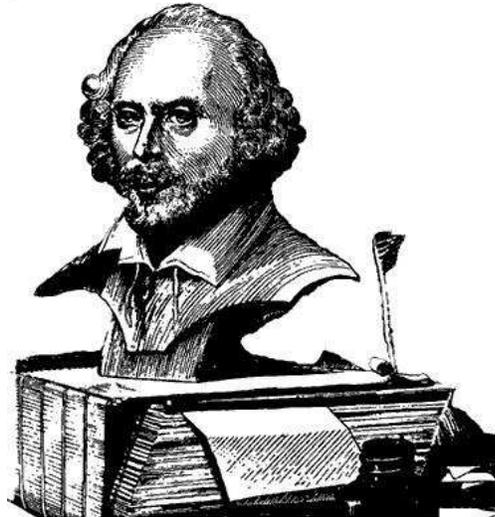


OPEN FORUM
**The Pages of *The Oxfordian* are open to all sides of the
Authorship Question**

Shakespeare Wrote Shakespeare

David Kathman

For the vast majority of Shakespeare scholars, there is no ‘authorship question’; they agree that the works of William Shakespeare were written by William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon (allowing for some collaboration), and tend to ignore or dismiss anyone who claims otherwise.



In the following pages I will try to explain, from the perspective of a Shakespeare scholar, why the Stratford Shakespeare’s authorship is so generally accepted by historians, and why those historians do not take seriously the various attempts to deny that attribution. I realize from experience that this explanation is not likely to convince many committed antistratfordians, but at the very least I hope to correct some misconceptions about what Shakespeare scholars actually believe.

For the purposes of argument, we can distinguish among three main strands of William Shakespeare’s biography, which I will call *Stratford Shakespeare*, *Actor Shakespeare*, and *Author Shakespeare*.

Stratford Shakespeare was baptized in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564, married Anne Hathaway in 1582, had three children with her, bought New Place in 1597 and various other properties in and around Stratford over the following decade, and was buried in there in 1616.

Actor Shakespeare was a member of the Lord Chamberlain’s/King’s Men, the leading acting company in London from 1594 on, and an original sharer in the Globe and Blackfriars playhouses.

Author Shakespeare signed the dedications of *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594), and over the next twenty years was named on title

pages as the author of numerous plays and poems, and was praised by such critics as Francis Meres and Gabriel Harvey. In 1623 his collected plays were printed in the First Folio, with a famous dedication and preface by John Heminges and Henry Condell, and several commendatory poems.

Standard biographies treat these strands—Stratford Shakespeare, Actor Shakespeare, and Author Shakespeare—as different but intertwined aspects of a single person’s life. Antistratfordians, on the other hand, claim that author Shakespeare is a different person from the other two, and some radical antistratfordians, such as Charlton Ogburn Jr., have also tried to claim that Stratford Shakespeare is distinct from actor Shakespeare—in other words, that the Stratford man was neither an actor nor a playwright.¹

In fact, however, a strong, tight web of cumulative and interconnected evidence shows that the Stratford resident, the actor, and the author were indeed one and the same person, and various antistratfordian attempts to weaken or dispute this evidence involve misleading, false, or distorted claims. It’s true that no one single document states categorically that William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon wrote *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, but then no such document exists for any other playwright of the time either.

The Name

The most straightforward evidence for the Stratford Shakespeare’s authorship is the fact that the name ‘William Shakespeare’ appeared on various printed plays and poems during his life-time. The dedications to *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594) are signed ‘William Shakespeare,’ as noted above,

I compiled a list of all known written references to William Shakespeare of Stratford during his lifetime (non-literary references), and a separate list of all known written references to William Shakespeare the writer during the same period (literary references).

and a few years later that name (or close variants) began appearing on the title pages of printed plays,

starting in 1598 with *Richard II* (by William Shakespeare), *Richard III* (by William Shakespeare), and *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (by W. Shakespeare). In 1601 a poem in Robert Chester’s *Loves Martyr* (now known as ‘The Phoenix and the Turtle’) was signed ‘William Shakespeare,’ and in 1609 *Shakespeare’s Sonnets* was published, including the narrative poem ‘A Lover’s Complaint’, attributed on the first page to ‘William Shakespeare’. Various other writers also referred to a poet and playwright named ‘Shakespeare’, most famously Francis Meres in *Palladis Tamia* (1598), who attributed a dozen plays to Shakespeare and praised his ‘sugared sonnets among his private friends’.² This only includes references

from Stratford Shakespeare's lifetime, and does not include the 1623 First Folio or the many other posthumous references.

