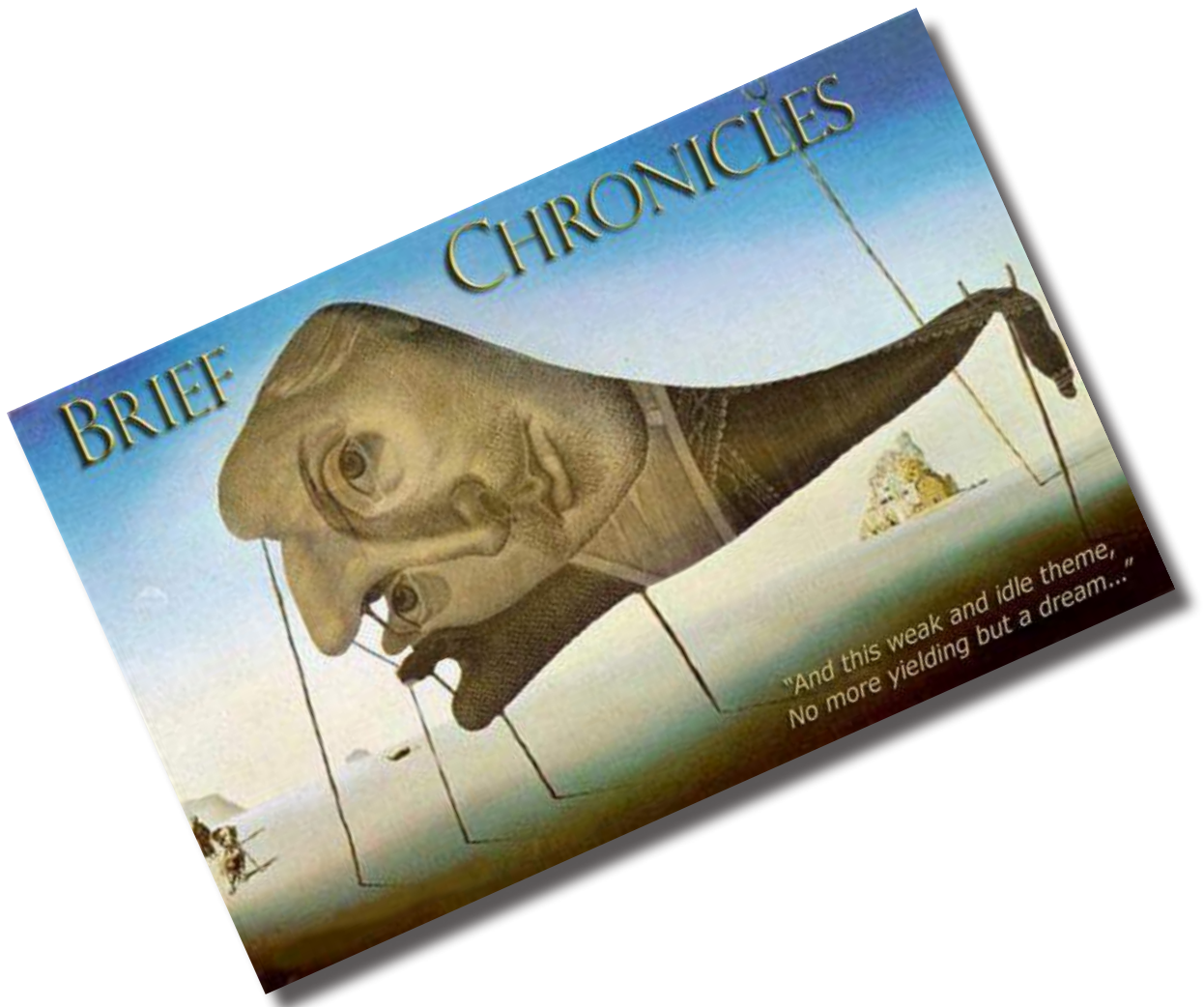


*The 1623 Shakespeare
First Folio:*

A Minority Report (2016)

A Special Issue of





From: First Folio Truth in
Advertising Campaign

To:
Director Michael Witmore
The Folger Shakespeare Library
201 East Capital Street S.E.
Washington, DC, 20003

Ber. What is the end of study, let me know?
King. Why, that to know which else we should not know.

Ber. Things hid and barr'd, you mean, from common
sense?

King. Aye, that is study's Godlike recompense.
(LLL 1.1.55-58)

This special volume of *Brief Chronicles* is being issued on the occasion of the Folger Shakespeare Library's 2016 First Folio Caravan Tour. The tightly scripted rollout of the Folger Tour, analyzed and critiqued by Ms. Maycock in our first article, has been the chief impetus for the present volume. When there is no voice, the people perish. By providing a more comprehensive interdisciplinary assessment of the historical, literary, and familial relationships affecting the 1623 Folio's publication, we hope our volume speaks on behalf of all those whose "art" remains "tongue tied by authority." — Ed.



Time's glory is to calm contending kings,
To unmask falsehood, and bring truth to light

~ ~ The Rape of Lucrece, 1594

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

Special thanks to Alex McNeil for his editorial assistance in this volume.

Our cover image, inspired by Salvador Dali's "The Dream" and the First Folio's Droeshout engraving, is an original work of art by Alan Green, whose talent and generosity are greatly appreciated.

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What's Past is Prologue

.....man, proud man,
Drest in a little brief authority,
Most ignorant of what he's most assured
—*Measure for Measure*



In January 22, 1988, Louis J. Halle (1910-1998), a distinguished professor of the history of ideas at The Ecole de Haute International in Geneva, wrote to Charlton Ogburn, Jr. (1911-1998). I like to imagine it was a postcard from the foothills of the Alps, but maybe it was like one of those carefully prepared missives Ogburn himself used to type on an orange 6x9 sheet, as he so often did to me, starting in about 1991 until shortly before his death in 1998. Ogburn was a Harvard graduate, journalist, and writer of well respected books on many subjects. A former State Department analyst, he had served as the communications officer of the fabled Merrill's Marauders, the U.S. special ops jungle combat team that against many odds traversed hundreds (by some accounts, thousands) of miles through the forbidding Burmese jungle during the struggle over control of the Pacific in 1944. Ogburn turned this experience into a bestselling narrative history of the 3,000-man squadron, later turned into a blockbuster 1962 movie. But neither Halle nor I, in our correspondences with Mr. Ogburn, were primarily interested in Merrill's Marauders.

After many years of research, as a second generation scholar of the Shakespeare question, Ogburn had in 1984 published an influential underground study: *The Mysterious William Shakespeare: The Myth and the Reality* is the book your English professor still won't read, a kind of samizdat, a grad student's forbidden thrill but not something you would ever dare to discuss with your advisor for fear of being branded with a scarlet letter in academia's hall of shame for "doubting Shakespeare." Expanding on the argument of J. Thomas Looney's revolutionary 1920 book, *Shakespeare Identified in Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford*, Ogburn's book not only identified Oxford as the author, but documented a long history of academic evasion and double-talk that had for so long prevented the case for Oxford's authorship from receiving a fair hearing.

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Halle wrote to suggest that Charlton Ogburn cheer up after the results of a 1987 moot court debate on the authorship of the Shakespearean canon held at American University in Washington, D.C., before three Justices of the U.S. Supreme Court—Brennan, Blackmun and Stevens—and in front of an audience of nearly 1,000. Ogburn's own book, then in its third year in print, had been perhaps the prime motive force for the moot. Sponsored by Washington philanthropist and entrepreneur David Lloyd Kreeger, then CEO of Geico, the large attendance signaled that the public had never abandoned its much-discussed curiosity about the problems of Shakespearean biography. Garnering extensive media coverage, the moot court eventually hit the *New Yorker*, in a fourteen-page spread by James Lardner, "Onward and Upwards with the Arts: The Authorship Question," published May 20, 1988.

Despite such positive coverage, Ogburn (among others) was bothered by the moot's outcome. At the outset of the debate, Justice Brennan (the presiding judge) announced, apparently without any debate or discussion among the participants, that the burden of proof would be on the Oxfordians, who would be obliged to show by "clear and convincing evidence" that William Shakspere of Stratford was not the author and that Edward de Vere was. At the conclusion of the debate, the three judges ruled that the Oxfordian side had not met this burden.

Many, like Ogburn, believed that imposing this standard on the Oxfordians was unfair for at least two reasons, each deserving a separate adjudication. Shouldn't the Oxfordians, as the outsiders and critics of an established paradigm, have the opportunity to test whether the orthodox had proved their own case—as orthodox authorities assert *ad nauseum* until the present—"by clear and convincing evidence"? This would seem on its face to be a necessary preliminary to examining any particular alternative claim to authorship. If the traditional case really has already been proved why would anyone question it? If we had to convict someone "beyond a reasonable doubt" as the true author of the works, how would the traditional Stratford candidate fare?

"He would be found innocent as a lamb," answers Ruth Loyd Miller in Lardner's *New Yorker* article. That finding, not the possession of any particular piece of "smoking gun" beyond-a-reasonable-doubt-in-five-minutes-inspection type of evidence, is the basis for post-Stratfordian doubts about the official story of Shakespeare. To the Oxfordians, the true author of the works is demonstrated by a significant *preponderance of the evidence*, especially when considered in its large aggregate and variegated forms. That such a preponderance exists is, on the other hand, itself actually a fact, even if comprehending its magnitude and detail requires a careful and discerning study that few professional Shakespeareans have dared to undertake. The Oxfordians therefore had reason to lament the absence of a more evenly balanced and carefully reasoned approach to the burden of proof in the 1987 moot court.

Stratfordians like to recount the story of the moot court as a defeat for the Oxfordians. They rarely admit what happened next, nor do they "connect the dots" the way an intellectual historian might. One justice, John Paul Stevens, had already expressed doubts about the orthodox story at the 1987 moot court; afterward, it is

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clear, Stevens continued to study the Shakespearean question. Five years later, in a 1992 *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* article, “The Shakespearean Canon of Statutory Construction,” Stevens carefully summarizes several of the most telling arguments supporting the Oxfordian theory and lends the force of his personal ethos to the inquiry.

At the time that Halle wrote, however, this was all in the future. To Charlton Ogburn, in 1987, the event had not gone well for the Oxfordians. Wrote Halle:


Dear Charlton:

I think the outcome of the trial before the moot court was to be expected, and that the triumph of the cause can only come by way of such successive defeats. The fact that *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* has been published in England—and favorably reviewed in *The Guardian*—shows that the thesis will continue to rise, stronger than ever, after every killing. It is more important to lose all but the last battle than to win all but the last.

I know something of the academic world, having had a long career on the inside as an outsider—first as a graduate student in anthropology at Harvard, then as a professor of politics in Geneva. The objective of the members of any academic community is to learn to say what we all say in the language in which we all say it. (Surely it was the same in the priesthood, and in the preparation for the priesthood, in the Middle Ages.) I have known students who in their Ph.D. theses would say what they knew to be factually false because the saying of it would identify them with the community in which they intended to make their careers. Such behavior, in my experience, is more the rule than the exception. In fact, it would be hard to find any exception in the academic communities I have known. *You* can be unorthodox because you are an outsider—as I have always been an outsider.¹

Halle went on to explain that “in the progress of human knowledge...a time does come when orthodoxy is seen to have points of implausibility. It is *then* that those who are not making their careers as insiders begin to be heard....” Halle’s “then” is *now*; the place is *here*, in the mind of every reader. Yes, Virginia, there is a Shakespeare question, and yes, the people who have studied it—whose research is gratefully sampled in the present volume—have made many genuine discoveries pertinent to the question. They know something about Shakespeare, the writer, and *where* the plays actually *come from*, that Shakespearean orthodoxy in institutions like the Folger still fails to understand. Perhaps more surprisingly, they seem to know that you can’t truly have an informed discussion about the 1623 First Folio without acknowledging the authorship question. The reason is interesting.

As these essays demonstrate, the question is written all over the Folio.

 Roger Stritmatter, PhD
Coppin State University
March, 2016

❧ **ENDNOTES** ❧

- ¹ Halle, Louis J. Letter to Charlton Ogburn, January 22, 1988. Reprinted in the *Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter*, 25:2 (Spring 1989), 20-21.

Branding the Author: Feigned Authorship Neutrality and the Folger Folio Tour

Shelly Maycock

—“Thence comes it that my name receives a brand.”¹

—“It’s not enough to speak, but to speak true.”²



Selected Folger Shakespeare Library First Folios (1623) are about to be displayed at libraries, universities and museums across the United States and its territories. As the exhibition is one of the major American contributions to international celebrations of the 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare of Stratford’s death, the Folger’s public event organizers have a wonderful opportunity to bolster their institution’s outreach and spread new insights about Shakespeare across the nation by offering United States citizens a glimpse of the library’s primary “icon.” Eighteen of the Folger’s eight-seven complete copies of the First Folio will be displayed for three weeks in each of the selected venues in 2016. Planned and orchestrated through the Folger Library’s combined partnership with the Cincinnati Museum Center (CMC) and the American Library Association (ALA), the tour, originally referred to (on the ALA site)³ as *Shakespeare and His First Folio*, is now known (in the application guidelines and press releases) as the *First Folio! The Book that Gave Us Shakespeare*. An array of formidable foundations has also contributed to the project. The tour is sponsored in part by a \$500,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and also through the support of Vinton and Sigrid Cerf and Google.org.⁴

While the *First Folio!* tour is significant in itself as a Shakespearean cultural event, and the organizers seek to broaden the Folger’s influence, the library’s tour parameters suggest that they hope to do so by promoting a view of the Folio that

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ignores questions about its authorship and origins. Unfortunately, nothing in the pre-tour documents or the original application packet completed by the awarded venues indicates that Folger-approved experts will be informed about, or prepared to respond neutrally to, questions about Shakespeare's authorship that often arise in relation to any study of the Folio's historical and cultural context, creation and design. The Folger, consequently, seems poised to perpetuate its own longstanding policy of branding its iconic author's works as forever unquestionably those of the inscrutable William Shaksper of Stratford-upon-Avon (1564-1616).

Exhibition sponsors insist that the tour is designed to be "thought-provoking." However, if past experience is any indication, serious questioning of the historical genesis of the book will be significantly limited by the Folger's centralized planning. On the contrary, the worthy goal of hosting "thought-provoking" content may require local planners, exhibitors and scholars to use their own "out of the box" expertise to raise questions that are not covered by the Folger's fastidious centralized planning. Their answers may benefit from those raised in this present *Brief Chronicles* special volume.

The exhibition themes of printing and cultural history highlight important and complex topics in Shakespeare scholarship unrelated to authorship *per se*, but the story of the author himself—who he was and how he made his art—are not stated themes of the exhibit, even though it is timed to coincide with the 400th anniversary of the alleged author's death. Apparently the Folger missed the lesson of its own 1980 tour "Shakespeare: The Globe and the World." John Russell, reviewing the tour for *The New York Times*, remarked that the tour did little to restore public confidence in the academic belief in the Stratford theory of authorship. Already, during the 1964 quadricentennial,

Fat biographies were thrust upon us, but they told us only what we already knew—that behind the three or four facts that were beaten into us at school, all is surmise. Behind the standard grammatical formulas – he "could have," he "might have," he "must have" and "he probably did"—a huge emptiness lurks.⁵

The vested traditionalists of the Shakespearean establishment seemingly put great pressure on the Folger staff to promote a rigid adherence to the orthodox theory of authorship, and therefore, to continually disregard the library's fiduciary responsibility to maintain authentic neutrality and acknowledge the diversity of informed opinion. Few mainstream Shakespeare scholars feel compelled to acknowledge or consider alternative authorship theories. However, in the name of free inquiry, those who do seek to understand this issue, whether novice curiosity seekers, independent scholars or veteran academics, should neither be silenced nor insulted by uninformed, vague, or disrespectful answers. Such a response would reveal the speakers' lack of preparation to consider the large questions raised by the Folio's publication timing, design, and striking bibliographic features. These aspects have long raised serious doubts about the traditional theory of authorship.

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The volume in which this essay appears should help exhibition librarians, curators, theater managers, speakers, and all manner of attendees address the gaps in the First Folio narrative in a more balanced fashion.

Under the circumstances set up by the First Folio tour directors, it may safely be predicted that some questioners who attend the exhibition know as much, or more, about certain critical topics than the Folger-approved speakers or curators. This volume of *Brief Chronicles* attempts to rectify this situation by placing in the hands of local organizers this “minority report” covering many of the issues omitted from the Folger’s publicity materials. Hopefully exhibitors, librarians, and tour event directors will avail themselves will use this resource to realize how truly “thought-provoking” the First Folio really can be when it is released from the constricting assumptions behind the traditional authorship attribution. Ian Donaldson, author of the acclaimed 2011 Cambridge University Press biography of the First Folio’s actual managing editor, Ben Jonson, comments on the authorship question in discussing Jonson’s part in the publication of Shakespeare’s works as represented in the controversial fictional film, *Anonymous*. Donaldson argues that authorship cruxes involve “legitimate and provocative questions, which literary and historical scholars ignore at their own peril.”⁶

Such questions have long been the province of authorship doubters such as Gerald H. Rendall, who more than ninety years ago identified Jonson as the “most skilled agent of anonymity.”⁷ Unfortunately, many mainstream scholars misunderstand the value of this inquiry, and have read little if any of the published scholarship on authorship.⁸ Few can claim any specific or detailed knowledge of the most viable alternate candidate, the Earl of Oxford (1550-1604), let alone discuss the claims of other candidates such as Francis Bacon (1561-1626) or Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593) from an informed perspective.⁹ Yet an objective appraisal will show that Oxfordian studies have contributed much, and can contribute much more, to the lively appreciation and understanding of Shakespeare, as presented with the First Folio or early quarto texts, as well as early modern culture in general. Claims that such questioning “denies” or is “anti-Shakespeare” are regrettable expressions of prejudice, literally *prejudgment*, based not on evidence but belief.

Ironically, when more carefully evaluated, as the essays of this volume show, the Folio actually becomes one of the most profound elements of evidence against the orthodox view of authorship. Oxfordians are, therefore, gratified to support and participate in the Folger tour; for them it represents a unique opportunity to educate the public on their case. Unfortunately, such a line of inquiry, highlighting the central role the Folio has always played in generating questions about authorship, and suggesting the credibility of alternative scenarios, contradicts longstanding Folger policy of never admitting the actual evidence that supports alternative authorship scenarios.

There is much more to the Folio’s story than is generally recognized. Authorship skeptics raise inconvenient questions that challenge easy confidence in the received view of authorship that the Folger tour insists the public should uncritically accept as true. A striking case in point is that of the Folio’s patrons,

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Phillip Herbert, Earl of Montgomery (1584-1650) and his elder brother William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke (1580-1630), who are not mentioned in the Folger/ALA descriptions of the exhibition's panels.¹⁰ Will the Folger's hand-selected "experts" be prepared to point out that that Montgomery was the Earl of Oxford's son-in-law, married to Lady Susan Vere, and that these two families were so closely related that Pembroke nearly married another de Vere daughter, Bridget? Will they even know who these men were, or that they were, at the time of the Folio, also close political allies of Oxford's son, the 18th Earl, Henry de Vere, who throughout the printing of the Folio, was imprisoned in the tower of London for too vigorously contradicting the King's plan to marry his son to the Spanish infanta? These patrons, named and celebrated on the next page after the Folio's Droeshout image, which is a highlight in exhibition messages, were among the most direct living relatives of the 17th Earl of Oxford in 1623.¹¹ If tour visitors inquire about the Folio "Brethren," will the docents be prepared to explain that they were Oxford's family members, closely associated with the Folio, and that these facts have long been central to the case for Oxford's authorship of the plays? So far, such fact-based, informed neutrality seems highly unlikely.

Analyzing the administrative exhibition documents and press associated with the 2016 First Folio tour reveals much about the Folger Library's longstanding entrenched stance on the authorship question, and also gives insight into the library's efforts to manage and control the messaging of the Folio tour. The tour guidelines show that the venues will be supplied with required display texts supporting the exhibit as well as educational materials, and that related programming is to follow certain prescribed themes.¹² The required minimum of two "approved" scholarly speaker/contributors must have been screened in advance, as their credentials were to be included in the sites' application packets. As one unorthodox scholar who prefers to remain anonymous put it, "the circumscribed qualifications required for speakers at the First Folio tour venues are a mirror of the fortified mentality of the Shakespearean *status quo ante*."

Such precautions are not only unnecessary, but, as we will see, contradict the tour's stated mission and contravene the founding free speech and inquiry missions of the institutions involved, particularly those of the ALA. In its publicity and programming for the tour, the Folger Library representatives seem poised, once again, to ignore if not suppress the plentiful research results that call the orthodox Shakespearean stasis into serious question, some discovered over the past century in documents from the Folger's own prodigious collections. If that is their intention, the First Folio tour organizers will miss an opportunity to also engage a growing portion of their audiences who are either skeptical of the received view of authorship, or openly curious about the Oxfordian or other alternatives. They will miss the chance to promote the open and free inquiry that the national organizations involved, the ALA, the NEH, and the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) hopefully will insist upon.¹³

In preparing this report, the author has consulted numerous publicly available documents associated with the Folger tour. One primary text is the

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thorough Folger-ALA-CMC application guidelines¹⁴ that the local applicants followed in order to win the honor of hosting one of the First Folios. Also examined were numerous local newspaper items and press releases about the winning venues from spring 2015, and the mission and ethics statements of the Folger, ALA, and AAM. One pattern that emerges from this inquiry is the Folger's consistently unimpressive track record of false neutrality in dealing with topics closely related to the authorship controversy. As much as Stratfordians need the folio to divert attention from the flawed nature of their biographical tradition, they are also – and not without good reason – afraid of it and somehow understand its destabilizing potential. This contradiction lies behind the library's careful effort to closely control the exhibit's messaging. The exhibit's application guidelines detail the tour's purpose, how venues were to apply to host the tour, the facility and program requirements, and the content or "themes" of the display panels that will accompany each Folio. The uniform press releases announcing the exhibition sites are formulaic, and show clear compliance with messaging management protocols of professional media hired to conduct a controversial campaign while minimizing real controversy and preventing unauthorized discussion. All the press releases, news items, and official announcements on the venue's websites are more or less uniform in text, doing some or all of the following: announcing the venue, supplying quotations from Director Michael Witmore, describing the tour's significance, offerings and content, quoting local project directors and their partners, adding praise and comments from local scholars – all following the same formula. The press clippings are too numerous to include or cite in this article, but Googling "First Folio" and any venue or host city name will turn up many press releases corresponding to this description.¹⁵

As of late fall 2015, only two of the fifty or more tour press releases had diverged from the prescribed or most likely "recommended" press release content. Staying "on topic" is, of course, usual and practical to keep an exhibit's messages consistent. And in this case, compliance with specified messages seems a requirement of hosting the First Folio. However, because the authorship of the First Folio is controversial, and there is public awareness of the controversy, true neutrality is called for, especially by local hosts and the libraries and museums involved in the Tour. Invited speakers at an exhibit sponsored in part by the ALA, it really goes without saying, should be *actively* neutral, practicing an academic freedom that encourages broad inquiry and allows scholars to acknowledge doubts and diversity opinion in an atmosphere of civil discussion and debate. Under the circumstances, dissent should not just be tolerated, but encouraged; sponsoring organizations should lay active plans not just to allow, but to actively solicit multiple interpretations of the evidence contained in the first folio.

Unfortunately, better informing venue experts and moderators about the controversy to promote neutrality is inconsistent with the Folger's traditional support, continued up until the present, for ignoring and/or ridiculing authorship-questioning scholarship. In an April 7, 2015, *Chicago Tribune* web article announcing the Illinois venue for the Folio tour, Garland Scott, the Folger's Director of External Relations, declares that, "*The Folger believes that there's nothing in [the] historical*

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record that suggests anybody but a man named William Shakespeare from Stratford-upon-Avon wrote these plays”¹⁶ (emphasis added). The journalist may not have been aware of the press release guidelines, but the topic in any case apparently came up. Granted, Scott is a spokesperson for the Folger, but is it proper to state that a library with a diverse staff of academicians and technicians “believes” such a specific, controversial claim? How far Scott’s uninformed and profoundly misleading claim jives with current Folger policy or intention for the tour remains to be seen, but it is consistent with the Library’s unfortunate history and, as we shall see, contemporary representations in other contexts.

Scott’s claim is problematic from several points of view. For one thing, according to the ALA, libraries are decidedly not supposed to take definitive positions of this sort on controversial scholarly matters. The authorship question has been rationally treated within recent memory in such publications as *The New Yorker*,¹⁷ *The Atlantic*,¹⁸ *The University of Pennsylvania Law Review*,¹⁹ *The Tennessee Law Review*,²⁰ *Harper’s*,²¹ *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and *The New York Times*,²² as well as being vigorously attacked on the internet on sites such as the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (SBT). Of course, it was also considered at some length in a 2010 book by one of the Folger’s top consultants, James Shapiro, in his *Contested Will*. Were the distinguished publications misguided in thinking that there is more than one rational point of view about authorship, that there is in fact much in the “historical record” that contradicts the Folger’s party line? Another conspicuous flaw in Scott’s statement is her careful specification of only one kind of evidence—so-called “historical” evidence—to the exclusion of others. It is as if, ironically, the contents of the folios themselves do not constitute “evidence” or are unworthy of a forensic as well as literary and historical inquiry. In fact, abundant evidence of all kinds (including “historical”) contradicting Scott’s sweeping assertion is housed in the Folger’s own archives and even contained in the First Folio itself. Most disconcerting of all, such sound bites sweep under the rug several hundred years of revealing ambiguities, distortions and mysteries in the purportedly unquestionable case for William of Stratford-upon-Avon.

Considering this style of logic, in fact, it is ironic that the exhibition’s Folios will be displayed open to Hamlet’s “To be or not to be,” speech, with its heart-wrenching expression of identity crisis. To fit this situation, we might append the word “honest” or the “truly neutral” to the end of Hamlet’s question. The general public has perennially shown itself to be interested in the difficult question of Shakespearean authorial identity. A lot of people are aware that there is controversy over the current academic view of Shakespeare, and they prefer real answers. Unfortunately, early signs such as Scott’s *fiat* suggest that the Folger is preparing to quash public interest by banning the authorship question from the Folio tour. Yet the matter of authorship attribution of Shakespeare is not settled, and acting as if it is settled is not honest, neutral or fair.

As of this writing, only one exhibition director, from Oxford, Mississippi, has spoken outside the parameters of the standard Folger press release format, saying of the First Folio in his own words:

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The historic significance is universal—an artifact from the early 1600s gets people thinking about how it was made, who made it, what was the culture like at that time and a variety of other perspectives that may or may not have anything to do with Shakespeare.²³

These are examples of the honest questions about the circumstances of the Folio that many may wish to ask, expressed by someone who is either of an independent bent or who did not get the email. Despite what the Folger allegedly “believes,” Folio Tour participants have a right to consider various theories about “how it was made,” “who made it,” and what role it has played in the history of Shakespeare scholarship, whether they are interested in authorship or not. But are Folger tour spokespersons prepared to offer informed answers if the authorship question comes up? What if they get questions about the Folio itself that lead in unauthorized directions? We suggest they brief themselves with this special journal volume. The clichéd rejoinders may no longer work.

The exhibition itself, as indicated within the guidelines, is intended “to engage a large and diverse audience” and to “attract and engage constituencies that will sustain Folger presence and outreach in the area.”²⁴ The bardolatry of Folger planners reveals itself in the exhibition’s statement of rhetorical purpose:

The First Folio itself is an iconic object, and one most people do not encounter in their lifetime. The goal of the exhibition is to bring this rich cultural artifact from a vault in the nation’s capital to communities across the country, and to bring communities to the Folio by providing context and programming designed to engage all audiences.²⁵

The tour’s specific overall local objective is “to extend and deepen the impact of the connection to the First Folio for members of their community.”²⁶ Insofar as they aim to share these splendid, rare, vaulted books with the general public, these goals are admirable ones. However, the guidelines also reveal that the provisioning of “context and programming” by local venues will be closely monitored by Folger/ALA tour directors. The monitoring and data collection via required reports following the exhibit are required by the NEH grant, which asked the sites and the Folger tour supervisors to describe how they will document their grant participation in advance. Consistent with its mission, the guidelines state that the NEH wants to record “how fully the project met its stated learning goals and how audiences were *more deeply engaged* in thinking about humanities ideas and questions as a result of the project” (emphasis added). The Folger/ALA over-the-shoulder supervision and “message control” is clear from the application language; for example, under the heading of “Other General Requirements” for the sites, we find this:

[The h]ost *must agree to work with the Folger* and major sponsors to *accommodate Folger and sponsor messaging*, [my italics] activities, special events, or

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promotional activities that also meet host's facility and promotional requirements. These activities will be paid for by sponsors and may involve data and promotional materials collection.²⁷ (Emphases added)

Such prescriptions are troubling. Indeed, it is reasonable to wonder if an exhibition organized under such provisions of centralized control, especially when coupled with the Folger's own selective and biased historical contextualization, can avoid contradicting the mandates of the sponsoring organizations to practice authentic neutrality. Whether the Folger's tour programming inspires audiences to become "more deeply engaged in thinking about humanities ideas and questions" also remains to be seen. The NEH has, apparently, long been tolerant of the Folger's dogmatism, having frequently sponsored past Folger events that have adhered to Stratfordian orthodoxy and actively excluded contrary views, the most recent being the Folger's spring 2014 "Conference on the Problem of Biography."²⁸ But the American Library Association, with its admirable annual and ongoing freedom of speech campaigns, and the American Alliance of Museums, whose code of ethics specifies adherence to intellectual integrity and "respect [for] pluralistic values, traditions and concerns"²⁹ also know better than to condone the suppression of alternative viewpoints in a topic under significant dispute.

The "hosting standards" within the exhibition guidelines outlined on the ALA site are clearly stated and many of the strictures are appropriate for travelling exhibitions, securing the revered documents as well as the safety of the public: "The objective of establishing these hosting standards and selection guidelines is to ensure that visitors of all ages in as many parts of the United States as possible get to experience a meaningful, safe, and memorable encounter with Shakespeare's work."³⁰ Of course, the venues need to be secure and safe. However, how "meaningful" and "memorable" the exhibit itself will be for its diverse audiences depends to some extent, at least for a growing skeptical audience, upon how the Folger staff and its associated partners, as well as the local exhibitor spokespersons, choose to respond to challenges regarding the tour's educational materials and message. Will they allow and respond positively to all inquiry including authorship questioning?

Descriptions of "required" educational and public programming followed by the phrases, "with materials provided by the Folger," and "presented by qualified humanities scholars, on the humanities themes of the exhibition" should invite skeptical scrutiny by anyone interested in free inquiry. Of course, the people involved should be "qualified." This would be all fine and good, if Folger officials stopped there. How has the Folger determined which humanities scholars are "qualified" and which are not? If past experience is any indication, anyone who might express a doubt about the Folger's story of authorship is automatically disqualified. However, it is clear that the selection committee preferred to screen the scholars chosen by the venues to avoid controversy, as the applicants were required to

Provide the name and title of at least two scholars who will help you with local programming for the exhibition. Scholars should have specialties in

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literature, history, or the works of Shakespeare. Describe their experience with the topics of the exhibit and with programming for public audiences. Attach a vita or biography (up to two pages only) for each scholar in Section 6.A.

