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On Biography

edited by
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Foreword: Shakespeare's Biography and Its Discontents

Rosy Colombo

For Stanley Wells

This second online issue of *Memoria di Shakespeare. A Journal of Shakespearean Studies* is meant to be a follow up to the issue on *Authorship*, which was part of the former series of the journal and the last to appear in print (2012). That issue dealt with the ecdotic question of the absence of an original text within Shakespeare's canon; it focussed, in fact, on "il testo che non c'è", according to the witty definition of the late Giorgio Melchiori. It is now the turn of an investigation of the paradigm of authorship as it relates to Shakespeare's biography – an investigation which must inevitably wander, at times, navigating scarcity of evidence and the dispersed traces of the self's presence; to rephrase Melchiori's statement, "una vita che non c'è", that is, Nobody's life: a life that lacks the centre of a full identity, both empirical and existential, in keeping with the very essence of the theatre.

The *vexata quaestio* of Shakespeare's life echoes the Homeric question, as Giambattista Vico first felt – and it is no accident that Vico is taken as a starting point in Paola Colaiacomo's opening essay in this issue. Although "not so anonymous", as Stanley Wells reminds us with characteristic vigour substantiated by admirable scholarship (in his pro-Shakespearean manifesto written with Paul Edmondson, *Shakespeare Bites Back: Not So Anonymous*, 2011), Shakespeare's identity remains a compound and enigmatic one, in spite of the variety of modes in which narrative forms of biography have coped with the *disjecta membra* of his multiple theatrical personality: at once player, share-holder and writer; a company man, a collective character – consistent with the collaborative textuality of his plays.

With that having been said, it must be added here – so that misunderstandings and misplaced expectations may be dispelled once

and for all – that the editors of this issue take full responsibility for their decision to turn down contributions from supporters of the anti-Stratfordian cause, which are mostly non literary-minded – as proven by a number of unscholarly and badly written biographies, better suited to debates on Wikipedia or to the commercial demands satisfied by biography shelves in bookshops. When not the products of intellectual snobbery for Shakespeare's middle class status, deemed by some (Sigmund Freud and Henry James are just two examples) to be incompatible with the stature of his artistic achievement, resentment is the emotion they grow out of and foster. Resentment may of course be attractive – even when treated by serious scholarship as in the case of James Shapiro's *Contested Will* (2010) – but above all it sells: and it matters little whether the target of the challenge is the authority of tenured academic professors, or the prestige of the literary over the theatrical, or the ghostly authority of a powerful father-figure, a founder of the British nation. Not to mention the bitter ideological resentment in some North American circles against the cultural hegemony of the 'Englishness' that is incarnated in the myth of Shakespeare and therefore rejected, by Emerson and Whitman among others, so that an American identity may be built along the lines of a self-created Adam, with no past at his back, and with no need of a Shakespeare that is identified as an archetype of the founding origin of a nation. An attitude which may be relevant, for example, in Delia Bacon's first challenge to Shakespeare's name. Today, however, those who openly contest historical evidence are using the Internet as their weapon of choice, with the clear intention to expand the 'conspiracy theory' by making it pass as supremely democratic – the legitimate speculation of 'open minds': in fact coming across as extremely aggressive and mean. And of course Shakespeare strikes back in several ways – not only in the above mentioned vindication by Wells and Edmondson, but also, for example, in Harold Bloom's highly entertaining mockery of a 'politically correct' Shakespeare, which we are very glad to be able to reprint here with the author's permission.

Incidentally, irony is an oft-wielded tool in the debate over Shakespeare's identity within the academic sphere, where life writing, previously a form tackled mainly by professional writers, has become a field that is highly frequented by specialists in 'biographical studies', in partial response to the demands of the cultural market. In other words, it has become a lucrative trend in the Shakespeare

industry, brilliantly commented upon by David Ellis in his contribution to this issue: on either side of the Atlantic, "biography became a prize for those Shakespeareans from the Academy who had become eminent in their profession. Given the limitations of data with which they had to deal, this was as if highly trained athletes were required to qualify at international level so that they could then participate in an annual British sack race" (see p. 24 in this issue). Which reminds one of Sterne's comment on the effects of the press in *Tristram Shandy*: "Tell me, ye learned, shall we for ever be adding so much to the *bulk* – so little to the *stock*? Shall we for ever make new books, as apothecaries make new mixtures, by pouring only out of one vessel into another?" Obviously the core issue is not so much the bulk, that is the quantity of information, as the kind; Stanley Wells is right about the amount of historical material that we do possess, but even such material may prove inadequate if we take *life*, not minute detail, as the true subject of a biography. Which inevitably causes frustration in the biographer, who must resign her/himself to welcome Shakespeare as a stranger.

New, however – as Ellis argues – are the perspectives on the same, 'old' material that rely on an original use of background history, as in the case of Stephen Greenblatt's juxtaposing of empirical records with conjectures prompted by his creative imagination, as well as in James Shapiro's brilliant 'micro-biographies', which breathe new life into historical data by concentrating on two seminal years of Shakespeare's life: *1599*, a year that is surveyed in the light of claims about the genesis of *Hamlet*, and *1606*, denominated as the year of *King Lear* because of some patent symptoms of the civil strife that was to come. Equally new is the emphasis on an 'ungentle' Shakespeare, as Katherine Duncan-Jones would have him from a feminist point of view – corroborating Edward Bond's vision of Shakespeare's late years, written and staged in *Bingo* as having been spent in cynical exploitation of his daughter and of the victims of the tragedy of the enclosures.

Shakespearean biographies still continue to appear under changing perspectives, and yet discontent persists as a keyword for them, bearing the imprint of Samuel Johnson's skepticism in spite of his deep commitment to the theory and practice of biography at a time of its secularization and involvement in the construction of subjectivity. Johnson's awareness – to which he lucidly resigned himself in *The Idler* (n. 84, 24 November 1759) – of the change brought about by the genre's

emancipation from its religious and classical avatars amounts to the statement that "by conjecture only can one man judge of another's motives or sentiments". A biographer's portrait, therefore, cannot but be inherently imperfect.

Johnson's meditations have provided a guideline for this issue of *Memoria di Shakespeare*, together with Virginia Woolf's own take on the theory and practice of biography, which she would elucidate many years later, wondering if biography could not be said to be an art after all: thus shifting the focus of the authorial/authorship question from the aim of 'life writing' in the nineteenth-century documentary style (anchored in her own father's *Dictionary*) to the goal of 'writing life', in the form she experimented with in *Orlando* – a way to overcome the discontents of biography, and one which gave a voice to the epistemological crisis brought about by the modernist investigation.

Within Shakespearean scholarship, a similar crisis can be said to have struck the founding paradigms of selfhood and authorial character, including national identity. It undermined the Romantic quest for the origin of the author's life to be reflected in his *oeuvre*, which, however, continued to be endorsed in Italy by Benedetto Croce. One wonders, in fact, whether the absence of a tradition of Shakespearean biography in Italy should not be attributed to Croce's hegemony in twentieth-century Italian culture. But the crisis also affected the grounds of the empirical trend in favour of positive records, of which Sidney Lee's 1898 biography is a monumental testimony (interestingly, it was republished by Cambridge University Press in 2012), not to mention the even more influential studies of 'facts and problems' by E. K. Chambers (1930) and Samuel Schoenbaum (1975) (see Gary Taylor's essay in this issue).

Precisely the change brought about in Shakespearean biography by the breakdown of the constitutive codes of biography-writing in Romantic and Victorian culture is the key to which the analyses offered by most of our contributors is attuned. Some essays reflect the waning of a long-standing, incurable antagonism between fact and fiction (Greenblatt's successful and controversial *Will in the World*, 2004, is a case in point). Others, on the other hand, echo the heyday of deconstruction under the influence of Foucault and Derrida which so strongly affected the paradigm of the centrality of the self as a measure of identity (so that Nadia Fusini can discuss Shakespeare's "many lives" and Paola Colaiacomo can outline a global image that reaches

far beyond national identity). All of this leads to the emancipation of biography from its endemic marginality with regard to the established canon of history: but it also leads to its very liberation as a form of literature, which increasingly moves towards the acknowledgement of its hybrid form as one that is intrinsically endowed with value. As a hybrid form, it is given the credit that Remo Bodei associates with piano playing (in his *Immaginare altre vite*, 2013), where the right hand plays the light key of the imagination while the left hand strikes the grave, low key of solid facts, the two moods interrogating each other according to the biographical vision of Virginia Woolf (see, on this, John Drakakis' contribution). And throbbing between the two is the ghost of Shakespeare's life, an absence. This is precisely what happens in life writing: the traces of Shakespeare's life (as in Stephen Greenblatt's essay reprinted here) are evidence of the author's presence being deferred in the writing process, which according to Derrida involves an ontological separation between the body (the hand) and its symbolic representation (the pen). Derrida's argument is all the more relevant if we consider Shakespeare's many uncanny references to the tyrannical violence of penning and imprinting, as well as his aversion to the inscription of a (his?) name. Paradoxically, Shakespeare's biography today can be enfranchised from the myth of evidence only to acquire the definitiveness of a tombstone.

In releasing this issue of *Memoria di Shakespeare*, I wish to acknowledge with heartfelt thanks the invaluable support of my co-editor, Gary Taylor, who engaged with the content of the volume both during the planning stage and as an original contributor. Without him, this issue could not have found its voice.

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Persona Pratica e Persona Poetica[1]

Paola Colaiacomo

> A certain awkwardness marks the use of borrowed thoughts; but as soon as we have learned what to do with them they become our own.
> Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Shakspeare; or, The Poet"

1. Biography

> Although almost every year there appears some new *Life of Shakespeare*, it is now time to recognise with resignation and clearly to declare that it is not possible to write a biography of Shakespeare. At the most, an arid and faulty biographical chronicle can be composed, rather as proof of the devotion of posterity, longing to possess even a shadow of that biography, than as genuinely satisfying a desire for knowledge. […] A rapacious hand is stretched out to seize the poetical works themselves, with the view of writing this sort of fiction since […] it cannot be admitted that it is impossible to know by deducing them from his writings, the life, the adventures, and the person of a man that has left about forty plays and poems. (Croce, pp. 122, 126)

> Shakspeare is the only biographer of Shakspeare[2]. (Emerson, "Shakspeare", p. 208)

> […] since there has come down to us no writer more ancient than Hom-

[1] This is the Italian original of Benedetto Croce's pregnant title of the first chapter of his study on Shakespeare. The English translation of this section is "The Practical Personality and the Poetical Personality", in Benedetto Croce, *Ariosto, Shakespeare and Corneille* [1920], Engl. transl. by Douglas Ainslie, New York, Henry Holt & Company, 1920, rpt. New York, Russell & Russell, 1966, pp. 117-37. This translation is quoted henceforward as 'Croce', followed by page number.

[2] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Shakspeare; or, the Poet", in *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Centenary Edition*, ed. Edward Waldo Emerson, Boston-New York, Houghton Mifflin, 1903-4, 12 vols, vol. IV *Representative Men. Seven Lectures* [1850], pp. 189-219. Quoted henceforward as 'Emerson, "Shakspeare"', followed by page number. The text may also be found online at: http://www.emersoncentral.com/shak.htm.

> er, […] we are obliged […] to discover the truth, both as to his age and as to his fatherland, from Homer himself[3]. (Vico, § 788, p. 305)

Shakespeare's biography an impossibility. Only a "Shakspeare" could write it. The hand stretched out to seize the poetical works themselves in order to deduce from them the life and adventures of the man, destined to bring back nothing but a handful of dust. The truth about Homer's life to be discovered from Homer himself, that is from his works.

What goes into the idea that a life (a bio-graphy: from the Greek *βιος* + *γραφια*) can, or perhaps should, be written independently from the works it has produced? What – on the other hand – goes into the idea that a life *is* its works?

Croce's conviction that the two histories, the practical and the poetical, are radically divergent, supports his argument about the impossibility of writing a biography of Shakespeare other than as an arid and faulty biographical chronicle of a few external facts. Is Croce here deliberately sharpening the opposition he himself has created in order to reinforce his argument? I don't think so. What he wants is to open the widest possible chasm between his own philosophy of art and nineteenth-century philology.

> […] the silent and tenacious, though erroneous conviction, as to the unity and identity of the two histories, the practical and the poetical, or at least the obscurity as to their true relation, is the hidden source of the large and to a vast extent useless labours, which form the great body of Shakespearean philology. This in common with the philology of the nineteenth century in general, is unconsciously dominated by romantic ideas of mystical and naturalistic unity, whence it is not by accident that Emerson is found among the precursors of hybrid biographical aesthetic […]. (Croce, p. 121)

Two points should be noted here. First, the mentioning of a "biographical aesthetic". A concept, however hybrid, open to a far more complex critical appreciation of the life/works relationship than that of biography interpreted as mere biographical chronicle. Second,

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[3] *The New Science of Giambattista Vico* [1744], ed. and Engl. transl. by Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch, Ithaca-London, Cornell University Press, 1968, rpt. 1994. Quoted henceforward as 'Vico', followed by paragraph and page numbers.

the use of such words as "obscurity", "unconsciously", "hybrid", all still redolent of the nineteenth century's revision of neo-classical culture.

> Shakespeare is above all writers, at least above modern writers, the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life. […] Shakespeare with his excellencies has likewise his faults […]. He had no regard to distinction of time or place […]. The effusions of passion […] are for the most part striking and energetic; but whenever he solicits his invention, or strains his faculties, the offspring of his throes is tumor, meanness, tediousness, and obscurity[4].

> The defect of such critical explanations lies in continuing to conceive of the artistic processes as something mechanical, and the unrecognised but understood presumption of some sort of "imitation of nature". […] Neither Shakespeare nor any other artist can ever attempt to reproduce external nature or history turned into external reality (since they do not exist in a concrete form) […] all he can do is to try to produce and recognise his own sentiment and to give it form. (Croce, p. 201)

> We can observe the re-immersion of Shakespearean poetry in psychological materiality […]. (Croce, p. 134)

The image of the mirror appealed to by Johnson on his setting out to extenuate Shakespeare's supposed "faults" was no less material, as a critical tool, than the "materiality" Croce now ascribes to Emerson's treatment of Shakespearean poetry. It is just a case of two 'materialities', different both in degree and in kind. But the taint of psychological materiality adheres as well to Croce's refashioning the time-honoured image of the "faithful mirror" into that of the poet engaged in "recognising" his own sentiment.

> Poetry, then, should certainly be interpreted historically, but by that history which is intrinsically its own, and not by a history that is foreign to it and with which its only connection is that prevailing between a man and what he disregards, puts away from him and rejects, be-

[4] Samuel Johnson, "Preface to the Plays of William Shakespeare", in *The Major Works*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 421, 427-28.

> cause it either injures him or is of no use, or, which comes to the same thing, because he has already made sufficient use of it[5]. (Croce, p. 137)

Clearly, the Shakespeare scholar active in Croce leads a separate life from the Vico scholar also living in him. Vico's *New Science* had been *new* exactly in this: in the undaunted courage with which it had faced, and tried to clarify, what Croce now called "the obscurity" of the relation between the two histories, the practical and the poetical. Vico too had started from the 'biographical' question – of course his text had been Homer, not Shakespeare – but in a completely different perspective: nothing, in him, of that 'faithfulness' to nature in which, according to his great quasi-contemporary, Dr Johnson, Shakespeare's major merit resided. For Vico Homer himself was nature, that is history. The result of Vico's investigations was, admittedly, abstruse: but hadn't Croce devoted a whole book to *The Philosophy of Giambattista Vico*?[6] Surely a groundbreaking book, at a time when the Neapolitan philosopher was all but ignored in Italy.

2. *Nation*

> […] the first gentile peoples, by a demonstrated necessity of nature, were poets who spoke in poetic characters. (Vico, § 34, p. 21)

In this principle is to be found the master key to Vico's *The New Science*, as he calls his ambitious treatise conceived, in the wake of Hobbes, as "a study of man in the whole society of the human race" (§ 179, p. 70). Culmination and motor of this *magnum opus* is its third book, provocatively titled "Discovery of the True Homer". In it, not only is the Greek poet established as the most ancient of writers, but the consequences of this fact are demonstrated to be decisive in settling the issue of the "true" Homer.

> This discovery […] has cost us the persistent research of almost all our literary life. (Vico, § 34, p. 22)

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[5] I have slightly altered the translation of the first part of this paragraph.

[6] Benedetto Croce, *The Philosophy of Giambattista Vico* [1911], Engl. transl. by R. G. Collingwood, London, Howard Latimer, 1913.

From the very first Vico acknowledges the huge amount of intellectual energy spent in his effort to recapture the poetic infancy of the world. In retrospect, his own personal biography is seen as a fragment, however minuscule, of the world's history.

> […] since there has come down to us no writer more ancient than Homer, […] and since the writers came long after him, we are obliged to apply our metaphysical criticism, treating him as founder of a nation, as he has been held to be of Greece, and to discover the truth, both as to his age and as to his fatherland, from Homer himself. (Vico, § 788, p. 305)

Of course Vico is not unaware that – according to strict chronological order – there have been other poets before Homer, among them Orpheus, Linus, Musaeus, perhaps Hesiod. In order to avoid possible misunderstandings, he warns his reader that what he is saying does not apply to "the Homer hitherto believed in" (§ 901, p. 327), but only to the one newly discovered by him, whose superior claim to antiquity does not rest on chronology but on poetry. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are the veritable storehouse of all Poetic Wisdom, and this fact establishes Homer as both the "founder of a nation" and the only trustworthy authority about himself. It should be noted that Vico's original for "founder (of a nation)" is 'author'. Homer is "un autore di nazione" ('an author of nation'). Given the context, 'author' is more pregnant than 'founder' because – sharing, as it does, the semantic field of the Latin verb *augeo* – it brings into play the concept of augmentation, or increase, and therefore of birth. The idea of 'birth' is thus found to be as much at the root of 'Nation', as it is of poetry. 'Nation' is from the Latin *nasci*, 'to be born'. As a deponent verb, *nasci* is passive in form and active in meaning.

> A "nation" is etymologically a "birth", or a "being born", and hence a race, a kin or kind having a common origin or, more loosely, a common language and other institutions[7].

> We shall show clearly and distinctly how the founders of gentile humanity […] in a certain sense created themselves […]. (Vico, § 367, p. 112)

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[7] Max Harold Fisch, "Introduction", in *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, p. xx.

Both "nation" and "being born" imply the act of 'generation', or begetting, and therefore the fact of being "gentile". "Gentile" (the same in English as in Italian) is a particularly important word in Vico. It is the adjective of the Latin *gens* (a group of people sharing the same name and claiming descent from a common ancestor). A *nation* is identified *genetically*, by a system of institutions having as their fountainhead the simple fact of birth, and the act of being generated. The English language experiences the same conceptual oscillation in words like 'kind' (both in the sense of 'nature' and of 'gentle') and 'kin' (or 'family'). All these words are related to a common Indo-European root meaning 'giving birth', active also in the Greek *γενος* and the Latin *genus*. By definition authors give birth, and by this fact they become 'kind'. Human-kind. Being gentile, they are also noble and speak in poetic characters. Antiquity, authoriality (the fact of being an author), and nation, are thus put in a logical sequence. Taken together, they form a trinity in which each concept is alive in each one of the other two.

> As for the contest among Greek cities for the honor of claiming Homer as citizen, it came about because almost all of them observed in his poems words and phrases and bits of dialect that belonged to their own vernaculars.
>
> […] the reason why the Greek peoples so vied with each other for the honor of being his fatherland, and almost all claimed him as citizen, is that the Greek peoples were themselves Homer.
>
> […] the reason why opinions as to his age vary so much is that our Homer really lived on the lips and in the memories of the peoples of Greece […]. (Vico, §§ 790, 875, 876, pp. 305, 324)

The connecting element between 'antiquity' and 'nation' is 'language'. A 'written' language, though at the time only a spoken one. Written *because* spoken. "Our Homer" has been living on the lips, and is written in the memories, of the peoples who spoke him and, by so doing, became "Greece".

For the moment, the fact that, in a literal sense, no writing existed at the time of Homer does not make any difference. Vico develops his argument this side of the question of orality vs. writing, which will present itself much later.

> Barbarous peoples, cut off from all the other nations of the world, as were the Germans and the American Indians, have been found to preserve in verses the beginning of their history. (Vico, § 841, p. 317)

> All that we call sacred history attests that the birth of a poet is the principal event in chronology[8]. (Emerson, "The Poet", p. 11)

To be a nation – no matter if "barbarous" or civilized – means to share a common birth, and therefore a common antiquity and a common poetic language. But the case of Homer is different from all others. He is and is not Greek. The fiction (if it is such) of him as a historical individual sits him on the cusp of time and place. When he was born Greece did not exist, and he invented it by creating himself as its *author*. His "practical personality" faced a world without Greece at a time when the Greek peoples were putting on his poetical personality – that is his works – and thus creating the nation of Greece. At that point, all the Greek peoples *were* Homer, because they *spoke* Homer, that is to say his poetry. Vico's "metaphysical criticism" disrupts the neat arrangement of sequential time: in order to discover the "true" Homer the common experience of time is of no help. The figure of historical time is seen to be not that of the arrow but that of the shuttle, restlessly moving backwards and forwards. The starting point of the investigation into the "true" Homer is also its final result: the truth about Homer – this is the gist of Vico's "*discoverta*" – cannot be derived but from Homer himself.

3. Representative man

> Shakspeare is the only biographer of Shakspeare; and even he can tell nothing, except to the Shakspeare in us […]. Read the antique documents extricated, analyzed and compared by the assiduous Dyce and Collier, and now read one of these skyey sentences, – aerolites, – which seem to have fallen out of heaven, and which not your experience but the man within the breast has accepted as words of fate, and tell me if

[8] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Poet", in *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Centenary Edition*, vol. III *Essays: Second Series* [1844], pp. 1-42. Henceforward quoted as 'Emerson, "The Poet"', followed by page number. The text is also available online at: http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/emerson/essays/poet.html.

> they match; if the former account in any manner for the latter; or which gives the most historical insight into the man. (Emerson, "Shakspeare", p. 208)

> For our existing world, the bases on which all the grand old poems were built have become vacuums – and even those of many comparatively modern ones are broken and half-gone. For us to-day, not their own intrinsic value, vast as that is, backs and maintains those poems – but a mountain-high growth of associations, the layers of successive ages […] upheld by their cumulus-entrenchment in scholarship, and as precious, always welcome, unspeakably valuable reminiscences[9].

Emerson's statement about Shakespeare being the only biographer of Shakespeare appears now less baffling than at the beginning. No less than Homer's, Shakespeare's words have been living on the lips and in the memories of the peoples who for centuries have been speaking his language, and this is why the man within the breast gives the most *historical* insight into the words of the man Shakespeare. "Historical" is keyword here, because it is the layers of successive ages and associations that have built the chronology through which the Poet is read. Just as the Greek peoples read themselves in Homer, in the same way have the British peoples been reading themselves in Shakespeare through the layers of successive ages.

> Man is explicable by nothing less than all his history. […] A man is the whole encyclopaedia of facts. […] This human mind wrote history, and this must read it. […] All that Shakspeare says of the king, yonder slip of a boy that reads in the corner feels to be true of himself[10].

Emerson is here verifying on Shakespeare Vico's axiom that "the true is what is made". He might have heard about Michelet's French translations of *The New Science* in its entirety (1827 and 1834), and almost certainly had come across Henry Nelson Coleridge's translation (1834) of its third book, "On the Discovery of the True Homer",

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[9] Walt Whitman, "A Thought on Shakspere", in *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose*, ed. Justin Kaplan, New York, The Library of America, 1982, p. 1151.

[10] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "History", in *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, *Centenary Edition*, vol. II *Essays: First Series* [1841], pp. 1-41; pp. 3-4, 6. The text is also available online at: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2944/2944-h/2944-h.htm#link2H_4_0001.

originally meant as an aid for the study of Greek at school and college. Or maybe he never heard about Vico. What I want to stress is that for him, as for Vico before him, the biography of the poet as "an author of nation" is the matrix in which the myth of the nation and, consequently, of its "birth"[11], is cast.

> At the time when he left Stratford and went up to London, a great body of stage-plays of all dates and writers existed in manuscript and were in turn produced on the boards. […] Shakspeare, in common with his comrades, esteemed the mass of old plays waste stock, in which any experiment could be freely tried. (Emerson, "Shakspeare", pp. 192-93)

In his anxiety to appropriate the major glory of the Mother Country to the new Nation, Emerson discovers the true Shakespeare, just as Vico before him had discovered the true Homer. And like Vico's Homer, also Emerson's Shakespeare is not the one "hitherto believed in", but a Shakespeare all of his own creation.

> The poet [Shakespeare] of whose works I have undertaken the revision may now begin to assume the dignity of an ancient […]. Perhaps it would not be easy to find any author except Homer who invented so much as Shakespeare, who so much advanced the studies which he cultivated, or effused such novelty upon his age or country. The form, the characters, the language, and the shows of the English drama are his[12].
>
> For whilst to th' shame of slow-endeavouring art,
> Thy easy numbers flow, and that each heart
> Hath from the leaves of thy unvalued book
> Those Delphic lines with deep impression took,
> Then thou, our fancy of itself bereaving,
> Dost make us marble with too much conceiving […][13].
>
> The greatest genius is the most indebted man. (Emerson, "Shakspeare", p. 189)

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[11] David W. Griffith, *The Birth of a Nation* (David W. Griffith Corp., 1915).

[12] Johnson, pp. 420, 440.

[13] John Milton, "An Epitaph on the Admirable Dramatic Poet, William Shakespeare", in *The Complete Oxford Shakespeare*, general eds Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987, rpt. 1994, 3 vols, vol. I, p. xli, ll. 9-14.

Vico founded Homer's immense authority on his being the most ancient of writers. Dr Johnson pays homage to the same tenet of literary genealogy by implying a relation between the richness and novelty of Shakespeare's invention, and his being "an ancient", or nearly one. This means that Johnson's Shakespeare looks further than Milton's. His Delphic lines still impress our hearts, but no longer make marble of them. On the contrary, they are a vivifying element, an active force in the nation's drama: in its language and characters. But the energy of Johnson's peroration is lost to Emerson's ears, keen on detecting, in Shakespeare's poetic measures, a different kind of 'invention' and a different kind of 'antiquity'. An all-American Shakespeare cannot eschew Homer, but has to find his own way to the ancient poet. Being the most ancient of poets had established Vico's Homer as the founder of the nation of Greece. But the new American Shakespeare – no less a founder than Homer – has no title to that type of antiquity. What he has instead, is the "waste stock" of the "mass of old plays" on which to experiment freely. A heap of ruins to refashion at will. The notion itself of "Homer's antiquity" is part of this waste stock to be reshaped and remodelled, if the time-honoured invention of the 'parallel lives' – Homer's and Shakespeare's – is to be kept alive and fruitful.

> […] I have been in such a state of Mind as to read over my Lines and hate them. […] yet when, Tom who meets with some of Pope's Homer in Plutarch's Lives reads some of those to me they seem like Mice to mine[14].

Doubts as to the Homer revisited on English ground in the previous century had been expressed by young Keats. But also of no use, to the Harvard-educated American scholar and divine, was the Victorian Homer, feasted upon, archaized and domesticized by the devotee of the Grecian Urn.

> I long to feast on *old* Homer as we have upon Shakespeare, and as I have lately upon Milton. If you understood Greek, and would read me passages, now and then, explaining their meaning, 'twould be, from its mistiness, perhaps a greater luxury than reading the thing one's self[15].

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[14] John Keats, "To Benjamin Robert Haydon", 10-11 May 1817, in *The Letters of John Keats*, ed. Maurice Buxton Forman, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 1952, p. 28.

[15] Keats, "To John Hamilton Reynolds", 10 April 1818, in *Letters*, p. 136, my emphasis.

In no way could Homer's "mistiness" – supposing there is one – be perceived by Emerson as a luxury. On the contrary, the poet he is expecting will be clear-sighted enough to assess the new country's real worth by scrutinizing its minutest particulars.

> I look in vain for the poet whom I describe. […] We have yet had no genius in America, with tyrannous eye, which knew the value of our incomparable materials, and saw, in the barbarism and materialism of the times, another carnival of the same gods whose picture he so much admires in Homer. (Emerson, "The Poet", p. 37)

To see Homer's gods in the materialism of the times: of this divine power Shakespeare had been the supreme incarnation in the old world and no less was expected of "Shakspeare", his American avatar. Seen from the distance of the New Continent, "Shakspeare"'s antiquity, though genetically derived from Homer's, belonged to an evolutionary line all of its own. In Darwinian terms, it represented a 'variation' on the old stock.

> Poetry, largely consider'd, is an evolution, sending out improved and ever-expanded types – in one sense, the past, even the best of it, necessarily giving place, and dying out[16].

As an improved and expanded type of poetry, Shakespeare's antiquity is, if possible, even more radical than Homer's. It brings to light the inherent antiquity of the present moment. Of *all* present moments. Not only have America's incomparable materials been there since Creation, but they are still alive in the expectation of the tyrannous eye which will finally see in them yet another epiphany of Homer's gods. Immemorial past lives in the present moment.

> Now, literature, philosophy and thought are Shakspearized. His mind is the horizon beyond which, at present, we do not see. (Emerson, "Shakspeare", p. 204)

Perhaps it was through the fine instrument of Keats's verse that the voice of a "Shakspearized" Homer reached Emerson's ear. Keats heard that voice on his first reading Chapman's Homer. Perfectly

[16] Whitman, "A Thought on Shakspere", p. 1151.

contemporary with Shakespeare's, it guided him as far as Cortez's "eagle eyes"[17], eagerly staring at the newly discovered world. Perusing its immensity as unbounded allegory of future dominion. In the secluded, magic atmosphere of Concord, Massachusetts, the voice of *that* Homer, accompanying the fervour and cruelty of the Conquest, must have sounded uncannily "loud and bold"[18] to the ears of the American scholar. To die, in that voice, was – in Whitman's words – the past, "even the best of it". A past Homer, as well as a past Shakespeare.

> There is scarcely the slightest trace of any such feeling [love of posthumous fame] in his [Shakespeare's] writings, nor any appearance of anxiety for their fate, or of a desire to perfect them or make them worthy of that immortality to which they were destined. And this indifference may be accounted for by the very circumstance that he was almost entirely a man of genius […] he seemed scarcely to have an individual existence of his own, but to borrow that of others at will, and to pass successively 'through every variety of untried being', – to be now *Hamlet*, now *Othello*, now *Lear*, now *Falstaff*, now *Ariel*[19].

As "almost entirely" a man of genius – such is Hazlitt's argument – Shakespeare was indifferent to posthumous fame, let alone to his own individual existence. The Romantic critic is here looking to the Elizabethan playwright in the mundane, secular perspective born of the French Revolution. No longer seen as an effect of restrictions imposed by the necessity of covering an illustrious name, the 'blank' of Shakespeare's biography turns, under his pen, into an optical illusion. It reverberates from a mode of being which is not far from that of the professional impersonator – today's celebrity – who looks at himself through the refracting prisms of the characters he himself creates, and whose existences he dons and doffs with the nonchalance of the consummate actor. Seen under this light, factual void metamorphoses into visionary fullness. It is not a question of "deducing" the life and adventures of the man from his writings

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[17] John Keats, "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer", in *Poetical Works*, London-Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1970, p. 38, l. 21.

[18] Keats, "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer", l. 8.

[19] William Hazlitt, "On Posthumous Fame. Whether Shakespeare was influenced by a Love of it", in *The Round Table and Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* [1817], London, Dent; New York, Dutton & Company, 1944, p. 23.

(see Croce, above), but of seeing "the about forty plays and poems" (Croce, again) as themselves the life, and adventures, of the man.

> The characteristic of Chaucer is intensity; of Spenser, remoteness; of Milton, elevation; of Shakespeare, every thing. […] Shakespeare's genius was its virtually including the genius of all the great men of his age, and not his differing from them in one accidental particular. […] He was just like any other man, but that he was like all other men. […] He had 'a mind reflecting ages past', and present: – all the people that ever lived are there. […] He had only to think of any thing in order to become that thing, with all the circumstances belonging to it. By an art like that of the ventriloquist, he throws his imagination out of himself, and makes every word appear to proceed from the mouth of the person in whose name it is given[20].

This is Romantic hagiography at its most exalted. The mask of the Shakespeare "hitherto believed in" – Johnson's Shakespeare, say – was hardly recognizable, under this hype. On the old Continent, it rapidly translated into the genealogy of Shakespeare-as-curator of the English national character.

> […] Voltaire was wrong to say that the French had improved on the works of antiquity; they have only nationalized them, and in this transformation they treated everything foreign and distinctive with infinite disgust […]. This is why the French have been the least able to come to terms with Shakespeare […]. Shakespeare understood how to imprint an English national character on the most variegated materials, although, far more deeply than the Spaniards, he could preserve in its essential basic traits the historical character of foreign nations, e.g. the Romans[21].

> What would be the use of poets, if they only repeated the record of the historian? the poets must go further, and give us if possible something higher and better. All the characters of Sophocles bear something of that great poet's lofty soul; and it is the same with the characters of Shakespeare. This is as it ought to be. Nay, Shakespeare goes further,

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[20] William Hazlitt, "On Shakespeare and Milton", in *Lectures on the English Poets* [1818] *and The Spirit of the Age* [1825], London, Dent; New York, Dutton & Company, 1967, pp. 46-50.

[21] G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, Engl. transl. by T. M. Knox, Oxford, Clarendon, 1975, 2 vols, vol. I, pp. 267, 274-75.

> and makes his Romans Englishmen; and there too he is right; for otherwise his nation would not have understood him[22].

In a Europe where the idea of the national state was an established political and juridical principle, the image of Shakespeare as fashioner of national identity was bound to receive ample currency. Shakespeare was not a nationalizer – like the French, who put wigs on the heroes of antiquity and thought they had improved on them – but a real "founder of nation". Gifted with an extraordinary capacity for seeing the present in the past and the past in the present, he appropriated the basic traits of antiquity to the nation he understood as no other did. Dialectically, he was able to descry the Romans in the Englishmen, and the Englishmen in the Romans. And his nation understood him – understood him through the medium of his borrowed individual existences.

> Antonio, who occasionally liked to introduce polemical ideas into the conversation although he rarely led it, asserted that the basic principles of English criticism and enthusiasm should be sought in Smith's *On National Wealth.* They were only too glad when they could carry another classic to their public treasure. Just as every book on that island became an essay after it had lain the proper time, in the same manner every writer became a classic. For the same reason and in the same way, they were just as proud of making the best scissors as of making the best poetry. Such an Englishman reads his Shakespeare no differently than he does Pope, Dryden, or whoever else might be a classic; he does no more thinking while reading one than the other[23].

> Finally, we must note a relation between a general characteristic of the English spirit and the nature of Shakespeare's poetry, although it is incapable of being exactly defined or grounded. Empiricism and the bent for induction corresponding to it developed in England with the same consistency which this nation displayed in the development of

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[22] Johann Peter Eckermann, *Conversations with Goethe,* Engl. transl. by John Oxenford, ed. J. K. Moorhead, London, Dent; New York, Dutton, 1970, p. 198 (18 April 1827).

[23] Friedrich Schlegel, "Dialogue on Poetry" [1799-1800], in *Dialogue on Poetry and Literary Aphorisms*, Engl. transl., introduction and notes by Ernst Behler and Roman Struc, University Park-London, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1968, p. 58.

> its constitution. Ever since Bacon's time, Plato and Aristotle have had no authoritative influence whatever on English attitudes and inclinations. Both the simple observer and the methodical scientist show an incomparable and refreshing impartiality in their perceptions and in the study of the natural and social realities surrounding them. Other modes of thought may have prevailed among philosophers and theologians, and may even have influenced the intellectual life of wider circles; during Shakespeare's time it was, after all, precisely Platonism that exerted the greatest influence; but these tendencies did not alter the empirical bent of the English spirit[24].

The English national character was perceived, on the Continent, as a composite, pluri-mediated formation – an original medley of high culture and everyday life. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the formula of "the empirical bent of the English spirit" is firmly established. It has finally impressed its seal both on the *idée reçue* of the national character and on the official interpretation of the national constitution. It accounts for the pursuit of wealth as well as of high culture. Shakespeare not excepted.

> Nay, apart from spiritualities; and considering him [Shakespeare] merely as a real, marketable, tangibly-useful possession. England, before long, this Island of ours, will hold but a small fraction of the English: in America, in New Holland, east and west to the very Antipodes, there will be a Saxondom covering great spaces of the Globe. And now, what is it that can keep all these together into virtually one Nation […]? Acts of Parliament, administrative prime ministers cannot. America is parted from us as far as Parliament could part it. […] Here, I say, is an English King, whom no time or chance, Parliament or combination of Parliaments, can dethrone! This King Shakspeare, does not he shine, in crowned sovereignty, over us all, as the noblest, gentlest, yet strongest of rallying-signs; indestructible; really more valuable in that point of view than any other means or appliance whatsoever? We can fancy him as radiant aloft over all the Nations of Englishmen, a thousand years hence. From Paramatta, from New York, wheresoever, under what sort of Parish-Constable soever, English men and women are, they will say to one another: "Yes, this Shakspeare is ours; we produced him, we speak and think by him; we are of one blood and

[24] Wilhelm Dilthey, "Goethe and the Poetic Imagination" [1877; 1910, 3rd edition], in *Selected Works*, eds Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1985-, 6 vols, vol. V *Poetry and Experience*, p. 263.

> kind with him". The most common-sense politician, too, if he pleases, may think of that[25].

From being accompaniment to the empirical bent of the national character, the name "Shakspeare" has rapidly become instrumental to it. At home, the fiction of the Bard as divine ventriloquist has evolved into the prodigious marketable commodity – present on a global scale – we inherit today. And it was there, at that juncture of times, that Romantic biography became relevant in a yet untried way. True, very little was known about Shakespeare the man; but very much could be known about the place he had come to occupy in the hearts of the people. Put side by side, the two orders of facts cross-fertilized.

> Well: this is our poor Warwickshire Peasant, who rose to be Manager of a Playhouse, so that he could live without begging; whom the Earl of Southampton cast some kind glances on; […] consider what this Shakspeare has actually become among us. Which Englishman we ever made, in this land of ours, which million of Englishmen, would we not give up rather than the Stratford Peasant? […] Consider now, if they asked us, Will you give up your Indian Empire or your Shakspeare, you English; never have had any Indian Empire, or never have had any Shakspeare? Really it were a grave question. Official persons would answer doubtless in official language; but we, for our part too, should not we be forced to answer: Indian Empire, or no Indian Empire; we cannot do without Shakspeare! Indian Empire will go, at any rate, some day; but this Shakspeare does not go, he lasts forever with us; we cannot give up our Shakspeare![26]

Already, in Carlyle's Hero-worship, the story of the poor Warwickshire Peasant is extremely enjoyable; filmic, almost. But Emerson – his protégé from beyond the Atlantic – would go much, much further than that.

> There is somewhat touching in the madness with which the passing age mischooses the object on which all candles shine and all eyes are turned; the care with which it registers every trifle touching Queen Elizabeth and King James, and the Essexes, Leicesters, Burleighs and

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[25] Thomas Carlyle, "The Hero as Poet. Dante; Shakspeare", in *On Heroes and Hero Worship* [1841], London, Dent; New York, Dutton, 1959, pp. 345-46.

[26] Carlyle, p. 344.

> Buckinghams; and lets pass without a single valuable note the founder of another dynasty, which alone will cause the Tudor dynasty to be remembered, – the man who carries the Saxon race in him by the inspiration which feeds him, and on whose thoughts the foremost people of the world are now for some ages to be nourished, and minds to receive this and not another bias. […] Bacon, who took the inventory of the human understanding for his times, never mentioned his name. (Emerson, "Shakspeare", p. 202)

Are we not here deliciously remote from the psychological materiality and biographical aridity Croce at a later date would spot in any foreseeable Shakespearean biography? Also very enjoyable is the silent snub at the so-called "Baconian hypothesis", on which Croce will pour fastidious scholarly scorn.

> We may also save ourselves from wonder and invective of the "Baconian hypothesis", by means of this indifference of the poetical work towards biography. […] But even if we grant the unlikely contention that in the not very great brain of the philosopher Bacon, there lodged the brain of a very great poet, from which proceeded the Shakespearean drama, nothing would thereby have been discovered or proved, save a singular marvel, a joke, a monstrosity of nature. (Croce, pp. 131-132)

By 1920 – the year Croce's chapter on Shakespeare goes to press – the writing of 'biography' was at the core of modernist experimentation. But the Italian philosopher prefers to stick to his cherished notion of the "indifference of the poetical work towards biography", which is after all a way – *his* way – of tackling a delicate literary issue.

> In the present volume, […] the author applies herself to the demonstration and development of a system of philosophy, which has presented itself to her as underlying the superficial and ostensible text of Shakespeare's plays. […] They filled out the scientific scheme which Bacon had planned […][27].

> I doubt it not – then more, far more;
> In each old song bequeath'd – in every noble page or text,
> (Different – something unreck'd before – some unsuspected author,)
> In every object, mountain, tree, and star – in every birth and life,

[27] Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Preface", in Delia Bacon, *The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakspere Unfolded*, London, Groombridge & Sons, 1857, pp. viii-ix.

> As part of each – evolv'd from each – meaning, behind the ostent,
> A mystic cipher waits infolded[28].

"Shakspere-Bacon's Cipher" – such is the title of Whitman's poem – was an elegant disclaimer, at the end of the century, of the Baconian hypothesis Croce will too facilely get rid of. At mid-century, Hawthorne had maintained a much more guarded attitude towards his female compatriot, whose work threatened "to tear out of the Anglo-Saxon heart the name which for ages it has held dearest"[29], substituting it with other improbable names. But it was also a reprise – Whitman's poem was – of the Emersonian discourse on poetry and dominion. On the surface, Emerson had been only extending Carlyle's words, in order to bolster up what might look, on his part, a naïvely optimistic vision about America. Examined in depth though, his project was the far more ambitious one of predicating national identity on a poet still to come, but whose precursor had already appeared on this earth under the name of "Shakspeare". As if responding to this ambition, Whitman's "cipher", forty years later, is still both "mystic" and "infolded". Both spiritually significant and as yet unexplained.

> The breadth of the problem is great, for the poet is representative. He stands among partial men for the complete man, and apprises us not of his wealth, but of the commonwealth. (Emerson, "The Poet", p. 5)

A new order of dominion is announced in these words. Charged with the electricity of long expectation, the commonwealth would receive *that*, and not another, bias. It will receive it as a present from his own American "Shakspeare" or "Shakspere", in embryo already the "inventor of the human" we today receive from Harold Bloom.

> Banks and tariffs, the newspaper and caucus, Methodism and Unitarianism, are flat and dull to dull people, but rest on the same foundations of wonder as the town of Troy and the temple of Delphos, and are as swiftly passing away. Our log-rolling, our stumps and their politics, our fisheries, our Negroes and Indians, our boasts, and our repudiations,

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[28] Walt Whitman, "Shakspere-Bacon's Cipher", in *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose*, p. 643. Whitman's poem was originally published in *The Cosmopolitan*, 4 (October 1887).

[29] Hawthorne, p. xv.

> the wrath of rogues […], the northern trade, the southern planting, the western clearing, Oregon and Texas, are yet unsung. Yet America is a poem in our eyes; its ample geography dazzles the imagination […]. (Emerson, "The Poet", pp. 37-38)

On the new, virgin soil, mythical forces are still in control of men's lives: hence the messianic expectation of the American poem, which will rest on the same foundations of wonder as the town of Troy, the mother of all myths. The still-to-come American Shakespeare founds his claim to antiquity on his power to be Homer's contemporary. No less than Gloucester's in *King Lear*, Emerson's is, imaginatively, a jump in the void. It lands him on one of criticism's blank spaces. An undiscovered country opens before his eyes.

> The entrepreneurial pioneers owned the land and also identified with it. […] This "primordial wilderness" was also "vacant": when the European settlers saw themselves as quickening a virgin land, the modern spirit completed its genesis by becoming flesh in the body of the American continent[30].

The American scholar anxiously waiting for his "Shakspeare" has the same blank, before his eyes, as the entrepreneurial pioneers quickening a virgin land. Not yet sifted to the dregs, America's splendid materials have not yet revealed their design, and the consequent blurring of the vision affects the pioneer and the philosopher alike, though in different ways. The task of the first is to conciliate material possession of the soil with idealist self-definition of one's own value. The even more daunting task of the second is to create, out of America's ample geography, a format pliable enough to accommodate the new Shakespeare.

> All the debts which such a man [Shakspeare] could contract to other wit would never disturb his consciousness of originality; for the ministrations of books and of other minds are a whiff of smoke to that most private reality with which he has conversed. (Emerson, "Shakspeare", p. 199)

> Almost all cities of Greece claimed to be his [Homer's] birthplace, and there were not lacking those who asserted that he was an Italian Greek. (Vico, § 788, pp. 304-5)

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[30] Myra Jehlen, *American Incarnation*, Cambridge, Mass.-London, Harvard University Press, 1986, p. 4.

> We all know how much *mythus* there is in the Shakspere's question as it stands today[31].

> […] when we adhere to the ideal of the poet, we have our difficulties even with Milton and Homer. Milton is too literary, and Homer too literal and historical. (Emerson, "The Poet", p. 38)

> He [Shakspeare] knows the sparkle of the true stone, and puts it in high place, wherever he finds it. Such is the happy position of Homer perhaps. (Emerson, "Shakspeare", p. 197)

It is by a series of imperceptible proprietary acts that The New World takes possession of the Old, and it is extraordinary the way this goal is achieved under the sign of Vico's Homer. The American scholar is busy shaping the Canon to his own likeness: Milton is too literary, and Homer can be too literal as well as too historical. But then he finds in Shakespeare the perfect connoisseur of the true stone, who will succeed in putting America's incomparable materials in that high place which is their due.

> Criticism is infested with a cant of materialism, which assumes that manual skill and activity is the first merit of all men, and disparages such as say and do not […]. Words and deeds are quite indifferent modes of the divine energy. Words are also actions, and actions are a kind of words. (Emerson, "The Poet", pp. 7-8)

By taking centre stage, the new Continent's ample geography has dissolved the cant of Romantic materialism, which enveloped the parallel fictions of the divine ventriloquist, of the man who is all men, of the superman throwing his imagination out of himself like a malevolent, or benign, wizard. It was the destined task of America's "splendid materials" to dissolve those mists of the intelligence.

> But Homer's words are as costly and admirable to Homer, as Agamemnon's victories are to Agamemnon. (Emerson, "The Poet", p. 7)

And the same is true of "Shakspeare"'s words: each one of them a victory snatched from the hardness and costliness of the visible

[31] Walt Whitman, "What Lurks behind Shakspere's Historical Plays?", in *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose*, p. 1148.

world. Each one of them as hard and sharp and sparkling as a warrior's sword. And acting like one. Is it too much, at this point, to remind the reader that Dante's Homer holds a sword in his hand (*Inferno*, IV, 86)? Emerson's Shakspeare is the American Homer, the American Dante. He is, most evidently, "Walt Whitman as Center of the American Canon"[32].

> The summary of my suggestion would be, therefore, that while the more the rich and tangled jungle of the Shaksperean area is travers'd and studied, and the more baffled and mix'd, as so far appears, becomes the exploring student (who at last surmises everything, and remains certain of nothing,) it is possible a future age of criticism, diving deeper, mapping the land and lines freer, completer than hitherto, may discover in the plays named the scientific (Baconian?) inauguration of modern Democracy […] may penetrate to that hard-pan, far down and back of the ostent of today, on which (and on which only) the progressism of the last two centuries has built this Democracy which now holds secure lodgment over the whole civilized world[33].

It is perfectly understandable that, being so inextricably entwined with the myth of Discovery, the name of Shakespeare should come up the moment the new Democracy became aware of its own still intact potentialities, and wanted its own syncopated "Shakspeares" or "Shaksperes" to be different, in degree if not in kind, from the stable, relaxed "Shakespeare" of the Mother Country. The new nation is proud of this difference: proud, even, that two lives so different and far apart the one from the other as those of William Shakespeare and George Fox may be, share a common ground exactly in that *indifference* of words and actions which Emerson had famously stressed with reference to Homer's words and Agamemnon's victories. But Whitman flies lower, and higher, at the same time, than his compatriot.

> Only to think of it – that age! its events, persons – Shakspere just dead, (his folios publish'd, complete) – Charles 1st, the shadowy spirit and the solid block! […] Strange as it may sound, Shakspere and George Fox, (think of them! compare them!) were born and bred of similar

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[32] Harold Bloom, "Walt Whitman as Center of the American Canon", in *The Western Canon*, New York, Harcourt Brace & Company, 1994; London, Macmillan, 1995, pp. 264-90.

[33] Whitman, "What Lurks behind Shakspere's Historical Plays?", p. 1150.

> stock, in much the same surroundings and station in life – from the same England – and at a similar period. One to radiate all of art's, all literature's splendor – a splendor so dazzling that he himself is almost lost in it – […] the other […] What is poor plain George Fox compared to William Shakspere – to fancy's lord, imagination's heir? Yet George Fox stands for something too […][34].

That George Fox stood for something was also Coleridge's impression, as early as 1832.

> To estimate a man like Vico, or any great man who has made discoveries and committed errors, you ought to say to yourself – "He did so and so in the year 1720, a Papist, at Naples. Now, what would he not have done if he had lived now, and could have availed himself of all our vast acquisitions in physical science?"
>
> After the *Scienza Nuova*, read Spinosa, *De Monarchia, ex rationis praescripto.* They differed – Vico in thinking that society tended to monarchy; Spinosa in thinking it tended to democracy. Now, Spinosa's ideal democracy was realised by a contemporary – not in a nation, for that is impossible, but in a sect – I mean by George Fox and his Quakers[35].

By way of conclusion, I like to take up this hint from Coleridge's *Table Talk*, collected and edited by his nephew Henry Nelson, who, two years on, would publish his translation of Vico's chapter on the "Discovery of the True Homer". There is reason to believe that during those two years Vico's name came up quite frequently at Coleridge's table. It seems to me that in the words of the great Samuel – uncontestedly the supreme authority on the theme of biography and poetry – many, if not all, of the different, and at times divergent, strands we have been following in these pages may find a convergence and perhaps an anticipation too. If for no better reason, at least for his mentioning Vico as one of the great men who made discoveries (and committed errors). When Vico spoke of "monarchy" what he had in his mind was an idealized image of the Roman Empire, interpreted as the most sustained attempt, in the ancient world, to extend the empire of reason

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[34] Walt Whitman, "George Fox (and Shakspere)", in *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose*, pp. 1244, 1247-48.

[35] *Specimens of the Table Talk of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, preface by Henry Nelson Coleridge, London, John Murray, 1851, p. 171 (23 April, 1832).

to the largest possible number of people. An ideal of democracy was therefore on Vico's horizon, as it was on the horizon of George Fox, whose life Whitman chose to see in parallel with Shakespeare's. But here I risk repeating myself. Suffice it to say that there are more things in a practical personality, as opposed to a poetical one, than even a Benedetto Croce could dream of. Or was his sharp distinction between the two a subtle defense mechanism against the too radical myth of the absoluteness of the artist's activity – *life* and *works* – as it presented itself in the ebullient years (the 1920s) of postwar modernism?

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How to Write a Biography of Shakespeare*

David Ellis

What do we mean when we say that we have *known* someone, on what is our claim to knowledge based? Among the strongest claimants to accurate understanding of another person must be members of the subject's family, those who, over a long period, have enjoyed daily contacts and a shared environment. These are the people with the authority to describe certain habits or gestures as characteristic, and even predict how the subject would have behaved in certain circumstances. Almost equally strong as their claim is the one that can be made by a husband, wife or sexual partner. They have the shared environment and daily contact but also that more intimate knowledge which comes from a physical relation. If they have a disadvantage, it is that they often have no personal knowledge of the subject's early or so-called formative years, but also that the kind of relationship they enjoyed will sometimes have had an intensity which leads to warped judgement. "I can read him like a book", said the first girlfriend of D. H. Lawrence, to which he later replied that the book was in several volumes[1].

People who have worked with the subject are also reliable witnesses. Standing next to a person on the factory floor, or sitting by them in an office, can yield information not necessarily accessible to a family member or sexual partner. Different kinds of work environment can

* This is a slightly modified version of the opening of my *The Truth about William Shakespeare: Fact, Fiction and Modern Biographies*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2012. I am grateful to Edinburgh University Press for authorising its republication here.

[1] For the details, see David Ellis, *Death and the Author: How D. H. Lawrence Died and Was Remembered*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 156.

be more or less revealing. A soldier, for example, might well feel that nothing teaches us more about another human being than shared danger. Yet if we accept that view, it may largely be because courage happens to be very high on our scale of values. Eating out with people every week gives us a knowledge of them which is very different from that which can be acquired on the battlefield, but which may, in some respects, be just as valuable.

This last comparison dramatises the obvious truth that all eye-witness reports are partial, which does not of course deprive them of their value and authenticity. Compared with the evidence provided by a sibling, sexual partner, work colleague or close friend, the position of biographers will seem very weak, especially when they have never met the subject or, as in the most common of cases, that subject is long dead. And yet they do have certain advantages. If they are not eye-witnesses themselves, they can put themselves in a position to compare different eye-witness reports and thereby produce what might hopefully be described as a more 'rounded picture'. Working as they so often do with letters, they can deal with the fact that a letter-writer will tend to adopt a different persona for the different people addressed by surveying a whole range of correspondence. In the most favourable of cases, they will also have access to a diary or journal in which the subject has recorded thoughts and feelings not revealed to the closest of his or her intimates. It is evident that these have to be treated with great caution. People do not always tell the truth about themselves, as Freud was by no means the first to have demonstrated. But if what they say cannot always be taken at face value, it at least provides the biographer with a starting-point. Where, after all, would Freud have been if his patients had never even spoken to him?

Although nothing can replace one individual's intimate knowledge of another, there are ways in which biographers can indeed 'know' their subject. Compared with the understanding which can come from personal contact, these may seem artificial, mediated as they so largely are through the written word. Although for some this is a fatal limitation, the written word is still the major resource of most historians, and there is an obvious sense in which anyone who offers to tell the story of another person's life has to become a historian. This simple truth ought to serve as a reminder that writing biography should be subject to strict conditions and that (to come to the point) *none* of these are met in the case of Shakespeare. Most biographers, for example,

rely very heavily on letters and not one of those which Shakespeare must have written has survived. This might seem mildly surprising but less so is that he left behind no diary or journal since the habit of keeping these only became common long after his death.

The question of eye-witness reports appears at first more promising. In the second volume of his magisterial *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, Edmund K. Chambers lists fifty-eight contemporaries of Shakespeare who made allusions to him, a number of them on more than one occasion. This seems like an embarrassment of riches until the reader discovers that the vast majority of these witnesses refer only to Shakespeare's *writings* (usually in the most cursory and unilluminating fashion), and no more than six of them have anything of any potential biographical significance to say. Six is a disappointingly low number and it is only reached by counting in Anthony Scoloker who, in an epistle which accompanied his poem *Diaphantus*, refers to "*Friendly* Shakespeare's Tragedies"[2].

A single word, without illustration or corroboration, is hardly enough to tell us whether Shakespeare was indeed a friendly man, especially when, as Ernst Honigmann has pointed out, the tone of the Scoloker epistle is playful and ironic[3]; and the remaining five reports or allusions are only slightly more informative. The most well-known of them is the attack traditionally attributed to the dramatist Robert Greene. "For there is an upstart Crow", the author of *Greenes Groatsworth of Wit* famously complains (echoing a line from the third part of Shakespeare's own *Henry VI*),

> beautified with our feathers, that with his "Tygers hart wrapt in a Players hyde", supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blanke verse as the best of you: and being an absolute *Johannes fac totum*, is in his owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in a countrey[4].

No complete consensus yet exists as to whether Shakespeare is being accused of plagiarism here, or criticised for being a mere actor who

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[2] Edmund K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1930, vol. II, p. 214, my emphasis.

[3] Ernst A. J. Honigmann, *Shakespeare's Impact on His Contemporaries*, London, Macmillan, 1982, p. 18.

[4] Chambers, p. 188. Shakespeare's line reads "O, tiger's heart wrapt in a woman's hide".

had not been to university and yet still had the temerity to write. The attack is significant because it shows that by 1592, when it was first published, the twenty-eight-year-old Shakespeare must have already been well established in the world of the London theatre; and it is interesting because it suggests that there was at least one person from that world who did not think much of him.

