

# A DOZEN SHAKESPEARE PLAYS WRITTEN AFTER OXFORD DIED?

## *Not proven!*

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Prospero: . . . this rough magic  
I here abjure . . . I'll break my staff,  
Bury it certain fadoms in the earth,  
And deeper than did ever plummet sound  
I'll drown my book.

*The Tempest*: 5.1.48-57



T's well known that the Shakespeare establishment dates the composition of a dozen Shakespeare plays close upon or after 1604, the year the Earl of Oxford died. Therefore, they insist, he could not have written them—or any of the plays and poetry of Shakespeare. For Stratfordians, the argument clinches the case against Oxford. To cite a few examples: In *Shakespeare's Lives*, Sam Schoenbaum called it “the principal drawback of the entire argument” (433). In *The Bedford Companion to Shakespeare*, Russ McDonald says, “Oxford's death in 1604 creates chronological bars to his candidacy” (26). In *The Genius of Shakespeare*, Jonathan Bate cites *Macbeth* and *The Tempest* in particular and scoffs, “How de Vere managed to write these plays from beyond the grave is a profound mystery indeed” (66). In *Shakespeare*, David Bevington calls it “the most telling argument against Oxford's authorship” and credits “centuries of scholarly studies” as well as recent scholarship (8). *The Reader's Encyclopedia of Shakespeare* says, “The major objection to the Oxfordian theory by orthodox Shakespeareans has been the fact that Oxford died in 1604 and that in the orthodox chronology many of Shakespeare's greatest plays were written after that date” (610). In the widely read Signet editions, editor Sylvan Barnet says that “some of the plays are clearly indebted to works and events later than 1604” (xiv).

Citing the allegedly post-1604 plays is a popular and devastating way to dismiss the case for Oxford. It has superficial appeal for the unwary reader, who must wonder how Oxfordians could possibly maintain that Oxford wrote all those plays after he died. Their evidence for post-1604 dates of composition, however, does not hold up to scrutiny, including their dates for *Macbeth* and *The Tempest*, the two plays most often cited. Historical facts and Stratfordian scholars' own research and interpretations undermine their dating scheme, even before Oxfordian arguments for much earlier dates are considered.

Direct evidence for dates of composition, i.e. dated manuscripts, diaries, letters, etc., does not, of course, exist for any Shakespeare play. Stratfordian scholars have recognized the difficulty of dating the plays. In his two-volume *William Shakespeare: a Study of Facts and Problems*,

E.K. Chambers wrote of “fitting this order [of plays] into the time allowed by the span of Shakespeare’s career” and concluded: “There is much of conjecture, even as regards the order, and still more as regards the ascriptions to particular years. . . . These [plays] are partly arranged to provide a fairly even flow of production [that is, composition.] when plague and other interruptions did not inhibit it” (1:253, 269).

Later editors have also issued cautions about dating the plays. E. Blakemore Evans of Harvard avers at the outset of the Riverside Shakespeare that “any attempt to arrange the plays chronologically is beset by hazards and uncertainties” (47). Sam Schoenbaum concedes that “in the absence of firm chronology, one must speculate, and some guesses are better than others” (161). Harold Bloom of Yale calls his chronology of the plays “necessarily tentative” (xiii).

Despite all their disclaimers, the orthodox scholars persist in maintaining that their chronology eliminates Oxford as Shakespeare. They have generally accepted the traditional chronology of the alleged post-1604 plays, a chronology designed to fit the lifespan of Shakspeare of Stratford, who died in 1616. They have devoted their efforts to finding contemporary writings and events that can be used to support the traditional chronology. No writings or events that they cite, however, are necessarily post-1604.

The purpose of this paper is not to propose earlier, pre-1604 dates of composition. The focus here is on those points that they believe enable them to eliminate Oxford as the dramatist, a consensus found primarily in the five copiously annotated collected works of Shakespeare: the Riverside, Norton, Oxford-Clarendon, Harper Collins/Longman, and the Modern Library (RSC Shakespeare) editions, plus *The Reader’s Encyclopedia of Shakespeare* and *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare*.

