

Shakespeare's Illegitimate Daughter

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Double Falsehood is not a forgery.

What difference does that make to our documentary biographies of Shakespeare?

What difference does it make to our imaginative biographies of Shakespeare?

Documents

I will not, here, rehearse all the evidence against the old theory that *Double Falsehood* is a forgery. After Brean Hammond's edition of the play was published in, and legitimated by, the Arden Shakespeare series, the forgery claim was quickly and conspicuously revived by Tiffany Stern in late 2011¹. But by the spring of 2015 Stern's reactionary thesis had been comprehensively refuted by a diverse international group of more than a dozen other scholars, working independently in a variety of different disciplines, using old and new techniques, from library catalogues to super-sophisticated statistical analysis of function words: in chronological order, besides myself, David Carnegie, MacDonald P. Jackson, Richard Proudfoot, Giuliano Pascucci, John Nance, Elizabeth Spiller, Steven Wagschal, Robert Folkenflik, Robert Hume, Jean Marsden, Diana Solomon, Marina Tarlinskaya, Brean Hammond, Ryan

¹ Brean Hammond, ed., *Double Falsehood*, The Arden Shakespeare, London, Methuen, 2010; Tiffany Stern, "'The Forgery of Some Modern Author?': Theobald's Shakespeare and Cardenio's *Double Falsehood*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 62 (2011), pp. 555-93.

L. Boyd and James W. Pennebaker². All this new research was peer-reviewed, and published by different academic publishers and different scholarly journals. Stern has made no attempt to answer all these criticisms, or to revive her claim. All these studies demonstrated that the text of *Double Falsehood*, published in late December 1727, is indeed what Theobald always claimed: a Jacobean play adapted for an early eighteenth-century theatre. Although Theobald, like other adapters, was undoubtedly responsible for some passages of independent writing (and for structural and verbal tampering throughout), the text preserves writing by both Shakespeare and Fletcher, and its primary source was clearly Thomas Shelton's translation of *Don Quixote*, published in 1612 (a text which Theobald never used elsewhere, and showed no awareness of). Consequently, the Jacobean play that Theobald adapted can be confidently identified as *The History of Cardenio*, by Fletcher and Shakespeare, entered in the Stationers' Register in 1653, and based on a play being performed by the King's Men in 1613.

Double Falsehood is an adaptation, not a forgery. So what? Theobald's eighteenth-century edition of *Double Falsehood* has now become a document, based at least in part on seventeenth-century documents that were available to Theobald but are no longer available to us. Theobald's tampering means that the published text cannot tell us much about Shakespeare's aesthetic range or achievement that we did not already know (although the text does contain a few brilliant passages of seemingly unadulterated Shakespearean prose and verse). But the twenty-first century scholarly confirmation of the veracity of Theobald's claim does have important consequences for our biographies of Shakespeare. It certainly tells us that Shakespeare's collaboration with Fletcher lasted for three plays (not just two), making it Shakespeare's most sustained partnership with another living play-

² David Carnegie, "Theobald's Pattern of Adaptation: *The Duchess of Malfi* and *Richard III*", in *The Quest for Cardenio: Shakespeare, Fletcher, Cervantes, and the Lost Play*, eds David Carnegie and Gary Taylor, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 180-91; Gary Taylor, "A History of *The History of Cardenio*" and "The Embassy, the City, the Court, the Text: *Cardenio* Performed in 1613", in *The Quest for Cardenio*, pp. 11-61, 286-307; MacDonald P. Jackson, "Looking for Shakespeare in *Double Falsehood*: Stylistic Evidence", in *The Quest for Cardenio*, pp. 133-61; Richard Proudfoot, "Can *Double Falsehood* Be Merely a Forgery by Lewis Theobald?", in *The Quest for Cardenio*, pp. 162-79; Giuliano Pascucci, "*Double Falsehood/Cardenio*: A Case of Authorship Attribution with Computer-Based Tools", *Memoria di Shakespeare, 8 On Authorship*, eds Rosy Colombo and Daniela Guardamagna (2012), pp. 351-72; Elizabeth Spiller, "The Passion of Readers, the Imitation of Texts: The History of Reading in the Quest for

wright, a partnership that dominated his last years in the theatre. It also probably tells us that there was no two-year gap after *The Tempest*: Shakespeare's late pattern of writing a play a year, probably in the summer or fall, might have stretched from *Coriolanus* (1608), through the three late romances (*Cymbeline*, 1609; *Winter's Tale*, 1610; *Tempest*, 1611), to the Fletcher collaborations (*Cardenio*, 1612; *All Is True*, 1613), with *Two Noble Kinsmen* probably breaking the pattern, being written sooner than we would have expected because of the financial strain created by the burning down of the Globe³. Moreover, the statistical analysis by Boyd and Pennebaker is based upon a well-established scientific method, using a person's (unconscious) use of function words to reveal significant personality traits. Such methods treat all texts as, in part, biographical records⁴. To test whether Theobald might have forged *Double Falsehood*, Boyd and Pennebaker were forced to create psychological profiles of Fletcher, Shakespeare, and Theobald,

