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TURN-TAKING IN SHAKESPEARE

OLIVER MORGAN

OXFORD TEXTUAL PERSPECTIVES

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Turn-Taking in Shakespeare

GENERAL EDITORS

Elaine Treharne   Greg Walker

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Oxford Textual Perspectives is a new series of informative and provocative studies focused upon texts (conceived of in the broadest sense of that term) and the technologies, cultures, and communities that produce, inform, and receive them. It provides fresh interpretations of fundamental works, images, and artefacts and of the vital and challenging issues emerging in English literary studies. By engaging with the contexts and materiality of the text—its production, transmission, and reception history—and by frequently testing and exploring the boundaries of the notions of text and meaning themselves, the volumes in the series question conventional frameworks and provide innovative interpretations of both canonical and less well-known works. These books will offer new perspectives, and challenge familiar ones, both on and through texts and textual communities. While they focus on specific authors, periods, and issues, they nonetheless scan wider horizons, addressing themes and provoking questions that have a more general application to literary studies and cultural history as a whole. Each is designed to be as accessible to the non-specialist reader as it is fresh and rewarding for the specialist, combining an informative orientation in a landscape with detailed analysis of the territory and suggestions for further travel.

Elaine Treharne and *Greg Walker*

For my wife

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Like me, this book has taken the scenic route. Many kind strangers have helped it on its way, only a few of whom can be acknowledged here. For all, our thanks.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ESTC	*English Short Title Catalogue* (British Library), http://estc.bl.uk/.
Folio, F	*Mr. VVilliam Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies* (London: Isaac Iaggard and Ed. Blount, 1623).
NOS	*The Complete Works: Modern Critical Edition*, ed. by Gary Taylor, Gabriel Egan, John Jowett, and Terri Bourus, The New Oxford Shakespeare (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). All quotations from Shakespeare are from this edition unless otherwise stated.
ODNB	*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press), http://www.oxforddnb.com/.
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford University Press), http://www.oed.com/.
OLD	*Oxford Latin Dictionary*, ed. by P. G. W. Glare, 2nd edn, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
Q1, Q2	First quarto, second quarto.
TLN	Through-line numbers as given in *The First Folio of Shakespeare: The Norton Facsimile*, ed. by Charlton Hinman, 2nd edn (New York: Norton, 1996).

Introduction

Charles Dickens had a genius for conversational abstraction. Take Mr and Mrs Tibbs, for example, proprietors of 'The Boarding-House' in one of his earliest stories:

> Mrs. Tibbs was always talking. Mr. Tibbs rarely spoke; but if it were at any time possible to put in a word, just when he should have said nothing at all, he did it. Mrs. Tibbs detested long stories, and Mr. Tibbs had one, the conclusion of which had never been heard by his most intimate friends. It always began, 'I recollect when I was in the volunteer corps, in eighteen hundred and six,'—but as he spoke very slowly and softly, and his better half very quickly and loudly, he rarely got beyond the introductory sentence.[1]

It tells us something about this couple that Mr Tibbs served in the volunteer corps—an early forerunner of the Territorial Army. It tells us something that he did so in 1806—some thirty years before 'The Boarding-House' was published, when the Napoleonic threat was at its height. It tells us something, too, that he is keen to mention these facts in company. But the particular story that Mr Tibbs is unable to finish tells us little in comparison with the fact that he is unable to finish it. More important than the content of the Tibbses' conversation is the pattern into which it habitually falls. Rather than provide us with a specimen of their talk, Dickens begins by sketching it in the abstract.

He is able to do so because whenever people talk to one another there are at least two things going on at once. First, and most obviously, there is an exchange of speech. Second, and slightly less obviously, there is a negotiation about how that exchange is organized—about whose turn it is to talk at any given moment. These two things are not separate—it is largely through speech that opportunities to speak are apportioned—but they are separable, as the example from 'The Boarding-House' shows. What I am calling the 'shape' of a conversation is the outcome of this negotiation. It is a record of who spoke when, for how long, and to whom. It matters because it tells us how the parties conducted themselves in the joint task of managing the conversational floor, what sort of etiquette seems to have been in operation when they did so, the social role taken by each of them, and where, if at all, negotiations may have heated up or broken down. Dickens is extremely alert to the significance of this second, organizational, level of conversational activity. His dialogue is accompanied by a running commentary on how the characters manage the exchange of turns at talk. He often introduces a character, as he introduces the Tibbses, with a brief sketch of their interactional habits—by providing the reader with a map, as it were, with which to navigate their contributions to the dialogue.