Whether that person was in fact Greene has been much disputed recently[5]. *Greenes Groats-worth of Wit* appeared after its supposed author's death and the heavy involvement of Henry Chettle in its publication has favoured an assumption that he must himself have written much of it. In his epistle to *Kind-Harts Dreame*, also published in 1592, Chettle writes (in apparent reference to what Greene is purported to have said of Shakespeare): "I am sory as if the orginall fault had beene my fault, because myselfe have seen his demeanor no lesse civill than he excelent in the qualitie he professes". That he is speaking here of having observed Shakespeare's demeanour *since* the attack is confirmed by his having previously said that he was acquainted with neither of the two people (usually thought to be Shakespeare and Marlowe) who have been offended by *Greenes Groats-worth*. Chettle follows his apology with: "Besides, divers of worship have reported his uprightnes of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace of writing, that approves his Art"[6]. Some still doubt that Chettle is here referring to Shakespeare rather than (for example) to Peele[7]; but on the assumption that he is, what he says could initially seem like a rich haul. He has complimentary things to say about Shakespeare's demeanour as well as reports from others ("divers of worship") about his "uprightnes of dealing". His words provide a striking contrast with Greene although, if Greene is to be absolved of responsibility for what was said in his name, they also indicate Chettle's capacity for a rapid change of mind. What is clear is that he cannot have known Shakespeare long enough to comment on anything *but* his demeanour, and that otherwise he is reliant on the testimony of others. The common suggestion that these others were powerful friends

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5 See, on this topic, Brian Vickers, *Shakespeare, Co-author: A Historical Study of Five Collaborative Plays*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 140-41.

6 Chambers, p. 189.

7 Someone who has made a strong case for thinking that they refer rather to Peele is Lukas Erne. See his "Biography and Mythography: Re-reading Chettle's Alleged Apology to Shakespeare", *English Studies*, 5 (1998), pp. 430-40.

of Shakespeare, who had put pressure on Chettle to apologise, only reduces the authority of his remarks. These are certainly more interesting than the single word "friendly", but not for that reason any more reliable. They hardly take us very much further towards discovering – to use the common phrase – what Shakespeare was really like.

'What was he like?' is a loose phrase to apply to Shakespeare but it suggests what a reader of his biography would like to know. On one level it means no more than what did he look like? how did he dress? was he loquacious or silent in company? did he like to drink?, and so on. These may seem relatively trivial matters but they help to give the 'feel' of a subject. None of the witnesses in Chambers's section of "Contemporary Allusions" record any details of what Shakespeare was like to be with which give us that feel. On this last matter of drink, a few phrases are often quoted from the notes John Aubrey made when he was preparing his "brief life" of Shakespeare. These are to the effect that Shakespeare was "not a company keeper", that he "wouldnt be debauched", and that if invited out he would write to say he could not come because he was in pain[8]. The notes belong to a period around 1681 and Aubrey's major source for them was William Beeston, son of the Christopher Beeston who, for a relatively short period between about 1598 and 1602, was a member of the same theatre company as Shakespeare. What Aubrey is reporting, therefore, is an impression or anecdote which refers to events which are eighty years in the past and which he garners not at first, but at second hand. This means that the possibility, always strong in these cases, of the reporter having remembered one incident and then generalised from it in a way which is distorting, cannot be explored. One could easily imagine that when the members of the Lord Chamberlain's Men went drinking in one of the few islands of free time available to them between performing and learning new parts, Shakespeare (whose responsibilities to the company exceeded theirs) declined to join them; and even that from time to time he avoided a social obligation by saying he was not well. But the evidence is too flimsy to be certain that this was so, and even if it were, our knowledge of Shakespeare would hardly be much advanced.

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[8] Chambers reprints Aubrey's notes in the section of *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems* which follows "Contemporary Allusions" and is called "The Shakespeare Mythos". See vol. II, p. 252.

How sociable Shakespeare was with his colleagues will seem a minor issue but it slides easily into a clearly more significant category of 'what was he like' because it concerns his attitudes, and between his attitudes to drink and (for example) noise, foreigners, pets, cruelty, women, there is a short step to his beliefs in the realms of politics and religion. The witnesses have next-to-nothing to say on these crucial matters being only slightly more forthcoming when it comes to general questions of what we call character. Scoloker holds his place among them because of that single word "friendly"; but one might also ask whether Shakespeare was cheerful, resolute, moody, vengeful, reliable, or a host of other adjectives habitually used to define character. Of course, many will feel that they know the answers to questions like these, as well as to those which concern attitudes, because they have read or seen his works; but there are major problems in taking that view which ought by now to be familiar. Other character-defining adjectives, apart from "friendly", can be found in the reports of those in Chambers's list of those claiming to have known Shakespeare, who is referred to in at least one of them as "honest" and "gentle". But those words alone tell us very little and they call out for some illustration or gloss which is invariably lacking.

Without letters or diaries, and with no eye-witness reports of any substance, the private life of the biographical subject becomes inaccessible. Yet not all of life is private. Human beings perform actions in the world easier to trace than their thoughts and feelings and, in relation to these, the outlook in Shakespeare's case is a little less gloomy. His biographers are fond of observing that he is very well known to us in comparison with playwrights of roughly the same period (Marlowe and Jonson excepted); but since our knowledge of the private lives of writers such as George Peele, Thomas Kyd or Anthony Munday is practically non-existent, that is hardly an impressive claim. They are nevertheless quite right to imply that our ignorance is far from complete. There are surviving records which refer to the dates of Shakespeare's baptism, marriage and death as well as to the christening of his children; and numerous documents relating to his financial or legal affairs. From these, it has become possible to construct what might be called a rough *chronicle* of his life (of the kind, for example, in Peter Holland's excellent entry on Shakespeare in the 2005 edition of the *Dictionary of National Biography*), although it remains very rough indeed. For long stretches we have very little idea where he was or

how he was passing his time so that what cannot be established is that basic tool of all biography: an accurate chronology. Between the christening of Shakespeare's twins, Hamnet and Judith, in 1585, for example, and that public attack on him in 1592 as a brash newcomer on the London theatrical scene, there is only one surviving record[9]. It has therefore become customary for biographers to refer to this seven-year period as 'the lost years'. This is an instinctively cunning move in that it implies that all the others have been found. In fact, if one thinks of biography as an attempt to describe what the subject was like, to recover details of tastes, behaviour, friendships, temperament or character, all Shakespeare's years might accurately be described as lost; but even on the bread-and-butter questions of where he was when, how he passed his time and whom he knew, the record remains very sparse indeed. There is more about the public than the private man but even that does not (one would have thought) take us very far.

One response to our ignorance of Shakespeare's life is to say it does not matter. Why should we care when we already have his writings? There is a hard-line position according to which all biographical information is distracting and our ignorance of Shakespeare is therefore a good rather than bad thing in that it leaves us freer to appreciate his poems and plays. Whether or not one adopts this view must be chiefly a matter of taste, but there is at least one argument against it. Shakespeare is the national Bard and every Briton is therefore expected, through exposure during childhood and youth, to understand what he has to say. But the insufficiently acknowledged truth is that he is often a difficult writer who can on occasions be impenetrably obscure. That knowledge of the biographical as well as historical circumstances in which certain of his more difficult lines were written would clarify them is a likelihood which applies particularly to his sonnets. In the 1890s, A. E. Housman wrote a poem about a young man who is being dragged off to prison because of the colour of his hair: "But they pulled the beggar's hat off for the

[9] In 1588 Shakespeare's name was associated with that of his parents in a case brought in London against the Lamberts, relatives to whom John Shakespeare had ceded a property which he had acquired on his marriage as part of his wife's dowry. For Jonathan Bate there are details of this case which provide "pretty strong evidence of Shakespeare's presence in London (not Lancashire, let alone abroad) in the Armada year of 1588". See his *Soul of the Age: The Life, Mind and Work of William Shakespeare*, London, Penguin, 2009, p. 323.

world to see and stare, / And they're taking him to justice for the colour of his hair"[10]. The naïve reader of the day must have felt that persecuting people for their hair colour indicated a pretty poor state of affairs; the less naïve one that the colour of the young man's hair must have been intended by Housman to stand for something else. For those who first read the poem without knowing anything about its author and then learnt that he was a homosexual, dismayed by the punishment meted out to Oscar Wilde, every line in it would have undergone a radical and irreversible change. It is quite possible that many of the more difficult lines in Shakespeare's sonnets would not only be clarified but also radically altered if we knew to whom they were addressed, when precisely they were composed (or revised), the circumstances of their composition, and whether Shakespeare himself approved or supervised their publication: all questions to which centuries of scholarly enquiry have failed to provide definitive answers.

This intellectual justification for knowing more about Shakespeare is probably only a minor component in the appetite which exists for details of his life. In many cases, as John Updike has been one of many to point out, people are anxious to learn about the life of a writer in order to prolong the pleasure which that writer has given them, "to partake again", as he puts it, "from another angle, of the joys […] experienced within the author's oeuvre"[11]. They can on occasion be disappointed as when, for example, someone they have admired for his depictions of domestic harmony turns out to have been a wife-beater; but in general they are able to continue through biography an acquaintance they have first formed through poems, novels or plays. Any discordance between life and art is in any case often overborne by the strong curiosity which exists about anyone who has achieved something remarkable in life. It is no doubt this, rather than any more specifically literary feeling, which takes thousands to Stratford every year, keen to see precisely where the great man was born and grew up. There is perhaps here a satisfaction in discovering that, allowing for the difference in period, Shakespeare was in his origins much like the rest of us; but perhaps also amaze-

[10] *The Poems of A. E. Housman*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1997, pp. 157-58.

[11] See the essay on "Literary Biography" in John Updike's *Due Considerations*, London, Hamish Hamilton, 2007, pp. 4-5.

ment that an apparently ordinary human being could have gone on to achieve so much that was exceptional.

Whatever the reasons for wanting to know about Shakespeare, that desire certainly exists so that those proud to be without it must be conscious of belonging to a minority. It is an appetite which began to grow fifty or so years after Shakespeare's death and has been on the increase ever since. Great scholars such as Edmond Malone in the eighteenth century, James O. Halliwell-Phillipps in the nineteenth, or Edmund K. Chambers in the twentieth, dedicated many years of their lives to satisfying it, and not without some modest results. It was Malone, for example, who succeeded in clarifying the question of Shakespeare's brothers and sisters, and who found what is still the only extant letter written to him (though there is some considerable doubt whether it was ever sent). Many advances of this kind were made but all three men had ways of acknowledging, more or less implicitly, that none of these was of crucial biographical significance. Malone's way was the most implicit of all in that he died with only a fragment completed of the biography on which he had spent over twenty years (it took the story up to 1592). Halliwell-Phillipps lived to publish the results of his researches in 1881, but he then called them *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare* and they obstinately remained what this title suggests through many subsequent editions. Nearer to our own time, Chambers was surely warning his readers not to expect miracles by entitling his major contribution to Shakespeare biography *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, and by then making clear that, in any attempt to reconstitute the details of Shakespeare's life, there were far more of the latter than the former.

By temperament and training, these three towering figures were inclined to tread warily but they all had contemporaries, and then successors, who were more fancy-free. Less inhibited biographies than theirs began to appear regularly in the nineteenth century, increasing in number as time passed. They were nourished by the occasional minor discovery, usually associated with Shakespeare's parents or his Stratford background rather than the man himself. The last significant documents with a direct relation to his life were unearthed in 1909. It was then that two Americans (a husband-and-wife team called Wallace), working away in the Public Records Office, came across the transcripts of a civil suit brought by Stephen Belott against his

father-in-law, Christopher Mountjoy, and discovered that Shakespeare had been one of those required to testify. Because nothing of similar importance has been found since then, one might expect the supply of biographies to have tapered off. Rather the opposite is the case and there was a particular glut of them at the beginning of this century, with biographical studies of Shakespeare by (amongst many others) Katherine Duncan-Jones, René Weis, and Jonathan Bate on one side of the Atlantic, and Stephen Greenblatt and James Shapiro on the other. Previously, the authors of lives of Shakespeare had largely been professional writers or 'men of letters', but these five authors confirmed a trend whereby biography became a prize for those Shakespeareans from the Academy who had become eminent in their profession. Given the limitations of data with which they then had to deal, this was as if highly trained athletes were required to qualify at international level so that they could then participate in an annual British sack race. The puzzle was how they could participate at all when the information with which they had to deal was not only so limited but had been in the public domain for so long. What resources of intelligence, scholarship or ingenuity did they possess that allowed them to make bricks without straw?

The wide variety of methods which Shakespeare's biographers have developed over the years in order to overcome the inevitable disadvantages of their position are amply illustrated in the book to which these remarks are the introduction; but there is room here for a brief indication of the major ones. Because so little is known about Shakespeare, and all authors of his 'life' are obliged to speculate, one of their problems is how to acknowledge this uncomfortable fact without giving their readers the impression that they might just as well have opened an historical novel. Part of the solution lies in phraseology: finding the right expressions and knowing how to put them in the right places. Those weasel words 'perhaps', 'if', 'probably', 'could have', 'may' etc. are difficult to avoid when the subject has left behind diaries or letters, and there are numerous eye-witness reports; but, deprived of these resources as Shakespeare biographers inevitably are, they become essential. Skilfully handled, they can function to recall that moment in many an American court room drama when the handsome defence attorney suddenly suggests to his hostile male witness the scenario which makes him responsible for the murder of which his

own female client stands accused (the genders are interchangeable). Although the prosecuting counsel then leaps to his feet with "Objection!", the idea of that witness as the real culprit is firmly lodged in the jury's mind well before the judge can say "Sustained". The weasel words I mention have this same function of "Sustained" in that they acknowledge the rules in the very moment when they are being broken. They announce an intellectual responsibility which would make writing yet another life of Shakespeare very difficult while at the same time presiding over what is – if the work is to get written – its very necessary abandon. What is particularly distinctive about their use in the case of Shakespeare is that they tend to accompany speculative answers to questions which have always proved unanswerable – how he managed to become an actor, for example, or the number of times he returned to Stratford once he was settled in London – and then vanish on the subsequent occasions these answers are taken for granted as essential narrative building blocks. One can see why this must be so. What might perhaps have been has to become what certainly was the case if the biography in which this transformation takes place is not to suffer a life-threatening loss of weight.

Even when the weasel words of qualification are not simply dropped, and the mood covertly changed from the conditional to the assertive, the English language is full of devices which help hard-pressed Shakespeare biographers to make what is speculative sound certain, or build into an apparently definitive statement touches which give it what has come to be widely known as plausible deniability. But logic can come to their aid also. Over the years a technique has been developed for solving some of their difficulties which could be termed the argument from absence. This consists in making the lack of information with which Shakespeare biographers have to deal work for them, in turning a negative into a positive.

The most familiar way this method operates can be seen in general statements about Shakespeare's character. If there is one word in these which now appears more often than any others it is 'discreet': here was someone, the impression given usually is, who steered clear of trouble and liked to keep his head down, a man who (as Jonathan Bate has recently put it) had "an instinct for caution" and a "track record of staying out of trouble"[12]. It will be obvious imme-

[12] Bate, p. 345.

diately how this way of presenting Shakespeare transforms the fact that we know virtually nothing about him from a weakness into a strength. Viewed from this perspective, the absence of information is not so much a result of the passage of time, accident, or Shakespeare's social status (whether or not aristocrats wrote more letters than ordinary people, those they did write were more likely to be preserved), but of particular patterns of behaviour. If in his private capacity Shakespeare left so little mark on his age, it is because it was in his nature to do so. This conclusion is open to challenge from those who say that it cannot be drawn without reference to some standard of comparison, but that is not far to seek. In his *Shakespeare: A Life*, Park Honan is one of many to indicate what the standard is when he insists that

> [a]s a man [Shakespeare] would lack a quirky egotism, as seems clear from his relatively peaceful career in the theatre, a hive of tension. He was not involved in Ben Jonson's kind of embroilments, or Marlowe's. He has a calm, fine control of emotive materials, and his sonnets, in the artfulness of their structures, reveal a lordly, easy play over feelings[13].

The final phrases in this extract may be especially questionable but what the whole of it illustrates is the freedom for calling Shakespeare discreet, or peace-loving, which can be derived from the fact that he did not leave a conspicuous trail in the law courts, and was never arrested for counterfeiting or murder, as Marlowe and Jonson were. However true it may be that not all manifestations of violence, aggression and unpleasantness end up in the courts, the failure to uncover a trace of any legal difficulties comparable to those suffered by his two great contemporaries has allowed biographers to arrive at conclusions about his character which are otherwise hard to draw.

The argument from absence works best when the reader can be persuaded that a gap for which there might in reality be many different reasons has only one explanation. A slightly more specific illustration of it involves the vexed question of Shakespeare's religious views. Since his was a period of violent religious controversy,

[13] Park Honan, *Shakespeare: A Life*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 18.

nothing could seem more biographically significant than some clear indications of where he stood on religious matters. In recent times, it has become fashionable to suggest that he was a Catholic, not merely sympathetic to the old faith but rather someone willing to support those working to restore it. Since this was a dangerous position to hold, it is clear that as a covert Catholic Shakespeare would not have been keen to advertise. It is this which leads the well-known Shakespearean scholar, Gary Taylor, to write, "I can't prove Shakespeare was a Catholic. But then, if he were one, he would have had strong incentives to prevent *anyone* from being able to prove it"[14]. It is not difficult to see how this has encouraged some to imply that it is precisely because Shakespeare never reveals he was a Catholic that we know he probably was one. Useful as this move may be, it leads to an absurdity which has been well described by Robert Graves in his novel, *They Hanged My Saintly Billy*. This tells the only lightly fictionalised story of Dr William Palmer who was executed in 1856 for the murder by strychnine of his betting partner, John Cook. There was strong circumstantial evidence to suggest that Palmer had committed this crime but nothing of a more definite variety so that at one point the prosecution's chief pathologist appeared to be arguing that, since strychnine is very rapidly absorbed into the body, the absence of any hint of it in Cook's showed that Palmer must certainly have used it to poison him[15].

Several pertinent instances of the argument from absence are illustrated in my book, but like the use and misuse of words which imply doubt or uncertainty, it is a relatively minor resource for Shakespeare biographers in comparison with two other, major ones. The first of these could be summed up briefly as making historical background stand in for an absent biographical foreground. In the writing of a biography of someone whose life has been written many times before, there is always an initial difficulty. Theoretically speaking, there are as many possible biographies as there are

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[14] Gary Taylor, "Forms of Opposition: Shakespeare and Middleton", *English Literary Renaissance*, 24:2 (Spring 1994), p. 298.

[15] The same pathologist had originally recorded finding non-lethal traces of antimony in Cook's body and hence the popular rhyme which Graves reproduces on p. 228 of *They Hanged My Saintly Billy* (London, Faber & Faber, 1957): "In antimony, great though his faith, / The quantity found being small, / Taylor's faith in strychnine was yet greater, / For of that he found nothing at all".

people willing to write them: new perspectives on the same old material; but in practice the public like to be given the impression that their biographers have been driven to composition by material which is new. This is perhaps why the blurb for Michael Wood's 2003 life of Shakespeare talks of "a wealth of unexplored archive evidence" and "fascinating new discoveries". Since the only recent discovery about Shakespeare which can be described as fascinating dates back (as I have said) to 1909, the new material Wood refers to here must be of an historical rather than strictly biographical nature: more information, that is, on Stratford, the rise of the commercial theatre, Court politics, or Elizabethan and Jacobean life in general. It is this which many biographers use to compensate for their inevitable ignorance of the details of Shakespeare's life: though there is little to say about the man himself, the supply of information about his times is ever increasing and inexhaustible. According to Samuel Schoenbaum, it was the Victorian biographer Charles Knight who was the first person properly to "associate Shakespeare with the circumstances around him" and thus triumph over the "limitations of his data"[16]. This method of dealing with their difficulties is one which Knight's successors have been employing ever since, yet whether it is really the triumph Schoenbaum calls it must be considered doubtful. One of the exciting historical events which took place while Shakespeare was still a boy, for example, was the 'mission' of Edmund Campion to England in 1580. A member of a small group of Jesuits who came from the continent with the intention of reconverting as many English people as possible to the old faith, the charismatic Campion is thought by some to have passed through Warwickshire; yet whether he met Shakespeare's parents or, as at least one biographer would have it, Shakespeare himself, is unknown and remains unknown however many details of Campion and his sad fate are provided (he was arrested and executed in 1581). Much later in Shakespeare's life, an episode of similarly intrinsic, historical interest was the effort made by the out-of-favour earl of Essex in 1601 to defeat his enemies at Court. Shortly before he launched what was later interpreted as the beginnings of an unsuccessful attempt to seize and perhaps murder the Queen, a group of his followers went to the Globe and

[16] Samuel Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1991, p. 277.

commissioned a special performance of *Richard II*, a play in which a monarch is deposed. Shakespeare's biographers have given increasingly detailed and interesting accounts of this episode but without being able to establish how far Shakespeare himself was involved (if indeed he was involved at all), or where his sympathies lay. This is because, although historical background may be essential for a full understanding of an individual's thoughts, feelings and actions, it can never compensate for an initial lack of information on those three matters. To think it can is to be like a man who takes a cart, carefully refurbishes or paints its structure, and then expects the horse suddenly to materialise, panting between the shafts.

The method Charles Knight inaugurated has become increasingly popular in recent times as Shakespeare biography has been more and more the preserve of academics who have often spent many years accumulating background knowledge. Their specialist interests have strengthened the tendency for a life of Shakespeare to be a history book, and often a very interesting history book, which is only disguised as biography. A particularly successful example of this tendency was James Shapiro's *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare*. None of the reviewers who welcomed this work commented on the ambiguity of its title which would have led ordinary readers to expect some account of how Shakespeare passed his time in the spring, what he did in the summer, and how he fared in the autumn and winter of 1599. What they in fact were offered was something much more like a narrative of various important happenings in 1599, one of the years in which Shakespeare happened to be alive. Even more than in many other comparable works, that is, history (cultural, social or political) was made to do the work of life-writing. Nearly always doing that work also, however, is the second major resource of the Shakespeare biographer, the one which consists in inferring the details of his life from his writing, or seeing those details reflected in it. T. S. Eliot once warned us against this habit when he famously claimed that "the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates"[17]; but he had been anticipated in this view by Halliwell-Phillipps who, in a preface to his *Outlines* of Shakespeare's life, wrote that

[17] T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent", in *Selected Essays*, London, Faber & Faber, 1932, p. 18.

> it must surely be admitted that the exchange of the individuality of the man for that of the author is the very essence of dramatic genius, and, if that be so, the higher the genius the more complete will be the severance from personality[18].

These are two statements the full implications of which most people quite reasonably find difficult to accept. It is hard not to believe that, as Stephen Greenblatt puts it in the preface to his biography, the words Shakespeare wrote "contain the vivid presence of actual, lived experience"[19]. The difficulty is that connections between those words and the "lived experience" must often have been extremely indirect and subtle so that there have to be strict criteria which govern any attempt to establish them. To understand how the life of any author is made manifest in his writings, the biographer needs to know both a great deal about that life and the particular circumstances in which individual works were composed. To say these criteria are not met in the case of Shakespeare would be the understatement of the year. "We know more about the life of Shakespeare than about that of any of his literary contemporaries bar Ben Jonson", Anthony Holden blithely declares and he goes on, "[a]nd the rest is there for all to see, in and between every line he wrote"[20]. But deciphering the plays in the way this suggests is not as easy as he implies. Many people might agree that, when Hamlet talks about acting to the players who visit Elsinore, we are hearing Shakespeare's own thoughts (although, since Hamlet is a character in a drama, these might also have been intended as the thoughts of a typical aristocratic patron of the Elizabethan theatre); but does that then mean we have direct access to his own views or feelings when Falstaff pronounces on honour, or Othello on women? Searching for characters in the plays who can be taken as articulating Shakespeare's own thoughts is the simplest and perhaps crudest method for helping the biographer to make bricks without straw. In my book the reader encounters several more, as well as the special and delusively promising case of the sonnets with

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[18] James O. Halliwell-Phillipps, *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare*, London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1886 (6th edition), vol. I, pp. vi-vii.

[19] Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*, London, Jonathan Cape, 2004, p. 13.

[20] Anthony Holden, *William Shakespeare: His Life and Work*, London, Little, Brown & Co., 1999, p. 2.

their apparently autobiographical 'I'. But as an introductory example of the general difficulty, and of how Shakespeare's biographers overcome it, the fate of his son Hamnet will serve as well as any.

Hamnet died in August 1596, when he was eleven, and the loss of his only male heir must, one imagines, have been a blow to Shakespeare. Any serious student of his life would like to know how it affected him. Since there are no private documents which tell us this, his biographers have traditionally found his reaction to the event in the words of Queen Constance in *King John*, after her young son Arthur has been captured and she rightly fears his life will be in danger:

> Grief fills the room up of my absent child,
> Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me,
> Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,
> Remembers me of all his gracious parts […]. (III.iii.93-96[21])

Biographers have found it reasonable to believe that what we hear in these moving lines is Shakespeare lamenting the death of his own son because Hamnet and the Arthur of the play would have been pretty much of an age, and *King John* is usually assigned to early 1597 when the memory of Hamnet's death would still have been fresh. Unfortunately for them, at least two distinguished scholars have argued strongly for a date which is much earlier, and it is clear that Shakespeare could not have been mourning Hamnet's loss long before it took place[22]. Chronology of composition is a remarkably tricky business in Shakespeare studies. Duncan-Jones describes *The Merry Wives of Windsor* as a play which "can be dated with unusual precision" and she goes on to say that, in his representation of young William Page in that play, Shakespeare was assimilating his dead son "into what he happened to be writing in the spring after his death". For her, therefore, William may be the nearest Shakespeare ever came to providing

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[21] For the sake of convenience, all the quotations from Shakespeare's plays or poems in my book were taken from the revised Arden edition of his complete works edited by Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson and David Scott Kastan (London, Thomson Learning, 2001).

[22] The two scholars referred to are Ernst A. J. Honigmann and Richard Dutton. See also David Bevington, *Shakespeare and Biography*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010, where the composition of *King John* is described as a matter on which "the jury is still out" (p. 103).

for Hamnet "a public memorial"[23]. Her book bears the Arden imprint but when Giorgio Melchiori came to edit *The Merry Wives* in Arden's Third Series, he decided it belonged to 1599, or later[24].

This lack of consensus as to when the plays were written (as opposed to registered or performed) is a considerable inconvenience to those looking for the man in his work; but that activity is too important to the biographers for them to be much troubled by it and, in any event, it is always open to them to say (in relation to *The Merry Wives*) that, although Shakespeare would not have written a memorial to his son while he was still alive, he could still have been remembering him not merely one, but three or four springs after his death. This is the approach adopted by David Bevington who, sympathetic to the idea that the effect of Hamnet's death can be found best not in *The Merry Wives* but in *Twelfth Night*, explains away a delayed reaction of four years or so by saying that "mourning for such an event can take time and patience"[25].

Most of the recent biographers are quite anxious about chronology but one it seems to leave untroubled is René Weis, who feels he can not only guess when the plays were written but also divine more or less exactly what Shakespeare was doing at the time of their composition. So precise is he on the latter question that he finds Constance's words in *King John* slightly *pre-dating* Hamnet's death; but he then shows the resourcefulness all Shakespeare's biographers require by suggesting they were written when he already knew his son was dying[26]. The play in which he finds a more powerful expression of grief, however, is *Romeo and Juliet*. The sorrow expressed by the Nurse, Capulet and Lady Capulet in that play over Juliet's death is, he says, "raw and heart-rending", and to him an obvious echo of what Shakespeare must have felt in losing Hamnet[27]. In the course of elaborating this case he finds an alternative answer to an objection to which Duncan-Jones might be said to expose herself in identify-

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[23] Katherine Duncan-Jones, *Ungentle Shakespeare: Scenes from His Life*, The Arden Shakespeare, London, Thomson Learning, 2001, pp. 97-99.

[24] Giorgio Melchiori, "Introduction", in William Shakespeare, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, ed. Giorgio Melchiori, The Arden Shakespeare, London, Thomson Learning, 2000, pp. 18-30.

[25] Bevington, p. 103.

[26] René Weis, *Shakespeare Revealed: A Biography*, London, John Murray, 2007, pp. 183-84.

[27] Weis, p. 203.

ing memories of Hamnet in William Page. He is after all a character surrounded by cheerfulness and one who certainly does not die. But that, says Duncan-Jones, is inevitable in a "festive farce, with no scope for any expression of private grief"[28]. In dealing with the comedy in *Romeo and Juliet*, Weis takes a different tack, noting how

> Shakespeare managed to conjure up a lively, funny maverick like Mercutio, at a time when he was presumably overwhelmed by grief, testimony perhaps to an iron resolve. Perhaps *Romeo and Juliet* was an act of solace and atonement, a determined creation of children in the teeth of adversity and death, children who, unlike his son, would be resurrected every time the Chorus stepped out to launch another performance[29].

The strategy employed here is of the 'heads-I-win-tails-you-lose' variety, and one which, in this instance, allows Weis to decide that either Shakespeare is directly expressing his grief and sense of loss in the plays he wrote shortly after Hamnet's death, or that the exuberant cheerfulness in many of them represents a compensatory mechanism for overcoming his sorrow. It would be wrong to imagine that arguments of this variety can be countered. What Weis says here may be true, but it may just as well be false. There is nothing which survives that would allow anyone to decide the issue. Nor, if one excludes chronology, is there anything to confirm or deny the effect of Hamnet's death in the very many other places, apart from *Romeo and Juliet*, where it has been found (*Hamlet* is a favourite hunting-ground), or the claims of those who decide to make that effect general. Anthony Holden, for example, attributes to Hamnet's death "the personal grief which now becomes a recurring strain in [Shakespeare's] work […] lifting his history to quite another poetic plane"[30], while Michael Wood, ignoring the predominantly comic mood of the plays which appear to have been written shortly after 1596, describes the effect on Shakespeare's writing of losing his only son in this way:

> Within the next year or two a change gradually came about not only in Shakespeare's themes but also in his way of writing, in his lan-

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[28] Duncan-Jones, p. 99.

[29] Weis, pp. 204-5.

[30] Holden, p. 151.

> guage and imagery. The great tragedies followed, plumbing 'the well of darkness'. This was not only a personal tragedy but a powerful intimation of mortality[31].

It stands to reason that Shakespeare must have been affected by the death of Hamnet but it is a smart move to let the reader decide exactly where in the plays this is evident, in case one of the likely candidates was written before it took place, but also because relevant quotations which readers themselves recall have more effect than any the biographer could choose for them. That with the right kind of encouragement (or the wrong one, in my view), any reasonably informed reader can find such quotations ought nevertheless to be a worry. This may be a case where the ability of very many people to come up with different answers to the same question is not significant since the effect of Hamnet's death on Shakespeare's writing can always be described as *pervasive.* Yet the ease with which the operation may be carried ought surely to be felt disturbing. It is one of which information-starved biographers are nonetheless fond because the apparent access it gives to Shakespeare's private feelings constitutes, along with the reliance on history, such a major reason why lives of Shakespeare can still continue to appear.

[31] Michael Wood, *In Search of Shakespeare*, London, BBC Worldwide Publications, 2003, p. 166.

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Shakespeare against Biography

John Drakakis

1. Biography

At the beginning of Antonia S. Byatt's novel *The Biographer's Tale* (2000) the young Phineas G. Nanson confesses to his Head of Department and Anglo-Saxon specialist, Ormerod Goode, that he doesn't want to be "a post-modern literary theorist" because he feels "an urgent need for a life full of *things*"[1]. His expression of the desire for "things" elicits the following response from Goode: "*Verbum caro factum est* […] The art of biography is a despised art because it is an art of things, of facts, of arranged facts". The young Phineas spends the remainder of the novel engaged in just such an arrangement, although he is finally forced to admit that "[i]t was of course, *my mind*, the mind of Phineas G. Nanson, that was doing all the work of redesign and recombination. It wasn't nice"[2].

At the beginning Phineas Nanson has clearly read his *Macbeth*, but by the end of the novel he has also read his Jakobson, his Barthes and possibly, even, his Foucault. Both the process of selection, and his immersion in a world of disjointed "facts" expose the extent to which a "weight of meaning" is built "around the categories of the world"[3]. But it is also as though the novel has built upon Virginia Woolf's observation that, "raised upon a little eminence which his independence has made for him, he [the biographer] sees his sub-

[1] Antonia S. Byatt, *The Biographer's Tale*, London, Chatto & Windus, 2000, pp. 3-4.

[2] Byatt, p. 201.

[3] John Frow, *Genre*, The New Critical Idiom, Abingdon-New York, Routledge, 2015 (2nd edition), p. 19.

ject spread about him. He chooses; he synthesises; in short, he has ceased to be the chronicler; he has become an artist"[4]. She goes on to say that the biographer – in this instance Harold Nicholson – "has devised a method of writing about people *and himself* as though they were at once real and imaginary"[5]. This is, of course, Woolf's own method in her fictional biography of Vita Sackville-West, *Orlando* (1928), when the documentary evidence fails:

> Just when we thought to elucidate a secret that has puzzled historians for a hundred years, there was a hole in the manuscript big enough to put your finger through. We have done our best to piece out a meagre summary from the charred fragments that remain; but often it has been necessary to speculate, to surmise, and even to use the imagination[6].

The persistent presence of the fictional biographer, his/her omniscient appeal to 'facts', and to techniques of narration, expose, as Rachel Bowlby has observed, "how both history and biography imply particular conceptions of the relations between subjectivity and history – what 'makes' the man (or woman) or period that is represented as a discreet and describable entity"[7].

It is not difficult to recognise the standard method of Shakespearean biography in these observations. This is also substantially what Hermione Lee, a biographer of Woolf, adopts as a method, in which "selection" and "shaping" and "pointing up the artifice of biographical narrative" allowed her to be "inspired" by Woolf's own "experimental novelistic strategies for accessing the interior lives of her characters and dealing with time, memory, and perspective"[8]. Lee goes on to observe that Shakespeare's biographers "differ widely – or wildly – in their lines of approach, between

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[4] Virginia Woolf, "The New Biography", in *Collected Essays*, ed. Leonard Woolf, London, The Hogarth Press, 1967, vol. IV, p. 231.

[5] Woolf, "The New Biography", p. 232.

[6] Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography*, ed. Brenda Lyons, introduction and notes by Sandra M. Gilbert, London, Penguin, 1993, p. 84.

[7] Rachel Bowlby, *Virginia Woolf: Feminist Destinations*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1988, p. 129.

[8] Hermione Lee, *Biography: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 122.

romantic guesswork, dogged sleuthing, historical contextualising, post-modern indeterminacy"[9]. This may be so, but at the end of the day they are all united in their search for the individual, the 'man' Shakespeare, the stable 'subject', who is socially determined, but who transcends these historical and cultural limits, and whose authority lies behind and above the 'texts' that are attributed to him and that are instrumental and expressive of a 'personality'. The *oeuvre* becomes the means whereby Shakespeare's "inner life realises itself" as Hegel might say[10], but also as *telos*, a harbinger of a 'modern' or even 'post-modern', future. But as Katrine Keuneman observes, in her preface to the English edition of Roland Barthes's *Criticism and Truth*: "The writer is the person for whom language is problematical, not transparent, who lays emphasis on the depths and not the instrumentality of language"[11]. This impinges directly upon the 'subjectivity' of the writer, and upon the conception of Shakespeare as a representative figure whose writing is driven by a teleological imperative.

The challenge that this poses, and that Barthes develops in his essay on "The Death of the Author", is that it rejects the existence of the writer's position as something that is prior to language that is assumed to embody a verisimilitude and that is an instrumental gateway to a singular authorial meaning. It is also to acknowledge that the 'author' is what Foucault would identify and reject: "a privileged moment of individualisation in the history of ideas, knowledge and literature", involving "reference to an originating subject or to a language conceived as plenitude which supports the activities of commentary and interpretation"[12].

To displace 'Shakespeare' from the practice of identifying unitary meaning is to challenge the notion of an autonomous subjectivity, and to distinguish the 'life' from the question of the 'author', while at the same time rendering the teleological narra-

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[9] Lee, p. 136.

[10] G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, Engl. transl. by John Sibree, New York, Dover, 1956, p. 462.

[11] Katrine Pilcher Keuneman, "Preface", in Roland Barthes, *Criticism and Truth*, Engl. transl. by Katrine Pilcher Keuneman, London, The Athlone Press, 1987, p. 21.

[12] Cf. Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?", in *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, Engl. transl. by Donald F. Bouchard, Ithaca-New York, Cornell University Press, 1977, p. 115, and p. 123, note 19.

tives that flow from this conjuncture of what are, in effect, two distinct discourses, irreducibly inter-discursive[13]. Indeed, at a purely empirical level, what little we know of Shakespeare, even in his last years, flies directly in the face of a teleological or a developmental narrative. It is also to challenge what Barthes calls a "critical verisimilitude"[14] that is "very fond of evident 'truths'", which are considered as being "essentially normative"[15]. One of the "rules" of verisimilitude that Barthes identifies is one that is central to biographical discourse: "objectivity" based upon "the certainties of language", and its implications "of psychological coherence and the imperatives of the structure of the genre"[16]. The "evident truths" that emerge according to Barthes are "only choices" that, he goes on to say, "are *already* interpretations, for they imply a pre-existing choice of psychological or structural model; […] all the objectivity of the critic will depend then, not on the choice of code, but on the rigour with which he applies the model he has chosen to the work in question"[17]. But what applies to fictional 'character' applies equally to biographical 'character' insofar as critical verisimilitude asserts that "life itself is clear: the same banality governs the relationship of people in books and in the world"[18]. In a later section on "The science of literature" he identifies what he calls "a literature faculty" which is "an energy of discourse" that

> has nothing to do with 'genius', for it is made up not of inspiration or personal will-power but of rules built up by many people besides the author. It is not images, ideas or lines of verse which the mythical voice of the Muse breathes into the writer, it is the great logic of symbols and great empty forms which allow him to speak and to operate[19].

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13 Cf. Foucault, p.124, where Foucault seeks to reverse the logic whereby "the function of the author is to characterise the existence, circulation, and operation of certain discourses within society".

14 Barthes, *Criticism and Truth*, p. 34.

15 Barthes, *Criticism and Truth*, p. 35.

16 Barthes, *Criticism and Truth*, pp. 36ff.

17 Barthes, *Criticism and Truth*, p. 39.

18 Barthes, *Criticism and Truth*, p. 41.

19 Barthes, *Criticism and Truth*, p. 75.

Barthes's killing off of the 'author' as "transcendental signified"[20] presents a very real challenge to the foundations of biographical discourse. It leads, as Séan Burke ultimately concludes, to the view that in a reconstruction of the figure of the author as "human subject" only one tenet can be stated with certainty "to wit, that authorship is the *principle of specificity in the world of texts*". Moreover, far from "consolidating the notion of a universal or unitary subject, the re-tracing of the work to its author is a working-back to historical, cultural and political embeddedness"[21], where both sides of the equation exist in a dynamic interaction with each other. In the decades since Barthes, Shakespeare biography has operated comfortably with the parameters of a teleologically imbued 'authorship' that Burke's careful revisionism has proposed, but it has done so without challenging the principles of 'fact', psychological consistency, or indeed, a "theology of the idealist subject"[22] that have underpinned its generic foundations. Indeed, we might even go so far as to suggest that the biography of the figure of the 'author' conflates two distinct discourses: one which is historically specific[23], and 'biography' per se with a particular series of assumptions concerning 'subjectivity'[24].

2. Fact, factish, faction, fiction

Prologues and epilogues are interesting generic forms. They allow writers moments for candour, and if, as in the case of Stephen Greenblatt's "Epilogue" in *Renaissance Self-fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (1980), they have been rendered self-consciously problematical, that is clearly not the case in Samuel Schoenbaum's "Epilogue" to his monumental *Shakespeare's Lives* (1991). In the introduction to *Derrida: A Biography* (2013), Benoît Peeters reveals that he has "sought, in the final analysis, to write not so much a Derridean biography as

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[20] Cf. Séan Burke, *The Death and Return of The Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1998 (2nd edition), pp. 23ff.

[21] Burke, p. 202.

[22] Burke, p. 113. I borrow this phrase from Burke who is using it in a different context.

[23] See Foucault, pp. 124-25.

[24] I owe the clarification of this point to my colleague at Stirling, Dr Dale Townshend.

a biography of Derrida", and he sketches in the former as "a multiple, layered but not hierarchised, *fractal* biography which would escape the totalising and teleological commitments which inhabit the genre from the start"[25]. In some ways, *Shakespeare's Lives* can be described as a "fractal biography" insofar as it explores a multiple series of "lives", although it does not flinch from its stated objective which is to pursue the quest "for knowledge of Shakespeare the man"[26]. After some 568 pages Schoenbaum concludes that the twentieth century "yet lacks an authoritative Life conceived in the modern spirit". He laments the absence of "a single personal letter, one page of diary!" but insists that "[e]ach generation must re-interpret the documentary record by its own lights and endeavour to sort out the relations of the man and the masks in the plays and sonnets". The absence of documentary evidence stands in the way of biographical positivist method to unearth salient 'facts', but this is now regarded as being of secondary importance to a more enduring record: "*Whatever we conclude in this regard*", Schoenbaum asserts, "we may discern in the *oeuvre* as a whole, the mysterious workings of a poet and dramatist's imagination; we can follow *the development of mind and art*, which, in the final resort, matter more to us than Shakespeare's private sorrows and ecstasies"[27]. Despite his genuflections in the direction of a modish pluralism, that by 1991 had infiltrated even the most conservative of literary discourses, Schoenbaum is on the side of a progressive 'realism' as opposed to 'constructivism'; if the documentary record refuses to yield meaning, then the *oeuvre* will. Schoenbaum has done more than any Shakespeare scholar to unearth and document 'the facts' but he retains a naïve faith in the spontaneous philosophy that attention to the *oeuvre* will surpass the practical, but, one suspects, over-determined vicissitudes of 'interpretation'.

This fetishising of the Shakespearean *oeuvre* takes place as though there were a quite natural and unproblematic pathway from 'fact' to text. Insofar as Schoenbaum can acknowledge a relativist and constructivist bent in relation to the assembly of biographical 'facts' he does so, but moving from unrecorded "private sorrows and ecstasies"

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[25] Benoît Peeters, *Derrida: A Biography*, Engl. transl. by Andrew Brown, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2013, p. 6.

[26] Samuel Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1991, p. vii.

[27] Schoenbaum, p. 568, my italics.

to the quasi-factual solidity of the *oeuvre* is to suggest, in the words of Bruno Latour, "that construction and reality are synonyms"[28]. The late Terence Hawkes, writing a year after the appearance of Schoenbaum's book, put the matter a little more directly in his comment that "[a]t one time" *Hamlet* "must obviously have been an interesting play written by a promising Elizabethan playwright" but since then it has "taken on a huge and complex symbolising function, and as part of the institution called 'English Literature'"[29]. Here the symbolic function of language to which Barthes had referred some twenty-five years earlier is extended well beyond the parameters he originally envisioned. But Hawkes is even more direct in his refusal to equate 'facts' or indeed 'texts' with the unproblematic assertion that they represent a prior 'reality':

> Facts do not speak for themselves. Nor do texts. This doesn't mean that facts or texts don't exist. It does mean that all of them are capable of genuinely contradictory meanings, none of which has any independent 'given', undeniable, or self-evident status. Indeed, they don't speak at all unless and until they are inserted into and perceived as part of specific discourses which impose their own shaping requirements and agendas[30].

By extension this also includes the figure of the 'author', to whom we may attribute 'agency' but who does not precede language, who is constituted *in* language, and for whom reality is *experienced* substantially through language[31].

Thus, to constitute and reconstitute the 'facts' involving the name Shakespeare is, *a fortiori*, to create fictions. And it is no accident that recent years have spawned a number of novels that deal directly either with aspects of Shakespeare's 'life' or with the problems of the discourse of biography itself. Indeed, we might even say that the problems have extended into the realm of autobiography, as *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, or Derrida's essay "The Ear of the Other"

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[28] Bruno Latour, *On the Modern Cult of the Factish Gods*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2010, p. 24.

[29] Terence Hawkes, *Meaning by Shakespeare*, London-New York, Routledge, 1992, p. 4.

[30] Terence Hawkes, *Shakespeare in the Present*, London-New York, Routledge, 2002, p. 3.

[31] Cf. Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, Engl. transl. by Richard Howard, New York, Hill & Wang, 2010, p. 56.

testify. Rudolph Gasché observes in his response to Derrida's essay that autobiography "is not in any way to be confused with the so-called life of the author, with the corpus of empirical accidents making up the life of an empirically real person". And he continues:

> Rather, the biographical, insofar as it is autobiographical, cuts across both of the fields in question: the body of the work and the body of the real subject. The biographical is thus that internal border of work and life, a border on which texts are engendered[32].

In the essay itself Derrida reiterates the now post-structuralist commonplace that the effects, or structure of a text, are not reducible to its "truth", "to the intended meaning of its presumed author, or even its unique and identifiable signatory"[33]. This is a very long way from William Empson's, admittedly nuanced, claim that when critics "make or imply a judgement about an author's character, they should supply evidence from his biography"[34]. In the examples that Empson chooses: Marvell, Fielding, Yeats, Eliot, and Joyce, there is ample documentary evidence to warrant a shuttling between writer and text, but in the case of Shakespeare much requires to be inferred, and the inferences are by no means consistent in pointing towards an omniscient authority. Shakespeare's texts are what Barthes would call "writable" texts insofar as they do not encourage the spectator or the reader to consume them; rather the spectator and/or the reader is invited to engage productively with the text[35]. Indeed, Barthes distinguishes between what he calls a "text of pleasure […] that contents, fills, grants euphoria; the text that comes from culture and does not break with it" and that "is linked to a *comfortable* practice of reading" and

> the text that discomforts (perhaps to the point of a certain boredom), unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions,

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[32] Jacques Derrida, *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation*, Engl. transl. by Peggy Kamuf, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1985, p. 41.

[33] Derrida, p. 29.

[34] William Empson, *Using Biography*, London, Chatto & Windus, 1984, p. 42.

[35] Cf. Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, Engl. transl. by Richard Miller, New York, Hill & Wang, 1974, but also Rosalind Coward and John Ellis, *Language and Materialism*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977, pp. 45ff.

> the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language[36].

In 1919 Virginia Woolf could assert in a quasi-Sidneyan fashion that "[t]he novelist is free" to invent his or her characters while "the biographer is tied"[37], and she went on to insist that "[w]e can no longer maintain that life consists in actions only or in works. It consists in personality"[38]. *Orlando*, of course, transcends that limitation in that it allows 'fact' and 'fiction' to jostle with, and interrogate, each other. But it also testifies to the claim made by her contemporary, Georg Lukács, who perceived a deep formal connection between what he calls "the inner form of the novel" and "biographical form". "The novel", he argues,

> overcomes its 'bad' infinity by recourse to the biographical form. On the one hand the scope of the world is limited by the scope of the hero's possible experiences and its mass organised by the orientation of his development towards finding the meaning of life in self-recognition; on the other hand, the discreetly heterogeneous mass of isolated persons, non-sensuous structures and meaningless events receives a unified articulation by the relating of each separate element to the central character and the problem symbolised by the story of his life[39].

For Lukács "the novel tells of the adventure of interiority"[40], precisely the ground on which biography and fiction meet, and where the biographer is implicated in "a method of writing" that Virginia Woolf recognised as being partially solipsistic: "writing about people *and about himself* as though they were at once real and imaginary"[41]. This is precisely the mode of critical discourse that we associate with A. C. Bradley for whom Shakespeare's 'characters' are possessed of a reality that exceeds their roles in the plays in which they appear. It follows from this that Shakespeare, like his characters, has a 'public'

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36 Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, Engl. transl. by Richard Miller, New York, Hill & Wang, 1975, p. 14.

37 Virginia Woolf, "The Art of Biography", in *Collected Essays*, vol. IV, p. 221.

38 Woolf, "The Art of Biography", p. 230.

39 Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, Engl. transl. by Ann Bostock, London, Merlin Press, 1971, p. 81.

40 Lukács, p. 89.

41 Woolf, "The New Biography", p. 232.

and a 'private' life, with all that that entails. Except that these terms have historically specific meanings that link biography, fiction, and a universal theory of 'humanity'. In a much larger context, Jürgen Habermas has described this as

> a public consisting of private persons whose autonomy based on ownership of private property wanted to see itself represented as such in the sphere of the bourgeois family and actualised inside the person as love, freedom, cultivation – in a word as humanity[42].

Once we acknowledge the convergence of novelistic and biographical discourse, then we are forced to reconsider the range of historical meanings to which terms such as 'public' and 'private' may be susceptible. This also embraces the different meanings to which the concept of 'otherness', embedded in Barthes's and Derrida's accounts of the relation between autobiography and biography, are susceptible. It is indeed the case, as Stephen Greenblatt has observed, that in seeking to speak with the dead, "to hear the voice of the other", one is inevitably forced to hear one's own voice[43]. The problem is, as Jorge Luis Borges observes in his short story "Shakespeare's Memory", that what he possesses is "my own personal memory and the memory of that Shakespeare that I partially am. Or rather, two memories possess *me*"[44]. It is that "personal memory", replete with projections, condensations, evasions, ideological underpinnings, that Terence Hawkes's "presentism" aims to re-instate as an indispensable and radically destabilising force that exposes the constitutive difference that resides at the heart of all historical enquiry.

3. The fictions continue

The melange of 'fact' and 'fiction' that comprises biographical narratives, and that in turn is what biography depends upon, is dedicated

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[42] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Engl. transl. by Thomas Burger, Cambridge, Mass., The MIT Press, 1991, p. 55.

[43] Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*, Berkley-Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1988, p. 1.

[44] Jorge Luis Borges, "Shakespeare's Memory", in *Collected Fictions*, Engl. transl. by Andrew Hurley, New York, Penguin, 1998, p. 510.

to revealing Shakespeare 'the man' and continues to guarantee its expansion because there is a gulf between assembled documentary evidence and the fictional texts. While the cultural authority of Shakespeare continues to expand, the 'author' recedes into the background. Fictions purporting to uncover *The Secret Life of William Shakespeare* (2012)[45] jostle with biographies that announce themselves as disclosures of a private life. New connections between unrelated and partially documented aspects of the 'life' generate new speculations. To take one recent, extreme, example: René Weis's exhaustively earnest *Shakespeare Revealed: A Biography* (2007) manages to excavate a Shakespeare who was a grain-hoarding homosexual cripple, and a French-speaking serial philanderer, who had managed to contract venereal disease that he succeeded in turning into poetry. Utilising a time-honoured biographical practice of oscillating opportunistically between sparse documentation and selections from the Shakespeare *oeuvre*, Weis embarks on the following speculation that, despite an initial conditional "if", seeks to link the "life" with *The Merchant of Venice* and the sonnets:

> If the fiction of the play is matched to the story of the life that emerges from the *Sonnets*, for Antonio read Shakespeare, with Bassanio is [sic] a version of the earl of Southampton, who quite possibly told Shakespeare about his relationship with Essex's cousin Elizabeth Vernon sometime during the summer of 1598[46].

This is what Franco Moretti, in his book *The Bourgeois: Between History and Literature* (2013), would label a "filler", a narrative that offers "pleasure compatible with the new regularity of bourgeois life", offering the kind of fanciful linkage that is "to story-telling what comforts are to physical pleasure: enjoyment pared down, adapted to the daily activity of reading a novel"[47]. Set alongside a short passage from Jude Morgan's recent novel, recording Shakespeare's first meeting with Anne Hathaway, both genuflect in the direction of Shakespeare's texts but both add a very contemporary 'creative' gloss; in Morgan's narrative the young Will is watch-

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45 Jude Morgan, *The Secret Life of William Shakespeare*, London, Headline Review, 2012.

46 René Weis, *Shakespeare Revealed: A Biography*, London, John Murray, 2007, p. 236.

47 Franco Moretti, *The Bourgeois: Between History and Literature*, London-New York, Verso, 2013, p. 81.

ing a performance of *The Right Tragical History of Darius King of Persia* in the Guildhall in Stratford when he sees Anne:

> But for the first time Will's attention was split. He kept watching Anne's face, almost as if it were part of the play. Judging the tragedy by the lights and shades it drew on that face. It seemed to him that other faces were like blank leaves compared to hers, where a whole busy page of text invited the eye to read[48].

This lacks the eloquence of Romeo's

> Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear.
> So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows
> As yonder lady o'er her fellows shows.
> (*Romeo and Juliet*, I.v.46-48[49])

But it is surely the 'text' that Morgan has in mind as he transports his Elizabethan lover into the ethos of the modern teenager. I leave aside the 'fact' that the first performance of *Darius King of Persia* was in 1688.

Biographies of Shakespeare are full of these fictional elements, and similarly, fictional lives of Shakespeare seek to amalgamate 'fact', 'faction' and 'fiction'. The aim seems to be to stabilise a persistently elusive 'authority' that the available documentation fragments. We can, of course, seek some solace in the experimental biographies/autobiographies of writers such as Barthes or Derrida that privilege incoherence and that resist teleological imperatives. But such is the force of Shakespeare's global image that the impulse to construct a coherent identity, capable of generating those "archetypal myths of tradition" from within the description of a particular historical individual[50], has proved difficult to resist.

The issue becomes more serious, however, when a literary critic of some distinction slips into the biographical mode as a means of assisting textual exegesis, ostensibly in the manner advocated by Empson.

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[48] Morgan, p. 48.

[49] William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. René Weis, The Arden Shakespeare, London, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012.

[50] I have borrowed part of the phraseology from Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 287.

Much is made of the name 'Shakespeare' on the title-page of the 1609 Quarto of the *Sonnets*, to the extent that Katherine Duncan-Jones is convinced that it was Shakespeare himself who authorised their publication[51]. It is into this theoretical context in which the name 'Shakespeare' is invested with transparent meaning[52], that I want to locate *Sonnet 122*, a sonnet that traditionally comes within the group that is thought to be directed towards a male addressee. Duncan-Jones is very cautious in providing a naturalistic auto-biographical narrative context for the poem[53], and this accords with John Kerrigan's initial description of the occasion of the poem. However, Kerrigan proceeds to question this narrative by asking why Shakespeare "should have chosen to write on a theme which, however conventional, challenged, indeed contradicted, his deepest instincts about memory and mortality". He then pinpoints a further difficulty in that "so accustomed is the reader at this stage to associate writing and anxiety about writing with the poet that the script discussed keeps shifting, in reading, from the friend to the apologetic *I*". He concludes that "[i]t is not finally possible, however, to read the text as an apology for losing *tables* inscribed by the poet – *tables* given him, blank, by the friend", and he lays the blame for the sonnet's confusion on the claim that "Shakespeare found himself tackling a theme which he could not handle with assurance (because the idea of writing carried such weight); biography impinges, once more, through inelegance of argument"[54]. I leave aside the question of how Kerrigan manages to locate Shakespeare's "deepest instincts" or whether they are the instincts of the critic projected onto the object of his enquiry. What he does register, however, is a nervousness about reading biographical detail into a poem that is self-evidently *about* the practice of writing. Equally, he appears nervous

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[51] Katherine Duncan-Jones, "Introduction", in William Shakespeare, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones, The Arden Shakespeare, London, Thomson Publishing, 1997, pp. 34-36.

[52] Derrida, p. 9, where in a discussion of Nietzsche's "name" in *Ecce Homo* Derrida notes that life "will return to the name but not to the living, in the name of the living *as* a name of the dead".

[53] Shakespeare, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, p. 354: "The speaker has parted with a notebook or manuscript volume given him by his friend, but claims that his own memory provides a more lasting memento".

[54] John Kerrigan, "Commentary", in William Shakespeare, *The Sonnets and A Lover's Complaint*, ed. John Kerrigan, London, Penguin, 1999, p. 343.

about moving away from a referential model of textual meaning that privileges consumption of the text's contents, and into one in which the reader is invited to collaborate with the speaker in *producing* the text. Both commentators display some discomfort at the prospect of straying from the mimetic gestures that the text appears to display.

Helen Vendler in *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (1997) moves a step further in fabricating what she calls "an absent centre" for the poem that takes the form of a hypothetical question from "the young man" which is: "Why did you give away my gift to you?"[55]. From this she constructs a nuanced dialogue, which prompts a range of "shifts by the speaker from strategy to strategy" that represent "Shakespeare's way of mimicking social unease, an unease prompted by the unanswerability (in factual terms) of 'Why did you give away my gift?'"[56]. This entire mimetic scenario treats the language of the poem as being primarily referential: an actual conversation took place that involved a 'real' book, and Shakespeare himself experienced a degree of "social unease" at having performed a particular action. All this is part of a narrative that is assumed to be fundamentally biographical, and that attempts to 'authenticate' the occasion of the publication of the *Sonnets* underpin. The entire argument from hypothetical biography falls if for a moment we entertain the distinct possibility that the addressee of the poem might equally be female, or that the alleged object might be metaphorical and not literal. If we privilege in our reading, as Kerrigan hints that we might, an uncertainty that seeps into "the categories of the world" to which the poem appears to refer, then the "gift" and the "tables"[57] to which the first line refers might just as easily register an act of inscription: the "tables", i.e. the distilled wisdom (that includes the appearance) of the addressee, comprise the "gift" itself. These are the qualities that are inscribed permanently ("charactered") in the speaker's "brain" "with lasting memory". The "idle rank" of line 3 permits a distinction to be made between the alleged permanence of writing, and the actual permanence of detail that resides in the living memory. The second quatrain qualifies the exaggeration with which

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55 Helen Vendler, *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, Cambridge, Mass.-London, Harvard University Press, 1997, p. 518.

