

*Brief Chronicles:
An Interdisciplinary Journal of Authorship Studies VI
(2015)*

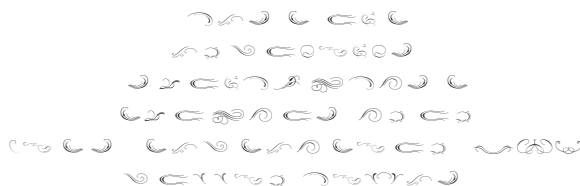




Copyright 2015
The Shakespeare Fellowship
Designed in Baltimore, MD.
Online ISSN: 2157-6793
Print ISSN: 2157-6785



This 2015 volume VI of *Brief Chronicles*, in keeping with our tradition, was set in **Chaparral Pro**. Our ornament selection continues to be inspired not only by early modern semiotics, but by the generosity of contemporary designers, such as Rob Anderson, who designed the Flight of the Dragon **Celtic Knot Caps**, the creators of **BD Renaissance**, Streetwise Software, and Mr. Fisk, the creator of **Satanus Humanum Salvator**, who describes himself as a “distressed-font-guru.” T. Olsson’s 1993 **Ornament Scrolls**, available for free download from **typOasis**, have once again furnished an inviting opportunity to apply some of the theoretical principles discussed by our more distinguished contributors.



General Editor: **Roger Stritmatter, PhD**, Coppin State University
Managing Editor: **Michael Delahoyde, PhD**, Washington State University

Editorial Board:

Carole Chaski, PhD, Institute for Linguistic Evidence
Ren Draya, PhD, Blackburn College
Sky Gilbert, PhD, University of Guelph, Canada
Geoffrey M. Hodgson, PhD, University of Hertfordshire, United Kingdom
Mike Hyde, PhD, English, Tufts University
Felicia Hardison Londré, PhD, University of Missouri, Kansas City
Donald Ostrowski, PhD, Harvard University
Tom Regnier, JD, LLM, University of Miami School of Law
Don Rubin, PhD, York University
Sarah Smith, PhD, Harvard University
Richard Waugaman, MD, Georgetown University of Medicine and
Washington Psychoanalytic Institute

Copy Editor: **Alex McNeil, JD**, Boston College 

Contributor Biographies

Bernd Brackmann studied German and Latin at the University of Bielefeld, worked as a teacher and in nursing care, and since 2003 has been a vocational trainer for adults and youth. “Biography, Genius and Inspiration in the Authorship Question” is his first contribution to *Brief Chronicles*.

Robert Detobel is a translator and scholar based in Frankfurt, Germany. He is co-editor (with Dr. Uwe Laugwitz) of the *Neues Shake-speare Journal*, published annually in Germany since 1997. Author of the book, *Wie aus William Shaxsper William Shakespeare wurde (How William Shaxsper became William Shakespeare)* (2005), Detobel has appeared in *The Elizabethan Review* and *The Oxfordian*, among other scholarly publications. Together with the late K.C. Ligon, he is co-author of the book *Shakespeare and The Concealed Poet* (2010). This is his third appearance in *Brief Chronicles*.

Michael Dudley, who holds Master’s Degrees in both Library and Information Studies and City Planning, is the history, politics and Indigenous Studies Librarian at the University of Winnipeg. He is the editor of the book *Public Libraries and Resilient Cities* (2013) and served for three years as the Editorial Chair of *Plan Canada* magazine. This is his second publication in *Brief Chronicles*.

Jacob Hughes, PhD, graduated in English Literature at Washington State University in May 2014. He teaches early English literature, Shakespeare, and composition courses at Washington State University’s campus in Richland. He has also taught courses on medieval and renaissance humanities and digital diversity. Hughes’s dissertation, titled “Shakespeare’s Chaucerian Entertainers,” focuses on how Chaucer not only informed some of Shakespeare’s key characters, such as Falstaff, but also how the poet influenced the playwright’s views on dramaturgy. He has published articles on English pedagogy, digital humanities, and several book reviews. Between 2009 and 2013, he was the managing editor of the *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature*.

Richard Malim was a practising English Lawyer. He qualified in 1962 and after a period in London joined the provincial family firm, rising to become senior partner

in 1993. He finally retired in 2003. In 1991 he joined the De Vere Society, and from 2003 has been the Society's secretary. He was the General editor of the Society's book of essays commemorating the quatercentenary of Oxford's death, *Great Oxford* (Parapress 2005), and subsequently the author of *The Earl of Oxford and the "Making" of Shakespeare: The Life of Edward de Vere in Context* (McFarland 2012).

James Norwood earned BA degrees in Drama and French from the University of California at Irvine, as well as MA and PhD. degrees in Dramatic Art from the University of California at Berkeley. For twenty-six years, he taught humanities and the performing arts at the University of Minnesota. For a decade, he taught a semester course on the Shakespeare authorship question. He wrote the foreword to the paperback edition of Charles Beauclerk's *Shakespeare's Lost Kingdom* and served as a consultant for the documentary film *Last Will. & Testament*.

William J. Ray attended the University of California, Berkeley, and graduated "with great distinction" in the Political Science Department in 1968. He continued his intellectual and artistic interests while working and homesteading East of Willits, California, publishing regionally in books, journals, newspapers, and most recently lecturing and writing on the Shakespeare identification issue. He is a former Shakespeare Fellowship Trustee who produces authorship related DVD's, essays, and reviews, collected in the website, wjray.net.

Don Rubin is a Professor and former Chair of the Department of Theatre at York University in Toronto. Founding director of York's Graduate Program in Theatre and Performance Studies (MA and PhD), he is the Series Editor of Routledge's six-volume *World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre* and was the Founding Editor of Canada's national theater quarterly, *Canadian Theatre Review*. He is President of the Canadian Theatre Critics Association and a member of the editorial board of the webjournal *Critical Stages*. Professor Rubin was coordinator of the 2013 Joint Conference of the Shakespeare Fellowship and the Shakespeare Oxford Society in Toronto, and is a trustee of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship.

Earl Showerman, MD, graduated from Harvard College and the University of Michigan Medical School, has been a patron of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival since 1974, and reads at the Hannon Library of Southern Oregon University in pursuit of the Shakespeare authorship question. He has served as a Trustee of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship and the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition. Since 2005 he has presented and published a series of papers on the topic of Shakespeare's "greater Greek," explicating the Greek dramatic sources in *Hamlet*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Pericles*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Timon of Athens*, *Troilus and Cressida* and the Tudor interlude, *Horestes*.

James A. Warren was a Foreign Service officer with the U.S. Department of State for more than twenty years, during which he served in public diplomacy positions at U.S. embassies and consulates in eight countries, mostly in Asia. Following his career with the State Department he served as Executive Director of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training (ADST) and then as Regional Director for

Southeast Asia for the Institute of International Education (IIE). James is currently devoting his energies to literary and musical pursuits, and in 2013 received the Vero Nihil Verius Award for Distinguished Shakespearean Scholarship from Concordia University (Portland, Oregon) for his accomplishment as the editor of *An Index to Oxfordian Publications*. He is a Fellow with the Center for the Study of the Great Ideas and the Adler-Aquinas Institute.

Richard Waugaman, MD, is a Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Georgetown University School of Medicine, a Training Analyst Emeritus at the Washington Psychoanalytic Institute, and a recognized expert on multiple personality disorder. He is a regular reader at the Folger Shakespeare Library, and has written extensively on Shakespeare, the psychology of anonymity, and the case for Oxford's authorship of the Shakespearean canon.

Alexander Waugh is the author of several books, including *Classical Music* (1995), *Opera* (1996), *Time* (1999) and *God* (2002). His family memoir, *Fathers and Sons* (2004), was made into 90-minute BBC documentary; a second family memoir, *The House of Wittgenstein* the story of the Austrian family of philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, was published in 2008. The General Editor of the scholarly 42-volume *Complete Works of Evelyn Waugh* for Oxford University Press, Waugh is a Senior Visiting Fellow at the University of Leicester, Honorary President of the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition and life-member of the De Vere Society. He co-edited, with John Shahan, *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt?* (2013) and published *Shakespeare in Court* as a 'Kindle Short' in 2014.

Richard Whalen is co-editor with Ren Draya of Blackburn College of *Othello* in the Oxfordian Shakespeare Series. He is a general editor of the Oxfordian editions series and the author of *Shakespeare Who Was He? The Oxford Challenge to the Bard of Avon* (Greenwood-Praeger, 1994).

Table of Contents

From the Pulpit: A Few Home Truths — A British Introduction	Alexander Waugh	1-8
Sisyphus and the Globe: Turning (on) the Media	Don Rubin	9-22
Biography, Genius, and Inspiration	Bernd Brackmann	23-32
Strat Stats Fail to Prove that ‘Shakspere’ is Another Spelling of ‘Shakespeare’	Richard F. Whalen	33-50
Arms and Letters and the Name “William Shake-speare”	Robert Detobel	51-58
The Use of State Power To Hide Edward de Vere’s Authorship of the Works Attributed to “William Shake-speare”	James Warren	59-81
Chaucer Lost and Found in Shakespeare’s Histories	Jacob Hughes	83-105
<i>A Midsummer Night’s Dream</i>: Shakespeare’s Aristophanic Comedy	Earl Showerman	107-136
Mark Twain and “Shake-Speare”: Soul Mates	James Norwood	137-158

Ben Jonson and the Drummond “Informations”: Why It Matters

Richard Malim 159-172

Reviews

Was William Scott a Plagiarist? A Review of Scott’s *The Model of Poesie*

reviewed by Richard Waugaman 173-178

Dr. Magri’s Bow and Quiver: *Such Fruits Out of Italy: The Italian Renaissance in Shakespeare’s Plays and Poems*

reviewed by William Ray 179-185


Towards a Pragmatechnic Shakespeare Studies: A Review-Essay on U. Cambridge’s *Shakespeare and the Digital World*:

reviewed by Michael Dudley 187-196



From the Pulpit – a Few Home Truths

Alexander Waugh

 According to the testimony of the distinguished 17th century antiquary and Garter Principal King of Arms, Sir William Dugdale, Shakespeare's Monument at Stratford-upon-Avon was originally surmounted by two carved cherubs, the one on the right held an hourglass, the one on the left, a spade. At some point in the late 17th or early 18th centuries these figures were replaced with newer, tidier models, whose chubby legs no longer dangled precariously over the ledge upon which they were sitting and whose arms were now neatly tucked close to their bodies. The one on the left still holds a spade, though it is no longer so easy to see, while the one on the right, now deprived of his hourglass, holds an inverted torch. A minute skull — pointless given that there was already a skull crowning the top of the monument — has been placed by the torchbearer's bottom. If it had not been for Dugdale's declared determination to "preserve those monuments from that fate which time, if not contingent mischief, might expose them to" we might never have known what message the monument's conceivers intended to convey. The spade and inverted combo that is seen on the monument today represents (or we are told) the figures of "Labour" and "Rest."

At least one commentator believes that the alteration of symbols has not changed the message. Of the original monument he writes: "Placed upon the cornice are two wingless cherubs, one holding a spade representing 'Labor', the other holding an hourglass and representing 'Rest.'"¹ I have not managed to find a shred of evidence to support this contention that the hourglass was ever used as a symbol of "Rest" — unless by "Rest" is meant "Death," or, more correctly, a *memento mori* — a reminder of the transience of life. But we should not confuse reminders

Waugh - From the Pulpit 2

of the transience of life with representations of “Rest.” What the hourglass patently and indisputably *does* represent is “Time.” The conjunction of spade and hourglass (“Labour” and “Time”) is not uncommonly found on English funerary monuments of this period. The 1623 monument to Richard and Elizabeth Berney, for instance, at St. Peter’s Parmentergate, displays a weary figure leaning on an hourglass and holding a spade; the glorious monument to Sir Edmund Plowden at Temple Church crosses spade, mattock and hourglass under a pile of autumn fruit. These symbols serve, not only as reminders of our mortality, but as images of those tools that are needed in life and that will be needed in death, in order for us find the “Truth.” As William Gurnall preached in his *Christian in Complete Armour* (1655): “thou must bestowe some time for thy diligent search after Truth. Truth lies deep, and must be digged for; this treasure of knowledge calls for spade and Mattock.”

The idea that “Truth” lies underground can be traced back to Democrates and the ancient Greeks, who had her slumbering at the bottom of a deep well. In Hebrew scripture God is said to have hidden Truth at the center of the earth and humans are expected to expend their time and effort excavating for her. Luther accused the Devil of deliberately distracting men from their labour so as to deprive them of the time necessary to their search after Truth. Iconography of the 16th and 17th centuries is replete with images of a winged, raddled Time holding his hourglass in one hand while hauling the luscious figure of “Truth” (his daughter) out of a dark pit in the ground.

In September 1623, two months before the publication of Shakespeare’s First Folio, Joseph Hall preached a sermon before that great book’s two illustrious dedicatees (Lords Pembroke and Montgomery) in which he said: “The vein of Truth lies low, it must be digged and delved for to the very centre.” His sermon took the form of an extended rumination on “Truth,” according to a phrase from Proverbs 23:23: “Buy the truth and sell it not.” Hall’s sermon mused on Latin words and phrases like *veritas domini* (God’s truth); *dilexisti veritatem* (thou hast loved Truth) and *verum omne vero consonat* (“all truth accords with every Truth”).

The preacher was, of course, the very same Joseph Hall who, two decades earlier and before he had joined the priesthood, had slandered Oxford/Shakespeare in a set of “tooth-lesse satyrs” called *Virgidemiarum* (1598). As post-Stratfordians are aware, the poet whom Hall accuses of running a scriptorium of writers and “shifting his name” like a “craftie cuttle who lieth sure in the black cloud of his thicke vomiture” was “Shakespeare,” even though Hall hides his identity behind the name “Labeo” — a classical reference to Quintus Fabius Labeo, the Roman aristocrat-poet-playwright who, according to Santra as reported by Suetonius, arranged for his comedies to go out under the allonym “Terence.”²

In his Third book of Satyrs from *Virgidemiarum* (1597) Hall attacks someone whom he calls “Great Osmond.” This person wonders how he shall be remembered once he is “dead & gone.” His name is not attached to any of his works and he is reviled for his living deeds. Hall insists that no fancy tomb will ever save his “rotten name,” and suggests that once “Great Osmond” is dead he should be “inditched in great secrecie where no passenger might curse [his] dust.” This attack appears

in the same book as Hall's darts against the shamed pseudonymous poet "Labeo" (Shakespeare) and we may tentatively identify "Great Osmond" as "Great Oxford" through Hall's veiled allusions to the Vere name in "true vertue" ("thy monument make thou thy living deeds: No other tombe then that true vertue needs"), and in the line: "where then is Osmonds name? Deservedst thou ill?"

That Oxford was eventually buried "in great secrecie" at Westminster Abbey may suggest that Hall possessed notable powers of prophecy, but Oxford was already ahead of the game. In the sonnets ascribed to "Shake-speare" we learn of a poet whose reputation and social standing are, like "Great Osmund's" and "Great Oxford's," in tatters, whose name has "received a brand" (111), who is, like "Great Osmond" and "Great Oxford" "despised" (37), "shamed" (72) "vile esteemed" (121) and "in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes"; who feels "all alone," and beweeeps his "outcast state" (29). Shake-speare knew that the pomp of a stately funerary monument would not have been appropriate at his passing, for he suffered a "bewailed guilt" (36) at the "vulgar scandal stamped upon [his] brow" (112). "If you read this line," he wrote, "remember not the hand that writ it" (71); "In me each part will be forgotten"(81); "My name be buried where my body is and live no more to shame nor me nor you"(72); "After my death...forget me quite"(72); "no longer mourn me when I am dead...do not so much as my poor name rehearse [for] I once gone to all the world must die" (71).

As Hall's attack on Oxford recommends that his remains "be inditched in great secrecie" so that "no passenger might curse his dust," the Stratford cenotaph defiantly urges the passenger to "Stay" and "read (from this monument) if thou canst, whom envious death hath placed with Shakespeare." "Judicio Pylum," "Genio Socratem" and "Arte Maronem" – clever allusions respectively to Beaumont, Chaucer and Spenser which allow the riddle-solving passenger to discover that "Shakespeare" was secretly "inditched" by "envious death" near to those three poets, thus confirming what Oxfordians have long supposed, that his body was removed from under an "uncarved marble" at Hackney and now, as stated by his cousin, Percival Golding, "lieth buried at Westminster."³ We have taken a long time to work all this out and it is a matter of no small regret that the two delightful cherubs — purposefully designed to encourage the Stratford passenger to bestow his time and labour in his search for Truth — are not still around to gloat over it.

If Hall ever read the Stratford epitaph he would undoubtedly have sensed the rebuke to his vulgar "satyr" against "Great Osmond" and, as a self-elected advocate of truth, might also have recognized the specific "truth" for which the cherubs ordained us to spend our time excavating, for he could not have been oblivious to the fact that *Vere* in Latin means "truly" or "truthfully," and that from this, Great Oxford had drawn his motto *Vero nihil Verius* ("Nothing Truer than Truth"). Those playful little putti on the Stratford-Shakespeare cenotaph were telling us all along that with time and labour we must dig for Vere.

And so to the present coal-face where the digging still goes on. The internet has allowed us to work at a much faster pace with a more productive rate of return

than ever before, and so (as those who are abreast of recent developments in the authorship question will be aware) the full shape and form of the once hidden treasure is now clearly in view. But as time and the hard sweat of an army of remarkable scholars approaches that moment when the truth can be finally winched from its 400-year-old pit, the diggers must strap their helmets tightly to their heads in expectation of the fiercest and bloodiest resistance from those who passionately prefer the truth to remain buried for ever.

Professor Don Rubin, who has achieved much success in inspiring students at the University of Toronto to take a keen interest in the Shakespeare authorship problem has, like most of us, made his fair share of enemies along the way. In this issue he tells of the hair-raising animosity levelled against his work by one James Kelly Nestruck, a theatre critic of *Toronto's Globe and Mail*. Stratfordians enjoy speculating on the psychological aberrations that motivate those who question their orthodoxy — we are snobs, anarchists, neo-romantics, Shakespeare-haters, mentalists, holocaust deniers, supporters of South African apartheid, etc., etc., *ad nauseam*. Above all we are scary. Professor Stanley Wells, in a television interview with his colleague, Carol Rutter, announced, in quite hysterical tones, that it is “dangerous to encourage people to question history.” A petrified educationalist called Alasdair Brown, in internet discussion, similarly announced that the Oxfordian challenge to his creed was “insidious, reactionary and dangerous.” Professor Rubin’s study of Nestruck’s craven attempts to have him discredited serves as a fascinating case study into how a human might behave when he is hell-bent on keeping a raft afloat that is slowly and ingloriously submerging beneath the muddy waters of a rising tide.

How often do Oxfordians have to hear their objectors cry: “What does it matter who wrote Shakespeare, so long as we have the plays?” While my own enjoyment of Shakespeare’s works has been unquestionably enriched by my understanding who wrote them and how they relate to his life and times, I accept that this is a personal attitude that others may not share. However, he who asks “What does it matter so long as we have the works?” is missing the point. History needs to be true and accurate if it is to serve any purpose at all. To plead that Shakespearean biography does not matter since it does not affect one’s personal enjoyment of his works displays not only a gross disregard for the concept and purpose of biography, but a myopic and wholly self-centered confusion of history and private, personal responses to aesthetic stimuli.

Addressing this topic Bernd Brackmann employs his spade and hourglass for a philosophical investigation of the relationship between genius, inspiration and an artist’s biography. His declared aim is not to uncover new facts about Shakespeare but to provide what he terms “a tangible approach to the man.” Brackmann argues that since the works of a writer of “genius” are necessarily “inspired” by his life’s experience, understanding a writer’s biography allows the reader to enter into a quasi-personal relationship with him — a relationship which he believes “may reveal new aspects of the work and enable an inner conversation with him in his work.” So to those who insist that Shakespeare’s biography is irrelevant to the appreciation

of his works, Brackmann eloquently recommends that “we open our experience to a new kind of writer: one who, in his works, confronts us not as one who writes about life, but one who writes in order to experience it.”

The question of the spelling of Shakespeare’s name and its relevance to the authorship question has been widely debated over recent years, most notably (for the anti-Stratfordians) by Professor A. J. Pointon in his book *The Man who was Never Shakespeare* and in *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt?* and by David Kathman (for the Stratfordians) on his own authorship web page (shakespeareauthorship.com). Richard Whalen reopens the case with an attack on the methodology that Kathman uses to swing the evidence so as to suggest that the spelling of “Shakspeare” was unregulated and therefore irrelevant to whether or not the playwright used a pseudonym. Whalen explains why Kathman’s statistics were misleading and shows that the figures could equally be interpreted to reveal the very opposite of that which Kathman believes. While Whalen achieves a battle victory for common sense, the spelling war will undoubtedly continue. J. E. Laughton in his *Defeat of the Spanish Armada* (1894) showed that the Elizabethans altered the spelling of their surnames in much the same way as they differenced their arms, to indicate precedence within the family. Walter Raleigh, for instance, spelled his name one way during the life of his grandfather, another after his decease, and when his father died he finally adopted his father’s spelling (“Raleigh”), which he maintained consistently until his death. We see variant spellings of *Vere* (*Ver*, *Veare* etc) used by different family members at different times, with the particule, *de*, seemingly reserved for the head of the family. In a letter to the *London Times*, Laughton argued that the spelling variations in Shakespeare’s signatures, which all postdate the death of his father, give “grounds for suspicion that they are not all genuine.”⁴ This is a field of enquiry that would certainly benefit from further Oxfordian research.

Robert Detobel has, for many years, been urging historians to concentrate on the culture and mindset of feudal Europe in order to make better sense of the Shakespeare authorship mystery. Elsewhere he has shown how a small passing phrase, such as Shakespeare used in his dedication to *Venus and Adonis* (“I vow to take advantage of all idle hours”), denotes that Shakespeare was not a professional writer but a courtly poet. Here he builds on that theme by closely examining the conflicts that assailed the European courtier from medieval times, between his feudal duty to arms and his courtly duty to letters. Detobel’s appeal for a more culturally sensitive historicity is bolstered with citations from across a spectrum of English and European literature, showing how the issue of arms and letters was of central concern to the gentlemen members of ruling class in Europe, and that the pseudonym “William Shakespeare” was born of this very concern.

It is well known that no direct evidence exists for any single individual as the author of Shakespeare’s works. If it could be found there would be no authorship debate. Stratfordians have insisted that there is nothing odd about this, that we have more information about Shakespeare than any contemporary playwright. They insist, moreover, on the immortally fatuous words borrowed by Donald Rumsfeld to urge a war over nonexistent weapons of mass destruction: “absence of

Waugh - From the Pulpit 6

evidence isn't evidence of absence."⁵ That argument was shattered in Diana Price's *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography* (2001), which exposed Stratford-Shakespeare as unique among contemporary writers for having left no literary paper trail. Whether you profess Stratfordianism or something a little more enlightened, reasons need to be found to explain the extraordinarily anomalous gap in the documentary record. James Warren boldly asserts that the absence of evidence points to a high-level cover-up sparked by Southampton's potential claim to the throne as a bastard son of Elizabeth. The author, who is to be heartily congratulated for his remarkable industry and dedication in producing the monumental *Index to Oxfordian Publications*,⁶ will undoubtedly stir up much controversy with some of his thesis, but whether you agree with his outline or not, he should be applauded for entering into an area which, for fear of ridicule, is usually ignored to the wider detriment of the post-Stratfordian cause. Warren's plucky salvo should, at very least, inspire a new generation to focus on the mystery of Shakespeare's absent records.

In "Chaucer Lost and Found in Shakespeare's Histories," Jacob Hughes examines Shakespeare's attitude to Chaucer and in particular the Chaucerian influence on the character of Sir John Falstaff, without pressing too hard at the gates of the authorship debate. Chaucer, just like Shakespeare, came from a higher social class than we are told in schools. His name (like Thomas Sackville's and Edward de Vere's) derives from old French and would have denoted high birth in his time. He was a prominent figure in the court circle of John of Gaunt, one of his nephews was the Earl of Somerset, another the Marquess of Exeter. His granddaughter married a duke.

In 2011, much to the amazement of anti-Stratfordians around the world, Stanley Wells acknowledged an article in *The Oxfordian* — "Shakespeare's Lesse Greeke" by Andrew Werth.⁷ If he is seriously interested in the subject of Shakespeare and Ancient Greek drama, he must turn his attentions to the extraordinary excavations of Dr. Earl Showerman, who may be described, without the slightest recourse to exaggeration, as one of the world's leading experts on Shakespeare's indebtedness to the Greeks. In this issue he demonstrates how, once again, Shakespeare's reliance on Greek texts seems to have been recklessly overlooked, citing Aristophanes's Dionysian comedy, *The Birds*, as a likely source for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

We all like to quote Mark Twain's observation about Shakespearean biography as "a brontosaurus of nine bones and 600 barrels of plaster-of-paris," but how many have actually read his book *Is Shakespeare Dead?* It was heavily criticized at the time of its publication (1909) for all the obvious reasons plus the fact that he appeared to have cribbed passages from Greenwood's 1908 masterpiece, *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, without acknowledgment, but this book, while superseded in a few facts, is still an excellent and amusing read, which I would strongly recommend to any person of literary persuasion, who is making his first forays into the Shakespeare authorship question.

Twain teaches, quite sensibly, that the anti-Stratfordian must be primarily concerned with setting the record straight and not exhausting himself in trying to

persuade others unapt to rational appeal, “for,” he writes

I am aware that when even the brightest mind has been trained up from childhood in a superstition of any kind, it will never be possible for that mind, in its maturity, to examine sincerely, dispassionately and conscientiously any evidence of any circumstance which shall seem to cast a doubt upon the validity of that superstition.

For this reason Twain asks himself “Am I trying to convince anybody that Shakespeare did not write Shakespeare’s works?...No-no.” Following his brilliant talk at the Madison Conference 2014, James Norwood wittily reminds us of the background to Twain’s anti-Stratfordianism and his surprising affinity to the playwright, Shakespeare.

A recent disappointment has been reading the exhaustive and expensive study of a Victorian charlatan, *John Payne Collier – Scholarship and Forgery in the Nineteenth Century*, by Arthur and Janet Ing Freeman (2004). There is of course much of interest to be mined from its two fat volumes, but as to the key matter of what Collier did or did not forge the work is pretty feeble. Collier is always given the benefit of the doubt, and while we may appreciate that it is tiresome for the Stratfordians if too much of what little there is about Shakespeare turns out to be forged, it is clearly the proper duty of the self-respecting scholar who embarks on a 1500-page study of a known forger to reopen every case, to re-examine all original sources, to readdress all of the accusations that have been leveled against him on a point-by-point basis and, with due diligence, to search out and expose any further documents whose authenticity is deserving of doubt due to Collier’s involvement with them.

In several cases (e.g., Sydney Race’s 1954 aspersions against the “Manningham Diary”), the accuser is simply rubbished as a person, without a single one of his accusations being tested, rebutted or even reported. I hope the Oxfordians will resist the temptation to treat the Freemans’ study as the final verdict on what might or might not be a forgery and will carry on investigating Collier in the same detective spirit as our intrepid digger, Richard Malim, has boldly reopened another forgery case that has lain dormant ninety years. Was Ben Jonson’s peculiar “Censure of the English Poets,” apparently recorded from conversations with William Drummond of Hawthornden on the occasion of Jonson’s visit to Scotland in 1619, an early 18th century imposture? As Malim reveals there are many sensible reasons to treat this source with extreme caution. It is possible that not one of the perplexing utterances ascribed to Jonson actually came from his lips.

Richard Waugaman gives an excellent summary of what a lately discovered manuscript by William Scott, *The Model of Poesy*, tells us about Shakespeare, reading perceptively behind the few lines and many omissions of Scott’s literary criticism. Curiously it is the same impulse to Shakespearean omission that has, according to Michael Dudley, inspired Peter Kirwan and Christie Carson to excessive coyness about the authorship question in their new anthology of essays, *Shakespeare and*

the Digital World. Dudley's sharp and informative review of this unappealing tome brings the current edition of *Brief Chronicles* to a close.

It remains only for me to congratulate all of these scholarly diggers on their splendid contributions, to encourage them, with hourglass and spade, to continue in their splendid endeavors, and assure each one of them, in Euphanes's words from Fletcher's *Queen of Corinth*, that "with all my nerves I'll labour with ye till Time awaken Truth."

Endnotes

¹ Peter Usher, *Shakespeare and the Dawn of Modern Science*, 2010.

² See *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars by C. Suetonius Tranquillus to which are added his Live of the Grammarians, Rehtoricians and Poets*, trans. Alexander Thomson & rev. T. Forester (1893), 534. *The Life of Terence* was preserved in a 4th century commentary by Aelius Donatus who attributed it to Suetonius. It was later published in Suetonius *de Viris Illustribus*. Both sources were available in printed editions by the end of the 16th century.

³ Alexander Waugh, "'Thy Stratford Moniment' – Revisited Holistic Interpretation," ShakespeareOxfordFellowship.org. March 8, 2015. Reprinted from the *De Vere Society Newsletter*, October 2014.

⁴ 27 November 1908.

⁵ The maxim, well known to lawyers, is often attributed to the cosmologist Martin Rees. Rumsfeld is also know for his classification of "unknowns": "there's what we know that we don't know, and there's also what we don't know that we don't know."

⁶ Somerville, MA: ForEver Press, 2013, 2014, 2015.

⁷ *The Oxfordian*. 29:1-8.

Sisyphus and the *Globe*: Turning (on) the Media

A paper presented at the 18th annual conference of the Richard and Jane Roe Authorship Research Center, Concordia University, Portland, Oregon, April 2014.

Don Rubin

In the fall of 2013, I found myself as local host in Toronto of the last joint meeting of the Shakespeare Fellowship and the Shakespeare Oxford Society before these two august institutions saw the wisdom of merging into a new entity called the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship (SOF). I was on the SF Board of Directors at the time of the changeover and I enthusiastically supported the move. The real war to be fought, it seemed to me, was the ongoing one between Oxfordians and Stratfordians, not one between two shades of authorship grey (Oxfordians who do or do not believe in things like the Prince Tudor theory, as one example of the different shades involved).

Indeed, it has been my fervent belief since personally connecting to the authorship issue that dividing authorship warriors into separate armies was certainly not the way to win the larger population to our cause. Nor to win them to the curious notion of the freedom to think independently, to think differently or to think rationally rather than merely thinking faithfully or traditionally. Indeed, watching authorship aficionados try to demolish one another's pet theories seemed to me a really good way to actually shoot all of us in the collective foot, to give aid and comfort as well as a really good laugh to those looking for any reason not to take us seriously. That's why, to my mind, making SF and SOS into one big cuddly SOF was clearly a move in the right direction.

Such divisions are partly what has given people like Stanley Wells his confidence over the years to take on the whole mob of us rather than any single

position. Even reasonable doubters, the easiest of the authorship positions to accept. As his and Paul Edmondson's recent book *Shakespeare Without Doubt* makes clear, their strategy is to mix all authorship positions together and create a sense of confusion in which we the disputants all seem to be shooting in every direction. It also gives him leave to drag out poor old Delia Bacon rather frequently. If she went mad, so must all authorship researchers be mad too.

Surely the time has come to circle the wagons in terms of media and public outreach and make sure that — at the very least — the truth about the man from Stratford becomes known more widely in both universities (where the idea of truth once reigned) and in the larger world of public opinion (molded heavily by the press whose opinions are generally formed by universities, mostly English and Theatre departments).

This is, of course, clearly what our friend John Shahan has been doing for years now with his Shakespeare Authorship Coalition and with its immensely clever Declaration of Reasonable Doubt. It is Shahan's profound belief that if we can all join together at least as "doubters," we might well build a strong public relations foundation for the authorship question.

In moving toward such a clear public relations strategy, let us, of course, recognize differences in what we do and celebrate them. Some of us here really are engaged in very specific academic issues connected to one side or another of the great debate and the ability of these first-class academics to act as our credibility and as our conscience is absolutely crucial to the overall strength of this sometimes arcane work.

I am thinking here of the kind of research that Roger Stritmatter has done on Oxford's Geneva Bible and the kind of work that he and Lynne Kositsky have just published on the re-dating of *The Tempest*. I am thinking of Kevin Gilvary's crucial work on the redating of the canon generally and Bonner Cutting's groundbreaking studies on Elizabethan wills and the visual arts and things like wardship in the Elizabethan era. I am thinking too of Ramon Jiménez's work on the Shakespeare apocrypha and Tom Regnier's identification of Shakespeare's legal knowledge and Earl Showerman's identification of Shakespeare's medical knowledge. And I am thinking especially of Diana Price's brilliant research on Shakespeare's unorthodox biography which even Stanley Wells has praised as first-class research but research that, as he put it so delicately to me, is totally misplaced. There are too many doing such fine work that I have no time to identify them all. But we know them and they know we are deeply appreciative and support their research in this field.

That said, let me add here that it is not to these crucial and essential academic studies that I think I myself can bring any new truths or insights, at least not yet. I am not — and I readily admit — a scholar of the Early Modern period. I am a theatre scholar, a theatre historian and a theatre critic with a fair amount of experience in various forms of journalism and an enormous curiosity about the authorship issue. My own contribution, therefore, will probably come from other areas related to the issue. It seems to me that there are two specific battlefields to be recognized here: one is the ongoing critical and journalistic war we have long

been fighting with hugely closed minds of influential media people who have lots of opinions and very few facts when they write; the other is the territorial war on campuses around the world for the right to discuss this issue as a legitimate area of intellectual inquiry utilizing the notion of academic freedom as our rationale.

Put another way, every time we try to move the authorship boulder a few feet up the mountain of Truth, the ground beneath us is shaken by authority of some sort and the authorship rock we are trying to move falls back yet again and we must start all over. Again and again. Of course we are not really starting all over again each time. We know that. But I am suggesting here that if we are to win this Sisyphus-like struggle at some point and clear the way for legitimate debate, we must understand not only who we are struggling against and understand their strategy of over-complication, insult and bluster. Let there be no doubt here: we *are* Sisyphus in this battle. And despite truth and fairness being on our side, the odds are still surely against us.

Let me share with you here something of my own experience in this regard around that last joint conference in Toronto in 2013. I am speaking here of my rather personal war with the *Globe*. To be more precise, my war *not* with Shakespeare's *Globe* but with Toronto's *Globe*, that is Toronto's *Globe and Mail*, one of Canada's most influential newspapers whose young and exceedingly disrespectful and closed-minded theatre critic, one J. Kelly Nestruck, decided prior to our conference that even though he himself has never done any serious study of the authorship question, even though he is obviously more interested in tweeting his way through the blogosphere than in actually examining new research in this field, and even though his wit far exceeds his grasp in such matters, he decided early on that the authorship question would be an easy target and that I myself — president of the Canadian Theatre Critics Association and a professor of theatre with over forty years of teaching and research experience — should be ridiculed and insulted as much as possible. And what better time to do all this than during the joint conference itself when author-shippers aplenty would actually be around to read his rubbish on a subject he knows only third or fourth hand through second-rate scholars of minimal reputation.

Some background here.

For two of the last three academic years, I have been teaching (rather successfully I daresay) a course on the authorship at York University in Toronto. Called Shakespeare: The Authorship Question and offered as a fourth-year one-semester course, the approach taken by me has been rather wide-open, its goal *not* being to prove one or the other of the many candidates as the real Bard but rather to lead students into the fertile grass of authorship studies generally, to let them find out without pressure from me just how unorthodox the traditional Bard biography really is.

The course limit is twenty-five students and it has quickly filled (with a waiting list) each time I have offered it. In the course, I ask the students not to become Oxfordians but rather to choose from among the many authorship candidates and to argue that case in front of the class. It doesn't matter

whether they themselves believe the case or not. It is an exercise in research and argumentation and they love doing it. I also ask them to end each presentation with a short statement summing up the arguments against that candidacy. For the record, I include all the usual authorship suspects including William of Stratford. In preparation for these debates, we study the sonnets in some depth, *Venus and Adonis*, *Rape of Lucrece* and *Hamlet*. We read the very useful Hope and Holston volume, *The Shakespeare Controversy*, which explains clearly and objectively the history of the argument. In the most recent iteration of the course we read as well *both Shakespeare Beyond Doubt* volumes – the Wells-Edmondson version and the Shahan-Waugh version.

Finally, the course looks closely at the Folio. Only after the presentations are made near the end of the course do I show several videos including Lisa Wilson and Laura Wilson Matthias's *Last Will. & Testament*, the German-made *Naked Shakespeare* and, for fun, *Anonymous*.

Because the joint conference was in Toronto, I invited my students to attend all of the public lectures. Most enjoyed the conference immensely and the speakers, I must say, seemed to really enjoy having students around the whole time asking the presenters questions and treating them a bit like rock stars.

Back in the course, on the last day of classes, in lieu of a final exam, I hold an open debate (two or three persons to a team) and then a secret vote to see which authorship candidate scores highest after taking the course. Each is rated using a Yes, Maybe, or No format. You will find it of interest, to note that when asked to say Yes to one of the names, de Vere came in first place with the Group-written theory coming in second, followed by Derby, Marlowe, John Florio, Mary Sidney, William of Stratford and Rutland all finishing rather far behind.

But when I combined the Yes and Maybe categories and re-evaluated the decision, it was actually the Group-written theory that finished a strong first with de Vere and Derby in second and third place; Mary Sidney, Marlowe and Florio coming in a closely bunched fourth, fifth and sixth; and William of Stratford, Rutland and Bacon rounding it out at a much more distant seven, eight and nine.

As with all courses at York, the teaching and content is evaluated by the students. In this case, it included attendance at the conference. Did they feel bullied or blindsided in any way?

One graduate student taking the course wrote: “In my fifteen years of teaching at the high school level, I have come to believe firmly that teaching is a moral act and that a teacher has the responsibility to encourage students to think critically and be able to advocate strongly for whatever developing opinions students may hold. In this spirit, in what I have observed both in classes and in...this conference [this course] has excelled....Interestingly...Prof. Rubin has never shared his own beliefs on the authorship question nor has he ever asked me what mine are, showing ultimate respect for my right as his student to make up my own mind on the subject after allowing me to carefully consider what academic research has revealed and might yet reveal about the subject...”

Another wrote: “The Shakespeare Authorship Conference was by far the greatest experience I have had the opportunity to be a part of in my four years here at York....As a student interested in pursuing the authorship question beyond my undergrad, I thoroughly enjoyed how accepting everyone was and how extensively I had my questions answered. I was very proud to be part of such a wonderful academic conference....”

And another: “the conference added to my critical thinking...I learned about the nature of evidence....the conference demonstrated many references within Shakespeare...For example...medicine, law and science....”

Said another, “This entire conference was one big lesson in Critical Thinking....The whole four days...was [a] reminder....to listen to what you are being told, analyze that...and [see if] you are still satisfied....enlightening, exciting and inspiring....”

And another: “Critical thinking...is about expanding one’s knowledge rather than being right or wrong. Rather than just accepting ideas at face value, we must always ask questions.”

For the record, the joint conference was officially supported by two major Canadian universities — York and the University of Guelph. Actual support amounted to a modest \$2,000 from each, most of which was used to cover the costs of the students who attended so they could get in without charge. A little of the funding also helped subsidize the bus trip to the Stratford Festival to see Antoni Cimolino’s brilliant production of *The Merchant of Venice*. Not only was the production a highlight but so too was the opportunity to have everyone meet with Mr. Cimolino, a professional director brave enough to stand before this group of “doubters” and say that the authorship question had no real impact on his work. I will always be appreciative that Cimolino showed up that day and that simple act of courage made a huge difference in the group’s respect for him.

Also showing up for that meeting was Stratford’s former Literary Manager and now its Director of Communications, David Prosser. David — a colleague and former theatre critic — has also been brave enough to stand up to us author-shippers from time to time and, though he enjoys tweaking us, he has never pulled punches or hidden his feelings. He doesn’t believe we are doing anything that can add to Shakespeare on a stage. He actually attended an earlier authorship conference I organized in Toronto where he got booed for comparing the authorship issue to holocaust denial.

His contribution this time came in the month prior to the 2013 conference when he was sent a complimentary copy of *Brief Chronicles IV*. This started yet another public battle. Prosser wrote to the journal’s editor, Roger Stritmatter:

Dear Dr. Stritmatter,

Please accept my sorely belated thanks for the complimentary copy of *Brief Chronicles*....In return for your kindness, I offer you a morsel of information that seems to have gone unnoticed by even the most perspicacious of

Oxfordians: the fact is that the name “William Shakespeare” is an anagram of “I, his wee pal, mask earl.”

Stritmatter was incensed and responded to the SOS and SF urging them to cancel all plans to attend the production at Stratford. “No need,” said Roger, “to spend our hard-earned cash on festivals whose communications directors have such a poor grasp of reality.” In fairness, it was Stritmatter who quickly pointed out that the letter from Prosser was not written on Festival letterhead but rather on his own private letterhead. Nevertheless, the ShakesVere internet group, among others, was deeply offended. Tom Regnier of the SF suggested that Prosser should not be allowed “to push our buttons.” He added that he was concerned that “some Oxfordians will write nasty letters to Prosser on their own which he will then use to demonstrate how ‘unreasonable’ Oxfordians are.”

My favourite response in this e-mail flurry was from one SF member who commented to the Board: “Perhaps we should inform Prosser that his own name is an anagram of ‘DR. AVOID PRESS’ (not very apt for the communications director). We should also ask him if by any chance he lives on (another anagram of his name) ‘ASSDROP DRIVE.’”

I argued in this series of e-mail exchanges that “I don’t think the answer is to attack Prosser. I think the answer is to continue to send him strong material. He is the kind of person we ultimately have to convince.” A position I continue to take in media matters.

Nothing more was sent nor was the visit to Stratford canceled, but I can tell you that a week before the show, I had a thirty-minute, four-way phone call from the Festival which included Prosser and Cimolino asking me to assure them that no one was planning to demonstrate during the show. They had somehow heard that there would be a protest. I personally assured them that we were all reasonable people and promising them that there would be no protest. On the bus to Stratford I begged everyone to be on good behavior. Tom Regnier added that we were there to talk theatre and see theatre. It was the wrong time and place to mount a protest. It would not help our cause, and he was right.

Because my own experiences to that point with speaking to individuals and small groups in the media was generally positive, I had decided during the summer before the conference that I would use the opportunity to explain to the Toronto theatre media why authorship issues were even in the air. In the belief that most were essentially rational people, I thought that if the issue were presented as something that even orthodox scholars were finally dealing with and if it could all be presented without emotion I felt I could possibly bring a few of them around to at least neutrality and openness.

As President of the Canadian Theatre Critics Association, a mix of journalists and scholars, I thought I would start there. The organization meets over lunch every couple of months and invites people of note to address them on issues of significance. With the conference set to take place in October, I offered to be the speaker for August hoping that if they simply heard the basic reasons why William

of Stratford's case was so dubious, they might actually want to hear the deeper arguments in October.

My offer was accepted. I was invited to speak and pointed out in an editorial in the organization's newsletter that the authorship issue was actually getting hot as a subject and that the conference was part of the heating up. I noted that Stanley Wells had a new book out on the authorship, that Wells was speaking at Stratford during the summer and suggested that the issue probably was not going to go away. All this seemed to me rather neutral and fact-based.

And when that newsletter came out in July, everyone I spoke to seemed to be looking forward to my formal talk. That was when the *Globe and Mail's* young critic decided he had had quite enough of me and it. In a letter to the board of the critics organization (copied to the entire membership) young Kelly Nestruck wrote:

I am very wary of Don Rubin using the CTCA to promote his fringe views on what he calls "the Shakespeare authorship question." I was aware that our otherwise reputable President was a proponent of anti-Stratfordian theories, but that he will subject members to a lecture on them at the [meeting] in September is seriously embarrassing – as was his devotion of so much of this latest ... bulletin to this utter nonsense. I'm not on the Board, but to those of you who are, I hope you'll rein him in. There has been good work done in building up CTCA of late and I'd rather not see it turn into a laughing stock.

Most of the Board was shocked by his response and several members called me. I said I would respond directly (copying the Board). And I wrote, rather cordially I thought given his juvenile and thoroughly disrespectful tone:

You may want to look around on this one. No one's laughing but you. Even the Stratford Birthplace Trust, which has the most to lose in this, has decided to stop laughing and has begun to deal with it all seriously.... Now that the evidence is clear that they may well have been wrong about it, they are trying to dispute what is out there and defend their rather tenuous position. Eventually I think they will give up the fight though probably not for decades. The Stratford birthplace story is too valuable a commodity:

Anyway, I know you are not really urging critics NOT to take positions on things and I am sure you are not urging scholars to shut down honest enquiry and debate. My hope is that you will join us [at the meeting] to understand what the evidence really is. If it still doesn't make a case for you, question it and take a position. Ridicule though is not an intellectually defensible position when evidence is presented honestly and openly.

Nestruck's response was a terse, "I'll be out of town for your talk, but I'll be sure to write about your conference at York...when I get back. Sad to see you dragging down the academic reputation of that fine institution – not to mention your own."

Unshaken by his nonsensical position, I headed into the meeting with the critics even more enthusiastically. My presentation — as all my introductory talks tend to be — was focused on the oddness of the Shakespeare biography. The response was generally positive. As for Kelly, he spent the next few months on a journalistic fellowship in Germany. On his return — two weeks or so before the conference was to begin — he got in touch once again.

“The Oxfordian conference that you are helping to organize is coming up very soon. I’d like to write about it for the *Globe and Mail*. Are you free for an interview sometime this week or next.” Then he added, “Obviously, you know my position on this already and I doubt I’ll budge, but I’ll give you a chance to convince me that this is a worthwhile area of study and discussion.”

A few days later Nestruck wrote to me again saying that he was willing to even do it as a phone interview because his piece on the conference was already scheduled. That certainly surprised me. Had he already written the piece?

I quickly wrote him:

I am still [available] if you are seriously interested in writing about the conference. [But] I am the only one with the final schedule and I haven’t released it yet. What are you really writing about?...It’s important that you understand that the core issue for this conference is serious and needs to be taken seriously to even begin to understand it. Without that groundwork, casual comments become just that. So I ask you again, what are you really writing about?

...I have always insisted that intellectual positions be respected and be understood. That’s the core of disinterested academic research. So I am a bit baffled how you can expect to do anything with integrity on this if you haven’t looked seriously at both sides and heard in a measured way from people who are prepared both to lay out the argument and to field questions from you...I am suggesting to you that there is huge evidence to keep the authorship issue in the public eye. Refusing to allow debate and/or ridiculing some of the serious ideas out there without really understanding them ... has to be deemed suspect in an open society. Do you actually know what the authorship issue is? What its fundamental question is? That’s the discussion I would like us to have....With all due respect, if you just want journalistic grist for your own brand of faith then there’s really not very much need for us to speak. And certainly, if your goal is to attack or ridicule without serious rejoinder, I really want nothing to do with it....I hope you will give me an opportunity to share real authorship [information] and real conference information.If you want to write about the conference, you should come to the conference and listen to some of the papers. We have speakers coming from Germany and the UK and all over the US and more than a dozen people from across Canada.

As for your apparent belief in what “unimpeachable” authority has taught you, I would only caution you to remember that the church taught for 1500 years that the sun moved around the earth. They ridiculed and burned people as heretics for believing otherwise. Five hundred years after, the church had to apologize, had to admit it was wrong. I urge you not to hang back with the apes, with official teaching just because it is official teaching... Be an independent thinker and make up your own mind when you have heard both sides equally presented.

I wrote that e-mail at 11:43 p.m. Nestruck wrote back to me forty minutes later saying he would meet. He added “I think this Oxfordian conference (note, he keeps referring to it as that rather than an authorship conference) being held in Toronto is interesting news, so obviously I’d prefer to write about it before rather than after.”

Again, I wondered what he really wanted to write about. I had been told by people at my own university that he had already been snooping around (that’s the only way to describe it; he certainly never asked me directly) for information, asking my chair and my dean if they supported such goings on and what it was costing. Both said that they supported academic freedom and the research of a senior faculty member. He was asking the same kinds of questions to University of Guelph people trying to challenge my Oxfordian colleague there, playwright Sky Gilbert. He had even apparently contacted Roger Stritmatter, which certainly shows how naïve Nestruck was. You don’t tangle casually with Stritmatter.

When I finally met with Nestruck six days before the start of the conference, I released all the financial details and speaker’s schedule (including abstracts of each talk) to him. I tried to summarize for him my talk to the Toronto critics of two months earlier. He said he had read up on the issues already and didn’t need to hear it all. In lieu of extended background, I just gave him a copy of my notes for that talk as well as a copy of Diana Price’s unimpeachable charts.

After he left, though, somehow I sensed that I was still going to be in trouble. I held my breath. The article did not appear the next day, nor the next or the next. Instead of their weekend paper, Nestruck held it until the opening day of the conference. It was timed for maximum damage. The story itself was not as terrible as the headline and even the headline was not as bad as the story’s placement: page one. It was being promoted with a huge banner headline on the front page of Canada’s national newspaper. I couldn’t believe it but there it was. In colour no less. All I could hope was that any publicity really was ultimately good publicity. And it turned out to be that. Ultimately.

Page one, top left, featured a large drawing of the Stratford man followed by a huge headline saying “Much Ado About Nothing.” Then came a long subhead slamming us all: “Two Canadian universities are wasting their time and money — and most of all risking their reputations — supporting a conference questioning

Shakespeare's authorship of his plays." It pointed readers to the full article in the Life and Arts section. And the *entire* first page of that section turned out to an even larger representation of the page one drawing, repeating the headline "Much Ado About Nothing" and not so delicately stating "The question of Shakespeare's 'true identity' is a non-issue...so why are two Canadian universities spending time and money debating it?"

When one finally got to the "full story" — again covering almost an entire page — there was yet another photo of Mr. Stratford and the headline "Is he or isn't he: That is the question" with yet another subhead proclaiming: "Canadian university support for Oxfordian conference fires up debate about Shakespeare's identity and institutions' role in free inquiry." At last something positive.

The article began by asking if Edward de Vere could have been the author of Shakespeare's plays and poetry and then followed with Nestruck's own response: "The short answer is: No, there's no evidence whatsoever...[and] academics in English and Theatre departments around the world have taught their students exactly that — even as the so-called Oxfordian theory has been persistently pursued by a mix of cranks and celebrities and even made into a Hollywood movie." Obviously I had not made a dent in his thinking, the clear sign of an ill-trained journalist.

Young Nestruck then went on to attack York and Guelph Universities for putting their names and resources behind the conference, noting that the students attending will hear papers on such topics as de Vere's "purported bisexuality, the question of whether he had two different handwritings, and, in the words of one abstract, the campaign to legitimize the authorship issue by April 23rd 2016."

Nestruck did quote Roger Stritmatter as saying it was important for two universities to support free inquiry into this area. That statement is, however, immediately shot down with Nestruck's view that such free inquiry is "an embarrassment." As support, he quotes a very junior professor from York's English Department as saying, in not-so-good English, "insofar as we are lending credence to a theory that is very dubious — and dubious at best and often not founded on rigorous scholarship — I find it troubling." Another young scholar is quoted as saying more directly "I think it's a real blow to the scholarly credibility of the university." So much for collegiality. But never mind.

Nestruck then goes on to name me — in fact, it is probably Lynne Kositsky, but that is another topic — as the prime culprit for "Edward de Vere's breakthrough into Canadian academia. Pointing out that I was teaching a fourth-year course on the authorship question, he sets me up for the grand fall by saying that, though I have made "several notable contributions to the study of Canadian theatre," Shakespeare...is not his area of expertise."

Finally admitting his own ignorance, Nestruck continued, "Now I'm not an Early Modern scholar," but "the arguments [Rubin] presented to me are the discredited ones that have circulated for decades." He ends his diatribe by noting that

For many years, academics kept a hands-off approach to the Oxfordian argument or other authorship conspiracy theories. But in recent years, certain professors have begun to engage in public debate of the subject as the Internet has spread the Oxfordian thesis wider than ever.

At the same time, in obscure outposts of academe, the 'authorship question' has made inroads. Concordia University in Portland, Ore, has a Shakespeare Authorship Research Centre, while Brunel University in London has offered an MA in Shakespeare Authorship Studies. Guelph and York are comparatively big fish.

In his final kick at the can (that is, at me), Nestruck quotes me as saying that ultimately I believe that "apologies will come from those who are hanging back with the apes, those who feel it's okay to ridicule, those who feel it's okay to say this is heresy." To which he adds unnecessarily and exceedingly personally: "I wouldn't hold your breath, Don."

Well, as you might imagine, the *Globe* piece (which I copied and made available for everyone at the conference to read) attracted huge attention among the attendees. Many of them wrote letters to the editor over the coming days and weeks and numerous letters appeared, in severely edited form, in the paper. A week is a long run in the newspaper world for a topic to hang on in the letters section and it hung on for a week and longer.

Here is one revealing excerpt:

"I'm prompted to write because of J. Kelly Nestruck's condescending column today... sadly, some academics and pundits have such vitriol for those who dare question 'conventional wisdom'" (Virginia Hart Nelson, Toronto).

The *Globe's* letters column on Saturday ran excerpts from nine more letters, six of them supporting Nestruck's position: "So some professors at York...and Guelph feel supporting a conference on Edward de Vere's authorship of Shakespeare's plays won't harm their school's reputations. I wonder how their colleagues in the geography department would view a request to support a conference exploring the flat-earth theory?"

An English professor from the University of Toronto linked the conference to fake moon landings, CIA plots and UFOs while someone else suggested that Shakespeare's wife wrote the plays. Another suggested that it was all about class: "Even geniuses can come from poverty." One positive letter came from a librarian at the University of Winnipeg who said that Nestruck was using "the timeworn but increasingly futile rhetorical trick of dismissing those who doubt...for not being 'Shakespeare scholars' while at the same time insinuating that no such scholar would even consider the subject worthy of study in the first place. It is this very prejudice," he went on, "that has kept...English, theatre and history students and faculty from pursuing, what has been, for more than 150 years, a research problem of great historical interest — it is the subject of hundreds of books — and one that

is yielding ever more convincing results...York and Guelph universities should be congratulated for joining the ranks of academic institutions around the world which are finally throwing off the atrophying shackles of the taboo Mr. Nestruck seeks to reinforce....”

A gentleman in Calgary wrote a second positive letter asking why Nestruck presented no evidence to support the authorship of what this man called rather picturesquely “the country clodhopper.”

My own response — I proposed it as a 500 word guest-column but that was turned down by the *Globe* — appeared on Monday as a heavily edited letter to the editor. About 200 or so of my original 500 words were included. What appeared was the following:

I was disappointed by what I consider a poorly argued attack on York University, the University of Guelph, 100 visiting scholars, and on me for asking the question: could the name “Shakespeare” have been a pseudonym? Our question: could a businessman from rural Stratford who had trouble writing his own name (his parents and children were functionally illiterate) have the vocabulary or knowledge of languages, law and medicine to write the plays? Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, is another candidate with ties to theatre, and who travelled to Italy, where a third of the plays are set, a country the man from Stratford never visited.

The guts of my letter were predictably left out but at least the edited version ended as I wrote it with: a challenge for Nestruck to deal with this issue by debating me publicly.

Additional letters came in subsequently on both sides. The most important was from Bonner Cutting’s husband, Jack, from Texas. He was not at the conference but had read the letters and the *Globe* piece at home. He wrote that Nestruck’s article was an example of “argument from eminence, rather than argument from evidence — a fallacy of logical thinking that is often resorted to by those in positions of power. And make no mistake about it, big media, like academia, is powerful....[E]ven in the face of the fierce embargo that academia has placed on the authorship subject...increasing numbers of people are taking the time to study the historical information and they have the personal courage to speak out on this issue....”

For the record, Kelly Nestruck never had the courtesy or the guts to respond to that challenge though he did say some days later that I had challenged him to a duel (Tweet, 21 October). I’m not sure where that came from.

It was around this time that a local Guelph newspaper decided to also take up the issue and began asking Guelph professors what they thought, English professors of course. One of them said categorically that “the authorship debate has already been settled” and that Guelph’s decision “to support this conference could end up hurting its academic reputation.” He added that he hoped the students attending were approaching it as “a lesson in critical thinking.”

That same article quoted Prof. Daniel Fischlin, a respected traditional

Shakespeare scholar at Guelph, as saying that he was concerned that students attending the conference were only being given “the Oxfordian’s extremely dubious, unsubstantiated by any serious scholarship, and incorrect, points of view.” He added curiously, “But if students get good information and can learn from being exposed to how academic red herrings like this get produced and disseminated...then I’m okay with it.”

And on and on it went. Literally. Throughout the conference, Nestruck had tweeted about papers being presented despite the fact he wasn’t in attendance for any of them. The students in attendance, however, were fast on the twitter uptake and they responded to him throughout. By my count (thanks to a student who sent me the thread) there were over sixty tweets.

Responding to one, a student at the conference wrote: “Come on Kelly. If there is absolutely no doubt that [Stratford] wrote [the plays] then please debate it. You will lose.” The same student later wrote: “Bad journalism. You are flat out lying to your readers.”

That notorious twitterer Roger Stritmatter chimed in with his own tweet to Nestruck: “I’d be happy to debate you also. You’re pretty uninformed, to be polite about it. In another he says, “your article completely lacks ‘honest, fact-based reasoning.’ What a wonderful double standard.” Roger later told the students: “Get used to this sort of evasion....It’s how they play the game. Obfuscate, insult, obfuscate, repeat.”