Then there is the specifying phrase, “on the themes emphasized in the exhibit.” Naturally, the rhetorical and spatial constraints for the physical exhibit’s panels require limitation to some topics. However, the description of the panels’ content in the application guidelines specifically outlines the exhibit’s “themes,” which unfortunately omit any actual cultural, political and historical context for what is termed a “rich cultural artifact.” Academic scholars who hold contrary views on authorship and who have “specialties in literature, history, or the works of Shakespeare” with expertise on the First Folio have not been consulted on the project.

The exhibit panels’ text and the accompanying programming content, as foreshadowed by the *First Folio! The Book that Gave Us Shakespeare* tour guidelines, will apparently deflect critical inquiry about the author and accept the most literal meaning of Ben Jonson’s lines that accompany the passing strange likeness of the author, “looke /Not on his Picture, but his Booke.” Shakespeare, the disembodied author, has, at least for the purposes of this tour, apparently morphed into an even greater non sequitur, “Shakespeare, the Book.” There remains much mystery surrounding the author, none of it solved by deflecting the controversy over the life onto the book, while simultaneously mystifying (mostly by complete erasure) the historical and cultural context of that book’s production. Ben Jonson, in the longer prefatory poem in the First Folio, defines Shakespeare as “not of an age,” for reasons that are not even universally agreed upon by orthodox Shakespearean-Jonsonian scholars, but which have been clarified by skeptical authorship scholarship.³¹

Some leading orthodox scholars are clearly aware that major problems with Shakespeare’s authorial biography cannot be solved within the current paradigm. This awareness-but-denial of the authorship problem became painfully obvious at the Folger Library’s own NEH-sponsored 2014 “Shakespeare and the Problem of Biography” Conference. The conference’s default solutions, when not taking the transparent fictional route, were to preselect presenters, deflect and ignore taboo questions about the author, while ridiculing³² those scholars (some present at the conference) whose work examines the biographical problem using evidence and logic. Instead, the conference orthodoxy employed creative rhetorical distractions such as the *ad hominem*s that characterized the reactions of several conference speakers. One would think the best scholars of Shakespearean biography presenting in a publically funded, allegedly neutral library could construct more ethical rhetorical stratagems. Recently, another prestigious group, the Royal Shakespeare Company, was persuaded by the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition to remove from its website an *ad hominem*-loaded blog entry by Stanley Wells that questioned the sanity of authorship doubters.³³

The Folger and other institutional interests may wish to take note. Original

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or compelling arguments about authorship, which should be among many foci of unencumbered Shakespeare research, are belittled and ignored by Stratfordians at their own peril. It is not possible to engage in proper, evidence-based counter-scholarship without first assessing the arguments of an opposing side.

The 2016 First Folio exhibit materials as represented by the tour guidelines *seem* to avoid the topic of Shakespearean biography. Portraying the book as “an object with iconic cultural status,” a thrice-mentioned phrase of the ALA/Folger guidelines, is a central thematic emphasis of the First Folio exhibition. The themes, to summarize, include the First Folio’s:

- “Iconic universality”
- Cultural and educational appeal, value and popularity in America
- Textual variation, exemplified by surface details about the complex providence of Hamlet’s “To be or not to be” speech
- Status as a “landmark” document in the history of books.

Viewed from this perspective, and especially in light of the many highly relevant omissions in the tour’s advance publicity, the Folio tour seems more intended to deflect attention from the book’s disputed authorship than to educate tour attendees about the Folio as a cultural artifact. While these topics, minus the bardolatry,³⁴ are reasonable and important aspects of Shakespeare studies, in the absence of more particular contextualization, the exhibition’s thematic emphases offer little opportunity for the kind of intellectual engagement that the folio tour purports to supply. Beyond the dubious biography-related claim that the First Folio preserves the controversial Droeshout engraving as “one of [the author’s] only authentic likenesses,” the program evades, rather than encounters, questions about authenticity and authorship, and even this claim of the posthumous Droeshout’s authenticity has never been proven and is still hotly disputed, even among traditionalists.³⁵ Claiming its legitimacy and unambiguous significance for fact, as the Folger does, is to ignore a long history of controversy that a publicly funded tour should embrace and invite. Instead we are treated to another version of the clichéd circular reasoning that “Shakespeare is Shakespeare,” a paper chase that fails to counter authorship questioning with evidence and arguably obscures the true historic meaning of document it purports to illuminate for the public. If the engraving is so “authentic,” why does editor Jonson tell us to look not on it, but on the book itself, to discover the author?

As we have noticed, another glaring omission from the Folger’s First Folio narrative concerns the earlier described roles of the Folio’s distinguished patrons and financiers, to whom the book conspicuously devotes two pages of introductory epistle, “THE MOST NOBLE AND INCOMPARABLE PAIR OF BRETHREN,” the earl of Montgomery, Susan de Vere’s husband, and his elder brother, the earl of Pembroke. Surely a museum-worthy display about an “iconic” literary artifact should

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consider the actual historical circumstances under which the book appeared in print, which prominently and undeniably include the patronage of the two brothers with such close ties to the de Vere family?

Nor do the Folger advance materials mention the striking political and cultural reality that the book was being published partly in response to a bitter three-year-long parliamentary controversy (1621-1624) over King James's design to marry Prince Charles to a Catholic Spanish princess. The Folger also appears poised to sweep under the rug the long-standing scholarly dispute, dating back to the late 18th century, questioning the attribution of the Heminges and Condell prefaces, with many scholars suggesting that the real author of at least one of them was actually folio editor Jonson — a finding which, if true, automatically calls into question almost every other aspect of the folio's genesis, design and intent.³⁶ It is also ignoring contemporary scholarly inquiry into the striking and enormous ambiguities of Jonson's prefatory contributions.³⁷ Collectively these omissions confirm the impression already given in remarks such as Garland Scott's that the Folger has no plan to explore any aspects of the Folio that don't readily conform to its pre-established Stratfordian narrative.

What's in a name anyway? Or, what's in the name of a tour? The illogic of the *First Folio!* tour's subtitle, *The Book that Gave Us Shakespeare*, which cleverly transfers authorial attribution to a physical object, parallels the doubtful logic of Scott's attribution of uninformed personal belief to an institution of which she is an employee. This anonymous language removes not only the author from the discussion, but anyone with a contrary viewpoint. Such conspicuous gaps in logic suggest that some Folger librarians, as a symptom of their orthodoxy, are struggling with their own complex professional identity crises, especially if they paid any critical attention to the presentations and comments at the 2014 Folger Biography Conference. Despite the intentions of the Folger and its co-sponsors, the event afforded opportunity for some remarkable exchanges of ideas due to the presence of a number of informed Oxfordians.

Historically and legally, the authority behind the Folger rests with the Amherst College Trustees. They administer the Folger Library and have, as in the case of the Amherst Trustees' Folger Committee Chair, Eustace Seligman, in the early 1960s, claimed neutrality vis-à-vis questioning authorial attribution: "The Trustees of the Folger Shakespeare Library have steadfastly refrained from in any way participating in the discussions as to the identity of the author of the plays credited to William Shakespeare."³⁸ Seligman's "steadfastly" seems to indicate a mandate. It would seem that the Folger's mission prescribes neutrality. Unfortunately, as any review of the evidence indicates, and continuing to the present as manifest in Scott's statement and in the abridged character of the Folio Tour materials, the Folger's neutrality has never been authentic. Amherst Trustees have for decades winked at the partisan behavior of both directors and staff avowing "neutrality." As former Folger Educational Programs director Richmond Crinkley (1969-1973), described the situation in 1985: "As one who found himself a contented agnostic Stratfordian at the Folger, I was enormously surprised at what can only be described as the

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viciousness toward anti-Stratfordian sentiments expressed by so many otherwise rational and courteous scholars. In its extreme forms the hatred of unorthodoxy was like some bizarre mutant racism.”³⁹ All too frequently, flimsy claims of impartiality have served to mask the Folger’s public authorship stance by excluding questions and answers that do not fit the Stratford narrative.

The fusion of individual psychology with scholarly inquiry may be nowhere more apparent than in the recent Folger leadership’s public dealings with the authorship question as evidenced by mentions on the library’s official website. Examining the Folger current and archived website materials on authorship question is revealing. On an archived version of their website (old.folger.edu), the current Folger Library Director, Dr. Michael Witmore, was directly quoted stating a qualified openness to future scholarly inquiry about authorship. The same statement (included below) resides, now sans attribution to Witmore, in the educational portion of the Library’s recently updated website, titled “Questioning Shakespeare’s Authorship.” The current website’s now seemingly generic Folger-authored FAQ paragraph, no longer assigned Witmore’s name but otherwise unaltered, also states blatantly—between dashes—that “no decisive evidence has been unearthed thus far”:

The Folger Shakespeare Library has been a major location for research into the authorship question, and welcomes scholars looking for new evidence that sheds light on the plays’ origins. If the current consensus on the authorship of the plays and poems is ever overturned—no decisive evidence has been unearthed thus far proving that the plays were produced by anyone but the man from Stratford-upon-Avon—it will be because new and extraordinary evidence is discovered. The Folger is the most likely place for such an unlikely discovery.⁴⁰

Playing the disingenuous “no-evidence” card is decidedly not neutral of Witmore (whether he takes credit for the paragraph or not), nor of the Folger Library, and seems quite stale after decades of repetition. This reductive claim rings especially hollow after decades of repetition, especially to those Oxfordians whose scholarly work (some of it done *at the Folger*) has repeatedly discovered, carefully analyzed, and shed “decisive, new and extraordinary” light on the genesis of the plays, sometimes via peer-reviewed mainstream journals, or in leading intellectual venues like *Harper’s*, *The Atlantic*, or *The New Yorker*, or books with academic publishers. Witmore’s carefully-shaded claim on the archived Folger authorship page was unfortunate enough, but now the attributed version has been relegated to the archives, and the library repeats Witmore’s words in an anonymous section of educational material, as a disembodied an unattributable claim of fact bearing the Folger’s general seal of approval.⁴¹ Instead of being the opinion of a moral agent, it is now presented as the unanimous opinion of an anonymous institution. Under “Shakespeare Frequently Asked Questions” the Folger asks, “Did Shakespeare write the plays and poems attributed to him?” Here Witmore’s “no evidence” claim is repeated in the remarkably inaccurate summary: “In the century [sic] since these claims were first advanced, no decisive evidence [sic] has been unearthed proving that the plays were produced by anyone but the man from

Stratford-upon-Avon.”⁴²

Consider the contradiction: the Folger website now represents an opinion about the authorship question among those *frequently asked*, but fails to indicate that this is a controversial, disputed claim or to point the reader to any of the many online resources that might provide an alternative perspective. This perilous territory is negotiated by the precise, premeditated placement of the weasel word, “decisive.” Elevated to the library’s own belief, the statement exemplifies the Folger’s unofficial tradition, since the 1980s, of allowing research privileges to nonconformists, while actively suppressing the results of their research because it does not meet some unexamined standard of “decisive” proof—as if anything approaching “decisive proof” existed on the orthodox side! The entirely oxymoronic implication is that the standard for academic inference is that one side in a debate should possess “decisive proof” before evidence on either side can be considered or debated. It does not take an advanced degree in Shakespeare studies to recognize that this is not neutrality. It is also not progress.

The Folger’s history of faulty neutrality may be placed in its correct historical and cultural context when we consider Director Witmore’s most recent public comments on authorship. In a November 27, 2014, interview, Folger biographer Stephen Grant quotes Witmore as believing that “the Folger does not have opinions. It has collections.”⁴³ One wonders how Witmore can reconcile this statement with the undisputed fact that the organization’s website claim, originally quoted as the Director’s own opinion, that “no evidence” contradicts belief in the orthodox story. This is, surely, expressing an opinion, and a poorly informed one at that. Stating that no evidence exists when thousands of people know that it does is not neutrality.

An April 29, 2015, C-SPAN interview about the Folger’s role in the nation’s political and cultural life further underscores the intrinsically contradictory rhetoric on which the Folger’s current position depends. In the interview, Witmore recounts the Folger visit of several Supreme Court justices (exact number unknown, according to Folger sources). Debating the authorship question among themselves, the Justices popped over to the library to view a specific Folger treasure, Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford’s Geneva Bible.⁴⁴ Assuring his audience of the library’s readiness to accommodate authorship scholars such as Supreme Court Justices, Witmore did not bother to detail the reason for the interest in the de Vere Bible: twentieth century American Oxfordian research links de Vere’s handwritten annotations thematically to the plays.⁴⁵ The interview hung in the rarefied air of SCOTUS prestige and went onto the next topic.

Witmore, of course, clearly suspects or knows what the Supremes knew—namely that there is probative, if not entirely persuasive to *everyone*, clear and unequivocal evidence of alternate authorship in the Folger’s very own vaunted book vaults. Why, then, is he acting as if this evidence still doesn’t exist? In addition to Roger Stritmatter’s dissertation connecting that Bible in tangible, material ways, to the plays, other Oxfordians have made discoveries at the Folger—two generations of Ogburns, Charlton and his parents, and Georgetown University’s Richard Waugaman, among others, have extensively utilized the Library’s holdings and made original

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discoveries that merit the Library's attention. As a Folger reader, Charles Wisner Barrell discovered that the Folger-held Cornwallis-Lysons manuscript represents a direct link between Oxford and Shakespeare via the Bohemian London townhouse known as Fisher's Folly.⁴⁶ Others have questioned the Folger's position on the Ashbourne portrait, for which it now claims a dubious identification without having seriously analyzed its provenance or judiciously considered other existing evidence that it is actually the lost Cornelius Ketel portrait of Oxford (see note 37).

It should not surprise Witmore that the Supreme Court justices are interested in the evidence for the authorship question. It is no secret at all that at least five former Justices—Blackmun, Powell, O'Connor, Stevens and Scalia—have been sympathetic to the Oxfordian case (others, currently on the bench, are said to be authorship doubters)⁴⁷ and are openly interested in research done at the Folger including but not limited to Stritmatter's. Research supporting the Oxfordian theory of authorship that has been done at the Folger is only unknown to those librarians and scholars who ignore the publications documenting it.

There are several clear indications that Henry Clay Folger, in his original curatorship and stewardship, wanted the archive not only to allow, but to actively encourage, free inquiry into every aspect of Shakespeare, including authorship. If so, this conviction has been obscured, sometimes by intent, in the decades since Folger's death. Biographer Grant, for one, insists that

The Folgers believed profoundly that Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare. Secondly, despite that belief they acquired all the books and articles they could about the authorship controversy. Their goal was to assemble as complete a Shakespeare collection as possible, to be of increased usefulness to the researchers, scholars and professors.⁴⁸

And yet Grant, in his biography, cites no source for his sweeping knowledge of the Folgers' convictions. Gail Kern Paster, a former director (2002-2011), also claims no knowledge of the founders' intentions. A 2007 *Amherst Magazine* interview records Paster's belief that

Folger's exact motives in acquiring the collection, and in creating the library, remain elusive: "It's really hard to get a sense of his own inner conversation," says Paster, [then] the library's current director. "He's like Hamlet: There's a mystery in there that we really can't pluck the heart out of."⁴⁹

It may be difficult to accurately understand Henry Folger's mind on authorship, but it is obvious that comments like Paster's do more to conceal the complex truth of his views than to make them manifest; the solution to this mystery may come instead from the prodigious neutrality and inclusiveness of the original collection itself. Although the image and legacy of this very private and secretive man, especially on any topic related to authorship, have been so carefully managed by predominantly Stratfordian-predisposed Folger administrations over many decades that

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it is difficult to feel certain how he felt, the evidence does not support the claim that Folger devoutly followed the Stratfordian belief. The Folger archives contain many valuable materials collected by the Folgers themselves that contribute to the alternative cases for authorship, including the aforementioned de Vere Geneva Bible, an Oxfordian novel by a major American writer and its manuscript,⁵⁰ an altered portrait that is probably that of the seventeenth earl of Oxford,⁵¹ and extensive Baconian, Oxfordian, and Marlovian holdings, as well as documents related to other candidates. Grant later claims that “Emily and Henry...harbored no doubts”⁵² about the authorship question. He justifies this inference through a single quotation, in which Folger, late in his life, allegedly told a book dealer that his interest in Bacon was ended.

This would have been just about the time Folger was corresponding with Oxfordian novelist Esther Singleton, whom he'd known since at least 1922,⁵³ and intending to acquire the manuscript, today still in the Library's possession, of her whimsical Oxfordian novel, *Shakespearean Fantasias: Adventures in the Fourth Dimension*. This exchange was almost ten years after the 1920 publication of J. Thomas Looney's "*Shakespeare Identified in Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford*," which was instrumental in converting Singleton, Freud, and others to the Oxfordian case. Needless to say, the quotation does not justify the biographer's claim, but only confirms, as other evidence suggests, that by the late 1920s Folger was no longer interested in Bacon because he may have realized that a more compelling alternative to the orthodox account was Oxford, which incidentally would explain his interest as well in the de Vere Geneva Bible, which he purchased in 1925. His last will and testament stipulates no particular candidate, only that his library be available for the study of "Shakespeare."

Several Oxfordian discoveries owe much to the Folger Library's broad holdings, amassed by Folger himself. For this reason, and because of the noncommittal bequest in Folger's will, the neutrality claimed by the Amherst Trustees as well as past and present Folger Directors would be an appropriate stance, were it genuinely adhered to. So far as allowing researchers to frequent the reading room, neutral access is allowed and the reading room librarians, at least since the early 1990s, have been courteous and professional in all their dealings with authorship skeptics. However, Folger administrative practice and public statement with regard to the discoveries themselves has all too often contradicted the library's own neutrality claims.

This neglect of a deeper and more authentic neutrality, all too conspicuous in the press coverage leading up to the tour, has in the past interfered with the Library's fiduciary responsibility as an institution receiving federal funding, not to mention furthering the mission of its visionary founders, who acquired such rich resources for authorship studies. Sadly, the evidence discovered by authorship researchers since the 1920 publication of "*Shakespeare Identified*," some through the Library's above-mentioned documents, has long been ignored or misrepresented by Folger administrators among other organs of the Shakespeare establishment. Charlton Ogburn, Jr. (1911-1998), a leading second-generation Oxfordian scholar, who did much of his research at the Folger in the last century, documents the fact that his extensive work was not received with reasonable consideration, but countered with contemptu-

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ous *ad hominem*s by then Folger director (1948-1968) Louis B. Wright.⁵⁴ In his 1968 book, *The Folger Library: Two Decades of Growth: An Informal Account*, Wright exemplifies the contra-indicated neutrality that seems to have been endemic at the library as early as the reign of Giles Dawson:

No one has disproved a mite of the evidence that Shakespeare of Stratford is the author of the plays that bear his name, or that anyone else wrote them. The Folger Library has no partisan concern to maintain the authorship of anyone. We simply do not have the time and patience to waste in arid sophistries and futile hypotheses. If anyone ever produced a single bit of genuine evidence to disprove Shakespeare's authorship or to establish another, every Elizabethan scholar in the land would assist in testing the evidence.⁵⁵

Here Wright was being mild, compared to his attacks on Ogburn, but what he was willing to say here in scholarly print belies the neutrality supposedly mandated by the Amherst Trustees. Such disdain is far from neutrality. Wright's last statement that scholars would come running to help could not be more dishonest—in reality, the Folger directors have mostly ignored and refused to (openly) talk, read or hear about, let alone help test, Oxfordian findings.

Fortunately, the Folger does have some history in a more tolerant mode. O. B. Hardison, Director from 1969 to 1983, made an effort to create a more collegial atmosphere and promote the value of conflicting viewpoints. Under Hardison, Richmond Crinkley even favorably reviewed Ogburn's book⁵⁶ in the library's *Shakespeare Quarterly*. Crinkley fairly summarized both Ogburn's position and his character: "Among the most congenial of men, Ogburn felt, rightly in my opinion, that such treatment violated the benign neutrality with which libraries should properly regard intellectual controversy. It was hard to dispute Ogburn."⁵⁷ Crinkley was a Folger administrator of rare knowledge and leadership, who saw the value of acknowledging varied perspectives on authorship and freely admitted that the orthodox view suffered from dramatic points of implausibility. Crinkley had recommended that the Folger change its tune. His review essay on Ogburn's findings represents a rare attempt by a leading Stratfordian to analyze authorship arguments as part of a fact-based inquiry. Relations between the Folger and leading skeptical scholars did temporarily improve, but by the next regime regressed back to the false neutrality that continues today.

The newest anniversary-celebrant Folger traveling exhibition, the Folio Tour, represents a new opportunity for the renowned Shakespeare library to break new ground by achieving some objectivity by subjecting its own assumptions to rigorous review and considering formerly prohibited perspectives. It will be an even more wondrous success if the message that accompanies the books around the country can be inclusive and exploratory rather than dogmatic and insular. Authorship scholars and the skeptical curious can and do pursue truths in Shakespeare just as keenly as professional, tenured academics; censoring the findings they have brought to light, sometimes from the Folger's own collection, is not the scholarship that either the

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Folger or the ALA is supposed to foster. Ben Jonson's biographer, Ian Donaldson, unlike some early modern scholars, has recognized the value of such dissent about the "facts": "Counterfactual history, when openly practiced, has the power to stretch and stimulate the mind."⁵⁸ One-sided inquiry that proclaims neutrality while ignoring mountains of credible and persuasive evidence on the other side is neither true scholarship nor free speech. Loyalty to one point of view for tradition's sake is far from neutrality. So it is with Macbeth's tragic fault, as he attempts to be both "loyal and neutral, in a moment."⁵⁹

The Folger hopes to take its mission national once again with this tour, and one can hope it is done with an accountability appropriate to the complex questions raised by the folio's existence and historical contexts. A major administrative collaborator with the Folger on the Folio Tour is the American Library Association's Public Programs Office. Most of the libraries hosting or assisting with the exhibition also belong to the ALA. While all participants clearly have the right to their own opinions on the matter, should any Folger administrators or librarians, obedient tour exhibitors, local theater or scholarly experts supporting the tour publicly refuse to allow or denigrate any discussion of the authorship question, those responsible will have likely forsaken their organizational missions, especially as librarians. They should remind themselves and their venues of the importance of genuine neutrality. The ALA Bill of Rights state that basic ALA and library policies should insure that

Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation (I) Libraries should provide materials and information *presenting all points of view on current and historical issues*. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval (II). Libraries *should challenge censorship* in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment (III). Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas (IV).⁶⁰

According to these principles, any public libraries or museums hosting the Folio should have complete freedom to offer their own programming and to invite appropriate speakers as they see fit. Members of the public should be allowed to ask questions about the authorship of the iconic text and should be able to expect reasonable, evidence-based answers or neutral responses.

The "Interpretations of the Library of Bill of Rights" page on the ALA site is even more explicit about these speech and academic freedoms, applying them to content and information access.⁶¹ Thus, if the messaging and programming for *First Folio! The Book that Gave Us Shakespeare*, does not shift to genuinely neutral ground, the tour's policies and practices will be clearly inconsistent with the collaborating public institutions' and their professional associations' ethical statements. If the Folger Shakespeare Library's goals include expanding the its own relevance to a broader audience by encouraging the appreciation and study of Shakespeare and promoting critical thinking about humanities and culture, Folger administrators

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really need to step up. It is time to cultivate true neutrality and recognize the scholarly fruits of free inquiry. The 2016 exhibition will have the travelling First Folios open for the public to see. Figuratively, the book should also be open to all questions that Shakespeare's powerful works inspire. Answers to questions not within the moderator or speaker's expertise can be met with referrals for further inquiry.

Unfortunately, nothing in the Folger's advance publicity or historic track record suggests that this is what the Library has in mind for the 2016 Folio tour.

In other words, Oxfordians believe that Shakespeare, the mysterious author, would be even more compelling and relevant to future generations if he and his book were not treated as branded icons for uncritical adoration, but as the work of a gifted but real human being who strove to illuminate the human condition in his drama. Rather than suppressing the controversial enigmas of the Stratfordian paradigm, the Folger and the First Folio exhibitors should allow the public to ask all potential questions about Shakespeare and his plays and poems, and when they can, give balanced, unbiased answers or refer to accessible, diverse sources, including those that express contrary opinions. They should admit that some questions have not yet been answered. As stewards of the Shakespeare and Folger legacies, as representatives of a powerful academic institution accepting public funding, Folger librarians *and* publicists should perform this service with courageous conscience, avoiding both the errors of censorship and the legacy of misinformation that have for so long plagued traditional Shakespeare scholarship and created so much basis for legitimate doubt.

ENDNOTES

¹ Sonnet 111.5.

² *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 5.1.

³ "Programming: 'First Folio! The Book that Gave Us Shakespeare,'" American Library Association Public Programs Office, accessed June 20, 2015.

⁴ The full foundation name is the Google Inc. Charitable Giving Fund of Tides Foundation.

⁵ Ogburn, Charlton, Jr. *The Mysterious William Shakespeare: The Myth & the Reality*. (McLean, VA: EPM, 1992), 69.

⁶ Marx, Bill. "Fuse Commentary: Not Just Shakespeare — 'Anonymous' Wrongs Ben Jonson As Well." *Artsfuse*. Nov. 8, 2011. Accessed July 5, 2015.

⁷ Rendall, Gerald H. *Ben Jonson and the First Folio Edition of Shakespeare's Plays*. (Colchester: Benham & Co 1939), 7.

⁸ For further information, many of these publications on the various arguments are available by searching scholarly databases and discovery engines with the key words, "Shakespeare authorship" and "Oxfordian." For the American organizations representing alternative points of view, see doubtaboutwill.org and shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org. Also see the New England Shakespeare Oxford Library site: shakespeareoxfordlibrary.org/. The third (2015) edition of James Warren's *An Index to Oxfordian Publications: Including Oxfordian Books And Selected Articles From Non-Oxfordian Publications* (Somerville, MA: Forever Press, 2015) now lists more than 6,500 entries on the Oxfordian theory of authorship. The index is available from *Amazon.com*.

⁹ On the history of the authorship question, see esp. Warren Hope and Kim Holston, *The Shakespeare Controversy: An Analysis of the Claimants to Authorship, and Their Champions and Detractors* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co, 1992), or the updated 2nd edition (2009).

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- ¹⁰ “Guidelines: Shakespeare and His First Folio: A Traveling Exhibition.” American Library Association Public Programs Office, last updated 6 June 2014, accessed June 20, 2015.
- ¹¹ Another of Oxford’s daughters, Elizabeth (1575-1627) was married to William Stanley (1561-1642), the literary 6th Earl Derby, who is reported by the Jesuit spy George Fenner circa 1599 to be “busy penning plays for the common players.” As Peter Dickson has noted, Thomas Walkley, the publisher of the 1622 renegade quarto of *Othello*, was a house printer to the Earls of Derby and used a Derby heraldic device – the eagle and child – on the issue of the Shakespearean play [*Bardgate: Shake-speare and the Royalists Who Stole the Bard* (Mt. Vernon, OH: Printing Arts Press, 2011): 151-156].
- ¹² “Guidelines.”
- ¹³ “Code of Ethics for Museums,” American Alliance of Museums, accessed June 20, 2015.
- ¹⁴ “Guidelines.”
- ¹⁵ For a list of host cities and venues, in chronological order, see the Folger’s online pdf, “First Folio! The Book that Gave Us Shakespeare: 2016 National Tour” Accessed Nov. 18, 2015.
- ¹⁶ DeVore, Sheryl. “Discovery Museum to Celebrate Shakespeare’s 400th Death Anniversary.” *The Lake County Sun-News* (Illinois). April 7, 2015.
- ¹⁷ Lardner, James. “The Authorship Question.” *The New Yorker*. April 11, 1988, 87.
- ¹⁸ Bethell, Tom. “The Case for Oxford.” *The Atlantic Monthly*. 268, no. 4 (October 1991): 45-61.
- ¹⁹ Stevens, John Paul. “The Shakespeare Canon of Statutory Construction.” *The University of Pennsylvania Law Review*. 140 (1992): 1373-87.
- ²⁰ *The Tennessee Law Review*. Entire Fall 2004 issue.
- ²¹ Bethell, Tom, et al. “The Ghost Of Shakespeare.” *Harper’s*, April 1999 (298: 1787), 35-62, which contains debate texts by Tom Bethell, Daniel Wright, Mark K. Anderson, Joseph Sobran, Richard F. Whalen, Gail Kern Paster, Marjorie Garber, Irvin Matus, Harold Bloom, and Jonathan Bate.
- ²² Niederkorn, William S. “A Historic Whodunit: If Shakespeare Didn’t, Who Did?” *The New York Times*, February 10, 2002.
- ²³ Norm Easterbrook, “UM to host first folio exhibit.” *Oxford Eagle Online (Oxford MS)*, Feb. 26, 2015, accessed June 18, 2015.
- ²⁴ “Guidelines.”
- ²⁵ “Guidelines.”
- ²⁶ “Guidelines.”
- ²⁷ “Guidelines.”

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²⁸ For one leading Oxfordian's provocative observations on this conference, see Roger Stritmatter, "Aloha Vere: Folger Library Confronts 'Problems' of Shakespearean Biography." *Shake-Speare's Bible*. April 7, 2014. Accessed August 1, 2015. The author also attended this conference.

²⁹ "Code of Ethics for Museums," American Alliance of Museums.

³⁰ "Guidelines."

³¹ This special 2016 volume of *Brief Chronicles* surveys some of the outstanding post-Stratfordian scholarship on the Folio.

³² The conference was not a conventional or typically accountable academic conference, as presenters were preselected without an impartial, open call for papers. While there were veteran, well-published academic authorship scholars present, the best that the preselected conferees at the 2014 Folger's Conference on the Problem of Biography could do was to sponsor a leading orthodox scholar's presentation on one Baconian's authorship cipher obsession, while repeatedly dropping the name of Delia Bacon, a 19th century authorship scholar who had a mental breakdown. In all fairness, some conferees engaged authorship scholars in collegial, if guarded, discussions about particulars of actual research, at lunch and between sessions. However, it seemed very clear that the presenters were told or had agreed in advance to avoid topics relating to alternate author theories. Graham Holderness was the lone scholar to break the conference taboo in order to hold up the example of the fictional movie *Anonymous* as an exhibit to somehow refute Oxfordian scholarship. He did not seem aware that Oxfordians recognize the fictional nature of the film and its inconsistencies.

Holderness misrepresented the film as depicting "an author disconnected from the theater," which ignores the film's depiction of young de Vere producing a play for the queen and later attending the public theaters. Further, via letter to Richard Waugaman of Georgetown University, conference participant Stephen Greenblatt retracted an offensive remark made that week to the *Washington Post* about the conference, comparing authorship-questioning scholars to Holocaust deniers, though he continued to endorse and employ other, less-fraught but still insulting, similes. Recently, the Royal Shakespeare Company has been compelled by the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition to remove an article that made false claims about the psychology of authorship doubters from its website. See note 33. Arguing authorship, which should be one focus of unencumbered Shakespeare research, is constantly made fun of but rarely the topic of informed opinion or honest counterarguments. These are just a few recent examples that compound of a long history of insults.

³³ "Royal Shakespeare Company Website Retracts False Claims about Authorship Doubters," The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship website, accessed June 20, 2015.

³⁴ Commonly defined as "the worship, particularly when considered excessive, of William Shakespeare," bardolatry goes hand in hand with the Stratfordian position

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because it makes the author a mythical figure rather than a genuine human being, which helps smooth over the problems with Shakespearean biography.