---

[1] Charles Dickens, *Sketches by 'Boz': Illustrative of Every-Day Life and Every-Day People*, 2 vols (London: John Macrone, 1836), I, pp. 148–9.

The reader of Shakespeare gets no such assistance. Shakespearean drama has no narrator and very few stage directions. If the Tibbses were minor characters in *Hamlet*, we would simply have to notice that Mr Tibbs always manages to speak 'just when he should have said nothing at all' and that Mrs Tibbs always cuts him off. In the case of the Tibbses, this would not be difficult. Their mode of interacting has all the clarity of caricature—together they form a kind of conversational grotesque, like a pigmy married to a giant. But the principle holds for Shakespeare's own characters, in ways that are often more subtle. When and how much they speak, what prompts or prevents them from doing so, to whom, in what circumstances, and why—how they conduct themselves, that is, in the ongoing negotiation that structures any exchange of speech—these are things that we are shown but not told. They are just as important, however, to an understanding of Hamlet's relationship with Gertrude, or of Lear's relationships with his daughters, as they are to an understanding of the relationship between Mr and Mrs Tibbs. The difference is that Dickens' dialogue is self-interpreting in this respect, while Shakespeare's awaits interpretation.

What we might expect, then, given the abundance of writing on Shakespeare, is a rich history of critical engagement with the patterning of his dialogue. No such history exists. Shakespeare's brilliance as a poet and a playwright has long overshadowed his brilliance as a writer of dialogue—his extraordinary grasp of what Erving Goffman has called the 'traffic rules' of interaction.[2] As Lynne Magnusson has pointed out, 'it seems odd that we have so few shared terms or concepts to help us, as theatre-goers, readers or actors, to understand and talk about dialogue as opposed to single-voiced poems or speeches'.[3] This is true of dialogue in general, and it is true, in particular, of dialogical form. Most students of literature encounter the term 'stichomythia' at school, but this is the only such term they encounter. It is as if our ability to describe poetic form were restricted to recognizing the presence or absence of heroic couplets.

The aim of this book is to put that right—to do for Shakespeare's dialogue what Dickens does for his own: to pay attention, that is, to its patterns and shapes and contours, and to map and abstract and explain them. At the heart of the project lies a simple act of redescription. That part of the dramatic text which has traditionally been referred to as a 'speech'—the string of words which follows a character's name and which we therefore understand to be spoken by that character—I propose to rechristen a 'turn at talk'. Implicit in this minor terminological shift is a major shift of perspective. Instead of reading Shakespearean dialogue as a series of rhetorical set-pieces—lengthy, poetic, persuasive, a treasure-trove for auditioning actors and aspiring anthologists—it encourages us to read it *as* dialogue. Adopting the turn as the basic unit of dialogical analysis foregrounds the negotiated, interactive quality of dramatic language. It makes visible that second, less obvious, level of communicative activity that gives shape to the first. Literary criticism, William Empson has suggested, is largely a matter of being able to identify 'the right handle to take hold of the bundle'.[4] My central claim is this: when the bundle is Shakespearean dialogue, the right handle is the turn at talk.

---

[2] Erving Goffman, *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behaviour* (New York: Anchor, 1967), p. 12.

[3] Lynne Magnusson, 'Dialogue', in *Reading Shakespeare's Dramatic Language*, ed. by Sylvia Adamson, et al. (London: Thomson Learning, 2001), pp. 130–43 (p. 131). See also the same author's *Shakespeare and Social Dialogue: Dramatic Language and Elizabethan Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 4, 183–4n.

[4] William Empson, 'The Structure of Complex Words', *The Sewanee Review*, 56 (1948), 230–50 (p. 239).