Cardenio", in *The Creation and Re-creation of Cardenio: Performing Shakespeare, Transforming Cervantes*, eds Terri Bourus and Gary Taylor, New York, Palgrave, 2013, pp. 3-14; Gary Taylor and Steven Wagschal, "Reading Cervantes, or Shelton, or Phillips? The Source(s) of *Cardenio* and *Double Falsehood*", in *The Creation and Re-creation of Cardenio*, pp. 15-30; John Nance, "Shakespeare, Theobald, and the Prose Problem in *Double Falsehood*", in *The Creation and Re-creation of Cardenio*, pp. 109-24; Gary Taylor, "Sleight of Mind: Cognitive Illusions and Shakespearian Desire", in *The Creation and Re-creation of Cardenio*, pp. 125-78; Marina Tarlinskaya, *Shakespeare and the Versification of English Drama, 1561-1642*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2014, pp. 203-11; Brean Hammond, "Double Falsehood: The Forgery Hypothesis, the 'Charles Dickson' Enigma and a 'Stern' Rejoinder", *Shakespeare Survey*, 67 (2014), pp. 165-79; Ryan L. Boyd and James W. Pennebaker, "Did Shakespeare Write *Double Falsehood*? Identifying Individuals by Creating Psychological Signatures with Text Analysis", *Psychological Science* (April 8, 2015), pp. 1-13 (DOI 10.1177/0956797614566658). The papers by Folkenflik, Hume, Marsden, and Solomon were given at a colloquium at the Clark Library at UCLA (January 31 and February 1, 2014); those by Marsden and Solomon are forthcoming in *Huntington Library Quarterly* in 2016; others are forthcoming in a collection of essays edited by Folkenflik. Pascucci and Tarlinskaya will publish additional work on *Double Falsehood* in *Shakespearian Authorship: A Companion to the New Oxford Shakespeare*, eds Gary Taylor and Gabriel Egan, Oxford, Oxford University Press, forthcoming in 2016. Also relevant is the theoretical and practical analysis of the difference between authorship and imitation, and our ability to distinguish the two, in Gary Taylor and John Nance, "Imitation or Collaboration? Marlowe and the Early Shakespeare Canon", *Shakespeare Survey*, 68 (2015), forthcoming.

³ On this chronological pattern, see David Gants, "The 1612 *Don Quixote* and the Windet-Stansby Printing House", in *The Creation and Re-creation of Cardenio*, eds Bourus and Taylor, pp. 31-46, esp. 43-44.

⁴ For the larger research methods and conclusions, in prose that does not require a specialist statistical background, see James W. Pennebaker, *The Secret Life of Pro nouns: What Our Words Say about Us*, London, Bloomsbury, 2011. Pennebaker has additional research forthcoming in the collection organized by Folkenflik.

based on the undisputed writings of each man. Not surprisingly, the free-wheeling, supercollaborative Fletcher proved to be intensely social and dynamic, in systematic contrast to the “organized, logical, and formal” Theobald, who was so anti-social that only one person attended his funeral. But Shakespeare’s profile “possessed some similarities to both Fletcher and Theobald”, combining the dynamic social focus of his seventeenth-century collaborator with some of Theobald’s intense interest in categories and grammatical logic⁵. Anyone familiar with the work of these three authors is, I think, likely to recognize and endorse these diagnoses.

But in all the recent hubbub and debate about *Double Falsehood*, the most important biographical consequence of Theobald’s newly established veracity has been completely overlooked. If, indeed, Theobald had in his possession one or more manuscript copies of a lost play, written by Shakespeare and Fletcher in 1612, then Theobald’s preface to *Double Falsehood* has to be taken seriously. The dominant tradition of documentary biography – from Malone to Chambers to Schoenbaum – has simply ignored *Double Falsehood*. But we can no longer refuse to face Theobald’s claim that Shakespeare had an illegitimate daughter.

Shakespeare’s three daughters

In 1709, Nicholas Rowe transformed the editing of Shakespeare’s plays. Among other innovations, he prefaced his edition with “Some Account of the Life, &c. of Mr. *William Shakespear*”. Rowe’s foundational literary biography claims that Shakespeare “had three Daughters, of which two liv’d to be marry’d”. Rowe then proceeds to discuss “*Judith*” and “*Susannah*”, but he makes no further mention of the third daughter⁶. Susannah (baptized on 26 May 1583) and Judith (baptized on 2 February 1585) are well represented in Stratford-upon-Avon’s surviving documentary records, and both continue to be discussed by all Shakespeare’s academic and fictional biographers⁷. But there is no

⁵ Boyd and Pennebaker, p. 10.