56 Vendler, p. 519.

57 All quotations are from Shakespeare, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*.

the first quatrain concluded. Memory, it is argued, is dependent upon 'life', and so long as the addressee continues to live then there will be a living "record" of these qualities. This sets up an opposition between the living "record" and an inferred impermanence of an actual written record. This would reverse the Latin adage *verba volant scripta manent*. Except, of course, that in this case, the *scripta* is nothing less than the sonnet itself. Or, to put it another way, the speaker is inviting the reader to engage with an act that performs a conflict between two modes of 'writing', that of literal inscription versus one that invokes the *presence* of the addressee. Simply to assert as 'real' the speaker's hypothetical experience of carelessness and subsequent embarrassment at having given away an actual object is to miss what is at stake here, and especially in the case of a sonnet that begins nominally as a paean of praise to the addressee. Indeed, by the end of the third quatrain, the speaker can dispense with the written record of his love: "Nor need I tallies thy dear love to score" (l. 10), and is prepared to rely on a more direct strategy that is present to itself: "To trust those tables that receive thee more" (l. 12), where "those tables" are the items that are inscribed in the speaker's living memory. Thus far the poem appears to be complimenting the addressee and reaffirming the speaker's "love". At no stage in this argument are we enjoined to think that this is a male or a female addressee, even though such "love" as is expressed appears to be spiritual rather than physical. The final couplet, however, returns us to the ethos of 'writing':

> To keep an adjunct to remember thee
> Were to import forgetfulness in me. (ll. 13-14)

The sheer audacity of this concluding couplet lies in the question it poses about the actual status of the sonnet. The paradox that the first 12 lines seek to negotiate is one involving two radically opposed modes of inscription. The 'absence' that Vendler attributes to a specifically unvocalised question reduces to a 'realistic' scenario the distinction between vocalisation per se, that privileges the voice, and 'writing' that defers *presence*. Thus the inscription of the sonnet itself, according to this logic, performs an act of forgetfulness. I need hardly point out that what I have offered is a *reading*, and one that resists reduction to some autobiographical 'fact' that might

limit its meaning. Indeed, I offer it as an example of a 'writable' text that systematically blocks any attempt to 'consume' its meaning, and that therefore resists a 'biographical' reading. Or, as the late D. F. McKenzie would have it, "[i]f a poem *is* only what its individual readers make it in their activity of constructing meaning from it, then a good poem will be one which most compels its own destruction in the service of its readers' new constructions"[58].

Biography is a problem for us because in its customary form it discloses an ideological investment in unitary meaning, while at the same time, and especially in the case of Shakespeare, entangling the 'authority' ascribed to the author with that assumed by the critic. The claim is that the closer we read the texts, the closer we get to the 'author' Shakespeare and the closer we get to a re-affirmation of a hierarchy of discourses. However, if Barthes's attempt to kill off the author was designed to initiate the development of democratic reading, he may well have underestimated, if not oversimplified, the capacity of the 'authority' that this threatened to displace, to migrate, and to set up shop elsewhere. Perhaps we should celebrate the fact that insufficient evidence survives to produce a 'definitive' Shakespeare biography of the sort that Schoenbaum dreamed of.

[58] D. F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 26. A little earlier in his essay, McKenzie signals his desire to acknowledge "authorial meaning" that he thinks "is in some measure recoverable" while at the same time "for better or for worse, readers inevitably make their own meanings" (p. 19).

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Who Was William Shakespeare?*

Graham Holderness

What a strange question! Shakespeare is acknowledged throughout the world as one of the greatest, if not the greatest, of writers; he has an unrivalled position as the greatest author of British culture. Can you imagine anyone asking that question of any other national writer? Who was Miguel de Cervantes? Who was Dante Alighieri? Who was Johannes Wolfgang von Goethe? So why Shakespeare?

The problem is everywhere. It troubles even Gwyneth Paltrow. "Are you the author of the plays of William Shakespeare?" asks Viola de Lessops, in the film *Shakespeare in Love*. What a roundabout way of asking someone's name! "Are you William Shakespeare?" would have been simpler. But Viola is, in fact, not just after a man, but in quest of a literary biography. She knew and loved the plays, before she knew and loved the author. Like her original, Viola Compton in the comic novel *No Bed for Bacon*[1], she doesn't want just any man, even one as dashing and soulful and sexy as Joseph Fiennes. She wants the author of the plays of William Shakespeare; who happens, in this instance, to be William Shakespeare himself. And fortunately for her, Shakespeare is, in the film, dashing and soulful and sexy, and not, for example, as he might have been in life, little, balding, grumpy and gay. And that involved syntax even sneaks in the possibility that "the author of the plays of William Shakespeare" might

* A number of passages in this article previously appeared in Graham Holderness, *Nine Lives of William Shakespeare*, The Arden Shakespeare, London, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011. The biographical question is here reprised and updated.

1 Caryl Brahms and S. J. Simon, *No Bed for Bacon*, London, Michael Joseph, 1941; London, Black Swan, 1999.

just have been someone other than William Shakespeare… of which more later.

In Lady Viola's innocent inquiry, the plays precede the author, and Shakespeare stands in a secondary relation to the works he is known to have originated. The man Shakespeare is of prior interest to her, on account of the poetry he has already written. The author derives from his work. And this is, of course, an accurate explanation of the origins of literary biography, as Nicholas Rowe stated clearly in the first Shakespeare biography, "Some Account of the Life, &c. of Mr. *William Shakespear*", published in 1709, in preface to his edition of Shakespeare's *Works*. Out of the "respect due to the memory of excellent men" arises a "Curiosity" regarding the "personal story"[2]. The life is of interest because of the works. Which means, in practice, that the biography of a writer is always the life of an 'author', a narrative that seeks to explain the relationship between writing, and the self who writes.

Shakespeare in Love presents the man behind the work, living the romantic life that can be imagined to have inspired the poetry. The idyll of love and loss embedded in *Romeo and Juliet* is really a side-effect of Shakespeare's passionate affair with a young lady. Life and art are one.

But the film is also self-conscious enough to acknowledge just how fictional this exercise really is. Early in the film we see close-up shots of Shakespeare's hand, in the act of writing. We assume he's dashing off a scene or a sonnet. On closer inspection it turns out that he is trying out different spellings of his own name. The joke is stolen from *No Bed for Bacon:* "He always practised tracing his signature when he was bored. He was always hoping that one day he would come to a firm decision upon which of them he liked best"[3]. The jest is a bit of donnish wit derived from the fact that among the surviving specimens of Shakespeare's signature, the name is spelt differently. But the scene in the film also gestures towards the problems of literary biography. Here we see Shakespeare, comically trying out different identities, as if he was already preoccupied with the

[2] Nicholas Rowe, "Some Account of the Life, &c. of Mr. *William Shakespear*", preface to *The Works of William Shakespear in Six Volumes*, ed. Nicholas Rowe, London, Jacob Tonson, 1709, vol. I, p. i.

[3] Brahms and Simon, p. 27.

difficulties later encountered by people trying to work out exactly who he was.

Would we call *Shakespeare in Love* an adaptation of the Shakespeare biography? Probably not. How much of Shakespeare's life is there in it? Hardly any. Shakespeare really was an actor and theatre poet, who lodged in London and wrote *Romeo and Juliet*. In the film he alludes to his Stratford home, his wife Anne Hathaway, her cottage, his twin children. All the rest is complete fantasy. There is a lot of reconstructed Elizabethan theatre business, but all playfully reconfigured. Historical characters abound, but they don't do anything they ever did in history. The central action of the film is driven by fictions of improbability: Shakespeare having writer's block; a young lady wanting to get onto the stage; Queen Elizabeth attending a performance at the public theatre; and so on. It would perhaps be more accurate to say that *Shakespeare in Love* is an adaptation of a 1940s comic novel that set out cleverly to adapt all the old jokes the authors could find about Shakespeare, Queen Elizabeth I, Francis Bacon etc. Biography hardly comes into it.

So let's consider another film about Shakespeare's life that does purport to be biographical, William Boyd's *A Waste of Shame*, which dramatises the supposed 'story' of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, in much the same way that *Shakespeare in Love* dramatises the imagined backstory of *Romeo and Juliet*.

> I wanted to come up with a film that made us re-think Shakespeare in quite a radical way – to de-mythologise him, to make him human, flawed, understandable – and therefore real. Everything we know about him suggests a man rooted in the real world[4].

The action of the film is thus the story of the *Sonnets*: a love triangle between the unhappily-married playwright, beautiful gay aristocrat William Herbert, earl of Pembroke (Mr W. H.) (not in this version the earl of Southampton) and a black prostitute called Lucy. Shakespeare contracts venereal disease from the latter. Boyd claimed that the screenplay was underpinned by extensive academic research of his own, and consultation with Shakespeare biographer and editor

[4] *Imagining the Bard: William Boyd Interview* (updated 27 October 2005), available from the Open University website: http://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/culture/literature-and-creative-writing/literature/imagining-the-bard-william-boyd-interview.

of the *Sonnets* Katherine Duncan-Jones, who is credited as academic adviser. The film is supposed to represent a genuine attempt at historical biography.

Now there is plenty of biographical material in the film; if anything it's foregrounded, paraded, especially in the wooden dialogue. But despite the film's academic credentials, it isn't a biography of Shakespeare. The story in the *Sonnets*, if there is one, is not necessarily autobiographical, and is certainly not corroborated by any independent evidence. There is even less evidence to identify the fair friend of the *Sonnets* with William Herbert, as there is with the earl of Southampton, and even for the latter there is nothing definite except the formal expressions of "love" in the dedications to two poems. The 'Dark Lady' of the *Sonnets* exists only as a fictional character, since there is no historical evidence linking Shakespeare with any woman other than his wife. Boyd construes her darkness as indicating a black person, her promiscuity as showing her to be a prostitute, and identifies her with the famous whore Lucy Negro of Clerkenwell. Plenty of biographers of Shakespeare have suggested all this of course before, notably Anthony Burgess (in his life *Shakespeare*[5] and his novel *Nothing Like the Sun*[6]), but none of it is in reality historical or biographical at all.

So where would we look for the truth about Shakespeare's biography? For an answer to the question 'Who was William Shakespeare?', we'd look to the biographies written by the leading Shakespeare scholars and professional writers – Stephen Greenblatt, Stanley Wells, Jonathan Bate, Peter Ackroyd, Bill Bryson, Michael Wood. And these of course are all factual, not fictional at all. Or are they?

Consider, as a 'case-study', how a number of major biographers of Shakespeare deal with the poet's death. There is virtually no data to work with, other than the facts that he made a will, died on 23 April 1616, and was buried in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford. Jonathan Bate baldly states the meagre record: "the only solid facts are the record of the burial", the gravestone and the monument[7].

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5 Anthony Burgess, *Shakespeare*, London, Penguin, 1972.

6 Anthony Burgess, *Nothing Like the Sun*, London, Heinemann, 1964; London, Alisson and Busby, 2001.

7 Jonathan Bate, *Soul of the Age: The Life, Mind and World of William Shakespeare*, London, Penguin, 2009, p. 428.

A seventeenth-century tradition, noted in his diary by Stratford vicar John Ward, is that Shakespeare had a "merry meeting" (i.e. a booze-up) with Ben Jonson and Michael Drayton, and contracted a fever from the after-effects[8]. Park Honan surmises that the "fever" Shakespeare died of was typhoid, and speculates about some of the symptoms he may have experienced: "He would have suffered incessant headaches, lassitude and sleeplessness, then terrible thirst and discomfort"[9]. Stanley Wells permits himself to mention this speculation as a reasonable hunch: "The best guess – it is not more – is that he was suffering from typhoid fever"[10].

Peter Ackroyd agrees about typhoid, for him a conveniently urban disease arising from water-borne infection. Ackroyd then goes on to narrate, as if factually, a typical seventeenth-century ritual of embalming, winding and viewing the corpse:

> He was wrapped in a linen winding sheet and two days later he was carried down the well-worn 'burying path' to the old church[11].

Ackroyd doesn't actually know that this happened, of course, but assumes that Shakespeare died and was buried according to respectably Protestant rites and services: he was buried in the church because of "his status as a lay rector". So it *must* have happened like this. On the other hand Michael Wood, whose biography promotes a 'Catholic Shakespeare', speculates that dying, the poet was "drawn to his childhood certainties at the end", and received extreme unction from a Catholic priest[12].

While all these male biographers like to think of Shakespeare as carried off by an infection, female biographers prefer the tradition that Shakespeare died of tertiary syphilis, contracted in his youth from prostitutes, which as we have seen is promoted as a fact by William Boyd in *A Waste of Shame*, where Shakespeare is seen endur-

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[8] Samuel Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare: A Compact Documentary Life*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977, pp. 296-97.

[9] Park Honan, *Shakespeare: A Life*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 409.

[10] Stanley Wells, *Shakespeare: For All Time*, London, Macmillan, 2002, p. 45.

[11] Peter Ackroyd, *Shakespeare: The Biography*, London, Chatto & Windus, 2005, p. 485.

[12] Michael Wood, *In Search of Shakespeare*, London, BBC Worldwide Publications, 2003, p. 377.

ing the painful treatment of a mercury bath. Katherine Duncan-Jones believes that Shakespeare probably was drinking to excess, as John Ward recorded, but that would have been to palliate his pain, since he was already severely ill from the symptoms of the pox: "My own guess is that heart and circulatory troubles were now added to latent syphilitic infection"[13]. This disease could have made the dying Shakespeare mad and "furiously angry with those around him". She speculates that the final scene of Ben Jonson's play *The Devil is an Ass*, in which the protagonist Fitzdotrell feigns mortal illness, actually portrays details from the real death of Shakespeare. Fitzdotrell

> is apparently mad and apparently dying. He laughs crazily, abuses his wife as a whore, foams at the mouth, uses foul language to an eminent lawyer, and comes out with childishly obscene fragments of English doggerel and bad Greek, Spanish and French[14].

Duncan-Jones's "ungentle" Shakespeare dies hating his wife: the curse on his gravestone was designed to prevent her from ever joining him in "his angry and unshared death bed".

Germaine Greer, writing a biography not of Shakespeare but of Anne Hathaway, agrees that Shakespeare had tertiary syphilis, but argues that he died from the cure not the disease: poisoned by the mercury then freely used as treatment for syphilis[15]. Greer speculates that, as a consequence of being clinically poisoned by mercury or arsenic, Shakespeare became increasingly detached from society, reclusive, confused and helpless. This assumed decline created a dependence, which enabled his wife Anne to become the heroine of the story, nursing him to his end: "In those quiet hours in the sickroom, husband and wife may have drawn closer together"[16].

Here we see a clear pattern in the ideological inflections of these biographical stories. Some scholars respectfully stay away from the deathbed, invoking as their excuse a lack of evidence. Others argue that Shakespeare died a fairly ordinary death, carried away

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[13] Katherine Duncan-Jones, *Ungentle Shakespeare: Scenes from His Life*, The Arden Shakespeare, London, Thomson Learning, 2001, p. 266.

[14] Duncan-Jones, p. 276.

[15] Germaine Greer, *Shakespeare's Wife*, London, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007, p. 304.

[16] Greer, p. 309.

by a common infection. Some see him dying a Protestant, others a Catholic. These accounts are all partly fictional. The most inventive interpretations come from the female scholars, Duncan-Jones and Greer, who build up imaginary cases for seeing Shakespeare either as raving mad, or as prematurely senile. In the former case the wife is the victim, abused and vilified; in the latter she is the angel of the house, who lovingly cares for her helpless husband.

We scarcely need to remind ourselves that "the only solid facts" are the record of the burial and the tomb[17], to appreciate just how inventive, fictional, speculative and opinionated such biographical writing really is. In my book *Nine Lives of William Shakespeare* I argued that Shakespeare biographers have always fictionalised their narratives, and still do. The first life of Shakespeare by Nicholas Rowe, as well as listing a few documentary facts, incorporated later seventeenth-century 'traditions' that modern biographers tend to regard as mythical and legendary – Shakespeare as poacher for instance. So from the beginning, the life of Shakespeare was both factual and fictional.

Most of the documentary material about Shakespeare's work in the London theatres, and his commercial and property dealings in Stratford and London, were discovered later, through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. By the mid nineteenth century Shakespeare biography had reached an impasse, since the historical record kept turning up nothing but details of petty financial transactions – money-lending, grain-hoarding, tax-dodging, land-enclosing – that just didn't seem to fit with the elevated status of the national poet. Thereafter Shakespeare's life was sought in his works, rather than in his biography.

This had two effects. One was to acknowledge an apparent disjunction between the facts of the life, and the character of the works: the life of the world's greatest writer could surely not be so – ordinary. The other was to insist that the works themselves should be read autobiographically. As we've seen, both our modern film examples take the latter position for granted. But both these effects actually cleared the way for that Shakespeare Authorship doubt, which began with Delia Bacon in the second half of the nineteenth century. If there was a gap between man and works, perhaps we have the

[17] Bate, p. 428.

wrong man? And if the plays are autobiographical, then surely their author must have experienced the experiences they dramatise? If William of Stratford wasn't a courtier, didn't have a university education, didn't travel abroad, then who wrote the plays?

Which brings us to my third filmic point of reference, Columbia Pictures *Anonymous*, directed by Roland Emmerich, which is predicated on the assumption that the true author of Shakespeare's plays was Edward de Vere, seventeenth earl of Oxford. It begins with committed Oxfordian Sir Derek Jacobi, standing on a replica Elizabethan stage in modern dress, asserting that Shakespeare did not write the plays attributed to him. So immediately you have a connection between the inside of the film and the Oxfordian cause out in the real world. In the film Oxford and Essex are plotting to replace Elizabeth with an aristocratic male successor, and to head off the claims of James of Scotland, favoured by the Cecils. Oxford is writing subversive plays and wants them performed under a pseudonym. Shakespeare the actor is a virtually wordless stooge who accepts Oxford's plays as his own. The life of "the author of the plays of William Shakespeare" is thus brought into conformity with the plays of William Shakespeare – he was really the earl of Oxford.

The poster for the film – a terrific poster, in my view – encapsulates all this. The man is an author, we know from his quill pen. But his identity is concealed as we see him from behind. The ink from his pen is spattered wildly around, forming blots that may just be a random pattern, or may be Rorschach blots that could be decoded to form a hidden meaning.

Now this film about Shakespeare contains nothing at all of Shakespeare's historical life (except maybe the fact that he was an actor, and acquired a coat of arms). Again, there are real historical characters, but they don't do what they actually did in history. In fact as many people have already pointed out, the film not only invents the unhistorical, but distorts the historical to fit a thesis.

So much has already been written about the film that I'll skip a lot of it. Yes it does seem to be promoting as fact the totally groundless idea that Oxford wrote the plays. Yes it does seem to occupy the same territory as anti-Stratfordian polemic promoting alternative authors. Yes it is so full of historical inaccuracy about people, dates, plays and poems, events, that you wonder how anyone could take it seriously as an argument.

But is this really the right way to approach the film? At the end you see the conventional disclaimer affirming that it's fiction:

> All characters appearing in this work are fictitious. Any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

Both the director and the actors who appear in the film oscillate between saying it's fact, and saying it's fiction. How can it be read as factual when it's entirely based on supposition without evidence, and the facts it does use are so distorted and misrepresented?

So if you remove the film from the environment of scholarly argument and intellectual debate; ignore what the publicity says and what the director and actors claim; and just accept it as fiction – then what's the problem? Did anybody go to see *Godzilla* and think this is really going to happen? Did anybody ever go to see *Independence Day* and start looking nervously out of the window? Did anybody go to see *The Patriot* – a film I find much more annoying than *Anonymous* – and think that Mel Gibson personally ended slavery during the American Revolution? No. Then let's get rid of the idea that *Anonymous* is anything other than a fiction, and let's appreciate and judge it as such.

Let's look at how the writer is presented in *Anonymous.* This time he is of course not Shakespeare, but de Vere. De Vere writes in secret, with absolutely no-one else privy to what he's doing. He writes in a comfortable book-lined study. Isolated from the theatre, from society, from other professional writers, he produces a series of neatly-written manuscripts of wholly completed plays, each one bound up in a leather folder. All Shakespeare's masterpieces are there, each one finished to perfection before being handed over to the professionals for them to produce in the theatre.

And what are these plays like when actually performed in the theatre? The plays are presented, in exactly the way they are interpreted in Thomas Looney's *'Shakespeare' Identified*[18], as political propaganda, agit-prop for the cause Oxford espouses, the reactionary idea of putting the feudal military aristocracy back in control of the state, and disempowering the new parvenu class of civil servants repre-

[18] J. Thomas Looney, *'Shakespeare' Identified in Edward de Vere, the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*, London, C. Palmer; New York, Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1920.

sented by the Cecils. We see *Henry V* offering a model of heroic and popular leadership. We see *Hamlet* as a wholly transparent roman-à-clef designed to satirise William Cecil (who watches the play, though he should be dead). We see *Richard III*, performed on the eve of the Essex insurrection (in place of the play mentioned in the historical record, *Richard II*), and deployed merely to satirise Robert Cecil.

So even if we just take the film as an imaginative exploration of a fictional subject, you can see here how the plays emerge from this treatment immeasurably flattened, attenuated, reduced in significance. They appear to encode only the political ambitions of one man, which is why they need to be so perfectly finished in the study; and they act out a journalistic commentary on the contemporary political scene. They create not fictional characters who never really lived at all and so can live forever, but limited portrayals of recognisable individuals from history. As James Shapiro put it, "the author of the great plays is reduced to a political propagandist, his plays to vehicles to advance his faction's cause"[19].

Shakespeare is celebrated as one of the greatest, if not the greatest, of *writers* – "above all other writers", as Samuel Johnson described him. Dr Johnson was thinking of Shakespeare as a writer like himself, a man who personally placed words on a page, with a quill pen dipped in ink. One of the iconic representations of Shakespeare is that image of a man writing, as in his funeral monument in the chancel of Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon: quill pen in his right hand, expectantly poised in the air, ready to begin; and a sheet of paper held firmly under the left hand. Although quills were used by all writers for a thousand years from about 700 AD, for some reason the implement has become particularly associated with Shakespeare. One of the most frequently-reproduced images from *Shakespeare in Love* is that of Joseph Fiennes as Shakespeare, sitting at a table, holding a quill, staring into space, trying to think what to put down on the blank page. Biographies of Shakespeare (e.g. those by Peter Ackroyd and Bill Bryson) often prominently feature a richly-feathered quill on the cover illustration. Thus the instrument that signs becomes itself the visual 'signature' standing in for the

[19] James Shapiro, "Shakespeare – A Fraud? *Anonymous* Is Ridiculous", *The Guardian* (4 November 2011), http://www.theguardian.com/film/2011/nov/04/anonymous-shakespeare-film-roland-emmerich.

writer. In the *Anonymous* poster de Vere brandishes the quill, derived of course from representations of Shakespeare, as a banner or a weapon. Ink from the pen splashes everywhere, like spilt blood. The trailer shows the quill pen writing the name of William Shakespeare on a piece of parchment, but the name then evaporates with Derek Jacobi's choric voice-over assertion that "William Shakespeare never wrote a word".

This is writing as a physical and intellectual process, involving the whole man, a holistic relationship between mind, body and writing technology. In their preface to the First Folio, Shakespeare's friends and colleagues Heminge and Condell, who must have actually observed him in the act of composition, said that in his writing "his mind and hand went together". In such images of the writer at work, the figure is usually seen as isolated, remote from any contact with other people or with material objects. Writing is an individual action, conducted at some distance from actual living, almost a form of contemplation.

The quill pen is the defining property of the early modern writer, and the image of Shakespeare with a feathered quill is so well-established in the popular imagination that it is frequently reproduced in adverts, cartoons and comedy sketches. Yet of course we have no actual knowledge of Shakespeare's writing habits. He must have used a quill, since this was the universal implement of the period for writing with ink (though they also had lead pencils), his signatures are in ink, and the quill is often alluded to in the plays. But the feathers may well have been stripped off from his pens, so they didn't get in the way, as they are in that shot from *Shakespeare in Love*. Such unattractively bald objects feature in early modern pictures of quills, but hardly ever in later representations of Shakespeare the writer.

The image of Shakespeare monumentalised in the Stratford bust will of course continue to dominate our view of Shakespeare as a writer. The quill pen will remain the staple property of Shakespeare the literary genius. No-one however is quite sure how the funeral monument acquired that pen, since it was absent from the monument's original design. When Thomas Dugdale printed a sketch of it in his *Antiquities of Warwickshire* (1656), pen and page are both notoriously absent, and the hands of the figure rest on a cushion or stuffed sack. This was the image reproduced as one of Shakespeare's portraits in Nicholas Rowe's 1709 edition of Shakespeare's works. The

sack has been thought of as a reference to Shakespeare's activities as a merchant, trading in crops such as barley, and animal staples such as wool, while others have proposed that it is really a 'writing-cushion'. Some time after this seventeenth-century installation, the figure was altered to that of Shakespeare the writer with paper and pen. Those who seek to prove that Shakespeare of Stratford was not a writer at all, but a landlord and merchant, and that someone else wrote the works, naturally find great significance in this transmutation. Annually on Shakespeare's birthday, a new quill pen is placed in the hand of the figure on the Stratford monument, as if to reiterate that this antique tool is also a modern interpolation, and has always been retrospectively placed in the writer's hand by others.

What do the biographers have to say about Shakespeare the writer? In his *Shakespeare: For All Time*, Stanley Wells presents a familiar image. Since he wrote with a quill pen dipped in ink,

> [t]his means he would have been more bound to a table or desk than modern writers, who have greater freedom of movement[20].

Where would that desk have been? Certainly, after Shakespeare had purchased New Place in Stratford, it would have been there:

> Writing is a solitary occupation. It calls for peace and quiet. Shakespeare's plays are the product of intense imaginative and intellectual activity, deeply pondered and intricately plotted. To write them he needed space for thought[21].

In addition, being a very literary writer who drew directly from books, Shakespeare must have had books by him, some of them very large and bulky tomes that couldn't have been easily transported in commuter trips between Stratford and London. What all this adds up to is that within the rural retreat of New Place, Shakespeare must have had his own "study":

> We know little about the contents of New Place, but my guess is that it contained a comfortable, book-lined study situated in the quietest part of the house to which Shakespeare retreated from London at every pos-

[20] Wells, p. 101.

[21] Wells, p. 36.

> sible opportunity, and which members of the household approached at their peril when the master was at work[22].

Now Peter Ackroyd in his biography also offers a similarly detailed account of Shakespeare's habits as a writer, based on the same repertoire of facts: the quill pen, the bulky literary sources, the places in which Shakespeare is known to have lived. But his Shakespeare is an entirely different kind of writer. Ackroyd describes Shakespeare at work, in an improvised "study" that would have been "fitted up for himself in the sequence of London lodgings that he rented":

> It is sometimes suggested that he returned to his house in Stratford in order to compose without noise and disturbance. But this seems most unlikely. He wrote where he was, close to the theatre and close to the actors. It is doubtful if, in the *furia* of composition, noise or circumstance affected him[23].

What about his books, those bulky volumes that in Stanley Wells's view must have kept him anchored to one spot? He took them with him as he shifted from one lodging to another. "He is likely to have owned a book-chest". He also probably kept notes in small notebooks, that could also be transported:

> He could have jotted down notes or passages that occurred to him in the course of the day; other writers have found that walking through the busy streets can materially aid inspiration[24].

In both cases what little is definitely known of Shakespeare serves as a template for the construction of two radically different images of Shakespeare as writer. In one scenario Shakespeare the writer needs peace and quiet for the prolonged and intensive labour of literary composition. He is also firmly fixed to a particular workstation, by the technical requirements of his writing implement, and the size and weight of his literary sources. So he willingly forsakes the bright lights and loud noises of London for the tranquillity of Stratford. There in his big house he retreats even further to a comfortable book-

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[22] Wells, pp. 37-38.

[23] Ackroyd, p. 257.

[24] Ackroyd, p. 257.

lined study, maintaining some distance from the business of family life, where his poetic and dramatic imagination can operate at the right level of undistracted concentration.

In the other scenario Shakespeare the writer is far more unfixed and itinerant, since he lives not in his own house in Stratford, but in a sequence of rented lodgings in London. He moves easily from place to place, taking his tools of books and pens with him in a box. He stays here to be right in the thick of cultural London, close to a teeming milieu of theatres and actors and printing presses. He wanders the crowded streets, picking up ideas and images as he goes, jotting them down in little portable notebooks. As he writes, he is surrounded by the disturbances of noise and social activity, but remains independent of all distractions.

No one ever thought to describe Shakespeare engaged in the practice of writing: where he sat, when he wrote, whether he wrote alone or in company. Most frustratingly, the sheets of paper on which his plays were written have all disappeared. We have Shakespeare's signature on legal documents; but the 'signature' we would wish to have, the name signed on manuscripts of the plays, the endorsement that would indissolubly connect the writing with the writer, is absent.

We do, on the other hand, have a specimen of Shakespeare's literary handwriting, in the form of a scene written into the collaborative play about the sixteenth-century statesman and Catholic martyr, executed by Henry VIII, *Sir Thomas More*. But this example does not present us with writing as the unmediated product of an individual's private vision. The manuscript of *Sir Thomas More* is a collaborative work, to which Shakespeare was obviously asked to contribute after it had been critically reviewed by the censor. Shakespeare's handwriting lies on the page, together with the hands of several others, all writing and revising in a continuous collaborative process.

Here we see Shakespeare the writer putting his pen not to a pristine sheet of blank paper, but to the pages of a text already written, and already revised, by others. We see him not necessarily, as the classic writerly image suggests, alone and isolated, withdrawn from the world, communing only with the voices of his imagination. Instead, we see him working as a professional writer within a busy, noisy and stressful environment, where writers worked together under enormous pressures of time, censorship, theatrical practicalities, to get the show on the road.

The Elizabethan dramatist's workshop must have been more like

the open-plan office of a modern national newspaper, than the book-lined study of a scholarly recluse. We can imagine Shakespeare as a writer who wrote with others, and with others around him; who combined writing with acting, theatre management, property dealing and general trading. We can think of writing more in the modern sense as a collective and collaborative cultural activity, a practical process that Shakespeare the writer undoubtedly led, but did not accomplish alone.

In the last few years there has been an explosion of interest in the life of Shakespeare: according to Anne Barton's count, at least one formal biography of Shakespeare has appeared every year since 1996[25]. In parallel with these major contemporary biographies, a number of works have recently been published that adopt a more peripheral view. I am thinking of Charles Nicholl's *The Lodger: Shakespeare on Silver Street*, which employs a "thick description" of the district Shakespeare lived in for a brief period of his life[26]; of Germaine Greer's *Shakespeare's Wife*, which approaches the Shakespeare biography from the perspective of Anne Hathaway's life-story; and James Shapiro's *Contested Will*, which throws light on the Shakespeare biography by studying attempts to prove that someone else was, in fact, responsible for producing Shakespeare's works[27]. These works indicate a kind of 'disintegrationist' movement in Shakespeare biography that I've tried to exploit and pursue in *Nine Lives of William Shakespeare.* As interest in both popular and academic biographies of Shakespeare continues to grow, so too imaginative works about Shakespeare's life have flourished, in the form of novels, poems, plays, films, radio and television drama, and artworks. All of these are adaptations of the basic Shakespeare life-story. Are they entirely different in kind, or only in degree?

As I've suggested at the beginning, Shakespeare biography suffers from a peculiar historical deformation. By the mid nineteenth century, Shakespeare life-writing had reached an impasse, since the largely legal and commercial evidence unearthed seemed radically

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[25] Anne Barton, "The One and Only", *The New York Review of Books*, 53:8 (11 May 2006), http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2006/may/11/the-one-and-only/.

[26] Charles Nicholl, *The Lodger: Shakespeare on Silver Street*, London, Allen Lane, 2007; London, Penguin, 2008.

[27] James Shapiro, *Contested Will*, London, Faber & Faber, 2010.

disconnected from the spirit of the plays. Thereafter the Victorians preferred to seek the life in the works. By the early twentieth century, however, Shakespeare biographers had become singularly assertive in their insistence that the available evidence sufficiently completed our picture of the poet's life and that no further explanation was necessary. A confident positivist historicism dominated the biographies of Sir Sidney Lee and Edmund K. Chambers, and was popularized with a touch of arrogance by Samuel Schoenbaum. A life of Shakespeare should consist of documentary facts; all undocumented traditions should be treated with suspicion or mistrust; and conjecture was forbidden. Shakespeare biography was declared a speculation-free zone.

It is now evident that the supremely confident scholarship of Lee, Chambers and Schoenbaum was unconsciously shaped by a shadow: the 'Shakespeare Authorship Problem' that began, from at least the middle of the nineteenth century, to question the capacity of 'the Stratford man' to produce those works, and to attribute them to Francis Bacon, or the earl of Oxford, or a host of other Renaissance illuminati. Mainstream Shakespeare biography declined to engage with these initiatives, treating them as at best eccentric, and at worst insane. But these maverick amateur intellectuals were raising questions of great interest and importance, questions avoided by the biographical establishment – which is why so many great minds (Hawthorne, Emerson, Mark Twain, Henry James, Freud) were interested or even persuaded by the anti-Stratfordian case. What is the relationship between art and the artist's life? Is drama autobiographical? Why are there gaps and inconsistencies in the Shakespeare life-story? Why is it that unlike other comparable national poets, Dante or Cervantes or Goethe, Shakespeare's life seems somehow not to fit with his works?

So I think we need a 'New Biography' of Shakespeare, one that is prepared to address all the questions and anxieties suppressed by the mainstream biographical tradition. For a start I think we need a more self-conscious approach to biography. Biographers will tell you that they just take the documented historical facts and explain them, expound them, flesh them out, fill in the gaps. But actually what they're doing is turning a documentary narrative into a literary one, converting the bare and sometimes incongruous facts into a coherent and plausible drama. It's much the same as taking a novel, and converting it into a screenplay.

I think we need to look at the history of Shakespeare biography, and understand some of the unconscious ideological assumptions that lie behind those works. I think we need to acknowledge the extent to which biography is a form of fiction. Since Stephen Greenblatt's *Will in the World*[28], 'conjecture' and 'speculation' have acquired a new positive status. People are starting to look again at biographical fictions, and considering them as evidence alongside the facts.

Biographers of Shakespeare will tell you that they deal predominantly with facts. Anti-Stratfordians say the same thing. At the moment they are lining up for a clash of the Titans over the film *Anonymous*, each side appealing to truth and evidence. Now if we argue that actually it's all to a large extent fiction, then these rival narratives can only be judged by how compelling they are as stories. I myself think there is a difference between making biographical drama out of historical fact, and making it out of nothing.

But we still have a problem in terms of the relationship, in biographical work on Shakespeare, between fact and fiction. It's obvious that the largely legal and commercial evidence about Shakespeare's life unearthed in the nineteenth century has seemed to many people radically disconnected from the spirit of the plays. In the controversy around *Anonymous* we see a significant restatement of this position. In their e-book *Shakespeare Bites Back: Not So Anonymous*, Paul Edmondson and Stanley Wells offer "a summary of the factual evidence", and refute the challenges to Shakespeare's authorship as "a web of fantasy"[29]:

> Here we reach the dangerous heart of conspiracy theories. Fictions we might choose to tell ourselves about the past become no less valid than interpretations constructed through empirical evidence such as documents and material remains. […] Those who know virtually nothing about the history of a particular period may enjoy engaging with and creating fantasies about it.
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> The mindsets of conspiracy theorists allow these fantasies to have the same status as properly informed interpretations of the facts. It may

[28] Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*, New York, Norton, 2004.

[29] Paul Edmondson and Stanley Wells, *Shakespeare Bites Back: Not So Anonymous*, e-book produced by The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in partnership with Misfit, Inc., 2011, p. 10. The e-book can be downloaded from: http://bloggingshakespeare.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Shakespeare_Bites_Back_Book.pdf.

> be enticing to believe in stolen documents, secret codes, buried treasure, and illegitimate children of Elizabeth I. But the belief itself doesn't make the fantasy true[30].

This positivist approach to some degree satisfies the needs of scholarship and criticism, but doesn't answer, often doesn't address, many of the problems endemic to Shakespeare biography: not so much the paucity (there's plenty) but as the wrong kind of evidence; the total absence of any personal traces among the mundane historical data; the missing years; the apparent incongruities between a life dominated by small-town and city commercial and property dealing, and a body of work almost universally acknowledged as the pinnacle of human artistic and intellectual achievement.

My book *Nine Lives of William Shakespeare* accepts that Shakespeare's lives are multiple and discontinuous, and yet they are facets of a single life. It speculates freely about Shakespeare's life, but admits that the exercise is one of speculation. Half of the book deals in historical facts, showing how much and how little we know about Shakespeare; and showing how these facts have been interpreted and embroidered by biographers. The other half is fiction. Each chapter gives the facts and their interpretation, then adds a fictional component. Some are historical stories; some reflect on Shakespeare's 'afterlife': his reputation, his mythology. Other fictions quit the territory of biography proper, in those cases where the historical record actually contains very little evidence. Examples include stories that circle around the legends of 'Shakespeare in love' with the earl of Southampton and the 'Dark Lady of the *Sonnets*', for which there is virtually no evidence at all. Hence it seems legitimate for a fictional commentary to take the form of invention, and I've taken that about as far as it can go. Which is why people might be surprised to find in the book characters like Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson, Oscar Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas, Ernest Hemingway and so on.

There is a Shakespeare Authorship problem: but it's a problem about authorship, not a question of authorial identity. I've tried in the book to embrace all the mystery, inconsistency and incongruity that surround the figure of 'the Stratford man'. Traditional scholarly

[30] Edmondson and Wells, p. 19.

biography as practised by scholars like Schoenbaum, sticking rigidly to the documentary facts, gives us a boring Shakespeare; one who couldn't possibly have been author to those anything-but-boring plays and poems. Shakespeare Authorship doubts give us biographical excitement: mystery, passion, conspiracy, betrayal. I want to see these qualities, to be found so abundantly in the plays, reassigned to Shakespeare the man in all of his – at least – *Nine Lives.*

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William Shakespeare: What He Was Not

Robert Bearman

It has become all but obligatory, when embarking on Shakespearean biography, to preface one's effort with a lament about the lack of material. This, of course, is true if the intent is to portray Shakespeare's life on a day-by-day, or even a week-by-week basis. However, to tackle Shakespeare's, or anybody else's life in this way, we would require at the very least that the subject had kept a diary for his or her whole life and that his or her activities were such as to provoke a string of equally well-documented comments by others to produce a balanced picture of what this person was like. In fact, even in our own time, records for such a reconstruction rarely exist. With the passage of time, and the inevitable decline in the survival rate of documentary evidence – bearing in mind too that fewer records per head of the population were being created in the first place – it is not a reasonable expectation, after 450 years, that sufficient material will have survived to allow for a detailed reconstruction of Shakespeare's life. He may now occupy a position on the international stage but in his own time he did not. We are therefore obliged to rest content with what has survived almost by chance to document incidents in his life. To expect more would imply a serious misunderstanding of the nature of historical evidence. What we now term archives normally began life as documents of relevance to the parties concerned, be they letters, accounts, minutes of meetings or title deeds. Over time, when such material had ceased to be of any current use, much the greater part was thrown away, though not always immediately, the guardians of these accumulations deterred by the thought that at a future date some might still be required for the conduct of business. But even today, much potential archive material is destroyed despite

a general awareness of its importance and the existence of a varied group of professionals whose job it is to determine what might one day be of historic interest. A succession of distinguished antiquarian collectors can be traced back into the seventeenth century but their principal areas of concern (the pre-Reformation church and the descent of noble families and their estates) did not embrace the more general themes of such interest to us today. Moreover, the setting up of institutions to provide a safe home for a wider range of archive material does not reach back much beyond 150 years; and, although we now might reasonably expect that the records of a group which had recently ceased to operate should come to be lodged in a local record office, we are reduced to only a faint hope that the records of a similar group operating a hundred years ago might also by chance have survived. What realistic chance therefore is there that similar records from an even earlier date will have escaped destruction?

The key to the survival of archival material from this early period, that is for the period of concern to Shakespeare biographers, is generally speaking the existence of an institution which would have provided it with a home after it had ceased to be of any current interest. Even here there have been huge losses and nor should we assume that those that have survived did so as the result of deliberate policy. It may simply have been that, hidden away in a store room, nobody had got round to throwing them away. Nevertheless, it is within the realms of civil government, at national, county and parish level, of ecclesiastical governance within the established church (including its probate responsibilities) and the management of great landed estates that we find the highest survival rate for archive material. There is some inter-connection, of course. For many years members of the great landed families also dominated civil government and others entered the church. There are also other institutions, Inns of Court, schools and universities, for example, where their continuity over centuries has provided archive repositories of some permanence. We also find that deeds of title have survived in some quantity for the quite different reason that a bundle of documents proving ownership of property over the previous hundred years or so, which lawyers would lovingly and expensively peruse when properties were to change hands, acquired an almost sacrosanct status amongst the wider community and was therefore carefully and symbolically handed over to the new owners. It follows that by and large docu-

mentation about any one individual, and the more so as we go back in time, tends to be confined to occasions when he or she came into contact with one of those institutions or organisations whose records have survived, or in cases when the family became the owners of property.

Seen in this light, the lack of biographical material for a reconstruction of the life of William Shakespeare is neither mysterious nor unusual. He was educated at a school whose records have not survived, he did not attend University, he never entered into government service or the household of a landed family, he had only the occasional brush with the law, he lived in London as an elusive tenant and worked for most of his professional career for a business (the Chamberlain's, later the King's, Men) whose records are lost. Inevitably, then, there is going to be a dearth of material, limited in the main to the few occasions when he drifted into contact with national or local institutions or because the deeds to his property in Stratford had been handed over to his successors in title. If any more personal papers were not lost with the records of the King's Men, they would most likely have disappeared when his direct line failed after two generations. Even the one 'personal' item we do have (Richard Quiney's letter to him of 1598 asking for his assistance in the raising of a loan of £30) survived firstly, because it may never have been sent (it was later found in Quiney's own papers) and secondly, because the letter itself, with several others between Quiney and other Stratford townspeople (three of which also mention Shakespeare) survived in a bundle left in the Corporation archives when Quiney died whilst serving as bailiff in 1602[1]. Similarly, the documents concerning Shakespeare's personal involvement, as a lessee of half the Corporation's tithes, in the attempt to enclose fields at Welcombe, just outside Stratford, were later found in the Corporation archives because the town clerk, Thomas Greene (and Shakespeare's fellow lessee of the tithes) left them behind when he sold up in 1618 and moved to Bristol[2]. Ironically, it now seems, we know more about Shakespeare's father, John, than we do about his son for the simple reason that for many years he played an important role in local gov-

[1] Robert Bearman, *Shakespeare in the Stratford Records*, Stroud, Alan Sutton Publishing, 1994, pp. 73-74.

[2] Bearman, *Shakespeare in the Stratford Records*, pp. 54-55, 74-75.

ernment, and thus appeared in the town archives at regular intervals. He then ran into financial difficulties which led to his citation in the local and national law courts, a good example of what is all too common at that date, that the survival of biographical data depended not necessarily on the relative status of any individual but on his or her almost chance engagement with record-keeping agencies.

Two issues arise from this, one welcome and one unhelpful. Due to the almost obsessive determination to uncover every single fact relating to Shakespeare's life, surviving archives have been ransacked to a degree unique in the study of a single person's life. Once Shakespeare had begun to assume the status of national poet, a succession of antiquaries, scholars and Shakespeare biographers has tirelessly worked through what material has survived for that period in the hope of unearthing the necessary building blocks for the re-construction of Shakespeare's life. From Edmond Malone's time in particular, he and the likes of R. B. Wheler and Captain James Saunders in Stratford, James O. Halliwell both in Stratford and elsewhere, and Charles Wallace and Leslie Hotson, principally in what in their day was called the Public Record Office in London but is now The National Archives, have put together what has traditionally been regarded as a meagre body of evidence but is in reality an impressive set of data, given the reality of the situation as outlined above[3]. The welcome outcome of their endeavour is that we now know all, or most, of what will ever be recovered about the immediate circumstances of Shakespeare's life. No major addition to the corpus has been made since Wallace's publication of an article in 1910 announcing his discovery the year before of papers relating to Shakespeare's involvement in the so-called Belott-Mountjoy suit[4]. This is not to say that various bits of the jigsaw, in the shape of documents actually naming Shakespeare, have not since surfaced, nor that other material relating to Shakespeare's friends and family, only in more recent times subject to the same scrutiny, has not come to light: in particular, in 1964 when the act books of Stratford's church court surfaced to reveal that on one occasion his daughter Susanna

[3] The discovery of these documents is carefully recorded in the original edition of Samuel Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life*, London, Oxford University Press, 1975, as notes to facsimile reproductions.

[4] Charles William Wallace, "New Shakespeare Discoveries: Shakespeare as a Man among Men", *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, 120 (1910), pp. 489-500.

was cited for non-reception of Holy Communion and, more significantly, that Thomas Quiney, his son-in-law, had been found guilty of incontinence with one Margaret Wheeler (who, with her illegitimate child, then died in childbirth) at the very time that Shakespeare redrafted his will to Quiney's disbenefit[5]. Nevertheless the chances remain slim that a further major cache will come to light which will significantly tip the factual balance.

The advantage here is that those who wish to reconstruct an outline of Shakespeare's life from primary evidence can at least assume that it is unlikely to be supplemented in any major way. He or she, if reared in the school of historical investigation, might even be impressed by the amount that has survived for someone who rarely came to the attention of, or became associated with, officials on whose records we principally depend for our knowledge of the past. For some people, we barely have knowledge of their existence due to the loss of parish registers of baptisms, marriages and burials. For others, we may have in court records the occasional notice of their misdemeanours or, if they were of some means, a listing in taxation returns. By way of contrast, the material for Shakespeare's life, leaving aside for a moment the literary output attributed to him, is still comparatively substantial. Nevertheless the gaps are inevitably disappointing for those wishing to establish Shakespeare's view on a particular issue, his personal relationships and the details of his day-to-day life. We do have his will, from which we can draw legitimate conclusions about his attitudes towards his friends and family; and Thomas Greene's notes on the progress of the Welcombe enclosure, in which both he and Shakespeare had a vested interest, allow us to hazard an opinion on Shakespeare's view of what was going on. But such glimpses are rare and, even in the case of the Belott-Mountjoy suit of 1612, when questions were put to Shakespeare about his recollections of a certain event – the arrangements made on the marriage between Stephen Belott and Mary Mountjoy in 1604 – he gave evidence to the effect that he could not recall quite what had happened.

The downside of this apparent shortage is the temptation, by various means, to fill in the gaps. At one extreme, of course, is forgery: as perpetrated in particular by William Henry Ireland (1777-1835)

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[5] Hugh A. Hanley, "Shakespeare's Family in Stratford Records", *Times Literary Supplement*, 21 May 1964, p. 441.

and John Payne Collier (1789-1883)[6]. Others have lobbied for the authenticity of a succession of various portraits said to have been painted during Shakespeare's lifetime which have turned out to be either forgeries or over-ambitious attributions[7]. At the other extreme are genuine attempts to get to grips with Shakespeare's inner feelings and creative genius by an analysis of what he wrote. This, however, is a hazardous route to tread for the very reason that we know so little about his personal life. It may be the case, when we know the details of a subject's life, that we can detect influences on his or her creative writing. Indeed, it would be verging on the absurd to argue that this would not have happened. The problem, however, is that the response of a creative writer's character to a particular event would not necessarily have been the writer's. Passages from Shakespeare's writings, often seized upon as evidence of his religious views, his attitude to kingship and rebellion and his feelings about social inequality may therefore simply have been responses put into the mouths of his characters because of an empathy with people who had expressed such views. Then, between these extremes, are speculations which evolve into theories liable to take on lives of their own. These can be based on circumstantial evidence which can be moulded into an outwardly plausible case or – a variation of drawing biographical material from the plays – based on the assumption that, to have written on certain subjects, Shakespeare must have been a schoolmaster, a lawyer's clerk, a soldier or a sailor, or at least have travelled abroad.

However, I do not wish here to venture too far along the route of specifically dismissing any of these theories, rather to return to the admittedly and frustratingly modest accumulation of historical facts about Shakespeare and ask ourselves, not what they might tell us about the sort of man Shakespeare was, but rather what sort of man we might reasonably conclude he was not. But before doing so, something more needs to be said about the limitations of documentary evidence. Our current legal system requires, or at least prefers, the testimony of at least two independent witnesses, who can be subjected to interrogation, to

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[6] Samuel Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991, pp. 141-67, 245-66.

[7] See, for instance, Tarnya Cooper, ed., *Searching for Shakespeare*, New Haven-London, Yale University Press and National Portrait Gallery, 2006.

establish, though not always successfully, the likely truth of an event. Clearly, when dealing with events which took place several centuries earlier no such option is available. Instead our knowledge of what happened depends largely on accounts which have chanced to come down to us in the written record, with all the problems associated with whether we can trust what we are being told and having to accept that, even if all the protagonists had kept personal diaries, we might still have doubts about the reliability of the evidence. It follows that, in the sphere of what we might term strict historical investigation, we are dealing not with absolute certainty but with a balance of probabilities. At its very basic, the fact of the baptism of a William son of Shakespeare on 26 April 1564 depends not on the oral testimony of those who attended the ceremony but on an entry in the parish register, the whole of which was re-copied in the late 1590s. However, most would argue that the entry can be accepted at its face value, or at least, in our balance of probabilities, that it is 99% certain that it is an accurate record of what actually happened. Whether or not he was the son of a John Shakespeare and Mary his wife, all three of whom were named in a legal action of 1588 concerning lands in Wilmcote, requires another calculation of probabilities which, without going into details, again puts us well into the 90% category. But on such issues as when and where exactly he was born or where he went to school, we can only offer assumptions for the simple reason that there is no surviving written record (if it ever existed) to help us. On the balance of probabilities and by cautious use of circumstantial evidence good cases can be made that he was likely to have been born on 23 April 1564 in the family homestead in Henley Street and that he was educated at the local grammar school. However, without direct documentary evidence, there is no alternative for the purist but to accompany such statements with the inevitable caveat of 'probably'. Many find such caution perfectly acceptable in cases where the balance remains firmly in credit but problems inevitably arise when circumstantial evidence, however exhaustively assembled, is not strong enough to make a claim more rather than less likely. This does not rule out the possibility that further evidence might push this claim further up the pecking order but to build a wider case on it, whilst still in debit, is not helpful.

However, this links to another limitation of the written record which tends to work in the opposite direction, namely that, given the huge gaps already alluded to, especially in the context of interpreting events

which took place 400 or 500 years ago, one cannot afford to claim to have proved a negative based on simple lack of evidence. If, for instance, as will be discussed below, we conclude that there is no material evidence to establish that Shakespeare was a recusant, we still cannot afford to claim that this establishes beyond doubt that he was not.

Bearing all this in mind, can we nevertheless propose what sort of man Shakespeare was not? The most prolific of surviving records from Shakespeare's lifetime are those of the courts, both civil and criminal, ranging from the highest royal courts in the land (Chancery, King's Bench and Star Chamber, for example), through county quarter sessions, down to the borough courts of record and manorial courts leet and views of frankpledge. Indeed, much of what we know about the Elizabethan/early Jacobean theatre comes from evidence submitted in the course of legal disputes over property and associated rights. Generally speaking, biographical information in these records is derived from instances when an individual appears as a plaintiff or defendant in a civil case or is prosecuted under the law, or is likely to be so, for a misdemeanour or more serious a crime. This, of course, is not always the case. An individual might be summoned to give evidence, as indeed Shakespeare was in the Belott-Mountjoy case. Also – and again this applies to Shakespeare – his name might be cited during the history of a dispute. Alternatively he might be the victim of a crime. However, if we are looking at whether or not a person, for whatever reason, was habitually litigious in civil matters, or became involved in activities likely to incur a penalty, the frequency with which he or she appears in legal records, either as a plaintiff, a defendant or an accused, is the obvious measure.

For Shakespeare, then, what evidence do we have, firstly, that he was not law-abiding? The short answer is none, or very nearly so. The one possible exception is the writ issued by the Court of Queen's Bench in November 1596 and addressed to the sheriff of Surrey, following a petition of one William Wayte, for "sureties of the peace" against William Shakespeare and three others, including Francis Langley, the builder of the Swan Theatre on Bankside[8]. Typically

[8] Discovered by Leslie Hotson and announced in "A Great Shakespeare Discovery", *Atlantic Monthly*, 148 (1931), pp. 419-36, and further discussed at greater length in his *Shakespeare versus Shallow*, London, Nonesuch Press, 1931.

this would have been the first stage in a process by which anyone thought to pose a risk to life and limb of the petitioner would be bound over before a magistrate to keep the peace, with two of his or her acquaintance standing surety. In addition to this minimum condition, others might be imposed, such as appearance at a future court. In this particular case we do not have the writ itself, only a note that it was issued, nor any bond to which Shakespeare was a party or evidence that the quarrel was ever referred to a court. However, determined burrowing in this court's records, and elsewhere, has revealed that this writ represented but one stage in a longer running quarrel between Francis Langley alone on the one part and William Wayte and local justice, William Gardiner, on the other. It is therefore quite reasonable to argue that Shakespeare (and two women, Dorothy Soer and Anne Lee, also named in the writ but not otherwise known to have been involved) had somehow got dragged into Langley's quarrel. What this was about and what level of public disturbance Wayte thought likely is simply not known. Given Langley's record, some quarrel over property or tenancy rights is possible but also essentially speculative. But to claim, on this single piece of evidence, that Shakespeare was guilty of anything more than an alleged association with someone with whom Wayte was quarrelling would be to go beyond what can reasonably be proposed.

The only other example of behaviour likely to have put Shakespeare at odds with the authorities arose out of his apparent failure to contribute to national subsidies granted by Parliament in the mid 1590s. As a resident in St Helen's, Bishopsgate, he was deemed liable for successive payments of 5 shillings and 13s. 4d. but on both occasions he failed to pay[9]. It is difficult to establish, however, that this was a deliberate act on his part: rather, as is in fact stated on the second occasion, his failure to pay can more likely be attributed to his move from Bishopsgate to Southwark on the other side of the Thames. In any event, there is no evidence that he suffered any penalty for this evasion, if evasion it were, nor that any such backsliding on his part would in any case have been treated as a breach of the law.

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[9] Authoritatively discussed by M. S. Giuseppi, "The Exchequer Documents Relative to Shakespeare's Residence in Southwark", *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society*, ns, 5 (1929), pp. 281-88.

This meagre haul does not necessarily mean that Shakespeare was never prosecuted under the law. Much to be lamented is the loss of virtually all the records of Warwickshire's quarter sessions records prior to 1625. The assize rolls for the county, dealing with serious crimes brought to the attention of royal justices on their regular visitations, have similarly been destroyed. Those wishing to cling to the story of Shakespeare's prosecution for deer-stealing at Charlecote in the 1570s can therefore fall back on such gaps in the evidence to argue that the theory might still have some legs. However, if we prefer to stay true to the principle of the balance of probabilities, we can still argue that because, as far as we know, Shakespeare is never known to have committed an action which led to his prosecution in a court of law, this reflects the fact that he was not a habitual law-breaker. In fact, we can go further as he is similarly not even known to have been fined for any minor misdemeanours. Whereas, for instance, many Stratford people at one time or another were found at fault for illegal brewing, failure to maintain their pavements or to attend church, for forestalling and a host of other minor offences, Shakespeare, either in his home town or elsewhere, is never known to have been presented for such activities. Again, although we cannot be sure that this never happened, it does bring down the balance further against his having been engaged in criminal, or even less serious activities, and in favour of his being generally law-abiding.

Turning to what we might call civil actions, there is a little more to go on. In Stratford's local court of record, set up under the town's 1553 charter of incorporation, with jurisdiction in civil action to the value of £30, Shakespeare, or at least his family or agent, is twice found pursuing outstanding debtors[10]. Between March and June 1604 Shakespeare had sold to Philip Rogers of Stratford, a local apothecary and ale-house keeper, twenty bushels of malt. Despite frequent requests, Rogers had failed to pay what was due resulting, it was claimed, in a debt of 45s. 10d. Then, some five years later, in 1609, we find Shakespeare in pursuit, over a period of six months, of a much larger sum, £6, owed to him by John Addenbrooke, a local man

[10] For the documentation, see Edmund K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, London, Oxford University Press, 1930, 2 vols, vol. II, pp. 113-118.

of some substance. Early in June, with Addenbrooke still declining to settle – he was buried on 19 June and so perhaps was terminally ill – Shakespeare's frustrated lawyer sought permission instead to chase Addenbrooke's surety, Thomas Hornby, for the repayment of the debt. At no point in the surviving records is it explained how the debt was contracted – for example, did it merely represent a straight cash loan or was it a debt incurred through non-payment for goods or materials supplied? What is clear, though, is Shakespeare's apparent determination to secure payment by transferring his attention to Addenbrooke's surety, Thomas Hornby, on Addenbrooke's refusal, or inability, to meet his obligations.

