

'Fabricated Lives': Shakespearean Collaboration in Fictional Forms

Robert Sawyer

East Tennessee State University (<resawyer1@msn.com>)

Abstract

The essay examines fictionalized accounts of the collaboration between Shakespeare and his contemporaries, focusing on those that portray Christopher Marlowe as occasionally Shakespeare's co-author. Beginning with two novels by Anthony Burgess, *Nothing Like the Sun: A Story of Shakespeare's Love-life* (1964) and *A Dead Man in Deptford* (1994), I then look at Peter Whelan's play, *The School of Night* (1992), before concluding with the film *Shakespeare in Love* (1998). By looking at these popularized renditions of collaboration and biography, I conclude that the more collaborative that the fictionalized work is in origin, the more positively it portrays such relationships in Shakespeare's time.

Keywords: Collaboration, Fictional Biography, Shakespeare Authorship, *Shakespeare in Love*, *The School of Night*

1. *Introduction*

A guy walks into a bar. Depressed because he has work and women woes, he starts to buy a drink. At the end of the bar he suddenly notices a colleague and buys his friend a mug as well. As they are both downing their beakers of booze, the friend tries to help the first guy out of his jam, but in short order they are interrupted by the call of business. Of course, this is the central scene focusing on the connection between Kit Marlowe and Will Shakespeare in the Academy award-winning film *Shakespeare in Love* (1998), produced for popular consumption by the Miramax/Disney Corporation. But this was certainly not the first fictionalized account of the two writers and their relationship with one another. I will examine fictionalized accounts of the collaboration between Shakespeare and his contemporaries by focusing on twentieth-century works that portray Christopher Marlowe as Shakespeare's occasional cowriter. Beginning with two novels by Anthony Burgess, *Nothing Like the Sun: A Story of Shakespeare's Love-life* (1964) and *A Dead Man in*



Deptford (1994), I then consider Peter Whelan's play, *The School of Night* (published and first performed in Stratford in 1992), before concluding with an examination of the fictionalized collaboration between Marlowe and Shakespeare in the film just mentioned, *Shakespeare in Love*.¹

In Burgess' 1994 novel, Shakespeare is described as a 'new player and playmaker (botcher, collaborator)' (195) who, with Marlowe's help, begins *I Henry VI*. In the Whelan play, Marlowe seems to fear Shakespeare, and in a crucial scene, Marlowe comes to believe that Shakespeare will eventually 'swallow him' like the whale in the story of Jonah (88). On the other hand, the Tom Stoppard/Marc Norman screenplay portrays Marlowe as the cool, calm, veteran writer who provides the initial conflict and characterization for the play Shakespeare cannot quite begin to compose. When Will runs into Marlowe in a local tavern, admitting that he has not 'written a word' of the new drama, Marlowe immediately helps out, proposing that 'Romeo is ... Italian. Always in and out of love', to which Will responds, 'Yes, that's good'. By looking at these more popularized renditions of collaboration and biography, instead of more academic examinations of these relationships, I hope to show that they too may participate in the 'building up of [a] personality structure' (Pugliatti and Leahy 2014) that portrays Shakespeare as an occasional collaborator with his contemporaries.

2. Nothing Like the Sun: A Story of Shakespeare's Love-life *and* A Dead Man in Deptford

In 1964, Anthony Burgess published his fictionalized biography of Shakespeare entitled *Nothing Like the Sun: A Story of Shakespeare's Love-life*. While collaboration is not the most central element of this novel, Burgess presents a Shakespeare who is driven by all the desires of the flesh, and also avoids all hints of a traditional rendering of Shakespeare's life and literary output. Burgess' protagonist, called 'WS' for most of the book, is an intelligent glove-maker's son who, early on and during a bout of drinking, is trapped into a marriage with Anne Hathaway. Shortly after, he deserts Anne and moves in with the family of a justice of the peace in a distant borough, serving as a private schoolmaster; he soon faces tough questions during his tutorials with the justice's twin sons about homoerotic love in classical societies. When WS responds that the 'ancients accounted that no sin', the boys are shocked and object that this practice is 'against our religion and the teachings of our Lord

¹ I want to thank Paola Pugliatti and William Leahy for inviting me to present this paper at the Shakespeare 450 Conference. I am also grateful for the funding provided by Clara Calvo and the grant, 'Cultures of Commemoration II: Remembering Shakespeare', which helped to defray some expenses while in Paris.