⁶ Nicholas Rowe, ed., *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear [...] Revis’d and Corrected, with an Account of the Life and Writings of the Author*. By N. Rowe, Esq., London, Jacob Tonson, 1709, 6 vols, vol. I, p. xxxvii.

⁷ For the surviving archival records, see Samuel Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1975, pp. 61-76. But

documentary record of the third daughter. From Rowe's comments on the other two, we can infer that the unnamed third daughter was neither the "eldest" nor the "favorite", and that Rowe could find no evidence that she married anyone. Perhaps she died young; perhaps she never married; perhaps there was no record or memory of her marriage in Stratford-upon-Avon and its vicinity, where the other two sisters lived out their lives, and where Thomas Betterton had traveled in search of more information about Shakespeare. No third daughter is mentioned in Shakespeare's will. If she existed, the third daughter was either dead by 1616, or she was, for some other reason, excluded from his will.

Biographers have assumed that the unnamed third daughter is simply a phantom, resulting from a mistake on the part of Rowe or his source. There are certainly mistakes in Rowe's "Account", and we can always speculate that Shakespeare's three baptized Stratford *children* got misunderstood as three *daughters*. But Theobald's preface to *Double Falsehood* suggests an alternative explanation for the third daughter.

Shakespeare's natural daughter

The first paragraph of Theobald's preface devotes a sentence to an explanation for Shakespeare's writing of the play based on *Don Quixote*:

There is a Tradition (which I have from the Noble Person, who supply'd me with One of my Copies) that [this Play] was given by our Author, as a Present of Value, to a Natural Daughter of his, for whose Sake he wrote it. in the Time of his Retirement from the Stage⁸.

Schoenbaum's conclusion – "By 1585, the family of William Shakespeare was complete" (p. 76) – treats the documentary record as though it were indisputably comprehensive.

⁸ Lewis Theobald, "Preface of the Editor", in *Double Falshood; or, The Distrest Lovers*, London, Watts, 1728, sig. A6. Although the titlepage of this first edition is dated "MDCCXXVIII" (1728), it was advertised in the *London Evening Post* of 19-21 December 1727, Theobald's dedication is dated 21 December, and a surviving copy, signed by Theobald, is dated 27 December; consequently, I refer to "1727" as the date of *Double Falshood*. (The first performances were also in December 1727.) The self-described "Second Edition", by contrast, can be properly dated, and distinguished, as "1728". The second edition includes several changes to the "Preface", clearly made by Theobald himself; these include "this Play" (square bracketed in my quotation, above), substituted for the original ambiguous "it" of the 1727 edition. The "it" might be interpreted to mean "the manuscript that I acquired from a Noble Person",

If *Double Falsehood* were a forgery, then there would have been no old manuscript "Copies" that Theobald acquired, and consequently "the Noble Person" of this sentence would be no more than a convenient fiction. Someone who invented a lost play could also invent an anonymous aristocrat to corroborate its authenticity. Moreover, Theobald had certainly read Rowe's "Account" of Shakespeare's life, and alludes to it in this very sentence; Rowe is the source of the story about Shakespeare's "Retirement from the Stage" in his final years⁹. So, if Theobald were a forger, the "Natural Daughter" might be a fiction, inspired by Rowe's mysterious third daughter.

But we now know that *Double Falsehood* was *not* a forgery. We now know that its Jacobean source *was* written in the last years of Shakespeare's life, when he had apparently retired from acting, and spent less time writing plays and more time in Stratford-upon-Avon. We now know that Theobald *must* have had a manuscript, and he could (as he claimed) have had several. Theobald *had* to acquire those manuscripts from someone, and a "Noble Person" is a plausible owner of such old manuscripts. If a manuscript was handed down in a noble family, then a "Tradition" might also have been handed down. Theobald was the first Shakespeare scholar. As a modern scholar or journalist would do, Theobald seems here to be dealing with a valuable source of documents and information: a person who (like a whistleblower, or a rich donor) does not want his or her name to be made public. Although Theobald had read Rowe's "Account", he scrupulously does *not* refer to Rowe's "three Daughters", and scrupulously does *not* assert that the unnamed "Natural Daughter" (identified by Theobald's source) was the unnamed third daughter (identified by Rowe's source). That may be a reasonable inference, but Theobald was careful not to make it. "I do not pretend to know", he had written, in the previous sentence of this preface (about Betterton's failure to perform the play); in this sentence, Theobald does not pretend to know anything more about the "Natural Daughter" than his source had told him.

one presumably called the ambiguity to Theobald's attention, and he scrupulously clarified his intention. For a modernized text with commentary, see Hammond, ed., *Double Falsehood*, p. 168 (Pre. 18-22).