Dates of composition before 1604 have been proposed by Oxfordian scholars and—for a few plays—by a few dissenting Stratfordians. Oxfordian scholarship—notably by Eva Turner Clark, Charles Wisner Barrell, Charlton Ogburn, Peter Moore, and Ron Hess—has been concerned primarily with identifying the evidence for much earlier dates of composition for some or all of the plays. (Oxford was fourteen years older than Shakspeare of Stratford.) Among the Stratfordians who have suggested or argued for earlier dates for a few plays are Edmund Malone, Joseph Hunter, E.K. Chambers, Karl Elze, and Kenneth Muir. While the Stratfordian consensus is not unanimous, it has prevailed.

A play-by-play examination of the Stratfordian datings shows that there is no valid evidence that any of the dozen alleged post-1604 must have been written after 1604. Five of the dozen plays are dated close to the year of Oxford’s death, that is, in 1603-04 or 1605-06.

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**O**THELLO and *Measure for Measure* are generally dated 1603-04, a year or two before first performances recorded in two Revels Account pages for 1604-05. (Some researchers consider these pages to be forgeries.) Since other evidence is lacking, Stratfordians have simply assumed dates of composition a year or two before performances of these two plays. They have no evidence foreclosing or prohibiting composition a few years or many years earlier. This begins a pattern that will emerge in the analyses that follow.

Regarding *Othello*, David Bevington notes in his edition of Shakespeare that the Revels Account was condemned by all as a forgery when it was published in 1842 and adds that it “is once again in doubt today.” He also says that “arguments are sometimes presented for a date as early as 1601 or 1602” (A-16). But he does not elaborate on either point.

Even if the performance records are not forgeries the conjectured dates of composition are close enough to Oxford’s lifetime that even Stratfordians should readily concede that nothing bars their composition by Oxford before he died, or even years earlier. The two plays must be subtracted from the dozen allegedly post-1604 plays.

That leaves ten.

**K**ING LEAR is dated sometime between 1603 and 1606, probably in 1605 or early 1606, about a year before its first recorded performance, as noted in the Stationers’ Register. Stratfordian scholars argue that it could not have been written before 1603, when the names of Edgar’s devils appeared in Samuel Harsnett’s *Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures*, registered in March 1603. According to the Oxfordian historian Gwynneth Bowen, however, Harsnett said he used the “express words” from a priest’s records of exorcisms—thus even before 1603. Some Stratfordians also cite a line about “these late eclipses in the sun and moon” (1.2.103) as evidence that the play was written after 1605. The line is taken to refer to a double eclipse near London in late 1605, but there was a better known double eclipse in March of 1598 (*Sky & Telescope*, June 2002). Edgar’s devils and the double eclipse pre-date even 1603, so the Stratfordian dating of *King Lear* cannot be used to preclude authorship of *Lear* by Oxford.

That leaves nine.

**P**ERICLES and *Antony and Cleopatra* are dated in 1606 or 1607, a year or so before entries for them in the Stationers Register of May 1608. Bevington says the date of composition for *Pericles* “is usually set between 1606 and 1608” (A-19). Hallett Smith in the Riverside edition proposes “a conjectural date of 1607 or early 1608” (1479).

Stratfordians, however, have no basis for dating the composition of these two plays just a year or so before entry in the Stationers’ Register, especially since they date the composition of five pre-1604 plays more than three years before their first appearance in the records—actually four, six, seven and twelve years earlier. (See the Riverside’s “Chronology and Sources.”)

Aside from its entry in the 1608 register, the only Stratfordian evidence for a 1606 or 1607 date of composition for *Antony and Cleopatra* is its supposed influence on a revised *Cleopatra* by Samuel Daniel in 1607. Daniel’s revisions, says Frank Kermode in the Riverside edition, “seem to owe something to Shakespeare’s play,” thus suggesting a date of 1606-07 for *Antony and Cleopatra* (1343). This characterization by Kermode and other Stratfordians of the supposed

influence is very tentative; and even if it were true, nothing precludes *Antony and Cleopatra* from having been written years before it influenced Daniel's revised play.

Dates for *Pericles* and *Antony and Cleopatra* are conjectural. No evidence prevents composition of the two plays before Oxford died, even years earlier.

That leaves seven.

