Respondent: Kirk Melnikoff, UNC Charlotte

Shakespeare's Enemies at the Public Theater

Matthew Charles Carter, UNC Greensboro

In June 2017, controversy swirled around the Public Theater's production of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar.* The modern-dress production sparked outrage in conservative circles when Shakespeare's Roman emperor appeared onstage, portrayed by Gregg Henry, as a clear analog for Donald Trump. Despite the fact that the play casts the assassins in a negative light, Trumpists went as far as rushing the stage during one performance to shout their dissent over the play's design concept. Left-leaning news outlets promptly rose to the challenge of pointing out that anger over the production represented poor reading comprehension skills on the part of conservative outlets such as Fox News, and a thousand English professors around the world collectively hemmed and hawed about the deterioration of our Shakespearean discourse. There were bad readers, it seemed, on both sides.

Has something fundamentally changed the way we read Shakespeare in the Trump era? Does this moment of contact between Trump's supporters and the usual Shakespeare in the Park crowd represent a change in the discourse surrounding early modern drama, or have we always read and performed Shakespeare this way? By comparing the Public Theater's production of *Julius Caesar* to the events surrounding Robert Devereaux's infamous special performance of *Richard II,* I shall argue that our relationship with Shakespeare is directly influenced by the way we create meaning as both readers and watchers of Shakespeare's plays.

This essay will diagnose what sort of reading practices are imbricated in the fraught process of interpreting a Shakespearean text. Using Stanley Fish, Jerzy Grotowsky, and David Mamet as the basis for an audience/reader oriented approach to Shakespeare's text, my essay speaks to the way that a Trumpist assault on the Public Theater's stage does not separate modern audiences from their early modern forbears. Rather, this event analogizes how meaning is created in acts of interpretation, highlighting that (mis)interpreting the fungible meaning of a text is actually a tradition that dates back all the way to Shakespeare's own time.

"Be angry at your pleasures":
Shakespeare and Aggressive Fandom

Emily Griffiths Jones, University of South Florida

This paper comes out of a project I'm working on concerning the early modern origins of what we today call "fan culture" or "fandom." In recent years, fandom has increasingly become a subject of academic study, but scholarship has largely been limited to the fan culture of the twentieth century (when it is broadly presumed to have originated) and the present day. I am interested in uncovering evidence of fandom and fan practices that are much older, and I believe

we can date some of these practices to the early modern period and the long eighteenth century. To a small extent, early modern scholarship has begun to engage with fan studies; for instance, Balaka Basu and a few others have argued that certain early modern writers can be said to have written fan fiction and to have formed strong emotional bonds with stories and characters. In our seminar on "Shakespeare's Enemies," I'd like to consider Shakespeare-centric fan practices associated not with admiration, love, and other kinds of positive affect (as is usually the case) but with dislike, frustration, and anger.

For instance, today many of us recognize the phenomenon of "hate watching" or "hate reading"—that is, the derivation of a perverse satisfaction, or even pleasure, from consuming entertainment that one dislikes or disdains. Seventeenth-century diarist Samuel Pepys, I argue, may offer early evidence of this cultural experience in his gleeful criticism of Shakespeare and other writers. Further, recent fan theory has begun to focus on the (usually online) figure of the angry, disappointed fan, who may feel a sense of ownership over a text (s)he did not create and, accordingly, an entitlement to demand that representations of it be done "right" or to fix those done "wrong." I'd like to propose that we can see evidence for fannish entitlement in Restoration-era rewrites of Shakespeare's tragedies, or in Romantic arguments (such as those by Charles Lamb) that Shakespeare's works ought to be read but not performed because actors inevitably played his characters incorrectly, interpreting them in ways the Bard did not intend— that is, in ways at odds with how Lamb and others had imagined and grown attached to them. Lamb and his fellow bardolators would hardly have thought of themselves as enemies of Shakespeare; however, their demands that Shakespeare no longer be acted, in the name of not disappointing his fans, are surely inimical to his life's work and his theatrical vision.