⁹ On Theobald's "ample (and acknowledged) use" of Rowe's biography, see Samuel Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1991 (new edition), pp. 91-92.

Theobald does not claim to have seen documentary proof of the existence of Shakespeare's "Natural Daughter", or documentary proof of the relationship between her and the old play (which we can now identify as *The History of Cardenio*). Theobald makes it clear that we are dealing, here, with an oral tradition, and such evidence will not satisfy all historians or biographers. Edmond Malone was a lawyer; E.K. Chambers was a civil servant; both these men came to Shakespearean biography from professions with little tolerance for the ambiguities of oral tradition. But Theobald's phrase, "Natural Daughter", is a polite euphemism for what others would call an illegitimate daughter, or – even more crudely, and much more commonly at the time – a 'bastard'. In the nature of things, we cannot always count on documents to establish the paternity of an illegitimate child. Shakespeare dramatized a dispute about paternity in the first scene of *King John* (probably written in 1596); legally, the character that Shakespeare calls, in stage directions and speech prefixes, the "Bastard", is the son of Robert Falconbridge, his mother's husband at the time of this son's birth. As King John explains the law,

Sirrah, your brother is legitimate.
 Your father's wife did after wedlock bear him,
 And if she did play false, the fault was hers,
 Which fault lies on the hazards of all husbands
 That marry wives. Tell me, how if my brother,
 Who, as you say, took pains to get this son,
 Had of your father claimed this son for his?
 In sooth, good friend, your father might have kept
 This calf, bred from his cow, from all the world;
 In sooth he might. (I.i.116-25)

This speech correctly reflects English common law¹⁰. Philip's true status as the 'natural' son of King Richard the Lionhearted depends on the oral testimony of his mother (who confesses it only in private, in a one-on-one conversation with the fruit of her illegitimate union). Until the DNA tests of the twenty-first century, it was almost never possible to establish with certainty the actual, 'natural' paternity of a child.

¹⁰ B. J. Sokol and Mary Sokol, *Shakespeare, Law, and Marriage*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 160-61.

In the nature of things, if Shakespeare had an illegitimate daughter, we would probably never find documentary evidence of her existence. If the mother was unmarried, then she might name the biological father; in the spring of 1616 Shakespeare's new son-in-law was named in this way as the father of a bastard, and in 1607 Shakespeare's younger brother Edmund was named as the father of a bastard son (who died in childbirth). But we know this only because the relevant records survive. Many parish records from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century do not survive. In particular, many were destroyed by the Great Fire of London. For more than twenty years, Shakespeare alternated between a respectable life as a wealthy gentleman, native son, and property-owner in the small Midlands market town of Stratford-upon-Avon (where he kept his wife and family), and not so respectable rented bachelor lodgings in metropolitan London (where he very successfully pursued a career in a profession that has always been associated with sexual play). London would have been a more tempting, and much safer place, for him to commit adultery. Even if the woman in question was unmarried, and even if she knew and named the father, if Shakespeare's "Natural Daughter" had been born in London there is a good chance that any documentary evidence of his paternity perished in 1666.

But Shakespeare's lover(s) might well have been married. If the mother of Shakespeare's third daughter were married, then the 'father' named in her parish register would be the mother's husband, and that husband would be the child's legal father. The mother might (or might not) know for certain the name of the biological father, but a married woman would have strong incentives to protect her own reputation by not publicly acknowledging the actual paternity. A small number of people might know, or guess, or speculate, about the identity of the 'natural', biological father; this is what we call gossip, or second-hand testimony, or hearsay, and it would not be admitted in a court of law, or the documentary biographies of lawyers and civil servants.

But if Shakespeare fathered a daughter with a woman other than his wife, such oral testimony is almost certainly the only evidence that would survive. In a patrilineal culture, male bastards were sometimes acknowledged, if a man had no surviving sons by his wife; but there were no such incentives for recognizing a female

bastard. Even if the natural daughter had still been alive in 1616, Shakespeare might not have wanted to acknowledge her in the very public, and very legal, document of his last will and testament. That document belonged, after all, to his respectable Stratford-upon-Avon life.

The insistence upon documentary evidence of paternity therefore serves to protect Shakespeare's sexual reputation. It has protected many male reputations. Women, after all, have the babies; men may or may not acknowledge their responsibilities. But Theobald is not the only witness to Shakespeare's fondness for extramarital sex. Anne Hathaway was already three months pregnant by the time Shakespeare married her; for that fact, we have documentary evidence, which also suggests that the marriage was rushed. As Stanley Wells points out, in the sixty years between 1570 and 1630, Shakespeare was one of only three men in Stratford-upon-Avon "recorded as having married before he was twenty years old, and the only one whose bride was pregnant at the time"¹¹. Which is to say: an early enthusiasm for illicit reproductive sex was among the many ways in which Shakespeare was demonstrably exceptional.