Jesus Christ'. WS replies, unfortunately for his future employment at the house, that 'some say' that Jesus Christ 'Himself did practise that sort of love with His beloved disciple John' (62). Many scholarly readers of the historical fiction would catch the allusion to Marlowe's alleged blasphemy printed in the Baines document,² and the scene also prepares us for WS' encounters with Marlowe in the near future.

When Shakespeare arrives in London, his collaborative work is first noted when he produces a 'patched play' for the Queen's Men in 1588, while also doing some '[p]rentice acting' (85). Burgess' fictionalized account of the relationship between Robert Greene and Shakespeare also comments on the collaborative mode of writing. In a scene where WS is reading the alleged attack by Greene in *A Groats-Worth of Wit*, WS recalls how he was 'surprised at the whiff of envy' in him each time he saw Greene in person, 'the wretched poet and scholar, bloated with drink and disease' (84). When WS reaches the lines in *Groats-Worth* directed at him, 'the Upstart Crow ... with the Tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide' (87), the effect is two-fold. While pleased that 'Greene had remembered that line from *Harry the Sixth*' (87), he certainly feels stung by the insult, so much so that he declares he will prove the recently deceased Greene wrong by demonstrating that he is 'something other than an ape [or a] crow' (88) who can only mimic others. He determines to prove that he is '[s]omething other, too, than a play-botcher', a person who worked with a team of other writers to produce a work whose ultimate literary goal was to function as no more than a mere 'exciter of groundlings' (88).

The connection, if not imaginative collaboration, between Marlowe and Shakespeare is also suggested following the former's death. Southampton hires WS and when both get word of Marlowe's murder, the nobleman attempts to comfort Shakespeare by pointing out how he will benefit: 'You may exult now, friend or no friend ... that you are without peer', before he gleefully exclaims that, following Marlowe's death, 'my poet is the only poet' (106). He concludes his speech by trying to reason with WS on what has been lost as well as gained by Marlowe's demise. Southampton points out that most writers would 'gladly lose a friend to know that' they are now without a poetic peer. WS, however, replies: 'He was not so close a friend. But there was no poet like him' (106).

In *A Dead Man in Deptford* (1994), Burgess revisits the topic he chose for his college dissertation, one which centred on Christopher Marlowe.³

² Richard Baines, a secret agent and informer, compiled a list of accusations of blasphemy against Marlowe ('Christopher Marly'), and submitted a memorandum to the authorities.

³ As I have argued elsewhere, this novel may be Burgess' most autobiographical work on the Elizabethan period, particularly in its focus on Catholicism, espionage, and even, perhaps, Burgess' obsession with tobacco, which would lead to the lung cancer from which he eventually died (Sawyer 2009).

This novel, as the title implies, downplays Shakespeare, highlighting instead Marlowe's life and his murder. Narrated from the perspective of a nameless bit player on the London stage, the actor does not even mention Shakespeare until page 178 of the 272-page novel; when we do finally hear of him, he is described as 'one newly up from the country trying his hand, Shogspaw or Shagspeer or some such name' (178), who, with Marlowe's help, begins *I Henry VI*. Recalling his first meeting with the man from Stratford, the actor describes Shakespeare as a 'new player and playmaker (botcher, collaborator)' from Warwickshire, a mild man but ambitious, who 'sucked me dry, but ever with a smile, of all I knew of the craft' (195).

Not long after this scene, the notion of collaboration is raised again, for after noting that this man with 'whom he lodged withal' was his close 'associate for many years with the Lord Chamberlain's men', he specifically recalls how Shakespeare 'and Kit were at work on *The Contention Between the Two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster*, a most incommodious title', which later the narrator explains, 'would be changed to *Henry VI Part One*' (208).⁴ About this same time, Burgess even has Kit refer to Shakespeare specifically as 'his collaborator' when he invites him to Scadbury 'with Tom Walsingham's approval' so they can sit in the 'summer saloon' and get to know one another better (208). As they talk, Will, as he is now known, explains his frustration that patrons do not believe that 'grammar-school boys can write plays', although they are called on often to '[b]otch and help when speed is needful' (209). As the novel progresses, the narrator adds that Marlowe's continual absences from London 'left a vacuum in playmaking which had to be filled, and there was our Warwickshire man to fill it' (213). The narrator goes on to highlight the fact that the 'final version of *The Contention Between the Two Famous Houses* was finished by one pen only and that with a speed of insolence' (213). So in Burgess' fictional version, Shakespeare combines two usually distinct talents into one very successful approach to writing. While university poets were often granted the luxury of time when composing a play, this grammar-school writer had been trained to work with the quicksilver speed needed for the team-authored plays, both new and revised, to meet the increasing audience demand for fresh works. Burgess' two novels, if we count sales as a factor, seem to have appealed to both a popular and a more academic audience.

