

***For a Good Poet's Made, as Well as Born:***  
**The Relational Ontology of Shakespeare's Genius**

**Wendy Ross**

Kingston University, United Kingdom

E-mail: [w.ross@kingston.ac.uk](mailto:w.ross@kingston.ac.uk)**Frédéric Vallée-Tourangeau**

Kingston University, United Kingdom

E-mail: [f.vallee-tourangeau@kingston.ac.uk](mailto:f.vallee-tourangeau@kingston.ac.uk)**ARTICLE INFO****Keywords:**

Creativity

Genius

Shakespeare

Cultural

Framework

Intertextuality

**Article history:**

Received 24 May 2018

Received in revised form 23 August 2018

Accepted 25 August 2018

ISSN: 2354-0036

DOI: [10.1515/ctra-2018-0002](https://doi.org/10.1515/ctra-2018-0002)**ABSTRACT**

Folk and scholarly conjectures on the nature of creative genius often focus on intrapsychic processes: The explanations centre on the person, the creator, transcending the more prosaic forces that shape everyday, routine cognition. Focusing on the alleged extraordinary character of a creator deflects attention from the emergent, distributed and relational nature of creativity. A more productive research agenda considers a range of factors, operating at different time scales, that guide and constrain the manufacture of creativity. We argue that a transactional perspective is particularly fruitful for the analysis of the dramatic work of William Shakespeare. Drama is an inherently relational art form created by the writer, the director, actors and audience. Further, Shakespeare's output is a palimpsest of classical texts and writers contemporary to him, and was shaped by practical constraints. Viewing his work as situated in a historical time period and in a dialogue with other voices gives us a fuller account of the ontological locus of his creativity.

**'THE POWER OF THE UNAIDED INDIVIDUAL MIND IS HIGHLY OVERRATED'<sup>1</sup>**

The question of what constitutes creative genius remains controversial. Barzun (1989) would argue that exceptional thinking drives the work of Leonardo or Picasso. Sternberg (1996, p. 353) asked: "why was Mozart so damn good?" and his answer discounts practice and acquired skills in favour of innate talent. Weisberg (2006) in turn would argue that more prosaic cognitive processes underlie creative achievements, even for those unanimously labelled genius. Whether the answers are couched in terms of exceptional

<sup>1</sup> Fischer, Giaccardi, Eden, Sugimoto and Ye (2005, p. 485).

processes, innate talent or acquired skills, mainstream cognitive psychology has the tendency to cast genius as the product of internal cognitive processes (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999, Glăveanu, 2015). We argue that a focus on the individual has come at the expense of a consideration of the product by which the genius is defined, and the extent to which that product is the result of personal, historical and socio-cultural forces. In contrast to the folk concept of a genius as a person who is 'other' and at odds with his or her environment and socio-cultural zeitgeist (Montuori & Purser, 1995), we suggest that even the most creative geniuses are more accurately seen as an emergent product of the dynamic relationship between the creator and the surrounding socio-cultural milieu. Further the contribution of the individual to these acts of creativity may be considerably smaller than the emphasis of much of contemporary psychological investigation suggests.

Broadening the scope of research into the ontological locus for genius beyond the individual brain and/or the personality of the creator encourages an entirely different set of research questions, seeking answers in terms of processes distributed across, and constrained by, time, society, others and the surrounding environment. In this respect, an analysis of William Shakespeare's creative genius would be particularly fruitful. Questions of subjective value in assessing both creativity and genius notwithstanding, Shakespeare is widely considered to be a creative genius: 'it is as close to a fact as we are ever likely to get in aesthetics' (Bate, 1997, p. 157). Simonton describes him as the 'prototypical literary genius' (Simonton, 1998, p. 168) and bemoans the lack of psychological investigation into his work. Bate (1997, p. 163) argues that the Romantic idea of genius 'was a category invented in order to account for what was peculiar about Shakespeare'. This Romantic view of Shakespeare has come to dominate folk ideas of 'the Bard'. A balding man holding a quill, the creativity solely a result of internal workings. In contemporary folk psychology, Shakespeare and genius are closely aligned. However, we hope to demonstrate that the drama for which Shakespeare is best known cannot be disentangled from the prevailing artistic currents and collaborations, nor can its novelty be appreciated without understanding the past from which it arose. This, in turn, will suggest a broadening of the scope beyond the narrow Romantic concept of genius which Shakespeare is so often called upon to illustrate.

