

***Dating Shakespeare's Plays:  
A Critical Review of the Evidence***

**edited by Kevin Gilvary**

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*Dating Shakespeare's Plays* makes a substantial contribution to the theory of dating through systematically re-examining 40 plays (36 from the First Folio and four from quartos) attributed in whole or in part to Shakespeare. Nineteen contributors analyze the evidence to establish not so much the exact date of a play's having been written but a range of dates—the earliest and latest possible date for the composition of each play. In addition, the book has three preliminary chapters: an "Introduction" and "Style, Verse and Chronology," both by Kevin Gilvary; and "The Use and Limits of Francis Meres," by Eddi Jolly. The "Conclusion" is also by Gilvary. In this review, I will focus on the methodological contributions of the book.

The dating of written work is an auxiliary historical discipline remarkably short on theoretical explications. Disparate practices are common, dependent on period and field of study.<sup>1</sup> Dating of Old Testament (OT) books, for example, involves close readings and modes of complex argumentation.<sup>2</sup> Dating of specific pieces of information within an OT book involves equally close reading and argumentation that may be even more complex.<sup>3</sup> Classical studies developed together with Biblical criticism over the course of several centuries and contributed its own methods. Dating of *Rus Chronicles* is a much more recent development, but utilizes some of the techniques of Biblical criticism and Classical studies. Scholars who do so, however, add practices of their own relevant to the material at hand.<sup>4</sup> After Biblical criticism, Shakespearean criticism is probably the most active. Yet, until recently both fields have been methodologically immature. As the Biblical scholar Richard Elliott Friedman has written about scholarship in his field:

I think it is all about method. For these 35 years I've been telling my students that the most important thing they need to learn is method. Our field was mighty sloppy for its first couple of centuries.... Biblical scholars ... dated texts based on ideas in them: If a text expressed guilt, they concluded that it had to have been written during the Babylonian exile. (Did they really think that people could only feel guilt when they

were in exile? ...) They made judgments about style without being trained in literary analysis, and judgments about history without being trained in historiography. The Bible was old, but the field was young, and we were plunging in haphazardly, without a sense of how to pursue the work properly.”<sup>5</sup>

Likewise, Shakespearean scholarship, except for a few bright exceptions, has been similarly lacking in scientific rigor. A case in point is the dating of the plays attributed to Shakespeare, which has until now been done in an unmethodical and often whimsical way.

We should not judge previous Shakespearean scholarship on this issue too harshly, for, as far as I know, no one has codified the principles or common rules for the dating of written texts. Rarely can a specific date be established for a work that has no date on it. In the vast majority of such cases, two termini provide a frame for the discussion of dating a written work—the earliest possible date and the latest possible date.<sup>6</sup> Some common principles used to establish those dates include (this list is not exhaustive):

1. A work cannot have been created before a work from which it borrows.<sup>7</sup>
2. A work cannot have been created after a work that borrows from it.<sup>8</sup>
3. Style, terminology, spelling, punctuation, and grammar can help to date a written work approximately.<sup>9</sup>
4. Codicological dating (for example, according to watermarks<sup>10</sup> and paleography<sup>11</sup>) can establish an earliest possible date for a manuscript or printed copy and thus help to establish a latest possible date of composition.
5. Publication date can establish a latest possible date of composition, but not an earliest.<sup>12</sup>
6. The content of a written work can be used to place it in the context of a period in which it was most likely written.<sup>13</sup>
7. References in other works, such as diaries, interviews, letters, marginalia, memoirs, notes, etc., to the work can help establish a latest possible date.<sup>14</sup>
8. Reference to historical events (including a prediction of something that was unlikely to be known to the supposed author—that is, a postdiction) can provide an earliest possible date.<sup>15</sup>

As Gilvary writes in the Introduction: “The ‘date’ of a play can refer to three possible events: when it was composed, when it was first performed or when it was first published” (2). He quickly points out, however, that we also have “no evidence for the date of composition of any play by Shakespeare” (2; see also page 190: “There is no direct evidence for the date of *composition* of any of Shakespeare’s plays” [italics in original]). Nor is there direct “evidence to date any première of any play by Shakespeare” (2). The date of publication, which depends on “a combination of an entry in the Stationers’ Register with the bibliographic information on the title page” is usually not complicated, but what does complicate matters is the assumption made by many that “publication in quarto followed shortly after composition,” although such plays as *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *A Comedy of Errors* that appear in

Meres' list of 1598 were not published until 1623, some 25 years later (3, 15–16, n. 4).

