

Shakespeare Authorship Trust

in collaboration with Brunel University London

Conference 20 November 2016

WHO'S THERE? Shakespeare Biography, Biografiction, and Bardolatry

Welcome to the annual conference of the Shakespeare Authorship Trust. It is 400 years since a well-known member of the King's Men died in Stratford-upon-Avon at the age of 52 or thereabouts. This year has been marked with many tributes and some interesting new discoveries. We take this as the theme of our Conference – to consider new evidence and new theories regarding the authorship of the works of Shakespeare.

Mark Rylance, Trustee of the Shakespearean Authorship Trust, writes:



“The majority of people agree that it was the actor from Stratford who wrote the plays and poems attributed to Shakespeare. But also, the majority of people have not looked very closely into the history. For many years, some people have doubted, from what we know of the actor's life, that he would have been able to write the plays and poems. Suggestions of other authors and doubt actually begins during Shakespeare's life. Today, exactly how the plays were crafted is by no means agreed and whoever you believe wrote the plays, the authorship enquiry yields much provocative research into their craft and meaning. We hope you enjoy a series of stimulating talks and performances.”

Programme

1100	William Leahy	Welcome to the Conference
Mark Rylance and friends will perform readings of Shakespeare sonnets and other passages during the day.		
1115	William Leahy	The Limits of “Bardography”
1145	Kevin Gilvary	Samuel Schoenbaum Revisited (then readings)
1300	Break for Lunch	(not provided)
1415	Keir Cutler	The making of the one man show <i>Is Shakespeare Dead?</i>
1445	Ros Barber	Brokering Shakespeare (then readings)
1600	Tea, Coffee & Cake	(provided)
1630	Alexander Waugh	Shakespeare without a Tombe? (then readings)
1730-1800	Forum	Q&A chaired by William Leahy

The Shakespeare Authorship Trust was founded on 6 November 1922 in Hackney, London, under the name of the Shakespeare Fellowship. The name changed to The Shakespearean Authorship Society in 1959, and we are now The Shakespearean Authorship Trust, a registered charity.

The aims of the SAT are (i) to seek the truth concerning the authorship of Shakespeare's plays and poems; (ii) to organise and encourage research, to promote the discussion of the authorship question, and to provide means of publishing contributions to its solution; (iii) to maintain and add to a reference library.

New Discoveries about Shakespeare in 2016

Amid all the celebrations for the National Poet (and we in the Shakespeare Authorship Trust are all in favour of celebrating the works of Shakespeare) was the launch of an exciting new online exhibition **Shakespeare Documented** at: www.shakespearedocumented.org. In general, this website provides immediate access to a wide range of documents which were previously available only in academic tomes such as E. K. Chambers *William Shakespeare: a Study of Facts and Problems*.

There are a few weaknesses to the website: firstly, while entries offer a transcript of the document, this usually follows a reviewer's (personal) interpretation and explanation of the record; secondly it provides images and commentary on many documents which turn out to be contextual; they do not name William Shakespeare – instead they detail topics such as the family in Stratford or the theatres in London. Thirdly, the actual contemporary records which directly and unambiguously reference the subject, about one hundred in total, must be accessed in a link 'Manuscript mention of Shakespeare in his lifetime'. Finally, the exhibition does not recognise the Authorship Question.

Here are three documentary discoveries in 2016 which promised more than they delivered:

Warrants under the signet and privy seals, c. 1603

In April 2016, the National Archives announced the discovery of a new manuscript document mentioning Shakespeare. The document, dated 17 May 1603, was found among the **Warrants under the signet and privy seals for the issue of letters patent** and represents an early stage in the issue of letters patent in establishing the King's Men. The discovery therefore does not tell us anything new about Shakespeare and has no bearing on the authorship question.

Ralph Brooke's compilation of arms granted by William Dethick c. 1600

At the end of June 2016, the *New York Times* ran an article about the 'discovery' of another manuscript document mentioning Shakespeare: the document was a notebook '**Coats of arms granted by William Dethick as York herald and Garter king of arms**'. This notebook had been discovered by Heather Wolfe, of the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington D.C., in the library of the College of Arms in London. It was first reproduced in an essay by Clive Cheesman in *Heralds and Heraldry in Shakespeare's England* (ed. Nigel Ramsay 2014). In the notebook are drawings of several Coats of Arms, including a version of the Shakespeare arms with the legend 'Shakespeare ye Player by Garter'. The document related to a forthcoming complaint as to the validity of a number of grants including Shakespeare's family. The complaint was lodged in 1602 and answered by Dethick. The legend 'Shakespeare ye Player by Garter' was known from a copy made c. 1700. The 'discovery' therefore does not tell us anything new about Shakespeare and has no bearing on the authorship question.

HMS Prince Royal identified as ship which inspired *The Tempest*.

The Times (of London) reported on Greg Doran's claim that Shakespeare was inspired to compose *The Tempest* by HMS Prince Royal which was launched at Woolwich in 1610. On her maiden voyage, she encountered a storm which the master builder blamed on witchcraft. The vessel survived and remained in service until captured and destroyed by the Dutch in 1665. However, the storm in *The Tempest* is primarily a device to bring the protagonists together in one place and does not relate to the main plot. At no point did the crew land on a barren island where a disgruntled duke used magic powers to regain his lost dukedom. ■

The limited Biographical Material for William Shakspere

Areas of ignorance in the traditional story of Shakespeare's life.

© Dr. Kevin Gilvary

Biographers of William Shakespeare (1564-1616) of Stratford-upon-Avon agree on two points: that there are gaps in our knowledge about him but we know more about the life of Shakespeare than about other writers of the period. This may be true, but biographers of Shakespeare are not attempting a series of life studies about early modern dramatists in general, but one study of one particular writer. In reading a Life of Shakespeare as with any other biography, we should treat with caution any claim which cannot be linked directly to a contemporary historical record; any posthumous claim may well be fictional.

Sufficient Records needed for a biography

For a narrative account of someone's life that is accurate, there must be sufficient primary sources to reconstruct the main aspects of the subject's life – main events, experiences, ambitions, motives, etc. Unlike a novelist, the biographer may not invent incidents, thoughts and feelings so to bring the subject into life. So a biographer should rely on primary sources – records which were created contemporaneously with the event under discussion and which directly and unambiguously reference the subject. The biographer's first step, therefore, is to identify sufficient material for a biography.