### THE CHALLENGE OF DEFINITION

In contemporary definitions geniuses are outliers. However, the notion of genius as 'extraordinary intellectual power especially as manifested in creative activity'<sup>2</sup> is relatively modern and arose from the Romantics; indeed, the use of genius as an adjective is often applied anachronistically in historical case studies (Bone, 1989). The original idea of geni-

<sup>2</sup> Merriam-Webster online: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/genius>

us was a notably external phenomenon; genius was a gift from the Muses. Yet, as the word developed, genius changed from an external appendage (something someone *had*) to an internal state (something someone *is*; Glăveanu, 2010). The claims that creativity either comes from the Muses or a specific, as yet undiscovered, part of the brain are practically interchangeable. Both ideas reflect an adherence to a mythology of sole, fixed causes that are centred on the individual, and both are equally useful in generating full explanations of genius. In other words, it is as useful to suggest Shakespeare was a great tragedian because he had a difference in a certain brain region as because he was inspired by Melpomene. This is a circular argument that restricts deeper investigation of what the creator did by focusing on what he was. Creating is an action-driven process that unfolds over space and time, shaped by a complex array of factors and forces, many originating outside the creator; creativity is not the product of a stable set of features inherent to the creator.

At the heart of both of these definitions and others, however, is the notion of an individual doing creating something novel and worthy (Runco & Jaeger, 2012). Even systemic views on creativity, such as that formulated by Csikszentmihalyi (see Csikszentmihalyi, 2015, for a collection of essays on his Systems model, especially Csikszentmihalyi, 1998) discuss how the act becomes valued as creative through reference to the intersections between the triad of the field, the domain and the individual: 'The creative process involves the generation of a novel creative product *by the individual*, the evaluation of the product by the field, and the retention of selected products by addition to the domain' (Csikszentmihalyi & Sawyer 1995, p. 78, emphasis added). In this view what is considered creative is seen as a reflection of wider socio-cultural trends that shape acceptance but, crucially, the product is generated by the individual - in Simonton's words, 'the individual embodies [...] the locus of the cognitive processes that generate creative ideas' (Simonton, 2010, p. 160). In this model, a creative act is the product of both individual contribution and societal approbation of that contribution. As creativity is defined by a change in the domain, the domain is an integral part in constituting that act as creative (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). However, we argue for a stronger place for the domain rather than addressing it as 'independent layer' (Malafouris, 2008, p. 1997). We suggest that such socio-cultural trends also shape the creative act rather than just react to it; that the entanglement of the external and the internal happens at various moments in the creative timeline.

### **ENTANGLED AGENCY**

The full implications of Csikszentmihalyi's analysis and model of creativity for the individual's agency in creativity deserve exploration. As Glăveanu (2010) also suggests, the mod-

el for a collective creativity may be 'derailed' (p. 90) if we have an incomplete vision of the social and cultural milieu. Rather, Csikszentmihalyi's definitions of domain and field can be extended from their conceptualisation as a controlling influence on the individual's creative output to being intrinsically involved in it. We would broaden Csikszentmihalyi's model along the lines of Glăveanu's suggestions, so that the field becomes the 'others' and the domain, 'pre-existing culture and artefacts' (Glăveanu, 2010, p. 87). Further, we would suggest that the generator of the ideas, the individual, is better reconceptualised as multiple. These triadic elements are recast to encompass all that are involved in the production of the creative act. Such a reconceptualization becomes particularly important when we consider the work of Shakespeare because at the time of Shakespeare's work, creativity was not equated with an individual and personal ownership of creative works was fluid.

Wider society does not just validate creativity but is directly involved in its production through language, concepts, possibilities or even direct interpersonal acknowledged and unacknowledged collaboration (Glăveanu, 2015). The cognitive locus for creativity is therefore more accurately considered as distributed across various domains: the individual, sociocultural forces, historical events, the available materials and a non-negligible dose of serendipity. This is not to suggest that individual differences in talent do not exist, but rather that they may not be the greatest driver of creative genius, or at least successful creative genius. As counter-intuitive as this position appears, it is supported by empirical longitudinal studies of artistic talent such as Ericsson, Krampe and Tesch-Römer's (1993) analysis of the role of effortful and deliberate practise in musical expertise. Additionally, Csikszentmihalyi, Getzels, and Kahn's (1984) report on artists indicates that success as a genius was not determined by artistic talent but rather by an understanding of the field of the artwork.