The term itself is not new. It has a long history of popular usage that stretches back at least as far as Shakespeare.[5] In the last forty years—since the publication of Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson's ground-breaking study, 'A Simplest Systematics for the Organization of Turn-Taking for Conversation'—the turn-taking model has become a standard tool of interactional linguistics.[6] Rather than simply adopt this model, however, I will be using it to develop a distinctively literary critical approach to turn-taking—an approach that owes as much to Emrys Jones as it does to Erving Goffman or Harvey Sacks. But before we start staking out academic territory and splitting theoretical hairs, it is worth looking at a couple of examples. If attention to turn-taking can help us to notice things in Shakespeare's dialogue that we might not otherwise have noticed, what are they?

My first example comes from 5.1 of *Measure for Measure*, in which Vincentio, Duke of Vienna, is petitioned by a young woman, Isabella.

DUKE [. . .] What would you say?
ISABELLA I am the sister of one Claudio,
Condemned upon the act of fornication
To lose his head, condemned by Angelo.
I, in probation of a sisterhood,

---

[5] According to the OED, the root of the English verb 'turn' is the Latin verb *tornare* ('to turn in a lathe, round off'), which survives in English, as in many other European languages, in the more inclusive sense of 'rotate' (without the need for a lathe). The noun is derived partly from the verb and partly from the French noun *tour*. By the thirteenth century it was being used to refer to a 'movement, device, or trick, by which a wrestler attempts to throw his antagonist' (*turn*, n. 20), presumably because throwing someone to the ground involves a violent act of rotation. This usage then seems to have expanded: first to cover everything that happens from the start of a bout of wrestling to the moment at which one of the wrestlers is thrown, then to cover a spell or bout of any other activity—a 'go' at doing something (*turn*, n. 25a). These two strands of meaning—that of rotation and that of a 'go'—combined in the late fourteenth century to produce the sense relevant here, a sense clumsily defined by the OED as 'the time for action or proceeding of any kind which comes round to each individual of a series in succession' (*turn*, n. 28a). The word began to be applied to acts of speech at some point between Chaucer and Shakespeare, who uses it in this way only once (*Titus Andronicus*, 5.3.118), although examples are increasingly common during his lifetime.

[6] Harvey Sacks, Emanuel A. Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson, 'A Simplest Systematics for the Organization of Turn-Taking for Conversation', *Language*, 50 (1974), 696–735.

> Was sent to by my brother, one Lucio
> As then the messenger.
> LUCIO   That's I, an't like your grace.
> I came to her from Claudio, and desired her
> To try her gracious fortune with Lord Angelo
> For her poor brother's pardon.
> ISABELLA   That's he indeed.
> DUKE [*to Lucio*] You were not bid to speak.
> LUCIO   No, my good lord,
> Nor wished to hold my peace.
> DUKE I wish you now, then. Pray you take note of it;
> And when you have a business for yourself,
> Pray God you then be perfect.
> LUCIO   I warrant your honour.
> DUKE The warrant's for yourself; take heed to't.
> ISABELLA This gentleman told somewhat of my tale—
> LUCIO Right.
> DUKE It may be right, but you are i'the wrong
> To speak before your time.—Proceed.
> ISABELLA   I went
> To this pernicious caitiff deputy [. . .]
>
> (5.1.68–88)

What Shakespeare could have written here is a single extended speech in which Isabella complains to the duke of her treatment at the hands of his deputy. All the plot requires at this point is that Angelo be publicly accused. A less gifted dramatist, or even a younger Shakespeare, might have left it at that. Mature Shakespeare crafts an intricate three-way scuffle over who speaks when. Notice how Isabella—ostensibly the protagonist of the scene—quickly becomes sidelined by the two men, both of whom appear to think they are helping her. Lucio interrupts her story to supply a detail that she is perfectly capable of supplying herself. Vincentio steps in to silence Lucio but only succeeds in amplifying and extending the disruption. Notice, too, how his intervention at line 78, 'You were not bid to speak', is spoken, as it were, 'across' Isabella, ignoring her turn to reply directly to Lucio. Rather than cutting the interloper out of the exchange, Vincentio puts him squarely at its centre. There is a contradiction, in other words, between the meaning of his speech as a speech and its implications as a conversational move. ‘You were not bid to speak’ functions something like ‘Will you please be quiet?’—seeming both to forbid a response and to demand one. The response it demands is an apology. Lucio need only say ‘Sorry, I’ll shut up now’ and we can get back to the business at hand. Only a fool could misunderstand this, but Lucio *is* a fool (or, at least, a ‘fantastic’). So he responds to the slight contradiction in the duke’s behaviour by behaving in an even more contradictory manner himself. On the one hand, he is entirely acquiescent, offering assurances and agreeing with whatever the duke says. On the other hand, he keeps answering back, no matter how clear it is made that the correct response is silence. Lucio is the conversational equivalent of a screwed-up ball of Sellotape—every attempt to remove him from one finger ends with him stuck to another.