The other evidence of Shakespeare's sex life is, unsurprisingly, based on oral reports. In 1602 the London lawyer John Manningham recorded, in the midst of his detailed weekly summaries of sermons he attended, an anecdote about Shakespeare's sexual assignation with a female fan of *Richard III*; Manningham identifies his source, William Towse, a lawyer not otherwise known for gossip, who was "deemed responsible enough to be chosen treasurer, the highest office at the Inner Temple, in 1608 and sergeant-at-law in 1614"¹². In this story, Shakespeare in London was competing with another man (Richard Burbage) for the sexual favors of a woman other than his wife. This anecdote was repeated by Thomas Wilkes in 1759; Wilkes cannot have taken it from Manningham's unpublished, unknown diary, and so he must have had some other source¹³. But

¹¹ Stanley Wells, *Shakespeare, Sex and Love*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 69.

¹² Philip Finkelpearl, "John Manningham", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/public/index.html>). For the anecdote itself, see *The Diary of John Manningham of the Middleton Temple, 1602-3*, ed. R. P. Sorlien, Hanover, NH, University Press of New England, 1976, p. 75.

¹³ Thomas Wilkes, *A General View of the Stage*, London, J. Coote, 1759, p. 221.

if Manningham's diary had not survived, the anecdote by Wilkes would have been dismissed as a fiction, or as a totally unreliable part of the eighteenth-century Shakespearian 'mythos'. (Neither Chambers nor Schoenbaum records the 1759 version of the story, or comments on its apparent corroboration of Manningham.)

According to John Aubrey, William Davenant did not discourage rumors that he was Shakespeare's illegitimate son (which presumably required a sexual assignation in Oxford). Even more famously, the edition of *Shakespeare's Sonnets* published in 1609 tells the story of an actor-poet who has an unmistakably sexual relationship with a woman (or a succession of women), to whom he is not married.

Of course, we can dismiss all this evidence, and Shakespeare's biographers have generally preferred to do so. The Manningham/Towse anecdote may be nothing more than a scandalous joke; Davenant's vanity may have encouraged him to acquiesce in, or promote, slanders of his own mother, in order to link him to his great predecessor; the sonnets may be entirely fictional literary exercises, without the slightest nugget of autobiographical pertinence. But in the wake of the sixteenth-century pregnant bride, it is hard to dismiss three separate seventeenth-century documents telling three distinct stories about Shakespeare's extramarital sexual adventures – to which we must now add a fourth distinct document, telling a fourth distinct story.

The Manningham/Towse anecdote was written in a private diary before Davenant was born, and there is no evidence that it circulated in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, or was known to Theobald. Aubrey's notes remained in manuscript until the nineteenth century. No one before Theobald recorded the "Natural Daughter" story. And Shakespeare's sonnets were hardly read at all, and certainly not admired, in the seventeenth century, or most of the eighteenth. What emerges from these separate witnesses is "something of great constancy", which suggests a lifetime of great inconstancy.

There is nothing intrinsically improbable about Rowe's claim that Shakespeare (like King Lear) had three daughters, or Theobald's claim that Shakespeare had an illegitimate daughter. Illegitimate births in England apparently rose through the sixteenth century, peaking in the first decade of the seventeenth; Shakespeare's alleged "natural daughter" would have been part of a much larger demographic pat-

tern¹⁴. But even scholars who accept that *Double Falsehood* is based on Shakespeare and Fletcher's *Cardenio* have simply dismissed Theobald's claim about the daughter. Brean Hammond, in the first critical edition of the play in a major scholarly series, begins his commentary note on this passage of Theobald's preface with the simple statement that "Shakespeare did not have a 'natural daughter'"¹⁵, as though this were an indisputable historical fact. But this opening premise forces Hammond to fill up the remainder of the note with twenty-nine lines of speculative alternatives, exculpating Shakespeare. Hammond in 2010 cited John Freehafer in 1969, who had conjectured that Theobald's statement was somehow related to the rumors that Davenant was Shakespeare's illegitimate son; if so, Davenant's wife might be regarded as Shakespeare's "natural daughter"¹⁶. But Freehafer actually provided no evidence or argument for this conjecture, simply citing a 1940 article by Alfred Harbage¹⁷. Thus, Hammond's first line of defense, in 2010, was speculation by Harbage, seventy years before. Harbage is worth quoting in full. He begins by stating that "One of the copies of the play, [Theobald] said, had survived as the property of Shakespeare's illegitimate daughter". This is not what Theobald said, or wrote. Theobald claimed that the play was *written* for Shakespeare's illegitimate daughter; he never claimed that he had acquired that particular manuscript, or that the daughter's manuscript "survived" as her property. This misrepresentation of Theobald's preface lays the foundation for Harbage's speculation about the whereabouts of that manuscript in the late seventeenth century, and about "the lady in question" (who is not called a "lady" by Theobald):

