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0521417376 - The Authorship of Shakespeare's Plays: A Socio-Linguistic Study

Jonathan Hope

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This book introduces a new method for determining the authorship of renaissance plays. Based on the rapid rate of change in English grammar in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, socio-historical linguistic evidence allows us to distinguish the hands of renaissance playwrights within play texts. The present study focuses on Shakespeare: his collaborations with Fletcher and Middleton, and the apocryphal plays. Among the plays examined are *Henry VIII*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, *Macbeth*, *Pericles*, and *Sir Thomas More*. The findings of the book allow us to be more confident about the divisions of the collaborative plays, and confirm the status of *Edward III* as a strong candidate for inclusion in the canon.

Using graphs to present statistical data in a readily comprehensible form, the book also contains a wealth of information about the history of the English language during a period of far-reaching change.

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A socio-linguistic study

Jonathan Hope

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. . . first I stood on that earthen floor
for a hundred years, while the language changed around me.

(Peter Didsbury, 'The Barn', in *The Classical Farm*,
Bloodaxe Books, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1987)

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Preface

In this book, I introduce a new method for determining the authorship of renaissance plays. This method relies on what I term socio-historical linguistic evidence. Simply put, the use of socio-historical linguistic evidence involves the determination and comparison of linguistic usages of renaissance dramatic authors: at this time the English language is changing so rapidly that it is possible to distinguish between the grammatical usages of certain writers, even though they are writing in the same place (London), and at the same time (*c.* 1590-1625).

The methodology I use to determine and compare linguistic usages is based on theories of language variation and change developed in the fields of socio-linguistics and socio-historical linguistics by William Labov and Suzanne Romaine (see Labov 1972, Romaine 1982). As I argue in the Introduction, the use of socio-historical linguistic evidence offers a more reliable means of resolving authorship debates surrounding Elizabethan and Jacobean plays than has previously been available.

This book is divided into three parts. The first part concerns the methodology of socio-historical linguistic evidence, and the grammatical features investigated in this particular study. It should be of particular interest to historical linguists and authorship scholars who want to understand the precise basis of the method. One of the strengths of socio-historical linguistic evidence as opposed to other current approaches to authorship, is that its basis should be readily appreciable by anyone familiar with the language or literature of the period: no statistical background is required.

The second part of the book consists of a series of studies of individual plays and groups of plays: first the Shakespeare–Fletcher collaborations; then the Shakespeare–Middleton collaborations; then the 1664 folio plays; then a more diverse group of apocryphal plays which have received varying degrees of support for inclusion in the Shakespeare canon. Although some refinements to the methodology set out in part I are presented in the first section of chapter 5, individual studies in part II should be clear to anyone who has read the Introduction and chapters 2 and 3.

Part III distils my findings on the authorship of individual plays, and is

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included so that those who want easy access to my conclusions can get at them quickly without having to follow the statistics and graphs of parts I and II. This section is designed for literary scholars who want to know the likely authorship of any play they happen to be working on, but do not have the time or inclination to get involved in the authorship studies themselves. They should be warned, however, that some ascriptions can be made more confidently than others: the background to the ascriptions made in this section can be found in part II.

In a work of this type, some statistics are inevitable, but this is a book written for literary and linguistic scholars, and I have tried to avoid opaque sets of figures and equations. Wherever possible, statistical information is presented graphically in the main text, or in simple percentages – those interested will find raw figures in the Statistical Appendix.

Acknowledgements

The methodology applied in this book developed from work which owes much to the influences of three people: Sylvia Adamson, Anne Barton, and Rivkah Zim. Of the three, my greatest debt is to Sylvia, who was patient and generous with a very stubborn, and completely ignorant, PhD student. I hope she will take pleasure in, and credit for, whatever is worthwhile in this book.