³⁵ The authenticity of the Droeshout engraving has long been a vexed question. Stanley Wells of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, in a counterpoint captured on the Folger's *Shakespeare Quarterly Forum* blog, pointed out the Droeshout's dubious status in the following remark concerning the Cobbe portrait: "The greatest weakness in Dr. Bearman's arguments is that he assumes as a given that the Droeshout engraving and the bust in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford, are 'the two authentic images' of Shakespeare, yet both are posthumous. I know of no other cases save, perhaps, those of Christ and of Antinous when a posthumous portrait is regarded as reliable evidence for a likeness, however much contemporaries, with the subject no longer there to act as a touchstone, may have averred that it was." Stanley Wells, "Response" to Robert Bearman, "The 'Cobbe' Portrait of William Shakespeare." "Shakespeare Portraits and Controversies," *Shakespeare Quarterly Forum*. 6 May 2011. Accessed November 12, 2015. Wells is also referring to Robert Bearman's review of the revised edition of *Shakespeare Found! A Life Portrait at Last*, edited by Stanley Wells in *Shakespeare Quarterly*. 62:2 (Summer 2011), 281-284.

³⁶ The idea that Jonson at least wrote the Heminges and Condell preface "To the Great Variety of Readers" (A3) goes back a long way and continues to the present; Steevens first thought of it in 1770 and Malone included it and seconded it in his edition (Malone, Edmund. *The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare*. Vol. II. [1821], 663). W. G. Clark and T. Glover's Preface to the *Cambridge Shakespeare* (1863) suggests that the prefaces were "written by some literary man" (270 n. 1). W. W. Greg (*The Shakespeare First Folio, Its Bibliographical And Textual History*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955) discusses the case for Jonson's authorship of the poem, including George Greenwood's critique, and seems convinced (17-26), which argument is cited by Leah Marcus as support for her assertions about the ambiguity of the prefatory poems (see note 23). More recently, Ian Donaldson agrees that Jonson wrote much of the epistle to the readers in general in his *Ben Jonson: A Life* (Oxford: OUP, 2011): 370-374.

³⁷ That Jonson cannot be read only literally is a consistent theme from early in Shakespeare-Jonson scholarship up to the present. Jonson's ambiguities are a constant in scholarship past and present. See Whalen, Richard, F. Chapter 11: "The Ambiguous Ben Jonson: Implications for Assessing the Validity of the First Folio Testimony" in Shahan, John M., and Alexander Waugh. *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt?: Exposing An Industry In Denial*. (Plantation, FL: Lumina, 2013), 126-135.

As William Slights, in 1994, expressed this doubt, "I have become convinced that the driving social force, distinctive dramatic techniques, and persistent interpretive puzzles in [Jonson's plays] are related in one way or another to the topic of secrecy." Slights, William W. E., *Ben Jonson and the Art of Secrecy* (Buf-

falo, NY: U of Toronto Press, 1994), 14.

Vanderbilt's Leah Marcus in her *Puzzling Shakespeare* (Oakland: U Cal P, 1988) argues that the reader is disoriented by the juxtaposition of the Droeshout portrait and the Jonson poem, which confounds the very perceptions it invokes. "[The folio] makes high claims for 'The Author' while simultaneously dispersing authorial identity; so that 'Mr. William Shakespeare' becomes almost an abstraction, a generic category, while remaining an unstable composite. Given the rhetorical turbulence of the volume's introductory materials, constructing Shakespeare requires almost a leap of faith, like Jonson's, and depends upon the suppression of a host of particulars that recede into indeterminacy when an attempt is made to pin them down (24-25). See Stritmatter review, pp. 103-109 this volume.

On the general ambiguity of early modern prefatory poems, Cannan's analysis of Jonson and his prefaces in their literary context [Cannan, Paul D. "Ben Jonson, Authorship, and the Rhetoric of English Dramatic Prefatory Criticism." *Studies in Philology* 99:2 (Spring 2002): 178-201], suggests that "discerning Jonson's – or any playwright's – place in the history of authorship requires an understanding of contemporary attitudes toward the theater, dramatists, and play publication. Unfortunately, the information we have regarding these topics is scrappy at best, and especially when appearing in prefatory matter, is frequently packaged in *elusive* rhetoric" (my emphasis, 180). Cannan later explains after many examples of prefatory writing in Jonson and others that early modern authors were working in a medium of "mixed messages on dedicating plays," and declares "the single most common feature of prefatory matter during this period" was "its contradictory nature" (186). Orthodox literary analysis has ignored these aspects along with the censorship and political realities that shaped such messages, a process carefully delineated in Annabel Patterson's ground-breaking work, mainly about Jonson, *Censorship and interpretation: The Conditions Of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984).

³⁸ Ogburn, 792.

³⁹ Richmond Crinkley, "Perspectives on the Authorship Question," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 36:4 (Winter 1985): 515-522.

⁴⁰ "Questioning Shakespeare's Authorship." Folger Shakespeare Library Online Archive, accessed June 2, 2015.

⁴¹ "Questioning Shakespeare's Authorship." accessed June 2, 2015.

⁴² "Shakespeare FAQ: Shakespeare's works: Did Shakespeare write the plays and poems attributed to him?" Folger Shakespeare Library, accessed June 28, 2015.

⁴³ "Local Author Zeroes in on Folgers, Shakespeare" Interview. Steven Grant. *Arlington Sun Gazette*. (Arlington, VA) November 27, 2014, accessed June 16, 2015.

⁴⁴ "Q&A with Michael Witmore." C-SPAN. Web interview, April 29, 2015. (00:57:55).

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Accessed June 18, 2015.

- ⁴⁵ Stritmatter, Roger A. 2001. *The Marginalia of Edward De Vere's Geneva Bible: Providential Discovery, Literary Reasoning, and Historical Consequence*. Ph.D. diss., (U Mass-Amherst. Department of Comparative Literature) ProQuest, UMI Dissertations Publishing.
- ⁴⁶ The Cornwallis-Lysons manuscript at Folger Shakespeare Library, circa 1585-90, contains the earliest known copy of any portion of "Shakespeare's" works, predating *Venus and Adonis* by several years, a poem later appearing in *The Passionate Pilgrim* in 1599 (as poem XIX) as attributed to "Shakespeare," as well as several poems attributed to de Vere. The (probably 18th c.) spine reads "MSS POEMS BY VERE EARL OF OXFORD &C," Charles Wisner Barrell, "Earliest Authenticated "Shakespeare" Transcript Found With Oxford's Personal Poems: A Solution of the Significant Proximity of Certain Verses in a Unique Elizabethan Manuscript Anthology," *The Shakespeare Fellowship Quarterly*, April 1945. Also see Miller, Ruth Loyd in an article originally published as: Chapter XVIII (369-394) in *Oxfordian Vistas* (Vol. 2 of *Shakespeare Identified*. Kennikat Press, 1975. Ed. by Ruth Loyd Miller). Orthodox commentary on the manuscript appears in William H. Bond, "The Cornwallis-Lysons Manuscript and the Poems of John Bentley," *Joseph Quincy Adams Memorial Studies*, ed. James G. McManaway, Giles E. Dawson, and Edwin E. Willoughby (Washington, DC, 1948), 683-693, and in Arthur F. Marotti, "Folger MSS V.a.89 and V.a.345: Reading Lyric Poetry in Manuscript," in *The Reader Revealed*, ed. Sabrina Alcorn Baron, et al. (Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC, 2001), 44-57.
- ⁴⁷ Bravin, Jess, "Justice Stevens Renders an Opinion on Who Wrote Shakespeare's Plays" *Wall Street Journal*, April 18, 2009, accessed October 10, 2015. Bravin says, "Justice Stevens can indulge his love of the Bard at the Folger Shakespeare Library, a block from the Supreme Court. He says he had a particular brainstorm after learning the library held a Bible that once belonged to de Vere."
- ⁴⁸ "Local Author Zeroes in on Folgers, Shakespeare." Steven Grant. *Arlington Sun Gazette*. (Arlington, VA) November 27, 2014, accessed June 16, 2015.
- ⁴⁹ Goldscheider, Eric, "An Unlikely Love Affair" *Amherst Magazine* Fall 2007, accessed June 23, 2015.
- ⁵⁰ Esther Singleton's *Shakespearian Fantasias*, a 1929 Oxfordian novel that the Folger owns in manuscript form. According to the editors of the Shakespeare-Oxford Society, American branch newsletter 1940, Henry Clay Folger was arranging to buy the manuscript just before his death, but it was later donated to fulfill his wishes posthumously after Singleton also died ("Editor's Note." at end of Singleton's "Was Edward de Vere Shakespeare?" report in *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, Autumn 1973, 15. *ShakespeareOxfordFellowship.org* "Publications").
- The Folger's copy of Singleton's published novel is inscribed by its author to Henry Clay Folger. The Folger's copy of one of her previous books, *The Shake-*

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Shakespeare Garden (1922) is also inscribed to him in the year of publication, confirming an association between Folger and Singleton of at least eight years duration.

- ⁵¹ *The Ashborne Portrait*. There are several articles that contradict the Folger's evidence-thin authority on this, William L. Pressley, and the version of the Portrait's story on the Folger website. Pressley's account is given in the rather aptly titled, "The Ashbourne Portrait of Shakespeare: Through the Looking Glass" *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 44, no. 1: 54-72. For a superb overview of the Oxfordian evidence, with references to all the "state of the art" prior literature, see Jeremy Crick and Dorna Bewley, "The 'Ashbourne' Portrait: New Research," *De Vere Society Newsletter*, Summer 2007, 24-35.
- ⁵² Grant, Stephen *Collecting Shakespeare* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. Kindle Edition. 2014), 78.
- ⁵³ Singleton's *The Shakespeare Garden*, held by the Folger Library, is inscribed in 1922 to Henry Clay Folger.
- ⁵⁴ See the chronicle of many assaults on Ogburn's work by following the references to "Folger Shakespeare Library" from his *The Mysterious William Shakespeare's* index and more particular, the references to Wright's own language. Granted, intolerance is not exclusive to Stratfordians [see Warren Hope and Kim Holston, *The Shakespeare Controversy: An Analysis of the Authorship Theories, Second Edition* (Jefferson NC: McFarland & Company, 2009): 175]; however, Wright frequently exhibits open and unapologetic hostility to authorship skeptics and is far from "neutral" when he calls those with whom he disagrees "anti-shakespeareans," "cultists," "neurotics" and "fanatics."
- ⁵⁵ Wright, Louis B. *The Folger Library: Two Decades of Growth—An Informal Account*, (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1968), 202.
- ⁵⁶ Crinkley, "New Perspectives."
- ⁵⁷ Crinkley, "New Perspectives," 515.
- ⁵⁸ Marx, Bill. "Fuse Commentary: Not Just Shakespeare — 'Anonymous' Wrongs Ben Jonson As Well." November 8, 2011. Accessed July 7, 2015.
- ⁵⁹ *Macbeth*, 2.3.
- ⁶⁰ "Library Bill of Rights," American Library Association, accessed June 20, 2015. Emphasis added.
- ⁶¹ "Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights," American Library Association, accessed June 20, 2015.


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Shakespeare's Impossible Doublet: Droeshout's Engraving Anatomized

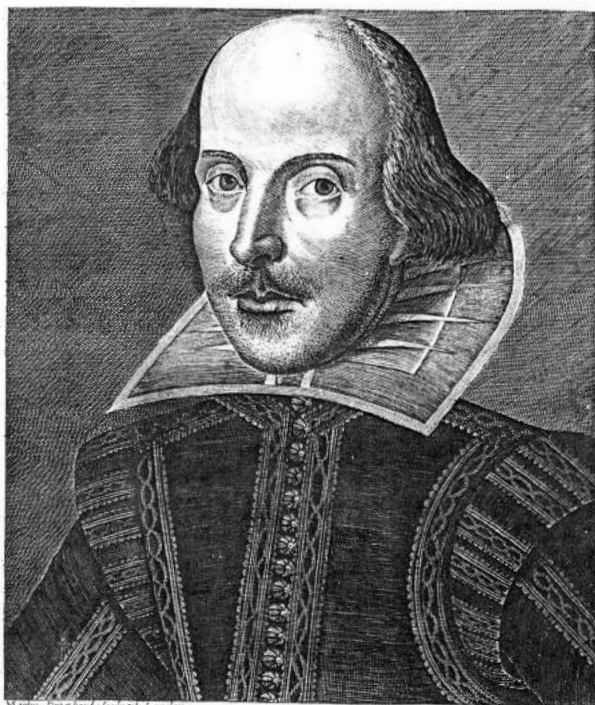
John M. Rollett

Abstract

The engraving of Shakespeare by Martin Droeshout on the title page of the 1623 First Folio has often been criticized for various oddities. In 1911 a professional tailor asserted that the right-hand side of the poet's doublet was "obviously" the left-hand side of the back of the garment. In this paper I describe evidence which confirms this assessment, demonstrating that Shakespeare is pictured wearing an impossible garment. By printing a caricature of the man from Stratford-upon-Avon, it would seem that the publishers were indicating that he was not the author of the works that bear his name.

 The Exhibition Searching for Shakespeare,¹ held at the National Portrait Gallery, London, in 2006, included several pictures supposed at one time or another to be portraits of our great poet and playwright. Only one may have any claim to authenticity — that engraved by Martin Droeshout for the title page of the First Folio (Figure 1), the collection of plays published in 1623. Because the dedication and the address "To the great Variety of Readers" are each signed by John Hemmings and Henry Condell, two of Shakespeare's theatrical colleagues, and because Ben Jonson's prefatory poem tells us "It was for gentle Shakespeare cut," the engraving appears to have the imprimatur of Shakespeare's friends and fellows. The picture is not very attractive, and various defects have been pointed out from time to time – the head is too large, the stiff white collar or wired band seems odd, left and right of the doublet don't quite match up. But nonetheless, the illustration is generally regarded as serving a valuable purpose in giving posterity some idea of what the playwright looked like.

MR. WILLIAM
SHAKESPEARES
COMEDIES,
HISTORIES, &
TRAGEDIES.
Published according to the True Originall Copies.



L O N D O N

Printed by Isaac Iaggard, and Ed. Blount. 1623.

Figure 1. Title page of the First Folio of Shakespeare's plays, 1623.

The icon's deficiencies are frequently ascribed to the incompetence of the engraver, usually assumed to be the Martin Droeshout the younger, born in 1601, and aged twenty-one or twenty-two in 1623. It is unlikely that he would have seen Shakespeare (who died in 1616), and it is often supposed that the engraving of the face was based on a portrait from the life, now lost.

The doublet may have been copied from the same portrait, or may have been added by the engraver, perhaps working from a real garment. Although Mary Edmond proposed in 1991 that the engraver was probably the young man's uncle, of the same name and aged around fifty-five,² this view is no longer tenable, following the publication by June Schlueter of fresh archival evidence which strongly supports the attribution to the younger Droeshout.³ Notwithstanding the deficiencies of the engraving, it was evidently found acceptable by the publishers, since they approved

it on the title-page of the First Folio.

Many commentators have drawn attention to the portrait's defects, most finding fault with the details of the face and hair, which will not concern us here. Several also point out errors in the costume, for example Sidney Lee refers to "patent defects of perspective"⁴ in the dress, while M. H. Spielmann says that the shoulder-wings are "grotesquely large and vilely drawn."⁵ The nature of the most elusive peculiarity was brought to light in 1911 by an anonymous tailor writing in *The Gentleman's Tailor*, under the title "A Problem for the Trade." After remarking that "it is passing strange that something like three centuries should have been allowed to pass before the tailor's handiwork should have been appealed to," he concludes that the doublet "is so strangely illustrated that the right-hand side of the forepart is *obviously* the left-hand side of the backpart; and so gives a harlequin appearance to the figure, which it is not unnatural to assume was intentional, and done with express object and purpose" (emphasis added).⁶ Since what is obvious to a professional tailor may not be obvious to a layman, in the next section I shall analyze the doublet to see whether there is evidence to support this assessment.

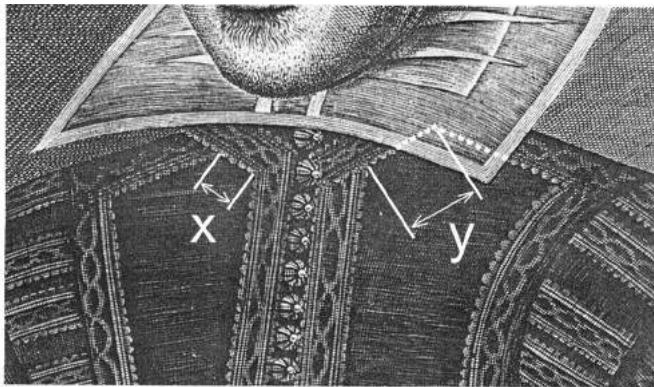


Figure 2. The right-hand front panel is smaller than the left-hand front panel.

Droeshout's Doublet

The doublet in the engraving displays a number of peculiarities. To begin with, the right shoulder-wing (onlooker's left, Figure 1) is smaller than the left shoulder-wing; instead they should be (roughly) the same size, or at least balance pictorially. In addition, the right-hand front panel of the doublet is clearly smaller than the left-hand front panel, as is confirmed by the different lengths of the embroidery edges labelled "x" and "y" (Figure 2). To my knowledge, this is the first time this oddity has been pointed out.

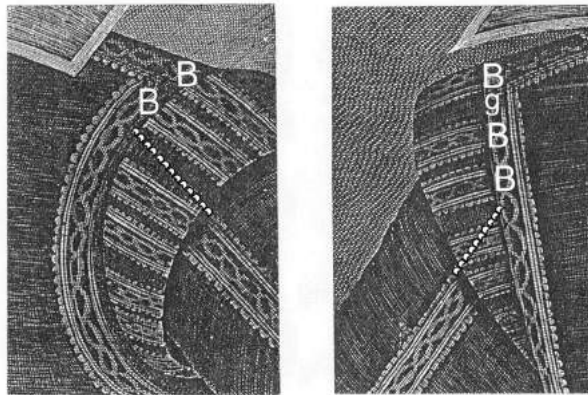


Figure 3. The embroidery on the right sleeve (right) is placed around twice as far down from the top of the shoulder-wing as that on the left sleeve (left).

More significantly, the embroidery on the right sleeve does not correspond to that on the left sleeve (Figure 3). On the left sleeve, the upper edge of the embroidery (when extended) meets the inside edge of the shoulder-wing (where it is joined to the doublet), a distance of just over two bands of embroidery (labeled “B”) down from the top of the shoulder-wing. On the right sleeve, the upper edge of the embroidery meets the inside edge of the shoulder-wing a distance of rather over three bands, plus a wide gap (labeled “g,” roughly the same width as a band), down from the top of the wing. Instead of corresponding (at least approximately) with that on the left sleeve, the embroidery on the right sleeve is located around a distance of two bandwidths lower than that on the left sleeve, or nearly twice as far away from the top of the shoulder-wing. This too has not been noted before, as far as I know.

Most significantly, the embroidery on the right shoulder-wing *does not match* that on the left shoulder-wing. From the top of the left wing (Figure 4), moving down, there are two bands of embroidery close together, a wide gap, and then another pair of bands, and so on. On the right wing, starting at the corresponding place, there is only *one* band of embroidery, then a wide gap, then a pair of bands, and so on. Symbolically, the pattern of embroidery on the left wing, starting from the top, can be represented by “BBgBBgBB,” etc. and that on the right wing by “BgBBgBBg,” etc. These two patterns would match on a normal garment, but here they do not: clearly *this is not a normal garment*. This new piece of evidence, described here for the first time, is crucial to the analysis of the image.

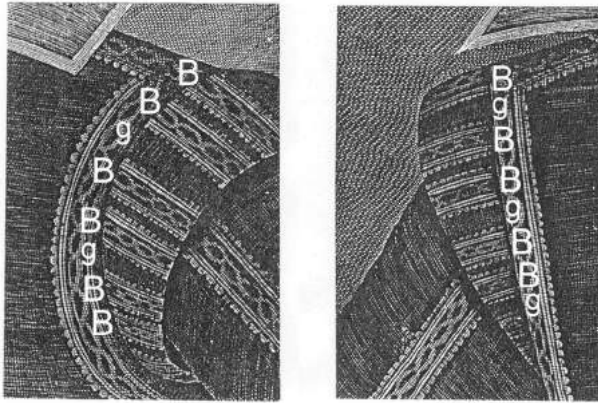


Figure 4. The embroidery on the right shoulder wing does not match that on the left shoulder-wing.

These four points confirm the verdict of the tailor of 1911; the garment consists of the left front joined to the left back of a real doublet – a sartorial anomaly. The right-hand half of the front of the doublet (Figures 3 or 4) is clearly not the mirror image of the left-hand half (even after taking perspective into account); and the embroidery on the right sleeve indicates that this is in fact the *back* of the left sleeve, where it would be correctly placed. The smaller size of the front right-hand panel (shown by seam *x* being around half the length of seam *y*, Figure 2) would be appropriate for the left-hand panel of the back of the doublet; the (non-matching) embroidery on the (smaller) right shoulder-wing would be what one would expect to see on the back of the left shoulder-wing, the “BBg” pattern being repeated regularly around it (Figure 5).



Figure 5. A mock-up of the left shoulder-wing (left) from the front, (center) from the side and (right) from the back. Compare with Figure 3 or 4.

It is now clear that no tailor-made doublet ever had such a counterchanged or

“harlequin appearance.” We are left wondering how this might have come about.

It has been frequently asserted that the engraver was incompetent and that the publishers, principally Isaac Jaggard and Edward Blount, were prepared to accept an imperfect image of the author and his doublet, despite the fact that such a costly undertaking (one of the most expensive to date by an English publisher) would surely demand a flawless frontispiece. Although incompetence in perspective drawing might possibly account for the first three points above, it cannot account for the last, the embroidery mismatch on the shoulder-wings. No tailor, dressmaker, painter or sculptor – or engraver – could ever commit such a gross error, unless it were expressly required by a patron or employer.

Thus, for whatever reason, the so-called “deficiencies” were apparently intentional, just as the tailor of 1911 supposed, and accepted as such by Jaggard and his colleagues (who would likely have approved initial sketches and might well have kept an eye on work in progress). If they didn’t like what the engraver first produced, they had only to withhold payment until he produced something more acceptable. Moreover, a young man undertaking an important commission early in his career is going to make absolutely certain that the finished product is exactly what his patrons require. Anxious to gain a reputation and a living, he would strive to avoid errors at all costs, knowing that his work would be subject to severe scrutiny on account of his youth. That the engraver signed with his full name suggests he was fully satisfied with his achievement.

Nevertheless, the engraving was not found to be entirely satisfactory, since changes were made as printing proceeded. According to Peter Blayney, in the first stage (of which only a few examples survive), there was “so little shading on the ruff that Shakespeare’s head appears to be floating in mid air.” Shading was therefore added, and later small changes were made to the hair and eyes when the plate was modified a second time. Blayney adds, “It is unlikely that anyone but Droeshout would have considered those alterations necessary.”⁷ But despite such close attention to detail by the artist on going to press, none of the other peculiarities in the engraving were altered in any way. (Errors in draftsmanship could have been removed by use of the burnisher, at least in the early stages.)

The mismatch between the patterns of embroidery on the shoulder-wings can only have been achieved deliberately; to put it another way, even a child of ten would know that the bands of embroidery on the two shoulder-wings should be mirror images of each other. An artist or engraver, having completed one shoulder-wing, would *automatically* make sure the second wing matched the first, unless instructed otherwise. Together with the other peculiarities, this specific feature shows beyond doubt that the engraved doublet was carefully designed to consist of the left half of the front and the left half of the back of a real garment. It would appear that the artist had a real doublet in front of him; having depicted the front left half with the central fastenings and embroidery, he turned it round and drew the back left half. Why the engraver should have distorted reality in such a way as to produce a sartorial absurdity remains open to speculation, especially as other engravings signed with his name or monogram are executed with more than average competence.⁸

This departure from reality raises the question of whether anyone else has ever been portrayed in a similarly counterchanged or “harlequin” type of costume; and, if so, for what purpose? Alternatively, if there is no history of similar iconography, what would persons buying a copy of the First Folio in 1623 make of the engraving, assuming they spotted its peculiarities, which must have been far more readily apparent to them than to us? Leaving these questions aside, it comes as no surprise to find that the oddities of the portrait seem to have aroused a certain amount of skepticism when it was later used as the basis of another frontispiece. John Benson’s 1640 edition of Shakespeare’s *Poems* employs a reversed and simplified version of the engraving made by William Marshall (Figure 6).⁹



Figure 6. William Marshall’s engraving of Shakespeare for the frontispiece of John Benson’s edition of *Shakespeare’s Poems*, London: 1640. Note the succession of interrogatories for ironic effect.

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The anomalous right-hand side of the doublet is covered by a cloak, and beneath the portrait are eight lines of verse, the first two of which read:

This Shadowe is renowned Shakespear's? Soule of th'age
The applause? delight? the wonder of the Stage.

The use of question marks rather than exclamation marks might appear to suggest that doubts about the engraving had already surfaced in print.



Figure 7. The typical elegant Stuart frontispiece, illustrated with Samuel Daniel's *Civil Wars*, engraved by Thomas Cockson. London: Simon Waterson, 1609.

The Uncomely Frontispiece

To examine the strangeness of the doublet from a wider perspective, I shall quote from observations made by Leah S. Marcus, in *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and Its Discontents*.¹⁰ In the first chapter of her book, Marcus makes some trenchant observations about the title page of the First Folio under the heading “The Art of the Uncomely Frontispiece.” Compared with other folio volumes of the period she finds the Folio title page peculiar, to say the least. To begin with, she reports that the Droeshout portrait has been “the object of much vilification. It has, we hear, a depressing ‘pudding face’ and a skull of ‘horrible hydrocephalous development’” (2). Readers, she says, “have delighted in pulling apart Droeshout’s engraving. Shakespeare, it is complained, has lopsided hair and a doublet with two left armholes, a displaced nose, eyes that don’t match, a head much too big for the body” (20). Compared with other portraits on title pages of the period it is “extremely large.” It is “stark and unadorned” – it has “no frame, no ornamental borders” (even though such “embellishments” are found elsewhere inside the volume), and it is devoid of the allegorical figures and emblems which customarily surround such portraits and are typical of the title pages of the age, including comparable volumes printed by William and Isaac Jaggard (2).



Figure 8. Detail of the portrait of Sir John Petre (1605).

Marcus compares the First Folio title page with those of Samuel Daniel’s *Civil Wars* (1609), Samuel Purchas’s *Pilgrims* (1625), John Taylor’s *Works* (1630), Raleigh’s *History of the World* (1614), and Jonson’s *Works* (1616). In these books the author’s engraving is surrounded by elaborate symbolical devices, designed to characterize the author and his book (3). As a representative example, consider the engraving of

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Samuel Daniel (Figure 7); note the modest costume appropriate to a middle class writer and poet, set off by complex ornamental designs. By contrast, the First Folio title page “appears stripped down to essentials,” differing from all the others by offering “no particularising details – only the raw directness of the image, as though to say that in this case, no artifice is necessary: this is the Man Himself” (18). Jonson’s poem facing the portrait adds further to the puzzle. It begins:

This Figure, that thou here seest put
It was for gentle Shakespeare cut

and ends, “Reader looke / Not on his picture, but his Booke.” Shakespeare, the verses tell us (according to Marcus), “is not to be found after all in the compelling image opposite” (8). It is a “Figure” cut “for” Shakespeare, and should be ignored (according to Jonson), in favor of the volume’s contents.

Commentary

Such details invoke a puzzling discrepancy on the title page of the First Folio between what one should expect, and what one finds. In place of a lifelike or at least credible portrait of the “Soul of the Age,” the “Star of Poets,” dressed appropriately, we are offered a picture of a man wearing a nonsensical costume – a garment consisting of the left front and left back of a real doublet.¹¹ What can this mean?

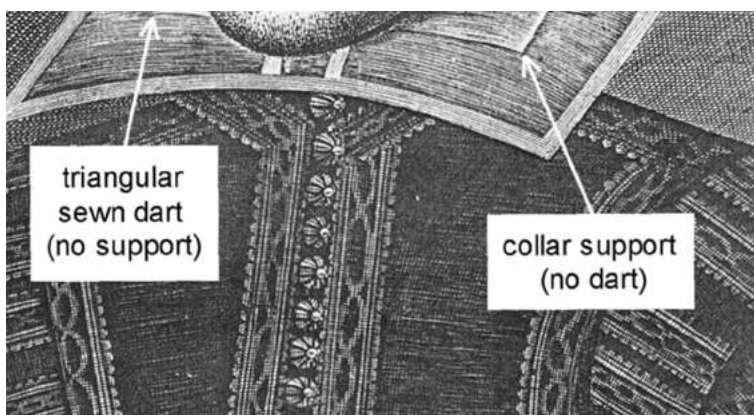


Figure 9. Showing the omission of the right-hand side of the collar support, and the lack of symmetry in the depiction of the triangular sewn darts in the wired band.

If similar portraits or historical parallels exist which might supply an

explanation, an exhaustive search has failed to produce a single example, and so we can only entertain a few conjectures. The idea that Martin Droeshout might have had a grudge against Shakespeare or the publishers of the First Folio, and set out to poke fun at him or them by producing an engraving full of faults (hoping no one would notice), can I think be discarded as implausible. Another possibility is that the two left sleeves symbolize the fact that Shakespeare was the servant of two masters, Queen Elizabeth and James I, badges of allegiance being worn on the left sleeve. But the man in the portrait, so far from wearing the clothing of a retainer or actor, is dressed in clothing appropriate to a landed gentleman such as Sir John Petre¹² (Figure 8). Shakespeare might have been given such clothing as a castoff to wear on the stage, but could hardly have worn it in ordinary life in view of the existing sumptuary laws. Another suggestion is that since left-handedness¹³ is sometimes associated with covert dealings, the portrait may hint at some subterfuge connected with the publication, perhaps that his role was not what it appeared to be (that of author). A further possibility is that the depiction of the face was imaginary, and the anomalous doublet was thus intended to warn the onlooker that it was not to be regarded as a true portrait (that is, not to be taken at face value).¹⁴

In the absence of a clear interpretation, perhaps something can be learned from other aspects of the engraving. Among the many peculiarities to which Marcus draws attention is that the portrait of Shakespeare is “extremely large” (2). In fact, it is around four times larger in area (six and a half inches by seven and a quarter) than the title page head-and-shoulders portrait of any other author of the period. Why is this? I would suggest that if the image had been of normal size (e.g. that of a playing card or postcard), the details, especially those of the embroidery, would have been so difficult to make out that the implication they were presumably designed to convey might never have been suspected. To ensure that the left-front left-back character would be noticed, the engraving had to be as large as possible; as a consequence no space was available for the conventional allegorical figures and emblems usually surrounding such an image.

Further evidence of the engraving’s duplicity is provided by the starched white collar or wired band under the head (Figure 1). Its support, known as an “underpropper” or “supportasse” (made, e.g., from lightweight material covered in silk) shows clearly through the linen on the left side of the collar (onlooker’s right), but is not visible on the right side; both Sandy Nairne¹⁵ and Tarnya Cooper¹⁶ draw attention to this curious omission in the National Portrait Gallery’s publication *Searching for Shakespeare*. It is also worth noting that the collar conceals part of the embroidery edge labelled “y” (Figure 2), in such a way that the exposed part is the same length as the edge labelled “x.” The left and right seams in the neck area therefore appear to match each other, creating a kind of *trompe l’oeil* effect which tends to obscure the differing sizes of the front panels. In addition, the triangular sewn darts of the collar are almost comically unsymmetrical: left and right bear no kind of mirror relationship with each other, even allowing for perspective; Figure 9 draws attention to the chief mismatches.¹⁷ It is no more a real collar than the doublet is a real doublet, and it is difficult to resist an impression that the person depicted

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is being gently and surreptitiously mocked. Although one or two peculiarities might be ascribed to carelessness, six or seven (some obvious at first glance) seem to point towards a deliberate agenda of some kind.