All somewhat amusing at this distance in time. Not so amusing at that moment. My own first instincts were, of course, anger and disappointment. As time passed, I had opportunities to pursue it in person with Nestruck (one odd opportunity in a men’s room a few weeks later when we found ourselves during an intermission awkwardly standing beside one another) but almost everyone around me suggested that the important points had been made and that I let it go for the moment. Contrary to all my instincts for battle, I agreed to stand back a bit and try to figure out what it all meant. That “time out” is what has led to this paper, this hopefully somewhat measured response to my own experiences pushing the authorship rock up that mountain, pleased with some progress, then frustrated and irritated watching it roll back over me (and us), wanting to make war but knowing that taking on the media directly in this battle— even with a media flyweight like Nestruck — would almost always be a losing proposition. After all, the media has the last word. Or does it?

My deeper question in this instance is how to get all this taken more seriously by both the media and the academic world. We all need to understand what this experience tells us about future moves to not just “turn” the media and the academic world to neutral but to actually “turn on” and excite them about a serious and important area of inquiry. These are crucial questions to answer if we are to move our case forward.

The fact is we did bring the case to the wider public, to the attention of the press and the academic community. We did get terrific space in the media and two universities did sponsor the conference. We have to keep doing that, keep after the

universities to be our partners, keep asking media to look at what we in a serious light. These are, to some extent, public relations questions. So I believe we need to create and have working for us constantly an active public relations team whose job is to position the authorship question as one that the media should see as relating to what I keep calling the greatest literary mystery in history, the theatre's most intriguing mystery. To get the media interested in that. How can they not be interested in that? It baffles me.

Within the academic community, we need to continue to fight for the right to research in this area and to position it as freedom of academic inquiry. We need to get the academic world to lose its reticence to look at new evidence in this issue. Questions about the biography have to be answered by the Stratfordians. The key questions have to be posed again and again within universities. By experts and by our own PR people. One way may be to get the core questions down to two or three — our own catechism — that the other side must answer *with evidence* and not simply with bluster.

What are those key questions? Stanley Wells once told me that he hadn't read Mark Anderson's biography of de Vere because he believed totally that William of Stratford had written the plays. He said that until someone convinces him — with real evidence — that Stratford did not write the plays he would not consider going any further. I suggest we start there.

The evidence against Stratford is mounting. It's the place to start the final push up the mountain. Our problem, of course, is that in trying to do that we are trying to prove a negative: that William of Stratford did *not* write the plays. I am not sure how to turn that into a positive. But turn it we must for all those ignorant and naïve media (like my young friend at the *Globe*) and for our more backward-looking and bull-headed academic colleagues who still don't believe there is an authorship issue.

It's time to act. I believe the issue is ours if we do.

Biography, Genius, and Inspiration: Clarification of Terms as a Contribution to the Authorship Debate

Bernd Brackmann¹

The First Entrance to the Work of Art

Although the idea of Shakespeare as a *genius* and an *inspired* author, like many other Romantic concepts, has declined along with the rise of postmodernism, these terms may still be applied to him with complete justification. The following essay will consider what is truly meant by these terms, inquire into the relationship between the concepts of *genius* and *inspiration*, and how they affect our ideas about the biography of an artist, and finally determine whether through these considerations the identity of the writer of the Shakespearean works may be more accurately deciphered. Our inquiry will not be an investigation into lost or unknown facts, but will supply a tangible approach to the man.

In considering the problem of the identity of the writer of the Shakespearean works we regularly encounter the question of whether it is really important to understand this biography, or whether on the contrary the work may be better grasped and evaluated through a formal analysis which ignores extrinsic factors. Naturally we must affirm that the work can be understood in this way. Of course it is possible to read and even converse with a literary work without knowing the biography of an actual author, and sometimes we may even find biography an impediment to unprejudiced inquiry into the work itself. The reader must be allowed to experience directly, because it is false to seek realities or life experiences in an artist's work as he very rarely intends just to retell them in the same way.

The Second Entrance: Art and Artist, Combined

Admittedly we first develop an interest in the author primarily by reading, through which we encounter the man who over time speaks to us through his own work. Whenever we read we are bound — even unconsciously — to establish a relationship with him. Becoming aware of this encounter may reveal new aspects of the work and enable an inner conversation with him, i.e., we may question him, measure him, and weigh our consent with him in our reading — we may even encounter him by (partly) distancing ourselves from him, which is definitely worthy of a mature reader. The work and the impulse of the artist can thereby become understood in a much more profound way.

With this discovery of biography, of the idea of individual creativity, or the concept of historical circumstances, etc., a new portrait of the artist and his works becomes available, and from it we may acquire a new world view. After all the modern investigations of literary biography, and what is now known through the history of the arts, music, and literature, surely we may agree that we would not wish to renounce them for trivial reasons. If we wish to more deeply understand Goethe's, Schiller's, Holderlin's, Van Gogh's, Trakl's, Kafka's, or Celan's art, do we not accomplish this by understanding how much and in what ways their productions and their lived biographies are creatively interfused with one another? Strangely enough, when studying Shakespeare the focus is usually on the Elizabethan times and questions dealing with his biography are often rejected as being unimportant, even inadequate.

The Significance of Biography

Let us consider if we can more precisely clarify what the phrase, "biography of the artist," might mean. It includes the class of extrinsic commonplaces like mother tongue, historical context, education, encounters and conversations, reading experiences, seized or lost opportunities, fulfilled and unfulfilled hopes, open and hidden secrets, and understanding or lack of understanding from fellow human beings. One's biography is formed not only by various individual experiences and circumstances, but also is shaped by the actions, reactions and dispositions of the artist himself — factors which are reciprocally established aspects of the individual and his world. Biography must be comprehended as a way of designing one's life and thus as an indirect *revelation* of a human being.

Naturally, none of these things are squandered in creative work, for writing does not take place in an airless vacuum. For the writer his or her biography is, if put figuratively, like a stone quarry from which with hard labor a stone may be extracted, or even sometimes fall unexpectedly without any effort at all in the writer's lap. What really matters is whether the inherent form of the stone, i.e., the deeper meaning of one's experiences, can be found.

Of course we must also affirm that it is one-sided and incomplete to simplistically derive the literary work from the biography of the artist alone, but it is equally misleading and absurd to extract it from traces of entirely marginal experiences or sufferings.²

Genius

Whether the stone itself becomes meaningful depends upon many other factors. Attention, refinement, awareness, the capacity for empathy and imagination, or for deepening, a flair for apprehending the deeper meaning of portentous events and for grasping the artistic potential of literary figures — all these are capabilities by which the artist shapes or changes themes or motifs, and through which he establishes new cultural trends.

By means of these gifts the artist creates his own world and plot lines, which may often proceed from outward experiences, but can also be obtained independently from them. From the overarching grandness of his natural disposition and under the impetus of his inspiration he appears with the creative force of genius (the idea of “genius” includes both the man and his capabilities). When all is said and done, we should probably admit that the origins of genius are not truly comprehensible. We do know that a genius understands and extends the possibilities of his materials, of which he is freely in charge, and he exercises his own unmistakable style over the transformational possibilities of his discoveries, establishing an unforeseen plenitude and opening an entire new world, if necessary even against resistance, either subjective or objective, or both.

Inspiration.....

Inspiration can be translated as “breath” or “breathing in” or “breathing on”; this is not the same as intuition (“prompting”), which is rather directly connected with action or immediately attained certainty. Instead it is nearer to overhearing, the ability to respond to something said in confidence to the reader. We should here definitely consider the experience of the ancients, who it is said believed that their works originated from a muse (both *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, for example, begin with an invocation to the Muse or the goddess). Inspiration, in other words, is like an emergence of impulses from barely glimpsed alien spheres, and what he dares extract from it often surprises even the writer himself. But even against his own expectation, he accepts it as belonging to his own being, feels it as an answer to an inner inquiry or mood of which he may not even have been aware. In the process it can work on the ordinary and inconspicuous experiences of the artist to open inner doors; it can make tangible the deepest layers that all superficial experience of the world conceals; finally it can call forth in him new images, sounds, or word coinages. Only such inspiration ultimately raises mere talent to genius. Anyone can have an approximate impression of the effect of the workings of inspiration, for example a musical composition, a painting, a literary work, or landscape or portrait. He may

not only experience the discovery of beauty, but can feel himself approached and spoken to in the work, by which he believes a secret to be mentioned, and which he desires to understand and transmit.

In Our Case the Inspiration of a Poet

Other than music or color, language is the expressive medium of poetic inspiration, basically accessible to everyone, and as a rule tied to our everyday lives. Superficially considered, it is a means of communication, information, and description. However, the poet approaches it — as does every genuine artist his “material” — through a relationship which for him may be an existential one,³ through which he reveals his deeper worldview and individual mode of experience. Verbal inspiration allows him to put into words inner or outer experiences, thoughts or feelings, which rise above the banalities of everyday life, and become articulable through his art. The poet’s inspiration can naturally also lead to an idea or an ideal shape of a theatrical scene or plot, which may possibly appear like a revelation to him.

...Especially With Shakespeare

With some justification one may distinguish *made* from *inspired* art. Made art is characterized by a superficial look at personalities and the need to lecture or instruct others. Inspiration instead expands and overtakes the usual boundaries of the merely *personal*. The British Romantic John Keats (1795-1821) finds in Shakespeare an almost total readiness to draw inspiration from his life experiences, whatever they were, in order to render them in the most highly individuated verbal expression, wrought by “negative capability.” Shakespeare himself is as one who has stepped behind his own work — back into his “negative capability” — in order to create room for his boundless inspiration through the distinctive speech modes of the theatrical arts, his depth of content, elaborate transformation of literary sources and the liveliness of his characters. These inspired creations become for the genius an element of character that naturally also imprints itself on his entire pursuit of his own life. Yet there also lies in him a tendency towards self-surrender or resignation in the spheres of life outside literary self-understanding. Reaching and exceeding the boundaries of everyday life, through his neglect of worldly concerns, he may risk endangering the security of his own existence.

Shakespeare and Goethe...

What can this reconciliation of the roles of genius and inspiration, to which we now add the topic of biographical knowledge, contribute to the discovery of the writer’s identity in the case of Shakespeare? As a proof supporting the view that the player William Shakespeare is the writer of the tragedies and comedies, it is often mentioned that only a man with theatre experience (which Edward de Vere also

had) could produce such great theatrical art. If we accept this as a real biographical inference, we are met with a surprising paradox: Having gone down this path, can we now exclude other such connections or avoid seeking further biographical particularities in the work? We ask: Cannot there also exist, along with “negative capability,”⁴ a wish for nourishment from comprehensive experience and, following from that, a life intensive discovery of impulsive experience and opportunity? Could the writer have sought the full experience and intensity of life, not just to supply the content of his work, but in order to expand and deepen his own capacity to discover the possibilities of life more generally?

It is an indisputable fact that there are many conspicuous correspondences between the life of Edward de Vere and the contents of the entire canon.⁵ We shall concentrate here on one of the central aspects of the collected works, which will lead us to the core of these similarities between life and art. One of the deepest emerging inner struggles pervading the Shakespearean works is the question of reality versus appearance, “to be or not to be,” sense and senselessness. In the comedies we encounter these themes, so to speak, brought forward in a lighter key, fusing reality and dream, confusion with clarity, earnest and play. In *King Lear*, by contrast, we are faced with this question as an inescapable abyss of life. Let us consider the last scene of the play, following the interpretation of Fred Dehenny, but pursuing another track.

Lear has lost all — his kingdom, his followers, his family and close friends — but of all these the death of his daughter Cordelia weighs most heavily on his heart. Not even a refuge in prison with her remains for him. Lear dies with the knowledge of having failed to recognize real love and in doing so having burdened himself with guilt. Let us directly compare, firstly, these “terrible fear-arousing five minutes of literary history”⁶ with a tragic scene from Goethe’s work, the conclusion of *Faustus*. Faust’s beloved Gretchen has loaded herself down with the most severe guilt over the death of her brother and her mother. Half insane, half seeking atonement, she rejects a flight from the prison and, hoping for the assistance of heaven, faces the sentencing.

Goethe allows Mephisto to interpret this event in the sense, “She is judged.” However, he also modifies this ending, adding a counterpoint: From the invisible deeps he allows a voice to intone, “She is saved.” By this means the harshness of the situation is partly mitigated, and the finality of the tragedy and the suffering is negated. Incidentally, it may be observed, that Gretchen is modeled after Ophelia in *Hamlet*; here also biographical experience, namely reading, recorded deep in him, had even inspired Goethe to write his history of *Doctor Faustus*. In contrast to Goethe, Lear’s experience is so overpowering that no way out of it can be devised. Lear’s identity and existence, the putative order of his world as well as his relationship to it are dissolved altogether. Surprisingly, something else has to be taken into account. Fred Dennehy writes that he had seen “at least half a dozen performances.”⁷ of *King Lear* and that he always left the public theatre stunned, as if the ground had been destroyed underneath his feet. But at the same time he experienced unfeigned exhilaration. The theatre was the place where his soul awoke — entering a primal zone that he had hardly ever otherwise been able to approach.

The fact that both the hopelessness and terror of human existence are revealed on the stage as a genuine human experience and in the highest poetic formulation proves the writer's familiarity with such a situation. Strangely enough this terror seems to be overcome or coped with through the perfect poetic form; we may even sense a kind of elevation, a certainty of being in the face of horror. Thus Shakespeare's art can be experienced deeply; there is not the slightest hint of a constructed, purely intellectual ideality that may obscure the power of experience or the inspirations supplied by life and art.

...and Edward De Vere...

Dare we suppose that the authenticity and the deep honesty of *King Lear* stands not in contrast to the author's biography? Can this and all the other frequently inscrutable Shakespearean dramas have been created not in isolation from his own experiences, but at least partly as an expression of them? Is the authenticity we feel from *Lear* a common mark of both biography and literary work? With de Vere we find, even beyond a factual corroboration, an inner convergence between biography and literary art. The elements of this convergence include his extensive and absorbingly thorough education at Cecil House, his university career, his achievements and high position in the court of Elizabeth I, his extensive travels, his obligation to participate in war, his devoted passion to the drama (even in light of the restrictions and taboos of his class), his association with many contemporary writers, and his extensive patronage of many creative spirits of the Elizabethan age.

His jealousy, guilt, and love liaisons all afforded him a great intensity of life experience. Through the tapestry of his biography is revealed a great ambition for life, a longing for exploring one's own self and widening one's horizons and an urge to fully challenge one's talents; but we see also emotional intensity, not fleeing from the darker sides of one's soul, doubtful internal debate, and emotional explosions. Altogether we certainly do not find a secure or stable ascetic view of existence, but instead a man with contradictory tendencies towards excess and self-sacrifice. Turning back, then, to our previous question, we find it indirectly but completely answered. The quest for a full experience undoubtedly leaves visible signs, balancing against Keats's so-called "negative capability," which through artistic transformation may yield wonderful results, but may equally endanger one's fixed ground of existence. Naturally Goethe, like many other artists, also possessed this "negative capability" to a certain extent, but in contrast to de Vere, he experienced more existential stability due a disposition which he had inherited from his father:

From my father I take my stature,
To live life in earnest,
But from my mother a joyful nature
And my delight in inventing stories.

“To live life in earnest” means to weigh things up when pursuing goals and to maintain a necessary distance to inner and outer influences, which may unsettle or endanger one, especially when trying out one’s faculties or giving way to one’s inclinations — faculties de Vere definitely lacked, for he exposed himself to all dangers, going to the utmost extremes. His death in 1604 remains clouded. Having been lamed in a 1583 street feud, he had squandered his own resources, and now lived by the support of his wife and his annual court stipend, with only a few surviving friends. At the end of his life de Vere bears similarity to Lear — one who, having fallen from a former great fullness of life, has now encountered the approaching boundary of life’s conclusion, that “undiscovered bourne, from which no traveller returns” (*Hamlet*, 3.1.80). He may well have felt himself an outcast, and we even gain the impression of a stumbler, excluded from the world of glamorous entertainments at the court, for which he felt such an abiding passion. We must resist the temptation to firmly establish this concurrence or primarily explain or interpret his works from such biographical coincidences; however, it would be equally wrong to overlook the striking existential nearness in de Vere’s life to the core of the Shakespearean plays and sonnets. Let us become receptive to a writer who reveals himself through his works not as one who writes about life but as one who writes out of deep experience.

...and three Other Authorship Candidates...

Might we also find in the lives (or works) of the three other authorship candidates aspects that can be assessed as counterparts to the genius-inspiration discussion implying similar chances and risks? Let us consider the three most probable candidates in light of this question.

From everything that we know about the Stratford player William Shakespeare, or *Shakspeare* as he spelled his name, we gain the impression of a man who vigorously pursued any prospect of financial success. He married early and became, like de Vere (by his first wife), the father of three children. Although he relocated from Stratford to London, where he became a member of a theatrical troupe, there is no evidence that he was an actor. Members of an Elizabethan dramatic troupe pursued various occupations, including but not limited to being actors. He acquired shares in the Globe Theatre and came to make money by various business interests. He did so well that in 1597, at the age of 33, nineteen years before his death, he purchased the second best house in Stratford, where he later was able to pass several years of leisure after retiring from writing.

Compared to the downwardly mobile de Vere, his dynamic development, from petty small-holder to leisurely bourgeois, constitutes an entirely contrasting life-arc to de Vere’s. And this raises a pertinent question: Where is the content, the inner substance, in Shakespeare’s life? His last will and testament, a crabbed ranking and meticulous division of all his goods, evokes an impression of abundant superficiality. From his life we solely have evidence about his everyday practices, which do not reveal any visible connection to his artistic production. Until some

is given there is also no mandatory reason to believe that any further revelation of facts will reveal it. So the traditional makeshift maneuvers us into imagining Shakespeare going through the world (London) with his particularly wide-open eyes, and receiving the impulses for his creations straight from received observation of the lives of others, but never accessing his own experience as a source of creative inspiration.

Might the scientist Francis Bacon inhabit this domain of experiential inspiration? Naturally he possesses the comprehensive and thorough education observable in the work of Shakespeare. Yet this does not solve the whole riddle. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, author of the Sherlock Holmes novels, gives a tip against Bacon's authorship, which should be taken seriously. In his poem, "Shakespeare's Exposition," Holmes considers the claim that Bacon had written the Shakespeare works, but rejects it because of the poor quality of Bacon's own poetry, which Doyle found neither inspired nor a work of genius.⁸ Doyle also considered it absurd to think that a genius would be able to jump here and there from mediocre to inspired work. Even if the work flows as from a spring, it does not mean that an author can turn on or off his inner participation at will. One might also ask whether the natural historian Bacon, with his close involvement with the outer world of rational speculation, would be likely to achieve Shakespearean depths, or if he could inhabit the supernatural world depicted, for example, in *Midsummer Night's Dream*. The last deed of Bacon's life was to attempt to determine if a frozen hen would remain preserved for a longer time if placed outdoors and stuffed with snow. As a result he acquired and eventually succumbed to pneumonia, from which he died.

And Christopher Marlowe? For him an answer is less easy to find. It is still unresolved whether he faked his own killing in a tavern brawl, or his capital indictment caused his judicial execution, or whether he actually was murdered. The lack of clear answers to these questions may allow different options for interpretation. One can pursue an inexhaustible series of subsequent questions, for example whether Marlowe's work already reveals a tendency to follow the patterns which appear — supposedly at a later time — in the Shakespearean works. Many readers, however, perceive that in spite of some similarities and common passages the characteristic style of Marlowe's work is quite distinct from Shakespeare's. Moreover Marlowe's plays are lacking in the kinds of creative wordplay that are a definite characteristic of our writer's work.

With Marlowe, questions abound. Did he supply all the additional works, even those published under the name "Shakespeare," also from his subsequent life, which he spent in exile? Was he lucky in his "afterlife," or did he prioritize themes of exclusion? Did he have access to a library through which he continued his education and remained current after 1593? Was he in danger of being discovered? The answers to these questions remain entirely speculative. We know nothing concrete.

...and Edward de Vere again...

While we can construct connections between life and work for these three well-known alternative candidates only through creative leaps, in de Vere's life and developmental trajectory we discover many elements which fit the Shakespearean works like a key in a lock. With considerable justification we may then answer our original question as follows: The deep authenticity of *King Lear* and other works springs from a life that is stamped by an unconditional devotion to existential experience, regardless of consequence, and correspondingly marked by a life and creative process which gave license to desire for deepest inspiration. In his will to see through reality and appearance, to disrupt the illusory distinction between inner and outer experience and take his readers to the margins of existence, he reproduces these themes in his works. Thus we are given the outstanding result of a life transcending borders, revealing us the victory over the world of appearance in the frame of a kaleidoscope of human emotions.

...and the Reader

We have examined the question of the identity of the author independent of many lines of inquiry and carefully considered various aspects of the problem scholars scrutinized, which often stood in the background, but which nevertheless are implicated in the deep contents and genesis of the work. Traces of the inner participation of the author with his creations bring the work closer to us, allowing access to an appreciation for the deep inspiration, for the power of genius and a biographical framework can keep our relationship with him creatively fluid. Such an approach enables us to see in the writer of the Shakespearean works one of or even the first modern artist –wrestling with his own existence as his art is a possibility of self-expression which cannot easily be brought in harmony with his own life.


Endnotes

- ¹ This article originally appeared in *Spectrum Shake-speare*, Stuttgart 2013, 28-40. It is here translated from the German by Roger Stritmatter and Elke Brackmann.
- ² Shortly before the release of the film *Anonymous* Thomas W70 posted an essay (on: www.freitag.de/community/blogs/thomas-w70/wer-schrieb-shakespeares-werke), in which our position is confirmed: "It was especially my intensive research on Goethe that made me realize that in order to produce great art the excessive exploitation of one's personal experience, even more than education and the command of literary skills, is relevant. In his conversations with Eckermann Goethe keeps criticizing young writers, blaming them for dealing with topics that were beyond their horizon. This, according to Goethe, is not a problem with minor issues, but if central topics are not based on personal experiences, their works are doomed to failure.... This is overwhelmingly true of nearly all leading 19th and 20th century authors, whose biographies are well documented. This does, however, not imply staring at the naked realities only. Of course, Goethe did not commit suicide as a young man and Thomas Mann did not die in Venice. What really matters is that one's life experiences and constellations may often take on threatening dimensions or escalate for the sake of dramatic clarity or become idealized or elated."
- ³ From the lyric poet Reiner Kunze come the following lines from his small poem, "The Writer in Exile," which of this deep connection (between "material" and existential reflection) furnish some comprehension: "but who knows, what this means, that 'one's life depends on a word.'" The Russian lyricist Jossif Brodsky also expresses the feeling to which Kunze alludes, namely that language itself employs the poet as a tool to develop itself: for him speech was its own being, the impulses of which the writer might obtain access. We find confirmation of this from other areas of art: the painter Emil Nolde, for example, tells us that the "colors loved his hand."
- ⁴ Fred Dennehy in his essay "King Lear's End: What Remains," *die Drei*, January 2013, coined this term (22).
- ⁵ The attack by pirates on his return trip from Italy to England appearing also in Hamlet; the comparison of Polonius in *Hamlet* and William Cecil, Oxford's father-in-law, the street battle in *Romeo and Juliet* recalls the circumstances of de Vere's lameness. On the exceptionally copious connections between de Vere's life and the Shakespearean works, see William Farina, *De Vere as Shakespeare: An Oxfordian Reading of the Canon*, McFarland, 2006.
- ⁶ See Dennehy, 20.
- ⁷ Dennehy, 20.
- ⁸ See for a discussion Richard Ramsbotham, *Who Wrote Bacon?: William Shakespeare, Francis Bacon and James I, a Mystery for the 21st Century*. London: Temple Lodge Publishing, 2004.

Was ‘Shakspere’ also a Spelling of ‘Shakespeare’?

Strat Stats Fail to Prove It

by Richard F. Whalen

he most fundamental article of the Stratfordian faith is the tenet that “Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare.”¹ That is, that the man who was born, raised, married and buried in Stratford-on-Avon and whose name was spelled “Shakspere” in the parish register there was the William Shakespeare who wrote the great poems and plays. “Shakspere” and “Shakespeare” are taken to be different spellings of the same name.

The belief is expressed directly when Shakespeare establishment scholars decide they must respond to those who doubt the traditional belief. In *Why Shakespeare WAS Shakespeare* (2014), Stanley Wells, honorary president of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in Stratford and professor emeritus at the University of Birmingham, specifies that “Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon was Shakespeare the poet and playwright.” The capitalized “WAS” in the title fairly shouts Wells’s conviction. He dismisses as “nothing peculiar,” and presumably nothing significant, in the “Shakspere” spellings in the Stratford parish register and several other Stratford records.² Likewise, in *Contested Will: Who Wrote Shakespeare?* (2010), James Shapiro expresses his confidence that “Shakespeare of Stratford really did write” the Shakespeare plays, and a few pages later cites the “overwhelming evidence of the title pages” naming Shakespeare as the author.³ The “Shakspere” spelling in Stratford gets two brief mentions, both seriously misleading.⁴

Much more common (and arguably more insidious) is the indirect expression of the traditional belief that simply leaves the “Shakspere” spellings in Stratford unrecognized. Very many biographies of the Stratford man as Shakespeare silently change the “Shakspere” spellings of the Stratford records to “Shakespeare” for the poet-dramatist and do so without comment. Rarely, if ever, do they discuss or even mention the lifelong “Shakspere” spellings on many documents. To cite just one of myriad examples, *The Reader’s Encyclopedia of Shakespeare* states without qualifications that “Shakespeare was born in Stratford-Upon-Avon. . . . His father was John Shakespeare.”⁵ That spelling, however, was not the spelling of their surnames in the Stratford parish register.

One Shakespeare establishment scholar who has openly, albeit reluctantly, recognized the spelling problem is Gary Taylor of Florida State University. In *Reinventing Shakespeare* he acknowledges that “the spelling of Shakespeare’s [sic] name causes special difficulties,” noting that the “Shakspere” spelling “seems to have been his own preferred spelling.” But, he concedes, “In our time ‘Shakespeare’ is normal, and I have therefore grudgingly perpetuated it.”⁶ This reluctant concession and so-called “normalizing,” however, comes only at the very end of his book where he reveals that until then he has silently substituted “Shakespeare” for “Shakspere” throughout.

An attempt to provide statistical support for the traditional belief is made by David Kathman, a security analyst and co-author of an Internet website entitled (no surprise) “The Shakespeare Authorship Page: Dedicated to the Proposition that Shakespeare Wrote Shakespeare.”⁷ One of his articles on the website uses a statistical methodology to argue against the Oxfordian proposition that William Shakespeare was the pseudonym of Edward de Vere, the seventeenth earl of Oxford, the leading candidate as the poet and playwright, and that William Shakspere of Stratford was not the writer. At issue is whether “Shakspere” was nothing more than a variant spelling of “Shakespeare,” the name on the poems and plays, or was a different name that belonged to the Stratford man.

The issue arises because spelling in the Elizabethan Age was so irregular that even someone’s family name could be spelled in several different ways, even in the same document. E. K. Chambers, the eminent Shakespeare scholar, found 83 different spellings of the Shakespeare/Shakspere surname over several centuries. He devoted four pages of *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems* to the phenomenon and noted the problem that “some of the forms may be merely scribal eccentricities or may rest on misreading.”⁸ Kathman finds 25 different spellings in 160 documents from 1564 to 1616, the lifespan of the Stratford man.⁹ Unless otherwise indicated, this article accepts Kathman’s listing of references, some debatable, and his tabulations of the raw data, while challenging his methodology and conclusion.

His statistical methodology is simple, probably *simplistic*. He divides the occurrences of the 25 spellings into two categories, literary and non-literary. In the literary category are the occurrences of “Shakespeare” and its variant spellings with the first *e* (i.e., *e* immediately after *k*). In the non-literary category are the occurrences of “Shakspere” and its variants without the first *e*. He then totals the occurrences in each category. Literary references (Table 2) total 149 for “Shakespeare” and 22 for “Shakspere.” The predominance of the “Shakespeare” spellings would be expected; they include the Shakespeare name on all editions of the poems and plays and the many references to them in literary contexts. None of the references in literary contexts identified “Shakespeare” as from Stratford.

The crucial evidence for Kathman’s analysis is in the non-literary category, which shows a higher frequency of the “Shakespeare” spelling in legal and business documents associated with the Stratford man. These non-literary references (Table 1) total 128 for “Shakespeare” and 52 for “Shakspere,” nearly three times as many for “Shakespeare,” which leads Kathman to conclude:

There were not two separate names, “Shakspere” and “Shakespeare”; rather, they were the same name, with “Shakespeare” being by far the most common spelling both in non-literary references to the glover’s son from Stratford and in the literary references to Shakespeare as a poet and playwright.¹⁰

The totals would appear to provide statistical certainty for the conclusion, which includes the unstated but implied corollary that the glover’s son from Stratford and the poet-playwright were the same man.

Statistics carry an aura of certainty; the numbers appear to speak for themselves. The single indicator of the 128-52 spelling totals in the non-literary category is supposed to be the final score. There may well be, however, good reasons for the “Shakespeare” spelling appearing so often in non-literary contexts referring to Shakspere of Stratford.

There are three significant problems with Kathman’s methodology: 1) the effect of counting repetitions of a spelling in the same document; 2) the failure to recognize that spellings probably should be weighted depending on the context, and 3) the need for essential judgments about contextual, historical, chronological and geographic factors. A statistical methodology that is based solely on frequencies of the “Shakspere” and “Shakespeare” spellings in the raw data distorts and superficially oversimplifies the evidence.

The analysis distorts by failing to take into account the effect of counting repetitions of the same spelling of the name in the same non-literary document. For example, a “Shakespeare” variant spelling of the poet-dramatist’s name occurred *17 times* in a 1605 tithes document in Stratford. It’s debatable whether that spelling should be counted 17 times, as Kathman does, or only once. The problem occurs in both the non-literary and literary categories.¹¹

Repetitions of “Shakespeare” in all non-literary references to the Stratford man occurred 90 times in 14 documents. Repetitions of “Shakspere” occurred 12 times in five documents. If the repetitions are not counted, the occurrences of “Shakespeare” in non-literary contexts drop precipitously, from 128 to 38, and repetitions of “Shakspere” drop from 52 to 40. They occurred with approximately the same frequency by this more conservative, less generous counting, contrary to Kathman’s conclusion that the “Shakespeare” spelling was “by far the most common spelling . . . in non-literary references to the glover’s son from Stratford.”¹²

There is good reason to question whether it makes sense to count repetitions of the spelling of a name in a non-literary document. A scribe would be expected to spell an important name the same way throughout an important legal or business document.¹³ It should come naturally to a professional business writer. But his repeated spelling of the name adds little or no significance to the frequency of its use in a statistical analysis of spelling usages. So it should probably be counted once, reflecting that writer’s understanding, rightly or wrongly, of how the name should be spelled. It might be argued that such repetitions should have at least some

significance, but it's difficult to see how this weighting factor would be defined and calculated without recourse to subjective criteria. Whether and how repetitions should be counted may never be resolved to everyone's satisfaction.¹⁴ It does, however, raise doubts about the validity of the methodology.

Counting repetitions also distorts the results in literary contexts, where the "Shakspere" spellings for the Stratford man, by Kathman's count, occurred 22 times versus 149 for "Shakespeare." But if the nine repetitions of "Shakspere" in three documents are omitted from the count, it occurs only 13 times. Shakspere's name in his hometown spelling occurred rarely in literary contexts for someone who is supposed to have written the works of Shakespeare.

A problem of oversimplification is whether every occurrence of a spelling should be given the same statistical weight. Two handwritten notes concerning purchases of Shakespeare books illustrate this problem. Richard Stonley, a court finance official, wrote "Shakspere," the Stratford spelling, in a diary entry for his purchase of *Venus and Adonis* in 1593 (the year it was published), despite the Shakespeare name on its dedication. Stonley's spelling gets the same weight as the dedicator's name in the book. It's entirely possible, however, that Stonley's "Shakspere" spelling, its first appearance in London, was simply his shorthand and not a reference to Shakespeare the poet, as Kathman would have it. There's no corroborating evidence that already in 1593, Stonley knew, or thought he knew, that Shakspere was Shakespeare. Similarly, sixteen years later (if the entry is authentic), Edward Alleyn, actor and impresario, wrote "Shaksper sonnetts, 5 d." on the back of note to him requesting a mastiff puppy. It's the last of seven payments he made in 1609, the year *Shake-speares Sonnets* was published. His entry gets the same weight as the prominent and uniform "Shakespeare" spelling on the title page and in the running title in the book published in dozens or scores of copies. Giving the same evidentiary weight to the two "Shakspere" spellings in short, handwritten jottings as "Shakespeare" in the two books is at least debatable.¹⁵

It is also arguable that spellings in authoritative documents of legal and historical significance should be given more weight. The six "Shakspere" spellings in two variants in the Stratford man's will, a personal, authoritative, primary source document, are each given no more weight in the tabulations than each of the eight "Shakespeare" spellings in five variants scribbled without any apparent purpose on a page of the so-called Northumberland manuscript (c. 1598-1603), a page that has little historical authority for anything.

Ignoring such qualitative distinctions, Kathman's methodology gives the same weight to every occurrence regardless of context. A statistical methodology based solely on frequencies of the "Shakspere" and "Shakespeare" spellings risks the accusation of being superficial. It fails to recognize the need to make essential judgments about the historical, chronological and geographic contexts in which the raw data appeared, especially the effect of the best-selling books by Shakespeare in that spelling at the time. For these reasons, each "Shakespeare" and "Shakspere" reference cannot be presumed to have the same evidentiary weight. Examples of such weighting problems can be multiplied and seriously undermine the validity of

Kathman's conclusions. As a practical matter, it is hard to imagine how the necessary weightings could be calculated numerically for a statistical model. Instead we should examine the contexts of each data point to see what they may suggest about the evidence.

First and foremost is recognition of the likely influence on scribes of the "Shakespeare" spelling displayed prominently and uniformly on the Shakespeare poems and plays. From 1593, when the first edition of *Venus and Adonis* was published, to 1616, when the Stratford man died, "Shakespeare" as the author appeared uniformly on more than 20,000 copies of 45 editions of the Shakespeare poems and plays.¹⁶ This massive, highly visible propagation of the name in the "Shakespeare" spelling could hardly have failed to influence the writers of non-literary documents associated with the Stratford man with the similar name. They were well-read readers by education and profession. This influence is especially pertinent at a time of highly irregular spelling when there was no consensus about how a surname should be spelled.

The year 1598 was the watershed year for the Shakespeare name in publishing. In that year alone, Shakespeare appeared as the author on the title pages of four playbooks, on the dedication page of the second edition of *Lucrece*, and eight times in the text of Francis Meres' *Palladis Tamia*. Print runs for the six books were probably well into the hundreds, or even into the thousands for the three second editions of the playbooks and the third edition of *Richard II*. More editions would signal great popularity and bigger print runs. And Richard Barnfield, prominent in literary circles, spelled it "Shakespeare" in *Poems in Divers Humours*, in which he praises his fellow poet's *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*. Before the watershed year, the Shakespeare name appeared in his books not at all in 1597, and only five times in the previous five years.¹⁷ In 1599, four more books with Shakespeare as the author were published: a third edition of *Henry the Fourth Part One* (featuring Falstaff), *The Passionate Pilgrim* and two more editions of *Venus and Adonis*, testimony to the sudden demand by readers for the play and the long, narrative poem of sexual desire.

The following year, 1600, is termed by Lucas Erne an "extraordinary year" in the London book trade,¹⁸ and more Shakespeare books were published then than in any other year from 1593-1616. Ten editions of Shakespeare plays and poems were published that year, almost one a month; six of them carried the author's name. Four of the plays were first editions, as publishers seemingly rushed to take advantage of the market value of the Shakespeare name on a book. This outpouring of fifteen books by Shakespeare in just three years was unprecedented in England. William Shakespeare—in that spelling—was by far the most prominent literary name for readers and writers in 1600, probably including writers of non-literary documents who happened to be writing about the Stratford man but seeing so often the "Shakespeare" spelling.

Erne, a professor of English at the University of Geneva, calls attention to 1600 as this peak year for publication of Shakespeare works in *Shakespeare and the Book Trade* (2013). The fourth of his books on Shakespeare, it follows on from his

well-regarded *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* (2003, 2nd ed. 2013). He describes Shakespeare as a “surprisingly prominent man-in-print”¹⁹ whose name “started appearing on title pages in 1598 with a suddenness and frequency unrivalled by fellow dramatists”²⁰ and whose popularity in London in 1600 was “sudden and massive.”²¹ The Shakespeare quarto playbooks that “started being read, annotated, commonplace, collected and catalogued in his own time” demonstrated to Erne “his rise to popularity in the book trade.”²²

He lists 65 editions of Shakespeare books from 1593 to 1616, an average of one every four and one-half months.²³ Forty-five of them carried the author’s name.²⁴ After the peak year of 1600, only three did not “advertise” the Shakespeare name, as Erne puts it. By 1600 the William Shakespeare name had arrived as that of a best-selling author.

Upwards of tens of thousands of his books probably circulated. Erne estimates that for a typical book a publisher would have issued at least a few hundred copies of each edition and perhaps well over a thousand if earlier editions had been very popular.²⁵ Given the rapid rise in the popularity of a book with the Shakespeare name on the title page, a conservative estimate might be a print run of up to 500 copies. That would mean that more than by 1616 at least 20,000 copies, and perhaps twice that number, had been published with Shakespeare as the author. The “Shakespeare” name in print was highly visible for book-buying readers, and apparently lucrative for publishers.

The immense popularity of the Shakespeare works is evidence for Erne of the rapid growth in “leisure reading,” as opposed to religious reading.²⁶ He calls Shakespeare “the reader’s writer, whose popularity called for a steady stream of new editions.”²⁷ All these editions, particularly in 1600, indicate to Erne that the Shakespeare works were “popular in more than one sense, not only widely read but also enjoyed by a more general, less specialized and elite readership.”²⁸ This general readership would have naturally included the scribes, clerks and attorneys in London, and even some in rural villages like Stratford.

Erne also observes that “clearly, it was not only Shakespeare that sold, but also Shakespeare’s name.”²⁹ He points out that the Shakespeare name on a book sold so well that over the years the type size for it increased. On the title page of the third quarto of *Hamlet* (1611), it’s spaced out in capitals, W I L L I A M S H A K E S P E A R E.³⁰ The Shakespeare name was so popular that it was often used to market playbooks that he did not write. By Erne’s count, as many as seven playbooks were falsely ascribed to Shakespeare, by name or initials, in the eighteen years from 1595 to 1613. During the same years, no other playwright had any false attributions.³¹

Although Erne (like Kathman) counts and tabulates data in search of their meaning, he cautions over several pages that quantifications may measure certain things but “are blind to others.” Data, he adds, “do not speak for themselves, but need to be interpreted.” Conclusions from statistical analyses of data drawn from literature and history, as Erne suggests, “inevitably depend on the principles of classification” that are adopted to analyze the raw data and depend especially

upon the questions that the statistical analysis is supposed to answer.³² Different principles of classification of data may lead to different conclusions, some valid, some not. The selection of the literary and non-literary classifications for “Shakspere” and “Shakespeare” spellings provide the relative frequencies of the spellings but reveal nothing about the contexts, especially when, where and by whom the spellings appeared, contexts that might well render the two classifications of little value.

Erne’s cautioning about “the limitations and pitfalls of quantitative analysis” in literary studies³³ suggests a fundamental question: Can a valid conclusion result from a statistical methodology that relies on a single indicator—surname spelling frequency—to analyze a complex socio-literary phenomenon four centuries ago involving personal identities? No rationale is given to justify this methodology, especially for spellings in a time of highly irregular spelling practices and usages in general, even of surnames.

Based solely on a single indicator, Kathman concludes that because the “Shakespeare” spelling by his count was by far the most common, 128-52 in non-literary contexts, “Shakespeare” with the first *e* and “Shakspere” without the first *e* were the same name. (As shown above, 128 and 52 may very well not be valid counts.) It’s debatable, however, whether a higher frequency of the “Shakespeare” spelling in non-literary contexts is sufficient to conclude that that spelling for the poet and playwright also designated the glover’s son from Stratford. A higher score for “Shakespeare” might or might not be more convincing; a lower score might be more problematical. Even the reverse score of only 52 for “Shakespeare” to 128 for “Shakspere” in non-literary documents might or might not be considered sufficient reason to decide whether Shakspere was Shakespeare. It would be a subjective opinion, not a statistical certainty, in a questionable methodology.

Embedded in his conclusion that Shakspere and Shakespeare were the same name is the unstated assumption that when writers of non-literary documents associated with the Stratford man used the “Shakespeare” spelling they were designating the glover’s son from Stratford as the poet-dramatist of London and did so often enough for Kathman to call it a common practice. As he puts it in his one-sentence conclusion, the “Shakespeare” spelling was “by far the most common spelling both in non-literary references to the glover’s son from Stratford and the literary references to Shakespeare as a poet and playwright.”³⁴ But there is no way to know what the writers had in mind. The unstated assumption is probably unwarranted; there is no corroborating evidence for it. Indeed, if the Stratford scribes had known, or thought they knew, that Shakspere of Stratford was the famous London author, none of them, or anyone else in Stratford, left any indication of it during his lifetime.³⁵ A more likely reason for the “Shakespeare” spelling in the non-literary documents is the influence of that spelling uniformly on tens of thousands of his best-selling books.

When a spelling occurs can also be significant, and failing to recognize this can create a chronological problem. To give just one example, the first occurrences of a “Shackespeare” spelling with *cke* in the middle was in a 1588 lawsuit involving

John Shakspere and mentioning his son William twice. Kathman classifies those spellings as non-literary references to the poet-dramatist because it was spelled with the first *e*.³⁶ The spellings, however, occurred five years before the Shakespeare name first appeared on the literary scene with *Venus and Adonis* in 1593. So “Willielmo Shackespere” in the lawsuit could only have been one of the many early variant spellings of the “Shakspere” name. Chambers found five “Shakespeare” variants for the name before 1593.

In the years that followed, “Shackespeare” spellings with *cke* occurred ten more times in non-literary contexts, which Kathman also counts as a variant spelling for Shakespeare the author.³⁷ Given the pre-1593 occurrence of “Shackespere,” it’s doubtful that the ten later occurrences of it should also be counted as variants of the spelling for the author Shakespeare. Adjusting the count would change the totals from 128 for “Shakespeare” spellings and 52 for “Shakspere” to 116 and 64, perhaps not that important, but still raising questions about Kathman’s methodology and weakening his conclusion that the “Shakespeare” spelling was “by far the most common spelling” for the poet-dramatist in non-literary references. It should also be noted that the “Shackespeare” spelling with *cke* never occurred in literary contexts for the poet-dramatist.

More important is the result if the “Shackespeare” spellings “Outside London” in Table 1 of non-literary references—all of them in or near Stratford—are more properly counted as “Shakspere” variants. Kathman allows that the “Shakspere” spellings were “fairly prominent” outside London.³⁸ This adjustment, however, changes the “Shakspere” occurrences outside London from not just “fairly prominent” to more prominent. The total of “Shakspere” spellings in Stratford increases from 42 to 54, while “Shakespeare” spellings drop from 61 to 49, for a final score of 54 to 49 for the “Shakspere” spelling outside London.³⁹

In sum, Kathman’s conclusion from his statistical analysis of spelling frequencies makes it deceptively easy to accept the Stratfordian tenet that Shakespeare (meaning Shakspere) wrote Shakespeare. It is, however, not that simple. His methodology is flawed by several major problems: 1) whether repetitions of a spelling in the same document should all be counted, 2) what consideration should be given to weighting spellings in differing contexts, and 3) how the prominence of the Shakespeare name on tens of thousands of Shakespeare books might very well have been an important influence on the scribes writing non-literary documents. The methodology relies solely on a single indicator to measure a complex socio-literary phenomenon. So many problems of context and chronology must raise significant doubt about his methodology and conclusions.

Kathman also overlooks or omits several spelling patterns that can be drawn from his lists of literary and non-literary references to Shakespeare and Shakspere, patterns that undermine his conclusion. They are the 80-4 score (without repetitions) for the “Shakespeare” spelling in printed references to the poet-dramatist, the 10-0 score for the “Shakspere” spellings in the authoritative Stratford vital records and in his will, and the 6-0 score for the “Shakspere” spelling of the signatures, which Stratfordians maintain that he himself wrote.

At least four modern-day non-Stratfordians have tackled the spelling issue by compiling and analyzing the occurrences, although none addressed Kathman's methodology. These include Mark Alexander, Richard Lester and myself.⁴⁰ Most recently, A. J. Pointon of the University of Portsmouth devoted a full chapter to it in *The Man Who Was Never Shakespeare* (2011). He offers a comprehensive historical analysis of William Shakspeare as a member of the Shakspeare family, concluding at one point that "the adherence of Shakspeare to his family name was amazingly consistent."⁴¹ His list of surnames in the records for the Shakspeare family has 26 "Shakspeare" spelling entries for 17 individuals from 1558 to 1617.⁴² None of the spellings was "Shakespeare."

A more straightforward methodology, and arguably a more reasonable one, is to set aside the doubtful significance of the spelling frequencies of the raw data and examine the historical facts. The result should be a more valid and persuasive conclusion.

First of all, in Stratford, the name of the man who was born, raised, married and buried there was William Shakspeare or a close variant (but without the *e* after the *k*) on all the official church records for him from his birth to his death and on his will.⁴³ His name was never spelled "Shakespeare." The Stratford parish register, the town's vital records of identity, from his baptism to his burial, and the records of the Worcester diocese, which included the Stratford parish, never use the literary spelling of the name:

- ***Shakspeare* on his baptismal record in 1564**
- ***Shaxpere* on the entry in the Worcester diocese records for his marriage license in 1582**
- ***Shagspere* on the security bond for his marriage in the Worcester diocese records in 1582**
- ***Shakspeare* as the father of Susanna on her baptismal record in 1583**
- ***Shakspeare* as the father of twins Hamnet and Judith on their baptismal record in 1585**
- ***Shakspeare* as the father on burial record of his son Hamnet in 1596**
- ***Shakspeare* on the record of his death and burial in 1616**

Despite the fact that by 1616 the famous Shakespeare name had appeared tens of thousands of times on the poems and plays, the name on his will and on his burial record that year used the "Shakspeare" spelling; on the monument in Holy Trinity Church in Stratford it is "Shakspeare," again without the *e* after *k* in *Shak*.

"Shakspeare," or a close variant without the first *e*, was also the spelling for his immediate family during his lifetime. It was the surname on the baptismal records of his seven siblings.⁴⁴ It was most often his father's name, which was spelled 17 different ways, but never "Shakespeare," in town corporation records in his time.⁴⁵ His father was buried as John "Shakspeare" and his mother as Mary "Shaxpere." His daughter Susanna was married as a "Shaxpere" and his daughter Judith as a "Shakspeare." As has been noted, various spellings were not at all unusual for surnames at the time.

Especially compelling is the “Shakspere” spelling in his will (a document which makes no reference to anything literary). In the text, his attorney’s clerk three times spelled it “Shackspeare,” a Stratford variant spelling (still without the first *e* after the *k*); and the endorsing name of the testator on each of the three pages was written, as best that scholars can make out, “Shakspere.” No one finds in them the *ke* combination in *shake*. It’s highly improbable that, if Shakspere wrote the best-selling works of Shakespeare, he would allow his famous name to be spelled “Shackspeare” in his will and would sign it “Shakspere.”⁴⁶ Shakspere, a Stratford spelling, was also the name engraved on the monument in Holy Trinity Church.

Six purported signatures of the Stratford burgher, the full extent of his literary output in his own hand, are extant —three in the will, as just described, and three on other non-literary documents. None spells his name “Shakespeare.” Even when the texts of the other non-literary documents in the 1600s spelled it “Shakespeare,” the signatures were “Shakspere” abbreviations without the first *e*. The tag on the outside of his deposition in the *Belott v. Mountjoy* case in London in 1612 was “Willm Shakp” even though the name is “Shakespeare” in the deposition; and the signature was “William Shakspe” on two Blackfriars Gatehouse documents in London in 1613, even though it was “Shakespeare” two dozen times in the texts.⁴⁷ Arguably, by 1612-13, the “Shakespeare” name and the uniform spelling of it, had become famous in London and was the default spelling by scribes there; but Shakspere, it would seem, had the spelling of his name “corrected” for the signatures.

The “Shakespeare” spelling appears nowhere in the vital records that constitute the best available proof of identity or in his will, even though that spelling by 1616 had become ubiquitous in print. Silently changing the Stratford man’s name from Shakspere to Shakespeare, as is done by almost all traditional scholars, is unwarranted and grossly misleading, especially when it is done to make the Stratford man the poet-dramatist of London.⁴⁸

While it was “Shakspere” in most variants for the Stratford man, in London the name on the published poems and plays was uniformly “Shakespeare.” It appeared in that spelling on more than 20,000 copies of his books, from *Venus and Adonis* in 1593 to the First Folio with thirty-six Shakespeare plays in 1623. There were only two minor exceptions, which prove the rule. It was “Shakspere” on *Love’s Labor’s Lost* in 1598, but still that is a recognized variant of “Shakespeare” with the first *e*; and it was spelled “Shak-speare” on the first edition of *King Lear* in 1608, the only Shakespeare play published by Nathaniel Butter. His *Lear*, however, was reprinted in 1619 by William Jaggard with a title page that falsely backdated it to the original publication date, and with the author’s name corrected to “Shakespeare,” superseding the “Shak-speare” spelling on the earlier edition and firmly attesting to the normative literary spelling of “Shakespeare” (or the common hyphenated form, “Shake-speare”).⁴⁹

More than a dozen publisher/printers of the poems and plays in many editions spelled the author’s name “Shakespeare.” It is almost as if someone were

enforcing the uniform “Shakespeare” spelling for the author. This would have had the effect, intended or not, of differentiating his name from that of the glover’s son from Stratford. At a time of highly irregular spellings of surnames, spelling patterns are crucial evidence. The “Shakspere” spellings in several variants for the Stratford man are in stark contrast to the virtually uniform “Shakespeare” spelling on the poems and plays. Perhaps the single most relevant fact in the name-spelling debate is this: If Shakspere were the great poet-dramatist who wrote nearly a million words that appeared in tens of thousands of copies of the plays and poems attributed to “William Shakespeare,” why did he allow his name to be spelled “Shackspeare” three times in his will and use the “Shakspere” spelling multiple times for his own signature?

In David Kathman’s analysis, faulty and doubtful conclusions follow from a statistical methodology that relies solely on the frequency of the “Shakespeare” and “Shakspere” spellings in literary and non-literary references in an attempt to support the Stratfordian belief that Shakspere wrote the works of Shakespeare. The true meaning of the raw data is richer and more telling when the contextual, historical, geographic and chronological factors are taken into account. Examining the facts of the spelling usages in context should lead instead to the conclusion that the preponderance of evidence shows that William Shakspere and William Shakespeare were similar but not identical names, sometimes confused, but generally falling into a clear pattern of differentiation. They were two different names for two different men, Shakspere the enterprising glover’s son from Stratford and “Shakespeare,” the enigmatic poet-dramatist of London.

POSTSCRIPT: If it is accepted that Shakspere was not Shakespeare, it becomes a much debated issue—one which is not the subject of this article—about how and when Shakspere of Stratford came to be taken as the poet-dramatist Shakespeare of London. Briefly, although there were hints and allusions earlier, the first clear evidence is the 1623 First Folio of Shakespeare plays, dedicated to the Earl of Oxford’s son-in-law the Earl of Montgomery and his brother, the Earl of Pembroke. Ben Jonson’s prefatory material to the folio seem to point to the Stratford man as the author, probably in an effort undertaken for several reasons to disguise the author’s identity as a ranking nobleman in Queen Elizabeth’s court. Two decades after Shakspere died, visitors to Stratford began to believe that he was the poet-dramatist Shakespeare; the belief gradually became conventional wisdom and the fundamental tenet of the Stratfordian faith. For Stratford, there were obvious commercial advantages for the rural village to become known as the supposed hometown of the famous author. And most people, including Shakespeare establishment scholars over the centuries, no doubt found it attractive to perpetuate the “Horatio Alger” myth that a glove maker’s son from Stratford wrote the works of Shakespeare.

Endnotes

- ¹ The general reader who has not read or heard much about the Shakespeare authorship controversy might be puzzled by the significance of the Stratfordian mantra that Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare. On its face, the mantra has to be true, but it's also a clever rhetorical device with a double meaning. Since everyone accepts that of course Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare, everyone is also supposed to accept that the first "Shakespeare" means Shakespeare of Stratford and not somebody else, so any doubt about Shakespeare's identity should be dismissed. Oxfordians can reply that of course it's true that Shakespeare wrote (the works of) Shakespeare just as Mark Twain wrote (the works of) Mark Twain and George Eliot wrote (the works of) George Eliot. But Mark Twain was Samuel Clemens, and George Eliot was Mary Ann Evans. Both are pseudonyms. The issue is whether the second meaning of the first "William Shakespeare" in the mantra should be considered the pseudonym for somebody else.
- ² Stanley Wells, *Why Shakespeare WAS Shakespeare* (Amazon Kindle, 2014), ch. 2. Wells also defends the Stratford man in *Is it True What They Say About Shakespeare?* (Norfolk UK: Long Barn Press, 2007): "Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare. . . . William Shakespeare who came from Stratford-upon-Avon wrote the plays and poems for which he is famous." With Paul Edmondson, he edited *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt: Evidence, Argument, Controversy* (Cambridge UP, 2013), a defense of the Stratford man as Shakespeare, which drew a non-Stratfordian response, *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt? Exposing an Industry in Denial*, edited by John M. Shahan and Alexander Waugh (Shakespeare Authorship Coalition with Llumina Press, 2013).
- ³ James Shapiro, *Contested Will: Who Wrote Shakespeare?* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), 223, 225.
- ⁴ Shapiro misleads his readers when he writes that the name on the title pages of the Shakespeare plays was "variously spelled 'Shakspere,' 'Shake-speare,' and 'Shakespeare,'" implying that the "Shakspere" spelling occurred roughly as often as "Shakespeare," or even more often since it's the first of the three. He adds that "there's no pattern" (227). But "Shak-speare" (not "Shakspere") appeared only once on a title page, and that was under unusual circumstances (see endnote 49). Without the single "Shak-speare" spelling there is in fact a significant pattern, the uniformity of spelling of the Shakespeare name on the plays. Shapiro also misleads when he says that "Shakespeare [his Stratford man] didn't even spell his own name the same way," recognizing the "Shakspere" spelling of the three signatures on his will, but he fails to

recognize the authority of the spelling of a person's own signature on a legal document, in this case "Shakspere" on the will for the Stratford man, not "Shakespeare," the name on the poems and plays.

⁵ *The Reader's Encyclopedia of Shakespeare*, eds. Oscar James Campbell and Edward G. Quinn (New York: Crowell, 1966), 755, 757.

⁶ Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare* (Oxford UP), 441.

⁷ The web site is www.shakespeareauthorship.com, created and occasionally updated by Kathman and Terry Ross with major contributions by Tom Reedy, defenders of Shakspere as Shakespeare. Kathman is the author of "The Spelling and Pronunciation of Shakespeare's Name." Besides making his statistical frequency argument, he devotes considerable space to the pronunciation of Shakspere and hyphenation of Shake-speare, which he mistakenly believes to be common Oxfordian arguments. He states that "there is little or no evidence to support the common Oxfordian assertion that 'Shakspere' always required a short 'a' pronunciation while Shakespeare always required a long 'a'" (7-9). Whether it is a common Oxfordian assertion is debatable; Kathman gives no examples. Most if not all Oxfordian scholars recognize the difficulty of determining how words were pronounced 400 years ago at a time of very irregular spellings, widespread illiteracy and quite different regional accents. Although it's difficult to be certain about Elizabethan pronunciation, Professor Emeritus A. J. Pointon of Portsmouth University, a non-Stratfordian, notes that "from what is known of the Midlands pronunciation in the nineteenth century and the way it carried through from Anglo-Saxon . . . it seems impossible that 'Shak' and 'Shake' ever sounded the same" (22). Kathman also argues that it is a "common claim by Oxfordians" that the hyphenated "Shake-speare" spelling (occurring on nearly half the quarto playbooks and on *Shake-speares Sonnets*) indicated that the name was a pseudonym (9-12). In rebuttal, he cites ten Elizabethan names that were hyphenated but were not pseudonyms. Whether it is a "common claim" by modern-day Oxfordian scholars without reservation is also debatable; again, he gives no examples. Pointon cites eight hyphenated names that were made-up names or pseudonyms and notes that "Shakspere" was never hyphenated, concluding that hyphenation alone "would not prove 'Shake-speare' was a pseudonym, but it is entirely consistent with all the other evidence that it was" (23). He addresses the two issues in just three paragraphs of his 294-page book, *The Man Who Was Never Shakespeare* (Tunbridge Wells, Kent, UK: Parapress, 2011). Neither pronunciation nor hyphenation is central to the Oxfordian proposition. They are not the primary subject of Kathman's statistical analysis of the surname spellings, nor are they addressed in this counter-article. (Page numbers for Kathman's online article reflect the pagination in a printout by this writer's computer. Other page displays and printouts may differ, but will be close enough.)

⁸ E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930) 2:371-374.

⁹ Kathman, "The Spelling and Pronunciation of Shakespeare's Name," Tables 1 and 2.