Many others have helped me during the writing, revising, and reworking: John Kerrigan, Willy Maley, Sophie Tomlinson, Gordon McMullan, my thesis examiners Richard Proudfoot and Susan Wright, Charles Barber, Matti Rissanen, Merja Kytö, and all at Helsinki. The method has been presented, usually with audience participation and on the spot testing, at Helsinki University, Newcastle University (Continuing Education Department), Leeds University, and King's College, London – I am grateful to all my audiences. Richard Holdsworth and Katie Wales ('thou' and 'you'), and Vivian Salmon (auxiliary 'do') answered questions so long ago they have probably forgotten. I have enjoyed a lively correspondence with Thomas Merriam.

From 1989 to 1991 the Department of Speech at Newcastle University provided me with the most supportive and stimulating academic environment possible, and Professors James and Lesley Milroy kindly read and commented on unreasonable amounts of draft thesis in a very short time. It is also a pleasure to be able to thank Lisa McEntee and Katie Reid of the Department of Speech for advice on sections of the thesis. Towards the end, Laura Wright read large sections of this book in manuscript, saving me from many, but not I fear all, indiscretions. Dream FM, Genesis FM, and RCR Radio kept me entertained through long Leeds nights.

Portions of the research presented here have been funded by the British Academy, St John's College, Cambridge, my parents, and an Earl Grey Memorial Fellowship from the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. Further research was carried out at the University of Leeds.

This book is for Dorothy and Basil Hope, with love and thanks, and especially Sylvia Adamson, who patiently guided me into the world of linguistics, and looked after my welfare when the 'real' world impinged.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used throughout the text; others are explained when they occur. In some cases plays have the same, or similar, abbreviation – in context, it is always clear which one is meant. In the list, plays marked (1) form the early Shakespeare sample (abbreviation Sh1); plays marked (2) the late Shakespeare sample (Sh2); while plays marked (3) represent a reduced Fletcher sample used in chapter 3.

<i>abbreviation</i>	<i>play</i>
Shak	Shakespeare
AW	<i>All's Well That Ends Well</i>
AC	<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> (2)
CE	<i>The Comedy of Errors</i> (1)
CO	<i>Coriolanus</i> (2)
CY	<i>Cymbeline</i> (2)
KL	<i>King Lear</i>
LL	<i>Love's Labours Lost</i> (1)
MM	<i>Measure for Measure</i>
MSN	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> (1)
MV	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i> (1)
O	<i>Othello</i>
R2	<i>Richard II</i> (1)
T	<i>The Tempest</i> (2)
TC	<i>Troilus and Cressida</i>
TG	<i>The Two Gentlemen of Verona</i> (1)
WT	<i>The Winter's Tale</i> (2)
Flet	Fletcher
B	<i>Bonduca</i> (3)
HL	<i>The Humorous Lieutenant</i>
IP	<i>The Island Princess</i>
LS	<i>The Loyal Subject</i>
ML	<i>The Mad Lover</i> (3)
MT	<i>Monsieur Thomas</i> (3)
P	<i>The Pilgrim</i>
V	<i>Valentinian</i> (3)

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<i>WG</i>	<i>The Wild Goose Chase</i>
<i>WP</i>	<i>The Woman's Prize (3)</i>
Marl	Marlowe
<i>E2</i>	<i>Edward II</i>
<i>T1</i>	<i>Tamburlaine part 1</i>
<i>T2</i>	<i>Tamburlaine part 2</i>
Dekk	Dekker
<i>IF</i>	<i>If This be Not a Good Play . . .</i>
<i>ML</i>	<i>Match Me in London</i>
<i>SH</i>	<i>The Shoemaker's Holiday</i>
<i>WB</i>	<i>The Whore of Babylon</i>
Midd	Middleton
<i>MW</i>	<i>A Mad World, My Masters</i>
<i>MT</i>	<i>Michaelmas Term</i>
<i>PH</i>	<i>The Phoenix</i>
<i>TC</i>	<i>A Trick to Catch the Old One</i>
<i>FG</i>	<i>Your Five Gallants</i>
Mass	Massinger
<i>BM</i>	<i>The Bondsman</i>
<i>DM</i>	<i>The Duke of Milan</i>
<i>MH</i>	<i>The Maid of Honour</i>
<i>RG</i>	<i>The Renegado</i>
<i>UC</i>	<i>The Unnatural Combat</i>