First Folio Fraud

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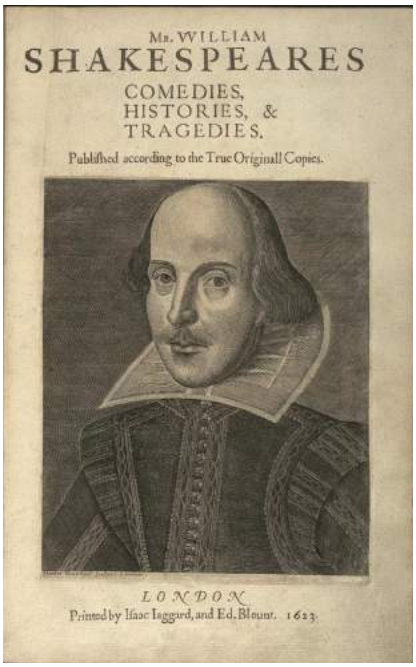
One of the greatest events in literary history was the publication of *Mr William Shakespeare's Histories Comedies and Tragedies* in 1623. Today called the "First Folio," the book contained thirty-six Shakespeare plays, twenty of which had never been printed. It was reissued nine years later, and two times after that. The first sixteen pages of the Folio – the preface – are extremely important to the Shakespeare professor because they contain his best evidence for the Stratford Man as the great author, so much so that *had the First Folio never been published, few or none would have connected the great author with the Stratford Man*.

These preliminary pages, therefore, merit close and careful examination – what is said and what is not said. Prior to the First Folio, the great author's person was undefined. "William Shakespeare" was only a name on title pages of his printed works or a name noted by literary critics regarding his works. This fostered the belief among some that the name was a pseudonym, and it seems that the First Folio preface tried to dispel that notion and to fill the personality void. William Shakespeare emerges in the opening pages as a person born with that name and a hint at his origins. He was a natural genius, the fellow of actors, and strictly a man of the theater. The "news" that he was dead was also given, but when or how long ago this had occurred remains obscure. On the surface, there seemed no reason to suspect the book. It had all the trappings of being official: noble patronage (the earls of Pembroke and Montgomery), tributes by people who supposedly knew Shakespeare, and the author's portrait. Twenty new Shakespeare plays appeared along with sixteen previously issued ones.

But there is something odd about the preface, and it is not just the strange face put forward as the great author's. Many of the statements made in the preface text are false and contradictory, and much information is left out. The main messages of the preface, as defined below, fostered the illusion that the Stratford Man was the great author, but at the same time, Ben Jonson's prefatory contributions seemed to

undermine them. Readers should review the transcription of the Folio's preface for better understanding of the following analysis.

Messages of the Preface


MR. WILLIAM
SHAKESPEARES
COMEDIES,
HISTORIES, &
TRAGEDIES.
Published according to the True Originall Copies.
LONDON
Printed by Isaac Iaggard, and Ed. Blount. 1623.

The enormous portrait of a man beneath the title screams to the reader this message: "William Shakespeare is not someone's pen name, he was born with that name, and is thus pictured." The size of the image was unprecedented, covering over half the large page. The large collar worn by the sitter gives the impression of an English gentleman. Even if the reader never ventured beyond the title page, these two points would get conveyed. In this official-looking book, any previously held notion that "William Shakespeare" was someone's pen name would get quashed, upon a first glance.

After the title page, John Heminges and Henry Condell, noted as Shakespearean actors further into the preface, officially convey the news that the author is dead. It can be described as news because only two indifferent remarks preceded it in print: Shakespeare's name was listed among other famous dead poets in a verse by John Taylor in *The Praise of Hempseed* (1620), and printer Thomas Walkley noted in his edition of Shakespeare's *Othello* (1622) that "the Author" was dead.

Heminges and Condell also wrote that they "collected" the great author's plays and were now acting as their "guardians ... only to keep the memory of so worthy a Friend, and Fellow alive, as was our SHAKESPEARE." The description of Shakespeare as the "friend and fellow" of the actors implies that they had similar social status. In the letter addressed "To the great variety of readers," Heminges and Condell implore the reader to buy the book, implying that it was their own enterprise and were desperate to get their money back.

Heminges and Condell commented upon the great author's writing habits in their letter to the reader, the very first published. They said he wrote effortlessly, that nearly perfect lines just flowed out of his hand.

> ... he was a happy imitator of Nature ... His mind and his hand went together: And what he thought, he uttered with that easiness, that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers.

The next two pages contain Ben Jonson's superb and oft-quoted elegy to the great author. Shakespeare's writings are "such, /As neither Man, nor Muse, can praise too much," wrote Jonson, declaring him "Soul of the Age!" Jonson said Shakespeare's talent outshined that of his contemporaries and that of the ancients. In this elegy, Jonson coined the now famous phrase, "Sweet Swan of *Avon*!" Poets were called swans, and Avon is the name of several rivers in England, so this poet Shakespeare presumably lived near a river Avon. It was the first association of Shakespeare with Avon made in print.

Following Jonson's elegy are poems lamenting Shakespeare's death written by Hugh Holland, James Mabbe and Leonard Digges. The poem by Digges contains the most important line in the entire Folio preface:

> *Shake-speare*, at length thy pious fellows give
> The world thy Works: thy Works, by which, out-live
> Thy Tomb, thy name must, when that stone is rent,
> And time dissolves thy *Stratford* moniment,
> Here we alive shall view thee still.