Gilvary describes four main previous attempts to date the plays through establishing a general chronology for them: Edmond Malone in 1778; Edward Dowden in 1874; E. K. Chambers in 1930; and Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor in 1987. One surprising finding, at least to me, is their tendency to assign plays to certain years solely on a desire to fill in so-called “blank years” (i.e., years in which no other play has been assigned) (189). The assumption is that Shakespeare was continuously productive at a certain discernible pace. Although we do have evidence of authors who are continuously productive,<sup>16</sup> the more usual rate of production by authors of a particular creative genre is sporadic and dependent on circumstances and the muse of inspiration. Gilvary notes that almost all subsequent attempts at fixing the dates of particular plays have been dominated by the four phases of Dowden's chronology—1. “in the workshop,” the period of Shakespeare's youth when he is experimenting and reworking other authors' plays; 2. “in the world,” the period in which his “imagination began to lay hold of real life” and history in particular; 3. “out of the depths,” the period in which the author “ceased to care for the tales of mirth and love; for the stir and movement of history,” and began to explore “the great mystery of evil”; and 4. “on the heights,” the period in which the poet exhibited a “wise, large-hearted, calm-souled” attitude (5). Later, Gilvary remarks that absent “direct evidence for the date of composition of any of Shakespeare's plays, many assertions and proposals have become gradually accepted as ‘fact’ in ‘scholarly consensus’” (190).

Gilvary then discusses the types of evidence that have been used to date English plays of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. He first divides the evidence into external and internal. He lists eight types of external evidence, four of which are not applicable to dating the plays attributed to Shakespeare; the other four are helpful only in establishing a latest possible date of composition:

1. Dated manuscripts—“there is no manuscript dated or undated of any Shakespeare play” (8);
2. Correspondence concerning literary matters—“There are no letters either to Shakespeare or by him about any of his plays or any literary matter” (9);
3. Revels Accounts—They “list plays performed at court but do not indicate when they were written” (9). They can, however, provide a latest possible date for composition;
4. Record of payment for plays—“There are no records of payments for the script of any Shakespearean play” (9);
5. Allusions to Shakespeare writing his plays—“There are no allusions to Shakespeare that can indicate when he composed any play” (9);
6. Francis Meres, 1598—“This list indicates [twelve Shakespearean] plays that were in existence by 1598, but gives no further indication of the date of composition” (10);
7. Stationers' Register (SR) —“lists when a play was registered for publication, thus indicating that a play was in existence but not necessarily demonstrating when it had been composed” (11). Just as with Revels Accounts, SR can provide

a latest possible date for composition of a particular play.

8. Title Pages—“Nineteen of Shakespeare’s plays were published in quarto up to 1622,” which again provide evidence for a latest possible date of composition.

In regard to internal evidence, Gilvary lists three types:

**1. Sources.** He defines “a source” as “a text which has had a major influence upon a play, usually concerning plot, characters and setting” (12). He points out that “Geoffrey Bullough carefully distinguishes between a probable source, a possible source and a similar text (which he [Bullough] calls an analogue)” (12).

**2. Allusions to other texts.** In contrast to a source, according to Gilvary, following Thomas Green “an allusion is a reference to another text which may have been added at a later stage” such as “when a play was revised” or merely represents an interpolation (13).