⁴ Most critics, including Brian Vickers (2002) and Gary Taylor (1995), agree on the multiple author notion, as does the *Oxford Companion to Shakespeare* which safely claims that '*Part I* is perhaps the least likely of the *Henry VI* plays to be wholly by Shakespeare' (Dobson and Wells 2001, 200). For a summary of the possible collaborators, see Potter 2012, 79. My point is that Burgess was fully aware of the controversy, even if almost no one today, with the exception of Hugh Craig (2009) and Warren Chernaik (2014), believes the collaborator to be Marlowe, as Burgess seems to suggest.

3. The School of Night

A similar tension between popular and academic interpretations of the connection or collaboration between Marlowe and Shakespeare also occurred in Peter Whelan's *The School of Night*.⁵ First performed for the RSC in Stratford in 1992, it continued to be performed on stages in the U.K. and the U.S. through the first decades of the twenty-first century. The drama incorporates elements of a number of late twentieth-century versions of collaboration, specifically the attempt to bridge an academic and popular portrayal of the relationship, such as the brief moment in *Shakespeare in Love* referenced at the beginning of this essay. Whelan adds other elements to his production, however, that anticipate the essential readings of the connection between Marlowe and Shakespeare in the twenty-first century – that of mystery, anxiety, and even conspiracy.

Focusing on the last few days of Marlowe's life, the setting of the first act of the two-act play is also set in Scadbury, home to Thomas Walsingham, related to Sir Francis Walsingham, Queen Elizabeth's spymaster. As the play opens, Marlowe is center stage in a room filled 'with star charts, astrolabe, globe, maps, cabalistic signs and glass retorts', and for good measure, 'a stuffed alligator hangs from the ceiling' (1), in other words, a room resembling the title-page of Dr. Faustus' study attached to the 1616 B text of the play. Marlowe's very first words are, not surprisingly, a blasphemous invocation, but this time to the 'Eternal Dog' ('God' spelled backward), the 'Immortal, invisible, all-seeing, all-smelling, brown-eyed, wet nosed' being whom he begs to '[I]et fall on [him] thy canine salivation' (1). This opening scene, then, immediately collapses Marlowe's allegedly biographical traits of atheist and blasphemer with those of his own protagonists who are overreachers and studious scholars.

Thomas Kyd enters the home, bringing in an actor Marlowe requested from the provinces named Tom Stone, to act in a masque featuring Dido and Aeneas that he has written to be performed at the estate. We also meet one other houseguest, a beautiful Venetian actress named Rosalinda Benotti, 'a Moor, early twenties' (iii) who is in love with Marlowe. Marlowe and Rosalinda are immediately suspicious of Tom, however, believing they have seen him before. After this and many other winks and nods to Marlowe's actual dramas, we soon discover that the actor named Stone is Shakespeare himself. This, of course, leads to other nods and winks to the rival playwright's life and work.⁶ Sir Walter Raleigh soon arrives to see the

⁵ This coterie allegedly consisted of free thinkers such as Marlowe, Thomas Harriot, and Sir Walter Raleigh. Shakespeare may have been alluding to it in *Love's Labour's Lost* in 4.3.251, but textual alternatives in this play render this reference inconclusive.

⁶ For instance, when Marlowe tells Shakespeare he looks older than he 'expected' (4), Kyd reminds Marlowe that they are both the same age, which prompts Shakespeare

evening's entertainment, a collaborative performance of the story of Dido and Aeneas that features Kyd controlling the lighting effects, while Marlowe and Stone/Shakespeare act out various roles (22-23).

But there is an air of anxiety over the whole house, for Raleigh is concerned that he is losing favour with the Queen, particularly due to his association with 'The School of Night', the alleged circle of heretics, scientists, and freethinkers that seemed so dangerous to the Elizabethan authorities. The following day, after Kyd has returned to his apartment in London, Nicholas Skeres and Francis Poley break down the door into his chambers and arrest Kyd, but not before demanding he give up any writings Marlowe may have left behind when they shared this same room at an earlier date.

