2013 Shakespeare Association of America Meeting
"Shakespeare and Business Culture" Seminar
Abstracts

Rita Banerjee, University of Delhi
The Culture of Credit, Its Attendant Risks, and Tragicomic Resolution in *Cymbeline*
Credit featured as an important element in Early Modern England's trade, domestic and international. While the growth of the market increased the demand for money in exchange for goods, the limited supply of money made it imperative for traders as well as consumers to rely on credit. Even in long-distance international trade, merchants had to honor bills of exchange as a pledge of faith. For those engaged in business judging creditworthiness correctly was a necessary criterion for success. But, misjudgments often occurred, resulting in loss to the creditor as well as to some potential borrowers for dubious borrowers managed to counterfeit creditworthiness. However, according to mercantile ethic, refusing to extend credit to an honest and deserving merchant could result in one's own loss of creditworthiness. The mercantile culture depended on the system of 'accommodation' of credit for its continuance and perpetuation. *Cymbeline's* vocabulary of credit, value, and price situates the play in the business economy of credit and the marketplace. This paper examines Posthumus's misjudgment of the creditworthiness of Imogen and Iachimo in the context of the relation between perception, creditworthiness, and acquisition of knowledge regarding credit. It also explores the process of recovery of creditworthiness by Posthumus and its relation to the tragicomic resolution of *Cymbeline*.

Christopher N. Warren, Carnegie Mellon University
Jacobean Commerce and International Law: The Prize in *Pericles*
Since work on Shakespeare and international commerce has until recently engaged relatively little with international law in the early modern period, this paper introduces a fascinating but little-studied English admiralty court case, *Venetian Ambassador vs. Brooke* (1608-1611), in which it was alleged that 30,000 crowns worth of goods on a Venetian ship had been stolen by Mediterranean pirates, sold to Turks in Tunis, and then bought by English merchants who transported the goods to England. On the basis of the case's high stakes and difficult questions about contracts, property and proof, the paper argues that the case serves as an important aid for understanding Jacobean romances and comedies like *Pericles*, particularly their heretofore under-acknowledged preoccupations with the canonical legal concerns of what is now called "private international law," especially the emerging conflict of laws doctrines of *lex loci contractus, lex rei sitae* (law of the place where an object is situated), and *lex loci delicti commissi* (law of the place in which a tort is committed). Since *Pericles*' title derives in part from Isaiah 23:8 where Isaiah calls the Biblical Tyre a place where the "merchants are princes," the play in the context of questions of international law helps us see how early modern culture represented overlapping merchant and legal ideologies, a way to study what Martti Koskenniemi has recently termed the "political theology of trade law," an early modern discourse of faith concerning the "miraculous coincidence of private and public good" attendant upon free trade.

David J. Baker, University of North Carolina
“Fifty Five Hundred Talents”: Numeracy and Calculation in *Timon of Athens*
Since the nineteenth century, there has been a debate over whether Shakespeare understood the monetary sums he used in *Timon of Athens.* Sometimes his figures are vastly exorbitant, sometimes vague (“so many talents”), sometimes ambiguous (“fifty five hundred talents”). Of the several speculations that have been advanced about this indeterminacy, one of the most interesting is that Shakespeare didn’t at first know how to use such sums with any accuracy, but then learned and changed his text to reflect this new awareness. I will argue that question of Shakespeare’s attitude toward calculation is crucial for our sense of him as a “businessperson” and a (possible) participant in an “emergent…subculture” of “business” in early modern England. One of the hallmarks of this subculture, we know, was a new emphasis on numeracy and accurate bookkeeping (often honored in the breach), but Shakespeare’s ambivalent math in *Timon of Athens* suggests that his stance towards financial calculation went beyond a simple adherence to the virtues of addition and subtraction. I borrow a term from actor-network theorist Michel Callon—“qualculation”—to describe the complexities of numerical figuration, both in this play and among “businesspeople” in England at the turn of the seventeenth century.