**3. Allusions to contemporary events and people.** Gilvary briefly discusses the problem with such allusions. One would think that identifying a contemporary allusion, such as to a general or an eclipse, would help establish the date of a play, but the problem is “[i]f we were sure of the date of composition, we could be sure of the allusion” (14). The range between the earliest possible date and the latest possible date of each play means we have alternative generals and eclipses to choose from.<sup>17</sup>

In the analysis of the dating for each play an “Orthodox dating” and an “Oxfordian” dating is provided. The reason that Gilvary gives for providing the Oxfordian dating is “[t]he main challenge to the ‘orthodox’ dating has been made by Oxfordians” (14). Since the lives of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford (1550–1604) and William Shaksper of Stratford (1564–1616) overlap but do not completely coincide, the date of composition has some bearing on the attribution question. Thus, within each chapter a four-category grid is applied to discuss the dating of each play: Internal Orthodox Evidence; External Orthodox Evidence, Internal Oxfordian Evidence, and External Oxfordian Evidence.

Near the end of the Introduction, a minor grammatical error occurs. After indicating that Alan Nelson’s biography of Edward de Vere, *Monstrous Adversary* (2003) has been used, Gilvary writes: “The ultimate purpose of this book is not to establish (or reject) Oxford’s candidacy for authorship but to examine the range of possible dates for each play” (15). The problem is the antecedent for “this book;” those familiar with *Monstrous Adversary* will readily see that rejecting Oxford’s candidacy for authorship was Nelson’s main motive in writing it. To those who are not familiar with Nelson’s book, it will probably not be clear that “this book” refers to *Dating Shakespeare’s Plays*.

In the chapter “The Uses and Limits of Francis Meres,” Eddi Jolly points out the collective inconsistency of editors in using Meres’ list in different ways to support their views about a play: “1. Meres was not offering a complete list; 2. If a play is

not mentioned by Meres Shakespeare has not yet written it; 3. Meres may have accidentally omitted a play; 4. A play of quality is likely to have been mentioned by Meres; 5. If a play is omitted it is not known to Meres” (20). As Jolly remarks: “These editors cannot all be right” (20). After an analysis of Meres’ content and style including a table on symmetry in Meres, Jolly concludes that “Meres does not intend to offer a full list of every writer’s works in 1598, and that he does not do so” (24). For Shakespeare, Meres provides a list of 12 plays, 6 comedies and 6 tragedies. Their inclusion on Meres’ list can provide evidence toward a latest possible date of composition for these plays, but no inferences should be drawn on the basis of the absence of a play from the list.

In the chapter “Verse, Style and Chronology,” Gilvary discusses various attempts to date the plays (or at least establish some kind of sequence of composition among them) through the analysis of verse and meter. Among the most prominent of these attempts are those by F. J. Furnivall and Frederick Fleay, Chambers, and Wells and Taylor. According to Gilvary: “While Furnivall compared end-stopped *vs* run-over lines, ten-syllable lines *vs* lines with an extra syllable (feminine lines) and rhyme *vs* blank verse, his friend, Frederick Fleay, counted syllables and rhymes” (29). Chambers derived his chronology from the work of Furnivall and Fleay and “has been extremely influential” (29). But Gilvary goes on to cite Grady’s and Vickers’ questioning whether these metrical tests are valid. Gilvary also points out that “Furnivall seemed to have made up an outline biography and then used metrical tests to support it” (29). In other words, the method as applied to Shakespeare’s plays has been a circular one.

Gilvary goes on to point out that since the mid-1970s “the style of many Elizabethan authors has been analysed” mainly “to establish or deny authorship” (30). But such studies do not provide an independent confirmation of the validity of the method: they “have NOT [caps in original] been used to establish the evolution of style for any other author’s works nor compared against authors whose chronology is already known” (30).