About eighty official records in manuscript mention Shakspere by name or refer unambiguously to him, with another fifteen or unofficial allusions in manuscript. There are a further eighteen references to him in print up until 1616 and about 46 publications are attributed to him on their title pages. These documents are by no means uniformly distributed throughout his life. While biographers concede one period of 'lost years' from 1585-1592, there are two other periods of 'lost years':

- **The lost years of Childhood and youth.** After his baptism in 1564, there is no record of William Shakspere until the issue of a marriage licence in 1582.
- **The lost years of early manhood.** William Shakspere is named as father of Judith & Hamnet on 2 Feb 1585 but is not mentioned again until 1595. In 1589, he is named as the claimants' heir to a disputed portion of land. It does not say where he was or what he was doing. The cryptic mention in *Groatsworth* (1592) to an 'vpstart crow' might be an allusion to another actor or writer.
- **The lost London years of middle age.** After being granted four yards of cloth so as to attend the procession of James I in 1604, there is scant mention of him in London until 1612. He is named as a beneficiary in a will in 1605 and as a sharer in the Blackfriars venture in 1608 (in a court record of 1619).

Taken as a whole, there are too many gaps in the record for a full length, cradle-to-grave biography of Shakespeare. However, scholars (and publishers) continue to publish a life of Shakespeare, which is largely unevidenced, relying on secondary sources, the biographer's intuition and the established narrative or 'ife-trajectory'.

More importantly, we do not have evidence of any literary activity for William Shakspere of Stratford-upon-Avon. By contrast, we know a lot about Ben Jonson (1572-1637). Many letters to and from Ben Jonson survive. In Scotland, he was entertained by Drummond who left a detailed journal of their conversations. Jonson published poems and prose which were personal. He wrote introductions in his own person to his works. We know exact details about Jonson's patrons, his travels, his hosts, his library and his personal grief. For William of Stratford, we have no such evidence.

Poor Quality of Source Material for Shakespeare

The recently launched website shakespearedocumented.org offers fascinating glimpses into the life of William Shakespeare and other persons in the early modern period. However, it does not offer an overview of the distribution of the dates of the records. Nor does it compare the quality of the extant records insofar as they would be useful for any biography. The following analysis considers the types of documents used by biographers in descending order of significance, and how far they can be found in the Shakespeare records.

Autobiographical: letters, diaries, literary manuscripts

When preparing a biography of a writer, autobiographical documents are the most important for understanding a subject's character and experiences. Of course, a person's intimate writings might not be entirely reliable: subjects may not be fully aware of their own motives and feelings, or they might misrepresent them. Biographers are spared this problem with Shakespeare as he left few comments about himself or his contemporaries. There are two short dedications to the Earl of Southampton, using the form of self-abatement common at the time. The dedications to the narrative poem do not state that he received any kind of recompense and there is no other contemporary record linking the two men.

The only other personal writing by him are his legacies in his will, where he distributed his possessions among over twenty named people. However, he mentioned no books owned or borrowed, no manuscripts and he made no bequests to any person or institution who may have helped his literary career. Apart from the will, he left no letters or notes, whether business or personal, offered no opinions or comments about any family, any neighbours, any business associates, or any colleagues, or patrons.

Witnesses

The second most informative material comes from the records of witnesses who expressed personal opinions about the subject. Again, such records are lacking for Shakespeare. Only a small number of contemporary witnesses mention him but, nobody describes actually meeting him, what he was wearing, his appearance, his demeanour or his behaviour. The few allusions to Shakespeare as a townsman of Stratford indicate his (relative) affluence but they do not refer to Shakespeare as an author. Apart from Manningham's comment that 'William the Conqueror was before Richard the 3rd' and depositions in the the Bellott-Mountjoy case in 1612, nobody ever recorded what he said.

Another category of witness consists of literary allusions by writers in print. Regarding Shakespeare, such references contain no personal knowledge of the man but attest to his reputation. The earliest allusion in London is taken to be in Greene's *Groats-worth of Wit* (1592) but William Shakespeare is not actually named as the "vpstart crow" and the meaning is so vague that it might not refer to Shakespeare at all. Even Greene's authorship of the tract is in dispute. The most important printed allusion was made by Francis Meres (*Palladis Tamia* 1598), who named twelve plays of Shakespeare. Meres also referred to his sugar'd sonnets, but does not show any personal acquaintance with the author.

Ben Jonson made more comments about Shakespeare than any other writer but he did not dedicate any epigram to Shakespeare, out of the 133 epigrams included in his folio of *Works* (1616). Jonson's contradictory opinions – gushing in public, dismissive in private – are only documented after Shakespeare's death in 1616. Other writers of commendations, such as Hugh Holland, Leonard Digges, and James Mabbe in the First Folio (1623), offer conventional praise to Shakespeare as an author; they do not indicate any personal acquaintance with the person who wrote them.

Official documents: registers, records, contracts

The third major source of biographical evidence is found in public records and archives. e.g. births, marriages, deaths, legal contracts, title deeds etc. Biographers trawl through such records to give an objective framework to the life. Biographers then select, omit and organise material according to their emphasis and interpretation. For Shakespeare, the most important official records are the registers at Holy Trinity Church beginning in 1558, which give brief details of baptisms, marriages and burials for many members of the Shakspeare family. Thus we find official records for William Shakspeare's baptism (in 1564), issue of a marriage licence (in 1582), birth of his children (in 1583 and 1584/5), his property purchases at Stratford (in 1597, 1602, and 1605) and his purchase of the gatehouse at Blackfriars in 1613. There are some theatrical records which mention Wiliam Shakspeare in connection with playing companies. These indicate his participation as a sharer in the company (the Chamberlain's Men formed c. 1594, which became the King's Men in 1603), but they do not name him as a writer.

The main reason for identifying a man of Stratford as the author of the great works is of course the similarity between the name 'William Shakspeare' as it appears in the Stratford records and the name William Shakespeare or Shake-speare' as the author attributed on title pages to plays published from 1598 onwards. At the same time however, we know that the name 'William Shakespeare was being used as a pseudonym' (*Passionate Pilgrim* 1599; *Sir John Oldcastle*, 1600; *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, 1608) presumably to cash in the fame. More importantly, the commendatory verses to the First Folio, which was published seven years after the death of Shakepere, are taken to indicate various attributes. Chief among these was the 80 line poem by Ben Jonson, which yields virtually no information about the author. As with other allusions in print, the reference is to the great works not to the person.