- ¹⁰ Kathman, 12.
- ¹¹ In his literary category, Kathman includes 53 occurrences of the “Shakespeare” spelling on excerpts in *England’s Parnassus* (1600).
- ¹² Kathman, 12.
- ¹³ Indeed, Kathman points to seven legal documents involving real estate that would have been “carefully written” and that consistently use the “Shakespeare” spelling (6). Again, this ignores the problem of counting repetitions and also fails to take into account the historical, chronological and geographic factors and especially the likely influence of the “Shakespeare” spelling on tens of thousands of books, as described later in this article.
- ¹⁴ Kathman glances at the repetition problem in note 1 on pp. 13-14. He excludes from his list repetitions in copies of two documents and in *Shakespeare’s Sonnets* but does not recognize the same problem in documents he does list for tabulation that contain multiple repetitions. Decisions on when and how to count repetitions are a major problem for his methodology.
- ¹⁵ Kathman, 6. Alleyn’s note perhaps should be omitted from an analysis of contemporary spellings as a possible nineteenth-century forgery by John Payne Collier, a notorious scholar-forgery (Chambers, 2:386, 389). The similarity of the *Sonnets* purchase entry in Alleyn’s list to Stonley’s note of a purchase of *Venus and Adonis* (both in the year of publication) is suspicious. They are the only two such notes of purchases, as listed by Kathman. Also, Alleyn’s list is dated just one month after the *Sonnets* was entered for publication in the Stationers’ Register, arguably not enough time for it to be off-press and a copy purchased. See George Frederick Warner’s *Catalogue of the Manuscripts and Muniments of Alleyn’s College of God’s Gift at Dulwich* (London: Longmans, Green, 1881), 71-72.
- ¹⁶ Lucas Erne, in *Shakespeare and the Book Trade* (Cambridge UP, 2013), counts a total of 65 Shakespeare plays and poems between 1593 and 1616, an average of one every four and one-half months, but the total includes anonymous plays that were by Shakespeare or attributed to him (1).
- ¹⁷ Before the 1598 watershed year, only two “Shakespeare” spellings appeared in non-literary contexts, both of them years after 1593, when the Shakespeare name first appeared and began to become famous as a poet. They were in handwritten documents, which Kathman counts as “Shakespeare” spellings for Shakspeare as the poet-dramatist, although that’s not at all certain. The first was a 1595 court record of payment to three members of the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, including “William Shakespeare,” for performances of two Shakespeare plays. It’s possible that this was one of the early variant spellings for Shakspeare of Stratford as a member of the acting company, although not as a playwright. More likely, the spelling, in a record made by the office of the queen’s treasurer, who was the second husband of the Countess of Southampton and made on her behalf, probably was influenced by the “Shakespeare” spellings the year before in the second edition of *Venus and Adonis* and the first edition of *Lucrece*, best-selling books dedicated to her son,

the Earl of Southampton, by William Shakespeare. The “Shakspere” spelling for the Stratford man had not yet appeared in London, so the “Shakespeare” spelling in the three editions was used. The second non-literary document that used the “Shakespeare” spelling was a record about the purchase of New Place in Stratford in 1597. Although that record is from the year before the watershed year, its spelling can reasonably be taken as a rare, distant variant for “Shakspere” of Stratford and the exception that proves the rule. Among the 83 variants he found, Chambers counted five “Shakespeare” variants before the name of the poet first appeared in the literary scene, in 1593 in *Venus and Adonis* (2:372). These five, early “Shakespeare” variants could not have referred to the as yet unknown Shakespeare the poet-dramatist, so “Shakespeare” in the New Place document probably was probably not a reference to the poet. It’s doubtful that these 1595 and 1597 spellings should be counted, but in any case two entries out of 128 are not material to the totals in a statistical analysis of the commonness of spelling occurrences.

¹⁸ Erne, 27.

¹⁹ Erne, 2.

²⁰ Erne, 4.

²¹ Erne, 18.

²² Erne, 10.

²³ Erne, 1, 26.

²⁴ See Table 1 (13-16), Erne’s detailed “chronological list of Shakespeare publications, 1593-1660,” giving editions, format and whether anonymous.

²⁵ Erne 26. He cites Peter Blaney’s estimate in his *The Publication of Playbooks* of 800 copies for a first edition and more for a second if the first sold quickly (422). In *Contested Will: Who Wrote Shakespeare?* Shapiro calls the number of copies of Shakespeare works in print from 1564 to 1616 “staggering and unprecedented.” He estimates that publishers sold at least a thousand copies of each edition and that 50,000 copies “circulated . . . at a time when London’s population was only two hundred thousand” (223-224). That seems much too high; it’s one copy of a Shakespeare book for every four London residents, including men, women and children, where most of the women and many of the men were illiterate.

²⁶ Erne, 20.

²⁷ Erne, 54.

²⁸ Erne, 54.

²⁹ Erne, 45.

³⁰ Erne, 97.

³¹ Erne, 56-57.

³² Erne, 25-27.

³³ Erne, 27.

³⁴ Kathman, 12. He also previews his conclusion at the start of “Spelling and Pronunciation” in one sentence, also unamplified: “‘Shakespeare’ was by far the most common spelling of the name in both literary and non-literary contexts, and there is no significant difference in spelling patterns

when we take into account such factors as handwritten vs. printed and Stratford vs. London spellings” (2). He argues that “a very significant factor is handwritten vs. printed spellings” and suggests that publisher-printers “tended to normalize” the spellings to “Shakespeare” (5-6). Absent any definition of, or standard for, “normalize,” this may be read that they tended to be influenced by the popularity of the Shakespeare name to normalize the spelling to “Shakespeare,” as I argue here. Regarding handwritten spellings, he suggests that it is “somewhat surprising that there are not *more* ‘Shakspere’-type spellings among the non-literary references, all but two of which are handwritten.” There are in fact more “Shakspere” spellings in non-literary contexts, 52-34, if the 88 repetitions are not counted.

³⁵ See Ramon Jiménez, “Ten Eyewitnesses Who Saw Nothing” in the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter* (Fall 2002), also at www.ShakespeareOxfordFellowship.org (8 September 2011).

³⁶ Kathman, Table 1.

³⁷ The “Shackespere” spelling appeared twice in Stratford in 1598, the year that the Shakespeare name began to be famous in London. They were in a record of corn and malt holdings and in the address of a letter by Richard Quiney. It is, however, the same spelling as that on the court case record in 1588, five years before “Shakespeare” first became known as a poet, in 1593. It’s doubtful that the two writers would use “Shackespere” to mean Shakespeare the author, but that’s how they are classified in the totals of frequency of literary references. The two 1598 spellings more likely were random variants of Shakspere and/or were influenced by the 1588 “Shackespere” spelling.

³⁸ Kathman, 5.

³⁹ It might be argued that the frequency of “Shakespeare” spellings in non-literary documents in Stratford, 45 times in five documents, indicated that Shakspere of Stratford was indeed Shakespeare, but if the 40 repetitions are removed, it’s only five times (once per document), and four of the five documents were written two to nine years after 1598-1600, when the “Shakespeare” name became famous.

⁴⁰ A full chronology of documents related to Shakspere and Shakespeare is provided by Mark Alexander, a writer and independent researcher, on his website, [ShakespeareAuthorshipSourcebook](http://ShakespeareAuthorshipSourcebook.com). The chronology includes much useful contextual information and comparative tabulations of occurrences of the names at certain points in time. Richard Lester, a U.S. government historian and independent researcher, used Kathman’s list of spellings as a source for tabulations in his article, “Shakespeare’s Name,” in *The Elizabethan Review* (Autumn 1998). He lists 127 occurrences of the various spellings, finds “a robust, statistically significant difference” between the Shakespeare and Shakspere spellings and discusses briefly the pronunciation and hyphenation factors. I counted the occurrences of Shakspere and Shakespeare during Shakspere’s lifetime and tabulated them as literary and non-literary in chapter 3 of my book, *Shakespeare: Who Was He? The Oxford Challenge to the Bard of Avon*

(1994). For an early analysis of the spelling issue, see William H. Edwards, *Shaksper Not Shakespeare* (1900), 7-11.

⁴¹ Pointon, 15. He condensed and edited the first three chapters of his book for his contribution to *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt? Exposing an Industry in Denial*.

⁴² Pointon, 24.

⁴³ In note 2 of his article, Kathman dismisses the authority and importance of the official “Shakspere” spelling in the parish register, suggesting that that spelling was “not very common at all” based on his count of non-literary occurrences, 52 for “Shakspere” vs. 128 for “Shakespeare.” But the “Shakespeare” spellings include the 88 repetitions, whose relevance as evidence for commonness is questionable. Even if it were not common, the “Shakspere” spelling was the spelling used in the town’s vital records from baptism to death, especially strong proof of identity. That it was less common in non-literary references as counted in Table 1 is not especially relevant given the many different spellings of a proper name and the great popularity of the “Shakespeare” spelling after 1598 and more so after 1600. He also questions the reliability of the “Shakspere” spellings in the parish register in the 1500s by noting that they were transcripts of lost originals, probably made in 1600 by the Stratford vicar, who “consistently used his own preferred spellings.” The alleged “consistency” of spelling by the vicar is contradicted by his four different Shakspere spellings out of seven. If the vicar had been “consistent” in his spelling, he would not have copied the four different spellings. He must have copied the variant spellings accurately from the originals. It’s also not clear what his “preferred spellings” might have been or why they would have included four different spellings. Kathman’s argument carries little or no weight. The Shakspere spellings in the parish register in the 1500s are authoritative evidence, along with the spellings in Shakspere’s will and on the monument.

⁴⁴ His brother Edmund was buried as “Shakespeare” in 1607 in London, but by that time the uniform “Shakespeare” spelling was far better known in London than the “Shakspere” spelling, if it was known at all. Pointon notes that this “was the only time in the context of family matters that the ‘Shakespeare’ spelling was used” during William Shakspere’s lifetime (16).


⁴⁵ Robert E. Hunter, *Shakespeare and Stratford-Upon-Avon, a Chronicle of the Time* (OUP, 1864), 11. Fourteen of the seventeen were Shakspere or a close variant, i.e., without an *e* after the *k*. The other three were *cke* spellings, also probably a “Shakspere” spelling. None was “Shakespeare.” John “Shakspere” appears in property documents in 1579, fourteen years before *Venus and Adonis* in 1593, and also appears in 1597 (Halliwell-Phillipps, *Outlines*, 11, 14), both no doubt early variants and not surprising, given the many different spellings of John’s surname.

⁴⁶ If he himself signed it. Whether the signatures are in Shakspere’s own hand is a matter of dispute between Stratfordians and non-Stratfordians. See, for example, Jane Cox, “Shakespeare’s Will and Signature: Shakespeare in the

Public Records,” *Journal of the British Records Office* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1985), 24-34. Cox had access to scores of wills during her two-decade career at the Public Record Office and suggested in her article that clerk-scribes might well have written the signatures on wills and other documents.

- ⁴⁷ These two important entries in Kathman’s list of non-literary references are written in a way that could mislead unwary readers. The 1612 entry for a signature on the *Belott v. Mountjoy* deposition is listed as a separate occurrence from the deposition itself. It reads: “(Signature on above; May 11) ‘Willm Shakp’ (handwritten; William Shakespeare).” This implies that “Willm Shakp,” a variant of the “Shakspere” spelling, was handwritten by William Shakespeare, the author of the poems and plays. The effect of this phrasing is to lead the reader to assume that “Willm Shakp” was a variant of the Shakespeare spelling, which it was not. The same ambiguity occurs in the 1613 entry for the signature on the mortgage for the Blackfriars conveyance, where it’s spelled “Shakspe.” The “Shakspere” spellings for the supposed signatures of the Stratford man here are significant because they are appended to the non-literary documents of 1612 and 1613 that use the “Shakespeare” spelling with the first *e* but contradict that spelling.
- ⁴⁸ In a curious and revealing about-face, many Shakespeare scholars and literary figures from the late 1800s to the early 1900s used the “Shakspere” spelling for the poet-dramatist Shakespeare, recognizing for their supposed author the predominance of that spelling in Stratford. Then they changed their collective mind, no doubt realizing that the spelling on the poems and plays was “Shakespeare,” and began to use that spelling for the Stratford man to make him the poet-dramatist. See Whalen, *Shakespeare: Who Was He?* 36-37.
- ⁴⁹ Butter’s reliability as a publisher is questionable; he also published *The London Prodigal* (1605), falsely attributing the anonymous play to William Shakespeare, probably to exploit the market value of the famous name, as did other publisher-printers.

Arms and Letters and the Name “William Shake-speare” Robert Detobel

 submit some reflections on arms and letters, a major theme at the end of the 15th century and throughout the 16th and 17th centuries. The question whether arms or letters should have the better claim to political leadership played a major role in the debates of the legitimacy of aristocratic rule. We can start with Cicero's famous phrase *arma cedant togae, concedat laurea laudi*, in *De Officiis*, “Yield, ye arms, to the toga, to civic praise, ye laurels.”¹ Another possible translation would be: “Let arms give way to the toga, give the laurel to civility.” Cicero's influence on Western European culture and ideas can hardly be overstated. The idea is expressed, among other places, in Thomas Nashe's preface to the (surreptitious) 1591 edition of *Astrophel and Stella*. Nashe addresses the Countess of Pembroke and includes a remembrance of her brother, Sir Philip Sidney: “Amongst the which, fair sister of *Phoebus*, & eloquent secretary to the Muses, most rare Countess of Pembroke, thou art not to be omitted; whom Artes doe adore as a second *Minerva*, and our Poets extoll as the Patroness of their invention; for in thee the Lesbian Sappho with her lyric harp is disgraced, & the Laurel Garland which thy Brother so bravely advanced on his Lance is still kept green in the Temple of *Pallas*”² (emphasis added).

“Arms” are expressed here by metonymy as “lance,” sometimes it was expressed by “spear” or “sword”; “letters” are expressed by “laurel,” more generally by “pen.” Sidney is praised by Nashe for his dedication to both arms and letters. In the First Folio Ben Jonson will be praising Shakespeare for “shaking a lance at the eyes of ignorance,” i.e., for using his pen as a soldier in the war against ignorance. The junction of arm and letters indicates an aristocrat dedicated to both arms and letters, as in the case of Sidney. And as in the case of Shakespeare.

We have here an example of how the dichotomy of arms and letters structured the social perception, thinking and language of the Elizabethans. Without awareness of it, we would probably not note that Ben Jonson was speaking of Shakespeare in a similar register as Thomas Nashe of Sidney, as an aristocrat who also excelled in letters.

At some time before his death in 1661, Thomas Fuller wrote on Shakespeare: “*Martial* in the *Warlike* sound of his Sur-name (whence some may conjecture him of a *Military extraction*), *Hasti-vibrans*, or *Shake-speare*.” So Fuller understood, playfully or not, the name as a signifier. It is noteworthy that Fuller marks out the signifying name from the mere surname by a hyphen. Hence, contrary to what many Stratfordians would like us to believe, the hyphen, in that it makes the surname signify, is not insignificant, as David Kathman has continually tried to argue. It was probably the same intention that moved Ben Jonson to write the name in the list of actors in two different ways, once as “Shakespeare” in the list for *Every Man in His Humour* (1598), and once as “Shake-Speare” in the list for *Sejanus* (1603).³ Thomas Vicars in 1628 also took the name to be a signifier when he wrote, “To these I believe should be added that famous poet who takes his name from ‘Shaking’ and ‘Spear.’”⁴

Arms and Letters

The following is a list of several quotes related to the topic, first outside England, then in England.

Outside England

From Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, it was first printed in 1528, quoted here in modern translation by George Bull (London: Penguin books, 1976), 88:

However, in addition to goodness, I believe that for all of us *the true and principal adornment of the mind is letters*; although the French, I know, recognize, *only the nobility of arms* and think nothing of all the rest; and so they not only do not appreciate learning but detest it, regarding men of letters as basely inferior and thinking it a great insult to call anyone a scholar.

(emphasis added).

From Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, contemporaneous translation by Thomas Hoby (London, 1561):

But beside goodnesse, the true and principall ornament of the mynde in every manne (I believe) are *letters*, although the Frenchmen know onelye the noblesse of *armes*, and passe for nothing beside: so that they do not onelye not sett by letters, but they rather abhorre them, and all learned men they

count verie rascalles, and they think it a great vilany when any one of them is called a clarke.

Though it is mainly concerned with letters (also termed “arts” or “sciences”), arms are said by Castiglione to be more important. He does not fully subscribe to Cicero’s *arma cedant togae*. The insistence on the precedence of arms was essential for the medieval aristocracy, which had developed from a class of warriors, to affirm its leading position (as “governors,” as Sir Thomas Elyot termed it in 1531). Already the Spanish Marquis de Santillana (1398-1458) had criticized the nobility’s hostility to learning. A Spanish marquis felt it not unnecessary to maintain: “Science [letters] neither blunts the sword nor slackens the spear (lance) in the hand of the knight.”⁵ The poet-soldier Garcilaso de la Vega (1501-1536), through whose influence the Italian sonnet took root in Spain, wrote: “Now I hold the *sword*, now the *pen*” (emphasis added). Stefano Guazzo (1530-1593), author of the widely read educational handbook *The Civil Conversation*, the first three books of which were translated into English in 1581 and the fourth in 1586, wrote in his *Dialogues Pacevoli* (Pleasant Dialogues): “Few knights excel in both *letters and arms*” (emphasis added), and he goes on to praise one of his interlocutors as a new Caesar, no less excellent in *letters than in arms*.

Within England

“Tam Marti quam Mercurio” (as much Mars as Mercury) was George Gascoigne’s motto. It is an equivalent of “as much arms as letters,” the god Mercury symbolizing letters. Most of the usual metaphors for arms and letters are brought together in Gascoigne’s sentence “poet with a spear... a Soldier armed, with pencil in his ear, with pen to fight, and sword to ride a letter.”⁶ The idea of a “poet with a spear” will later appear in a few references to Shakespeare (see above Thomas Fuller, Thomas Vicars, also the anonymous “M.L.” who has “poetry supported by a spear”).

In the play *Campaspe*, John Lyly twice refers to the dichotomy of “arms and letters.” Alexander the Great’s general Hephestion: “That whilst arms cease, arts may flourish, and joining letters with lances we endeavour to be as good philosophers as soldiers, knowing it no less praise to be wise than commendable to be valiant” (I.i.95-97). Later, in II.ii.34-36, the same Hephestios reminds Alexander: “Will you handle the spindle with *Hercules*, when you should shake the speare with *Achilles*? Is the warlike sound of drumme and trumpe turned to the soft noyse of lire and lute?”

This suggests that the representation of Shakespeare as a “poet with a spear” might have been more familiar in literary and courtly circles than we now can comprehend and makes it likely that the pseudonym “Shake-speare” was derived from Gascoigne’s sentence, as a poetical-ironical name for a courtier whose first occupation should have been, according to Castiglione, the military profession, “to shake a spear,” but who was principally a poet.

Less directly we find the reference to arms and letters in Gabriel Harvey’s speech to the Earl of Oxford at Audley End in 1578, coming after Gascoigne (who

had died in 1577). In Harvey's Latin speech the passage reads *Vultus tela vibrat*. Captain Ward translated it "thy countenance shakes spears." To this it has been objected that the Latin word for spear is *hasta*, whereas *telum* designates more generally a weapon to be thrown, such as a dart, spear, javelin or missile. However, this is hair splitting. The tenor of Harvey's speech to Oxford is that he should abandon writing. "O thou hero worthy of renown, throw away the insignificant pen, throw away bloodless books, and writings that serve no useful purpose, now must the sword be brought into play, now is the time for thee to sharpen the spear and to handle great engines of war."⁷ Ward may be accused of a bias in twice translating "spear." In fact, I think his translation is defensible, for what Harvey clearly means is that Oxford should dedicate himself entirely to arms, not letters. And in English the most common metonymies for handling "arms" were: "to shake a spear/lance" or "to hold a sword" (see Gascoigne). However, I don't think that Harvey's words can be taken as directly defining Oxford as Shakespeare. On the contrary, the pseudonym "Shakespeare" suggests that he was a courtier, an aristocrat whose principal occupation should be the military profession and that he was not living up to his more important vocation as a military man (a reproach he reiterated in "Speculum Tuscanismi").

Why "William"?

If the significance of the name "Shakespeare" seems clear, the significance of the first name "William" is less so. "William" can be read as "I am Will." Did Oxford bear the name "Will" or "Willy" as a pastoral name? The best evidence I know of, as Charles Wisner-Barrell has pointed out, is Nashe's dedication of *Strange News* to "Apis lapis, alias Master William," and his reference (in the text proper) to "Will. Monox."

But why should Oxford have borne the pastoral name Will? That the name was apparently also used for Philip Sidney does not rule out that it was also used for Oxford. A pastoral name was not the same as a pseudonym. Two different persons could be given the same pastoral name by different authors and even by the same author (for instance, Melibœus in Chettle's *England's Mourning Garment*). As Sidney was dead by 1592-93, the date of Nashe's *Strange News*, the name could have devolved to Oxford.

But what could be the meaning of "Will"? Playing on the words "wit" and "will" occurred frequently. The first occurrence I came across rather looks like a curiosity. It is an entry in the Stationers' Register of 7 September 1580, to William Wright of "WILLIAM WITTE, wittes will, or willswitt Chuse you whether." Nicholas Breton published two minor works: *Wit's Trenchmour – In a conference had between a scholar and an angler* (1597) (the trenchmore was an Irish dance), and *The Will of Wit*, according to A.B. Grosart and Halliwell-Phillipps written before 1582 and the same work as *William Witte*; it contains commendatory verses signed "W.S."; no issue of 1580-82 is extant; the first known version bears the date 1599. Halliwell-Phillipps declares the ascription to Shakespeare absurd; he prefers William Smith

as author, probably on the basis of the mere initials; Grosart believes they have a Shakespearean sound; in point of poetical sensibility Grosart is more to be trusted than Halliwell-Phillipps, whose spirit was that of a collector).

Breton's *Will of Wit* can be found here online at <https://archive.org/details/willwitotherwis00bretgoog>

Most interestingly, he writes: "Since when, I have wandred through a wilderness of woe, which in the mappe of that country (I find) is called the Desart of Desire." Even more interestingly, Breton's booklet contains a "Song between Wit and Will" which is an obvious variation on Oxford's "When wert thou borne, Desire."

Oxford:

When wert thou born, Desire? In pomp and prime of May.
By whom, sweet boy, wert thou begot? By good conceit, men say.
Tell me, who was thy nurse? Fresh youth in sugared joy.
What was thy meat and daily food? Sore sighs with great annoy.

Breton:

Wit. What art thou, Will? *W.* A babe of natures brood.
Wit. Who was thy syre? *W.* Sweet lust, as lovers say.
Wit. Thy mother who? *W.* Wild lustie wanton blood.
Wit. When wert thou born? *W.* In merrie moneth of May.
Wit. And where brought up? *W.* In school of little skill.
Wit. What learndst thou there? *W.* Love is my lesson still.
Possibly Breton is the (anonymous) author of the following song text:
All my wits hat will enwrapped
 All my sense desire entrapped
 All my faith to fancy fixed
 All my joys to love amixed
 All my love I offer thee
 Once for all yet look on me.

Breton might possibly also be the author of poem 15 of *The Passionate Pilgrim*:

It was a lording's daughter, the fairest one of three,
That liked of her master as well as well might be,
Till looking on an Englishman, the fairest that eye could see,
Her fancy fell a-turning.
Long was the combat doubtful that love with love did fight,
To leave the master loveless, or kill the gallant knight;

The entry of Breton's *Wit of Will* as "WILLIAM WITTE, wittes will, or willswitt Chuse you whether" shows that the pun on "Will" and "Will-i-am" was more or less familiar to contemporaries and no modern fancy. Moreover, Breton's booklet justifies the interpretation of "will" as desire.

...Enter William Shakspere

How did William Shakspere of Stratford come into play? Surely because of his name. How could his role as a front work? Some anti-Stratfordians have resorted to an analogy with the McCarthy era. Take the case of the screenwriter James Dalton Trumbo. Trumbo wrote several scripts under pseudonym. For the script of *Roman Holiday* he received the Academy Award. Being blacklisted, he was fronted by Ian McLellan Hunter, who was the official recipient of the award. However, this is the wrong analogy. In Shakespeare's day there were no Academy Awards, Pulitzer prizes, Oscars and the like. In addition, Hunter was a screenwriter himself. Not only was Shakspere no writer, he could hardly write anything. How could he have passed as the author of *Venus and Adonis* or *The Rape of Lucrece*, when he was not able to write? It might have been possible on condition he stayed in Stratford. But he did not; he was in London, probably from 1594 to 1597-98. Was he in London before 1594? There is no trace of him until late in 1594. After 1598 it is clear that he was in London but, as Charles Nicholl has put it, as a lodger. Despite almost frenetic research no London address has been found for him. A great many London addresses have come to light for other actors. The Quiney letter and the subsequent exchange of letters between Richard Quiney and Abraham Sturley reveal that he had no permanent address in London (the Quiney letter does not show one). From the Mountjoy-Belott suit it is clear that in 1604 he had been lodging in Mountjoy's house for some time. All documents between 1598 and 1616 identify him as a resident in Stratford, where he had bought a house in 1597. His "permanent" London career seems to have been short-lived.

It is hard to imagine a sustained London career under such circumstances. Yet this is what Diana Price seems to have attempted in *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography*, and William Leahy seems to have subscribed to it in *Shakespeare and His Authors: Critical Perspectives on the Authorship Question*.

The Name "Chrétien de Troyes" and the Name "William Shakespeare": A Comparison

The following is an extract from the first chapter about the signification of the name Chrétien de Troyes, which I think carries some relevance to that of the name William Shakespeare.

Considering that authors proved so skillful in the art of concealment and, on the other hand, so indifferent to literary property should incite us to a more in-depth analysis of the rhetorics at work in the medieval practice of coining

pseudonyms. From thence to the conjecture that the name *Crestiens de Troyes*, of which there is no trace in the archives, it takes only one step more. Suffice it to center on a salient fact: the way Chrétien de Troyes associates the first part of his name with the word *crestiantez* (Christianity):

Herewith I shall begin a history,
That will be remembered
As long as Christianity subsists:
That is of which *Crestiens prides himself*

It would be difficult to deny that the association of the two words (*crestiantez* and *Crestiens* — *Christianity* and *Christian*) clearly represents a deliberate stylistic effect linked with the conventions of a prologue. One can readily see that, while the author foregrounds the first part of his name by giving it quite a “Christian” accent, he is at the same time eyeing the signifying potential of the second part. In our view Chrétien is playing on the homophony of *Troyes*, a city in the northeast province Champagne, and *Troie*, the French spelling of the ancient city of Troy. *Troyes* and *Troie* are pronounced identically. We should bear in mind that in the Middle Ages the city of Aeneas was linked with both a literary and an historiographic tradition which made the Franks of France, to the benefit of their greater glory, the descendants of the Trojans. In addition, Troy supplied the first French chivalric novels, clad in an ancient coat, with one of the most productive foundation myths in the Middle Ages.

All this leads to the conjecture that the name *Crestiens de Troyes*, cleric and author of Christian or “Trojan” novels, suggests the twofold origin of his works through the signification of a name and a surname, whereby the latter contradicts the former. Indeed, how could a *Christian* who glorifies *Christianity* at the same time be a dweller in the pagan city of Troy?

Dragonetti further remarks that with Chrétien the name operates as a kind of revelation. “The names are pure poetical signifiers.”

Some additional reflections. Not only the French cherished the tradition of ancient Rome and, via Rome, their descent from Troy. As such England and France entered a cultural and historical contention for the medieval foundation myth. See Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, book III, canto IX: “For noble *Britons* sprong from *Troians* bold/And *Troynouant* was built of old *Troyes* ashes cold.” Not surprisingly, Britomart, the personification of Queen Elizabeth, and the false Paridell compete for the true descent from Troy. The name Paridell points to both the Trojan hero and to Paris, the capital of France. Paridell probably represents King Henri III of France, who had a bad reputation of being a decadent king. Incidentally, some interpreters who believe that in false Paridell and his bad reputation was based on the Earl of Oxford, though on the backdrop of historical facts he is most likely to represent Henri III.

When Rome, during its expansion in the Mediterranean region, came in contact with the far superior Greek culture, it must have worked like a culture shock. Virgil’s *Aeneid* can be seen as the attempt to overcome this culture shock by tracing

the Roman descent to Troy, a world as old as Greece and with a culture equal to that of Hellas.

We may conceive that the Western knighthood, at first a rather unmannered and uncivilized class of mere warriors, experienced a similar shock when it came in contact with the more civilized Byzantine and Middle East. Chrétien de Troyes's novels can be seen as an attempt to civilize the manners of the knighthood. His novel *Erec and Énide*, in the prologue of which he expresses this aim, is telling. "Erec" is a name of Frankish origin; Énide, derived from Aeneid, is of Trojan origin. It is the task of the woman Énide to soften the manners of the rough knight Erec. The same pattern of sentimental education survives in Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* with the knights Musidorus and Pyrocles and the heroines Philoclea and Pamela.

Thus the name Chrétien de Troyes can be understood both as the name of a person and as applicable to a person and a literary program. So can the name William Shakespeare. The surname "Shakespeare" symbolizes the martial part. In John Lyly's play *Campaspe* it is what the general Hephestion urges Alexander the Great to consider as his genuine duty: to shake a spear like Achilles. But in Lyly's play Alexander has a weaker, more feminine side. This opposite to spear-shaking Achilles (as the dichotomy "Christian/Trojan" in the case of Chrétien de Troyes), this more passionate, feminine side is symbolized in the name William, Will-I-am, Will. The first name "Will," meaning "desire," is as symbolic as "Shakespeare," which, if understood as personifying metaphor, destroys the argument for someone really bearing the first name William from the "will" sonnets; for, after all, though "Chrétien" is a real French first name, we cannot be certain that it was the real first name of the author of the 12th-century chivalric novels.

My suggestion is that the name "Chrétien de Troyes," and the name "William Shakespeare" both refer not only to an identity, but also to a literary program.

Endnotes

¹ *De officiis, On Duties*, translation of Walter Miller (London: Heinemann, 1913), I.77.

² Thomas Nashe, *The Works of*, 5 volumes, ed. R. B. McKerrow and F.P. Wilson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), vol. 3, 331.

³ Fred Schurink, "An unnoticed arly reference to Shakespeare," *Notes and Queries*, March 2006, 72-74.

⁴ STC 14751, 438.

⁵ Jean-Marc Pelorson, *Les Letrados – juristes castillans sous Philippe III. Recherches sur leur place dans la société, la culture et l'état*. (Poitiers, 1980), 208. Philip III was king of Spain from 1598-1621.

⁶ Gascoigne, Works II.

⁷ Charlton Ogburn, Jr., *The Mysterious William Shakespeare—The Myth & The Reality* (McLean, Virginia, 1984), 597.

The Use of State Power To Hide Edward de Vere's Authorship of the Works Attributed to "William Shake-speare"

James A. Warren

Those who controlled state power used it not only to destroy evidence of the Earl of Oxford's literary activities, but also to airbrush him from much of the historical record. It will be argued that the only explanation weighty enough to account for the use of state power for that extraordinary purpose was Oxford's bodily involvement in the succession issue in some way—as described in the so-called Prince Tudor or Tudor Heir theories — an involvement that could have affected Queen Elizabeth's reputation and provided a possible challenge to the legitimacy of King James's reign. Focusing on the authorship question from the point of view of the use of state power makes it possible to see the effort to hide Oxford's authorship of Shake-speare's works in the proper context, as one part of the larger effort to remove him from the historical record for non-literary reasons, and thus provides an explanation for how and why Oxford became Shake-speare that is in accordance with those provided by Hank Whittemore, Charles Beauclerk and others.

I: State Power Used to Hide Oxford's Authorship

"William Shake-speare" was a pen name. There was no actual person with that name involved with the theater in London at the time "Shake-speare's" plays were written, first performed or published. It is not surprising that the author used a pen name; as Archer Taylor and Frederic J. Mosher concluded in their study of literature in the Elizabethan era, "the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries [were] the Golden Age of pseudonyms [and] almost every writer used a pseudonym at some time during his career."¹ Thus, a search for the real author must be undertaken if we are to know his or her real identity.

The two principal candidates for the authorship of Shake-speare's works are well-known today: the man baptized as Gulielmus Shakspere, from Stratford-on-Avon, who was also known as William Shakspere² throughout his lifetime, and Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford.

It is easy to understand why Shakspere would have used a pseudonym, if he was the author. Writing was and is a dangerous occupation in authoritarian societies, and Elizabethan society was certainly authoritarian.

And it is easy to understand why Oxford, as a courtier, would have used a pseudonym. In his day, men of his social rank did not write poetry. As the author of *The Arte of English Poesie* noted, "in these days (although some learned princes may take delight in them [poetry]) yet universally it is not so. For as well poets as poesie are despised & the name become of honourable infamous, subject to scorn and derision, and rather a reproach than a praise to any that useth it."³ And, as is well known, the social customs at the time prohibited courtiers from publishing their works or having them performed on the public stage.

Evidence of authorship

It is truly astounding that no direct evidence exists today in support of either of these men—or anyone else—as having been the author of the works attributed to William Shake-speare.

Ben Jonson, a contemporary of Shakspere and Oxford, was clearly a writer, having left a literary paper trail in connection with all twelve types of evidence shown below in Figure 1, which is modeled on the chart in Diana Price's book *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography*. William Shakspere was clearly not a writer, having left behind no literary paper trail at all, casting doubt on whether he was even literate even though Shake-speare's works were attributed to him after his death. For the purposes of this paper, I will assume that no paper trail exists for Shakspere today because none existed during his lifetime; in other words, he was not the author of anything literary.⁴

Oxford, like Jonson, left behind a clear paper trail connecting him to a literary life. It connects to eight types of documents, a record equal to or better than all but four of the twenty-five writers listed in Price's chart. Significantly, however, none of these records ties Oxford directly to the works attributed to William Shake-speare.

Figure 1: Paper Trail of Three Writers	Jonson	de Vere	Shakspere
Evidence of Education	Yes	Yes	No
Record of handwritten correspondence	Yes	Yes	No
Record of correspondence on literary matters	Yes	No	No
Evidence of having been paid to write	Yes	Yes	No
Evidence of a direct relationship with a patron	Yes	Yes	No
Evidence of association with other writers	Yes	Yes	No
Extant original manuscript	Yes	No	No
Commendatory verses or epistles from other writers	Yes	Yes	No

Commendatory verses or epistles contributed	Yes	Yes	No
Misc. records referring to him as a writer	Yes	Yes	No
Evidence of books owned, written in or borrowed	Yes	Yes	No
Notice at death as a writer	Yes	No	No
TOTALS	12	8	0

Although no *direct* evidence exists today to prove that Oxford was Shake-speare, a large and growing amount of *indirect or circumstantial* evidence does support that conclusion. That evidence, accumulated by hundreds of Oxfordian and even Stratfordian scholars and researchers since John Thomas Looney first proposed Oxford as Shake-speare almost 100 years ago, includes more than 200 correspondences between marked passages in Oxford’s Geneva Bible and passages in the plays, as documented by Roger Stritmatter,⁵ and hundreds of examples of incidents in the plays that mirror events in Oxford’s life.⁶

Missing Documents

If Oxford wrote Shake-speare’s works, direct evidence of his authorship must have existed at one time. But that evidence is missing now. Documents that would substantiate Oxford’s authorship, if they still existed, would include:

- Government records. For instance, minutes of Privy Council meetings are missing for more than two years (Aug. 27, 1593-Oct. 1, 1595). As Stephanie Hopkins Hughes points out, “this period of time included many developments related to the theater that surely would have been discussed by the Privy Council, given that several of Elizabeth’s leading councilors [were] also patrons of London theater companies.”⁷ This period, she notes, “covers the months following Marlowe’s assassination, through the registration with the Stationers of a dozen (anonymous) plays of the 1580s, the murder of Ferdinando Stanley, Lord Strange . . . the formation of the second Royal company, the Lord Chamberlain’s Men from what was left of Stanley’s company and the marriage of [Robert] Cecil’s niece (Oxford’s daughter) to Stanley’s brother, now the 6th Earl of Derby.”⁸
- Private papers of important government officials. The papers belonging to Sir Francis Walsingham, Principal Secretary to Queen Elizabeth, are missing. Walsingham was extensively involved in supporting the theater, and Hughes believes that his papers would have shown his patronage of Oxford’s literary activities at Fisher’s Folly and the creation of the first two successful commercial theaters in London.⁹ The papers of Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, and of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, among others, are also missing.

- Records of theatrical performances. Records from the Master of the Revels are missing, as are records of works performed at the first Blackfriars theater, a key venue for performances of Oxford's work in the 1580s. All of these documents would tell us much about the birth of the London stage and Oxford's role in creating it.
- Personal documents. Missing are any letters from or to Oxford mentioning any of his literary activities. Not one such letter exists even though, as Gary Goldstein observes, "33 books were dedicated to him, he employed writers such as John Lyly, Anthony Munday, and Thomas Churchyard, and was patron of two theater companies, one operating for more than 20 years."¹⁰ Thousands of letters dealing with these activities must surely have existed.
- Oxford's own dramatic works, personal papers, books, and will. As John Thomas Looney noted, "Edward de Vere is the only dramatist in the long list compiled by Francis Meres (1598) of whose work no trace has been found."¹¹

Missing . . . through accident or on purpose?

Such records that could be direct evidence of Oxford's authorship of the works of Shake-speare—are they missing because they have been lost through the ravages of time over the last 400 years . . . or is there a more sinister reason?

Stephanie Hopkins Hughes has persuasively argued that these records have not gone missing by accident, because they are too coincidentally relevant to the authorship question. As she explains, "when following the paper trails that lead to Oxford's activities from the 1580s on, to the University Wits, and to the creation of the London Stage and Press, it seems to happen with rather considerable regularity that the trail will vanish just at the point in time where one would expect to find information, then reappear once that point is past."¹²

Charlton Ogburn, Jr., similarly noted "the wholesale evidently selective disappearance, hardly to be explained as accidental, of records that might be expected to throw light on the object of the quest."¹³ He added:

The fact is that every contemporary document that might have related authorship of Shakespeare's plays and poems to an identifiable human being subsequently disappeared. Every last scrap of paper that would have told who Shakespeare was — whether the Stratford man or any other — simply vanished; . . . And I think we cannot simply attribute the blank record to accident. For a body of work as superior as Shakespeare's, it is simply not conceivable that every reference during the author's life, and evidently for some years thereafter, which linked the work to a flesh-and-blood author, including everything in the author's own words, written or

quoted, should have passed into limbo by chance. Chance is not so purposeful. Elizabethan writers of far less stature than the author of Shakespeare's works have been found unmistakably associated with their products by concrete references that have not had to be unearthed through the exhaustive searches over years by legions of investigators.¹⁴

Thus, Ogburn concluded, "there can be but one explanation for the empty-handedness of generations of scholars after lifelong quests. Someone saw to it that those quests would be fruitless."¹⁵

Gary Goldstein also concluded that "if the author of the canon wished to remain anonymous, then he and his friends did an outstanding job of eliminating any contemporary records that could identify him."¹⁶ Morse Johnson found that "Such an unthinkable, singular and total eclipse cannot be attributed to happenstance or indifference. The sole rational explanation is that his identity was intentionally and effectively concealed during the lifetime of whoever was the author."¹⁷

Hughes, Ogburn, Goldstein and Johnson are surely right. The scope and variety of the documents that are missing, the range of places where they should have been found, and the fact that other similar documents that do not relate to Oxford's authorship still exist, all lead to the conclusion that their absence is not the result of chance. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that a concerted, sustained, systematic effort was undertaken to seek out and destroy those documents that would have supported Oxford's authorship of the works attributed to William Shakespeare.

Who Was Involved?

Oxford was no doubt involved in the effort to hide his authorship of his literary works. We know that he took steps earlier in his years as a courtier to hide authorship of his poems, publishing them anonymously or under pseudonyms such as the initials *E.O.* He also published two lengthy poems in 1593 and 1594 under the name William Shakespeare, and he approved of at least some of his plays being published under the same name beginning in 1598.

We also have Oxford's own words in the *Sonnets* testifying that he was aware that his name would not survive: "My name be buried where my body is" (Sonnet 72), and "Though I, once gone, to all the world must die" (Sonnet 81).

Although we don't know to what extent Oxford was involved in the effort to seek out and destroy documents that would tie him to his literary works and the creation of the public stage in London, we do know that others must have been involved because Oxford would not have had access to many of the documents, such as Privy Council records. What we see is a concerted, extensive effort carried out at least partly, if not largely, by people other than Oxford. So, who would have been involved in that effort?

Given the nature of the documents that are missing, the campaign to destroy them must have been orchestrated by those who controlled state power. Only they would have had access to the state documents that are missing, such as Privy Council records and the records of the Office of the Revels. Only they would have had the power to seize private papers of important officials and letters in private hands.

Because much of state power was in the hands of the two Cecils—William Cecil, Lord Burghley, chief advisor to Queen Elizabeth during most of her reign, and his son Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury—it is principally that team that I mean when I discuss the use of state power.

Father Francis Edwards provides the context:

For at least 50 crucial years — until 1612, in fact, England was virtually ruled, and with remarkable consistency and effectiveness, by Sir William Cecil and Sir Robert, his son. As principal secretaries, they had all the power necessary to preserve or destroy for posterity the materials of future history that lay in public hands. As Masters of the Court of Wards, they had similar opportunities to deal, sooner or later, with the private records of a great many leading families.

No one who has attempted research on important figures who collided or disagreed with the regime at any point can fail to notice the curious lop-sidedness of the records.”¹⁸

Nature of State Power in Authoritarian Societies

Beyond controlling the paper record, the Cecils and others who controlled state power were ruthless in using it to ferret out risks to the government or the crown. As Alfred Hart explained, “Walsingham and the Cecils controlled an efficient secret service, and any person of local importance who criticized any action or proclamation of the Council ran the risk of being summoned to London.”¹⁹ And interrogated, which often involved torture.

The theater and the press were censored to restrain “the expression of discontent and criticism of the government and its actions.”²⁰ As Janet Clare notes in *Art Made Tongued-Tied by Authority*, “Elizabethan drama was subject to two largely unrelated types of censorship: censorship by the Master of the Revels before the performance of a play and censorship by an ecclesiastical licenser prior to publication.”²¹ These two types of censorship were put under the sole direction of the Master of the Revels by the Star Chamber decree of 1586 mentioned below, thus “confirming the secularization of dramatic censorship under absolute state control.”²²

Penalties for violating censorship regulations were severe; playwrights, actors, printers and publishers were especially vulnerable to charges of possessing or writing seditious materials. Ben Jonson was arrested numerous times; Thomas Nashe’s works were burned in 1599 and he was forbidden ever to publish again. It

is worth noting that Chapman, Jonson and Marston were all arrested after the first performance of their play *Eastward Ho!*—a play that does not appear to contain seditious material but does appear to pay homage of sorts to Oxford. We might also note that Ben Jonson’s study was set ablaze and all his papers and books were destroyed in 1623, shortly after the First Folio of Shake-speare’s works, which Jonson edited, was ready to go on sale—a very physical form of censorship.

John Stubbs had his right hand chopped off for publishing a tract, *The Discovery of a Gaping Gulf*, which argued against the idea of the Queen marrying the French Duc of Alençon. We have some idea of just how traumatic that event was for Oxford because of his extraordinary use of the word “hand” 72 times in *Titus Andronicus*, a play in which the main character has a hand chopped off. We can, in fact, date that play to the months following Stubbs’ punishment in 1579.

Those who controlled the state during the reigns of Elizabeth and James had power far beyond that which exists in a modern democracy, and they could be ruthless in using it in the pursuit of their interests. The threat of such severe penalties for crossing those with political power would itself have instilled a sense of self-censorship among those who knew of Oxford’s authorship, limiting the number of handwritten or printed documents that would need to be sought out and destroyed in order to bury awareness of Oxford’s authorship and his role in establishing the public theater in London.

Only Two Choices Exist

If we assume (a) that documents that once existed that tied Oxford directly to authorship of the works of Shakes-peare are now missing, (b) that they have not gone missing by accident, (c) that Oxford could not have destroyed all of them by himself, (d) that state power would have been needed to seek out and destroy them, and (e) that those who controlled state power were sufficiently ruthless to do so, we must choose between two options:

- Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, was not the author of the works attributed to “William Shake-speare,” or
- Oxford was the author and the effort to hide his authorship was so systematic, so extensive and so successful that it could have been carried out only through the use of state power at the highest levels.

There are no other options. Before choosing between them, it is worth pausing to recognize just how improbable it would have been for state power to have been used to seek out and destroy the large number of documents that resulted from Oxford’s authorship of Shake-speare’s works and his role in the creation of the public theater. Ogburn described that effort as “highly implausible” and noted that “its implausibility is what has chiefly blocked a more general acceptance of ‘Shakespeare’ as having been a pseudonym.”²³

At the same time, we can note, with Sherlock Holmes, “When you have eliminated all which is impossible, then whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.”

So, based on the overwhelming amount of circumstantial evidence that has been uncovered in the past century, we must conclude that the first option (that Oxford was not “Shake-speare”) cannot be true, and that the second option must be true: Oxford was the author and state power was used to hide his authorship. The serious men who dominated Queen Elizabeth’s government made a determined—and until the past century successful—effort to wipe Oxford’s authorship of Shake-speare’s works from the historical record.

II: Why State Power Was Used to Hide Oxford’s Authorship

Many of Oxford’s plays were first written to be performed as entertainment in the court and for private performances for courtiers outside the court. If the story had ended there, there would have been little need for the use of state power to hide his authorship. It is only when the plays left the court to be performed on the public stage and to be published (and thus read by the general public) that they became of concern to the government.

Those who controlled state power believed it was necessary to separate the plays from the court in the public mind, and the best way they found to do that was by cutting the connection between the plays and the author. This section considers three of the many reasons why. The first has to do with Oxford’s use of the plays to generate public support for Queen Elizabeth’s reign and the anticipated war with Spain, the second with the political nature of the plays, which made them of concern to the government, and the third with the portrayal in the plays of the ultra-sensitive issue of succession.

Conditions Early in Queen Elizabeth’s Reign

It is helpful to review the conditions that existed early in Elizabeth’s reign.

Elizabeth became Queen in November 1558, but her accession to the throne had not been a sure thing. Parliament had twice declared her a bastard ineligible for succession, and the religious situation was even more contentious. The separation of the Church of England from Rome, the suppression of the religious orders and the dissolution of the monasteries had occurred less than thirty years earlier.²⁴ England had recently been through years of religious strife under the reign of Bloody Mary, and Elizabeth found herself a Protestant queen of a country that was still majority Catholic.

Furthermore, she was under verbal assault from outside England from the start of her reign. “As early as 16 February 1559, Pope Paul IV published the Bull, *Cum ex apostolates*, advocating the deposition of all sovereigns who encouraged

heresy.”²⁵ Ten years later, early in 1570, following her government’s victory over the Northern Rebellion, Pope Pius V issued a Bull of Deposition against Elizabeth that excommunicated her and absolved her subjects from allegiance to her.

Reason 1: Public Performances of the Plays to Garner Support for Queen Elizabeth’s Reign

From the beginning, Elizabeth needed to move quickly to increase public support for the legitimacy of her reign and the authority of the Church of England. She did this through both of the means to reach large audiences available to her—the pulpit and the public theater.

Her government ordered that certain homilies, or sermons, be read from every pulpit in England each Sunday to give a common message to the entire country. In the early years of Elizabeth’s reign, her government reissued the series of homilies originally distributed in 1547 by King Edward’s Council of Regency. But after the Ridolfi plot, which aimed at the invasion of England and the accession of the Duke of Norfolk, she ordered that a new set of twenty Homilies on Disobedience and Willful Rebellion be prepared. They were distributed throughout England in 1573.

These Homilies, as Alfred Hart noted in his analysis published in 1934, “put into the form of sermons a series of simple lessons on the fundamental principles of Tudor politics.”²⁶ The most important of them, Homily X, was “An exhortation concerning good order and obedience to Rulers and Magistrates,’ . . . [and] it briefly expounds such politico-religious doctrines as the divine right of kings, non-resistance, passive obedience, and the wickedness of rebellion.”²⁷

It is just these themes from the Homilies that Shake-speare, far more than any other writer of his day, emphasized in his plays. As Hart observed:

Shakespeare outdoes every other important dramatist of his time in the number and variety of the allusions made to the divine right of the reigning monarch, the duty of passive obedience enjoined on subjects by God, and the misery and chaos resulting from civil war and rebellion. References to such topics are scattered through at least twenty plays. . . . Though most frequent in the plays on English history, they are also to be found in comedies of his early and middle periods, and in the great tragedies.²⁸

What is peculiar to Shakespeare is that he treats the politico-theological doctrines of divine right, non-resistance, passive obedience and the sin of rebellion, as the accepted and immutable law of almost every land in every age. He has adroitly woven into the fabric of his plays so many and varied references, direct and indirect, to these doctrines, that we may extract from them an excellent digest of the main articles of the . . . political creed of the Tudors concerning the constitution of the body politic in general and the relation of ruler to subject in particular.²⁹

In fact, Hart concluded, “The number and variety of the passages . . . in which [Shakespeare] makes definite allusions to [these] topics . . . give . . . very strong support to my contention that Shakespeare derived these ideas either directly or indirectly from the Homilies.”³⁰ The similarities between the themes and wording of the homilies and Shakespeare’s plays are so similar that Mark Anderson speculates in his book *“Shakespeare” By Another Name* that one or more of them were actually written by a twenty-year-old de Vere. “The anonymous Homily Against Disobedience and Willful Rebellion (1571),” he writes, “is a proto-Shakespearean piece of prose—containing enough distinctive rhetoric and poetic flourishes to lead one to suspect the hand of a twenty-year old Bard. . . . Did de Vere record his theological reflections on rebellion for clergymen across the land to recite to their flocks?”³¹

But even if Oxford did not write any of the homilies, we see a body of work presented to the public in the theaters that mirrors their messages in support of the Queen and her government and the authority of the Church of England. We thus see Oxford seeking to influence public opinion through the theater long before he ever began to use the pseudonym William Shakespeare, and he would have been most effective in doing so if it was not known that the author of the plays was a member of the court. These plays, then, would have been of interest to the state for their content even if state power was not yet used to hide Oxford’s authorship of them.

Need for National Unity During the Anglo-Spain War (1585-1604)

The early use of the public theater to influence public opinion was expanded in a more systematic way to create unity throughout the country as England entered the War with Spain in the mid-1580s. At the same time, Oxford himself moved from being an unofficial supporter of the government to becoming a direct supporter and perhaps even a member of it.

England’s fear as the 1580s progressed was that if Spain succeeded in extinguishing the independence of the Protestant Dutch and Flemish communities, it would then turn its power toward a religious crusade against England. In summer 1585 Elizabeth recognized that she had no choice but to support the Low Countries, and sent English military forces there to help defend them. Thus began the Anglo-Spanish War that did not end until nineteen years later, when King James signed a peace treaty with Spain.

The war represented a direct threat to the continuation of Elizabeth’s reign. In June 1587, following the execution of Mary Queen of Scots, the Pope issued a Papal Bull calling on all English subjects to rise up and depose her. As historian Paul Johnson explains:

There were few members of her government . . . who were under any illusion that her, and their, regime was likely to survive her murder. No imaginable successor would be able to command the confidence of the country; the result would be civil war, the intervention of one

or more Catholic powers, a compromise at best, leading inevitably to the triumph of Rome. Then they would be hanged or burned alive. Nor was it just a question of their own lives. They had no doubt that the fall of England would mean the end of reformed religion.³²

Elizabeth and her government were in for the fight of their lives, and it was a fight that put England on an exhaustive war footing for almost twenty years. As Colonel B. R. Ward discovered, expenditure on soldiers, sailors and war materials averaged 70% of revenue during the entire 1585-1604 period, and expenditures on the army and navy in the year of the Armada actually amounted to 101% of revenue.³³ This was a terrible burden to be borne by the English crown and people for such an extended period of time, and the government came close to bankruptcy during the closing years of Elizabeth's reign.

To garner public support for her regime during those difficult years, Queen Elizabeth took two steps in June 1586. First, on June 23 she established severe and rigid control over the printing presses by a Star Chamber Decree, a measure designed to stop the dissemination of opinion contrary to the war effort. Second, only three days later, on June 26, she sanctioned a grant of £1,000 a year to the Earl of Oxford. Oxford was to serve, as Ward explained, "as the head of a Secret Service Department of State. This could hardly have been anything but a War Propaganda Department."³⁴ Payments to him were retroactive back to March 1586, but it is likely that discussions on this issue were underway by the fall of 1585. If so, the creation of this new secret department was likely the reason why Oxford had been recalled suddenly from the Low Countries in October 1585, where he was serving as General of the Horse. In 1585 or 1586, then, Oxford moved from being an unofficial supporter of Queen Elizabeth's reign by writing plays emphasizing themes from the Homilies to working in an official capacity as a member, though secret member, of her government.

As a result of Oxford's new responsibilities, we see a change in themes of the plays that he and his team of writers wrote. Whereas in the earlier plays he had emphasized the ideas of the divine right of kings and the necessity of obedience and loyalty—themes supporting Elizabeth's reign—the plays now encouraged pride in the nation and support for the war with Spain. In *Henry V*, to cite one example, characters from every part of the British isles—the Welsh Fluellen, Irish Captain Macmorris, Scottish Captain Jamy and English Gower—cooperate with each other, thus demonstrating the idea of Britain as a union of people united in resisting the Spanish menace.

1586 was thus a critical year in Oxford's life. It might seem at first that other years were of greater importance—e.g., 1581, the year of his banishment from court, or 1593, the first use of the pseudonym "William Shake-speare." But a case can be made that 1586 was the true turning point for the future of Oxford and the memory of his name because it was at that time that he moved from hiding his authorship due to traditional reasons—that courtiers do not write or publish—to hiding it for reasons of state. It was at that time, with the launching of the state-

funded propaganda effort in the theater, that state power perhaps began to be used to hide Oxford's authorship of his plays. If so, it was perhaps at that time that his art began to become "tongued-tied by authority."

Reason 2: The Political Nature of Oxford's Plays

Although Oxford's plays were designed in part to strengthen support for the Elizabethan regime, there was a problem with them—at least for the state. The problem was that the plays were political through and through. They did not merely contain passing references to issues currently being addressed by the government, or occasionally ridicule prominent members of the court. Rather, most of these plays were built around issues of great concern to the state and ridiculed prominent personages in the court in almost every act and scene.

In many cases, they had been written originally for audiences of courtiers who would immediately understand the allegorical references to matters of state and know just who was being ridiculed. While it might be regarded with great humor within the court to see their queen falling in love with an ass—and everyone at court knew just who that ass was in real life—it simply wouldn't do to have the general public make the same connections. Censors had to find a way to reduce that likelihood.

Because the plays were so political throughout, ordinary censorship—cutting out a scene here or a speech there that authorities deemed offensive or inappropriate—would not work. After censors got through removing all the sensitive parts, there would not be much of a play left. There were the additional problems that the author was less likely to practice self-censorship, and that he and his theater company had more power than others to resist official censorship. Those who controlled state power had to find another way to sanitize the plays if they were to be performed on the public stage.

The way they found to cut the connection between the plays and the court was to break the connection between the plays and the author. By suppressing awareness that Oxford's works presented on the public stage had been written by a nobleman, an inner member of the court, those not in the know would be less likely to perceive that the plays mirrored developments and portrayed individuals from the court. The plays could then be presented as mere entertainment unconnected with real life.

Reason 3: Family Politics of the Cecils

It was not just the official censors who would have wanted Oxford's authorship of his plays hidden, but also senior officials who had been portrayed and ridiculed in the plays. It was bad enough that their pride was pricked in the closed performances in the court, but it must have been intolerable for them to imagine the common

people laughing at characters modeled on themselves. One of the most effective scenes in the movie *Anonymous* was one in which Will Shakspeare, on stage, mocks a high official who has a feather in his hat by saying that his brain is lighter than his feather. We saw how that ended, with the official storming out of the theater and the play being closed down.

We can easily imagine something similar happening in real life. As Janet Clare notes, “censorship beyond the state system was thus provoked. . . . [T]he players had to accommodate not only the official censorship of the Master of the Revels, but arbitrary intervention from influential courtiers who were alert to real or perceived aspersions on their family name.”³⁵

On this point, Charlton Ogburn concluded that

Oxford would pay dear for his satisfactions. If there was anything on which Elizabeth, Burghley and the other Cecils, Leicester and the other Dudleys, Christopher Hatton, the 3rd Earl of Southampton, and doubtless others who appeared in the plays and poems were agreed upon it was that the author must never, *never* be known for who he was, lest his characters be seen for who they were, if heaven and earth had to be moved to prevent it. And for all we know, the inheritors of their power well into the future would be aware of that necessity and be obedient to it.³⁶

As we have seen, the most powerful of all the officials during Oxford’s lifetime, the two Cecils, had ample power and opportunity to cleanse the historical record of anything they did not want in it. William Cecil would surely not have wanted the general public to realize that he was the real-life model for Polonius in *Hamlet*. Robert Cecil’s motivations would have been, in Stephanie Hopkins Hughes’ estimation, “darker and more personal,” given “Oxford’s portrayal of him as the twisted, evil Richard III. Unable to attack him openly,” she writes, “I believe he [Cecil] set about first to curtail, then when that ended in a stalemate, to remove every trace of his [Oxford’s] power, every connection to the writing establishment and to his authorship of the Shakespeare canon.”³⁷

Reason 4: The Succession

A third reason for the use of state power to hide Oxford’s authorship has to do with the issue of succession. In the last decade of Queen Elizabeth’s reign — since she turned sixty years old in 1593 — no issue was more important or more sensitive than that of who would succeed her.