Wells and Taylor, in contrast, isolated 27 “colloquialisms in verse,” the result of which was to “confirm the traditional dating of Shakespeare’s plays.” But, as Gilvary points out, “there has been no explanation as to how a study of style and/or verse can date an author’s works” (30). One should also point out that some plays attributed to Shakespeare (such as on the title page of quartos) but not thought to have been written by him on stylistic grounds are excluded from the stylistic date base, thus raising questions about how one determines what is and what isn’t Shakespeare’s style. Again, a bit of methodological circular reasoning may be occurring based on the traditional dating of the plays, which, as pointed out above, is made to fit the biography of Shakspeare of Stratford. Gilvary lists and discusses five components of using style to date texts that are otherwise not datable: 1. establish dates for core texts to provide a framework of analysis for the undated ones; 2. unrevised drafts; 3. meter; 4. colloquialisms; and 5. changes in style within a text, as in Dickens’ *Great Expectations*. Not having unrevised drafts, as indeed we do not for Shakespeare, according to Gilvary, “calls into doubt the basis for making judgements based on

style” (31). The core texts that are datable by other means “must be known to have been composed within one short space of time” for the method of dating by style to have any validity (31). In the conclusion to this chapter, Gilvary iterates the assertion that “Shakespeare appears to be the only major writer whose works have been dated according to stylistic tests” (34). He quotes Vickers that stylistic methods can “play a part in confirming or questioning a date established on other grounds,” which in the case of Shakespeare’s plays “have yet to be established” (34).

In regard to the dating of individual plays, I will mention here only a few salient points. Perhaps the most immediate observation is that none of the date ranges given for any of the 40 plays discussed excludes either William Shaksper or Edward de Vere from having been the author. In other words, the date range for each play overlaps, at least in part, with the adult lifetime of both men, while some of the extreme dates lie beyond the lifetimes of one or both. After reading these chapters, one can see that the earliest possible date for each play ranges from 1558 (*Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Merchant of Venice*) to 1590 (*As You Like It* and *King Lear*). The latest possible date for each play ranges from 1592 (*1 Henry VI* and *3 Henry VI*) to 1623 (*Coriolanus* and *Timon*) (Table 1, page 477).

One piece of evidence in regard to dating that has received a great deal of attention is Ariel’s reference in *The Tempest* to “still-vexed Bermoothes.” Traditional scholarship has pointed to a description in a letter of 1610 written by William Strachey of the crash of the *Sea Venture* in 1609 off the coast of Bermuda. Strachey’s letter was not published until 1625. A number of Stratfordians have latched onto this letter as evidence against the Oxfordians. Yet recent scholarship, both Stratfordian and Oxfordian, has rejected Strachey’s letter and its description of a Bermuda shipwreck as a source for the play. The chapter on dating *The Tempest*, co-authored by Philip Johnson and Gilvary, does a commendable job of summarizing briefly and accurately the issue as well as the evidence and arguments for and against seeing a connection between Strachey’s letter and the play (40–44).

Another issue that comes up in discussion of dating of such comedies as *The Tempest*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *Love’s Labours Lost* is *commedia dell’arte*, the Italian form of theater that was prominent in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. *Commedia dell’arte* utilized stock characters and stock situations in which the actors often improvised. I imagine that for a playwright to be influenced by *commedia dell’arte* he or she would have to have seen such plays performed, and probably more than once. To describe such a form to a playwright and expect that person to then write plays in that style would be akin to describing a Monty Python sketch to someone, expect them to get it, and be able to replicate it in new ways. While the contributors to *Dating Shakespeare’s Plays* do well in remarking on the probable influence of *commedia dell’arte* on the author of the comedies mentioned above, a number of other authors have picked up on influence of the form on at least one of Shakespeare’s tragedies, *Othello*.<sup>18</sup> To be able to adapt the form that way would seem to indicate the playwright had thoroughly internalized that form.