For the first time in print the great author is associated with "Stratford," where his monument is located, and presumably his tomb. England at the time had at least a dozen towns named Stratford and it was very unlikely that the contemporary reader would have thought of the small town of Stratford-upon-Avon had Jonson not written "Sweet Swan of *Avon*!" on a previous page. This clue about "Stratford" was placed far into the preface, as if not to draw too much attention.

The Folio preface emphasizes that Shakespeare was a man of the theater – an actor and a dramatist. In his tribute, Hugh Holland calls Shakespeare a "Famous Scenic Poet," stating that he has gone to Death's dressing room ("Death's public tiring-house" – "tiring" was short for "attiring"). James Mabbe's tribute offers a similar acting metaphor, that Shakespeare went "From the World's-Stage, to the Grave's-Tiring-room." The Folio's preface also features a list of "Principal Actors" in Shakespeare's plays, with Shakespeare's name heading it. This was another piece of news hitherto unknown about the great author, i.e., that he acted in his own plays. Prior to the Folio, most Shakespeare commentary was directed at his popular poems. The Folio's neglect of Shakespeare's poetical accomplishment, noted Patrick Cheney, "skews the historical record."[1] Leonard Digges addressed this very point about Shakespeare in a poem printed seventeen years after the Folio was released: "First, that he was a Poet none would doubt."[2]

Unsaid in the First Folio's Preface

The information given in the preliminary pages of the First Folio does not satisfy. It lacks a biography of the great author or more personal information. No birth date or year is given. No death date or year is given or how long he had been dead. No account of where he was born or had died. No account of his career. No mention that

he was a member of the Lord Chamberlain's Men or the King's Men acting companies, even though letters in the preface were signed by members of both. (This is also true for the title pages of Shakespeare's printed poems and plays. Actor and poet William Barksted, for example, had described himself as "one of the servants of his Majesty's Revels" on the 1610 title page of his poem, *Hiren: or the Fair Greek*, and actor Robert Armin had described himself as "servant to the King's most excellent Majesty" on the 1609 title page of his play, *The History of the Two Maids of More-clack*.) No mention of the great author's family. Unlike Ben Jonson's collected works, there was no attempt in the Folio to date the Shakespeare plays or give their order of composition. Of the sixteen pages of the preface, five are blank—surely there was enough room for more information. The reader may be surprised to learn that nothing in the Folio preface directly ties the great author to the Stratford Man. The phrase, "Stratford-upon-Avon," does not exist in it. "Stratford" and "Avon" are words on separate pages in verses composed by different people. Robert Brazil observed that the Stratford Man's coat of arms, which appears on his monument, did not appear in the Folio.[3]

Folio Contradictions

The Folio's preface contains contradictions, unverified information, and outright lies. They start on the first page of the Folio's preface, where Ben Jonson advises the reader to ignore the author's portrait on the opposite page, and end on the preface's final page, where Shakespeare is listed among the principal actors in his plays. And there is much in between. Jonson's verses contradict much of the information in the Folio's preface, and, in one instance, he seemingly responds to Heminges and Condell's statement about "the ill fortune" of having to seek patrons for Shakespeare's book: he wrote that Shakespeare was "above the ill fortune" of misplaced praise. Jonson metaphorically contradicts Leonard Digges, who refers to Shakespeare's tomb and a "Stratford moniment" in his preface poem; instead Jonson says to Shakespeare, "Thou art a moniment, without a tomb." More Folio contradictions, and lies, follow.

On the left side of the title page, a spot often reserved for an author's portrait, is Jonson's verse addressed "To the Reader." It comments upon the huge image, supposedly of the great author, on the page opposite. Jonson tells the reader: "Look / Not on his Picture, but his Book." To paraphrase, the true portrait of the great author is reflected in the plays ("his Book"), so please ignore the supplied image. Jonson repeats this thought in his elegy: "Look how the father's face /Lives in his issue…" [i.e., his works]. Leah Marcus described Jonson's poem, with the large type and high position on the page, as "vying for the reader's attention" in competition with the portrait's direct gaze at the reader.[4]

Acclaimed poets were often pictured with laurel wreaths or bays on their heads, but such was not the case with Droeshout's image of Shakespeare. Hugh Holland and Leonard Digges, however, envisioned Shakespeare with such adornments in their Folio verses:

That corp's, that coffin now bestick those bays,
Which crown'd him *Poet* first, then *Poet's* King.

and

Shake-speare, thou can'st never die.
But crown'd with Laurel, live eternally.

J.L. Nevinson observed that Droeshout could have portrayed Shakespeare as a poet, as a dramatist, or as an actor, but "the image of a gentleman author" won out.[5] It was probably chosen to match the Stratford Man's status of gentleman. The sitter's clothing, however, dated 1610 to 1613,[6] was not in sync with the Stratford Man's age at that time—the sitter looks younger than 46 to 49. This is admittedly a minor point, but it is a major point that the face in the Droeshout engraving does not resemble the effigy's face of "Shakspeare" on the monument in Stratford-upon-Avon. (For years, scholars have wished to exhume the Stratford Man's body to see if there was an actual likeness to the Droeshout engraving or the monument's effigy.) Such details may have been purposely conflicting or carelessly overlooked. The most important point of all, however, is that Droeshout's engraving was a *posthumous* rendition, and one that was not endorsed by Jonson. This raises the question of why it was used at all when it could have been easily changed or improved.