Peter Berek, Amherst College
Defoliating Playbooks in the Revolution
The first major collections of plays, Jonson’s (1616) and Shakespeare’s (1623) are printed in the expensive folio format. But during the 1650s octavo format for collections becomes the norm. I argue that the folio playbook first becomes a luxury item for a court coterie and is then supplanted by octavo collections that treat plays as commodities and define their market largely in economic terms. Sir John Suckling’s *Aglaura* (1637), published in folio by Thomas Walkley, is more a vanity publication than a commercial venture. The folio format may have been part of the flamboyant self-promotion that characterized Suckling as courtier and soldier as well as writer. Though looking like the Jonson and Shakespeare collections, Humphrey Moseley’s 1647 Beaumont and Fletcher folio, with its 36 prefatory poems and epistles, is also a gesture of royalist grandiosity. The first octavo collection, Moseley’s 1651 edition of plays and poems by William Cartwright, outgoes Beaumont and Fletcher with 52 prefatory promotional poems. Both collections are veritable Super Bowls of print, as notable for their commercials as for the ostensible main event. These grandiose collections invite the book-buyer to join the community represented by the writers of encomia. They define an in-group of royalists, an out-group of revolutionaries. Moseley’s later octavo collections are very different. Far from grandiose, they are often bound-together collections of plays that could also have been sold separately. With titles like *Five New Plays* and *Six New Plays*, collections by Shirley, Massinger, Carlell and Brome treat plays as commodities. The last collection before the King returns, Andrew Crooke’s and Henry Brome’s *Five New Plays* by Richard Brome (1659), in its look and format closely follows Moseley’s productions. The publisher’s epistle situates Brome and his master, Ben Jonson in a long tradition of craftsmanlike lowborn writers who worked at unglamorous trades, as Jonson did at bricklaying. A reading public made up of anyone who can afford the collection has now replaced the tony self-regarding coteries celebrated in the Beaumont and Fletcher folio and Cartwright octavo collection. Like these grandiose collections, the Brome volume markets itself divisively, but the division is not between royalists and revolutionaries, but between socially swank pretention and the wit that comes from learning and professional skill.

Ann Christensen, University of Houston
It takes a 'busied man': Donne and Business Culture
John Donne (1572-1631) wrote a number of farewell poems, including the valedictions ("Of Weeping" and "Forbidding Mourning") and others in his Songs and Sonnets, such as "Break of Day" (1622, 1633) and "The Sun Rising" (1633). My paper reads these sets of poems alongside his "sermon preached to the honourable company of the virginian plantation" (1622) at St. Paul's Cathedral in order to show business travel's impact on domestic life. Donne's own absences fostered many of the most memorable images his poetry—from the "fixt twin compass" and "gold to airy thinness beat" of "Valediction Forbidding Mourning" to "both th'Indias of spice and *mine*" ("Sunne Rising" 17). Donne at times mocks or diminishes the power of traffic and trade, and sometimes uses this power to praise his beloved. His poems contrast presence and absence via images of literal or metaphorical movement, travel, and projected departures.

I take my title from the female speaker in "Break of Day," who charges her businessman-bedfellow with adultery, but not in the usual way. Married to his work, which is his primary commitment, the man cheats on business by his lovemaking:

> Must business thee from hence remove?
> O, that's the worst disease of love.
> The poor, the foul, the false, love can
> Admit, but not the busied man.
> He which hath business, and makes love, doth do
> Such wrong, as when a married man doth woo.

The sermon extolling mercantile travel and colonial ventures and the poems of parting taken together offer a glimpse into the complex interplay of travel and domestic life—not just Anne and John Donne's but early modern English homes in the age of the "global renaissance."