Conclusion

The engraving by Martin Droeshout on the title page of the First Folio shows a man, identified by Ben Jonson and Leonard Digges¹⁸ as William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon, wearing an impossible garment which, it is reasonable to suppose, carries some symbolic implication. If no likeness of the poet had been available, the publishers could have commissioned an imaginary portrait properly costumed (as has sometimes been done, for example, with editions of Homer), or omitted one altogether; instead, they chose a course apparently intended to invite speculation.

If nothing else, this analysis of Shakespeare's doublet draws attention to an astonishing aberration at the heart of the First Folio. Whatever its interpretation, there can now be no doubt that the left-front/left-back anomaly is a fact. What is usually taken to be a poorly drawn portrait of the playwright turns out to be a skillfully executed depiction of a carefully designed enigma. Droeshout's engraving of Shakespeare has become, down the years, the most famous literary icon in the world, yet while ostensibly a portrait of our great poet, it hides beneath a more or less plausible surface a so far unresolved problem.

Perhaps light can be shed on this problem by examining other volumes of the period. Head-and-shoulder portraits of the following authors appear on title pages of their publications: John Florio, Walter Raleigh, Francis Bacon, Samuel Daniel, Michael Drayton, Ben Jonson, John Donne, John Weever, Samuel Purchas, John Taylor, John Milton; none show any peculiarities of costume and none are associated with questions of authorship. Only Shakespeare's dress is anomalous, and only Shakespeare's authorship is in doubt. Many people will be likely to conclude that by printing a caricature of the man from Stratford-upon-Avon, the publishers were indicating that he was not the author of the works that bear his name.

Reprinted from *Brief Chronicles II* (2010), 9-24.



ENDNOTES

- ¹ *Searching for Shakespeare*, Exhibition curated by Dr. Tarnya Cooper, National Portrait Gallery, London, March to May, 2006.
- ² Edmond, Mary. "It was for gentle Shakespeare cut." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42 (1991): 339-344; "Martin Droeshout." *The Dictionary of Art*. Oxford: OUP, 1996; "Martin Droeshout." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: OUP, 2006.
- ³ Schlueter, June. "Martin Droeshout Redivivus: Reassessing the Folio Engraving of Shakespeare." *Shakespeare Survey* 60 (2007): 237-251.
- ⁴ Lee, Sidney. *A Life of William Shakespeare* (third edition of revised version). London: John Murray, 1922: 529.
- ⁵ Spielmann, M.H. *The Title Page of the First Folio of Shakespeare's Plays: a comparative study of the Droeshout portrait and the Stratford bust*. London: H. Milford, 1924: 32.
- ⁶ Anon. "A Problem for the Trade." *The Gentleman's Tailor* 46 (1911): 93.
- ⁷ Blayney, Peter W.M. *The First Folio of Shakespeare*. Washington, D.C.: Folger Library Publications, 1991: 18.
- ⁸ Martin Droeshout had a successful career as an engraver both in England and Spain, and engraved portraits of many well-known and distinguished people including John Donne, the Duke of Buckingham, the Bishop of Durham, the Marquis of Hamilton and Lord Coventry. In 1631 he was commissioned to illustrate the second edition of Crooke's *Mikrokosmographia* (over 1000 pages long), testifying to an excellent reputation. The title page of this work is given here: <http://www.bpi1700.org.uk/jsp/zoomify.jsp?image=157307> . Other examples of his work are included in June Schlueter's paper referenced above, and on the website of the National Portrait Gallery, <http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person.php?LinkID=mp06906&role=art> .
- ⁹ Shakespeare, William. *Poems: written by Wil. Shake-speare*, Gent. London: John Benson, 1640.
- ¹⁰ Marcus, Leah S. *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and Its Discontents*. Berkeley;

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London: U. of California Press, 1988: 1-30.

¹¹ With plain material and bold colours, this is the style of dress of jesters.

¹² Detail from the painting of Sir John Petre, 1603. At the time he was Lord Lieutenant of Essex, and was later created Baron Petre.

¹³ It may be relevant to note that the primary meaning of the word “ambodexter” or “ambidexter” (having two right hands) in the 16th-17th centuries was “double-dealer” (OED), in particular someone taking money from both sides in a dispute. The corresponding word, ambisinister, was very rarely used, though by inference it might convey the same meaning, especially as left-handedness is sometimes associated with underhand dealing. Characters named Ambodexter in dramas of the period were notably greedy for money.

¹⁴ I am indebted to Phyllida McCormick for this suggestion.

¹⁵ Nairne, Sandy. “Supportasse, 1600-1625.” *Searching for Shakespeare*. London: National Portrait Gallery, 2006: 120.

¹⁶ Cooper, Tarnya. “William Shakespeare, from the First Folio, c. 1623.” *Searching for Shakespeare*. London: National Portrait Gallery, 2006: 48.

¹⁷ In William Marshall’s 1640 version of the engraving, Figure 5, the underpropper shows through on both sides of the collar, and the triangular darts on left and right are mirror images of each other. Through restoring symmetry, Marshall acknowledges – by correcting them – two of the more obvious peculiarities of the Droeshout original.

¹⁸ In their poems prefaced to the first Folio, Ben Jonson addresses the poet as “Sweet Swan of Avon,” and Leonard Digges refers to “Thy Stratford Monument.”

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“Look Not on this Picture”:

Ambiguity in the Shakespeare First Folio

Richard F. Whalen



Shakespeare scholars and editors contend, or simply assume, that the prefatory matter in First Folio of 1623 provides straightforward, valid evidence that William Shakspere of Stratford-on-Avon wrote the works of Shakespeare. They cite the dedication over the names of John Heminge and Henry Condell, former actors mentioned in Shakspere’s will, who state that they collected the plays “only to keep the memory of so worthy a friend and fellow alive, as was our Shakespeare, by humble offer of his plays, to your most noble patronage.” And they cite the allusions to “sweet swan of Avon” by Ben Jonson and “thy Stratford monument” by Leonard Digges as pointing to Stratford-on-Avon.

Unfortunately, Stratfordians take these passages at face value. What they have not considered, however, is that Ben Jonson, their principal authority, has a reputation for ambiguity, veiled truths and subtle self-contradiction, including in the prefatory matter of the First Folio. His testimony for Shakespeare’s identity must be interpreted.

Among those citing his testimony in the First Folio is Thomas Pendleton, professor of English at Iona College and co-editor of *The Shakespeare Newsletter*. In the winter 2003-4 issue, he says that “the evidence for Shakespeare of Stratford—preeminently the will, the Stratford monument and the First Folio—is so abundant as to make the search for a ‘real’ Shakespeare basically pointless” (104). In the fall 2006 issue Pendleton elaborates, arguing that Heminge and Condell say that the plays in the First Folio “were written by their ‘friend and fellow’ William Shakespeare in the most literal sense possible: ‘[We] have scarce received from him a blot in his papers’” (43-44).

In the abstract for his paper published in *The Tennessee Law Review* Alan Nelson, professor emeritus of the University of California-Berkeley, wrote: “the documentary

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evidence for Shakespeare [of Stratford], which survives most abundantly in the First Folio of 1623 but also in standard historical sources...demonstrates the traditional claims [for him]" (149). Non-Stratfordians, he says, must believe that the First Folio "is not an honest tribute organized by Heminge and Condell, but a tissue of lies supervised by William and Philip Herbert [earls of Pembroke and Montgomery to whom the First Folio is dedicated], with the voluntary or forced cooperation of Ben Jonson, who lied through his teeth both to his contemporaries and to posterity" (163).

Usually, however, biographers who believe that Will Shakspere was the poet-dramatist simply *assume* that the First Folio proves it. S. Schoenbaum, for example, devoted three pages in *William Shakespeare, a Compact Documentary Life* to the prefatory matter in First Folio. He takes it at face value without even bothering to cite it as proof of authorship (314-317). He would have considered it self-evident, straightforward testimony by Ben Jonson, Heminge and Condell and Leonard Digges (for "thy Stratford monument").

Two Stratfordian scholars who do mention ambiguity in the First Folio and elsewhere do not elaborate further. Gary Taylor warns in passing of "the ambiguous oracles of the First Folio" in his introduction to the Textual Companion to the Wells-Taylor collected works of Shakespeare (18). In answer to a query, however, he said he hadn't published anything more on the "ambiguous oracles" and hadn't thought about it since his 1997 Companion. Dennis Kay, a Shakespeare biographer, observed in an article in *Early Modern Literary Studies*: "As is now widely recognized, ambiguity was a feature of Elizabethan courtly performance" (25 online). But that's all he says.

Establishment Shakespeare scholars do not question whether ambiguity in the First Folio prefatory matter might invalidate it as evidence for the Stratford man as the author. They have not recognized the extent to which Elizabethan and Jacobean writers, and Ben Jonson in particular, used ambiguity to disguise their meanings and how their ambiguous writings, self-contradictions and veiled meanings have been identified by Jonson and other early modern scholars. The contrast in method, indeed, is striking.

Ambiguity is defined as double-meaning, an expression that is equivocal. (OED 3.a. b, 4) It can range from confused, careless writing that is unintentionally ambiguous to the simple pun that is relatively obvious and perhaps amusing to a more radical—and deliberate—ambiguity that elicits alternative reactions, or multiple reactions or even opposing reactions to the same piece of writing. *In Seven Types of Ambiguity*, William Empson says, "We call it ambiguous, I think, when we recognize that there could be a puzzle as to what the author meant, in that alternative views might be taken without sheer misreading" (x).

Deliberate ambiguity allows the writer to leave the truth of the matter unstated and can provide immunity from blame, reprisals or prosecution for the writer who needs protection. The discerning reader is expected to see through the ambiguity and even appreciate how the writer has wittily avoided taking a public position while expressing something the reader knows or suspects to be true. See Empson, esp. 1, 192.

Jonson's works clearly contain passages, including many in the folio, that can be identified as deliberately self-contradictory and ambiguous, and that such ambiguity was a prominent characteristic of Elizabethan and Jacobean literature. It was often used in deliberately violating government and/or church censorship, or to avoid offending the powers that be. The purpose was to convey veiled meanings, to blur dangerous or inconvenient facts, and, in the words of one Jonson biographer, to create a "maze of seductive falsehoods," to enlighten and entertain the discerning reader or playgoer.

One of Jonson's favorite authors from antiquity was Quintilian, who wrote in *The Orator's Education* (9.2) on various uses of ambiguity, including:

Now it is time to come to the very common device, which I am sure the reader is especially waiting for, in which we drop a hint to show that what we want to be understood is not what we are saying—not necessarily the opposite (as in irony) but something hidden and left to the hearer to discover. . . . [And]

You can speak as openly as you like against . . . tyrants, as long as you can be understood differently, because you are not trying to avoid giving offense, only its dangerous repercussions. If danger can be avoided by some ambiguity of expression, everyone will admire its cunning.

It is worth noting that Quintilian insists in the first of these two passages that the teaching by cunning misdirection, involving covert clues accessible only to the initiate reader is "a very common device." Following his Roman mentor Quintilian, Jonson was especially cunning in his use of this type of ambiguity.

Unlike Shakespeare biographers and editors, Jonsonian scholars do recognize that Jonson cannot always be taken at face value. They discuss how he used ambiguity with wit and artistry when writing about forbidden and dangerous contemporary matters—and how, in consequence, he has left contradictions and puzzles for commentators centuries later to unravel and resolve.

In one of the most recent and probably most authoritative biographies of Ben Jonson,¹ David Riggs of Stanford University (1989) finds ambiguity throughout Jonson's work. He gives several examples from Jonson's poems and plays: In "Inviting a Friend to Supper" the menu "is tantalizingly equivocal" (230). The verse collection entitled "The Forest quietly but insistently addresses the tensions and ambiguities in Jonson's self-conception as a courtly amateur" (234). The poem "To Heaven" shows that "Jonson's [mental] state bristles with contradictions" (237). In *Catiline*, Jonson situates his own position on religion "beyond the reach of any recoverable meaning" (178).

Jonson's poem "A Speech According to Horace," says Riggs, is a "mock encomium" full of irony and ambiguity (299). Jonson's principal editor, George Parfitt of Nottingham University, wrote an article on the poem for *Studies in English Literature*, entitling it "History and Ambiguity: Jonson's 'A Speech According to Horace.'"

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Jonson's *Volpone* "is an ambiguous drama, with an ambiguous protagonist," says Mario Praz (183). And Riggs writes: "Like *The Faerie Queene* and *Paradise Lost*, *Volpone* forces its readers to work their way through a maze of seductive falsehoods; if they are any wiser at the end of the play, it is because they have withstood this assault on their moral bearings. . . . Just as *Volpone* gulls his clients, Jonson gulls his audience; but Jonson's falsehood has the capacity to educate as well as to delude" (136-137). By extension, unwary readers of Jonson's prefatory poems in the First Folio risk being gulled by a maze of seductive falsehoods or half-truths that disorient and make the reader easily lose his or her literary-historical bearings.

Jonson was a master of creative ambiguity, but he was not alone in his use of the strategy. A survey of Elizabethan and Jacobean writings is far beyond the scope of this research, but some examples would include *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit*, Henry Chettle's *Kind Heart's Dream*, Sidney's *Arcadia* and many passages in Spenser and Nashe.

The Elizabethan writer who made the greatest creative use of ambiguity to convey hidden meanings, however, was undoubtedly Shakespeare himself. The richness and complexity of Shakespeare's writing is owed in large part to his adroit use of poetic ambiguity. Scholars recognize many ambiguous passages in Shakespeare. For example, Wolfgang Clemen, A. P. Rossiter, Norman Rabkin, and Rene Girard discuss the dramatist's use of ambiguity and ambivalence in their articles in *Shakespeare, an Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1945-2000*. Jonathan Bate, in his book, *The Genius of Shakespeare*, reports with great admiration on the work of William Empson, author of *Seven Types of Ambiguity*. "Shakespeare," says Bate, "gave Empson more examples of ambiguity than any other poet" (309).

Two eminent scholars of English Renaissance literature have examined Jonson's use of ambiguity in the First Folio. Neither is a member of the Shakespeare establishment. Neither has published widely on Shakespeare nor edited a Shakespeare play. Their findings may thus be taken as relatively objective.

Annabel Patterson, Sterling professor of English at Yale University, argues that Elizabethan and Jacobean writers frequently used ambiguity to convey hidden meanings. In the introduction to her *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England* (see also Stritmatter, "Puzzling Shakesperotics," this volume, 103-109), she says,

the unstable but unavoidable relationship between writers and holders of power was creative of a set of conventions that both sides partially understood and could partly articulate, conventions as to how far a writer could go in explicit address to the contentious issues of his day, and how, if he did not choose the confrontational approach, he could encode his opinions so that nobody would be required to make an example of him.

(12)

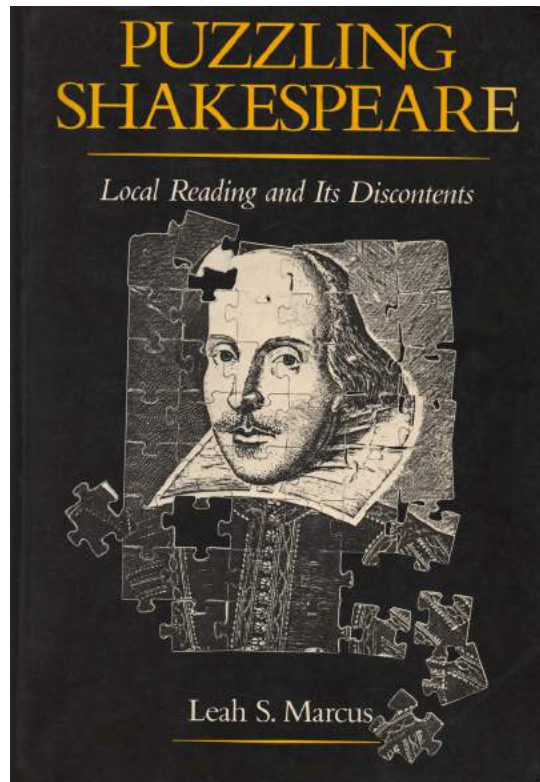
That is, he could encode his opinions in ambiguous language that could be understood by those in the know while preserving deniability.

According to Patterson, this ambiguity was ubiquitous: "What we can find everywhere apparent and widely understood, at least from the middle of the sixteenth century in England onward, is a system of communication ('literature') in which ambiguity becomes a creative and necessary instrument, while at the same time the art (and the theory) of interpretation was reinvented, expanded and honed. I call this phenomenon 'the hermeneutics of censorship'" (18). And later on, she says the "functional, conscious, textual ambiguity" was often used by writers who were divided against themselves or who found the "loyalties divided by events" (66).

Patterson's view of ambiguity is cited by Gail Kern Paster, former Director of the Folger Shakespeare Library, in a guide to Shakespeare. "Shakespeare," says Paster, "was a master of ambiguity, and if his plays encode topical allusions to religious controversy, as scholars have sometimes argued, they do so without sacrificing their purchase on timelessness" (6).

Patterson describes Jonson as the most complex of authors and says that in his plays, "there is evidence, if we look carefully, [emphasis added] of a highly sophisticated system of oblique communication, of unwritten rules whereby writers could communicate with readers or audiences (among whom were the very same authorities who were responsible for state censorship) without producing a direct confrontation" (53). Jonson was twice imprisoned for his share in two plays, and five times he faced accusations for other writings. Patterson says he "incorporated them [these 'harassments'] into a political and social theory of literature, a poetics of censorship" (57). The possibility of prison and torture was a real incentive for Jonson to hone his skills for cunning ambiguity.

Regarding the relationship between literature and historical events, Patterson points out that in his 1616 collected plays Jonson published his *Sejanus* and along with it a short, sardonic poem, "The New Crie," that seems to undercut the politically controversial play, creating "a record of ambiguity and interpretive difficulty," says Patterson, "in which texts and historical events are equally resistant to simple, settled meanings" (64). This ambiguity would seem to apply equally well to



***Puzzling Shakespeare* (1988): Truth in Stratfordian advertising.**

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Jonson's prefatory matter for the Shakespeare First Folio—ambiguity, interpretive difficulty, no simple, settled meanings. Patterson notes the importance of prefatory matter that addresses the reader and his or her expectations. "In general," she says, "late modern criticism has not paid enough attention to the interpretive status of introductory materials in early modern texts" (56).

Leah Marcus has paid close attention to the introductory matter in the First Folio. She is a chaired professor of English Renaissance literature at Vanderbilt University and in her *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and Its Discontents*, she devotes the first fifty pages to the large portrait in the First Folio and Ben Jonson's poem on the facing page. She interprets the portrait as an iconoclastic image that contradicts itself and almost abolishes the pictured Shakespeare as the author. For contrast, she includes ten other frontispieces and title pages, including those for the works of King James and Ben Jonson, both published in 1616.

She finds the portrait odd and unsettling. That's mild. It has dismayed almost all Shakespeare commentators. Hugh Trevor-Roper, Oxford Regius Professor of History, styled it "the blank face of a country oaf" (41). J. Dover Wilson called it a false image that the world turns from in disgust (6). W. W. Greg wrote simply: "It is not pleasing and has little technical merit" (451). Schoenbaum blamed the engraver: "Droeshout's deficiencies are, alas, only too gross" (315). Biographer Katherine Duncan-Jones referred to the "childish clumsiness" that produced "an inept and witless-looking image" (280). Then there's the famous portrait painter, Thomas Gainsborough. When David Garrick asked him to paint a portrait of the poet-dramatist for his Shakespeare Jubilee in Stratford in 1769, Gainsborough replied: "Damn the original picture of him (with your leave); for I think a stupider face I never beheld except D—k's" (1:328). He lost his commission.

Marcus's extended analysis of the portrait begins by noting that "if the First Folio is considered in light of other English folios of the period...there is something quite odd about the way it starts out." She notes the "unsettling size and directness" of the portrait, "stark and unadorned." Unlike most portraits on title pages, it has no frame, no ornamental borders, no allegorical figures and devices that might be expected (2).

Following Greg, she notes its "raw directness" and suggests that the portrait is saying "this is the Man Himself" and continues, "That, at least, is what the portrait seems to say; the verses on the facing page say otherwise. . . . The poem undermines the visual power of the portrait. . . . Shakespeare, the verses tell us, is not to be found after all in the compelling image opposite. The poem undermines the visual power of the portrait by insisting on it as something constructed and 'put' there" (18).

She goes on to argue that Jonson's poem is "in a precise sense of the term, iconoclastic, shattering the power of the visual image in order to locate Shakespeare's identity elsewhere [namely] in 'wit.'" And therefore, "Jonson's poem abolishes Shakespeare as an entity apart from his writings" (19).

She also finds a contradiction in the claim "Published according to the True Original Copies," which appears above the portrait on the title page. She asks, "If these are 'True 'originals,' what would a false one be? How can something be both

an original and a copy?" The claim contradicts itself "seeming at first to set forth something direct and immediately apprehensible, then undermining the authenticity of what it presents" (19-20). Summing up, she says, "The First Folio opens with an implicit promise to communicate an authorial identity, which it instead repeatedly displaces: Shakespeare is somehow there, but nowhere definitively there" (20). The title page, she says, "refuses to yield a clear message about the author" (22).

Turning her attention to the anti-Stratfordian interpretation, she says they "respond to Shakespeare's failure to possess a stable authorial identity by re-assigning his works to someone else, usually the earl of Oxford. . . someone less shadowy than the picture on the front of the folio, someone with a full and detailed life story and impeccable upper-class credentials, someone easier to assimilate to the honorable role of author" (34-35). She says that because anti-Stratfordians make the same use of topical allusions as does traditional historical methodology, they "wildly disrupt the efforts of Shakespearean historicism" in a way that "has been more corrosive than we have been willing to admit . . . casting a faint yet lingering odor of inauthenticity over all Shakespearean historicism" (35).

Four other commentators who have addressed Jonson's ambiguity are listed by Diana Price in her chapter on the First Folio in *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography* (191). Analyzing Jonson's use of ambiguity, Price suggests that "if the commoner Shakspeare was the author, there was no need for ambiguity. If Jonson's tributes were entirely complimentary and sincere, there was no need for ambiguity. On the other hand, if an aristocrat was the author there was every reason for ambiguity" (192-193). For whatever reason, Price does not mention Marcus. She cites Patterson in only one sentence on Jonson's ambiguity and Riggs several times but not on Jonson's ambiguity. Marcus, Patterson and Riggs are probably the most important and most respected university scholars to have identified the ambiguity in the First Folio that has been overlooked or deliberately ignored by Shakespeare establishment scholars, who routinely consider Jonson, taken at his most superficial, as a reliable witness.

As if to set the tone for what follows, Jonson opens the the prefatory material of the First Folio with purposeful ambiguity. The first two of the eleven pages contain several instances of ambiguity—indicators that the entire prefatory matter may well be "a maze of seductive falsehoods." Jonson's contemporary readers would be immediately on the alert for sly falsehoods, veiled meanings and especially the ambiguous passages that could convey hidden meanings.

As Marcus points out, Jonson contradicts himself in his poem on the portrait when he says that it is not *of* Shakespeare but made *for* him and that the reader should not pay any attention to it. The opening two lines of Jonson's poem "To the Reader" on the page facing the title page with its extremely large portrait says, "This figure...was for gentle Shakespeare cut." But a frontispiece portrait in any book should be *of* the author, not *for* him. If it is for Shakespeare, it's not of him, and if it's not of him, it's not Shakespeare's likeness. The poem contradicts itself. Then, after several convoluted lines about the engraver's aborted effort "to out-do the life" the poem closes by exhorting the reader to "look / Not on his picture, but his book." This could be just a conventional poetic conceit, but it reinforces the poem's opening lines,

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which say that the engraving that should be the image of the author is not really the image of the author.

Stratfordian biographers rarely comment on the poem. One who did was Schoenbaum, but the best he could say was that “an over-subtle reader will detect a latent irony in Jonson’s conclusion [to look at the book, not the picture]...but the advice is sound enough” (315-317). He does not, however, give the text of the 10-line poem so the reader can judge whether, or how, the advice is sound enough.

Leah Marcus also notes that the headline on the title page, “Published According to the True Original Copies” is either extravagant puffery or a falsehood given the obvious disparity of sources for the play texts. And, as she argues, the engraving itself is an iconoclastic image that contradicts itself and Jonson’s portrait poem.

Three more instances of ambiguity in the First Folio, which have not received the attention they deserve, might be cited: the use of “figure” for the portrait, the description of Shakespeare as “gentle,” and a grammatical construction favored by Jonson. Stratfordian scholars have not analyzed any of them.

The first line in the First Folio is, “This figure that thou here seest put,” referring to the “figure” in the big portrait on the opposite page. “Figure,” of course, has many meanings. The first is the bodily form, shape or appearance of a person or thing, which readers would readily apply to the depiction of a man in a portrait, although the OED does not give “portrait” as one of the meanings of “figure.”

Another early meaning of “figure” is “an imaginary form, a phantasm” (OED 9.b, obs.). The OED gives just two examples: from Chaucer, “Or if the soule . . . warneth al and some . . . Be avisions or be figures;” and from *Merry Wives of Windsor*, “To scrape the figures out of your husbands’ brains” (4.2.231). In Shakespeare’s day then, “figure” could have called to mind a phantasm as well as a portrait or a portrait that was a phantasm, an “illusion, a deceptive appearance,” according to the OED (I.1.a).

The word “gentle” would also have had an alternative and special meaning for perceptive readers of the First Folio in the early 1600s. It occurs three times in the prefatory matter. Jonson says in his portrait poem, “This figure . . . was for gentle Shakespeare cut” and in his long eulogy he again refers to “my gentle Shakespeare.” The Heminge-Condell letter addressing the reader says Shakespeare was “a most gentle expresser” of Nature. No one before had ever called Shakespeare gentle.

The ostensible authors of the letters, Heminge and Condell, were almost certainly not the authors, and Jonson almost certainly was. Citing Greg (17-21) Marcus says the language in the Heminge-Condell prefatory address “so strongly echoes the Induction to Jonson’s *Bartholomew Fair* that many are convinced Jonson wrote the preface himself” (22).

To 17th century readers of the First Folio, however, “gentle” did not primarily mean *kind* or *tender*; it was a secondary meaning. The OED places first “that sense...which was actually the earliest in the language; others follow in the order in which they appear to have arisen” (xxix). The earliest and primary meaning of “gentle” was “of persons, well-born, belonging to a family of position; originally

used synonymously with noble" (from 1225 to 1625 [OED 1.a]). Only later in the 16th century did "gentle" begin to take on the secondary meaning of "mild of disposition or behaviour, kind, tender" (OED 8). Jonson used "gentle" to describe the Shakespeare of the First Folio as a nobleman, but ambiguously, since "gentle" was beginning to take on the secondary meaning of "kind and tender." In today's parlance, Jonson sought deniability.

That "gentle" in Elizabethan times primarily described someone of superior birth and rank, an aristocrat, is confirmed by the word's use in several Shakespeare plays in contexts where it could not mean *kind or tender*. Charlton Ogburn found several, including one in *Richard II*. When Henry Percy, the earl of Northumberland, tells the king he has sent the severed heads of four men to London, the king says, "We thank thee, gentle Percy, for thy pains" (5.6.11). Ogburn notes that Northumberland was gentle in that he was "of superior birth, certainly no other sense" (225).

Two additional examples can be cited. In *Romeo and Juliet*, when Mercutio, a kinsman to the prince of Verona, quarrels with Tybalt, he calls him a rat-catcher and draws his sword, Romeo says "Gentle Mercutio, put thy rapier up." (3.1.84) Mercutio is anything but mild in disposition. In *Troilus and Cressida*, Agamemnon tells his warrior commander, "Go, gentle knight, / Stand by our Ajax" in his combat with Hector (4.5.88). He surely does not mean for his warrior to be tender and mild in behavior. Shakespeare uses "gentle" almost four hundred times. A survey of all of them would no doubt turn up more examples of "gentle" used in its earliest and primary meaning of well-born and noble.

Today's meaning of "gentle" is so pervasive that readers can be easily and understandably be misled into thinking the word simply describes the dramatist as a nice guy. Marchette Chute believes that this gentleness "came from his natural courtesy of mind" (111). The well-regarded biography by Park Honan ignores the primary meaning of "gentle" and paints a strikingly sweet and gentle Shakespeare of Stratford: He "lack(s) a quirky egotism" (18). He has a "habit of mind of courtesy. . . humane, receptive and alert to tenderness" (21). He is "self-abnegating. . . (having) daily self-effacing duties" in the theater (207). His "behaviour was easy and companionable" (235). Biographer Dennis Kay refers to the "habitual references to him as 'sweet' and 'gentle,'" although he cautions against taking those characterizations at face value (164).

The Stratfordian biographer Katherine Duncan-Jones also embraces today's usual meaning of "gentle" retrospectively for the First Folio. But she reads it as mockery. "Jonson," she writes in *Ungentle Shakespeare*, "characteristically drew attention to his 'beloved' Shakespeare's 'gentle' status so persistently and knowingly as in effect to mock it" (281). She finds Jonson describing Shakespeare "living up to the flamboyant aggression suggested by his surname in writing [the] lines of verse, 'he seems to shake a lance / As brandished at the eyes of ignorance.'" And she points to Jonson's lines that "it is with rage," rather than with gentleness, that he [Shakespeare] is implored to admonish the theater of latter days" (277-278). The lines she cites are from Jonson's longer poem: "Shine forth, thou Starre of Poets, and

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with rage, / Or influence, chide or cheer the drooping stage.”

In his eulogy to Shakespeare Jonson writes, “And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek, / From thence to honour thee, I would not seek / For names, but call forth thundering Aeschylus...” etc. The initial “though” seems to say, although you had small Latin and less Greek. But as in the lines in the song to Celia,² the First Folio lines might well be read, “*Even if you only had small Latin and less Greek,*” as first noted by the Stratfordian C. M. Ingleby (151-152). The similarity of the two ambiguous constructions in Jonson’s poems has not been noted by Jonsonian or Shakespearean scholars.

These instances of ambiguity and self-contradiction identified by Jonsonian and English Renaissance scholars, along with several others documented by anti-Stratfordian scholars, cast grave doubt on the reliability of the evidence in the First Folio for Shakespeare’s identity and character. The others include the unsettling anomalies in the portrait image, Jonson’s allusion to “Sweet Swan of Avon” and three pages later Leonard Digges’s allusion to “thy Stratford monument” that point ambiguously either to Stratford-on-Avon, or to the Earl of Oxford’s two properties on the Avon River and near the London suburb of Stratford. “Monument” could mean the stone monument in the Stratford church or the plays themselves metaphorically as a monument to Shakespeare’s genius. The OED gives as the earliest usages for monument “a sepulchre” (1, obs.) and “a written document” (2.a). See Whalen, “Stratford Bust.”