There are no other similar records affecting Shakespeare's business dealings. This does not mean, of course, that he never lent anybody any money or that, for one reason or another, people never ended up in his debt. However, given that, for most of his Stratford contemporaries of some social standing, the local court of record is littered with strings of cases arising out of their business activities – arising from either the buying or selling of goods or simply of advancing money – the fact that Shakespeare barely surfaces must surely indicate that he was not customarily engaged in such activity, at least on a local front. Of course, much of Shakespeare's working life was spent in London and it might therefore have been there that he conducted most of his business. All the same, there is no record at all of any pursuit of debtors, either in local or national courts. This should give pause to anyone proposing that Shakespeare was a money-lender or that he ever engaged in extensive business activities beyond those expected of him as a sharer in a theatre company.

There is a similar lack of evidence for Shakespeare ever facing the predicament of pursuit for debt. Shakespeare would doubtless have borrowed money whenever he needed access to a substantial capital sum, either for buying himself into the Chamberlain's Men as a sharer and then as a 'householder' of the Globe and later the Blackfriars, or for investing in real estate. Indeed, we know, following the purchase of a share in the lease of Stratford's tithes in July 1605, that six months later he still owed the vendor Ralph Hubaud £20 – no doubt part of the purchase price[11]. When he bought the

[11] E. A. B. Barnard, *New Links with Shakespeare*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1930, pp. 60-61.

Blackfriars Gatehouse in 1613, he arranged to delay the payment of half the purchase price (£60 out of £120) for six months[12]. The famous request made by Richard Quiney in 1598 to William Shakespeare that he would help provide security in negotiating a loan to Quiney of £30 also reveals his familiarity with the process of borrowing money[13]. But the distinctive feature of any such activity on his part is that it never landed him in any recorded trouble. In other words, his ability to repay on time any money that he borrowed made him creditworthy, both able to borrow when he needed to and wise enough not to lend money to those who were not similarly trustworthy.

Quarrelling over sums of money was not, of course, the only sort of dispute to reach the courts. Disputes over property or failed business ventures surface just as often, and frequently more spectacularly, in both Chancery and various other central courts. Money (or loss of it) was often still the fundamental issue but cases were nevertheless more complex. Shakespeare twice went to court in cases of this sort. Around 1611, he and Richard Lane of Stratford-upon-Avon filed a complaint in Chancery concerning their shared interest in parcels of Stratford tithes. There is no need here to enter into the complexities of the issue: suffice to say that Shakespeare had purchased a half-share in a lease of the tithes of Old Stratford, Bishopton and Welcombe, whilst Lane held the tithes of Shottery and Clopton, two other hamlets within the parish. Both men, as the consequence of an agreement made back in 1580, were contributors to an annuity of £27 13s. 4d. to the Barker family, earlier holders of a lease of all the parish tithes. Lane's and Shakespeare's complaint was that, though they, and the Combe family, were paying their fair share of this annuity (£5 a year apiece in the Combes' and Shakespeare's cases), the holders of other parcels of the tithes were not, leading to attempts by the Barkers to extort the balance from Lane and Shakespeare. The exact sum of money is not mentioned and the outcome is unknown although William Combe, who held the other half of the lease of the Old Stratford, Bishopton and

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12 Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, vol. II, pp. 154-59.

13 Bearman, *Shakespeare in the Stratford Records*, pp. 33-36. I have developed the role which Shakespeare was being asked to perform in a forthcoming study of Shakespeare's finances and social standing.

Welcombe tithes, already, like Shakespeare, paying £5 did agree to pay an additional 6s. 8d. to account for the tithes of Rhyn Clifford which he also held[14].

This, then, is clearly a case of Shakespeare going to law to protect his interests but, looking into the affair more closely, it's difficult to portray him as enthusiastically litigious. The owner of Shakespeare's share of the tithes was the Stratford Corporation, currently engaged in an effort to buy out the Barkers' interest so that they could get a better return on its asset[15]. Frustrated owners of other portions of the tithes, including John Nash, were also urging the Corporation to take action to undermine the Barkers' position[16]. These negotiations, however, were not moving along quickly enough, leading on, apparently, to a reluctance by some of the tithe-owners to contribute to the Barkers' annuity but a determination on the Barkers' part to get their money back by focussing on Lane and Shakespeare. The threat to Shakespeare's annual tithe income cannot have been more than £5 and was probably less but his willingness to join Lane in his suit is certainly of significance in its indication of Shakespeare's willingness to protect his income, or at least that of his family in the future. Nevertheless, we might well doubt that he would ever have got involved in these legal manoeuvres had there not been a wider dispute over the rights and wrongs of the central issue.

Much the same can be said for Shakespeare's only other known appearance in the civil courts as a plaintiff, namely the case in which, in 1615, he is named as one of six who brought an action in Chancery against Mathias Bacon, whose mother and grandmother had previously owned not just the so-called Blackfriars Gatehouse, which Shakespeare had bought two years earlier, but also other property belonging to the dissolved Dominican priory, including the former prior's lodging house. The action came about because of Bacon's disinclination to part with the title deeds still in his possession which related to his family's combined holding, thus making it

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[14] James O. Halliwell-Phillipps, *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare*, London, Longmans, 1894 (9th edition), 2 vols, vol. II, pp. 25-31; Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, vol. II, pp. 122-25.

[15] Robert Bearman, ed., *Minutes and Accounts of the Stratford-upon-Avon Corporation, 1599-1609*, Dugdale Society, 44 (2011), pp. 471, 473, 475.

[16] Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, BRU 15/12/102.

difficult for the purchasers of the individual lots to prove their title[17]. In Shakespeare's case, these deeds would have established Bacon's right to the Gatehouse as granted to him in 1590 by his mother Ann and which, in 1604, he had sold to Henry Walker, the man from whom Shakespeare had later bought it[18]. This case has traditionally been described as 'friendly litigation' and Bacon did give way immediately, replying to the effect that he was only holding on to them "untill such tyme as hee may be lawfully and orderlie discharged thereof upon his deliverie of the same"[19]. However, going to law was an expensive business, and would hardly have been embarked on unless the freeholders thought there was genuine need for clarification. Nevertheless, Shakespeare had only recently acquired his portion, and only after it had passed through the hands of another freeholder, and he is therefore unlikely to have initiated the proceedings. It is again of some significance that, as with the previous action concerning his tithe income, he was prepared to join in legal proceedings to safeguard his interests, but his involvement in this case again does not have the air of a forceful defence of his rights by a man of a litigious turn of mind.

We are faced with a similar dearth of evidence in a search to establish Shakespeare's involvement in civic actions as a defendant. In fact, although actions brought against some of his fellow householders do much to clarify Shakespeare's interests in both the Globe and Blackfriars theatres, he is never named as defendant. A case of sorts can be made out that he was a nominal defendant in an action of 1610 brought by Robert Keysar in the Court of Requests. Keysar was claiming that, as a major sharer in the interests of the Children of the Queen's Revels, the company which had previously occupied the Blackfriars Theatre, he had suffered when two years earlier the lease had been surrendered to Richard Burbage, who with his brother Cuthbert, John Heming, Henry Condell and "others"

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17 The three documents relating to the case are most conveniently transcribed in Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, vol. II, pp. 159-64.

18 The earlier history of the Blackfriars site, until 1590, when it was broken up and the Gatehouse settled on Mathias Bacon, is recorded in an abstract of title, together with details of the 1604 conveyance to Walker, in Folger Shakespeare Library MS W.b.123. See also Roland B. Lewis, *The Shakespeare Documents*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2 vols, vol. II, pp. 436-37.

19 Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, vol. II, pp. 62-65.

had then entered the premises to use them for their own purposes despite a previous undertaking that they would not do so without giving Keysar some form of compensation. Whether Shakespeare was amongst the "others" against whom, with those specifically named, the action was technically brought, is not certain. Though other legal proceedings establish that Shakespeare was an original shareholder/housekeeper in the Blackfriars, he had almost certainly disposed of his interest by the time he died in 1616, and perhaps earlier[20]. However, even if, as seems more than likely, Shakespeare can be counted amongst Keysar's "others" in 1610, the fact that he did not name him says much about Shakespeare's involvement. Keysar's principal target in any case was Richard Burbage, who, as the owner of the premises, was the man who in 1600 had granted Keysar the lease of the building which he had later called in.

With the usual caveat that this very limited evidence of legal activity on Shakespeare's part, either as a plaintiff or defendant, may not reflect the full extent of his involvement in such matters, the indications are still very strong that he was not by instinct or necessity litigious. Legal records have survived in significant quantities for this period and have also been ransacked for Shakespearean references. Such evidence as has come to light may be crucial to our understanding of how the theatres operated in Shakespeare's time and his involvement in their affairs but he is never named as an active party in any of the disputes which spawned these records. Disputes certainly raged around him, setting the Burbages, for instance, against others involved in theatre management, and bringing Francis Langley to the point of bankruptcy. Thomas Dekker, Philip Massinger and Henry Chettle, amongst others, found themselves frequently pursued for debt to the point of imprisonment, and Christopher Marlowe died as the result of a brawl, possibly associated with espionage activity. Ben Jonson only evaded criminal prosecution following his killing of actor Gabriel Spencer by pleading benefit of clergy, whilst George Wilkins was in and out of the courts from 1602 until his death in 1618, charged with a string of misdemeanours. Thomas Kyd suffered torture for heresy and Ben Jonson, again, was on two occasions imprisoned for the writing and staging of controversial plays (on the second occasion with George

[20] Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, vol. II, p. 162.

Chapman and John Marston) as was Thomas Middleton for a similar offence. By way of contrast, William Shakespeare's career indicates a man neither by nature litigious – say in the pursuit of debtors or quarrelling over his rights – nor one who came to the notice of the law as the result of his activities, either through a failure to meet his financial obligations, involvement in criminal behaviour or the publication of subversive views. As we have seen, he is not entirely absent from legal records – pursuing two minor debtors, joining with others on a couple of occasions to defend property rights and, again with others, named as a man likely to commit a breach of the peace. But, compared with many of his contemporaries engaged in making a living in the theatre, and bearing in mind the abundant survival of legal records and the thoroughness with which they have been investigated, we can still safely say that Shakespeare was neither a habitual trouble-maker nor a man inclined or easily persuaded to resort to the civil courts.

Turning from attempts to interpret Shakespeare's life through surviving court records, I consider now whether his career is characterised by a search for patronage or public office as a means of boosting his income. Here the most well-known indicator of such an ambition was his decision in 1593 to dedicate his poem, *Venus and Adonis*, to the nineteen-year-old Henry Wriothesley, earl of Southampton, followed by a similar dedication a year later for his poem, *The Rape of Lucrece*. The second dedication is in a warmer tone than the first, suggesting that there had been personal contact between the two men during the 1593-94 period. In return for these dedications Shakespeare might well have received some token gift and also harboured thoughts that Southampton might be a source of future patronage. Southampton was on the verge of coming into his inheritance and may already have shown an interest in poetry and the theatre[21]. Thomas Nashe was clearly of the same view that Southampton might be looked to for financial support when in the same year he dedicated his *The Unfortunate Traveller* to the young earl whom he hailed flatteringly, and perhaps hopefully, as "a dear lover and cherisher […] as well of the lovers of poetry, as of poets

[21] For evidence from 1600 that he enjoyed visiting the theatre, see G. P. V. Akrigg, *Shakespeare and the Earl of Southampton*, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1968, p. 96.

themselves"[22]. Barnabas Barnes and Gervase Markham also looked to flatter the young man with dedicatory poems from these early years[23]. However, we need more than this to support the proposal that Shakespeare enjoyed Southampton's extended patronage. Over a hundred years later there was talk of Southampton having given Shakespeare the preposterously large sum of £1,000 to set him up in his career but it is not difficult to see how, over the years, such a story could have evolved simply through an imaginative misinterpretation of the dedications[24]. Taking a less imaginative line, the years 1593-94 saw the closure of the theatres due to plague and the dispersal and, indeed, break-up of several theatre companies. In this context it would hardly be surprising to find Shakespeare looking for alternative sources of income, not merely by selling his poems to printers but also by approaching likely patrons. However, even if this approach did lead to some encouragement, there is no reason to believe that this developed into a long-term relationship. Southampton's prospects were not quite what they might at first have appeared. His father's recusancy had a distinctly adverse effect on any sums of money he may have had to hand and he was also burdened early on with a considerable fine imposed by his guardian, Lord Burghley, on his refusal, it was said, to marry a bride of Burghley's choosing, namely his own granddaughter. Southampton's preferred choice, Elizabeth Vernon, one of the Queen Elizabeth's maids of honour, proved equally contentious for he married her without the queen's consent, thus incurring her grave displeasure. His later association with the earl of Essex's rebellion and his subsequent imprisonment would in any case have rendered him a liability as a patron rather than an asset. It can certainly be argued that John Florio enjoyed the earl's direct patronage: in his dedication to *A Worlde of Wordes*, an Italian-English dictionary eventually published in 1598, he paid tribute to the earl "in whose paie and patronage I have lived some years"[25]. But in Shakespeare's case, the lack of any such evidence is

[22] STC 18380.

[23] STC 118785; 17385.

[24] The story is first recorded by Nicholas Rowe in 1709, having been handed down, he was assured, by William Davenant; Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, vol. II, pp. 266-67.

[25] Publication had been mooted as early as March 1596, with Southampton named as the sole patron, though when published three others were included: STC 11098; Akrigg, p. 53.

a strong indication that following the re-opening of the theatres and his success in buying himself into the profitable Chamberlain's (later the King's) Men, he never again felt the need to look for financial support from a chosen patron.

Something depends, of course, on how patronage is defined. It might be argued, for example, that Shakespeare's membership of a theatrical company under noble, and later royal, protection represented a form of patronage. However, there is little evidence that this led to the development of personal relationships. Henry Carey, the Lord Chamberlain and patron of the company which Shakespeare joined in 1594, may have had long-standing theatre connections but he was also required, as Lord Chamberlain, to guarantee a source of good quality court entertainments, especially over the Christmas period. Carey's decision to put this new company under his protection might therefore be a simple reflection of his need to fulfil his courtly duties rather than of any particular favour towards the company. There were, of course, benefits. Carey's patronage, and that of his son George who succeeded as Lord Chamberlain in 1597, was doubtless a welcome shield in the ongoing struggle between the City of London, always on the look out for reasons to suppress the theatres, and the Privy Council, mindful of the need to nurture theatrical companies if it were to meet its obligation to provide the court with entertainment. Such entertainment was also highly profitable to the company. But it is stretching the point to interpret such protection and nurturing as patronage in the sense that Shakespeare and his fellow sharers derived from it any personal or immediate financial gain. The endorsement of the company by successive Lord Chamberlains, for practical reasons of their own, while useful, did not absolve the company from the need to make its own way. Such considerations would continue to have applied when the patronage of the company was transferred to James I, soon after his accession in 1603.

There is another instance of possible patronage to consider, and that is the first dedicatory page to the edition of Shakespeare's plays published in 1623, known to us as the First Folio. Here John Heming and Henry Condell of the King's Men address William Herbert, earl of Pembroke, and his brother Philip, earl of Montgomery, as two lords who have thought "these trifles [Shakespeare's plays] something, heeretofore; and have prosequted both them and their Authour

living, with so much favour" that "you will use the like indulgence toward them [the plays] [as] you have done unto their parent […] For so much were your L.L [Lordships] likings of the severall parts when they were acted, as before they were published, the volume ask'd to be yours". Pembroke was the foremost literary patron of his day with more works dedicated to him than to any other during the early years of the seventeenth century. As Lord Chamberlain since December 1615 he was responsible for the provision and supervision of court entertainment, so important to the King's Men's finances. Amongst those to whom he provided direct financial assistance was Ben Jonson who received an annuity of £20 to buy books, and he is also known to have actively patronised George Chapman, Edward Alleyn and, important in this discussion, Richard Burbage whose death, in March 1619, prevented Pembroke from attending a play at court "so soone after the loss of my old acquaintance Burbadg"[26]. But this does not establish that Pembroke had similarly treated Shakespeare with any marked favour, the dedication more likely simply reflecting, in exaggerated terms, the fact that many of Shakespeare's plays had been performed at court whilst Pembroke was Lord Chamberlain and acting at the same time as a tactful reminder that the company would be grateful for further invitations to perform at court. Nor is there anything exceptional about the inclusion of the other dedicatee, Pembroke's younger brother, Philip Herbert, another of James I's leading courtiers and earl of Montgomery since 1605. He, like his brother, was a noted literary patron, with a total of forty works dedicated to him – ten in conjunction with Pembroke, whom he was to succeed as Lord Chamberlain in 1626. In summary, it is impossible to demonstrate that Shakespeare actively sought the personal endorsement of either man as a patron or received any direct rewards: rather, the dedication can be read simply as a means of keeping these powerful men well disposed towards the company, Heming and Condell using the well-known popularity of Shakespeare's plays at court as a means of oiling the wheels. Doubtless combined with what might seem a somewhat worldly concern was the two men's genuine feelings of affection and gratitude towards their former colleague but

[26] Mary Edmond, "Richard Burbage", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (online at http://www.oxforddnb.com) citing British Library, Egerton MS 2592, fol. 81. See also Victor Stater, "William Herbert 3rd Earl of Pembroke", *ODNB*.

this did not mean they were unaware of the wisdom of keeping on the right side of two of the most influential personages at the heart of government.

It may well have been that during Shakespeare's lifetime printed playbooks were rarely thought prestigious enough to be dedicated to a patron, and in Shakespeare's case, given the state of those of his plays which made it into print before he died, there is nothing to suggest that he took any interest in their publication[27]. The one publication which, consistent with contemporary practice, Shakespeare could have dedicated to a patron was his *Sonnets* published in 1609. This does, of course, carry the notorious dedication signed off by the printer Thomas Thorp to a "Mr W. H.", described as the "begetter" of the sonnets. This has given rise to endless speculation but, whatever its meaning, it hardly establishes that Shakespeare took a direct interest in the publication of the work (which in any case contains several defects which would not have escaped a conscientious author's attention) or that he wished to advertise the names of those who looked favourably on his work. Again, with all the necessary caveats applied to the problems of arguing from absence of evidence, all we know is that on two occasions only, early in his career and at a financially difficult time, did Shakespeare look for direct patronage, that he is never on record as the recipient of gifts, and that he is never found in possession of a sinecure or indeed of any office out of which he would have derived an 'unofficial' income. Surely this means that we can say with some confidence that such ambitions were never part of his plan. Though his income may have depended to some extent on his membership of a company under royal patronage, and though some other work may have come his way as a result of his contacts at court – but of which writing a motto for the earl of Rutland's *impresa* is the only known example[28] – this would not represent patronage in a form that offered more generous or favourable treatment than for the performance of a specific task. What we might call net-working was one thing: tying oneself to the fortunes of a particular, and wealthier, member of society another.

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[27] From 1602 an increasing number of printed editions of plays (helpfully tabulated in David M. Bergeron, *Textual Patronage in English Drama, 1570-1640*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2006, pp. 216-20) contained prefatory matter under the author's name but Shakespeare's published texts carried no such material.

[28] Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, vol. II, p. 153.

Finally, I consider the contention that William Shakespeare may have had strong religious views or, more particularly, that he inclined towards the old Catholic religion. It should be made clear at the start that there is no material evidence that he did, the most obvious manifestation of which would have been a listing at some point of his refusal to attend church. Lists do survive of those in Stratford who committed such an offence supplemented by nation-wide recusant rolls which record the same. We also have the records, albeit patchy, of Stratford's local church court for the period 1590 to 1608, with a single entry from 1616[29]. None of these, however, contains any reference to Shakespeare having adopted a position which would have got him into trouble. The nearest we get is the citation of his daughter Susanna in the local church court in May 1606, one of twenty-one local people presented for not receiving communion the previous Easter[30]. However, bearing in mind that in any case such an offence would not necessarily reflect Shakespeare's own views on religious practice, there are other things to consider. The Gunpowder Plot of November 1605 had inevitably provoked a certain nervousness, not least in Stratford as one of the conspirators, Ambrose Rookwood, had taken a lease of a house a mile or so out of town. There are two lists of Stratford recusants dating from 1606 (with fourteen and thirty names) and another dating from August 1605, before news of the Plot broke, also listing thirty names. There is even a listing of thirteen names for c. 1607[31]. Susanna's name occurs in none of these, nor do seventeen others presented alongside her in Stratford's church court in May 1606. In other words only three of her 'co-defendants' were elsewhere cited for recusancy. By way of contrast, eight notable known Catholics who occur consistently in the four lists cited above do not feature alongside Susanna, and three of those who feature in three lists are similarly absent. Moreover, in the overwhelming number of cases brought against Susanna's co-

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[29] Calendared in E. R. C. Brinkworth, *Shakespeare and the Bawdy Court of Stratford*, Chichester, Phillimore, 1972, pp. 120-46.

[30] Brinkworth, p. 132.

[31] London, The National Archives, E377/6, mm. 15v, 20v; E377/15, m. 15v; Ronald Halstead and others, "Return of Recusants in Kineton and Barlichway Hundreds, County Warwick, 1605-6", *Worcester Recusant*, 18 (December 1971), pp. 19, 31; Bearman, ed., *Minutes and Accounts of the Stratford-upon-Avon Corporation, 1599-1609*, pp. 350-352.

defendants, the clerk simply noted that the charge was dismissed, usually on the understanding that they would receive communion in the future. In Susanna's case the abbreviated notes are difficult to interpret with confidence but it would seem that not only was she one of those who chose not to put in an appearance but also that, whereas three similar defaulters appeared at the next court, Susanna did not even do this, yet the charge was still dismissed. In short, her citation, and indeed that of most of her 'co-defendants', seems to have been based on a different set of criteria: an effort perhaps to round up those not diligent in their attendance through indifference or carelessness, and at a politically sensitive time, rather than because of any obstinate recusancy. If we need further persuasion that this was the case we need only recall that the following year Susanna married John Hall, in nobody's book anything but a committed Protestant, if not of Puritan tendencies, given his support of the radical minister, Thomas Wilson[32].

A similar proposition, but similarly a dead-end as far as concerns Shakespeare's personal beliefs, is that his father John remained a committed Catholic[33]. This, it is argued, would inevitably have had an effect on his son. There are only two pieces of evidence which can be adduced to back up this idea. The more persuasive, at least at first sight, is his inclusion in two lists covering the county of Warwickshire, compiled in a 1591-92 nation-wide drive against suspected Catholic sympathisers[34]. All, however, is not quite what it seems. The second list – in effect the 'official' one of which the first is an initial draft – is divided into five sections. The first three and the fifth sections deal with various levels of recusancy or religious nonconformity: firstly those who "yet wilfullye persiste in thear Recusancye" (including three Stratford names), secondly those who were thought to be "daungerous and seditious Papistes […] As have bene presented

[32] See, for instance, Ann Hughes, "Religion and Society in Stratford-upon-Avon, 1619-1638", *Midland History*, 19 (1994), p. 69.

[33] For my full treatment of this issue, see Robert Bearman, "John Shakespeare: A Papist or Just Penniless?", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 56 (Winter 2005), pp. 411-433.

[34] John Tobias, "New Light on Recusancy in Warwicksire", *Worcester Recusant*, 36 (December 1980), pp. 8-27; Michael Hodgetts, "A Certificate of Warwickshire Recusants, 1592", *Worcester Recusant*, 5 (May 1965), pp. 20-31; 6 (December 1965), pp. 7-20. The relevant sections are also to be found in Richard Savage and Edgar Fripp, eds, *Minutes and Accounts of the Stratford-upon-Avon Corporation, 1586-1592*, Dugdale Society, 10 (1929), pp. 148-49, 159-62.

to us […] And now either beyonde the Seas or vagrante within this Realme" (including one Stratford name), thirdly "Recusantes As have been hearetofore preasented within this Countye of Warwicke And are now either Dwelling in other Counties or gone oute of this Countye" (including two from Stratford), and fifthly those who may have been named in the first survey but had since conformed or were thought likely to do so, including sixteen from Stratford. John Shakespeare, however, is not listed in any of these categories but in the fourth one, made up of those not attending church monthly, "yet are thoughte to forbeare the Church for debtte and for feare of processe, Or for soom other worse faultes, Or for Age, sicknes or impotencye of bodie". In Stratford fifteen people were grouped under this head, further divided into nine (including John Shakespeare) who feared "processe for Debtte", and six whose presenters said that "all or the most of theese cannot coom to the Church for age and other infirmities". Without going into unnecessary detail here, such reasons or excuses can generally be substantiated, including, in John Shakespeare's case, financial difficulties which can be tracked convincingly from around 1580. It can hardly be claimed, then, that this establishes that John Shakespeare was an obdurate recusant if he had in fact been included in the one category out of the five which was designed to cover those who were not. Whilst some may still insist that this does not *prove* John Shakespeare was not a Catholic sympathiser, surely the balance of probability is firmly in favour of accepting John's categorisation as valid. Otherwise, one must ask why, if the town authorities were prepared to cite some twenty-five of their fellow townsmen for recusancy of varying degrees of seriousness, they should collude to protect fifteen others. The local men compiling the lists would have been aware that they would be looked over not only by government officials in London but also by zealous local commissioners and justices of the peace who would already be familiar with the situation and who would not look kindly on any deliberate attempt to mislead[35].

The second piece of evidence used in attempts to establish John Shakespeare's recusancy is his so-called 'spiritual testament', revealing that the man who attested it was clearly a Catholic. This hand-

[35] Glynn Parry, "The Context of John Shakespeare's 'Recusancy' Re-examined", *Shakespeare Yearbook*, ns, 18 (2007), pp. 8-27.

written document no longer survives, leaving us with no option but to rely on copies made in the late eighteenth century when it first came to light, hidden, so it was claimed, in the roof of the Shakespeare's family home. However, there are real problems over the authenticity of this evidence, linked as it is with other suspicious Shakespearean tales circulating in Stratford at the end of the eighteenth century when the 'spiritual testament' first came to public attention, nor is there any further document to substantiate recusancy on John Shakespeare's part[36]. There would have been nothing surprising, of course, if John Shakespeare, reared in the old faith, had cherished some memories of traditional church worship. But to argue, on the basis of no reliable evidence, that he pushed such loyalty to the point of threatening his livelihood, remains essentially unconvincing, given that until the mid 1570s John's conduct was typical of an ambitious man actively pursuing a business career. It is not impossible, of course, that John Shakespeare's quarrels had originated in high words over religious views, or that religious difference could have manifested itself in quarrels of a more general nature. But, in fact, the cause of most litigation, whether actions remained civil or degenerated into direct action and criminal offences, lay in the problems of enforcing payment for goods supplied or the repayment of debts. Stratford's court of record, meeting fortnightly and specifically charged with sorting out disputes of this nature, and serving a population of perhaps less than 2,000 could, at each session, in the mid 1580s, typically hear thirty cases, five or six of which would be new claims. All the indications are that John's troubles derived from business transactions of this sort, involving, in his case, loss of credit and the need to realise assets to meet his obligations. An alternative scenario, that John Shakespeare, for ideological reasons, was prepared to jeopardise his hard-won position in the local business elite by adhering obstinately to the old religion remains essentially unconvincing. Advocates of the authenticity of his 'spiritual testament' were given ammunition of a sort when, in the 1960s, a printed version of a very similar document was discov-

[36] I have discussed this in detail in "John Shakespeare's 'Spiritual Testament': A Reappraisal", *Shakespeare Survey*, 56 (2003), pp. 184-202. See also Thomas M. McCoog and Peter Davidson, "Edmund Campion and William Shakespeare 'Much Ado about Nothing'?", in *The Reckoned Expense: Edmund Campion and the Early English Jesuits*, ed. Thomas M. McCoog, Rome, Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2007, pp. 165-185.

ered. Several others, virtually identical, have since been unearthed. These were translations of a work said to have been composed by Cardinal Charles Borromeo when Milan was visited by plague in the 1580s. Superficially this might seem to support the idea that the version allegedly subscribed to by John Shakespeare was authentic. But there are serious obstacles to overcome. Firstly, all the printed versions so far discovered date from the 1630s, suggesting that it was not translated into English until that date. Secondly, if we are to assume instead that printed English versions *were* circulating in the 1580s, why was John Shakespeare presented with a manuscript version to subscribe to? Thirdly, although the bulk of the manuscript version is almost identical with the printed text, its first three clauses are not only completely different but also clearly concocted with forgery in mind. It can therefore be just as persuasively argued that, a damaged version of the printed version having come to light, it was copied out, John Shakespeare's name inserted and the damaged part made good by substituting some preliminary wording in a mischievous attempt, characteristic of the late eighteenth century, to mislead. Finally, the sceptical are bound to point out the amazing coincidence that not only has no other manuscript copy of the 'spiritual testament' ever come to light but also that the one that has surfaced happened to have been subscribed to by the father of one of the most illustrious figures in the country's history.

To some extent, of course, such a discussion is in any case irrelevant when we come to consider Shakespeare's own beliefs. If there were any evidence that Shakespeare veered from the official line then it might be profitable to link this with childhood experiences. However, not only is there no evidence to attach even the mildest form of recusancy to Shakespeare's career, it is also difficult to argue convincingly that his father had difficulty in adapting to the requirements of the Elizabethan settlement either; and even if he had, that is no reason to assume that his son would have felt the same.

The risks of arguing from absence of evidence have been flagged up more than once. Much of the contemporary documentation of Shakespeare's life has been lost and, if more had survived, we would inevitably know much more about his dealings with his fellow citizens and his beliefs on a variety of issues. Although I have argued above that there is very little evidence to establish that he frequently

went to law or was ever prosecuted for misdemeanours, that he ever deliberately set about seeking patronage and sinecures to bolster his income or that he adhered obstinately to the Catholic faith, this is inevitably not the full picture. Even though further fragmentary evidence might turn up to flesh out one or two details, we are still faced with the unavoidable fact that much of the evidence for reconstructing Shakespeare's life has disappeared without trace. To move on to unequivocal statements that Shakespeare was not litigious, that he was not a habitual law-breaker, that he did not seek patronage and was not a recusant would therefore be to take liberties. But, to return to the issue of balance of probabilities, it is surely more reasonable, given the examination of what evidence we do have, to propose that such conclusions will not be far from the truth; or at least more consistent with what we know than to argue that, despite this lack of material evidence, we are still going to argue the opposite simply on the basis that it cannot be disproved. In any case, because it can be established, from the number of times they appear in the record, that some people *were* litigious, of criminal persuasion, dependent on patronage or of controversial religious views, then it surely follows that Shakespeare, if not necessarily entirely free of such tendencies, was much less influenced or compromised by them.

Having reached the point of establishing, as far as we know, what sort of man Shakespeare was not, the next step should be to ask, on the basis of surviving evidence, what sort of man we think he was. It is hardly surprising that, in addressing this, most biographers are drawn into discussing his involvement in the London theatre, both as a sharer in the profits of the Chamberlain's (later the King's) Men and as what we might call his particular role as its 'resident playwright'. Although in general terms we lack specific detail on Shakespeare's personal involvement in these operations, much of course can then be said about theatrical life generally and of the unique contribution which Shakespeare made to this outburst of creative activity. But this is not underpinned by surviving archival documentation. A few sources provide specific details of his day-to-day life in the theatre but the majority of archival references which have come down to us relate to other, sometimes mundane, issues. To many, this is a disappointment, and almost an embarrassment, suggesting as they do a man not totally immersed in the theatrical world but one clearly concerned with day-to-day matters unrelated to his literary output.

However, this is a poor excuse for sidelining such evidence as it offers useful pointers in the assessment of the sort of man Shakespeare was. But that is another (and longer and more complicated) story, which I hope to tell at another time and in another place, and is therefore a subject which I do not wish to pursue here[37]. Suffice to say that I base my interpretation on the title by which Shakespeare was known in his own day and which, if he did not write it, he at least went along with: 'William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon, gentleman'. To contemporaries such a style, especially those who remembered his father's misfortunes, had overtones which are not immediately obvious to us today, and when combined with this other 'non-theatrical' evidence, go some way towards building up a more helpful picture of Shakespeare's personality: in my view, what he was, rather than what he was not.

[37] This is the subject of a forthcoming monograph in which I examine Shakespeare's business career and social standing.

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John Florio and Shakespeare: Life and Language

Donatella Montini

> Pour nous, Shakespeare a connu et approché l'Italie, sa langue, sa littérature et sa civilisation, par l'intermédiaire de John Florio. Car […] les deux hommes, le poète et le grammairien, se connaissaient nécessairement.
>
> Clara Longworth Chambrun

When, in his 1747 annotated edition of Shakespeare's works, William Warburton declared that "by *Holofernes* is designed a particular character, a pedant and schoolmaster of our author's time, one *John Florio*, a teacher of the *Italian* tongue in *London*"[1], he certainly could not have imagined that he had inaugurated one of the most intriguing threads within the never-ending quest to find Shakespeare's 'traces of life', literally opening the proverbial Pandora's box. With his hypothesis Warburton suggested a close connection between the playwright and John Florio (1553-1625), an Italian teacher (*Firste Fruites*, 1578; *Second Frutes*, 1591), lexicographer (*A World of Words*, 1598; *Queen Anna's New World of Words*, 1611), translator (Montaigne's *Essays*, 1603; *Decameron*, 1620), recognized as one of the most outstanding interpreters of Italian humanistic culture in Elizabethan England.

After Warburton, many other modern critics have been haunted by a sort of 'magnificent obsession' to prove the existence of a liaison, both in a biographical and/or in a linguistic perspective, between these two giants of Elizabethan culture[2]. Gentlemen and courtiers in Queen

[1] William Warburton and Alexander Pope, eds, *The Works of Shakespear*, London, J. and P. Knapton,1747, vol. II, p. 227. Interestingly, the comment goes on to describe Florio as someone "who has given us a small dictionary of that language under the title of *A world of words* […]. From the ferocity of this man's temper it was that *Shakespear* chose for him the name that *Rablais* gives to his Pedant of *Thubal Holoferne*" (pp. 227-28).

[2] Shakespeare's connection to Florio has been repeatedly explored along two main lines, "pseudo-scholarly and intertextual", as has been summed up by Sergio Costola and Michael Saenger in "Shylock's Venice and the Grammar of the Modern City", in *Shakespeare and the Italian Renaissance. Appropriation, Transformation, Opposition*, ed. Michele Marrapodi, Farnham, Ashgate, 2014, pp. 147-62; p. 152. Among the classic contributions on the topic see Clara Longworth Chambrun, *Giovanni Florio, un apôtre*

Elizabeth's entourage, like the earl of Southampton, have often been mentioned in order to provide historical dates and events which might have hosted Florio and Shakespeare together; parallels have been sought between Shakespeare's plays and Florio's didactic dialogues. Some have gone so far as to suggest merging the two figures into one by imagining Florio to be Shakespeare himself, thus giving a new twist to the authorship question. However, any effort in this direction has been fruitless and no solid facts have been put forward but only conjectures about a possible, at best probable, acquaintanceship.

In the wake of this failure to find historical dates and documents linking Florio's and Shakespeare's lives, I would like to start again from what is extremely historical and factual, the real commodity which joins them indissolubly and which plays such a relevant role both in their biographies and in their careers, that is the Italian language. A language that was at the time in dialogue and confrontation with Early Modern English, itself a developing language, malleable and fluid as it was, not yet standardized, and veritably steeped in a linguistic culture "that existed without dictionaries of English, where there was no 'authority' on the shelf and which therefore had a very different relationship with language"[3].

On the relationship between the English and the Italian language at the time, Florio himself writes in the "Induction" to his *Firste Fruites*: "I am sure, that no language can better expresse or shewe foorth the liuely and true meanyng of a thing, then the Italian"[4]: the English language, like a waste land, will only become fertile and rich through Florio's Italian flowers, and the Italian culture and its *civil conversazione* are to be taught and spread, as English "but passe Douer, it is woorth nothing" (*FF*, chap. 27, p. 50).

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de la Renaissance en Angleterre à l'époque de Shakespeare, Paris, Payot, 1921; Frances Yates, *John Florio. The Life of an Italian in Shakespeare's England*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1934; Frances Yates, *A Study of* Love's Labour's Lost, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1936; Carlo Maria Franzero, *John Florio a Londra ai tempi di Shakespeare*, Parma, Guanda, 1969; Mario Praz, "Shakespeare's Italy", *Shakespeare Survey*, 7 (1954), pp. 95-106; Rinaldo C. Simonini, *Italian Scholarship in Renaissance England*, Chapel Hill, University of Carolina Press, 1952.

[3] Jonathan Hope, *Shakespeare and Language. Reason, Eloquence and Artifice in the Renaissance*, London, Methuen, 2010, p. ix.

[4] John Florio, *His Firste Fruites: which yeelde familiar speech, merie Proverbs, wittie sentences, and golden sayings. Also a perfect Induction to the Italian and English tongues*, London, Thomas Woodcock, 1578, p. 114. From here onwards: *FF*.

As many studies have shown, in Elizabethan London Italian was conceived as a *lingua franca*, the object of pedagogical strategies whose linguistic and performative force passed through "the courteous conversational exchange as a mode of imparting knowledge and civility"[5], in the wake of the legacy of Stefano Guazzo's *Civil conversazione*[6]. Italian was taught by private teachers, and the first generation of refugees, such as Michelangelo Florio, had been employed as private tutors to aristocratic as well as royal pupils: until the first decades of the seventeenth century, the Italian language remained an ornament for the elite, a way of engaging with a rich cultural tradition. Moreover, in the sixteenth century England witnessed a significant rise in the number of translations of continental printed books, and, in particular, there was an ever increasing demand for texts of specifically Italian origin, as "by the second half of the century Italian had overtaken French as the prestigious language to be acquired by the elites, due in no small part to Elizabethan Italophilia"[7]. Italian, in other words, was conceived as the key to social accomplishment and John Florio presented himself as a crucial mediator of these modes, a teacher of Italian language and conversation, a compiler of Italian words and sayings, spreading his knowledge and taste like a contagion, in brief, the ideal subject to be in charge of Shakespeare's education to Italian fashion and modes[8].

Shakespeare and Florio are to be framed precisely in this rich network of interdiscursive relations which connect the Italian human-

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[5] Keir Elam, "'At the Cubiculo': Shakespeare's Problems with Italian Language and Culture", in *Italomania(s). Italy and the English Speaking World from Chaucer to Seamus Heaney*, ed. Giuseppe Galigani, Firenze, Mauro Pagliai, 2007, pp. 111-22; p. 115.

[6] Sergio Rossi, *Ricerche sull'Umanesimo e sul Rinascimento in Inghilterra*, Milano, Società Editrice Vita e Pensiero, 1969; Silvana Sciarrino, "Da John Florio a Giovanni Torriano: l'insegnamento della lingua italiana nel Rinascimento inglese", in *Intertestualità shakespeariane. Il Cinquecento italiano e il Rinascimento inglese*, ed. Michele Marrapodi Roma, Bulzoni, 2003, pp. 31-46; Michael Wyatt, *The Italian Encounter with Tudor England. A Cultural Politics of Translation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005.

[7] Guyda Armstrong, "Paratexts and Their Functions in Seventeenth-Century English Decamerons", *Modern Language Review*, 2007, pp. 40-57; p. 42.

[8] See Manfred Pfister, "Inglese Italianato – Italiano Anglizzato: John Florio", in *Renaissance Go-Betweens. Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe*, eds Andreas Höfele and Werner von Koppenfels, Berlin-New York, Walter de Gruyter, 2005, pp. 32-54; Donatella Montini, "John/Giovanni: Florio mezzano e intercessore della lingua italiana", in *Memoria di Shakespeare*, 6 *Shakespeare e l'Italia*, ed. Rosy Colombo (2008), pp. 47-59.

istic language and culture with the early modern English language and culture. My contention is that it is in the exchange between the two languages – in particular in speech-based and speech-purposed textual forms, such as didactic and dramatic dialogues – and specifically through borrowings and acquisitions, but also borrowings and rejections, that the real link between Shakespeare and Florio and the Renaissance "great feast of languages" should be investigated. An approach to language as introduced by such recent trends in modern linguistics as historical dialogue analysis and historical pragmatics – areas of linguistics that emphasize language use in context – can be particularly helpful to analyze dialogues and answer "the call for historicisation and contextualisation" at the heart of current debates on the topic[9]: indeed, these fields of studies have been emerging as a productive place of intersection between literary studies and linguistics, and particularly between the literary interpretation of Shakespeare and linguistic work on early modern English. I will thus attempt here to integrate the history of early modern English with the history of its context, and to combine a historical-pragmatic study of early modern dialogues with a historical framework which might account for 'the Shakespeare and Florio connection', tentatively reaching a partial appeasement of the magnificent obsession.

Life: an 'Italianated' fantasia

The first connecting link between Shakespeare and Florio emerges from their historical lives. Rather than subduing interest in the historical figure of the national Bard, the well-known lack of evidence of Shakespeare's biographical data seems, over the years, to have fuelled the quest to discover his real identity, resulting in a flourishing of biographies, fictional and non-fictional, which persist in trying to find traces of his human presence, surfing through conjectures and hypotheses[10].

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[9] For an exhaustive survey on recent trends and theories on Shakespeare's language see Iolanda Plescia, "Shakespeare, Linguistics and a New Philology", *Memoria di Shakespeare*, 8 *On Authorship*, eds Rosy Colombo and Daniela Guardamagna (2012), pp. 79-94; p. 82.

[10] In the last decade there was an explosion of books on Shakespeare for the general reader and at least a dozen biographies. For a thorough and updated survey on this

Of course, all the issues related to Shakespeare's uncertain biography merge into and intermingle with the authorship controversy[11]. It is beyond the aim of this article to review the vast repertory of multifarious perspectives which have induced hundreds of scholars 'in arms' to reconsider the credibility of Shakespeare's existence and authorship, putting forward more than seventy candidates: Stratfordians and anti-Stratfordians, Oxfordians, Marlovians, Baconians, orthodox and anti-orthodox critics have been fighting and debating about the identity of an author who only really exists on the page and on the stage.

Among the negationist theorists, one of the elected candidates is the famous John Florio. *In quaestione vexata quaestio*, as Holofernes might comment, connected to Shakespeare's supposed knowledge of Italian. The doubts and queries are well-known: how did Shakespeare know so much about Italy? Could he read Italian or did he need a mediator? Did Shakespeare and Florio know each other? Did the Italian teacher influence Shakespeare's knowledge of the Italian language, geography and culture? Let me try to give some order to the facts. Since Florio was Shakespeare's contemporary (he was eleven years older, in fact), it is possible to argue quite plausibly that they knew each other: both the teacher and the actor/playwright pursued professions and belonged to a social class that needed the patronage of powerful aristocratic figures, and the presence of both may be traced to the household of Henry Wriothesley, earl of Southampton at the time when Shakespeare dedicated his poems *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* to him, that is between April 1593 and May 1594[12]. Probable connections may also be suggested as far as the world of publishing is concerned: Edward Blount, best known for the publication of Shakespeare's *First*

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aspect of Shakespeare's criticism, see Paola Pugliatti, "The Burden of Proof: From New Biographism to New Disintegration", in *Memoria di Shakespeare*, 8 (2012), pp. 133-48, and as a definitive analysis of the never ending story of Shakespeare's life see Stephen Greenblatt, "The Traces of Shakespeare's Life", in *The New Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*, eds Margreta de Gratia and Stanley Wells, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 1-13 (and rpt. in this issue of *Memoria di Shakespeare*).

[11] One of the most interesting and innovative books on the authorship question is the recent William Lehay, ed., *Shakespeare and His Authors*, London, Continuum, 2010. As for myself, I confess that I entirely agree with Brian Vickers's vision of those who strive to deny Shakespeare's very existence defining them as "the legion of misguided souls" (Brian Vickers, "Shakespeare and Authorship Studies in the Twenty-First Century", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 62:1, Spring 2011, pp. 106-42; p. 114).

[12] Yates, *John Florio*, pp. 124-25.

Folio, registered in 1608 in the Stationers' Register as one of the owners of *Pericles* and *Antony and Cleopatra,* had also published Florio's dictionary and translation of Montaigne[13]. Improbable, though more intriguing, are the amorous affairs which would seem to link Florio and Shakespeare: in fact, a theory has been advanced by a professional Shakespearean scholar such as Jonathan Bate (in *The Genius of Shakespeare*), who suggests that Florio's wife was Shakespeare's lover and the *dark lady* of the *Sonnets*[14].

The legendary gaps in Shakespeare's biographical data, together with authorship theories and the recurrent presence of Italian scenarios in his plays, have allowed "the occasional dilettante researcher to give Shakespeare an Italian identity", writes the inflexible Desmond O'Connor in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*[15]. The first hypothesis put forward by a certain Santi Paladino dates back to the Italian fascist 'roaring twenties', when Shakespeare became Italian, Sicilian in fact: he was supposed to be Michael Angelo Florio, born in Messina to Giovanni Florio and Guglielma Crollalanza; by virtue of his Calvinist creed, he had fled to England to avoid religious persecution, and here he was to assume his mother's anglicized surname becoming Guglielmo Crollalanza, hence in English, William Shake-spear.

A few decades later, Santi Paladino re-formulated the story in his *Un italiano autore delle opere shakespeariane*[16]: in this new version John Florio is seen translating his father Crollalanza-Shakespeare's works from Italian into English, or according to another version, John collaborated with an actor, a certain William Shakespeare, who would become a co-author of his plays.

A few years ago, as a new contributor to the Shakespeare-Florio connection, Lamberto Tassinari, who has taught Italian at Montreal University, published his *John Florio. The Man Who Was Shakespeare*[17]:

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[13] Franzero, p. 185.

[14] Jonathan Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare*, London, Picador, 1997, pp. 54-58.

[15] Desmond O'Connor, "John Florio", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, eds H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, vol. XX, pp. 165-68; p. 168.

[16] See Santi Paladino, *Un italiano autore delle opere shakespeariane*, Milano, Gastaldi, 1955.

[17] Lamberto Tassinari, *John Florio. The Man Who Was Shakespeare*, Montreal, Giano Books, 2009 (e-book 2013), http://www.johnflorio-is-shakespeare.com/ (last accessed 13 February 2015).

among his "fifteen reasons for John Florio, the man who invented Shakespeare" which are presented as final evidence to validate his theory, he ranges from Florio's and Shakespeare's common knowledge and interest in Italian humanistic culture, to a similar "bombastic style", from a vast knowledge of the Bible and liturgies as well as of music, to an identical linguistic creativity; the most reasonable and historically proven argument among these being that both Shakespeare and Florio were part of the same entourage, the least reasonable and most fanciful, the fact that Shakespeare, in spite of his origins, possessed a "strong aristocratic persona". The climax, however, of Tassinari's theory is what he defines as his "ontological and sociological proof": "If two such characters […] had lived in London at the same time, they would have certainly met, perhaps even clashed, leaving behind visible traces. Instead a total void! If Florio shared with Shakespeare the same patrons, the same friends, the same interests, passions and abilities and yet never met him, nor mentioned him, this proves once more that William Shakespeare never existed as the scholarly, multilingual, aristocratic Italianizing author of the works penned (when they were) by *William Shakespeare*"[18].

Over the years other people have joined the group of Florio's supporters, advancing other hypotheses and suggesting other explanations in a desire to provide evidence of the superimposition of Florio's identity on Shakespeare's[19]: such evidence, however, has always proved to be circumstantial rather than direct, allowing more than one explanation. Again, I would comment, with Greenblatt, "there is nothing amiss with this desire […] its satisfaction, however, lies in the imagination"[20].

Language: "Who the devil taught thee so much Italian?"

Parallel to the attempt to link Shakespeare and Florio's lives and make them one, there is quite a long list of scholars who have

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18 Tassinari, http://www.johnflorio-is-shakespeare.com/ (last accessed 10 March 2015).

19 Even for the name of Florio, as pointed out in Pugliatti's survey, non-orthodox theories are usually advanced by non-academic critics, such as Saul Gerevini, Massimo Oro Nobili, Martino Iuvara.

20 Greenblatt, p. 12.

tried to connect them on a linguistic and stylistic level, finding traces of Florio's Italian and his supposed knowledge of Italy in Shakespeare's plays, seeing Florio's didactic dialogues as contributing to Shakespeare's dramatic dialogues and conversational exchanges, or crediting his dictionaries as well as his translations with the enrichment of the playwright's vocabulary.
Borrowings and intertextual connections between Florio's writings and Shakespeare's plays have been accurately investigated and selected[21], and the first and probably best known reference is the origin of the title of Shakespeare's comedy *Love's Labour's Lost*, supposedly coming from *First Fruits*:

Non accade parlar tanto di amore, ogni libro è pieno di amori, con tanti Autori che sarebbe pena persa, a parlar di amore.	We neede not speak so much of loue, al books are ful of loue, with so many authours, that it were labour lost to speak of Loue. (*FF*, chap. 31, p. 71)

Notoriously, Gonzalo's commonwealth speech in *The Tempest* (II.i.147-165) echoes "Of the Caniballes", one of Montaigne's *Essays* in Florio's translation[22], and in *Othello*, Iago's attack on women recalls the long debate between Silvestro and Pandulfo in the last chapter of *Second Frutes*[23]:

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[21] Longworth; Yates, *John Florio*; Yates, *A Study of* Love's Labour's Lost; Simonini; Franzero; Elam, "'At the Cubiculo'". Many quotations and references are reviewed in a recent book on Florio's linguistic and stylistic influence on Renaissance English authors: Jason Lawrence, *"Who the Devil Taught Thee So Much Italian?": Italian Language Learning and Literary Imitation in Early Modern England*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2005. Lawrence, treating the issue at some length, breaks new ground in favour of Shakespeare's competent reading knowledge of Italian, via the mediation of Florio's works.

[22] The parallel was first noted by Edward Capell in his *Notes and Various Readings to Shakespeare*, London, Henry Hughs, 1779-80, 2 vols, vol. II, p. 63. On Shakespeare's knowledge of Florio's translation before 1603, year of publication, see also Yates, *John Florio*, p. 243; Hugh Grady, *Shakespeare, Machiavelli and Montaigne: Power and Subjectivity from* Richard II *to* Hamlet, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 49-50; William M. Hamlin, *Montaigne's English Journey: Reading the* Essays *in Shakespeare's Days*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013.

[23] "It is more than analogy and Shakespeare must have had this passage in mind when he wrote Iago's speech" (Simonini, pp. 97-98). See also Longworth, pp. 144-45, and Lawrence, who points out how Shakespeare with this reference also recalls Florio's dialogical method to put forward positive and negative views, as typical of rhetorical procedures (Lawrence, p. 168, note 28).

Iago
Come on, come on, you are pictures out of door,
Bells in your parlours, wildcats in your kitchens,
Saints in your injuries; devils being offended,
Players in your housewifery, and hussies in your beds.
(*Othello*, II.i.110-13[24])

Le donne sono Sante in chiesa, Angele in strada, Diauole in casa, Sirene alla finestra, Gazze alla porta, e Capre nei giardini.	Women are in churches, Saints: abroad, Angels: at home, deuills: at windowes Syrens: at doores, pyes: and in gardens, Goates. (*Second Frutes*, chap. 12, pp. 174-75[25])

Naseeb Shaheen also highlights a similarity between some lines in the Osric scene in *Hamlet* and a passage in *Second Frutes*, chapter 7, pointing out an identical use of "for my ease"[26]:

Hamlet
Put your bonnet to his right use, 'tis for the head.
Osric
I thank your lordship, it is very hot.
[…]
Hamlet
I beseech you remember.
Osric
Nay, good my lord, for my ease, in good faith.
(*Hamlet*, V.ii.92-94, 104-5)

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[24] All Shakespeare references to *Teatro completo di William Shakespeare*, ed. Giorgio Melchiori, Milan, Mondadori, 1976.

[25] John Florio, *Second Frutes* [1591], ed. Rinaldo C. Simonini, Jr., New York, Delmar, 1977. From here onwards: *SF*.

[26] Naseeb Shaheen, "Shakespeare's Knowledge of Italian", *Shakespeare Survey*, 47 (1994), pp. 161-69; p. 162. Other allusions or paraphrases are traced in various plays: in the Duke of York's description of Queen Margaret in *3 Henry VI* (I.iv.138): "O tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide!" which recalls Florio's "her heart of Tiger", in *FF*, chap. 14, *Parlar amoroso*, rewording in turn Petrarch's "cor di tigre o d'orsa"; in *Romeo and Juliet* the Nurse's comments on Friar Laurence's advice to Romeo: "O Lord, I could have stayed here all the night / To hear good counsel! O, what learning is!" (III.iii.158-59) echo *Sentences divine and profane* in *FF*, chap. 18: "Certis if you wyl beleeue me, I coulde staye night and daye, to heare such sentences, you have much reioced my hart". Portia's description of the monolingual and monocultural English suitor, "a proper man's picture, but alas, who can converse with a dumb show?" (*The Merchant of Venice*, I.ii.57-61) parallels Florio's "When I arriued first in London, I coulde not speake Englishe, and I met aboue fiue hundred persons, afore I coulde find one, that could tel me in Italian, or French, where the Post dwelt" (*FF*, sig.51r; and also sig.62v).

G. Perché state così scoperto? V.s. si fa torto.	G. Why do you stand barehedded? you do your self wrong.
E. Perdonimi v.s. io lo faccio per mio agio.	E. Pardon me good sir, I doe it for my ease.
G. Copriteui di gratia, voi siete troppo cerimonioso.	G. I pray you be couered, you are too ceremonious.
E. Io stò tanto bene, che mi par d'esser in paradiso.	E. I am so well, that me thinks I am in heauen.
G. Deh metteui il cappello, se mi volete bene.	G. If you loue me, put on your hat.
E. Io lo farò per ubidir v.s. non gia per voglia ch'io n'habbia.	E. I will doe it to obay you, not for any pleasure that I take in.
	(*SF*, chap. 7, pp. 110-11)

There is more. Like Holofernes (whose very name was read as a supposed – and imperfect! – anagram of John Florio), other characters have been interpreted as his parodical portraits: Armado in the same comedy *Love's Labour's Lost*, Parolles in *All's Well That Ends Well,* but also Falstaff has been suggested as modelled on the Italian lexicographer[27].

Allusions, borrowings, paraphrases, quotations, parodies, the list is very long, but in all these cases Florio's bilingual texts could have allowed even the monolingual English reader to access his writings. Things change when the Italian language is taken into consideration. French, both in amorous conversation and in a didactic setting, is extensively displayed in Shakespeare's plays, as in *Henry V* (III.iv and V.ii.98ff); the Italian language, however, plays a different role and has a different function. Certainly the plots of many of Shakespeare's plays are set in Italy, and closely adhere to their Italian sources[28]; what is less adamant is Shakespeare's knowledge of

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[27] See Arthur Acheson, *Shakespeare's Lost Years in London, 1586-1592*, London, Bernard Quaritch, 1920 (chap. 8 is entitled "John Florio as Sir John Falstaff's Original").

[28] About eleven plays are referred to Italian scenarios; *Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Measure for Measure*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* are based on various Italian narratives: from Giraldi Cinthio to Bandello, from Ser Giovanni Fiorentino to the anonymous play *Gl'ingannati*. "Without necessarily relying on any precise knowledge of Italian history or geography, this iconology of Italy was mostly derived from the works of Renaissance historians and humanists such as Machiavelli, Guicciardini, Castiglione, Ariosto, Tasso, and from the influence of *novelle* and of Cinquecento Italian theatre – Bandello, Aretino, Cinthio, Guarini – whose sometimes lurid stories of deceit, intrigue, jealousy, and passion provided a perfect setting for both comedy and tragedy" (Michele Marrapodi *et al.*, eds, *Shakespeare's Italy. Functions of Italian Locations in Renaissance Drama*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1993, p. 3). See also Harry Levin, "Shakespeare's Italians", in *Shakespeare's Italy*, pp. 17-29; *Memoria di Shakespeare*, 6 (2008); Michele Marrapodi, ed., *Intertestualità shakespeariane*.

Italian and the presence, function, and relevance, of Italian words in his plays. Could Shakespeare read and/or speak Italian? Even those critics who have tried to put forward positive answers introduce their arguments by using mitigating phrases and hedges, such as 'it would be mere conjecture to assert', 'it is possible to argue quite plausibly', 'it appears safe to conclude', therewith admitting the uncertainty which pervades this area of study.