Ben Jonson is also thought to have ghost written the epistle, apparently signed by John Heminges and Henry Condell "To the great Variety of Readers". The main purpose of this was to encourage them to purchase the volume: "But, whatever you do, Buy." E. K. Chambers realised that the address was intended as an "advertisement, rather than an affidavit." W. W. Greg cites many further similarities between the Hemminges / Condell address and the works of Jonson, concluding that Jonson probably wrote this address. The names of Heminges and Condell also appear at the end of the dedicatory epistle to the Incomparable Pair of Brethren, the earls of Pembroke and Montgomery. Various commentators have noticed the irreverent attitude towards the noblemen and also the inconsistency between the epistle, in which readers are urged to buy, and the claim that their sole intention was to preserve the memory of their friend. Again, Jonson probably wrote the epistle to promote sales.

Physical objects

The fourth major area of biographical evidence concerns context, which includes physical objects (e.g. clothes, furniture, possessions) and physical remains (e.g., the house and locality where a subject grew up and lived). Such objects have limited significance. Regarding actual objects, there is very no surviving material for Shakspeare. None of Shakspeare's clothes, furniture, manuscripts, books owned or borrowed have survived. The so-called Birthplace in Henley Street was extensively restored in the Victorian period but there is no record of where he was born. Any one of four properties might have been the family home at the time.

The King's School at Stratford survives, but its records for the period do not. As there is no record that William or any of his brothers ever attended this (or any other) school, any reference to Shakespeare's desk, classroom or school-master is mythical. However, this does not prevent unfounded claims such as: "The lesson of Sir Hugh Evans in *Merry Wives* is based on the standard school text of the period. It is all the evidence we need that William Shakspeare attended the King's Free School of Stratford-upon-Avon."

Against this, we should note that the passage merely shows that the author had experience of a Latin teacher using a standard school text, not where or when he gained such experience. Any mention of his education in Stratford is simply based on inference from other educational records in England during the Tudor period.

Images

There is no known likeness of Shakespeare. Martin Droeshout produced an engraving for the First Folio, but he was then in his early twenties and unlikely ever to have met Shakespeare. It is not known if Droeshout used a source image for his engraving. This portrait has been heavily criticised on both anatomical and sartorial grounds. A second image can be found in the chancel of Holy Trinity Church at Stratford, showing the bust of a man apparently with a pen in his hand. However, William Dugdale's illustration in the *Antiquities of Warwickshire Illustrated* (1656, 520) shows the monument with a man holding a woolsack, based on a pencil drawing which still exists. Scholars usually dismiss Dugdale's drawings as "more or less worthless" but the bust may well have been altered from its original appearance.

Another claimed likeness is the Chandos Portrait, the first item acquired by the National Portrait Gallery in London when it was established in 1856. However, it was not attested as a likeness of Shakespeare before 1719. The Cobbe Portrait, has recently been claimed by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust as a likeness. However, most scholars follow Dr. Cooper in identifying the sitter in this portrait as Sir Thomas Overbury. Overall, we have no reliable representation of Shakespeare's appearance.

Biographer's first-hand experience of the subject

In 1790, Malone lamented that previous writers had missed the opportunity to interview surviving relatives of Shakespeare: "our poet's grand-daughter, Lady Barnard, who did not die till 1670. His sister, Joan Hart, was living in 1646; his eldest daughter, Susanna Hall, in 1649; and his second daughter, Judith, in 1662".

Most biographers believe that have developed an insight into the writer from a close reading of the works. Such 'insights' depend on personal selection and interpretation. Hence the identification of various personas in the sonnets: a young man, a dark lady, a rival poet. However, the contradictory identifications of these personas with historical figures shows the lack of external corroboration. We cannot establish whether, where, or how far any passage in the works report the author's own feelings and experiences. Nobody can claim first-hand knowledge of Shakespeare from the works.

Areas of Ignorance

We cannot write a biography of Shakespeare because we have no personal papers e. g. such as letters, notes or journals; no personal descriptions of Shakespeare; no record of childhood, youth or education, 1564 – 1582; no mention anywhere from 1585 until 1592 and not reliably until 1595 and no mention in Stratford as to any activity as a literary figure. Furthermore we have no record to date the composition for any poem or play; no record of his working practices as to possible revision or co-authorship; no insight into the author among contemporary allusions to Shakespeare, and scant evidence of activity in London between 1604 and 1612.

From this review, two conclusions emerge: it is not possible to write a biography of William Shakespeare of Stratford due to the poverty of the data; secondly, there is an Authorship Question due to the "vertiginous expanse between the sublimity of the subject and the mundane inconsequence of the documentary record."

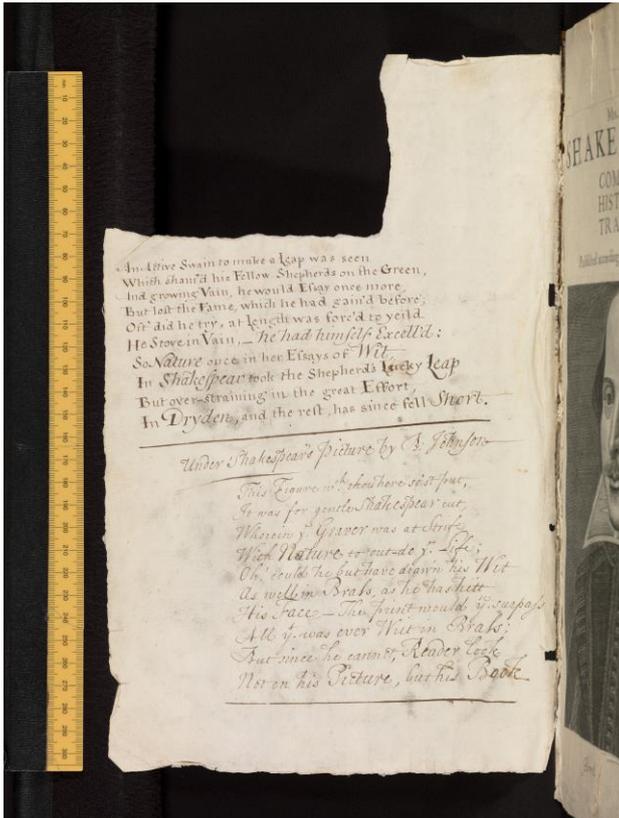
A longer version of this paper appears on the website: www.deveresociety.co.uk. ■

