Titus Andronicus* and *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, were published anonymously. Some of his plays, such as *1 Henry IV, Richard II and Richard III*, were popular enough to go into multiple editions under his name[6] while others, *The History of King John, Twelfth Night, The Taming of the Shrew, Measure for Measure* and *Macbeth*, for example, were not published at all in his lifetime. Erne and others have argued that Shakespeare was keen to present himself as a literary playwright, writing with publication half in mind. There is, however, still currency in the argument that as a company man, writing for the theatre was Shakespeare's priority. Shakespeare had no need to promote his career through publication and patronage. None of his plays that were published had dedicatees or letters of address appealing to the reader for an approving reception. Promoting a play, even those not by Shakespeare, as we shall see, was a publisher's ploy, but it was not the only way drama circulated in this period.

Foucault touches on alternatives to conceiving texts in terms of their author which are relevant here. After postulating how the author function arose, he states that we should move away from questions arising from authorship, authenticity and originality to ask new questions about the modes of existence of discourse, its origins, circulation and control. These terms seem to me intriguing in contexts where questions of authorship and attribution can never be fully resolved. In the final section of this essay, then, I will apply Foucault's putative methodological analysis to several anonymous plays which circulated contemporaneously with inter-dependent plays attributed to Shakespeare. For Foucault these questions should displace our preoccupation with the author. They may, on the other hand, lead to deeper insight into the existence of early modern authorship.

Three plays, *The Taming of a Shrew* (1594), *The Troublesome Reign of John King of England* (1591) and *The True Chronicle History of King Leir and his three daughters* (1606) served as dramatic templates for Shakespeare. All were published anonymously with authorship displaced by company auspices. Ownership, of course, had been ceded to the respective publishers. *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The History of King John* and *The Chronicle History of King Lear* were later published and attributed to Shakespeare. With the first two, so close are the narratives and dramatic effects, if not the language, that in the last two centuries some editors and critics have tried to claim Shakespearean authorship. Surely, it is implied, Shakespeare could not have been so unoriginal as to have composed so closely to another play? This idealized view of Shakespeare rules out such upfront borrowing.

According to the title page *The Troublesome Reign of King John* was performed by the Queen's Men, a company with whom Shakespeare may have acted. It was published by Sampson Clarke in 1591, the year the company disbanded, and in two parts, with the name of the company on both title pages. Copyright changed hands. It was reprinted in 1611 by Valentine Simmes for John Helme with the same details of performance on the title page, but this time with the addition that it was written by 'W.Sh'. Had Shakespeare been responsible for claiming this play as his, this might have constituted a case of plagiarism as it was then understood. It has been conjectured on and off over a century that the author of *The Troublesome Reign* was George Peele who, according to Francis Meres in *Palladis Tamia*, died in 1596. The play has now been published under his name. For a Jacobean reader Peele may have provoked little interest. Shakespeare on the other hand was a brand name for the English history play. Presumably Helme was cashing in on Shakespeare's reputation while depriving Peele of any recognition that might have been his due. A further reprint in 1621 by Augustine Mathewes for Thomas Dewer drops the name of the Queen's Men, obsolete for three decades, and states that the two parts were written by 'W. Shakespeare'.

Two years later another version of John's history dramaturgically similar to that represented in *The Troublesome Reign* appears in the Shakespeare Folio as *The Life and Death of King John*. Though there are no verbal parallels, it is clear that the plot lines are modelled on those of *The Troublesome Reign*. In brief, the conflict between John and Arthur is mediated primarily through their mothers and both plays give prominence to the fictional character of the Bastard. *The Troublesome Reign* is much more overtly anti-papal and anti-clerical, while both plays sustain a fiercely Protestant ideology. Editors have argued that *The Troublesome Reign* is a corrupted version of Shakespeare's *King John* or is derived from it.[7] Theories that Shakespeare's play pre-dates *The Troublesome Reign*, making him the originator and that the latter is a corrupted version of it, spring from the massive prejudice in favour of Shakespeare's originality and authorship and the reluctance to accept that he could produce such an evidently derivative work. Dating makes the thesis improbable. In order for Shakespeare to have written a play on King John from which *The Troublesome Reign* was composed and then published an exceptionally early date for the former must be posited. If, on the other hand, the anonymous play came first it is manifest that Shakespeare knew the text well, and it is not inconceivable that he may have acted in it or even contributed to it. Rather than being regarded as an inferior or corrupted version of Shakespeare's play *The Troublesome Reign* should be granted independent authorship, as the play's recent editor, C.R. Forker, firmly states (Peele 2011, 6-21).