**TIMON OF ATHENS** and *Coriolanus* are classified as "late plays" based primarily on internal, stylistic considerations. Their composition is put somewhere between *King Lear* and *Pericles*, that is, between 1605 and 1608. Stylistic evidence, however, is quite subjective, as even Stratfordians have conceded. For example, Evans says in the Riverside Shakespeare that "internal evidence is slippery in the extreme and often susceptible of more than one interpretation" (47). Even if accepted, such stylistic evidence would only have evidentiary value if the Stratfordian dates for *King Lear* and *Pericles* were solid, which they are not.

David Bevington says in his Shakespeare edition that dating *Timon of Athens* is "unusually difficult." There is solid evidence, however, that *Timon of Athens* must have been performed several years before 1604 or 1605. Sandra Billington, a Stratfordian at the University of Glasgow, wrote in *Notes and Queries* that John Marston's satire, *Jack Drum's Entertainment*, published in 1601, "contains one direct and two indirect references to *Timon of Athens*," indicating that Shakespeare's *Timon* was known by that time (September 1998, 351).

Stratfordian attempts to support a 1607-08 date for *Coriolanus* have generated nearly a dozen suggested "echoes" and "borrowings." Nearly all the echoes are quite faint, and Chambers dismissed half a dozen of them, saying, "There is practically no concrete evidence as to date, and the attempts to find some have been far-fetched" (1:479). *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare* cites stylistic tests and accepts four echoes of events in 1607 and 1608, but only as possibilities. None is a clear allusion to an event in those years (90). The Norton Shakespeare does not even conjecture a date of composition.

The most popular borrowing in *Coriolanus* is the so-called "fable of the belly" (1.1.95-153). The long passage has wording resembling a version of the fable in William Camden's *Remaines*, published in 1605, indicating for Stratfordians composition after 1605. But Philip Brockbank, editor of the Arden annotated *Coriolanus*, notes that "since the dedicatory epistle of the *Remaines* is dated June 1603, a version of the manuscript must have been ready by then, and we cannot be certain that Shakespeare had not seen it" (24, 29). More important, the fable goes back to Roman times and was retold by at least seven other writers in Greek, Latin, French, and English, long before Camden's *Remaines* in 1605.

Again, no valid evidence for the composition of *Timon of Athens* or *Coriolanus* after 1604 or even years earlier, leaving five.

**THE WINTER'S TALE** and *Cymbeline* are assigned 1609 or 1610 as dates of composition based on six pages of notes attributed to Simon Forman that describe performances in 1611. These, however, are almost certainly forgeries. They were brought to light and published in 1836 by John Payne Collier, an erudite scholar but also a notorious forger. An impressive case for forgery was built in 1933 by Samuel A. Tannenbaum, a life-long Stratfordian, co-founder of

the Shakespeare Association of America and editor for a decade of the predecessor of *The Shakespeare Quarterly* (1.35). Although nearly all Stratfordian scholars now accept the Forman notes as authentic, Katherine Duncan-Jones recently found them “strangely suspicious” (xiii).

Based on the Forman notes, Stratfordian editors (once again) simply date the composition of the two plays a year or two before their first appearance in the records, even though those performance records are suspect. And they offer no real evidence that the two plays were written after 1604. The Norton Shakespeare, for example, says, of *The Winter’s Tale* that “the exact date of composition is uncertain” and that “the date of *Cymbeline* is uncertain, though it is usually given as 1609 or 1610” (2880, 2956).

That leaves three.

**S**TRATFORDIANS date *Henry the Eighth* in 1612, a year before a performance of a play called *All Is True*, in which King Henry was reported to have a leading role. During the performance at the Globe in 1613 the theater caught fire and burned down. Two accounts of the fire called the play “new.” Most orthodox scholars believe that *Henry the Eighth* was written by Shakespeare and John Fletcher, with Fletcher writing most of it, even though the First Folio prints it as by Shakespeare (Norton 3111; HarperCollins 893; Riverside 976-7). Chambers has suggested that it might have been adapted from the lost, anonymous play *Buckingham* of 1593 (1.497). Edmond Malone argued for composition during the reign of Elizabeth, whose birth is celebrated in the play, and most of the leading Shakespeare scholars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries agreed.

It’s possible that Shakespeare could have started the play during the reign of Elizabeth, and Fletcher finished it, thus making it “new.” Malone suggested that it would be unlikely that Shakespeare, assuming he was the dramatist, would celebrate the birth of Elizabeth in a play written during the reign of King James (qtd. in Anderson 401). Unlikely also because James’s mother was executed during Elizabeth’s reign, and he demoted Elizabeth’s place of burial, from under the altar of the King Henry the Seventh chapel in Westminster Abbey to a joint grave with her sister Mary, in order to make place for himself in the prestigious location (Walker 252-5).