New Authorship Document:

'An Active Swain'

© Dr Ros Barber

Inspect the newly digitised Bodleian First Folio and you will find, on the page facing the Droeshout engraving, not Ben Jonson's 10-line poem telling the reader seeking the author to 'looke/Not on his Picture, but his Booke' (this has been removed) but a replacement:



*An Active Swain to make a Leap was seen
which sham'd his Fellow Shepherds on the Green,
And growing Vain, he would Essay once more,
But left the Fame, which he had gained before;
Oft did he try, at length was forc'd to yeild
He st[r]ove in Vain, - he had himself Excell'd:
So Nature once in her Essays of Wit,
In Shakespear took the Shepherd's Lucky Leap
But over-straining in the great Effort,
in Dryden, and the rest, has since fell Short.*

[I have tried to reproduce it as the author intended, including those words and phrases in italics; I have left the spelling of 'yeild' alone, though it is wrong to modern eyes. It is fair to assume from the context that 'strove' not 'stove' was intended.]

I imagine the title of this poem might have been instructive, but it has been removed. Presumably it was offensive to someone; perhaps the same person who wrote 'Honest [Will? Shake]peare' under the portrait, or the person who copied back in, by hand, the poem that should have been on this facing page. We are fortunate the poem itself survived.

The Dryden reference helps date the poem: John Dryden was made Poet Laureate in 1668. The Bodleian First Folio is a rarity for not having been re-bound since it was first donated to the library in 1623. The library 'appears to have sold it at some point in the late 1660s'¹, so it seems likely that 'An Active Swain' was written into the Bodleian First Folio not long after this, during Dryden's dominance: 1668-1700. The anonymous author need only be one or two generations removed from Shakespeare's generation: in a position to have had information directly from their father or grandfather.

¹ <http://shakespeare.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/the-bodleians-first-folio/>

Like many of the anomalous writings connected to the Shakespeare canon, this poem is written in such a way that its meaning is deliberately veiled. To someone convinced of the traditional narrative, it will look like nonsense (essential for preservation: not worth destroying, though the title clearly was). But if you look at the words through a particular lens, you may get a little more clarity. I am choosing to look at it through a Marlowe-shaped lens because there seem to be some strong points of connection with that theory.

Shakespeare and another poet

This is a poem about the author known as Shakespeare. Shakespeare's name is mentioned in the 8th line, and the poem has been deliberately placed opposite the Droeshout engraving, replacing Ben Jonson's instructions about how to approach the First Folio. It speaks of a separate poet, an 'active swain', later referred to as a shepherd.² This poet cannot be equated with Shakespeare because line 8 makes it clear they are separate: that Nature, 'in Shakespear took the Shepherd's Lucky Leap.'

This poet made a leap

Lines 1 and 2 tell us that the 'Active Swain' made a leap which shamed his fellow poets (who are on 'the green' because this is what pastoral poets do, of course, sit about on the grass). What kind of leap could that be? Most orthodox scholars accept that Marlowe's genius paved the way for Shakespeare.³ He also made a social leap. A cobbler's son who gained an MA and the social rank of gentleman, he has documented connections not only with the members of the Privy Council, but with Ferdinando Stanley (Lord Strange/5th Earl of Derby), Henry Percy (9th Earl of Northumberland), Mary Sidney (Countess of Pembroke) and Sir Walter Raleigh. Both artistically and socially he outstripped his peers, putting them to 'shame' as the poem describes. According to the poem, this 'leap' led to the poet 'growing Vain'. [Gabriel Harvey's 'Gorgon' poem](#), written in 1593 and mentioning 'thy Tamburlaine' contains a contemporary accusation of Marlowe's vanity:

*He that nor feared God, nor dreaded Div'll,
Nor ought admired, but his wondrous selfe:
Like Junos gawdy Bird*, that prondly stares
On glittering fan of his triumphant taile*

** peacock*

This poet 'left the fame'

Lines 3 and 4 tell us that this poet 'left the Fame, which he had gained before'. These lines are a fine fit for the Marlowe theory, which includes the reluctant abandonment of fame. The theory goes that he was forced to fake his death, while on bail, in order to escape being executed for atheism, then considered treason. A faked death of this kind would not be technically difficult, given an absence of physical identification, Marlowe's high-placed connections and his work for the secret service.

² Swain or shepherd was a common pastoral term for poet. Christopher Marlowe was referred to as a shepherd in *As You Like It* when Rosalind quoted a line from Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*: 'Dead shepherd, now I find thy saw of might:/Whoever loved, who loved not at first sight?'

³ http://marloweshakespeare.info/Marlowe_Scholarship.html

There was a struggle and the poet lost

We are told 'Oft did he try, at length was forc'd to yeild'. One wonders if there is a link here with the previous verb, 'essay', which means both try and accomplish, and is linked (through its noun form) to writing. To whom or what was he forced to yield? And what does this have to do with Shakespeare's First Folio, in which the poem is so deliberately written? We might read it as Marlowe's struggle to be 'resurrected' or at least have his works attributed to his own name: the words directly opposite the poem: '*Mr William SHAKESPEARES Comedies Histories & Tragedies*' is the record of his defeat.

The poet excelled himself

Everything in the Marlowe canon was written by the time he was 29. The works of a (brilliant but inexperienced) twenty-something cannot compare with a writer allowed to reach his prime. *Doctor Faustus* and *Edward II* are accomplished plays but *Lear*, *Othello*, and *Hamlet* came twenty years later; twenty years extra reading, life experience, writing experience, and 'striving'. 'He had himself Excell'd' is clearly important: it is the only phrase in the poem that the author has emphasised with italics. The solitary dash clearly indicates that 'excelling himself' is the cause of the poet's failure (to achieve what he was trying to achieve). Under what circumstances could a poet's excellence lead to their failure? If Marlowe was the central author of the Shakespeare canon this line makes perfect sense.