What might we infer about early modern authorship from this brief account of the circulation and bibliographical history of the two *King John* plays? When the Queen's Men – one of the leading touring companies of the day – disbanded, a number of its plays passed into the hands of publishers (McMillin and Maclean 1998, 84-96). Publishers did not seek to promote sales by naming the author, but by naming a leading acting company. The Queen's Men were, after all, the most popular acting company of their day. In the early 1590s Shakespeare wrote a play on *King John* using the structure and material of *The Troublesome Reign*. We do not know which company performed the play. That Shakespeare was known as the author of a play on *King John* is attested to by Francis Meres's inclusion of the play in *Palladis Tamia* amongst the catalogue he gives in his commendation of Shakespeare. Meres must have been writing about a performance of the play or reputation rather than the text since Shakespeare's play was not published until 1623 or he could have read *The Troublesome Reign* and simply assumed that Shakespeare was its author. The naming of Shakespeare as the author of *The Troublesome Reign* in 1611 suggests opportunism and is an early indication of the branding of Shakespeare. By 1611 Shakespeare must have been recognized as the foremost writer of plays on English history even though he had not written an English history play for a decade. If the brand fitted, publishers did not scruple to misrepresent the author. That *The Troublesome Reign* was in circulation may

have precluded publishers' interest in the publication of Shakespeare's *The Life and Death of King John*. Erne, anxious to find reasons why Shakespeare did not publish more of his plays, suggests that Sampson Clarke would no doubt have considered any edition of *King John* to which he had not consented a breach of his rights (2003, 82-83). But, as Joseph Lowenstein has argued, in the early 1590s plays most popular on the stage were the focus of disorderly competition among stationers (2002b, 28). Abel Jeffes, for example, printed *Arden of Faversham* when Edward White had the copyright and White printed *The Spanish Tragedy* which belonged to Jeffes. Another explanation for the non-publication of Shakespeare's *King John* is that Shakespeare did not seek to publish a play so closely modelled on another work, and neither did the company even after if its author was dead. As we have seen, in the fractious world of the early modern theatre the discourse of plagiarism could be readily employed in an attempt to belittle another writer.

The relationship between the *The Taming of a Shrew* and Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* tells a similar story of authorship to that of the anonymous *King John* play and Shakespeare's version. *The Taming of a Shrew* was published anonymously in 1594 by Peter Short for Cuthbert Burby with a title page showing that it had been the property of Pembroke's Men. It was popular enough to be reprinted in 1596 and in 1607. By 1607 copyright belonged to Nicholas Ling for whom the play had been printed by Valentine Simmes. There was no attempt to attribute the play to Shakespeare or anyone else until a similar play, *The Taming of the Shrew*, was included amongst the comedies in Shakespeare's Folio. In 1607 Nicolas Ling transferred his publication rights in *The Taming of a Shrew* to one 'John Smythick'. No publication followed. When Smethwick eventually published the play in 1631 instead of the play in which he had copyright, that is *The Taming of a Shrew*, the text was that of *The Taming of the Shrew* with Shakespeare's authorship proclaimed on the title page. Smethwick was unlawfully claiming copyright of Shakespeare's play and exploiting his authorship. Again, this seems to be an illustration of branding. Shakespeare was identified with shrew baiting drama to such an extent that, at least in Smethwick's eyes, his play was the only one that mattered for readers.

A number of hypotheses have been advanced by editors and bibliographers to determine the inter-relationship of *The Taming of a Shrew* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, which was published nearly twenty years later. Again, Shakespeare's authorship has occluded a larger sense of stage traffic. In brief, *The Taming of a Shrew* was once regarded simply as a source for *The Taming of the Shrew*. Later *The Taming of a Shrew* came to be regarded as a badly reported or reconstructed version of an original Shakespearean text. In Greg's *A Bibliography of the English Printed Drama* the two plays are regarded as composite. This view is retained, for example, in the reissued Penguin Shakespeare where the editor claims that the latter text is 'a very garbled version of the original, put together, probably by an actor or actors, from memory, eked out by ex-

tensive patches of verse culled from *Dr Faustus* and *Tamburlaine*' (Hibbard 2006, 113). There is a general reluctance to dissociate the provenance of *The Taming of a Shrew* from Shakespearean authorship leading to hypotheses of a lost Shakespeare original from which *A Shrew* is derived. Stanley Wells has suggested that the author of *A Shrew* borrows from *The Shrew* and that such a plagiarist 'could exercise independent inventiveness, even if of an order greatly inferior to Shakespeare's' (Wells and Taylor 1987, 367). In her edition of *The Taming of the Shrew* Ann Thompson acknowledges that *The Taming of a Shrew* may represent an earlier version of the play, but concludes that, in any case, Shakespeare must have been responsible for the complex structure and interweaving of material present in both plays (2003, 9).

An attempt to attribute Shakespearean authorship to *The Taming of a Shrew* has distorted - to quote Foucault - the 'modes of existence' and the manner of circulation of the two plays. Neither *A Shrew* or *The Shrew* seem to have been known much in their own times through their authors.[8] I have argued elsewhere that the two plays are distinct and circulated independently (Clare 2007). Both plays employ the same dramatic narratives of the Sly frame (complete in one text and incomplete in the other), the shrew baiting story, and the proxy wooing of the shrew's sister or sisters, but the idiom, tone and reception are quite different. Although there are critics who may wish he had not written such a shrew-baiting play, knowing that Shakespeare wrote *The Taming of the Shrew* has not helped a critical appreciation of *The Taming of a Shrew*. The latter has been eclipsed by the former. Again, we could conjecture that, as in the *King John* plays, the derivative nature of *The Shrew* precluded publication under the name of Shakespeare until Shakespeare's play had superseded in popular memory the anonymous shrew-baiting play.