Martin Droeshout's engraving has received mostly negative criticism over the centuries. The figure has an oversized and wooden forehead, and a head out of proportion with the body. From where the likeness derived is unknown. W.W. Greg wrote, "It is not pleasing and has little technical merit."[7] Arthur Hind, in a study of 16th and 17th century prints, called it "lifeless in expression."[8] It appears that a deliberately ugly or grotesque image, and an unclean face (the grizzled mustache and beard), was supplied so it would not inspire worship. But there could have been another objective: to depict the great author as a "rare and accomplished monster, or miracle of nature." Jonson added this phrase to the 1616 version of his comedy, *Every Man In His Humor*, in a dialogue addressed to Master Stephen, a character that apparently lampooned the Stratford Man:

> let the idea of what you are be portrayed in your face, that men may read in your physiognomy, *here within this place is to be seen the true, rare, and accomplished monster, or miracle of nature*, which is all one.
>
> [1.2, original italics]

Master Stephen was a "gull" bent on becoming, or being perceived as, a gentleman. The great author presented as a monster, a freak of nature, was perhaps the only way that the public or posterity would accept such a grand literary achievement coming from someone with the Stratford Man's blank educational background. Alongside this "gentleman-monster" depiction may have been one more message. The double lines under the ear and the "bad hair" could be perceived as a figure wearing a

mask – most apropos, as pen names are also masks.

In their Folio preface letters, John Heminges and Henry Condell described the great author's plays as "trifles" three times within two lines, and wrote that they expected readers to "censure" or criticize the plays. Ben Jonson's stellar praise of Shakespeare's art, that it was greater than that of his contemporaries and that of the ancients, made the two actors look like cretins. Jonson was so concerned about how the great author should be praised that he devoted the first sixteen lines about it in his Folio elegy, which we might paraphrase:

> I won't envy your name, Shakespeare, although I have much envy for your book and fame; for I confess that neither man nor muse can praise your writings too much. It's true, in all men's collected opinion. But envy and collected opinion are not the ways I mean to praise you. These ways foster silly ignorant comments that are mere echoes of what others say. They foster blind affection that never advances the truth [i.e., the extent of Shakespeare's achievement]. They foster the crafty malice of those who pretend to praise with the intent to ruin, like an infamous bawd or whore who praises a proper lady – what could hurt her more? But Shakespeare, you are proof against them, and above the ill fortune of them, or the need. I, therefore, will begin.

Ben Jonson punned on Shakespeare's name twice in his elegy: "Shake a stage" and "shake a lance," the latter an acknowledgement of the descriptive action of the pen name, i.e., spear shaking. The hyphen was applied in five of nineteen occurrences of "Shakespeare" in the Folio's preface. Jonson twice used the phrase, "gentle Shakespeare," in his Folio verses. During this era, the first definition of "gentle" was not "nice," but a well-born person – someone born into the gentry or nobility, which was not the Stratford Man's case.

Heminges and Condell wrote that Shakespeare's art flowed so naturally from his hands that he barely blotted the paper, as if he were a medium performing automatic writing. Ben Jonson was not so naive, explaining that the great author crafted his talent with hard work.

> Yet must I not give Nature all: Thy Art,
> My gentle *Shakespeare*, must enjoy a part.
> For though the *Poets* matter, Nature be,
> His Art doth give the fashion. And, that he
> Who casts to write a living line, must sweat,
> (such as thine are) and strike the second heat
> Upon the *Muses*' anvil: turn the same,
> (And himself with it) that he thinks to frame;
> Or for the laurel, he may gain a scorn,
> For a good *Poet's* made, as well as born.
> And such wert thou. Look how the father's face

Lives in his issue, even so, the race
Of *Shakespeare's* mind, and manners brightly shines
In his well turned, and true-filed lines.

Like an ironworker, Shakespeare kept "striking" the anvil, or revising, until he produced perfect lines, "sweating" in the process, something like today's expression, "one percent inspiration, 99 percent perspiration." Heminges and Condell would reverse those figures, that the great author's achievement was merely a "miracle of nature." There is evidence that the natural genius idea was conceived circa 1615, while Jonson was preparing a collection of his own works. It is contained in a manuscript of verses written by "F.B." that was addressed to Jonson.[9]

... here I would let slip
(If I had any in me) scholarship,
And from all Learning keep these lines as clear
as Shakespeare's best are, which our heirs [posterity] shall hear
Preachers [professors] apt to their auditors [students/public] to show
how far sometimes a mortal man may go
by the dim light of Nature, 'tis to me
an help to write of nothing;

"F.B." undoubtedly represented Jonson's dramatist friend, Francis Beaumont, who died in March 1616. In his verse, Beaumont said that Shakespeare's "best" lines are "clear" or free of learning, which implies that Shakespeare had less clear lines that were *full of learning*. He predicted that posterity ("our heirs") will have professors ("preachers") citing Shakespeare as an example to their students ("auditors") of how an uneducated man ("the dim light of Nature") can achieve literary greatness. Beaumont was either psychic or he knew, along with Jonson, that the myth of Shakespeare as a natural uneducated genius was planned as early as circa 1615, *well before the Stratford Man's death*. Proclaiming someone's talent as "natural" halts explanations of how one attains greatness. The Stratford Man's case as the great author would be otherwise untenable. This notion agrees with the apparent depiction of the great author by Droeshout as a freak of nature, a monster.