It's true that these references do not by themselves prove that Stratford Shakespeare and author Shakespeare were the same person, but surely a person's name on so many contemporary title pages and similar documents is significant evidence, subject to confirmation by other means? Antistratfordians have typically responded to this evidence by claiming that the Stratford man's name was not actually 'Shakespeare', but rather 'Shaksper' or some variant thereof, with the first syllable pronounced like 'shack' rather than 'shake.' Unfortunately this claim, which is treated as an article of faith by many anti-stratfordians, does not stand up to objective scrutiny. Back in 1996, I compiled a list of all known written references to William Shakespeare of Stratford during his lifetime (non-literary references), and a separate list of all known written references to William Shakespeare the writer during the same period (literary references). There is considerable spelling variation in both lists, but 'Shakespeare' was by far the most common spelling used both for the Stratford resident and the author, and 'shake' spellings in general (with the first 'e') are far more common than 'shak' spellings (without the first 'e') in both lists. There is no evidence that 'shake' and 'shak' spellings were pronounced differently, and considerable evidence to the contrary; for example, in the 1592 quarto of the anonymous play *Arden of Feversham*, the name of the character Shakebag is spelled indifferently with or without the medial 'e'.³

Some antistratfordians also claim that hyphenation was used in Elizabethan times to indicate a pseudonym, and that since Shakespeare's name was sometimes hyphenated (e.g. on the title page of *Richard II* in 1598), this is evidence that people recognized it as a *nom-de-plume*.⁴

But the idea that hyphenation has anything to do with pseudonyms is completely unknown outside of antistratfordian literature, and completely unsupported by any evidence. The names of numerous real people of Shakespeare's day, such as Charles Fitzgeoffrey and the printer Edward Allde, can be found hyphenated on title pages. The most famous pseudonym of the day, Martin Marprelate, was never hyphenated in any of the earliest Marprelate tracts, yet the name of the tracts' printer, Robert Wal-degrave, appears repeatedly in those same tracts—always hyphenated.⁵ Similarly, antistratfordians sometimes make much of the fact that the early quartos of Shakespeare's plays did not have an author's name on them, implying that there was some effort to keep the author's name secret. But contemporary plays at that time were not considered literature, and most people didn't pay much attention to their authors, at least not until after 1600. Only about a third of all the commercial plays printed in the 1590s named the author on the title page, and a significant portion of these were the Shakespeare quartos late in the decade.⁶

The Contemporary Connections

Suppose we accept that the Stratford man's name was the same as that which appeared on the plays and poems, allowing for the inevitable variation in spelling. What, then, is the evidence that William Shakespeare of Stratford was the same William Shakespeare who wrote all those plays and poems? As noted above, this evidence forms an interconnected web of various strands, no single one of which tells the whole story. First, let's consider the evidence from the Stratford man's lifetime, before moving on to posthumous evidence such as the First Folio.

The first strand of evidence shows that somebody named William Shakespeare was a prominent member of the acting company known as the Lord Chamberlain's Men from 1594 to 1603 and as the King's Men after 1603.⁷ William Shakespeare was a member of this company by at least March 15, 1595, when the Treasurer of the Queen's Chamber paid 'William Kempe William Shakespeare & Richarde Burbage servants to the Lord Chamberleyne' for plays

The most that antistratfordians can do is assert that all these people must have been mistaken, fooled by a virtually omnipotent conspiracy that hid the alleged 'true' authorship of the works and promoted the authorship of the Stratford man instead.

performed at court in Greenwich on December 26 and 27 of the previous year.⁸

In the patent by which the Chamberlain's Men became the King's Men in 1603, 'William Shakespeare' is listed second among nine company members, and the following year he leads a list of nine King's Men who received red cloth for King James's coronation procession.

Later records show that 'Willelmo Shakespeare' was among the original sharers of the Globe playhouse in 1599 and the Blackfriars in 1608, and that he performed in Ben Jonson's *Every Man In His Humour* (1598) and *Sejanus* (1603). Shakespeare was often paired in contemporary records with Burbage, the company's leading actor. John Manningham's diary for 1602 famously includes a racy anecdote about Shakespeare and Burbage, and two legal documents from 1601 over control of the estate of Nicholas Brend, including the land on which the Globe sat, listed 'Richard Burbage and William Shakspeare gentlemen' as the primary tenants of the 'playhouse'.⁹

A second strand of evidence shows that the Chamberlain's/King's Men owned and performed the plays of William Shakespeare from the mid-1590s onward. The 1597 quarto editions of *Richard II* and *Richard III* both say that these plays had been publicly performed by 'the right Honourable the Lorde Chamberlaine his Servants', and the second editions the following year further attribute both plays to William Shakespeare.