Thus, *The Famous History of the Life of King Henry the Eighth* of the First Folio may well have been written during Elizabeth’s reign. Assuming the play printed in the First Folio was the same play performed in 1613 as *All Is True*, it may have been rendered “new” by Fletcher’s revisions. In any case, Stratfordians offer no real evidence that the Shakespeare portion of the play must have been written after 1604.

That leaves two.

### ***Macbeth and The Tempest***

Stratfordians often cite these two plays as the best evidence eliminating Oxford. *Macbeth*, which is dated 1606, has been the subject of much commentary about supposed topical references to events just before that year, principally a treason trial following the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. In that trial, equivocation was a central issue. “Equivocators” is mentioned by the porter at the gate (2.3.115) and “equivocation” by Macbeth at the end of the play (5.6.43). Also cited





*Macbeth and Banquo meeting the three witches; engraving from 1577 edition of one of Shakespeare's sources: Holinshed's Chronicles.*

as evidence to date the play. None of the topicalities is unique to post-1604 events, as they must be if they are to be used to eliminate Oxford as the author. The Jesuit doctrine of equivocation had been notorious for decades; it was a central issue in the high-profile trial of a Jesuit in 1595. *Tiger* was a common name for a ship; a *Tiger* sailed to Aleppo, a major trading port, in 1583.

James faced possible death by explosion before the Gunpowder Plot was exposed, but the murder of Duncan in *Macbeth* is entirely different. The Gunpowder Plot was allegedly a plot by Roman Catholic radicals to blow up the government, including James, in Parliament in broad daylight. In the play, *Macbeth* slips into Duncan's bedchamber at night and stabs him while he is asleep. The two events, one aborted the other successful, could hardly have been more different. The Gunpowder Plot is singularly unconvincing as inspiration for *Macbeth*.

What is known about James undercuts the Stratfordian conjecture that he would have been pleased by a performance of *Macbeth*. There is no record that *Macbeth* was performed during James's reign, and it is not credible that a dramatist would try to complement the Scottish king with a play about the assassination of a Scottish king, Duncan, that is instigated by witches and then the defeat and beheading of Duncan's Scottish successor, Macbeth, plus the murder of Banquo, who is supposed to be the predecessor of James. This would, as the Stratfordian William C. Carroll points out, make James "the royal spectator of a royal bloodbath, whose own right of succession to the English crown was . . . questioned" (5). Banquo was a late addition to the *Macbeth* historical legends. James would have known that Banquo was fictional, not historical.

James took a keen interest in witchcraft (he wrote a treatise on it), because he was terrified that someone would use it to have him harmed or killed. In 1604, an act of Parliament condemning witches to death began: "Be it enacted by the king our sovereign lord . . ." (Carroll 328). It strains credulity that he would enjoy seeing witches excite a nobleman to kill a king.

In short, it is not credible, despite the lively imagination of Stratfordians, that *Macbeth* was written for King James and that he would have enjoyed it. Much more likely, he would have

is a passing mention of a voyage of a ship named *Tiger* to Aleppo in 1606 (1.3.7).

Stratfordians argue that the play was written to compliment the Scottish King of England, James VI. He survived the Gunpowder Plot, he was obsessed with witchcraft, and he supposedly traced his line back to Banquo, who was assassinated by Macbeth's henchmen. They even suggest that James would have enjoyed seeing a performance of the play.

Historical facts, however, undermine their topical references

been appalled. (See Whalen: “Shakespeare in Scotland.”)

*The Tempest* is dated 1610-11, largely based on a 1611-12 Revels Account record of its performance that was “discovered” by Peter Cunningham and John Payne Collier, which some scholars consider to be a forgery. More important, many—but not all—Stratfordians argue for 1610 based primarily on William Strachey’s 24,000-word letter to an unidentified “noble lady” describing a shipwreck at Bermuda in 1609 and life on the island. Shakespeare is supposed to have drawn partially on two 1610 pamphlets but primarily on the private, manuscript letter, which was not published until 1625. The publisher gave the letter a date of July 15, 1610, apparently because that happened to be the date of an event in the letter.