However, this issue (like the earlier issue of her possible marriage) was one about which Elizabeth never tolerated interference by others. She believed that as the monarch—the only person in the kingdom who was responsible to God for the kingdom as a whole—such decisions in these matters belonged exclusively to her.

Elizabeth sought throughout her reign to restrict Parliament’s role in them, beginning with its first meeting in 1566-67. When Parliament tried to pressure her

to resolve the marriage issue by linking it to the annual subsidy to the crown and refusing to consider other business until the succession issue had been resolved, Elizabeth responded angrily by vetoing all discussion of her marriage or succession by Parliament, and attacked what she called “the impudent assumption that parliamentarians were more concerned for the future of the kingdom and its people than she herself, divinely anointed to discharge this very duty.” The impasse was resolved only when Elizabeth withdrew her ban on discussion of the issues and Parliament simultaneously decided not to discuss them.

Elizabeth also sought to ban or limit public discussion of her marriage or succession. As noted, John Stubbs had his right hand chopped off for daring to advise the queen on her marriage in his pamphlet *The Discovery of a Gaping Gulf* in 1579. As William Camden noted, in response to Stubbs’s pamphlet “Her Majestie burned with choler that there was a book published in print, inveighing sharply against the marriage,” and it was she herself who decided on Stubbs’s sentence and who pushed it through the court system in violation of usual procedures, much to the consternation of her advisers.

Into this breach rode the Earl of Oxford, seeking to advise the queen and others on this most sensitive issue of succession through his plays. Even though public discussion of succession was forbidden, Oxford’s later plays (or at least those revised from the early 1590s onwards) seemed to focus almost obsessively on that issue, examining from every angle the question of who is a legitimate ruler and the mechanics of how power is transferred from one monarch to another.

Several Oxfordian researchers have shown that earlier plays which had emphasized such themes as obedience to the crown or support for the war with Spain were revised from 1593 onwards to focus much more on the issue of succession. Daniel Wright has shown the extent to which this was done as *The Troublesome Reign of King John* was revised to become *King John*, and Ramon Jiménez has shown similar changes as the *True Chronicle of King Leir* became *King Lear*.

Given the obsession in the plays with the issue of succession, it was imperative for reasons of state that Oxford’s authorship be kept hidden so that the public would not recognize that the succession issues being dealt with in the plays actually related to the current monarch.

III: State Power Was Used to Airbrush Oxford from the Historical Record

We have examined how and why those who controlled state power—in particular, the Cecils—used it to hide Oxford’s authorship of the works attributed to William Shakespeare and his role in the creation of the public theater in London. But the story doesn’t end there. They also used state power for a second purpose: to eliminate Oxford himself from much of the historical record.

Airbrushed Out of History

Oxford was, in effect, airbrushed from history by Robert Cecil and others who controlled state power. “Airbrushed” is the term used to describe the removal from photographs of the political leadership in the Soviet Union and China of those who fell out of favor with the current leadership.

We have today far fewer documents related to Oxford than we would expect to have, given his position as Lord Great Chamberlain and as a member of the court. It is not just documents about his writing and acting, and his role in providing dramatic entertainment in the court and in creating the public stage that are missing. The paper trail of the non-literary aspects of his life has also largely vanished. Burghley’s files are unaccountably incomplete when it comes to Oxford. They contain nothing related to Oxford’s connection with the expeditionary force in the Low Countries, and the grant of £1,000 a year to him, an extraordinary large amount, is never mentioned.

Oxford was the only major Elizabethan figure not to have had a public funeral. As Hughes noted, “Whatever Oxford’s relationship with Cecil might have been, protocol would have demanded that the premier earl in the kingdom have a public and honored funeral. There is not a single other major figure in the Elizabethan era that did not have a public funeral.”³⁸

Oxford’s own files, papers, books, manuscripts and will are missing. With only a handful of exceptions, no letters exist either from or to Oxford, other than letters between him and the Cecils. His letters to Anne Cecil have not survived even though hers to him have. On this point Charlton Ogburn concluded “that every communication he ever made his wife in writing can hardly have vanished without someone’s having exerted himself to that end. But if we were to be prevented from hearing Oxford’s side, care was taken to preserve a record of Anne’s.”³⁹ And, “Once again one is reminded of the irretrievable loss we have suffered from the Cecils’ tight control of the records of Elizabeth’s reign, including, it is evident, the decision as to what correspondence of their illustrious in-law’s would be allowed to survive.”⁴⁰ Thus, Ogburn concluded, “in expunging all traces of his [Oxford’s] connection with the stage . . . [the Cecils] seem almost to have effaced Oxford himself from the record.”⁴¹

The effort to airbrush Oxford from history was so successful that he vanished almost completely for more than 300 years. Paul Johnson’s book *Elizabeth: A Study in Power and Intellect*, published in 1974, provides an example of the minimal presence that Oxford has had in the historical record, as shown in Figure 2. That book’s 500 pages contain only seven references to Oxford, fewer even than Henry Carey, 1st Lord of Hunsdon, and far fewer than Burghley, Walsingham and other prominent members of the court and government. All seven references to Oxford are derogatory. Johnson does not mention at all that Oxford was the Great Lord Chamberlain of England or that he was acclaimed as a poet and dramatist.

Burghley, Sir William Cecil, Baron	125	Bacon, Sir Francis	18
Walsingham, Sir Francis	75	Henry, Lord Hunsdon	16
Leicester, Robert Dudley, Earl of	71	Sidney, Sir Philip	14
Raleigh, Sir Walter	57	Smith, Sir Thomas	14
Cecil, Sir Robert, Earl of Salisbury	43	Shrewsbury, Gilbert Talbot, 6 th Earl of	13
Hatton, Sir Christopher	43	Seymour, Lord Thomas	12
Essex, Robert Devereux, 2 nd Earl of	34	Henry Wriothesley, 3 rd Earl of Southampton	12
Drake, Sir Francis	28	Hunsdon, Henry Carey, 1 st Lord of	11
Norfolk, Thomas Howard, 4 th Duke of	24	Oxford, Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of	7

Figure 2: Number of References to Major Figures in Elizabethan England in Paul Johnson’s Elizabeth (1974)⁴²

It is thus not surprising that John Thomas Looney had never heard of Edward de Vere when, in the 1910s, he began his search for the real author of the works attributed to Shake-speare.

IV: Why State Power Was Used To Airbrush Oxford from the Historical Record

We now ask, not *how* it was possible to erase Oxford from the historical record, but *why*? What reason could have existed to warrant the use of state power to erase from the historical record a man described by his contemporaries as “the most brilliant of the young nobility of Elizabeth’s court” and as “a fellow peerless in England,” and by King James as “Great Oxford”? Surely there must be more behind the effort than merely hiding his authorship of the works of Shake-speare. The connection between the court and the plays had already been cut by the use of the pseudonym.

H. K. Kennedy-Skipton has given us a clue by suggesting that it was done for reasons unrelated to the authorship of the plays.

If we accept the life of De Vere and his relation to the times as told in the plays, we may find they form a historical foreground, and will in fact be a criterion of the truth of the background. There can be no doubt that the plays and the life of Edward De Vere conceal facts

of vital historical import, compared with which the mystery of the authorship is of minor consequence. How otherwise can one explain the erasure of the name of such an important person from the pages of our history?⁴³

Others have commented on the importance of literature as a source for knowledge of historical events, but Kennedy-Skipton's statement, from 1932, is the earliest I have found that relates specifically to Shakespeare. We now must consider the possibility that Oxford might have been airbrushed out of the historical record for non-literary reasons.

The Succession Issue Revisited

Part II concluded with a discussion of Oxford's addressing the sensitive issue of the succession to Queen Elizabeth in his plays. I now return to that issue.

Since the 1930s, some Oxfordians have speculated that Oxford was not merely an observer of the succession process, but was directly involved in it either as a son of the queen, a lover of the queen and father of a child by her, or both. The Tudor Heir theories, also known as Prince Tudor Theories, or "P.T.," are the most controversial aspects of the authorship question. They posit not only that the Earl of Southampton and perhaps Oxford himself were sons of Queen Elizabeth, but also that Oxford's place in history was sacrificed to protect the "Virgin" Queen's reputation and to eliminate any potential challenges to King James' reign by direct descendants of Queen Elizabeth.

Some Oxfordians have concluded that the Tudor Heir theories have been proven to be false, persuaded perhaps by Diana Price's 1993 article, "Rough Winds Do Shake,"⁴⁴ or Christopher Paul's 2002 article "The Prince Tudor Dilemma."⁴⁵ I have examined these and other articles and found their arguments to be less than definitive. In addition, key points in them have been effectively addressed by Bill Boyle, Charles Beauclerk, Hank Whittimore, Daniel Wright and others in *A Poet's Rage*, published in 2013. A more comprehensive re-examination of these theories is needed; they should not be ruled out until that examination has been undertaken.

The Tudor Heir theories are of vital importance because no other theories are weighty enough to explain why those who controlled state power saw fit to use it to conduct the systematic, sustained and determined effort that was needed to eliminate not only the historical record of Oxford's role in the development of the public theater and his authorship of the literary works attributed to William Shakespeare, but also most records pertaining to his place in the court and government and his correspondence with anybody other than the Cecils.

Right Up To The Brink

It is interesting to note that Walt Whitman, that most perceptive of readers of Shakespeare's plays, felt in his bones that "It is impossible to grasp the whole

cluster of these plays . . . without thinking of them as . . . the result of an essentially controlling plan. What was that plan? Or, rather, what was veil'd behind it? – for to me there was certainly something so veil'd.⁴⁶ Whitman's friend William O'Conner also had the impression of the plays having “a lurking sense of being in aid of some ulterior design, probably well enough understood in that age, which perhaps time and criticism will reveal.”⁴⁷

B. R. Ward thought that the ulterior design lurking behind Shakespeare's historical plays was their role in influencing public opinion during the War with Spain. But something weightier was needed to explain the plays' obsession with the issue of succession.

We noted earlier Charlton Ogburn's conclusion that Elizabeth and her senior advisors felt that “the author must never, *never* be known for who he was . . . if heaven and earth had to be moved to prevent it.”⁴⁸ Surely if they felt strongly enough about protecting their family names to destroy evidence of Oxford's literary and theatrical activities, they would not have balked at the additional step of destroying the non-literary records of Oxford's life in order to achieve the far more important goals of protecting Queen Elizabeth's reputation and the legitimacy of King James's reign.

As noted earlier, Stephanie Hopkins Hughes concluded that Robert Cecil was determined to remove every trace of Oxford's connection with the theater.⁴⁹ From there it is only a step away for Cecil to eliminate Oxford himself from the historical record in order to protect his own position by hiding awareness of any potential challengers to James.

And, as noted above, Charlton Ogburn concluded that “in expunging all traces of his [Oxford's] connection with the stage . . . [the Cecils] seem almost to have effaced Oxford himself from the record.”⁵⁰ I believe that Ogburn got it backwards. Effacing Oxford himself from the record was the primary goal, not an accidental result from an overzealous effort to expunge Oxford's connection with the stage.

Thus, many eminent Oxfordians go right to the brink in describing the extraordinary efforts taken to eliminate Oxford from the historical record. But because they were focused only on the narrower issue of the authorship question, they did not recognize that burying the record of Oxford's authorship of Shakespeare's works was only one part of the larger effort to eliminate Oxford himself from the historical record for other reasons.

And in fact, Charlton Ogburn later came to conclude that Southampton was the son of Queen Elizabeth and Oxford because, as he explained, “there is no other scenario of which I have heard that accommodates the facts in the case.”⁵¹ As he wrote in a letter to the editor of *The Elizabethan Review* in 1997, “the need for dissimulation of Oxford's authorship of Shakespeare's works was absolutely imperative.” It was, he continued, “not simply a matter of preserving the reputations of the Queen and those around her, which would be recognized in the plays were these attributed to an insider at Court . . . What was at stake in the identity of the poet-dramatist was the succession to the throne of the United Kingdom. For all I know, this may be dynamite even today.”⁵²

Those who controlled state power in the early years of the 17th century believed that they faced no effort more deserving of the fullest use of their power than that of establishing and preserving James on the throne. This article has examined some aspects of the use of state power for that purpose, and reached conclusions about how Oxford became Shake-speare that are in accordance with the more comprehensive accounts provided by Hank Whittemore in *The Monument* and Charles Beauclerk in *Shakespeare's Lost Kingdom*.

Summary and Conclusion

State power was used for two purposes:

- 1) To hide Oxford's authorship of the works attributed to "William Shake-speare" because . . .
 - the plays had been used for propaganda purposes, i.e., to generate public support for Elizabeth's reign, especially during the War with Spain;
 - the plays were political through and through, and to break the connection between them and the court it was necessary to break the connection between the plays and Oxford; and,
 - the plays addressed the ultrasensitive issue of succession.
- 2) To airbrush Oxford from the historical record because . . .
 - Oxford was bodily involved in the succession issue as described in the Prince Tudor/Tudor Heir theories and thus his existence threatened the purity of Queen Elizabeth's reputation and the legitimacy of King James' reign.

State power was clearly used for these two purposes, but to state them in this way does not adequately describe what happened.

It is more accurate to note that the purposes for which state power was used evolved over time. The discrete effort to hide Oxford's authorship of plays being performed on the public stage became only one part of the larger effort to airbrush him from the historical record. The effort to protect the family name of those portrayed in the plays ultimately became one part of the more determined effort to protect James' reign from challenges by direct descendants of Queen Elizabeth.

The evolution of the purposes for which state power was used took place over a period of about twenty years. It began in the mid-1580s, around the time that Oxford began receiving the annual annuity of £1,000, and was largely complete by the coronation of King James in 1603, as shown in Figure 3.

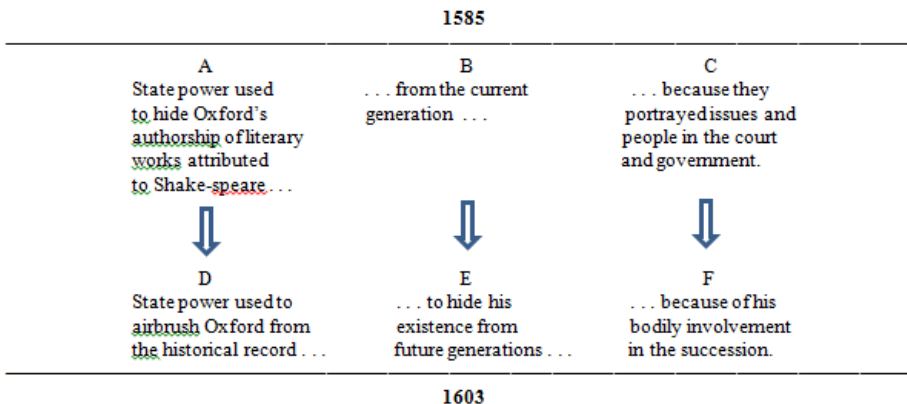


Figure 3: Evolution in the Use of State Power as it Relates to the Authorship of Oxford's Literary Works

One key moment in that evolution was the spring of 1593, when Oxford first published under the pseudonym William Shake-speare, when Shake-speare's first published work was dedicated to Southampton, and when Southampton held a particularly prominent place in the court. Another key moment occurred early in 1601 at the time of the Essex Rebellion, when Southampton was convicted of treason. I have not described those two points in time in this paper, nor have I noted the passages in Oxford's works that tie them to him and to Southampton's parentage, because those events and references have been thoroughly addressed elsewhere.⁵³

It was perhaps only after James was securely on the throne—in the final year of Oxford's life and in the years immediately following his death—that Robert Cecil, with future generations in mind, sought to carry out the full-scale effort to airbrush Oxford from the historical record that had begun earlier.

Focusing on the authorship question from the point of view of the use of state power makes it possible to place the effort to hide Oxford's authorship of the works of Shake-speare in the proper context. The use of state power for political reasons, then, played *the* critical role in why today so many people believe that William Shakspeare, rather than Oxford, was the author of the plays and poems they love so dearly.

Works Cited

- Mark K. Anderson. *"Shakespeare" By Another Name*. New York: Gotham Books, 2005.
- Charles Beauclerk. *Shakespeare's Lost Kingdom: The True History of Shakespeare and Elizabeth*. New York: Grove Press, 2010.
- William E. Boyle. *A Poet's Rage*. Somerville, MA: Forever Press, 2013.
- Janet Clare. *'Art Made Tongue-Tied By Authority.'* New York: Manchester University Press, 1990.
- Gary Goldstein. "Still in Denial," *The Oxfordian* 15, 2013.
- Alfred Hart. *Shakespeare and the Homilies*. New York: Octagon Books, 1970.
- Stephanie Hopkins Hughes. "Missing From the Record." Web. accessed January 17, 2014.
- Stephanie Hopkins Hughes. "The Cecils and History." Web. accessed January 17, 2014.
- Morse Johnson. "The Oxfordian Position," *Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter*, Vol. 24/3, Summer 1998.
- Paul Johnson. *Elizabeth I: A Study in Power and Intellect*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974.
- H. K. Kennedy-Skipton. "The Tragic Story of Shakespeare," *Shakespeare Pictorial*, August, 1932.
- J. Thomas Looney. *"Shakespeare" Identified*. London: Cecil Palmer, 1920.
- Charlton Jr. Ogburn. *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*. McLean, Virginia: EPM Publications, Inc., 1992.
- Colonel B. R. Ward. "Elizabethan Exchequer Figures," *Shakespeare Pictorial*, March, 1929.
- Colonel B. R. Ward. "Queen Elizabeth's 'Parsimony,'" *Shakespeare Pictorial*, June, 1929.
- Colonel B. R. Ward. "What Lurks Behind Shakespeare's Historical Plays," *Shakespeare Pictorial*, September, 1929.
- Hank Whittemore. *The Monument*. Marshfield Hills, Mass.: Meadow Geese Press, 2008.

Endnotes

- ¹ Archer Taylor and Frederic J. Mosher, *The Bibliographical History of Anonyma and Pseudonyma*, 1952, p. 85, quoted in Mark Anderson, "Shakespeare" By Another Name, xxviii.
- ² Shakspeare used a variety of spellings of his name, but none of them has the e in "Shake." All would have been pronounced with the short a sound. "Shack."
- ³ Charlton Ogburn, Jr., *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*, 688.
- ⁴ See the list of works cited for books that make a fuller case why the man from Stratford could not have been the author of "Shake-speare's" works, especially Anderson, Looney and Ogburn.
- ⁵ Roger Stritmatter, *Edward De Vere's Geneva Bible: the marginalia of Edward De Vere's Geneva Bible: providential discovery, literary reasoning, and historical consequence*.
- ⁶ See, for example, Eva Lee Turner Clark, *Hidden Allusions in Shakespeare's Plays* (1930), Dorothy and Charlton Ogburn, *This Star of England* (1952), and other works cited.
- ⁷ Stephanie Hopkins Hughes, "Missing From the Record." Accessed January 17, 2014.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ Gary Goldstein, "Still in Denial," *The Oxfordian* 15, 99.
- ¹¹ J. Thomas Looney, "Shakespeare" Identified.
- ¹² Hughes, "Missing From the Record," www.politicworm.com, accessed January 17, 2014.
- ¹³ Ogburn, Jr., *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*.
- ¹⁴ Ibid. at 183.
- ¹⁵ Ibid. at 183-184.
- ¹⁶ Goldstein, 98-99.
- ¹⁷ Morse Johnson, "The Oxfordian Position," *Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter*, 24:3 (Summer 1988), 9.
- ¹⁸ Ogburn, Jr., at 201-202.
- ¹⁹ Alfred Hart, *Shakespeare and the Homilies*, 14.
- ²⁰ Ibid. at 14-15.
- ²¹ Janet Clare, *Art Made Tongue-Tied By Authority*, 16.
- ²² Ibid. at 17.
- ²³ Ogburn, Jr., at 198.
- ²⁴ Hart, 10-11.
- ²⁵ Paul Johnson, *Elizabeth: A Study in Intellect and Power*, 87.

- ²⁶ Hart, 29.
- ²⁷ Ibid. at 21.
- ²⁸ Ibid. at 27-28.
- ²⁹ Ibid. at 28.
- ³⁰ Ibid. at 67.
- ³¹ Anderson, 43.
- ³² Johnson, 241-242.
- ³³ Colonel B. R. Ward, "Queen Elizabeth's "Patrimony," *Shakespeare Pictorial*, June 1929, 20.
- ³⁴ Ward, "Elizabethan Exchequer Figures," *Shakespeare Pictorial*, March 1929, 16.
- ³⁵ Clare, 78.
- ³⁶ Ogburn, Jr., 657.
- ³⁷ Hughes, "The Cecils and History," www.politicworm.com, accessed January 17, 2014.
- ³⁸ Hughes, "Oxford's Funeral." Web. Accessed February 2014.
- ³⁹ Ogburn, Jr., 649.
- ⁴⁰ Ogburn, Jr., 735.
- ⁴¹ Ogburn, Jr., 203-204.
- ⁴² Johnson.
- ⁴³ H. K. Kennedy-Skipton, "The Tragic Story of Shakespeare," *Shakespeare Pictorial*, August 1932.
- ⁴⁴ Diana Price, "Rough Winds Do Shake: a fresh look at the Tudor Rose Theory," *Elizabethan Review*, Vol. 4/2, Autumn 1996, 4-23.
- ⁴⁵ Christopher Paul, "The Prince Tudor Dilemma: hip thesis, hypothesis, or old wives' tale?" *The Oxfordian* 5 (2002), 47-69.
- ⁴⁶ Ward, "What Lurks Behind Shakespeare's History Plays," *Shakespeare Pictorial*, September, 1929, 16.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid.
- ⁴⁸ Ogburn, Jr., 657.
- ⁴⁹ Hughes, "The Cecils and History," www.politicworm.com, accessed January 17, 2014.
- ⁵⁰ Ogburn, Jr., 203-204.
- ⁵¹ Ogburn, Jr., Letter to the Editor, *The Elizabethan Review* 5:1 (Spring 1997), 7-9.
- ⁵² Ibid.
- ⁵³ See, for instance, Hank Whittemore's *The Monument* and Charles Beauclerk's *Shakespeare's Lost Kingdom*.

Chaucer Lost and Found in Shakespeare's Histories

Jacob Hughes

It should come as no surprise that Shakespeare and Chaucer, the two artistic monuments in early English literature, have faced comparative scholarly treatment over the past century. This treatment, though, has been relatively uneven in terms of scope and intent, and there is considerably less of it than one would expect. With an increasing number of exceptions since the 1980s, it has been generally focused on what noted Chaucerian E. Talbot Donaldson refers to as “source hunting,” i.e., identifying sources rather than discussing their significance or purpose.¹ However, critics such as Donaldson and Anne Thompson have found that Chaucer’s thematic influence is rife throughout much of Shakespeare’s canon. While many authors showcase their erudition by referencing their exemplars, Shakespeare owes more to Chaucer than a few borrowed plots and quotations; he frequently implements Chaucerian characterizations (or caricatures) and thematic patterns that are relevant to his own art. Far from random, Shakespeare reflects on Chaucer’s influence in his plays. More specifically, Shakespeare frequently, though often subtly, draws attention to his Chaucerian influence through characters who can be considered entertainers or stage managers. And very often these Chaucerian entertainers, when we examine the root of their poetic influence, stem from Chaucer’s own discussions of art and entertainment.

Without context or provenience, there is no good reason to wonder why Shakespeare never directly references Chaucer in his known canon. Apart from a mention in the prologue of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* as a source, Shakespeare seems to avoid Chaucer’s persona entirely, despite his clear narrative indebtedness to the poet for that play and for *Troilus and Cressida*. To be fair, Shakespeare might not have had anything to do with the prologue of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*; John Fletcher is as likely a culprit, if not more so. That play’s dual authorship notwithstanding, Shakespeare almost never mentions any of the sources he likely drew from. As a dramatist, he was not obligated to cite his every source, nor would that practice

be sustainable. To suggest otherwise would be ludicrous; and yet, it is hardly fair to say that Shakespeare lacked any sort of autobiographical impulse. Some of his most significant exemplars do feature in his plays in one form or another. Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in book form, features importantly in *Titus Andronicus* and John Gower—Chaucer's colleague and author of *Confessio Amantis*—appears as a chorus character in *Pericles*. A Gower also appears in *Henry IV, Part Two* as a member of the King's party, reporting news and being invited to dinner by Falstaff in Act II²; a soldier in *Henry V* shares the same name. John of Gaunt, Chaucer's brother-in-law and his most notable patron, receives one of the most dazzling speeches in the canon, in *Richard II*, despite his relatively small part compared to his son, Henry Bolingbroke. Justice Shallow mentions a "Scoggin" in *Henry IV, Part Two*, likely the moralist Henry Scogan, tutor to Henry IV's children,³ and dedicatee of Chaucer's envoy. Shakespeare seems very familiar with the two courts most crucial to Chaucer's life—those of Richard II and Henry IV—including both major and minor figures who characterize Chaucer's "narrow aristocratic circle" among the *dramatis personae* and at least mentioning others: John of Gaunt, Henry Scogan, and John Gower were among his key audience members.⁴ From an artistic standpoint, Donaldson even suggests that Chaucer was Shakespeare's only meaningful English poetic influence.⁵ Given Shakespeare's fascination with the late 14th and early 15th centuries, Chaucer's fame, and the most auspicious opportunities to include at least a passing reference or stage cameo to England's most important poet, Chaucer's absence—in all forms—seems glaring. Assuming that the idea of a Chaucerian entertainer is a viable, and to some extent real, construct, the notion that Shakespeare missed such a fruitful opportunity to engage Chaucer in one or more plays set in the poet's own time is not only highly suspect, but unlikely.

The implication is that Chaucer does indeed feature in Shakespeare's history plays, though the locus of his influence is cleverly disguised. While Shakespeare surely recognizes Chaucer as an exemplar—possibly his only significant exemplar in English—he does not seem interested in paying homage to him as he does with Ovid and Gower. Chaucer's methods are much more relevant to Shakespeare, especially as they pertain to professional entertainment.

In keeping with the idea of a Chaucerian entertainer, theatrics and wordplay are Falstaff's ancillary vocation. But he does not exist independently from the play's setting; Falstaff's antics are inseparable from his socio-historical context. This context bridges Shakespeare's Early Modern period and his understanding of Chaucer's Middle Ages; Falstaff serves as a kind of Chaucerian conduit or lens through which we can read the plays' central themes. More specifically, Falstaff represents a kind of Chaucerian echo. He embodies a part of Shakespeare's literary origins, voiced indirectly by quotations, affectations and, at points, stark resemblances to "the father of English poetry." As such, Falstaff is the most overtly Chaucerian of Shakespeare's Chaucerian entertainers. Moreover, Shakespeare's own self-conception as an entertainer is bound up in Falstaff as well. The fat knight could be viewed as a locus in which Shakespeare and Chaucer interact.

It is crucial to acknowledge that while Falstaff severally echoes Chaucer, his characterization is not solely indebted to the poet. Falstaff's connections to the historical Lollard Sir John Oldcastle and to career soldier Sir John Fastolf have long been established.⁶ Oldcastle's name was initially borrowed for the anonymous *Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth* and—proving offensive to that knight's descendants—was later dropped for Shakespeare's *Henriad*. Fastolf was co-opted in the first part of Shakespeare's *Henry VI* plays. Regardless, Falstaff is not a simple embodiment of any one real person, nor is he likely a direct allegorical representation of a historical figure. He is larger than life and complex. Falstaff evades easy characterization, being neither wholly commendable nor objectionable. Critically, he often evades moderate readings. Harold Bloom ardently insists, "Time annihilates other Shakespearean protagonists, but not Falstaff, who dies for love. Critics have insisted that this love is grotesque, but they are grotesque."⁷

Bloom's bardolatry aside, it seems unlikely that Shakespeare would invest so many speaking lines in Falstaff if he was either boring to write for or a simplistic paragon of vice. Writers and readers can both love characters and approach them with great moral ambivalence. Chaucer's Wife of Bath—who Donaldson in *Swan at the Well* points out has much in common personally with Falstaff, especially in the way of wit⁸—evokes similarly varied responses. Donaldson points out a shared trait between these two larger than life characters that might illuminate their appeal to some and distastefulness to others:

[A]lthough others may find what they do reprehensible, they find their occupations fully justified because they are *their* occupations, and they find them congenial. Their ideas of the world may be at variance with other people's ideas, but they are at home with them, and do not intend to alter their styles for anyone.⁹

These subversive qualities uniquely empower Falstaff with a perspective otherwise beyond our reach as readers. We can only ever take Falstaff as he is. Falstaff's role as a Chaucerian lens, or echo, is never at odds with any of his other characterizations. Sir John is ever overlapping.

Though Falstaff continues as a Chaucerian representative throughout the other Henry plays in the tetralogy, the shadows of Chaucer's poetry creep into Shakespeare's drama prior to Falstaff's direct involvement. In *Richard II*, Chaucer is indirectly infused throughout the play via the frequent use of the term "pilgrimage."¹⁰ Henry Bolingbroke mentions that he and his foe Mowbray are "like two men / That vow a long and weary pilgrimage" (2.3.49)¹¹ in regard to their conflict, which is distinguished from his later pontification that he will "make a voyage to the Holy Land" (5.6.49). It is unclear why Shakespeare uses "pilgrimage" for "voyage," though he may be distinguishing between Henry's initial metaphorical use of the term and his later literal yet unrealized intention. John of Gaunt uses the term in a similar manner when begging Richard to shorten his son's banishment, fearing that his advanced years will preclude a reunion: "Thou canst help time

to furrow me with age, / But stop no wrinkle in his pilgrimage” (1.3.230). Henry responds to his father’s insistence that banishment can be “a travel that thou takest for pleasure” (1.3.262): “My heart will sigh when I miscall it so, / Which finds it an inforced pilgrimage” (1.3.263-264).

Aging, banishment and suppression do not necessarily match up neatly with pervasive themes in *The Canterbury Tales*, or in a thematic manner that Shakespeare finds meaningful enough to indicate that he was thinking of it. However, those themes may be biographically relevant to Chaucer himself. Perhaps significantly, the term “pilgrimage” is used only by Chaucer’s patrons—Richard II, John of Gaunt and Henry IV. Coincidentally, Terry Jones points out that as a literary figure, Chaucer’s relationship to those three nobles may well have been considerably governed by aging, a kind of banishment, and potential suppression of his works leading up to his eventual retraction.¹² Chaucer’s biographical associations can be derived from his works without necessarily consulting historical records. In *The Complaint of Chaucer to his Purse*, the poet appeals directly to King Henry IV, and seems to be in dire straits:

O conqueror of Brutes Albyon
Which that by lyne and free eleccion
Been verray kyng, this song to yow I sende,
And ye, that mowen alle oure harmes amende,
Have mynde upon my supplicacion.
(22-26)¹³

Chaucer grandiosely implies that Henry is the rightful bearer of the crown, despite his succession by coup and the death of Richard. Chaucer was a member of Richard II’s court, but it seems as if he has at least initially succeeded in surviving the transition, though he was having dire financial woes. Benson suggests that Chaucer’s *Complaint* may indicate that the grants originally approved by the new king may not have been paid.¹⁴

Chaucer’s most prominent court connections maintain their presence, to a degree, through the remaining Henry plays, but Falstaff also draws from and alludes to *The Canterbury Tales* directly. Among them, the two *Henry IV* plays contain the most significant allusions to Chaucer’s works. But Shakespeare does not simply pile Chaucerian sources into Falstaff’s massive frame; he puts Chaucerian methods into action through him.

Falstaff’s initial antics highlight him as a professional analogue to both Chaucer and Shakespeare, though at first obliquely. In *Henry IV, Part One*, Poins reports “pilgrims going to Canterbury” (1.2.126),¹⁵ a connection noted by Thomas McNeal.¹⁶ Poins suggests that Hal, Falstaff and company should don “vizards” (1.2.128) and rob the pilgrims at Gadshill. Hal is at first reluctant, but agrees after Poins promises a better ruse on Falstaff: robbing him after he loots the pilgrims. Ultimately, the pilgrims get the short end of the deal. Despite Hal’s reservations, we later learn he does not have problems with taxation through government channels.

Falstaff predicts Hal's eventual hypocrisy: "There's neither honesty, manhood, nor good fellowship in thee, nor thou camest not of the blood royal, if thou darest not stand for ten shillings" (1.2.139-141). Ultimately, Hal plays along with Poins, duping Falstaff into dropping his spoils. The exchange of funds here is representative of the royal tax collection process: The pilgrims are figures without agency who pay taxes, collected by Falstaff, and reaped by the heir apparent. The same analogy, strangely, applies to the artistic process of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Regardless of the stories' authenticity, Chaucer depicts himself collecting tales from his fellow pilgrims, and records them for the entertainment of others. Loomis points out that Chaucer's audience was primarily aristocratic¹⁷—a fact surely not overlooked by Shakespeare. Thus, Chaucer's tale-telling is analogous to Falstaff's own antics: an entertainment enjoyed, and possibly exploited, by royalty.

Falstaff's own stories are often trumped-up exaggerations, or flat-out lies, but even still his presentation is wholly entertaining and self-aware. Past the surface of the matter, Falstaff addresses a perennial question in literary art: Is fiction a lie? In his General Prologue, Chaucer takes care to mention that whenever a story bears repeating, the teller has the responsibility of reporting the facts as closely as they were spoken to him:

For this ye knowen also wel as I,
Whoso shal telle a tale after a man,
He moot reherce as ny as evere he kan
Everich a word, if it be in his charge,
Al speke he never so rudeliche or large,
Or ellis he moot telle his tale untrewe,
Or feyne thyng, or fynde wordes newe.
(A 732-739)¹⁸

Certainly, Falstaff's tall tales do not meet this criterion, and he is mocked by Hal for his exaggerations: "These lies are like their father that begets them; / gross as a mountain, open, palpable" (2.4.225-226). However, the fat knight responds wittily, praising his own instinct for not killing the heir apparent. Effectively, Falstaff is not so much a liar as he is what we would call a "bullshitter." Even though Bardolph and Peto later reveal that the knight hacked his sword with a dagger, his story seems so obviously exaggerated and contrived that one wonders how seriously Falstaff expected Hal and Poins to take him. This tongue-in-cheek pontification on the verity of Falstaff's claims echoes Chaucer's scheme in the General Prologue: The poet does not expect his audience to treat the work as history, but as a tale. When Chaucer warns that the speaker who fails to memorize whomever he is quoting entirely may "feyne thyng, or fynde words newe," he is actually paying homage to the creative process. Falstaff, as Shakespeare's authorial response to Chaucer, answers this claim through theatricality. The entire post-Gadshill spectacle is a show, replete with exaggerated language, costumes (the vizards) and even makeup in the form of blood,

as Bardolph bemoans that Falstaff made the would-be thieves “tickle our noses with spear-grass to make them bleed, and then to beslobber our garments with it and swear it was the blood of true men” (2.4.309-311).

Falstaff’s own operation as a dramatist, similar in philosophical bearing to Chaucer’s handling of truth in the General Prologue, harkens back to the poet’s caricature of himself in *The Canterbury Tales*. “Chaucer the pilgrim,” as critics such as E.T. Donaldson would identify the character, appears as a kind of bumbling, rotund, “wide-eyed,” simple-minded and jolly fellow, a depiction very similar to his own characterization in the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*.¹⁹ His tale of *Sir Thopas* is described as “nat worth a toord” by the Host, who interrupts its telling (B2, 2119).²⁰ Similarly, Hal does not seem impressed by Falstaff’s antics. Yet Hal calls for further performance—just as the Host does—asking Falstaff to “stand for my father, and examine me upon the particulars of my life” (2.4.376-377), whereupon Falstaff responds by preparing his stage, props, and makeup: “this chair shall be my state,/this dagger my sceptre, and this cushion my crown” (2.4.378-379), even calling for another cup of sack “to make my eyes look red, that it may be thought I have wept” as he plays Hal’s father (2.4.385). The entire presentation seems absurd, yet serves to highlight more subtle issues and establish Shakespeare’s skillful blending of fiction within fiction—just like Chaucer’s telling of *Sir Thopas*. Despite our understandable suspicion of the Hostess’s credentials as a drama critic, she praises Falstaff’s performance: “O Jesu, he doth it as like one of these harlotry players as ever I see!” (2.4.395-396). Isaac Asimov notes that Falstaff employs “exotic words and farfetched similes often drawn from nature,”²¹ taking a euphuistic tone—balanced sentences characterized by contrast. Shakespeare depicts Falstaff as a capable actor, instilling him with linguistic flourishes so that both his staged and real audiences see that he puts on a good show. Effectively, Falstaff uses the drama to defend himself after Hal turns the tables, forcing him to switch roles. While Falstaff’s interpretation of the King assumes that the fat knight is the only point of virtue in Hal’s unruly lifestyle, Hal’s own projection of his father demands the fat knight’s banishment, to which Falstaff responds:

But to say I know more harm in him than in myself, were to say more than I know. That he is old, the more the pity, his white hairs do witness it; but that he is, saving your reverence, a whoremaster, that I utterly deny. If sack and sugar be a fault, God help the wicked! if to be old and merry be a sin, then many an old host that I know is damned: if to be fat be to be hated, then Pharaoh’s lean kine are to be loved. No, my good lord; banish Peto, banish Bardolph, banish Poins: but for sweet Jack Falstaff, kind Jack Falstaff, true Jack Falstaff, valiant Jack Falstaff, and therefore more valiant, being, as he is, old Jack Falstaff, banish not him thy Harry’s company, banish not him thy Harry’s company: banish plump Jack, and banish all the world.

(2.4.466-480)

Hal’s chilling reply is “I do, I will” (2.4.481), and the production halts as

Bardolph reports that a sheriff and his entourage are approaching. Falstaff demands that the performance continue, crying, "Play out the play: I have much to say in the behalf of that Falstaff" (2.4.484-485), maintaining his displaced defense. He will never get the opportunity, as the play never resumes.

Like Chaucer the Pilgrim, Falstaff is silenced amidst an artistic defense. Chaucer laments his own interruption:

"This may wel by rym doggerel," quod he [the Host].

"Why so?" quod I, "why wiltow lette me

Moore of my tale than another man,

Syn that it is the beste rym I kan?"

(B2, 2115-2118)

Chaucer the Pilgrim is eventually asked to tell something else: "Sire, at o word, thou shalt no lenger ryme. /.../ Or telle in prose somewhat, at the leeste" (B2, 2122-2124). Chaucer's stand-in is naïve and bumbling, both through his interactions with the other pilgrims and his attempt at a tale.²² Falstaff, though instilled with wit, suffers from a similar plight, since no one will take him seriously as he attempts to defend his position through art. While we do hear defensive soliloquies from him, he never attempts to reassert his value in Hal's presence. Rather, Falstaff is prone to introspection and self-justification. The only defense for both stand-ins is, ironically, through art, and both are interrupted amidst their critiquing.

Aside from Chaucer's literary self-defense, the lampooned chivalric elements in *Sir Thopas* importantly link with Falstaff. As with some of his other tales, Chaucer satirizes the chivalric and romance traditions through the Thopas character. Larry Benson suggests that beyond the clear literary satire, Chaucer may have been satirizing Thopas's behavior as a "would-be gentleman, who works just a bit too hard at observing the proper forms of romance knighthood."²³ Aside from his pretentiousness, Thopas is not a particularly chivalrous or skilled knight. For example, he neglects to bring his armor while afield, and after encountering a giant, Thopas boasts,

Tomorwe wol I meete with thee,

Whan I have myn armoure;

And yet I hope, *par ma fay*,

That thou shalt with this lancegay

Abyen it ful sowre.

(B2, 2007-2012)

The giant throws stones at Thopas, who retreats but never returns. Though he goes through the general motions of chivalry, Sir Thopas never really follows them through. He seems more caught up in the pomp than in the practice.

Falstaff himself is a poor-behaving gentleman, and as such, serves a similar

purpose to both Chaucer the Pilgrim and Sir Thopas. Marjorie Garber points out the parallel Shakespeare sets up between the lower class characters and the antics of the nobility: “The Gads Hill caper is another version of Hotspur’s rebellion, another kind of anarchy and robbery; both are the result of the failed kingship of Henry IV and his usurpation of the throne.”²⁴ Harold Goddard observes a similar nuance:

The hypocrite has always been a favorite subject of satire. Henry IV is one of the most subtly drawn and effective hypocrites in literature, in no small measure because the author keeps his portrayal free of any satirical note. But not of any ironical note.²⁵

Thus Shakespeare, like Chaucer, avoids direct satire, and instead operates using characters either easily dismissed for their vices or confirmed by their limited virtue. Even Falstaff himself is an example of how badly a noble can behave and still retain his station. In his own defense, Falstaff pays homage to this particular strategy, considering the royal target involved. While he is never shy about bantering with Hal, Falstaff’s only genuine defense comes in the form of his thinly veiled performance. As is likely the case with his “bullshitting” session prior to the mini-play’s performance, one wonders to what extent Falstaff expects his audience to ignore his embedded messages—the knight’s depiction of his own character is comically exaggerated. Chaucer, on the other hand, overstates his mask’s ineptitude, far enough so that his audience will understand the joke: The author of *The Canterbury Tales* is a skilled poet (unless we believe his earlier assertion about telling the tales as accurately as he heard them), and yet his own tale is interrupted for being sub-par. Shakespeare creates a similar literary habitat for Falstaff, but the knight is never allowed to completely reconcile his clown persona with his inventive one. All of the accoutrements of a poor production are present, and Falstaff’s performance is interrupted, yet the audience understands that Shakespeare is a skillful playwright, and in a self-reflexive manner presents a simultaneously skilled and bumbling Falstaff as a kind of mirror not just to Chaucer’s own foolish caricature, but to the author himself. To a degree, Shakespeare wears this dual-faced mask—one for Falstaff the clown, the other for Falstaff as the creator within it.

Falstaff’s theatricality is significant not just in terms of how Shakespeare identifies with him as a performer and author—he is, at least in part, a caricature bred of Shakespeare’s artistic response to Chaucer the Pilgrim. Shakespeare instills part of Chaucer’s methodology and physicality in Falstaff. In the prologue to *Sir Thopas*, the Host says of Chaucer, “He in the waast is shape as wel as I” (B2, 1890), indicating that both are overweight. The most revealing self-references come from some of Chaucer’s other poems. In *Leuoy De Chaucer a Scogan*, the poet suggests that he is “hoor and rounde of shap” (31),²⁶ or old and fat. Gross notes that since Scogan was only thirty years old at the time, Chaucer must be referring to himself (1087).²⁷ In *House of Fame*, the giant eagle complains that “Geffrey” is “noyous for to carye” (574).²⁸ Finally, in *Merciles Beaute*, Chaucer puns, “Sin I fro Love escaped am so fat” (27).²⁹ Falstaff, one of Shakespeare’s best-loved characters, is legendary for his rotundity, and Bardolph confirms this notion: “Why, you are so fat, Sir

John, that you must needs be out of all compass, out of all reasonable compass, Sir John” (3.2.21-23). Apart from their shared girth, old age also figures prominently in Chaucer’s and Falstaff’s character portraits. In the first *Henry IV* play, Prince Hal, while aping his own father, refers to Falstaff as “that old white-bearded Sathan” (2.4.463). Furthermore, Falstaff describes himself as a meddler, an “apple-john” (3.3.4). We can assume a similar depiction of Chaucer the Pilgrim, as he bustles about the company at the tavern, learning about his fellow travelers on the evening of the pilgrimage.

Perhaps due to their social natures, both characters consort with dubious individuals and nobles alike, crossing class boundaries in the associations that they keep. “Company, villanous company, hath been the spoil of me” (3.3.9-10), laments Falstaff, though the audience may find his remark ironic. Chaucer’s busybody interactions with the vile Summoner, whom he describes “As hoot he was and lecherous as a sparwe, / With scalled browes blake and piled berd, / Of his visage children were aferd” (A 626-628), seem contradictory in nature. The pilgrim concludes that the Summoner is ultimately “a gentil harlot and a kynde; / A better felawe sholde men noght fynde” (A 647-648), despite his sinister behavior. Whilst drunk, the Summoner “Thanne wolde he speke no word but Latyn” (A 638), and not very well, for “A fewe termes hadde he, two or thre, / That he had lerned out of som decree” (A 639-640), seeming like a nastier version of Pistol. Chaucer is grouped in the General Prologue with questionable company: “There was also a Reve, and a Millere, / A Somnour, and a Pardoner also, / A Maunciple, and myself—ther were namo” (A 542-544), perhaps paralleling, and possibly accounting for, Falstaff’s own seedy associates.

Reputation may be at least partially at stake for Shakespeare in his self-conception via Falstaff. Though Falstaff is verbose, witty, and has a penchant for entertainment and productions, his audience seems largely low-born at this point in his life, save for Hal. According to what he would have us believe in his soliloquy against Shallow being a liar in *Henry IV, Part Two*, Falstaff was familiar enough with John of Gaunt to pun on the elder Lancaster’s name, albeit at the expense of Shallow: “I saw [Shallow getting beaten], and told John a’ Gaunt he beat his own name, for you might have thrust him and all his apparel into an eel-skin” (3.2.324-325).³⁰ Chaucer also puns on Gaunt’s name in *The Book of the Duchess*: “A long castel with walles white” (1318), referring to “Lancaster” and his wife Blanche.³¹ Shakespeare makes a similar “castle” pun in *Henry IV, Part One* when Hal calls Falstaff “my old lad of the castle” (1.2.41-42), a reference to Sir John Oldcastle.³² Regardless of his station, Shakespeare’s involvement with the theater and its professionals was likely perceived as a lowbrow cultural pursuit. In his sonnets, Shakespeare disparages his own profession: “Alas, ‘tis true, I have gone here and there, / And made myself a motley to the view, / Gor’d mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is most dear (110.1-3).

There are further significant links between Falstaff’s and Chaucer’s associations. One is literary, as Falstaff invokes a character from *The Nun’s Priest’s Tale* in the context of complaining about his company. After he discovers that his

pocket has been picked, Falstaff sends the Hostess out to find the culprit. When she returns, he calls out to her, “How now, Dame Partlet the hen? Have you inquir’d yet who pick’d my pocket?” (3.3.52-53). The footnote to the *Riverside* edition simply states “traditional name for a hen,” alluding to Falstaff’s mockery of the Hostess’s “agitation and flutter,”³³ but McNeal recognizes its Chaucerian origin³⁴: Falstaff’s gibe is not so much a barnyard reference as a literary one. Chauntecleer, the noble rooster in *The Nun’s Priest’s Tale*, is infatuated with one of his seven wives, “Of whiche the fairest hewed on hir throte / Was cleped damoysele Pertelote” (B2, 4059-4060).³⁵ Chauntecleer has a disturbing dream about being eaten by a Fox, and Pertelote dismisses his concerns outright, despite the Rooster’s educated insistence of its significance.³⁶ The Hostess replies indignantly to Falstaff’s own concerns, and repeats “Sir John” in a nagging fashion no fewer than seven times in her next thirteen lines of dialogue (54-72). Significantly, in the prologue to *The Nun’s Priest’s Tale*, the Host refers to the nun’s priest as “sir John” (B2, 2810). Furthermore, in the same manner that Chaucer’s Pertelote denies Chauntecleer’s dream-visions, the Hostess rejects Falstaff’s accusations of thievery:

Why, Sir John, what do you think, Sir John? Do you think I keep thieves in my house? I have search’d, I have inquir’d, so has my husband, man by man, boy by boy, servant by servant. The tithe of a hair was never lost in my house before.
(3.3.54-58)

Essentially, Falstaff’s invocation of this particular reference from Chaucer serves to highlight his unjust treatment on the part of the Hostess—she dismisses his plight out of hand, like Pertelote. Ultimately, Chaucer’s Pertelote proves incorrect, and Chauntecleer is temporarily captured by a fox, though he is able to save himself using his wit. Thus, while Falstaff suggests that he is being henpecked, identifying with Chauntecleer’s plight, his reference also indicates that he is fond of the Hostess: “He loved hire so that wel was hym therwith” (B2, 4066).

Falstaff’s self-identification with Chauntecleer may also serve to explain his behavior toward his other Eastcheap companions. Benson describes Chaucer’s Chauntecleer as “learned as well as courtly,”³⁷ certainly first amongst the other chickens. While Falstaff’s mannerisms surely are not the courtly ideal, his parallel context must be considered. Chauntecleer is noble, wonderful to listen to, and first amongst the chickens, but he is still a chicken. By the same token Falstaff exhibits great wit and intelligence, and is enjoyable to listen to and be around. Harold Goddard points to Falstaff’s irresistible allure as a companion, noting Bardolph’s lament at the fat knight’s death in *Henry V*: “Would I were with him, wheresome’er he is, either in heaven or in hell” (2.3.7-8).³⁸ However, if the mock-heroic parallel can be carried through to Falstaff, his physicality seems to precede any virtue, just as Chauntecleer’s precludes the Rooster from being noble. While he may well be first among the rogues at Eastcheap, Falstaff still projects the image of a failed noble,

a testament to both the shortcomings of the chivalric system and the potential consequences of abusing it. Yet, on the other hand, are the values of Falstaff and Chauntecleer diminished *a priori* due to their natures? Chauntecleer is a chicken, and Falstaff is fat, but their virtues are both independent of, and corroborate with, their vices; they praiseworthy when they deserve it and mocked for the same, yet never once should either character's shortcomings overpower his virtues. The same applies for the reverse. Falstaff could hardly provide piercing social commentary, or even just fun, if he were a conformist.

In the Nun's Priest's mock heroic form, the audience should be tempted to overlook any uncomfortable parallels that the animals share with humans. Larry Benson notes that "Chaucer delicately maintains the balance between the two, combining the elements of courtly discourse with occasional sharp reminders that the characters are, after all, only chickens."³⁹ However, Chaucer embeds a literary safety valve in the form of the mock-heroic. If his motives are questioned by noble patrons, the poet can simply default to Benson's assumption in his own defense. Falstaff serves a similar purpose. Should his subversion turn too many heads, the author can simply default to the position that "it is just Falstaff and his companions, after all." Garber notes the parallels between the interactions of the Boar's Head ruffians and Henry's own court, pointing specifically to Falstaff's tale-telling after the Gadshill incident and its subsequent mock theatrical performance:

Henry IV does, in a way, "counterfeit" the person of a king ("person" in this sense is nicely related to *persona*, or mask, as well as to "body"). Falstaff's imaginary men in buckram are the "low" and comic counterparts of the many men marching in the King's coats, and Falstaff's lie is in a way no more a lie than Henry's claim to the crown. Men in costume are men in costume, whether they are encountered in the tavern, on the highway, on the battlefield, or, indeed, on the stage.⁴⁰

For Chaucer, the form of the mock-heroic in *The Nun's Priest's Tale* is manifested, and masked, in barn animals. Again, perhaps beyond coincidence, "Chauntecleer" is an anagrammatic amplification of "Chaucer." Shakespeare's audience, depending on its familiarity with *The Canterbury Tales*, may well have made this association, at least subliminally. In any case, for Shakespeare, the lower class characters and Falstaff as their leader mirror the main action and actual concerns of the nobles. They are operating as Shakespeare's barnyard animals.

As a writer, Chaucer had to exercise great caution when embedding any critiques in his works. Patronized by John of Gaunt and Richard II, Chaucer's political connections were strong, and he depended on them for his sustenance, as evidenced in his appeal to Henry IV in *The Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse*. *The Canterbury Tales* depicts members of the clergy, nobility, middle class, and peasantry at varying moral gradations, ranging from the commendable clerk to the vile friar. His own caricature, Chaucer the Pilgrim, allows the poet to move among his characters in such a way that we get to know them almost as well as Chaucer the

Poet does. The Pilgrim is impressed, perhaps for all of the wrong reasons, with many of his company, and his often flattering descriptions are questionably praiseworthy, aimed at careful readers. For example, when the Monk decries the Benedictine Rule, declaring it “nat worth an oystre” (A 182), the Pilgrim reports, “And I seyde his opinion was good” (A 184), going on to explain that it is foolish to go mad with study. However, the monk is an “outridere” (A 166), and an owner of greyhounds—he does not go mad with study, but does not study at all. The Pilgrim is impressed with the Monk, who is not very impressive *as* a monk. Chaucer’s pilgrim mask partially obscures his poetic countenance, but not completely. For Chaucer’s message to take hold, he could not have utterly subsumed his own identity in his pilgrim.

Falstaff presents a similar problem, though his conception is more complex in many respects. Not only is Shakespeare using Falstaff—the entertainer, tale-teller, and faux theater performer—as a mask, but he is fashioning that mask in the likeness of Chaucer. In *Henry IV, Part One* there is mainly circumstantial evidence, though very compelling, suggesting such a link. The Gadshill caper, Falstaff’s philosophical motives in connection with *Sir Thopas* and his identification with Chauntecleer from *The Nun’s Priest’s Tale*, physical characteristics, and the similarity in company that they keep seem, at least subliminally, to connect Falstaff and Chaucer the Pilgrim. On their own, these thematic instances point toward a Shakespearean mindfulness of Chaucer, situated in the poet’s own historical context. In *Henry IV, Part One*, Shakespeare’s use of Chaucer could have been relatively self-contained, especially as it seems to draw primarily on themes from *The Canterbury Tales*.

However, Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* are not the only works that connect in some meaningful manner with Falstaff. The fat knight expands his Chaucerian invocations to some of the poet’s other works, and incorporates them so as to indicate a direct connection between the two. For example, In *Henry IV, Part Two*, Falstaff laments his financial situation after the Chief Justice refuses him a loan:

I can get no remedy of this consumption of the purse; borrowing only lingers and lingers it out, but the disease is incurable....’Tis no matter if I do halt; I have the wars for my color, and my pension shall seem the more reasonable. A good wit will make use of anything. I will turn diseases to commodity.
(1.2.235-237, 244-248)

Falstaff’s woes significantly echo *The Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse*, both in tone and intention. Chaucer, in his last known piece of writing, levels his own appeal to Henry IV, pleading “Have mynde upon my supplicacioun” (26)⁴¹ to the King directly. Falstaff commands his page, “Go bear this letter to my lord of Lancaster, this to the Prince, this to the Earl of Westmorland” (1.2.237-239), seeking similar aid from noble company. He likens his money troubles to a terminal illness, staved off only for a short while.

Chaucer’s gravity concerning his “supplicacioun” shares Falstaff’s tone. Chaucer was reliant on his government pensions, as were all civil servants. In 1390

he was robbed by highwaymen at “le Foule Oke” in a forest near Kent, “a short way from London in the direction of Canterbury,”⁴² though inconsistencies in the record blur whether he was robbed once or three times, possibly also in Surrey.⁴³ Crow and Leland assert that the records unanimously affirm that Chaucer was blameless and those responsible were punished,⁴⁴ but he may have lost up to twenty pounds of the King’s money and his own. After Henry deposed Richard II, Chaucer’s previous royal annuities were apparently renewed, plus an additional forty marks a year for life, though Crow and Leland note that Chaucer’s *Complaint* “suggests that the grants approved by the new king had not yet been paid.”⁴⁵ Like Falstaff, Chaucer attempts to turn his misfortune into something profitable.

Shakespeare understands Chaucer’s treatment of his financial woes, and uses “disease” in a complex metaphorical sense. Though Chaucer describes his purse as a lady, she has “been lyght” (3). Falstaff’s wordplay with disease extends our understanding of “lyght” to consumption, and since Chaucer’s financial woes endanger his life, the disease metaphor seems applicable to the poet. Regardless of Chaucer’s attitude toward his lady’s sickness, he pleads, “Beth hevy ageyn, or elles moot I dye” (14). Thus, Chaucer’s money troubles could be seen as a terminal illness unless they are treated. Chaucer and Falstaff enact supplication—which will hopefully lead to healing—through writing.

This relationship between disease and commodity, commodity and writing, is reinforced when the Page reports, upon Falstaff’s request, a physician’s opinion of the fat knight’s health based on a urine sample: “He said, sir, the water itself was a good healthy water, but for the party that ow’d it, he might have moe diseases than he knew for” (1.2.3-5). Falstaff retorts, “I am not only witty in myself, but the cause that wit is in other men” (1.2.9-10). Falstaff’s disease—his wit—is also the source of his authorial impetus. Falstaff shares this disease with Chaucer and Shakespeare, in their characters and livelihoods. Authors are indeed sources of wit in others, and Falstaff’s remark may be serving as a double entendre, a signal that we should see Falstaff as a kind of artist.

Aside from his connections to Chaucer’s poetry, Shakespeare also incorporates elements of significant biographical information. He quixotically connects Falstaff to some of Chaucer’s acquaintances via Master Shallow, who apparently knew Falstaff as a youth. Though the fat knight warns us of Shallow’s liberal exaggerations, “how subject we old men are to this vice of lying” (3.2.304), Shakespeare provides us with some insight into Falstaff’s company as a youth. Notably, he seems familiar with John of Gaunt, Chaucer’s great patron and brother-in-law. Though Shallow pretends, as Falstaff puts it, to have “been a sworn brother to him” (3.2.321), as Chaucer was, Falstaff himself seems to have been more familiar:

I’ll be sworn ‘a [Shallow] ne’er saw him [John of Gaunt] in the Tilt-yard, and then he burst his head for crowding among the marshal’s men. I saw it, and told John a’ Gaunt he beat his own name, for you might have thrust him and all his apparel into an eel-skin. (3.2.321-326)

Falstaff's wordplay with the meaning of "gaunt" does not simply suggest a familiarity between the two, but more significantly points to Falstaff's previous reference to commodity. As noted, Falstaff is convinced that his wit is his saving grace financially. It is not unreasonable to conclude that Falstaff, like Chaucer, was patronized (or tolerated) by John of Gaunt for his wit.