Over the next five years, eight more plays that later appeared in the First Folio (*Romeo and Juliet*, *Titus Andronicus*, *2 Henry IV*, *Henry V*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*) were printed in quarto editions attributing them to the Lord Chamberlain's Men, either with or without a further explicit attribution to William Shakespeare. Starting in 1603 (with the first quarto of *Hamlet*), similar attributions to the King's Men appeared on the title pages of more Shakespeare plays.¹⁰

Thus various plays were attributed at the time to 'William Shakespeare', and somebody of the same name was a prominent member of the acting company which owned and performed those same plays. Even if no other evidence existed, these facts would allow us to say with a very high degree of confidence that William Shakespeare the actor was William Shakespeare the playwright. However, other evidence does exist to tie actor Shakespeare explicitly to author Shakespeare. The 1601 Cambridge play *The Second Part of the Return from Parnassus* includes Will Kempe and Richard Burbage of the Chamberlain's Men as characters, and at one point Kempe refers to 'our fellow Shakespeare' as a rival of the university playwrights and Ben Jonson.

Charlton Ogburn asserts that Kempe's mention of 'that writer Ovid, and that writer Metamorphosis' shows that he is too ignorant to be taken seriously, and that the whole passage is mocking the idea that the writer Shakespeare could have been an actor.¹¹ The passage makes perfect sense if the phrase in question is emended to 'that writer's Metamorphosis,' but even if we treat it as a comic blunder by Kemp, Ogburn's attempt to make it mean the opposite of what it says is typical of his aggressively deceptive rhetorical style. Kemp and Burbage are clearly comic characters being used by the Cambridge playwright to make fun of professional actors, but that doesn't mean that everything they say is false. In fact, the *Parnassus* scene merely reinforces all the other evidence we have just seen for identifying actor Shakespeare with author Shakespeare.

If we accept that actor Shakespeare and author Shakespeare were the same person, then what evidence is there that this person was William Shakespeare of Stratford? Even if we restrict ourselves to the Stratford man's lifetime, there are a few key pieces of evidence apart from the identity of the name. The first such bit of evidence is a 1602 document from the College of Heralds in which Peter Brooke, York Herald, accused Sir William Dethick, the Garter King of Arms, of awarding coats of arms to base persons. Brooke drew up a list of 23 individuals whom he claimed were not entitled to bear arms, including 'William Shakespeare,' and included a sketch of the Shakespeare arms, captioned 'Shakespeare ye Player by Garter.' These are the same arms that were granted between 1596 and 1599 to John Shakespeare, William's father (who died in 1601), and which appear on William Shakespeare's monument in Stratford.¹² Here we have specific

evidence identifying Shakespeare of Stratford as Shakespeare the actor (and thus Shakespeare the playwright), and it is reinforced by references to the actor and playwright as ‘gentleman,’ as the coat of arms entitled the Stratford man to call himself. The 1601 legal documents cited above list ‘Richard Burbage and William Shakespeare gentlemen’ as the tenants of the Globe, and in 1615 Edmund Howes published a list of ‘Our moderne, and present excellent Poets’ which included ‘M. Willi. Shakespeare gentleman’.

Further evidence along the same lines comes from the will of William Shakespeare of Stratford, which includes a bequest ‘to my ffellowes John Hemyng Richard Burbage & Henry Cundell xxvj s viij d A peece to buy them Ringes.’ Heminges, Burbage, and Condell had been three of the most prominent members of the King’s Men alongside William Shakespeare, so this bequest is very clear evidence that the actor and the Stratford man were one and the same. In the original will this bequest is an interlineation, and for this reason antistratfordians have sometimes tried to cast doubt on it by implying that it could have been forged after the fact.¹³ Apart from the implausibility of conspirators forging a bequest in a will that remained buried in the archives for 150 years, such claims reveal ignorance of English probate procedure. Every will proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, as Shakespeare’s was, had to be transcribed into a register, which survives to this day. The register copy of Shakespeare’s will includes the bequest to Heminges, Burbage, and Condell, indicating that Shakespeare’s daughter and son-in-law accepted it as genuine when they proved the will on June 22, 1616.

The Posthumous Evidence

Antistratfordians frequently claim or imply that the only evidence tying William Shakespeare of Stratford to the works of Shakespeare is posthumous, and that by attacking such posthumous evidence, such as the First Folio and the Stratford monument, they are somehow undermining the Stratford man’s claim to authorship.¹⁴ But the evidence we have seen so far all comes from the lifetime of William Shakespeare of Stratford, and it collectively shows beyond a reasonable doubt that he was in fact the William Shakespeare who wrote those plays and poems—unless one is prepared to posit a conspiracy of unprecedented scope and complexity, as antistratfordians necessarily must. Although the posthumous evidence for the Stratford man’s authorship is not quite as central as antistratfordians would like to believe, it is certainly important, and we now turn to it.