There is a branch of creativity research which broadens the field beyond methodological individualism and encourages us to view the creative genius as situated within a time and an environment. Csikszentmihalyi's work dethroning the individual to merely one part of the triad is the most well accepted example of this and it is now common to refer to his three aspects in any consideration of creativity. Simonton (1998; 2004) developed a quantitative programme which uncovers the influence of historical events on creativity. Glăveanu's (2010) survey of the current state of creativity studies poses a harder challenge to reductionism in the study of creativity and the subsequent model of *cultural framework* expounded in that paper relocates all levels of creativity at a community and external level. As Montuori and Purser (1995) suggest, psychology considers itself as the study of individuals and resists broadening the definition beyond this. Frameworks such as these allow us to examine human behaviour when it is both situated and active.

## THE RELATIONAL ONTOLOGY OF CREATIVITY

In the main, thinking happens outside the fMRI scanner or the laboratory and an explanation of creativity will be fundamentally unsatisfactory if it ignores external factors that have not only contributed to the acts considered genius, but whose effect may be significantly greater than the properties of the individual. Creativity does not happen inside people's heads, but in the interaction between a person's thoughts and a socio-cultural context, and this interaction produces a creative act beyond the limits of the constraints of each part (Engeström, 2001). The ontology of creativity is not in terms of a feature or element possessed to various degrees by some. Creativity is not a within property, it is an in-between process (to adapt Malafouris, 2015): it is a property of “the relational space” that results from engaging with “the social, cultural and material environment” (Glăveanu, 2014, p. 38). A more comprehensive, and therefore more accurate, analysis would need to consider the role of the whole system in the production of the creative product, not just its validation as creative. Furthermore, the very concept of individual genius is predicated on a society which has a strong sense of the self as individual and presupposes a culture in which individual achievement is celebrated and idealised.

Kearney (1988) notes that the original paradigm of the art was theocratic and the artist was anonymous; art was a medium for the glory of God. However, ‘the modern movements of Renaissance, Romantic and Existentialist humanism replaced the theocentric paradigm, the mimetic craftsman, with the anthropocentric paradigm of the original *inventor*’ (Kearney, 1988, p. 12). The identification of an artist with their creative product is not a necessity but a reflection of cultural norms. This observation is echoed by Glăveanu who suggests that the He-paradigm of creativity arose in the Renaissance; here creativity is associated with individuality and outstanding naturally endowed ability whether that endowment is from a celestial source or from the biological makeup of genetic inheritance (Glăveanu, 2010). This suggests that the central place of the individual in creativity is culturally contingent. Recognising this contingency forces a perspective shift that sits uncomfortably with current models but that is also necessary to untangle the full creative process.

Shakespeare as a creative individual is surprisingly underrepresented in the historical record. The few biographical details of his life relate mainly to his business dealings and there is little contemporary evidence about his creative output. Indeed, ‘we have no idea what Shakespeare thought on any question’ (Nuttal, 2007, p. 1). Therefore, what we have left to analyse is the extant works. In the absence of biographical details, intrapsychic explanations of Shakespeare’s creativity become more problematic for psycholo-

gists. Unlike Einstein (Men et al, 2014), we do not have access to his physical brain nor do we have the letters, diaries and autobiographies that are frequently used in psychobiographies (see for example Chapters 6 [on Hardy and Ramanujan] and 7 [on Mozart] in Steptoe, 1998). In the case of Shakespeare, we are left with the product instead of the producer, forcing us to invert the traditional order of examination in cognitive psychology which focuses on the internal characteristics of the individual. Simonton recognises this dilemma with regards to Shakespeare and uses historiometric analysis to assess which aspects of form and content influence the plays' popularity as well as assessing how these intersect with historical events (Simonton, Taylor, & Cassandro, 1998; Simonton, 2004). While acknowledging the importance of external historical events on the finished product and of stylistic characteristics to an analysis of quality, this paper foregrounds the collaborative nature of Shakespeare's creativity, emphasising its dependence on the dialogue with pre-existing and contemporary creativity.