Folio Lies

LIE: *The First Folio's texts derive from the great author's original manuscripts*

Vaunted on the title page, vaunted by Heminges and Condell in their letter to the readers, and vaunted on the final page of the preface is the claim that the First Folio contains the great author's perfect play texts. This statement is patently false. Several plays contained in the Folio are reprints of flawed quarto editions. There is some good copy too, but there are errors everywhere. The assertion of "true original copy" is one of the biggest lies of the Folio preface. Leah Marcus noted the odd pairing of words:

"How can something be both an original and a copy?"[10] Sir George Greenwood showed how Heminges and Condell contradicted themselves about the origin of the play texts: each of their preface letters stated that they took the role of "guardian" of the "orphan" Shakespeare plays, implying that the great author's originals had been entrusted to them for publication. Yet in these same letters they also stated that they "collected" the plays.[11] Greenwood also noted that although Heminges and Condell were left a small bequest in the Stratford Man's will, nothing in the will hints that he intended them to be his literary executors.[12] Another lie, as advertised on page 16 of the Folio's preface, is that the Folio contained "all" of Shakespeare's "Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies." *Pericles* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* were left out, although the latter could be excused because half of the play was written by John Fletcher.

LIE: *Edward Blount was one of the First Folio's printers*

At the bottom of the Folio's title page is the line: "Printed by Isaac Jaggard, and Ed. Blount." Blount was a prominent publisher and bookseller, but never a printer. The Jaggard house printed the Folio. The "and" in this phrase is usually assumed as a misprint for "for."

LIE: *John Heminges and Henry Condell wrote their two Folio preface letters*

Scholars have suspected for over two centuries that both letters signed by Heminges and Condell in the Folio preface were actually written by Ben Jonson. The dedication letter to the brother earls of Pembroke and Montgomery contained language and images taken from the classical writers Pliny and Horace. Heminges and Condell were neither writers nor scholars (after retiring from the stage, we know that Condell worked as a grocer). Jonson was a classical scholar.

Direct parallels exist between three passages by Horace and Pliny (one from a dedication letter), and one passage in Heminges and Condell's dedication letter.

Odes by Horace, Book III, No. 23, stanzas 1 and 4[13]

Hold out your *hands*, palms turned to the sky, when the
New moon is up, my *country*-bred Phidyle;
Treat well the Lares [household gods]: bring *incense*, this year's
Corn and your greediest pig to please them. ...

Pure, empty *hands* touch altars as closely as
Those heaping dear-bought offerings. Simple gifts
Soothe angry household *gods*: the poor man's
Salt that will spit in the fire and plain meal.

Natural History by Pliny, dedication letter to Emperor Vespasian:[14]

Country people *and many nations* offer *milk to their gods*; and they who *have not incense obtain their requests with* only meal and salt; nor was it imputed to any as *a fault to* worship the *gods in whatever way they could*.

Compare all three passages above with the Folio's dedication letter to the Herbert brothers by Heminges and Condell:

Country hands reach forth *milk,* cream, fruits, or what they have: *and many Nations* (we have heard) that *had not* gums & *incense, obtained their requests with* a leavened Cake. It was *no fault to* approach their *Gods, by what means they could*: And the most, though meanest, of things are made more precious, when they are dedicated to Temples.

Heminges and Condell's second letter, "To the great Variety of Readers," is a pastiche of phrases found in several of Jonson's works that are too many for coincidence. Below are five Jonson excerpts, two of which are taken from letters to the reader, which resemble lines in Heminges and Condell's letter, "To the great Variety of Readers."[15]

Jonson*, Cataline His Conspiracy* (1611):

To the reader in ordinary:

The muses forbid that I should restrain your meddling, whom I see already busy with the title, and tricking over the leaves: it is your own. *I departed with my right*, when I let it first abroad;

and Jonson, Induction, *Bartholomew Fair* (1614; first published 1631):

It is further agreed, that every person here have his or their free-will of censure, to like or dislike at their own charge, the author having now *departed with his right*: it shall be lawful for any man *to judge his six-pen'worth, his twelve-pen'worth, so to his eighteen-pence, two shillings, half a crown*, to the value of his place; provided always his place get not above his wit ... as also, that he be fixed and settled in his *censure*, and what he approves or not approves today, he will do the same tomorrow; and if tomorrow, the next day, and so the next week, if need be, and not to be brought about by any that *sits on the* bench with him, though they indict and *arraign plays daily*.

Jonson, *Epigrams*, No. 3 (1616):

To My *Bookseller*:

Thou that mak'st gain thy end, and wisely well

Call'st a book good or bad, as it doth sell ...

and Jonson, *The New Inn, or the Light Heart* (1628):[16]

> *Suffrages* in Parliament *are numbered*, not *weigh'd*: nor can it be otherwise in those public Councils, where nothing is so unequal, as the equality: for there, *how odd soever* men's *brains*, or *wisdoms* are, their power is always even, and *the same*.

and Jonson, in the "The Dedication, *To the Reader*." of *The New Inn, or the Light Heart* (1628):[16]

> If thou be such [i.e., someone who can read], I make thee my Patron, and dedicate the Piece to thee: If not so much, would I had been at the charge of thy better literature. Howsoever, if thou *canst but spell* ...