The notion of Marlowe and Shakespeare as collaborators in spirit, if not in actuality, is intimated often, beginning at the end of Act I. When Marlowe asks if Stone is really 'Shag-Spur', Shakespeare corrects his pronunciation of his name. When Kyd hears this, he asks with astonishment, 'You mean you did write *Harry the Sixth*?', to which Shakespeare drolly replies, 'The better parts' (33). Before the night is over, Marlowe and Shakespeare realize they are both composing poems, *Hero and Leander* for the former and *Venus and Adonis* for the latter, and Marlowe comments that it must be fate that they were 'brought together to write two love poems in one house' (35).

In the second act, Marlowe is arrested partly on false evidence, and soon Raleigh visits him in prison to help secure his release, but not before he demands that Marlowe assure him that he has kept no records of the members or meetings of the School of Night. After reassuring Raleigh there is no paper trail which may cause him concern, the playwright is released but under Privy Council orders to remain close to the city centre. With only a three-mile radius in which to move, Marlowe makes his way to a familiar haunt on the other side of the Thames, the deserted Rose Theatre. As he enters, he overhears, with 'an inner sense of defeat', Shakespeare reading one of his Dark Lady sonnets to the dusky Rosalinda (69). Suddenly Skeres and Poley arrive, and Shakespeare unsuccessfully tries to fend them off with a stage sword. They explain to Marlowe, however, that they mean him no harm, for they have come to fetch him in order to fake his death at Deptford by employing a '[d]ead man's switch'; that is, taking a corpse and substituting it for Marlowe's body (78), allowing him to escape to Venice undetected.

Shakespeare and Marlowe then discuss putting Shakespeare's name on Marlowe's plays once he is safely on the continent. Shakespeare confesses that it has 'been suggested' by others that he should 'have your plays produced alongside mine', to which Marlowe responds, realizing immediately what this

to explain that he usually dons 'a hairpiece', but not when riding horseback, a glance at Shakespeare's famously receding hairline (5).

means: 'D'you mean under your name?', to which Shakespeare nods (80). But Marlowe then asks, 'Who is going to accept that your "vision" and mine could proceed from the same mind?' When Walsingham points out that '[s]urely, there are similarities' between the two writers, Kit diabolically distinguishes his writing: 'He holds his mirror to humanity. I look behind the mirror' (80).

On the evening before Marlowe is to depart, he ponders the plays he might write in the future, once safely out of England. 'That's what I should write in Venice', he says aloud, a story about a 'Moorish general and his jealousy. A good theme, jealousy'. Turning to Shakespeare he says, 'you could be the damned machiavel [*sic*] ensign that dupes him into murdering' Desdemona; in Marlowe's version the two would then 'creep up on her in her sleep' and 'hit her with a sandbag' to kill her (83). Almost immediately, however, Marlowe turns and says, 'No ... too much like *The Jew of Malta*' (83). Yet before he finishes his sentence, Shakespeare interrupts and says, 'I think the Moor should do the murder himself ... alone ... without Iago' (83). When Marlowe responds, 'without the mach-ivel? How?', Shakespeare suggests, 'He kills her for love by kissing her to death ... and smothering her with a pillow' (83). The stage direction indicates that 'Marlowe is taken aback by the way that [Shakespeare] has been thinking it out and has the answer so complete' (84). Of course, this idea of Marlowe and Shakespeare working collaboratively to sketch out plot lines will be seen again in *Shakespeare in Love*.

While I would suspect most academics would enjoy the play, particularly since it only fills in details from the factual events of Marlowe's last days without resorting to sensationalized accounts of the playwright's death, it probably comes as no surprise that the reviews were decidedly mixed on the play's popular appeal. While its first audiences in Stratford seemed to enjoy it, that may have been because, as the reviewer for *City Limits* complained, it 'felt written for the specific press-night of Stratford habitués' (Shuttleworth 1992). When it played later in the U.S., it was even more chastised for its book knowledge, and *The Los Angeles Times* titled its review '*School of Night* at Mark Taper [theatre] doesn't do its homework' because, the subtitle suggested, 'Peter Whelan can't decide if he's writing a murder mystery or a master's thesis' (McNulty 2008). Even Laurence Vittes, in his much more sympathetic review of the production in *The Hollywood Reporter*, led the review with the following: 'Bottom Line: So Christopher Marlowe was a spy who didn't write Shakespeare after all. So who cares?' He had to admit, however, that the play may have bridged the town/gown divide, although his tone suggests slight condescension: 'For many theatergoers intrigued by the chance to see Shakespeare and his buddies without all of that Elizabethan poetry stuff', Vittes opined, the play would be worth 'venturing downtown to see how it was when the English language came to flower amidst the riotous behaviour of great rulers and poets, lesser heroes and villains' (2008).