Jonson’s use of ambiguity in the First Folio gets indirect support from his prior publishing experience and his close connections to the earls of Pembroke and Montgomery, to whom it was dedicated. No one was more qualified to see the First Folio through the press than Ben Jonson. Six years earlier, he had been the editor and publisher of his own *Workes of Benjamin Jonson* (1616), the first English collection of plays in a folio. At the time, King James granted him an annual pension of sixty-six pounds for unspecified services. Jonson was personally involved in all aspects of his own thousand-page folio from beginning to end, revising both its contents and presentation: “Jonson was tinkering with the folio text until the very last minute,” says Riggs (226). Thus, Jonson was eminently qualified to shape and control the prefatory matter in the Shakespeare First Folio, the second English collection of plays, also about a thousand pages long. And he was in a perfect position to introduce as much ambiguity and seductive falsehood as he judged necessary and appropriate, especially given his connections with the Herbert family.

Jonson’s close association with William Herbert, the 3rd earl of Pembroke, Lord Chamberlain and Jonson’s patron, reinforces the conclusion that Jonson was using ambiguity to obfuscate the identity of Shakespeare. The Herberts were the most important and influential literary patrons of the time. Riggs says that with publication of his *Works* in 1616, Jonson “makes his way into an extended circle of blood relations and family retainers that revolves around the Herberts and the Sidneys. The central figure in this network is Pembroke. His brother Montgomery was married to Susan Vere, a cousin of Horace Vere” (230). Riggs doesn’t mention that Susan’s father was Edward de Vere, 17th earl of Oxford, and the leading candidate

today for authorship honors, but he does detail how Jonson in prison sought Pembroke's aid, how several of his masques supported Pembroke's political ambitions and how he dedicated several of his most important works to Pembroke (179, 215, 226, 230, 232).

As Lord Chamberlain, Pembroke oversaw the theater, and plays performed in public and at court and their publication. He had the government position and the family wealth to authorize and finance the very expensive publishing project.

If Oxford indeed was the dramatist writing under the pen name William Shakespeare, the brothers Pembroke and Montgomery, the latter Oxford's son-in-law, had the means, motive and opportunity to sponsor the First Folio of thirty-six plays—eighteen of which had never before been printed and might well have been lost to posterity. And if Oxford was Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, knowing his patron's close family connections to Oxford, would have had the means, motive and opportunity to employ artistic ambiguity, subtle self-contradiction and seductive falsehoods in the prefatory matter to the First Folio.

Thus, a knowledgeable and perceptive Jacobean reader of the First Folio might well divine that Jonson wrote the dedication to the two earls and the letter to the readers ascribed to Heminge and Condell (they were not scholars and writers) and that he was describing the late 17th Earl of Oxford as his "friend and fellow," that is, his fellow poet and playwright, whose plays were collected in the First Folio.

Jonson was not lying; he was practicing the art and politics of selective ambiguity. His use of equivocal, self-contradictory, veiled language and seductive falsehoods has not been sufficiently recognized. Indeed, it is ignored by nearly all Shakespeare establishment scholars. Their reading of the prefatory matter to the First Folio has been literal and uncritical. Jonsonian scholars, however, are well aware of his penchant and talent for ambiguity. The First Folio can be properly interpreted and understood only in light of Jonson's reputation for deliberate ambiguity in its many forms and in light of the prevalence of such deliberately ambiguous writing during the reigns of Elizabeth and James. The prefatory matter in the First Folio is unreliable as testimony and therefore should not be cited as valid evidence that William Shakspere of Stratford wrote the works of Shakespeare.

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From *Ben Jonson and Shakespeare* (1921)

Sir George Greenwood

THE sheet anchor of the traditional belief with regard to the authorship of the plays and poems of Shakespeare is undoubtedly Ben Jonson. It is to the Jonsonian utterances that the apostles of the Stratfordian faith always make their appeal. That faith we are told is based on the “irrefragable rock” of Ben Jonson’s testimony.

Well, it was not so very long ago that we used to be told that the truth of a universal deluge and the preservation of mankind and animals of every kind and species, in Noah’s Ark, was established on the “impregnable rock” of Holy Scripture, and yet to-day we find even high Church dignitaries—with whom Mr. J. M. Robertson would certainly be in entire agreement here—disavowing any belief in this interesting mythological tradition. Is it not, then, possible that the Jonsonian testimony may prove no more “irrefragable” or “impregnable” than that of those old chronicles, which age-long tradition has ascribed to the authorship of “Moses”?

As a distinguished writer, well-known both in the political and the literary world, has written to me, the difficulties in the way of the orthodox “Shakespearian” belief seem to be insuperable. Are the Jonsonian utterances of such weight as to outweigh them all? I reply, put Jonson in one scale and all the difficulties and improbabilities — if not impossibilities — of the “Stratfordian” hypothesis in the other, and old Ben will kick the beam.

Now let us briefly consider this Jonsonian testimony. There are two utterances to which the orthodox appeal as conclusive evidence, viz.: the lines bearing Jonson’s signature prefixed to the Folio of 1623, and the much-quoted passage *De Shakespeare nostrati* in his *Timber or Discoveries*. Let us first consider the evidence of the Folio.

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Seven years after the death of William Shakspeare of Stratford-upon-Avon, it entered into the mind of somebody to publish a collected edition of “Mr. William Shakespeare’s” plays. Who that somebody was we do not know, but we do know that Ben Jonson was very closely associated with the undertaking. It cannot reasonably be doubted that Jonson was the “literary man” who, as the Cambridge Editors long ago suggested, was called in to write the Preface “To the Great Variety of Readers” signed by the players Heminge and Condell. That he did, indeed, write this Preface was, in my opinion, proved by that very able critic, George Steevens, in a masterly critical analysis. “After the publication of my first edition of Shakespeare’s works,” writes Steevens,

a notion struck me that the preface prefixed by the players in 1623 to their edition of his plays had much of the manner of Ben Jonson, and an attentive comparison of that preface with various passages in Jonson’s writings having abundantly supported and confirmed my conjecture, I *do not hesitate* now to assert that the greatest part of it was written by him. Heminge and Condell being themselves wholly unused to composition, and having been furnished by Jonson, whose reputation was then at its height, with a copy of verses in praise of Shakespeare, and with others on the engraved portrait prefixed to his plays, would naturally apply to him for assistance in that part of the work in which they were, for the first time, to address the publick in their own names...I think I can show the whole of the first member of this address, comprising eighteen lines out of forty, to be entirely his....a minute comparison of the first half of this preface with various passages in Jonson’s works will, I conceive, establish my hypothesis beyond a doubt.

It will be noticed that Steevens here speaks *without doubt* as to part of this Preface only as having been written by Jonson, but we need have no hesitation in saying that if Jonson is proved to have written part he undoubtedly wrote the whole of the Preface. It seems to me absurd to suppose that, having been called in to write in the names of the players, he would have contented himself with composing a fragment of a preface, and have left the rest to others. Least of all would he have left what he had written to be completed by those “deserving men,” Heminge and Condell, who were, as Steevens justly remarks, “wholly unused to composition.” That was not the way in which old Ben, of all men, was in the habit of doing things. I entertain no doubt, therefore, that the Preface “To the Great Variety of Readers” was wholly written by Ben Jonson.

But, further, there can be, in my judgment, no reasonable doubt that Jonson wrote the “Epistle Dedicatory” also. He was, doubtless (I use that often misused adverb with confidence here), employed as the “literary man”

to write the prefaces to the Folio, as, also, the poetical eulogium of the author prefixed to it. The "Epistle Dedicatory" contains many classical allusions, quite in the Jonsonian style. Some of it is taken direct from the dedication of Pliny's *Natural History*, and there is an obvious allusion to a well-known ode of Horace.¹ Mr. James Boaden, amongst others, had no doubts about the matter. "Ben," he says, "it is now ascertained, wrote for the Player-Editors the Dedication and Preface to his [Shakespeare's] works."

The Cambridge Editors—and the names of Messrs. W. G. Clark, John Glover, and Aldis Wright must always command respect—are at least so far in agreement that they tell us that "the Preface (to the Great Variety of Readers) may have been written by some literary man in the employment of the publishers, and merely signed by the two players." Nor would this be at all an unusual thing to do. For example, when the folio edition of Beaumont and Fletcher's Plays was brought out in 1647, by the publisher Moseley, there was a dedicatory epistle, similar to that of the Shakespeare Folio, prefixed to it, and addressed to the survivor of the "Incomparable Paire," viz.: Philip, Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery, who was then Lord Chamberlain. This was signed by ten of the players of the King's Company, but nobody, I imagine, supposes that they wrote it, or any one of them. "The actors who aided the scheme," says Sir Sidney Lee, in his Introduction to the Facsimile Edition of the Shakespeare Folio, "played a very subordinate part in its execution. They did nothing beyond seconding Moseley's efforts in securing the 'copy' and signing their names—to the number of ten—to the dedicatory epistle." From this I conclude that, in Sir Sidney Lee's opinion, the actors in this case, at any rate, did not write the epistle to which they so signed their names.

Now in the case of the Shakespeare Folio we know that Jonson wrote the lines facing the Droeshout engraving, subscribed with his initials, and the eulogistic verses signed with his name in full. Is it not reasonable, then, to conclude that he was the "literary man in the employment of the publishers," as suggested by the Cambridge Editors, and that he wrote the prefaces, which are entirely in his style? May we not go further and say that it is certain that he was the author of these prefaces? Let us see what the Professor of English Literature in the University of Pennsylvania has to say on the subject. Dr. Felix Schelling, who holds this position, is recognized as a high Shakespearean authority. He is, moreover, a man to whom any doubt as to the "Stratfordian" authorship of the plays is anathema. And this is what he tells us with regard to the preparation for publication of the Folio of 1623:—"Neither Heminge nor Condell was a writer, and, such a book ought to be properly introduced. In such a juncture there could be no choice. The best book of the hour demanded sponsorship by the greatest contemporary man of letters. Ben Jonson was the King's poet, the Laureate, the literary dictator of the age; and Jonson rose nobly to the task, penning not only the epigram 'To the Reader,' and his noble personal eulogium, but both the prose addresses of dedication. *Of this matter there can be no question whatever,*

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and if anyone is troubled by the signatures of Heminge and Condell appended to two addresses which neither of them actually wrote, let him examine into his own conduct in the matter of circulars, resolutions, and other papers which he has had written by skilled competence for the appendage of his signature.”

But, as every student of Shakespeare knows, the players, in the Preface “to the Great Variety of Readers,” which bore their signatures, say, or rather, are made to say, that the readers of the plays who were “before abus’d with diverse stolne, and surreptitious copies, maimed, and deformed by the frauds and stealthes of injurious impostors,” are now presented with correct versions, “cur’d, and perfect of their limbes; and all the rest, absolute in their numbers, as he [Shakespeare] conceived them.” Whereupon the Cambridge Editors justly remark, “The natural inference to be drawn from this statement is that all the separate editions of Shakespeare’s plays were ‘stolen,’ ‘surreptitious,’ and ‘imperfect,’ and that all those published in the Folio were printed from the author’s own manuscripts. But it can be proved to demonstration that several of the plays in the Folio were printed from earlier quarto editions, and that in other cases the quarto is more correctly printed, or from a better manuscript, than the Folio text, and therefore of higher authority. . . As the ‘setters forth’ are thus convicted of a ‘suggestio falsi’ in one point it is not improbable that they may have been guilty of the like in another.”

Jonson then, as writer of the prefaces, and closely associated with the preparation and publication of the Folio, was guilty of the *suggestio falsi* concerning the “stolne and surreptitious copies,” with which the Cambridge Editors justly charge the “setters forth,” or the “literary man” who, as they suggest, wrote the prefaces for them. And even if it may be contended, as Mr. A. W. Pollard contends, that, speaking strictly by the card, the statement was true, inasmuch as “not all but only *some* of the quartos ought to be treated as “stolne and surreptitious,” that cannot acquit the author of the preface, seeing that, as this learned writer admits, “with the sale of the First Folio in view it was doubtless *intended* to be interpreted” as it has, in fact, been interpreted ever since, viz. : that the plays were all now for the first time published from perfect author’s manuscripts, which certainly is very far from the truth.*****

What, then, becomes of the supposed guarantee of” those “deserving men” Heminge and Condell ? What becomes of the dismal farce of the “unblotted manuscripts?” Let us listen to what Mr. Dugdale Sykes, himself, I believe, a quite orthodox “Stratfordian,” has to say on these points. In reply to the question how it was that Heminge and Condell came to include *Henry VIII* in the First Folio Shakespeare, and how it was that Waterson came to put Shakespeare’s name with Fletcher’s on the title-page of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, he writes, “I suggest as a possible answer to this question that neither Heminge and Condell nor Waterson possessed a higher standard of honesty than seems to have been prevalent among the publishers of their day: that in this respect there may have been little to choose

between them and Humphrey Moseley, who in 1647 printed as Beaumont and Fletcher's (from 'the author's original copies') thirty-five plays of which a large number were written by Massinger and Fletcher, while three (*The Laws of Candy*, *The Fair Maid of the Inn*, and *Love's Cure*) contain no recognizable trace either of Beaumont or Fletcher. When we find that two publishers issued spurious plays as Shakespeare's during his lifetime, and that a third put Shakespeare's name on the title-page of the early play of *King John* in 1623, there appears to me to be no reason why we should accept Heminge and Condell's attribution of *Henry VIII* to Shakespeare as decisive. And I submit that we *have* a solid reason for doubting their honesty, inasmuch as their assertion that all the plays in the Folio were printed from the author's manuscripts is known to be untrue.

So much then for the "deserving men," and the "True Originalls" and the "unblotted manuscripts." And what becomes of Jonson's testimony? Jonson was "in the swim." He was concerned "up to the hilt" in the publication of the Folio, and all these facts must have been within his knowledge.

The orthodox were wont to appeal to Messrs. Heminge and Condell as though it were blasphemous to doubt the truth of any word they have said. Now this bubble has been pricked, and soon, perhaps, it may dawn upon the critics that Jonson's testimony with regard to the Shakespearean Folio and its supposed author is not of much greater value. He knew that not all the plays included in the Folio were written by "Shakespeare"; he knew well enough that they were not printed from the "true originals"; he knew that the statement about the "unblotted manuscripts" was mere fudge.¹ It is not necessary to condemn him and the players as guilty of dishonesty in the same measure as we should do if we tried them by the standard of the present day, for we should remember that such aberration from the path of strict veracity was, as Mr. Dugdale Sykes truly says, looked upon as a more or less venial offence in those times when literary mystifications of this sort were of common occurrence, and when plays, and other works, were frequently published in the names of writers who were not really the authors thereof.

And now, in 1623, all "Shakespeare's" plays were to be published in collected form, "Truely set forth, according to their first ORIGINAL!" as the second title-page of the Folio informs the reader. But alas, they were far from being all Shakespearean work, and many of them far from being "set forth according to their first original." Jonson, however, was employed to give the volume a good send-off, not only by writing the prefaces, and making himself responsible for the statements therein contained, together with those on the two title-pages, but also by the exercise of his poetical genius. He accordingly wrote the very remarkable lines which face the paralysing Droeshout engraving and also the long eulogy signed by his name prefixed to the Folio.

Now, what was the state of the case, as I conceive it to have been? I conceive that the name of "Shakespeare," first given to the public on the dedicatory page of *Venus and Adonis*, in 1593, had been adopted as a convenient mask-name. That many subsequently wrote under that name besides the real "Shakespeare," whoever he was, is a simple matter of fact, and also that they did so unrebuked and unrestrained,

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without let or hindrance. I conceive that several men of high position, but, more especially one man of high position and of supreme genius, wrote plays under that name. I conceive that Shakspeare, the actor-manager, who was probably himself able to “bumbast out a blank verse,” acted as “honest broker” for these plays. He received them, and put them on the stage if he thought fit to do so, and they became, presumably, the property of the Company. They became “Shakespeare’s” plays, and the authorship, about which there was no questioning—for who cared a twopenny button-top about the authorship at that date?—was, I take it, generally attributed to him, though, as a fact, it must have been known that, whether he or somebody else were the real “Shakespeare,” many of these plays were not “Shakespearean” at all. But this was a matter in which but few people took any interest in those days.

Now, some six-and-twenty years ago Frances E. Willard wrote in the *Arena Magazine* (1893): “It seems perfectly reasonable to me that Lord Bacon and a number of other brilliant thinkers of the Elizabethan era, who were nobles, and who, owing to the position of the stage, would not care to have their names associated with the drama, composed or moulded the plays.” This fairly well expresses my own view, with the qualification that I make no assumption whatever with regard to the “Baconian” hypothesis. I would rather say, “it seems perfectly reasonable to me” that some men of high position, and especially one great man of transcendent ability, wrote dramas under the mask-name of “Shakespeare”—a name which had been already adopted by the author of *Venus and Adonis*—which were confided to the actor-manager to be put upon the stage.

If anybody asks why they should think it necessary to conceal their identity, I need do no more than advise him to study the social history of the Elizabethan age. “The period of the Tudors,” writes E. A. Petherick, in his preface to Edwin Johnson’s *Rise of English Culture*,

was not only a time of severe repression and of harsh government, but also a time when free speech was impossible. Able men could only dissemble and speak in allegory. The plays of Shakespeare and of other writers are doubtless a reflection of the period; the names but a disguise—the play-writers merely the spokesmen of those who would have been sent to the Tower and the Block if they had expressed their opinions openly.

This may be an exaggerated statement, but quite apart from any fear of punishment, to write dramas for the players was considered altogether below the dignity of a noble, or any man of high position in the community. However innocent might be the work, it brought him into ridicule and contempt, and might prove an insuperable obstacle to his advancement in the State. Even to publish poetry in his own name was unworthy of a man of high position. In these circumstances it was but natural that men in high place, who had in mind, it might be, to instruct and improve, as well as to entertain, the public, through the medium of the drama, should do so under the disguise of a pen-name; and “Shakespeare,” or, as it was so often written on title-pages, “Shake-speare,” formed an excellent pen-name.

But now the time had come when these “Shakespearean” plays—those of them which appeared to the editor, or editors, of the Folio to be most worthy of publication—were to be collected and republished (such as had already been published), and with them were to be given to the world sixteen dramas which had never seen the light in print before, including such masterpieces of literature as *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It*, *A Winter’s Tale*, *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth* and *Cymbeline*. These now, seven years after William Shakspere’s death, were to be rescued from that oblivion to which the actor-author (if, indeed, *he* was the author of them) was, apparently, quite content that they should be consigned.

And now Jonson was to write a poetical panegyric which should commend the Folio to the reading public, and give it a good send-off. And right well he did it, and fully does the world now recognize that he did not exaggerate by one jot or tittle the eulogy of that “Shakespeare” whose writings he held up to the admiration of all readers, as such

As neither Man, nor Muse, can praise too much.

The plays, I repeat, were the plays of the actor-manager; they were, it would seem, the property of his Company; they were “Shakespeare’s” plays, and the authorship was, we may suppose, generally ascribed to him, so far as anyone ever concerned himself about the authorship. It was, then, for Jonson to eulogize “Shakespeare,” and for the general public “Shakespeare” would, I imagine, be Shakspere of Stratford, the actor-manager.¹ The true Shakespeare’s real name could not be revealed, but some ostensible author there must be. Why, then, disturb the accepted legend? So Shakespeare would for the general public be the “Swan of Avon,” as he appears in Jonson’s poem.

But here the indignant critic will doubtless interpose. “What! Jonson wrote thus, though knowing all the facts. Then, according to you, Jonson was a liar!” Whereat we of the “heretical” persuasion can afford to smile. For we see no reason to suppose that Jonson might not have taken the course we attribute to him, and considered himself quite justified in so doing.

Nearly three hundred years sever us from the publication of the Folio, and, as I have already said, we know that at that date very much less strict views were commonly held as to the obligations of literary integrity. Literary deceptions—“frauds” we might perhaps call them at the present day—were constantly perpetrated. Works were not infrequently attributed by their authors to other writers, who were, in fact, guiltless of any responsibility for them. Moreover, nobody at that date could foresee that the authorship of the Shakespearean plays would be a matter of such transcendent importance as it has now become. Not having met Jonson in the flesh, and not knowing what his views may have been with regard to these literary deceptions, or by what constraining influences his action may have been governed, but knowing something concerning the practice of the times in this connexion, I see nothing unreasonable in believing that he acted as I have suggested, and I should no more think of calling him “a liar” on that account than I should

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think of branding Sir Walter Scott with that opprobrious epithet because he denied point-blank the authorship of the *Waverley Novels*. We know that he considered himself justified in so doing, and we doubt not that Jonson also considered himself justified in what he did.

Reprinted from a larger work by Sir George Greenwood, *Ben Jonson and Shakespeare*.
Hartford, Ct.: Edwin Valentine Mitchell, 1921.

First Folio Fraud

Katherine Chiljan

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

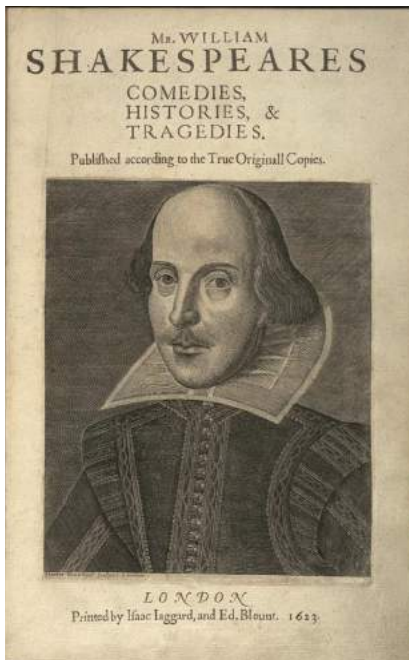
These preliminary pages, therefore, merit close and careful examination – what is said and what is not said. Prior to the First Folio, the great author's person was undefined. "William Shakespeare" was only a name on title pages of his printed works or a name noted by literary critics regarding his works.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

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

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

Messages of the Preface



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

After the title page, John Heminges and Henry Condell, noted as Shakespearean actors further into the preface, officially convey the news that the author is dead. It can be described as news because only two indifferent remarks preceded it in print:

Shakespeare’s name was listed among other famous dead poets in a verse by John Taylor in *The Praise of Hempseed* (1620), and printer Thomas Walkley noted in his edition of Shakespeare’s *Othello* (1622) that “the Author” was dead.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Unsaid in the First Folio's Preface

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

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

Folio Contradictions

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

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

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

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

and

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

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

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

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

[1.2, original italics]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Folio Lies

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Odes by Horace, Book III, No. 23, stanzas 1 and 4¹³

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jonson, *Cataline His Conspiracy* (1611):

To the reader in ordinary:

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

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

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

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

To My Bookseller:

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

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Call't a book good or bad, as it doth sell ...

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

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

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

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

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

To the great Variety of Readers.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

To the Reader.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LIE: *Jonson “beloved” Shakespeare*

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

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

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

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

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

"Little Latin" and "Less Greek"

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

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

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

The Truth: Ben Jonson in His Own Voice

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

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

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

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

Martin Droeshout's Portrait of Shakespeare

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

Reprinted with permission from *Shakespeare Suppressed: The Uncensored Truth about Shakespeare and his Works* (2011, Faire Editions), by Katherine Chiljan.

❧ **ENDNOTES** ❧

- ¹ Patrick Cheney, *Shakespeare, National Poet-Playwright*, Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004, p. 69.
- ² *POEMS: WRITTEN BY WIL. SHAKE-SPEARE. Gent, 1640 (STC 22344).*
- ³ Researcher Robert Brazil in 2005 first noted the absence of the Shakespeare arms in the First Folio preface in the online scholarly discussion group, Elizaforum.
- ⁴ Leah S. Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and Its Discontents*, U.C. Press, Berkeley, 1988, p. 19.
- ⁵ J.L. Nevinson, "Shakespeare's Dress in His Portraits," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 18, no. 2 (Spring 1967), p. 106.
- ⁶ Tarnya Cooper, *Searching for Shakespeare*, National Portrait Gallery, London, 2006, p. 48.
- ⁷ W.W. Greg, *The Shakespeare First Folio, Its Bibliographical and Textual History*, Oxford, 1955, p. 451.
- ⁸ Arthur M. Hind, *Engraving in England in the 16th and 17th Centuries, Part 2 (Reign of James I)*, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1955, p. 357.
- ⁹ Edmund K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare, A Study of Facts and Problems*, Oxford, 1930, vol. 2, p. 224.
- ¹⁰ Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare*, p. 19.
- ¹¹ Sir George Greenwood, *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, London, 1908, p. 291.
- ¹² Sir George Greenwood, *Is There A Shakespeare Problem?*, London 1916, p. 314.
- ¹³ *The Odes of Horace*, translated by James Michie, New York, 1963, p. 235.
- ¹⁴ Translation by C.M. Ingleby in *Shakspeare Allusion-Book*, London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1932, vol. 1, p. 314.
- ¹⁵ Many of these parallels were noted in an article by Prof. W. Dinsmore Briggs, "Ben Jonson and the First Folio of Shakespeare," *Times Literary Supplement*, Thursday,

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

- ¹⁶ Greenwood, *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, p. 265.
- ¹⁷ Cooper, *Searching for Shakespeare*, p. 50.
- ¹⁸ Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *Philaster*, 1622, letter to the reader.
- ¹⁹ *The Return from Parnassus, Part 2* (4.3); see J.B. Leishman, *The Three Parnassus Plays (1598-1601)*, London, 1949, p. 337.
- ²⁰ *M. William Shak-speare, His True Chronicle History of the Life and Death of King Lear and His Three Daughters*, 1608 (STC 22292).
- ²¹ Roger Stritmatter, "Bestow how, and when you list," *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, Fall 1998, pp. 18-19; *Archaio-Ploutos ... the former Treasury of Ancient and Modern Times*, 1619 (STC 17936.5).
- ²² Leah Scragg, "Edward Blount and the Prefatory Material to the First Folio of Shakespeare," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Univ. Library of Manchester*, vol. 79, no. 1 (Spring 1997).
- ²³ *Notes of Conversations with Ben Jonson made by William Drummond of Hawthornden, January 1619*, ed. G.B. Harrison, New York, 1923, pp. 3-4.
- ²⁴ Edwin Reed (*Francis Bacon, Our Shake-Speare*, London, 1902, pp. 144-69) listed many words with Latin roots that Shakespeare coined. For example, *abruption*, *circummure*, *conflux*, *credent*, *deracinate*, *empiricutic*, *festinate*, *fluxive*, *iterance*, *sanctuarize*.
- ²⁵ *The Reader's Encyclopedia of Shakespeare*, ed. Oscar James Campbell, New York, 1966, p. 635.
- ²⁶ Charles C. Hower, "The Importance of a Knowledge of Latin for Understanding the Language of Shakespeare," *The Classical Journal*, vol. 46, no. 5 (Feb. 1951), pp. 221-27.
- ²⁷ Antonio Minturno, *L'Arte Poetica*, Venice, 1564, p. 158. This passage was noted in *Ben Jonson*, eds. C.H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson, Oxford, 1952, vol. 11, p. 145. Excerpt translated by Elizabeth Coggshalle (doctoral candidate, Stanford Univ.).

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“Bestow How, and When you List...”: The de Veres and the 1623 Shakespeare Folio

Roger Stritmatter

Advocates of the Oxfordian view attributing the authorship of works published in the 1623 “Shakespeare” folio to Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, have naturally drawn attention to the fact that the folio was dedicated to, and apparently published under the patronage of, Phillip and William Herbert, the two sons of Mary Sidney who were respectively de Vere’s son-in-law and near son-in-law. Although this striking circumstance was not included among the elements of evidence adduced in J. Thomas Looney’s original 1920 book on the theory, by 1984 when Charlton Ogburn published *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*, the Herbert brothers are pegged, very plausibly, as the folio’s ringleaders, “engineers of the crucial artifacts,” in Charlton Ogburn’s words (216-239).

It is not difficult to see how readily the evidence supports such inference. In 1621, when work on the folio’s production began in earnest, these two renowned arts patrons possessed the power, the political connections and, quite likely, the requisite manuscript materials, to turn the folio into a reality. Pembroke had in 1615, after several years of angling, finally obtained the position of Lord Chamberlain and was therefore in administrative control of the archives of the King’s Men, formerly the “Lord Chamberlain’s Men” who had acted many of the Shakespeare plays. Thus, whether unpublished play material came from the archives of the Company or from private holdings among de Vere’s descendants and in-laws, it was Pembroke and Montgomery—and perhaps Susan Vere—who were positioned to hold final authority over any plans to publish. It was this trio, apparently, which authorized, facilitated, and subsidized the *First Folio*’s 1623 publication by the firm of Isaac and William Jaggard.

In evaluating the undoubtedly complicated process by which the folio came to be published, literary historians would do well, however, to avoid the great

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bugaboo of mono-causal explanation and instead consider the potentially contrary or converging motives of all the historical actors involved, in one way or another, with the production. Jaggard and other publishers may have had their own motives for seeking the laurels of publishing the works of “Shakespeare.” Two years before the publication of the folio began (during the summer of 1621), in 1619, the Jaggard firm collaborated with Thomas Pavier to publish a series of seven Shakespearean and pseudo-Shakespearean quartos. This series of plays, known collectively as the Pavier quartos after the name of the publisher, included quartos of 2 & 3 *Henry VI*, *Henry V*, *Pericles*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. For reasons not well understood, as William J. Neidig documented in a remarkable 1910 article in *Modern Philology*, three of these plays were falsely backdated to 1600 or 1608.

This venture indicates Jaggard’s apparently mounting enthusiasm for undertaking publication of the Shakespearean plays, which by 1619 must have been viewed as a prize to be bestowed on some eager printer, who could hope not only for profit but lasting fame from the enterprise. By many accounts, however, Jaggard was not the most likely candidate for the job. It is not without some interest, therefore, that in the same year that the Pavier quartos were published, the Jaggard firm dedicated a major folio volume, *ARXAIO-PLOUTOS. Containing, Ten following Bookes to the former TREASURIE of AUNCIENT AND MODERN TIMES* to Phillip Herbert, Earl of Montgomery and also, very pointedly, to Montgomery’s wife, Lady Susan Vere, daughter of the 17th Earl. As Montgomery is also one of the two dedicatees of the Folio, four years later, this connection is not without some interest.

The Jaggard-Vere link was brought to my attention in 1990 while working at a Northampton (Mass.) book auction at which the volume was offered for sale. Among other bibliographical links between *ARXAIO-PLOUTOS* and the folio, the book employs many of the same typographical devices which appeared four years later in the Shakespeare folio. Before that time, this concrete 1619 link between Susan Vere and the Jaggard firm was not known to students of the authorship question.

Incidentally, the fact that this discovery represented a new and unprecedented connection between the Jaggard firm and the de Vere family did not stop orthodox scholars whom I approached about the book from authoritatively pronouncing that there was “nothing new” about the find. This statement was apparently made in attempt to splash cold water on any enthusiasm that might have been generated by the potential implications of such an unambiguous 1619 link between Susan Vere and William Jaggard. Charlton Ogburn, for his part, was “floored” by the discovery and considered it of the highest importance.

ARXAIO-PLOUTOS is a translation and amalgamation of several works detailing the customs and cultural traditions of the Gauls, Spaniards, and Italians, to which the English Herald Thomas Milles has added material on the heraldry and customs of England. As the reproduction below shows (left), the book is prominently dedicated to Susan Vere, as well as her husband, the patron of the 1623 *Folio* (right).