The poet's 'lucky leap' is 'in Shakespear'

In Shakespeare, we are told, we will find the poet's 'lucky leap'. How could the excellence that apparently led to failure, despite all his striving - be described as 'lucky'? Under the Marlowe theory, Marlowe's 'lucky leap' - the blessed escape which allowed him to continue writing and developing as a writer - ends up 'in Shakespear' - in this book of plays that appear under the Shakespeare name.

The poem explains why 'Shakespeare' is unsurpassed

The final two lines explain that no writer since has come close to the brilliance we find in the canon called Shakespeare. The poet's striving to overcome his circumstances (the circumstances that involved leaving his fame behind) led to him excelling himself with a genius (contained 'In [the works of] Shakespear[e]') that has never been surpassed or even equalled. Not at the time this poem was written, and not since.

(There is a fuller version of this article at <http://rosbarber.com/bodleian-first-folio/>)

Jan Cole of the De Vere Society shows how a little known poem has a bearing on the Authorship Question.

'The English Swain'

the un-named poet in *Britannia's Pastorals*, Book 2 (1616)



In 1616, an anonymous collection of poems called *Britannia's Pastorals* was published. The author was later identified as William Browne of Tavistock (c.1590-1645). He was under the patronage of the Herbert family (William Earl of Pembroke, Philip Earl of Montgomery and his wife Susan Vere Herbert) from about 1615 until 1635, perhaps until his death, writing epitaphs for the family in 1621 (on Mary Sidney Herbert), 1629 (on Susan Vere Herbert) and 1635 (on Philip and Susan's son, Charles Herbert). He was educated at Exeter College, Oxford from 1603-07, and at Lincoln's Inn from 1615. In 1624 Browne became tutor to Roger Dorner, who later became Earl of Carnarvon and married Philip and Susan's eldest daughter, Anna-Sophia. He specialised in writing pastoral verse, using a simple, plain diction and few archaic words, and retaining the genre's traditional function of pastoral metaphor, in which poets were 'shepherds' or 'swains' and their poems 'songs'.

Britannia's Pastorals was a long pastoral romance, interspersed with songs. Book I was published in 1613 and dedicated to Edward, Lord Zouche (1556-1625). Book II published in 1616 was dedicated to William Herbert. In Book II, Song 2, Browne included a 100-line long 'digression' (in the middle of a list of named English poets), describing an eminent poet whom he calls 'the English swain', but without ever naming him. The poets praised by name are Spenser, Sidney, Chapman, Daniel, Drayton, Christopher Brooke, John Davies of Hereford and George Wither - all but the first two were personally known to Browne. Between Spenser and Sidney he places the digression on 'the English swain', known to everyone as the best of all poets. Various allusions suggest that this poet is the one otherwise known as 'Shakespeare'. The conceit employed is that the classical goddess, Thetis, has swum up the Thames to discover a tree, beneath which sit 'a jocund crew of youthful swains' (i.e. the English poets).

*And underneath this tree (till Thetis came)
Many resorted, where a swain of name
Less than of worth, (and we do never own
Nor apprehend him best that most is known),
Fame is uncertain who so swiftly flies,
By th'unregarded shed where vertue lies:
She (ill-inform'd of Vertue's worth) pursu'th
(In haste) Opinion for the simple Truth.
True Fame is ever liken'd to our shade,
He soonest misseth her, that most hath made
To over-take her, who so takes his wing;
Regardless of her, she'll be following:
Her true propriety she thus discovers,
'Loves her contemners, and contemns her lovers'.
Th'applause of common people never yet
Pursu'd this swain; he knew't the counterfeit
Of settled praise, and therefore at his songs,*

*Though all the shepherds and the graceful throngs,
Of semi-gods compar'd him with the best
That ever touch'd a reed or was address'd
In shepherd's coat, he never would approve
Their attributes giv'n in sincerest love,
Except he truly knew them as his merit.
Fame gives a second life to such a spirit.
This swain, entreated by the mirthful rest,
That with entwined arms lay round about
The tree 'gainst which he lean'd (so have I seen
Tom Piper stand upon our village green
Back'd with the May-pole, whilst a jocund crew
In gentle motion circularly threw
Themselves about him), to his fairest ring
Thus 'gan in numbers well according:
Venus by Adonis side
Crying kiss'd and kissing cried,*

Wrung her hands and tore her hair

For Adonis dying there . . .

At this point, four more verses give the gist of the story of Venus and Adonis from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Then:

... this shepherd's song

*Had so enamour'd each acceptable ear,
That, but a second, naught could bring them clear
From an affected snare; had Orpheus been
Playing some distance from them, he had seen
Not one to stir a foot for his rare strain,
But left the Thracian for the English swain.*

Here various gods and goddesses are overcome by the English swain's song.

*... and though Arctor's son,
Hundred-eye'd Argus, might be lull'd by him,
And loose his pris'ner, yet in every limb
That god of wit [Hermes] had felt this shepherd's skill
And by his charms brought from the Muses' bill,
Enforc'd to sleep and robb'd of pipe and rod,
And vanquish'd so, turn swain, this swain a god.*

*Yet to this lad not wanted Envy's sting,
'He's not worth ought that's not worth envying'.
Since many at his praise were seen to grutch,
For as a miller in his bolting-butch
Drives out the pure meal nearly as he can
And in his sifter leaves the coarser bran,
So doth the canker of a poet's name
Let slip such lines as might inherit fame
And from a volume culls some small amiss
To fire such dogged spleens as mate with his.
Yet as a man that by his art would bring
The ceaseless current of a crystal spring
To overlook the lowly flowing head
Sinks by degrees his order'd pipes of lead
Beneath the fount, whereby the water goes
High, as a well that on a mountain flows,
So when detraction and a cynic's tongue
Have sunk desert into the depth of wrong,
By that the eye of skill true worth shall see
To brave the stars, though low his passage be.
But here I much digress....*

The length and detail are an indication that these lines contain allusions to an actual poet. On closer analysis, they point to the author who wrote under the name of 'Shakespeare'. Browne does not directly identify 'the English swain' by this (or any other) name, suggesting perhaps that he knew the name 'Shakespeare' itself was being used as a pseudonym. The following phrases are ambiguous and allusive:

- a) He is *a swain of name / Less than of worth*. He has a famous name, yet his name is of less worth than his poetry. Note how the words may be combined as 'name-less', without a name, or anonymous.
- b) *...we do never own / Nor apprehend him best that most is known*. Multiple meanings: a) he doesn't need to be named because we (poets) know who he is; b) we never acknowledge the merit of someone who has become the most well-known; c) he is so well-known that we don't need to name him. Though regardless of fame, Fame sought this poet out, since she loves those who do not seek her. Those who are virtuous do not seek fame, but despite this they achieve it.
- c) *Th'applause of common people never yet / Pursu'd this swain*. Multiple meanings: a) he wasn't acknowledged by common people; b) he wasn't recognised by common people because they didn't realise who he was; c) he kept himself apart from common people; d) he was of higher social status than common people. All suggest disguise (writing under anonymity or using a pseudonym).
- d) He was fully recognised by other poets and compared to the best poets who had ever written or had been *addressed in shepherd's coat* (regarded as poets); this also may imply a concealed identity.
- e) He never endorsed other poets' praise of him, though it was sincere, unless he could truly acknowledge that he deserved it.
- f) *Fame gives a second life to such a spirit* (this may suggest use of a second name or pseudonym).

- g) He was at the centre of a circle of admiring poets (perhaps a literary patron of higher status).
- h) His first ‘song’ (poem) was about Venus and Adonis (alludes to *Venus and Adonis*, the first work to be published as the ‘first invention’ of ‘William Shakespeare’ in 1593).
- i) His ‘song’ of Venus & Adonis was so well loved that ‘a second song’ (poem) was demanded (the subject is not named, but the obvious allusion would be to *The Rape of Lucrece* published with the name of ‘William Shakespeare’ in 1594).
- j) His listeners (readers) were so ‘enamoured’ by these songs that if Orpheus had been present they would rather listen to this poet than to Orpheus (i.e. his poetry was superlative).
- k) It was as though Hermes (Mercury) had left his abode with the Muses and had changed places with this poet, making Hermes a shepherd and this ‘shepherd’ a god (i.e. his gift for poetry was more than human; implies divine inspiration in the Platonic sense).
- l) Many were envious of his skill as a poet and ‘grouched’ against him, i.e. begrudged him and moaned about him. This may allude to Jonson (who was derisive of Shakespeare at times).
- m) *The canker of a poet’s name*. To be a poet was adverse to his reputation (may suggest he was of noble status and lowered himself by writing poetry and associating with poets, or some misdemeanours).
- n) *Let slip some lines as might inherit fame* (suggests his name was omitted from his work).
- o) *And from a volume culls some small amiss* (suggests his name was omitted from his work).
- p) He was ‘put down’ by detractors and cynics, but just as pipes are sunk deep in the earth to make water spring up elsewhere as a fountain (a clever metaphor, since the image suggests classical ideas of inspiration, e.g. the fountain or spring on Mount Helicon, the sacred grove of the Muses), his work survives. This suggests he was forced to become anonymous or pseudonymous.
- q) Despite being deeply wronged, his merit has mounted so high that it challenges the stars, *though low his passage be* (this suggests he has been wrongly denigrated and has suppressed his identity).

The most obvious allusion is that the first ‘song’ that he *[be]gan in numbers well according* was ‘Venus and Adonis’, and that this poem was so overwhelmingly loved that a second ‘song’ was demanded. Interestingly, Browne didn’t refer to or attempt a verse précis of *The Rape of Lucrece*, as he had done with *Venus and Adonis*. Perhaps to have done so would have been too explicit for this poet’s modesty and reticence. If he was hiding his identity as an author, reticence would be essential.

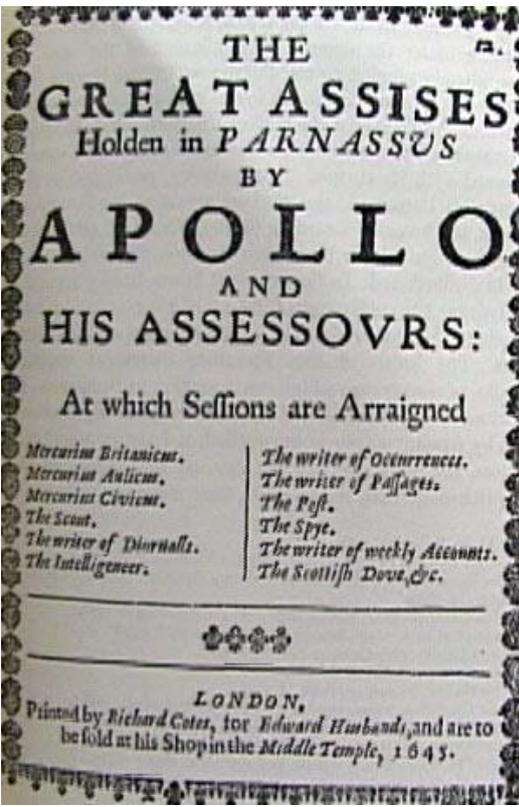
Overall, this passage seems to be a reference to ‘Shakespeare’. But why, as late as 1616, did Browne deliberately omit this name? Was it because he knew the name was being used as a pseudonym, and the real identity of the poet could not be mentioned? His inclusion of this nameless but supreme poet amongst the group of poets whom he *does* name (and refers to briefly and familiarly) makes his praise of ‘the English swain’ stick out like a sore thumb as a huge encomium embedded amongst fairly ordinary tributes to other named poets.

Interestingly, the printer of *Britannia’s Pastorals*, Thomas Snodham, quickly reissued an edition of Shakespeare’s *Lucrece* in the same year (1616), and then William Standby reissued *Venus and Adonis* in the following year (1617). If ‘the English swain’ was indeed Shakespeare, then he was on the bookstalls once again!

Hazlitt, W.C. (ed.), *The Whole Works of William Browne of Tavistock and of the Inner Temple, with a memoir and notes*, The Roxborough Library, 2 vols. 1869 – accessible online at Internet Archive. ‘Britannia’s Pastorals’ Book II is in vol.2 of this edition. ■

William Shakespeare: The Writer of Weekly Accounts

© Julia Cleave



Written in an established satirical tradition of a mock trial of prominent literary figures, *The Great Assises Holden in Parnassus by Apollo and his Assessours* was published anonymously in 1645, but is generally believed to be by George Wither.