Now compare the above five Jonson excerpts with the following Folio letter to the reader signed by Heminges and Condell:

To the great Variety of *Readers*.

From the most able [i.e., able to read], to him that *can but spell*. There you *are number'd*. We had rather you were *weigh'd*. Well! It is now public, & you will stand for your privileges we know: to read, and *censure*. Do so, but buy it first. That doth best commend *a book*, the *stationer says*. Then, how odd soever your *brains* be, or your wisdoms, make your license *the same,* and spare not. *Judge your six-pen'orth, your shillings worth*, your five shillings worth at a time, *or higher,* so you rise to the just rates, and welcome. But, whatever you do, buy. *Censure* will not drive a Trade, or make the Jack go. And though you be a Magistrate of wit, and *sit on the* Stage at *Black-friars*, or the *Cock-pit*, to *arraign Plays daily*, know, these plays have had their trial already ...

It had been a thing, we confess, worthy to have been wished, that *the Author* himself had liv'd to have set forth, and overseen his own writings; But since it hath been ordain'd otherwise, and he by *death departed from that right*, we pray you do not envy his Friends, the office of their care, and pain, to have collected & publish'd them ...

Jonson's *Timber, or Discoveries* (98) also contains a passage about Shakespeare:

> *He was* (indeed) honest, and of an open and free nature; had an excellent fantasy, brave notions, and *gentle expressions*;

Now read a line from Heminges and Condell's letter, "To the great Variety of Readers," about Shakespeare:

Who, as *he was* a happy imitator of *Nature*, was a most *gentle expresser* of it.

Scholars are well aware that Jonson borrowed extensively from his own works and from the works of others, increasing the likelihood that he composed Heminges and Condell's letters. For example, read Jonson's verse opposite the Droeshout engraving:

To the Reader.

This Figure, that thou here seest put,
It was for gentle Shakespeare *cut*;
Wherein the Graver had *a strife*
with Nature, to *out-do the life*:
O, could he but have drawn his wit
As well *in brass*, as he hath hit
His face, the Print would then *surpass*
All, that was ever writ *in brass*.
But, since he cannot, Reader, look
Not on his Picture, but his Book.

The theme of Jonson's poem, and the lines, "Wherein the Graver had a strife /with Nature, to outdo the life," were borrowed and paraphrased from lines in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* (1593):

Nature that made thee, with herself *at strife* [line 11]

Look, when a painter would *surpass the life* [line 289]

His *art with Nature's* workmanship *at strife* [line 291]

Jonson may have even lifted a few words from Thomas Heywood's *An Apology for Actors* (1612), which had expressed the same idea.[17]

The visage is not better *cut in brass*
Nor can the Carver so express the *face*
As doth the Poet's Pen whose arts *surpass,*
To give men's lives and virtues their due grace.

Heminges and Condell's comment that the previous editions of Shakespeare's plays were "maimed, and deformed" echoed a comment by publisher Thomas Walkley. In 1622, Walkley referred to the previous edition of *Philaster* as "maimed and deformed."[18] Even Heminges and Condell's description of Shakespeare as their "Friend, & Fellow" may have been inspired by a line in the play, *The Return to Parnassus-Part 2* (circa 1601-02): the line, "our fellow Shakespeare," was repeated twice by the character, "Kempe," the then-deceased comic actor.[19] This play and the Folio's preface both depicted "ignorant" actors discussing Shakespeare. *Parnassus* may have also contained the first

application of the word "master" to Shakespeare in a literary work. (The 1608 quarto edition of *King Lear* is possibly the first instance that "Mr Shakespeare" appeared on a title page.)[20] Another phrase in the Folio's preface was evidently borrowed from the dedication letter to *Archaio-ploutos*, a book printed by William Jaggard in 1619. Addressed to the Earl and Countess of Montgomery, the dedication letter opened, "To the most Noble and Twin-like pair ..." Roger Stritmatter first noticed the similar address used in the Folio's dedication to the same Earl of Montgomery and his brother, the Earl of Pembroke: "To the Most Noble and Incomparable Pair of Brethren."[21] Leah Scragg also found many points of resemblance between Heminges and Condell's dedication letter and one written by Folio publisher Edward Blount in his 1598 edition of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*.[22]

LIE: *When alive, the great author received the " favor" of the earls of Pembroke and Montgomery, and he was their "servant"*

Absolutely no evidence supports the above statements contained in the dedication letter signed by Heminges and Condell. It is on record that Pembroke's Men performed some Shakespeare plays, but the patron of that acting troupe was the second Earl of Pembroke, not the third. The only person who could claim to be Shakespeare's patron was the Earl of Southampton, to whom the great author dedicated two poems – these poems, and Southampton's name, were left out of the Folio. As mentioned above, the Folio emphasized that Shakespeare was a working man of the theater.

LIE: *"William Shakespeare" was a "principal actor" in his own plays*

One page of the Folio preface lists "principal actors" of the Shakespeare plays. "William Shakespeare" heads the list, his name placed above the celebrated actor, Richard Burbage. There is simply no evidence that "William Shakespeare" was a principal actor in any play. Ben Jonson listed "William Shakespeare" as an actor in two of his plays (*Works*) published shortly after the Stratford Man had died. It is posthumous evidence only that "Shakespeare" acted in the plays of Shakespeare and Jonson, and in both cases, Jonson supplied the "evidence." This Folio "lie" was one of the few not contradicted by Jonson, perhaps because the great author did publicly act in his own plays, making himself "a motley to the view," as he had expressed in Sonnet 110. The scandal that it would have caused to someone of his high status would have made open credit impossible.