An example of the direction of borrowing from the Shakespearean corpus is the relationship between *As You Like It* and Thomas Lodge’s prose romance *Rosalynde*

(written 1586–87, published 1590). The orthodox position, as represented by Bullough and Brissenden, is that the author of the former borrowed from the latter, providing 1590 as an earliest possible date for the play. Some Oxfordians have posited a reverse direction of borrowing, providing a latest possible date for *As You Like It* of 1590, given that the borrowing could have occurred any time up to the first publication of *Rosalynde* (141, 144). Another example is the relationship of *The Taming of the Shrew*, first published in the First Folio (F1) in 1623, to an anonymous play *The Taming of a Shrew*, which was entered into the Stationers Register in 1594. As Stephanie Hopkins Hughes describes it, one can ask whether “*A Shrew* is the original play, by an unknown writer, and the direct source of” *The Shrew*? Or whether “*The Shrew* is the original play and *A Shrew* is a memorial reconstruction by an actor or some other person of the Shakespeare play, i.e. a ‘bad quarto’? Or do “both *Shrews* derive from a lost original which was Shakespeare’s first version of the play” (151)? If Stephen Miller’s conclusion, based on a systematic text comparison, is correct — that *The Shrew* is primary and *A Shrew* is derivative<sup>19</sup> — then the derivative version appeared in print 29 years before its source did.

There has been a tendency to assign late earliest possible dates to particular plays on the basis that the translation of a work written in Italian or French was not then available in English. The reasoning is that Shakespeare was not able to read these works in the original. There is ample evidence in the plays that the author knew both French and Italian. For example, *Il Percorone* by Ser Giovanni Fiorentino, published in Italian in 1558, and considered a source for *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (65, 67) and possibly *The Merchant of Venice* (125), was not translated into English until 1632, well after the death of any of the proposed candidate-authors of the plays. In contrast, we have examples of English translations by associates of Oxford of works connected with the plays. Longus’ *Daphnis and Chloë*, which was translated into Italian and French by 1559, and which was a source for *The Winter’s Tale* (178–79), and possibly *Cymbeline* (427), was translated into English in 1587 by Angel Day, who had dedicated an earlier work to Oxford (181). *Fedele and Fortunio*, translated and adapted into English in 1585 (from Luigi Pasqualigo’s *Il Fedele*) probably by Anthony Munday,<sup>20</sup> self-described “servant of the Earl of Oxford,” may have been connected with *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (57), *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (67–68) and *Much Ado about Nothing* (98), as was his translation of a Spanish romance, *Primaleon, Book III* (1595), which may have served as a source for *The Tempest*.

A number of plays had been attributed to Shakespeare but scholars now think were not written by him. Some of these were later (1650s) attributions, but *The London Prodigal* was printed in 1605 with “Shakespeare” on the title page. There are at least two other plays—*A Yorkshire Tragedy* (1608) and *Sir John Oldcastle* (1600)—that were published early with “Shakespeare” identified as the author, and a third—*Pericles, Prince of Tyre* (1609)—that scholars accept as only partially written by Shakespeare. Gilvary addresses this problem in the chapter on *The Life and Death of King John*. Discussing the relationship of this play to *The Troublesome Reigne of John King of England*, which was published anonymously in 1591 and republished as

by “W Sh” and “W Shakespeare” in 1611 and 1622, respectively, Gilvary mentions but does not necessarily support the suggestion that pseudo-Shakespeare plays such as *The Troublesome Reigne*, *Sir John Oldcastle*, and *The London Prodigal*, which had attributions on their quarto title pages, “were deliberately misattributed so as to boost sales” (199).

This issue is a troublesome one from a methodological perspective. If, as Kier Cutler and others have suggested, the name “Shakespeare” was a generalized pseudonym, then perhaps not all the works presently attributed to Shakespeare (the Shakespeare canon) were written by one person, or even had the involvement of a particular individual who can be identified as Shakespeare. If there were several Shakespeares, then that would help to account, to a certain extent, for the phenomenal knowledge and wordsmithing in the plays, and it would make even more problematic the attempts to identify a single style, even one divided into Dowden’s four phases. That would also raise the possibility that the Oxfordians, Marlovians, Baconians, etc., are venturing too much by trying to claim the entire canonical corpus for their respective candidate. On the other hand, if we insist on seeing a single author for the plays now attributed to Shakespeare, and if we insist on basing our conclusions on evidence, logical argument, and elegance of interpretation, then the Earl of Oxford is by far the leading candidate.