In conjunction with his pronouncements on knowing John of Gaunt, Shallow mentions an incident between Falstaff and a man named Scoggin: "I see him break Scoggin's head at the court-gate, when 'a was a crack not thus high" (3.2.29-30). The footnote to the *Riverside* edition reads "Shakespeare was perhaps thinking of John Scogan, the court jester to Edward IV and hero of a jestbook popular in the later sixteenth century,"⁴⁶ a sentiment echoed by S.B. Hemingway.⁴⁷ However, according to McNeal, Shallow is most likely referring to Henry Scogan.⁴⁸ Laila Gross notes this Scogan as the likely recipient of Chaucer's *Lenvoy de Chaucer a Scogan*.⁴⁹ McNeal contends "that Shakspeare [sic] took the name *Skogan* from the poems relating to the man at the back of Speght's *Chaucer*—that we may now drop the court jester to Edward IV for good and all."⁵⁰ Scogan was the tutor of Henry IV's children, and he wrote a moral ballad for them that quotes the entirety of Chaucer's *Gentillesse*.⁵¹ Shallow's allusion to Falstaff's conflict with Scoggin, no matter how exaggerated, makes greater sense in the context of Chaucer's own work. In his envoy, Chaucer skewers Scogan for offending Venus:

But now so wepith Venus in hir spere
That with hir teeres she wol drenche us here.
Allas! Scogan, this is for thyn offence;
Thow causest this diluge of pestilence.

(11-14)

It makes sense that Falstaff would embattle himself with Scoggin over moral issues; by his nature, Falstaff challenges the boundaries of morality. Falstaff is, of course, better equipped for verbal sparring than a physical altercation.

Additionally, Falstaff's interactions with women suggest a telling parallel with Chaucer's own attitudes. Shakespeare may have derived this connection from Chaucer's apparently forced *The Legend of Good Women* in the Prologue by "Queen Alceste."⁵² As Shaner and Edwards explain, any allegorical connection between Chaucer's life and his prologue is a matter of debate.⁵³ Regardless, Chaucer's poetry is ambivalent toward women: *Troilus and Criseyde*, *Against Women Unconstant*, and *The Complaint of Mars* are particularly notable examples. Falstaff suffers from a similar predicament. After his death, the boy reports of Falstaff, "A said once, the dev'l would have him about women" (*Henry V* 2.3.35-36), and that they are "dev'ls incarnate" (31-32).⁵⁴ This may indeed reflect Chaucer's own equivocation about women, as projected in several of his works. Though Chaucer may well have only loosely allegorized or even fabricated the conversation with Queen Alceste from *The Legend of Good Women's* prologue, Shakespeare may nonetheless have incorporated this aspect of Chaucer's mask into Falstaff.

Despite their poetic affinities, it seems at first that Chaucer and Falstaff

share little in common biographically. A character sketch of Falstaff reveals that he is essentially an aristocrat in his own right, though his specific titles are in question. He is frequently referred to as “Sir John,” and we see him (somewhat) engaged in combat and responsible for rallying troops. Chaucer, on the other hand, was a civil servant, whose role was primarily of the administrative middle class, though he was closely connected to the court and relied on the patronage of nobles. Donaldson, however, cautions us against assuming that Chaucer the pilgrim, Chaucer the poet, and Chaucer the man were the same person:

The fact that these are three separate entities does not, naturally, exclude the probability—or rather the certainty—that they bore a close resemblance to one another, and that, indeed, they frequently got together in the same body. But that does not excuse us from keeping them distinct from one another, difficult as their close resemblance makes our task.⁵⁵

Judging by Shakespeare’s use of his own masks, he is just as perceptive a Chaucer critic as Donaldson. While Loomis objects, “But Shakespeare wears no mask; he is not there at all,”⁵⁶ her assertion is somewhat mitigated by the fact that Chaucer is never specifically named in the tales except in the prologue to *The Man of Law’s Tale* (B1, 47),⁵⁷ and even then his name is never connected specifically to the narrator. Donaldson even identifies this chronicler as “presumably someone called Geoffrey,”⁵⁸ yet critical consensus identifies Chaucer as the narrator: rightly so, as “Geoffrey” is named in other works, such as *House of Fame*. It is entirely plausible that Shakespeare learned how to mask himself from Chaucer’s example, especially considering that his masks are closely associated with Chaucerian references.⁵⁹ Falstaff, therefore, seems a likely mask for Shakespeare, even coded in the syllables of their names in the form of “Fal-staff” and “Shake-speare,”⁶⁰ and a locus for his identification as a masked author vis-à-vis Chaucer.

So both Chaucer and Shakespeare are represented in the Henriad, though perhaps in the same massive body: Shakespeare’s mask with a Chaucerian face. Goddard acknowledges that the complexity of Falstaff’s character leads to a potentially dualistic interpretation of his behavior:

Which is he? A colossus of sack, sensuality, and sweat—or a wit and humorist so great that he can be compared only with his creator, a figure... livelier than life? One might think there were two Falstaffs.⁶¹

Furthermore, Goddard argues that this complexity may account for Falstaff’s girth,⁶² suggesting that Shakespeare implies that more than one Falstaff could inhabit the same body.

Why would Shakespeare invest so much of Chaucer, the greatest English poet that preceded him, into the problematic Falstaff? On one hand, Chaucer the pilgrim keeps questionable company himself, interacting with even the vilest members of the Canterbury pilgrimage. Benson notes, “Perhaps Chaucer the

pilgrim—cheerful, tolerant, but no fool—is closer than has been thought to Chaucer the man, who may even have relished an occasional rascal,” though the character is deeply complex and avoids simple characterizations.⁶³ Chaucer the pilgrim, on the other hand, may not have simply relished rascals: He may have been one. He interacts with everyone, crossing class boundaries just as Falstaff does.

Despite the compelling links between Falstaff and Chaucer’s mask, the fat knight’s rejection scene at the end of *Henry IV, Part Two* throws a disturbing pall over their connection. It must be noted that Falstaff’s caricature, if indeed inspired by Chaucer’s self-conception, must be distinguished from Chaucer the poet. There is no way of knowing the full extent of Shakespeare’s familiarity with Chaucer’s biography—the only records of Shakespeare’s sources are alluded to in the plays themselves. Unfortunately, that means there is no way to gauge whether Shakespeare distinguished between Chaucer’s mask in his poetry and the man himself. Donaldson, however, cautions against assuming that Shakespeare’s understanding of Chaucer was limited: “Shakespeare himself provides the final indication of the way Shakespeare read Chaucer, and that way is with full appreciation of his complexity.”⁶⁴ Thus, Shakespeare himself is a Chaucerian, concerned with the complexities of the poet’s meaning, but also incorporates that concern into his own art.

Falstaff is a locus where Chaucer and Shakespeare interact, where their masks meet. If an understanding of Falstaff is extended to his representation as this locus, Chaucer’s retraction and the rejection scene are inextricably linked with Shakespeare’s treatment of Sir John. When an ecstatic Falstaff rushes in to see his friend’s coronation, the moment is “one of the most devastating in any of Shakespeare’s plays.”⁶⁵ Hal, now Henry V, proclaims, “I know thee not, old man” (5.5.47). If Chaucer the pilgrim can appropriately be read as a component of Falstaff, he too has been rejected as an otherworldly literary relic, a Munchausen, a “defaute of myn unkonnyng” (*Retraction* 1, 1082)⁶⁶ in Chaucer’s words. Chaucer the Pilgrim is subsumed as one of many “translacions and editynges of worldly vanitees, the whiche I revoke in my retracciouns” (I 1085). The England of *Henry IV, Part Two* is “drooping” (I.i.3). Richard’s regime, which apparently valued literacy and learning, and, significantly, Chaucer, is replaced with the rule of the Henrys:

One way of mapping the decline is to notice how much of this play is written in prose. Almost every scene in verse is followed immediately by a longer one in prose, full of topical humor, bawdy puns, sexual innuendo and braggadocio, and endless discussions of how much things cost. The prose world is swallowing up the world of poetry....⁶⁷

Though it seems that Falstaff is no poet (neither is Chaucer the pilgrim, really), his wit carries him far, until he is silenced at the end, unable to respond to his own banishment, or to sufficiently employ his bullshitting skills on the now angry Shallow. Falstaff’s theatrics, his words, have ceased, and despite the play’s epilogue, we never see him again. Harold Bloom gravely suggests “The greatest of all fictive wits dies the death of a rejected father-substitute, and also of a dishonored

mentor.”⁶⁸ Chaucer’s world, as Garber puts it, is being swallowed by prose. Though the new King tells Falstaff to “Leave gormandizing” (5.5.52), Goddard notes Henry “turns to his attempt to swallow France.”⁶⁹ This consumption language survives in *Henry V*. Exeter delivers Henry’s message to the King of France, insisting,

Deliver up the crown, and to take mercy
On the poor souls for whom this hungry war
Opens his vasty jaws; and on your head,
Turning the widows’ tears, the orphans’ cries,
The dead men’s blood, the privy maidens’ groans,
For husbands, fathers, and betrothed lovers,
That shall be swallow’d in this controversy.
(2.4.104-109)

Significantly, Chaucer the pilgrim is swallowed by Chaucer the poet’s retraction. Historically, Chaucer the man also quickly fades from the record.

The relationship between Chaucer, Falstaff, and Shakespeare is complex and tangled. While we can speculate that Shakespeare feared, or felt, rejection in his own artistic circle, and incorporated Chaucer’s own self-rejection, there is no positive biographical source to draw upon. However, if we view Falstaff as Shakespeare’s mask, representative of his response to Chaucer’s *persona*, more than a modicum of anxiety simmers in the last act of Falstaff’s final play. Even the knight’s reported death scene is suggestive of Chaucerian themes:

‘A parted ev’n just between twelve and one, ev’n at the turning o’ th’ tide;
for after I saw him fumble with the sheets, and play with flowers, and smile
upon his finger’s end, I knew there was but one way; for his nose was as
sharp as a pen, and ‘a babbl’d o’ green fields.
(*Henry V*, 2.3.12-17)

This depiction seems to match Donaldson’s perception of Chaucer’s “outmoded” popular conceptualization as a “wide-eyed, jolly, roly-poly little man who, on fine Spring mornings, used to get up early...and go look at daisies.”⁷⁰ Falstaff himself was, and still is, one of Shakespeare’s most beloved conceptions. Is Shakespeare, like Chaucer, retracting the fat knight, anticipating the problems he will cause in *Henry V*?

Falstaff’s death is more significant than a convenient killing-off. During the battle of Agincourt, Fluellen points out several superficial similarities between Alexander the Great and King Henry. But among the facile references to rivers and places starting with the letter *M*, Fluellen and Gower argue over comparisons on how Alexander and Henry treated their closest friends. Fluellen insists Alexander “did in his ales and his angers, look you, kill his best friend, Clytus” (4.7.37-39). Gower protests that their king “never kill’d any of his friends” (4.7.41), but Fluellen

Hughes - Chaucer Lost and Found 100

makes a chilling retort:

as Alexander kill'd his friend Clytus, being in his ales and his cups; so also Harry Monmouth, being in his right wits and his good judgments, turn'd away the fat knight with the great belly doublet. He was full of jests, and gipes, and knaveries, and mocks—I have forgot his name.

(4.7.44-50)

Even so late in the play, Falstaff's rejection haunts Henry's motives. This additional acknowledgment of Henry's responsibility for Falstaff's death, according to Goddard, is "Shakespeare's last judgment on the rejection of Falstaff."⁷¹ Goddard contends that this moment, and Henry's entrance immediately following where he declares he was never angry "Until this instant" (4.7.56), doubly confirms that the king's behavior has been calculated and ruthless.⁷² So Falstaff is a public sacrifice to Hal's own performance apotheosis, which he announces at the beginning of *Henry IV, Part One*:

And like bright metal on a sullen ground,
My reformation, glitt'ring o'er my fault,
Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes
Than that which hath no foil to set it off.
I'll so offend, to make offense a skill,
Redeeming time when men think least I will.

(1.2.212-217)

In some respects, Falstaff sowed the seeds of his own destruction. Hal was an excellent understudy to Falstaff's theatrics, but the future king's aims in his methods were distinct from his mentor's. For all of his faults, Falstaff is generally a fun-loving reprobate, and the audience has to wonder, at least on some level, why it is better off with a man who swallows countries instead of sack. But if Falstaff is a sacrifice to Henry's rise, what are we losing? What aspect of Falstaff's rejection is Shakespeare casting judgment on?

Regarding his portrayal of Falstaff in his film *Chimes at Midnight*, Orson Welles commented:

[T]he film was not intended as a lament for Falstaff, but for the death of Merrie England. Merrie England as a conception, a myth which has been very real to the English-speaking world, and is to some extent expressed in other countries of the Medieval epoch: the age of chivalry, of simplicity, of Maytime and all that. It is more than Falstaff who is dying. It's the old England dying and betrayed.⁷³

While Welles' notion of "Merrie England" is anachronistic to Shakespeare, considering Chaucer's echoes in Falstaff's character, the playwright might well be on

the same relative track as Welles. Nostalgia aside, Shakespeare's sensitivity to the late 13th and early 14th centuries would necessarily contrast Chaucer's presence and subsequent disappearance. Though far from idyllic, Richard II's reign maintained a living "father of English poetry." Henry IV's rule signaled a drastic change and long following period of strife, during which Chaucer was almost entirely absent. His disappearance parallels Falstaff's in *Henry V*, and one cannot help wondering if Chaucer was also regarded as too subversive to further comment on current affairs, as Terry Jones suggests in *Who Murdered Chaucer?*

Significantly, Falstaff is related to another famous subversive disturber and corrupter. A number of critics have noted parallels between Falstaff's reported death scene in *Henry V* and Plato's telling of the death of Socrates.⁷⁴ Paul M. Cubeta points out that the Hostess, who has had a troubled relationship with Falstaff in the past, provides a "Christian charity starkly missing in Falstaff's monarch" in her comforting of the knight in his final moments.⁷⁵ Further,

Her ministrations may also be reminiscent of those of Socrates' friends at the onset of the death of their companion, condemned as another alleged villainous, abominable misleader of youth and a threat to the established political order.... (181)

Cubeta notes that the Hostess's telling of Falstaff's death—"I put my hand into the bed and felt them, and they were as cold as any stone; then I felt to his knees, and so up'ard and up'ard, and all was as cold as any stone" (2.3.23-26)—perhaps recalls Thomas More's own recollection of Plato's account in the *Phaedo* in his "Remembrance of Death" from *Four Last Things*: "lying in thy bedde...thy nose sharpening, thy legges coling, thy fingers fimbiling...all thy strength fainting...and thy death drawyng on."^{76,77} Shakespeare adopts a decidedly English interpretation of Socrates's death, and even transposes "Arthur" for "Abraham" (2.3.9-10), which Garber contends as "a splendidly 'English' malapropism for the biblical phrase 'in Abraham's bosom' (Luke 16:22)."⁷⁸ It is uncertain whether Shakespeare would have associated Chaucer with a corrupter of youth, but the parallels between Falstaff, Chaucer, and Socrates do not strain credulity, given their close provenience. In any case, barring any specific link between Chaucer and Socrates, both Falstaff and the philosopher are rejected teachers. While their methods may be to some extent outdated or outmoded, something culturally tangible is indeed being lost in this exchange of lives for power. It seems that all three—Falstaff, Chaucer, and Socrates—leave us when *we* would least want them to, but when it is most convenient for their respective potentates.

While it is tempting to jump to a specific "point" in Shakespeare's use of Falstaff as a Chaucerian-fashioned mask, the bard may not have reached any definitive conclusion himself, as to either Falstaff or Chaucer. Though not above borrowing some narrative elements from his exemplars, Shakespeare does not so much emulate Chaucer's work as he reacts to it. This trend could indicate that Shakespeare attempted to come to terms with his understanding of Chaucer, rather

than simply incorporating convenient plot devices and showing off his breadth of reading. Just as Chaucer retracts what we regard as his best work, Shakespeare allows Falstaff to be rejected. But the lesson is embedded in those rejections. The audience is responsible for giving meaning to the loss of Chaucer and the loss of Falstaff. It is entirely possible that Shakespeare feared his own eventual rejection, that he might be filtering the anxieties of authorial reputation and his legacy as a writer through his understanding and perception of England's greatest poet. Nevertheless, the audience must reconcile the likes of Falstaff, who is reflective of both the best and worst of both worlds in terms of wit and reputation. The same applies to readers of Chaucer. Can we actually divorce Falstaff and *The Canterbury Tales* from their respective vices? It seems impossible to understand or experience their virtues without considering what these vices imply. How could Chaucer lampoon medieval social norms without his flawed pilgrims? How could Shakespeare address the complexities of honor without Falstaff? As Donaldson suggests, "although others may find what they do reprehensible, they find their occupations fully justified because they are *their* occupations, and they find them congenial."⁷⁹ Whatever good exists in a character like Falstaff must be sought in the entire scope of his behaviors, not just individual qualities. These virtues and vices are not unharmonious in the least. Thus, there is no dissonance in Shakespeare's appreciation of Chaucer, though there may well be in his reckoning of Chaucer's self-conception as an author, who just happens to be a living part amidst a greater cast of characters.

Endnotes

- ¹ E. Talbot Donaldson and Judith J. Kollmann, eds. *Chaucerian Shakespeare: Adaptation and Transformation*. Medieval and Renaissance Monograph Series II (Detroit: Michigan Consortium for Medieval and Early Modern Studies, 1983), 1.
- ² Thomas H. McNeal. "Henry IV, Parts I and II, and Speght's First Edition of Geoffrey Chaucer," *The Shakespeare Association Bulletin* 21.2 (April 1946), 87.
- ³ Laila Z. Gross. "The Short Poems." *The Riverside Chaucer*. ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1987), 636.
- ⁴ Dorothy Bethurum Loomis. "Chaucer and Shakespeare," *Chaucer's Mind and Art*. ed. A.C. Cawley (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1969), 169-170.
- ⁵ Donaldson, *Chaucerian Shakespeare* 5.
- ⁶ See also Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1998), 274.
- ⁷ Bloom, 272.
- ⁸ E. Talbot Donaldson, *The Swan at the Well* (London: Yale University Press, 1985), 131.
- ⁹ Donaldson, *The Swan at the Well* 130.
- ¹⁰ Michael Delahoyde is responsible for this observation (and many others). For a more complete discussion of Chaucer's lyrical influence on Shakespeare, see Delahoyde's "Lyric Poetry from Chaucer to Shakespeare," *Brief Chronicles V* (2014): 69-100.
- ¹¹ All quotations of the canonical play are taken from *The Tragedy of King Richard the Second* in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1997), 847-883.
- ¹² Terry Jones and Robert Yeager, Alan Fletcher, Juliette Dor, Terry Dolan. *Who Murdered Chaucer?: A Medieval Mystery* (New York: St. Martin's, 2004), 63-68.
- ¹³ All quotations of the canonical poem are taken from *The Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse* in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1987), 656.
- ¹⁴ Benson, "Introduction," *The Riverside Chaucer*, xxv.
- ¹⁵ All quotations of the canonical play are taken from *The First Part of Henry the*

Fourth in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1997), 889-927.

¹⁶ McNeal, 89.

¹⁷ Loomis, 169.

¹⁸ All quotations of the canonical poem are taken from *The Canterbury Tales General Prologue* in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 23-36.

¹⁹ E. Talbot Donaldson, *Speaking of Chaucer* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1970), 2.

²⁰ All quotations of the canonical poem are taken from *The Prologue and Tale of Sir Thopas* in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 212-217.

²¹ Isaac Asimov, *Asimov's Guide to Shakespeare* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1970), 353-354.

²² Donaldson, *Speaking of Chaucer* 1-2.

²³ Benson, "The Canterbury Tales," *The Riverside Chaucer*, 1-22.

²⁴ Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare After All* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004), 316.

²⁵ Harold C. Goddard, *The Meaning of Shakespeare*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 162.

²⁶ All quotations of the canonical poem are taken from *Lenvoy De Chaucer A Scogan* in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 655.

²⁷ Laila Z. Gross, "The Short Poems," *The Riverside Chaucer*, 1087.

²⁸ All quotations of the canonical poem are taken from *The House of Fame* in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 348-373.

²⁹ All quotations of the canonical poem are taken from *Merciles Beaute* in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 659.

³⁰ All quotations of the canonical play are taken from *The Second Part of Henry the Fourth* in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2nd ed., 928-973.

³¹ Colin Wilcockson, Explanatory Notes to *The Book of the Duchess*, *The Riverside Chaucer*, 976.

³² Herschel Baker, "Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2: Explanatory notes," *The Riverside Shakespeare*. 2nd ed., 891.

³³ Baker, 911.

³⁴ McNeal, 89.

³⁵ All quotations of the canonical poem are taken from *The Nun's Priest's Prologue, Tale and Epilogue* in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 252-261.

³⁶ Benson, 18.

³⁷ Benson, 18.

³⁸ Goddard, 176.

³⁹ Benson, 18.

⁴⁰ Garber, 317.

⁴¹ All quotations of the canonical poem are taken from *The Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse* in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 656.

⁴² Martin M. Crow and Clair C. Olson, *Chaucer Life Records* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966), 477-489.

⁴³ Martin M. Crow and Virginia E. Leland. "Chaucer's Life," *The Riverside Chaucer*, xxv.

- 44 Crow and Leland, xxv.
- 45 Crow and Leland, xxv.
- 46 Baker, 946.
- 47 Quoted in McNeal, 91.
- 48 McNeal, 91.
- 49 Gross, 636.
- 50 McNeal, 92.
- 51 Gross, 636.
- 52 All quotations of the canonical poem are taken from *The Legend of Good Women* in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 588-630.
- 53 M.C.E. Shaner with A.S.G. Edwards, "Explanatory notes to the *Legend of Good Women*," *The Riverside Chaucer*, 1061.
- 54 All quotations of the canonical play are taken from *The Life of Henry the Fifth* in *The Riverside Shakespeare*. 2nd ed, 979-1021.
- 55 Donaldson, *Speaking of Chaucer* 1.
- 56 Loomis, 174.
- 57 All quotations of the canonical poem are taken from *The Man of Law's Introduction, Prologue, Tale, and Epilogue* in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 87-104.
- 58 Donaldson, *The Swan at the Well* 7.
- 59 My current manuscript project, built from my dissertation titled *Shakespeare's Chaucerian Entertainers*, focuses on a number of these characters.
- 60 Bloom, 273.
- 61 Goddard, 175.
- 62 Goddard, 176.
- 63 Benson, 6.
- 64 Donaldson, *The Swan at the Well* 2.
- 65 Garber, 357.
- 66 All quotations of the canonical poem are taken from *Chaucer's Retraction* in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 328.
- 67 Garber, 348.
- 68 Bloom, 272.
- 69 Goddard, 211.
- 70 Donaldson, *Speaking of Chaucer* 2.
- 71 Goddard, 249.
- 72 Goddard, 251.
- 73 Quoted in Bridget Gellert Lyons, *Chimes at Midnight* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 262.
- 74 Bloom, 292. Cf. Cubeta.
- 75 Paul M. Cubeta. "Falstaff and the Art of Dying," *Sir John Falstaff*, ed. Harold Bloom (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2004), 181.
- 76 Cubeta, 181.
- 77 All quotations are from the MS *The vvorkes of Sir Thomas More Knyght, sometyme Lorde Chauncellour of England, wrytten by him in the Englysh tonge*. Printed at London: At the costes and charges of Iohn Cawod, Iohn VValy, and Richarde

Hughes - Chaucer Lost and Found 106

Tottell, Anno. 1557. Copy from the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery. STC (2nd ed.) / 18076.


⁷⁸ Garber, 397.

⁷⁹ Donaldson, *The Swan at the Well*, 130.

A Midsummer Night's Dream: **Shakespeare's Aristophanic Comedy** **Earl Showerman**

“So far as native talent goes, there is no Greek dramatist that stands anywhere near Shakespeare, though Aristophanes suggests him.”¹

☞ John Jay Chapman, *Greek Genius and Other Essays* (1915)

wentieth century literary criticism rarely examined the possibility that Shakespeare was influenced by 5th-century (BCE) Greek dramas. The works of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes had been neither translated nor published in England in Shakespeare's lifetime,² hence the dearth of scholarship addressing the possible influence of Attic theater on the Elizabethan stage. In *Classical Mythology in Shakespeare* (1903), Robert Kilburn Root expressed the opinion on Shakespeare's "lesse Greek" that presaged a century of scholarly neglect,³ most recently echoed by A.D. Nuttal in "Action at a distance: Shakespeare and the Greeks":

That Shakespeare was cut off from Greek poetry and drama is probably a bleak truth that we should accept. A case can be made — and has been made — for Shakespeare's having some knowledge of certain Greek plays, such as Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Euripides' *Orestes*, *Alcestis*, and *Hecuba*, by way of available Latin versions, but this, surely, is an area in which the faint occasional echoes mean less than the circumambient silence. When we consider how hungrily Shakespeare feeds upon Ovid, learning from him, or extending him at every turn, it becomes more evident that he cannot in any serious sense have found his way to Euripides.⁴

Nevertheless, a few scholars have examined Greek tragedy and tragicomedy for their influence on a number of Shakespeare's plays. Renowned Greek scholar Gilbert Murray⁵ and Shakespeare scholars Jan Kott⁶ and Louise Schleiner⁷ have argued convincingly that Aeschylus's *Oresteia* influenced *Hamlet*.⁸ More recently, Jonathan Bate,⁹ Sarah Dewar-Watson¹⁰ and Claire McEachern¹¹ have all acknowledged that Euripides's tragicomedy *Alceste* is a direct source for the final scenes of both *The Winter's Tale* and *Much Ado about Nothing*.¹² George Stevens, J.A.K. Thompson, J. Churton Collins and Emrys Jones have argued that *Titus Andronicus* was indebted to Euripides's *Hecuba* and Sophocles's *Ajax*, while A.D. Nuttall himself has presented evidence of Sophocles's *Oedipus at Colonus* being remarkably similar to *Timon of Athens*.¹³ Inga Stina-Ewbank¹⁴ has recently proposed that Aeschylus's *Agamemnon* influenced *Macbeth*, and others have identified a variety of Greek dramatic elements in this dark tragedy.¹⁵

While commentaries on the influence of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides on Shakespeare are extant, the role of Aristophanes and Old Comedy in the development of Elizabethan theater has remained unacknowledged by virtually all scholars. In *The Growth and Structure of Elizabethan Comedy* (1955), Muriel Bradbrook summarizes the collective influences on Shakespearean comedy without reference to Aristophanes or to Old Comedy:

Needless to say, opinion has not been wanting that Shakespeare modeled himself on the Comedia dell'Arte, and that his work was precisely of this kind. He was confronted with the alternatives of Italian tradition, with all its prestige and its ready models, or the shapeless native popular play, in which material designed for narrative was struggling to accommodate itself to dramatic form. Each type had its own set of incidents and characters. For the first there was the Plautine tradition of mistakings and farce; for the second, a series of marvelous and inconsequent adventures, probably involving magic. The characters of the first kind were those descended from the Masks of ancient comedy, but modified by rhetorical 'Characters', and by medieval practice of character-drawing in debate and homily, sermon and moral play.¹⁶

In his chapter on "Classical Influence in Comedy" (1911), Tucker Brooke expressed the general opinion that has since prevailed regarding the singular importance of Roman comedy: "Greek drama was at the time much too little known to exert influence upon the popular or even in any appreciable measure upon the purely academic theatre."¹⁷ In *Shakespeare and the Traditions of Comedy* (1974), Leo Salinger devotes forty pages to describing and interpreting the comedies of Aristophanes and the themes of Greek Old Comedy, but ultimately echoes Brooke and Bradbrook by never suggesting that they were direct sources: "Athenian Old Comedy had been a political celebration, Roman comedy, a festive entertainment. The achievement of the Italians in the early sixteenth century was to reintroduce the methods as well as the spirit of Roman comedy to modern Europe..."¹⁸

In the most recent study of this subject, *Shakespeare & Classical Antiquity* (2013), Oxford University Senior Research Fellow Colin Burrow includes extended chapters on Virgil, Ovid, Roman Comedy, Seneca and Plutarch, but makes not one reference to Aristophanes's or Old Comedy, and dismisses the notion that Shakespeare owed any direct debt to the dramatic literature of 5th-century Athens:

Shakespeare almost certainly never read Sophocles or Euripides (let alone the much more difficult Aeschylus) in Greek, and yet he managed to write tragedies which invite comparison with those authors. He did so despite the limitations of his classical knowledge, and perhaps in part because of them. He read Plutarch in North's translation rather than reading Sophocles in Greek. This means that he read a direct clear statement about the relationship between divine promptings and human actions rather than plays in which complex thoughts about the interrelationship between human and divine agency were buried implicitly within a drama. Having 'less Greek' could therefore have enabled him to appear to understand more about Greek tragedy, and its complex mingling of voluntary actions and divine promptings, than he would have done if he had actually been able to work his way through Aeschylus and Euripides in the first place.¹⁹

Countering the arguments of Root, Nutall and Burrow, J. Churton Collins identified a number of 16th-century Latin translations of the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides that were published in Paris, Bale, Venice, and Frankfurt. Collins noted that many of these rare editions had "elucidatory notes, while the Latin of the literal versions is remarkably simple and lucid, it is in itself improbable, almost to the point of being incredible, that Shakespeare should not have had the curiosity to turn to them."²⁰ Although Collins mentions the existence of Latin editions of Aristophanes, he concluded that "beyond a few coincidences, which seem purely accidental, I find no trace in Shakespeare of any acquaintance with Aristophanes."²¹ In the way of explaining his rejection of Aristophanes's influence, Collins notes that no translation could make understandable what is so "essentially indigenous," "local and peculiar," with an "exquisite lyric vein" intelligible only to "professed scholars."

Here, I will examine the evidence that Shakespeare's Athenian comedy, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, displays numerous elements of Greek Old Comedy, and that Aristophanes's masterpiece, *The Birds*, was a direct source. Both of these festive comedies feature protagonists who are refugees from Athenian laws and present humans metamorphosed into grotesque animal forms, "translated" Bottom and Aristophanes's heroes who sprout wings by eating a magical plant, and both conclude with consecrated marriages, followed by approval-seeking epilogues.

The Birds and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are self-consciously literate, political comedies, with copious literary allusions and topical references. In *The Birds*, Aristophanes portrays Hercules as a gluttonous bully, while Shakespeare's ravenous "Bully Bottom" proclaims he could "play er'cles rarely" and bombasts out a parody

Showerman - Shakespeare's Aristophanic Comedy 110

of the prologue to John Studley's English translation of Seneca's *Hercules Oetaeus*. Aristophanes often provided entertainment by parody of tragedy. According to F.H. Sandbach: "The simplest form of parody was the introduction of vocabulary drawn from tragedy, which used much language that was not in ordinary Attic speech. Put in the mouth of a down-to-earth character, this was comically inappropriate...."²² In *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy*, C.L. Barber makes a parallel observation:

There is a great deal of incidental amusement in the parody and burlesque with which *Pyramus and Thisbe* is loaded. It burlesques the substance of the death scene in *Romeo and Juliet* in a style which combines ineptitudes from Golding's translation of Ovid with locutions from the crudest doggerel drama.²³

Finally, the identification of Queen Elizabeth and the French Duke of Alençon with Shakespeare's Titania and Bottom underlies the presence of an allegorical subplot in Shakespeare's *Dream* that is emblematic of traditional Aristophanic political satire.

While numerous scholars have noted that the story of the four young lovers is a variation on the basic plot of classical New Comedy in which a daughter is forbidden to marry her beloved by the will of her father, and then finds a means to overcome his resistance, Shakespeare was writing far more than an imitation of New Comedy. His mastery of mimesis, adapting character names, incidents, ideas, plots and images from a wide variety of literary sources is never more evident than in *Dream*. Although no primary source has ever been identified for the central plot, many sources have been noted from Greek, Roman, Biblical, Medieval and Renaissance works, making this comedy one of Shakespeare's most source-rich works. The significance of this technique is underlined by R.A. Foakes in the introduction to his 1984 Cambridge University Press edition in which he notes that the "tragical mirth" of *Pyramus and Thisbe* as a "conscious burlesque":

The detection of these has its own fascination and is useful insofar as they illustrate the workings of Shakespeare's imagination, but the most notable feature of the play is the dramatist's inventiveness, brilliantly fusing scattered elements from legend, folklore and earlier books and plays into a whole that remains as fresh and original now as when it was composed. The range of reference underlying it deserves attention also, however, because it helps to explain something of the archetypal force of the comedy, showing the dramatist's instinct for seizing on whatever might articulate and enrich the web of meanings and relationships developed in it.²⁴

Shakespeare's inventiveness echoes similar critical commentaries on Aristophanes's *The Birds*, the longest and arguably the most lyrical of Aristophanes's eleven comedies. Editors Whitney Oates and Eugene O'Neill, Jr., note that "its general merits are such that the relatively small amount of bawdiness in it has led

many to designate it as the finest, or at least the most delightful, of Aristophanes's compositions."²⁵ Notably, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is similarly considered the least bawdy of Shakespeare's comedies.²⁶ In *Aristophanes and the Comic Hero*, Cedric H. Whitman writes:

The Birds is, as a rule, regarded as the most mysterious of the comedies... the poet's masterpiece.... *The Birds* plays with language in a way far beyond any of the other comedies, and the sense of reality undergoes considerable change by consequence.... [O]ne vast finely woven texture of word plays, creates the absurd and wonderful metaphor of Utopia....²⁷

The editor of the Notable Names Database has similarly emphasized the extraordinary quality of Aristophanes's lyric inventiveness: "His truest and finest faculty is revealed by those wonderful bits of lyric writing in which he soars above everything that can move laughter to tears, and makes the clear air thrill with the notes of a song as free, as musical, and as wild as that of the nightingale invoked by his own chorus in *The Birds*.... Nothing else in Greek poetry has quite this wild sweetness of the woods. Of modern poets Shakespeare alone, perhaps, has it in combination with a like richness and fertility of fancy."²⁸

K. J. Dover has identified two other elements "of great importance" to Aristophanic Old Comedy that suggest Shakespeare's technique in characterizing comic heroes:

[T]he fulfillment of a grandiose ambition by a character with whom the average member of the audience can identify himself, and the fulfillment by supernatural means which ... overturn many of those sequences of cause and effect with which we are familiar in ordinary life. The gods are treated and portrayed not as the august beings worshipped in hymns and processions to temples, but as Pucks....²⁹

In "Aristophanes's *Birds*: The Fantasy Politics of Eros," William Arrowsmith describes Pisthetairos, the metamorphosed Athenian hero who sprouts wings after eating a magic plant and contrives to claim the scepter of Zeus and marry the god's daughter, Basilia, in terms that suggest Shakespeare's farcical hero, Bottom: "Dionysiac," "lustiness," "enterprise," "ingenuity," "restless, inquisitive innovative intelligence," "insatiability."³⁰ Bottom is a character very much like Pisthetairos. William Hazlitt claimed that Bottom was prepared to undertake most anything: "He is for playing the tyrant, the lover, the lady, the lion.... [H]e is not only chief actor but stage manager... who rules the roost among his fellows, and is no less at home in his new character of an ass." Similarly, Dover Wilson has observed that Bottom is "the very embodiment and idealization of that self-esteem" and that he is "ready-witted, unbounded in his self-confidence, and with a conceit nursed into absolute proportion by the admiring deference of his brother clowns."³¹ More recently Colin McGinn

made this observation on Bottom in his book, *Shakespeare's Philosophy*:

He is *theatrical* through and through, sliding effortlessly from one role to the next. He is a weaver by trade and also a weaver by vocation – of tales, of imaginative constructions. His imagination sometime runs away with him, taxing his linguistic abilities (which are comically off kilter). He is a master of transformation, always on the alert for what he can become, ready to accept any role that is offered to him. He is, in an important sense, a self-created being.³²

Festive Drama as Renaissance Epithalamium

The dramatic presentations of 5th-century Athens, the tragedies, comedies and dithyramb competitions, were celebratory and festive, featuring music and dance, and meant for performance during religious holidays. The seasonal celebrations of the Greater City Dionysia took place in March, and the Lenaea Festivals in December. The theater of Dionysius in Athens was, technically, a sacred temple, and the performance of dramatic works a display of religious piety. In "Dithyramb and Paeon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*" (1974), Neil Issacs and Jack Reese comment that Shakespeare's comedy similarly seems to be "patterned on a Dionysian celebration."³³ In *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* (1959), C.L. Barber also noted that several Shakespeare comedies appear to be saturnalian cultural equivalents of the comedies of Aristophanes:

Once Shakespeare finds his own distinctive style, he is more Aristophanic than any other great English comic dramatist, despite the fact that the accepted educated models and theories when he started to write were Terrentian and Plautine. The Old Comedy cast of his work results from his participation in native saturnalian traditions of the popular theatre and popular holidays.³⁴

Barber emphasized the singular importance of *Dream* in recognizing Shakespeare's art as a festive dramatist, combining elements from the rites of May and Midsummer Night:

In ... *Love's Labour's Lost*, instead of dramatizing a borrowed plot, he built his slight story around an aristocratic entertainment. In doing so he worked out the holiday sequence of release and clarification which comes into its own in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This more serious play, his first comic masterpiece, has a crucial place in his development. To make a dramatic epithalamium, he expressed with full imaginative resonance the experience of the traditional summer holidays. He thus found his way back to a native festival tradition remarkably similar to that behind Aristophanes at the start of the literary tradition of comedy.³⁵

A number of Shakespeare scholars have suggested that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was commissioned to celebrate a wedding among the nobility. Harold Bloom has argued that Shakespeare composed this comedy "probably on a commission for a noble marriage, where it was played,"³⁶ and Kenneth Burke has similarly suggested it was written "as a kind of masque, to celebrate a wedding among persons of nobility, the 'Dream' simply exports the aesthetic and cultural values of the court to a series of fanciful scenes in the woods..."³⁷

In "On the Chronology and Performance Venue of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,"³⁸ Roger Stritmatter reviewed earlier scholarship on the premise that the play was written as a dramatic, festive epithalamium, and examines arguments related to dating it and to possible topical references to events at Elizabeth's court. He notes that over a century ago, H.H. Furness endorsed this theory and suggested one of three wedding ceremonies as possible venues for its performance: Earl of Essex and Frances Sidney (1590), Earl of Derby and Elizabeth Vere (1595), and Earl of Southampton and Elizabeth Vernon (1598). Stritmatter also cites E.K. Chambers's comment that "the hymeneal character of the theme has led to the reasonable conjecture that the play was given at a noble wedding." Chambers identified the marriage of Sir Thomas Heneage and Mary Browne Wriothesley, the dowager Countess of Southampton, in May 1594 as another possible occasion for *Dream*. Stritmatter further notes that Shakespeare editor A.L. Rowse and Southampton biographer Charlotte Stopes concur with Chambers, and concludes that *Dream* was most likely written as a dramatic epithalamium for the Heneage-Browne union in 1594.³⁹

Appropriate to the occasion of a wedding, there are references to Cupid in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, an association which evokes comparison to *The Birds*. In *Dream*, there are six separate allusions to Cupid, and several more to Venus, as well as one to Apollo's love-shaft-induced pursuit of Daphne.⁴⁰ Similarly, in *The Birds*, Eros, the equivalent Greek god of love, is recognized for his archetypal significance as progenitor of the race of birds as sung in the opening passage of a choric song:

Firstly, black-winged Night laid a germless egg in the bosom of the infinite deeps of Erebus, and from this, after the revolution of long ages, sprang the graceful Eros with his glittering golden wings, swift as the whirlwinds of the tempest. He mated in deep Tartarus with dark Chaos, winged like himself, and thus hatched forth our race, which was the first to see the light. That the Immortals did not exist until Eros had brought together all the ingredients of the world, and from their marriage Heaven, Ocean, Earth and the imperishable race of blessed gods sprang into being.⁴¹

In "Aristophanes's *Birds*: the Fantasy Politics of Eros," William Arrowsmith emphasizes the importance of this theme:

No other play of Aristophanes, not even *Lysistrata*, is so pervaded, so saturated by the language of desire. *Eros, erastes, epithumia, pothos* – over and over again the note of desire is struck, given constant visual dimension and the stress that only great poetry can confer. Thus, at the very center of the play, in the great first parabasis, radiating forwards and backwards over the whole work, is the cosmogonic presiding presence of primeval Eros – “the golden, the gleaming, the whirlwind Love on shining wings” – ancestor of the Birds, oldest of the gods, the very principle embodied by Cloucduckooland. And this same Love is present too at the culmination of the play – the “holy marriage” or *heiros gamos*.... “Sing Hymen, Hymenaios O,” cries the chorus, in celebration of the nuptials of the new lord of heaven, whose bridal chariot is driven by “shimmering Love on gleaming wings”....⁴²

How fitting that Aristophanes's comedy ends in a choric tribute to Eros and an invitation to the wedding chamber by Pisthetairos, who now rules the Olympians and has married the incomparable Basilica, whom he robbed from Zeus: “Let all the winged tribes of our fellow citizens follow the bridal couple to the palace of Zeus and the nuptial couch!”⁴³ Shakespeare's hero, Theseus, extends the identical invitation in the final scene of *Dream*: “Sweet friends, to bed. A fortnight hold we this solemnity, in nightly revels and new jollity” (5.1.368-370).

Bird Allusions

The possibility that Shakespeare alluded directly to Aristophanes's *The Birds* in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has only recently been proposed by Marianne Kimura in “Midsummer night's dream+sun” (2013). Kimura insightfully notes that Bottom's bird-inspired song in Act III, which serves to awaken Titania from her sleep, is remarkably similar in context and content to a song by Epops, the hoopoe bird, in Aristophanes' comedy, pointing to the “strong likelihood that the famous Greek comedy is one significant source for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.”⁴⁴ Bottom's song is prompted by Peter Quince, who, horrified by the ass-headed monster before him, blurts out in his desperate retreat, “Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee! Thou art translated.”

Bottom. I see their knavery. This is to make an ass of me, to fright me, if they could; but I will not stir from this place, do what they can. I will walk up and down here, and I shall sing, that they shall hear I am not afraid.

The woosel cock so black of hue,
With orange-tawny bill,
The throstle with his note so true,
The wren with little quill –

Titania. What angel wakes me from my flow'ry bed?

Bottom. The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,

The plain-song cuckoo grey,
Whose notes full many a man doth mark,
And dares not answer nay –

For indeed, who would set his wit to so foolish a bird? Who would give a bird
the lie, though he cry “cuckoo” never so?

(3.1.117-136)

Titania, under the influence of Oberon’s love potion, proclaims to be “much enamoured of thy note” and “enthralled to thy shape,” and calls on her fairies, Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth and Mustardseed, to attend on Bottom, to “fetch jewels from the deep” and to sing while he “on pressed flowers doth sleep.” She even promises to purge his “mortal grossness” so that he may “like an airy spirit go.”

Comparing this passage to Epops’s song, which similarly awakens the nightingale Procne in *The Birds*, convinced Kimura that Aristophanes’s comedy influenced Shakespeare’s *Dream*. Epops, who was once the Thracian King Tereus, but was transformed into a hoopoe, sings a song that is longer than Bottom’s, but also has two parts and results in an awakening that eventually draws in a flock of different birds to form the chorus. Epops’s song initiates the dramatic action that leads to the founding of the kingdom of the birds, “Nephelococcygia,” variously translated as “Cuckoonebulopolus” or “Cloudcukooland.”

Epops. Chase off drowsy sleep, dear companion. Let the sacred hymn gush from thy divine throat in melodious strains; roll forth in soft cadence and refreshing melodies to bewail the fate of Itys, which has been the cause of so many tears to us both. Your pure notes rise through the thick leaves of the yew-tree right up to the throne of Zeus, where Phoebus listens to you, Phoebus with his golden hair. And his ivory lyre responds to your plaintive accents; he gathers the choir of the gods and from their immortal lips pours forth a sacred chant of blessed voices.

Epopopoi popoi popopopoi popoi, here, here, quick, quick, quick, my comrades in the air; all you who pillage the fertile lands of the husbandmen, the numberless tribes who gather and devour the barley seeds, the swift dying race that sings so sweetly. And you whose gentle twitter resounds through the fields with little cry of *tiotiotiotiotiotio*; and you who hop from the branches of the ivy in the gardens; the mountain birds, who feed on the wild olive-berries or the arbutus, hurry to come at my call, *trioto, trioto, totobrix*; you also, who snap up the sharp-stinging gnats in the marshy vales, and you who dwell in the fine plain of Marathon, all damp with dew, and you the francolin with speckled wings; you too, the halcyons, who flit over the swelling waves of the sea, come thither to hear the tidings; let all the tribes of long-necked birds assemble here; know that a clever old man has come to us, bringing an entirely new idea and proposing great reforms. Let all come

Showerman - Shakespeare's Aristophanic Comedy 116

to the debate here, here, here, here. *Torotorotorotorotix, kikkabau, kikkabau, torotorotorolilix.*⁴⁵

Kimura suggests that “The second stanza of Epops’ song, with its invocation of many different kinds of birds, a powerful summons which works immediately (many birds instantly arrive in the Greek comedy), is adapted, yet its power is preserved by Shakespeare (in that Titania awakens).”⁴⁶ Bottom has already referred to himself in connection with specific birds when he insists that as a lion he would not “fright the ladies,” but “will aggravate my voice so that I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove; I will roar you and twere any nightingale” (1.2.81-84). His double reference to the “cuckoo” bird at the end of his song and discourse may now be understood as another indication of Shakespeare’s familiarity with Aristophanes’s play, where the cuckoo is acknowledged to have a special role, besides now serving as the avian namesake for the birds’ capital:

The cuckoo was king of Egypt and the whole of Phoenicia. When he called out “cuckoo”, all the Phoenicians hurried to the fields to reap their wheat and their barley.⁴⁷

One is tempted to suggest that if Shakespeare is parodying Aristophanes’s bird song, then the “nay” at the end of Bottom’s recitation would have been pronounced like an ass’s “neigh.” The ass makes a distinctive neigh that carries long distances, giving credence to the saying “Not within an ass’s roar.”

Shakespeare mentions many different species of birds in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, including the dove, nightingale, crow, owl, philomel, raven, ousel (blackbird), throstle (song thrush), wren, finch, sparrow, lark, cuckoo, goose, chough and screech owl. All but two of these species are also mentioned in Aristophanes’s comedy. Notably, neither eagles nor other fierce birds of prey mentioned in Aristophanes’s *Birds* are alluded to in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. An additional association between the lovers and birds is again suggested in Act IV of *Dream* when Theseus greets Hermia, Helena, Lysander and Demetrius with, “Good morrow, friends. St. Valentine is past/Begin these woodbirds but to couple now?” (4.1.139-140).

The songs that awaken Titania and Procne initiate the arrival of a chorus of winged servants in both comedies. A fairy chorus in *Dream*, “Philomele, with melody,/Sing in our sweet lullaby,/Lulla, lulla, lullaby, lulla, lulla, lullaby” (3.2.13-15), also has a direct connection to *The Birds*. The hoopoe bird, Epops, who advocates for the Athenians and sings the song that awakens Procne, was once human, according to the myth. Tereus was King of Thrace and married to Procne, but his abduction and rape of Procne’s sister, Philomela, and the savage revenge murder of his son by the sisters results in their all being transformed into birds. Philomela or Procne (depending on the source) becomes a nightingale. The myth is narrated in great detail in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* Book VI.

Aristophanic Political Satire

In the introduction to his 1961 translation of *The Birds*, William Arrowsmith describes this comedy as “Aristophanes’s finest. Splendidly lyrical, shot through with Utopian satire and touched by the sadness of the human condition, its ironic gaiety and power of invention never flag.” He further notes that with great ingenuity and little cogency the comedy has been interpreted as a detailed allegory of the Sicilian expedition. The play has been viewed both as “Aristophanes’ passionate appeal for the reform and renewal of the Athenian public life,” and, alternatively as “a fantastic, escapist extravaganza created as a revealing antidote to the prevalent folly of Athenian political life.”⁴⁸ That Aristophanes was adept at poking fun at contemporary political leaders, poets, philosophers and other figures was common knowledge. According to K.J. Dover:

Of all the men we know from historical sources to have achieved political prominence at Athens during the period 445-385, there was not one who is not attacked or ridiculed in the extant plays of Aristophanes or in the extant citations from the numerous lost plays of the period. Often the attack is on a grand scale: *Knights* is a prolonged and vicious attack on Kleon, Hyperbolus was ridiculed by several poets in a series of comedies.... Pericles, who died two years before Aristophanes’ first play, was similarly attacked during his lifetime, and Aristophanes’ own allusions to him and the part he played in bringing the (Peloponnesian) war about are uncomplimentary in the extreme.⁴⁹

The business of Old Comedy often involved outrageous slanders, for to speak fair of a politician, philosopher, or military leader would have been to violate the satiric spirit and poetic license afforded by Athenian democracy during the Golden Age. New Comedy, as represented by the works of Menander, Plautus and Terence, had none of the political allegorical imprint of Aristophanes. Old Comedy was both topical and mythopoetic, highly inventive and exhibiting an extreme freedom of speech. Leo Salinger’s description of this style is instructive regarding the style of cartoonish caricature of well-known personalities and gods, with talking animals and personified abstractions:

And it regularly employed burlesque for the elements of the scenario, weaving current allusions into parodies of epic, tragedy, myth, fable, religious ritual or state procedure. Because a comedy in Athens was topical and mythical together, neither satire, nor burlesque could operate alone. No comedy of Aristophanes is simply a myth of fable turned to ridicule; still less

is any of them a reconstruction, even in caricature, of current events.⁵⁰

A *Midsummer Night's Dream* can be shown to include a topical, satiric, political allegory, which clearly establishes that Shakespeare was familiar with the conventions of Greek Old Comedy. The theory that Bottom and the other "rude mechanicals" represent a parody has attracted scholarly interest for over a century. As early as 1877, J. Macmillan Brown observed that "Bottom and his scratch company have long been recognized as a personal satire." However, it was only in *Hidden Allusions in Shakespeare's Plays: A Study in the Early Court Revels and the Personalities of the Times* (1931) that Eva Turner Clark identified a fully-developed satiric allegorical context. She presented literary and historical evidence that the love affair between Titania and Bottom was a satiric mirror on the courtship of Queen Elizabeth by the young French Duke of Alençon (and Anjou), Hercule Francois de Valois (1555-1584), the youngest son of Henry II of France and Catherine de' Medici.

Historians have identified a number of allegorical literary, dramatic, and artistic responses provoked by the marital negotiations between the Queen and the Duke. In *Monarchy and Matrimony: The Courtships of Elizabeth I* (1995), Susan Doran observes that in the masques, plays and other entertainments performed before her from 1561 to 1578, the virginity of Elizabeth was not idealized, but instead marriage was celebrated as a preferable state. Doran argues that beginning in 1578, "the iconography of chastity was imposed on her by writers, painters and their patrons during the matrimonial negotiations," and that for the next three years "opponents of the match cultivated the image of the Virgin Queen as a means of sabotaging the marriage."⁵¹ Commenting on the spectacular two-day triumph, *The Four Foster Children of Desire*, penned by Sir Phillip Sidney and staged over Whitsun in 1581 for the French ambassadors, Doran claims that the event was staged to convey the political message that the English court stood united in its opposition to the French match:

Overall, the allegory portrayed the queen both as an unobtainable object of desire in the chivalric tradition and a neo-Platonic celestial being; the clear message was that her chastity was part of her special mystique and that her marriage to the French prince was therefore out of the question.⁵²

Other dramatic works have been identified by scholars as commenting on this controversial court romance. A century ago Tucker Brooke argued that John Lyly's *Sapho and Phao* was a flattering allusion to the "matrimonial fiasco" between Elizabeth and the Duke, which dragged on for almost a decade before ending in February 1582, a month before the play was presented at court. In the introduction to his edition of *Sapho and Phao* (1991), David Bevington reviewed historical criticism on allegorical interpretations of Lyly's comedy, noting that the playwright "plainly intended his dramatic portrait of Sappho as a compliment to Queen

Elizabeth before whom the play was performed at court.”⁵³ While not endorsing the argument that Sappho and Phao stand for Elizabeth and Alençon, Bevington nonetheless summarizes the supporting evidence put forward by Warwick Bond and other scholars, including Felix Schelling, Albert Feuillerat, Brooke and Elizabeth May Albright.

The most complete review of the literature proposing allegorical representation of the courtship between the Queen and the Duke is developed in Marion Taylor’s 250-page study, *Bottom, Thou Art Translated: Political Allegory in A Midsummer Night’s Dream and Related Literature* (1973). Taylor, who does not cite Eva Turner Clark but echoes many of her original textual points, provides a detailed recounting of the allegorical literature, including the works of Edmund Spenser, Phillip Sidney and John Lyly, as they reflect on the protracted affair between Elizabeth and Alençon, “the most important political issue of Elizabeth’s reign — the burning question of succession to the throne.”⁵⁴ To this day, Clark, Taylor and Stritmatter are the only authors to have given this compelling narrative the consideration it deserves. The great irony is that virtually all modern editors have failed to recognize the highly amusing, highly political Elizabethan satirical soap opera that is embedded in this masterful comedy.

Instead, an alternative allegorical interpretation of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* has become quite popular. In *Shakespeare and Elizabeth: The Meeting of Two Myths* (2009), Helen Hackett notes that, “The clearest reference to Queen Elizabeth in Shakespeare’s works is arguably Oberon’s vision in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, already described in 1895 as the subject of more voluminous speculation than any other twenty-five lines in all of Shakespeare.”⁵⁵

Flying between the cold moon and the earth
Cupid, all armed. A certain aim he took
At a fair vestal throned by the west,
And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts
But I might see Cupid’s fiery shaft
Quenched in the chaste beams of the wat’ry moon,
And the imperial vot’ress passed on,
In maiden meditation, fancy free.
(2.1.156-164)

In 1709 Nicholas Rowe identified the “fair vestal throned by the west” as Queen Elizabeth, and, in 1797 James Plumtre proposed that Cupid’s attack upon the vestal was based on the 1575 Princely Pleasures at Kenilworth, sponsored by the Earl of Leicester. In *Will in the World* (2005), Stephen Greenblatt goes even farther in speculating that:

Shakespeare’s sense of the transforming power of theatrical illusions may be traced back to what he heard about or saw for himself in 1575 at Kenilworth,

Showerman - Shakespeare's Aristophanic Comedy 120

his sense of the coarse reality that lies beneath the illusions may very well go back to the same festive moment. Virtually the whole last act of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is given over to a hilarious parody of such amateur theatrical entertainments, which are ridiculed for their plodding ineptitude, their naiveté, their failure to sustain a convincing illusion.⁵⁶

Helen Hackett, however, expresses skepticism regarding the associations and conclusions that scholars have theorized for over a century regarding the implicit connection between Kenilworth and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, noting that the topical reading of Oberon's vision by Greenblatt and other new historicists suggests these critics have "been dazzled by Elizabeth's glamour, and by the desire to assert the power of drama by associating it with the Crown":

The possible connection between Oberon's vision and Elizabeth at Kenilworth has been one of the most enduring and important elements of the double myth of Shakespeare and Elizabeth. Its history illustrates how that myth has crossed boundaries between academic scholarship, fiction and popular culture, as many different kinds of readers and writers, the custodians and customers in the heritage industry, have taken a shared pleasure and satisfaction in the idea that Shakespeare's first inspiration came from the magnificent, spectacular figure of Elizabeth and the pageants in her honor.⁵⁷

In "Bottom and Titania" (1993), John A. Allen states that "Queen Elizabeth, as the emblem of sovereignty, is the political equivalent of Titania, emblem of nature's sway over living things. Both queens confer the blessing of continuity in their respective realms...."⁵⁸ However, in *Shakespeare and Ovid* (1993), Jonathan Bate clearly states that an association between Titania and Queen Elizabeth is untenable. While Edmund Spenser's Gloriana, the fairy queen, is associated with the chaste Elizabeth, and though Titania is referred to frequently as the fairy queen, to Bate the consequence of such an identification is alarming as Shakespeare's fairy queen fawns on the changeling boy, is chastised for her love of Theseus, and is victimized by Oberon's love-in-idleness liquor:

Shakespeare cannot afford to license the interpretation of this as an image of the Queen in a perverse encounter which upsets both the natural and the social order; if such an interpretation were at all prominent, the Master of the Revels would not have licensed the play. By identifying the queen with the imperial votaress, Shakespeare denies the transgressive identification of her with Titania.⁵⁹

Taking the opposite view, Clark writes that Queen Elizabeth, as the emblem of chastity, was often called the moon goddess and patron of virgins, Diana. In the 1580s, "the Queen and her Maids of Honor had been repeatedly referred to by the

poets of the time as nymphs and fairies. Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* (III, 173), gave to Diana the name Titania.⁶⁰ Clark proceeds to widen the matrix of allusions that binds Elizabeth to Titania, who treats Bottom like royalty: “Be kind and courteous to this gentleman,/Hop in his walks and gambol in his eyes;/Feed him with apricots and dewberries,/With purple grapes, green figs and mulberries;/The honey bags steal from the bumble bees” (3.2.164-168). Finally, Titania instructs the fairies as the scene ends:

Come wait upon him; lead him to my bower.
The moon methinks looks with a wat'ry eye;
And when she weeps, weeps every little flower,
Lamenting some enforced chastity.
Tie up my lover's tongue, bring him silently. *Exuent*
(3.2.197-201)

Clark argues that this passage refers specifically to the night of November 21, 1581, when Elizabeth's maids of honor kept her awake all night with crying in protest over the Queen's announced engagement to the Duke. To confirm this interpretation, Clark quotes an English translation of William Camden's Latin edition of *The True and Royal History of the Famous Empresse Elizabeth*: “The Queen's women with whom she was familiar, wailed, and by laying terrors before her, did so vex her mind with anguish, that she spent the night in doubtful care without sleep, amongst her women which did nothing but weep.”⁶¹

Clark's analysis also reveals numerous textual clues that suggest Bottom is a satiric portrait of the Duke of Alençon, the last and youngest of Elizabeth's suitors. Alençon was widely referred to as “Monsieur” while he was in England actively courting Queen Elizabeth between 1578 and 1581. Elizabeth wrote a remarkably ambivalent poem dedicated to him at the end of their affair in 1582:

On Monsieur's Departure

I grieve and dare not show my discontent:
I love, and yet am forced to seem in hate;
I do, yet dare not say I ever meant;
I seem stark mute but inwardly do prate.
I am, and not; I freeze and yet I burn.
Since from myself another self I turned.