Trying to stage a drama by Marlowe and Shakespeare is hard enough. Trying to produce one about their lives may be even more difficult, for now a twentieth-century writer must try to put words into the mouths of two of the most famous playwrights of the Elizabethan era, whether they worked together or not. But this challenge was not lost on Whelan, for he gestured toward the distinction between popular and academic culture in a 2004 interview: 'Drama and University have an uneasy relationship. Drama is about emotion, not about analysis. You should need departments of love and hate and rage' (Ellis 2004). Attempting to serve two masters, one on campus or at home reading and analysing the play, the other attempting to enjoy a night at the theatre, remains one of the most difficult tasks for writers attempting to please both.

But the whole subject of the play, I would suggest, anticipated a key ingredient for the hint of collaboration between Elizabethan playwrights for the next few decades, one with a dash of mystery, a hint of conspiracy, and a large helping of relevancy. It is worth noting that as soon as Whelan graduated from high school, he entered the National Service and was sent to post-war Berlin. 'I sometimes think the ruins of that [city] had a bad effect on me', he once claimed, as did the 'pervasive sense of suspicion' he felt while in East Germany. Full of spies, double agents, turncoats, and paid informers, the cast of people Whelan worked with would not be out of place in a John le Carré novel, and he transferred that stifling, paranoid anxiety into *The School of Night*.⁷ Indeed, Vittes had wondered in his review of the play if Marlowe was supposed to be Whelan's version of 'a James Bond of the late sixteenth century', adding that, if so, the 'idea failed miserably' (2008). Even the less-than-scholarly *Variety* magazine noted that Whelan was writing about his own era as much as the Elizabethan one. 'In attempting to sum up the intellectual commerce of an era' and how it relates 'to the struggles between liberal thinkers and conservative power brokers in our own', Bob Verini concluded that Whelan had 'probably bitten off more than one dramatic work can chew' (2008).

It should be noted that Whelan was also collaborating with others, including his scene designers, his actors, even his audience, as does any playwright. So it makes sense that Shakespeare, both as a character and a role model for writing, remains central to Whelan's work. He has noted that the works of Shakespeare and Shaw influenced him most, and he even references Shakespeare when talking about his decision to first write plays in his late 30s, seeming particularly concerned that playwrights have short shelf

⁷ His former play, *A Russian in the Woods*, was based on these experiences. Written for the RSC in 2001, its protagonist is a National Service volunteer who is assigned to an educational unit in a suburb of West Berlin.

lives. 'You've about 20 years' to write, he explained to Samantha Ellis in an interview in 2004, 'Shakespeare started when he was 29 and he was dead by the time he was 53' (Ellis 2004).

4. Shakespeare in Love

Directed by John Madden in 1998, *Shakespeare in Love* also fabricated a Shakespeare-Marlowe collaboration while blurring the boundaries between elite and popular culture. In fact, one of the complaints about the film focused on this tension. Some critics wanted a more 'accurate' story and they particularly disliked the anachronisms scattered throughout Tom Stoppard and Marc Norman's screenplay, including Will's 'psychiatrist', whom he visits at the beginning of the film to find a cure for his writer's block, to the 'daily special' type lunches offered at the local inn. The shtick of the cabbie-like boatmen crossing the Thames is another instance. For example, when Will desperately needs to catch up to the boat of Viola just ahead of him, he shouts to the 'Taxi-driver BOATMAN' (as the stage directions read) to 'Follow that boat!' (Norman and Stoppard 1998, 36). For the offended critics, these references to popular culture amidst a film on a highbrow subject suggest the superficial chattering heard at any 'cocktail party', shrinking the 'emotional range' of the film to that 'of a good TV sitcom'; more generally, they seemed offended principally by the 'middlebrow pleasures dressed up in the trappings of high learning' (Scott 1999). Other critics, however, defended the anachronisms, claiming they 'establish[ed] a textual bridge' between the film's contemporary audience and its 'mock-Elizabethan past' (Davis and Womack 2004, 156).