An oft-cited argument for denying the Earl of Oxford any claim to have authored the plays attributed to Shakespeare is that a number of the plays were written after Oxford died in 1604. The publication of *Dating Shakespeare’s Plays* will not stop anti-Oxfordians from continuing to make that argument. But it will allow Oxfordians to respond each time they do by citing this thoroughly researched, fair, and balanced analysis of the available evidence regarding the dating of the plays.



### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> See, e.g., D. S. Likhachev, *Tekstologiiia. Na materiale russkoi literatury X–XVII vekov*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (Moscow and Leningrad: Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1962), 272–280; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Leningrad: Nauka, 1983), 290–297; 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., with the participation of A. A. Alekseev and A. G. Bobrov (St. Petersburg: Aleteia, 2001), 285–292. The first half of the section in each case deals with the codicological dating of manuscripts; the second half, with dating of written works.
- <sup>2</sup> See Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986).
- <sup>3</sup> Baruch Halpern, “Eyewitness Testimony: Parts of Exodus Written within Living Memory of the Event,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, September/October 2003: 50–57.
- <sup>4</sup> A. A. Shakhmatov, *Razyskaniia o drevneishikh russkikh letopisnykh svodakh* (St. Petersburg: M. A. Aleksandrov, 1908); D. S. Likhachev, *Russkie letopisi i ikh kul’turno-isotricheskoe znachenie* (Moscow and Leningrad: Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1947); A. N. Nasonov, *Istoriia russkogo letopisaniia. XI–nachalo XVIII veka* (Moscow: Nauka, 1969); Ia. S. Lur’e, *Obshcherusskie letopisi XIV–XV vv.* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1976).
- <sup>5</sup> Richard Elliott Friedman, “The Bible Then—The Bible Now,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, 37, no. 5 (September/October 2011): 26.
- <sup>6</sup> Both termini are often identified by their Latin phrases. The first phrase is *terminus ante quem non* [end before which not] (sometimes rendered as either *terminus a quo* [end from which] or *terminus post quem* [end after which]), and refers to the earliest date a work could have been written. The second phrase is *terminus post quem non* [end after which not] (sometimes rendered as either *terminus ad quem* [end to which] or *terminus ante quem* [end before which]), and refers to the latest date a work could have been written. This multiplicity of terms can be confusing, so, in an effort to save the reader from trying to disentangle the meaning of the Latin phrase being used in each case, I will refer to the “earliest possible date” and the “latest possible date” of a composition.
- <sup>7</sup> A prime example of the application of this principle is Ihor Ševčenko, “The Date and Author of the So-called Fragments of Toparcha Gothicus,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 25 (1971): 115–188 + 28 plates, in which Ševčenko demonstrated the dependence of the *Fragments of Toparcha Gothicus*, supposedly dating from the 10<sup>th</sup> century,

on, among other texts, an account of travels by Maria Guthrie published in 1802: *A Tour, Performed in the Years 1795–6 through the Taurida, or Crimea ... by Mrs. Maria Guthrie*, ed. by Matthew Guthrie (London, 1802).