The lady is otherwise unknown, but possibly Mary Davenant is indicated. As the widow of Sir William Davenant, active about the theatre long after her husband's death, she is not at all unlikely to have possessed such a relic. In the early eighteenth century Sir William Davenant was rumoured to have been Shakespeare's illegitimate son:

¹⁴ For summaries of this evidence, see Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 158-59, 166.

¹⁵ Hammond, ed., *Double Falsehood*, p. 168.

¹⁶ Hammond, ed., *Double Falsehood*, p. 168, citing John Freehafer, "*Cardenio*, by Shakespeare and Fletcher", *PMLA*, 84:3 (1969), pp. 502-4; Freehafer, pp. 501-13; p. 503.

¹⁷ Alfred B. Harbage, "Elizabethan-Restoration Palimpsest", *Modern Language Review*, 35 (1940), pp. 287-319, esp. 297.

Theobald may have been guilty only of misconstruing and elaborating common gossip.

Harbage's conjecture begins by misrepresenting Theobald's preface, and ends with Theobald's presumed guilt. But we now have no reason to assume that Theobald was guilty of anything, and every reason to believe that he was telling the truth about his access to manuscripts of a Jacobean play. And how, we might reasonably ask, does Davenant's widow become Shakespeare's illegitimate daughter? This conjecture interprets 'natural daughter' to mean 'daughter-in-law married to an alleged illegitimate son' (the son being Davenant, whom Theobald does not name anywhere in the preface). There is, of course, no parallel for this usage of 'natural daughter', because 'natural' specifies a biological relationship without any legal basis, whereas 'daughter-in-law' specifies a legal relationship without any biological basis. Harbage's candidate for Shakespeare's natural daughter was Davenant's third and last wife, the Frenchwoman Henrietta Maria du Tremblay (better known in her English years as Lady Mary Davenant), who survived her husband and did not die until 1691; Henrietta Maria's birthdate is unknown, but she and Davenant had nine sons, the first (Charles) born in November 1656¹⁸. It is extremely unlikely that Henrietta was forty years old when her first child was born, or that she subsequently had eight more. Consequently, Shakespeare was dead before Henrietta was even born (and born in another country). Harbage and Freehafer's candidate thus forces them to ignore the rest of Theobald's sentence, about the relationship between Shakespeare, the natural daughter, and the play based on *Don Quixote*.

Harbage deserves credit for calling attention to the Restoration and eighteenth-century adaptations of pre-1642 plays that have subsequently been lost, and Freehafer deserves credit for his pioneering scholarly defense of the credibility of Theobald's claim that *Double Falsehood* was an adaptation of a lost Jacobean play. But the Harbage-Freehafer explanation of 'natural daughter' is an embarrassingly absurd conjecture (Robert D. Hume calls it "approximately lunatic"¹⁹). And why should it be any more acceptable for

¹⁸ Mary Edmond, "Sir William Davenant", *ODNB*; Julian Hoppit, "Charles Davenant", *ODNB*.

¹⁹ Robert D. Hume, "Believers versus Skeptics: An Assessment of the *Cardenio/Double Falsehood* Problem", p. 12. I am grateful to Hume for allowing me to read the unpub-

Shakespeare to have had an illegitimate son, than an illegitimate daughter? There are only two possible explanations for this bias. One is the patrilineal and patriarchal assumption that sons are more important than daughters (combined in this case with the male fantasy that literary fathers give birth to literary sons). The other explanation is damage control: we may be forced to accept one illegitimate paternity, but we cannot accept two, so we must find a way to make both claims somehow refer to a single act of adultery, a moment of weakness rather than a pattern of illicit sexuality.

Hammond also records Neil Pattison's unpublished conjecture "that the comma after 'his' in 'natural daughter of his' is erroneous and that the phrase should run 'natural daughter of his for whose sake he wrote it'. This would have the consequence that Shakespeare wrote the play not for his own natural daughter but for his patron's natural daughter". This conjecture depends on an emendation of the text; Theobald was a scrupulous editor, but he not only failed to catch the original putative error, but also overlooked it when he revised the preface (and revised this very sentence, correcting "it" to "this Play"). The assumption of error is intrinsically implausible. Its only advantage is that it transfers the "natural daughter" from the named playwright to an unnamed male patron. Aristocratic patrons may have illegitimate daughters, but great poets apparently cannot. Pattison assumes that Shakespeare could have given a manuscript of the play to a patron's daughter, but he could not have given it to his own daughter. Neither of these assumptions is defensible. Though Hammond records Pattison's conjectural emendation, he (sensibly) does not adopt it.