The punchline comes with his shortest, and most apparently acquiescent, turn: ‘Right’. Timing, we are told, is the secret of comedy. The script may provide the words, but the comedian provides the performance. The kind of timing possessed by Morecambe and Wise or Tony Hancock is not something that can be written down. And perhaps this is so. But look again at the timing of Lucio’s ‘Right’:

LUCIO I warrant your honour.
DUKE The warrant’s for yourself; take heed to’t.
ISABELLA This gentleman told somewhat of my tale—
LUCIO Right.
DUKE It may be right, but you are i’the wrong [. . .]

At line 83 the duke tells him, for a third time, to shut up. And for one turn Lucio seems to have done so. Then, just as the dialogue appears to have moved on, up he pops to reignite the whole tedious argument. And sandwiched between the duke’s exasperated imperative and Lucio’s infuriating reply is Isabella’s observation that ‘This gentleman told somewhat of my tale’—another remark to which ‘Right’ could plausibly be a response. It is as if Lucio is deliberately exploiting this ambiguity—appearing to reply to Isabella in order to have the last word over Vincentio. He uses her words as cover, peeping out from behind her turn to fire one last dart at the duke. It’s a tiny, tiny effect—a little patch of yellow at the corner of the canvas—but it is characteristic of the skill and subtlety with which Shakespearean dialogue is crafted.

I want to contrast this with something a little larger, an effect that resonates across two plays and upon which hangs the fate of a kingdom. In each of the two parts of *Henry IV* there is a reconciliation scene between the king and the Prince of Wales. The first comes in 3.2 of *1 Henry IV*, with the crown facing a major rebellion in the north of England. Dismayed by Hal's licentiousness, the king summons him for 'some private conference' (3.2.2). Alone together for the first and only time in the play, the two men exchange long and, for the most part, perfectly formed speeches—the father rebuking his wayward son, the son apologizing and promising to reform. In contrast to the undignified squabbling of the example from *Measure for Measure*, this is high and serious drama. In place of the rapid and chaotic exchange of turns, we have a stately and dignified alternation. There is just one crack in this otherwise smooth interactional surface:

KING [. . .]
And in that very line, Harry, standest thou;
For thou hast lost thy princely privilege
With vile participation. Not an eye
But is a-weary of thy common sight,
Save mine, which hath desired to see thee more,
Which now doth that I would not have it do—
Make blind itself with foolish tenderness.
PRINCE I shall hereafter, my thrice-gracious lord,
Be more myself.
KING For all the world,
As thou art to this hour was Richard then,
When I from France set foot at Ravenspurgh,
And even as I was then is Percy now.
(3.2.85–96)

Henry has been developing a double analogy—between Hal and Richard II on the one hand, and himself and Hotspur on the other—for fifty lines before Hal speaks and will continue to do so for thirty lines afterwards. At the height of his tirade, he suddenly grinds to a halt. One explanation for the rhetorical glitch is that his voice fails him—the same foolish tenderness that 'make[s] blind' his eye makes dumb his tongue, and Hal takes advantage of the pause to offer a response.

Another explanation is that the sight of his father so moved is too much for the prince. He interrupts the old man because he simply can't bear to hear any more. Either way, the promise to reform is premature. The king ignores it and picks up in his next turn exactly where he left off in his last. The two turns constitute a single speech, and Hal must listen to the whole of it before any promises or apologies will be heard.