In the end, "the question of whether Shakespeare could read Italian remains uncertain"[29], as Shaheen resolutely opens his article – so is the issue of whether he could read sources for his plays in Italian or in French. John Lievsay in his turn has no doubts and provides a clear and undisputable answer to the query:

> Was Shakespeare caught up in the conventional views of Italy? Undoubtedly, even though his settings and incidental knowledge of Italian scenes and customs are such as to have prompted speculation that he had himself visited Italy. But he is clearly no 'Italianate' Englishman. He sprinkles his plays with a smattering of broken Italian, although rarely in complete copybook sentences, as in *The Taming of the Shrew* (I.ii). Such individual words, dubiously Italian, as appear here and there throughout the plays – *punto*, *fico*, *basta*, *magnifico*, *duello*, *zany*, *mandragora*, *via*, *nuncio*, *bona roba*, *fantastico*, *signior*, etc.—are the common counters of the time. They indicate no particular proficiency in the language, no particular penchant for Italian culture[30].

In their recent and authoritative *Shakespeare's Words*, David and Ben Crystal list no more than 30 Italian words in Shakespeare's entire corpus, half of them taken from *The Taming of the Shrew*, vs. more than 300 in French and in Latin[31]. Still less verifiable is whether those words may be the effect of the playwright's possible acquaintance with John Florio and his writings.

However, in his investigation into Italian language learning and literary imitations in early modern England, Jason Lawrence assigns

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[29] Shaheen, p. 161.

[30] John L. Lievsay, *The Elizabethan Image of Italy*, Ithaca-New York, Cornell University Press, 1964, p. 25.

[31] David Crystal and Ben Crystal, *Shakespeare's Words. A Glossary and Language Companion*, London, Penguin, 2002, p. 647. Quite surprisingly, Italian and Spanish words are presented in the same page without trying to distinguish between them and are preceded by French (pp. 638-41) and Latin (pp. 643-46).

a paramount role to Florio's language manuals, putting a premium on Shakespeare's good reading knowledge of the target language as a sufficient skill to engage with literature in Italian. While denying the possibility of a fluent speaking competence, Lawrence argues for "Shakespeare's gradual acquisition of an adequate reading ability in Italian, given the frequent indebtedness to Florio's manuals and his uncontested Italian sources in many of his plays"[32]; it would be possible that by the early 1590s Shakespeare started learning Italian through Florio's *Firste Fruites* and *Second Frutes*, without necessarily developing an acquaintance with the author.

In fact, a few lines in *The Taming of the Shrew* (1590-93) offer the longest (and only) example of Shakespeare's use of Italian in his plays, greetings and exclamations which may be referred to the first dialogues in Florio's *Firste Fruites*:

> Tranio
> *Me pardonato*, gentle master mine.
> (*The Taming of the Shrew*, I.i.25)
>
> Lucentio
> *Basta*, content thee, for I have it full. (I.i.195)
>
> Petruchio
> Signor Hortensio, come you to part the fray?
> *Con tutto il cuore ben trovato*, may I say.
> Hortensio
> *Alla nostra casa ben venuto,*
> *Molto honorato signor mio Petruchio.* (I.ii.23-26)

Shifting the focus away from didactic dialogues, Keir Elam argues that "Florio's most powerful impact on Shakespearean discourse and on Shakespeare's imagination was undoubtedly exercised through his great dictionaries, which the dramatist demonstrably turns to on numerous occasions"[33].

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[32] Lawrence, p. 11. Again, Lawrence's claim seems based on Shakespeare's familiarity with Florio which in fact is only a supposition. He also points out that "the method by which Shakespeare tends to use his Italian models, seems to develop directly out of the insistent parallel-text focus of the bilingual dialogues in *all* the contemporary language manuals" (Lawrence, p. 11).

[33] Elam, "'At the Cubiculo'", p. 118.

Borrowing from other languages in the early modern period was certainly one of the most effective means of English vocabulary enrichment: sixteenth-century loans from Italian include terms related to products (for example *artichoke*, *majolica*, *parmesan*), or architecture and music (*balcony*, *grotto*, *villa*, *portico*, *opera*, *solo* and *sonata*). There are loan words that might be called 'social' which include *gala*, *gusto*, *regatta*, *carnival*[34]. However, Elam argues for an interlexical exchange as form of micro-intertextuality, a dialogic relationship between two languages and two cultures set up within the space of a single lexical item. In this perspective, Florio may be recognized as an important contributor to the expansion of the early modern English language: Italian and English words are contrasted, the two languages shaped through reciprocal influence, as in the language of a comedy like *Twelfth Night* (1601-2) which is imbued with the vocabulary of *A World of Words*, both with the Italian lemmas and their English definitions, like the term 'intercepter', an Anglicisation of 'intercettore'[35].

Another extensive example of linguistic and stylistic interconnectedness between Shakespeare's and Florio's style is probably displayed in their use of proverbs and maxims, which were one of the most relevant devices used by Florio to teach Italian and which abound in Shakespeare's plays[36]. In Renaissance England, in fact, proverbs were extremely popular, "highly prized rhetorical arms that distilled traditional oral as well as prestigious literary wisdom, the *vox populi* but also highly cultivated textual discourse"[37]. Many

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[34] See Giovanni Iamartino, "La contrastività italiano-inglese in prospettiva storica", *Rassegna italiana di linguistica applicata*, 33:2-3 (2001), pp. 7-130; Terttu Nevalainen, *An Introduction to Early Modern English*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2006, pp. 45-57.

[35] According to Elam, "[t]erms from the dictionary appear throughout, but especially in the play's more intensely farcical moments, as in Sir Toby's attempts to get Sir Andrew to dance, urging him 'to come home in a coranto' (I.iii.117)" (Elam, "'At the Cubiculo'", p. 120). In the introduction to the Arden edition, Elam provides also a short list of lemmas and definitions from Florio's *World of Words* which may have influenced the comedy; see William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, ed. Keir Elam, The Arden Shakespeare, London, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2008, pp. 66-67. See also Desmond O'Connor, "John Florio's Contribution to Italian-English Lexicography", *Italica*, 49 (1972), pp. 49-67; Dewitt T. Starnes, "John Florio Reconsidered", *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 6:4 (Winter 1965), pp. 407-22.

[36] Wyatt, pp. 174-80. Spartaco Gamberini, *Lo studio dell'italiano in Inghilterra nel Cinquecento e nel Seicento*, Messina-Firenze, D'Anna, 1970.

[37] Elam, "'At the Cubiculo'", p. 115.

collections were published throughout the period, like Erasmus' *Adagia*, James Sandford's *The Garden of Pleasure* (1573), a translation of the Italian *Detti e fatti piacevoli* by Ludovico Guicciardini, Charles Merbury's *Proverbi volgari* (1581), the adages in romances like George Pettie's *Petite Palace* and, especially John Lily's *Euphues*.

Florio inserted proverbs within his didactic dialogues and as an appendix to *Second Frutes* he even compiled *Giardino di Ricreazione* (1591), thus recalling Sanford's collection: the same proverbs are often included in Shakespeare's dramatic dialogues, especially in the comedies[38]. The proverb used in Italian by Holofernes to display his knowledge of foreign languages in *Love's Labour's Lost* is well-known and Shaheen points out that "the fact that Shakespeare quotes the proverb in Italian rather than in English strongly suggests that Florio's manuals were his source"[39]:

> HOLOFERNES
> Ah, good old Mantuan, I may speak of thee as the traveller doth of Venice:
> *Venetia, Venetia,*
> *Chi non ti vede, non ti pretia.*
> Old Mantuan, old Mantuan! Who understandeth thee not, loves thee not.
> (*Love's Labour's Lost*, III.ii.94-99)

which in Florio's didactic copybooks occurs both in *Firste Fruites* and *Second Frutes*:

Venetia, chi non ti vede, non ti pretia, ma chi ti vede, ben gli costa.	Venise, woo seeth thee not, praiseth thee not, but who seeth thee, it costeth hym wel. (*FF*, chap. 19, p. 34)
S. Venetia, chi non ti vede non ti pretia, Ma chi ti vede ben gli costa.	S. Who sees not Venice cannot esteeme it, But he that sees it payes well for it. (*SF*, chap. 6, pp. 106-7)

[38] Keir Elam, *Shakespeare's Universe of Discourse. Language-Games in the Comedies*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 275-89.

[39] Shaheen, p. 163.

Another frequently quoted example of Florio as a source seems to occur in Lucentio's speech, in *The Taming of the Shrew*, borrowing, with minor changes, the admiring comment on Lombardia from the dialogues between Peter and Stephen:

> Lucentio
> Tranio, since for the great desire I had
> To see fair Padua, nursery of arts,
> I am arrived for fruitful Lombardy,
> *The pleasant garden of great Italy* […]
> Here let us breathe, and haply institute
> A course of learning and ingenious studies.
> (*The Taming of the Shrew*, I.i.1-4, 8-9, my emphasis)

P. Doue, faccio pensiere di fermarmi un pezzo, a vedere le belle Città di Lombardia. S. La Lombardia è il giardino del mondo.	P. Where I purpose to stay a while, to view the fair Cities of Lombardy. S. Lombardy is the garden of the world. (*SF*, chap. 6, pp. 106-7[40])

The list of borrowings may certainly be longer[41], comprising both words and proverbs, phrases and sayings; these are other allusions, other echoes which, however, risk being merely juxtaposed one over the other only to find similar examples in other authors, like Samuel Daniel or John Marston, or John Ford[42]. Moreover, the question of Shakespeare's Italian inevitably criss-crosses and overlaps with the similarly never-ending and complex debate on Shakespeare's

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[40] Lawrence collects a list of proverbs which occur both in Shakespearean plays and Florian manuals: "Small herbs have grace, great weeds do grow apace" (*Richard III*, II.iv.13) recalls Florio's "An yl weede growth apace" (*FF*, sig.31v); the inscription in the gold casket in *The Merchant of Venice* (II.vii.65) echoes Florio's "Al that glistreth is not gold" (*FF*, sig.32r), and Shylock's "Fast bind, fast find / A proverb never stale in thrifty mind" (II.v.53-54) is *SF*, chap. 1, "H. Faste binde, faste finde. T. And he that shuts well, auoydeth ill luck" (p. 15). Westmorland's description of the Scots "playing the mouse in absence of the cat" in *Henry V* (I.ii.172) brings to mind Florio's "When the cat is abroad the mice play" (*FF*, sig.33r). See also Longworth, pp. 141-42. It is worth mentioning that according to Gamberini the "proverbs in the Italian of the dialogues of *Second Frutes* are starred to indicate that they are listed among the proverbs collected in the *Giardino*" (Gamberini, p. 63).

[41] See notes 26 and 40.

[42] See Lawrence, pp. 62-117, 127-35. For a survey of the use of Italian in early modern drama, see A. J. Hoenselaars, "'Under the Dent of English Pen': The Language of Italy in English Renaissance Drama", in *Shakespeare's Italy*, eds Marrapodi *et al.*, pp. 272-91.

language, its 'myths and realities', thoroughly explored in many important studies[43]. Certainly the age is pervaded by 'a circulation of *linguistic* energy', to paraphrase Stephen Greenblatt, in which both Florio and Shakespeare are immersed and which they in turn cherish as outstanding interpreters. Both of them also partake of and foster a cult of *civil conversazione* and elect dialogue, either didactic or dramatic, as a privileged form of expression, an issue which has apparently reinforced the theory of a connection.

Indeed, Florio's didactic dialogues are close to Shakespeare's dramatic ones as far as communicative strategies are concerned: they are speech-based and also speech-purposed texts, the emphasis is on spoken language and oral skills, the speakers respect precise turns in conversation and often deal with themes and topics belonging to the same Renaissance culture of courteous manners. The equation, however, cannot be taken very far. I do not here raise the question of the basic distinction between the literal and the figurative use of words in fictional and non-fictional texts, or the 'hightening' strategies in Shakespeare's dramatic language in order to mark the distance from Florio's stichomythia[44]. No matter how many significant similarities may have been detected in terms of lemmas, proverbs, or paraphrased concepts, things change radically as a result of different textual and linguistic contexts, and different addressees: in other words, if dialogues are statutorily built on the 'intersubjective force of discourse', the language in action typical of dialogic exchanges necessarily varies in terms of communicative strategies depending on different pragmatic contexts and text-types. It is beyond the scope of this article to provide a thorough investigation into the different pragmatic effects in Shakespeare's and Florio's dialogues, but a few suggestions from the tool-kit of conversation analysis and pragmat-

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[43] David Crystal, *"Think on My Words". Exploring Shakespeare's Language*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008; Jonathan Culpeper and Mireille Ravassat, eds, *Stylistics and Shakespeare's Language. Transdisciplinary Approaches*, London, Continuum, 2011.

[44] Ann Thompson, "Heightened Language", in *Reading Shakespeare's Dramatic Language. A Guide*, eds Sylvia Adamson *et al*., The Arden Shakespeare, London, Cengage Learning, 2001, pp. 5-16; p. 8. See also Giovanna Perini, "Dialogo didattico e dialogo drammatico: John Florio e William Shakespeare", *Studi secenteschi*, 33 (1992), pp. 167-82. Perini denies a true stylistic contamination between Shakespeare and Florio, arguing that Florio's aim is exclusively to provide lexically and syntactically simple exchanges and that only casually do Florio's dialogues pursue a dramatic effect.

ics of drama may be put into service and refresh, if not reset, the perspective and try to dispel some generally held as well as patchy beliefs[45].

Early modern English language teaching books in dialogue form have been the subject of recent studies by historical pragmaticians who have wished to assess their linguistic and didactic aspects. They are all key features which make them significantly different from dramatic exchanges: for example, the focus on the needs of the learner, either as a member of the aristocracy or as a refugee, the standardized conversational flow, the absence of overlapping in the exchanges and the lack of interrupted insertion sequences in the two-way exchange[46].

'Informational intensity', which is a necessary feature of dramatic discourse to carry the action forward, in pedagogical dialogues may be associated only with an enrichment of lexical or syntactical forms, more relevant targets in a didactic process.

The teaching perspective as a main communicative goal also needs perspicuousness, and long lists of words are inserted and repeated in textbooks for the enrichment of vocabulary. In a dramatic exchange, however, this would produce a dangerous weakening of the dialogic turn-taking, even in a similar setting. Compare, for example, the 'French lesson' about the parts of the human body in *Henry V* with any excerpt from Florio's dialogues designed to teach and enrich a semantic area: the graphic and phonic play-on-words,

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[45] Some important and pioneering contributions to the analysis of speech-based texts and in particular of Shakespeare's dialogues in a historical-pragmatic and pragmatic approach are Juhani Rudanko, *Pragmatic Approaches to Shakespeare*, Lanham, University Press of America, 1993; Andreas H. Jucker, Gerd Fritz and Franz Lebsanft, eds, *Historical Dialogue Analysis*, Amsterdam-Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1999; Brian Vickers, *Appropriating Shakespeare: Contemporary Critical Quarrels*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2000, pp. 74-91.

[46] See Werner Hüllen, "A Close Reading of William Caxton's *Dialogues*", in *Historical Pragmatics. Pragmatic Developments in the History of English*, ed. Andreas H. Jucker, Amsterdam-Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1995, pp. 99-121; Gabriella Di Martino, *Cento anni di dialoghi. La lingua inglese dal 1573 al 1685*, Napoli, CUEN, 1999; Richard Watts, "'Refugiate in a Strange Countrey'. Learning English through Dialogues in the Sixteenth Century", in *Historical Dialogue Analysis*, eds Jucker, Fritz and Lebsanft, pp. 215-42; Jonathan Culpeper and Merja Kytö, *Early Modern English Dialogues. Spoken Interaction as Writing*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010; Donatella Montini, "Teaching Italian as a Foreign Language: Notes on Linguistic and Pragmatic Strategies in Florio's *Fruits*", *Textus*, 24 (2011), pp. 517-36.

the use of puns and sexual innuendos of the famous Shakespearean scene radically differ from Florio's didactic exchanges where "vocabulary-building works against realism"[47].

The point is that early modern pedagogical dialogues, as examples of 'face-to-face spoken interactions embedded within written text', may provide great functional richness because the functions of the oral interactions add to the interactive functions with readers; however, dramatic dialogues are *pre-texts* to a performance and interact with the complex, multi-layered and multidimensional semiotic model of theatrical communication.

Indeed, what is still more evident is the different role played by what is said and unsaid in the two text-types, to frame the issue in pragmatic terms, by the different presence and use of implicatures, a recurrent and powerful device in Shakespeare's dialogues. In a dialogic exchange, particularly in a conversation, speakers are conventionally engaged in a cooperative effort to communicate with each other effectively and coherently: in dramatic dialogues, what is of greater interest is precisely the breaking of those rules, either for a comic or a tragic effect. In teaching dialogues, conversational implicatures are rarely seen at work, and, paraphrasing Grice's words, "the characters seem to make their conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage it seems, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which they are engaged"[48].

Let us compare Shakespeare's short and simple exchange of salutations in *The Taming of the Shrew*[49] with Florio's "Parlar familiare" in *Firste Fruites*:

Dio vi dia il bon giorno.	God geue you good morrow.
E a voi anchora sign.mio	And to you also, my lord.
Dio vi salui signore. […]	God saue you sir. […]
Bentrovato caro fratello	Wel met deare brother.
	(*FF*, chap. 1, p. 1)

[47] Culpeper and Kytö, p. 469.

[48] H. Paul Grice, "Logic and Conversation", in *Syntax and Semantics*, vol. III *Speech Acts*, eds Peter Cole and Jerry L. Morgan, New York, Academic Press, 1975, pp. 41-58; p. 45.

[49] See p. 120 above.

Venite, voi sarete il ben venuto.	Come, and you shalbe welcome. (*FF*, chap. 4, p. 4)
Ben trouati signori miei. Ben venuto signor B.	Wel met my sirs. Welcome sir B. (*FF*, chap. 13, p. 10)

Here the traits typical of everyday conversation are standardized, conversational turns and adjacency pairs are regularly respected, greetings answered by greetings; the salutations may even be omitted without jeopardizing the subsequent parts of the dialogue, as they are functional to the didactic aim of showing examples of polite greetings. Differently, the dialogue in *The Taming of the Shrew*, short and simple as it is, is to be framed in the scene and offers more than one semiotic enrichment: Petruchio is quarrelling with Grumio and the Italian fragment can be interpreted as a means "to establish the locale shortly following the transition from the Cotswolds of the Induction to the Padua location"[50]. Moreover, Grumio's ensuing confusion between Italian and Latin is functional to the characterization both of the servant and of his relationship with Petruchio and Hortensio.

Eventually, I would like to suggest a pragmatic perspective to investigate the role and function of proverbs, recurrently presented as one of the most effective examples of similarity and intertexuality between Shakespeare's and Florio's dialogues.

In his characteristic style, Florio does not elaborate any theories on the use of proverbs, either cultural or didactic, nor does he seem to share the aims of the Latin or other English collections, their pedagogical strategies or their moral teachings. Rather, he casts proverbs within dialogues, apparently rendering them functional to his didactic and communicative strategy (which will not be confirmed in *Giardino di Ricreazione*, a mere repertory of Italian proverbs). In *Firste Fruites*, he inserts proverbs only in about thirteen chapters out of forty-four, but what is interesting is that his mode of use essentially reflects the two most typical forms of presentation of proverbs of the time, both graphic and dialogic: either a long list in alphabetical order (see chap. 19), or inserts which carry on a small portion of conversation between the two speakers. In *Second Frutes*,

[50] Hoenselaars, p. 280.

he makes a much greater use of proverbs in almost every chapter, and tries to change his conversational strategy, now tending to integrate proverbs into the didactical conversation. However, in these dialogues, proverbs are not part of a narrative strategy, the opening and closing frames are only intended to catch the readers'/listeners' attention, and proverbs maintain their role of inserts. Indeed, when he tries to embed them within dialogues as arguments in a discussion, the conversational exchange loses its flow and reverses into a mere didactic sequence.

In Shakespeare things are different. Proverbs become full titles (*Measure for Measure*, *All's Well That Ends Well*), or compact quotations meant to express ethical admonitions. As an example of copiousness and amplification, they are fragmented or paraphrased, or they are part of comic paroemiological struggles with which the rhetoricians of the time were familiar. In Shakespeare's comic dialogues, a proverb is rarely employed as a mere ornament: instead, it is enclosed in the narrative development of discourse, or used to mark the character's sociolinguistic identity, as it occurs for Holofernes. In any case the syntactical and semantic integration into the dialogues tends to include the proverb and negate its role as quotation. Fragmentation is one of the most interesting devices used in weaving proverbs into the dramatic dialogical interaction, consisting in "the *dis*integration of the proverbial syntagm, its reduction to one or two key words dropped, as it were, into the dialogue and acting by way of allusive pointers, without bracketing off a continuous stretch of discourse as in the full citation"[51]. The force of those proverb splinters, or better, of the parts left out, produce an effect of defamiliarization and a smooth and natural integration into the dramatic discourse. Again, the dramatic exchange seems to differ systematically from any didactic equivalent: Shakespeare can borrow Florio's proverbs but the dramatic setting and discourse radically change the communicative as well as the stylistic target[52].

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[51] Elam, *Shakespeare's Universe of Discourse*, p. 279. Interestingly, Elam notes how "the very propositional completeness and autonomy of the *allegorical maxim* render it hard to digest within the flux of dramatic discourse, where it tends to lie precisely like a precious collector's item brought out for the occasion" (p. 282).

[52] Donatella Montini, "Proverbs in John Florio's *Fruits*: Some Pragmatic Aspects", in *Historical Perspectives on Forms of English Dialogue*, eds Gabriella Mazzon and Luisanna Fodde, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2012, pp. 248-64.

Other issues and theories could be employed to further investigate dialogues, such as a systematic analysis of particular speech acts, or of politeness issues related to address terms: in fact, launching an accurate pragmatic comparison between the two text-types, didactic and dramatic, has never been attempted so far, and it would certainly be worth the effort. This general survey on the topic, however, provisional and limited as it is, seems to highlight a significant divergence between the two genres as far as pragmatic effects are concerned: similar words, similar sentences, also similar exchanges turn into utterances playing different roles and performing different functions. In these terms, Florio's influence on Shakespeare's dramatic language, observed through a new lens, proves to be much less pervasive than suggested, and if the Elizabethan culture may have been conquered by the Florian cultural project to teach knowledge and civility through conversational forms following Italian models, the communicative energy rising from Shakespeare's dramatic and theatrical language seems to derive from other sources.

In other words, we could also imagine Florio and Shakespeare walking together along the streets of London, or dancing with the same *Madonna*, or even engaged in *civil conversazione*, and firmly believe, like Clara Longworth, that "Shakespeare a connu et approché l'Italie, sa langue, sa littérature et sa civilisation, par l'intermédiaire de John Florio. Car […] les deux hommes, le poète et le grammairien, se connaissaient *nécessairement*"[53]. When they went back to their linguistic laboratories, however, Shakespeare and Florio, the playwright and the linguist, were evidently interested in and applied themselves to a different use of the language. *Necessarily*.

[53] Longworth, p. 100, my emphasis.

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The Traces of Shakespeare's Life*

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What are the key surviving traces, unadorned by local colour, of Shakespeare's life? The core set of these traces, of course, consists of the printing of his name as the author of his plays and poems. During his lifetime, eighteen of the plays now attributed to Shakespeare were printed in the small-format editions called Quartos. Many such editions of plays in this period were issued without the name of the author – there was no equivalent to our copyright system, and publishers were under no legal obligation to specify on their titlepages who wrote the texts they printed. By the second decade of the seventeenth century, it had become more or less routine to include the author's name, but it remains difficult at this distance to gauge the level of contemporary interest in particular playwrights: some contemporaries compiled detailed lists of the names of those they regarded as the pre-eminent playwrights in different genres; many others, to judge from surviving texts, seem to have been no more interested in the authors of plays than audiences today are interested in the authors of television shows. Only occasionally were there significant exceptions, and then as now for the same principal motive: profit. By 1597 seven of Shakespeare's plays had been printed, their titlepages providing details of plot and of performance but not the identity of the author. After 1598 Shakespeare's name, spelled in various ways, began to appear on the title page of Quartos, and indeed several plays almost cer-

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tainly not authored by him were printed with his name. His name – Shakespeare, Shake-speare, Shakspeare, Shaxberd, Shakespere, and the like – had evidently begun to sell plays. During his lifetime more published plays were attributed to Shakespeare than to any other contemporary dramatist.

Similarly, Shakespeare's name figured prominently in the editions, published in his lifetime, of his non-dramatic works: *Venus and Adonis* (1593), *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594) and the *Sonnets* (1609). Confirmation of Shakespeare's contemporary reputation as a love poet comes from many early sources, including those students in St John's College, Cambridge, who wrote an amateur play in which one of the characters rhapsodizes, "I'll worship sweet Mr Shakespeare, and to honour him will lay his *Venus and Adonis* under my pillow". Comparable praise was showered during his lifetime on Shakespeare as a dramatist. Francis Meres, who published a survey of the literary scene in 1598, wrote that "As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for Comedy and Tragedy among the Latins, so Shakespeare among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage". Meres followed with a list of plays – such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet* – that seemed to him to prove his point.

But the greatest tribute to Shakespeare's genius – and the single most important trace of Shakespeare's whole life – came seven years after his death, when two of his friends and colleagues, John Heminges and Henry Condell, brought out the collected edition of his plays now known as the First Folio (1623). This edition gave the world the text of eighteen plays – including such masterpieces as *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It*, *Macbeth*, *Measure for Measure* and *The Tempest* – that had not been published before and might well have otherwise disappeared. It included an engraved portrait of Shakespeare that, because the editors knew Shakespeare well, is probably closer to a reasonably accurate image of the author than any other that has been found. And it featured no fewer than four dedicatory poems. The poem by Ben Jonson – celebrating Shakespeare as "Soul of the Age! / The applause!, delight! The wonder of our Stage!" – is particularly noteworthy since Jonson likens his deceased friend and theatrical rival not only to some of the greatest English writers – Chaucer, Spenser and Marlowe – but also to the greatest playwrights of antiquity – Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides.

This tribute is a biographical fact of great significance: a distinguished poet, playwright and classicist, notoriously competitive, defensive and combative, exalts Shakespeare – safely dead, of course – to the highest rank of literary achievement. Jonson clearly expected not to be ridiculed for the extravagance of his praise; he thought rather that it would bear witness to the justness of his judgement. We learn something important then not only about Jonson's taste but also about the esteem in which a large circle of Shakespeare's contemporaries held him a mere seven years after his death.

But literary reputation, though it was enormously important for Shakespeare and his contemporaries, is generally not regarded by modern readers as the heart of the matter. It seems to us somehow a superficial or external piece of biographical information; what we want is the details of a lived life. And it is both revealing and frustrating that the First Folio, for all the obvious care with which it was edited and presented, gives us almost nothing of what we crave. There is a single detail that Heminges and Condell bother to provide: their great friend's "mind and hand went together", they write; "And what he thought, he uttered with the easiness, that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers". If the claim is true, it helps to explain how Shakespeare managed to accomplish so much in a relatively short lifespan. But, as Margreta de Grazia has observed, the same claim was made for other writers in this period and may have had little relation to reality[1]. And indeed recent studies of the various states of Shakespeare's texts suggest that he heavily re-worked at least several of his plays.

Apart from the debatable claim that he possessed a startling authorial 'easiness', Heminges and Condell are virtually silent about Shakespeare's life. The Folio editors do not even arrange the plays in the order of their composition, so that readers could follow the evolution of the playwright's skill and vision. A major scholarly effort, over several centuries, has pored over theatrical records, allusions and internal evidence in order to establish a plausible order. Though there are still disputes over the precise years in which certain plays were first written and performed, a rough chronology of the plays is now generally accepted. Some biographers, particularly in the late

[1] Margreta de Grazia, *Shakespeare Verbatim: The Reproduction of Authenticity and the 1790 Apparatus*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1991, pp. 43-44.

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, attempted to assign this chronology to a presumed psychological evolution that underlay it: from the mingled realism and festive laughter of the histories and comedies, to the despair and bitterness of the tragedies, to the renewed if sober hopefulness of the romances. But quite apart from certain anomalies that disrupt the comfortable flow of the psychological story – *Titus Andronicus*, for example, written uncomfortably close to *The Comedy of Errors*; *Twelfth Night* cheek by jowl with *Hamlet* – the story itself has proved difficult to coordinate coherently with the surviving biographical details of Shakespeare's life.

The Folio editors, in any case, had no interest in providing any assistance to such an attempt. Though they include the author's picture, they do not bother to include his birth and death dates, his marital status, his surviving children, his intellectual and social affiliations, his endearing or annoying quirks of character, let alone anything more psychologically revealing, such as the 'table talk' carefully recorded by followers of Martin Luther. Shakespeare may have been a very private man, but, as he was dead when the edition was produced, it is unlikely to have been his own wishes that dictated the omissions. The editors evidently assumed that the potential buyers of the book – and this was an expensive commercial venture – would not be particularly interested in what we would now regard as essential biographical details.

Such presumed indifference is, in all likelihood, chiefly a reflection of Shakespeare's modest origins. He flew below the radar of ordinary Elizabethan and Jacobean social curiosity. In the wake of the death of the poet Sir Philip Sidney, Fulke Greville wrote a fascinating biography of his friend, but Sidney was a dashing aristocrat, linked by birth and marriage to the great families of the realm, and he died tragically of a wound he received on the battlefield. Writers of a less exalted station did not excite the same interest, unless, like Ben Jonson, they were celebrated for their public persona, or, like another of Shakespeare's contemporaries, Christopher Marlowe, they ran afoul of the authorities[2]. The fact that there are no police reports, privy council orders,

[2] Jonson's opinions on literature and life were recorded both by himself, in *Timber*, and by the Scottish man of letters, William Drummond of Hawthornden. On the interest the authorities took in Marlowe, see Charles Nicholl, *The Reckoning: The Murder of Christopher Marlowe*, London, Jonathan Cape, 2002, and David Riggs, *The World of Christopher Marlowe*, London, Faber & Faber, 2004.

indictments or post-mortem inquests about Shakespeare, as there are about Marlowe, tells us something significant about Shakespeare's life – he possessed a gift for staying out of trouble – but it is not the kind of detail on which biographers thrive.

Centuries of archival labour have unearthed at least some of the basic details. William Shakespeare was baptized in Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon on 26 April 1564. (Since christenings usually took place within five days of a child's birth, his actual date of birth – for which there is no record – is conventionally celebrated on 23 April.) He was the first son of John and Mary Shakespeare; two daughters had already been born to them, but neither had survived infancy. Altogether they would have eight children, four daughters and four sons. William's sister Anne, born when he was seven years old, died in 1579, just before William's fifteenth birthday. Another sister, Joan, married a hatter and survived both her husband and her celebrated brother; she is mentioned in Shakespeare's will. William and Joan were the only ones of the siblings to marry. One of Shakespeare's younger brothers, Richard, left no trace of his occupation; another, Gilbert, is said to have been a Stratford haberdasher; and the third, Edmund, became a professional actor, though evidently not a notable one. Edmund, who died at twenty-eight in 1607, was given an expensive funeral, presumably paid for by his older brother, whose tremendous success in the theatre had by that time made him a wealthy man.

The place into which William was born was a prosperous, pleasant market town, situated on the River Avon, about a hundred miles north-west of London. It was not the fiefdom of a powerful nobleman or of the church; since the mid sixteenth century it had been an independent township, governed by an elected bailiff and a council of burgesses and aldermen. The town was graced with substantial half-timbered houses lining the three main streets running parallel to the river, a fine church with a noteworthy chapel, a bustling annual fair and – perhaps most important for our purposes – an excellent free grammar school. The origins of William's father, John, were in the countryside; his grandfather, Richard, was a tenant farmer in the nearby village of Snitterfield, where he rented a house and land from Robert Arden, a prosperous, land-owning farmer. In the mid sixteenth century John Shakespeare moved to Stratford, where he became a glover and dresser of soft leather. He must have

done reasonably well for himself, for he purchased a house and other property in Stratford and soon after married Mary Arden, the youngest daughter and favourite of his father's landlord. Mary was not one of the wealthy heiresses – Portia, Juliet, Celia, Hero and Olivia – who populate Shakespeare's plays, but, bringing both property of her own and a name of some repute, she was a prize for John Shakespeare. Continuing to prosper – in addition to making fashionable gloves, he seems to have bought and sold real estate, dealt in wool and other agricultural commodities, and lent money at high rates of interest – John steadily rose in the town's administrative hierarchy. He held a series of trusted roles culminating in 1568 – when his son William was four years old – in a year's term as bailiff, the equivalent of mayor. A sign of his ascent was the application he initiated for a coat of arms, which would have signalled his attaining the rank of a gentleman, someone in the upper two per cent of England's population.

But though a coat of arms was drawn up for him, John Shakespeare did not pursue the costly process that would have led to its actual grant. From the late 1560s onwards the course of his life became distinctly less smooth. There were repeated, unexplained failures to attend meetings; legal complaints, lawsuits and fines; the selling of family property to raise cash. When in 1592 the local authorities, attempting to ferret out Catholic sympathizers, drew up a list of those who had not been coming monthly to the Protestant church services, as the law required, John Shakespeare's name was included. Speculation that Shakespeare's father was secretly a Catholic – at a time of intense fear and persecution of Catholics suspected of conspiring to topple the regime – was furthered by the discovery, in the eighteenth century, of a document that purported to be John Shakespeare's "spiritual last will and testament". The original document, conspicuously Catholic in its formulations, has been lost, however, and its authenticity has been challenged. Moreover, in the list of those cited for failing to attend church, John Shakespeare's name was placed in a special category, distinct from religious recusancy: "It was said that these last nine come not to church for fear of process for debt". John Shakespeare never returned to public office in Stratford, though he seems to have weathered his financial difficulties and remained, until his death in September 1601, in the substantial double house in Henley Street

where his celebrated son was born. Shakespeare's mother outlived her husband by seven years.

Part at least of William Shakespeare's childhood and adolescence may well have been shadowed by these family difficulties – how could it not have been? – but there is no firm evidence to prove it. Indeed, after the initial baptismal entry, there is no firm evidence of anything about his upbringing. He presumably learned his ABCs at what Elizabethans called a petty school and then presumably went on to the King's New School, a fine, free grammar school where he would have received a serious education centred on the Latin classics, but the records that might have confirmed his attendance are lost. There is no record, likewise, of what he did in the years immediately after he left school. His name is not listed in the well-maintained records of those who matriculated at Oxford or Cambridge University, and, if he had somehow attended anyway, we would almost certainly know it from the title pages of his plays whose authors routinely and conspicuously trumpeted such distinctions. But whether he was an apprentice to his father in the glove business or a law clerk or an unlicensed schoolteacher or a soldier – all frequently rehearsed speculations – is impossible to determine with any certainty.

The next time that William Shakespeare leaves a documentary trace of himself is in the marriage licence bond recorded on 28 November 1582 to enable him to marry Anne Hathaway of Shottery, a village near Stratford. Shakespeare was eighteen years old; Anne was twenty-six, the daughter of a modestly prosperous sheep farmer and husbandman, recently deceased. The bond, required to facilitate unusual haste in conducting the marriage, may have been linked to the fact that the bride was some three months pregnant. In May she gave birth to a daughter, christened Susanna. Before two years had passed, she gave birth to twins, a boy and a girl, whom the parents named Hamnet and Judith, after their long-term Stratford friends Hamnet and Judith Sadler. These three children, all of whom survived infancy, are the only recorded offspring of William Shakespeare. Hamnet died in 1596, at the age of eleven; Susanna died in her sixty-seventh year, in 1649; and Judith reached what for the time was the ripe old age of seventy-seven, dying in 1662. Her three sons all died before she did, and Shakespeare's only grand-daughter, Elizabeth, died childless in 1670.

What role Shakespeare played in the upbringing of his three children is unknown. After the records of their births in 1583 and 1585 we have no direct evidence of his whereabouts or activities for seven years, a period that has been dubbed by frustrated biographers the 'Lost Years'. Then in 1592 a playwright, pamphleteer and fiction writer notorious for his disorderly life, Robert Greene, published a nasty attack on an "Upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers". "Our feathers": Greene's attack takes the form of a warning to fellow university-educated playwrights who had been writing for the London stage. Lacking their elite educational background, the "Upstart Crow" started off as a mere actor – one of "those Puppets", as Greene puts it, "that spake from our mouths, those Antics garnished in our colours" – but has now set up to be a writer as well. He has the gall to think he is "as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you"; indeed he imagines himself to be "an absolute *Iohannes fac totum*", a Johnny-do-all. Greene does not exactly name the rival he thus characterizes as ambitious, unscrupulous and opportunistic, but he unmistakably identifies him by alluding to a line from one of Shakespeare's earliest plays, *3 Henry VI*, and informing us that its author regards himself as "the onely Shake-scene in a country".

It is reasonably clear then that by 1592 Shakespeare had made his way from Stratford to London, that he had become an actor and that he had established himself sufficiently as a playwright to excite the anger of an envious contemporary. Indeed Greene seems to assume that Shakespeare was well-enough known to be identified merely by a quotation and an allusion. A few months later the printer of Greene's pamphlet, Henry Chettle, published an apology. Once again, no names are directly mentioned, but referring to the person attacked as an upstart crow, Chettle testifies that he personally has "seen his demeanour no less civil than he excellent in the quality [i.e. the occupation] he professes". "Besides", he adds, "diverse of worship" – that is, several important people – "have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious [i.e. witty] grace in writing, which approves his art"[3]. By 1592, then, Shakespeare seems to have had important friends and protectors.

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[3] Chettle, in Edmund K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1930, 2 vols, vol. II, p. 189.

The precise route by which Shakespeare entered the professional theatre – the company he may have first joined as an apprentice, the way he initially received the chance to write for the stage, the precise moment he arrived in London – has remained obscure. Theatre scholars have reconstructed with reasonable confidence his trajectory thereafter, a trajectory that led him to be an actor, playwright and shareholder in the company known first as the Lord Chamberlain's Men and then, after Queen Elizabeth's death in 1603, as the King's Men. These were the two most successful and celebrated companies of the age, and Shakespeare flourished in both reputation and wealth.

He must have worked extraordinarily hard: for the better part of two decades he wrote approximately two plays a year, plays that suggest restless and substantial background reading as well as intense compositional attention. At the same time he was somehow memorizing parts, rehearsing and performing in plays, his own and those of others. He must, at least on some occasions, have also accompanied his company when they travelled from town to town. And he was helping to manage his company's finances and his own, investing his earnings, for the most part, in country real estate in and around Stratford and perhaps lending money from time to time at a favourable rate of return. He was indeed an "absolute *Iohannes fac totum*", and he reaped the rewards. In a profession where almost everyone else eked out a marginal existence, Shakespeare amassed a small fortune.

Combing the archives, scholars have found various documentary traces of Shakespeare's business dealings. He was twice cited for not paying his taxes on his London residence. In his Stratford house he amassed an ample supply of corn and malt, presumably for sale. He sold a load of stone to the Stratford corporation, which used it to repair a bridge. He bought an interest in a lease of "tithes of corn, grain, blade, and hay". A letter from one Stratford burgher to another remarks that "Our countryman Mr. Shakespeare is willing to disburse some money upon some odd yardland or other at Shottery or near about us"[4]. Another letter, drafted but not sent, asked Shakespeare for a loan of £30; he was evidently understood, then, to dabble in money-lending. At least twice Shakespeare went

[4] Letter of Abraham Sturley, in Chambers, vol. II, p. 101.

to court to recover small sums of money that he claimed were owed him. None of these dealings constitutes anything out of the ordinary for a person of means in this period, but, taken together, they represent a lifelong attention to his financial resources.

If we set aside the astonishing genius of what he wrote, this set of activities and accomplishments, though considerable, might not qualify as superhuman, but it would for anyone, however gifted, have required unusual discipline, tenacity and ambition. The seventeenth-century gossip-monger John Aubrey, one of the first writers to interest himself in Shakespeare's life, is not to be trusted. But at least one of the anecdotes he collected and recorded in 1681 rings true: Shakespeare was not, Aubrey was told, "a company keeper". He "wouldn't be debauched", Aubrey's informant reported, and if invited out, he would excuse himself, writing that "he was in pain"[5]. Shakespeare must have husbanded his time extremely well: it is noteworthy that his two great narrative poems seem to have been written during a period in which the theatres were all shut down, by government order, in response to an epidemic of plague.

When this torrent of London-based activity was going on, the playwright did not live with his family: he took rented lodgings near the theatres, living at various times in St Helen's parish, Bishopsgate, in the Clink in Southwark, across the river, and on Silver Street, not far from St Paul's. How frequently Shakespeare saw his wife and children is not known; Aubrey was told that he visited them once a year. He had not, in any case, abandoned them: his wife and children remained in Stratford, living with his parents in the family house on Henley Street and then, from 1597 onwards, in New Place, the second-largest house in the town. Shakespeare's purchase of New Place is striking evidence of his prosperity, prosperity signified as well by the successful application in 1596 for a family coat of arms. His father, as we noted above, had initiated that application decades earlier, at the height of his prosperity, and then abandoned it; its renewal was almost certainly the work of his startlingly successful son. Certainly the irate York Herald, Peter Brooke, thought so: he complained that his colleague had inappropriately assigned a heraldic device to a number of base persons, including "Shakespear ye Player".

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[5] Aubrey, in Chambers, vol. II, p. 252.

After the construction of the Globe theatre in 1599 Shakespeare had another source of regular income: he was in the unusual position of being part-owner of the playhouse in which his company (of which he was also part owner, as well as principal playwright) performed. After 1606 his company also took the lease on the Blackfriars theatre and thereby acquired another significant London venue. There are traces of other, more occasional remunerative activities: in 1604, along with other members of his company, Shakespeare received a cash payment and scarlet livery to attend on the visiting Spanish ambassador, and in 1613 he was paid 44 shillings for devising the *impresa*, or insignia, to be inscribed on a nobleman's tournament shield. In addition he was rumoured to have been given very substantial gifts by the fabulously wealthy earl of Southampton to whom he dedicated *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* and who is often mentioned as one of the prime candidates for the unnamed fair young man of the sonnets.

The sonnets seem to promise a huge biographical payoff. They are written in the first person with exceptional intensity and reveal a passionate relationship, mingling adoration, desire and bitter reproach, with both an aristocratic young man and a dark lady. There is pain when a rival poet threatens to displace the speaker in the young man's affections, and still greater pain when the dark lady seduces the young man. In several of the sonnets the poet seems to refer specifically (and with shame) to his profession in the public theatre:

> Alas, 'tis true, I have gone here and there
> And made myself a motley to the view,
> Gored mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is most dear.
> (*Sonnet 110*, ll. 1-3)

And in addressing the dark lady the poet repeatedly refers to himself by name:

> Make but my name thy love, and love that still,
> And then thou lov'st me for my name is Will.
> (*Sonnet 136*, ll. 13-14)

Apart from these moments of self-identification the sonnets do not identify the characters – despite a mountain of speculation, the

identity of the young man, the dark lady and the rival poet remain in doubt – and readers have long understood that Shakespeare could have invented the whole erotic tangle. Nonetheless, the sonnets are a distinct provocation, a tantalizing invitation to biographical speculation, even as they withhold the detailed information that would give that speculation some solid ground. Many have accepted the invitation and constructed elaborate accounts of Shakespeare's sexual life, as revealed by the sonnets, but Stephen Booth's wry comment in 1977 sums up some of the frustration that haunts all these accounts: "William Shakespeare was almost certainly homosexual, bisexual, or heterosexual. The sonnets provide no evidence on the matter"[6].

Something of the same frustration attends speculation about Shakespeare's religious beliefs or his sceptical doubts. In the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century Richard Davies, a Gloucestershire curate, jotted down that Shakespeare "died a papist" – that is, Davies believed that on his deathbed Shakespeare received the Catholic last rites. Some have conjoined this jotting to the hints that Shakespeare's parents may have harboured faith in Roman Catholicism, and scholars, notably Sir Edmund Chambers and Ernst Honigmann, have ferreted out intriguing links between several schoolmasters in Stratford, during the young Shakespeare's years at the King's New School, and both English recusants at home (that is, those who refused to attend the Protestant Church of England religious services) and English Catholic exiles abroad.

Critics have accordingly scrutinized Shakespeare's plays and poems for signs of clandestine Catholic sympathies. The enterprise is hindered both by the complexity and ambiguity of the religious settlement in Tudor and Stuart England and by the complexity and ambiguity of Shakespeare's works. Comparable hindrances have been encountered by critics who have attempted to find in Shakespeare signs of thoroughgoing disbelief. The surviving biographical records indicate that he was baptized in a Protestant church, married in a Protestant ceremony and buried in a Protestant funeral. If he had systematically refused to attend Church of England services, he would almost certainly have been cited and

[6] William Shakespeare, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. Stephen Booth, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1977, p. 548.

fined – regular church attendance in this period was not voluntary. Since he was not so cited, he presumably met at least the minimal formal requirements for an observing Protestant. What he believed – or did not believe – in his heart remains hidden. Or, rather, here too the works are an invitation to venture forth in a speculative landscape without clear boundary markers or secure destinations.

In 1607-8, having written an astonishing succession of tragic masterpieces, Shakespeare shifted generic ground and collaborated with a freelance playwright, George Wilkins, on an episodic romance, *Pericles, Prince of Tyre.* On internal evidence it seems that Wilkins wrote most of the first two acts and Shakespeare most of the last three. This is not an obvious recipe for success, and little in Wilkins' life suggests that he was a promising candidate for a happy collaboration. (Repeatedly in trouble with the law, Wilkins was arrested in 1611 for "kicking a woman on the belly which was then great with child", and in his later years he seems to have run a brothel.) But *Pericles* was a major popular success, and in Shakespeare's career it seems to have initiated the interest in romance that dominated his last works.

Sometime in his later forties, around 1611, Shakespeare seems to have retired from London and returned to Stratford. The reason for his retirement, at around the time he wrote *The Tempest*, is unclear. He was still busy with affairs: in 1613 he made a very substantial investment in London real estate, purchasing the Blackfriars Gatehouse, near the private playhouse in which his company performed. He busied himself in Stratford life as well, contributing to the bill to repair the highways, entertaining a visiting preacher in his home at New Place and entering into agreements to protect his personal financial interests in a dispute over the enclosure of common lands. He continued to write plays – the lost *Cardenio*, *Henry VIII* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* – but now, it seems, from the distance of Stratford and with the collaboration of a younger colleague, John Fletcher.

Shakespeare's older daughter, Susanna, married the physician John Hall in 1607. The couple lived in Stratford and had a daughter, Elizabeth, the next year. Shakespeare's younger daughter, Judith, married Thomas Quiney of Stratford in February 1616. On that occasion, or shortly after, according to a tale recorded in a Stratford vicar's diary some fifty years later, "Shakespeare, Drayton [that is,

Michael Drayton, the poet], and Ben Jonson had a merry meeting, and it seems drank too hard, for Shakespeare died of a fever there contracted". This tale – like the other stories that belatedly began to circulate about Shakespeare as a deer poacher, or a menial at the door of the theatre or a prompt-boy – must be taken with many grains of salt, but it is at least clear that he became seriously ill at about this time.

In the winter of 1616 Shakespeare summoned his lawyer, Francis Collins, and instructed him to draw up his last will and testament, a document he signed, with a shaky hand, on 25 March 1616. The will leaves virtually everything – the substantial house, the great bulk of its contents and the lands in and around Stratford – to Susanna, who was named executor, along with her husband. A provision was made for Judith, though the will was carefully crafted to keep Judith's husband from having access to the inheritance, and smaller sums were left for his only surviving sibling, Joan, and for several other relations and friends. A modest donation was made to the poor. To his wife of thirty-four years Shakespeare initially left nothing at all. Then, in an addition interlined on the last of the three pages, he added a new provision: "Item, I give unto my wife my second-best bed with the furniture [i.e. bed furnishings]". Scholars have debated the significance of this addition: some have observed that Shakespeare's wife would have had certain legal rights, independent of the specific terms in the will, and have argued that the second-best bed was often the one that the couple used, the best bed being reserved for special guests. Others have found the provision, in the absence of any terms of endearment, a deliberate slight.

Shakespeare was buried in the chancel of Holy Trinity Church in Stratford. Carved on the plain slab covering his grave are four lines:

> GOOD FREND FOR JESUS SAKE FORBEARE,
> TO DIGG THE DUST ENCLOASED HEARE.
> BLESTE BE YE MAN YT SPARES THES STONES,
> AND CURST BE HE YT MOVES MY BONES.

In the north wall of the chancel above the grave a monument carved in black-and-white marble depicts Shakespeare with a quill pen in his right hand, a piece of paper under his left. Above the effigy sits the Shakespeare coat of arms, flanked by cherubs, and at the top, presiding over it all, sits a highly realistic carved skull.

In one of the dedicatory poems to the First Folio, seven years after Shakespeare's death, Leonard Digges remarks that when "Time dissolves thy Stratford monument", here in this book "we alive shall view thee still". The sentiment is conventional, but anyone who has spent much time with the biographical traces of Shakespeare's life will understand Digges' point. The traces are, for the most part, frustratingly inert, and those that are not inert are frustratingly ambiguous. They provide shadowy glimpses of the questions that haunt most lives: Who am I? In what can I put my faith? Whom can I love? What should I do with my time on earth? In his works Shakespeare pursued these questions with a passionate intelligence, intensity and eloquence so remarkable that many readers instinctively desire to approach him more nearly, to penetrate the barrier that time, the negligence of his contemporaries and perhaps his own reserve erected. There is nothing amiss with this desire: it is deeply human, the consequence of Shakespeare's own great gift in seeming to speak so directly across the centuries. But its satisfaction lies in the imagination.

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Shakespeare's Many Lives

Nadia Fusini

Literary biography is an art which can be practised with scrupulous fidelity or anachronistic imagination. And Shakespeare's life has been shaped in both these ways by his many biographers. In his own sublime manner, Henry James in his story "The Birthplace" imagines librarian Morris Gedge who, once installed as the custodian of "the sacred place, the early home of the Supreme Poet, The Mecca of the English-speaking race"[1], realizes how difficult it is for him to exercise his devotional role and at the same time remain faithful to the truth of his love for the Bard. Much to his surprise, reverence and sincerity do not get along. He profoundly reveres the art of the Writer whose shrine he keeps (the name Shakespeare is never pronounced), and precisely for that reason (you shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain), he feels piously obliged to observe the mystery of his cult, but in doing so grows more and more suspicious and begins to doubt the chatter he feels forced to give tourists who visit the home. As he respectfully carries out his mission, he begins to understand that those who come so far to adore Him do not want the truth: they don't want to be told how things really were; they do not want to know the facts ascertained, they want to be helped to dream… Yes, dream… The pilgrims come in order to be helped to dream about Him, they come to be in His presence, to feel the spell, the mystic presence of the Writer, who is behind the Art they admire. The devout Gedge tries at first to be true to his love of truth, and divulges the scarce facts of which he is certain, which do not amount

[1] Henry James, "The Birthplace" [1903], in *Complete Stories, 1898-1910*, New York, The Library of America, 1996, pp. 441-95; p. 443.

to much; then he succumbs… He understands his position requires of him to come to terms with the needs of fiction, he *must* lie; and in the end he capitulates to the Show. He cannot profess an apophatic faith in front of the desperate need of the visitors to be told facts and anecdotes, however imaginary, about the sacred Body, the Corpus of the supreme Artist. He feels he *must* produce the Corpus of the Author for them to adore, he *must* feed their appetite for the real thing. They want not only to be administered the *host*, they want the real *body*; they want to see the exact place where He was born – because He *was* born, He was a man in the flesh – yes, He was a genius but also a common man. His life was of course exceptional, but after all not so very different from theirs.

So he takes them to the Holy of Holies of the Birthplace, the Sublime Chamber of Birth – empty as a shell, of course, which he fills up with stories he invents in order for them to feel the mystic presence, and they feel it! He feeds the gluttony of the public for false facts, for a fictional life which helps them to love his works. So the end, which is good, justifies the means, which is false, somehow.

After all, a little bit of fantasy helps and if that is what they want, he will give it to them. Do they want to know how as a child He played around the house? Do they want to 'humanize' the Artist, so that their relationship to Him becomes easier? Why not? He complies with their human, all too human desires, and of course, they love it, the number of tourists grows and he, the willing custodian, gets a raise.

In this way, though, Gedge's employment changes into an ordeal and not only does he find himself entrapped in the net of "the immense assumption of veracities and sanctities, of the general soundness of the legend"[2]; he finds himself split in two – between the priest of the idol and the poor unsuccessful honest man he had always been. He grows more and more estranged from Him, Whom he knows can only be adored in the poverty of true faith, in the absence of paraphernalia.

Masterfully, Henry James touches here on a crucial point of the question we Shakespeareans must face *vis-à-vis* our author and his work. Why do we, who have his works of art, want to know more about his life? More of the life of the artist, whose art we celebrate? Is the work of art not enough? Do we believe that if we know more of

[2] James, p. 459.

his life, we may get more of the sense of his art? Do we want to know more about the work of art, or more about the author? Are we admirers or envious? Do we delight in his being like us? Or do we hate his being different from us?

Is the passion fuelling the many biographies and the many films[3] dealing with the *life of Shakespeare* admiration or envy? I am not sure. It is certainly the case that of *Shakespeare's lives* there are so many now, and they are of two kinds: there are those where he is celebrated, those where he is denigrated, those in which he is attacked, others where his wife Anne is maligned…[4] Through the years we have had scholars saying that Shakespeare was a pen-name, a pseudonym, a fraud, an impostor. Shakespeare was not Shakespeare, Shakespeare was an 'other'.

A brilliant but troubled, self-appointed researcher – the American Delia Bacon – came all the way from the States to England to persuade us gullible Shakespeareans that the very idea that "a stupid illiterate third-rate play-actor" could have written works of such "superhuman genius" was pure madness[5]. In order to write what Shakespeare in fact wrote, according to her, he needed a set of qualities – good breeding, foreign travel, the best education, knowledge of court-etiquette, which she found – what a coincidence! – in Francis Bacon. She ended her life in an insane asylum.

Another determined to show that Shakespeare was the earl of Oxford and – what a coincidence! – the man was called Looney. *Nomen omen*, one might well say. The fact is that the allure of the absurd has beguiled the imagination ever since the world began, so much so that there are those who pretend to respect reality but in fact find it too anonymous, and tend to yield to an occult fanaticism, and to indulge in a taste for fanciful, fantastic reconstructions.

On the contrary, we should recognize that there are many and compelling reasons to maintain that we are absolutely right in believing that the man from Stratford did indeed 'write Shakespeare';

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[3] For this and the following see "Shakespeare: Playwright or *Sprachschöpfer*?", in *Memoria di Shakespeare*, 8 *On Authorship*, eds Rosy Colombo and Daniela Guardamagna (2012), pp. 95-118.

[4] On this see the very interesting essay by Maurice J. O'Sullivan, "Shakespeare's Other Lives", in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 38 (1987), pp. 133-55.

[5] Bacon's essay is reprinted in Peter Rawlings, *Americans on Shakespeare, 1776-1914*, Aldershot, Asghgate, 1999, pp. 169-99 (quotations on p. 199 and p. 173).

and if there is something deplorable, it is indeed the appearance yet again, in the post-millennium, of biographies in which speculations about Shakespeare's inner life are made on the basis of his literary works by clever scholars who for the 'common' reasons of becoming 'popular' or 'making money' are ready to feed the appetite for conspiracy theories, which never seems to end; or are prone to connive with the desire of familiarity with the 'genius'.

In fact, those who reject or contest Shakespeare's authorship are far stranger than the provincial guy who came to London from Stratford in his twenties, grew wealthy and went back home in his late forties to buy himself a house and die. We have contemporary witnesses who testify to it. We have tracks left by printing houses and theatrical practice. We have a thousand details that show, apart from anything else, how unnecessary the whole farrago has been and is. We know for sure that Shakespeare was Shakespeare, both a simple and a mysterious man; a man of the theatre, who read, observed, listened and remembered. He was like himself, exactly like anybody else. We know of Shakespeare, we know of his age, we know of his readings, of him as an actor, of him as a playwright, of the historical and social background. The compact documentary life written by Samuel Schoenbaum, a masterpiece of the genre, covering four hundred years of Shakespearean scholarship, is there to be consulted[6]. But it is not enough, it does not exhaust the appetite for gossip… The Show must go on… as the patient Gedge would say.

In the nineteenth century a general disbelief seemed to prevail amongst readers and scholars, who dared to challenge the sacrosanct authenticity of Homer and the Gospels and Shakespeare himself – disbelief which, *à propos* of Shakespeare, conveyed to a wide audience the false idea that the scant facts of Shakespeare's life, largely derived from surviving financial records and legal proceedings, were too poor to demonstrate for sure that Shakespeare was Shakespeare, without making clear that it would have been more strange to see much else survive from the sixteenth century.

Things have changed, but in another sense the disbelief still persists: where could an ordinary man find the extraordinary capacity which enabled Shakespeare to write – in the mere three years from

[6] Samuel Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Compact Documentary Life*, revised edition with a new postscript, New York-Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987.