The first important piece of posthumous evidence is William Basse’s famous elegy on William Shakespeare. As I have shown in detail elsewhere, at that time only socially important people such as noblemen and church leaders were honored with printed (and thus datable) eulogies soon after their death; any eulogies for poets such as Shakespeare generally circulated in manuscript for years before

reaching print, if they reached print at all.¹⁵ In fact, Shakespeare was the best-memorized English playwright before Ben Jonson more than 20 years later, and the Basse elegy is a prime piece of evidence for this conclusion. It was written no later than 1623, when Ben Jonson responded to it in the Shakespeare First Folio, but was not printed until 1633, when it appeared in the first edition of John Donne's *Poems* (before being removed from the second edition two years later).¹⁶ At least 34 manuscript copies of the poem survive, meaning it was very popular by seventeenth-century standards, and it clearly refers specifically to William Shakespeare of Stratford. Seven of the manuscript copies, including one in Basse's autograph, specify that the Shakespeare in the poem died in April 1616, as does the version printed in the 1640 edition of Shakespeare's poems (attributed to Basse), and one manuscript copy specifies that he was 'bury'd att Stratford vpon Avon, his Town of Nativity'.¹⁷

Next we have the famous monument to Shakespeare in Holy Trinity Church in Stratford. It was presumably in place by 1623, since Leonard Digges refers to it in the First Folio. The monument depicts Shakespeare writing on a cushion, with a Latin inscription that compares him to Nestor, Socrates, and Virgil, and an English inscription that refers to 'all that he hath writt' and his 'living art'. Antistratfordians must find some way to discredit this clear evidence that the

The 1623 First Folio edition of Shakespeare's plays is the most important piece of posthumous evidence for Shakespeare's career as a playwright, and as such it is a prime target of attacks by antistratfordians

Stratford

Shakespeare was a writer, and they generally try to do so by pointing to an engraving in

William Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire* (1656) which depicts the monument rather differently than it appears today, with a much thinner figure who appears to be hugging the cushion rather than writing on it. The suggestion is that Dugdale (and his engraver, Wenceslaus Hollar) depicted the 'original' monument, which supposedly did not depict Shakespeare as a writer, and that this was later replaced or altered by conspirators. Apart from the implausibility of such a conspiracy going totally undetected, there are many serious problems with this scenario. For one thing, Dugdale explicitly identified the monument as being for 'our late famous Poet Will. Shakespeare' and transcribed the verses from the monument and gravestone. Also, Dugdale's engravings were demonstrably inaccurate in many other cases, as M. H. Spielmann showed in 1924, and Dugdale's original 1634 sketch of the Shakespeare monument is significantly closer to the monument we see today, proving that Hollar introduced errors into the engraving.¹⁸

Most importantly, a mass of independent evidence shows that from the be-

ginning, everyone saw the Stratford monument as depicting Shakespeare the famous writer. Soon after the publication of the First Folio, a contemporary hand transcribed the poems from the Shakespeare monument and gravestone into a copy of the First Folio (now in the Folger Shakespeare Library), along with another poem not recorded elsewhere.¹⁹ In his 1631 book *Ancient Funerall Monuments*, John Weever, who in 1598 had written a sonnet to Shakespeare and probably knew him personally, printed the poems from the monument and gravestone in his section on Stratford upon Avon, adding ‘Willm Shakespeare the famous poet’ in a marginal note. In September 1634 a Lieutenant Hammond, from a military company of Norwich traveling through Stratford, wrote in his private diary that the church contained ‘A neat monument of that famous English Poet, Mr. William Shakespeare; who was borne heere.’ All of these near-contemporary witnesses independently believed that the man buried and memorialized in the Stratford church was the famous poet William Shakespeare.²⁰

Other witnesses from around the same time, while not specifically mentioning the monument, make it clear that Stratford was famous as the birthplace of Shakespeare within a generation of his death. In 1630 an anecdote in *A Banquet of Jeasts or Change of Cheare* mentions Stratford upon Avon as ‘a Towne most remarkable for the birth of famous William Shakespeare,’ and Richard Hunt (c.1596-1661), vicar of Ichington, Warwickshire, annotated his copy of Camden’s *Britannia* by adding ‘et Gulielmo Shakespeare Roscio plané nostro’ (‘and to William Shakespear, truly our Roscius’) to Camden’s sentence on famous residents of Stratford upon Avon.²¹ The most that antistratfordians can do is assert that all these people must have been mistaken, fooled by a virtually omnipotent conspiracy that hid the alleged ‘true’ authorship of the works and promoted the authorship of the Stratford man instead.²²

The 1623 First Folio edition of Shakespeare’s plays is the most important piece of posthumous evidence for Shakespeare’s career as a playwright, and as such it is a prime target of attacks by antistratfordians. In addition to the plays, half of them never printed before, the volume includes the famous Droeshout engraving of Shakespeare, and much informative front matter. In their dedication to the earls of Pembroke and Montgomery, John Heminges and Henry Condell of the King’s Men write that they published the Folio ‘onely to keepe the memory of so worthy and Friend, & Fellow alive, as was our Shakespeare’. As we saw above, William Shakespeare of Stratford left money in his will to Heminges and Condell, and this passage provides further confirmation that the Stratford man was indeed the Shakespeare who acted with the King’s Men and wrote the plays in the Folio. The volume also contains Ben Jonson’s famous poem in which he calls Shakespeare ‘Sweet Swan of Avon’, and a poem by Leonard Digges, the stepson of Shakespeare’s friend Thomas Russell, who refers to ‘thy Stratford Moniment’; together these indicate pretty clearly that the Shakespeare being honored by this volume

was from Stratford-upon-Avon, consistent with all the other evidence we have just seen.