"'Purging' Enemies: Shakespearean Satire and 'The Poets' War'"

William R. (Rusty) Jones; Murray State University

My interest in this seminar stems from a desire to test, expand, revise, and / or complicate the issues I posited in the fifth chapter of my recent book, *Satire in the Elizabethan Era: An Activistic Art*. In that chapter, entitled "Shakespearean Satire: Redux," I revisited and questioned the prevailing assumption that a number of Shakespeare's plays performed around the turn of the seventeenth-century (or soon thereafter, particularly, *As You Like It, Troilus and Cressida,* and *Timon of Athens*) actively and purposefully lampooned Shakespeare's supposed enemies (namely, Ben Jonson and John Marston) as part of the vitriolic exchanges characteristic of the so-called *Poetomachia* or "Poets' War." In dialogue, most often, with James Bednarz's excellent study, *Shakespeare and the Poets' War*, I employed, in places, elements of Marxist criticism to suggest that there would be few class or economic advantages for the Shakespeare of 1599-1605 to assault the 'up-and-coming' generation of satiric poets who had supposedly critiqued him on the public stage, and even fewer aesthetic reasons, as Shakespearean drama held a seemingly unassailable status in the culture at the time, a status validated by his company's change to royal patronage in 1603. Were Shakespeare's supposed enemies truly opposed to his influence on the culture (and, as a side note, I have argued elsewhere that such detractors certainly existed, e.g.

John Weever's ambiguous sonnet to Shakespeare), and if not, then how are we to best understand such satiric, socially dialogic dramas as *Troilus* and *Timon*? In my book, I contend that these plays seem more ironic meta-reflections on the effects of lampooning satire on the culture than intentional satiric assaults on a cadre of enemy playwrights, but I would like to have the opportunity to test that contention through dialogue with the members of this seminar.

In short, and with an eye firmly fixed on my next project, a book-length study of Shakespearean satire intended to update the wide-ranging 1943 study of the subject by Oscar J. Campbell (*Shakespeare's Satire*), my hope is that the members of this seminar will help to enhance my thinking about the nature of Shakespeare's relationship to both his imagined "enemies" in the period and the nature of those satiric dramas that he supposedly deployed against them. In the spirit of full disclosure, I plan to borrow liberally from the fifth chapter of my recent book, with sections augmented for this seminar in order both to foreground the questions and issues I have related above and to facilitate beneficial conversations.

Shakespeare, Dryden, and Adaptation as Rivalry

John R. Ladd, Washington University, St. Louis

William Shakespeare and John Dryden both made many enemies throughout their careers as dramatists. Each used the energy of contest and rivalry to bolster their own poetic faculties, developing their styles and themes in response to competitors. As Bednarz has established in *Shakespeare and the Poets' War*, the "Poetomachia" led to a flurry of writerly exchange and activity among Elizabethan playwrights. And more so than other authors of either the Renaissance or Restoration, much of Dryden's poetic energies were taken up by his many fraught relationships with patrons, former friends, and fellow authors, as evidenced in the satirical attacks, parodic allusions, and outright nastiness of many of his prefaces, poetry, and plays.

In this essay I argue that Dryden's preoccupation with competition manifests in his three adaptations of Shakespeare plays: *All for Love* (from *Antony and Cleopatra*), *The Enchanted Island* (from *The Tempest*), and *Troilus and Cressida*. While parts of the original plays are animated by Shakespeare's own rivalries and competitions, Dryden's adaptations increase the plays' poetics of contest by turning them toward his rivalry-obsessed worldview. Dryden imagines Shakespeare and his works as an extension of his own competitions. I take this reading as an occasion to investigate the ways in which rivalry enlivens rather than quashes poetic output, particularly in the Restoration. Looking at rivalry as a complement to collaboration can help literary scholars to push past Bloom's "anxiety of influence" frame when thinking about contest and intergenerational adaptation.