1595 to 1597 – *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard II*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice*? And in the five years from 1600 to 1604 *Hamlet*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Othello*, *Measure for Measure*? And then the year after: *King Lear* and *Macbeth*? He would finish one play, start another and these were – I repeat – *King Lear* and *Macbeth*. He had not been to university, he was not an intellectual, so how did he manage to pull it off? Clearly, it could not be him, it had to be someone else… an exceptional man, a miracle. A wonder-man. A superman.

The situation – albeit in a completely different context – had already been imagined by Shakespeare himself in the last act of his *Antony and Cleopatra*, when the Egyptian queen asks the astonished Dolabella: "Think you there was or might be such a man / As this I dreamt of?" That is, a man who even remotely resembles the one she has just described, as though in a dream. Yes, because now that Antony is no longer alive, it seems to Cleopatra that she has dreamed him up, and she would give anything – life, more than life! – to see such a man once more.

A man who was a world, who bestrode the world and dominated it; a magnificent and munificent man. "Do you think, Dolabella, that a man like this ever did or could exist?", Cleopatra insists, and Dolabella, almost in a whisper, almost ashamed, replies, "Gentle madam, no". He has never known such a man. Did or could a man like him exist? The force of Antony's personality is immense. Literally unbelievable.

This more or less is what happens with Shakespeare. At a certain point, people stopped believing that Shakespeare had existed. In the beginning there were people who had met him, and knew that Shakespeare was Shakespeare – people who had no doubts, like for example Heminges and Condell, two actor friends of his, who after his death took the trouble to collect his works into one volume. Nor did Ben Jonson – for whom Shakespeare was an admired colleague – have any doubts. In his view, Shakespeare was a good actor and writer – and a handsome man. Heminges and Condell and Ben Jonson knew where he lived – in temporary, rented accommodation.

Then there came those who had met people who had known him personally, like John Aubrey. He also did not doubt his existence. In his *Brief Lives* he reports that Shakespeare composed his works by taking his cue from real life. He had heard from someone who had known him that the character of the constable in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was someone he had chanced to meet at Grendon, on

the way from London to Stratford. That was Shakespeare's way; he drew out his characters from everyday life.

As the years passed by and the time of his actual historical existence receded into the past, the legend took over. In 1790, when Edmond Malone started to work on a new edition of Shakespeare's plays, wanting to order them chronologically, he thought that he could reconstruct the chronology on the basis of personal, biographical cross-references, which he sought out in the plays; as if a writer could write only about things he knew *because* he had experienced them. This is the original sin, which in the years to come was to clear the way towards a subjective, almost lyrical, confessional reading of Shakespeare's works. As though dramatic works might be subject to such a mood or tone…

This is the great error that in the early 1900s blinded Freud himself: in his view Shakespeare could only have written *Hamlet* after the death of his father and only because he had experienced the grief of losing his son Hamnet, a grief which would come back to the surface in the tragedy of the Danish prince. It is this kind of interpretation that justifies those who reason as follows: how could Shakespeare have known everything about the art of falconry, since he wasn't a nobleman? How could he have known everything about a ship if he had never sailed on one?

The fact is, as I said earlier, in the mid 1800s a strong general agnosticism prevailed, which was not limited to Shakespeare. In the previous century, some libertine authors had gone so far as to cast doubts even on the Gospels. Was it really believable that the authors of the Gospels were simple, ignorant, illiterate fishermen? Voltaire, for his part, had pointed out that the New Testament was full of contradictions and deceptions. And even the historical existence of Jesus: what proof was there of that? What if everything was a myth? The question was being asked with ever greater insistence.

The same question was asked ironically by the refined and learned writer Samuel Butler in translating the *Odyssey*: is it possible that the person who wrote the *Iliad also* wrote the *Odyssey*? Impossible, asserts Butler. Clearly the *Odyssey* was written by a woman, who knows how washing is spread out in the sun, how sheets are folded and how fabric is spun with a spindle. And indeed, Butler writes, the author was an authoress, a Sicilian princess from Trapani; while it was most certainly a man – who knows all about war – who wrote the *Iliad*.

To return to Shakespeare, at a certain point people no longer wished to believe in the testimony of those who had met him, the contemporaries who were witnesses to his existence. As I said, it was argued that the information we had was too little, though in actual fact, given the times in which he lived – not particularly meticulous when it came to conserving documents – it is already a miracle that any documentary proof of his existence survives.

So they started daydreaming about Shakespeare, which of course we may let people do, on the clear understanding, though, that if we really have to answer the question 'who was Shakespeare?' the only valid answer for a true reader and a loyal critic must be that Shakespeare is the name we give to a most magnificent *corpus* of works which go under that name. One needs the work, what else? Nothing else in fact can help us to get closer to a writer. As a critic I myself do not want anything else. As a critic I don't think we can make useful statements about Shakespeare in general. As a critic, I know that the writing 'I' is a transformation of the living 'I', but it's the writing 'I' that counts. Virginia Woolf explains the mystery very well[7]: the life of a writer is not a series of exploits, it is not a tale of battle and victory, it is more an inner life of emotions and thoughts which a writer expresses in what he/she writes… So we come back to the work. There is nothing else but the work… Yes, it may be that Shakespeare had a stormy life, from his writing we can tell "there is scarcely anything nasty and sordid which he hasn't lived through, not a passion which he hasn't known; hatred and love, revenge and lust, murder and fire – all these he seems to have experienced, as a poet"[8]. But precisely as a real poet should, ought to, he sacrifices his person to his poetry, so much so that all he has lived through is in his work. Or it doesn't count. I firmly believe in T. S. Eliot's *dictum* that the progress of the artist is a continual self-sacrifice, "a continual extinction of personality"[9].

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[7] See Virginia Woolf's two essays on "The New Biography" [1927], in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, vol. IV, ed. Andrew McNeillie, London, The Hogarth Press, 1994, pp. 473-80, and on "The Art of Biography" [1939], in *The Crowded Dance of Modern Life: Selected Essays*, ed. Rachel Bowlby, London, Penguin, 1993, pp. 144-51.

[8] That's Strindberg on Shakespeare, in his essay entitled "The Self-Sacrifice of the Writer", quoted by Inga-Stina Ewbank in her "The Tempest and After", *Shakespeare Survey*, 43 (1991), pp. 109-20.

[9] T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" [1919], in *Selected Essays*, London, Faber & Faber, 1932; new edition New York, Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1950, p. 7.

Very much in the same vein as Morris Gedge, I as a reader feel that there is nowhere else to go "to catch the author"; "practically […] there is no author […] for us to deal with", except "in the work"[10] – as Gedge concludes, anticipating Foucault and Barthes.

I am a reader of Shakespeare whom Shakespeare has turned into a writer about Shakespeare precisely because of the fantastically rich way in which Shakespeare exploits the verbal resources of his language and culture. Precisely because I want Shakespeare to be 'simply' what he has written, I recognize Shakespeare as a function, the author-function. And when I read Shakespeare and when I write about his plays, I turn my back on the quagmire of biographical speculations which sound to me so boring. I prefer to attune my ears to other sounds.

Of course I recognize the powerful attraction which emanates from the miracle of his extraordinary output, and perfectly understand that one may want to consider how the forces of his personality and those of his society shape the ambiguities of the poetry. Still, in order to truly love him, I feel I have to abjure any reference to things outside the house of language. I want to predicate everything on words, I want to know Shakespeare from his words. Of course I know the greatest poetry is the most baffling; like Touchstone I am ready to profess that "the truest poetry is the most feigning"; I know of the depth of Jacobean negation inhabited alike by Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Of course I believe in the existence of Shakespeare, of course I recognize the fact that Shakespeare was as an entity prior or exterior to those texts which go under his name: yes, not only an author, Shakespeare was an actor, and a man – there is hard evidence, proof of it. Shakespeare certainly had an investment in what we could define as an ideological dimension, he had beliefs, feelings, he suffered, he believed and disbelieved and of course I understand that we want to 'humanize' Shakespeare and our relation to him, and in order to do that we 'demythologize' Shakespeare. Nor do I want to reject familiarity in the name of an aesthetic sublime. Of course Shakespeare is in his plays, his life has spilled over into the lives of others; it is there, in the other lives, in the others' lives he creates, in the characters who live in his dramas, that he deposits his own.

[10] James, p. 472.

I do not want to deny, nor denounce the tendency to try and discover the 'man' behind Shakespeare's works. On the contrary, I understand it, it is part of our human, all too human nature, to want to pry into the affairs of others, to look too closely and curiously and impertinently into the lives of others – perhaps because we are dissatisfied with our own.

I only observe that all this is very problematic. First of all, what does the word 'life' mean? In Shakespeare's case, his existence between birth and death? What he did, what he thought, what happened to him in that arc of time? Of course, the interest is immense, but how to satisfy it?

We go back to the question: is there a proper writing of lives? Life-writing is certainly an art; in its essence a kind of conservative art, in that it intends to celebrate a life of the past. It is also a mania very peculiar to the British; more than other peoples, the British seem to believe in the individual life, without necessarily wanting to turn it into a cult of personality, although there is an inevitable tendency, it seems, to transform the protagonist of the life into a hero. Things get more difficult if one wants to write a non-fictional biography, a 'true' biography, if the biographer wants to rely only on real facts and events. Again Virginia Woolf, herself a writer of biographies, explains how impossible it is to write a biography without imagining… If the man Shakespeare himself is the supreme object of our curiosity, if we do want to get at the essence of his temperament, if we believe that the aim of biography is the truthful transmission of personality, then we need fiction. We need some little phrase or anecdote picked up in passing, we need to imagine the tone of his voice, how he turned his head, how he laughed… After all, biography is itself a model for our thinking about the nature of imaginative writing. Still, the distinction between the two genres remains absolutely central: they differ in the very stuff of which they are made. At the same time writing a biography is writing.

We might think that we get to know Shakespeare the man in conflating what Shakespeare's characters say and do and what their creator said and did. This foraging for autobiography may be popular, but it does violence to Shakespeare. It diminishes the very thing that makes him so exceptional, his imagination. As Keats and Eliot and Joyce understand perfectly – they know it! – Shakespeare is Shakespeare precisely because he has recoiled from the work. Shakespeare

writes in order not to express himself, but so that the lives of others may appear in all their variety, so that the work of art may appear in its freedom. The work of art is not the mirror of the author. In Shakespeare's case the very concepts of 'authority' and 'authorship', 'identity' and 'ownership' undergo a special metamorphosis, due to his absolute originality, but also to his medium and to his epoch.

Shakespeare is not the great artist working in splendid isolation. Yes, there is a moment in which he is alone before the page and no doubt that moment of mystery remains, but it is also true that that moment, the moment of writing in solitude, is immediately dispersed within the social sphere. So much so that I would prefer to say that it is the entire age, his audience – whose real presence is inscribed into the play and conditions it – that writes Shakespeare's plays.

While a paradox, the idea is important for it serves to elucidate something that has to do with the essence of the dramatic medium Shakespeare uses. Shakespeare has not left us any abstract theories about his art. His is a practice without theory – or better, he theorizes as he practices. That's the point. Shakespeare is both Bottom and Peter Quince in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and through them he passes on pearls of incomparable dramaturgical wisdom. In the mode of parody, it should be noted. Shakespeare is Polonius and Hamlet, and through them he tells us how things went in the contemporary theatre. The Danish prince even inscribes us into the play in the role of active spectators, and *Dramaturgen* at the same time.

In the dramatic spectacle the audience is part of the play, in the sense that the audience too is a playwright. The audience in the theatre is more active than in other media, and the playwright is reactive to the highest degree, ready to exploit the emotion, the commotion that unites the stage and arena. In this sense the name Shakespeare denotes a function and not an individual. After all, if the notion of 'author' is constructed from the text, it cannot be other than a form. Existence itself is of course form, that's where ethics and aesthetics embrace one another.

In the construction of the Shakespearean text various figures and functions come into play: the copyist, the editor, the spectator. The last figure is the reader as interpreter who cannot but be aware of both the physical and metaphysical fact of the present-day *corpus* composed thanks to an operation of philological engineering. The image of the *corps morcelé*, taken up by Lacan, serves to indicate this. Lacan refers it to a stage of human growth, a stage in the process of

identification, which is also a movement towards form. In any case the total form of the body is perceived due to a mirage, an image in the mirror which the infant child captures and assumes as his own thanks to the triangulation with the gaze of the mother. One point in this process interests us: the passage from a fragmented image of the body to an orthopaedic formation of its whole – a montage, in essence. This is what happened – as we have seen – to the Shakespearean text, which we must in a certain sense imagine in the beginning as a body without organs which through successive orthopaedic operations acquires the form we know.

This state of things renders complex both the hermeneutic act and the identification of the category founding the act itself, the category of 'author'. What does the word 'author' mean in these given conditions? Is the author the owner, the possessor? Texts, as Foucault points out in his 1969 essay titled "Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?"[11], began to have authors at the moment in which the author could be punished, that is to say to the extent to which what the author said or wrote was shown to be an act, a gesture filled with danger. If this were the measure of authorship, one would have to note that in the case in question the theatrical text belonged not to Shakespeare but to the company, and that as far as censorship was concerned, had the text been penalised, the corporal or financial punishment would have been meted out to the entire company, to the theatre itself.

As Foucault points out, it is in the 1800s that, along with the question of ownership of a work, a personal idea is established of the author not as a function, but as an individual whose concealed face we wish to unveil, as if the work could and must coincide with the concrete and psychological individuality of the author. This is what we saw happen to Shakespeare in the nineteenth century too, when the train of doubts with regard to his historical person began.

The truth is that the figure or function of the author is a variable that changes over time and in history, so that our way of treating the relationship between the author and his work changes. Before the nineteenth century, the name of the author was fundamental, yes, but for scientific texts, as a guarantee of truth, while literary texts circulated for the most part anonymously. Afterwards, things changed – they were turned upside down in some ways.

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[11] In *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie*, 63:3 (1969), pp. 73-104.

In the twentieth century, the issue of the relationship of the author to his work went to extremes, to the point of the absurd and paradoxical demonstration that the work does not belong to the person who wrote it, for in any case the meaning is not based on the intentionality of the author, but lives in the virtually infinite proliferation of readings that can be given of a text. With succinct simplicity in his 1968 essay Barthes announced *la mort de l'auteur*[12]: the author is dead, the reader is free to conduct the processes of signification of the text as he pleases, without regard for the signifiers.

The whole of twentieth-century literary theory led to this conclusion, problematizing the relationship between the speaking and writing subject, taken in relation to language in an insoluble suspension, a language that by definition goes infinitely beyond the speaking and writing subject in opening a word space that is neither of the author, nor of man, nor of God…

Is not literature, is not the theatre a language anterior to the writing subject? Does not the work in itself involve the sacrifice of the particular characters of the subject to the advantage of the neutral and anonymous ones of language – and in particular of theatrical, dramatic language?

Almost as if literature exculpates the writer, taking every responsibility away from him, identifying the writer as a passive site where a superior language is encountered, certain radical positions have come to the point of cancelling the linguistic act that ties the author to his work and which is at the origin of the author, defined as the juridical referent of the pronounced or written word. It is not by chance that Foucault's essay opens by echoing on the one hand the question of "who is speaking" – fundamental for philosophy – and on the other Beckett's answer, "What does it matter who is speaking?"

It is thus that the question of the author, a question that concerns man himself both as subject and author, falls by the wayside. Language, which nevertheless continues to be one of the privileged sites where knowledge is manifested, manifests itself as the very complex woven plot where the subject is emptied, or better where it encounters its own emptiness. If the author as individual disappears, there still remains the classifying function of the term 'author', perhaps: a category which would represent the relationships of homogeneity

[12] *Manteia*, 5 (1968), pp 12-17.

and filiation, authentication and reciprocal explanation among the various texts – precisely the activity which we saw proceed industriously in the case of Shakespeare, a practice essentially aiming to delineate the figure of the author from without, as an empty profile on which to hang processes which are at bottom commercial. Nothing more.

Removing its characteristics of interiority and intentionality, and its ownership, propriety-bound uses and valences, I propose here to dissipate the author-function and resolve it in the name, precisely in the proper name, thanks to which the word in language triumphs over the anonymous murmur, the uninterrupted buzz. The name of the artist, of the creator is a proper name. It is the name of neither the father nor the master. It is the name of the work, which names the creator. Here therefore is who/what Shakespeare is – a name, an anonymous name.

That the author dies in his work is the thesis of Maurice Blanchot – master of Foucault and Barthes in this and other ideas; a theory and thought which, unlike others, the writer Maurice Blanchot put into practice in his own life, where he followed the rule of appearing as little as possible in order to preclude the presence of an author demanding his own existence. His life was entirely devoted to literature and the silence that is proper to it.

Blanchot's thought was shared by John Keats who regarded Shakespeare as a "self-less poet" to the highest degree. As "the most impersonal" of authors. Shakespeare was sovereign among the poets because he possessed "negative capability", a capacity to efface the self through sympathetic identifications with others. In his work the author's personality is silent, while his creatures are given body and voice. Shakespeare doesn't exist, but Othello and Hamlet do. Shakespeare has the ideal poetical character, Shakespeare is a chameleon, taking as much delight in Iago as in Imogen.

In other words, Shakespeare is the name of a power of creation, thanks to which, as another great writer, Virginia Woolf, understood, writing brings us *hors de la littérature*. Shakespeare is everyone and no-one, suggests Borges, who loved playing with the ambiguity of identity. Shakespeare is not an author, Shakespeare is a creator of language, affirms Wittgenstein: a "*Sprachschöpfer*". For *playwright* that he is – that is in the mode of dramatic play, with a light touch and a personal stroke – he works and produces things, spectacles,

which might be defined as "new natural forms of language"[13]. Exactly so.

But above all Shakespeare is to me supremely and only a name. A proper name. A name that denominates a *corpus* of works. He is there, in his plays, his life is the lives of others – not only the others he invents, but the others who read him and discover life through him.

To me Shakespeare is elusive, invisible, inaccessible, and I want him to be and stay that way. I don't want to know if he loved his wife, if he betrayed her. I know there is no way I can recuperate his feelings, or his views about life: the dramatic mode he chose to work with prevents him from speaking in his own voice.

I admire and envy the sublime self-effacement celebrated by Keats. I rejoice, as Henry James put it in "The Birthplace", in the way he "covered His tracks as no other human being has ever done"[14].

[13] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, ed. Georg Henrik von Wright, in collaboration with Heikki Nymann, Oxford, Blackwell, 1994, p. 84.

[14] James, p. 463.

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Shakespeare's Lack of Care for His Plays

Andrew Gurr

If Shakespeare really wanted his plays to be read, why did he allow the company to issue their version of *Henry V* rather than his own original manuscript? His original manuscript, which seems to have been used to print the well-known Folio text, was twice the staged version's length, and had many features that had disappeared when the company prepared and printed it in the 1600 Quarto[1]. He must have known the superior value of his version compared with the much shorter Quarto text, which cut out all the choruses and the much-celebrated "Once more unto the breach, dear friends" speech. All subsequent generations of readers and stage audiences have thought the same. In spite of such evidence for his casual attitude to the acted texts, and the absence of any evidence for him taking a hand in the publication of the early Quartos, it has been claimed pressingly in recent years that Shakespeare must have wanted his plays to be read. Such a claim needs to be interrogated.

Tiffany Stern has asserted with some cogency that most early modern playbooks existed as one item in a lengthy process of production, subject to many different hands and inputs. What we have comes from a patchwork of papers, of which the press printed only one, and that was not necessarily the final, finished product. She declares:

> every bit of a play as it was gathered together for a production was a paratext, in that every bit of a play was 'auxiliary' to every other bit: it

[1] Detailed information about the Quarto text of *Henry V* appears in Andrew Gurr's edition, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000. The view that it was prepared by members of the acting company for the press appears on p. 22.

> was performance that made a text from those paratexts, with printed plays always falling a little short because always an incomplete reflection of that[2].

So why was it that Shakespeare's company chose to print the paratextual versions they themselves had put together, without him intervening? Thanks to the Folio compilation of so many of the original playbooks, including *Henry V*, we currently believe that many of the Folio texts were printed from his original manuscripts. Not Shakespeare but his fellow-players chose to issue all the Quartos from 1597 onwards. Half of what appeared in the Folio of 1623 were taken from these Quartos, the other half mostly from the initial manuscripts before they were drawn into Stern's complex gathering process. Most of the early Quartos appeared three or more years after their first success on stage, the 1600 Quarto of *Henry V* being the only one issued within a year of its original composition. Nothing says that Shakespeare took part in getting any of them printed, certainly not the last of the King Henry plays. That printed text does seem to have been designed for reading, but the manuscript from which Thomas Creede printed it was put together by members of the company, not its author. There is no evidence for his hand in any of the changes made to that text.

The idea that Shakespeare really did want his plays put into print for readers has been used to explain why some texts, such as Q2 *Hamlet*, *Richard III* and a few of the other histories, are so much longer in print than the norm of performance time for a play would have permitted. We know that originally plays on stage were expected to last little more than two hours, which is all that the 1740 lines of the *Henry V* Quarto would take. So the exceptional length of plays like the Folio version of *Henry V* does raise the question what Shakespeare might personally have wanted. Did he indulge himself by writing full versions for himself, then leaving it to his company to reduce them to an actable length? If so, why did he not insist on the longer versions coming into print for general access? Not even the different versions of *Hamlet* that came into print between 1603 and 1605 show any sign of Shakespeare intervening to see the longest version published.

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[2] Tiffany Stern, *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 256.

Lukas Erne and many others have made the claim that the playwright saw himself as a "literary dramatist"[3]. The provenance of whatever manuscripts lie behind a few of the other early Quartos, like the first texts of *Merry Wives* (1602) and *Hamlet* (1603), might have come from other sources than the company itself, as Q *Henry V* did, but there can be no doubt that it was not Shakespeare but the company who chose to print the plays. It was their name on the titlepages. Shakespeare's own did not start to appear till 1598 and after. All the plays appearing in the 1623 Folio seem to have been in the company's possession. So the real enigma standing upright behind this evidence for authorial casualness is how we choose to read the evidence for what happened in May 1594. Why, until he joined the new Lord Chamberlain's Men, did Shakespeare choose to keep the ownership of his manuscript playbooks to himself? Was it he who kept them to himself until he handed them over to the Lord Chamberlain's Men, or was it Edmund Tilney, Master of the Revels, who had the authority to gather them all up from their first owners, in order to hand them over to the new company? How and why did the ten or more Shakespeare plays known to have predated 1594 come into the new company's hands? The thirty-six plays finally issued in the First Folio of 1623 include all of those we think preceded its existence. So what was it that made him change his policy, and hand all of his playbooks over to the Chamberlain's?

His plays had various performers before 1594. *Titus Andronicus* was recorded in the Stationers' Register on 6 February in that year. Its titlepage vaunted three different companies as performing it. That was followed on 12 March by the shortened, actor's version of *2 Henry VI*, listed on the titlepage as *The Firste Parte of the Contention betwixt the two famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster*. No company or author was listed, but its successor, the shorter version of *3 Henry VI*, was issued a year later as *The True Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke, and the death of good King Henrie the sixt, with the whole contention betweene the two Houses Lancaster and Yorke*. This time its titlepage declared "as it was sundrie times acted by the Right Honourable the Earle of Pembrooke his servants". That was presumably the company said

[3] The chief assertion of this view first appeared in Lukas Erne's *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003. It has been widely upheld since then.

to have broken up in August 1593. The repetition of "Contention" on its titlepage indicates that it was meant to be recognized as the sequel to the previous year's history play. Rather confusingly, its title echoed another play, the Queen's Men's *True Tragedie of Richard the third*, sold by William Barley. The bookseller for both versions of the Shakespeare plays was Thomas Millington, who had also sold *Titus*. Pembroke's company had previously been named on the titlepage of *Edward II*, entered by William Jones in the Stationers' Register on 6 July 1594, when Marlowe was named as its author. The other early play, containing the name of at least one Pembroke's player, was the version of *The Taming of the Shrew* usually now known as *A Shrew*, entered in the Stationers' Register on 2 May 1594.

The next Shakespeare play to be registered and published did not appear until 20 October 1597. *Richard III* boasted on its titlepage that it was performed by the Lord Chamberlain's Men, but again supplied no author. Perhaps also originally a Strange's play, to judge from the way it elevates the key role of Derby from the Strange family, in engineering the transition of the crown from Richard to Richmond. This was the first of a brief flow of Shakespeare's most popular early plays, including *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard II*, both *Henry IV* plays and the Quarto texts of *Henry V*, *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Merchant of Venice*. They all appeared under the Lord Chamberlain's Men's aegis, with its name on all their titlepages[4].

Because it was usual in these early years to give only the performing company and not the author's name, it is not absolutely obvious who did own and sell these playbooks to the printers. Most of the plays printed up to at least 1597 appear to have been texts that emanated from the companies rather than their authors, though even that is not often entirely clear. The fact that the initial name on the titlepages cited the company rather than the author, and that all the extant Shakespeare playbooks remained in the company's hands until 1623, does make it appear that from 1594 onwards Shakespeare, having ceded their ownership to the company, chose not to retain them as his own property. Even when his name did begin to appear on their titlepages, the hyphen it acquired seems to have been a joke

[4] A fairly detailed account of the history of the published Quartos is in chapter 1 of David Scott Kastan's *Shakespeare and the Book*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001.

set as part of the title by the company, rather than the author's own. 'Spear-shaker' was a common joke as the name for a player[5]. From this it seems clear that, as with the *Henry V* Quarto, the author chose to take no direct part in his company's decision to publish.

These early texts also suggest that Shakespeare's own allegiance to the companies he wrote for was variable. Some hints about who some of the original players were exist in several of these early play-texts. The diminutive John Sinckler, for instance, who was later a Chamberlain's man, was named in both *A Shrew* and the full version of *3 Henry VI*. John Holland, also later to be a Chamberlain's man, appears by his name in *2 Henry VI*, along with another player called "Bevis" (the shorter version has a reference to the legendary Bevis of Hampton as "Bevis of South-hampton"). He and Holland appear together in the manuscript 'plot' of *2 The Seven Deadly Sins*. He was also linked with a "humfrey", who was probably Humphrey Jeffes, later of the second Pembroke's at the Swan. The longer version of *3 Henry VI* also names a "Gabriel" who was probably the Gabriel Spencer of the later Pembroke's, killed by Ben Jonson in September 1598. The repetition of some of these names in more than one play suggests that the one company which printed these plays, Pembroke's, included all these players in the years up to May 1594. All this exists in spite of the quite good evidence to show that the first *Henry VI* plays, and even *Richard III*, were originally written for a different company, Lord Strange's Men.

Given such diversity, we must ask how they were all gathered into the repertory of the new Chamberlain's Men in 1594. We have seen that from 1597 onwards the leading sharers in the company owned all we have of his plays, from before and after that crucial time. Apart from *Titus Andronicus* and the few other early printings, from 1597 onwards they chose to publish about half of what Shakespeare gave them. Mostly the half appeared in print well after their first appearances on stage. Then in the 1620s the last two sharers surviving from the previous century devoted their final creative activities to issuing all the thirty-six or more plays the company still had, half of them never before in print, and quite a few dating from well before 1594. So we should ask not only why Shakespeare himself was unhelpful

[5] See Andrew Gurr, "In-jokes about Spear-shakers", *Notes & Queries*, 58 (2011), pp. 237-41.

over getting so few of his plays into print in his own lifetime, but how it was that all those written for various companies previous to 1594 could have entered the company's repertory in that year.

Several possible answers to this question have been canvassed. He might have retained them in his own hands until then from his own choice, or, more likely, for their potential value as commodities, helpful in the business of acquiring an interest in a company of players. Alternatively, some authority, almost certainly the Master of the Revels, might have taken them from their former companies to establish the core of the new company's repertoire. In such a process, he might readily have chosen to assure the company's future by adding their author to the company's list of sharers. Was Shakespeare's continuing career as an actor chosen for him by the authorities? Was he a willing victim to such an act of authority? The evidence for any of these possibilities is less than easy to identify. No reasons for any of these events can be found that is not mere conjecture. The only firm evidence there is makes it clear that from 1594 onwards he gave up the ownership of his plays, old and new, in favour of the new company.

The chief alternatives that we can juggle with over this have major significance. The biggest is identifying what his own opinion of his work was. It seems quite likely that, in contrast to all the other writers of that time, at first he chose to keep his playbooks to himself, carrying them with him through those 'lost' and fluctuating years. If so, less plausibly, he must even have kept the ownership of plays that he was only the part-author of, such as *Titus* (with Peele), and *1 Henry VI*. It has been suggested that owning such playbooks would have given him share capital, a practical and cash-free contribution to each company's financial welfare. He could take his manuscripts with him while he moved from one short-lived company to another.

That possibility has its attractions, and for instance matches the evidence of the first Quartos quite perfectly. His first tragedy, printed early in 1594, advertised on its titlepage that it had already been played by three different companies, Strange's, Pembroke's, and Sussex's. The last of these three companies played it at the Rose in early 1594, as Henslowe's *Diary* affirms[6]. For its second edition in 1599 the publisher added to this sequence of users the by then

[6] See *Henslowe's Diary*, eds R. A. Foakes and R. T. Rickert, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1961, p. 280.

famous fourth company, the Chamberlain's Men. If Shakespeare did keep all his plays to himself, the four companies listed on that second titlepage might well reflect his membership of them, however transient, presumably in the sequence listed on the 1599 titlepage. No other evidence about his early career is quite so tangible as this.

Yet there are strong counter-arguments. How, for instance, did he manage to keep to himself as he travelled between companies the crucial 'allowed book', the copy with the Master's signature authorizing it for performance?[7] None of the manuscripts that Heminges and Condell had kept and used in 1622 for the Folio were 'allowed books'. Such valuable properties are far more likely to have been collected up in May 1594 by the authority of the Master himself. Authors lost their property, and their rights to their use, when they sold them. From then on the 'allowed books' were company property, as Shakespeare's earlier plays became.

Since the first three companies in the *Titus* list, Strange's, Pembroke's and Sussex's, had all died by mid 1594, it must be possible that ownership of the original play manuscripts might have remained in their author's hands. But surely they were not in the form of 'allowed books'. This makes it likely that the Master of the Revels, being ordered to assemble two new companies, was the figure who chose in May 1594 to make provision for each of the new companies by using his authority to gather up a range of the existing playbooks, including all of Shakespeare's and several from the Queen's Men, for the two new repertories.

The Shakespeare plays we know about. To the other company he must have given five or more of Marlowe's plays, written for three different companies up to 1593, along with Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* and some other of the existing popular creations. Some of the Marlowes, most notably *Tamburlaine* and *Faustus*, did not become available to the company for the first three months of their new career, while other Marlowes, notably *The Jew of Malta* and *The Massacre at Paris*, both current at the Rose, were available to them from the outset.

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[7] The 'allowed book' itself, authorized by the signature of the Master of the Revels on its final page, being of prime value to legitimize performances, would never have been passed on to a printer. Apart from one play-text, which was not printed until well through the long closure after 1642, the only 'allowed books' that survive are in manuscript. See Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespeare Company, 1594-1642*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 122-24.

The history of the companies who staged Marlowe's plays is only a little less complex than those for which Shakespeare wrote. The most obvious explanation for the travels of the two *Tamburlaines* and *Faustus* is that the old Admiral's Men, still performing them, were out of reach touring the country through the first months of the transitional period. The new Admiral's Men launched their other Marlowes at the Rose from May onwards, including the two that Alleyn or Henslowe owned. The 'allowed books' of his two most famous plays must have stayed with the old Admiral's company that owned them until it returned to London. Somebody then made it possible for Alleyn to resume his former roles. The first "*Tamburlen*" did not join "*the Jewe of malta*" and "*the masacar*" at the Rose until 28 August 1594, and "*docter ffostose*" not until 30 September 1594.

These celebrated plays went through plenty of different hands up to 1594, in total contrast to what happened after that year's reformation. During his short play-writing life, between 1587 and 1593, Marlowe sold his six plays to at least three different companies. On the evidence of the *Titus* titlepage, Shakespeare did much the same over this period, although Marlowe, not being a player like Shakespeare, had less reason to keep the ownership of his plays to himself while the different companies performed them. It makes sense to see someone in the know authorizing the delivery of all the dead Marlowe's plays to the one new company and all the living Shakespeare's to the other. Worryingly, though, it also seems certain that, if Shakespeare truly had retained possession of all his playbooks, it must have been authority's decision in 1594 that forced him to give up his previous practice of keeping to himself the ownership of his plays. Unless under pressure from above, why should he give up the previous practice of keeping his plays in his personal possession?

What the many questions that these readings of the limited evidence raise is above all what they might signify about Shakespeare's private attitude to his plays. Was he happy to concede ownership of them once he became committed to being a sharer in the new company? Or did he do it under pressure, because such a concession was demanded by authority? While making his way up the career ladder, did he keep them for job security, and only surrendered their ownership once he was secure with the new and officially-licensed

company? If so, why was he confident that this company would last longer and more happily than any of the previous companies of the tumultuous years up to 1594? Most pointedly, did he, now or ever, take any care for them as the basis for his reputation, or did he regard them as no more than a commercial commodity?

His use of the press in 1593 and 1594 for his epyllions shows him trying hard to launch a new career for himself, not that of player and playwright. Through the plague-ridden years up to May 1594 he dedicated his publications to a wealthy and possibly a rewarding new patron, the earl of Southampton. That in itself suggests that he valued his older plays less highly than his poems. Was it this low valuation that made him hand over both his existing and new plays to the company he worked for? Given that the Master (presumably) allocated Marlowe's plays to the Lord Admiral's and his to the Lord Chamberlain's in the same month that his second epyllion appeared from the press of his friend Richard Field, did its reception by Southampton make him doubt that he would have a prosperous future as a poet under such a patron?

Apart from what might be inferred from the sonnets, we know nothing about what was in his mind at this crucial time, nor even whether he felt there was any choice between continuing as a common player or glorying in his reception as a great new poet. That dark space impacts heavily on the question of how he valued his plays. It is the chief reason why we should ask how he could leave it to the players to publish his plays, and why he never took any care to get them published properly, least of all to have them carefully proof-read, as he did with his two epyllions. The so-called 'stigma of print' is hardly enough to explain why from 1594 onwards he never gave any of his plays to the press. The only publications he might have taken any direct interest in after May 1594, *The Phoenix and the Turtle* of 1601[8], and the *Sonnets* in 1609, seem to have been freakish and in every sense occasional exceptions. Besides the public scorn that Robert Greene lavished on him in 1592 for wearing his player's hide, several of the sonnets, especially *29*, *37*, *110* and *111*, explicitly advertise his humiliation at having to undergo the means that pub-

[8] Even that wonderful, celebrated, and yet wholly enigmatic occasional poem came into print with the company's former joke-version of his name, "William Shakespeare", attached to it. See note 5.

lic manners bred in him, and in consequence to live with his dyer's hand perpetually stained from his trade. The stigma of playing was far worse than that of print. It is easy to make a case from the sonnets that he suffered from the social inhibition of being a mere playmaker, unable to make himself a true poet like Spenser.

The idea that he valued his plays highly enough to want them in print as readable texts upholds a view of the plays quite contrary to what he lamented in the sonnets. One of the few things certain in this grey morass of hints is that Ben Jonson, intimate with Shakespeare from at least 1598, took such a radically different view about plays appearing in print from his friend. His attitude was quite distinct from all his predecessors. As Joseph Lowenstein put it, it was Jonson who established the concept of "possessive authorship" for his published plays[9]. Several other playwrights subsequently, such as Barnabe Barnes and John Webster, both of whom proudly announced on the titlepages of their King's Men's plays that this was their own version rather than a theatre or company copy, chose to copy Jonson's declared position[10]. Such an exhibition of pride in play authorship is notably absent from Shakespeare. One could almost say that he opted deliberately to avoid the route pioneered by Jonson. We know him to be strikingly independent, as he was before 1594 if he really did retain the ownership of his early plays to himself. He never shared Jonson's pride in what he wrote.

Jonson's first two Chamberlain's Men's plays, *Every Man In* and *Every Man Out of His Humour*, were printed (in reverse order of their staging) in 1600 and 1601. He copied the flurry of play Quartos that began to appear in 1597. The second of his plays, *Every Man Out*, was radically innovative. It appeared at the same time as several other Chamberlain's Men's plays, including Shakespeare's, were going through the press. It was the company that sent all of them, other than Jonson's, to the printers. Jonson's was all his own work. *Every Man Out*'s titlepage reversed the now-standard priorities, ignoring the company that performed it and asserting instead that its text con-

[9] Joseph Lowenstein, *Ben Jonson and Possessive Authorship*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002.

[10] For a sound overview of the reception of early plays in print and especially Jonson's contribution, see Alan B. Farmer, "Print Culture and Reading Practices", in *Ben Jonson in Context*, ed. Julie Sanders, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 192-200.

tained the author's own "first composed" text, with "*more then hath been publikely spoken or acted*". Alan Farmer is hardly extreme when he writes "Beginning with the first edition of *Every Man Out of His Humour* in 1600 Jonson radically altered how professional plays were sold to readers"[11]. His added paratexts make him the first to assert the author's primacy rather than that of the performing company, and the first to supply information about the play for the reader. All previous Quartos, including Shakespeare's, had been published as play-texts simply reproducing what was spoken on stage. It was Jonson who began to issue plays designed for readers, not audiences. Pride in authorship of his plays was Jonsonian. It does not seem to have been Shakespearean.

The fact that Shakespeare never copied Jonson's practices in publishing his plays is basic here. In part, of course, his policy may have differed from his colleague's out of loyalty to his company. When he became a sharer, very likely his existing plays served as the cash for his share in the company's finances, for all the later rumours that the earl of Southampton laid the money out for him. From 1594 the company owned all his contributions to the repertory, including his rewrites of five or more old Queen's Men's plays that seem to have been added along with his own to the new company's resources (see below). So we should ask, if up to 1594 he had indeed kept the ownership of his plays to himself, why did he give the practice up? Even after the first disastrously brief and erratic version of *Hamlet* appeared in 1603, the replacement source for the better version was simply a spare manuscript of the original playbook held in the company's hands. The third version in the Folio probably came to the press from somewhere close to the 'allowed book', as regularly used by the company. Since allowed books were far too precious to be handed over to a printer, the texts of the plays eventually published in the 1623 Folio that originated in the author's own hand were the spare copies that the company could afford to release. This needs consideration not only because it confirms who owned the plays, but as another indication of the little care Shakespeare himself took for them. In this light, the insistence that Shakespeare did want his plays to be read appears more of a modern neurosis than an early reality.

[11] Farmer, p. 194.

One of the better contributions to this matter has come from Richard Dutton, one of the first to ask seriously why Shakespeare never published his own plays. In his essay "The Birth of the Author"[12] he began by noting that Richard Field, Shakespeare's fellow Stratfordian and publisher of his two epyllions in 1593 and 1594, never published any of the plays. From that thought Dutton went on to consider other major questions, of copyright, of the known social objections to poets issuing their own work, and finally what he considered to be the main likelihood, that they might have circulated in manuscript. The flurry of articles later appearing in *Shakespeare Studies* 2008 about the so-called 'Return of the Author' was part of a fairly concerted attempt to uphold the idea that, like us, Shakespeare valued his own plays highly. Awkwardly, this has left most of its many strings dangling. Some of them even flaunt the balloon claiming Shakespeare did want to see his plays in print. Others such as Patrick Cheney found a variety of ways to identify what they consider to be his pride in his work for the acting company[13]. This hope led to such extreme arguments as Jeffrey Knapp's, in *Shakespeare Only*, where he asserted the primacy of authorial pride throughout, claiming firmly that Shakespeare "expected his plays to be read as well as performed"[14].

Inherent scepticism should make us ask what real evidence there is to justify the claim that Shakespeare did value his plays as much as we do now. Why should there be nothing to show that after 1594 he did keep copies of his plays to himself, yet never published them? Only the sonnets can have any claim to that distinction. Even the Folio came from the last of the sharers who once were fellows with the Bard. It was they who still possessed all the company's manuscripts. If he really did value them enough to retain his own copies, why have they never been seen, either in manuscript or print, nor mentioned by any of the friends who read them?

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[12] Richard Dutton, "The Birth of the Author", in *Texts and Cultural Change in Early Modern England*, eds Cedric C. Brown and Arthur Marotti, New York, St Martin's Press, 1997, pp.153-78.

[13] See Patrick Cheney, *Shakespeare's Literary Authorship*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, and elsewhere; and W. B. Worthen, *Drama: Between Poetry and Performance*, Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, and "Intoxicating Rhythms: Or, Shakespeare, Literary Drama, and Performance (Studies)", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 62 (2011), pp. 309-39.

[14] Jeffrey Knapp, *Shakespeare Only*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2009, p. 166.

In large part these hopeful thoughts were prompted by Lukas Erne's well-received *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*[15]. The balloons he helped to float are partly gas-filled by two older aspects of the case. One is the continuing struggle between page and stage. The main objective of the 'Return' movement is to assert that the original staging tended to alter the plays to such an extent that the author was drawn into the habit of keeping his own precious versions to himself, chiefly for that select few who Francis Meres, writing about the sonnets, called his "private friends". Dutton has given the best summary of this theory[16]. The other aspect is inflated by the assumption that Shakespeare must have valued them roughly as we do. From this, it follows that he must have felt the texts his company printed were, like the early Quartos of *2* and *3 Henry VI*, of such poor quality that he chose to keep his own unabridged copies to himself. Nobody, however, has managed to show how these versions somehow got back into the company's possession, so that they eventually reached the world in 1623. If they had remained in Shakespeare's hands, we might at least expect them to have been mentioned in the will of 1616.

The airiness of such balloons demands that we re-scrutinize the evidence. First, if like us he did rate his plays as his best work, we must ask why, knowing that from 1597 the company was prepared to sell so many of them to the press in the rough forms of the early Quartos, did he never make any attempt to get better versions of them into print. When his name began to creep onto titlepages (including several plays he clearly did not write)[17], it was not Shakespeare that issued them. The company added his name to them, complete with its joking hyphen.

Many variant approaches to this are possible. In a careful article on the unhappy condition of the printed play-texts, Ernst Honigmann delivered his own version of the 'Return of the Author', arguing that

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[15] See note 3.

[16] Richard Dutton, *Licensing, Censorship and Authorship in Early Modern England*, Houndmills, Palgrave, 2000, and "Not One Clear Item but an Indefinite Thing Which Is in Parts of Uncertain Authenticity", *Shakespeare Studies*, 36 (2008), pp. 114-21.

[17] The so-called 'apocrypha' that exploited Shakespeare's celebrity by adding his name as author include *The London Prodigal* (1605), and *A Yorkshire Tragedy* (1608). *The Troublesome Raigne of King John* was reissued as by Shakespeare in 1611, and the Pavier Quartos of 1619 added *Oldcastle*.

he may have been involved in planning for the Folio before he died, seven years prior to its eventual publication[18]. Such a theory may help to explain why Ralph Crane was employed to make transcripts of the first five plays in the new book, but it provides no evidence for the diverse origins of the texts for the other thirty-one plays in the Folio, many of which, like *Romeo* and *Richard II*, were simply reprinted from the old Quartos. Shakespeare's failure to secure properly corrected and proof-read versions of his plays, quite unlike what he did when he worked with Richard Field to publish his poems, is a consistent omission, an act of avoidance that should seriously inhibit the idea that he ever wanted his plays to be issued in a readable form. Honigmann acknowledges the dubious origins of the earliest Quartos, especially Danter's *Titus* and Q1 *Romeo*. He even argues that the 'corrected' Quartos of *Romeo* and probably *Love's Labour's Lost* show no sign that the author intervened to correct either text, an absence to which he might have added the second Quarto of *Hamlet*. He quotes from *Sonnet 55* to show how proud Shakespeare was of his verses ("Not marble, nor the gilded monuments / Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme"), but this valuation is never shown in the printed texts of any of the plays.

Honigmann tries to explain the arrival through the press in 1608-9 of *King Lear*, *Pericles*, *Troilus and Cressida* and the *Sonnets*, plus the entry of *Antony and Cleopatra* in the Stationers' Register in 1608, as occasioned by his departure back to Stratford, allowing what Honigmann calls "pirates" the opportunity to print them all. Yet nothing says that Shakespeare had retained the original manuscripts himself, nor that the plays were stolen, nor that they were sold to the press by anyone but the company. The survival of all the Folio's plays from the Globe's fire in 1613 must mean that the company's sharers had their own copies of the play manuscripts, and rescued them before the flames caught them. That must have helped Heminges and Condell to issue all of them in 1623. Honigmann is right to note the difficulties behind getting so many of the Quartos into print, but he should not ignore the absence of any authorial correcting hand from all of them.

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[18] Ernst A. J. Honigmann, "How Happy Was Shakespeare with the Printed Versions of His Plays?", *Modern Language Review*, 105 (2010), pp. 937-51.

So it seems impossible to deny the likelihood that Shakespeare always saw his work for the Chamberlain's and later the King's Men as a duty that never matched his own earlier interests. The prime consequence of this found him putting any high value on the work he thereafter did for his employers. The deal of 1594 brought into the new company, besides Shakespeare's own existing plays and his new comedies, a group of old Queen's Men's plays. The players evidently commissioned Shakespeare to rewrite them. His *King John* was an immediate and direct revision, most likely done in 1595, of the Queen's Men's *Troublesome Raigne* of 1590 or so. He made freer use of *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, carefully composing his own prequel, *Richard II*, in 1595, and planning two more plays based on the same story. The invention of Falstaff made him extend the one on Prince Hal into two halfway through its composition, telling the story up to his triumph as the prodigal king. In the end he extended the single old *Famous Victories of Henry V* into three new plays. More rewrites followed. In 1600 his *Hamlet* copied the lost ur-*Hamlet* of the Queen's Men that Nashe first noted as early as 1589, and Lodge in 1596. Similarly in 1605 he adapted the former Queen's Men's *King Leir*. These revisions were done as company duties, whatever we now make of the glories we find in the new plays that emerged from them. The comedies he wrote through the same years acquired fairly dismissive titles, *As You Like It*, and *Twelfth Night, or What You Will*.

The evidence is quite consistent that Shakespeare always held a markedly lower valuation of the business of his play-writing and its products than we do now. Being persuaded, or coerced, in 1594 into remaining a player rather than to become the poet that his dedications to Southampton proclaim, he had to re-employ himself as an actor. He used his share in the new company and later in its playhouses chiefly to make money, investing almost all of it back in Stratford. Buying his father's right to the status of armiger in 1596, and the purchase in 1597, with the help of Richard Quiney in London, of New Place for his family (probably also accommodating his father, after the fire in Henley Street)[19], were features in a

[19] For his purchase of New Place, and Quiney's likely involvement, see Robert Bearman, "Shakespeare's Purchase of New Place", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 63 (2012), pp. 465-86.

process of business investments, all made locally in Stratford, that continued throughout his later years. It seems that his profits from the business of writing plays supplanted his ambition as a poet.

It is true that by 1609 he owed a substantial loyalty to his fellow-players, enough to make him continue helping the newcomer John Fletcher by writing plays in collaboration. Later still he invested in buying a property adjoining the Blackfriars playhouse, and in 1616 he left the three most senior of his company's fellows money for memorial rings. He must have sold his shares in the two playhouses in 1613, after the first Globe burned down, because neither is mentioned in his will of 1616. He must have refused to help pay for the rebuilding of the Globe in 1614. There is nothing in his will in 1616, or in his life or his actions that can help us to believe that he wanted his plays to immortalize him in the way he once thought his poems and sonnets might. Aged thirty when he joined, or was joined up to, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, he had already fought his way a long distance up the ladder of celebrity. From then on, tied to being a player, whose public means bred only public distaste, he seems to have valued his plays at the same low level as he did his status of common player. In the end, it seems, his highest ambition became that of Stratford landowner.

Shakespeare spent his twenty years in London ignoring the chance to get forty or more of his plays into print. Such a substantial body of negative evidence about his valuation of his own plays should not be ignored.

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Shakespeare's Illegitimate Daughter

Gary Taylor

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 2011[1]. 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. Pennebaker[2]. 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 II*", 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 Globe[3]. 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 records[4]. 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 Pronouns: 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 logic[5]. 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 daughter[6]. 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 biographers[7]. 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 Stage[8].

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 years[9]. 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.

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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 law[10]. 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.

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[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 source[13]. But

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[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-

tern[14]. 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 Harbage[17]. 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:

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[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 1656[18]. 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

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[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].

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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 bequest[21].

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.

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[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 transferrable, 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".

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[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 life[24]. 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.

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A Salvo for Lucy Negro*

Harold Bloom

1.

As my correspondence shows me, since the October 1998 publication of my *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, Oxfordians are the sub-literary equivalent of the sub-religious Scientologists. You don't want to argue with them, as they are dogmatic and abusive. I therefore will let the earl of Sobran be and confine myself to the poetic power of Shakespeare's sonnets, and the relation of that power to the now venerable quest to demonstrate that someone – anyone but 'the Man from Stratford' – wrote the plays and poems of William Shakespeare.

The academy, as everyone knows, is shot to pieces. Even at Yale, I am surrounded by courses in gender and power, transsexuality and queer theory, multiculturalism, and all the other splendors that now displace Chaucer, Milton, Shakespeare, and Dickens. But the worst may well be over. A decade ago, I would introduce my Graduate Shakespeare seminar (never my Undergraduate) by solemnly assuring the somewhat resentful students that all of Shakespeare, and not just the sonnets, had been written by Lucy Negro, Elizabethan England's most celebrated East Indian whore. Anthony Burgess, in his splendid fictive life, *Nothing Like the Sun*, had identified Lucy Negro as the Dark Lady of the sonnets and thus Shakespeare's peerless erotic catastrophe, resulting in heartbreak, venereal disease, and relatively early demise. Stone-faced (as best I could), I assured my

* This essay was originally published in *Harper's Magazine*, 298:1787 (April 1999), pp. 55-57.

graduate students that all their anxieties were to be set aside, since the lustful and brilliant Lucy Negro actually had composed the plays and sonnets. Thus they could abandon their political reservations and read 'Shakespeare' with assured correctness, since Lucy Negro was, by definition, multicultural, feminist, and post-colonial. And also, I told them, we could set aside the covens of Oxfordians, Marlovians, and Baconians in the name of the defrauded Lucy Negro.

Since I long ago joined Samuel Butler, who had proclaimed that the *Odyssey* was written by a woman, when I suggested in *The Book of J* that the Yahwist was a human female, I felt it would have been redundant had I introduced Lucy Negro into my Shakespeare book as the creator of Falstaff, Hamlet, Rosalind, Iago, Cleopatra, and the other glories of our language. And I propose to say no more about Lucy Negro here, except that she far outshines Oxford as a rival claimant, since she at least slept with Shakespeare! Instead I will devote the remainder of this brief meditation to a surmise as to why the Oxfordians, Marlovians, and Baconians cannot cease to try to badger the rest of us.

The sorrows of the poet of the sonnets are very complex, worthy of the best shorter poems in the language. In fact, we don't know for sure who this narcissistic young nobleman was, though Southampton will do, and there are many candidates for the Dark Lady, though none so exuberant as Lucy Negro. All we actually do know, quite certainly, is that the frequently unhappy (though remarkably restrained) poet indeed was Will Shakespeare. These are "his sugared sonnets among his private friends", doubtless a socially varied group extending all the way from lowlife actors (and Lucy Negro!) to the petulant Southampton, patron and (perhaps) sometime lover.

There is a shadow upon the sonnets, as upon so many of the darker Shakespearean plays. We can call it scandal or public notoriety, something that transcends the poet's ruefulness at being a poor player upon the stage of the Globe. If the late *Elegy for Will Peter* is Shakespeare's (and I think it is, despite being a weak poem), then the shadow of scandal lingered for more than a decade. Yet the sense of self-wounding is only a small edge of the greater show of morality, which is the authentic darkness of the best sonnets and of all Shakespeare from *Hamlet* onward. The sonnets are poetry for kings and for enchanted readers, because few besides Shakespeare can fully portray that shadow, which in this greatest of all poets becomes "millions of strange shadows".

2.

Astonishing as the sonnets remain, they are of a different order than, say, *As You Like It*, *Henry IV* (1 and 2), *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night*, *Measure for Measure*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, *The Winter's Tale*, and about a dozen other Shakespearean dramas. Most simply, the sonnets do not invent (or, if you prefer, represent) human beings. Necessarily more lyric than dramatic, these poems have their clear affinities with Falstaff and Hamlet and many more of Shakespeare's protagonists, and yet the affinities remain enigmatic. Unless you are a formalist or an historicist, Falstaff and Hamlet will compel you to see them as larger even than their plays, and as more 'real' than actual personages, alive or dead. But the speaker of the sonnets presents himself as a bewildering series of ambiguities. He is not and yet he is William Shakespeare the playmaker, and his two loves of comfort and despair, a young nobleman and a dark woman, never have the substance or the persuasive force of Anthony and Cleopatra, and of their peers in the greater plays. Shakespearean characters are adventures in consciousness; even the speaker of the sonnets evades that immensity. Of the inwardness of the fair young man and of the dark lady, we are given only intimations.

We cannot recover either the circumstances of the personal motives (if any) of the sonnets. *Love's Labour's Lost*, uniquely among the plays, shares the language of the sonnets. Shakespeare's apparent dilemma in the sonnets, rejection by beloved social superior, seems analogous to Falstaff's predicament in the Henry IV plays, but the speaker of the sonnets has little of Sir John Falstaff's vitality, wiliness, and aplomb. Some of the sonnets turn violently aside from life's lusts and ambitions, but these revulsions are rendered only rarely in Hamlet's idiom. It is dangerous to seek illuminations for the plays in the sonnets, though sometimes you can work back from the dramatic to the lyric Shakespeare. The poetic achievement of the sonnets has just enough of the playwright's uncanny power to show that we confront the same writer, but the awesome cognitive originality and psychological persuasiveness of the major dramas are subdued in all but a few of the sequences.

From at least *Measure for Measure* through *Othello*, and on through *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, sexuality is represented primarily as a torment – sometimes comic, more often not. As an archaic bardolator,

I am not inclined to separate this dramatic version of human reality from the playwright himself. Formalist and historicist critics frequently give me the impression that they might be more at home with Flaubert than with Shakespeare. The high erotic rancidity of *Troilus and Cressida*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, and *Timon of Athens* is too consistently ferocious to be dramatic artifice alone, at least in my experience as a critical reader. The bed trick, harlotry, and venereal infection move very near the center of Shakespeare's vision of sexuality.

3.

Those who devote themselves to the hapless suggestion that Shakespeare did not write Shakespeare are secret, perhaps unknowing resenters of his cognitive and imaginative power. The greatest of all converts to the Oxford lunacy was Dr Sigmund Freud, who could not acknowledge that his masterly forerunner had been a rather ordinary young man out of Stratford-upon-Avon. The earl of Oxford, dead before Shakespeare's last twelve dramas had even been composed, left behind some commonplace lyrics, not worthy of rereading. Those who resent Shakespeare always will be with us; our only response should be to return to the plays and the sonnets.

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Selected Publications in Shakespeare Studies (2013-2014)

Simon Ryle, *Shakespeare, Cinema and Desire: Adaptation and Other Futures of Shakespeare's Language*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, xiii+253 pp., £55.00.

According to Ryle's complex yet fascinating argument, Shakespearean adaptation for film acts in such a way that it can bring the language of the plays vividly into the present and empower it to be projected into the future. Materialist and historicist criticism, Ryle claims, has turned away from the inscribed traces that language creates. So often Shakespeare, he points out, projects his own writing into an unknown future by reference to the ink and marble of literary and sculptural monuments. This in its turn draws our attention to the limits of representation in language. One of the tropes of this book is the way in which film, challenged as it is by the special qualities of Shakespeare's language, creates a bridge between the early modern and the present. Film, says Ryle, picks up on Shakespeare's claim that "not marble nor the gilded monuments / Of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme".

The theoretic presence that underpins Ryle's argument is that of Lacan, and most especially his writing about desire. Ryle, in suggesting that Shakespeare's interactions with both past and future can be seen through the lens of desire, openly admits that his book is an apology for poststructuralist theory. Picking up on Maurice Blanchot's notion of the 'limit experience', Ryle points to those effects where Shakespeare ruptures the 'formal' representational limits of language and draws attention to the sensuous surface of mimesis. This 'limit experience' is felt at its most extreme in the apprehension of void spaces and bodily penetrations, and it is here that Lacan's theories of desire come most powerfully into operation. Desire, says Lacan, involves an unquenchable lack that is in turn related to limit experience. Driven by desire we reach beyond ourselves and, in this text, questions of desire thread together explorations of loss, the future, and the limit experience. Though Ryle draws his theory from psychoanalysis, his work, he says,

is dominantly an aesthetic study of the afterlife of meaning in Shakespeare's language.