There have been no attempts to attribute Shakespearean authorship to *The True Chronicle History of King Leir*, a play published anonymously in 1605 by John Wright and printed by Simon Stafford. It was advertised as having been lately and sundry acted, although by 1605 the play must have been two decades old. The publication of *The True Chronicle History of King Leir* was timely for it served Shakespeare the following year with a template for a play to be performed before the King on St Stephen's Night. Two years later appeared *M William Shakespeare His True Chronicle History of the Life and Death of King Lear and his Three Daughters*. The play was printed by Nicholas Okes for John Busby and Nathaniel Butter. The title page insists on difference, and the use of 'his' is one of the first assertions of proprietary authorship. Shakespeare's reputation, at least on the part of the publishers, is such that besides his *King Lear* the earlier play is of no account. Indeed, the title replicates and duplicates the title of the earlier play, as if intent on obliviating the earlier work.

Unlike the previous cases of intertextual relations, editors and commentators of *King Lear* have not been troubled by the existence of another

play with the same material. The old Leir play is seen as folkloric and naïve, so unlike Shakespeare's searing tragedy to be altogether a different play. But would spectators have necessarily seen it this way? Taste is culturally variable (Rosenthal 1995, 323-325). Eighteenth-century audiences preferred Nahum Tate's adaptation of Shakespeare's play. The old *Leir* play was of sufficient interest to be resurrected for publication in 1605 and Shakespeare took more than plot lines from it. It has been suggested that the very long title page description of Shakespeare's *Lear* conveys doubt that his name alone was sufficient to distinguish it from *Leir*. We can, though, surely conjecture that by the time Shakespeare was established as the leading playwright of the King's Men his reputation was so high that there was enormous interest from audiences and readers in what he had done to the old play.

One of the premises of Foucault's 'What is an Author' is Beckett's rhetorical question 'What does it matter who is speaking?' (Beckett 1995, 109). It is difficult to imagine a scholarly, pedagogical or theatrical approach to Shakespeare and early modern drama where it doesn't matter who speaks. One could say cynically that there are too many vested interests in the attribution of Shakespearean authorship. An edition or performance of a play of uncertain authorship like *Edward III*, for example, will be more commercially viable if a case of attribution can be made for Shakespeare.[9] Despite the growth of interest in Shakespeare's collaborators, mostly the plays continue to be marketed under his name. Indeed, over the centuries the work attributed to Shakespeare has reached a position of such pre-eminence in English speaking countries and elsewhere that his unique status as an author seems impregnable. Nevertheless, this is a historical accretion at variance with the conditions prevailing in the theatre in his day, where a writer with the 'bibliographical ego' of Jonson was at pains to assert ownership over his writings. The author's emergence was a slow process. Plays continued to circulate via playing communities and communities of spectators. Playwrights borrowed and imitated with scant regard for possession of material. So much so that Foucault's speculative anticipation of a period when authorship will no longer matter might be projected back on to theatre traffic in the Elizabethan years. Then, he imagines, the traditional questions will no longer be asked, 'instead, there would be other questions like these: 'What are the modes of existence of this discourse? Where has it been used, how can it circulate, and who can appropriate it for himself?' (Foucault 1988, 210).

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[1] The 'apologetical dialogue' was performed only once and not published until 1616.
[2] For all these cases of censorship see Clare (1999), 48-52, 86-87, 132-135, 139-145.
[3] Ling alleges that only when copy had been personally delivered did he place a man's name 'either at large, or in letters' (Ling, ed., 1600, A4r).

[4] For a discussion of the diversity and changes which accompany the use of plagiarism in the early modern period see Kewes, 2003. Kewes refers to 'translation' and 'imitation' as legitimate counterparts to plagiarism (4).

[5] See the 'Introduction' for discussion of authorship and the role played by Henry Chettle.

[6] There were six quartos of *Richard III* before the Folio. All but the first advertising Shakespeare's name, *Richard II* follows the same pattern with Shakespeare's name appearing on the title page of the second quarto in 1598. The second quarto of *1 Henry IV* was advertised misleadingly 'as newly corrected by W. Shakespeare' since there are very few differences between this and the first quarto.

[7] Notably Honigmann (1967 and 1982). The argument is refuted by Smallwood (1974) and Braunmuller (1989).

[8] Meres in 1598 does, however, include *The Taming of the Shrew* amongst Shakespeare's comedies.

[9] *Edward III*, edited by Giorgio Melchiori, was published in 1998 in the New Cambridge Shakespeare. Melchiori in his survey of authorship judged the play to be a collaborative work. It was performed by the RSC in 2002 at the Swan theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon and published as a 'Royal Shakespeare Company Classic' by Nick Hern Books, marketed by the publishers as 'officially attributed to Shakespeare only in 1998'.

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