Compare this to their second reconciliation, in 4.3 of *2 Henry IV*, as Henry lies dying. Dazed by insomnia, harassed by rebels, and despairing of his son, the king suffers an 'apoplexy' (4.3.130). Recovered slightly but nearing his end, he is carried into a side room, where his crown is set on a pillow. Hal arrives late (as usual) and, left alone with the sleeping king, begins to soliloquize. Within twelve lines he has concluded that his father is dead, within twenty he has crowned himself, and within thirty he has walked out of the room with the crown still on his head. But Henry is not dead, and he wakes up as soon as Hal has left. So the second reconciliation begins with another lengthy tirade, this time on the theme of the young man's impatience for his father's death. Once again it stops short:

> KING HENRY [...]
> O my poor kingdom, sick with civil blows!
> When that my care could not withhold thy riots,
> What wilt thou do when riot is thy care?
> O, thou wilt be a wilderness again,
> Peopled with wolves, thy old inhabitants.
> PRINCE HARRY O pardon me, my liege! But for my tears,
> The moist impediments unto my speech,
> I had forestalled this dear and deep rebuke
> Ere you with grief had spoke and I had heard
> The course of it so far. There is your crown;
> *[He returns the crown]*
> And He that wears the crown immortally
> Long guard it yours!
>
> (13[4.3].263–76)

For the first five words of his speech, it sounds as though Hal is apologizing for interrupting his father. It turns out, however, that he is apologizing for not having interrupted him sooner. He was unable to do so because, in a reversal of what happened in the previous play, it is now the son that is choked with grief. Never having thought to hear his father speak again, Hal cuts short the next thing his father says. As Emrys Jones has pointed out, the prince's unluckily timed entry and exit—coming in just after his father has dropped off, finding him 'dead', and then leaving just before he wakes up—'are a means of re-enacting their whole relationship [. . .] They have, so to speak, been missing each other all their lives'.[7] And this habit of somehow mistiming things, of first walking past and then awkwardly bumping into each other, is re-enacted again in the shape of the dialogue. There is a form of dramatic synecdoche at work here, in which the fumbled transitions between two speakers are made to stand for the larger transition between two kings. And not only does this resonate back to the earlier play: it also resonates outwards into Elizabethan society. Anxiety over the succession dominated the last years of Elizabeth's reign, as it had dominated the reign of her father before her.[8] The 1534 Act of Succession outlines the various treasonable activities 'whereby your highness [Henry VIII] might be disturbed or interrupted of the crown of this realm'.[9] Interrupting his father 'of the crown' is precisely what Hal has just done, by placing it, prematurely, on his own head. And he apologizes for this interruption by interrupting his father's speech. The metaphor works because hereditary monarchy, like dialogue, is a form of turn-taking. Hal is the next speaker in the great conversation of state, waiting—with an awkward mixture of dread and impatience—for his father to fall silent.

Taken together, these two examples show just how sensitively Shakespearean dialogue is shaped to meet the demands of the dramatic moment. Either scene could have been written straight (as it were) without the extra layer of complexity that the wrangling over speaking rights provides. But Shakespeare, like any good dramatist, intuitively thinks in turn-taking terms. He understands the mechanics of conversation and exploits them dramatically, for small effects as well as large.

---

[7] Emrys Jones, *Scenic Form in Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 38.

[8] For a useful summary of the issues involved, see E. W. Ives, 'Tudor Dynastic Problems Revisited', *Historical Research*, 81 (2008), 255–79.

[9] *The Tudor Constitution: Documents and Commentary*, ed. by G. R. Elton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), p. 10.

There is a constant counterpoint in his work between dialogical form and linguistic content, between what is said and when. What the two examples also show is the kind of analysis that attention to such details can yield, even without the benefit of a precise technical vocabulary or an elegant theoretical apparatus. One aim of this book is to provide such a vocabulary and propose such an apparatus. But these are a boon rather than a necessity. As soon as the basic point is grasped—that as well as scripting the words the characters say to each other, Shakespeare also scripts an ongoing negotiation between them about whose turn it is to talk—then the kind of analysis I have provided in this chapter becomes possible. More than that, it becomes natural. Any socialized human being has a lifetime's experience of how turn-taking functions. They may not be able to articulate it clearly, but that experience is nonetheless central to the way in which they read drama. All that is lacking is a name to call it by.