Loving to Distraction: The Enemy Adapters

Eric S. Mallin, University of Texas, Austin

We in the seminar are beginning to establish two broad categories of "enemy to Shakespeare": those contemporaries possessed of professional or rivalrous jealousy; and the later, present-day readers or critics who, for any number of reasons, deem his works overrated, overwrought, or perhaps merely oversold by the culture. Both these kinds are one kind: those viewers and critics who cannot abide the Bard.

Another enemy lurks, whose motives and presumed intentions towards Shakespeare are largely benign or even worshipful: those who adapt his plays directly into films. The film adapters have the same complicated motives as anyone who seeks to create art, and I cannot impugn nor recover their intentions; I want merely to argue against their results, which have been hugely damaging, even debilitating, to the object they intend to honor. If "Shakespeare" the idea, the literary and theatrical fact, can be harmed, they have done so. Juliet-like, they kill with too much cherishing. Such an argument should draw on venerable critiques of film adaptation of the theater, but I shall try to avoid doing so. Instead, I shall hang my polemic on two claims: that cinematic adaptations of Shakespeare (there are many different kinds of adaptations, but I shall treat mostly the intentional, direct ones) are, on balance, very bad movies; and that they fail markedly in showing anything new or illuminating about the plays, and more often get things horribly wrong, thus obviating their ostensible reason for being. Thus, claim number three: in failing their two most basic functions, they become against their will the enemies of what they wish to honor. I shall engage with at least two adapters (Luhrmann, Branagh) and a number of skillful defender critics of the adaptation mode (Hatchuel, Ryle, Lehmann) to try to make good my claim that those who make Shakespeare movies are loving him to distraction and death.

How Was Shakespeare Bad Thirty Years Ago?

Zoltán Márkus, Vassar College

In the Introduction of the essay collection *"Bad" Shakespeare: Revaluations of the Shakespeare Canon* (1988), the editor of the volume, Maurice Charney, writes the following:

"Our authors are eager to question the established Shakespeare canon insofar as it places a higher value on works that seem more 'Shakespearean' than others. One conventional way to deal with plays that do not seem Shakespearean at all is to demonstrate that they lack authority and that they are therefore not authored by Shakespeare or show his hand only in superior bits. Our project proposes criteria for what is Shakespearean and speculates about the range of possibilities in Shakespeare's style. Canonical thinking tends to be extremely rigid and zealous—a kind of Shakespeare fundamentalism. We cannot be sensitive to changes in taste and sensibility and also be faithful to the orthodox demands of canon. The best criticism has always questioned the assumptions of the established canon."

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Paul Menzer, Mary Baldwin University

The first part of my paper considers the question of how we relate to these issues addressed 30 years ago. How have we moved away or beyond these problems and how do these thoughts resonate with our concerns and arguments today?

In the second part—if I can squeeze a second part into a 3000-word paper—I'd like to draw on the work of an SAA Seminar devoted to the topic of "Wrong Shakespeare" (directed by M. J. Kidnie and Katherine Scheil in 2013) and discuss the distinction between "bad Shakespeare" and "wrong Shakespeare." How do investigations of "wrong Shakespeare" assume different critical protocols from those of "bad Shakespeare"? What kind of ethical assumptions, implications, or judgments do our discussions of "bad Shakespeare" vs. "wrong Shakespeare" generate?

Old Shakespeare

Cyrus Mulready, State University of New York at New Paltz

As various witnesses in the early seventeenth century attest, even within Shakespeare's lifetime his plays had become out-of-date. Augustine Phillips testified that the Chamberlain's Men were puzzled by members of Essex's party who asked for a performance of *Richard II*, which by 1601 was "so old and so long out of use." And Walter Cope, writing in 1604 about household entertainments for Anne of Denmark and James I, indicates that Richard Burbage had "no new playe that the queen hath not seene, but they have Revyved an olde one" (*Love's Labor's Lost*). Later in the century, this attitude gathered as Shakespeare's life and works receded further into the past. William Cartwright in 1647 noted Shakespeare's "old-fashioned wit, which walkt from town to town / In turn'd Hose, which our fathers call'd the Clown." Writing of a performance of *Hamlet* that he saw in 1661, John Evelyn reported "now the Olde playe began to disgust this refined age." Indeed, throughout the seventeenth century, Shakespeare and his works were often viewed as "old," even "obsolete."