My care is like my shadow in the sun –
Follows me flying, flies when I pursue it.
Stands, and lies by me, doth what I have done;
His too familiar care doth make me rue it.
No means I find to rid him from my breast,

Showerman - Shakespeare's Aristophanic Comedy 122

Till by the end of things it be suppressed.

Some gentler passion slide into my mind,
For I am soft and made of melting snow;
Or be more cruel, Love, and be so kind.
Let me or float or sink, be high or low;
Or let me love with some more sweet content,
Or die, and so forget what love e'er meant.

Clark draws specific attention to the fact that Bottom, speaking to the fairies in Act IV, addresses each one as "Mounsieur," repeating the word no less than eight times in sixteen lines of prose (4.1.8-24).

Clark also notes that after his transformation, Bottom refuses "to stir from this place," which may allude to the fact that Alençon was known to have delayed leaving England without Elizabeth's consent to marriage, and that Bottom's repeated demands for a "honey bag" (4.1.13, 15-16) may be allusions to the "moneybags" Elizabeth gave her French suitor; during the years of the marital negotiations she delivered to him over £300,000 for his military campaigns. Historian Stephen Budiansky, in *Her Majesty's Spymaster* (2005), relates that "It cost the Queen £60,000 in promised loans to get him to go and embark upon his own promised expedition to the Low Countries."⁶²

Martin Hume, in *Courtships of Queen Elizabeth: A History of Various Negotiations for her Marriage* (1896), cites documents of the 1581 marital negotiations in which Alençon's ambassador demanded "his coronation immediately after the marriage, secondly the association of him with the Queen in the government, and thirdly the granting to him of a life pension of 60,000 pounds per annum."⁶³ Marion Taylor identifies a parody of this general promise of an annuity referenced satirically in Francis Flute's pathetic remembrance of Bottom:

O sweet bully Bottom! Thus hath he lost sixpence a day during his life;
he could not have 'scaped sixpence a day: an the duke had not given him
sixpence a day for playing Pyramus, I'll be hanged; he would have deserved
it: sixpence a day in Pyramus or nothing.
(5.2.19-24)

A telling allusion to Hercules in Shakespeare's comedy greatly amplifies the associations between Alençon and Bottom. The weaver's claim that he could play Hercules is a direct marker as Alençon's birth name was "Hercule," and he was only rechristened "Francois Hercule" after the death of his older brother, King Francis II. According to Taylor, Alençon was actually of small stature, scarred by smallpox and "so thoroughly un-Herculean" that "he and his family must have found his name to be a continual embarrassment because of its utter ridiculousness."⁶⁴

Bottom: Yet my chief humor is to play the tyrant. I could play Ercles rarely, or a part to tear a cat in, to make all split.

“The raging rocks
And shivering shocks
Shall break the locks
Of prison gates,
And Phibus’ car
Shall shine from far
And make and mar
The foolish Fates.”

This was lofty. Now name the rest of the players. – This is Ercles vein, a tyrant’s vein. A lover is more condoling.
(1.2.28-41)

Scholars have long recognized this passage as a parody of Hercules’s prologue in John Studley’s 1571 translation of Seneca’s *Hercules Oetaeus*. “Hercles,” as Studley referred to the hero, recounts his own exploits in bad verse with excessive use of alliteration.⁶⁵ This bit of bombastic doggerel is also arguably a satiric mirror of Apollo’s prologue in Euripides’s *Alcestis*, where the god relates how he “tricked the Fates” and gives prophecy that Hercules will arrive in time to wrestle Queen Alcestis from Death. Thus Shakespeare not only mocks Bottom, but Seneca, Studley, Euripides and, quite probably, the Duke of Alençon in one short speech.

Taylor further notes that Bottom’s line about “your French-crown-colored beard, your perfect yellow” and Quince’s reply, “Some of your French crowns have no hair at all, and then you play barefaced” (1.2.93-98), is likely to represent another direct allusion to the French Duke, who was rumored to have gone bald by syphilis:

First it is a pun about French money that could also refer to a French crowned head or royalty such as Alençon, heir to the throne. Second, it is a pun about a head gone bald from the French pox.... Third, it is about a French crowned head-to-be who was outwitted by Elizabeth, who left him “barefaced”. The joke fits Alençon in all three counts....⁶⁶

The matter of Alençon’s facial hair is also likely alluded to in Francis Flute’s objection to being cast as Thisbe, “Nay, faith; let me not play a woman; I have a beard coming” (1.2.47-48). In *The Virgin Queen Elizabeth I, Genius of the Golden Age* (1991), Christopher Hibbert reports this on the Duke’s appearance:

As for his ugliness, this has been much exaggerated, so Fenelon assured the Council. It would certainly not present an insuperable problem even to one “with such a delicate eye as she.” Besides, the Duke would soon grow a beard and that would help to hide such defects as there were.⁶⁷

Showerman - Shakespeare's Aristophanic Comedy 124

Peter Quince's reassurance that "Pyramus is a sweet-fac'd man, a proper man as one shall see on a summer's day" (1.2.86-87) now gains an ironic poignancy.

In 1579, Alençon sent Jean de Simier to negotiate terms of the marriage treaty with 12,000 crowns' worth of jewels. According to Martin Hume, Simier "was a consummate courtier steeped in the dissolute gallantry of the French court" who "artfully made violent love to the Queen under shelter of his master's name."⁶⁸ Elizabeth dubbed Simier her "ape," and the couple soon established an intimacy that scandalized the court. Elizabeth reportedly became more beautiful and happy than she been for over a decade. Simier's influence over Elizabeth so offended Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester, and Christopher Hatton that they conspired unsuccessfully to have him assassinated on several occasions.

Christopher Hibbert describes Dudley's concerns regarding the Queen's intoxication with the ambassador in highly suggestive language that adds fodder to the allegorical context of Shakespeare's comedy:

Leicester maintained that Simier's hold over the Queen, his convincing her of the ill-favored and dissolute Duke of [Alençon's] worthiness to be considered a suitable husband, was due less to his skills as an advocate than to the drink he gave her and the "unlawful arts" he practiced upon her. She was clearly fascinated by him. She called him her "Monkey"; and there were reports that she had burst into his bedroom very early one morning, and told him to talk to her "with only his jerkin on."⁶⁹

The "liquor" that Oberon fashions from the "little western flower" is very likely to represent an allusion to Simier's love potion. While Simier was known as Elizabeth's "ape," Alençon himself was called "the imp of the crown of France" in John Stubbs's *Gaping Gulf* slander. Further, the Duke's older brother, Henry III, is known to have referred to him as *le petit magot*, "the little monkey." The relevance to Oberon's description of aphrodisiacal effect of his "love-in-idleness" eye drops is noteworthy:

I'll watch Titania when she is asleep,
And drop the liquor of it in her eyes.
The next thing then she waking looks upon,
Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,
On *meddling monkey*, or on *busy ape*,
She shall pursue it with the soul of love.
(2.1.177-182, emphasis added)

Marion Taylor has also convincingly identified several members of Alençon's entourage with Bottom's company of "rude mechanicals." Stage manager Peter Quince, she suggests, was named for Alençon's ambassador de Quince, who led the French delegation during the marital treaty negotiations in 1579, and accompanied Alençon on at least one of his visits to England. Francis Flute would naturally

represent another stand-in for “Francois Hercule.” Taylor cleverly notes that Snout the Tinker may be a phonetic equivalent of Alençon’s secretary, Du Bex; *bec* in French means “beak” or “snout.” Taylor argued that “many people in London and at court, and indeed the Queen herself both spoke and wrote French fluently, many of them would catch at once the joke that Snout the Tinker was a satire of another one of Alençon’s envoys who was also in London for some time, the Frenchman Du Bex, the Duke’s personal secretary.”⁷⁰

Although neither Clark nor Taylor suggested that Robin Starveling is named for another courtier, it is not improbable, given the other associations already established, that her “Sweet Robin,” the Earl of Leicester, who more than anyone in England opposed the Alençon match, is represented by Robin Starveling. He is cast as Thisbe’s mother in Act 1 and plays Moonshine in the farcical masque. Both of these roles reflect Dudley’s lifelong intimate attachment to Elizabeth, signified by the moon, his opposition to the Duke’s mission, and his accompanying Alençon to the Low Countries in 1582 and the latter’s investment as the Duke of Brabant. By the same token, the fairy Moth (pronounced *mote*) is likely to have been named for another of Alençon’s ambassadors, le Mothe de Fenelon (also pronounced *mote*).

Taylor includes one last detail to support her theory based on the evidence of which member of the Lord Chamberlain’s Men portrayed Bottom in the original production. T.W. Baldwin argued that it was Will Kemp. Like Alençon, Kemp was a rather small man. Significantly, both were noted for their dancing in contemporary records.

Martin Hume states that Elizabeth managed the affair with her “frog” with great aplomb, playing upon this hopes, fears and ambitions “with the dexterity of a juggler.” In the end, after the failure of “The French Fury” to capture Antwerp in 1583, “Alençon, in despair of obtaining sufficient help from Elizabeth ... retired to France, leaving his forces under Marshall Biron. Lovelorn epistles and frantic protestations continued to be passed between him and Elizabeth; but it was acknowledged now that his cause was hopeless, and he fell henceforth entirely under the influence of his mother.”⁷¹

The death of Francois de Valois, Duke of Anjou and Alençon, removed from the scene the last serious suitor to the Queen’s hand in marriage; and his passing bell rang down the curtain upon the longest and most eventful comedy in the history of England.⁷²

In *Her Majesty’s Spymaster*, Stephen Budiansky echoes Hume’s judgment by writing that in the end “their courtship became simply a farce, a bit of political theatre that dragged on three scenes too long, a joke even to the Queen, as she admitted in moments of privacy and candor.”⁷³

As noted, it is ironic and unfortunate that this 16th-century political soap opera, so well documented by historians, has escaped the attention of most literary scholars as an allegorical subtext in Shakespeare’s Athenian comedy. As Roger Stritmatter contextualizes it:

If topical evidence suggests a final composition date of composition in the 1590's, the evidence also reveals an author whose chronological frame of reference stretches back to 1581 or earlier, and whose topical preoccupations included a closely-veiled comic commentary on one of the most explosive issues of the reign: the intersection of the private life and courtships of Elizabeth I and matters of public policy and authority. So often do the Queen, her courtship, and the matter of the succession appear in the critical literature of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that it is difficult to avoid concluding that the play constitutes, on one level, a sly commentary on the sexual politics of the Elizabethan era.⁷⁴

Discussion

Harold Bloom called *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the author's "first undoubted masterwork, without flaw... of overwhelming originality and power," and observed that the image of the "fair vestal throned by the west" is a vision that constitutes Shakespeare's largest and most direct tribute to his monarch during her lifetime. If Titania and Bottom are truly understood as parodies of Elizabeth and "Monsieur," then Shakespeare appears to have taken unprecedented poetic license in boldly satirizing such a potentially sensitive subject. In all the history of drama, only Aristophanes and the poets of Old Comedy were afforded such liberty in subverting authority through political farce.

The acknowledged sources of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* include a maze of classical, medieval and Renaissance texts: Ovid, Chaucer, Seneca, Plutarch, Apuleius, Lyly, Spenser, Marlowe, *Huon of Bordeaux*, Munday's *John A Kent and John A Cumber*, Robert Greene's *The Scottish History of James IV*, Reginald Scott's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, St. Paul's Epistle to the *Corinthians*, Cooper's *Thesaurus*, *A Handful of Pleasant Delites*, *Of the Silkwormes and their Flies*, and Preston's *Cambises*.⁷⁵ Regarding Shakespeare's method of using so many sources, Kenneth Muir has observed that "A study of the tragical mirth of Quince's interlude leads one right to the heart of Shakespeare's craftsmanship and even throws light on the workings of the poetic imagination."⁷⁶

To this long list, Aristophanes's *The Birds* needs to be included as a likely source. Similar to Shakespeare's *Dream*, *The Birds* is a self-consciously literate comedy which makes direct reference to a pantheon of literary and political figures. These include playwrights Aeschylus, Sophocles, Phrynicus, Cinesias and Callias; Aesop; philosophers Thales, Socrates, and his disciples, Prodicus of Ceos and Aeschines Socraticus; lyric poets Simonides, Archilocus and Pindar; and political figures Nicias, Cleisthenes, Theogenes, Timon and Solon. The metamorphosis of a human into a grotesque animal form occurs only in *The Birds* in all of Aristophanes's extant comedies and only in *Dream* among those attributed to Shakespeare. Given all these associations, why have scholars not included it in the discussion of the

myriad accepted sources for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*?

In his highly regarded study, *Shakespeare and the Classics* (1952), J.A.K. Thomson concludes that while the playwright's Latin was "formidable," "Greek was out of the question." Similarly, in *Shakespeare and the Uses of Antiquity* (2003), Michelle and Charles Martindale echo Thomson's rejection of Greek drama as a potential source:

Any Greek language Shakespeare had would not have been sufficient to allow him to read the extremely taxing poetry of the fifth century BC. Renaissance culture remained primarily Latin-based....Moreover, despite all efforts, no one has succeeded in producing one single piece of evidence from the plays to make any such debt certain, or even particularly likely.⁷⁷

More recently, Laurie Maguire has challenged the notion of Shakespeare's "lesse Greek": "It is a truth universally acknowledged that Shakespeare's acquaintance with Greek myth and drama was mediated by Roman redactions: Seneca, Ovid, Virgil. Yet critics (with embarrassment, with apology, with a submerged sense of inconvenience) repeatedly note Hellenic dramatic influence in Shakespeare, an influence they are obliged to classify as an affinity."⁷⁸

Kenneth Burke has insightfully noted that in the development of Greek drama, technology would have been rudimentary, that "many visual aspects of a performance must have been quite crude. Consider, for example, the tragedies which involve the appearance of a god in a machine, the *deus ex machina*. Doubtless the very awkwardness made it good fun to have such a figure in Aristophanic comedy, somewhat as with the farcical performance of *Pyramus and Thisbe*...."⁷⁹ Burke's observation raises further doubt on the wisdom of ignoring the legitimate question of Shakespeare's debt to Greek Old Comedy. This is a topic worthy of serious philological examination, especially as it pertains to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

The failure to consider Greek Old Comedy in Shakespeare criticism stems from the awareness that the works of Aristophanes had not been translated into English before or during the period Shakespeare is likely to have written his plays. Except for productions of two comedies earlier in the century, Aristophanes's plays had never been performed in England. As Katherine Lever attests in "Greek Comedy on the Sixteenth century English Stage":

The *Plutus* and the *Peace* of Aristophanes were performed at Cambridge in 1536 and 1546 respectively, the only known performances of Greek comedy in England during the sixteenth century. What impression, if any, these performances made on the audiences, we do not know, for no record has survived of their opinion.⁸⁰

The *Peace* was the last Greek comedy performed at Cambridge. Plautus, Terence and Seneca displaced Aristophanes, replacing these politically controversial dramas with productions of farces, romances and tragedies.⁸¹

Showerman - Shakespeare's Aristophanic Comedy 128

Independent scholar Myron Stagman has nonetheless proposed that Shakespeare was directly influenced by all the 5th-century Greek playwrights, including Aristophanes. In *Shakespeare's Greek Drama Secret* (2011), Stagman argues that there are many unmediated textual correspondences between 5th-century Greek dramas and the plays of Shakespeare, and that Shakespeare's artistic achievement was unique precisely because of his mastery of the Attic drama. His book lists many potential textual connections between Shakespeare and the Greeks, and he speculates that the poet's education must have included readings from Homer, Lucian, Pindar and the Athenian playwrights. Problematically, most of these works existed only in Greek editions or Latin translations published on the Continent. In *The Burllesque Comedies of Aristophanes* (2000), Stagman writes:

In all literature, no one has acquired as much well-earned notoriety for humorous obscenity as Aristophanes. Shakespeare is his rival and, I contend, deliberate disciple.⁸²

As to Shakespeare's use of bawdry, Eric Partridge includes a glossary of over 200 pages of obscene terms in *Shakespeare's Bawdy* (1947), and more recently Pauline Kiernan's *Filthy Shakespeare* (2006) offers up over seventy examples of sexual allusions. Female sexuality, Kiernan contends, is most often expressed as linguistic transgression through oblique commentaries, with the chief rhetorical figure being the pun, what Dr. Johnson called "Shakespeare's fatal Cleopatra."

On the prolific use of obscene language in Attic comedy, Jeffrey Henderson, author of the *Maculate Muse*, offers a remarkably similar commentary:

The plays of Aristophanes burst with jokes and buffoonery of all kinds: in the service of satire, abuse, parody, irony, and surrealist absurdity are countless plays on words, comic distortions of proper names, ludicrous and extravagant compounds, constant shifting between different proprieties of diction, verbal surprises, equivocations, deceptions. Although the physical action must have been fast-paced and colorful, it is primarily in his verbal pyrotechnics that the genius of Aristophanes ... resides.⁸³

Henderson points out how Aristophanes used obscenity as a vehicle for ridicule, satire, and comic representation which "could not be equaled by any other weapon in the poet's arsenal" and derived its license from the democratic openness of Periclean Athens.⁸⁴

Regarding Aristophanes as a source for Shakespeare, Myron Stagman and Marianne Kimura are unique, even among the minority of scholars who have previously argued for Shakespeare's familiarity with Greek tragedy and tragicomedy. The classical model for Elizabethan comedy was, after all, New Comedy.

Stagman proposes that Aristophanes's works influenced a number of Shakespeare's dramas, including *Othello*⁸⁵ and *Timon of Athens*,⁸⁶ and that Falstaff in

1 Henry IV bears a remarkable resemblance to Aristophanes's parodies of Cleonymus, an Athenian politician and general during the 420s who is referred to no less than sixteen times in seven different comedies by Aristophanes. Cleonymus is repeatedly presented as a glutton and liar, "the butt of Athens for his bulk and his appetite." Importantly, he is satirically ridiculed by Aristophanes for his "better part of valor" cowardice in having cast away his shield at Delium in 424 BC.⁸⁷

One thinks about the Elizabethan playwright's propensity toward the use of bawdry, accents, the depiction of eccentricity, and the epilogue which intimately addresses the audience. The use of choruses, prologues, and epilogues came to Shakespeare, directly or indirectly, from Greek Drama.... Aristophanes wrote a special kind of epilogue, and Shakespeare commonly wrote that special type.⁸⁸

Seven of Aristophanes's eleven extant plays end with choric epilogues. Similar to Shakespeare's, they "often address the audience intimately and express the hope or assurance that the play was well received."⁸⁹ Aristophanes's epilogues frequently even made a plea that the playwright be awarded first prize in the competition. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Puck makes a similar appeal in the closing lines of the comedy, calling for applause rather than the snake-like hiss of offense taken:

And, as I am an honest Puck,
If we have unlearned luck
Now to scape the serpents tongue,
We will make amends ere long;
Else the Puck's a liar call.
So good night until you all.
Give me your hands if we be friends,
And Robin shall restore amends.
(5.1.431-438)

In summary, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a mimetic masterwork of borrowed plots, literary allusions, parody, and mocking satire on the politics of the Elizabethan court and a romantic French Duke. Like Aristophanes's masterpiece, *The Birds*, *Dream* incorporates a dense matrix of bird allusions and songs, animal metamorphosis, paeans to Cupid /Eros, and concludes with marriage and an epilogue, the canonical trademarks of Greek Old Comedy. The evidence that Shakespeare's creative imagination was influenced by 5th-century Greek dramas is substantial, but has been unrecognized by most 20th-century Shakespeare critics, who turned away from philological investigation of rare Greek texts.

Oxfordian Coda

The lacuna in Shakespeare studies presented—a century-long reticence to address fully the question of Greek dramatic sources—may be indirectly related to the Shakespeare authorship question. Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, now the primary alternative candidate, had an outstanding education and would have had access to the Greek texts of Attic tragedies and comedies in his youth through his tutor, Cambridge University Greek orator and Vice-Chancellor Sir Thomas Smith.⁹⁰ Smith was provably familiar with the conventions and texts of the classical theater as he helped produce first the *Plutus* (1536) and then the *Peace* (1546) of Aristophanes at Cambridge University.⁹¹

As for access to translators and continental editions of Greek texts, for nearly a decade Oxford lived at Cecil House, where he was in close contact with England's leading translators, including his maternal uncle, Arthur Golding (Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, 1567), George Gascoigne (Euripides's *Phoenissiae*, 1572), and Arthur Hall (the first ten books of Homer's *Iliad*, 1581). Smith and Cecil possessed Greek editions of Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Plato in their libraries. Further, Mildred Cecil, the Earl of Oxford's mother-in-law, was also an accomplished Greek translator. John Strype (quoting Roger Ascham) said, "Mildred Cecil spoke and understood Greek as easily as she spoke English."⁹² In Caroline Bowden's recent article, "The Library of Mildred Cooke Cecil, Lady Burghley," the inventory of her Greek editions makes clear that Edward de Vere would have had ready access to the plays of Attic tragedians.

The call for greater study of Greek sources made by the few scholars who have seriously investigated the question runs counter to the arbitrary limits accepted by most modern Shakespeare critics, who refuse to consider Greek dramatists as possible sources because of Shakespeare's supposed lack of education and limited access to continental editions. The authorship claim of the Earl of Oxford, who throughout his life was surrounded by scholars versed in the Greek canon, may itself operate to limit the intellectual vigor of Shakespeare studies simply because Oxford is a far superior candidate than the Stratford man, at least as to their respective ability to create plays based on 5th-century Greek tragedies and comedies. The recent colloquium at the University of York, "Greek Texts and the Early Modern Stage," may be a healthy sign that the times are changing.⁹³

Evidence that the Earl of Oxford had a personal relationship with the Duke of Alençon and was privy to the details of the marital negotiations is uncontested. Oxford would certainly have met Alençon at the coronation of Henry III in 1575, and he famously refused to dance for the French delegation headed by Ambassador de Quincy in 1578. Further, Richard Malim has noted that Oxford appeared in a drama before the French ambassadors engaged in the discussions of the Alençon match:

We have a record of the production of *Murderous Michael* on Shrove Tuesday (March 3) 1579, when Sussex's Company put on the play "Device by earls oxford and Surrey, Lord Thomas Howard, and Lord Windsor before the

French Ambassador and Simier [Alençon's representative in the French marriage negotiations]. A Morris masque prepared but not danced."⁹⁴

How appropriate that Bottom's last malapropism is an appeal to the Duke of Athens, "Will it please you to see the epilogue, or hear a Bergomask dance between two of our company?" (5.1.352-354), to which Theseus replies, "No epilogue, I pray you; for your play needs no excuse. Never excuse; for when the players are all dead, there needs none to be blamed" (5.1.355-357).

Finally, Mark Anderson has documented that Oxford's cousin, Lord Henry Howard, urged him to flee to France under Alençon's protection when Ann Vavasour was late in her pregnancy in 1580.⁹⁵ That Oxford would soon be imprisoned in the Tower of London and banished from court during the most heated marital negotiations, which deeply troubled virtually all members of the English court, may have given him sufficient motive to satirize the farcical romance between the Queen and Alençon a decade after the death of the French Duke. Whether *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was first performed at the wedding of the Earl of Derby to Oxford's eldest daughter, Elizabeth Vere, from whom he was estranged for the first five years of her life, is not at issue here, although the idea of this superb comedy as a dramatic epithalamium and apology has great appeal. Imagining Oxford, whose heraldic emblem was the blue boar, as the author magnifies the symbolic significance of Oberon's incantation before he places the love drops in Titania's eyes:

What thou seest when thou doth wake
Do it for thy true-love take;
Love and languish for his sake.
Be it ounce, or cat, or bear,
Pard or boar with bristled hair.
In thy eye that shall appear
When thou wak'st, it is thy dear.
(2.2.27-33)

Suffice it to conclude that *Dream* is a highly inventive, Aristophanic political allegory that defies the assumptions of traditional interpretation and attribution.

Endnotes

- ¹ John Jay Chapman, *Greek Genius and Other Essays* (New York: Moffat, Yard & Company 1915), 138.
- ² In "Translating Europe into Your England" from *Shakespeare and European Politics* (2008), Dominique Goy-Blanquet writes that George Gascoigne and Francis Kinwelmersch's *Jocasta*, a translation of Euripides' *Phoenissae*, was "the only Greek play available in England under the reign of Elizabeth," 289.
- ³ Robert Kilburn Root, *Classical Mythology in Shakespeare* (New York: Gordion Press, Inc. 1965-1903), 6. "It is at any rate certain that he nowhere alludes to any characters or episodes of Greek drama, that they extended no influence whatsoever on his conception of mythology."
- ⁴ A.D. Nuttall, "Action at a distance: Shakespeare and the Greeks," in *Shakespeare and the Classics*. ed. Charles Martindale and A.B. Taylor (2004), 210.
- ⁵ Gilbert Murray, *Hamlet and Orestes: A Study in Traditional Types*, Proceedings of the British Academy, (June 1914) 1-24.
- ⁶ Jan Kott (trans. Boleslaw Taborski), "Hamlet and Orestes", *PMLA* 82:5 (1967), 303-313.
- ⁷ Louise Schleiner, "Latinized Greek Drama in Shakespeare's Writing of *Hamlet*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 41:1 (1990).
- ⁸ Also see Earl Showerman, "Orestes to Hamlet: Myth to Masterpiece," *The Oxfordian VII* (2004).
- ⁹ Jonathan Bate, "Dying to Live in *Much Ado about Nothing*," In *Surprised by Scenes: Essays in Honor of Professor Yasunai Takahashi*, edited by Yasunari Takada, 69-85 (Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1994).
- ¹⁰ Sarah Dewar-Watson, "The *Alcestis* and the Statue scene in *The Winter's Tale*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 60 (2009), 73-80.
- ¹¹ Claire McEachern, ed. *Much Ado about Nothing* (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2006).
- ¹² Also see Earl Showerman, "Shakespeare's Many *Much Ado*'s: *Alcestis*, Hercules and *Love's Labour's Wonne*," originally published in *Brief Chronicles Vol. 1* (2009), 109-140. Reprinted in *Shakespeare Criticism Vol. 141*, Gale, Cengage Learning (2012).

- ¹³ A.D. Nuttall, *Timon of Athens* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1989).
- ¹⁴ Inga Stina-Ewbank, "Striking too short at Greeks': The Transmission of *Agamemnon* to the English Renaissance Stage," in *Agamemnon in Performance 458 BC to 2004*, ed. Fiona Macintosh, Pantelis Michelakis, Edith Hall and Oliver Taplin (Oxford University Press, 2005), 51.
- ¹⁵ See Earl Showerman, "Shakespeare's Greater Greek: *Macbeth* and the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus," *Brief Chronicles* Vol. 3 (2011), 37-70.
- ¹⁶ M.C. Bradbrook, *The Growth and Structure of Elizabethan Comedy* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1962), 77-78.
- ¹⁷ Tucker Brooke, *The Tudor Drama: A History of English national drama to the Retirement of Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1911), 148.
- ¹⁸ Leo Salinger, *Shakespeare and the Traditions of Comedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 175.
- ¹⁹ Colin Burrow, *Shakespeare & Classical Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 247.
- ²⁰ J. Churton Collins, *Studies in Shakespeare* (Westminster: Archibald, Constable & Co. Ltd., 1904), 41.
- ²¹ Collins, 41.
- ²² F.H. Sandbach, *The Comic Theatre of Greece and Rome* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1977), 47.
- ²³ C.L. Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy: a Study of Dramatic Form and its Relation to Social Custom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 152.
- ²⁴ R.A. Foakes, *A Midsummer Night's Dream, New Cambridge Shakespeare* (Cambridge University Press, 1984), 4.
- ²⁵ Whitney J. Oates and Eugene O'Neill, Jr., *The Complete Greek Drama* (New York: Random House, 1938), 727. Citations of the English translation of Aristophanes's *The Birds* are taken from this edition.
- ²⁶ Eric Partridge, *Shakespeare's Bawdy* (New York: Routledge, 1947, 2001) 57. Partridge calls *Dream* "a pretty safe play," and "the cleanest comedy."
- ²⁷ Cedric H. Whitman, *Aristophanes and the Comic Hero* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), 172.
- ²⁸ <http://nndb.com/people/843/000087582/>
- ²⁹ K.J. Dover, *Aristophanic Comedy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1972), 30.
- ³⁰ William Arrowsmith, "Aristophanes' Birds: The Fantasy Politics of Eros," *Arion* New Series 1.1 (1973), 129.
- ³¹ Hazlitt and Wilson commentaries taken from *The Variorum Shakespeare: A Midsummer Night's Dreame* ed. H.H. Furness (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1895), Appendix: 315-319.
- ³² Colin McGinn, *Shakespeare's Philosophy: Discovering the Meaning Behind the Plays* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 34.
- ³³ Neil Issacs and Jack Reese, "Dithyramb and Paeon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Review of English Studies* 55(4) (1974), 351.
- ³⁴ Barber, 3.

Showerman - Shakespeare's Aristophanic Comedy 134

- ³⁵ Barber, 11.
- ³⁶ Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1998), 148.
- ³⁷ Kenneth Burke, "Why A *Midsummer Night's Dream*?" in *Kenneth Burke on Shakespeare*, ed. Scott Newstock (2007), 176-177.
- ³⁸ Roger Stritmatter, "On the Chronology and Performance Venue of *A Midsummer Night's Dreame*," *The Oxfordian* IX (2006), 81-90.
- ³⁹ Stritmatter, 85-86.
- ⁴⁰ Cupid references in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (The Riverside Shakespeare, 1974): "I swear to thee by Cupid's strongest bow" (1.1.169), "And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind" (1.1.235), "Cupid, all armed" (2.1.157), "yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell" (2.1.165), "'Cupid is a knavish lad" (3.2.440), "Dian's bud o'er Cupid's flower (4.1.73). Venus references: "As yonder Venus in her glimmering sphere" (3.2.61), "As the Venus of the sky" (3.2.107)
- ⁴¹ Aristophanes, *The Birds*, 762.
- ⁴² Arrowsmith, 130.
- ⁴³ Aristophanes, *The Birds*, 797.
- ⁴⁴ Marianne Kimura, "Midsummer Night's Dream+sun," *Tsukuba University Department of Area Studies Journal* 34 (3.2013), 87-114, Section 30.30.
- ⁴⁵ Aristophanes, *The Birds*, 743-744.
- ⁴⁶ Kimura, Section 33.33.
- ⁴⁷ Aristophanes, *The Birds*, 755.
- ⁴⁸ William Arrowsmith, trans. *The Birds* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961), 1.
- ⁴⁹ K.J. Dover, *Aristophanic Comedy*, 34.
- ⁵⁰ Salingar, 95.
- ⁵¹ Susan Doran, *Monarchy & Matrimony: The Courtships of Elizabeth I* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 217.
- ⁵² Doran, 181.
- ⁵³ David Bevington, ed., *John Lyly: Sappho and Phao* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), 165.
- ⁵⁴ Marion Taylor, *Bottom, Thou Art Translated: Political Allegory in A Midsummer Night's Dream and Related Literature* (Amsterdam: Rodopi NV, 1973), 31.
- ⁵⁵ Helen Hackett, *Shakespeare and Elizabeth: The Meeting of Two Myths* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 114.
- ⁵⁶ Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World* (New York, W.W. Norton & Co., 2005), 50.
- ⁵⁷ Hackett, 120.
- ⁵⁸ John A. Allen, "Bottom and Titania," *Shakespeare Quarterly*: 18-2 (1967), 116.
- ⁵⁹ Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 141.
- ⁶⁰ Eva Turner Clark, *Hidden Allusions in Shakespeare's Plays* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1931, 1974), 614.
- ⁶¹ Clarke, 615-616.
- ⁶² Stephen Budiansky, *Her Majesty's Spymaster* (New York: Penguin Group, 2005), 114.

- ⁶³ Martin Hume, *Courtships of Queen Elizabeth: A History of Various Negotiations for her Marriage* (London: Eveleigh, Nash & Grayson Limited, 1896, 1926), 205.
- ⁶⁴ Taylor, 140.
- ⁶⁵ Lorde of Ghostes whose fyrre flashe (that forth thy hand doth shake)
Doth cause the trembling Lodges twayne of Phoebus Carre to quake,
Raygne reachlesse nowe: in every place thy peace procurde I have
Aloofe where Nereus lockes up lande Empalde in winding Wave.
Thwack not about with thunder thumpes, the rebell kinges bee downe,
The ravening tyrauntes Scepterlesse, are pulled from their crowne:
(First Acte, Lines 1-6 in *Seneca His Tenne Tragedies* edited by Thomas Newton, first published in 1581 and cited here from a modern edition, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1927)
- ⁶⁶ Taylor, 139.
- ⁶⁷ Christopher Hibbert, *The Virgin Queen Elizabeth I, Genius of the Golden Age* (Perseus Books, 1991), 191.
- ⁶⁸ Hume, *Courtships of Queen Elizabeth*, 199-200.
- ⁶⁹ Hibbert, 193.
- ⁷⁰ Taylor, 199.
- ⁷¹ Martin Hume, *The Great Lord Burghley, A Study in Elizabethan Statecraft* (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 1898, 2004), 382.
- ⁷² Martin Hume, *Courtships of Queen Elizabeth*, 333.
- ⁷³ Budiansky, 113.
- ⁷⁴ Stritmatter, 88.
- ⁷⁵ Kenneth Muir, "Pyramus and Thisbe: A Study in Shakespeare's Method," *Shakespeare Quarterly*: 5 (2) 1954, 141-153.
- ⁷⁶ Muir, 153.
- ⁷⁷ Michelle and Charles Martindale, *Shakespeare and the Uses of Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 2003), 41.
- ⁷⁸ Laurie Maguire, *Shakespeare's Names* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 97.
- ⁷⁹ Burke, 172-173.
- ⁸⁰ Katherine Lever, "Greek Comedy on the Sixteenth century English Stage," *The Classical Journal* 42:3 (1946), 169.
- ⁸¹ Lever, 173.
- ⁸² Myron Stagman, *The Burllesque Comedies of Aristophanes* (City-State Press, 2000), 25.
- ⁸³ Jeffrey Henderson, *The Maculate Muse: Obscene Language in Attic Comedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 1.
- ⁸⁴ Henderson, 29.
- ⁸⁵ Myron Stagman, *Shakespeare's Greek Drama Secret* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 234.
- ⁸⁶ Stagman, 244.
- ⁸⁷ Stagman, 312.
- ⁸⁸ Stagman, 333.
- ⁸⁹ Stagman, 337.

- ⁹⁰ Stephanie Hopkins Hughes, "'Shakespeare's' Tutor: Sir Thomas Smith," *The Oxfordian III* (2000), 20.
- ⁹¹ Katherine Lever, "Greek Comedy on the Sixteenth century English Stage," *The Classical Journal* 42:3 (1946), 169.
- ⁹² Caroline Bowden, "The Library of Mildred Cooke Cecil, Lady Burghley," *Library*, ser.7, 6 (2005), 6.
- ⁹³ In July 2014 the Center for Renaissance and Early Modern Studies at the University of York in England sponsored a day-long colloquium on "Greek Texts and the Early Modern Stage" to explore the considerable impact of the Greek canon on Shakespeare and his contemporaries. The colloquium description underlines the radical cultural shift this represents. "Greek provokes strong associations for a number of reasons: its controversial associations with Erasmus, Protestantism, and heresy; the specter of democratic governance; the rebirth of interest in Galenic medicine; the pervasive influence of Greek culture on Latin literature; and the identification of Greece with the origins of theatre." In the abstract of her paper, "Hamlet and the Ghost of Sophocles," Sarah Dewar-Watson claimed that the verbal echoes of Sophocles' *Antigone* in *Hamlet* suggests Shakespeare was familiar with the anthology of seven Greek plays, *Tragediae selectae Aeschyli, Sophoclis, Euripidis*, published in Paris in 1567, which included Latin translations of *Antigone, Hecuba, Alcestis* and *Iphigenia at Aulis*.
- ⁹⁴ Richard Malim, *The Earl of Oxford and the MAKING of "SHAKESPEARE"* (Jefferson: McFarland & Co., 2012), 87.
- ⁹⁵ Mark Anderson, *Shakespeare By Another Name: The Life of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, the Man Who Was Shakespeare* (New York: Gotham Books, 2005), 163. "But, my lord, what cause should make you lose this opportunity of benefiting both yourself and others, since you seem the likest man to wax great in Monsieur's favor if he come over?"

Mark Twain and “Shake-Speare”: Soul Mates

James Norwood

One of the hallmarks of Mark Twain was irreverence. His first major publication, *The Innocents Abroad*, called into question the high culture of Europe, which he had experienced first-hand during an extended trip. Following his days as a prospector and journalist in Nevada and California, Twain moved to New York City and soon received a commission to write about Europe and the Holy Land as part of a religious-oriented “great European pleasure excursion.”¹ Twain set sail from New York aboard the *Quaker City*, a former Civil War steamship, in June, 1867, and he returned in late November. His fellow tourists wanted to worship the idols of European culture; Twain wanted to bury them. The experience set Twain on a lifelong mission of challenging the status quo, of questioning cherished beliefs, and attacking sacred cows.

In assessing Michelangelo, for example, Twain wrote the following:

I wish to say one word about Michael Angelo Buonarotti (sic). I used to worship the mighty genius of Michael Angelo—that man who was great in poetry, painting, sculpture, architecture—great in everything he undertook. But I do not want Michael Angelo for breakfast—for luncheon—for dinner—for tea—for supper—for between meals....In Genoa, he designed every thing; in Milan he or his pupils designed everything....in Padua, Verona, Venice, Bologna, who did we ever hear of, from guides, but Michael Angelo? In Florence, he painted every thing, designed every thing, nearly, and what he did not design he used to sit on a favorite stone and look at, and they showed us the stone. In Pisa he designed every thing but the old shot tower, and they would have attributed that to him if it had not been so awfully out of the perpendicular....He designed St. Peter's; he designed the Pope; he designed the Pantheon, the uniform of the Pope's soldiers, the Tiber, the Vatican, the Coliseum, the Capitol, the Tarpeian Rock, the Barberini Palace, St. John Lateran, the Campagna, the Appian Way, the

Seven Hills, the Baths of Caracalla, the Claudian Aqueduct....the eternal bore designed the Eternal City, and unless all men and books do lie, he painted every thing in it!.... 'Say no more!....Say that the Creator made Italy from designs by Michael Angelo!' I never felt so fervently thankful, so soothed, so tranquil, so filled with a blessed peace, as I did yesterday when I learned that Michael Angelo was dead.²

Twain's satirical writing may have anticipated the shrill cries in academe in the late twentieth century, as university professors attacked with even greater venom the "Dead White European Male."

But unlike his satirical treatment of Italy, Twain had great respect for England. He claimed that some of his Clemens ancestors were pirates in the Elizabethan era, noting that during the reign of Elizabeth, piracy was "a respectable trade."³ He first traveled to England in 1872, and he later lived for extended and joyous periods in the English countryside with his family. The culmination of his English travels came in June, 1907, with the awarding of an honorary doctorate from Oxford University. During his visit, Twain was treated like royalty, and he relished every moment of it.

And yet, from his earliest experiences as a cub reporter in Nevada, Twain had doubts about the traditional view of Shakespeare. In the 1860s, Sam Clemens was hired by newspaper owner and editor Joseph T. Goodman as a writer for the *Virginia City Territorial Enterprise*. This young, failed prospector had finally hit the mother lode at the moment when he adopted the pseudonym Mark Twain and began the career of a writer.

On April 22, 1864, Twain wrote a piece for the alleged three hundredth anniversary of the birth of the Bard. Published in the *Territorial Enterprise*, the article sought to present a biographical sketch of Shakespeare. Twain recalls in his autobiography that "I got the Cyclopedia and examined it, and found out who Shakespeare was and what he had done....There wasn't enough of what Shakespeare had done to make an editorial of the necessary length, but I filled it out with what he hadn't done—which in many respects was more important and striking and readable than the handsomest things he had really accomplished."⁴ It is not unusual for conventional Shakespearean biographers to embellish the known facts of the life of William of Stratford. In this regard, Twain was anticipating by 150 years Stephen Greenblatt's fanciful biography *Will in the World*.

As early as 1870, Twain began work on an ambitious autobiography. But it was not until January, 1906, that he formally began his "Autobiographical Dictations," recording the majority of the massive autobiography currently being released in installments by the University of California Press. Twain insisted that the work not be published until after his death. He claimed famously that, "I think we never become really and genuinely our entire and honest selves until we are dead—and not then until we have been dead years and years. People ought to start dead and then they would honest so much earlier."⁵ It has taken more than a century for the autobiography to be fully prepared and edited by the dedicated

scholars at the Bancroft Library in Berkeley. The work is ongoing with two of the three projected volumes of Twain's autobiography having been published, respectively, in 2010 and 2013. This meticulously edited text provides an expansive window into the creative process of Twain as a writer. It is instructive to weigh the author's perspectives in his autobiographical writings to understand why Twain felt a spiritual bond with the author "Shake-Speare." Scattered through Twain's autobiography are insights about the true nature of literary genius.

In his "Autobiographical Dictations," Twain wished to avoid a straightforward chronological life story. Instead, he wrote selectively and with free association, connecting his present experience with past moments of his life. He described his goal in the loftiest of terms: "I intend that this autobiography shall become a model for all future autobiographies when it is published, after my death, and I also intend that it shall be read and admired a good many centuries because of its form and method—a form and method whereby the past and present are constantly brought face to face, resulting in contrasts which newly fire up the interest all along like contact of flint with steel."⁶

Twain's goal was to tell his life story in a non-linear fashion in the same way that Arthur Miller's memoir *Timebends* filters a myriad of past events in a mosaic of impressions and experiences. In the author's dictated words, it becomes clear that Twain was driven to write in response to personal loss and tragedy. Twain used his autobiography to find comfort after the deaths of his wife and two of his three daughters. Following the death of his wife, Livy, in 1904, he simply poured himself into writing. He was dictating to his secretary, Isabel Lyon, while simultaneously providing insights to his biographer, Albert Bigelow Paine, who was virtually in residence with Twain for many years. This was an author using the act of dictation as a way to cope with his grief. In the process, Twain revealed insights about himself as a creative artist.

A theme that emerges from the autobiography is that in his literary creations, Twain wrote from direct, personal experience in order to evoke the human realities of his fictional characters. In his autobiography, Twain reminisced about his formative years in Missouri, "I can call it all back and make it as real as it ever was, and as blessed."⁷ He once wrote in a notebook the following creed of himself as a literary artist:

If you attempt to create & build a wholly imaginary incident, adventure or situation, you will go astray, & the artificiality of the thing will be detectable. But if you found on a fact in your personal experience, it is an acorn, a root, & every created adornment that grows up out of it & spreads its foliage & blossoms to the sun will seem realities, not inventions.⁸

Harold Bloom has credited Shakespeare with the "invention of the human" in literature. To be more exact, Shakespeare was at the literary forefront of a new artistic vision of the "self" that was part of the broader cultural phenomenon of Renaissance humanism. The new aesthetic focusing on the individual was

ushered in by Petrarch, who was crowned poet laureate in Rome on April 8, 1341. Michelangelo painted his face as the likeness of the martyred St. Bartholomew in his *Last Judgment* fresco in the Sistine Chapel. The early Renaissance artist Donatello sculpted biblical images in his own likeness. Art historian John Hunisak writes of Donatello's *David* that, "with Donatello, we discover the first modern instance of the fusion of art and autobiography."⁹ It is not surprising that in painting, the forms of portraiture and self-portraiture are essential inventions of the Renaissance.

Perhaps the most complete depiction of the ideal individual in the Renaissance is articulated in the dialogues of Baldassare Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* (The Book of the Courtier). Drawing upon his experience in the civilized world of Urbino, Castiglione describes a nearly divine image of the "self" for young men and women, wherein their characters are molded by education, culture, and courtly manners, while expressed effortlessly through *sprezzatura*. Castiglione genuinely believed in the perfection of the human being in body, mind, and soul. For Oxfordians, it comes as no surprise that Edward de Vere wrote in a polished Latin a dedicatory letter to Bartholomew Clerke's 1571 English translation of *The Courtier*.¹⁰ In Spain, Miguel de Cervantes was clearly modeling his most famous literary creation, Don Quixote, on his own life and character. Twain articulates precisely how Shakespeare conceived human truths by grounding the works of literature in the author's "personal experience." When Stratfordians like Jonathan Bate and Stanley Wells stress the importance of "imagination" in literature, it is the exact opposite of what Twain or any artist knows from the process of starting with the "acorn and root" of personal experience.

Recalling his years as a riverboat pilot, Twain remarked that "the face of the water, in time, became a wonderful book."¹¹ That book was *Life on the Mississippi*. The Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986) came to the United States at age 83. Professor Shelley Fisher Fishkin recounts the moving story of the visit of Borges to Hannibal, Missouri:

Borges agreed to lecture at Washington University in St. Louis on the condition that his hosts take him to Hannibal. Twain's writings — particularly *Huckleberry Finn* — had captured his imagination as a child and sustained him as an adult. Frail and nearly blind, Borges insisted on making the two-hour trip to Twain's hometown. When he got there, it became clear that there was really only one thing he wanted to do: put his hand in the Mississippi River. He reached down and did just that. The river, he said, was the essence of Twain's writing. He had to touch it.¹²

The experience of the river had been communicated across time from one literary genius to another.

Huckleberry Finn is arguably Twain's greatest literary achievement, and it was written almost entirely out of Twain's personal experience. It drew upon the townspeople of Hannibal, Missouri, such as Tom Blankenship, who was the model for Huck. The recollections of a slave belonging to Twain's uncle and known to Twain

as “Uncle Dan’l” were the basis for the character of Jim. “Uncle Dan’l” was a man in his 30s at the time when little Sam Clemens knew him virtually as a father figure. From Twain’s autobiography, we learn that:

All the Negroes were friends of ours, and with those of our own age we were in effect comrades....We had a faithful and affectionate good friend, ally and adviser in Uncle Dan’l, a middle-aged slave whose...sympathies were wide and warm and whose heart was honest and simple and knew no guile...I have not seen him for more than half a century and yet spiritually I have had his welcome company a good part of that time and have staged him in books under his own name and as ‘Jim’, and carted him all around—to Hannibal, down the Mississippi on a raft and even across the Desert of Sahara in a balloon—and he has endured it all with the friendliness and loyalty which were his birthright.¹³

Twain’s fictional works are peopled with individuals exactly like “Uncle Dan’l”. Twain moved effortlessly among genres, including journalism, satire, the novel, short stories, memoir, travelogue, historical writing, plays, and children’s books. The list of styles enumerated by Polonius in describing the vast repertoire of the company of actors arriving at Elsinore could serve as a catalogue of Twain’s literary canon. He seemed to master any literary style. But at its core, the Twain corpus was autobiographical.

Ernest Hemingway famously wrote that “all modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn*.”¹⁴ The history of that novel has been filled with controversy, including the initial banning of the book by the Concord Public Library at the very location that marked the beginning of the Revolutionary War in the eighteenth century and the home of Emerson and Thoreau, as well as a center of abolitionism, in the nineteenth. In the twenty-first century, it might be added that *Huckleberry Finn* is the greatest American novel that is no longer read. Sadly, the reason why this work is infrequently assigned in colleges and universities stems from those exclusive members of the professoriate who are the guardians of the curriculum.

But what is considered “offensive” language in the novel today was the exact intention of Twain, as apparent in his explanatory note to *Huckleberry Finn*. Twain advises the reader that “In this book a number of dialects are used....The shadings have not been done in a hap-hazard fashion, or by guess-work; but pains-takingly, and with the trustworthy guidance and support of personal familiarity with these several forms of speech.”¹⁵

Twain’s goal was to faithfully reproduce the rhythms of speech, including the colloquial expressions and class-based dialects from the Midwest of the antebellum era. Like Shakespeare, Twain began with the spoken word that was deeply engrained in his personal experience and turned it into art. His stated purpose was to discover the soul of the people. This was achieved not from the world of the imagination, but from the roots of his experience in the culture of the Mississippi River. The “soul” of Mark Twain lay in the experience of that little river town.

The moral center of *Huckleberry Finn* lies in Huck's relationship with the fugitive slave Jim, who becomes both a father figure and a buddy to the young man during their quest for freedom on the Mississippi. Twain began writing the book in 1876, but the setting is clearly in 1840s. The novel telescopes the action from the end of Reconstruction back to the antebellum world of slavery.

But Twain then placed the project on hold at the point in the novel when Jim and Huck are fleeing the South and approaching the Northern free states. When he returned to the novel nearly a decade later, he chose to have Jim and Huck double back and head south on the river. Of course, this makes no sense in the context of Jim's search for freedom, as he is heading in the opposite direction of the free state of Illinois. But Twain was not comfortable in his attempt to depict the Northern dialect, and so his characters drifted south where the author was able to convey in the vernacular he knew best the antics of such colorful characters as the con artists, the Duke and the King. Thus, the final chapters of the novel turn into an episodic sequence of vignettes that showcase the diverse patterns of speaking along the southern portion of the Mississippi.

The turning point of the novel arrives when Huck is about to send a letter to Miss Watson, the owner of the slave Jim. The moral position engrained in Huck is not to steal other people's property, and so, he feels obligated to return Jim to Miss Watson. Huck's considered analysis of whether or not to send the letter takes on the gravitas of a Shakespearean soliloquy: "I got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself: 'All right, then, I'll go to hell' — and tore it up."¹⁶

In deciding to defy the conventional definition of "conscience" and refuse to return the "property" of a slave to its lawful owner, Huck as a hero has defined a higher moral authority in recognizing Jim as a human being. It was in this internal struggle of Huck Finn that Hemingway knew that Twain had discovered the essential voice of America—in both its worst and best ways.

In the words of author Toni Morrison, "elitist censorship"¹⁷ has kept *Huckleberry Finn* out of the curriculum in higher education. Those same elitist censors have kept an open disclosure of the Shakespeare authorship question out of our classrooms. Twain knew that the "soul" of Shakespeare belonged to the world of Tudor aristocracy—not to the community of Stratford-upon-Avon. Elitist censorship works in insidious ways like the elitist educators who proclaim that those who doubt the traditional Shakespeare authorship story are...elitists! To graduate from adolescence to adulthood, the public must understand that historical truth matters, that the original story of Shakespearean authorship is a lie, and that the same authority figures who have suppressed the masterpieces of Mark Twain have dictated the teaching of a Shakespearean biography that is a myth.

Twain always placed himself at the center of his writing. His greatest literary works, *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*, draw upon his personal experience in Hannibal. Twain wrote *Tom Sawyer* in the wake of the loss of his nineteen-month-old son Langdon to diphtheria. The novel was not only an ode to childhood, but, in this case, to one specific child. In capturing the efflorescence of youth, Twain was

meditating on the life that could have been lived by his boy and that Twain himself could have experienced vicariously if Langdon had lived. Thus, Twain himself is an omnipresent figure hiding in the shadows of *Tom Sawyer*. Twain also appears as the eponymous title character in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. He is the wily Yankee Hank Morgan in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. He even appears as the autobiographical Stranger who exposes the rampant small-town mendacity of "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyberg," which arguably is the finest storytelling of his late writing career.

The truth about Mark Twain is, according to his own admission, more detailed in his literary works than in his autobiography. To Twain's friend William Dean Howells, Twain confessed that though his intent was to write an autobiography that was "a perfectly veracious record of his life," he later admitted that "as to veracity it was a failure; he had begun to lie, and that if no man ever yet told the truth about himself it was because no man ever could."¹⁸ The author himself realized that a more profound truth about the soul of Mark Twain is memorialized in his own literary works.

In the first volume of his autobiography, Twain describes in almost Proustian fashion his sensory experience of a watermelon:

I know how a prize watermelon looks when it is sunning its fat rotundity among pumpkin vines....I know how to tell when it is ripe without 'plugging' it; I know how inviting it looks when it is cooling itself in a tub of water under the bed, waiting; I know how it looks when it lies on the table in the sheltered great floor-space between house and kitchen, and the children gathered for the sacrifice and their mouths watering; I know the crackling sound it makes when the carving knife enters its end, and I can see the split fly along in front of the blade as the knife cleaves its way to the other end; I can see its halves fall apart and display the rich red meat and the black seeds, and the heart standing up, a luxury fit for the elect; I know how a boy looks, behind a yard-long slice of that melon, and I know how he feels; for I have been there. I know the taste of the watermelon which has been honestly come by, and I know the taste of the watermelon which has been acquired by art. Both taste good, but the experienced know which tastes best.¹⁹

It is this kind of sense memory work that Twain used to perfect his great literary works, which he accomplished not by artifice or the imagination, but by lived experience and memory. Twain drew upon the farm of his uncle for the meaningful details of his novels. In the autobiography, he provides a colorful description of Southern cuisine:

My uncle, John A. Quarles, was a farmer, and his place was in the country four miles from Florida....In "Huck Finn" and in "Tom Sawyer Detective"

I moved it down to Arkansas...It was a heavenly place for a boy, that farm of my uncle John's....In the summer the table was set in the middle of that shady and breezy floor, and the sumptuous meals—well, it makes me cry to think of them. Fried chicken; roast pig; wild and tame turkeys, ducks, and geese; venison just killed; squirrels, rabbits, pheasants, partridges, prairie chickens; home-made bacon and ham; hot biscuits, hot batter-cakes, hot buckwheat cakes, hot 'wheatbread,' hot rolls, hot corn pone; fresh corn boiled on the ear, succotash, butter-beans, string beans, tomatoes, peas, Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes; buttermilk, sweet milk, 'clabber;' watermelons, musk melons, canteloups (sic)—all fresh from the garden—apple pie, peach pie, pumpkin pie, apple dumplings, peach cobbler....The way that the things were cooked was perhaps the main splendor—particularly a certain few of the dishes. For instance, the corn bread, the hot biscuits and wheatbread, and the fried chicken. These things have never been properly cooked in the North—in fact, no one there is able to learn the art, so far as my experience goes. The North thinks it knows how to make corn bread, but this is gross superstition. Perhaps no bread in the world is quite as good as Southern corn bread, and perhaps no bread in the world is quite so bad as the Northern imitation of it. The North seldom tries to fry chicken, and this is well; the art cannot be learned north of the line of Mason and Dixon, nor anywhere else in Europe. This is not hearsay; it is experience that is speaking.²⁰

In this lengthy description of the foods, Twain is telling us how he wrote his masterwork, *Huckleberry Finn*: through the sensory recall of his own experience. He is soulfully describing the world of his childhood, and in looking for the soul of the experience of the author "William Shakespeare," Mark Twain had the laser-like vision to perceive a void in the biographical record. Twain published his final book in 1909. It was neither a novel nor a memoir. Rather, it was a work of literary criticism that cast doubt on the traditional view of authorship of Shakespeare's plays. *Is Shakespeare Dead?* has confused Twain scholars for over a century. Twain's first biographer and confidant, Albert Bigelow Paine, urged Twain not to publish the work for fear that he would be ridiculed. Speaking for countless English literature professors, Paine asserted that "the romance of the boy, Will Shakespeare, who had come up to London and began by holding horses outside of the theater, and ended by winning the proudest place in the world of letters, was something I did not wish to let perish."²¹ But Twain disagreed with his friend Paine and insisted on the publication of his manuscript. As with so many of the untruths he sought to expose, Twain was convinced that the conventional Shakespearean biography was a lie.