Antistratfordians are forced to claim that all this straightforward evidence is the result of an elaborate conspiracy of deception, necessarily involving at least Jonson, Heminges, and Condell, and they often try to support this dubious claim by asserting that the evidence in the Folio is ambiguous, and thus somehow suspect. Richard Whalen is a representative example; he suggests that Digges's and Jonson's references to 'Stratford' and 'Avon' are not explicit enough because they appear in separate poems, and tries to suggest that they could refer to the London suburb of Stratford at Bow, not too far from the earl of Oxford's house in Hackney, and to an estate that Oxford once owned at Bilton, on the river Avon.²³ To call these claims weak is charitable. As Irvin Matus pointed out, Oxford is never known to have visited his estate at Bilton and sold it in 1580, forty-three years before the First Folio; Stratford at Bow is two miles from Hackney, across the River Lea, and has never been generally associated with it.²⁴ Other antistratfordian suspicions of the First Folio are generally based on distorted, ignorant, or anachronistic expectations. For example, Joseph Sobran wonders why the Folio does not include Shakespeare's narrative poems or sonnets, and sees this lack as evidence for an elaborate but incoherent conspiracy to obscure an alleged homosexual affair between Oxford and the earl of Southampton.²⁵ In fact, the Folio did not include the poems because its four publishers did not have the rights to them. However, Roger Jackson, who owned the rights to *Lucrece*, published a new edition of that poem in 1624, hard on the heels of the First Folio, just as he had published an elaborately revised edition of *Lucrece* in 1616, immediately after Shakespeare of Stratford's death.²⁶

Scholarship and the Nature of Evidence

By the standards of Elizabethan and Jacobean literary history, the evidence we have just seen is abundant, and leaves no doubt that William Shakespeare of Stratford is William Shakespeare the actor, poet, and playwright. However, antistratfordians feel entitled to dismiss all this evidence because they believe (with various degrees of vehemence) that William Shakespeare of Stratford could not have written these plays and poems, no matter what the evidence says. They typically present a negative and highly skewed picture of the Stratford man, relying on the same distortions and ignorance of context we have already seen in their handling of the positive evidence for his authorship. For example, antistratfordians often claim that the Stratford man did not own any books or manuscripts because he did not mention them in his will; however, books and manuscripts were rarely mentioned in wills of that time, and are absent from the wills of such learned men as Francis Bacon and Richard Hooker.²⁷ Antistratfordians often depict Stratford as a densely ignorant backwater, when in fact it was an important

market town with a fairly educated populace. Shakespeare's friends in Stratford included Thomas Greene, a Middle Temple lawyer who was also friends with Michael Drayton and lived in Shakespeare's house for a while, and Richard Quiney, whose correspondence (preserved by chance when Quiney died in office as bailiff of Stratford) is full of Latin and literary allusions.²⁸ Antistratfordians tend to grossly overestimate the formal education needed to write Shakespeare's plays, and vastly underestimate the resources available in Elizabethan London for someone who wanted to learn about virtually anything.²⁹ In general, they usually apply a tremendous double standard, hypercritically examining ordinary documentary evidence relating to Shakespeare of Stratford while accepting far more speculative 'evidence' for their favored candidate.

Factual sloppiness and ignorance of historical context are part of the problem here, but a bigger issue is that antistratfordians abandon the standards of evidence used by historians in general. Shakespeare scholars, like all literary historians of that era, rely primarily on external documentary evidence (of the type we have been looking at) to determine questions of attribution, only turning to internal

evidence (such as interpretations of plays and other works of literature) when such docu-

Factual sloppiness and ignorance of historical context are part of the problem here, but a bigger issue is that antistratfordians abandon the standards of evidence used by historians in general.

mentary evidence is missing, incomplete, or problematic. Anti-stratfordians, on the other hand, start with Shakespeare's works and use them to build up a picture of who they think the author must have been, often interpreting the works as a sort of crypto-autobiography; if the documentary record does not agree with this picture, that is seen as evidence that the documentary record cannot be trusted and must have been tampered with.³⁰ The problem with such an approach is that biographical interpretations from an author's work are notoriously subjective and often flat-out wrong, as many modern authors have noted, and the problem becomes exponentially worse when we are dealing with works from 400 years ago. The situation becomes still worse when the interpreter is not very familiar with the social and literary norms of the time and brings anachronistic assumptions to the table, as is the case with most antistratfordians.