Double Falshood is a document. It is an imperfect document, but so are all the extant documents of Shakespeare's plays and poems. Nevertheless, we do not emend the surviving documents of Shakespeare's work, and life, without strong evidence that they are incorrect. There is no strong evidence that "Natural Daughter" is incorrect. Even E. K. Chambers had to admit that there was "not [...] any great improbability in Shakespeare's having a natural daughter"²⁰.

lished typescript of his 2014 UCLA paper. His statement is completely independent of my own analysis here.

²⁰ Edmund K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1930, 2 vols, vol. I, p. 541.

A present of value

Nevertheless, in the very same sentence, Chambers dismissed Theobald's claim as "absurd". Why? Because Shakespeare "did not write his plays under conditions which left him any property in them to transmit, and in any case a play would have been an inadequate provision for the poor girl". Six decades later, this objection was repeated, with equal confidence, by Schoenbaum:

it is a most dubious tradition, reflecting as it does a curious incomprehension of the nature of a playwright's business arrangements with his company, which would not leave him with transferable property rights in playbooks. The unfortunate love child – did she exist – would have benefited little from such a bequest²¹.

Although Schoenbaum carefully varies his language and cannot be accused of verbal plagiarism, the intellectual content of these two passages is identical. Both of them assume that Theobald was making a claim about a playwright's relationship to an acting company, about the transmission or transferal of property rights, about a bequest intended to support the child after Shakespeare's death, and about a "poor girl" or "unfortunate [...] child". On the basis of these interpretations, both of them dismiss everything in Theobald's sentence.

But Theobald did not say, or imply, any of the things that Chambers and Schoenbaum attribute to him. The daughter is not described as poor or unfortunate; Theobald does "not pretend to know" anything about her economic or social circumstances. If her mother was married to someone other than Shakespeare, then the daughter might have been born into a very comfortable existence, economically and socially. Likewise, Theobald describes her only as a "daughter", and says nothing about her age at the time when the play was written, or the time when the gift was given. She might, for all we know, already have been an adult, rather than a "girl" or "child". Although Theobald associates the writing of the play with Shakespeare's retirement to Stratford, he does not describe the gift as a death-bed bequest. Hence, Theobald never claims, or even implies, that the "present" was intended to provide for any kind of maintenance, or income, over a long period of time.

²¹ Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives*, p. 53.

Theobald tells us that the play was “given [...] as a present of value”. Both Chambers and Schoenbaum assume that “value” was financial, and they dispute the claim by referring to the very different nature of copyright law in the early seventeenth century. But Theobald’s claim need have nothing to do with inherited, or transferable, literary copyright. By 1612-13, there may well have been a market for private transcripts of Shakespeare’s plays, especially the ones that had never been printed. But the greater value of a play was in the theatre. Playwrights made most of their money by selling scripts to acting companies: a one-time payment, rather than a promise of decades of royalties. But Shakespeare was not just “a playwright”, and his “business arrangements” differed from those of other writers. Unlike his co-author John Fletcher, Shakespeare was also a shareholder in the King’s Men, and as such he profited from every performance of every play. Conceivably, Shakespeare might have made an arrangement with the King’s Men that his natural daughter would be paid his ‘share’ of the receipts for any performance of this particular play, at least during his lifetime, or as long as he was a shareholder. Of course, that is pure speculation on my part. But we simply do not know the nature of Shakespeare’s very particular business relationship, as an actor-sharer-playwright, with his acting company. We therefore cannot dismiss the “Tradition” that Theobald records.

More significantly, the financial value of a gift is often less important than its emotional value, worth, or importance. If Theobald’s source was telling the truth, then Shakespeare committed adultery with a woman who gave birth to his biological (but not legal) third daughter. That daughter was still alive when *The History of Cardenio* was completed, no earlier than 1612, no later than February 1613. By that time, at least privately, Shakespeare recognized that she was indeed, biologically, his child. He gave her a gift. We do not know whether he gave her other gifts, or if she regarded this gift as in some way exceptional or extraordinary. For a child with no legal standing, any act of recognition or generosity by the biological father can be especially important. For any child whose parent is a writer, the gift of a text written by that parent, perhaps in the parent’s own handwriting, may be particularly precious.