* * *

If the claims I am making on behalf of this approach are justified then it would seem odd that critics have not already adopted it. More than forty years has passed since the publication of Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson's 'Simplest Systematics'. This study, which inadvertently founded the branch of linguistics now known as 'conversation analysis', has become the most frequently cited article in the history of *Language* (the official journal of the Linguistic Society of America), and the model of conversation it proposes has been adopted by researchers in a variety of other fields.[10] In spite of its obvious relevance to the study of dramatic dialogue, however, it has had little impact on critics and editors of Shakespeare. The phrases 'turn-taking' and 'turn at talk' appear only twice in 123,000 annotated entries to the World Shakespeare Bibliography Online.[11] Full-text searches of *Shakespeare Survey*, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, and *Shakespeare* yield a combined total of three further articles, one of which is a review.[12] These facts need explaining.

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[10] Brian D. Joseph, 'The Editor's Department: Reviewing Our Contents', *Language*, 79 (2003), 461–3.

[11] Magdalena Adamczyk, 'Shakespeare's Wordplay Gender-Wise: Punning as a Marker of Male-Female Relationships', in *Topics in Shakespeare's English*, ed. by Piotr Kakietek and Joanna Nykiel (Czestochowa: Wydawnictwo Wyzszej Szkoly Lingwistycznej, 2010), pp. 185–200; and John Haddon, 'Talk in Life and *Othello*', *Use of English*, 56 (2005), 202–21.

Most scholars who work on language in Shakespeare are more interested in classical rhetoric than contemporary linguistics—in the analytical tools available to Shakespeare rather than those available to us. Above all, they are interested in what he is likely to have learned at school.[13] This makes sense, of course, and such work is extremely valuable for understanding how Shakespeare came to write in the way he did and how his contemporaries might have understood his writing. It is no doubt true that 'critical sophistication in this period comes in the form of rhetorical analysis' and that the study of rhetoric can help us to 'think [ourselves] back into a Renaissance frame of mind'.[14] But it does not follow from this that rhetorical analysis is able to account for everything that happens in a Shakespeare play. What rhetoric theorizes is oratory, not conversation. It can help us to understand how individual speeches perform acts of persuasion but not how a group of characters exchanges turns at talk or why this particular character is the one making a speech in the first place. I will return, in some detail, to the question of exactly what rhetoric does and does not tell us about dramatic dialogue. All that matters here is to recognize the shortfall. Literary sophistication often exceeds—or at least precedes—our ability as critics to describe it. Which is not to suggest that we should abandon historicist approaches to Shakespeare's language, only that we should recognize their limitations. As well as trying to recover Renaissance ways of thinking, we should be taking advantage of the fact that we are no longer bound by them.

There are critics, of course, who seek to do just that—to bring the insights of contemporary linguistics to bear upon early modern texts—but few such critics work on dialogue. Literary linguistics remains a minority sport, especially among Shakespeareans, and linguistic approaches to literature still tend to focus, like linguistics itself, on the sentence as the fundamental unit of analysis—on the syntactical and lexical choices that constitute style. This tendency is embodied in the term 'stylistics', often used as a shorthand for linguistically informed literary analysis. Shakespeare is studied as a stylist rather than a dramatist, with the emphasis on linguistic texture rather than dialogical form. Critics who make use of less-traditional approaches, such as conversation analysis or pragmatics, are a minority within a minority. They do exist, however, and it will be necessary to position my own work in relation to theirs.

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[12] Lynne Magnusson, '"Voice Potential": Language and Symbolic Capital in *Othello*', *Shakespeare Survey*, 50 (1997), 91–9; William Dodd, review of *Shakespeare and Social Dialogue: Dramatic Language and Elizabethan Letters* by Lynne Magnusson, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 52 (2001), 154–7; Roderick Hugh McKeown, '"I Will Stop Your Mouth": The Regulation of Jesting in *Much Ado About Nothing*', *Shakespeare*, 11 (2015), 1–22.