Some antistratfordians have tried to bring a measure of scholarly rigor to their arguments, but such attempts have always foundered due to some combination of the above problems. For example, Diana Price's *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography: New Evidence of an Authorship Problem* (2001) presents a typically distorted picture of the Stratford man by interpreting all the evidence in the worst possible light, but Price also tries to show that the evidence for the Stratford man's authorship is uniquely deficient among playwrights of the time. To do this, she compares his 'literary paper trail' to those of 24 contemporary poets and

playwrights in terms of ten criteria (e.g. ‘evidence of a direct relationship with a patron’; ‘notice at death as a writer’), and claims that only ‘Shakspere’ (i.e. Shakespeare of Stratford) does not meet any of the criteria.³¹ However, Price’s definition of a ‘literary paper trail’ is an arbitrary one that seems designed to exclude Shakespeare, and would not be used by any working literary historian. She excludes all posthumous evidence unless it is precisely datable to within a year of the person’s death (thus excluding the Basse elegy and the First Folio), and does not count Shakespeare’s name on title pages or similar contemporary evidence, because she believes that the Stratford Shakespeare was a play broker who passed off the work of an unnamed nobleman as his own. The criteria she does use are applied with a typical double standard that never favors Shakespeare. For example, Francis Beaumont’s burial in Westminster Abbey counts as a ‘notice at death as a writer’, but Shakespeare’s Stratford monument does not; Shakespeare’s dedications to the earl of Southampton do not count as ‘evidence of a direct relationship with a patron’, but similar printed dedications by Spenser, Lodge, Greene and others do count; and so on (and on).³²

Roger Stritmatter is another antistratfordian with pretensions to scholarly rigor, though his arguments have generally focused not on the Stratford man but on the most popular alternative ‘Shakespeare’, Edward de Vere, seventeenth earl of Oxford. Stritmatter gained some attention in the early 1990s for his analysis of a Geneva Bible, now in the Folger Shakespeare Library, which apparently once belonged to the earl of Oxford and contains hundreds of ink annotations.³³ Stritmatter originally pointed out that some passages annotated in this Bible were also used by Shakespeare, and suggested that there was a significant relationship; however, my 1996 analysis found that the pattern of annotations is very different from Shakespeare’s pattern of Biblical usage, and that any overlap between the two appears to be due to chance.³⁴ By the time he wrote up his findings in his 2001 doctoral dissertation, Stritmatter was de-emphasizing quantitative analysis (though not abandoning it entirely) and focusing more on alleged thematic similarities between the annotations and Shakespeare’s Biblical usage.³⁵ This dissertation may look impressive to the uninitiated, but actually it is an astonishingly sloppy piece of work, riddled with elementary historical, literary, and logical errors. In an appendix, Stritmatter attempts to show that there actually is a statistically significant relationship between the annotations and Shakespeare’s Biblical references, but the analysis is close to worthless because of (among other things) Stritmatter’s extremely lax standards for what counts as a correspondence, including his dubious use of ‘diagnostic verses’ and his willingness to count annotated verses that are not alluded to by Shakespeare, but are near such a verse.³⁶

To return to the main topic of this essay—how do we know that William Shakespeare of Stratford wrote the works of William Shakespeare? We know because all the documentary evidence—the type of evidence actually used by histo-

rians of the period—says so. The attribution on the title pages of the contemporary quartos and in the First Folio is supported by a robust web of independent but interconnected evidence showing that William Shakespeare of Stratford, William Shakespeare the actor, and William Shakespeare the poet/playwright were all the same person. Antistratfordian attempts to attack or undermine this evidence do not stand up to scrutiny, being based on mistaken or distorted ‘facts’ and ignorance of the literary and historical context. Antistratfordian ideas have never had more than fringe status within the field of Shakespeare studies, and this is unlikely to change as long as antistratfordians continue violating so many of the standards used by historians in general

Notes

¹ Charlton Ogburn Jr., *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*, 2nd edition (McLean, VA: EPM Publications, 1992), 99-105.

² A complete list of these references to 1623 can be found on my web page at <http://shakespeareauthorship.com/name3.html>.

³ Much more detail on all this can be found in my essay ‘The Spelling and Pronunciation of Shakespeare’s Name’, available at <http://shakespeareauthorship.com/name1.html>.

⁴ For example, Charlton Ogburn Jr. wrote (*The Mysterious William Shakespeare*, 98): ‘To me, the hyphenation is so inexplicable except as designating the name as fictitious that I do not see how there can ever have been any question about it.’ This is a typical example of Ogburn’s arrogantly certain rhetoric about a subject on which the only ‘evidence’ he provides is shockingly distorted.

⁵ This last sentence is based on a study of the 1967 Scolar Press facsimile edition of the Marprelate tracts.