Since the mixing of pop culture and highbrow entertainment is one central tenet of postmodernism, however, I would suggest this method fits the film perfectly, since its insistence on the collaborative notions of authorship is an equally postmodern notion. As almost everyone knows, the play Shakespeare is working on during the film, and also one of the movie's main conceits, is really written as much by Marlowe (and Burbage and the Queen and others) as it is by Shakespeare, although Marlowe provides the initial conflict and characterization. When Will runs into Marlowe in a local tavern, admitting that he has not 'written a word' of the new play, Marlowe chimes in, proposing that 'Romeo is ... Italian. Always in and out of love', to which Will responds, 'Yes, that's good'. Marlowe then suggests that Romeo's love interest be 'the daughter of his enemy', and further, that Romeo's best friend should be killed in a duel by the brother of his beloved. 'His name', proclaims Marlowe, 'is Mercutio'; Will graciously replies, 'Mercutio ... good name', and he agrees to Marlowe's ideas as he hurries out (Norman and Stoppard 1998, 30). In this film, then, Shakespeare and Marlowe are transformed into congenial and even collaborative writers, buying each other beakers of booze while they hash out the play's details.

As Diana Henderson argues, Will Shakespeare is at his worst in this filmed fabrication, 'not because he collaborates but because he betrays that process: with Henslowe, with Burbage, and most notably with' Marlowe, though in 'this last case, he heartily repents' (4). Of course, Marlowe's powerful presence is felt throughout the film, and not solely as the helpful collaborator for Will's yet-to-be-written play, 'Romeo and Ethel the Pirate's Daughter'. The scene immediately following the tavern exchange focuses on actors auditioning for Will's new play, almost all (except Viola) using the speech from *Doctor Faustus*, 'Was this the face that launched a thousand ships?'. Even the tradesmen know of Marlowe's talent; when Will is ferried across the river, the boatman claims: 'I had Christopher Marlowe in my boat once'. Perhaps most importantly, the moneyman, Phillip Henslowe, sighs, 'There's no one like Marlowe'. It is not hard to imagine that the Miramax producer Harvey Weinstein, the modern day moneyman, may have thought something similar when he financed the movie. Perhaps he thought 'there's no one like Shakespeare' to fill the movie coffers, at least when packaged in a palatable version of his work and life.

The idea of collaboration seems even more relevant in this fabricated story when we consider the group effort that produced the film. Tom Stoppard and Marc Norman worked together on the screen play, while John Madden directed the movie, so it makes sense that the plot suggests a resemblance between the shared duties of the Elizabethan theatre and those of modern filmmaking; the film may also challenge the idea of solitary authorship as an ideal working condition for an artist. But there is even more of a collaborative backstory for this film, as Marc Norman apparently consulted Shakespeare scholars such as Stephen Greenblatt about the possibilities of producing a popular culture version of Shakespeare's life.⁸

But the fact that there were numerous credited contributors to the film did not keep some viewers from trying to locate the main authorial voice in the movie. Henderson may also be correct to say that most critics, and certainly academics, have 'attributed the film's wit – including not only good lines but its larger shape and logic – to Stoppard' (2-3). She cautions, however, that if we choose to make 'claims based on name and our sense of style', we are reverting back to the very same kind of 'evidence historically used to attribute early modern plays to single, singular names' such as Shakespeare, Marlowe, and others (3). Instead Henderson suggests that if we can view

⁸ In an op-ed piece in *The New York Times* (6 Feb. 1999), Greenblatt reveals that Marc Norman had taken him to lunch years before the film and asked Greenblatt about writing a 'screenplay about Shakespeare, in the manner of the very successful movie about Mozart, *Amadeus*'. Greenblatt claims he suggested the 'best' period to focus on would be 'the late 1580s or early 1590s', a time in Shakespeare's life, in Greenblatt's words, 'about which we know next to nothing'.

Stoppard as only 'one key player amidst the swirling production' of the film, perhaps we can also 'begin to see Shakespearean texts themselves not as Bardic monuments of genius or anxiety but as analogous works of popular if thoroughly commercialized collaboration' (7).

Other extratextual similarities vis-à-vis the authorship of *Shakespeare in Love* may also be worth noting. Not unlike Shakespeare himself, the trio of writers are 'diachronic collaborators' borrowing from source material and converting it into something innovative and, in many cases, more relative: 'Distancing themselves from exploitative film spectacle as descendants of honey-tongued, gentle Will Shakespeare, Norman, Stoppard, and Madden instead stress the capaciousness of collaboration as a concept, with themselves amongst the happier and more creative beneficiaries' (Henderson, 6).