The Stratfordian consensus used for this paper is ambivalent on whether Strachey (and/or the pamphlets) was a necessary source for *The Tempest*. Accepting Strachey’s manuscript letter as valid evidence are *The Reader’s Shakespeare Encyclopedia* (855), the Riverside edition (56, 1606) and the Oxford Companion (470). The four other Stratfordian collected works, however, are much less certain.

The RSC Shakespeare, the most recent of the collected works, manages to be both firm and cautious. In a list of key facts, the play “uses source material not available before autumn 1610” (5). But two pages earlier: “Scholars debate the extent to which Shakespeare made direct use of these materials [Strachey and the two pamphlets], but certain details of the storms seem to be derived from them” (3, 4). The Oxford-Clarendon edition says Shakespeare “seems to have known” Strachey’s manuscript letter (1167). Stephen Greenblatt of Harvard hedges at first, writing that Shakespeare “seems to have read” Strachey’s letter but concludes that “with the possible exception of some phrases from Strachey’s description of the storm and a few scattered details, *The Tempest* does not directly use any of this vivid narrative” (3051-2). The HarperCollins-Longman edition retreats in the appendices from a firm opinion in the introduction to the play, flatly stating first that “Shakespeare borrowed details” from the pamphlets and Strachey’s letter (1526). But then in Appendix 1 on dating the plays, “Shakespeare probably knew” the pamphlets and Strachey’s letter (A-20). In Appendix 2 on sources for the plays, “Shakespeare does seem to have drawn material from various accounts [in the pamphlets and Strachey]. . . although the importance of these materials should not be overstated” (A-55).

Other Stratfordian editors who have doubted Strachey’s influence include Kenneth Muir, who says that although there is little doubt the author read Strachey and the two pamphlets “the extent of the verbal echoes of these three pamphlets has, I think, been exaggerated. Surely he needed no printed page; he must have met at ‘ordinaries’ many a man with a personal experience to unfold” (280).

As it happens, “the printed page” could have provided Shakespeare much earlier with many accounts of storms at sea and shipwrecks. They include St. Paul’s Acts of the Apostles, Virgil’s *Aeneid*, Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso*, Erasmus’s *Naufragium*, Remigio Nannini’s *Civil Considerations* (1582), Richard Eden’s *Decades of the New World* (1550) and Henry May’s report of his shipwreck and sojourn on Bermuda in 1593. In all of them, scholars have noted correspondences with *The Tempest*, and all were much easier to access than Strachey’s manuscript letter to the noble lady.

The influence of the 1610 sources is thus quite uncertain and cannot be used by Stratfor-

dians to eliminate Oxford as the author. The evidence is much too flimsy. Moreover, the manuscript letter has not survived, and there are no signs anyone read it before its publication in 1625. It's most unlikely that Shakspeare from Stratford would have seen the long letter to an unnamed "noble lady" presumably written in Jamestown in June 1610 and sent to her in England in time for him to see it and write *The Tempest* for performance in November 1611, assuming the Revels Account is authentic. No records put Shakspeare in London at this time. Three records in 1609, 1610 and 1611 put him in Stratford (Chambers 2:118-127). Neither the Strachey letter nor the two pamphlets about Bermuda were necessary sources for a play set on Prospero's island in the Mediterranean, and *The Tempest* cannot be used to eliminate Oxford.

In summary: none of the twelve allegedly post-1604 plays had to have been written after Oxford's death in 1604. There is nothing in them that is unique to post-1604 events or writings—no topical allusions, no topical references, no sources that have been proven to be unique to post-1604 events or writings.

Another telltale characteristic of the Stratfordian dating undercuts their allegation of post-1604 composition. They date the composition of eight of the twelve plays a year or two before their first appearance in the records, i.e. a performance record, or entry in the Stationers' Register. It is, however, unrealistic to arbitrarily date the composition of a play a year or two before its first appearance in the records. That's not evidentiary proof against its composition years earlier. As Evans says in the Riverside Shakespeare, "External evidence can generally establish . . . the date after which the work cannot have been written [for example, a performance date], but it tells us nothing about how long before this terminal date the work was in fact composed" (47). Plays can and have been written years before first performance or publication. And for three of the twelve plays, in opposition to the consensus, even Stratfordian scholars have offered strong evidence for earlier, pre-1604 dates.