- <sup>8</sup> Complications often arise in trying to ascertain direction of borrowing and whether both borrowed from a common source. A central problem in Rus' historical and literary study is the relationship of the Igor Tale (*Slovo o Polku Igoreve*) to the 15<sup>th</sup> century work titled *Zadonshchina*. See John Fennell, "The Recent Controversy in the Soviet Union over the Authenticity of the Slovo," in *Russia: Essays in History and Literature*, edited by Lyman H. Legters (Leiden, 1972), 1–17; idem, "The Tale of Igor's Campaign," In John Fennell and Anthony Stokes, *Early Russian Literature* (London, 1974), 191–206; and Russell E. Martin and Donald Ostrowski, "Guest Editors' Introduction," in *A. A. Zimin and the Controversy over the Igor Tale* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2007), 3–17 (= *Russian Studies in History*, 45, no. 2 [2006]). For a discussion of just such a problem involving the *Complaint* (*Zhaloba*) of Isaiah of Kamenets-Podolsk and the First Letter (K1) attributed to Prince Andrei Kurbskii (1528–83), see my "'Closed Circles': Edward L. Keenan's Early Textual Work and the Semiotics of Response," *Canadian Slavonic Papers/Revue canadienne des slavistes*, 48, nos. 3–4 (2006): 254–263.
- <sup>9</sup> The best known example of the use of this principle was Lorenzo Valla's analysis of the Latin in the *Donation of Constantine* showing that it could not have been written in the 4<sup>th</sup> century (the time of Constantine the Great) but most likely in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Lorenzo Valla, *Discourse on the Forgery of the Alleged Donation of Constantine*, edited and translated by Christopher B. Coleman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922), 20–183 <<http://history.hanover.edu/texts/vallapart2.html>>. A second well-known example is Morton Smith's stylistic analysis of a letter found by him that purports to have been written by Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–ca. 217). Smith compared the writing style and word usage with other well-accepted writings of Clement, as well as Clement's contemporaries or near contemporaries Athanasius and Philo. He concluded that the letter is most likely an authentic work of the late 2<sup>nd</sup>–early 3<sup>rd</sup> century (i.e., written by Clement) rather than a forgery of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the time the copy that Smith discovered was made. Morton Smith, *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 67–77.
- <sup>10</sup> See, e.g., Alan Stevenson, *The Problem of the Missale Speciale* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1967) on using watermarks to date a printed copy.
- <sup>11</sup> See, e.g., A. Powell Davies, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York, 1956), 27–35 for an informative explanation of using paleography to date the Dead Sea scrolls.
- <sup>12</sup> Mikhail Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita*, e.g., was written between 1928 and 1940, but not published until 1966.
- <sup>13</sup> The correspondence attributed to Kurbsky and Groznyi provides an example of this principle as it has been pointed out that the issues being discussed are more in keeping with 17<sup>th</sup>-century issues than those of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Ia. S. Lur'e, "Pripiska Ivana Groznogo s Kurbskim v obshchestvennoi mysle drevnei Rusi,"

in *Perepiska Ivana Groznogo s Andreem Kurbskim*, edited by Ia. S. Lur'e and Iu. D. Rykov (Moscow: Nauka, 1981), 249.