Such fictionalized versions of collaboration between Marlowe and Shakespeare can also be found in numerous biographies in the early twenty-first century – some scholarly, some not. For instance, in 2005, Rodney Bolt published *History Play: The Lives and After-life of Christopher Marlowe*. Printed on its dust jacket was a quote from one critic who called it 'bold and wickedly fun new fictional biography', in essence making sure it was not mistaken for 'another standard anti-Stratfordian tract attempting to settle the authorship debate'. Indeed, even the author 'freely admit[ted] he's making this up' (dust jacket). The book generated decent reviews in many publications, including *The Times Literary Supplement* and *The Kirkus Review*.⁹ I see this book, however, as a conduit from semi-speculative books, such as Greenblatt's *Will in the World* (2004), to a rash of books that do *not* admit to the fiction of Marlowe's authorship of Shakespeare's plays.¹⁰ These include but are not limited to *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography: New Evidence of the Authorship Problem* (Price 2001); *The Shakespeare Enigma: Unravelling the Story of the Two Poets* (Dawkins 2004); *The Truth Will Out: Unmasking the Real Shakespeare* (James and Rubenstein 2007); *Marlowe's Ghost: The Blacklisting of the Man who was Shakespeare* (Pinksen 2008); *The Marlowe-Shakespeare Connection: A New Study of the Authorship Question* (Blumenfeld 2008); and *The Shakespeare Controversy: An Analysis of the Authorship Theories* (Hope and Holston 2009). While admitting that these presses are not the most scholarly, and one work was even self-published, the flood of monographs was enough to prompt James Shapiro, one of our more judicious Shakespearean critics, to attempt to staunch the flow of widely speculative notions of authorship and collaboration in his book, *Contested Will: Who Wrote Shakespeare?*, published in 2010 by Simon and Schuster.

⁹ See Amazon.com: <<http://goo.gl/YwR69O>>, accessed 20 March 2015.

¹⁰ Of course almost all biography, by its very nature, is somewhat speculative.

5. Conclusion

If ‘collaboration is like a marriage’, as Moss Hart allegedly claimed while working together with George Kaufmann on numerous plays (quoted in Potter 2012, 84), this notion may have been even more valid for Shakespeare’s situation for, when he was composing most of his dramatic works, at least in the early period, he would have had more contact with his acting company and other authors than he did with poor Anne back in Stratford. So in that sense, his work and working conditions may have seemed more like a marriage than the officially sanctioned one from the consistory court in Worcester.

What I also found in the works I have examined is that the more collaborative in origin the fabricated work is itself, the more it positively portrays such relationships in Shakespeare’s own time. In other words, Burgess, the solitary novelist working without others in a romanticized notion of singular authorship, raises the idea of collaboration in his book when discussing such plays as *1 Henry VI*, but reverts back to the idea that this work, not unlike his own novel, ‘was finished by one pen only’ (Burgess 1994, 213). As a playwright, Whelan’s take on collaboration suggests some middle ground between sole author and collaborators not unlike, perhaps, the relationship between a playwright/director and his or her actors. Since films by their very nature must have multiple collaborators, it follows that *Shakespeare in Love* almost revels in highlighting the death of the Burgess-like solitary authorial presence.

In any event, there remains a palpable strain in many of these attempts to crossbreed Shakespearean biography with a glossy take on his life packaged for wider consumption. Perhaps the anonymous actor/narrator in *A Dead Man in Deptford* came close to describing this tension when he claimed, ‘there be two poles in the *mappamundi* of the writer’s craft, ever opposed, and the scholarly and the mere crowd-pleasing cannot meet’ (Burgess 1994, 213). Of course, neither the narrator, nor perhaps Burgess himself, could have anticipated the crossover appeal of *Shakespeare in Love*. This particular biopic on Elizabethan dramatists and their fellow collaborators won seven Oscars, including Best Supporting Actress, Best Actress, and Best Original Screenplay, the last award highlighting the extremely collaborative effort of the film. Moreover, the movie was praised by a chorus of Shakespearean scholars as well as the ticket-buying patrons who attended in record numbers, so that the academic circles and the public spheres formed yet another collaboration, this time a nonfictional one, as they combined their interests to make it the most talked-about film of the year.¹¹

¹¹ A review in *Entertainment Weekly* by Owen Gleiberman (1998) expressed this notion, labeling the film ‘that rare thing, a literate crowd pleaser’.