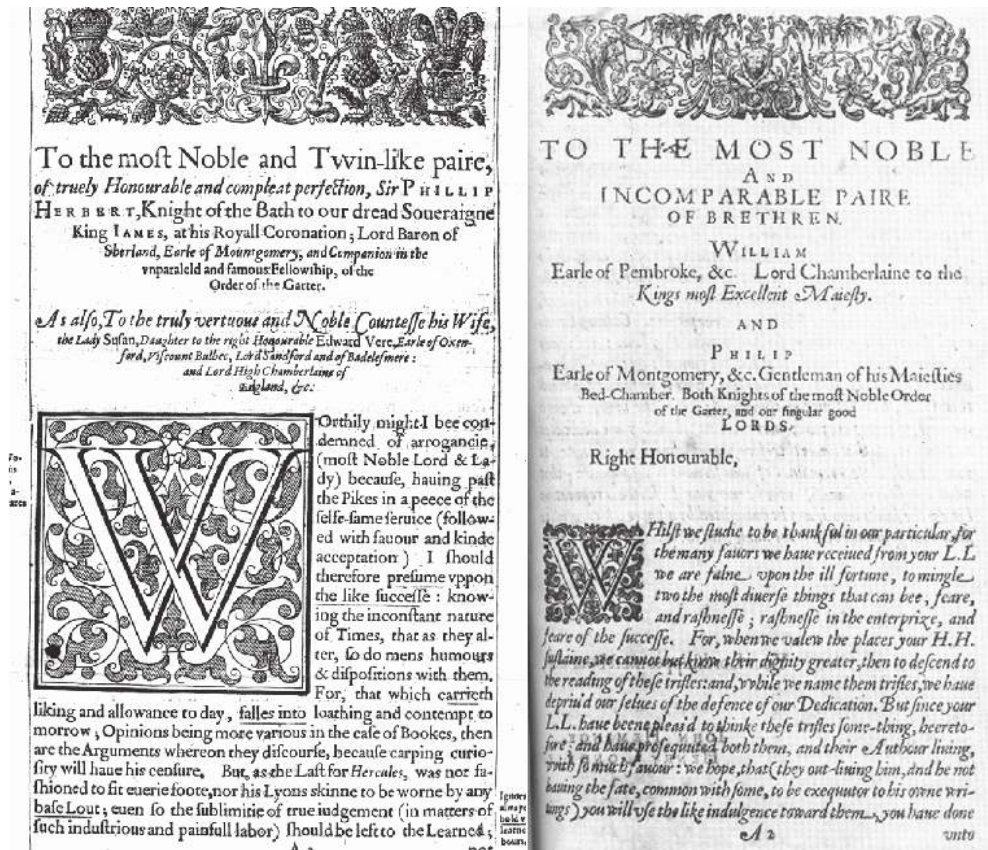


Figure One: 1619 dedication to Susan Vere, daughter of the 17th Earl, and her husband Phillip Herbert, compared to the 1623 Folio dedication to Herbert and his elder brother, the Earl of Pembroke.

The similarities of both design and language between the 1619 dedication “To the Most Noble and Twin-like Paire” and the 1623 Folio dedication, “To the Most Noble and Incomparable Pair,” are striking enough to constitute a clearly deliberate creative allusion, employing both visual elements of design and linguistic cues to connect the Shakespeare volume to the *Archaeoploutos*. It is difficult to believe that Jaggard did not have the 1619 version in mind when he designed the 1623 Folio dedication. It is easy to believe, on the contrary, that when he wrote the 1619 dedication to Susan Vere, extolling both her and her illustrious father, he wasn’t thinking ahead to a day in the future when there would be a Shakespeare Folio. Yet since Stratfordians cannot imagine any logical reason why Jaggard would have intended one dedication to echo another, this evidence is naturally ignored if not suppressed, by Shakespearean authorities. In fact, a close reading of the dedication suggests that Susan is the primary covert dedicatee of the volume; although the dedication initially makes appeal to the “most

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Noble Lord & Lady,” subsequent passages are directed solely to the “gracious madam,” Susan Vere. The complete title-page dedication reads,

To the moft Noble and Twin-like paire,
*of truly Honourable and compleat perfection, Sir Philip
Herbert, Knight of the Bath to our dread Soueraigne
King Iames, at his Royall Coronation ; Lord Baron of
Sherland, Earle of Mountgomery, and Companion in the
vnparaleld and famous Fellowship, of the
Order of the Garter*

*As alfo, To the truly vertuous and Noble Counteffe his Wife,
the Lady Sufan, Daughter to the right Honourable Edward Vere, Earle of Oxen-
ford, Vifcount Bulbec, Lord Sandford and of Badelefmere :
and Lord High Chamberlaine
of England, etc.*

The extended praise of Susan’s father, Edward de Vere, is also noteworthy, given that it ends with an “etc.,” which invites filling in the following blank space with some “other honors” to which he may be entitled, but which remain unmentioned. While this was a convention of the time when printing the names of important persons, given the reasonably obvious echoing of the first dedication page by the second it does not seem inappropriate to consider the implications of such a convention if the writer is thinking of the fact that the countess’s father was “Shakespeare.”

The dedication itself invites both patrons to “enter into a spacious Forrest” — evidently a metaphor for the world of historical customs embodied in ARXAIO-*PLOUTOS* — “affording all choise of pleasing Game, either for Hawking, Hunting, Fishing, Fowling, or any other Noble exercise beside.” The dedication goes on from this to assure the book’s patrons that,

*...an Orchard stands wide open to welcome you, richly abounding in the fairest
Frutages: not to feed the eie only, but likewise to refresh the Heart, inviting you to
plucke where, and while you please, and to bestow how, and when you list: because
they are all yours, and whosoever else shall taste of them, do enioy such freedome
but by your favor.*

In this garden, the dedication assures Lady Vere,

*...you may meete with a faire Bevey of Queenes and Ladies, at diverse turnings
as you walke, and everie one will tell you the Historie of her life and fortune (rare
examples of Vertue and Honor) as themselves can best, truly & plainly discourse
unto you. Some other also you shall see, sadly sitting under Eughe & Cipresse tress,
with Garlands of those leaves wreathed about their heads, sighing out their divers*

disasters: whom your noble nature cannot choose but commiserate; as greeving to see a scratch in a cleare skin, and a bodie beautified by Nature, to be blemished by unkinde Destiny.

Is the dedication, in this final passage, referring to the bounteous literary exploration of female subjectivity embodied in the “Shakespeare” canon? Certainly, his language calls to mind characters such as Ophelia, Desdemona, Cleopatra, Lucrece or Imogen—who all are made to tell “the history” of their “lives and fortunes” in a manner quite unprecedented for early 17th century England and undoubtedly quite capable of stirring considerable emotional response in a cultivated arts patron such as Lady Vere. She was one who could commiserate with the “divers disasters” of such characters, not only from literary precedent, but out of secret sympathy with her own father and other relatives who had survived the hurricane of his life.

If so, the entire address to Montgomery and his wife assumes an awesome consistency. Jaggard’s patrons are credited with being stewards of the orchard. The fruits “are all yours, and whosoever else shall taste of them, do enjoy such freedom but by your favor.” These stewards are therefore urged to “bestow how, and when you list [i.e., please].”

Do we have here a public appeal to the “grand possessors”—who are in the 1609 preface to the second state of *Troilus and Cressida* also referred to as the “grand [theatrical] censors”—powerful insiders ultimately responsible for the inhibition of controversial plays such as *T&C*? Is Jaggard signaling his flattering enthusiasm for proceeding with the folio project and requesting the approval and patronage of Montgomery and his wife, the daughter of Edward de Vere?


Whether or not the reader accepts this interpretation of Jaggard’s dedication, *ARXAIO-PLOUTOS* establishes a tangible and telling political link between Phillip Montgomery, his wife Susan Vere, Edward de Vere’s youngest daughter, and the folio publishers, during the period in which the political decisions leading to the 1623 First Folio publication were being made.

This article first appeared in the *Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter* 34:3 (Fall 1998), 18-19. It has been slightly modified in this version, so as to reflect the editor’s awareness of the collaborative authorship of the *ARXAIO-PLOUTOS* dedication. Most likely, it represents a collaboration between the publisher, Jaggard, and the translator, Thomas Milles.

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Shakespeare's Son on Death Row

William Boyle

 In July 7th, 1998 researcher Peter Dickson gave his third lecture of the year at the Library of Congress on his theory about the publication of the *First Folio* and the Spanish Marriage Crisis. Since our report about Dickson's work in the last issue of the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter* he has uncovered more new documents which lend support to his theory about the *Folio* publication.

The July 7th lecture, held at the Hispanic division of the Library of Congress, was highlighted by Dickson's presentation of a letter he had just received from Spain's royal archives in June. In this letter the Spanish ambassador to London at that time, Count Gondomar (full name, Don Diego Sarmiento de Acuña), wrote back to his home government that the actions that King James took in April 1622 in imprisoning Henry de Vere, the 18th Earl of Oxford, were at the behest of Gondomar himself. Furthermore, in this same letter, Gondomar states that King James had also relieved the 18th Earl of Oxford of his fleet command in the English Channel because of Gondomar's request, and Gondomar goes on to say that he personally would like to see the 18th Earl of Oxford executed.

The clear implication in the letter is that James is doing whatever Gondomar wishes to see done. This in itself is not new information, since Gondomar is already notorious in history as a Machiavellian type who had more than once manipulated the English monarch in the name of Spanish policy objectives. What is new is that the letter clearly reveals that Henry de Vere, 18th Earl of Oxford — Shakespeare's son — is now in the sights of a man who can convince King James to do what he wants him to do.

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The Gondomar letter itself has only been cited once in earlier historical scholarship about this period, and never (to Dickson's knowledge) has it been reproduced in full as we have done in this issue of the newsletter. In an 1869 book, *Prince Charles and the Spanish Marriage Crisis* by Samuel Rawson Gardiner, the author makes reference to this letter (which he had read while researching in the Royal Spanish archives in Simancas). It was a footnote in Gardiner's book about this letter that led Dickson to request a copy from the archives earlier this year.

As for the "Marriage Crisis," this is a period in English history that seems to have drifted off into obscurity. Dickson believes this is "primarily because the Liberal Nationalist and even anti-Catholic bias of most British historians prior to the middle of this century encouraged them to turn a blind eye to the conduct of King James and his young advisor/protege/lover George Villiers—the Duke of Buckingham—in what was, for them, a disgraceful scheme to achieve a permanent peace with Spain through a marriage alliance."

This alliance was to have been the marriage of James I's son Charles with King Philip IV's sister, and would have thus been the key event in sealing a permanent peace agreement between England and Spain. From about 1613 through 1623 the marriage alliance was a major foreign policy objective of the Spanish. It became a crisis in England because a majority of the English population wanted no part of such a deal—seeing it as a return of the papacy to the Isle—and it was opposed at higher levels of government by a most interesting (to Oxfordians) set of leaders: the 3rd Earl of Southampton, the 18th Earl of Oxford, and the Earl of Pembroke, one of the dedicatees of the *First Folio* and Lord Chamberlain from December 1615 through 1626. The crisis reached hysterical heights when Prince Charles and Buckingham secretly left England in 1623 for eight months to travel to Spain to secure the marriage deal in person.

Incredibly, 120 years passed before the Marriage Crisis received the serious attention of scholars again. Thomas Cogswell of Harvard University wrote about it in *The Blessed Revolution* (1989), but his book is actually about the period immediately following the failure of the marriage proposal, beginning in the fall of 1623 when Buckingham and Prince Charles had returned from Spain empty-handed, and the nation went into a prolonged celebration which included bonfires in the streets throughout London.

Cogswell does not mention the May 16th Gondomar letter in his book, nor does he dwell much on the roles of Southampton and Oxford in the whole affair. And, as Gardiner before him, he pays no attention at all to the parallel event of the *First Folio* publication occurring in 1622-1623, let alone consider that the *Folio* publication and the Marriage Crisis are linked. But this "oversight" is shared by nearly all scholars of the period, and in the authorship debate neither Stratfordians nor anti-Stratfordians have ever made this connection either.

Dickson's new theory addresses this oversight by stating that there clearly is a connection between a *Folio* publication project that *has always been acknowledged* to have been sloppy and flawed, the monumental proportions of the Marriage Crisis, and the involvement of Oxford's friends and family in both the crisis and the *Folio* publication.

Dickson has further stated that, given the historical evidence of this period, the *Folio* publication project can no longer be seen as a purely literary project, and that once one accepts the political dimensions of the project, the Oxfordian theory of the Shakespeare authorship has *by far* the best explanatory powers.

Why the *Folio* in 1623?

In order to fully understand the possible interconnection between the Marriage Crisis and the publication of the *First Folio* one must first ask why was the *Folio* published in 1623? There has never really been any serious question in either Stratfordian or anti-Stratfordian camps about why the *Folio* was published at this particular time. It appears to have just been generally accepted that it was published when it was published because that's apparently how long it took for those involved to get organized, go to the printer and have it done.

It has been considered by some that the strange events of 1619 when a series of quartos known as the "Pavier" quartos appeared might constitute an early attempt at publishing a Shakespeare *Folio*. These quartos were published by Pavier in association with Jaggard, but the titles involved are a mixed bag of previously published Shakespeare titles and such apocryphal plays as *Sir John Oldcastle* and *A Yorkshire Tragedy*. None of the previously unpublished 18 plays that would first appear in the *Folio* four years later were part of this project, which would seem to indicate that the key players in the later *Folio* project (i.e., those who held the text of all the unpublished plays in some form—"the grand possessors"?) were not involved in releasing them to anyone in 1619, even if printers such as Pavier and Jaggard were themselves thinking at this time about collecting whatever they could of Shakespeare's plays.

However, there is one significant fact about the *First Folio* that *all* scholars—Stratfordian and anti-Stratfordian—have always acknowledged, and that is that the *First Folio* was full of errors, to a point of embarrassment as some critics have noted. Why this is so, no one has ever been able to figure out, or even to theorize much about. It is this telling fact, coupled with the scholarship of Charlton Hinman in his 1963 work *The Printing and Proof-reading of the First Folio of Shakespeare*, that provides the linchpin for Dickson's theory. Hinman's work clearly establishes that the *Folio* printing process *could not have begun* any earlier than February or March, 1622 (and may even have started later in 1622), and in the 35 years since his work was published no one has rebutted this key fact.

We know that work on the *Folio* must have been completed in October to November 1623 since the first copies for sale appeared in bookstores in December 1623. This means that the entire project was completed during virtually the same period of time that Henry de Vere, the 18th Earl of Oxford, was in the Tower (April 1622 to December 1623).

Another intriguing fact about the whole *Folio* project that should also be mentioned here is that Jaggard registered 16 of the previously unpublished 18 plays with the Stationers' Register on November 8th, 1623. This event thus came at the very end of the printing schedule, not the beginning, a most peculiar ordering of priorities.

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Compare this, for example, with the Ben Jonson folio project in 1615-1616, for which the printer registered *all the previously unpublished material* as the *first step* in the process, not the last.

Jaggard's trip to the Stationers' also took place just days after a very public reconciliation between Southampton and Buckingham and an agreement for the release of Oxford from the Tower, an agreement which included an arrangement for him to marry Diana Cecil, great granddaughter of Lord Burghley. All these events took place within four weeks of the return of Buckingham and Prince Charles from Spain, empty-handed. The Marriage Crisis was over.

While mainstream scholars from Sidney Lee in 1902 to Irvin Matus in 1994 have all commented on the *First Folio's* clear shortcomings and wondered why more care was not taken with such an ambitious and important project, one of the best quotations we could find that illustrate the significance of this unanswered question about the *Folio* publication comes from none other than Charlton Ogburn, in his *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*. At the conclusion of Chapter 13 Ogburn has this to say about the *First Folio* publication:

A second reason for the textual failings of the *Folio* must be that however long the collection had been planned the actual production was rushed. A much better job could have been done with the materials available. Were the compilers fearful that the longer the work of assembling and printing took the greater the danger would be of provoking a reaction at the highest level of the realm and of a bar to the publication? A guess as to the cause of haste, relying on our present information, can be only a shot in the dark.

(*TMWS*, page 239)

The newsletter has been in touch with Ogburn about Dickson's theory and about this paragraph from Chapter 13 of his book. Ogburn commented to us that, "Dickson appears to have taken this shot in the dark, and I am coming to believe that he is correct in his theory about the *Folio* publication and the Marriage Crisis. It would certainly explain a great deal that has, up to now, been unclear."

Ogburn also later commented in a separate conversation with Dickson that, "You have placed the Oxfordian theory at the heart of English history."

Was the 18th Earl in danger?

In addition to Gondomar's May 16th letter, there is another significant historical fact that must be considered here in understanding that Oxford's imprisonment was serious business—the fate of Sir Walter Raleigh in 1618. The historical record is quite clear that Raleigh's execution on Oct. 29th, 1618 was primarily an accommodation with the wishes of the King of Spain and the English-Spanish "peace process" of the time.

And the record is equally clear that Count Gondomar played a key role in

convincing King James that Raleigh *must be* executed for the sake of that peace process. Surviving letters between Gondomar and King Philip IV show the King instructing his ambassador on how to convince James that Raleigh's execution is a political necessity for the good of English-Spanish relations.

It should also be noted here that James's young and upcoming favorite George Villiers—at this moment the Marquis of Buckingham, but soon to be the “Duke of”—supported Raleigh's execution in his new role as James's chief advisor, a fact undoubtedly not lost on the increasingly alarmed opponents of James's policy with Spain.

Thus, when Oxford spoke of James giving “everything temporal to the King of Spain” (as cited in the May 16th letter) he may well have had in mind this earlier sacrificial execution of Sir Walter Raleigh in addition to more recent affronts. And there can be little doubt that Oxford's friends and family also had in mind Raleigh's death, and must have believed that he could just as easily be sacrificed for the sake of English-Spanish relations as had Raleigh.

Since Gondomar's May 16th letter echoes the arguments used in 1618 to engineer Raleigh's execution, there really can be no doubt that Oxford's life was in danger over his politics and over his role in publicly criticizing both King James and Gondomar. And we also now know that he was seen as “the” leader in opposing Spanish Policy vis-à-vis England, and not just by Gondomar.

On 18 April 1623 King James wrote to Buckingham in Spain (*Letters of King James IV & I*, 409), and informed him that the Star Chamber had considered freeing Oxford at that time—since no charges had yet been brought—but the Lord Treasurer, the Earl of Middlesex, interceded and warned the King against freeing Oxford, stating that, “he would provide a ringleader for the mutineers.” So, James wrote, “...which advice I followed.”

This characterization by Middlesex is quite interesting, since the use of the word “mutineers” implies the absolute authority of the King and his decisions—the captain of the ship of state—even as a majority of his subjects and of the peerage were clearly against the course being set for the nation through the proposed Spanish marriage.

The reference in the final sentence of Gondomar's letter to the “Palatinate” is a reference to James's daughter Elizabeth Stuart (driven by the Hapsburg armies into exile in Holland with her husband, the Elector of the Palatinate) and seen by Protestants in England—the mutineers?—as “The Queen of Hearts,” a superior alternative to the increasingly “soft on Catholicism” James, his boy-wonder advisor George Villiers (Duke of Buckingham), and the dark presence of the notorious Count Gondomar—popularly called “The Spanish Machiavelli”—serving as the ambassador/broker between England and Spain.

Othello a harbinger?

The first imprisonment of both the 3rd Earl of Southampton and the 18th Earl of Oxford had occurred in the summer of 1621, shortly following the downfall

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of Francis Bacon over bribery in the conduct of his office—with, interestingly, Southampton leading the opposition against Bacon. The 47-year old Southampton and the 28-year old Buckingham nearly came to blows on the floor of Parliament over this matter.

Just months later the Countess of Pembroke died, and within weeks of her death *Othello* (one of the Shakespeare plays that had never been published before) was registered for publication. Dickson believes that the *Folio* publication process probably began in earnest following this first imprisonment, and that the appearance of *Othello* was perhaps a first step in that process.

If Eva Turner Clark is at all correct in her assessment of *Othello* in *Hidden Allusions in Shakespeare's Plays*, the play dates from the 1580s and alludes to such matters as the politics of a marriage match (Elizabeth and Alençon) and the seemingly endless military efforts of Spain to bring the rest of Europe back to Catholicism, with the battleground then—as again in the early 17th century—the Netherlands. Such allusions would not be lost on an audience with any historical memory of the Elizabethan era.

Concerning *Othello* it is especially interesting to note that Iago's name can be seen as a diminutive (Jago) of "Diego" in Spanish—"Diego" being Gondomar's first name and also being Spanish for "James." James is known to have referred to himself and Gondomar as "the two Diegos."

When Othello says of Iago—"demand that demi-devil / Why he hath thus ensnar'd my soul and body?" (5.2.300-01)—it is not hard to imagine politically aware readers or audiences in the 1620s thinking of Gondomar ("Diego") and his "ensnaring" hold on their English monarch—the other "Diego"—and thus on England's future.

So, the appearance of *Othello* at this time (even though it was registered with a different printer than Jaggard) could well have been a harbinger of the *Folio* publication soon to come, complete with an implicit message that those involved in getting the *Folio* published *did have in mind* the political crisis of the time and the key players in that crisis.

The *Folio* and politics

Over the past year Dickson has been in regular touch with a small number of Oxfordians around the country about his theory and its implications for the authorship debate. The question that has most often come up in these discussions is "how does publishing the *Folio* have any bearing on saving Oxford?"

That is, of course, a difficult question to answer. It may be that the rush to publish was simply an attempt to preserve the plays, given that the political climate indicated that more than Oxford's life could be lost if the Spanish Marriage became a reality.

In other words, for the Protestant faction in England the stakes in this crisis could be that they feared—with good reason—that the days of Bloody Mary could be returning, and that *many lives* might be lost, along with many books and manuscripts.

Also to be considered here is that the "grand possessors" certainly had their

own strong convictions about the philosophical, political, and artistic accomplishment of these plays and of their author, and in this light their publication at this point in time might be seen as a political statement in opposition to what was undoubtedly perceived by James's opponents as the betrayal of the nation by its own monarch. The publication might also then have been a message to this monarch to "think twice before you execute Shakespeare's son."

The other key question involved here is, of course, why publish the *Folio* under the name "Shakespeare," especially if the purpose—in part, at least—was to save the 18th Earl's life?

This is, again, a difficult question to answer. Dickson believes that, in the heat of this crisis, it was way too late to change, assuming that there ever was a thought or a plan to someday publish under Oxford's name. Publishing now was a bold enough move in itself, but to use Oxford's name would have been somewhat like "rubbing it in" and would most likely have been counterproductive. Undoubtedly James knew who the true author was anyway.

For most Oxfordians, the more familiar answer to the question about sticking with the Stratford man is the matter of what the plays might have to say about the behind-the-scenes politics of the nation-building Elizabethan era, about Gloriana herself, and about the author. Such realities would have been laid open to everyone's scrutiny once the true identity of the author was known—or, if you will, openly acknowledged. From this point of view, the time would never be right, as Oxford himself wrote in the *Sonnets*: "... I, once gone, to all the world must die."

Such considerations as these will certainly occupy the minds of Oxfordian—and all other—scholars for years to come. And, of course, we cannot even begin here to consider such eternally vexing questions as "What was the true religion of the true author?" ...or "Are there political secrets embedded in the Shakespeare canon?" ...or "Had the author by the end of this life transcended all the "mere" political and religious ritual and dogma of the day as he explored his soul and spoke to posterity of his explorations?"

Conclusion

Finally, then, we should conclude by returning to the key question postulated by Dickson's theory: "*Is there*, in fact, a connection between the Marriage Crisis of 1621-1623, the imprisonments of Southampton and Oxford in 1621, and of Oxford again in 1622-1623, and the late-starting and too-soon-finishing *Folio* publication process of 1622-1623?" This is the core of Dickson's new and provocative theory, and, if he is right, neither Shakespeare authorship scholarship nor mainstream Shakespeare scholarship will ever be the same.

We can say, after months of consideration, that Dickson's conclusions are not based simply on unfounded speculation (as a few Oxfordians familiar with his work have already remarked), but have been carefully thought out in light of the existing historical record, and they do seem to indicate some sort of causal relationship among

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these key events. The wonder, really, is that no one had seen it before.

Whatever various critics (Stratfordian, Oxfordian, or other) may now say about the pros and cons of this theory, it is probably safe to say that no one will ever again look at this critical period in English history in the same way as before.


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Puzzling Shakesperotics:

A Review-Essay of Leah Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare* (1988)

Roger Stritmatter

☁ We Have Met the Enemy: and He is Us
—Pogo

ublished over twenty-five years ago in 1988, Leah Marcus's *Puzzling Shakespeare* remains among the most important books written by an orthodox Shakespearean scholar in response to such radical manifestations of "post-Stratfordian" skepticism as Charlton Ogburn's *The Mysterious William Shakespeare: The Myth & the Reality* (1984), a book which undoubtedly inspired the dust jacket iconography of Marcus's book as well as influencing its theoretical orientation to a significant degree. The importance of Marcus's review is only redoubled by the Folger Shakespeare Library's 2016 attempt to defraud the reading public with a road tour that promotes the 1623 First Folio while effectively prohibiting scholarly inquiry—of the sort found in the present volume—into the historical contexts of the Folio's origins (i.e., the Pembroke-Montgomery-Vere nexus or the Spanish Marriage Crisis [see William Boyle, this volume, "Shakespeare's Son on Death Row"]) and semiotics while simultaneously declaring a solution to the problems of Shakespearean biography under the pretense that the folio itself "made" Shakespeare. In anything but the most metaphorical sense—clearly not the one primarily intended in the tour's advance p.r.—this is metaphysical sleight of hand of the most indefensible sort.

Puzzling Shakespeare is a wide-ranging book. In this review I will focus almost exclusively on the part of the book which, to me, is most interesting and most historically important: chapter 1 (1-50), "Localization," which primarily treats Patterson's analysis of the 1623 folio. Parts of this review were previously published

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in the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, but the review has been revised and updated.

Despite her (in 1988) skepticism towards the post-Stratfordian position, Marcus's book constitutes a seminal contribution to the history of Shakespearean scholarship, whose full implications are only now, in the 21st century, becoming apparent to literary historians. Thus, while many academic books tackle ephemeral subjects, Marcus's analysis of the First Folio materials in the first chapter of her book has become more, not less, significant as the years pass by and orthodoxy continues to fail to grapple in an honest manner with the evidence she presents.

The unacknowledged keyword in Marcus's discourse is "doubt." She bravely sets forth to tame the history of doubt articulated by Ogburn—without, incidentally, acknowledging or drawing the question into focus—in order to draw it within the orbit of the conventional cultural criticism rooted in the Stratfordian paradigm. However, the doubts Marcus inherit from Ogburn have an uncanny knack for stinging her when she's not looking. Consequently, the book is a curious blend of Stratfordian polemic against the "wildly disrupting" antics of the Oxfordians and a sophisticated analysis of the semiotics of the 1623 First Folio, and the concept more generally of "local" reading, one which goes very far towards destroying the premises that Marcus set out to defend.

Stratfordians, as Ogburn argues, "have no case if they do not take the first folio at face value" and "grant it the claim of authenticity" (1984: 222). In Marcus's book, for the first time in many decades, an orthodox critic takes up the theoretical enigma of the First Folio. Although her intentions are orthodox beyond reproach, *Puzzling Shakespeare* is the first book by anyone to begin the job of contextualizing the bizarre semiotics of the folio in a properly historical and comparative light.

Doubts about the folio often begin and end with the obvious – the perversely uncoordinated Droeshout engraving of the alleged author. Indeed, long before Marcus the Droeshout's reputation was already so damaged that a popular joke among the 18th century encyclopediasts, according to former *Boston Globe* staffer Patricia Smith, was that somebody should apply Occam's razor to the bard's hirsute cheeks.

"Damn the original portrait," declared the art historian Gainsborough, "I never saw a stupider face. It is impossible that such a mind and such rare talent should shine with such a face and such a pair of eyes."

Bardographer Ivor Brown compared it unfavorably with the Stratford monument depicting a "puddin-headed' William who could never have written anything except a note of hand to buy malt." And even Samuel Schoenbaum cannot distract himself long enough to avoid admitting that the "Droeshout's deficiencies are, alas, only too gross" (Ogburn 222-223).

It turns out, as Marcus shows, that within the Renaissance tradition of prefatory materials the engraving looks even more bizarre than it does to the untutored modern reader. In each case, comparison serves rather to enhance than suppress the impression that there is "something fishy" about the First Folio.

Read in conjunction with editor Jonson's accompanying poem, the Droeshout begins to appear like a droll joke on orthodox pretensions to understand the author; compared to Droeshout's other prefatory material, the Folio looks more, not less, bizarre; compared to the typical prefatory materials of the period, it assumes—says Marcus—an “iconoclastic,” “Protestant,” and “rhetorically turbulent” character.

But it is Marcus's analysis of how the engraving and the Jonson poem function as parts of the folio ensemble which is most provocative from an Oxfordian perspective. Gainsborough and other critics, suggests Marcus, “blame the picture for a broader discomfort arising out of the endlessly circulating interplay among all elements of the title page—the portrait, the words above, the poem” (20).

These elements, furthermore, seem to have been designed to set the Shakespeare Folio apart from other books by deliberately cultivating an atmosphere of discordance and mystery which “sets readers off on a treasure hunt for the author” (19). The engraving itself, wholly lacking in the ornamental features and trimming oval customarily employed in such book designs, affects “a slightly unfinished look... [offering] no particularizing details—only the raw directness of the image, as if to say that in this case no artifice is necessary: ‘this is the Man Himself’” (18).

Jonson's poem on the facing page, however, tells another story. The poem “undermines the visual power of the portrait by insisting on it as something constructed and ‘put’ there” (18). The net effect of engraving and poem, argues Marcus, is to set in motion a competition between poem and portrait in which the two elements are “vying for the reader's attention” (19).

Furthermore the poem—in its emphasis on the artificial and unreal nature of the engraving and its explicit warning to “look not on his picture but his book”—is “in the precise sense of the term, iconoclastic” (19), that is to say, it literally attacks the credibility of the portrait it effects to accompany. In Marcus's analysis, then, the Folio frontispiece functions

like a veil covering the book's contents and preserving it from vulgar eyes: Only those learned enough to “read” the book's visual schematization on the title page had earned the right to enter the text itself. (21)

This “veiling” of the book's text, moreover, has an immediate implication with respect to the enigma of authorship. The juxtaposition of the Droeshout engraving and the Jonson poem, writes Marcus, disorients and disrupts the very perceptions it invokes. The folio

makes high claims for “The AUTHOR” while simultaneously dispersing authorial identity; so that “Mr. William Shakespeare” becomes almost an abstraction, a generic category, while remaining an unstable composite. Given the rhetorical turbulence of the volume's introductory materials, constructing Shakespeare requires almost a leap of faith, like Jonson's, and depends upon the suppression of a host of particulars that recede into indeterminacy when an attempt is made to pin them down.

Marcus's point, if this reader understands her properly, is that the editorial transformation of the author "Shakespeare" into an "abstraction" and a "generic category," is intimately tied to the "veiling" of meaning which the folio seeks to accomplish. It is not just that old "honest Ben"—as Jonson, tongue firmly planted in his cheek, liked to be remembered—preferred his authors on the half-shell. Somehow the meaning of Shakespeare's text, or possibly the range of relevant interpretation, is bound up with the veiling of author's identity. Marcus calls it a "powerful inducement against [the] localization" of meaning—but misses the obvious point that Jonson may be making a plea for a relocalization of meaning veiled by the folio's pretenses.