Twain's book on Shakespearean authorship was inspired from a personal visit paid to him at his home by Helen Keller. Twain had first met Keller at a time when she was fourteen years old and appeared at a small gathering at the home of the critic and editor of *Harper's* magazine, Laurence Hutton. Twain was deeply moved by the sensitivity of Helen, who was able to identify the names of every one

of the dozen or so men and women present simply by touching their hands. As recounted in Twain's autobiography,

The guests were brought one after another and introduced to her. As she shook hands with each she took her hand away and laid her fingers lightly against Miss Sullivan's lips, who spoke against them the person's name. When a name was difficult, Miss Sullivan not only spoke it against Helen's fingers but spelled it upon Helen's hand with her own fingers—stenographically apparently, for the swiftness of the operation was suggestive of that.²²

Poet Margaret Sangster observed Twain's emotional reaction to Helen as he "impetuously dashed the tears from his eyes as he looked into her sweet face."²³ At the end of the evening, Twain patted Helen on the head and was amazed that she recognized him. He later wrote, "Perhaps someone else can explain this miracle, but I have never been able to do it. Could she feel the wrinkles in my hand through her hair?"²⁴ When Helen later visited Twain at his Stormfield home in Connecticut, Twain asked her about the "miracle." She simply said that she recognized him by his scent. Perhaps Helen was being polite in declining to say that he reeked of tobacco. But what is truly remarkable was how Helen Keller was able to perceive Twain's voice. She recalled that "his voice was truly wonderful. To my touch, it was deep, resonant. He had the power of modulating it so as to suggest the most delicate shades of meaning, and he spoke so deliberately that I could get almost every word with my fingers on his lips."²⁵ Of course, Helen Keller was deaf, yet she was able to provide possibly the most detailed description ever written of Twain's vocal quality simply through touch.

For inclusion in his autobiography, Twain insisted on publishing a letter he received from Helen Keller, dated March 27, 1906. Twain recounted that "if I know anything about literature, here was a fine and great and noble sample of it; that this letter was simple, direct, unadorned, unaffected, unpretentious, and was moving and beautiful and eloquent; that no fellow to it had ever been issued from any girl's lips since Joan of Arc, that immortal child of seventeen, stood alone and friendless in her chains, five centuries ago, and confronted her judges—the concentrated learning and intellect of France."²⁶ In the letter, Helen writes the following to Clemens about his support of the blind:

You once told me you were a pessimist, Mr. Clemens; but great men are usually mistaken about themselves. You are an optimist. If you were not, you would not preside at the meeting. For it is an answer to pessimism. It claims that the heart and the wisdom of a great city are devoted to the good of mankind, that in this the busiest city in the world no cry of distress goes up, but receives a compassionate and generous answer. Rejoice that the cause of the blind has been heard in New York: for the day after, it shall be heard round the world. Yours sincerely, Helen Keller.²⁷

The letter speaks volumes about Helen Keller as much as it does about Samuel Clemens.

When she visited Twain at his Stormfield home, Helen was accompanied by her mentor, Annie Sullivan, as well as Annie's husband, John Macy. It was at this time that Twain coined the phrase "miracle worker" to describe Annie Sullivan. Fifty years later, that image became the title of William Gibson's play *The Miracle Worker*, which was later adapted into a film with the same title and featured Anne Bancroft as Annie. Sullivan's husband, John Albert Macy (1877-1932), was a Harvard instructor and literary critic. When he arrived at Stormfield, he brought along the galley proofs for a new book on the Shakespeare authorship question. The 600-page volume by William Stone Booth was titled *Some Acrostic Signatures of Francis Bacon*. As Twain had been troubled for decades by the traditional Shakespearean biography, he devoured Booth's book, staying up at all hours to complete the reading.

Like so many who have attempted to decode Baconian ciphers, Twain was confused by the complexity of the acrostics, which sought to make the case for Francis Bacon as the author of the Shakespeare canon. Twain thereby resolved to write his own book to set forth the evidence in a way that "he who merely skims a book might grasp it."²⁸ Twain complained about "that third-rate actor who never wrote a line in his life" and was especially troubled by the absence of a literary paper trail linking the man from Stratford to the great plays and poems. For Twain, "it always seemed unaccountable to me that a man could be so prominent in Elizabeth's little London...yet leave behind him hardly an incident for people to remember him by....Not even a distinguished horse could die and leave such biographical poverty behind him."²⁹ For Twain, the Stratford man's legacy was "a vague file of chipmunk-tracks stringing through the dust of Stratford."³⁰ During the visit from Helen Keller, Twain's secretary, Isabel Lyon, overheard Twain and Macy denouncing the Stratford man in the strongest terms imaginable. Lyon recounted that, "You'd think both men had Shakespeare by the throat...strangling him for some hideous crime."³¹ Miss Lyon did not grasp that the "crime" being discussed by Twain and Macy was identity theft!

Twain spent only two months in writing *Is Shakespeare Dead?*, which was published one year before his death in 1909. Parts of the book were dictated, and others were written in longhand. Twain set a daily word count as a goal, which was in keeping with his traditional discipline of writing. He was fully aware of the resistance to overcome in changing minds of those wedded to the deeply entrenched myth of the Stratford man. He wrote that "I am aware that when even the brightest mind in our world has been trained up from childhood in a superstition of any kind, it will never be possible for that mind, in its maturity, to examine sincerely, dispassionately, and conscientiously any evidence or any circumstance which shall seem to cast a doubt upon the validity of that superstition."³² His *Harper's* publisher did not want to print the book, but was at the time under contact to publish anything Twain wrote. Twain wanted his short volume to appear before Stone's book on acrostics was published, and so, Twain's book was rushed into print on April 8, 1909.

Twain was never a stranger to controversy, and, following his death, Twain scholars have been embarrassed by *Is Shakespeare Dead?*, casually dismissing the work as a “semi-autobiographical” study.³³ But Twain’s treatise has rarely been examined in mainstream critical studies to understand what it might be saying about the traditional view of Shakespearean authorship. In fact, *Is Shakespeare Dead?* is consistent with Twain’s long-held skepticism about the author of Shakespeare’s works. In 1880, Twain published a short, fictional dialogue among various members of the nobility at the court of Queen Elizabeth I. This ribald, scatological sketch was entitled *1601*. Perhaps the most Rabelaisian writing of Twain’s career, the sketch was prepared for the amusement of Twain and his close friend Joe Twichell, the fun-loving father of nine children and pastor of the Asylum Hill Congregational Church in Hartford, Connecticut. The jokes would be appropriate to any number of teenage locker room-style situations in today’s Hollywood films. While Samuel Clemens wrote under the pseudonym of Mark Twain, the author chose to publish *1601* anonymously in 1880. Composed between the time Twain had completed *Tom Sawyer* and was working on *Huckleberry Finn*, the *1601* dialogue reveals how the rascally side of Twain was emerging right along with the development of two of his most famous literary creations.

In *1601*, characters who converse with Elizabeth I include Francis Beaumont, Walter Raleigh, Ben Jonson, Francis Bacon, and a small coterie of aristocratic women. William Shakespeare makes an appearance with the name spelled “Shaxpur” (S-H-A-X-P-U-R), which is the correct phonetic spelling of the name of the man from Stratford. Twain sensed that the human realities of Shakespeare’s literary canon did not correspond to the facts of the life of the man from Stratford: there was a mismatch wherein Twain observed no evidence of notoriety even at the time of the death of William of Stratford. As he observed in *Is Shakespeare Dead?*, “If Shakespeare had really been celebrated, like me, Stratford could have told things about him; and if my experience goes for anything, they’d have done it.”³⁴

In 1986, Oxfordian Ruth Loyd Miller wrote a paper entitled “Mark Twain: Muzzled By Petrified Opinion” as part of her course work for a Masters degree at the University of Southwestern Louisiana.³⁵ In her twenty-two page essay, Miller offered commentary on Twain’s *Is Shakespeare Dead?* One of her themes is the silent treatment Twain received following the publication of *Is Shakespeare Dead?*, and the silence has continued to the present day. In June 2001, Miller appended a note to her paper, indicating that “this is now being updated to include the current group of ‘scholars’ who seek to ‘sanitize Twain’ (i.e.—keep the image pure by concealing his long-time & vibrant interest in the Shakespeare authorship issue)—the woman editor of the Oxford Twain & Ken Burns.”³⁶

Miller inserted into the paper a detailed fact sheet of the primary source references for the life of the Stratford man, as compiled by E. K. Chambers, R. Roland Lewis, Giles Dawson, and Samuel Schoenbaum—none of whom were able to adduce concrete evidence that he was a writer. She also prepared a detailed critique of the scholarly shortcomings of Shakespeare’s preeminent nineteenth century biographer, James Orchard Halliwell-Phillips, whom she described as “a young man

in a hurry”³⁷ and Sir Sidney Lee, the principal authority in the early twentieth century, who, in the words of Miller, “succeeded, more or less, to the high priesthood of Bardology.”³⁸ At the end of the paper, an extensive set of appendices offers a robust argument against the Stratford man as the author of Shakespeare’s literary works.

Miller also discusses how Twain was influenced by Sir Granville George Greenwood’s *The Shakespeare Problem Restated* (1908). The noted Twain scholar Alan Gribben concluded that the Greenwood volume “became the most heavily annotated and underscored book in Twain’s library.”³⁹ From the Albert A. Berg Collection of the New York Public Library, Miller acquired photocopies of Twain’s personal copy of Greenwood’s book with Twain’s holograph notes, which served as the final portion of her appendices. In his annotations, Twain refers to the Stratford man as “the Arthur Orton of literary ‘claimants.’”⁴⁰ One of the most revealing of Twain’s marginal notations comes in Greenwood’s discussion of the early works of Shakespeare, including “Venus and Adonis” and *Titus Andronicus*: “It is environment, & environment alone, that develops genius or strangles it.”⁴¹ Twain clearly recognized that the environment of Stratford did not provide the creative impetus for the author’s narrative poem and the early Senecan revenge tragedy. Alongside Greenwood’s summary of Ben Jonson absorbing Greek and Roman classics and “studying the humours” of London, Twain simply wrote in the margin, “Huck Finn”!⁴²

In her paper, Miller describes the intense pressure placed on Twain not to publish *Is Shakespeare Dead?* Twain’s secretary, Isabel Lyon, wrote with dismay about the widespread “chagrin” expressed by those closest to Twain when, against the wishes of his family and associates, he proceeded with the publication. Miller argues that “the community of Shakespearean scholars is filled with Shaksper worshipers who like Miss Lyon defended the religious belief that Shaksper was Shakespeare. *Is Shakespeare Dead?* was Twain’s last attempt to unlock closed minds—to crash the barrier of petrified opinion.”⁴³ Although Twain’s final book publication has been marginalized by Twain specialists, it may nonetheless be one of his most important long-term literary contributions.

Along with his success as a writer, Twain wrestled with a dual identity of the Midwesterner of humble origins, Sam Clemens, and the international celebrity, Mark Twain. In his lecturing, Twain frequently told his audiences that he had a twin brother named (interestingly) William. One of the twins died at age two, but it was never known for certain which one of the twins had drowned. In his lectures, even Twain himself seemed uncertain! The interplay of binary opposites is a motif throughout his literary works. Huck Finn has his shadow side in Tom Sawyer. Hank Morgan is split between two worlds, toggling between the modern industrial age of New England and the feudal world of King Arthur in *A Connecticut Yankee*. Tom Canty, the commoner, switches places with young Edward VI, the Prince of Wales, in *The Prince and the Pauper*.

On December 31, 1906, Twain welcomed in the New Year by entertaining guests at his rented home at 21 Fifth Avenue in New York City. Twain suddenly

appeared along with a friend at the top of the stairs. Both men were dressed in white suits and informed the group that they were Siamese twins about to deliver a lecture on the evils of alcohol. One of the twins was a teetotaler and the other was constantly sipping from a flask. The more that the one brother denounced the spirits, the more that the other consumed the drink, sending them both into bouts of slurred speech and inebriation.⁴⁴ In the late 1860s, Twain had written a short comic work called “Personal Habits of the Siamese Twins.” In the 1890s, his story “Those Extraordinary Twins” featured a pair of conjoined brothers, one a Democrat and the other a Whig. *Pudd’nhead Wilson* of 1893 features the two colorful characters of Thomas à Becket Driscoll and Valet de Chambre as the switched babies in the culturally-driven narrative of one of Twain’s greatest literary achievements.

A lifelong obsession for Twain was his intent to expose false claimants. For this reason, he was the wily autobiographical Pudd’nhead Wilson, who makes use of modern forensic science to serve justice in the Dawson’s Landing community through the use of fingerprints. But he also wrote about the Tichborne Claimant (Arthur Orton), Satan, Louis XVII, the Veiled Prophet of Khorassan, and Mary Baker Eddy—all of whom he considered pretenders. His 1892 novel *The American Claimant* tells the story of an eccentric American inventor seeking a claim on an English earldom. Twain even joked that through his wife’s genealogical tree, he had personally become the Earl of Durham.⁴⁵ The pretender “William Shaxpur” was the culminating act of a lifelong passion to peel away the layers on usurpers, con artists, and charlatans.

A nearly exact contemporary of Twain was the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Twain and Nietzsche were responding critically to troubling issues in modernity. Both writers were deeply concerned about growing industrialization, militarism, secularism, and the erosion of spirituality. Both were sensitive authors who saw themselves as prophets during the waning of the nineteenth century. But Nietzsche and Twain were also a pair of binary opposites. Twain yearned for the academic credentials and pedigree of Nietzsche. Labeled a pariah and a madman, Nietzsche craved the celebrity status of Twain. Twain wanted to be taken seriously, but was labeled a humorist — the wry and eccentric jokester in the white suit entertaining large crowds in lecture halls. Nietzsche was at heart a humorist who was branded a nihilist. Twain had at best an elementary school education, having reached no level higher than the sixth grade. One of the greatest moments of his life was in receiving an honorary doctorate from Oxford University. But Twain never really looked the part of the scholar. Dressed in his academic robes and attempting to balance a mortar board that would not stay in place, he was a comical figure oddly out of place in an academic procession.

But Twain’s vision is relentless Nietzschean. The apocalyptic ending of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court* anticipates the great wars to come in the twentieth century, just as Nietzsche had prophesied in his learned philosophical works. Hank Morgan’s skills acquired in a nineteenth-century American factory eventually are used to bring down the sixth-century knights on horseback, but in the process they destroy the idealistic world of Camelot. All great artists are

prophets of their ages. Shakespeare saw the security of the old feudal order giving way to the chaotic early modern age. He had depicted the new mercantile ethic in the Italian comedies, especially *The Merchant of Venice*. It was as if Shakespeare was embarking on a ship that had just left port and the old world was slowly receding in the distance.

In a more accelerated world in transition, Twain and Nietzsche were warning of the dangers of the new and terrifying military-industrial age. Nietzsche observed first-hand the rise of Bismarck; Twain reacted with horror to nineteenth-century imperialism, denouncing the policies of King Leopold of Belgium, as well as American adventurism in the Spanish-American War. He was adamantly opposed to the missionaries who sought to Christianize foreign lands while ignoring social problems at home. He exposed the corruption of the robber barons and satirized the daily hypocrisy of small-town America in “The Man That Corrupted Hadleyville”—citizens of Twain’s “gilded age” who were treading the thin veneer of affluence while clothing their greed in phony virtue. Twain was especially intolerant of the hypocrisy of the era of emancipation. His greatest novel of his later years, *Pudd’nhead Wilson*, covertly attacked the abhorrent ruling of *Plessy v. Ferguson* in attempting to define race through biological determinants. Above all, Twain wanted to challenge people in the area of critical thinking—to not merely accept what they are told, but to think for themselves. This was a pattern since the time he first questioned sacred cows in *The Innocents Abroad*.

The most Nietzschean of Twain’s writings is his prose poem, “The War Prayer.” Twain was especially incensed over the war in the Philippines, and, written in the final decade of his life, “The War Prayer” combines Twain’s anti-war sentiments with his zeal against missionaries. As a prophet, Twain foresaw future international wars that would consume the soul of America. Like Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, the Stranger in “The War Prayer” warns of the horrors to emerge in the modern age. The setting is a church service with a congregation praying for divine intervention for victory. Twain was unable to find a publisher for the “The War Prayer.” At the urging of friends and family, he gave up on his quest to publish it, saying, “I have told the whole truth in that, and only dead men can tell the truth in this world. It can be published after I am dead.”⁴⁶ It was finally published posthumously in 1923, but only at a time when an isolationist climate had returned temporarily to America.

In Teddy Roosevelt, Twain discovered another pretender, as he believed America was moving closer to monarchy, and he forecast the period when the United States would become the equivalent of the Roman Empire. While Roosevelt’s iconic image eventually was etched in stone on Mount Rushmore, the serious side of Mark Twain is often forgotten. In fact, Twain was a “truth teller.” In his lifetime, he observed the transformation of America from an agrarian society into an industrially based world power. And he did not like what he saw. In his own words, Twain referred to his craft as a writer as “the deriding of shams, the exposure of pretentious falsities, the laughing of stupid superstitions out of existence.”⁴⁷

Twain voiced opposition to changes brought about by modernity, yet could

not resist being drawn into the very world he was deriding. He was always at the forefront of the new technology. He became a Mississippi riverboat pilot in the new age of steam. He was one of the first homeowners with a telephone. He had a vision of a new typesetter that would revolutionize printing; that “invention” eventually failed and led to his bankruptcy. Twain and especially his daughter Susy detested his popular image of entertainer and humorist. His satirical goals have often been underappreciated, just as Shakespeare’s satirical intentions have been misunderstood. Similarly, Edward de Vere was straddling the Middle Ages and the early modern era. At heart, de Vere was a medieval man, who was inevitably drawn to the dazzling culture of Renaissance Italy and the allure of attractive, yet foolhardy, investments in the new Age of Exploration. By the ends of their lives, both Twain and de Vere were disillusioned as they contemplated rapidly changing worlds.

Late in his life, Twain loved making trips to Bermuda. The seclusion and beauty of the island helped Twain to cope with the loss of his beloved wife, Livy, and two of his three daughters, Susy and Jean. In his autobiography, he wrote the following:

It is human life. We are blown upon the world, we float buoyantly upon the summer air a little while, complacently showing off our grace of form and our dainty iridescent colors; then we vanish with a little puff, leaving nothing behind but a memory—and sometimes not even that.⁴⁸

In these words, Twain was reflecting on his beloved daughter Susy, who had died of meningitis at age twenty-four. But he was also recalling the words of Prospero spoken when he was letting go of his daughter Miranda and saying: “All which it inherit, shall dissolve,/And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,/Leave not a rack behind.”⁴⁹ While writing a letter from Bermuda, Twain self-consciously drew upon *The Tempest* when he confessed that “my ship has gone down, but my raft has landed me in the Islands of the Blest, and I am as happy as any other shipwrecked sailor ever was.”⁵⁰

On his final trip to Bermuda, Twain and his friend Marion Allen discussed Shakespeare. When Marion began to wonder how Shakespeare might have picked up information about Bermuda while living in London, Twain was quick to correct Marion’s careless use of the poet’s name, saying that instead of referring to “Shakespeare,” she should have said, “the man who wrote the Shakespeare plays.”⁵¹ By spring of 1910, Twain was preparing to depart Bermuda for his return trip home. He intentionally left behind his beloved 2,000-page dictionary, inscribing it to his friend, as follows: “Given by Mark Twain to Marion Schuyler Allen, Bermuda, April 1910.”⁵² As a young printer, Twain came to appreciate the value of a dictionary and the significance of words. In setting the type, he had watched each letter of a word being formed. This work was essential to his education as a writer. Both Twain and Walt Whitman used words in revolutionary ways to create a uniquely

American literary language. Of course, those two seminal authors both doubted the conventional Shakespeare authorship story. On one occasion, Twain described his goal of returning the American language to the English of the Elizabethan age. By that, he was referring specifically to Shakespeare's language. Now, he was drowning his book just like Prospero. Twain returned to his home at Stormfield, dying on April 21, 1910, within weeks of leaving his book behind in Bermuda.

Twain clearly sensed a kindred spirit in Shakespeare. By the time he wrote *Is Shakespeare Dead?*, Samuel Clemens was the voice of America, just as Shakespeare had been the voice of England and, indeed, the voice of the Renaissance. In his own remarkable rise from humble Midwestern origins to riverboat pilot to failed gold prospector to successful writer, Twain became America's first modern celebrity. He was in the perfect position to assess the story of another self-made man—the gifted poet and playwright who ostensibly had made his way from a small provincial English town to London. On the surface, the two biographies of Twain and Shakespeare were parallel journeys of writers who moved from obscure upbringings in small towns to international fame as writers of genius.

And yet, Twain did not find the story of the Stratford man to be credible! As the embodiment of the Horatio Alger myth himself, Twain perceived that something was amiss in the conventional biography of Shakespeare. In *Is Shakespeare Dead?*, he presents a host of problems about the orthodox Shakespearean biography, including the author's intimate knowledge of the law; the absence of recognition in his home town even at the time of his death; the uncanny ability for a man of the middling order to recreate stories of the nobility; and the absence of hard evidence linking the Stratford man to the literary works. Above all, Twain knew that his own life experience was imprinted in his literary masterpieces. But he was unable to find a similar connection with the conventional biography of the Stratford man and the plays and poems of Shakespeare.

In this regard, Twain recognized a pseudonym when he saw one. He spent his adult life struggling with the dichotomy of his dual identity as Samuel Clemens and Mark Twain. By the end of his life, he saw himself as the American incarnation of Prospero, and by inference, the author Shakespeare, renouncing his magic and leaving behind for posterity in a massive autobiography the true feelings of Samuel Clemens, as opposed to Mark Twain. Without his book — the 2,000-page dictionary — Twain really had nothing more to live for. Prospero vows to “retire me to my Milan, where/Every third thought shall be my grave.”⁵³ Likewise, Twain saw himself as the mere mortal he was upon departure from Bermuda. A final parallel of the two authors comes with Prospero's decision in Act V to renounce his magic, saying,

I'll break my staff,
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And deeper than did ever plummet sound,
I'll drown my book.⁵⁴

The phrase “plummet sound” takes us back to the genesis of the pseudonym of a young author who recalled his personal experience of sounding the depths for safe passage along the Mississippi and awaiting the signal of two fathoms deep in the reassuring cry of “mark twain!” With good reason, Twain proclaimed, “I am not an American. I am THE American.”⁵⁵ A study of *Is Shakespeare Dead?*, Twain’s autobiography, and his own literary works helps to inform the nature of artistic creativity and may serve as a guidepost to understanding why Mark Twain and “Shake-Speare” are soul mates.

Works Cited

- Bancroft Library home page: "Europe and the Holy Land" <http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/Exhibits/MTP/europe.html>.
- Thomas Cahill. *Heretics and Heroes—How Renaissance Artists and Reformation Priests Created Our World*. New York: Doubleday, 2013.
- Shelley Fisher Fishkin. "Lighting Out for the Territory—Reflections on Mark Twain and American Culture." *The Washington Post* (June 20, 1995): <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/books/chap1/lightingoutfortheterritory.htm>.
- Alan Greenblatt. "Why Mark Twain Still Matters." NPR (April 21, 2010): <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=126135081>.
- Justin Kaplan. *Mark Twain and his World*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974.
- Albert Bigelow Paine. *Mark Twain A Biography—The Personal and Literary Life of Samuel Langhorne Clemens*. 1912. Project Gutenberg ebook: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2988/2988-h/2988-h.htm>.
- Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, The New Penguin Shakespeare. New York: The Penguin Group, 1968.
- Michael Sheldon. *Mark Twain: Man in White—The Grand Adventure of His Final Years*. New York: Random House, 2010.
- Mark Twain Project Online: <http://www.marktwainproject.org/>
- Mark Twain. *Autobiography of Mark Twain: The Complete and Authoritative Edition, Vol. 1*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010.
- Mark Twain. *Autobiography of Mark Twain: The Complete and Authoritative Edition, Vol. 2*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.
- Mark Twain. *Innocents Abroad, Roughing It; Mississippi Writings; A Tramp Abroad, Following the Equator, & Other Travels; The Gilded Age & Later Novels; Tales, Sketches, Speeches, & Essays 1852-1890; Collected Tales, Speeches, and Essays: Volume 2—1891-1910*; The Library of America. For free ebooks of the Twain corpus, see The Project Gutenberg at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/>.
- Mark Twain. *Is Shakespeare Dead?* New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1909.
- The Mark Twain House & Museum website: <http://marktwainhouse.blogspot.com/2011/06/i-am-not-american-i-am-american.html>
- Geoffrey C. Ward, Dayton Duncan, and Ken Burns. *Mark Twain—An Illustrated Biography*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001. Historical Romances: Prince & the Pauper, Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc.

Endnotes

- ¹ Bancroft Library home page: "Europe and the Holy Land" <http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/Exhibits/MTP/europe.html>.
- ² Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad, Roughing It*, The Library of America, 227-228. The title of Twain's final book publication, *Is Shakespeare Dead?*, clearly derives from the content of his first book, *The Innocents Abroad*, wherein Twain lampoons the deceased giants of the high culture of Europe. Similarly Twain's 1898 play, *Is He Dead?*, is a comedy, based on the fictional treatment of the nineteenth-century French painter François Millet, who stages his own death in order to increase the value of his paintings. The play made its debut on Broadway in 2007. There is no doubt that Twain would have conceived a priceless quip about the name of the leading actor who played Millet: Norbert Leo Butz.
- ³ Sheldon, *Mark Twain: Man in White*, 52.
- ⁴ *Autobiography of Mark Twain*, Vol. 1, 296.
- ⁵ Ward, et al. *Mark Twain—An Illustrated Biography*, xi.
- ⁶ *Autobiography of Mark Twain*, Vol. I, 441.
- ⁷ Kaplan, *Mark Twain and His World*, 25.
- ⁸ Ward, et al. *Mark Twain—An Illustrated Biography*, xiii.
- ⁹ Cahill, *Heretics and Heroes—How Renaissance Artists and Reformation Priests Created Our World*, 88.
- ¹⁰ It is clear from de Vere's dedication that he has studied Castiglione's *The Courtier* with great care when he writes, "what more difficult, more noble, or more magnificent task has anyone ever undertaken than our author Castiglione, who has drawn for us the figure and model of a courtier, a work to which nothing can be added, in which there is no redundant word, a portrait which we shall recognize as that of a highest and most perfect type of man. And so, although nature herself has made nothing perfect in every detail, yet the manners of men exceed in dignity that with which nature has endowed them; and he who surpasses others has here surpassed himself and has even out-done nature, which by no one has ever been surpassed. Nay more: however elaborate the ceremonial, whatever the magnificence of the court, the splendor of the courtiers, and the multitude of spectators, he has been able to lay down principles for the guidance of the very Monarch himself. Again, Castiglione has vividly depicted more and even greater things than these. For who has spoken of princes with greater gravity? Who has discoursed of illustrious women with a more ample dignity? No one has

written of military affairs more eloquently, more aptly about horse-racing, and more clearly and admirably about encounters under arms on the field of battle. I will say nothing of the fitness and the excellence with which he has depicted the beauty of chivalry in the noblest persons. Nor will I refer to his delineations in the case of those persons who cannot be courtiers, when he alludes to some notable defect or to some ridiculous character, or to some deformity of appearance. Whatever is heard in the mouths of men in casual talk and in society, whether apt and candid or villainous and shameful, that he has set down in so natural a manner that it seems to be acted before our very eyes.” The complete translation of de Vere’s dedicatory letter by B. M.

Ward may be accessed at: <http://www.elizabethanauthors.org/vere106.htm>.

- 11 Twain, *Life on the Mississippi* in *Mississippi Writings*, Library of America, 283.
- 12 Fishkin, “Lighting Out for the Territory—Reflections on Mark Twain and American Culture.” *The Washington Post* (June 20, 1995): <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/books/chap1/lightingoutfortheterritory.htm>
- 13 *Autobiography of Mark Twain*, Vol. I, 211.
- 14 Alan Greenblatt, “Why Mark Twain Still Matters”: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=126135081>.
- 15 Mark Twain, Explanatory Note to *Huckleberry Finn* in *Mississippi Writings*. Library of America, 620.
- 16 Mark Twain, *Huckleberry Finn* in *Mississippi Writings*. Library of America, 834-35.
- 17 Ward, et al. *Mark Twain—An Illustrated Biography*, 181.
- 18 *Autobiography of Mark Twain*, Vol. I, 57.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 217.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 210.
- 21 Sheldon, *Mark Twain: Man in White*, 318.
- 22 *Autobiography of Mark Twain*, Vol. 1, 465.
- 23 Sheldon, *Mark Twain: Man in White*, 312.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 313.
- 25 *Ibid.*
- 26 *Autobiography of Mark Twain*, Vol. 1, 466.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 467.
- 28 Sheldon, *Mark Twain: Man in White*, 317.
- 29 *Ibid.*
- 30 *Ibid.*, 321.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 318. By the time he occupied his new home called Stormfield in Connecticut, Twain was a widower. Craving companionship, he was constantly inviting guests for short visits, and there was clearly never a dull moment in this bustling household. One can only imagine the dynamism and energy during the stay of Helen Keller and the lively discussions about Shakespearean authorship. On another occasion, there had been a robbery at Stormfield, in which three unimaginative thieves had escaped with some of the family silverware belonging to Twain’s beloved wife, Livy. The

incident devolved into comic opera with a chase scene and shootout on a train in which a local deputy sheriff was wounded. Upon the arrest of the burglars, Twain personally confronted the thieves, saying, “So you’re the... young men who called at my house last night and forgot to put your names in my guest-book?” (Sheldon, 274) After unleashing a lengthy diatribe, Twain concluded with his characteristic wit: “Don’t you see where you’re drifting to? They’ll send you from here down to Bridgeport jail, and the next thing you know, you’ll be in the United States Senate. There’s no other future left open to you” (Sheldon, 274).

³² Ibid., 319.

³³ A fastidious Twain scholar, Michael Sheldon has written a superb biography of Twain’s late years in *Mark Twain: Man in White—The Grand Adventure of His Final Years*. While Professor Sheldon’s sensitive insights have left an imprint on this paper from start to finish, he is nonetheless unable or unwilling to acknowledge that Twain has raised legitimate concerns about the conventional Shakespearean biography.

³⁴ Twain, *Is Shakespeare Dead?*, 65.

³⁵ On April 17, 1986, the paper was submitted to Professor Milton Rickels for English 550 (Seminar in American Literature)—a course that is still offered at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette (formerly the University of Southwestern Louisiana). During one of the many pleasant trips of Miller and her husband to the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, she deposited a copy of her Mark Twain paper in the library’s archives. On those ventures, Miller delivered lectures at the renowned Marian Miner Cook Athenaeum at Claremont McKenna College. In the UK, she left a copy of her paper in the holdings of the Seax-Essex archive, likely through her friendship with the distinguished archivist F. G. Emmison. The manuscript was graciously shared with me by Miller’s daughter, Bonner Cutting. John Fiero is now a retired English professor from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, who taught Ruth Loyd Miller in a Shakespeare seminar in the late 1970s or early 1980s. Reflecting thirty-five years later, Professor Fiero observed to me in an e-mail of September 29, 2014, that “she Miller and her husband were...two of the most genteel persons it was my pleasure to know.” This is arguably one of the highest tributes ever paid by a Stratfordian to an Oxfordian.

³⁶ The name of the editor of the multi-volume *Oxford Mark Twain*, which totals 14,176 pages in the 2009 edition, is Shelley Fisher Fishkin, who is the Joseph S. Atha Professor in Humanities at Stanford University. Miller correctly observes that Professor Fishkin chose to combine Twain’s short parody *1601* with *Is Shakespeare Dead?* It is also true that the two works bear no stylistic or thematic similarity and were composed thirty years apart. While Twain spells the poet’s name as “Shaxpur,” he does not overtly explore the authorship topic in *1601*. Miller is also correct about filmmaker Ken Burns, who produced a four-hour PBS series on Twain, plus a 250-book

accompanying the series. There is not a single reference to *Is Shakespeare Dead?* in either the film or the book.

³⁷ Ruth Loyd Miller, unpublished manuscript (1986), 12.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴⁰ Title page, Twain's annotation within his personal copy of Greenwood's *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*. Albert A. Berg Collection of the New York Public Library.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 75.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴⁴ Sheldon, *Mark Twain: Man in White*, 6.

⁴⁵ Kaplan, *Mark Twain and His World*, 13.

⁴⁶ Paine, *Mark Twain A Biography—The Personal and Literary Life of Samuel Langhorne Clemens*. 1912. Project Gutenberg ebook: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2988/2988-h/2988-h.htm>. For students of the Shakespeare authorship question, it is important to observe that in late-nineteenth-century America, even a figure as renowned as Mark Twain at the height of his celebrity was still unable to find a publisher for all of his writings. Suppression of free speech works in insidious ways. If Mark Twain's writing could be suppressed in the late nineteenth century, then one may imagine how easy it was for Burghley or Walsingham in the sixteenth century to reject prospective publications, destroy already printed materials, or conceal the identity of authors, in the interests of national security. Part of the challenge in understanding the identity of the author "Shakespeare" lies in coming to terms with the entirely unique way in which that author's works were treated, when compared with any other Elizabethan poet-playwright. One critical question is: how was it possible for the Shakespearean texts with components of satirical writing from "Venus and Adonis" to *Troilus and Cressida* to find their way into print, while the works of other Elizabethan authors were suppressed?

⁴⁷ Ward, et al. *Mark Twain—An Illustrated Biography*, vi.

⁴⁸ *Autobiography of Mark Twain, Vol. II*, 257.

⁴⁹ Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, The New Penguin Shakespeare, IV,i,154-56.

⁵⁰ Sheldon, *Mark Twain: Man in White*, 403.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 389.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 407.

⁵³ *The Tempest*, V,i,311-12.


⁵⁴ *The Tempest*, V,i,54-57.

⁵⁵ According to the scholars at the Mark Twain House & Museum in Hartford, this famous quote was first made by Twain's friend Frank Fuller. See: <http://marktwainhouse.blogspot.com/2011/06/i-am-not-american-i-am-american.htm>

Ben Jonson and the Drummond

“Informations”: Why It Matters

Richard Malim

he versions of Sir William Drummond’s account of his conversations with Ben Jonson on his visit to Scotland have long been understood as a leading source of information for biographers of Jonson. The most recent (Ian Donaldson¹) recommends that the opus be now referred to as *Informations to William Drummond of Hawthornden*, or *Informations* for short. It purports to contain the remarks or notes on the remarks by Jonson in conversations with Drummond.

There are two references to Shakespeare in it:

“That Shakspear wanted Arte”

“Sheakspear, in a play, brought in a number of men saying they had suffered Shipwrack in Bohemia, where there is no sea neer by some 100 miles.”



These statements appear to denigrate the author in his guise as “Shakespeare” and to run contrary to Jonson’s otherwise consistent critique and praise of Shakespeare as evidenced in Jonson’s “Ode to Shakespeare” in the preface to the 1623 First Folio, and some may think that not a great deal turns on them. However, other references in *Informations* — particularly to Fletcher — run contrary to evidence of Jonson’s opinions as expressed elsewhere. Taken together, these references make it difficult to correctly perceive the literary scene in the period after Oxford’s death in 1604, and might be thought to be damaging to the Oxfordian hypothesis. Particularly damaging is the notional support given to the contention that Fletcher and “Shakespeare” collaborated during the latter’s lifetime in the production of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*.

Our case requires that Jonson must continue to be seen as the almost uncritical admirer of Shakespeare, who, even while being slightly critically askance of him, could still write, “For I loved the man, and do honour his memory (on this side idolatry) as much as any.”²

In 1925 a Mr. C.L. Stainer published a small booklet³ of some eighty octavo pages denouncing *Informations* as an eighteenth-century forgery. Stainer’s booklet is so badly organized and is such a muddle of good points, bad points and rubbish

that the high priests of Jonsonian scholarship of that time had very little trouble in picking holes in it. Their leader, Percy Simpson, did so in nine pages in January 1926.⁴ There the position has stood to this day and is echoed by Donaldson.⁵ Stainer is, however, very good at identifying characters mentioned in *Informations* and in the letters referred to below with people whose existence in 1618-19 was already known in 1711, when *Informations* was published.

Because of the potential incompatibility between Drummond and the Oxfordian hypothesis, I did think there might be a case of no smoke without fire.

One of Stainer's points is that the forger had the year wrong. So, Jonson's activities should be looked at. From Christmas 1604 to 1623, Jonson was primarily responsible for the Court masques and revels and only three times during that period was he passed over, namely 1606, 1612 and 1618. His effort in 1617 (*Pleasure Reconiled to Virtue*) was deemed so dull that one critic suggested that he take up bricklaying again, and the 1618 masque was assigned to Chapman: 1618 must be the year Jonson went to Scotland, walking all the way. Very recently James Loxley, an intrepid scholar from Edinburgh, has unearthed a diary of the journey kept by a godson who accompanied him the whole way. The inference is that there was money on it, and the godson was chosen to make sure Jonson did not cheat. Jonson left London on Wednesday, July 8, and arrived in Edinburgh on Thursday, September 18, 1618. John Taylor, the "water poet," records meeting Jonson in Leith in that month, and in October the Edinburgh City Council gave a banquet in his honor.

The godson was no longer required, as the return journey was apparently not to be vetted. He left by boat from Leith (the port of Edinburgh) on October 5, 1618.

There is one further piece of evidence. John Selden (1584-1654), historian and antiquarian, had written *History of Tithes*, published in November 1618. The book caused a furor because it contended that tithing was subject to the law, and was not the divine right of the bishops of the Church of England. The bishops lobbied the King, and James summoned Selden to face him personally to debate the question.

Selden, perhaps twelve years younger than Jonson, had never met the King, was understandably nervous and arranged to be accompanied by two friends. One was Jonson, who knew the King well enough, after the production of some fifteen Court Masques, and so Jonson is placed in England in mid-December 1618 at the time of Selden's first meeting with the King. Selden wrote his memoir at the end of his life, and Donaldson suggests he may have confused this meeting with one at a later date, but by then his book had become an Ecclesiastical and Privy Council matter, and later meetings with the King took place on a more official basis. At that first meeting, James had virtually let Selden go (he acknowledges that Jonson was helpful then), to the annoyance of the Bishops. Were it not for the dates in *Informations*, no one would dispute Selden's version.⁶ It means that after the City of Edinburgh's banquet in his honor in October 1618, Jonson must have quickly returned to England by December, too late for the preparation of the Chapman masque of 1618-19, but in time to be briefed by Selden. There is no evidence of a return journey on foot in winter and if there had been one, Jonson would have told everybody.

The sum of the evidence is that Jonson walked to Scotland in the summer of 1618 and returned in the late autumn. The thought of anybody (let alone a conspicuously overweight forty-six-year-old academic) attempting to return on foot during a Scottish winter (November to March) is beyond contemplation. Had he done so, Jonson was hardly likely to better his outward time of two months and seven days at that time of year. Planning for a Masque in 1618 would have had to start before Jonson was (or would be known to be) available, so it is no wonder Chapman was employed as the Masque-maker that year.

Informations exists in two versions: one a folio, printed but apparently extensively edited, appearing in 1711; the other a manuscript discovered in 1833, purporting to be a copy transcribed (the handwriting has been verified) by Sir Robert Sibbald, a noted antiquary in c. 1710, from the original said by him to be in Sir William Drummond's hand. No original has been found.⁷ However, Professor Donaldson has kindly provided me with a copy of his Textual Essay to *Informations* as part of his Introduction to Jonson's Complete Works, soon to be published electronically, in which he mounts a spirited *prima facie* defense of the provenance of the two documents.

The introduction to the 1711 folio says that Jonson "came down to Scotland on Foot in the year 1619 on Purpose to visit him [Drummond]," which is wrong. There is extant a letter to Sir Dudley Carleton dated 4th June 1617: "Ben Jonson is going on foot to Edinburgh and back for his profit," which indicates that a bet was involved (perhaps the return walk on foot was waived as nothing is heard of it).

The editor of *Informations* prints a purported letter dated May 1619 from Jonson to Drummond on his return to London. It is suspect for three reasons: First, Jonson was in Oxford in May and the letter gives no London address; second, it is signed *Ben Johnson*, whereas Ben always spelt it *Jonson*; and third, it speaks of "reporting to the King," as if he had some commission from the King (while the editor has told us Jonson went to Scotland for the purpose of seeing Drummond), and the King, having recently lost the Queen in March, was himself convalescing from a very serious illness out of London until his return to London on June 1. Stainer makes the good point that the King had himself visited Scotland at length in 1617 and would have been perfectly adequately informed about affairs there without Jonson's "assistance."

The folio produces a purported (I use that word because it was "found" in the papers of the alleged sender) letter from Drummond dated January 17, 1619, which says: "I have heard from the Court, that the late Mask was not so approved of the King, as in Former Times, and your absence was regretted." This can only be intended to refer to the Chapman masque of 1618-19 (Jonson, back in London, would have known the climate of opinion anyway), for Jonson was in fact responsible for the 1619-20 masque, which seems to have been successful. Until 1752, when the New Style calendar came in, the New Year was deemed to commence on March 25: thus, in England any year mentioned in a date between January 1 and March 24 actually refers to what we now think of as the previous year. However, in

1600 the Scottish Parliament adopted January 1 as New Year's Day, and this does seem to have been used informally as the seventeenth century wore on in both countries. So the purported date of this letter must be New Style 1619.

The manuscript version goes on to say that "He [Jonson] went from Lieth [sic] the 25 of January 1619."⁷ To keep the show on the road, this date must be meant to mean January 1619/20. The system does seem to have confused both Sibbald and the editor of the printed folio (see the discussion on Jonson's age below).

Stainer also touches on the question of whether Drummond was actually at home at Hawthornden at the time. He had inherited the estate in 1610, and published two small books of poems in 1613 and 1614. An anonymous poem, *Forth Feasting* (1617), is ascribed to him. Significantly, it was not included with the presentational volume of poetry presented to King James on his visit to Scotland in 1617. Drummond published nothing else until 1623. Moreover, the introduction to the printed folio says in essence that he stayed eight years abroad from 1614 or 1615 on. Stainer notes that although poet John Taylor mentions a Mr. *David* Drummond, he makes no mention of *Sir William*, who one would think would have extended his hospitality to Taylor. For Jonson to be back in London in early December, any meeting with Drummond (if there was one at all) must have been short, and must have taken place in September-October 1618.

Before turning to the content of the folio and the manuscript, we ought to consider what, if we think these documents were faked, was the point of them. Stainer suggests that they were an attempt to make the folio more serviceable and "to claim a poet for Scotland," by which I assume he means to show that Jonson had Scots origins. Both folio and manuscript affirm that Jonson said: "his Grandfather came from Carlisle, and he thought Anandale to it, he served Henry 8, and was a gentleman." There is no other such evidence of his grandfather extant. "*Anandale*" links the grandfather to the reiver family of Johnston of Annandale. Percy Simpson dismisses the "a poet for Scotland" claim as "puerile." No doubt it might seem so in 1926, but in 1711 (and in 2011) the thought cannot be brushed off so lightly. The then very unpopular Union had only just (1707) come into existence, and we now see Scottish Nationalism as a renewed political force. There were plenty of Scots who understandably would wish to see Scottish national and cultural traditions preserved; why would some not take even more direct steps? It is notable that Sibbald, a one-time Catholic, and Bishop Sage, one of the progenitors of the printed folio, who was a non-juror (i.e., one who, having sworn allegiance to James VII and II, could not see his way to doing the same for William III in James's lifetime), seem to be part of the small High Anglican (in Scotland, Episcopalian) Jacobite-minded group who might favor the Old Pretender and with him a Scots nationalist outlook. The publishers (including Sage) could well have been Sibbald's dupes.

One of the tests for the folio and the manuscript is to see what is brand new, i.e., for which there is no evidence in the folio and/or the manuscript. There is a wealth of references to documents which were available for the producers of the material in 1711, but in general they can add nothing to a search for a solution to the problem. There is also the question of amendments to the existing documents. Do

they indicate earlier genuine versions or are they concoctions to lend verisimilitude to their scenario? For instance, in conjunction with a purported letter from Jonson to Drummond dated January 19, 1619, to copies of nos. VI and VII of the 1641 *Underwood – Miscellaneous Poems*, in the printed (but not in the manuscript) edition, are given introductions, that for no. VI being particularly florid. Both have Jonson spelling his name *Johnson*, which is a matter of comment. Jonson's own 1641 version is headed "My picture, Left in Scotland" and contains the lines "My hundreds of grey hairs/ Told seven and forty years," which makes the date of the poem 1619 (Jonson was born June 11, 1572), but for some reason the line is altered to "Told six and forty years," which from the producers' angle would make the poem one year earlier. Either the producers miscalculated the year or they believed that Jonson was born in 1574, so he would be forty-six years old in 1620, which is the year they need to agree with the rest of their production. For very many years scholars believed Jonson was born in 1574 and the true date (or perhaps a date with rather more certainty) of 1572 has only relatively recently been recognized (and a nasty hole is blown in the concoction).

We find other discrepancies in *Informations*: "He was a Master of Arts in both Universities by favour not his studie" (the underlined portion not in the printed folio). Jonson did not become a Master of Arts at Oxford until July 19, 1619, *after* he had returned from Scotland.

"[S]ince his coming to England [i.e. from the Low Countries, sometime in 1597], being appealed to in the fields [folio: to a Duel], he had killed his adversary, which had hurt him in the arm, and whose sword was 10 inches longer than his; for the which [folio: For this Crime] he was emprisonned, and almost at the gallows." It is noticeable that Jonson does not tell Drummond who his opponent was.

This information was not available in 1711, but we now know he was Gabriel Spencer, a fellow actor. In dueling there was a strict rule that the weapons had to be of the same length, which makes this version ludicrous. There is no evidence that Jonson went to prison on this occasion. Jonson himself says he went to prison once before 1605, and the warrant for his release is dated October 8, 1597, along with those for his Gabriel Spencer (his subsequent victim) and Robert Shaa, as noted in the Privy Council records.

In 1605 Jonson wrote to Robert Cecil (Earl of Salisbury) from prison, where he had been committed with Chapman. *Informations* reports: "He was delated (Folio: accused) by Sr James Murray to the King for writing something against the Scots in a play *Eastward Hoe*, and voluntarily imprissonned himself with Chapman and Marston...." His letter to Cecil does not mention Marston, and the thought that that one might voluntarily imprison oneself in a Jacobean jail is again ludicrous. *Informations* then suggests that all three were in danger of mutilation,⁸ which again seems unlikely.

"When the king came in England [in 1603], at the tyme the pest was in London, he being in the country at Sr Robert Cotton's house with old Camden, he saw in a vision his eldest son.... (as if already dead)." Stainer ascertained that

Cotton's house was in the process of being built and was not completed until some time later.

"Sr John Roe . . . died in his armes of the pest, and he furnished his charges, 20lb; which was given him back." Stainer makes the point that the only treatment for the plague was complete isolation and, as for Jonson discharging the funeral costs for the family, this is altogether unlikely.

"Of their [folio: the English] Nation, Hookers Ecclesiasticall historie (whose children are now beggars). . ." (the underlined portion not in the folio). Stainer shows that this is a story taken from Anthony Wood's 1661 diary, and was untrue since two of Hooker's daughters died young and the other two married, without any suggestion of poverty.

"Tailor was sent along here to scorn him" (not in the folio). Stainer shows from the water poet Taylor's own works that Taylor had a very high opinion of Jonson, and how much he appreciated Jonson's kindnesses to him in Scotland.

"Overbury was first his friend then turned his mortall enimie" (not in the folio); and "The Countess of Rutland. . . Sir Th: Overburie was in love with her and caused Ben to read his Wyffe [a poem] to her, which he with an excellent grace, did, and praised the author. That the morne thereafter he discarded with Overburie, who would have him intend a sute that was unlawfull...."⁹ Jonson's *Epigram CXIII*, written on Overbury's return to England in 1610, is laudatory, and the Countess died in August 1612. Overbury was imprisoned in the Tower in April 1613 and there murdered in August 1613. A poem of Overbury's, *The Husbande*, was published in 1614 (the same year as *The Wyffe* appeared). Jonson wrote commendatory verses to it and also *Epigram 113*, published in 1616. "To the worthy Author...." Some "mortall enimie"! *Informations* is the only "evidence" of the alleged enmity.

An even more damning point is that Overbury is not elsewhere recorded as having shown the slightest interest in women at all. His great friend, lover and protector up to 1613 was the King's homosexual favorite Robert Carr. The poem *Wyffe* is scarcely an invitation to loose behaviour on the part of a wife: quite the reverse. Overbury's own father suggested that he wrote it as part of his anti-heterosexual campaign to deter Carr from marrying the Countess of Essex once she had obtained the annulment of her earlier marriage.

"That Epithalamium that wants a name in his printed Workes was made at the Earl of Essex marriage." There was no need to draw attention in this way to the subsequent annulment, the result of a political/judicial fiddle and the greatest scandal of the reign, as Drummond would have known all about it as well as Overbury's subsequent imprisonment and murder at the behest of the Countess and the fall-out from them. Jonson also wrote a poem to Somerset for the day of his wedding to the Countess of Essex, again bravely alluding to Overton: "Wife, in worth, thy friend did make...."

"His inventions are smooth and easie, but above all he excelleth in translation." Jonson's translations are few in number, and he never published them.

"He hath commented and translated Horace *Art of Poesie*: it is in dialogue

ways; by Criticus he understandeth Dr. Done [Donne].” Criticus appears as a character in the quarto version of *Cynthia’s Revels*; it is generally recognized to be Jonson’s self-portrait, and was so understood at the time.

“He said to Prince Charles of Inigo Jones, that where he wanted words to express the greatest villaine in the world, he would call him ane Inigo” (not in the folio).

There is no particular evidence that Jonson disliked Inigo Jones to such an extent as early as 1618: The really serious breaches between them occurred in the 1620s. It is highly unlikely that Jonson would have such speech with the King’s heir. Simpson relies on *Epigrams* CXV and CXXX (which he gets the wrong way round and misnumbers the latter as CXXIX) to show that the enmity was already in full flow, notwithstanding that Jonson and Jones worked on later Masques. The references in CXV are more generally accepted than those in CXXIX as referring to Jones. The former (*On the Town’s Honestest Man*) denies that it is aimed at a specific victim:

...but this one
Suffers no name, but a description
Being no vicious person, but the Vice
About the Town. . .

* * *

.....doth play more
Parts than the Italian could do with his door
Acts Old Iniquity, and in the fit
Of miming, gets the opinion of a wit
Executes men in picture: by defect
From friendship, is its own fame’s architect,
An inginer in slanders of all fashion
That seeming praises, are yet accusation
Described it’s thus: defined would you it have?
Then, the Town’s Honest Man’s, her errant’st knave.

One critic¹⁰ points out that the “Italian” can be identified and links “Old Iniquity” with older plays’ vice figures. I suggest that if *Informations* had not linked Jonson and Jones in a quarrel as early as 1619, there would be nothing much by way of evidence for it, since the two ambiguous epigrams are the sole evidence at this early time, and so *Informations* is likely unreliable. The references to “Iniquity,” “architect” and “inginer” might point to Inigo Jones, but they do seem in context to be metaphorical rather than critical.

“When his play of a Silent Woman [otherwise entitled *Epicene*] was first acted, there was found verses after the stage against him, concluding the play was well named the Silent Woman, there was never one man to say *Plaudite* to it.” The play may have been temporarily suppressed as it contains this reference: “[he can draw maps] of the Prince of Moldavia, and of his [the map-drawer’s] mistress,

mistress Epicene” (V.i.18-19). Although not actually in the context of the play the mistress of the Prince, Jonson offended the Lady Arbella, the King’s cousin, who was being courted by a claimant to the throne of Moldavia, but there is nothing to show that the play did not have some success.

Throughout there are numerous errors of noblemen’s titles, misquotations and critical errors which perhaps the edited version might have put right. While these are a matter of comment, conceivably were it not for the serious matters above they might have been defensible inside a genuine transcript.

We have placed a huge question mark over the reliability, let alone the authenticity, of *Informations*. The next step is to see what it said about the Shakespeare and the Jacobean literary scene, with a bucket of salt at hand.

By way of introduction a confusion is illustrated by report in both the manuscript and the folio within the space of a few lines of each other, tarnishing with unreliability the passages of criticism generally:

That Silvesters translation of Du Bartas was not well done” and “That the best pieces of Ronsard were his Odes....All this was to no purpose for he neither doeth understand French nor Italiennes [Folio : for he never understood the French or Italian Language].

Early in *Informations* the manuscript tells us that “Shakspear wanted Arte” to which the folio adds, “and sometimes Sense.” These views are totally negated by what Jonson wrote four or so years later in the Ode prefatory to the 1623 Shakespeare Folio:

Nature herself was proud of his designs....
Yet I must not give nature all: thy art,
My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part.
For though the poet’s matter nature be,
His art doth give the fashion; and that he
Who casts to write a living line must sweat –
Such as are thine are - and strike the second heat
Upon the muses’ anvil

* * *

. . . even so the race
Of Shakespeare’s mind and manners brightly shines
In his well-tuned and true filed lines
In each of which he seems to shake a lance,
As brandished in the face of ignorance....

No, the remarks in *Informations* merely reflect the taste of second-rate criticism of the late Stuart era when they were written.

Later the second reference appears: “Sheakspear, in a play, brought in a

number of men saying they had suffered shipwreck in Bohemia, wher there is no sea neer by some 100 miles.” It seems unlikely that Jonson would so hopelessly distort the plot of *The Winter’s Tale*. Until some forty years earlier, Bohemia had a particularly dangerous piece of shoreline on the Danube, and with the start of the Thirty Years War everyone with political interests would know that Bohemia did not have a seacoast. Jonson would be unlikely to make this type of mistake. Anyway, the reference is totally unsupported by the play, where only Antigonus and the baby Perdita survive the shipwreck: The thought that Jonson, who repeatedly shows tight attachment to Shakespeare, making that kind of error is rubbish. Shakespeare is ridiculing the ignorance of the Clown and the Old Shepherd his father.

As well as two separate references to Beaumont (in one his age at death is wrong), there are three other references to Beaumont, Fletcher and Chapman:

- 1) “That next himself only Fletcher and Chapman could make a mask” (not in the folio). There is no evidence that Fletcher ever penned a masque – this mannered form of entertainment with its stratospheric expense would hardly be to the extreme Protestant Fletcher’s taste.
- 2) “Fletcher and Beaumont ten years since hath written The Faithful Shepherdess a Tragicomedy well done” (again, not in the folio).
- 3) “That Chapman and Fletcher were loved of him.”

This remark is probably derived from a reading of Jonson’s posthumous (1641) *Underwood*: “His inventions are smooth and easie, but above all he excelleth in translation.” Jonson’s translations are few in number, and he never published them. *Miscellaneous Poems* XX (to Chapman) and XIV, respectively. XIV is a sympathetic address to Fletcher on the poor reception of his verse-drama *The Faithful Shepherdess* (in which Beaumont had no hand at all) on its first appearance in 1608. Both poems were available for the second printing of *Epigrams* in 1616 (the first, from 1612, is lost), but curiously neither appeared. Even more curiously, Epigram LV is a panegyric to Beaumont, who died that year (probably earlier in it; the exact date is March 15, 1615/6), followed immediately by a vicious denunciation in the next Epigram (LVI) of the “Poor poet Ape, that would be thought our chief” — clearly Fletcher.¹² The change in Jonson’s attitude is not picked up in *Informations*, and may be put down to Fletcher’s anti-Catholic sentiments (as interpreted) in the printed edition of *The Faithful Shepherdess*,¹³ and in subsequent works. Fletcher’s clear Protestant worldview does not bring him into an association with Jonson at any later stage. The Prologue to *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, with its clear denigration of Fletcher, and therefore written after Fletcher’s death in 1625, for the 1634 print of the play, depicts Jonson’s attitude to both play and dramatist:

New plays and maidenheads are near akin,
Much followed both, for both much money gi’en,

If they stand sound and well. And a good play –
Whose modest scenes blush on his marriage day,
And shake to lose his honour – is like her
After that holy tie and first night's stir
Yet still is modesty, and still retains
More of the maid to sight than husband's pains.
We pray our play may be so; for I am sure
It has a noble breeder, and a pure,
A learned, and a poet never went
More famous yet 'twixt Po and silver Trent.
Chaucer, of all admired, the story gives;
There constant to eternity it lives.
If we let fall the nobleness of this,
And the first sound this child hear be a hiss,
How will it shake the bones of the good man,
And make him cry from underground 'O, fan
From me the witless chaff of such a writer
That blasts my bays and my famed works makes lighter
Than Robin Hood !' This is the fear we bring;
For, to say truth, it were an endless thing,
And too ambitious to aspire to him.
Weak as we are, and almost breathless swim
In this deep water, do you but hold out
Your helping hands, and we shall tack about,
And something do to save us; you shall hear
Scenes though below his art, may yet appear
Worth two hours' travail. To his bones sweet sleep;
Content to you. If this play do not keep
A little dull time from us, we perceive
Our losses fall so thick we needs must leave.

The Prologue repays detailed analysis. Because it contains no commendation of Fletcher's contribution, but rather clear denigration of him and the play itself, it cannot have been written for an early production. Likewise, after the denunciation of Fletcher by Jonson, I do not believe Jonson could have written anything by way of prologue for the play before Fletcher died in 1625 (and then he could be ignored), and, as I show, I do believe that Jonson is the only logical author of the Prologue, and he must have pulled rank and sneaked it in to the printed 1634 edition. I do not believe it was meant to be spoken on the stage at all. It starts as a spoof on the genre of mock humility on the part of the cast and the writer.

It is interesting that Jonson appears to attack the reputation of the dead Fletcher, the Protestant Government dramatist, obliquely: "We pray...." (line 9); As in all prologues, the lines are meant to be spoken by a member of the cast. "We"

is therefore the cast, not the two authors. “[F]or I am sure...” (line 9); “I” is Jonson himself, who is sure, and (as the next three lines indicate) so would some of the audience, that the single author referred to Shakespeare (“noble breeder,” a learned poet whose literary stamping ground was England and Northern Italy). The word “breeder” might indicate some connection to the original plot, but certainly not to the final product.