- <sup>14</sup> The Church Council of 1564 in Moscow declared in its decision that nothing had been written about the wearing of the white cowl by the archbishops of Novgorod. This statement has been used as evidence for dating the *Tale of the White Cowl* to after 1564, because it discusses that very matter.. Donald Ostrowski, "Ironies of the Tale of the White Cowl," *Palaeoslavica*, 10, no. 2 (2002): 43–44. As a counter example, one might point out that *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, the standard version of which is generally regarded to have been written between 1800 and 1600 BC, has few or no allusions that are clearly to it as a written work in subsequent antiquity. Maureen Kovacs, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), xxiii, xxvii. Likewise, the Igor Tale, thought to have been written in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century AD, leaves no "tracks" before the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.
- <sup>15</sup> The classical scholar Andrew Runni Anderson preferred a late 7<sup>th</sup> century composition for the *Revelations of Pseudo-Methodios of Patara* on the basis that the Umayyads are mentioned in the work (*qui fuerunt filii Umee*). The Umayyad Caliphate is generally regarded to have begun in 661 with the accession of Caliph Muawiyah I. Andrew Runni Anderson, *Alexander's Gate, Gog and Magog, and the Inclosed Nations* (Cambridge, MA: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1932) 45, fn. 1. Examples of postdictions also occur in the *Revelations of Pseudo-Methodios of Patara*. See Anastasios Lolos, *Die Apokalypse des Ps.-Methodios* (Meisenheim am Glan: Verlag Anton Hain, 1976), 20–22. Another example of a postdiction occurs in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Long Redactions of the *Tale of the White Cowl*, which "predict" that Moscow will become a patriarchate. That postdiction provides an earliest possible date of 1589 for both redactions since that is when the Moscow patriarchate was established. Ostrowski, "Ironies," 44–45.
- <sup>16</sup> One of the most remarkable examples is the Russian historian Sergei M. Solov'ev, who between 1851 and his death in 1879 published 29 volumes of his *History of Russia from the Earliest Times* at the rate of one volume a year. In the field of music, Bach was known for his steady pace of productivity turning out a cantata a week for most of 27 years while Kantor of St. Thomas Church in Leipzig.
- <sup>17</sup> In the chapter on *Henry V*, Gilvary discusses how the Chorus' mention of "the general of our gracious empress / As in good time he may, from Ireland coming, / Bringing rebellion broached on his sword" could be an allusion to Thomas Butler, Earl of Ormonde in 1569–73; Sir John Norris in 1575; Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, in 1599, or Charles Blunt, Baron Mountjoy, in 1600–01 (13, 18 n. 260). In the chapter on *King Lear*, Alastair Everitt discusses how Gloucester's mention of "these late eclipses of the sun and moon" could be an allusion to such a co-occurrence in July 1590, February 1598, November/December 1601, or September/October 1605 (401). Since the publication of *Dating Shakespeare's Plays*, Hanno Wember has published an article in this journal in which he points out that the 1598 solar eclipse was the only one that was more than 90% visible in England. According to him, "Solar eclipses often go unnoticed because unless the eclipse is more than 90% of totality, it dims the sun's light no more substantially

than does a cloudy day.” Hanno Wember, “Illuminating Eclipses: Astronomy and Chronology in King Lear,” *Brief Chronicles* 2 (2010): 37. Wember goes on to make the comparison with the solar eclipses of 1601 (80%) and 1605 (85%) and bring in the percentages of their co-occurring lunar eclipse: 1598 (98%), 1601 (88%), and 1605 (58%). Gilvary, though, does raise the question whether the statement by Gloucester in *Lear* is a topical allusion to a specific co-occurrence “or to no specific co-occurrences” (14). A third example of ambiguous allusion can be found discussed in the chapter on *Macbeth* by Sally Hazelton, in which the terms “equivocator” and “equivocation” could refer to trials of Jesuit priests Edward Campion and Robert Southwell in 1581 and 1595, respectively; to the Gowrie Conspiracy of 1601; or to the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 (371–375).

- <sup>18</sup> Barbara Heliadora C. de Mendonça, “*Othello*: A Tragedy Built on a Comic Structure,” *Shakespeare Survey* 21 (1969); Louise George Clubb, “Italian Stories on the Stage,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Comedy*, ed. by Alexander Leggatt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 43–45; Pamela Allen Brown, “*Othello* Italicized: Xenophobia and the Erosion of Tragedy,” in *Shakespeare, Italy and Intertextuality*, ed. by Michele Marrapodi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); Teresa J. Faherty “*Othello dell’Arte*: The Presence of *Commedia* in Shakespeare’s Tragedy,” *Theatre Journal* 43 (1991): 179–194; Irene Musumeci, “Imagining *Othello* as *Commedia dell’arte*,” URL, 2002; Ren Draya and Richard F. Whalen, eds., *Othello, the Moor of Venice*, (Truro MA: Horatio Editions-Llumina Press, 2010); and Richard F. Whalen, “*Commedia dell’arte* in *Othello*, a Satiric Comedy Ending in Tragedy,” *Brief Chronicles* 3 (2011) (forthcoming).
- <sup>19</sup> Stephen R. Miller, ed., “*The Taming of a Shrew*”: *The 1594 Quarto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
- <sup>20</sup> Anthony Munday was identified by F. H. Mares as the “M.A.” and “A.M.” of the signed dedications. F. H. Mares, ed., *Much Ado about Nothing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).