⁶ This figure is based on the data in James P. Saeger and Christopher J. Fassler, ‘The London Professional Theater, 1576-1642: A Catalogue and Analysis of the Extant Printed Plays’, *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 34 (1995), 63-109.

⁷ Except where noted, the following references are all discussed in E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of the Facts and Problems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), and in S. Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

⁸ Charlton Ogburn Jr. tried to claim that this record was somehow forged (*The Mysterious William Shakespeare*, 65-66), but Irvin Matus effectively demolishes this claim in *Shakespeare, IN FACT* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 54-57.

⁹ These last documents, and later documents derived from them, are discussed in David Kathman, ‘Six Biographical Records ‘Re-Discovered’: Some Neglected Contemporary References to Shakespeare,’ *The Shakespeare Newsletter* XLV: 4 (1995), p.1.

¹⁰ The complete texts of these title pages can be found in W. W. Greg, *A Bibliography of the English Printed Drama to the Restoration*, vol. I (London: The Bibliographical Society, 1970).

¹¹ Ogburn, *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*, 106-108.

¹² The sketch is reproduced in Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare*, 172, and Irvin Matus, *Shakespeare, IN FACT* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 79-82, confirms its authenticity.

¹³ For example, Ogburn, *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*, 34, says of the bequest that 'evidently it had come to the testator as an afterthought (supposing that the thought was his) that, after all, the closest associates of his life were -- were they not -- in the theatre!' Ogburn's parents, Dorothy and Charlton Sr., wrote in *This Star of England* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1952), 1230, that the bequest 'could be part of the 'build-up' of Shaksper undertaken by the perpetrators of the hoax in the First Folio.'

¹⁴ For example, Ogburn, *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*, 41, writes of the monument and the First Folio that 'Without these two posthumous memorials... it is scarcely conceivable that anyone would ever have thought of the Stratford Shaksper as the writer.'

¹⁵ David Kathman, 'Shakespeare's Eulogies', online at <http://shakespeareauthorship.com/eulogies.html>. In 'Why I Am Not an Oxfordian', *Elizabethan Review* 5.1 (Spring 1997), 32-48 (also available online at <http://shakespeareauthorship.com/whynot.html>), I specifically address the claims made by Charlton Ogburn on this topic, and show that they are not supported by the historical record.

¹⁶ Brandon Centerwall, 'Who Wrote William Basse's 'Elegy on Shakespeare'?: Rediscovering a Poem Lost From the Donne Canon', *Shakespeare Survey* 59 (2006), 267-84, argues that the poem is actually by Donne. I disagree with this conclusion, but the attribution is not directly relevant for our purpose here.

¹⁷ Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 163-4, list 27 manuscript copies, and Centerwall adds seven more. The seven manuscript copies that mention Shakespeare's death date are B4, F7, R2, N, O4, O5 (in Wells and Taylor's notation), plus C (in Centerwall's notation), the copy in Basse's autograph. The copy mentioning Shakespeare's burial place is Y2.

¹⁸ M. H. Spielmann, 'Shakespeare's Portraiture,' in *Studies in the First Folio* (Oxford University Press, 1924), excerpted online at <http://shakespeareauthorship.com/monspiel.html>. Diana Price, 'Reconsidering Shakespeare's Monument', *Review of English Studies* 48 (1997), 168-181, reproduces and discusses the 1634 sketch.

¹⁹ Robert C. Evans, 'Whome None but Death Could Shake: An Unreported Epitaph on Shakespeare', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 39 (1988), 60.

²⁰ I discuss these and later seventeenth-century references to the monument at <http://shakespeareauthorship.com/monrefs.html>.

²¹ The *Britannia* inscription was first noted by Paul H. Altrocchi, 'Sleuthing an enigmatic Latin annotation,' *Shakespeare Matters* (Summer 2003), 16-19, and Alan Nelson later identified the writer as Richard Hunt and uncovered much information about him. As Altrocchi and Nelson note in 'William Shakespeare: Our Roscius' (forthcoming), the eponym 'Roscius' referred to the most famous actor of ancient Rome, and was commonly used to praise contemporary English actors.

²² Ogburn, *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*, 14, is typically mendacious on this point; he only mentions Lieutenant Hammond out of these witnesses, and scornfully suggests that the only people who connected Stratford with Shakespeare in the

seventeenth century were those who stumbled upon the monument while traveling through town, being presumably too simple to know otherwise.

²³ Richard F. Whalen, *Shakespeare: Who Was He? The Oxford Challenge to the Bard of Avon* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1994), 56-57.

²⁴ Matus, *Shakespeare, IN FACT*, 220-21. Matus also corrects many other antistratfordian myths and distortions about the publication of the Folio.

²⁵ Joseph Sobran, *Alias Shakespeare* (New York: Free Press, 1997), 218-21.

²⁶ These editions are described on pages 409-410 of Hyder Rollins's 1938 New Variorum edition of Shakespeare's poems.