There are various limitations to the process of reverse engineering the idea of genius and creativity from biographical examples. These range from the practical need to find sufficiently robust and reliable evidence, to the risk of confirmation bias in selecting the genius; we are examining an artist or scientist or playwright who is an acknowledged genius often without recognising the key role of that acknowledgement in constituting the genius of the person. In other words, the very selection of the subjects for study possibly tells us more about the culture that has coronated these geniuses than the inner workings of those geniuses themselves. Further, the bidirectionality of the correlation between the domain and the creative act itself is rarely examined - not only does the domain approve the creative act, but the creative act can influence the domain. The interaction between domain and individual is reciprocal and heteroscalar. Disentangling such circular relations in historical case studies is impossible because of our anachronistic vantage point. However, we can highlight certain salient points. Not only was Shakespeare situated in a particularly fertile time in the history of dramatic arts, he was also trained to consciously situate himself in past tradition. As T.S. Eliot (1919; 1982) argues, the work of a poet (or any creative artist) is in a bidirectional dialogue with preceding work and any future work. These ideas from literary criticism echo ideas in cognitive science that creative acts do not spring from nowhere but are instead extensions of previous thoughts; both Eliot (1919) and Weisberg (1986, 1993) see creativity as an incremental building on the past. These standpoints are in opposition to the folk psychology of a lone creative genius working in isolation. Indeed, Weisberg's overall thesis aims to dismantle the myth of the 'lone genius' and demonstrate that works of great scientific or artistic cre-

ativity emerge from incremental changes in the pre-existing domain and cannot be understood in isolation from their past.

### IMITATIO

There are close linguistic and content parallels between Shakespeare and his sources (see Muir, 2014, for a detailed analysis of the relationship between the plays and their sources). Perhaps, the most well, known is that of the similarity of Enobarbus' description of Cleopatra on her barge in *Anthony and Cleopatra* to the description of the same Egyptian queen in Thomas North's 1579 translation of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*. Consider for example:

North: *And now for the person of herself: she was laid under a pavilion of cloth of gold of tissue, apparelled and attired like the goddess Venus, commonly drawn in picture.* (Plutarch, 1909, p. 38)

Shakespeare: *For her own person/It beggared all description. She did lie/in her pavilion, cloth-of-gold of tissue/ o'erpicturing that Venus where we see/the fancy outwork nature.* (Shakespeare, 1997, 2:2. 203-207)

However, these are not cases of plagiarism in a modern sense of text-theft. Although modern attribution scholars may use plagiarism checkers to assess similarities between texts, this textual borrowing and inspiration was considered neither plagiarism nor cheating. Such ideas of text-theft imply an ownership of words and phrases which can only arise in a society which sees the creative act as belonging to its creator. By contrast, humanist education in the tradition of Erasmus encouraged this word/phrase borrowing, teaching pupils to take phrases from classical works and keep them in a notebook ready to reuse in their own writing (Crane, 2014). This rhetorical method of *imitatio* was a conscious placing of oneself within a classical tradition and was much admired as a mark of scholarly learning. Thus, it is important to note that the creative genius of Shakespeare was not only influenced by the sources but also constrained by the cultural limits on what constituted creative genius.

To become a great Early Modern literary figure, one was obliged to enter a dialogue with the past. Montuori and Purser (1995) note that in our modern society we worry that learning by heart will undermine creativity (in their case, jazz soloists) but under the sixteenth century humanist schooling system, creativity was considered to be enhanced by this thorough knowledge of, and dialogue with, classic texts. Indeed, for Renaissance humanist scholars, all art was imitation (Clare, 2014) which echoes the Early Modern translator John Florio's (1603) borrowing from Ecclesiastes that 'there is nothing new under the sunne' (p. 12). Novelty in the strict sense of the word was impossible within this tradition. There was no concept of creativity as arising *ex nihilo* from a lone and untutored ge-

nius. In this way, the domain shapes the creative product by valuing effortful work anchored in the past.

Moreover, the past becomes a co-author of the work, providing not only plot and characters but elements of linguistics style. Bate (1997, p. 103) writes that, 'nearly all Shakespeare's plays are rewritings of one kind or another. His works were in all sorts of respects prewritten by others, just as they have been subsequently rewritten by others.' Shakespeare's genius is contingent on collaborations with the past, present and future. This borrowing from, and reworking of, sources is evident throughout all his plays whether conscious or unconscious (Muir, 2014). Thus, to suggest that Shakespeare's genius arose *ex nihilo* would be to do so against considerable evidence to the contrary. Rather, as well as informing and creating the foundation for Shakespeare's work, the past had an active input into it allowing him to exceed the necessary limitations of one individual. If we look again at the passage from Anthony and Cleopatra we can see that whereas in North, Cleopatra was 'attired like the goddess Venus, commonly drawn in picture', in Shakespeare she was 'o'erpicturing that Venus'. Here Shakespeare is consciously building on his source and creating a novel metaphor crucially rooted in, and dependent, on that source.