Works Cited

- Blumenfeld S.L. (2008), *The Marlowe-Shakespeare Connection: A New Study of the Authorship Question*, Jefferson, McFarland.
- Bolt Rodney (2005), *History Play: The Lives and After-life of Christopher Marlowe*, London, Bloomsbury.
- Burgess Anthony (1964), *Nothing Like the Sun: A Story of Shakespeare's Love-Life*, New York, Norton.
- Burgess Anthony (1994), *A Dead Man in Deptford*, New York, Vintage.
- Chernaik Warren (2014), 'Shakespeare as Co-Author: The Case of *I Henry VI*', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 27, 192-220.
- Craig Hugh (2009), 'The Three Parts of *Henry VI*', in H. Craig, A. Kinney, eds, *Shakespeare, Computers, and the Mystery of Authorship*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 40-47.
- Davis Todd and Kenneth Womack (2004), 'Reading (and Writing) the Ethics of Authorship: *Shakespeare in Love* as Postmodern Metanarrative', *Literature/Film Quarterly* 32, 2, 153-162.
- Dawkins Peter (2004), *The Shakespeare Enigma: Unravelling the Story of the Two Poets*, London, Polair.
- Dobson Michael and Stanley Wells, eds (2001), *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Ellis Samantha (2004), 'Interview with Peter Whelan', *The Guardian*, 23 November.
- Gleiberman Owen (1998), 'Review of *Shakespeare in Love*', 11 December, <<http://goo.gl/lbKg5t>>, accessed 5 January 2009.
- Greenblatt Stephen (1999), 'About that Romantic Sonnet', *The New York Times*, 6 February, section A, p. 15, column 1.
- Greenblatt Stephen (2004), *Will in the World: How Shakespeare became Shakespeare*, New York, Norton.
- Henderson D.E., 'Two Popular Kinsmen?: Shakespeare, Stoppard, and the Aesthetics of Film Collaboration', unpublished manuscript, cited with permission of the author.
- Hope Warren and K.R. Holston (2009 [1992]), *The Shakespeare Controversy: An Analysis of the Authorship Theories*, Jefferson, McFarland.
- James Brenda and William Rubenstein (2007), *The Truth Will Out: Unmasking the Real Shakespeare*, New York, Harper.
- McNulty Charles (2008), 'School of Night at Mark Taper doesn't do its homework', *Los Angeles Times*, 11 November, <<http://goo.gl/1SxdWX>>, accessed 18 January 2016.
- Norman Marc and Tom Stoppard (1998), *Shakespeare in Love: A Screenplay*, New York, Hyperion.
- Pinksen Daryl (2008), *Marlowe's Ghost: The Blacklisting of the Man who was Shakespeare*, New York, iUniverse.
- Potter Lois (2012), *The Life of William Shakespeare: A Critical Biography*, West Sussex, Wiley-Blackwell.
- Price Diana (2001), *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography: New Evidence of an Authorship Problem*, Westport, Greenwood Press.
- Pugliatti Paola and William Leahy (2014), 'The Many Lives of William Shakespeare: Collaboration, Biography and Authorship', Shakespeare 450 Seminar, Paris, France.

- Sawyer Robert (2009), 'Shakespeare and Marlowe: Re-Writing the Relationship', *Critical Survey* 21, 3, 4-58.
- Scott A.O. (1999), 'Stoppard in Love: The playwright's infatuation with smart fun ... and with himself', *Slate Magazine*, 21 March, <<http://goo.gl/yKdSn5>>, accessed 15 June 2005.
- Shapiro James (2010), *Contested Will: Who Wrote Shakespeare?*, New York, Simon and Schuster.
- Shuttleworth Ian (1992), 'Review of *The School of Night*', *City Limits Magazine*, <<http://goo.gl/eO3hDG>>, accessed 15 March 2015.
- Taylor Gary (1995), 'Shakespeare and the Others: The Authorship of *Henry the Sixth, Part One*', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 7, 145-205.
- Verini Bob (2008), 'Review of *The School of Night*', *Variety Magazine*, 10 November, <<http://goo.gl/96aOwB>>, accessed 19 July 2013.
- Vickers Brian (2002), *Shakespeare, Co-Author*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Vittes Laurence (2008), 'Bottom Line: So Christopher Marlowe was a Spy who didn't write Shakespeare after all. So who Cares?', *The Hollywood Reporter*, 10 November, <<http://goo.gl/fRzAt4>>, accessed 22 July 2013.
- Whelan Peter (1992), *The School of Night*, London, Warner Chappell Plays Ltd.
- Whelan Peter (2001), *A Russian in the Woods*, London, Methuen.