Lord Verulam, Francis Bacon, the Chancellor of Parnassus, presides over the proceedings, as befits his actual judicial role as Chancellor of England, as well as his extensive literary activities involving a scriptorium of ‘good pens’. Sir Philip Sidney is his High Constable, and Edmund Spencer acts as the Clerk of the Assises. Apart from Apollo, all 32 figures involved in this tribunal (both the assessors and the accused) are real persons. The sixteen assessors include European humanists of the mid 15th to the mid 17th century such as Mirandola, Erasmus and Casaubon.

The essence of the joke in this satirical broadside, (extending over 900 lines), is that the twelve named jurors are simultaneously the twelve malefactors. Within its hierarchical schema, it is worth noting that William Shakespeare is relegated to 31st place. He is the eleventh of the twelve jurors. Under the parallel list of malefactors he is identified as *The writer of weekly accounts*.

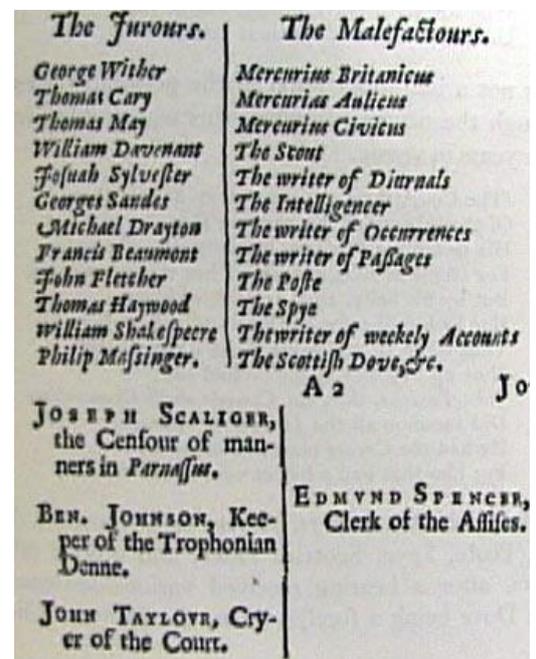
As each charge is read, the accused has the opportunity to offer his defence. In many cases, adding to the comedy, this defence takes the form of an attack on his fellows, challenging their fitness to act as jurors. Thus Thomas Cary declares:

*Shakespear's a Mimicke, Massinger a Sot,
Heywood for Aganippe takes a plot:
Beaumont and Fletcher make one poet, they
Single, dare not adventure on a Play...*

As instances of the word ‘mimicke’ cited in the *OED* for this period show, it refers exclusively to an actor, mimic or jester. It is not a neutral term; it is invariably pejorative, and it would fit with the evidence we have for a minor actor within the company: ‘Shakespeare ye Player’.

When it comes to the specific charges levelled at Shakespeare, they are veiled in deliberately obfuscatory terms which require careful decoding. We note the implications of the word ‘pretend’. His role appears to be that of someone who seeks to maintain the commercial success of the theatre (‘the art of lying’) by procuring written material (‘accounts’) of dubious provenance (‘pamphlets vain’):

*And this was he, who weekly did pretend,
Accounts of certain news abroad to send.*



*He was accus'd, that he with Pamphlets vain,
The art of lying had sought to maintain.*

The charge continues, and confirms this interpretation of Shakespeare playing an entrepreneurial role within the company. It refers specifically to an actual transaction which took place on 19 May 1603:

*Which trade, he and his fellows us'd of late,
With such successe, and profit in the State
Of high Parnassus, that they did conspire,
A Patent from Apollo to acquire:
That they might thus incorporated bee,
Into a Company of Lyers free.*

It has long been known that the Lord Chamberlain's Men were granted a royal patent to become the King's Men shortly after the accession of James I, and it was assumed that this initiative came from the King. What was not known, until it was announced in April this year, was that a document has recently come to light in the National Archive which shows that it was Shakespeare and his fellows who took the initiative to apply and pay handsomely for this privilege. This discovery was hailed by scholars and reported in the press as revealing his opportunistic instincts and 'flair for self-promotion'. An article in *The Times* (April 2016) observed: "The speed with which Shakespeare's company acquired the King's patronage demonstrates that they were not only artists but businessmen who recognised the value of what would now be considered a brand name." Dr Hannah Crummé, the discoverer of the document, is quoted as saying: "It shows that he was a cunning businessman who took active steps to make his own fortune." This assessment concurs precisely with the reference in our poem to 'success and profit' resulting from the acquisition of a patent from 'Apollo'.

The final punishment meted out by Apollo consigns him to 'Stygian gloom'. He is condemned 'to keep true accounts' (a legalistic formulation specific to the practice of accountancy) 'upon a wooden tally' and to ferry ghosts back and forth across the river Styx 'for seven year's space'. (A possible allusion to the period 1597-1604 during which the bulk of plays attributed to Shakespeare were published, prior to the appearance of an additional 18 in the First Folio, after a gap of 19 years?) He is 'judg'd to be a **bond-slave**' and 'for his **hire**, each night receive hee must / Three fillips on the nose, with a browne crust / Of mouldy bread'.

This ignominious fate is in sharp contrast to the judgement passed on one of his fellow jurors, Michael Drayton, whom 'The Spye' (Thomas Heywood) attempts to traduce. Instead of punishment, Apollo rebukes his accuser, and devotes 30 lines of high praise to Drayton: commending variously the sweetness and sublimity of his poetic and dramatic works.

Conversely, Shakespeare is consistently associated with a lexicon of financial dealing: *accounts, accounts, trade, profit, acquire, incorporated, accounts, tally, bond, hire*.

So here we have it. Smuggled in under the smoke-screen of satire, an accurate profile of the Man from Stratford as procurer of plays, theatre entrepreneur, and occasional mimicke.