The book divides into two parts where part 1 deals with narrative space, and part 2 with narrative time. *King Lear* forms the subject of the first chapter where Ryle examines the nothingness of language separating humankind from the natural presence of the body. In the second chapter it is Cleopatra's body that is the focus of Ryle's discourse. Here Ryle brings to the foreground the performativity of Cleopatra's presence, and her self-conscious awareness of her own performance. The third chapter is concerned with "Unfolding Hamlet" where the inability of representation seems to coincide with Hamlet's own unrepresentable interior and where the character of Hamlet becomes an image of the cinema's own ghostly projections. Chapter 4 deals with *The Tempest* and the new media. Reproductive futures are guaranteed by Shakespeare's female bodies in pregnancy, rebirth, queer identity politics and digital technology.

Ryle's is a fascinating view of Shakespeare's exploration of his own mimetic limits involving a complicated creation of affective intensity by disavowing the representational medium itself. Shakespeare, he says, explores the 'limit point' that serves to locate a void at the centre of representation.

J. B. Bullen, Professor Emeritus, University of Reading

Carla Dente and Sara Soncini, eds, *Shakespeare and Conflict: A European Perspective*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, xix+275 pp., £60.00.

Shakespeare and Conflict is a reworking of sixteen of the papers offered to the 2009 European Research Association conference in Pisa. Each of the three sections, "Conflict in Shakespeare", "Conflict through Shakespeare" and "Shakespeare in Times of Conflict", is preceded by an introduction. Conflict in Shakespeare is viewed from a number of perspectives. Sometimes these are the literal sites of war and battle in the plays, but at others they are seen as sites of conflict within the metaphors and tropes of the language itself. Shakespeare, claims Paola Pugliatti in her introduction to the first section, staged war as both necessity and scandal. But conflict in Shakespeare does not always derive directly from war. As Sabine Schülting points out in the second chapter, migration and the impact of aliens on native populations create cultural stresses that feature in many of Shakespeare's plays. The most immediate and physical outcome of this impact is the sword dual. At a more local and specific level, the dual ritual is feature of numerous scenes, most especially in the history plays, and its many-sidedness is examined in the third chapter by Paola Pugliatti. The conflictual role of silence, especially as it operates in the language of *King Lear*, is examined in the fourth chapter and this is developed in the fifth into a wider examination of Shakespeare's word

play and its huge manifold of coincidences, contradictions and conflicts. Carla Dente opens the second section of the book with an introduction that stresses the fact that conflict lies at the heart of all drama as an energising force but it is one which has come into special prominence in the twentieth century during a period that has been deeply conflicted and overshadowed by wars and divisions. Dente points out how Tillyard's *Elizabethan World Picture* (1945) and Olivier's version of *Henry V* (1944) exemplify this tendency in both theory and practice. More recently 'language wars' have thrown up all kinds of insight into the translation of Shakespeare, and the eighth chapter deals with the way in which stresses between ideologies, social pressures, and cultural values are stylistically negotiated by translators. In the two chapters that follow, Shakespeare's texts lock horns with surrealist and experimental theatre and film. *Romeo and Juliet* is appropriated by Garcia Lorca in *El Publico* and *Hamlet* in Humphrey Jennings's *A Diary for Timothy*. In the eleventh chapter Miguel Gomes ponders another crosscurrent in Shakespeare appropriation, Heiner Müller's 1977 play *Hamletmaschine*, which, written out of the GDR, revisits the twentieth-century engagement of German culture with the work of Shakespeare. Shakespeare, Gomes argues, provided Müller with a powerful mediation in dealing with conflicted political issues. The introduction to the third part written by Manfred Pfister is concerned with Shakespeare's plays translated or staged in times of conflict opening with a chapter by Clara Calvo who deals with the performances by conscientious objectors during the First World War, notably amateur performances staged in Dartmoor Prison in 1919. In the piece which follows Monica Matei-Chesnoiu picks up the baton with a highly unusual production of *Hamlet* in a Romanian political prison in 1942-43. The acting process, Matei-Chesnoiu suggests, provided the prisoners with a temporary escape by adopting Hamlet's words and poses. The Second World War is again represented by Ton Hoenselaars's chapter on performances of vignettes of characters drawn from *Julius Caesar* in a Canadian prison camp. Other productions of this popular play were also mounted in captivity, one on the Isle of Man, the other in the South of France. Again the pressure to perform comes out of the desire for freedom and escape. The book concludes with a piece by Anna Cetera who returns to the vexed question of Shakespeare translation and the internecine strife that takes place in the ranks of the translating class.

J. B. Bullen, Professor Emeritus, University of Reading

Michael Caines, *Shakespeare and the Eighteenth Century,* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, xxvii+232 pp., £17.49.

Shakespeare and the Eighteenth Century by Michael Caines provides a fresh assessment of the cultural status of the Bard in eighteenth-century England

with a view to illuminating the ways in which Shakespeare's oeuvre was valued, criticized, read, and performed. Caines charts those contradictions, appropriations, and uneven developments that make the study of Shakespeare's reception in the eighteenth century a historiographic challenge as well as a fruitful field of investigation. Avoiding overarching theses and teleological biases, he devotes close attention to a broad range of cultural players, such as Nicholas Rowe, Colley Cibber, Charles Macklin, Alexander Pope, David Garrick, Samuel Johnson, Edmond Malone, and William Henry Ireland. Caines addresses both adaptations of Shakespeare's works and their reception, showing the extent to which they were manipulated for the stage and the way in which they were interpreted by contemporary arbiters of taste. At the same time, however, he assesses how Shakespeare's oeuvre influenced eighteenth-century culture, tracing the dialectical relation between Shakespeare and his later readers and thus looking at the eighteenth century not only as a self-enclosed system. Needless to say, a key topic of this study is the canonization of Shakespeare, his transformation into a touchstone and an icon. Far from being devalued in light of neoclassical or Enlightenment ideals, Shakespeare and his works became weapons in the battle for cultural value. Interpretations of Shakespeare were used to delineate philological criteria, ideological positions – with Shakespeare becoming a 'national' poet – and, of course, aesthetic values. In this respect, Caines also shows awareness of a broader history, briefly focusing on Shakespeare's reception in France, Germany, and America. While Caines does full justice to the eighteenth century and its culture, his study helps us understand how that culture laid the foundations for our own, how Shakespeare became what he is now.

Riccardo Capoferro, Sapienza University of Rome

Andrew Cutrofello, *All for Nothing: Hamlet's Negativity*, Cambridge, Mass.-London, The MIT Press, 2014, xiii+226 pp., $22.95.

This excellent book is an invitation to philosophers and Shakespeareans alike to tackle the question of Hamlet the thinker by following the thread of continental philosophy from Descartes to Hegel and beyond. In this sense, it may be regarded as a necessary complement to the author's illuminating *Continental Philosophy*, which appeared with Routledge in 2005, adopting a contemporary perspective on the controversial 'continental' label which in recent years has overcome its merely geographical connotation to reach a meta-philosophical level.

In the same vein, Cutrofello has contributed to *Memoria di Shakespeare*'s inaugural online issue (1/2014, *Thinking with Shakespeare*, eds Rosy Colombo and Nadia Fusini), with a reading of *Troilus and Cressida* through Kant and Derrida.

Cutrofello's intense philosophical reading of *Hamlet* tackles the core of contemporary representations of this most contemporary of characters by reflect-

ing on the play's key issues of melancholy (chapter 1), negative faith (chapter 2), nihilism (chapter 3), nonactivity (chapter 4), nonexistence (chapter 5).

The book's challenging epilogue interweaves Hegel's concept of 'determinate negation', derived from Spinoza, with the literary heritage of T. S. Eliot's reflection on the reworking of the idea of canon as a category constantly exposed to change, and of 'complete meaning' as something that is never achieved once and for all. *Hamlet* itself is proposed as the objective correlative of the philosophical idea of 'determinate negation', conceived as the "permanent possibility of radically transforming the symbolic order" (p. 151). It is this principle of 'objective incompleteness' that leads to the conclusion that "*Hamlet*'s failure is the very mark of its success" (p. 153).

The critical presence of Eliot in the book is matched by more ghostly literary apparitions – Kafka above all, though explicitly mentioned only once in relation to his *Trial*, but even more significantly Beckett, whose position is here incarnated by Vladimir, who, as Cutrofello reminds us, is a character "better at advancing arguments than plots" (p. 2) – exactly like Hamlet. Such an open critical attitude, in which traces are as important as concrete presences, indeed responds well to a radically continental perspective that, in Italy, has produced interesting results, such as Massimo Cacciari's *Hamletica* (2009), itself articulated along the lines of Hamlet's *insecuritas*, K's sense of displacement in the *Castle*, and Beckett's aesthetics of exhaustion. Cutrofello's methodology is rigorous in dealing with Hamlet's negativity from the philosophical point of view, but to the more literary-minded reader his passing, but richly evocative, references to the most iconic figures of contemporaneity are a real boon.

Rosy Colombo and Iolanda Plescia, Sapienza University of Rome

Hester Lees-Jeffries, *Shakespeare and Memory*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, xiii+228 pp., £50.00.

Memory always needs support: not only practice, but also a material object, such as wax, a hard disk or cloud storage. Plato's metaphor of the wax block in *Theaetetus* famously introduced the concept of impression to account for the varying malleability and persistence of memory among people and over time. Small wonder, then, that even today i-Pads are called tablets. In her innovative, well-informed take on this topic Hester Lees-Jeffries ponders Shakespeare's centrality in early modern interpretations of memory. *Shakespeare and Memory* rests on an eloquent analysis of Shakespeare's references to memory and of the relevant historical and cultural contexts, together with fascinating inspiration from neuroscience and cognitive psychology and more circumstantial evidence like the continuity of acting traditions.

As the author says, "Shakespeare both engaged with and changed the ways in which people remembered" (p. 6). The Elizabethan Janus-like

approach to memory still revered Plato's wax block, the division within the five senses offered in Aristotle's *De anima* and the tradition of the *artes memoriae*. Yet new technologies, like print, prompted a shift from a pre-eminently oral culture to one based on writing. This upheaval in early modern information technology occurs, moreover, after the iconoclastic defacing of the Catholic past, including not only images but also ancient practices of commemoration of the dead inscribed within the belief in Purgatory.

Lees-Jeffries's point is that Shakespeare exposes the early modern decay of the ancient power of memory. As the traditional forms of collective commemoration have been undermined, Hamlet dramatically counters the prevalent notions of personal and national memory testified by Claudius or the performance of mourning enacted by Gertrude. More radically, after the meeting with the Ghost, he deconstructs all forms of memory storage such as commonplace books or *florilegia*. For Hamlet, modern memory is an act fueled by trauma (the author's introduction explicitly refers the topicality of this book to the contemporary trend of 'memory studies' occasioned by the Shoah). The early modern union between memory and trauma informs the other chapters as well: the emphasis is on the uncertainties of modern memory, rather than on its prodigious feats. The Roman plays "question the status and stability of classical texts", as well as "the idealization of ancient Rome" (p. 60), which is indeed "memorable, but for all the wrong reasons" (p. 50). The English past returns in the history plays as proving the educational utility of theatre, and yet this emergence of the past is hardly immune from the anxiety of censorship. As the author notes, "memory in the early modern period is so bound up in material objects" (p. 159): in Shakespeare, these material records turn into palimpsests incessantly erased and rewritten, as is the case with flowers and smells in *Twelfth Night* and in the *Sonnets*, or the exchange of gifts in *Winter's Tale*, *Merchant of Venice*, and *Othello.*

Lees-Jeffries reminds us that in Shakespeare's England remembering the dead, and remembering more in general, had turned into a practice fraught with anxiety. It is Hamlet's memory that "makes *this* Yorick's skull" (p. 103): Shakespeare presents memory as a personal act concerning mere individuals, with a skeptical distrust in communal forms of commemoration.

Rocco Coronato, University of Padua

Rory Loughnane and Edel Semple, eds, *Staged Transgression in Shakespeare's England*, Palgrave Shakespeare Studies, Basingstoke-New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, 298 pp., £58.00.

This volume brings together both established and emerging literary scholars to investigate the issue of transgression on the early modern English stage. Various forms (mockery, resistance, divorce, etc.) and figures (drunkards, Jews, bawds) of transgression are analyzed, simultaneously highlighting the

role of authors, audiences and performances in the crossing of established borders. The book moves away from the grand design of new historicism or Foucauldian aesthetics in favour of a more recent "micro-historical" (p. 14) approach to the topic, embracing a multiplicity of critical perspectives, from gender theory to cognitive studies. As a consequence, the general stance of the volume is less ideological and more lively, full of perceptive analysis and original, insightful considerations. Iago becomes a jester and evil 'parody' of history in Adam Smyth's astute examination of the troubling role of laughter in *Othello* and *Titus Andronicus* ("'Ha, Ha, Ha': Shakespeare and the Edge of Laughter"); Mariam's denial of her body to her violent husband and the clandestine marriage between the Duchess and Antonio reflect the political debate "about the linked issues of property and freedom of speech" in the Houses of Parliament (Christina Luckyj, "Politics and Law in *The Tragedy of Mariam* and *The Duchess of Malfi*", p. 94), while Antonio's failure to spit in Shylock's mouth inverts the traditional idiom of the spitting Jew and signals the presence of a "dogge Iew" that cannot be tamed (Brett D. Hirsch, "The Taming of the Jew: Spit and the Civilizing Process in *The Merchant of Venice*"). Other pieces propose captivating investigations of Edgar as Blackface (B. Minor and A. Thompson, "'Edgar I Nothing Am': Blackface in *King Lear*"), of the brothel as a grey area where "a rigid morality is interrogated and exposed as untenable" (Edel Simple, "Rethinking Transgressions with Shakespeare's Bawds", p. 204), of Margaret as "queen consort, Amazonian warrior, and nourishing, protective mother" (Christopher Ivic, "'How to vse your Brothers Brotherly': Civility, Incivility and Civil War in *3 Henry VI*", p. 248). In the afterword ("Thinking Staged Transgression Literally") Jean E. Howard suggests an interesting link between transgression and the aesthetic dynamism of an early modern theatrical scene dominated by a "turbulent, vibrant, and competitive urban marketplace" (p. 256). A whole essay on this subject is the only missing piece in a volume full of fresh perspectives and stimulating insights.

Davide Crosara, Sapienza University of Rome

Laurie Shannon, *The Accommodated Animal: Cosmopolity in Shakespearean Locales*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2013, 290 pp., £18.00.

Laurie Shannon presents an ambitious and piercing study of the status of animals in early modern culture, organizing her discourse around sources as diverse as Elizabethan plays and poetry, natural histories, political pamphlets, philosophical essays.

The introductory chapter ("Creatures and Cosmopolitans: Before 'the Animal'") presents the fundamental dialectic of the volume: Montaigne's zoophilic vision as opposed to Descartes's anthropocentric notion of the *bête*

machine. In his *Apologie for Raymond Sebond* Montaigne "accommodates the presence of animals and conceives them as actors and stakeholders endowed by their creator with certain subjective interests" (p. 18): the earth becomes a shared kingdom, a universe enlivened by relationships among different species. On the contrary, Descartes's *cogito* outlines a world dominated by man's predatory attitude, where the animal is nothing more than an automaton, deprived of soul and agency.

In Shannon's opinion late modernity, combining ecocritical thought and posthumanist theories, points back to Montaigne's permeability of the boundaries. She exemplifies the main assumption of her study through the notion of cosmopolity: like cosmopolitanism, cosmopolity is a way of inhabiting the world open to diversity, a call to think not only across races and nations but across species, claiming that men and animals possess "legitimate, subjective investments in the world as fellow creatures" (p. 248).

References to Shakespeare are present in almost every chapter of the book: chapter 1 ("The Law's First Subjects: Animal Stakeholders, Human Tyranny, and the Political Life of Early Modern Genesis") envisages the Arden forest in *As You Like It* as a second Eden peopled by deer, the "native burghers of this desert city" (p. 80); chapter 3 ("Poor, Bare, Forked: Animal Happiness and the Zoographic Critique of Humanity") reads Lear's well-known line as "part of a larger zoographic critique of man" (p. 133); chapter 4 ("Night-Rule: The Alternative Politics of the Dark; or, Empires of the Nonhuman") analyses nonhuman agency in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as a subversive strategy that posits "human identity as *a constraint*" (p. 180); chapter 5 ("Hang-Dog Looks: From Subjects at Law to Objects of Science in Animal Trials") presents Shylock's "stranger cur" as a testimony of a shared human-animal attitude towards difference.

However, Shakespeare occupies a marginal position in *The Accommodated Animal*: his voice is a voice among others, from Thomas More to Jacques Derrida. Far from being a weakness, this is a strong point in a volume that, clearly indebted to new historicism, situates Shakespeare in a larger, general discourse that intertwines history, philosophy and literature.

Davide Crosara, Sapienza University of Rome

Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan, eds, *The Tempest: A Critical Reader*, Arden Early Modern Drama Guides, London, Bloomsbury, 2014, 278 pp., £60.00.

This critical reader sums up the curators' long-lasting familiarity with *The Tempest*. In his introduction, Alden T. Vaughan provides a brief but effective sketch of the critics' ever-expanding "range of inquiries" (p. 1) into the play. The first part of the volume concentrates on the critical history of *The Tempest*: in chapter 2 ("The Critical Backstory: 'What's Past is Prologue'") Virginia

Mason Vaughan traces a general outline of the text's reception, from the seventeenth century to the late twentieth century. Eckart Voigts (chapter 2, "A Theatre of Attractions: Colonialism, Gender, and *The Tempest*'s Performance History") recalls the performance history of the play, from the spectacularity of Davenant and Dryden's adaptation to the recent, post-Greenaway "digital theatre of attractions" (p. 46); Brinda Charry (chapter 3, "Recent Perspectives on *The Tempest*"), instead, analyses trends in literary criticism from the 1970s to the present. The second half of the book proposes new points of view on topics that have been addressed before: Andrew Gurr ("New Directions: Sources and Creativity in *The Tempest*") signals how both widely accepted sources (Ovid, Virgil, Montaigne) and controversial influences on the play (the *Sea Venture* chronicles, Jonson's masques) undergo the same process: they are constantly reworked by Shakespeare's creativity. Helen M. Whall ("New Directions: *Commedia dell'Arte*, *The Tempest*, and Trasnational Criticism") considers *commedia dell'arte* from a European perspective, suggesting a transnational approach to the issue of Shakespeare's debt to Italian comedy that inverts the burden of proof: "The logical question is: how could Shakespeare *not* have known about *commedia dell'arte*?" (p. 116). Jeffrey A. Rufo ("New Directions: 'He Needs Will Be Absolute Milan': The Political Thought of *The Tempest*") examines "Shakespeare's contributions to an early modern conversation about authority and its limits" (p. 137), underscoring his skeptical oscillation between Montaigne and Machiavelli, while Scott Maisano ("New Directions: Shakespeare's Revolution – *The Tempest* as Scientific Romance") reads the presence of atomism and 'new science' in the play as discourses "at once prefiguring and launching the genre of scientific romance" (p. 194). In the final chapter Nathaniel Amos Rothschild ("'Volumes That / I Prize': Resources for Studying and Teaching *The Tempest*") provides a useful catalogue of selected editions of the text, online resources, thematic approaches for teachers and a selected bibliography. The volume is a valuable guide for both scholars and students of *The Tempest*, providing a comprehensive overview of past and current research into the play. Its only flaw is the misspelling of Italian names, that I hope a second edition will amend.

Davide Crosara, Sapienza University of Rome

Colin Burrow, *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, viii+282 pp., £50.00.

What is meant by 'classical' in Shakespeare and in Shakespeare's times? And what was it for? These are the questions that Colin Burrow addresses in the six chapters of his volume *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity*; a task that he performs by taking issue with any such idea of the 'classical' as a given, an abstract absolute ideal. He consequently provides a welcome consideration of the degree of historicity which is entailed in both the way the very mean-

ing of the terms 'classical'/'classics' evolve in the English language and the diverse uses of 'classical' antiquity that Shakespeare and his contemporaries made. In this sense he convincingly situates Shakespeare's relationship with the 'classics' within a history of the reception of classical antiquity in early modern England. "For Shakespeare and his generation", Burrows maintains, "reading and imitating classical literature were not activities only to be undertaken with reverence and awe, or with the trans-temporal longing described by Johann Winckelmann" two centuries later. Rather, they were part of a "practical humanism". Ancient authors "would inform you about how to live in the present and would provide material for your own writing. Many sixteenth-century readers encountered these texts in the spirit of 'What can this text do for me?' rather than of 'What culturally remote beauties can I discover here?'" (p. 5).

But what about Shakespeare's knowledge of the classics? And how did he learn from the past? Undoubtedly Shakespeare's knowledge of the classics was shaped by the grammar-school curricula. But though grounding his enquiry in this fact, Colin Burrow takes pains to distance his undertaking from T. W. Baldwin's approach to this issue. Burrow argues that using solely the curricula of early modern grammar schools as a sort of "great database of memory" – such as the one built by Baldwin in his imposing two-volume *William Shakespeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke* (1944) – helpful though it may be, provides no guarantee as to what and how Shakespeare 'knew'. Shakespeare may have had an imperfect memory of what firsthand knowledge of Latin authors he had by reading them at King Edward VI School, Stratford. Instead, other Latin authors (together with some other Greek works filtered through Latin culture) he may have read later in his life, and at different times. He may have read them entirely, or in translation; or acquired them as a mediated form of knowledge through authors such as Chaucer, Montaigne, or also by means of a variety of less authoritative, miscellaneous and fragmentary sources, adages, *exempla*, *sententiae*, phrasebooks, dictionaries. Some instances may be Thomas Cooper's *Thesaurus Linguae Romanae et Britannicae*, or apt manuals for the instruction of noblemen such as Iohannes Sturm's *Nobilitas Literata* (1549), translated by Thomas Browne of Lincoln's Inn as *A Rich Storehouse or Treasure for Nobility and Gentlemen* (1570). Similarly, one might add, the presence of John Florio – the translator of Montaigne into English, among other things – in London may have been instrumental to building a bridge not only with the Italian language, but also with Italy's vision of the classics.

Burrow's book aims at showing not only the different ways in which Shakespeare 'knew' or 'may have' known, but mostly the ways in which such a knowledge is turned into theatre. What pupils were trained for in their reading of ancient literature in grammar schools, Burrows underlines, was learning a method: that is, how to turn reading into an emulative/competitive writing practice. Humanist readers were trained "to read with

an eye to the 'how' of what they read" (p. 52). Whether those be classical or contemporary works, Shakespeare, as a writer and a playwright, would continue to read 'pragmatically', not just to plunder contents, narrative ideas, or particular quotations, but with an ear and an eye quick to evaluate their performative potential. The specific chapters devoted to Virgil, Ovid, Roman Comedy, Seneca, Plutarch, all exemplify the diverse degree of 'usefulness' that the 'classics' have in Shakespeare's imaginative world, as well as the different kinds of presence they have – direct, extensive, consistent, fragmentary, and more often, ghost-like, the elusive effect of epochal and co-authored intertextual palimpsests. They also explore the ways in which Shakespeare transforms everything he touches into something which is completely Shakespearean. Each time as if '*un*remebering' the original.

Maria Del Sapio Garbero, Roma Tre University

Pamela Bickley and Jenny Stevens, *Essential Shakespeare: The Arden Guide to Text and Interpretation*, Arden Shakespeare, London-New York, Bloomsbury, 2013, 343 pp., $24.95.

This book is presented, rather deceptively, simply as a tool for undergraduate students, a definition which fails to do it justice, though *Essential Shakespeare* certainly offers a very useful early approach to Shakespeare's works, also containing a useful glossary of metalinguistic terms. The book, in which fourteen of Shakespeare's plays are examined from fourteen different critical standpoints, is of great interest, not only to students.

Bickley and Stevens' study offers a range of the most challenging interpretative frameworks of Shakespeare criticism to date, from a Bakhtinian carnivalesque interpretation of *A Midsummer's Night's Dream* to a sociolinguistic approach to *Much Ado about Nothing*, from queer studies applied to *Twelfth Night* to psychoanalytic studies in the case of *Measure for Measure*, from a post-colonial perspective on *Antony and Cleopatra* to a deconstructionist interpretation of *Richard II* or a feminist approach to *The Winter's Tale*. The authors' interpretations of most plays, which are far from banal, offer a well-informed insight into the findings of recent criticism.

In the introduction, each chapter is described as having a similar structure, four sections plus one brief section on "Afterlives", in which each play is: 1. discussed within a different critical framework, 2. analysed in the early modern context, 3. subjected to close reading, 4. described in one or more productions. In the brief section on "Afterlives", which concludes each chapter, re-writings from neo-classical to contemporary are briefly mentioned. The principal aspect of each chapter, as already mentioned, is the interpretation of the play in question from one modern critical standpoint, while a second section analyses and clarifies relevant aspects of early modern staging and culture. The second section of each chapter is thus devoted to the func-

tion of: boy-actors (*Antony and Cleopatra*), the revenge motif in Elizabethan times (*Hamlet*), costumes in Elizabethan theatre in connection with sumptuary laws (*Richard II*), the Tudor myth (*Richard III*), early modern attitudes to madness and melancholy (*The Winter's Tale*) and an interesting analysis of the use of private theatre in *Cymbeline*, where the different theories of Tiffany Stern and Andrew Gurr are briefly but fruitfully discussed.

Chapters divide and multiply, creating a rich interplay of their themes. For instance, "Bakhtin's carnivalesque" opens the chapter on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, followed by a second paragraph on Ovid as a source of the play, and a third on rhyme, rhythm and metre.

In the chapter on *Much Ado about Nothing*, sociolinguistics offers a useful insight from a feminist perspective – shared by the authors – where the patriarchal vision of "a silent wife [as] a gift of the Lord" is challenged by a reflection on the power dynamics in the play; Beatrice's "exploit[ation of] the semantic elasticity of words" (p. 43) is shown as undermining the preeminence of male discourse by challenging the logic of its rhetoric.

In the chapter devoted to *Twelfth Night*, queer studies offer a fitting key to the problem of cross-dressing and an awareness of the existential problem involved in this process, while the specific aspect of gender studies enquiry into the myth of masculinity forms the basis for a sound analysis of *Macbeth*. Here the different conceptions of manhood presented by the characters are discussed in the second section; the violence inherent in the praise of martial values is analysed in both the main part of the chapter and in the section devoted to an analysis of Polanski's film, where the stress on blood and mindless slaughter is justly attributed to memories of Nazi attacks on Warsaw during Polanski's childhood, rather than to the lurid chronicle of his wife Sharon Tate's murder. The paragraph on the early modern context is devoted to analysing *Macbeth* "as a Jamesian play".

As mentioned above, *Measure for Measure* is read through the lens of psychoanalytic criticism, mostly Freud but with a mention of Lacan (especially through Belsey). The focus is on the masochistic strains in Isabella's attitudes, and – as often happens in criticism of this play – on her problematic silence following the Duke's marriage proposal. The section on early modern context focuses on echoes of the Bible in the text.

The impossible task of discussing *Hamlet* in less than twenty pages without recourse to platitudes is solved by focusing on the rise of the film in literary studies and the prominence critics now give to filmic interpretations. A brief survey ranging from Sarah Bernhardt's three-minutes *Hamlet* to Olivier's 1948 film, from Kozintsev's (1964) to Branagh's (1996), and quoting Peter Brook's opinion of the "sad history of Shakespeare on the screen" (p. 103), serves as the basis for the authors' discussion of the suitability of Shakespeare's works to the new medium, and indeed vice versa. As mentioned above, the early modern section is devoted to the revenge motif; the paragraph on a specific production is devoted to Almereyda's *Hamlet* (2000).

A couple of pages are rightly devoted to the portrayal of the Ghost in various films; the choice of how to present the spectral visions seen by the protagonists in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* is indeed a key point in the interpretation of these plays by different directors.

Referring back to the work of such critics as Coppélia Kahn and Jan Kott, the analysis of *King Lear* confronts the reader with a Marxist/Marxist-feminist reading, in which the patriarchal view of love and people as commodities is shown and found wanting. The performance chosen is Kozintsey's masterpiece *Korol Lir*; here – to quote just one example – the shot panning in onto the beggars' emaciated bodies adds poignancy to the poor naked wretches' speech, and is a strong visual statement of the effect of the whims of the powerful on the thousands of common people whose lives are destroyed in the process. A brief summary of the Quarto/Folio question, though it does not explicitly mention specific findings, shows the authors' awareness of the critical debate prominent in recent studies of both *Hamlet* and *King Lear*.

Post-colonial studies are applied to a reading of *Antony and Cleopatra*; critics such as C. C. Rutter, Loomba and Daileader are referred to in the first part, Jardine, Jean H. Howard, J. L. Gibson and Shapiro in the second. The all-male performance of the play at the Globe in 1999, with a 'muscular' thirty-nine year-old actor as Cleopatra (p. 205) directed by Giles Block, is used to explore further the transgressive elements in the play.

With the work of Hugh Grady and Terence Hawkes as a starting point, presentism, linked as it is to the 'inherently presentist' readings of post-colonial and feminist theory, is the tool used to work on *Othello*, together with an emphasis on Iago's performative language. The chapter concludes with an analysis of Orson Welles' famous production of *Othello*.

The problem of language is also rightly seen as central to *Richard II*. The play is interpreted from a deconstructionist viewpoint, together with an analysis of Shakespeare's verse: *Richard II*, with *King John*, is one of the two all verse plays in the Shakespearean canon; the survey sheds useful light on the general use of blank verse in Shakespeare and on its specific quality in this play. The production examined here is Deborah Warner's *Richard II* with Fiona Shaw in the leading role, seen as a provocative "means of liberating someone from gender" (p. 230).

New historicism is the tool for the reading of *Richard III*, with a useful survey of Tillyard's version as against neo-historicism. Dollimore, Sinfield, Jean H. Howard, Dutton, Richard Wilson and Stephen Greenblatt are aptly quoted; though, in this brief survey, there is no space to mention Lever's historical dismissal of the "chain of being" (which has grown "rusty", as Lever wrote in the seventies). A further paragraph on the sources (pp. 241ff.) precedes an analysis of the *Richard III* film by Loncraine, famously set in the thirties.

'British studies', together with neo-historicism and a post-colonial non-Anglocentric perspective, are used in the analysis of *Cymbeline*, while a feminist approach is applied to the reading of *The Winter's Tale*. This is one of

the most interesting chapters in the book; in just a few pages Shakespeare's sister is quoted, as famously imagined by Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*; the reader is then reminded of female authors' works mostly attributed to their brothers (Mary Lamb's and Henrietta Bowdler's) and of Mary Cowden-Clarke's imagined lives of Shakespeare's heroines (pp. 279-80). The work of Showalter and Belsey's is then mentioned, then Dusinberre's seminal book in the seventies, to arrive to McLuskie, Jardine, Ann Thompson and Janet Adelman. Applying Adelman's *Suffocating Mothers*, the concept of pastoral is examined, from the idealized male version shared by Leontes and Polixenes to the fruitful and joyous pastoral actually achieved in Perdita's scenes. The second paragraph examines ideas of madness and melancholy in early modern literature, aptly quoting Bright's and Burton's treatises on melancholy, but also noting how the tragic representation of Leontes' mad jealousy is influenced by comic writing, namely the Jonsonian humour plays (pp. 285-86). A useful analysis of the pastoral genre recurs also in the following paragraphs devoted to this play. Comment on the whole BBC 1980s project is based on Jane Howell's direction of *The Winter's Tale* for the BBC. The project (though, according to Holderness, "oppressive" as an agency of cultural hegemony) is righty remembered, as the only undertaking to include the entire Shakespeare canon.

The final chapter is a reading of *The Tempest* from the viewpoint of genre theory. The chapter opens with a presentation of *The Tempest* as tragicomedy or romance; the 'myth of lateness' aptly opposes the traditional idea of the play as a farewell to the stage by the aging playwright, and the fact that Shakespeare, as now known, wrote three further plays after *The Tempest* (the extant *Two Noble Kinsmen* and *Henry VIII*, both written in collaboration, as was *Cardenio*) and after his thorough revision of *King Lear* in the form now recorded in the First Folio. The examination of the firm belief expressed by many critics that the last plays contain extremely experimental and "daring theatrical ventures" (p. 308: Michael O'Connell is quoted here, but also Gordon McMullan, Russ McDonald and above all Edward Said's work *On Late Style*, difficult as Beethoven's last works, should be mentioned) is a rapid but effective presentation of the *status quaestionis*.

Two useful brief paragraphs on the masque in general, and as used in *The Tempest*, close the survey of early modern practice on stage.

Daniela Guardamagna, University of Rome Tor Vergata

Agnès Lafont, ed., *Shakespeare's Erotic Mythology and Ovidian Renaissance Culture*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2013, 224 pp., £60.00.

In the editor's words this volume "focuses on the process of textual myth-making, on the transmission and reinvention of classical and continental erotic mythology in Elizabethan and Jacobean texts".

No doubt the reader has an opportunity here to explore the various aspects in which Ovid's *Metamorphoses* did impact on European Renaissance culture, quite often following unexpected and very indirect or subterranean paths in the field of the fine arts, music, literature and drama, and in the development of taste and ways of living as well.

The book contains four sections, the two central ones dealing with some relevant Shakespearean texts: especially *Venus and Adonis*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *As You Like It*, *The Winter's Tale*. Other Elizabethan playwrights are mentioned, such as Marlowe, and sixteenth-century learning and aesthetics are duly taken into account through detailed discussion of translations, book printing and diffusion, and of the visual arts, mainly painting and decoration.

The approach is rather unusual as Ovid is not considered acting as a direct and well defined source, as one would expect, but as exerting a diffused and subtle influence, in some cases quite hidden and one would say undetectable. On the other hand, Ovidian sources at work in Shakespeare and his contemporaries are so well known and commented upon that there was scarce need of another study about it. The large bibliography and many references here are another proof of that in case the reader had any doubts.

The same happens with eros and its aspects in Shakespearean drama: rather than being examined and discussed *per se*, the theme is tackled through the lens of the multifaceted use of mythological material, sometimes straight from Ovid, more often connected with the most unexpected and even remote hints.

The idea behind it is that more than and beyond method there is influence, and that there are forces at work that in some way or another transcend conscious choices. Therefore the argument put forward appears to be that Ovidian culture was so strong in the Renaissance that scarcely any intellectual of some status would or could take no notice at all – a subtle texture of direct and ancillary but concomitant elements constantly flowed in unnoticeably anyhow.

In a way the critical method applied follows the hypothesis, in that it does openly privilege surprise and detection, and more than proving suggests similarities, analogies, consonance or equivalence, by which myths appear to constantly transform, according to the metamorphic Ovidian model. The risk of course is that one could make this too broad, if applied at large with indistinctions made to prevail on clear cut pictures and characters, here now and then seeming to merge into the common tapestry of ever-changing forms. In fact, coming to conclusions such as "stories have a capacity to mutate, merge and multiply in countless ways as they pass through the pens of poets" (p. 150) seems to add little to critical appreciation.

On the other hand, the idea that eros in Shakespeare becomes more intelligible if connected to the general appreciation of principles such as indistinction, transformation, masking, negation and a sense of an ever-changing

form, to be assimilated to his theory of drama and theatrical representation, has some ground and appears the most convincing point developed across these essays, provided one does not make it strictly depend, as it occasionally may seem, on a range of references so sundry as to possibly suggest "conflation, blurring of boundaries, indistinction, 'non finito'" (p. 4) as the only way to interpret the complexities of the Renaissance and the Shakespearean corpus itself.

The detailed information, the suggestive plates enclosed and the wide cultural perspective make this book a useful and rich resource for the scholar.

Giuseppe Massara, Sapienza University of Rome

Daniel Juan Gil, *Shakespeare's Anti-Politics: Sovereign Power and the Life of the Flesh*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, vi+176 pp., £55.00.

Daniel Juan Gil's thesis is deliberately provocative. The author of *Shakespeare's Anti-Politics* admits that the best recent criticism in Shakespeare studies has proved Shakespeare's intense engagement with politics. However, Gil contends, Shakespeare is not political after all. Far from being an enlightened champion of Tudor and Stuart absolutism, or, according to the alternate critical view, an advocate of civic republican virtues, Shakespeare in fact anticipates Michel Foucault's conception of 'bio-politics' and foreshadows Giorgio Agamben's reassessment of Carl Schmitt's idea of sovereignty in order "to launch a nihilistic critique of state power and a sustained exploration of a countervailing life of the flesh" (p. 2). Accordingly, the power of the fledgling nation-state is supposed to be omni-pervasive of subjective life, even of its most intimate aspects. Gil sees Shakespeare's strategy as being not directly confrontational. In the four plays here analyzed (*Julius Caesar*, *Measure for Measure*, *Othello* and *King Lear*) characters (and audience) are supposed to experience the abjection of their bodies when they are put face to face with the brutality of unmitigated political power. It is at these critical moments that, inadvertently fired by power, a key transformation occurs in which subjects reduced to flesh enter new relationships with the flesh of others. The vision in which Marc Antony wishes to mingle his blood with Caesar's through the medium of the swords used by the conspirators precipitates a civil war that causes bodies on the stage to interact in ways not admissible in any form of politically mediated life. In *Measure for Measure* the life of the flesh comes to the fore in acts of cannibalistic prostitution. In *Othello* Iago unveils the raw face of power which Venice has dislocated in the exceptional figure of the Moor, making visible the reversion of dramatic personae to physical bodies both in the two riots Iago starts in Cyprus and crucially in the assassination of Desdemona. A similar disintegration of

socio-political identities is made manifest in *King Lear* through the violence (the torture of Gloucester and the banishment of Lear, Edmund and Gloucester) and the masochistic sexuality the actors enact on the stage and share with the audience.

Overall, the analysis appears coherent with the theoretical sources on which Gil relies, but this merit only accentuates the teleologism deeply affecting his research. Gil seems to relapse into the idealistic precursor syndrome by perceiving in Shakespearean texts anticipations of modern and post-modern theories which add value to them. With the exception of an interesting discussion of the legal system in Shakespeare's time occupying a good portion of the second chapter dedicated to *Measure for Measure*, historicist preoccupations find no place in the book. One would be very interested, for example, in historical evidence concerning the reception of the plays which Gil focuses on. Had he provided the reader with substantial information relative to the audience reaction energized by the life of the flesh, as he puts it, staged at the Globe, one would not have remained with the impression of an academic exercise. To follow him on his favourite terrain, however, let's put the last (but not least) objection in interrogative form. Does Gil really find his sources still inspiring in a globalized era which incessantly reduces the power of nation-states in favour of non state actors? Does he still consider the ideas developed by his cherished critics indispensable for the endless task of actualizing Shakespeare?

Daniele Niedda, UNINT, Rome

Miguel Ramalhete Gomes, *Texts Waiting for History: William Shakespeare Re-Imagined by Heiner Müller,* Amsterdam-New York, Rodopi, 2014, 301 pp., €64.00 / $90.00.

When conflicts rage, or censorship squelches both creativity and critique, literature has two choices: to remain silent, or to rewrite itself. There are hardly works more politically engaged than Bertolt Brecht's *Antigone* or Christa Wolf's *Kassandra*, to mention just two east German authors who rewrote ancient myths to critique contemporary societies. At the center of Miguel Ramalhete Gomes's book, *Texts Waiting for History: William Shakespeare Re-Imagined by Heiner Müller*, is the greatest German dramatist of the twentieth century after Brecht, and his problematic relationship with the east German state. Heiner Müller's play *Die Umsiedlerin* (*The Resettler Woman*, 1961) was censored after only one performance, and the author was simultaneously expelled from the Writers' Association of the GDR. *Der Bau* (*Construction Site*, 1965), about the construction of the Berlin Wall, was never staged; and neither was *Mauser*, composed in 1970, and first performed in Texas in 1975.

The reason why *Texts Waiting for History* is included in this selection is its focus on Müller's many adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, which Gomes

reads as a way to portray the contemporary political circumstances in east Germany without incurring censorship. Shakespeare, indeed, had become part of Germany's cultural legacy – "unser Shakespeare" – at least since the Schlegel-Tieck translation of the 1820s. Shakespeare's works had been read-apted for the GDR's stage among others by Brecht with *Coriolanus* in 1951. In 1964 Shakespeare was officially declared a model to be uncritically emulated by each east German playwright. Simultaneously along and against the dictates of this cultural propaganda, Müller rewrote Shakespeare precisely to question and criticize, in other words to continue producing political drama, in hopes that future authors would not need to *rewrite* Shakespeare – or any other canonical author imposed by authoritarian regimes.

Texts Waiting for History is a revised version of Gomes's doctoral dissertation, the main purpose of which was to account for every use of Shakespeare in Müller's work. After a theoretical introduction dealing with questions of method and philosophy of history in two recent trends in Shakespeare studies – new historicism and presentism – the first part of Gomes's book focuses on the texts that were excluded from his study because their engagement with Shakespeare was only superficial (it is the case of minor dramatic adaptations, translations, poems and fragments). Chapters 2 through 5, however, consider Müller's most original and experimental reworking of *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Titus Andronicus* and *Coriolanus*. *Macbeth, nach Shakespeare* (*Macbeth, after Shakespeare*, 1972) draws on Holinshed as well as on Shakespeare, with a strong emphasis on history and violence. *Die Hamletmaschine* (*Hamletmachine*, 1977) is a postmodern nine-page play that bears little connection with the original *Hamlet*. *Anatomie Titus* (*Anatomy Titus*, 1985) returns to violence and history, which clearly are the lenses through which Gomes likes to explore Müller's aesthetics. Not coincidentally, parts of the book had already appeared in volumes focusing on violence, for example *Shakespeare and Conflict: A European Perspective* (eds Carla Dente and Sara Soncini, 2013), published by Palgrave Macmillan.

While attempting to show how Müller's modernizing of Shakespeare develops a theoretical form of reception that is relevant to Shakespeare studies, this comprehensive account of Müller's intertextual practices manages above all to shed light both on the German author and his creative method and the process of rewriting *per se*. In the last chapter, Gomes analyses Müller's references to Shakespeare during the period between the end of the GDR and the first years after the reunification of Germany, with a special focus on *Germania 3 Gespenster am toten Mann* (*Germania 3 Ghosts at the Dead Man*, 1995). Müller's last play is a return to the connection between *Hamlet* and the Wall, and centers on Brecht's updating of *Coriolanus*: "Shakespeare through Brecht, Brecht through Shakespeare" (p. 227).

However, Gomes has the merit, in this book as in his previous essays, of calling attention both to the afterlife of Shakespeare in the GDR, following in the steps of J. Lawrence Guntner and Andrew M. McLean (*Redefining*

Shakespeare: Literary Theory and Theater Practice in the German Democratic Republic, 1997), and to Müller's manifold and long-lasting engagement with Shakespeare, thereby completing what Roland Petersohn had started in 1993 with his *Heiner Müllers Shakespeare-Rezeption: Texte und Kontexte*, which of course could not take into account Müller's late production (he continued to compose and direct until he died in 1995). Moreover, Gomes makes his analysis available to the English speaking community – while Petersohn's studies on Shakespeare and Müller have never been translated. Other contributions on the topic in English are limited to book chapters or articles.

Although Müller was famous abroad even before the fall of the Berlin Wall, some of his plays inspired by Shakespeare have been translated into English only recently. The volume *Heiner Müller after Shakespeare* was published in 2012, translated and edited by Carl Weber (Professor Emeritus in the Department of Theater and Performance Studies at Stanford University and translator of *Hamletmachine and Other Texts for the Stage* and of *A Heiner Mueller Reader*) and Paul David Young. Not only does it make available for the first time *Macbeth after Shakespeare* and *Anatomy Titus Fall of Rome*, but it also includes *Shakespeare a Difference*, the text of an address Müller gave at a conference of Shakespeare scholars, *Shakespeare Tage*, in Weimar in 1988. He said: "Shakespeare is a mirror through the ages, our hope a world that he doesn't reflect anymore. We haven't arrived at ourselves as long as Shakespeare is writing our plays". Rewriting Shakespeare – as *Texts Waiting for History* claims – is the sign of the times' violence and lack of freedom. A future without Shakespeare and without rewriting might be a better future.

Stefania Porcelli, The Graduate Center, CUNY

Vin Nardizzi, *Wooden Os: Shakespeare's Theatres and England's Trees*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2013, xii+205 pp., €59.00.

The first thing to strike the reader of this book is its awkwardly puzzling title, then the genuine pleasure, the intellectual curiosity and the precise reasoning and style with which it has been written and researched. Completely original in its outcome, this study is also well rooted in recent and less recent scholarship about the English Renaissance and Shakespeare, as well as ecocriticism, and appears, in this latter case, to be a peculiar widening and reversing, although circumscribed to early modern England, of Robert Pogue Harrison's 1992 essay *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization*. If the first explored the imagination of forests in western thought as, precisely, the "shadow of civilization", this work points out the vital importance of trees and of wood for the survival and wellbeing of civilization in Renaissance England. A fact remarkably summed up in Arthur Standish's phrase "no wood no Kingdome", or in Francis Bacon's observation that the "[p]lanting

of countries is like the planting of woods". More in detail, this study links the economic history of forestry in England's enclosure crisis in the sixteenth century with the beginning of commercial drama performances within the newly built outdoor spaces – permanent theatres like the Rose, the Globe and the Fortune – in London's suburbs. The author reminds us that it is Shakespeare himself who calls the new kind of structure – with incredibly poetic and evocative power, now that we understand its context – "wooden O" in the prologue of *Henry V*.

The essay's starting point is Thomas More's description of the reallocation of trees in *Utopia* (1516) from their original place to new sites, seen here as an "eco-fantasie" – of colonial extraction and/or the reforestation of England – fueled by the, whether perceived or real, scarcity of "wood and timber" (*ligna*) in that time, and "a precursor to the utilitarian regime of fiscal forestry, which simplifie[d] a 'habitat' into the term 'natural resources'". Moreover, the author reveals an interesting analogy between More's transplanting of woods with the building techniques of the 'wooden Os' of Shakespeare's age. These were in fact prefabricated constructions, framed directly in the woods from which they had been extracted and fashioned, "before they were disassembled and conveyed to the performance site, where they were erected again as they had previously stood in the woods". The implications of this technique are manifold as to the significance of the material 'stuff' of London's Renaissance theatres. Their famous lack of perspective scenes and distinguishing scenographic elements gives a different meaning to this background: it is permanently wooden on the one hand, and it is "brought back into life" as living trees "whenever a character enters a wood". One may go as far as to assert that for the audience they worked as a kind of imaginative compensation to the shortage of wood and the consequent fear of deforestation, although this may seem slightly too far-fetched.

The plays and the theatres discussed in this book are Robert Green's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* at the Rose, Thomas Kyd's composite *Spanish Tragedy* at the Fortune, and Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *The Tempest* at the Globe. It is an unprecedented literary analysis in the field as 'eco-material' history from woodland to theatre, which also significantly testifies the recent 'material turn' in ecocriticism. The only aspect that is maybe missing in this work, and this is a general risk that 'material ecocriticism' runs, is the consideration and inclusion of traditional humanist elements, such as, in this particular case, the architectural history of England's Renaissance theatres, in other words, to mention whence *the plans* (i.e. the 'form') for these 'wooden Os' were taken from. A subject eminently treated in Frances Yates's 1969 study *Theatre of the World*, where we learn how James Burbage built the first permanent wooden theatre in London on the basis of some English sources of Vitruvius' fourth book of *De architectura* and Leon Battista Alberti's *De re aedificatoria*, thus linking Shakespeare's theatres not

only to the Roman theatre architecture of the first century b.C., but also to its ancient Athenian model, with all the ensuing enrichment in their cultural and anthropological implications.

Caterina Salabè, Sapienza University of Rome

Charlotte Scott, *Shakespeare's Nature: From Cultivation to Culture*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014, vii+257pp., €70.00.

Charlotte Scott is a Senior Lecturer in Shakespeare at Goldsmith's College, University of London, and this is her second book with Oxford University Press, after *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Book* (2007). Despite the only seeming plainness and fairly generic range of its title – *Shakespeare's Nature* (possibly echoing Dan Brayton's 2012 prizewinning essay *Shakespeare's Ocean*) – this work introduces us to this talented scholar's liquid play with different terms and concepts such as agronomy, cultivation, husbandry, economic history, language, culture, aesthetic arts, literature and ethics in a way that makes their uncertain landmarks and overlappings visible. This is not only interesting and pleasurable as a feature of critical style, but also reveals theoretical implications in the demarcation of boundaries between academic disciplines.

At the heart of this study lie the author's personal experience and intellectual teachings gained from "the terms and practices of husbandry", projected onto Shakespeare's life, language, work and time in a comparative perspective that goes from Cicero and Virgil to Francis Bacon and the husbandry manuals of the Elizabethan age. The subtitle *From Cultivation to Culture* clearly indicates that in Scott's view cultivation comes first. Thus the ability to know, master, manage and use nature in the services of human life (paraphrasing Joseph Glanvill's quotation from the introduction of the book) becomes the precondition and the model for the mastering of the mind and of every cultural and especially artistic achievement that leads to civilization. An idea beautifully expressed in Bacon's description of *The Advancement of Learning* as a "Georgickes of the mind".

Nevertheless, reading further into the book becomes at times confusing as far as a lucid definition of its conceptual topic and method is concerned. A slightly cumulative stylistic description conveys the impression that the study has not reached the necessary synthesis and clarity of thought, or of speech – which should be a priority aim of every scientific research – by overindulging in the pursuit of discursive liquidity as new value, rather than as critical metaphor for our factual postmodern reality. If the reader is asked to perform such a synthesis, in a kind of up-to-date participative open source scholarship, or 'thought-sharing', the reviewer's personal contribution to that would be the following: what this book wants to say is that true cultural renaissance and in particular the English Renaissance, with Shakespeare as

its best fruit, sprang from the earth rather than from letters. Furthermore, that Shakespeare himself (or his model) was more (that) of a husbandman, than (that of) a humanist. This particular aspect leads one to think that besides being an essay in literary criticism, this work is also a cultural claim trying to uplift responsible agrarian life at the top of human activities, and to create a new branch in the wide range of postmodern 'proud-isms' such as a spring British left-wing 'Rural Pride'. There would be no fault in that, and this may be one of the reasons why such a highbrow publisher as Oxford University Press has chosen to add this title to its collection. Moreover, the text represents an elegant and metamorphic kind of propaganda for the merely one hundred-year-old fascist, and the fifty-year-younger hippie exaltation of the virtues of communal agrarian life, which desperately needs to be restored and rehabilitated, with due mentality changes in our day, for reasons that are evident to most thinking people.

The book is divided into seven chapters discussing Shakespeare's work as a whole, but with a special focus on *The Sonnets*, *Henry V*, *Macbeth*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*. Its discourse can be plugged in the many-sided reality of contemporary ecocriticism, insofar as it collects the ethical wisdoms and cultural values of early modern husbandry through the work of Shakespeare, as a solution to the sustainability problem for our posterity and its future projects.

Caterina Salabè, Sapienza University of Rome

Margherita Pascucci, *Philosophical Readings of Shakespeare*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, 284 pp., £58.00.

In this book Margherita Pascucci provides us with a highly philosophical reading of Shakespeare's dramatic art, trying to explore, within and through four Shakespearean plays – *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear* and *Timon of Athens* – a theoretical constellation outlined by three main conceptual issues, namely, the self, value and power, a constellation that, risen at the beginning of the seventeenth century with Descartes' and Spinoza's speculation on subjectivity and moral action, results (*via* Marx) in Deleuze's, Foucault's and Benjamin's critique of social constraint as a form of power-knowledge from modernity to advanced capitalism.

According to Pascucci's analysis, Shakespeare's dramatic art can be considered as the hotbed of a new way of thinking man's relation to time, emotion, imagination, consciousness, property and wealth; more radically, Shakespeare's theatre concretizes on the stage the ontological subversion of (Foucauldian) 'representation', that is to say – following Foucault's epistemology (*The Order of Things*) – the peculiar configuration of knowledge that characterizes European philosophical thought during the seventeenth century (the so-called *âge classique*).

In what sense must this 'subversion' be understood? Shakespeare's theatre is not – Pascucci stresses – a mimetic *dis-play* of the state of things as they actually exist or as theory represents them in the realm of abstraction; on the contrary, it is the *play* in which the self-creation (or self-production) of reality (the being of reality in its innumerous forms) makes its appearance as an unexpected, unpredictable, and unique event.

In this way, the relation that Hamlet develops with himself during dramatic action shows us how selfhood is not a pre-determined 'conceptual persona', but rather the ever undetermined (ever "out-of-joint") outcome of human thinking conceived as an ever-changing process: as Pascucci says, selfhood is a "form of being productive of further being".

As it happens with subjectivity in *Hamlet*, so it occurs with sovereignty in *King Lear*: the king becoming the "thing itself" (as Poor Tom previously did) must not be intended as a mere image of degradation: the fall of dignity and power into poverty, misery and dereliction leads us to an exceptional discovery: the insurgence of being as existence. Since he is thoroughly dispossessed, the beggar king embodies the allegory (in the sense Walter Benjamin gives to this word) of human condition: the beggar's sole possessions are, in fact, his own mind and body. What is property in itself but the euphemistic name of the naked self? Thus, *Timon of Athens* answers that modern profit-credit system (the circulation of money) is the play that plays us all false; and since money is the metaphor that stands for society, the whole of collective life is but a gigantic lie.

Macbeth's aspiration to absolute power (to become a king) complements *King Lear*'s subversion of power: almost forerunning Spinoza's notion of *potentia* (the power-to-act), Macbeth discovers the implicit, yet salient feature, if not the hidden essence, of power: imagination, in other terms, the perilous and ghostly path that, bringing from desire to the act, enables and allows us to be what we will.

Sometimes, Pascucci's philosophical 'idiolect' could appear unnecessarily overwhelming to the reader; nevertheless, in the vast panorama of Shakespearean bibliography, this book stands out as an enriching contribution to critical debate, for it stimulates us to read Shakespeare's theatre not only as a literary genre but also, and foremost, both as a form of knowledge and an inexhaustible work of thought.

Massimo Stella, Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa

Paul Edmondson and Stanley Wells, eds, *Shakespeare beyond Doubt: Evidence, Argument, Controversy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013, xiv+284 pp., paperback edition £19.99.

Since Delia Bacon published *The Philosophy of Shakspere's Plays Unfolded* in 1857, in which she put forward the hypothesis that Shakespeare's plays

had actually been written by a 'school' of intellectuals including her namesake Sir Francis Bacon, countless books and articles have been published questioning the premise that William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon was the author of the works attributed to him and proposing an astonishing number of alternative candidates. For a long time what has come to be known as the 'Shakespeare Authorship Debate' remained the domain of amateurs and was largely neglected by professional scholars. Over the last few years, however, doubters have acquired unprecedented visibility and a higher profile thanks to initiatives such as the online petition "A Declaration of Reasonable Doubt", launched in 2007 by the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition and signed by prominent Shakespearean actors like Mark Rylance and Derek Jacobi, the release in 2011 of Roland Emmerich's film *Anonymous*, which depicts Shakespeare as a semi-illiterate buffoon and Edward de Vere, the seventeenth earl of Oxford, as the real author of the plays, as well as the creation of MA programmes on Shakespeare Authorship Studies in England at Brunel University and in America at Concordia University (Portland, Oregon). Partly as a consequence of these developments, many Shakespeare scholars have come to realise that simply ignoring the problem was not enough to make it go away, that it was necessary to adopt a more active strategy, and the essay collection *Shakespeare beyond Doubt*, edited by Paul Edmondson and Stanley Wells, is a very fine example of this new, energetic way of countering "a too-long-established heresy" (p. xiv).

The book comprises nineteen essays by twenty-two distinguished specialists that outline the history of the debate, review the different theses that have been proposed in the course of time, and supply comprehensive evidence proving "beyond doubt" that Shakespeare actually wrote Shakespeare. The "anti-Shakespeareans" – a term Edmondson and Wells prefer over "anti-Stratfordians" as more "accurate and honest" (p. xii) – are consistently addressed in a respectful and urbane manner. In the General Introduction, for example, the editors state that some of them are "persons of high intellectual ability fully conversant with the techniques of academic scholarship" (p. xii) and that "the authorship discussion is a complex intellectual phenomenon well worthy of objective consideration" (p. xiv). The serious style in which the doubters' theories are described and refuted, however, cannot – nor is it meant to – bestow any legitimacy upon them; on the contrary, it makes their lack of scholarly soundness appear, if possible, even more striking.

The volume is divided into three parts: part I, "Sceptics", looks at the main candidates that have been put forward in the place of Shakespeare, particularly Bacon, Marlowe and Oxford, but also at some "unusual suspects" (including "extreme" nominees such as Mary Sidney or Miguel de Cervantes) and at the unusual kind of evidence, based on cryptograms and anagrams, that has been employed to advocate their candidacies. Part II, "Shakespeare as Author", illustrates what we do know about William

Shakespeare, and the principal historical and documentary reasons for thinking that he wrote, sometimes in collaboration with other playwrights, the texts ascribed to him. Part III, "A Cultural Phenomenon: Did Shakespeare Write Shakespeare?", discusses the dynamics of the authorship controversy in contemporary culture, unearthing some of the political and psychological motivations behind it.