Marcus does recognize, however, that far from supplying material for a life of Shakespeare, the folio purposefully renders him abstract and generic. Jonson calls Shakespeare a "monument without a tomb;" the Folio, argues Marcus, is paradoxically a book without an author—or rather, as we might see it, a book which feigns to represent an author while at the same time instructing the reader that he is a ruse, a smokescreen, a hoaxing understudy for *somebody* concealed under the grotesque exterior of the Droeshout's hydrocephalic cranium.

So, while attempting to dispel the anxiety the folio will generate in a sophisticated reader, Marcus ends up on the same treadmill as every other Stratfordian apologist. She sets up all the theoretical landmarks for a post-Stratfordian exegesis of the folio's rhetorical function as an "engineered artifact" (to use Ogburn's terminology) in the "imaginative conspiracy" (to use Supreme Court Justice Stevens's terminology). In her more candid moments, Marcus admits to sharing the orthodox nostalgia for endless revisionism which instantiates and motivates the Stratford ideology. The virtue of Stratfordianism, for the Shakespeare Industry, is that it legitimates an endless play of compensatory theorizing. Unlimited by the specter of an authentic authorial presence supplying an "objective correlative"—the thing T.S. Eliot insisted was lacking in orthodox accounts of *Hamlet*—anything goes: anything, at least, which doesn't endanger the sacred assumption of Stratfordian authorship.

"We seem to want to keep a thing called Shakespeare," admits Marcus, "if only to guarantee the authenticity of our own revisionist enterprise" (36). The admission puts a finger on the button of the motives which provoke the intense irrationality of orthodox reactions to new Oxfordian evidence and old (but unread) Oxfordian reasoning: it is not the authenticity of Shakespeare so much as the authenticity of themselves, which is somehow felt to be attacked and undermined by post-Stratfordians. Like many earnest and well-intentioned critics of her generation, Marcus seems to need to believe that she is on the side of the oppressed "discontents" of civilization. Hence her book is in part an apology for, and endorsement of, "local reading"—the kind of reading at which Oxfordians, who at least know in what sector of the universe the author lived, have been all too sophisticated at generating and advancing.

In this respect, *Puzzling Shakespeare* represents a flanking maneuver by a Stratfordian industry preying on the idealism of 1960s generation of “tenured radicals;” the focus on the “topical” is a veil to disguise the psychological plausibility of the Oxfordian case, which now stands, as exemplified in books such as Looney’s or Ogburn’s (among many others), in such stark and unforgiving contrast to the almost total failure of Stratfordian psychology to make significant contributions to Shakespeare scholarship (because authors inevitably depart from the wrong set of minimal biographical facts and inevitably fail to achieve or even approximate Eliot’s “objective correlative”).

As the Oxfordians might see it, however, Marcus’s rattling the banners of liberation contains an unacknowledged paradox which haunts the rhetoric of *Puzzling Shakespeare*. As Warren Hope (Ph.D., English) would have it in his brilliant *The Shakespeare Controversy: An Analysis of the Claimants to Authorship, and Their Champions and Detractors* (1992, 2009) Marcus is merely defending the entrenched citadel of “professional bureaucrats, servants of the state’s cultural apparatus, who inform the people of the currently fashionable brand of truth by asserting it repeatedly, and at great length”(6).

And in the final analysis, it seems that Marcus actually believes—unconsciously at least—Hope’s analysis: reading between the lines, it is clear that her position of power-knowledge is situated right at the imaginative cusp of empire.

Caught between the Scylla of a politically incorrect universalism and the Charybdis of the Oxfordian abyss, Marcus’s rhetoric deliberates by chasing its own tail until it finally disappears into the babbling vortex of Ben Jonson’s “complicity in the humanist enterprise”—a retrojection of contemporary values and needs (above all, the urgent professional need for Stratfordians to believe that Jonson was conspiring “with us” and not “agin us”) which is a doubtful substitute for the kind of self-critical appraisal called for by Richmond Crinkley in his 1985 *Shakespeare Quarterly* review of Ogburn’s book.

Admittedly, it is only an academic ideal that controversial ideas should be discussed with moderation and tolerance and that orthodox powers are on their honor to offer a fair and accurate representation of alternate theories so that students can exercise their own independent faculties of investigation and argument rather than merely bowing down in awe before the nearest sacred cow with tenure. But the prerequisite to presenting an alternative is knowing what it says.

As Crinkley wrote in his review, Ogburn

chronicles a sorry record of abuse from the orthodox [Stratfordians], much of it direct at assertions never made, positions never held, opinions never expressed....If the intellectual standards of Shakespeare scholarship quoted in such embarrassing abundance by Ogburn are representative, then it is not just authorship about which we have to be worried. (518-519)

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Crinkley, of course, was right. There is a fundamental ethical problem at stake in this conflict, and that ethical problem is aptly suggested in Marcus's reference to Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Marcus is haunted by the specter of father Freud himself: Of all the sins of the Oxfordians, the seduction of Freud is, according to Dr. Marcus, the most unforgivable:

This fringe movement, which has dogged topical approaches to Shakespeare like a dark shadow, has been more corrosive than we have been willing to admit (it convinced Sigmund Freud, for example), and has had the effect, along with the first folio itself, of casting a faint yet lingering odor of inauthenticity over all Shakespearean historicism. (35)

Perhaps the fall of Freud, when all is said and done, is merely a minor parenthesis in a much more encompassing nightmare vision. As Harold Bloom would have it in his *Western Canon*, Oxfordian Huns and Vandals are poised to sweep through the lacerated gates of civilization, with legions of topical berserkers, anarcho-feminists, epistemologists and sheepdogs in tow.

In the final analysis, the psychology of the Stratfordian ideology is not difficult to diagnose. It is a politics of envy — proceeding from the psychological need to trim Shakespeare down to mortal size, paradoxically, by deifying him, in the words of the late Samuel Schoenbaum, as an “incomprehensible genius.”

Perhaps, to our surprise, Stratfordianism is little different, in its essential essentialism, than the original “imaginative conspiracy” of the Tudor Crown to place the real author of the plays in the dark. Just as war is said to be an extension of diplomacy by other means, the Stratfordian ideology is an extension of Tudor policy under another name, an extension inspired by motives that become more and more prosaic, comical, and unconscious as the controversy proceeds towards the inevitable denouement of the lie.

Already the first of the tenured professoriate have started belatedly to follow in father Freud's heretical footsteps, at last beginning to grasp the actual cultural and psychological dynamics of the controversy and to withdraw their intellectual capital from the Stratfordian bureaucracy, leaving orthodox rhetoricians with less and less of a herd to fall back upon for safety when the tough questions begin to be posed.

The retreat is visible on the title pages of leading editions of the collected works starting as early as the 1990s. David Bevington's 1995 fourth edition (1995) of the collected works tosses the Droeshout engraving which adorns the cover of the 3rd (1980) edition, in favor of the Scheemakers statue erected under the patronage of Pope and his friends in Poets' Corner at Westminster Abbey in 1740. The 1996 Riverside opted for a reprint of the eerily de Vere-like Staunton portrait owned by the Folger.

The real author's own relationship to the Tudor crown, historically and psychologically, was far more complicated and contradictory than an oversimplified Freudian model will allow. He may well have been the most self-censored author in the history of art, and it was his highly conscious wrestling with the moral problems

of knowledge and representation which he transformed into the cultural capital of his work. As Charlton Ogburn suggests in PBS *Frontline's* "The Shakespeare Mystery," the Bard compensated for the loss of his literal kingdom—the political power and prestige inherited in the de Vere dynasty—by recreating a kingdom of the imagination.

As he says in *Rape of Lucrece*,

Time's Glory is to calm contending kings
To unmask falsehood, and bring truth to light.
(939-940)

Somewhat against the conscious judgment of the author, this book is a highly recommended contribution to that historic project. It can be read and appreciated by any student of the Shakespearean works interested in understanding their historical origins and genesis.


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“Publish We This Peace...”:

A Note on the Design of the Shakespeare First Folio

and the Spanish Marriage Crisis

Roger Stritmatter

alph Waldo Emerson, writing long before J.T. Looney, observed that “Shakespeare is a voice merely: *who* and *what* he was that sang, that sings, we know not.” Emerson’s recognition of the futility of the orthodox Shakespeare biography was not without precedent. Ben Jonson warns his his 1623 Folio encomium of “seeliest ignorance” misconstruing the contents of the book. Yet, the folio to which Jonson prefixed this sober warning is one which which has for a long time now been acquiring the reputation of an a “ancient and very fishlike smell,” partly for the reasons indicated in greater detail elsewhere in this volume.

Early 20th century scholars such as George Greenwood or Gerald Rendall thought they knew the reason for the smell. If you want to hide the writer, what better way than to pin someone else’s face to the cover of his work? When Sidney Lee finally threw down the gauntlet of folio editor Ben Jonson’s authority as the first “Stratfordian,” Greenwood smiled and replied, without missing a beat, “we of the heretical persuasion can afford to smile. For we see no reason to suppose that Jonson might not have taken the course we attribute to him [i.e. participate in a conspiratorial hoax] and considered himself quite justified in doing so....” (27). To Gerald H. Rendall, an early Oxfordian known primarily for the influence his two books on *The Sonnets* exercised on Sigmund Freud, proposed Jonson as the “skilled and most effective agent of anonymity” (7). Rendall then followed suit with additional materials pointing directly to folio editor Jonson’s employment by the family of de Vere’s son-in-law Phillip Herbert, Earl of Montgomery, during the two-year period in which the folio was under preparation. To this day a suite in Mary Sidney’s Wilton estate is known as the “Jonson room.”

Perhaps for obvious reasons, then, the folio has always been on the list of the seven things one does not discuss in a Freshman Shakespeare survey. Stratfordians,

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as Charlton Ogburn argues in *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* “have no case if they do not take the First Folio at face value” and “grant it the claim of authenticity” (1984, 1992).

Recently, however, the orthodox practice of backpedaling the folio’s irregularities has started to change. In 1988 Leah Marcus authored an astonishing expose of the folio. Although her intentions are orthodox beyond reproach, *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading And Its Discontents* (1988) is on my list of the top ten orthodox Shakespeare books Oxfordians should love to hate. Indeed, it is the first book by *anyone* to *begin* the job of placing the curious semiotics of the folio in a proper comparative light. (see Stritmatter, “Bestow, When and Where You List,” this volume).

And now we have Peter Dickson’s exciting new research on the political context of the 1620s period [see Boyle, “Shakespeare’s Son,” this volume, 95-102]. Dickson shows that Henry de Vere, 18th Earl of Oxford, Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton, and the Herbert brothers (William and Phillip) who patronized the folio (one, Phillip, being married to Susan Vere), were all at the forefront of the intense public opposition against the marriage negotiations between Prince Charles and the sister of Phillip V. These staunch English Protestants feared the worst—that the country was about to be auctioned off to the Spanish Crown, and all because the lovestruck James I had already delegated a frightening degree of power to the irresponsible Duke of Buckingham George Villiers while the implacable international chess player Gondomar watched, calculated, and maneuvered. The contretemps over the marriage became the greatest domestic dispute of James’s reign.

No careful reader of the two past *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletters* [Spring and Fall 1998] will find reason to doubt that Dickson has established a *prima facie* case for his theory. Even those who remain skeptical must admit that the circumstances seem remarkably suggestive. Let us consider some of the relevant facts.

The printing of the folio was a sloppy, rushed job; to this day a small industry—which includes the past labors of Emily Clay Folger, Charlton Hinman, Edwin Elliott Willoughby and other luminary scholars—is devoted to establishing a documentary record of folio publication anomalies. So bad is the folio typography, in fact, that each copy exists in a unique state. There are literally hundreds, if not thousands, of errors in many copies. Hinman, treading where no cypher-crunching Baconian would dare to go, actually invented a special machine to enable collation of the myriad textual variants to the giant book. Yet, the Stratfordians have no explanation for why the First Folio was so sloppily printed.

The folio was patronized by de Vere’s in-laws. Like de Vere’s son, they became leaders of the Protestant opposition to the impending Spanish marriage and resisting the rising influence of Villiers and Gondomar in the court. The dates of Henry de Vere’s imprisonment (April 1622 to December 1623) match the dates of production of the folio almost exactly (February 1622 *or later* to November 1623).

The folio effects a nationalist character which would have served such a political cause well. It celebrates a dramatic tradition which was reputedly an inspiration to both Elizabeth and James. It places the historic deeds of the ancient

Britains and their medieval and Renaissance descendants such as Henry V or the Bastard Falconbridge on a par with those of the ancients.

Are we left, then, with a case—however plausible—which must remain “speculative,” “subjective” or “unproven” in the absence of that much lamented category of thing, the “documentary evidence”? Do we need a note in the Earl of Pembroke’s handwriting to the publisher William Jaggard, “hurry it up, old man, my cousin’s in the tower”?

The purpose of this article is to propose that we do not. There is in fact a document, one well known, I should hope, to all readers of this *Newsletter* and now available in paperback for \$19.95 in many bookstores, which confirms the intrinsic plausibility of Dickson’s thesis. I mean the Shakespeare First Folio itself. Before passing negative judgment on Dickson’s thesis, find yourself a copy of any one of the popular facsimiles of this “smoking gun.” Review the introductory materials, the table of contents, and the general plan of the book; you may begin to understand what Jonson and the other architects of the folio (if any) were up to.

Notice that the first play, for example, is *The Tempest*. Now, isn’t that, somehow, appropriate? On one level, *The Tempest* tells the allegory of the author’s life as an artist, the exiled magus Prospero. Prospero is an older and more alienated version of the same character we saw as the Duke in *Measure for Measure*—the artist himself, comically trying to have an impact on a social order which often spurns his humors and his magic. The play tells the story of how this man came to be marooned on the desert island of his own art, within the magic circle of the 1623 Folio. Imprisoned here, he is, as Samuel Shepherd wrote of Shakespeare in 1651, “a Shepheard cag’d in stone,” cut off from the common redemption which would be granted through the recognition of his identity could it be restored through prayer, scholarship, or any other means.

If you think that this sounds plausible but you aren’t yet convinced (after all, such an effect could be achieved, in this case, by mere coincidence), consider my second example of how the folio exhibits a structural character which appears to be intentionally designed. Editor Jonson has constructed the folio to communicate messages (particularly messages keyed to the date 1623, or more generally to the politics of the era or of de Vere’s life as the artist) which individual component plays cannot. In other words, the whole of the folio is more than the sum of its parts.

If you think I’m making this up and you can therefore safely ignore it, think again. I’m merely transposing what the best Jonson experts have already said about his careful design of his own 1616 folio. Consider Richard Dutton’s careful observations:

Over the last few years there has been a growing recognition that the organization of the *Epigrams*—like that of *Bartholomew Fair*—is far more subtle, sophisticated and significant than at first meets the eye; behind the apparent randomness or spontaneity, there is a careful and deliberate structure. In different, though related ways we may now begin to appreciate that the same is true of the first folio as a whole ...

Obviously, the idea that *The Tempest* was placed first in the Shakespeare folio to invoke an allegory of authorship finds ample warrant in this description of Jonson's editorial technique when applied to his own literary corpus. But can we find further evidence for the deliberate arrangement of the component parts of the folio in order to make architectonic statements? Undoubtedly many could be proposed and at least several of these might be "correct"—whatever that means here.

But the one I have in mind is special for one very good reason: to my way of thinking, it supplies all the "documentary" proof Dickson's theory could ever want. It also happens to make a nice complement to the example of *The Tempest*. In that case the allegory deduced is of a personal, authorial, perhaps even subjective nature. My second case, on the contrary, concerns public affairs of state and history. This is the fact—the documentary fact—that the last play in the folio is *Cymbeline*.

Now, why is that? Can anyone think of a really good reason which has escaped my notice? For Stratfordians the placement of *Cymbeline* is another unexplained anomaly. The play certainly does not belong in the concluding section of tragedies. An early Arden editor conjectured that its placement may have been "the result of late receipt of the 'copy' in the printinghouse." W.W. Greg supposed that it may have been "through a misunderstanding that Jaggard placed it at the end of the volume instead of the section [containing the comedies]." Other Stratfordians may discover other excuses for the play's placement. I think such explanations are wrong.

If, however, we instead consider the placement of *Cymbeline* from the point of view of Dickson's theory about the Spanish marriage crisis, everything seems to fall into place with no need to impute misunderstandings to Jaggard or any other party to the folio's production. *Cymbeline*, whatever genre we may assign it to, is conspicuously a play about the prehistoric battle for English independence from Roman rule. In it the English king Cymbeline, with the help of Posthumous Leonatus, defeats the Roman forces and runs them out of the land. The play ends with Cymbeline offering the comic promise that Britain,

Although the victor, [submits] to Caesar
And to the Roman empire, promising
To pay our wonted tribute, from the which
We were persuaded by our wicked queen.
(5.5.460-463)

No English reader of 1623 could have considered this plot without being reminded of the parallel between Cymbeline's war for the independence of Britain and the current Counter-Reformation politics of James's reign and the Spanish Marriage Crisis. The play concludes on a note of British victory, but the victory is tempered by strenuous protestations of Cymbeline's desire for peace with Rome—from the vantage of independent equality. As Francies A. Yates surmises, the play is one in which

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A vast Romano-British pax is being proclaimed, ratified with ceremonies and feasts in Lud's town (London), and the achievement of this pax, after misunderstanding and conflict, is the theme of the play.

The play, especially with this ending, makes a perfect conclusion to a volume sponsored by the era's leading faction of Protestant nobles and designed to send a forceful message to a monarch who was, they believed, flirting with disaster. Consider the play's concluding lines:

Cym. Laud we the Gods,
And let our crooked Smoakes climbe to their Nostrils
From our blest Altars. Publish we this Peace
To all our Subiects. Set we forward : Let
A Roman, and a British Ensigne waue
Friendly together : so through Luds-Towne march,
And in the Temple of great Iupter
Our Peace wee'l ratifie : Seale it with Feasts.
Set on there : Neuer was a Warre did cease
(Ere bloodie hands were wash'd) with such a Peace.
Exeunt (5.5.477-485)

Note the key phrase, from the point of view of the Folio "conspirators":

Publish we this Peace,
To all our Subiects....

As applied to the publication of the First Folio, the phrase means that Pembroke, Montgomery, de Vere, Southampton and the rest, not Buckingham and Gondomar, or even King James, were dictating the terms of an acceptable peace with Spain and international Catholicism. Their "magna carta" was the First Folio of "Shakespeare."

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The Methodology of Literary Criticism and the Shakespeare Authorship Question

James A. Warren



Much can be learned about why literary scholars have not accepted Edward de Vere's authorship of the works of William Shakespeare by examining changes in the methodology of literary criticism over the course of the twentieth century.

In 1920, at the time J. Thomas Looney introduced the idea de Vere's authorship, the study of literature was conducted through two complementary methods. One approach sought to explain the significance of works of literature by considering them as works of art important in themselves. Practitioners of this approach, who could be called literary connoisseurs, sought to understand and demonstrate the technical perfection or artistic unity of a work. They helped readers understand the genre, literary devices and rhetorical figures authors used, and expressed judgments about how successfully they used them.

The other approach sought appreciation of works of literature through knowledge of the life and times of their authors. We might call practitioners of this approach literary historians. Their work is of greater relevance for the Shakespeare authorship question because they sought to understand an author's intentions and how he or she was influenced by the political, economic, social and literary currents of the society in which he or she lived. Because most readers lived in societies very different from those of the authors whose works they read, they benefited from the expert knowledge of the author's life and times that literary historians brought to the discussion.

Given what was to come, it is important to emphasize that the two approaches were two sides of one methodological coin because both required close readings of literary works with the goal of teasing out the author's meanings. In that tradition, Professor Jonathan Culler explains,

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[T]he task was the interpretation of literary works as the achievements of their authors, and the main justification for studying literature was the special value of great works: their complexity, their beauty, their insight, their universality, and their potential benefits to the reader . (Culler 47)

The methodology that encompasses both approaches to the study of literature, often referred to as the humanistic tradition in literary criticism, stretches back to the earliest Western writings about the nature of literature, beginning with Aristotle and Horace, and continuing through Alexander Pope, Samuel Johnson, and Matthew Arnold, and including Henry James just prior to the time that Looney identified Edward de Vere as the pen behind the name William Shakespeare.

Introduction of the idea of de Vere's authorship

At the time Looney introduced the idea of de Vere's authorship, doubts about William Shakspeare's authorship had been growing outside of academia for more than fifty years. "The undermining of that belief," Looney explains, was due "mainly to two movements . . . [arising in] the nineteenth century." The first was the marked interest in practical historical research, which "brought to light the disconcerting fact that the English writer most distinguished by the brilliancy of his powers was, paradoxically, separated from all his fellows by a glaring deficiency of relevant personal records." The second was the development of a scientific study of literature, which "yielded a truer measure of the culture represented by the works." These two developments "produced in many minds a definite conviction that . . . a school of literature of the first rank had been allowed to grow up around a personality having no title whatever to the honour" (Looney, *Hind*, 23-24).

Looney sought to investigate the authorship question guided only by qualities deduced from his reading of Shakespeare's works that he thought the author must have had. In approaching the authorship question in this manner, Looney was acting in the role of an investigator. Because what he was investigating took place in the past, he was in effect conducting the work of a historian. It is appropriate, then, to consider the methodology most appropriate for historians.

"History," writes noted historian David Hackett Fischer, "must begin with questions. Questions for historians are like hypotheses for scientists" (Fischer, xx). In asking an open-ended question and in presenting his results "in the form of a reasoned argument," Looney seems almost to be following the process of "adductive reasoning" that Fischer describes fifty years later as most appropriate for historians.

The logic of historical thought . . . consists neither in inductive reasons from the particular to the general, nor in deductive reasoning from the general to the particular. Instead, it is a process of *adductive* reasoning in the simple sense of adducing answers to specific questions, so that a satisfactory explanatory "fit" is obtained. . . . Always it is articulated in the form of a reasoned argument. (Fischer xv)

Looney's case was built in part on the striking number of similarities between events and people important in the life of Edward de Vere on one hand, and events and characters in Shakespeare's plays on the other. One notable example was the Gad's Hill robbery perpetrated by servants of Edward de Vere in real life and portrayed in *Henry IV, Part 1*. He believed that the large number of such correspondences was one of the most important factors in proving his case. As he explained, "The predominating element in what we call circumstantial evidence is that of coincidences. A few coincidences we may treat as simply interesting; a number of coincidences we regard as remarkable; a vast accumulation of extraordinary coincidences we accept as conclusive proof" (Looney, *Identified* 80).

Once Looney had discovered de Vere authorship, his followers, known as Oxfordians, sought to establish the facts of de Vere's life and of how he had come to write his works. Early researchers such as Eva Turner Clark documented scores of similarities between events depicted in the plays and events in de Vere's life and in Elizabeth's court and government that took place fifteen years too early for the man from Stratford to have been the author. As Looney comments on this point, "It is because the Shakespeare literature embodies work representing all periods of Oxford's lifetime, sometimes in a single play, that efforts to fix a Shakespeare canon on the basis of an author younger than the Earl of Oxford have proved so inconclusive" (Looney, *Hind*, 30).

These doubts penetrated less deeply into the academic/scholarly community than in the wider cultural world though, and authorship by the man from Stratford remained the guiding idea in academia. Given the "facts" already known to academics—that Shakspere's authorship had been confirmed by the *First Folio* and that the plays had been written for the public stage—scholars' efforts were focused on fleshing out their understanding of the context in which the works had been written, with that context defined by the timeline of Shakspere's life.

Guided by such a deductive methodology, Stratfordians could not accept authorship by others regardless of the lack of correspondences between Shakspere and the works and regardless of the number of coincidences uncovered between events in the plays and events in the lives of other purported authors. With correspondences between the life and works ruled out as an acceptable form of evidence by their methodology, Shakespearean scholars felt justified in concluding that insufficient evidence existed to justify academic consideration of the Shakespeare authorship question.

Just how limiting this approach was is shown by the case of Charlotte Carmichael Stopes, who spent decades searching for evidence of ties between William Shakspere and the Third Earl of Southampton, the dedicatee of Shakespeare's two long poems. Unable to find even a single scrap of evidence to connect the two men, she regarded her search as a failure. With a more open-ended methodology, she might have come to realize that her assumption of Shakspere's authorship was mistaken.

In addition to their research aimed at establishing connections between William Shakspere and the works of William Shakespeare, Stratfordians also invented

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ad hoc explanations for things that otherwise could not be explained in any rational way if the author was born in Stratford in 1564. As one example, when evidence arose that a play with a character named *Hamlet* had existed by the end of the 1580s, far too early to have been written by Shakspere, they fantasized about the existence of an anonymous play they called *ur-Hamlet* on which Shakespeare had based his play, even though no independent evidence exists that such a play ever existed.

The idea of de Vere's authorship was subjected to unacademic attacks by literary scholars, who often criticized the ideas of Delia Bacon from the 1850s rather than address the most sophisticated evidence in support of de Vere's authorship presented by Charlton Ogburn and others. Opponents also used spurious arguments, such as citing the "fact" that de Vere could not have written many of the plays because they had been written after his death in 1604, while knowing full well that the date of composition has not been established for any of the plays.

Supported by fantasies and *ad hoc* explanations to explain anomalies and by and unacademic attacks on the idea of de Vere's authorship—along with the fact that many scholars remained unaware that de Vere had been proposed as a candidate for authorship—the weight of academic opinion remained opposed to the idea that William Shakespeare was a pseudonym behind which lay the pen of Edward de Vere.

A rare example of someone of prominence remaining open to other possibilities was that of Henry Clay Folger, founder of the Folger Shakespeare Library. He was so intrigued by Esther Singleton's novel *Shakespearian Fantasias* (1930), in which characters from Shakespeare's plays quote poems by Edward de Vere and describe other characters using words that were actually used to describe de Vere, that he purchased a dozen copies and sent them out to major players in the field of Shakespearean research. He also purchased the original manuscript, which is now part of the Folger Library's collection.

More indicative of opinion within the Folger Library and academia is a statement made by Louis B. Wright, who served as Director of the Folger Library from 1948 to 1968. In it, Wright characterized those who doubt authorship by the man from Stratford as

"disciples of cults" that "have all the fervor of religion," pray to "emotion that sweeps aside the intellectual appraisal of facts" chronology and the laws of evidence." They are "fanatic sectarians" who "rail on disbelievers and condemn other cultists as fools and knaves," and "who welcome a new convert to their beliefs with the enthusiasm accorded a repentant sinner at a Holy Rollers' revival," while "a fog of gloom envelops them." They have developed a "neurosis . . . that may account for an unhappy truculence that sometimes makes them unwelcome in polite company." Indeed, "one gets the impression that they would gladly restore the faggot and the stake for infidels from their particular orthodoxy" (Ogburn 154).

Showing just how little has changed within academia since Wright published those comments in *The Virginia Quarterly Review* (VQR) in 1959, the VQR selected

Wright's article as one of only four from the 1950s included in *We Write for Our Own Time: Selected Essays from 75 Years of The Virginia Quarterly Review*, published in 2000. Given the viciousness of the characterizations of those doubting authorship by the man from Stratford by Wright and other leading academics, it is not surprising that almost all English professors continue to teach their students that Shakspere wrote Shakespeare's works whether they believe that to be the case or not.

After its rejection, the idea of Edward de Vere as the author of Shakespeare's works remained an underground theory for the next half century. Throughout that time its proponents continued to refine the theory, document how doubtful the evidence supporting authorship by the man from Stratford really was, and further establish the facts of Edward de Vere's life and the tightness of the correspondences between it and events and characters in Shakespeare's works. In 1984, Charlton Ogburn, Jr., pulled together that evidence and published it in his comprehensive and persuasive book *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*.

Although academia remained firm in its beliefs that the man from Stratford wrote Shakespeare's works and that de Vere did not, the publication of Ogburn's book coincided with and probably was largely responsible for a significant increase in public attention to the Shakespeare authorship question. Since the mid 1980s, the number of books, articles and documentaries addressing the authorship question and the idea of de Vere's authorship of Shakespeare's works has steadily increased. Richard Whalen, observing in 2007 the greater attention paid to the authorship question by the media and even academia, writes with some surprise that "the extent of these examples just from the past decade is unprecedented. Nothing like it occurred in academia before the mid-1990s" (Whalen 19-20).

Evolution of the methodology of literary criticism

It would be pleasing to describe how the methodology of literary criticism evolved in ways more favorable to the authorship question since Looney proposed de Vere's authorship in 1920. Unfortunately, since the middle of the twentieth century the humanistic tradition, with its artistic and historical approaches to the study of literature, began to lose favor with the academic and scholarly community.

By the last few decades of the twentieth century, that tradition—one not unfavorable in itself to consideration of the authorship question—was largely replaced by a new methodology that does not value close readings of literary works and in which the intentions of the author are largely irrelevant. The decline of literary studies in academia is not a pleasant story, but it is one that authorship scholars must be familiar with if they are to persuade literary scholars that the authorship question is worthy of academic study.

One of the first developments in the transformation of literary criticism came from within the historical approach—the change in emphasis from seeking to understand those aspects of an author's society that he had consciously and purposely sought to portray in his works to what he unconsciously revealed about it.

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This is a change in focus from what Lionel Trilling identifies in *The Liberal Imagination* as “the explicit statements that a people makes through its art . . .” (Trilling 205) to that of “the dim mental region of intention” that lies below them, “a culture’s hum and buzz of implication . . . the whole evanescent context in which its explicit statements are made. It is that part of a culture which is made up of half-uttered or unuttered or unutterable expressions of value” (Trilling 206-207).

With this change, literary scholars not only had to bring expert knowledge to help readers “reconstruct the original context of production (the circumstances and intentions of the author and the meanings a text might have had for its original readers),” but also to “expose the unexamined assumptions on which a text may rely (political, sexual, philosophical, linguistic)” (Culler 68-69).

In seeking to “expose the unexamined assumptions” of an author, we have reached what W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley called “the intentional fallacy,” in which “the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art” (Wimsatt and Beardsley 1). Instead, Culler explains, “The meaning of a work is not what the writer had in mind at some moment during composition of the work, or what the writer thinks the work means after it is finished, but rather what he or she succeeded in embodying in the work” (Culler 67). Thus, a fuller examination of works of literature is required, one that examines both the conscious and unconscious results of the author’s efforts.

Another development came from within the artistic approach to the study of literature. After the heyday of the New Criticism, some critics adopted its practice of separating works of literature from their authors, but did so not in order to examine them as works of art as the New Critics did, but to examine their political and social content unencumbered by the intentions of the author—exactly those aspects of the work that the New Critics had sought to get away from by isolating works from their authors and history.

With both approaches focused on the contents of the work of literature rather than the author, there was, some thought, no need to consider the author at all. Why not eliminate consideration of him or her completely in order to focus directly on the contents without distinguishing between its intentional or unintentional origin? With this line of thinking we have reached what Roland Barthes called “the death of the author.”

The approach of examining works of literature in isolation from consideration of their authors is obviously not one favorable to the Shakespeare authorship question, which is intimately bound up with consideration of the life of the author and his reasons for writing his works. Neither of these factors is given much importance in an approach that examines works of literature as though they were immaculately conceived and the result of virgin births.

We have already seen attempts to cut off consideration of the strongest type of support for the idea of de Vere’s authorship—the correspondences between his life and Shakespeare’s works—by denying the validity of circumstantial evidence. We now see another tactic that would have the same effect: that of denying the importance of the author and thus the importance of any linkages between his life

and works.