²⁷ I discuss this issue in more detail in 'Shakespeare's Will' at

<http://shakespeareauthorship.com/shaxwill.html>.

²⁸ See my 'Shakespeare's Stratford Friends' at <http://shakespeareauthorship.com/friends.html>.

²⁹ Among others, see my articles 'Were Shakespeare's Plays Written By An Aristocrat?', 'Shakespeare's Knowledge of Italy, the Classics, and the Law', and 'Shakespeare and Richard Field' at <http://shakespeareauthorship.com/#educ>.

³⁰ I am aware that most antistratfordians would claim that the documentary evidence for the Stratford man's authorship is scanty and/or ambiguous, but I hope to have shown here it is not the case.

³¹ Diana Price, *Shakespeare's Unauthorized Biography: New Evidence of an Authorship Problem* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001), 301-313.

³² More detailed criticisms of Price's arguments can be found at <http://stromata.tripod.com/id115.htm>, where Tom Veal discusses many of the contradictions and inconsistencies in Price's scenarios.

³³ Bruce R. Smith, *Roasting the Swan of Avon: Shakespeare's Redoubtable Enemies & Dubious Friends* (Washington, DC: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1994), 59-60, citing Stritmatter's article in the Spring 1993 *Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter*.

³⁴ See 'Oxford's Bible' at <http://shakespeareauthorship.com/ox5.html>, including a link to a complete list of the annotations.

³⁵ Roger Stritmatter, 'The Marginalia of Edward de Vere's Geneva Bible: Providential Discovery, Literary Reasoning, and Historical Consequence', University of Massachusetts, Amherst Ph.D dissertation (2001).

³⁶ The most detailed examination of the myriad problems with Stritmatter's dissertation is by Tom Veal, and links to his five-part analysis can be found at <http://shakespeareauthorship.com/#veal>.

Bibliography

Altrocchi, Paul H., 'Sleuthing an enigmatic Latin annotation,' *Shakespeare Matters* (Summer 2003), 16-19.

Altrocchi, Paul H., and Alan Nelson, 'William Shakespeare: Our Roscius' (forthcoming).

- Centerwall, Brandon, 'Who Wrote William Basse's 'Elegy on Shakespeare'?: Rediscovering a Poem Lost From the Donne Canon', *Shakespeare Survey* 59 (2006), 267-84
- Chambers, E. K., *William Shakespeare: A Study of the Facts and Problems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930).
- Evans, Robert C., 'Whome None but Death Could Shake: An Unreported Epitaph on Shakespeare', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 39 (1988), 60.
- Greg, W. W., *A Bibliography of the English Printed Drama to the Restoration*, vol. I (London: The Bibliographical Society, 1970).
- Kathman, David, 'Six Biographical Records "Re-Discovered": Some Neglected Contemporary References to Shakespeare,' *The Shakespeare Newsletter* XLV: 4 (1995), 1.
- Kathman, David, 'Why I Am Not an Oxfordian', *Elizabethan Review* 5.1 (Spring 1997), 32-48
- Kathman, David, and Terry Ross, eds., *The Shakespeare Authorship Page*, online at <http://shakespeareauthorship.com>.
- Matus, Irvin, *Shakespeare, IN FACT* (New York: Continuum, 1994).
- Ogburn, Charlton Jr., *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*, 2nd edition (McLean, VA: EPM Publications, 1992).
- Ogburn, Charlton Sr., and Dorothy Ogburn, *This Star of England* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1952).
- Price, Diana, 'Reconsidering Shakespeare's Monument', *Review of English Studies* 48 (1997), 168-181.
- Price, Diana, *Shakespeare's Unauthorized Biography: New Evidence of an Authorship Problem* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001),
- Rollins, Hyder, ed., *The Poems (New Variorum Shakespeare)* (Philadelphia and London: J. B. Lippincott, 1938).
- Saeger, James P., and Christopher J. Fassler, 'The London Professional Theater, 1576-1642: A Catalogue and Analysis of the Extant Printed Plays', *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 34 (1995), 63-109.
- Schoenbaum, S., *William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).
- Smith, Bruce R., *Roasting the Swan of Avon: Shakespeare's Redoubtable Enemies & Dubious Friends* (Washington, DC: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1994).
- Sobran, Joseph, *Alias Shakespeare* (New York: Free Press, 1997)
- Spielmann, M. H., 'Shakespeare's Portraiture,' in *Studies in the First Folio* (Oxford University Press, 1924).
- Stritmatter, Roger, 'The Marginalia of Edward de Vere's Geneva Bible: Providential Discovery, Literary Reasoning, and Historical Consequence', University of Massachusetts, Amherst Ph.D dissertation (2001).
- Wells, Stanley, and Gary Taylor, *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).
- Whalen, Richard F., *Shakespeare: Who Was He? The Oxford Challenge to the Bard of Avon* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1994).