LIE: *Jonson "beloved" Shakespeare*

Jonson titled his famous elegy to Shakespeare, "To the memory of my beloved, The Author, Mr. William Shakespeare: And what he hath left us." Jonson never wrote about his "beloved" before the First Folio. A section of Jonson's folio, *Works* (1616), is comprised of 133 epigrams, four of which praised writers John Donne, Sir Henry

Goodyere and Josuah Sylvester; Jonson's "beloved" Shakespeare was left out. The Stratford Man died in April 1616, and it is believed that *Works* was printed in the summer of 1616 – plenty of time for Jonson to include a Shakespeare tribute and the perfect occasion to do so.

In 1618, Jonson "censured" several "English Poets" including Shakespeare, in his conversation with William Drummond: "Shakspeer wanted [lacked] art." Drummond recalled that Jonson also censured Shakespeare for getting it wrong about a shipwreck occurring in Bohemia.[23] After the Folio was published, Jonson called Shakespeare's play, *Pericles*, "a moldy tale" in his play, *The New Inn, or The Light Heart*, written in 1628. In his posthumously published *Timber, or Discoveries*, Jonson seemingly responded to Heminges and Condell's statement that the great author never blotted a line.

> My answer hath been, would he had blotted a thousand. Which they [the actors] thought a malevolent speech. [p. 97]

In the same work, after declaring he "lov'd the man, and do honor his memory (on this side Idolatry) as much as any," Jonson in essence said Shakespeare talked too much. The paragraph ends with a backhanded compliment: "But he redeemed his vices, with his virtues. There was ever more in him to be praised, than to be pardoned" (p. 98). Outside of Jonson's high tribute to Shakespeare in his Folio elegy, the reader may now judge how sincerely Jonson "beloved" Shakespeare.

"Little Latin" and "Less Greek"

> And though thou hadst small *Latin*, and less *Greek*,
> From thence to honor thee, I would not seek
> For names; but call forth thund'ring *Aeschylus*,
> Euripides, and Sophocles *to us*
> *Pacuvius*, *Accius*, him of Cordova dead [Seneca],
> *To life again,* to hear thy buskin tread [ref. to tragedy],
> And shake a stage: Or, when thy socks were on [ref. to comedy],
> Leave thee alone, for the comparison
> Of all, that insolent *Greece*, or haughty *Rome*
> sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.
> Triumph, my *Britain*, thou hast one to show,
> To whom all Scenes of *Europe* homage owe.
> He was not of an age, but for all time!

The traditional interpretation for Ben Jonson's elegy line, "And though thou hadst small *Latin*, and less *Greek*," is that the great author had little knowledge of these languages. Yet this cannot be true because many Shakespeare works display considerable knowledge of both. Shakespeare invented many words based upon Greek

and Latin roots.[24] His works are filled with allusions to the works of classical writers, and sometimes he paraphrased their lines. In some cases Shakespeare alluded to or borrowed from a classical work before it had been translated into English. For example, Shakespeare was "indebted" to the Latin play by Plautus, *Menechami*, for his play, *The Comedy of Errors*,[25] yet the experts believe that Shakespeare wrote his play a few years before the first printed English translation in 1595. Charles C. Hower wrote a paper illuminating the true meaning of several Shakespeare lines by applying Latin etymology to the English words.[26] Shakespeare's knowledge of Latin, therefore, was more than "small." Jonson, whose classical reading was extensive, certainly knew this, so what did he mean by his elegy phrase? "Even if " is a valid interpretation of "though." Using this definition, the line would mean, "Even if Shakespeare had small Latin and less Greek," and Jonson would be correctly assessing the great author's knowledge. Yet the Shakespeare professor defends the traditional interpretation, and is perhaps relieved by it, because the Stratford Man's acquisition of Latin at the Stratford grammar school would have been limited (and Greek, not at all), had he in fact attended.

Immediately before the line in question, Jonson said that Shakespeare outshined his contemporaries (John Lyly, Thomas Kyd, Christopher Marlowe). Immediately after it, Jonson listed six classical dramatists (Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, et al) to "honor" Shakespeare. But Jonson said he did not wish to only drop names, he wished to "call forth" these classical dramatists "to us" (Jonson and Shakespeare), and "to life again," so they could witness and "hear" Shakespeare's tragedies and comedies. Jonson said that Shakespeare's works would "triumph" in "the comparison." Presumably Jonson wanted the classical poets to materialize so Shakespeare could hear these dramatists favorably critique his plays—"even if" Shakespeare's understanding of Greek and Latin were limited. Perhaps Jonson had intended the "small *Latin*, and less *Greek*" line to be ambiguous, adding to the idea that the great author was a "natural" unlearned genius. Jonson's contemporary, H. Ramsay, questioned Jonson's elegy line in *Jonsonus Virbius: or, The Memory of Ben* (1638). Ramsay wrote that Jonson had a good command of Latin, "That which your *Shakespeare* scarce could understand?" Jonson did not originate the "small *Latin*, and less *Greek*" line, he borrowed it from the Italian critic, Antonio Minturno, in his *L'Arte Poetica* (1564). In the context of dramatic writing, Minturno wrote about some of his contemporaries who did not properly appreciate the ancients.