My work for this seminar stems from a larger project, *Shakespeare Outdated*, that seeks an alternative to presentist narratives of Shakespeare's timelessness and futurity. By looking at moments in literary history where his works were seen, contrarily, as outmoded, old-fashioned, or antiquated, I aim to show both the contingent nature of Shakespeare's putative modernity and to find new insights that emerge when we see in Shakespeare (in text, language, and performance) that which was sometimes viewed as old and obsolete. For this essay, and inspired by the topic of our seminar, I want to argue that the roots of latter-day Shakespeare animosity can be found in the process of modernizing "old Shakespeare" that transpired through the eighteenth century. In 1700, Shakespeare was securely part of "the older sort"—"Dead," as a character in a 1699 dramatic dialogue attests, "before I knew the town"; through the century, however, he became a near-contemporary writer, glimpsed, for instance, in the Westminster Abbey statue erected in 1741 that re-imagined him as an eighteenth-century man of letters. This essay argues that the transition from "Old Shakespeare" to the author that is eternally present to us began in the early eighteenth century with alterations in British copyright law. The 1710 Copyright Act diminished the importance of legacy claims to literary property ("Old Shakespeare") and would eventually open opportunities for rapid innovations in the reproduction

of Shakespeare's text. As an example of this shift, I look briefly at the feud between Jacob Tonson and his heirs with Robert Walker, an upstart publisher who challenged the Tonsons' effective monopoly on Shakespeare in the 1730s. Following that time, it becomes much rarer to see Shakespeare judged as old-fashioned, even by those openly hostile to his work.

Walt Whitman and Shakespeare Skepticism in Late Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia

Joseph Navitsky, West Chester University

Close scrutiny of the intellectual environment of 1880s Philadelphia reveals a series of coexistent, yet conflicting, positions on the question of Shakespeare's cultural preeminence. On the one hand, Horace Howard Furness' New Variorum project—and the support it received from members of the American Philosophical Society and a literary society called the Shakspeare Society of Philadelphia—speaks to the centrality of the city in the world of Shakespeare scholarship. Moreover, Furness' friendship with the scholar, educator, and humanist Felix Schelling meant that Shakespeare could not help but be enshrined in the newly created English major at the University of Pennsylvania. On the other hand, however, an intense ambivalence about Shakespeare also persisted at this time—an ambivalence encouraged by none other than Walt Whitman, who lived in nearby Camden, New Jersey, until his death in 1892. Whitman's frequent pronouncements about Shakespeare form part of a larger late nineteenth-century backlash against the playwright. While no anti-Stratfordian like his famous contemporary Mark Twain, Whitman harbored serious doubts about his countrymen's fidelity to a writer he saw as a representative of feudal hierarchies and defender of aristocratic values.

For this seminar, I want to evaluate one moment in Whitman's relationship with Shakespeare: an exchange of essays with Jonathan Trumbull in the Philadelphia-based (and staunchly pro-Shakespeare) literary magazine *Poet-Lore*. Although this exchange has received some attention in Peter Rawlings' *Americans on Shakespeare, 1776-1914* (1999) and, more recently, Gary Schmidgall's *Containing Multitudes: Walt Whitman and the British Literary Tradition* (2014), I want to shift the conversation to the topic of the wider reception of what I am calling Whitman's "Shakespeare skepticism," especially within the Philadelphia literary community of the day and, more specifically, within the Furness-Schelling circle.