In any case, a posthumous premiere or posthumous publication or first notice is not at all unusual. Notice of two plays in the Fletcher canon, and probably a dozen more collaborative efforts, first appeared in the records years after he died in 1626. In modern times, for example, Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* was not known publicly until sixteen years after he wrote it and three years after he died, when it was published. Maxwell Anderson left behind twenty unfinished or unpublished plays. Tennessee Williams left five full-length plays and scores of shorter works that were unknown until two decades after his death.

Ironically, the Stratfordian argument itself is self-defeating since four plays that did not appear in the records until after he died in 1616 would then eliminate Will Shakspeare as their author. *Macbeth*, *Coriolanus*, *Timon of Athens* and *All's Well That Ends Well* were not in the undisputed records until they were printed in the First Folio in 1623, seven years after Shakspeare died. So he could not have written them. The argument, of course, is specious either way.

Stratfordians sometimes contend that centuries of scholarship by the most eminent establishment Shakespeareans supports their dating of the plays after 1604, but this appeal to authority is severely undermined by the lack of direct evidence to date the plays, by the Stratfordian chronology-dating that deliberately fits the plays into Will Shakspeare's adult life, by the tentative nature of that dating, and in some cases by the strong Stratfordian evidence for earlier dates of composition.



### Oxfordian research

Stratfordian evidence, or the lack of it, has been used here to critique the Stratfordian method of argumentation in order to question the validity of their efforts to date Shakespeare plays after 1604. For three of those plays, Oxfordian scholars have offered strong evidence that contradicts the Stratfordian dating:

*The Tempest*: In a landmark paper in Oxfordian research, Roger Stritmatter of Coppin State University and author Lynne Kositsky have demonstrated that reports of the Bermuda shipwreck in 1609 could not have been sources for *The Tempest*. Their paper appeared in the November issue of the prestigious *Review of English Studies*, published by the Oxford University Press. (See news story on page xx. They show, for example, that William Strachey's 24,000-word letter to a noble woman about the shipwreck and life on Bermuda, which Stratfordians use to date the play 1610-11, could not have been written until 1612 or later, for in a book published that year he refers to his uncompleted "story" about Bermuda. They argue that *The Tempest* was written no later than 1603. They also make the case that "Strachey, a notorious plagiarist, even by early modern standards, borrowed much that his narrative shares with *The Tempest* from earlier sources also accessible to Shakespeare." They had a common source or sources.

Nina Green, an independent scholar, analyzed fifty-three parallels that the Stratfordian David Kathman claimed as evidence linking *The Tempest* to Strachey's letter. Although the play and the letter both describe a storm at sea and survivors on an island, she found specific differences in the details and concluded on her web site, "The differences are so striking that they constitute a prima facie case in themselves for supposing that Shakespeare never saw either the Strachey letter" or the pamphlets. (Web site article 1)

*Timon of Athens*: Robert Detobel, an independent scholar, found in Ben Jonson's *Poetaster* of 1601 a strong allusion to a play that was probably *Timon of Athens*. At one point in Jonson's play, Albius, who goes to plays to pick up "well-penned phrases," announces a banquet that awaits his guests. Jewels are mentioned. *Albius* then says in an aside, "I got that speech by seeing a play last day" (2.2). In *Timon of Athens*, Timon says a banquet awaits his guests, and he asks a servant to bring jewels (1.2), a scene that no doubt would have been in the 1601 (or earlier) performance of *Timon* (Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter, spring 2004 PAGE NUMBERS?)

*The Winter's Tale*: Charles Wisner Barrell suggests that *The Winters Tale* of the First Folio is "The Wynters nightes pastime" entered in the Stationers' Register in 1594 and also "the gelyous [jealous] comedy" in Henslowe's bookkeeping entry the year before. Barrell notes that Leontes's self-created jealousy drives the action of the play and that he twice accuses his wife and their friend of making a "pastime" of his suffering.

Oxford could have written all twelve plays before 1604, even years earlier. Nothing requires their composition after 1604. There is no "insuperable obstacle," no "chronological bar" to Oxford's candidacy, and no need for him to have written plays "from beyond the grave." \_\_\_\_\_ 🍷

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