All the essays are brief and accessible. Often summarising their own ground-breaking research, the contributors accomplish a two-fold task: they expose the feebleness of the anti-Shakespeareans' contentions and simultaneously provide accounts of the most recent developments in various branches of Shakespeare studies, whose scope and interest go well beyond the authorship question. The essays by John Jowett, "Shakespeare as Collaborator", and MacDonald P. Jackson, "Authorship and the Evidence of Stylometrics", for example, outline the methodology of computational stylistics and demonstrate the collaborative nature of a number of plays in the Shakespeare canon – a perspective that has profoundly affected Shakespeare scholarship as a whole over the last years and that in itself disproves the majority of the anti-Shakespeareans' theories, typically propounding only single authors as alternatives to Shakespeare. The collaborative nature of the plays also shows that they must have been written by someone immersed in the life of the theatre, thus ruling out aristocratic contenders such as the earl of Oxford or Francis Bacon. This point is further reinforced by James Mardock and Eric Rasmussen who, in their "What Does Textual Evidence Reveal about the Author?", focus on the deft use of the doubling technique which can be found in every one of Shakespeare's plays – highlighting, among other things, that the astounding sixty-seven roles of *3 Henry VI* could be performed by just twenty-one actors – and convincingly conclude that this kind of structure could only be devised by a working theatre professional. But all the essays in the collection supply valuable insights both on the broader field of Shakespeare studies and on the authorship debate. Responding to the argument frequently upheld by anti-Shakespeareans that the gaps in the records of Shakespeare's life and writerly activity are particularly unusual, Andrew Hadfield ("Theorizing Shakespeare's Authorship") shows that such gaps are indeed very common in early modern biographical documentation, that we know much more about Shakespeare than about most of his contemporaries and that "all early modern authors have had attribution problems, which is hardly surprising in a time when many works, plays in particular, were not thought of as the exclusive property of their authors" (p. 66). And Stanley Wells in his masterly survey of "Allusions to Shakespeare to 1642" provides overwhelming evidence for Shakespeare's authorship, "to dispute [which] is to challenge the entire validity of historical research" (p. 87). The last essay in the collection, Paul Edmondson's "'The Shakespeare Establishment' and the Shakespeare Authorship Discussion", explores the various kinds of antagonism at the heart of present-day developments in the authorship con-

troversy, rejects the anti-Shakespeareans' claim that "Shakespeare Studies is an industry in denial" with "too much of a vested interest in the discussion" (pp. 225-26), and illustrates the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust's Authorship Campaign started in 2011 and led by Edmondson himself.

The book ends with an "Afterword" by James Shapiro which usefully summarises and comments on the main authorship topics addressed in the collection. As he already did in his outstanding *Contested Will: Who Wrote Shakespeare?* (2010), Shapiro points out that anti-Shakespeareans share with Shakespeareans a methodology ultimately based on post-Romantic assumptions about the autobiographical nature of creative writing – which was actually first introduced and embraced by professional Shakespeare scholars themselves – and urges fellow Shakespeareans to abandon such a perspective as the best way to counter the sceptics' movement. However, as anti-Shakespeareans do not really harbour "reasonable doubts" but rather a faith, no critical stance or strategy is likely to make them disappear any time soon – witness the publication of the essay collection *Shakespeare beyond Doubt?* (edited by the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition's chairman John M. Shahan and by Alexander Waugh, 2013) shortly after *Shakespeare beyond Doubt* and the ongoing debate on the internet and other media. At least, thanks to the invaluable work of Stanley Wells and Paul Edmondson, "responding to the next film, or the next campaign, or the next question posed about Shakespeare's authorship" will be "that much easier" (p. 240).

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Bart van Es, *Shakespeare in Company*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, xiv+357 pp., £26.99.

"Not a company keeper": this is how John Aubrey famously described Shakespeare in a note written down about sixty-five years after the playwright's death and based on the actor William Beeston's testimony. Aubrey later crossed out the note and, in his *Brief Lives*, asserted instead that Shakespeare was "very good company, and of a very ready and pleasant smooth wit" (p. 311). Neither of these statements, of course, can be considered as solid evidence for a biographical reconstruction of Shakespeare's character. They do, however, represent the two main, contradictory perspectives which can be detected throughout the history of Shakespeare criticism: on the one hand, a deep awareness of the unrivalled quality of the dramatist's achievement – what Coleridge termed Shakespeare's "still remaining uniqueness" (p. 304) –, which seems to set him apart from his contemporaries; on the other hand, an acknowledgement of the influence that early modern educational and cultural institutions, and particularly the working patterns of the theatre industry, had on him. In *Shakespeare in Company* Bart van Es brings together these two polarised positions, showing

that they are both correct. The Shakespeare who emerges from this book is, paradoxically, 'unique in company': his work is unparalleled partly because of the unparalleled material circumstances he enjoyed and because of the poets, playwrights and actors he met.

To demonstrate his thesis, van Es offers a lucid and ambitious re-examination of the whole of Shakespeare's career. The volume divides into four, chronologically arranged parts, each one analysing the different professional companies Shakespeare kept in the course of his life and how these affected his artistic output. Part 1, "Shakespeare as Conventional Poet-Playwright (1592-1594)", focuses on the writers – from Christopher Marlowe to Robert Greene, from Thomas Kyd to George Peele – with whom Shakespeare competed, and in some cases collaborated, at the beginning of his career, highlighting the "deep, fibrous intertextuality" (p. 28) and the "compositional habits" (p. 37) his early works share with those of his contemporaries. At this stage, van Es claims, Shakespeare was still a conventional and imitative writer, whose development seems to follow a preconceived model, partly established through the example of Ovid, which was common to many other poet-playwrights of his age.

The second part, "Shakespeare as Company Man (1594-1599)", is devoted to what, according to van Es, was the single most significant and transformative event in Shakespeare's development: his decision in 1594 to become a 'sharer' in the newly formed Chamberlain's Men. It is only after this date that Shakespeare's trajectory started to diverge radically from that of his fellow poets and dramatists. His new position allowed the playwright to exert an unprecedented control over the dramatic life of his plays and, most importantly, over casting. From that moment onwards, Shakespeare started to write his roles for specific actors, such as the great Richard Burbage and the energetic clown William Kemp – who were also sharers in the acting company – exploiting their peculiarities; and this, in its turn, enabled him to devise new techniques of characterisation and to create "psychological depth" (p. 98). In this period, Shakespeare ceased to take interest in the print publication of his work and his involvement with co-authorship waned. The key innovation in this second phase, however, is what van Es defines "relational drama": starting from *Richard II*, he contends, "the distinctive feature of Shakespeare's dramaturgy is the relationship between and within clusters of characters" (p. 119). In other words, the close relationship between the playwright and his performers made possible by the founding of a new, stable acting company gave rise to an original kind of drama, itself concerned with relationships. It is mainly thanks to Shakespearean characters' ability to interact that the audience can perceive them as three-dimensional 'personalities', and this distinguishes them both from Shakespeare's previous creations and from the humoral characters in the plays of contemporary dramatists such as Chapman or Jonson.

The longest and most engaging part of the book – "Shakespeare as Playhouse Investor (1599-1608)" – focuses on what the author identifies as

the third phase of Shakespeare's career, when the playwright became part-owner of the Globe. 1599, van Es argues, marked a second watershed that put Shakespeare in a position not only distinct from but exceptionally superior to that of any other contemporary dramatist. At the same time, especially after Will Kemp left the Chamberlain's Men in 1600, Richard Burbage became unquestionably the company's leading performer. The result was that the "partnership of equals" formed in 1594 was replaced by "a personal partnership between the pre-eminent actor and the pre-eminent poet of the age" (p. 162). This new, hierarchical arrangement provoked a further change in Shakespeare's compositional method: his plots became more and more built around their protagonists, so much so that in plays such as *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *Measure for Measure* the lead speaks more than thirty percent of the line total. The transformation, of course, was qualitative as well as quantitative: the investment in Burbage's exceptional talent led Shakespeare to experiment unprecedented forms of characterisation and, particularly after the creation of Hamlet, to explore in ever new ways "that within which passes show" (pp. 239ff). But there were also other actors in the company for whom Shakespeare crafted purposely tailored roles, and van Es devotes a lengthy, stimulating chapter to Robert Arnim, Will Kemp's successor as principal comic performer of the Chamberlain's Men, whose individual style of clowning and whose own writings – especially *Fool upon Fool* and *Quips upon Questions* – inspired a whole series of Shakespearean 'melancholy' fools such as Touchstone, Feste, Thersites, Lavatch and, of course, the Fool in *King Lear*.

The fourth and final part of van Es's book, "Shakespeare in the Company of Playwrights Again (1608-1614)", concentrates on the last period of the dramatist's career, when, after the composition of *Coriolanus*, yet another metamorphosis in his dramaturgy can be detected. A number of interpretive hypotheses have been put forward by successive generations of critics in order to explain the origins of Shakespeare's late style. Having taken into account many of these explanations, and having shown their respective shortcomings, van Es suggests that the crucial factor can be identified, once again, in a shift in Shakespeare's daily pattern of work and in the company he kept. 1608 was, among other things, the year in which the Blackfriars venture started; contrary to the Globe venture, however, the controlling syndicate of this indoor theatre was dominated by men with business interests in the investment rather than by performers, and, consequently, the investment itself "in fact, crystallized a separation between housekeepers and mere actors that had been in progress for some time" (p. 258); moreover, because of a severe outbreak of plague that same year, all London playhouses were closed, almost without interruption, for over two years. These events must have loosened Shakespeare's connections with the acting profession. If, as Russ McDonald affirmed in *Shakespeare's Late Style* (2006), one of the distinctive qualities of Shakespeare's last plays is a weakening of "the link between

speech and speaker", this could reflect, according to van Es, "a weakening of the link between the players and Shakespeare himself" (p. 255). The events of 1608, then, prompted a reversal of the watershed of 1594. This helps to explain why Shakespeare in his last phase resumed, to some extent, the practice of his first phase: he worked, once again, "more as a poet than as a director of actors" (p. 262) and the company he kept became mainly that of other writers. Their presence is evident in the recurring representation of author figures in the romances – ranging from John Gower as Chorus in *Pericles* to the 'playwright' Prospero in *The Tempest* – as well as in the re-emergence of co-authorship, particularly with John Fletcher, his successor as principal playwright for the King's Men and a "shaping influence" (p. 265), van Es argues, even before the beginning of their collaboration.

Shakespeare in Company offers a meticulously researched synthesis of existing Shakespeare scholarship as well as some fresh insights on the playwright's artistic development. Taken together, Aubrey's contradictory statements provide van Es with a "useful paradigm" that enables him to interpret Shakespeare's achievement as an unmatched "combination of integration and difference" (p. 311).

Laura Talarico, Sapienza University of Rome

Chris Laoutaris, *Shakespeare and the Countess: The Battle That Gave Birth to the Globe*, London, Fig Tree, 2014, xvii+503 pp., £20.00.

Shakespeare and the Countess is a well-researched and intriguing work of detection. Chris Laoutaris uncovers the story of how, in 1596, the Lord Chamberlain's Men's plans for a theatre of their own in the Blackfriars district were thwarted by the formidable Lady Elizabeth Russell, self-styled Dowager Countess of Bedford. In November that year the Countess, who lived in the same area, successfully submitted a petition to Queen Elizabeth I's Privy Council, which prevented the opening of the newly built, state-of-the-art playhouse. According to Laoutaris, this episode nearly destroyed Shakespeare's career at the time but, in the long run, contributed to his success: forced to find a different location, the Chamberlain's Men moved to Bankside, where they built the Globe. Had they been able to use the new indoor theatre in 1596, Laoutaris argues, Shakespeare might have developed the style of the romances "Much earlier, and perhaps we would not now have the great tragedies – *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth* – which were produced in the first six years after the opening of the Globe" (p. 415). In other words, we would not have Shakespeare as we know him today.

The Countess's petition is not in itself a new find. Discovered in the 1830s by the Shakespearean critic, and notorious forger, John Payne Collier, it has been known to scholars for a long time. Unfortunately, however, as Collier decided to improve on it by fabricating a 'counter-plea' bearing the

name 'Will[ia]m Shakespeare' which was revealed in 1860 to be spurious, the petition's authenticity was also questioned. It was subsequently proved to be genuine (it is now regarded as an accurate contemporary copy of the original address to the Privy Council) but, because of its association with the infamy of the Collier forgeries, it "dropped out of public consciousness" (p. 6). Chris Laoutaris wishes to repair the damage done by Collier supplying further, compelling evidence that the petition is authentic; but, most of all, he focuses on a specific, and rather surprising, aspect of the document: its thirty-one signatories include Shakespeare's patron, George Carey, second baron Hunsdon, and Richard Field, his fellow Stratfordian and publisher of the immensely popular *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. This looks like a disconcerting act of disloyalty. "What could have possessed these men, who by all accounts were damaging their own interests in their support of Elizabeth Russell, to turn against Shakespeare?" (p. 7). And who was the woman that managed to convince them?

In order to solve these enigmas, Laoutaris reconstructs the lives of Lady Russell's co-petitioners and unravels their relationships, thus introducing his readers to a varied and fascinating cast of characters and offering them a vivid picture of the whole Blackfriars neighbourhood in Shakespeare's time. He shows that many of the signatories were connected with St Anne's Church in the Blackfriars, a hub of Puritan zeal and Lady Russell's centre of operations, where Richard Field served as a sideman and churchwarden – a circumstance which contributes to explain his 'betrayal'. The greater part of the book, however, is devoted to Shakespeare's fearsome adversary, Lady Elizabeth, a "woman who broke […] spectacularly with contemporary rules of female conduct" (p. 7), whom Laoutaris undertakes to rescue from oblivion and whose reputation he endeavours to redress.

Born in 1540, Elizabeth was the daughter of the humanist scholar and religious reformer Sir Anthony Cooke, who had been tutor to Edward VI and, convinced that "women are as capable of learning as men" (p. 24), ensured that Elizabeth and her four sisters received a high standard education, exactly like their brothers – so much so that their home, Gidea Hall in Essex, was praised by the Cambridge scholar Walter Haddon as a "little university" for women (p. 23). Elizabeth was married, and widowed, twice: first to Thomas Hoby, the English translator of Castiglione's *Il cortegiano* and ambassador to France, who left her the house in the Blackfriars; then to John Russell, heir of the earl of Bedford, who predeceased his father and thus never inherited the title – a detail which did not prevent Elizabeth from calling herself the 'Dowager Countess'. Exposed to radical religious ideas from her earliest youth, Lady Russell was a committed Puritan activist all her life and, as the sister-in-law of William Cecil, Lord Burghley, she was extremely well-connected with the court. Thanks to Chris Laoutaris's extensive archival research, this neglected figure emerges as a woman of uncommon erudition and indomitable will, "a protector of orphans and an early champion of

women's rights": someone to whom "warfare had become second nature" (p. 8). But not only does Laoutaris re-assess the role played by Lady Russell during her lifetime, he also takes care of her 'afterlife' (cf. "Epilogue: Afterlife of a Murderess"). Outside of specialist circles, today the Dowager Countess is mostly remembered as the 'Wicked Lady' who killed her own infant son and whose ghost haunts Bisham Abbey, the Hoby seat in Berkshire; Laoutaris demonstrates that there is no evidence to support these legends and decidedly rejects all the allegations against his heroine.

Given the space devoted to Lady Russell's biography, the title *Shakespeare and the Countess* is partly misleading. Although the author sets out to solve the puzzles posed by Elizabeth Russell's petition concerning Shakespeare's career, Shakespeare himself is a secondary figure in the overall drama reconstructed in the volume. Chris Laoutaris does however put forward some interesting hypotheses on the influence the unconventional Countess might have exerted on the Bard's work and on the creation of some of his characters. He suggests for instance that, claiming his revenge, Shakespeare probably embedded allusions to Lady Elizabeth's violent feats in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and, as other critics have also maintained, that he parodied her son, Thomas Posthumous Hoby, through the Puritanical Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*. But Laoutaris's main contention is that the playwright used Lady Russell as the model for the Dowager Countess of Roussillon in *All's Well That Ends Well*, a character defined by George Bernard Shaw as "the most beautiful old woman's part ever written" (p. 8). If this was the case, Shakespeare may have sensed the pivotal and, on balance, positive role the Countess had unwittingly played in shaping his artistic activity and legacy; he may have realised that his adversary's machinations had turned out to be a *felix culpa.*

Laura Talarico, Sapienza University of Rome

Peter Cochran, *Small-Screen Shakespeare*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013, 531 pp., £59.99.

"*Small-Screen Shakespeare* is a guide to all the Shakespeare productions available for viewing on computer or TV". The notes on the back cover of Peter Cochran's book begin with a statement that cannot be taken seriously: a staggering number of Shakespeare productions from all over the world are now available on YouTube and no individual researcher (or, indeed, team of researchers) can claim to have watched and catalogued them all. Of course, Cochran has only listed and analyzed items that he has personally seen, or at least heard of, and his 'world view' is very much Anglo-centric. He takes great pride in having unearthed a Peruvian *El Rey Lear* (dir. Edgar Saba, 1999) on YouTube, and shares with us his discovery that "acting in Peru is just as good as anything to be found in London […] if not better" (p.

313). However, about eighty percent of his entries are dedicated to Anglo-American TV productions and big screen films that have been released on DVD and can thus be viewed on small screens.

The book is divided into five parts. Part 1 focuses on Orson Welles, Franco Zeffirelli, Laurence Olivier, and Kenneth Branagh. So much has been written about the 14 Shakespeare films of these directors that one can hardly expect ground-breaking new readings in the 41 pages Cochran devotes to them. A former RSC actor himself, the author has an eye for details of performance that may have escaped the non-professional viewer – for example, the foregrounding of Gertrude (Glenn Close)'s realization that she has been poisoned in Zeffirelli's *Hamlet*. He is less reliable when he offers his own interpretation of fairly complex Shakespearean characters: "Hamlet is a charismatic serial killer" (p. 28).

The bulk of the book is devoted to part 2, in which the author catalogues big screen and TV versions of individual plays. Again, his comments are often helpful and illuminating when he can draw on his own experience as a theatre actor. He is clearly more at ease with TV versions of stage performances than with films. Thus, for example, the entries on Michael Bogdanov's *Wars of the Roses* (1990) are especially interesting for readers who may consider watching those flawed but exciting productions of the Histories, but the entry on Grigori Kozintsev's *Hamlet* (1964), a film Cochran admires, is too sketchy and unfocused to be of any real use for prospective viewers.

Parts 3 (loose screen adaptations of the plays) and 4 (Shakespearean references in non-Shakespearean films) deal almost exclusively with films that had already been included in Richard Burt's (ed.) *Shakespeares after Shakespeare* (2007) and in Marcus Pitcaithly's *Shakespeare on Film: An Encyclopedia* (2010). No good reason is offered for the inclusion of two theatre reviews (of Ingmar Bergman's *Hamlet* and Peter Hall's *Antony and Cleopatra*) as part 5.

In his introduction, Cochran claims to have written his book for the "tiny minority [that] take perverse pleasure in putting Shakespeare's plays on, or in going to see his plays when they're put on" (p. 6). The needs of his chosen addressees would have been better served if he had abandoned his overambitious attempt at comprehensiveness in favour of in-depth analyses of a limited number of televised stage productions.

Mariangela Tempera, University of Ferrara

Farah Karim-Cooper and Tiffany Stern, eds, *Shakespeare's Theatres and the Effects of Performance*, Arden Shakespeare, London, Bloomsbury, 2013, 296 pp., paperback edition €28.60.

'Spectators', 'listeners', 'assembly', 'audience' are different ways to refer to the Renaissance playgoers, each privileging a sensory sphere over the others. Complementing the traditional view of the primacy of the aural dimen-

sion in Renaissance theatre, this collection of essays explores the range of senses addressed by the theatrical performance, together with the related conventions that may be lost to a contemporary audience. Divided into three sections, the essays examine the fabric of early modern theatres, the technologies of the body and the sensorial complexity of the stage.

In the first part, Tiffany Stern analyses the role of Shakespeare's master-metaphor, the *theatrum mundi*, in its physicality, interpreting the theatrical building as a prop. Next, Gwilym Jones reviews the effects required for the staging of storms, particularly for the 'dropping fire' of *Julius Caesar*, retrieving the supernatural expectations engendered by the convention in the early modern playgoer; *The Tempest*'s stage directions are seen as unusual for their depiction of lightning as a sound effect, a strategy that creates the possibility for the storm to echo throughout the play. Natalie Rivere de Carles then addresses the shifting role of arrases, clothes, curtains, hangings and veils, as objects that used to signal the need to substitute eyesight with the sight of the mind; textile props performed a range of functions: they could anticipate the genre of a play, represent visual conventions or even draw attention on a character's emotional state.

The second section features Lucy Munro's essay on the use of stage blood and false limbs on the early modern stage as being related to the body's ontological status, always midway between the physical and the symbolic. The spectacularization of the body on the Elizabethan stage was in no way an example of proto-naturalism: the crudeness of gory scenes and amputated limbs was always linked to a sense of the cosmic forces involved in human affairs. Andrea Stevens treats cosmetic transformations, or 'paint', such as Martius' sanguinary appearance in *Coriolanus*, in relation to blushing, showing how 'paint' was another way to materialize anxieties about false appearances. In "Costume, Disguise, and Self-display", Bridget Escolme starts from the parodic value assumed by disguising after the Restoration to illustrate the readiness with which a change of clothes ensured a shift of identity. In this way the author highlights the difference between a contemporary notion of identity and the early modern one, which did not assume the existence of a truer self hidden beneath clothing, so that the *cucullus* – the hood – could indeed make the *monachum*. On the other hand, disguises were used to stage concerns about the vulnerability of the great and a simultaneous need for protection. Paul Menzer, then, explores the minor role played by print in theatre, in which scrolls were handwritten, placing the early modern stage between "textual multiplicity and scriptural singularity".

In part 3, Bruce Smith follows the complex circulation of sound between the different areas of the stage, particularly in relation to the stage directions of 'within' and 'without'; while the former disconnects sound from vision, the latter aligns them. Holly Dugan focuses on how the actual smells of the theatres were used to build 'smellscapes' evoking specific occasions, such as Bartholomew's Fair. Farah Karim-Cooper closes the

collection with a contribution on metaphors of taste and, more generally, on the tactile dimension of theatregoing; the second section of her essay examines onstage kisses and the anticipations they portended for the early modern audience. Evelyn Tribble's coda, finally going back to the sense of sight, shows how sight was intended as a creative act, always subject to manipulation and error, thus questioning the accountability of vision in a way specific to the early modern stage.

Maria Grazia Tonetto, Sapienza University of Rome

Bridget Escolme, *Emotional Excess on the Shakespearean Stage: Passion's Slaves*, Arden Shakespeare, London-New York, Bloomsbury, 2014, 302 pp., paperback edition €33.89.

Moving along the boundary of historical difference, Escolme explores the gap between early modern views on the expression of emotions and contemporary canons of propriety. Her examination of recent Shakespearean productions brings to light how the gap between the cultural constraints that were operative upon emotions in Shakespeare's times and in the twentieth/twenty-first centuries affects interpretation.

The first chapter focuses on *Coriolanus* and the problem of the warrior's anger. While Plutarch ascribes Martius' choleric temper to the lack of a fatherly education that made him socially unskilled, recent productions, such as Yukio Ninagawa's or Dominic Dromgoole's, are clearly conceived within a post-Freudian outlook, for which anger results from the repression of a psychological need related to the mother. Ralph Fiennes' filmic version asks the viewer to consider anger as the soldier's 'spontaneous efficiency': as the way a warrior stays alive. Being equated with his functional anger, Martius becomes a man whose purpose and value are decreed by the society which can make use of him.

The second chapter addresses the problem of laughter and its excesses in early modern drama. While a twenty-first-century audience may be disturbed by the drive to laugh at tragic figures, an early modern audience may have laughed without reserves. The author considers Elizabethan theories on laughter in its relation to pity, and its power to create and undo communities. The exhibition of mad figures on the early modern stage may have been intended as a partly comic show, in the absence of hints for interpretations based on shame. Escolme, then, examines contemporary productions of *Twelfth Night*, particularly Tim Crouch's *I, Malvolio*, which asks the audience to consider the cruel excesses of the laughter excited by the monologue.

Chapter 3 considers love and its excesses in *All's Well* and in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Prompting the lovers to trespass the boundaries of social propriety, love is notably an excessive passion. However, Escolme points out a basic

difference between the early modern notion of love – always contaminated by the somatic nature of the passion – and the twentieth-century tendency to separate it from lust. Helena's and Cleopatra's loves contradict current notions of maturity and coldness, a reason why contemporary productions show an anxiety over the excessive power of feelings, and, in the case of *Antony and Cleopatra*, have anachronistically stressed the gap between the Queen's theatrical excessiveness and a supposedly more authentic personal plainness.

Chapter 4 is concerned with grief and the cultural limits of its acceptability. Although the moderation of grief was crucial to the early modern Christian ethics of a cosmologically god-given state of things, early modern theatre depended on depictions of excesses of grief and sorrow for the achievement of dramatic pleasure. Too long or too passionate a mourning was considered to adumbrate a lack of faith in redemption, whereas a contained grief for the dead was everyone's religious duty. While there is continuity in the notion that excessive sorrow could lead to mental illness, a contemporary audience is not conditioned by philosophical or religious exhortations to moderate its outward expression. With reference to *Henry VI*, *Richard III* and *Hamlet*, the book considers the relationship between grief and action, particularly political action. In the *Henry VI* plays, grief is seen as an obstacle to action, unless it changes its nature into anger. In *Richard III*, women's grief turns active, as the language of curse that springs from it seems to precipitate Richard's downfall. Roxana Silbert's 2012 production for the Royal Shakespeare Theatre exploits concepts of movement and stasis, having Margaret and Elizabeth lie on the floor, so that the active, obstructive role of excessive grief in the play is foregrounded. Turning to recent productions of *Hamlet*, Escolme remarks how the question of authenticity becomes more and more relevant to political contexts in which the expression of one's unhappiness or uneasiness is prohibited and the State polices one's relationship and outward manifestations. A rejection of negative feelings seems to be common to Claudius' kingdom and some 'seemingly' democratic regimes, imposing a compulsory happiness or an easy way of drowning sorrow with alcohol over their subjects.

Maria Grazia Tonetto, Sapienza University of Rome

Ralph Hertel, *Staging England in the Elizabethan History Play: Performing National Identity*, Farham, Ashgate, 2014, 271 pp., €77.51.

Situating Shakespeare's historical plays within the context of early modern non-fictional writings and cultural materials, the book traces the role of theatre in the transition from the concept of nation as a realm personified in its ruler, to one identified with a geographical space and the community of its people. After a review of the main positions on the emergence of the idea

of a nation – the primordialist, modernist, and ethno-symbolist approaches – Hertel traces the emergence of nationalism in the late sixteenth century. Engaging the audience in imagined communities and asking them to consider and judge kings and politics, theatre was crucial in shaping a new national idea.

Essential, in Hertel's view, was "the cartographic turn": cartography produced a space removed from the individual's psychological dimension, a space visually and verbally homogeneous, which gave actual existence to the representation of a nation that coincided with its spatial borders. The human figures that decorate sixteenth-century maps are the sign of an attempt to re-humanize an all too objective and cold national space.

Maps were also threatening tools, which served the definition of private property: as such, they are used in *King Lear* – in which land is envisaged as a possession to be handed on almost as a physical transmission, with disastrous effects – and in *Henry IV Part 1*, in which the map features as the main tool of the conspirators. In Hertel's view, *Henry IV Part 1* mirrors the new cartographic turn in the width and swiftness of the characters' journeys, which "hardly accord to human scale" but presume the bird's-eye view of the map. Quite in the same way, *Richard III* is tied to a geographical perspective: while the play remains London-centred, the charismatic Richard holds the scene of power firmly, whereas, as the play shifts towards Bosworth Fields, Richard is belittled in a growing vision of the national dimension of history. Richmond's relative weakness as a character accords with the shifting poise from the monarch to the nation as the root of authority.

Part III is devoted to religion and its role in the formation of a national identity, fostered by the many controversies and turns that changed the picture of the sixteenth century. According to the author, *King John* is the play that embodies the need for a new national unity that downplays religious dissention in favour of a nationalized religion.

Part IV analyses the semantic shift of the word 'nation' from the idea of a noble descent to the general population. A debate on the 'commonwealth' granted the emergence of an idea of political authority as being rooted in a community of people. Accordingly, *Henry VI Part 2* is seen to embody anxieties over the basic instability of such an idea of nation, exhibiting its cracks in the class conflict that opposes the common people, the upper classes, and the minor landed gentry.

The last section concentrates on gender and the anomaly of female rule. While Elizabeth's reign created a rift between the king's two bodies – which, in the author's view, is best captured by Marlowe's *Edward II* – a tradition ascribing female qualities to England along with a political imagery of a basically masculinized English people was strengthened. In this light, the book implies, nationalist views of authority can be seen as a means to contain anxieties about the female monarch and her body.

Maria Grazia Tonetto, Sapienza University of Rome

Lois Potter, *The Life of William Shakespeare: A Critical Biography*, Chichester, Wiley-Blackwell, 2012, 497 pp., £69.95 / 87.50, paperback edition £22.99 / 28.80.

Potter's biography explores Shakespeare's life chronologically and in fact confirms how little we know about his personal life and yet reading it we become more familiar with the particulars of the period in which he lived and thus perhaps closer to an understanding of the mind which produced the drama and poems. Relocating Shakespeare in his own time the author succeeds in reconstructing events and conjecturing – but always on solid documented facts – how these may have influenced the playwright and poet. Lois Potter's own experience as a theatre scholar and reviewer emerges clearly in the noteworthy observations on Shakespeare's contemporaries and possible collaborators, as well as on the role of actors and audiences in the shaping of the plays. It is worth mentioning that the recent revised edition of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* edited by Potter herself (Arden 2015) contains a long and stimulating introduction in which, amongst other things, the question of collaboration is opportunely investigated and inserted in the broader question of authorship and the stage history of the play, including issues related to casting, adaptation and performance, is very closely examined. The punctual analysis of aspects concerning the status of collaborative plays and theatrical history and theory further confirms the editor's exceptional competence in these matters.

The extraordinarily detailed and documented information surrounding the world of Shakespeare from his earliest days – including speculation on matters such as who may have attended his christening – is certainly a tribute to research even if it inevitably fails to give us absolute certainties; yet the biography is praiseworthy for accomplishing the task of putting together all known 'proofs' of Shakespeare's doings through his transactions and through recorded references to him by contemporaries. The most appealing part of this study however is the reflection on Shakespeare's production: from the economic and political influence on the publication of the plays themselves to the meticulous and often original analyses of the single works which often provide fresh hypotheses.

The strength of Potter's book lies in the vivid and accurate picture of theatre activities and in her critical acumen when approaching the texts more than in the unquestionably scholarly attempt to reconstruct the life of the man William Shakespeare.

Maria Valentini, University of Cassino

Simonetta de Filippis, ed., *William Shakespeare e il senso del tragico*, Napoli, Loffredo Editore, 2013, 317 pp., €14.50.

This volume collects contributions to a Shakespearean conference organized by the University of Naples "L'Orientale" in 2012. The main theme,

Shakespeare's sense of the tragic, is approached from various perspectives which range from a more comprehensive view on the philosophy of the tragic during the Renaissance, to more specific sections concentrating on the tragic gaze, adaptations and rewritings of Shakespeare's works and two final parts which deal more directly with stage performances and Shakespearean directors, actors and actresses.

The opening paper written by the editor Simonetta de Filippis lucidly emphasises the innovative nature of Shakespearean tragedy, a tragedy of men with flaws and frailties, no longer victims of God's wrath but rather tragically responsible for their own fate. The sense of uncertainty and precariousness which characterizes aspects of the Renaissance is observed through the other papers which make up this first section, through examinations of *Richard II* and the metaphor of the mirror as a tool for attaining outer knowledge and reflecting on identity, of the role of passions both in the tragedies and the comedies and of Marlowe's Faustus whose thirst for knowledge is compared to Hamlet's desire for self-knowledge. The section closes with a detailed analysis of King Lear as a father more than a king, and a more general reflection on the Aristotelian idea of the tragic intended as a particular narrative form and a specific series of events.

King Lear is also at the centre of the opening two contributions in the section concerning the tragic gaze. The first minutely analyses the father/daughter relationship, which Shakespeare was to develop further in his romances, and the search for motherly care – together with the acknowledgement of its lack – in association with the storm scenes. The theme of filial *pietas* is interestingly explored also through examination of significant artworks. The tragedy of Lear is seen, in the second paper, as deriving from a breakdown in communication: Cordelia's silence and her "nothing" are shown to give rise to the ensuing confusion and manifestations of cruelty, a cruelty which finds expression through the abundant animal imagery present in the play. Imagery, this time of an erotic nature, is next explored in a study on *Othello* which deals with the concept of obscenity both in its sense of indecency and in that of taking place off-stage – outside and beyond the scene. The audience is invited to gaze at what happens on stage and, at the same time, to turn away from the occurring monstrosities. Gaze is again central in the concluding paper, this time with a captivating analysis of the Sleeping Beauty myth; some Shakespearean females are seen as the object of a desiring male gaze whilst in a position of submission because they are asleep, or lying down or in a state which appears to be between life and death.

A form of Shakespearean transcodification is presented in an appealing analysis on "Digital Shakespeare" in which the author comments on the implications of the interactive mode provided by the web. This is investigated with respect to the Shakespearean text and particularly to the sense of the tragic which traditionally requires an extended period and instead needs to be strongly reduced when expressed through the internet. From

transcodification to transposition we might say in the next contribution on Shakespeare in Bollywood. *Othello* and *Macbeth* are investigated through their Indian versions *Omkara* and *Maqbool* by Vishal Bhardwaj demonstrating how the tragic sense of Shakespeare's plays can be transposed into a contemporary Indian setting where modern politics and corruption echo their original counterparts. Auden's famous *The Sea and the Mirror* is the object of a paper exploring issues of Shakespearean rewritings. The tragic sense in *The Tempest* is expressed in this poem with reference to the tragic events of the forties, and the individual Shakespearean characters are acutely described with Caliban significantly obtaining the final monologue as the one embodying – according to the poet – man's true nature. The closing contribution to this section is devoted to the monologues of Tim Crouch where particular emphasis is given to minor characters with a view to demonstrating that history does not belong to heroes. Apart from the meticulous approach to Crouch's narration, the paper interestingly contextualizes its main focus through the so-called 'Mobility studies' introduced by Stephen Greenblatt and other scholars in 2010 which advocate that in dealing with cultural processes what should be taken into account is the mobility and fluidity of cultural traditions and identities.

Three contributions concentrating on Italian stage performances, stirred by Shakespeare, compose the penultimate section of this volume. The first introduces us to the production by the Neapolitan actor and playwright Giovanni Piscitelli, *Rosalina: ovvero l'incubo di una notte di fine autunno*, which gives body and substance to the very slight figure of Rosaline in *Romeo and Juliet*. The specificity of this play and of its protagonist is that it gains inspiration from both the Shakespearean text and John Ford's *'Tis a Pity She's a Whore*; in fact, the analysis of Piscitelli's play is preceded by a rich investigation into the sense of the tragic in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries precisely through a comparison of the two works which both make use of the eye metaphor as a means for perception of reality. *Hamlet*, as mirror of modernity, is identified, in the second paper, also as a reflection of what Lyotard has defined the "postmodern condition". The rewritings of *Hamlet* by Carmelo Bene and Federico Tiezzi – which are exhaustively commented upon – function as a kind of deconstruction of the traditional tragic element. Both playwrights find in Shakespeare's most famous play the ideal, and possibly only true, subject for their own research into the nature of the tragic and the possibility of its staging. Finally, *Totò, principe di Danimarca* by Leo de Berardinis invites us to reflect upon the possibilities of mixing the comic with the tragic. De Berardinis' production seems to show us that this is not only possible but can produce most effective results. The Italian playwright exhibits highbrow and lowbrow cultures alongside each other in all aspects of his work, from language to setting and music. Different acting styles mingle and the play closes on the notes of Verdi's *Falstaff* as if to remind us of the burlesque nature of our universe.

The closing section of this book provides us with brief personal viewpoints of directors and actors/actresses. Laura Angiulli tells us of the different types of power and forms of evilness exhibited through her direction of *Othello*, *Macbeth* and *Richard III*, initially produced as a trilogy and later as individual plays. The actor Giovanni Battaglia recounts his experiences in interpreting Iago and Michelangelo Dalisi – who is a director as well as an actor – comments on the comic and tragic elements which are frequently combined in Shakespeare and which he accentuates in his own version of *Hamlet*, *Per Amleto*, a play which he centres around the concepts of memory and oblivion. Alessandra D'Elia, an actress who considers Shakespeare the richest source for any performer, stresses her own personal reaction to the female characters she has impersonated whereas Stefano Jotti recalling Peter Brook stresses the extreme power of words in Shakespeare's works which, according to him, function as epiphanies. Finally we hear the voice of Piscicelli, whose adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* had been previously dealt with, explaining himself the reasons which pushed him to place at the centre of his production the neglected Rosaline who existed only through the words of others and his choice to translate the iambic pentameter with an archaic Neapolitan dialect.

The volume, as we have seen, ranges from theoretical issues concerning the tragic mode to the practical implications of putting it on stage as witnessed by those directly involved. The various aspects approached in the different sections provide an extraordinarily rich and vivid picture of the distinct ways a complex theme such as Shakespeare's tragic sense can be confronted and the individual contributions are noteworthy for their capacity to introduce us to less popular performances and directors, new studies and schools of criticism, original interpretations and reflections. This collection of essays confirms the vitality and innovative nature of research which has always been associated with scholars working at "L'Orientale" in Naples, a University which is traditionally an academic cutting-edge institution.

Maria Valentini, University of Cassino

Maurizio Calbi, *Spectral Shakespeares: Media Adaptations in the Twenty-First Century*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, 236 pp., £58.00.

Spectrality has haunted Calbi's writing for some time. In *Spectral Shakespeares*, however, the author takes us into new territories. In his introduction, he revisits the theoretical grounding of his work, projecting it onto the new screens provided by a selection of twenty-first-century adaptations of some of Shakespeare's tragedies. In a constantly re-mediating to-and-fro movement, the shifting scenarios of his projections interrogate the practice and thinking of media and performance, providing a major, innovative contribu-

tion to theoretical studies of Shakespeare adaptations and of the new media in general.

In each of his six chapters, Calbi focuses on a different adaptation and its interactions not only with the Shakespearean 'pre-texts', seen as incomplete, fragmentary texts-in-the-making, recreated retrospectively by the new work, but with other adaptations, performances and writing, theoretical, critical and literary. As the author notes in his discussion of Alexander Fodor's experimental *Hamlet* (chapter 5), "Both 'Shakespearecentric' and 'Shakespeareeccentric' concerns show that there is no unmediated access to 'Shakespeare': the film cannot adapt Shakespeare without repeatedly conjuring up the processes of remediation through which 'Shakespeare' is consumed, reprocessed, and recycled" (p. 110). In this sense, his discussion of Billy Morissette's *Scotland, PA*, and Peter Moffat's BBC *Shakespeare Retold Macbeth* (chapter 1) could be taken to suggest a self-reflexively culinary actualization of the process of textual and mediatic consumption and cannibalistic incorporation.

Kristian Levring's Dogme95 film *The King Is Alive* literally rewrites and re-performs the 'bare life' – and text – of *King Lear* in a Namibian desert (chapter 2). Through a continuous process of boundary crossing, it explores issues of displacement, dispossession and dis-adjustment, to which Calbi applies the Derridean concept of autoimmunity (sacrificial self-destruction vs. self-protection as a principle that aporetically opens the space of death, but also of survival, or *survivance*). Some of the 'bareness' of Levring's film returns in the 'rhetoric of silence' that pervades Alexander Abela's *Souli* (chapter 3), a Senegalese reworking of *Othello*. Foregrounding postcolonial issues of textual appropriation, transmission and circulation, it reproduces Othello's concern with narration and with the tale of his self to be delivered to the future in the desire of its Othello-like protagonist to ensure the survival of Thiossane, the traditional oral story he has been seeking to recreate but at the same time protect from the appropriative impulse of a young white researcher: "By making an absent, unwritten, and perhaps unwriteable, *African* tale interact with the *Othello* script, *Souli* forces an interrogation of the status of *Othello* as a Western inscription and appropriation of the alterity of the exotic Other" (p. 73). A literary 'scramble for Africa' paralleled by the possession and abuse of the body of a young African woman by the film's Iago figure.

Ethnic conflict and issues of hos(ti)pitality and migration are central to Roberta Torre's *Sud Side Stori* (chapter 4), a significantly re- and mis-translated 'Shakespeare-in-translation' set in Palermo. A 'postmodern pastiche' of *Romeo and Juliet*, but also of *West Side Story* and *William Shakespeare's Romeo+Juliet*, Torre's film presents the tragic story of Toni Giulietto, a local rock singer, and Romea Wacoubo, a Nigerian prostitute, and the opposing 'foreignnesses' of their respective families and communities – and, indeed, of the richly differing media and styles in which the story is played out.

In this focus on the issues of migration and hospitality, Calbi argues, "the response to the alterity of the body of the 'other'/foreigner/migrant (i.e., especially Romea but also the similarly displaced 'native' Toni Giulietto) becomes inextricably intertwined with the question of the incorporation of the 'foreignness' of Shakespeare, a 'textual body' that migrates from an Anglophone to a non-Anglophone context" (pp. 82-83).

Self-reflexivity marks all the works Calbi takes into consideration. In Klaus Knoesel's *Rave Macbeth* (chapter 6), it takes a particularly intricate transmedial form. Using multiple mirror-window-screens and simulations of DVD rewind and fast-forward modes, its response to the reiterative structure of *Macbeth* works by "repeatedly drawing attention to the *essentially* reiterative, self-destroying 'nature' of the media languages of rave culture; by identifying them as performances that are compulsive and addictive and thus also contiguous with the repeated ingestion of drugs" (p. 122). Here the "quasi-suicidal logic" of autoimmunity (p. 129) is applied to ecstasy and the life-enhancing, life-destroying effects of this new version of Shakespeare's "insane root". Both the viewer-consumer (gazed at by the gigantic eye that intermittently re-emerges on the screen) and the Shakespearean text are drawn into its hallucinatory, mirroring iterations.

Such Tweet Sorrow stages *Romeo and Juliet* as a five-week Twitter performance with Royal Shakespeare Company actors improvising on line on 'missions' received from the production team and interacting, via mobile phones and laptops, both with one another and with their Twitter followers in a potentially ever-expanding and addictive connectivity (chapter 7). Calbi notes however how the performance exploits the off-line mode and inattentive or random, intermittent access in the dramatic unfolding of its story: "*Such Tweet Sorrow* can be said to respond to the spectral effect of that extended aporia which is *Romeo and Juliet* – the oxymoronic entanglement of love and death, cure and poison, friend and foe, fate and chance – by creating a self-reflexive, medium-oriented aporia of its own: a hybrid remediation that takes place at the crossroad of a variety of social media feeding upon each other without necessarily converging, a remediation that includes within itself the possibility of remediation's silence and effacement" (p. 162).

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Abstracts

Persona Pratica e Persona Poetica

Paola Colaiacomo

Giambattista Vico's repositioning of Homer from singer to *author* of the nation of Greece is at the core of this anthological essay. A number of samples from Shakespearean interpretations by famous poets, philosophers, philologists, essayists, are ideally situated around Vico's famous thesis. The resulting collage is interspersed with my own reflections, in a sort of protracted dialogue with the chosen authors. Benedetto Croce posited the impossibility of writing a biography of Shakespeare on the imagined contrast between two radically divergent Shakespearean "personalities", the practical and the poetical, and quoted Emerson as representative of the "hybrid" biographical aesthetic which tried to conciliate the two. Taking my cue from Croce, I start by interrogating Emerson, whose famous apophthegm – "Shakspeare is the only biographer of Shakspeare" – sounds as the mature reprise of Hazlitt's high Romantic interpretation of Shakespeare's individual existence as an experiment in borrowing new and untried modes of being. But Vico's "discovery" about the only reliable authority on Homer being Homer himself was also active in Emerson's text, whether he knew it or not. Seen from beyond the Atlantic, the myth of the poet as author of a nation developed into the parallel myth of the birth of a new, democratic nation. Both founders of nations, Homer and Shakespeare, share parallel critical destinies.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Biography, Author, Authority, Nation, Democracy

How to Write a Biography of Shakespeare

David Ellis

The essay is a slightly modified version of the opening of the author's book, *The Truth about William Shakespeare: Fact, Fiction and Modern Biographies* (2012), reprinted here by permission of Edinburgh University Press. In these introductory chapters the types of evidence most sought after by biographical writers are discussed, as well as the lack of such information when it comes to Shakespeare's life. In particular, different strategies used by biography-writers over the years to make up for the lack of evidence, including the 'association'

of Shakespeare with the broader historical context of his age, are reviewed critically and shown to function within the dynamics of the contemporary cultural and publishing industry.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Biography, Evidence, Fiction, Historical context, Cultural industry

Shakespeare against Biography
John Drakakis

Shakespeare's 'biography' has proved a challenge partly because of the limited amount of documentary material available, but also because there is a problem that resides at the heart of 'biography' as genre. The problem lies in the extent to which the biographer interposes his or her own subjectivity into the narrative process itself. Virginia Woolf was one of the first to argue that all biography is to some extent 'autobiography'. Armed with this insight it is possible to detect in Shakespeare biographies the shaping hand of the biographer, and the insertion into the narrative of assumptions about human behaviour that in historical terms is anachronistic. The resulting contradictions emerge, even in particular readings of Shakespearean texts, and the positivistic assumptions that are often made about their allegedly referential frameworks. This emerges in a challenge to a particular reading of Shakespeare's *Sonnet 122* where many of the questions concerning representation are raised.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Biography, Virginia Woolf, Poetry, Representation

Who Was William Shakespeare?
Graham Holderness

The essay reprises and updates the biographical questions discussed in a number of passages which previously appeared in the author's *Nine Lives of William Shakespeare* (The Arden Shakespeare, London, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011), tackling the question of Shakespeare's identity as it is presented in contemporary television drama and cinema, in particular in *Shakespeare in Love* (1998), *A Waste of Shame* (2005), and the recent *Anonymous* (2011), as well as in the work of a number of influential Shakespearean biographers, in order to argue for the need of a "New Biography" of Shakespeare that will accept the challenge of addressing the "anxieties suppressed by the mainstream biographical tradition".

Keywords: Shakespeare, Biography, *Shakespeare in Love*, *A Waste of Shame*, *Anonymous*, Authorship

William Shakespeare: What He Was Not

Robert Bearman

In this essay I discuss the nature of historical evidence and the reasons for its survival and conclude that the documentation which has been unearthed to document Shakespeare's life, though admittedly sparse, is no less than for other of his contemporaries whose lives brought them only occasionally within the orbit of record-accumulating bodies. However, I then argue, with all necessary caution, that his absence from certain categories of surviving records does at least allow us to propose the sort of man he was not. His rare appearances in court, as plaintiff, defendant or accused do not, for instance (when compared with the record of many of his fellows), suggest a man of a litigious turn of mind, or a habitual rule- or law-breaker. The equally rare mentions of him in the entourage of the great landed families, or in token institutional employ, do not reflect a dependency on patronage or sinecures for an income. The complete absence of any evidence of his recusancy must surely carry some weight in assessing any Catholic (or Puritan) leanings he may, or may not, have had. I do not claim to have *proved* that such activities and concerns were completely outside his experience, merely to point out that, if we are seeking a better understanding of the man, these are not the obvious places to look.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Biography, Sources, Historical records, Documentation

John Florio and Shakespeare: Life and Language

Donatella Montini

Investigations into the link between Shakespeare and John Florio stretch back to the mid eighteenth century when, in his edition of the plays (1747), William Warburton suggested that "by *Holofernes* is designed a particular character, a pedant and schoolmaster of our author's time, one *John Florio*, a teacher of the *Italian* tongue in *London*". Since then, other modern critics have been haunted by a sort of 'magnificent obsession' to prove a connection, both in a biographical and/or in a linguistic perspective, between these giants of Elizabethan culture. However, no solid facts have been put forward but only conjectures about a possible, at best probable, acquaintanceship. Failing to find historical dates and documents which link Florio's and Shakespeare's lives, the essay suggests a re-examination and reappraisal of their supposed reciprocal influence, especially as far as their dramatic and didactic dialogues and Shakespeare's knowledge of Italian are concerned. The attempt is thus to combine a historical-pragmatic investigation into early modern dialogues with a historical framework which might account for 'the Shakespeare and Florio connection'.

Keywords: Shakespeare, John Florio, Biography, Early modern English dialogues, Proverbs, Historical pragmatics

The Traces of Shakespeare's Life
Stephen Greenblatt

The first essay included in the 2010 *New Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*, eds Margreta de Grazia and Stanley Wells, is reprinted here by permission of Cambridge University Press. It introduces and comments upon "the key surviving traces" of Shakespeare's life, discussing documentary evidence and the printing of Shakespeare's name on a number of Quarto editions and on his non-dramatic works, the composition of the 1623 Folio and the work of its editors, the details of Shakespeare's life that emerge from "centuries of archival labour". The word "trace" – as opposed to the idea of "fact" – is a keyword in this compact exploration of Shakespeare's life that re-considers the known biographical data while acknowledging as "deeply human" the reader's desire to know more about the man.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Biography, Historical evidence, Traces

Shakespeare's Many Lives
Nadia Fusini

Taking as its point of departure Henry James' short story "The Birthplace" (1903), which imagines the life of the custodian of Shakespeare's birthplace, this essay explores the idea of literary biography as an art, constantly hovering between the two extremes of "scrupulous fidelity" and "anachronistic imagination". The essay proceeds to investigate some of the psychological motivations of those who contest Shakespeare's authorship, in order to ask the question of whether a "proper writing of lives" may be said to exist, with particular reference to the relationship of the "writing I" to the "living I", and drawing also on Woolf, Lacan, Foucault and Blanchot to discuss the notion of the author's life and name.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Biography, Henry James, Authorship, Name

Shakespeare's Lack of Care for His Plays
Andrew Gurr

Recent insistence that Shakespeare must have wanted his plays to be read runs counter to the fact that he never took any care to get his plays into print. Evidence,

from the conditions that evoked the first Quarto of *Titus Andronicus* to the first Quarto of *Henry V*, all testifies to his lack of concern with print. No evidence exists to say that he cared as much for his plays as we do now. His change of career in May 1594, from would-be poet to common player, suggests that he then, probably under pressure from the authorities above him, surrendered his ambition to be a major poet, and instead gave himself over to the trade that made him so much more money. A survey of hard evidence supports this view, from what is written about his dyer's hand in the sonnets to the consistent evidence that it was the company, not the author, who controlled seeing his plays into print. This all endorses the idea that Shakespeare never valued his plays as much as we do.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Print, Playbooks, Quartos

Shakespeare's Illegitimate Daughter
Gary Taylor

This essay considers the biographical implications of the increasing acceptance of Lewis Theobald's claim that *Double Falsehood (*1727) is based on a seventeenth-century manuscript of the lost play *The History of Cardenio*, written by Shakespeare in collaboration with John Fletcher in 1612 or early 1613. A great variety of scholarly studies have provided compelling evidence that, although *Double Falsehood* does contain some additions and alterations by Theobald, it cannot be a forgery. This validation of Theobald's honesty means that we must also consider the possibility that he was also honest in reporting that the play was written for Shakespeare's "natural daughter". Could Shakespeare have fathered an illegitimate daughter? This essay re-examines the history of attempts by biographers to deny Theobald's claim, in the context of other evidence for Shakespeare's unconventional sexual behavior.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Biography, *Double Falsehood*, Lewis Theobald, *Cardenio*, Illegitimate daughter

A Salvo for Lucy Negro
Harold Bloom

This essay was originally published in *Harper's Magazine*, 298:1787 (April 1999) as part of a special section on the question of authorship surrounding the works of Shakespeare. The writer discusses Shakespeare's sonnets, arguing against the notion that the poems were not written by Shakespeare himself but by the earl of Oxford.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Biography, Authorship, Sonnets, Oxfordianism

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Harold Bloom, Sterling Professor of the Humanities and English at Yale, is the author of many books, including *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*, *Agon: Towards a Theory of Revisionism*, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, *Wallace Stevens: The Poems of Our Climate*, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, *How to Read and Why*, *Stories and Poems for Extremely Intelligent Children of All Ages*, *Genius: A Mosaic of One Hundred Exemplary Creative Minds*, *A Map of Misreading*, and *Hamlet: Poem Unlimited*. He is also co-editor with Lionel Trilling of *Romantic Poetry and Prose* and *Victorian Poetry and Prose*.

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John Drakakis is an Emeritus Professor in English at the University of Stirling, and he holds visiting professorships at Glyndwr University (Wrexham) and at the University of Lincoln. He is the general editor of the Routledge New Critical Idiom series, and he is the general editor and contributing editor to the forthcoming revision of Geoffrey Bullough's *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare***.** He has produced an edition of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* for the Arden 3 series, and he has edited collections of essays on *Shakespearean Tragedy*, *Tragedy*, *Alternative Shakespeares* and *Radio Drama***.** He has contributed many reviews and articles to learned journals, and he has been invited to write a number of book chapters in collections edited by others. He is a Fellow of the English Association, and a member of the Academia Europaea, and he holds honorary degrees from Glyndwr University, and Blaise Pascal University. He has just completed ten years as a founder member of the Trustees of the British Shakespeare Association, and he has also chaired the Association's Honorary Fellowships

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David Ellis is Emeritus Professor at the University of Kent. His interests span the literature of the early twentieth century, D. H. Lawrence, Shakespeare, the nature of autobiography and biography, theories of comedy, comic characters in Shakespeare, Stendhal. His most recent publications include *Memoirs of a Leavisite: The Decline and Fall of Cambridge English* (Liverpool University Press, 2013), *The Truth about William Shakespeare: Fact, Fiction and Modern Biographies* (Edinburgh University Press, 2012), *Byron in Geneva: That Summer of 1816* (Liverpool University Press, 2011), *Death and the Author: How D. H. Lawrence Died, and Was Remembered* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

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Andrew Gurr, a New Zealander, is Professor Emeritus at the University of Reading, and former Director of Research at the Shakespeare Globe Centre, London. He spent more than twenty years at the new Globe chairing the committee that decided on the Globe's shape and structure. He subsequently helped design the shape of the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse. The idea of having both a summer and a winter venue, based on the intention of the Shakespeare company, dating from their first months of existence in 1594, was a scheme that, in league with John Orrell, he first persuaded Sam to take on in 1984. He is also currently a Trustee of the Rose Theatre Trust. He has written more than twenty academic books, and hundreds of articles. His books on theatre history include *The Shakespearean Stage, 1574-1642*, now in its fourth edition, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, now in its third, *The Shakespearean Playing Companies*, *The Shakespeare Company, 1594-1642*, *Staging in Shakespeare's Theatres* (written in collaboration with Mariko Ichikawa), and *Shakespeare's Opposites: The Admiral's Men, 1594-1625*. He has also edited Shakespeare's *Richard II* and *Henry V*, and three plays by Beaumont and Fletcher.

Graham Holderness has taught at the universities of Oxford, Swansea, Roehampton and Hertfordshire. Most of his forty published books focus on Shakespeare, with particular interests in Shakespeare's history plays, Shakespeare and the media, Shakespeare editing, Shakespeare and contemporary culture, and transnational Shakespeare. Recent publications include *Shakespeare in Venice* (Ashgate, 2009) and *Nine Lives of William Shakespeare* (Bloomsbury, 2011). Influential publications include: *D.H. Lawrence: History, Ideology and Fiction* (1982), *The Shakespeare Myth* (1988), *Shakespeare: The Histories* (2000), and the trilogy *Cultural Shakespeare: Essays in the Shakespeare Myth* (2001), *Visual Shakespeare: Essays in Film and Television* (2002), and *Textual Shakespeare: Writing and the Word* (2003).

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Gary Taylor is a Distinguished Research Professor of English at Florida State University, and general editor of the *New Oxford Shakespeare* edition of Shakespeare's *Complete Works* (forthcoming in 2016). He also general edited the prize-winning *Collected Works of Thomas Middleton* (2007), and the previous Oxford edition of *Shakespeare's Works* (1986-2005). He has written extensively about *Double Falsehood* and *The History of Cardenio* in two collections: *The Quest for* Cardenio (Oxford University Press, 2012) and *The Creation and Re-creation of* Cardenio (Palgrave, 2013).

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