[13] See, for example, Colin Burrow, 'Shakespeare and Humanistic Culture', in *Shakespeare and the Classics*, ed. by Charles Martindale and A. B. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 9–27.

[14] Neil Rhodes, *The Power of Eloquence and English Renaissance Literature* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), p. vii; Brian Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 283.

This book differs from previous accounts of turn-taking in dramatic dialogue in two main ways. It is simultaneously narrower in focus and more broadly inclusive—narrower in focus because it does not present the turn-taking model as part of a larger theoretical apparatus, more broadly inclusive because it is addressed to a general Shakespearean audience. Most literary linguists, if they mention turn-taking at all, do so only in passing. It tends to be offered as part of a package deal of pragmatic tools—thrown in for free when one makes a more substantial purchase, such as speech act theory, politeness theory, or Gricean implicature.[15] The two most comprehensive accounts currently available are those provided by Keir Elam (fifteen pages in a book of over three hundred) and Vimala Herman (a single article, later republished as part of a monograph).[16] In purely quantitative terms, this is not enough space to do the subject justice. Turn-taking is as fundamental to dialogue as rhythm is to verse, and Shakespeare's handling of it is virtuosic. Dialogical form is the undiscovered country of Shakespearean criticism, and it will take more than a handful of articles and half-chapters to map it with any sort of precision.

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[15] See, for example, Mick Short, *Exploring the Language of Poems, Plays, and Prose*, Learning about Language (London: Longman, 1996); Jonathan Culpeper, *Language and Characterisation in Plays and Texts: People in Plays and Other Texts*, Textual Explorations (Harlow: Longman, 2001).

[16] Keir Elam, *Shakespeare's Universe of Discourse: Language-Games in the Comedies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 185–99; Vimala Herman, 'Dramatic Dialogue and the Systematics of Turn-Taking', *Semiotica*, 83 (1991), 97–122. This became the second chapter of a monograph, *Dramatic Discourse: Dialogue as Interaction in Plays* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 76–121.

The package-deal approach to literary pragmatics also creates a second problem. By embedding the turn-taking model within a larger theoretical framework, these writers imply that there is a necessary connection between the two—that adopting one means adopting the other. This is not the case. The recognition that dialogue is best understood as a series of turns at talk need not commit us to any further theoretical assumptions. We can adopt the turn as the unit of dialogical analysis without needing to import the entire apparatus of conversation analysis, or pragmatics, or signing ourselves up as card-carrying discourse analysts. Which is not to say that such approaches have nothing to contribute to the study of literary dialogue—only that there is something to be gained from considering turn-taking as a subject in its own right. One weakness of much work in this area, I want to suggest, is its ambition. Like a teenager bringing in the shopping, the stylistician tries to carry across too many linguistic tools in one trip. The instinct is understandable, but its effect can be counterproductive. By trying to do too much at once, we make it hard to do anything properly. The reader interested in speech act theory, politeness, the cooperative principle, repair, or forms of address will find these subjects amply and ably discussed elsewhere.[17]

The second way in which this book differs from earlier work on turn-taking in dramatic dialogue is the extent to which it is prepared to adapt—rather than simply adopt—the standard linguistic model. This is partly a question of translation. Conversation analysts speak a highly specialized academic dialect, and I want to make it possible for the reader to benefit from their insights without having to learn their language. The problem seems to get worse, rather than better, when

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[17] See, for starters, Stanley E. Fish, 'How to Do Things with Austin and Searle: Speech Act Theory and Literary Criticism', *MLN*, 91 (1976), 983–1025; Roger Brown and Albert Gilman, 'Politeness Theory and Shakespeare's Four Major Tragedies', *Language in Society*, 18 (1989), 159–212; Marilyn M. Cooper, 'Implicature, Convention, and *The Taming of the Shrew*', *Poetics*, 10 (1981), 1–14; Clara Calvo, 'Pronouns of Address and Social Negotiation in *As You Like It*', *Language and Literature*, 1 (1992), 5–27; A. J. Gilbert, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Speech: Studies in Renaissance Literature* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997); Beatrix Busse, *Vocative Constructions in the Language of Shakespeare* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2006).