How I Learned to Stop Hating Shakespeare and Love the Bard

Jeanette Tran, Drake University

James Baldwin's short essay, "Why I Stopped Hating Shakespeare," opens with the ultimately false but provocative premise that Shakespeare is an obvious or natural enemy of the black man. Baldwin begins with the statement that "every writer in the English language…has at some point hated Shakespeare, has turned away from that monstrous achievement with sick envy," but quickly transitions to a discussion of how his identity as a black man intensified his enmity with Shakespeare. It seemed "bitterly anomalous" that a black man should be forced to deal with the English language at all, let alone Shakespeare, the man who Baldwin "condemned" "as one of

the architects of my oppression." While one can read Baldwin's essay as a love song to Shakespeare—it concludes with the statement that Shakespeare was the "greatest poet of the English language"—one can also read it as a critique of the uniquely American sensibility that the African American should hate Shakespeare, and that Shakespeare should hate the African American. I read Baldwin's essay as a direct response to the history of enmity that was cultivated between African Americans and Shakespeare as a way to alleviate white anxieties about the social, intellectual and sexual advances of African Americans in white society. "How I Stopped Hating Shakespeare" is an act of reclamation that requires Baldwin to disentangle Shakespeare from the history of America, which is a history of racial violence. When Baldwin looks in the "rubble" of history for Shakespeare, he does not find a god, but a witness to a history of undifferentiated human suffering. In refusing to recognize Shakespeare as a symbol of white cultural capital, Baldwin makes a case for his own humanity, and the humanity of Shakespeare.

Friendly Fire: Shakespeare's Accidental Enemies

Richard M. Waugaman, M.D., Georgetown University

As a Shakespeare authorship dissident, I will offer a counter-intuitive perspective on our topic. Namely, that it is mainstream Shakespeare scholars who inadvertently undermine our understanding of the author Shakespeare, and prevent us from making vital connections between the works and their true author. Not enemies of the canon, but unintentional "enemies" of our search for the truth about the real author of the canon. A core unexamined assumption is that early references to "Shakespeare" were definitively references to Shakspere of Stratford.

As early as 1628, Thomas Vicars referred to "that famous poet who takes his name from shaking and spear" ["celebrem illum poeta qui a quassatione et hasta nomen habet"] (*Cheiragogia Manuductio ad Artem Rhetoricam*. London: Augustini Matthews. Third Edition, p. 70). This circumlocution sounds very odd if the poet to which Vicars referred were Shakspere of Stratford. The other poets in Vicars' book are all listed by their actual names.

The Stratfordian Marcy North indirectly raised further reasons to cast doubt on Shakspere's claim to authoring the canon in her pivotal 2003 study of the prevalence of anonymous Elizabethan authorship (*The Anonymous Renaissance*). The stigma of print as a factor that inhibited the aristocracy from signing their names to their literary works has been challenged but not successfully refuted. Nobles' use of an allonym is illustrated by the Earl of Essex once instructing his secretary to ask another man if his initials could be signed to Essex's self-congratulatory account of his role in the Battle of Cadiz, lending false objectivity to the story.

Followers of the traditional authorship theory believe that their theory is 100% proven (with some open questions about co-authorship and about plays such as *Edward III*). Naturally, they question the motives of anyone who is skeptical about what they consider a fact, not a theory. I believe they are being unconsciously influenced by groupthink, a phenomenon of social psychology that promotes group cohesiveness by agreeing not to question unproven core assumptions. Reasoning is deductive, based on an unquestioned premise that "Shakespeare wrote

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Shakespeare," rather than examining all relevant evidence, and then reasoning inductively as to what conclusions it best supports. Those who attempt to present evidence that is inconsistent with the group's foundational premise are often condemned with ad hominem attacks, rather than being offered an ad rem examination of their new evidence.

In his 2012 book, *The Truth about William Shakespeare*, David Ellis points out that we have insufficient evidence to write any sort of literary biography of Shakspere of Stratford. Instead, this popular (and profitable) genre of biography substitutes legends; speculations; alleged biographical allusions in the plays and poems; and inferences drawn from the historical context. Ellis warns that Shakespeare biographies are so inherently speculative that they damage the credibility of the genre of biography itself. So, another example of Shakespeare scholars involuntarily being the enemy of what Ellis calls the truth about Shakespeare.