Then there is the reference to Chaucer, the principal source of the play’s story, but, “If we let fall the nobleness of this” (i.e., dispense with the contributions of Chaucer and Shakespeare, and fail to reach the maiden modesty of a good new play) and the first sound the infant play hears is an auditorium hiss, it will “shake the bones of the good man [Chaucer]” and make him cry out asking that the “witless chaff of such a writer” [Fletcher], which damages his reputation, be fanned away (i.e., the play should be consigned to oblivion). The acting company purportedly “fears” this, and by way of contrast (“to say truth”), suggests the idea for the play may be “too ambitious to aspire to him.” This is obscure, but can only mean that the idea for the play is beyond Fletcher’s abilities. This is Jonson’s cunning stuff, because on a cursory read “him” would seem to refer to Chaucer, when clearly the writer of the “witless chaff,” being the nearest person to the pronoun, is intended.

The cast cry out for rescue from “this deep water: and finish:
“You shall hear Scenes that below his art may yet appear
[i.e., even worse than his usual]/ Worth two hours travail ...’
[i.e. hard work, suffering and even labor pains!]

The Prologue finishes, “To his bones, sweet sleep.” Again not Chaucer, but Fletcher: ironically, the latter’s bones should have the “sweet sleep” of total oblivion, while Chaucer’s are “shaken.

The sum is a brilliant Jonsonesque hidden exposé of the true position. Jonson’s attitude is borne out by the Prologue to *The Sad Shepherd*:

Or that the Man who made one such poor flight [i.e., *The Faithful Shepherdess*]
In his whole Life, had with his winged Skill
Advanc’d him upmost on the Muses Hill,
When he like Poet yet remains, as those
Are Painters who can only make a Rose.

If *Informations* were a reliable source, it would contribute to the idea that *The Two Noble Kinsmen* is a reworking (or even a collaboration) between Fletcher and “Shakespeare” of an older or unfinished Shakespeare play, with Jonson as a supporter both of Fletcher and Shakespeare. While this is ruled out by all the genuine evidence, nevertheless it appears to afford a plank on which the collaboration theory might rely.

So what is the literary value of *Informations*, either the manuscript or the printed version? None, but as a reflection of the political opinion of certain highly

educated Scotsmen in 1711 it may well be of interest. Discard *Informations* and evaluation of Jonson's attitude to Shakespeare (and Fletcher) is no longer impeded. Jonson's future biographers (to say nothing of Shakespeare's) may well find that a more consistent and clearer picture of him emerges.

I put this essay to a major Jonsonian biographer, who told me it was full of unwarranted assumptions and conclusions, but declined to identify any, or to provide a reason for his failing to include, let alone mention, the 1634 Prologue to *The Two Noble Kinsmen* in the *Complete Works of Jonson*. I consider that my assumptions and conclusions are sustained either by evidence or by logic based on that evidence, and I beg leave to disagree.

Why does all this matter? By relegating *informations* to the literary dustbin I present a clearer picture of Jonson's view of Shakespeare.

Endnotes

- ¹ Ian Donaldson, *Ben Jonson A Life* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 34 ff.
- ² Ben Jonson, *Discoveries* (1640-41), l. 481.
- ³ C.L. Stainer, *Jonson and Drummond /their Conversations/ A few Remarks on an 18th Century Forgery* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1925).
- ⁴ Percy Simpson, "The Genuineness of the Drummond 'Conversations,'" *Review of English Studies* 2 (1926), 42-50 (for which is gratefully acknowledged the help of Bristol University library staff). Although he is on occasion rightly scathing of Stainer, he can nod, too. *Informations* (both the folio and the manuscript) records, "Essex [d.1601] wrote that Epistle or preface before the translation of the last part of Tacitus, which is A.B." Stainer points out that Jonson congratulates Sir Henry Savile on his translation (*Epigram* XCV), and the preface signed A.B. appears in the edition of 1604. A.B. cannot be Essex, but Simpson writes (p. 49), "Edmund Bolton, who is a high authority on such a point, makes the same statement in his *Hypercritica*, which was not printed till 1724." That must be all right then, save that Bolton's only authority must have been the statement in *Informations* (1711), which passes by Simpson entirely.
- ⁵ In a footnote (447 n.39) Donaldson confirms that he relies heavily on the manuscript version of *Informations*.
- ⁶ Donaldson, 362-363; Selden, *Vindiciae secundum Integritatem Existimationis suae...* (1653), 16-19. Selden's Latin clearly says that Jonson saw to it that the Marquess (afterwards Duke) of Buckingham should stand Selden favorably with the King, and keep him less antipathetic towards Selden's argument. This is a rather different nuance to Donaldson's version. Later on Selden was imprisoned and much less favorably treated, and there can be little doubt that Jonson and another accompanied Selden at this *first* meeting with the King. There would be little point in Jonson (who is not noted as an expert on Anglican Church Law) coming — let alone being admitted — to a subsequent formal encounter (as Donaldson suggests in order to keep within *Informations* timetable) with Church dignitaries involved. Jonson wrote a laudatory poem to Selden who, with Heywood, was his "tenth Muse" ("Underwood" at 31). Amusingly, "Drummond" misread Drayton to ascribe to him the thought that his extra muse was the ninth — a mistake that neither Drummond nor Drayton nor Jonson would make.
- ⁷ An ingenious suggestion that the original was borrowed in 1711 or shortly thereafter and destroyed in a fire in 1899 has no evidential basis (but see Donaldson at 447 n.39). Why was it necessary for an experienced antiquary to make an exact manuscript copy (when any poor student could do the same), when the printer would have required a manuscript of the edited version? The suggestion that the manuscript copy was a draft for editing in the production of the printed fake looks quite enticing, especially as interesting (and some

more ingenious) items in it do not appear in the printed version (see note 10 below)

⁸ Perhaps a Scottish nationalist crack at English Justice.

⁹ Bacon, well known as a homosexual, implies Overbury was similarly oriented. For this and other evidence, see Anne Somerset, *Unnatural Murder* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1997), 59, 63, 71 and 104ff. The scandal and the subsequent court cases received very wide publicity to the extent that “the whole country was absorbed by what was happening, almost to the exclusion of other business” (id. at 384). Jonson and Drummond could not fail to be well apprised.

¹⁰ William Gifford, *Ben Jonson's Works with a Biographical Memoir* (1816), makes no reference to Drummond because only the printed folio, which omits the story, was available to influence his critique — the manuscript had not been discovered. The editors of the second edition in 1843 (by which time it was) do not amend the section.

¹¹ Before the appearance of the Clown and the Old Shepherd in the scene (III.iii), the only allusion to the sea is the late editorial insertion in the 1623 First Folio (there being no earlier version) whereby the boatman character in the folio is described as “mariner,” not as part of the text but as identity to the character speaking.

¹² Full text of *Epigrams*, LVI:

Poor poet Ape, that would be thought our chief,
Whose works are e'en the frippery of wit,
From brokage is become so bold a thief,
As we, the robb'd, leave rage, and pity it.
At first he made low shifts, would pick and glean,
Buy the reversion of old plays;
[acquire some versions of *The Two Noble
Kinsmen*, *Henry VIII* and *Cardenio*]
now grown
To a little wealth, and credit in the scene,
He takes up all: Makes each man's wit his own;
And told of this, he slights it. Tut, such crimes
The sluggish gaping auditor devours;
He marks not whose 'twas first: and aftertimes
May judge it to be his, as well as ours.
Fool! As if half eyes will not know a fleece [i.e. theft]
From locks of wool, or shreds of the whole piece.


¹³ Clare Asquith, *Shadowlands* (Public Affairs, 2005), 275ff. By way of further evidence of the rift between them, Fletcher wrote two poems addressed to Jonson in praise of *Volpone* (1607) and *Catilina* (1611), but nothing later, ignoring *The Alchemist* (1612) and *Bartholomew Fair* (1614) and later works (quarto dates given, but first performances at least one year earlier).

¹⁴ I.e., *The Faithful Shepherdess*.

Was William Scott a Plagiarist?:

A Review of Scott's Unpublished Manuscript, *The Model of Poesy* (1599)

Richard M. Waugaman

ave you ever wished that some 16th century manuscript would turn up, and settle the authorship question once and for all? Well, we will have to keep wishing for that one. But, in the meantime, a very interesting 16th century manuscript *has* turned up. It was published for the first time in 2013, and it has some provocative implications for the authorship of the canon.

The work in question is *The Model of Poesy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), written by William Scott (c.1571-c.1617) in 1599, but never before published. Gavin R. Alexander of Cambridge University, whose extensive editorial work on *The Model* was deservedly praised by Russ McDonald in his *Times Literary Supplement* review (March 21, 2014), believes that Scott originally intended to publish his short book. Scott wrote a dedicatory epistle, which is uncommon for a manuscript that is not intended for publication. Alexander calls *The Model's* references to Shakespeare in order to illustrate rhetorical principles “unprecedented” (lxi).

The work consistently commends Sidney's *Defense of Poetry*, and Scott calls it “in many ways a commentary” (lxiii) on Sidney's prior work, which was itself written around 1579, and published in 1595, nine years after Sidney's death. Although Scott freely criticizes other authorities, he never once criticizes Sidney, although he does expand his own work beyond the limits of Sidney's.

After Alexander presented his research on *The Model* at a Renaissance Society of America meeting on March 24, 2012, he told me during the discussion period that *The Arte of English Poesie* is alluded to frequently by Scott. Because of my interest in *The Arte*, I have been waiting for the publication of Alexander's book with lively anticipation. It is rewarding to Oxfordians in several ways, especially to those of us who think de Vere was the author of the anonymous *Arte of English Poesie*, which Scott calls “another of Scott's favorite sources” (85). Tantalizingly, Scott criticizes the excessive creation of new words. He speaks of “some [words] new

coined," borrowing the use of "coin" meaning to create a new word, first used in *The Arte*. As usual, Scott fails to acknowledge his source here.

Stanley Wells, who has done so much to discredit his own scholarly reputation by clinging to the orthodox premise of authorship and refusing to even read contrary scholarship, in this case deserves our thanks for rediscovering Scott's manuscript, which he announced in the *Times Literary Supplement* in 2003. Early accounts of this rediscovery highlighted Scott's role as Shakespeare's first serious literary critic.

In his excellent editorial apparatus, Alexander sidesteps some peculiar oddities of *The Model*. It's not just that Puttenham is never mentioned in it. After all, the assumption that Puttenham wrote *The Arte* is a later one, although based on rather dubious evidence. What Alexander does not acknowledge is that *The Model* borrows extensively from *The Arte*, without ever once acknowledging that 1589 book. Any student or scholar who did this today would be condemned for blatant plagiarism. You may ask if Scott mentions the authors of other works that he cites. Yes. He names "Sir Philip Sidney" (in just those words) on nearly every page (I counted thirty-five instances); "Master [Edmund] Spenser" six times (as well as simply "Spenser" three additional times); Scaliger as often as Sidney; "[Du] Bartas" twelve times; as well as two mentions of [Samuel] Daniel; and one of "Sir Thomas More," "Sir Thomas Wyatt," "my Lord of Surrey," and "mine uncle George Wyatt."

So failing to name an important source was atypical for Scott. What about "Shakespeare"? Once again, Scott is intriguingly silent, though he mentions "that well-conceited tragedy *Richard the Second*" and "*Lucrece' Rape*," from which he twice quotes. Alexander squarely faces this failure, but then evades the obvious question as to its meaning: "Scott does not name Shakespeare as the play's [i.e., *Richard II's*] author at any point, but we cannot infer from this that he used the anonymous 1597 quarto [of the play]: he also fails to name Shakespeare as the author of *Lucrece*, and Shakespeare's authorship of that work was clear..." (133). In contrast with Alexander's admirable effort to place the date of *The Model's* composition in the summer of 1599, his powers of logical inference seem to abandon him when it comes to Scott's failure to name Shakespeare, or to refer to *The Arte* by name. Instead, he commends Scott's "scholarliness" (liii), and emphasizes that "he is far more assiduous than many of his contemporaries are in citing his sources" (liii).

Marcy North's crucial work on early modern anonymous authorship seems unknown to most Shakespeareans. Those who have read her know that she does not accept the common attribution of *The Arte* to George Puttenham. Instead, she advises us to admit we do not know who wrote it. Further, North points out that 16th- and early 17th-century commonplace books fail to mention Shakespeare as the author when they copy his sonnets, even when they name the other poets whose poems they copy. So here is an important precedent for Scott's failure to name Shakespeare as author of *Richard II* or of *The Rape of Lucrece*. This failure comes as no surprise to Oxfordians. We recognize that it was only with the 1623 publication of *The First Folio* that there was a concerted effort to invent "William Shake-speare" as author of the canon. At the time Scott wrote, in 1599, those in the know respected

de Vere's wish for authorial anonymity. Yet Scott's failure to use the name "William Shakespeare" from the dedicatory epistle of *The Rape of Lucrece* hints that, for some reason, he does not wish to promote the use of that pseudonym. His strong support of Sidney probably prejudiced him against Sidney's one-time enemy, Edward de Vere.

Scott may have had further reasons for his silence about the author's name, as well as his reticence in naming *The Arte*. He dedicated *The Model*, as well as an accompanying translation of a poem by Du Bartas, to his patron, Sir Henry Lee (1533-1611). Lee was the nephew of Sir Thomas Wyatt (who is mentioned once in *The Model*), and also related to William Cecil, to the Earl of Essex, and to Queen Elizabeth. Still more significantly, Lee's mistress was Anne Vavasour, father of Edward de Vere's illegitimate son Edward Vere. In fact, Lee's affair with Vavasour may have begun when he was her jailer when she was imprisoned in the Tower after her son's birth. Lee lived with her in the 1590s, after his wife died. In fact, it was said that Lee entertained Queen Elizabeth so lavishly at his estate in 1592 in an effort to placate her resentment at his relationship with Vavasour.

Since Lee was Scott's patron, he may have felt it would be imprudent to risk Lee's displeasure by writing too favorably about Edward de Vere or his literary works. It is also likely that naming de Vere as author of the Shakespeare works was taboo (the still surviving theatrical taboo against saying "Macbeth" aloud may be a displaced remnant of that name taboo).

It is curious that, despite Alexander's impressive scholarship, he fails to consider the implications of Scott's failure to name *The Arte* as a primary source of his book; as well as his failure to name Shakespeare as author of two of the works he discusses. A further curiosity is that Russ McDonald, in his *TLS* review mentioned above, similarly ignores these omissions, inconvenient as they are to the traditional authorship theory of both *The Arte* and the Shakespeare canon. Post-Stratfordians are well acquainted with the various scotomata of the Stratfordians. But here we have the opportunity to observe such a blind spot in *statu nascendi*.

Scott may have made some veiled criticisms of de Vere's literary works. There is no contradiction in Scott praising phrases from two works by de Vere, while objecting to others. In fact, Scott condemns one phrase from *Lucrece*¹ as "very idle, stuffed verse," while saying the poem as a whole is "very well-penned" (53). Did Scott have the extremely popular but racy *Venus and Adonis* in mind when he wrote, "And so they that under these flowers of poetry hide snaky wantonness and villainy bring poison in a golden goblet and are to be entertained as soul-murderers" (32)?

Surprisingly, Scott believes there is no place for ambiguity in good poetry. He could not be more different from de Vere in this respect. Stephen Greenblatt identifies "strategic opacity" as Shakespeare's characteristic pattern of deleting obvious motivations from his plots, so as to increase the complexity of his characters and their psychology. Stephen Booth has similarly identified the multiple, sometimes contradictory meanings of many of the words in the Sonnets. Scott, though, praises "*perspicuity*, when our words are, as it were, clear and transparent... having no ambiguous or obscure phrase...The contrary to this may be seen in him that thus lays down ambiguously a good conceit:

That when the searching eye of heaven is hid
Behind the globe, that lights the lower world.”

(54)

Those two lines are from *Richard II* (3.2.37-38), which Scott also praises as “well-penned” (45).

Scott mentions Plutarch, whose Italian sonnet structure was transformed into the English sonnet by de Vere’s uncle, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, who is mentioned on page 29. After praising Petrarch and unnamed English poets, Scott goes on to deprecate other unnamed English poets:

There is nothing in him [i.e., Petrarch] but may stand with honesty and virtue. We have some English admirers of their sundry stars with great felicity of wit that follow him; *but it were to be wished some conceits had never been born or never seen the light to have eclipsed the virtue and worth of them whom they have unworthily succeeded* [emphasis added].

Besides, we have other plaintiffs [i.e., poets who write “complaints”] as we have other calamities and losses, whether of goods, honour, friends, health, or whatsoever worldly fading joy we hold dear...Besides, it is an ease to the person affected to unload the burden of his affections and pour out his passion in complaint:

For sorrow ebbs, being blown with *wind* of words
[from *The Rape of Lucrece*, line 1330, emphasis added].

(27)

I wonder if Scott has some of de Vere’s poetry in mind, in addition to *Lucrece*. Had Scott seen *A Lover’s Complaint* in manuscript? Its line 7 includes the phrase, “sorrow’s wind,” echoing the line Scott quoted from *Lucrece*. Some of de Vere’s sonnets were circulating in manuscript by 1599, and they may have conceivably been one target of Scott’s criticism. Referring to emblems and impresa, Scott writes, “But this too large a field for me to *ear* in” (81; emphasis added). Using “to ear” meaning “to plough” in a figurative sense, referring to literature, was somewhat unusual in the 1590s; but de Vere’s dedication of his 1593 *Venus and Adonis* to the Earl of Southampton includes the phrase, “I shall be sorry it had so noble a godfather, and never after *ear* so barren a land...”

Another hint that Scott knew and may have been deliberately alluding to de Vere’s poetry is his use of the derogatory phrase “carpet poets”: “So as here those carpet poets that make their argument love and courting dalliance to stir sensual and low-pitched affections are clean dismissed from the rank of the heroical [poets]—yea some may be utterly unbilled from the service of poetry as weak or treacherous” (70). The phrase “carpet poets” is unusual—it does not occur in *Early*

English Books Online. But it recalls the similarly demeaning phrase “carpet knights” that occurs in the final stanza of de Vere’s poem “A Young Gentleman Willing to Travell.”² If Scott intended “carpet poets” to echo “carpet knights” (as Alexander believes he did) he seems to be alluding to de Vere’s failures at court, including his banishment in the early 1580s for his “dalliance” with Anne Vavasour.

It also occurs in Book 12 of the “Golding” translation of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, which may have been partly or entirely de Vere’s work. There, as well as in two earlier Golding translations, it takes the form “coward[ly] carpet knight.”

Scott also criticizes poetry that is set to music as inferior—“they lose little grace if they want [lack] music—whereas these [i.e., poems set to music] are for the most part low matter, principally the number [meter] fitted to melody...” (25). De Vere signed some of the poems and anonymously wrote other poems in the wildly popular *Paradise of Daintie Devises*, which was a collection of the sort of song lyrics that Scott is deprecating.

Again, Scott does not name any examples, but he betrays his Puritan origins when he castigates the kind of “songs or carols” that “suffers now a strange *metamorphosis* in our last, loosest age into crowed ditties lewd and scurrilous, having no ingenious conceit and most of them most abominably lascivious, such as the heathens would not endure; and shame is it that they be suffered to disgrace our art and undermine our honesty” (27; emphasis added). Given that Sidney Lee said of de Vere’s father-in-law Lord Burghley that he found de Vere’s “perverse humour a source of grave embarrassment,” and given the bawdiness of his literary works, it is possible that he is at least one of Scott’s unnamed targets here. Further, Scott rails against the use of comedy to make disguised attacks against important people:

[I]t is against the law of comedy and received custom (howsoever now countermanded) to represent the errors and follies of high states and personages, lest the sacred majesty of the places and dignities become contemptible for those personal faults, so neither must the errors of these high and holy mysteries be profaned and vilified by vulgar reproaches, because, the case going so near as the conscience of a man, these slips and errors are to be pitied and tenderly tendered, not scorned and reproached.

(79)

One thinks of *The Arte* calling de Vere the best author of comedy, and of his skewering his former guardian, and his father-in-law Lord Burghley as Corambis in an earlier version of *Hamlet* (Polonius in later versions). In the 19th century, Corambis/Polonius as Burghley could be freely acknowledged by Shakespeare commentators, before de Vere was first proposed as “Shakespeare” in 1920. Many of Burghley’s “personal faults,” “errors and follies” are “profaned and vilified” in this play. Scott’s phrase, “the case going so *near* as the *conscience* of a man,” brings to mind Hamlet’s explanation to Horatio of why he feels no guilt about the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, “They are not *near* my *conscience*” (5.2.58; emphasis added).

The 1599 *The Model of Poesy* is valuable evidence that supports the post-Stratfordian conclusion that 'William Shakespeare' was a pseudonym. Further, it is consistent with the hypothesis that Edward de Vere wrote *The Arte of English Poesie*. It will reward further study.

Endnotes

- ¹ "The endless date of never-ending woe," which Scott uses to exemplify what Scaliger identified as the error of having "idle attributes only to fill up your metre" (53).
- ² See Richard M. Waugaman, "A Wanderlust Poem, Newly Attributed to Edward de Vere." *Shakespeare Matters* 7(1):1, 21-23, 2007. "Carpet knight" also occurs in Book 12 of the "Golding" translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which may have been partly or entirely de Vere's work. There, as well as in two earlier Golding translations, it takes the form "coward[ly] carpet knight."

Dr. Magri's Bow and Quiver

Such Fruits Out of Italy: The Italian Renaissance in Shakespeare's Plays and Poems by Dr. Noemi Magri, PhD. Edited and with introduction by Gary Goldstein. Laugwitz Verlag, Buchholz, Germany, 300 pages, paperback, \$15.

Reviewed by William J. Ray

Gears after her death, Noemi Magri continues to riddle the orthodox position that the Shakespearean authorship inquiry is not legitimate scholarship. Within the ivied halls, the reflexive rejection of Oxfordian studies, if verbalized, would cite faulty methodologies, amateurish conclusions, insupportable assumptions, unverified claims. There the skepticism of great minds is at best regarded as unprofessional “celebrity opinion,” and any unsanctioned result constitutes a Scarlet Letter prohibiting the heretic from even second best cocktail parties.

In accord with academic guild requirements, Dr. Magri was educated and accredited in Italy, England, and the United States. She graduated from Ca' Foscari University in Venice, wrote her PhD dissertation on Philip Sidney, was a Fulbright Scholar, taught English at Mantua's Istituto Tecnico Industriale Statale, then supervised training in English there. She was fluent in Italian and Latin and knew Greek. She studied historiography and the arts of the Italian Renaissance. This background prepared her admirably for the first literary question in Western culture, was “Shakespeare” written by a businessman from Stratford, or by a Renaissance Man heretofore unrecognized. It couldn't be both.

Her eighteen essays ply the traditional canon of academic inquiry. Formulate the question; research it; master facts, dates, alignments; assemble supporting material, deductions, and connective logic; seek and deal with inconsistencies; and state a conditional hypothesis. The process of discovery utilized both customary and recondite sources and tested inferences drawn from extant documents. Most importantly, she plumbed data from Italian texts and art, an enormous resource usually neglected in Shakespeare scholarship.

To compare her methodological approach with highly respected Stratfordian peers, here is a reasonably representative statement of the opposing view, quoted from Sir Jonathan Bate, author of the estimable *Shakespeare and Ovid*. Then we will examine a few Magri essays:

One of the most frequently reiterated Anti-Stratfordian claims is that William Shakespeare could not have written the plays because he had never been to Italy, of which the plays supposedly reveal intimate knowledge. Let us set aside the fact that in the first scene of the [play] *Two Gentlemen of Verona* the impression is given that it is possible to travel by sea from Verona to Milan, which makes one suspect that the plays could not have been written by anyone who had ever actually been to Italy. (Milan is a seaport once again in *The Tempest*). The interesting thing about this claim is not its falsity but the conclusion which tends to be drawn from it: the plays must have been written by an English aristocrat who visited Italy....As I remarked in the previous chapter, Shakespeare's knowledge of matters Italian can be attributed to the presense of John Florio in the household of the Earl of Southampton. Because Shakespeare knew Florio and his works, the belief that Shakespeare's works were actually written by Florio is harder to refute than the case for any aristocrat's authorship—but because Florio was not an Englishman, the case for him has never made much headway.

The Genius of Shakespeare (1998, 94)

Within this cursory, at times accusatory, statement are eight unsupported notions about the author and the plays:

- That Shaksperre of Stratford was Shakespeare the famous dramatist and poet.
- That Shaksperre/Shakespeare was an imaginative writer and did not have to see Italy to write about it; such familiarity was not germane to the plays.
- That Shaksperre/Shakespeare did not describe Italy accurately.
- That there was no water transport between Verona and Milan.
- That topographies in *TGV* and *The Tempest* are poetic license.
- That Shaksperre/Shakespeare knew Southampton and through him Florio, therefore it is easy to infer how he gained usable details about Italy.
- That attributing Shakespeare's works to Florio is more plausible than doing so to any aristocrat writer.
- And the corollary, only Florio's being Italian, not English, kept him from being yet more plausible as "Shakespeare" than an aristocrat-author.

Upon inspection these are suppositions lacking foundation. Without foundation, the character of the paragraph is no more than impatient polemic. Had Dr. Magri advanced as mediocre a methodology in her professional work, her book would never get published.

Instead, the essays comprising *Such Fruits Out of Italy* illuminate the historical and artistic evidence for the Shakespearean sojourn in Italy, set out in more detail and from a broader bibliography than any previous work.

Regrettably, the book's publication occurs under adverse conditions. It is reprehensible that modern English studies doctrinally suppress the biographical aspect current to all other literary studies for its supreme example of the Artist in Western culture. The *de facto* policy will obstruct the book's plenary recognition. Double standards in the field also come into play. As long as paragraphs on the authorship issue such as Bate's find a passive audience, serious inquiry will continue to be shamed, defiled and tabooed.

There is a recent harbinger of change. Due indirectly to Dr. Magri and to Richard Roe's *The Shakespeare Guide to Italy*, Shakespeare-in-Italy tours are increasingly popular. Viewer-citizens sense a story. It may be in the air.

By contrast, *a priori* denials of "Shakespeare" in Italy, like tar patches on a derelict highway, last only the time it takes to test them. This state of chronic rationalization is the direct result of 1) ignoring geography effortlessly presented in the play texts; 2) overlooking the text's implied surroundings; necessitating 3) a "great" author who didn't know either geography or surrounds.

The ignorant author notion symptomatically represses the plays' geographical realism in the defense of the industry's mythic belief that the Italian canon issued from an untraveled mind happily spinning out masterpieces in London and Warwickshire. That the critics themselves by and large do not know Italy and judge that their subject couldn't, complicates the tortured logic.

This forms our entrée to Dr. Magri's contrasting thesis. She broadsides the Stratford ship of state, though employing the usual academic methods of pictorial and linguistic analysis. If she shows in the end that the plays depict Italy as a resident might have known it in the 16th century, a major tenet of the Stratford narrative will wither for lack of plausibility and the paradigm will fragment.

The essays are gathered by editor Gary Goldstein into four sections: Italian Renaissance Art in Shakespeare, the book's tour de force; Italian Geography in Shakespeare, the most extensive group; Oxford in Italy; and a miscellany that includes for example extensive evidence that the Italian legal system was unerringly depicted in *The Merchant of Venice*.

The first essay argues that Titian's Barberini version of "Venus and Adonis" must have been the source for a critical scene of "Shakespeare's" first work of poetry of the same title. The painting's bonnet covers Adonis's eyes. He looks askance at Venus, who is prostrate and pleading. Her arms enfold him like a band. His countenance and body language say, "let me go." Cytherea, the equivalent of Aphrodite, hides in the foliage. Tears of anguish trickle down Venus's cheek. All these details of the painting reappear in the graphically descriptive poetry of Shakespeare. They were not in Ovid, nor in Golding's translation.

Another passage of the poem describes Adonis's horse:

Look when a painter would surpass the life
In limning out [painting] a well-proportioned steed,
His art with nature's workmanship at strife,
As if the dead [painting] the living should exceed:
So did this horse excel a common one
In shape, in courage, colour, pace and bone
(289-294)

The lifelike aspect of the horse, the skillful painting for effect, Dr. Magri traces to another Shakespeare icon, Giulio Romano, the only contemporary artist specifically named in the canon. Incidentally, the phrases "surpass the life" and "workmanship at strife" with Nature, it can be argued, are sources of Jonson's sly First Folio allusions back to an observer's similar remarks, one who had to have seen works of this sort to speak of them as he did.

The *coup de grace* of the essay is the meticulous way it tracks down the provenance and location of the Barberini version of Titian's work. First, Dr. Magri eliminated the other four known versions as differing in their depictions of the conjugal scene. She also excluded the possibility that Edward de Vere, her identified "Shakespeare," could have seen them. This left the copy in Titian's house in Venice. How could de Vere have seen that one?

Sovereigns, princes, ambassadors, cardinals never failed to pay Titian a visit when they were in Venice....Titian was not only much loved by his countrymen but he also aroused admiration owing to his age: in 1575 he was about one hundred years old and still active. Considering de Vere's desire for learning and his love for Italian culture, he must have wished to meet Titian and admire his collection. Thus, he may have seen V&A in Titian's house, where the artist preserved originals and autograph copies. (29)

From her Greek education Dr. Magri also related the matched arts of poetry and painting, essential to understanding Shakespeare's "first heir of my invention," the revolutionary Venus and Adonis poem itself. Aristotle said that poetry and painting are twinned forms of art with the same nature. One is dumb poetry, the other speaking painting, two sides of human perceptual comprehension. The essay suggests a fascinating point, that de Vere/Shakespeare was so struck with the new Renaissance artistic realism that he introduced its frank descriptiveness into English prose and poetry, transforming English into an instrument of new Consciousness. We continue to use his expanded insight and higher vocabulary as the language of our modern consciousness.

The following essay, on the "Wanton" paintings, is of a piece with these several insights. Even the gods suffer human consciousness and passions. The induction scene of *The Taming of the Shrew* also convinced Dr. Magri that the author must have gone to Italy, to have so closely described the three "wanton" works. She systematically compared the "Cytherea" description in the play to Penni's "Venus

and the Rose,” the “Io” description to Correggio’s “Io,” and the “Apollo and Daphne” narrative to the anonymous “Apollo and Daphne” now in Casa Vasari, Arezzo. In addition to showing unmistakable points of similarity between the respective paintings and the author’s lines, she established that all three paintings were available to Oxford during his travels. Considering she was working at a remove of hundreds of years, this is Aesthetics history on a high level.

The three works dealt, in de Vere’s language, with “fond desire.” The sexual dynamic as metaphor for the inner spiritual struggle was to be a theme of the Sonnets, under the changed rubric of head versus heart, or Mind versus Desire.

II

The controversy that persists to this day concerning Shakespeare’s depiction of water travel in Northern Italy receives extended study in the essay, “No Errors in Shakespeare: Historical Truth and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*.” Dr. Magri’s early contribution emphasized that the physical descriptions of water use were not creative fancy, but historical fact. For example, when traveling from state to state, people showed a form of passport at the dock. Travel talk in the play is in the terms of “being shipped” and “embarking.” The Adige is “the river” inferred by Launce’s line. An intricate water transport system had existed since Roman rule, both for war and commerce. A landing spot was a *porto*, a port, albeit inland: *Portiolo*, *Portomaggiore*, *Portobuffole*, *Portonovo*, *Porto di Gaizignano*: small, major, canal, new, or in this case Padua.

“In 1572 the Boatmen’s Guild counted 49 *burchieri*, boatmen who transported passengers and merchandise.” Footnoted to a contemporary Veronan archive, this one sentence refutes the obsessive argument advanced by Oxfraud.com (an anti-Oxfordian website) that it was absurd to propose, as Oxfordian Richard Roe had, that canals were used for Northern Italian passenger travel. Dr. Magri first published the article in the *De Vere Society Newsletter* long before, in May 1998.

On the issue of realism in *The Merchant of Venice*, specifically transport to Belmont, another essay has a very good engraving of Villa Foscari, showing a small vessel gliding past the building and outfitted with a mast for river travel. In discussing the villa’s history she shows from the text that the playwright was likewise familiar with the history. Villa Foscari was precisely ten miles from Venice, just as described in the play. Besides the landing by the Brenta there was a road accessible to the back hall. Portia says, “The light we see is burning in my hall.” The hall window is visible from the road.

Another seemingly throwaway line concerns the visit of the Marquis of Montferrat to Belmont/ Villa Foscari. That was a real event brought about by the simultaneous visit of Henry of Valois, King of Poland, to Villa Foscari. It would not have been known in England, but it was part of the prestige of the monumental building. Henry of Valois spent ten days in Venice and stayed a night at the estate that would be immortalized as Belmont in the play. So did the Marquis of Montferrat. It is recorded as part of Mantuan history. The change for art’s sake to

Belmont is underlaid by great familiarity about contemporary Venetian history and great respect for the villa itself. Any scholar is hard put to explain how a stay-at-home playwright would know these minute details. But Dr. Magri made it easy to understand how the Earl of Oxford would know. As English nobility, he was an honored guest of—and peer among—the class that participated in the historic event, which happened only the year before he visited Venice.

The cumulative results of these studies are quite enlightening. De Vere's fidelity to the truth was so thorough that he would not cheapen a work of literary art with imaginary geography or topography. He was temperamentally faithful to Nature and the eternal Past. The accuracy of the physical and cultural descriptions should therefore not be surprising, once we have the right face in the frame.

By associating art, author, and specific sense of place, Dr. Magri also gives insight into the author's soul, that we find so pitiable a vacuum in the received narrative. I do not believe this particular aspect has ever been appreciated before. "Shakespeare"/ de Vere wrote not just as an imaginative artist plumbing the human condition, but as an enthusiastic candid explorer of Earth. Geography was the educational and spiritual theme of the Age of Exploration—the material metaphor for the Renaissance's New World of Knowledge. Travel, pilgrimage, exploration revealed unseen glories of God to the eyes of men, those fortunate enough to journey far and return home.

"Shakespeare" joined both forms of knowing, earthly and fictional, into his plays about Italy and France, the Mediterranean generally. Readers of this book thus have a treat in store, a variety of contextual information never before realized. The plays and poetry, in addition to conveying universal art, become historical documents that capture 16th century Italy in amber.

III

Scholarship comes down to specificity. Her voluminous proofs of authenticity set Dr. Magri's work apart from any other, even in the Oxfordian-Shakespeare field. In the particular subset of aesthetic, linguistic, and architectural study, *Such Fruits Out of Italy* is the most compelling monograph on "Shakespeare" in print. I would add that the essays are richly footnoted. In themselves they provide material for further study. The essays were done over a period of years. Consequently, they do not share a single theme other than veracity and need not be read consecutively.

Finally, in the course of one essay, Dr. Magri takes on Alan Nelson, whose account of Oxford, *Monstrous Adversary*, was rated by critic William S. Niederkorn as "one of the most bilious biographies ever written." Contrary to the decorous custom among Oxfordians in conferences, Dr. Magri proves Nelson an incompetent historian and dishonest arguer. This was most clearly illustrated in her reprise of Nelson's work regarding the Cuoco hearing (the Venetian Inquisition). According to the 1581 Arundel-Howard libels, immoral relations had occurred between Oxford and the young countertenor, whom he had brought back from Italy.

Nelson considered Oxford's enemies' testimony wholly correct, and he committed numerous errors about, and egregiously self-serving mistranslations of, the Inquisition texts, written in Latin and Venetian-Italian. Cuoco's testimony did not in any way corroborate the Arundel-Howard charges. But Nelson never dealt with the matter of their credibility, he merely accepted it at face value. The libels came about because Oxford had exposed their treasonous designs to Queen Elizabeth. Being suspect themselves, their testimony about Oxford had no weight at the time, nor should it since. The outlandishness of their other libels about Oxford constituted further grounds for doubt. None of this affected *Monstrous Adversary*.

Her critique pointed out Nelson even spelled the youth's name wrong. Dr. Magri, fluent in the languages, corrected additional errors. She did not make a general comment obvious from the data, that it is utterly irresponsible for an historian to assert the worst about his subject on dubious grounds, then ignore contrary evidence from a primary character witness.


I mention this essay to contrast her meticulous, cumulative, painstaking approach to knowledge, with the biased results she felt obligated to analyze in Nelson's book. By holding to verifiable fact, always a clue to personal integrity, by professional skills of a high order, she opened the path for truth, one neither questioned nor countered since. Nelson's biography is out of print.

[Editor's note: Portions of this review also appeared in the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, 50:4 (Fall 2014).]

Insularity, Omission and Exclusion at Cambridge University Press

A Review Essay on *Shakespeare and the Digital World: Redefining Scholarship and Practice* (Cambridge, 2015)

Michael Dudley

 Recently, in the process of moving some file boxes of papers from our home to my office at the university, I was pleasantly surprised to find among them documents from the early 1990s—old Shakespeare Oxford Society newsletters, photocopied articles and chapters on the Shakespeare Authorship Question obtained via interlibrary loan, as well as correspondence with other Oxfordians. It was a reminder of those (now almost unimaginable) days before the arrival of the World Wide Web, when authorship research and the means of engaging with others interested in it was comparatively slow and difficult, was confined to paper, microfilm, email and listservs, and, if not entirely invisible to the mainstream, then very easily excluded and dismissed.

A quarter century on, scholarship and pedagogy across the disciplines have been radically enhanced and transformed by digital resources, online publishing and social media. In the case of the SAQ, these tools have granted new audiences access to resources long available only to in-person scholars, while enabling the discourse on Shakespeare's identity to become increasingly heated and to penetrate ever closer to—and actually influence—the mainstream.¹

This influence is clearly evident (if deliberately muted) in Christie Carson's and Peter Kirwan's new edited collection, *Shakespeare and the Digital World: Redefining Scholarship and Practice*, a useful but compromised effort to chart the digital future of Shakespeare studies, teaching and performance.

It may at first seem incongruous that *Shakespeare and the Digital World* (SATDW) exists at all as a book: Given its focus on the use of e-books, blogs, wikis, open-access journals, databases, MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) and

multimedia in support of research, teaching and performance in the humanities, the content here might well have been served better with an online platform, in which all the resources mentioned in the text could have been linked to directly. Yet, as editors Carson and Kirwan state in their introduction, the monograph format is superior in terms of its ability to develop an extended argument (which, in their case, they describe as “carefully constructed” [6]). Even so, the authors of the book’s seventeen essays continually engage with the debate over the merits of and challenges posed by digital technologies, and the nature of their relationship to the monograph—and, by extension, their transformative force in the world of scholarship. This tension underscores the entire book, and warrants even closer examination than the editors appear to be aware (or, as is more likely, are willing to admit), for it leads to additional tensions, contradictions and omissions which, I believe, have significant implications for the authorship debate.

On its own terms, *SATDW* is a practical introduction to (and, at times, meditation on) the many tools available for digital humanities practice and scholarship in an era of ubiquitous mobile computing and networking. It should be of interest and value to a wide audience, including librarians, students and researchers wishing to understand and utilize the digital resources available at university libraries (such as *English Books Online* and *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*), instructors designing courses around blogs and wikis (especially for distance education), and arts organizations looking to shape their online presence and engage their users through social media.

Its lasting value, however, will be undermined by its unfortunate lack of an appropriate philosophical foundation, and its startlingly impoverished view of Shakespeare himself as an author—shortcomings which I believe to be fundamentally related.

My (admittedly presumptuous) purpose, then, is twofold: to review the book on its own terms and then to supply what I see as its missing theoretical framework—drawn from the philosophy of technology literature—which, I propose, would have gone a long way toward making this a truly significant (but, as we shall see, quite different) book.

A “Carefully Constructed Argument”

The book is a collaboration between editors Christie Carson and Peter Kirwan and their contributors, many of whom refer to each others’ chapters. Carson is well known for her work on digital media in Shakespeare performance, in particular as the co-editor of *The Cambridge King Lear CD-ROM: Text and Performance Archive*, and her research agenda focuses on the uses of digital technologies in documenting, teaching and researching dramatic performance history. Kirwan (who blogs at *The Bardathon*) and whose research focuses on Shakespeare collaboration and apocrypha, was an associate editor of Jonathan Bate’s and Eric Rasmussen’s *Collaborative Plays by Shakespeare and Others* (2013).²

Carson and Kirwan are to be commended for the book's excellent organization and thematic integrity. The book is divided into two broad themes, each of which is subdivided into two further parts and framed with their own introductions by Carson or Kirwan (while both supply the conclusion). Their stated intention with this scheme was to afford readers the option to read the book according to interest (much like one would on a website) rather than sequentially (though what effect this would have on their "carefully constructed argument" they don't say). Parts one and two are dedicated to "defining current digital scholarship and practice," first by examining "Shakespeare research in the digital age" (10-55), and then by considering "Shakespeare pedagogy in the digital age" (57-112). The second half of the book sets about "redefining the boundaries and practices of Shakespeare studies online" by looking at "publishing and academic identity" (127-186) and then through "communication and performance" (187-257).

Interestingly, the four essays ostensibly on "Shakespeare research in the digital age" are really more about defining digital humanities in general, with only tangential references to Shakespearean texts or digital projects. John Lavagnino argues that what we have since 2008 been calling "digital humanities" actually has a much older history, with relevant literature emerging as early as 1973 with the first computer-assisted analysis of Shakespeare's plays. Bruce Smith's offering is a charming and even moving reflection on the importance of the physical book, especially for capturing the "pastness" in medieval and Renaissance texts. By contrast, Farah Karim-Cooper focuses specifically on the supplementary role of the iPad when researching and communicating about these time periods, while David McInnis describes the history of and remarkable collaborative research breakthroughs afforded by the *Lost Plays Database*.

For the section on pedagogy, Erin Sullivan stresses that when planning the physical and online course offerings of the Shakespeare Institute in Stratford-Upon-Avon, content and outcomes are the primary considerations, with digital tools being of secondary or tertiary concern. Sarah Grandage and Julie Sanders look at the online potentialities for the global "brand" of Shakespeare, particularly in terms of the 2012 "Globe to Globe" festival which saw the venerable theater host thirty-seven productions from around the world, many in languages other than English. Next, Sheila Cavanagh and Kevin Quarmby continue in this international vein by offering their positive experiences with Transatlantic pedagogy, in which actor-scholar Quarmby, Skyping from London, co-taught a "Shakespeare in Performance" course with Cavanagh at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. Finally, Kirwan shares his own use of blogs and wikis in the classroom, noting their value for personal reflection in a "post-consensus society" (105), and for challenging, albeit to a deliberately constrained extent, traditional notions of authority and the hierarchization of knowledge.

In between parts one and two, a "half time...pause for reflection" by Sharon O'Dair cautions against a thoughtless embrace of digital technologies and media, given their origin in massive, market-driven corporations, and the concomitant neoliberal orientation of institutions of higher learning, both of which, she says, threaten true scholarship.

Kirwan introduces the section on “redefining boundaries and practices” by observing that it is problematic for institutions to take ownership of Shakespeare in the digital age, when his identity as “person and text” is debatable, as is that of the blogging and podcasting academic him/herself (129). No less disruptive, argues Katherine Rowe, has been the instability wrought by the shift, especially in classrooms, to digital texts, and the sheer unpredictability of content to which students may be referring (videos, Facebook, etc.). Peter Holland explores the virtues of virtual communities, highlighting his own experiences with the SHAKSPER listerv, while Sylvia Morris advises arts organizations to loosen their grip on online assets (e.g., low-resolution images) so that they may be shared by users.

This section also includes one of two chapters of most obvious interest to the authorship scholar: Eleanor Collins’s “Unlocking scholarship in Shakespeare studies: Gatekeeping, guardianship and open access journal publications.” It opens with the controversy over Roland Emmerich’s 2011 film, *Anonymous*, then frankly criticizes the Shakespeare academy for its restrictive, insular, and exclusive gatekeeping, before discussing how new online, open-access models of scholarly discourse are challenging it (favorably mentioning *Brief Chronicles* twice in the process). While she does not address the authorship question directly, she closes with the provocative “central question of what Shakespeare scholarship will be in the future: Whether it chooses to occupy an embattled centre, or to question received truths and in doing so open the way for fresh readings and critical paradigms” (141-142).

The final section on “communication and performance” also includes the impacts of *Anonymous*, and the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust’s “unashamedly evangelical” (195) campaign against it, which authors Paul Edmondson and A.J. Leon—in a decidedly galling and self-aggrandizing rhetorical flourish—characterize as “championing freedom and democracy” (193). According to the authors, the Trust’s approach to its much-pilloried “60 Minutes with Shakespeare” website consisted of “break[ing] down the assault on Shakespeare into *soluble spoonfuls for the general public*” (199, emphasis added). The tone is unabashedly, and revealingly, patronizing.

Ryan Nelson then discusses the Globe’s online outreach (including its “Adopt an Actor”) while Stephen Purcell explores digital broadcasts of live performances offered by the Globe, BBC, the National Theatre, and the Royal Shakespeare Company, as well as more innovative digital performances, including a *Romeo and Juliet* performed exclusively on Twitter and other social media. Carson then delivers the penultimate essay, asking what is the role of the expert or in this new, unmediated world? To what extent can order be re-established when postmodern conceptions of “truth” expressed via digital media threaten all coherence?

The answer, as provided by herself and Kirwan, is both inconclusive and complex: The amateur scholar may appear to have equal access to audiences, but the system still favors large, corporately owned information sources and institutions. At the same time, in this new environment the audience must now to some extent participate in the conversation; passivity is no longer entirely possible or desirable.

For all of their cautious enthusiasm about the potentialities of digital

technologies and media in the study, teaching and performance of Shakespeare, the editors and many of the contributors are clearly conflicted and anxious about what the liberating and leveling forces unleashed by digital publishing portend, when it is no longer possible to exclude or ignore the voices of the amateur scholar, student or audience.

To some extent these tensions should have been anticipated and pre-empted by the editors via a broader interdisciplinary engagement, in particular with reference to literature from the philosophy of technology. Surely they should have recognized that Shakespeareans are not the only practitioners facing these issues and asking these questions. Instead, many of the contributors appear to spin about in their own orbits, pursuing rhetorical questions for which answers (or at least more original and fruitful lines of inquiry) exist had they but looked beyond their narrowly defined fields. However, as will be shown, those answers would have been decidedly discomfiting.

Theory: From Focaltechnic to Pragmatechnic Shakespeare Studies

What the editors and authors of *SATDW* apparently failed to understand or address is that their questions and problem statements are among the oldest foundational themes in the philosophy of technology. As Albert Borgmann puts it in his classic *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life* (1984), these concerns are described as *instrumentalist*, *substantive*, or *pluralist* views:

Is technology a powerful instrument in the service of our values, a force in its own right that threatens our essential welfare, or is there no clear problem of technology at all, merely an interplay of numerous and variable tendencies?³

Accordingly, the instrumentalists in *SATDW* describe how digital media can be put to use by themselves or their organizations to fill a need or solve a particular problem (e.g., Edmondson and Leon); the substantivists warn that digital technologies threaten the nature and future of scholarship (e.g., O'Dair), while the pluralists (e.g., Sullivan) adopt no particular position on the matter, seeing technology as just one consideration among many.

Borgmann expands upon this foundation with what he calls “focal things and practices”: those objects around which we are engaged socially and to which we direct our attention, and the social practices we build around them (e.g., a meal and its preparation and consumption). In an advanced technological society, as machinery becomes more sophisticated and its processes hidden from us (or as Lewis Mumford would have it, “etherealized”) the practices around that thing erode and it becomes merely a commodity which is procured, e.g., a Big Mac.^{4,5}

Again, we see this concern reflected in *SATDW*, for example with Rowe’s discussion of students’ response to digital texts: The focal thing (text) has long had particular social practices built around it (book-based pedagogies) which are changing as the text has etherealized and been transformed into a commodity.

In his explication of focal things and practices, Lawrence Haworth refines Borgmann's ideas further by identifying some practices which are "guarding" and others that are aimed at "internal goods." The first he likens to religion, the second to arts and crafts: that in the first instance God (or the object of devotion) is independent of the practices built around Him/Her, while a particular work of fine art cannot be physically created without the traditions and the practice of that craft.⁶ In the case of guarding practices,

[T]he thing is in the care of the practice. This involves that the thing has significance apart from the practices by which it is guarded, but is, shall we say, fragile, at least under modern conditions, and so needs the practice to preserve it.⁷

But adds,

The tie to external realities is never so strong that tradition and history play no role in determining the shape of the goods internal to a practice. This follows from the very idea of a practice.⁸

To address this reality, Haworth proposes a *synthetic* model, in which it is not possible to distinguish between the excellence of the object of the practice, and the nature of the practice itself: that if a practice too slavishly follows tradition and does not adapt to changing conditions, then the realization of the object with which it is concerned will suffer.⁹

At this point we are obviously beyond any of the analysis to be found in *SATDW*; yet, using an anti-Stratfordian lens the implications coalesce rapidly: that orthodox Stratfordian Shakespeare scholarship is a "guarding practice" dedicated to an "object of devotion" shaped by its practice but which is, indeed, fragile under modern (digital) conditions, and is seeking to preserve it. At the same time, the academy's slavish adherence to tradition and refusal to adapt to the rapidly changing conditions wrought by digital technologies is, for all practical purposes, etherealizing its focal object.

The alternative, according to Larry Hickman, is to utilize technologies in a more constructive and analytical way, one which can help us identify and set aside those things and practices which no longer serve their intended purpose. He finds Borgmann's theory (which he dubs "focaltechnics") wanting, calling instead for a *pragmatechnic* view, which, derived from the pragmatism of John Dewey

is a thoroughgoing program of problem solving that involves analysis, testing and production: production of new tools, new habits, new values, new ends in view, and, to use Borgmann's phrase, even new "focal things and practices." Pragmatechnics thus takes up a matter that appears to be absent in focaltechnics, that is *how we come by focal things and practices in the first place*. [It] argues that if technology is to be responsible then it must

be able to test our focal things and practices...that we sometimes need to examine our enthusiasms, aesthetic experiences, and sympathies and to subject them to tests of relevance and fruitfulness and...reject the ones that are unproductive because they are based on what is merely personal or sectarian.¹⁰

The closest we come in *SATDW* to Hickman's pragmatechnics is Collins's plea to use digital media "to question received truths and in doing so open the way for fresh readings and critical paradigms" (141-142). What is missing, however, is the acknowledgement that the engagement with focal things is a social process, and that developing such new paradigms would require orthodox scholars to connect honestly with their ideological antagonists to generate new knowledge through dialogue. A pragmatechnic approach to Shakespeare studies, then, would be open to testing its assumptions and practices, and rejecting those which are "unproductive"—something desperately needed under the dominant Stratfordian orthodoxy.

Carson's and Kirwan's recognition of the new age of audience agency and participation is a partial step in this direction, but again lacks external support to develop the argument to its necessary conclusion. They unwittingly echo communications studies scholar Henry Jenkins, who, in his *Convergence Culture* (2006), argues that new digital media are changing the relationship between cultural producers and consumers, and unleashing and stimulating the collective intelligence of audiences to reshape cultural products as part of a "participatory culture":

Consumption has become a collective process and that's what I mean...by collective intelligence...None of us can know everything; each of us knows something; we can put the pieces together if we pool our resources and combine our skills. Collective intelligence can be seen as an alternative source of media power. We are learning how to use that power through our day-to-day interactions within convergence culture.¹¹

Lacking as they do any reference to Jenkins's work on "convergence culture," there is an inadequate appreciation on the part of the editors for the potential of this "collective intelligence" to not just affect the practices of Shakespeare scholarship, but to "pragmatechnically" alter social reality itself. Yet, as the University of Wyoming's Ali Raddaoui states:

Web 2.0 actors are somehow controlling the means of intellectual, cultural and technological production. These actors are creating new knowledge, technological and otherwise, and...[b]ecause of the mass, connectedness and methods of operation of these actors, it is suggested that the democratizing power of Web 2.0 extends beyond offering forums, channels and gadgets for self and collective expression, adjudicating truth and writing popularly-validated, parallel versions of history and thought. Ability to describe and

comment on reality and to prepare a 'generic', non-expertly written version of truth, is strongly associated with the traditional exercise of democracy. The novelty of Web 2.0 may be that its actors are capable of impacting and transforming socio-political realities in ways unfolding right before our eyes...This consensus seems to be imposed by a newly-empowered majority in possession of the tools of production and change afforded by Web 2.0, and it is giving birth to new realities on the ground...redefining the world, and changing social reality.¹²

This brings us to the most problematic aspect of *SATDW*, and one that appears to be quite subconscious on the part of the editors and contributors: They share a profound lack of coherence regarding the focal thing that is Shakespeare himself, and an unspoken fear of the power of Web 2.0 to define it without reference to their expertise.

A reader wholly unfamiliar with Shakespeare could be forgiven for coming away from this book unaware that the word "Shakespeare" referred to an actual person, a writer who existed and created within a particular historical-political context and social and creative milieu. Instead, we learn that Shakespeare is a "cultural phenomenon" (30); a "commodity of the heritage industry" (133); a "brand" (75); a "global cultural field" (84); and even, more ineffably, a "cultural concept" (239). A sole passing reference on page 246 to "Shakespeare's grammar school" aside, any sense of using these tools to seek an identifiable author is all but absent; in a book dedicated to virtual practices, the sheer virtuality of its ostensible object is indeed remarkable. The book's cover art—featuring a highly pixelated, formless reproduction of the Droeshout portrait—is, ironically, most apropos.

More remarkable still is that this lacuna co-exists with a frank—and for the most part surprisingly restrained and respectful—conversation about the "Shakespeare authorship discussion," as it is referred to here. Aside from a cryptic reference by Kirwan to "conspiracy hubs" (61), as well as his frustration that online comments in mainstream media articles on Shakespeare often get "hijacked" by anti-Stratfordians (249-250), the existence of the Shakespeare Authorship Question is accepted as part of the landscape, its adherents tacitly included under the banner "Shakespearean."

Which makes all the more inexcusable what must have been a deliberate decision on the part of the editors to exclude anti-Stratfordian voices. There are no equivalent contributions from the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition about its online campaigns, no discussion of the *Declaration of Reasonable Doubt*, no chapter from the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship, no references to the popularity of Keir Cutler's videos, nothing about Hank Whittemore's methodical online list of "100 Reasons Why Oxford Was Shakespeare," or Roger Stritmatter's scholarly and often humorous "Shake-Speare's Bible" site. There is absolutely no sense at all that the Authorship Question—and the case for Edward de Vere in particular—has seen an explosion of vitality, influence and supporters over the past twenty years with the emergence of the World Wide Web and social media. The gatekeeping critiqued by Collins is, ironically, on full display.

Conclusion

SATDW is, indeed, a “carefully constructed argument,” one that scrupulously avoids what, in the light of selected theories from the philosophy of technology, is the most significant digital development of all: That there is, in fact, a pragmatechnic revolution underway in Shakespeare studies, but one in which Stratfordians are playing no role, leaving the field entirely in the hands of anti-Stratfordians willing to use digital tools to examine, consider and discard obsolete focal things and practices in favor of those which bear more fruit.

Had *Shakespeare and the Digital World* been better grounded in these philosophies, the editors and contributors might have been more equipped to face what seems to me to be an inevitable conclusion: that the disruptive nature of these technologies and their ability to unleash our collective intelligence cannot help but reveal, undermine and erode the etherealized, virtual foundations of the field of orthodox Shakespeare studies. The center cannot hold when there is none.

Instead, the book sinks beneath the weight of its own insularity, exclusions, omissions and contradictions. That the seemingly limitless vistas afforded to us by new digital tools in understanding Shakespeare—the writer and his works as well as his place in our cultures—should instead elicit so circumscribed a response ultimately tells us more about the Shakespeare academy itself than it does about blogs, databases and wikis.

Endnotes

- ¹ For example, Edward de Vere's Geneva Bible, (which Roger Stritmatter studied for years in person at the Folger Shakespeare Library, and in so doing identified over a thousand underlinings and annotations, 246 of which strongly correlate with over 600 allusions in the works of Shakespeare), may now be viewed online by anyone searching the Folger Shakespeare Library website (Call number STC 2106).
- ² Reviewed by Ramon Jiménez in *The Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, vol. 50 no. 4, 13-15.
- ³ Albert Borgmann, *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life: A Philosophical Inquiry*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 15.
- ⁴ Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, its Transformations, and its Prospects* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961), 112.
- ⁵ Borgmann, 196-210.
- ⁶ Lawrence Haworth, "Focal Things and Focal Practices," *Technology and the Good Life?* eds. Eric Higgs, Andrew Light, David Strong (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 59-62.
- ⁷ *Ibid*, 60.
- ⁸ *Ibid*, 66.
- ⁹ *Ibid*, 63-64.
- ¹⁰ Larry Hickman, "Focaltechnics, Pragmatechnics and the Reform of Technology," *Technology and the Good Life?* 95-96 (emphasis added).
- ¹¹ Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 4.
- ¹² Ali Raddaoui, "Democratization of Knowledge and the Promise of Web 2.0: A Historical Perspective," *Proceedings of the 11th European Conference on e-Learning*, 2012, 440.



Designed at The Snail's Head Press.
Baltimore, MD.

Where the design meets the mind.



Our cover image is sampled from Thomas Morely's
The first Book of Ballets to Five Voices (1595), published by
Thomas East. The motto, "sed adhuc mea messis est in herba est"
— "until this time my harvest has yet been in leaf" —
is topically derived from Ovid, *Heroides*, xvii, 263.