The usual story of illegitimate children is that the father has no legal obligation to support them; therefore, anything they receive from the father is an act of generosity, a gift, rather than a duty: a free

expression of recognition, affection or approval. The gift was “this Play”²². The recipient therefore had, or was thought to have, or was being encouraged to have, an interest in plays. But in context it is clear that the gift was a material object: not a special trip to the theatre, but a text of the play. Therefore, presumably, the recipient could read. This tells us that the recipient was, by 1612-13, old enough to read. If she was the sexual fruit of Shakespeare’s London life, then she would have been younger than Shakespeare’s two Stratford daughters; she might have been born at any time between 1589 and 1606. Given the relatively low rates of female literacy in early seventeenth-century England, more remarkable than the daughter’s age is the inference that she was literate.

But the gift here was not just any text of any play. The “tradition” reports that “this play was given by our author [...] to a natural daughter [...] for whose sake he wrote it”. The gift, then, is not just the material text of a play, which may or may not have had any particular financial value. The gift is the *writing* of this particular play. Shakespeare of course wrote only part of the play, and it was not a private text; he and Fletcher sold it to the King’s Men, who performed it. So “for whose sake he wrote it” must have some more particular meaning, a meaning that has nothing to do with the play’s financial value. The “Tradition” recorded by Theobald tells us only that there was an unspecified special relationship between this play and this daughter. Why? Is there something in *Double Falsehood*, or in “the history of Cardenio” told by Cervantes, which might be particularly relevant to Shakespeare’s illegitimate daughter? And since we now know that Shakespeare co-wrote the play with Fletcher, is there, or was there, something in the scenes written by Shakespeare that would have been particularly relevant to his illegitimate daughter?

Theobald does “not pretend to know” the answer, and neither do I. But there are two daughters in *Double Falsehood*, and two daughters in “the History of Cardenio” as told by Cervantes. In *Double Falsehood*, one of those daughters, Leonora, has a very conspicuous

²² Theobald mistakenly believed that the play had never been performed in Shakespeare’s lifetime; therefore, in his account, the gift had to have been specifically textual. Theobald is careful not to claim that he possessed the original manuscript Shakespeare had given to his “Natural Daughter”, but theoretically the “Copie” he acquired from a “Noble Person” might have been a copy of that original (or Theobald might have thought that it was).

father, who is a major character in the play. The father of the other daughter, Violante, is entirely absent. He does not, and cannot, protect her. Neither of those names appears in *Don Quixote*, and some scholars have assumed that Theobald himself changed the names as part of his adaptation (as he certainly changed Cardenio to Julio, and Fernando to Henriquez)²³. But what if Shakespeare himself changed one of those names? What if he substituted his illegitimate daughter's name for the name he found in *Don Quixote*? We cannot answer that question, but we can ask it. And we can observe that the name "Violenta" appears twice in the 1623 folio of Shakespeare's *Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*: once as an error for the fatherless daughter "Viola" in a stage direction in *Twelfth Night* (I.v.160-61) and then again as the name of a fatherless "daughter" who enters in the opening stage direction of III.v in *All's Well That Ends Well* – but then never speaks, is spoken to, or otherwise identified anywhere in the play. In other words, on both occasions, in two plays written early in the seventeenth century, the name "Violenta" is a textual ghost, a name that flitted into someone's consciousness and then into a text where it did not belong. Editors routinely remove the name "Violenta" from both texts, making her even more of a ghost.

There could be a million different connections between Shakespeare's ghostly "Natural Daughter" and the ghost of the lost original *History of Cardenio*, none of them recoverable from any legal paperwork. Ghosts fall between the cracks of our legal, textual, and editorial bureaucracies. We do not know what might have made *Cardenio* especially meaningful, or relevant, to a daughter about whom we know almost nothing. But the fact that we do not know, and perhaps will never even be able to guess, the significance of the gift, does not mean that, in our ignorance, we can blithely dismiss the fragile trace of Shakespeare's third daughter's existence. Theobald's claim is entirely plausible, historically and emotionally. Theobald had access to sources – texts and persons – that are no longer available to us. He or his sources may have been wrong, but we must at least consider the possibility that they were right. Even documentary historians must acknowledge the legitimacy of the questions raised by Theobald's account of the "Natural Daughter".

²³ For Julio and Henriquez, see Taylor, "The Embassy", in *The Quest for Cardenio*, eds Carnegie and Taylor, pp. 304-6.

Any attempt to answer those questions must leave documentary biography behind, and move into the narrative realm of an imagined life: our imaginations of Shakespeare's life, Shakespeare's imaginations of other lives, his and our imaginations of Violante's life²⁴. It is our imaginative biographies of Shakespeare, the stories we tell about our most influential storyteller, which will be most affected by the "Tradition" of the third daughter. But those imaginings are best separated from my more circumscribed effort, here, to unpack the significance of a single sentence in a single document. It is enough, for now, to say that responsible scholarship can no longer ignore the "Natural Daughter" in Theobald's preface to *Double Falsehood*.

²⁴ I am at work on a book about Shakespeare's third daughter and her mother.