Derrick Higginbotham, University of Cape Town
'To Suffer with a Quietness of Spirit:' Risk and Business in *The Merchant of Venice*
Economic criticism of *The Merchant of Venice* often concentrates on the depiction of usury and the socio-religious problem of profit, but Natasha Korda and Amanda Bailey's most current work departs from this trend by investigating the complex bonds involved in credit and debt. Even though this critical turn to an analysis of commercial bonds reveals hitherto unseen affective and political meanings of *The Merchant of Venice*, it thus far neglects the representation of Antonio, the businessman who most embodies the fragility linked to debt. In my paper, I show that Antonio's assumption of commercial risk by standing surety for Bassanio tailors a distinctive image of the businessman as possessing a soft style of masculinity. In order to fashion this image, *The Merchant of Venice* evokes a longstanding model of Christian manhood that makes a virtue of the ability to endure pain and potential loss, a model found—at least in part—in earlier morality plays concerned with prodigality. Shakespeare's comedy also borrows the convention that loss must be restored from these prodigal plays, using it to create an ending that materially rewards Antonio's style of masculinity, which indicates its value to the culture of business.

Ken Jacobsen, Sir Wilfred Grenfell College/ Memorial University
Managing Shakespeare: If the Bard Ran General Motors
Since the early 1990s, a notable trend in the literature of business management has been the treatment of the great books of Western philosophy, religion, and imaginative literature as sourcebooks for the principles of leadership and managerial training, the best known and perhaps best executed being Tom Morris's *If Aristotle Ran General Motors* (1997). Not surprisingly, Shakespeare has been appropriated by authors such as Jay Shafritz, Norman Augustine, Jay Adelman, John Whitney, Tina Packer, Richard Olivier, and Paul Corrigan to illustrate their respective theories. While some of the titles are mere kitsch, others are laudable attempts to forge an interdisciplinary, humanities-inflected approach to the art of management, though this mode of appropriation places a kind of constraint or pressure on interpretation, producing uncritical (or perhaps pre-critical) readings which are sharply at variance with those of mainstream academic Shakespeareans. John Whitney and Tina Packer's *Power Plays*, for example, exemplifies this tension, particularly in its reading of *Hamlet* as a cautionary tale about flawed corporate leadership. (However implausible this may sound, the play has in fact been staged quite frequently in a contemporary corporate *mise en scene*, most visibly in Michael Almereyda's 2000 film version starring Ethan Hawke.) While it is certainly true that writers like Whitney and Packer could refine their approach by interrogating their assumptions about management in the light of academic Shakespearean criticism, the reverse is perhaps true as well: the vagaries of academic criticism might fruitfully be challenged by their pragmatic counterparts from the world of business. This can be illustrated in the eerie parallels between Whitney and Packer's reading of *Hamlet* and that of Terence Hawkes.

Marcela Kostihova, Hamline University
'To thine own self be true': Selling Authenticity through Authentic Shakespeare
In *Authenticity: What Consumers REALLY Want*, an exceptionally influential business manual published by Harvard Business School Press as a sequel to the equally successful *Experience Economy*, Joseph Pine II and James Gilmore argue that transformational authenticity has become the core essence of successful product positioning. At core of this essence, the two gurus suggest, is the desire of the current consumer to achieve internal psychological integrity which can be satisfied by careful alignment of one's consumptive choices with one's own moral philosophy. Perhaps not surprisingly, Polonius' infamous speech to the college-bound Laertes serves as one of the central illustrative linchpins of such claims – all aspiring businesses, the reader is told, should perform a "Polonius Test" before finalizing their marketing strategies. Thus, Shakespeare cultural capital is placed front and center of a relatively new business model that seeks to enfold us in a comforting embrace of readily-available goods that reassuringly delineate the moral boundaries of our individual and collective existence.

In this paper, I will explore –in ways that are not yet entirely clear to me– the intersection between, on the one hand, transformational authenticity (defined through Shakespeare) by Pine, Gillmore, and others and, on the other, the ongoing battles for "Authentic Shakespeare" in the cultural sphere, which I will narrow down to examples from one of the currently broadly defined fields of theater performance, translation, or TV production (or something entirely different; I beg your patience as I solidify a thus-far nefarious new project).