For that reason there are some, who by chance know little of Latin and even less of Greek, who in Tragedy place Seneca, barely known by the Latin writers, before Euripides and Sophocles, who are considered by all to be the princes of Tragic poetry.[27]

Jonson also borrowed from Minturno the names of Sophocles, Euripides and Seneca for his Shakespeare elegy.

Conclusion

The great author's persona first emerged from the preface of the First Folio in 1623. "William Shakespeare" was the great author's born name; he was a gentleman, an

actor, a dramatist, a natural genius, and was associated with the place names Avon and Stratford. Some of this information is contradicted within the same pages. This can be explained if the entire preface was geared to two different audiences: the knowing and the unknowing. The knowing audience comprised both those who knew that the great author was a nobleman using a pen name and those who were acquainted with William Shakspere of Stratford-upon-Avon. The Stratford Man could not be openly identified as the great author because many knew it was not true and they could publicly question this identity change and spoil the intention of those who contrived this preface. The unknowing audience, the majority, would make the connection between the great author and Stratford-upon-Avon without question.

Substantial evidence shows that Ben Jonson actually wrote the letters of actors John Heminges and Henry Condell, a "fraud" that taints the entire preface. Jonson styled the letters as he believed actors would write, i.e., ignorantly, for authenticity. They were presented as incapable of recognizing the greatness of Shakespeare's plays by repeatedly calling them "trifles," thus the nonsense lines urging the reader to buy, fearing they would never get their money back. If this was a legitimate concern, then why did they not include Shakespeare's proven top sellers, the poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*? His role as poet was instead overlooked. The overemphasis on buying – an entire paragraph – is almost comic and evidently without example. Jonson in his own voice sneers at these actors, and was perhaps trying to distinguish himself from them because at one time he did act. It is unlikely that Heminges and Condell asked Jonson to write their letters because they were so unflattering. And Jonson seemed to use them as scapegoats for the Folio's textual errors, most likely caused from not having the great author's original texts. Meanwhile the Folio's title page put forth the lie that the text was based upon the author's "True Original Copies." The idea that Heminges and Condell were the great author's "friends and fellows," and the Folio their production, was a red herring to help throw the great author's literary identity onto the Stratford Man. It also diverted attention away from the person most responsible for the entire Folio production, the Earl of Pembroke, the subject of the next chapter.

The Shakespeare professor is well aware of Jonson's voice in Heminges and Condell's letters but is reluctant to admit he wrote them because of the implications. If they were fraudulently written, then the veracity of the entire preface is questionable, including Droeshout's image of "Shakespeare." And this preface, in conjunction with the Shakspeare monument in Stratford-upon-Avon, is the professor's best "evidence" that the Stratford Man wrote Shakespeare! The Folio preface was specifically tailored to give the impression that the Stratford Man, a gentleman, was Shakespeare without directly saying so. It was ultimately left to the readers to connect the dots, which they eventually did. Heminges and Condell were chosen as front men because they were colleagues of the Stratford Man in the King's Men acting company, and in other business. Droeshout's engraving of Shakespeare was probably an invented image. The preface was designed to *suggest* that the Stratford Man was the great author, not to blatantly show it. The image was unadorned and imperfect, even deformed, presumably meant to deter public idolization of the Stratford Man, who was the wrong man. This must

have been intentional, as none of the other portraits by Droeshout have sitters with faces looking so wooden or artificial. Jonson left posterity the key to understanding Droeshout's bizarre image in lines added to the 1616 edition of *Every Man In His Humor*: the great author is to be depicted as a "rare, and accomplished monster, or miracle of nature." Apparently, Jonson believed that the only way the general public and posterity would swallow the idea of the Stratford Man as the great author would be to present him as a freak of nature, a "monster." It is fact that the Stratford Man held the status of gentleman, thus Droeshout's depiction of a gentleman-monster rather than the usual depiction of accomplished poet-dramatists – wearing or holding bay leaves. Readers today are so familiar with Droeshout's image that it may be difficult to see it like this, but one must remember that Jonson composed most of the Folio preface, and that *plans for the identity switch were afoot before the Stratford Man had died* (Beaumont's verses to Jonson). Droeshout's face of Shakespeare was proof enough to convince the masses that the great author was a man born with the name William Shakespeare who was the fellow of actors. But for those who were truly interested in the great author and his works, Jonson provided the voice of truth: the great author is masked, and to discover his true identity, read "his Book" carefully. Below is a summary of the Folio's true and false messages.

The Truth: Ben Jonson in His Own Voice

"Shakespeare" is the greatest dramatic genius ever born, cannot be praised too highly, and "what he hath left us" is something extraordinary. This fact is recognized by the learned and the unlearned. His memory will stay alive so long as his works remain in print. Although certainly inspired with a gift, "Shakespeare" worked hard at his craft, constantly revising. His works "delighted" Queen Elizabeth and her successor, King James. "Shakespeare" was of "gentle" birth, and some noted his dramatic talent with the intent of damaging his reputation/high status. "Shakespeare" is a descriptive pen name ("shake a Lance"). The given "figure" on the title page is not his true image – his works reveal himself best. Shakespeare is "a moniment, without a tomb," i.e., Shakespeare represents a body of writing (one definition of "moniment"), not a human being. (Jonson's reference to Avon in his elegy was not necessarily Stratford-upon-Avon; many towns in England include the word "Avon." Jonson may have been purposely ambiguous on this point, like he was with the line, "small *Latin*, and less *Greek*.")