Oxfordians have speculated among themselves for years about the extent to which the “death of the author” approach to literary theory arose as a response to the mismatch between Shakspere’s life and Shakespeare’s works. It is perhaps not unreasonable to consider the extent to which literary scholars aware of the challenge to authorship by the man from Stratford deliberately overstated “the death of the author” as one way of preserving their belief in his authorship.

There is yet one more significant change to consider: the change from studying works of literature *through* the history of their times, to studying societies and cultures *through* works of literature. In this methodology, literary criticism is no longer an independent field of study, but one that has been largely subsumed as a subfield within the larger field of Cultural Studies.

Rather than being the ends to be studied, literary works have become merely one means through which non-literary subjects are studied. Cultural theorists regard literary works of all types as mere cultural artifacts to be mined for data about the society from which they arose in the same manner that advertising copy or other anonymously-written documents are examined. Considering works of literature as works of art important in themselves—the work of literary connoisseurs—has little place in this methodology, and has largely ended within academia. Gone is any sense that literature has something meaningful to say about the larger aspects of what it means to live as human beings on planet earth. The focus is now on what literary works can tell cultural researchers about specific political, economic, social or sexual practices in the cultures from which they arose.

Let us be clear that when the so-called “death of the author” is discussed, what is also implied is the death of literary criticism itself. The standard anthology in the field, *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, declares that

Literary texts, like other artworks, are neither more nor less important than any other cultural artifact or practice. Keeping the emphasis on how cultural meanings are produced, circulated and consumed, the investigator will focus on art or literature insofar as such works connect with broader social factors, not because they possess some intrinsic interest or special aesthetic value (Seaton 20).

The introduction to another widely used text, *Cultural Studies*, specifies that “although there is no prohibition against close textual readings in cultural studies, they are also not required” (Culler 50). Thus, Culler observes, “In theory cultural studies is all-encompassing: Shakespeare and rap music, high culture and low, culture of the past and culture of the present” (Culler 47) are all equally worthy of study. “Freed from the principle that has long governed literary studies—that the main point of interest is the distinctive complexity of individual works—cultural studies could easily become a kind of non-quantitative sociology, treating works as instances or symptoms of something else rather than of interest in themselves, and succumbing to other temptations” (Culler 50-51).

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Examples of how works of literature can be mined for information about cultural issues unrelated to the intentions of their authors are endless. As one example, Culler notes that

Interpreting *Hamlet* is, among other things, a matter of deciding whether it should be read as talking about, say, the problems of Danish princes, or the dilemmas of men of the Renaissance experiencing changes in the conception of the self, or relations between men and their mothers in general, or the question of how representations (including literary ones) affect the problem of making sense of our experiences. (Culler 33)

In all of these potential “interpretations,” the play is treated as just another cultural artifact, in which what is most special about it—that it was created by a specific human being for a specific purpose or purposes—is intentionally ignored.

Departments of Literature still exist on university campuses today, but often they are in reality Departments of Cultural Studies. As Seaton observes, “in some of the most influential academic centers literary criticism has been replaced by cultural studies” (Seaton 1). The situation is not that cultural studies courses are taught alongside literature courses in those departments. It is not even that cultural studies have influenced the methodology of literary criticism to include new factors in literary criticism. It is, rather, that a takeover has occurred in which there appears to be little room left for the traditional humanistic approach to literary studies. Seaton notes that “From the viewpoint . . . of influential English graduate programs, prestigious academic journals, authoritative anthologies of criticism, and the most prominent academic theorists, the humanistic tradition in literary criticism seems to be invisible” (Seaton 6-7).

As one example, the editors of *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* could not find much space in their 2,785-page volume for the giants of traditional humanistic literary criticism in the twentieth century. Lionel Trilling, for instance, is not represented at all, and Edmund Wilson is represented only by one unrepresentative essay, even though the book claims to “present a staggeringly varied collection of the most influential critical statements from the classical era to the present day” (Seaton 20).

To sum up, the humanistic tradition of the study of literature in place at the time Looney identified Edward de Vere as Shakespeare has been replaced by one unreceptive to the authorship question. The methodology of seeking correspondences between events and characters in literary works and events and people in the life of a purported author has little resonance in an environment in which the author is regarded as an outmoded “construct” that is bypassed in favor of cultural forces that determine the content of literary works. And, that the entire field of literary studies has been subsumed under the field of cultural studies, which is itself wracked by methodological flaws that produce works that cannot be considered serious scholarship, is not indicative of an environment in which the academic study of the authorship question can easily take place. Simply put, the authorship question is not one that most literary scholars find attractive in the current environment.

Figure 1 summarizes the changes that have occurred in the methodology of literary study since Looney introduced the idea of Edward de Vere as Shakespeare in 1920s.

	Traditional methodology of literary criticism	New methodology of literary criticism	Cultural studies
Consideration of the literary work	Focus is on the unique artistic aspects of literary works consciously used by the author	Focus is on unintentional aspects of works through techniques such as Stylometrics	Focus is not on the work itself but on mining it to find data supportive of cultural theories
Consideration of the author	Focus is on the author's intentions and on how they arose from the conditions of his life and times	Focus is on what the author reveals unintentionally or unconsciously	Focus is not on the author himself but on the cultural forces that are reflected in the work

Figure 1: Changing methodologies in literary criticism.

The Descent into Theory

As bad as this situation seems for the study of the Shakespeare authorship question, there is one more development that must be noted, one as detrimental as any already described: the corruption of Cultural Studies itself through seemingly widespread unacademic practices.

Because historians are what cultural theorists are when they examine cultural conditions in the past, it might be appropriate for them to follow the guidance for historians from David Hackett Fischer already noted. It would also be appropriate for those studying cultural subjects to adhere to the principals of academic study, as explained by Stanley Fish. Subjects investigated, he advises,

should be studied as the objects of analysis, comparison and historical placement, etc.; the arguments put forward in relation to them should be dissected and assessed *as* arguments and not as preliminaries to action on the part of those doing the assessing. The action one takes (or should take) at the conclusion of an academic discussion is the action of tendering an *academic* verdict as in “that argument makes sense,” “there’s a hole in the reasoning here,” “the author does (or does not) realize her intention,” “in this debate, X has the better of Y,” “the case is still not proven.” These and similar judgments are judgments on craftsmanship and coherence—they respond to questions like “is it well made?” and “does it hang together.”

(Fish 25-26).

The apparent practice within Cultural Studies of studying academic subjects in order to promote non-academic goals does not appear to be due to the failings of individual researchers, but results rather from the methodology of Cultural Studies itself. The field appears to be fragmented into a dozen or more subfields, each defined not only by the general topic to be researched, but also by outcomes that appear to be predetermined by the very nature of the subfield. Publications produced in the subfields all too often have the appearance of relying on data cherry-picked to reach conclusions determined in advance by the premises of the subject being studied.

These subfields also appear to suffer from several other procedural flaws that Fischer warned historians away from. One of them, “The fallacy of declarative questions,”

Consists in confusing an interrogative with a declarative statement. It violates a fundamental rule of empirical question-framing, which requires that a question must have an open end, which will allow a free and honest choice, with minimal bias and maximal flexibility. If a historian goes to his sources with a simple affirmative proposition that “X was the case,” then he is predisposed to prove it. He will probably be able to find “evidence” sufficient to illustrate his expectations, if not actually to sustain them. If, on the other hand, he asks, “Was X or Y the case?” then he has an empirical advantage, at least in some small degree. And if asks “Was X or not-X, Y or not-Y, Z or not-Z . . . the case?” and if he designs X, and Y, and Z in such a way that his own preferences are neutralized . . . then the probability of empirical accuracy is still further enhanced. (Fischer 24)

Another is “the pragmatic fallacy,” in which the mistake is made of selecting “useful facts—immediately and directly useful facts—in the service of a social cause. . . . It consists in the attempt to combine scholarly monographs and social manifestoes in a single operation” (Fischer 82). “A historian,” Fischer notes, “like any other researcher, has a vested interest in answering his own questions. His job is at stake, and his reputation, and most important, his self-respect. If he substitutes a declarative for an interrogative statement, then the result is literally a foregone conclusion. The best will in the world won’t suffice to keep him honest” (Fischer 24-25).

And there are others. One is “The fallacy of the one-dimensional man,” which selects one aspect of the human condition and makes it into the measure of humanity itself. . . . It reduces the complex psychic condition of men merely to their political roles and shrinks all the components of the social calculus to a simple equation of power, ambition, and interest” (Fischer 200). Related to this is “the fallacy of the universal man,” which “falsely assumes that people are intellectually and psychologically the same in all times, places and circumstances. Every unitary solution, without exception, which has ever been proposed as a panacea for the hopes

and misfortunes of mankind, has been fatally flawed by this fundamental fallacy” (Fischer 203).

In indulging in these fallacies, it almost appears as if Cultural Studies itself no longer studies the cultures of various societies or the process of cultural change, but instead hand-picks data from various societies to support theories arising from outside Cultural Studies itself—indeed, from outside academia. If so, the field no longer qualifies as an academic discipline as defined by Stanley Fish. Such a state of affairs, if this analysis is accurate, would show the full depth of the degradation into which literary studies, now a subfield within Cultural Studies, has fallen. Figure 2 shows this progression.

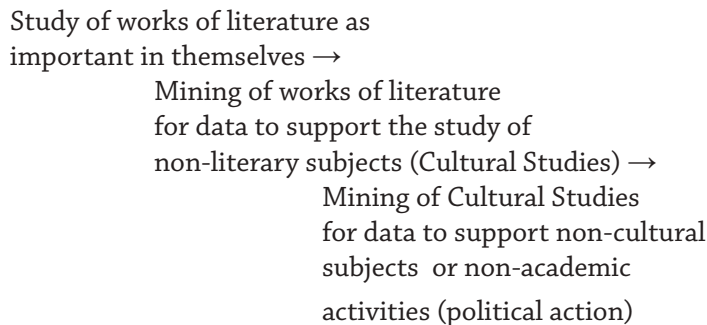


Figure 2: The corruption of Culture Studies.

Without academic standards in place to guide cultural theorists away from those fallacies and inappropriate non-academic goals, it is not surprising that they often developed, in Culler’s phrasing, “dispositions to give particular kinds of answers to the question of what a work is ultimately ‘about’: ‘the class struggle’ (Marxism), ‘Oedipal conflict’ (psychoanalysis), ‘the containment of subversive energies’ (new historicism), ‘the asymmetry of gender relations’ (feminism), ‘the self-deconstructive nature of the text’ (deconstruction), ‘the occlusion of imperialism’ (postcolonial theory), ‘the heterosexual matrix’ (gay and lesbian studies)” (Culler 65). Flawed methodologies lead to flawed practices, as “Marxist theory sees the subject as determined by class position: it either profits from others’ labour or labours for others’ profit. Feminist theory stresses the impact of socially constructed gender roles on making the subject what he or she is. Queer theory has argued that the heterosexual subject is constructed through the repression of the possibility of homosexuality” (Culler 10).

These cultural theories draw heavily on the idea of deconstruction, which at its very core has an agenda that is not objective examination of a subject, but rather, Culler explains,

a critique of the hierarchical oppositions that have structured Western thought: inside/outside, mind/body, literal/metaphorical, speech/writing, presence/absence, nature/culture, form/meaning. To deconstruct an opposition is to show that it is not natural and inevitable but a construction,

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produced by discourses that rely on it, and to show that it is a construction in a work of deconstruction that seeks to dismantle it and reinscribe it – that is, not destroy it but give it a different structure and functioning.

(Culler 140)

Deconstruction, by that definition, presupposes the nature of what is to be studied, making an objective, open-ended examination impossible. Cultural theorists could learn much from Samuel Johnson, who recognized long ago the distinction between “argument,” which aims to discover the truth and hence supports the idea of unbiased assessment of cultural factors, and “testimony,” which aims to convince others of a certain point of view and hence describes the agenda-driven cherry-picking of evidence that appears to exist all too often in Cultural Studies.

Nay, Sir, argument is argument. You cannot help paying regard to their arguments, if they are good. If it were testimony, you might disregard it. . . . Testimony is like an arrow shot from a long bow; the force of it depends on the strength of the hand that draws it. Argument is like an arrow shot from a crossbow, which has equal force though shot by a child. (Fischer 282)

An environment in which “testimony” is favored over “argument” is not one in which academic study of the Shakespeare authorship question is likely to occur.

Methodology and the future of the Shakespeare authorship question

It now appears that the most critical factor affecting acceptance or rejection of new theories is that of methodology, that of the process through which academic communities pursue new knowledge and interpret and judge new ideas and data. Several conclusions about the nature of methodology can be cited that account for academia’s continuing rejection of the Shakespeare authorship question.

First, methodologies will differ from field to field because they must be suited to the nature of the objects being examined and the explanations being sought. For historical studies, the appropriate methodology is the “adductive reasoning” explained by historian David H. Fischer that asks open-ended questions and answers them in the form of reasoned argument. For literary criticism, the appropriate methodology is one that recognizes the two distinctive features of works of literature: that they are unique and so deserve careful study in themselves as works of art, and they are produced by specific individuals for specific reasons at specific points in time, which makes awareness of the author’s intentions and the details of his life and times important for understanding them. The Shakespeare authorship question, being a study of the historical aspects of the origin of works of literature, will best be studied through a methodology blending those of history and literary criticism.

Second, focus must remain primarily on substantive accomplishments, not on adherence to any specific methodology. Facts, data and theories must be considered separately from the methodology in place when they were discovered.

Not doing so is a mistake being made by literary scholars who reject findings by Oxfordians. The longer a methodological practice continues substantially unchanged the more firmly the bureaucratic supports for it will have become entrenched and the more difficult it will be to consider new ideas and data resulting from outside the approved methodology. The bureaucratic pressure to regard adherence to methodology as an accomplishment in itself must be resisted if an environment conducive to independent and creative thought is to be preserved.

Third, the right type of data must be selected and it must be judged objectively. Data should not be invented, as in the case of the *ur-Hamlet* example, but must be found. *Ad hoc* explanations are not legitimate explanations. Practitioners of Cultural Studies who cherry-pick data in support of existing theories are engaging in unacademic practices unlikely to lead to accurate findings.

Fourth, circumstantial evidence is a legitimate form of evidence in historical investigations, just as it is in courtrooms. Correspondences between events and characters in literary works ascribed to a pen name and similar events and people in the life of a purported author are legitimate grounds for establishing authorship. What is important is the quality and quantity of the correspondences.

And fifth, investigations must be conducted in an academic manner with the goal of establishing the truth or falsity of the ideas examined. Care must be taken to avoid the fallacies identified by David Hackett Fischer and the politicization of issues as described by Stanley Fish.

A new methodology more appropriate for the study of literature must be created. Any methodology built around the two factors that distinguish literature from natural objects studied by the natural sciences—that each work of literature is a unique work of art and is created by a specific author in a specific time and place for specific reasons—will be appropriate for the Shakespeare authorship question.

Putting together the idea that each field of study requires its own unique methodology and the idea that methodology follows practice, it becomes clear that in order to change the methodology of literary criticism, changes in practice need to occur and be successful so that a new methodology can be formed based on them. And further, changes in what is being studied must occur first so that new practices will evolve that can be studied and incorporated into a new methodology.

But is it possible for a new methodology to be formulated if what is being studied has not changed? At first glance the answer appears to be *no* if what is being studied is works of literature from the past that have not changed. But the answer actually is *yes*. This paradox can be explained by noting that works of literature are not now being studied. What is being studied in cultural programs masquerading as literature programs is cultures, which are studied in part *through* works of literature.

The change to study of works of literature themselves would lead to new practices (or a revival of older ones), and thus to a new methodology incorporating and justifying them. That new methodology would not be exactly the same as the older methodology in the humanistic tradition because of technological advances made in the past half century. It would, however, include the work of literary

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historians and literary connoisseurs noted earlier, and also have room for more quantitative practices such as Stylometrics.

If the healthy study of literature is to occur under a new methodology, it must take place outside the dominion of and domination by Cultural Studies. Cultural studies, in spite of the unacademic practices currently in place, is a legitimate field of study. It is unfortunate that literary studies became combined with it, and the health of both fields requires that they be separated. The two study different things and so require different methodologies, and thus need to be housed in different departments dedicated to maintaining high standards in their respective methodological areas.

Although the subject of how Oxfordians might engage literary scholars to persuade them to accept the authorship question of one worthy of academic study is outside the subject of this paper, some preliminary thoughts can be presented here. First, it should be noted that the methodology of literary criticism has changed before. It is worth Oxfordians' time to examine closely how the New Critics "convinced professors of literature [to establish] literary criticism as an academic discipline" (Seaton 102).

Second, in the effort to separate literary studies from Cultural Studies, it could be the case that the authorship question will be the issue that triggers changes in the broader methodology of literary criticism. The difficulty of the effort to reconcile the life of the man from Stratford and the works of Shakespeare could be the catalyst leading to the return of genuine literature programs in our universities. After all, if it was the case that a significant impetus toward the "death of the author" was the effort to sidestep the lack of correspondences between the life of the man from Stratford and the works of Shakespeare, then it is conceivable that serious academic study of the authorship question could lead to the "resurrection of the author."

And third, a scenario for the implementation of a new methodology and acceptance of the legitimacy of the authorship question might involve the following steps. Initially, a few literary scholars beginning to use the new technique of establishing linkages between the author and the work to supplement the case for their existing belief in Shakspeare's authorship, followed by instances in which they accept data from the new method even when it conflicts with the data from their existing method. Those steps could be followed in turn by more frequent use of the new methods as alternate candidates for authorship are examined, until finally scholars conclude that the authorship question is one of real substance. Once that occurs, the resurrection of the author would almost certainly follow because the existence of an author is necessary for correspondences between the work and an author to take place. And with that step, the new methodology would be largely in place, and the authorship question would be well on the way to being resolved.

Once truly independent literary studies departments are established or re-established, safe havens will exist for the methodology of literary studies. In them, literary scholars will be free to cultivate what one historian describes as "the ability to enter imaginatively into the life of a society remote in time or place, and produce a

plausible explanation of why its inhabitants thought and behaved as they did” (Elliott xi). Applying this ability to the study of literature, scholars will seek to step outside their own personal experiences, to see the world as the author saw it in another time and place and to understand what he or she had to say about it.

A methodology of literary criticism that is able “to make the great works of literature more consequentially available not only to academics but to general readers without any special intellectual equipment beyond the educated good sense of their time” (Seaton 10) as James Seaton phrased it, is one in which the study of the Shakespeare authorship question would finally receive a fair hearing.



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Looking Not on His Picture, but His Books: Two New Histories of Folger's Quest for First Folios Shed Unintended Light on the Authorship Question

A Review Essay by Michael Dudley

The Millionaire and the Bard: Henry Folger's Obsessive Hunt for Shakespeare's First Folio by Andrea E. Mays. Simon & Schuster, New York, New York (2015). 350 pages. Hardcover, \$27.00.

Collecting Shakespeare: The Story of Henry and Emily Folger by Stephen H. Grant. John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore (2014). 244 pages. Hardcover, \$29.95.



literary-minded gentleman who sits close to the levers of power, and with talents recognized by only a few insiders, embarks on a hidden career to develop his country's nascent culture, inspired by that of an older European civilization. Living a double life over several decades and working in secret—his identity concealed by a front man—he lavishes his substantial fortune on theatrical works to the point of exceeding his income and going repeatedly into debt, leaving contemporary observers to wonder in print about his real identity.

For readers at all acquainted with the Oxfordian theory of Shakespearean authorship, this description will immediately recall the life of Edward de Vere, 17th earl of Oxford, whom many believe to have been known as Shakespeare during his lifetime as an open secret among the nobility and in literary circles—a “noted weed” (Sonnet 76)—but has yet to receive mainstream recognition in the 21st Century.

It is, ironically, also a highly apt description of the life of Henry Folger, president (and later chairman of the board) of the Standard Oil Company of New York, who, for the better part of half a century kept his dealings with an elite number of high-end book dealers and auction houses secret in order to secure a vast horde of Shakespeareana, in particular virtually every copy of the First Folio that came to market. In meticulously planning and cataloguing his purchases and eventually establishing his eponymous library, Folger invested his nation—and the world—with a superlative cultural heritage, albeit one deliberately and methodically drained from

England.

Although far from intentional on the part of their respective authors, this parallel with de Vere does emerge easily from an Oxfordian reading of two recently-released books, *The Millionaire and the Bard* by Andrea Mays and Stephen Grant's *Collecting Shakespeare*. Henry and Emily Folgers' shared obsession with collecting First Folios and other Shakespeareana is a fascinating story, and in the hands of two very different authors—both from disciplines other than English literature—illuminates not only the origins and formation of one of America's most important libraries, but, more interestingly, the current state of the Shakespeare Authorship Question.

While concerning the same topic and released within a year of each other, the books do nonetheless differ significantly: Mays' *Millionaire and the Bard* is an entertaining (if lightly-sourced) work of popular nonfiction that focuses exclusively on a narrative the Folgers' pursuit of First Folios, one suited to her background as an economist. Former career diplomat Grant adopts a more sober and thematic approach for his *Collecting Shakespeare*, devoting chapters to each of the Folgers, Henry's oil career, their collecting methods and strategies (in particular their use of antiquarian book dealer Henry Sotheran as their primary front man), as well as their longstanding rivalry with railroad magnate and Shakespeare enthusiast Henry Huntington, leaving only one chapter to focus on the First Folio itself. While in many ways more informative than Mays' book, Grant's *Collecting Shakespeare* nevertheless lacks *Millionaire's* enjoyable and occasionally sequential and exciting Folio-by-Folio narrative.

A highlight of both books is the story of the evolution of the Folger Shakespeare Library, from the Folgers' realization of both the extent of their hoard and their own mortality, through to the selection of Paul Philippe Cret as architect of the Art Deco neoclassical building, to the meticulous care with which the Folgers planned and finished the Tudoresque interior. Grant's discussion of the library—a third of his book—is by far the more substantial of the two.

It is these authors' respective treatments of Shakespeare biography and the Authorship Question, however, which make for particularly fruitful comparisons. As ostensible outsiders both to the Shakespeare establishment, Mays and Grant tackle these subjects quite differently, but each, in their own ways, provocatively.

Mays makes a number of unfortunate observations that belie her claim to have been "obsessed" with Shakespeare all her life, including that "everyone knows William Shakespeare" (xv) when even orthodox writers admit to his inescapable elusiveness¹, and that Shakespeare did not "believe that his writings would last" (xv)—this in spite of directly quoting Sonnet 81 on the book's penultimate page, and its prediction that "eyes not yet created" would still be reading him. Her traditionally speculative biography consists of the usual combination of hoary chestnuts ("we know more about him than any of his contemporaries, save playwright Ben Jonson" [27]) and eyebrow-raising overstatements: Shakespeare "enjoyed the patronage of earls and monarchs" (27, emphasis added) and that *Green's Groatsworth of Wit* was the "first mention of Shakespeare's name in print," when its status as a mere allusion is

in doubt (8).

Amidst these inflations and conflation Mays nevertheless includes several amusing—albeit surely unwitting—observations that would be quite at home in any post-Stratfordian book: that Shakespeare’s burial register noted him as *gent* rather than playwright, and “[i]n no way did the people of England respond to his death with a gesture that suggested they believed a great man had died” (4). Conceding that all records of his early life have vanished she wonders, “how exactly an outsider without proper university credentials or an established literary reputation was able to penetrate the tight-knit circle of wits poets and actors who orbited the London theaters”? She can only conclude that it “remains unknown” (7). The absence of references to manuscripts in Shakespeare’s will and his failure to retain his originals is “hard to fathom” (25) and, despite Elizabethan Britons being “efficient record keepers,” “not a single letter [of Shakespeare’s] has been unearthed” (27). Later, she mutters in frustration that, if only Heminges and Condell had included a biography in the First Folio, it would have “answered many of the questions that have gnawed at generations of Shakespeare scholars” (63). Reading passages such as these, one can’t help but recall Kevin Costner’s Jim Garrison in the Oliver Stone film *JFK* going over the witness interview transcripts in the Warren Report and saying out loud, “ask the question. Ask the question!”²

Such questions are, however, far from her mind. So far in fact that (in what is surely one of the strawest of straw men arguments ever) she makes the jaw-dropping accusation that skeptics claim Shakespeare’s manuscripts “never existed in the first place” (26) – an absurd mischaracterization. She writes that, while Henry Folger was pleased to obtain Edward de Vere’s Geneva Bible, he believed the Oxfordian theory “ridiculous,” but offers no documentation to support the claim (222). Such Stratfordian “debunking” could be dismissed as typical if it weren’t in her case so positively inexcusable: her classified bibliography includes not just James Shapiro’s *Contested Will* but *Shakespeare by Another Name* by Mark Anderson and Charles Beauclerk’s *Shakespeare’s Lost Kingdom* – none of which she has appeared to have so much as cracked open.

Grant too refers to Shapiro’s *Contested Will* but only in passing, similarly giving no indication of having read it. Unlike Mays, he eschews outright any kind of biographical treatment of Shakespeare, or indeed his own thoughts on the author; his focus is so exclusively on the Folgers as collectors, one could imagine him applying his energies equally well to the story of a pair of philatelists. Inasmuch as Shakespeare himself may be all but absent, Grant does take the liberty of addressing the SAQ openly, treating the question of authorship as both a dedicated focus of the Folgers’ collecting and as a legitimate, intentional category in their Library, along with source books, allusions, prompt books, manuscripts, music literature and period instruments. This would seem to undermine Mays’ assertion that Folger rejected Oxford out of hand; in fact, Grant reveals Folger to have been a long-standing member of the Bacon Society of America, and having deliberately collected Baconiana with—for a while at least—an open mind as to his authorship of Shakespeare (78).

In spite of the riches afforded by two books on the same topic, there are

some notable absences in each. Easily the most obvious missed connection on the part of Mays and Grant is that they both go into considerable detail about the notorious 1911 anti-monopoly case against John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil under the Sherman Antitrust Act, in which Henry would play a significant part and from which he would ultimately profit handsomely. Yet neither author recognizes that the enterprise in which Folger was engaged in the rare book market was also the creation of a monopoly of sorts in First Folios and other Shakespeareana. Grant acknowledges the frustrations expressed by contemporary Shakespeare scholars whom, towards the end of Folger's collecting career, came to realize the extent of what he held and how inaccessible it was.

However, because Mays rejects the mystery over authorship and Grant appears not to have given it a great deal of thought, it doesn't occur to either author what a loss this situation represented: for all the good work that the Folger Shakespeare Library has accomplished since it opened in 1932, it does beg the question of what potential discoveries into the authorship of the plays and poems might actually have been delayed for decades or prevented outright while the Folgers' treasures sat locked away in various warehouses, their contents unknown even to their owners. We need only recall the groundbreaking analysis of Edward de Vere's Bible at the Folger Library by the general editor of this journal, Dr. Roger Stritmatter, to appreciate what other discoveries might have been gained over this time period.

The other great absence in both books—as is so often the case with orthodox treatments of Shakespeare—is a true sense of the *object* of the Folgers' obsession: Shakespeare himself as an artist, an individual. Mays struggles to sustain a biographical narrative with frequently risible results, in the process posing hapless observations about the paucity of the available evidence, which had she had followed through upon, might have led her to contrary conclusions about the identity of the actual author. Grant for his part doesn't even bother trying.

Yet, as this essay's opening paragraph indicates, there are some pretty compelling parallels to be mined between the careers of both Shakespeare and Henry Folger, ones which may be more than just ironic. They suggest perhaps that Folger, having read deeply of Shakespeare over his entire lifetime, sensed – as did J. Thomas Looney—the author's true character, spirit and intent and, in a kind of Freudian psychological transference, adopted a number of Shakespeare's attributes: apparent eccentricity, a man apart, an enthusiast for music and the culture of another country, and—while not at all improvident with money matters—holding money itself in low regard and only as a means to other ends. At the very least even orthodox scholars would admit that both men may be described as elusive.

Such transference is not merely fanciful musings on the part of the present writer, but a recognized tenet of literary theory. John Rodden, in his book *George Orwell: The Politics of Literary Reputation* describes both the *radiating reputation* of an author, in which an author's perceived "energy is 'transferred' and... absorbed" by the reader³ and *transference heroics*, in which readers identify with writers they admire and adopt them as models for their own development⁴. Both processes could well occurred in the mind of Henry Folger, so profoundly did he admire Shakespeare,

making him the focus of his entire non-working life.

The closest Mays gets to drawing connections between the two men is the rather pedestrian observation that both William Shakespeare and Henry Folger were successful businessmen who made lots of money but who didn't live to see the full fruits of their work, in the printing of the First Folio and the opening of the Folger Shakespeare Library. An author aware of—or at least open to—Oxford as Shakespeare would have had much more substantial ideas with which to work.

Certainly the Oxfordian reader will be frustrated with the face-value acceptance both authors give to the First Folio itself, Mays in particular. Her history of the First Folio is as fanciful as her Shakespeare biography: Her third chapter confidently describes John Heminges' and Henry Condell's decision-making processes as they secure the rights to the quartos and manuscripts and make arrangements with Jaggard's print shop and the authors of the Folio's preliminaries, only to concede at its close that no records concerning the production of the First Folio have ever been found. She calls Heminges' and Condell's production of the First Folio among "the most puzzling literary mysteries of all time," (56) but the possibility that they had nothing whatever do with it is apparently unknown to her. Grant's only concern is the Folio's physicality as a collectible. Neither admit to any skepticism over its origin, publishing history or contents.

In terms of the broader debate over authorship, *The Millionaire and the Bard* and *Collecting Shakespeare* reveal two important things. First, that the extent of anti-Stratfordian literature and the reach of its arguments are now so significant that they cannot easily be ignored, and certainly not by Shakespeare outsiders. Second, that in so dealing with the SAQ, conventional scholars are really left with only two choices: to attempt to debunk it with inevitably fallacious arguments (Mays), or to respectfully acknowledge its existence but to avoid the subject of biography altogether, such that Shakespeare himself no longer appears to matter as an individual (Grant). This latter approach was also adopted by the editors of the 2014 book *Shakespeare and the Digital World* in which "Shakespeare" was for all intents and purposes treated as an object and an industry, but not an actual author⁵.

Perhaps the most significant lesson authorships skeptics may draw from the story of Henry Folger is that, as a case study, it serves to demolish any attempt to ridicule the Oxfordian case as a "conspiracy theory", one about which "too many people" would have needed to have known. We must understand that Henry and Emily Folger and a close circle of confederates were able to operate an enterprise on a *global scale* in secret and at the same time kept his name out of the newspapers *for the better part of four decades* – and all this in an age of mass media, with British newspapers responding with outrage to the loss of their printed heritage at auctions to a faceless American millionaire. If, with the right mix of power and influence this could be accomplished in a democracy during the 20th Century, how much more likely is it that a similarly secretive and powerful man in an authoritarian 16th Century could have disguised his actions to contemporary observers—and thus to history?

These conclusions must all, of course, obtain from an Oxfordian reading; they do not originate from authorial intentions, which, constrained as they are by

Stratfordian thinking, are incapable of any similar kind of theorizing. *The Millionaire and the Bard* and *Collecting Shakespeare* once again demonstrate the profound and ultimately tragic limitations that the Stratford model imposes on even the best-intentioned writers – curtailing analysis, aborting connections, misdirecting investigation, and impoverishing their work of potentially valuable insight.

While Grant has produced an at times fascinating if bloodless institutional history, and Mays an engaging quest story, neither can be said to have successfully joined Henry Folger in a genuine pursuit of Shakespeare.

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