Shakespeare's creative genius arises not solely from his own words, but from the interplay between his text and its source; it is both reliant on and surpasses the past. Shakespeare's audience would have been aware of the classical references. In these productions, understanding arose in a collaborative space and meaning was contingent on an audience's understanding of these classical moments incorporated in the present. As well as changing the way the plays were written and performed, humanist education practices changed the way the audience saw the play. Returning to Csikszentmihalyi's argument that a creative product is found at the intersection of individual, domain and field, with the spread of Erasmusian pedagogy, we see a demonstration of domain and field - the dialogue with the past shaped the domain and the product that was produced as well as the reaction to it.

### **COLLABORATIVE AND CONTINGENT CREATIVITY**

Shakespeare's creativity was not just rooted in the past. A close analysis of the domain and field of Early Modern drama will indicate just how fertile a ground it was for the types of play that proliferated in that period. Drama of all periods is, by its very nature, a collaborative genre which goes beyond the dialogue between reader and writer that emerges in other forms of fiction. A play is shaped by the writer, director and actors, and the final product is contingent on the actions of this broad, interlinked, constituency. This can be clearly evidenced by the revivals and reconceptualization of not only Early Modern drama



but even contemporary plays which are reimagined to reflect contemporary events. Additionally, a play is also reconstituted in every performance with the addition of the audience. The plays we read, even the plays we see performed in the present, are not the plays that Shakespeare wrote. Those plays as artefacts were lost when they ended; they had a singular existence, captured by a set of contingent parameters. Even a scant knowledge of the ways the plays were turned from performed piece to printed text from the writer's draft, some memorisation and then interventions from the printers, undermines the relationship between the play and the written text (see Petersen, 2016; Dahl, 2016).

Moreover, just as there have been few modern productions that have completely respected the text, it seems unlikely that contemporary productions would have been any more respectful. This is what Potter (2014, p. 468) calls the 'contingent side of [Shakespeare's] theater', suggesting that the multiplicity of performances is a reflection of the text's flexibility. It is not only conceivable but probable that the play scripts we have inherited from the quartos and the folios refer to an actual play that was never performed as written. It is this that Williams (2018, p. 134) hones in on when he suggests that the plays we have received are not exact; that any evidence 'is not made up of chemical formulae but of the messy strugglings of human creativity'. When we speak about the Shakespeare's dramatic genius, Shakespeare here does not signify the individual that could be subjected to neuroscientific tests or psychometric profiling; instead it is a shorthand for the constitutive elements of the performance enacted by actors, directors and spectators.

The modern desire to attribute authorship to one sole individual and grant him ownership of the text is anachronistic when applied to the plays of the Shakespearean stage. Shakespeare's work was shaped by both friendly and rival sources and playwrights. Indeed, Masten (1997, p. 32) writes that 'collaboration was the Renaissance English theatre's dominant mode of textual reproduction'. It is notable that an entire field of study has arisen to discuss the authorship of the plays, disentangling the phraseology and words that can be attributed to different single authors from this period. Collaborations are woven in to the very fabric of the texts we have inherited. Jowett (2013, p. 88) lists the dramatists with whom computational stylistics would suggest Shakespeare worked:

'Christopher Marlowe, George Peele, Henry Chettle, Thomas Dekker, Thomas Heywood, Thomas Middleton, George Wilkins and John Fletcher. If he revised *The Spanish Tragedy*, he worked on a play that was also revised by Ben Jonson. The two posthumous adaptations [*Macbeth* and *Measure for Measure*] were undertaken by Middleton'

This collaboration was both conscious and unconscious. Shakespeare was in a transitional period in relation to both the dramatic form and the idea of ownership of a play-

texts. Once a text was bought it was held by the playing company that performed it and altered by the writers of that company so that each text became a palimpsest of sorts.

Beyond deliberate collaboration, either in concert with the main writer or a 'non-consensual form of collaboration' (Jowett, 2013, p. 90), Shakespeare's work was marked by informal collaboration. This intertextuality was not the deliberate, conscious word borrowings of *imitatio*, rather a rich idiolect of the friends and rivals that would have informed the written and performed work. Marlowe and Shakespeare's influence on each other (until the former's dramatic death) is stark enough that there are still many that are convinced that Marlowe is the better candidate for authorship of the plays commonly attributed to Shakespeare. Clare (2014, p. 20) refers to this intertextuality as 'dynamic exchange' and suggests a critical methodology which 'does not privilege the agency of the playwright, the reader/auditor, or the text itself'. Intertextuality is a constituent part of the drama itself and the individual as described by Csikszentmihalyi (1998) cannot easily be disentangled from those in his immediate social circle. For this reason, this part of the creative triad is best considered as multiple.