The False: Jonson in the Voice of John Heminges and Henry Condell

Because Shakespeare died without making arrangements for his own writings, we (Heminges and Condell) have taken it upon ourselves to collect and publish his plays. Despite the "ill fortune" of this task, we do it gladly for our fellow. We hope the earls of Pembroke and Montgomery will patronize this work because they favored Shakespeare, the man and his plays. He was their servant. Unlike previously stolen and false editions of the plays, this book contains Shakespeare's true lines, directly

taken from his own clean papers. He was a natural writer, churning out perfect lines as soon as he thought of them. Any errors in the text are due to our limited abilities. It is outside of "our province" to praise these "trifles," so just buy the book. We advise you to read the plays "again, and again ... to understand him." If you need more understanding about Shakespeare, "we leave you to other of his Friends," who "can be your guides." ("Friends" James Mabbe, Hugh Holland and Leonard Digges only informed the reader that Shakespeare was dead and had a "Stratford moniment." The best understanding, therefore, comes from "friend" Jonson, the voice of truth.)

Martin Droeshout's Portrait of Shakespeare

Here is the image of the writer, Mr. William Shakespeare. He was actually born with that name. He was a gentleman. He was a rare miracle of nature. He was ugly. Do not worship him. If you're a little skeptical that this image is authentic, you may be right: it could just be a mask covering the identity of the real author.

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Endnotes

[1] Patrick Cheney, *Shakespeare, National Poet-Playwright*, Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004, p. 69.

[2] *POEMS: WRITTEN BY WIL. SHAKE-SPEARE. Gent*, 1640 (STC 22344).

[3] Researcher Robert Brazil in 2005 first noted the absence of the Shakespeare arms in the First Folio preface in the online scholarly discussion group, Elizaforum.

[4] Leah S. Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and Its Discontents*, U.C. Press, Berkeley, 1988, p. 19.

[5] J.L. Nevinson, "Shakespeare's Dress in His Portraits," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 18, no. 2 (Spring 1967), p. 106.

[6] Tarnya Cooper, *Searching for Shakespeare*, National Portrait Gallery, London, 2006, p. 48.

[7] W.W. Greg, *The Shakespeare First Folio, Its Bibliographical and Textual History*, Oxford, 1955, p. 451.

[8] Arthur M. Hind, *Engraving in England in the 16th and 17th Centuries, Part 2 (Reign of James I)*, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1955, p. 357.

[9] Edmund K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare, A Study of Facts and Problems*, Oxford, 1930, vol. 2, p. 224.

[10] Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare*, p. 19.

[11] Sir George Greenwood, *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, London, 1908, p. 291.

[12] Sir George Greenwood, *Is There A Shakespeare Problem*?, London 1916, p. 314.

[13] *The Odes of Horace*, translated by James Michie, New York, 1963, p. 235.

[14] Translation by C.M. Ingleby in *Shakspere Allusion-Book*, London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1932, vol. 1, p. 314.

[15] Many of these parallels were noted in an article by Prof. W. Dinsmore Briggs, "Ben Jonson and the First Folio of Shakespeare," *Times Literary Supplement*, Thursday,

Nov. 12, 1914, p. 502, and in *Ben Jonson*, eds. C.H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson, Oxford, 1952, vol. 11, pp. 140-44.

[16] Greenwood, *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, p. 265.

[17] Cooper, *Searching for Shakespeare*, p. 50.

[18] Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *Philaster*, 1622, letter to the reader.

[19] *The Return from Parnassus, Part 2* (4.3); see J.B. Leishman, *The Three Parnassus Plays (1598-1601)*, London, 1949, p. 337.

[20] *M. William Shak-speare, His True Chronicle History of the Life and Death of King Lear and His Three Daughters*, 1608 (STC 22292).

[21] Roger Stritmatter, "Bestow how, and when you list," *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, Fall 1998, pp. 18-19; *Archaio-Ploutos ... the former Treasury of Ancient and Modern Times*, 1619 (STC 17936.5).

[22] Leah Scragg, "Edward Blount and the Prefatory Material to the First Folio of Shakespeare," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Univ. Library of Manchester*, vol. 79, no. 1 (Spring 1997).

[23] *Notes of Conversations with Ben Jonson made by William Drummond of Hawthornden, January 1619*, ed. G.B. Harrison, New York, 1923, pp. 3-4.

[24] Edwin Reed (*Francis Bacon, Our Shake-Speare*, London, 1902, pp. 144-69) listed many words with Latin roots that Shakespeare coined. For example, *abruption*, *circummure*, *conflux*, *credent*, *deracinate*, *empiricutic*, *festinate*, *fluxive*, *iterance*, *sanctuarize*.

[25] *The Reader's Encyclopedia of Shakespeare*, ed. Oscar James Campbell, New York, 1966, p. 635.

[26] Charles C. Hower, "The Importance of a Knowledge of Latin for Understanding the Language of Shakespeare," *The Classical Journal*, vol. 46, no. 5 (Feb. 1951), pp. 221-27.

[27] Antonio Minturno, *L'Arte Poetica*, Venice, 1564, p. 158. This passage was noted in *Ben Jonson*, eds. C.H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson, Oxford, 1952, vol. 11, p. 145. Excerpt translated by Elizabeth Coggshalle (doctoral candidate, Stanford Univ.).