The collaborations were not only with other playwrights but also with directors and actors. Mardock and Rasmussen (2013) demonstrate that an analysis of love comedies of the 1590s suggests that there were two boy actors playing female parts - one tall and fair and one short and dark - given the number of female pairings in plays from this period which have these characteristics. Moreover, they argue that the excision of Innogen from *Much Ado About Nothing* which 'critics usually explain [...] in terms of literary craft' (p. 114) instead reflects the more practical considerations of casting for a company that had no more than four boy actors. Yet, this practical choice shaped the relationship between Beatrice and Hero and possibly enhanced its dramatic effectiveness. The change here that wrought interesting dramatic tensions in female relationships were potentially made for practical reasons rather than reflecting authorial intent.

Also, particularly important was the actor Robert Burbage, of whom Wells (2006, p. 43) writes '[his] special talents undoubtedly did much to influence Shakespeare's choice of materials for plays and his characterisation of many leading roles'. This intimate knowledge that Shakespeare had of the actors in his company and his close, friendly relations with them undermine the attribution of these texts to a sole literary genius; the plays grew in the space between the actors and the playwright. That 'no other dramatist of the period had so long and close and relationship with a single acting company' (Wells, 2006, p. 5) may even be a far greater explanation of Shakespeare's genius than any intrapsychic one.

## CONCLUSION

Since Barthes (1977; 1994) killed off the author, literary criticism has battled with how much of the writer to put in the text and how to reconcile the sterility of deconstructionism with the production of living texts by a living author. The New Historicists have firmly situated literary texts in the time and space in which they were written, and the writer is often reduced to a conduit for contemporaneous political forces (see Nuttall, 2007). Mainstream cognitive psychology, on the other hand, resists considering human behaviour and products as anything other than the actions of a decontextualized fully agentic individual. This assumes a fixed, inviolable and immutable unit with inputs and outputs that can be operationalised.

It is clearly discomfoting and unsatisfactory to go to the furthest extreme and erase human agency and individual differences from the creative process (see March, 2017, for a phenomenological description of the anxiety evoked by losing agency in creativity). Furthermore, it still does not explain all the factors in extreme outliers. After all, however scant the biographical evidence, there was a playwright called Shakespeare whose influence was immense, and it could be argued that a discussion such as the above dismisses the importance of his own agency in creating his work. This tension between individual and socio-cultural contribution is described by Glăveanu as a root paradox in creativity (Glăveanu, 2018).

Nevertheless, a recognition that an individual writer does not write in isolation seems particularly important for an analysis of the works of Shakespeare. While our brief case study of Shakespeare's creativity is anchored in terms of a set of historical and cultural coordinates, we believe the analysis showcases the heuristic value of framing ontological questions about creativity and genius in relational terms which may be fruitfully applied to other outputs or persons deemed creative. Current conceptualisations of creativity assume a pure and individual author, rather than a writer whose thinking and creativity was contingent on, and shaped by, heteroscalar forces and contemporary creative energies and synergies. While his genius must occur in the space beyond the overlap of socio-cultural forces, it is still important to assess the overlap because this may be larger than we initially assume. Analysis of Shakespeare's style at the microscopic level using statistical stylistic markers suggests that 'his work is unusual if anything for its constant closeness to the average use of words at the time.' (Rosso, Craig, & Moscato, 2009, p. 925); perhaps even his mundanity is what makes him so appealing. This would seem to support Glăveanu's suggestion that the paradox can be resolved by an 'immersed detachment' in which the creator is 'well-connected to his or her society or culture' (Glăveanu, 2018, p.3).

Indeed, as we examine more closely the historical appeal of Shakespeare, and the validation of the field, it is the openness (Eco, 1962; 1989) of his work which allows it to be manipulated in such a way as to provide a vehicle for subsequent generations to project their own anxieties and preoccupations. Shakespeare's literary reputation was forged by others, rather than himself, and the biography of the creator is notoriously slippery enough to allow other figures to be considered as authorship candidates. So, it is, perhaps, Shakespeare's very absence as a creative individual that enables us to endow him with such genius.

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**Corresponding author at:** Wendy Ross, Department of Psychology, Kingston University, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey, UNITED KINGDOM, KT1 2EE.  
E-mail: [w.ross@kingston.ac.uk](mailto:w.ross@kingston.ac.uk)