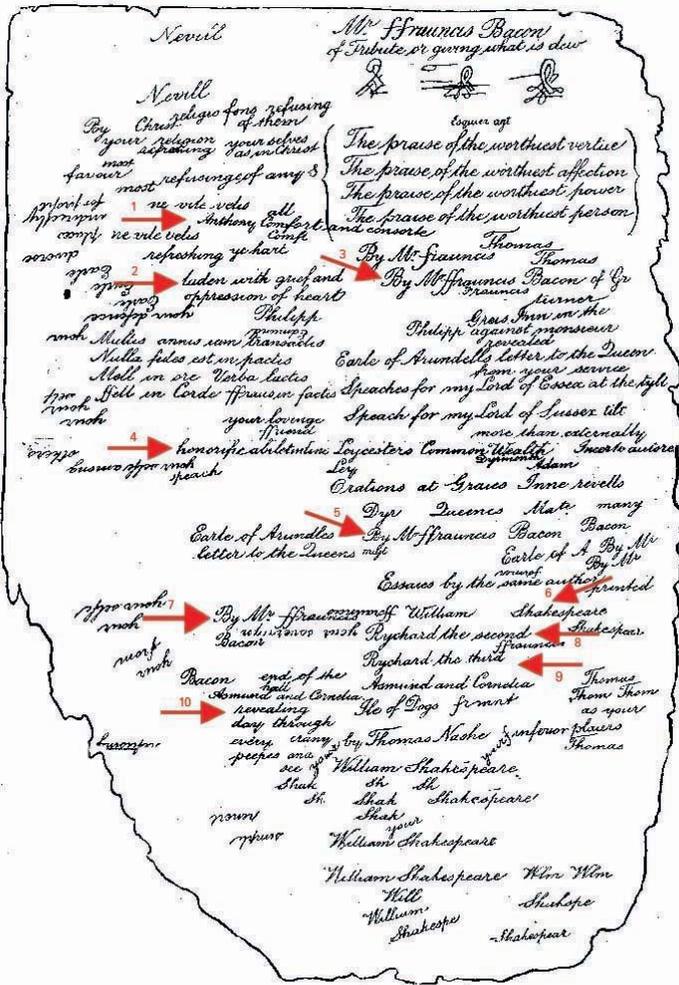
For a complete version of the poem and a short bibliography:

<http://spenserians.cath.vt.edu/TextRecord.php?textsid=33437>

For an account of the recent discovery in the National Archive:

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/news/new-shakespeare-discovery-reveals-fee-for-royal-favour/

The Northumberland Manuscript



In 1867 a batch of Elizabethan manuscripts was found in Northumberland House, London. They had once belonged to Francis Bacon and consisted mainly of his work, copied by his scribes in the mid-1590s. The cover page is filled with a miscellany of writing, which Frank Burgoyne, the Lambeth Librarian, transcribed in modern script and published in 1904. He thought that most of this writing was in one hand with additional words and phrases by one or two other persons. About a quarter of the matter on the page consists of incomplete words, half-syllables, repeated single letters and meaningless strokes; but most of the writing is competent and purposeful ---the lines are straight, the words are well-spaced and many letters, in particular the capitals, have ornamental flourishes typical of the Elizabethan secretarial hand. Where the writing is difficult to read, this is generally because it is faded or damaged, seldom because it is scribbled. Some words are written diagonally and some are written upside-down, indicating that a little trouble was taken (turning the page around) in order to draw the reader's attention to these words.

Today most readers only see the original of the cover page in considerably reduced facsimile, as it is presented, for example, in E.K.Chambers' *William Shakespeare* (facing p.196). This not only makes reading more difficult and in places impossible, but it gives the impression that the page is a chaotic mass of meaningless scribbling, as many detractors have claimed. However, when seen in enlarged rather than reduced facsimile, the order and purpose of most of the writing becomes clear. This article focuses on a four-line section, arguably the most significant part of the page. Some of this section has faded badly and some has become blurred, but none of the key words can be described as 'meaningless scribbling'.

Sir Henry Neville 1562-1615

New Evidence for an Authorship Candidate

Dr John Casson www.creativepsychotherapy.info

Since his authorship of the works of Shakespeare was discovered by Brenda James, a decade of research has led to much new evidence supporting his case. This evidence is multi-dimensional. Neville's dates and life experience fit Shakespeare's writing. His social network was what we would expect: principally he had a life long friendship with Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, who was named as Neville's patron. Southampton dedicated a document praising Richard III to Neville in 1603 in which he referred to plays which made Richard infamous. Neville also knew John Fletcher: Beaumont and Fletcher gave Neville the manuscript of their play *A King and No King* just before Shakespeare started co-writing with Fletcher. Neville knew the "incomparable pair of brethren" William and Philip, earls of Pembroke, to whom the First Folio was dedicated and his son and grandson were their wards. Neville's father-in-law was one of the editors of Holinshed and Neville knew Ralph Newbury, one of the publishers.

Neville was a courtier; a JP and MP who knew the law; he had travelled extensively in Europe including France and Italy; he visited Scotland; he was ambassador to France; he was a scholar who knew Latin, Greek, French, Italian, Spanish; he lived near Windsor giving him the local knowledge we see in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*; he was a subscriber to the Second London Virginia Company giving him access to the Strachey letter that is a source for *The Tempest*; he was an astronomer and mathematician; he had travelled by sea and knew Dover (*King Lear* contains eye witness scenes of the cliffs). Studies of the history plays have revealed a consistent Neville bias: the playwright distorted history to foreground a Neville to bring him glory or acted to protect Nevilles from shame. In *Richard III* there are 20 members of the Neville family referred to or on stage.

It is above all the rediscovery of Neville's library with books that are sources for Shakespeare, annotated with notes that relate to the Shakespeare plays and poems, that offer clear evidence of his authorship. These notes predate the plays and show Neville had the knowledge and interest in characters, stories and images that later were to appear in the plays. These annotations also reveal his interest in theatre. Neville left letters and notebooks which provide evidence that he had interests in politics and history and had rare vocabulary used by the Bard. His handwriting offers supporting evidence that Hand D of *Sir Thomas More* may be his. Neville owned the Northumberland Manuscript (1596-7): his surname and family motto are at the top of the front cover and this is the earliest document to list and quote from works of Shakespeare and identify him as a playwright before this name appeared on any play (1598). Neville's arrest and imprisonment in 1601 explains why Shakespeare's writing turned from histories and comedies to great tragedies and the troubled problem plays. His biography illuminated the plays. He had strong reasons to keep his authorship secret. Neville's descendants and relatives have included writers, poets and playwrights.

There are now nine books on Neville's authorship, including:

Sir Henry Neville was Shakespeare: The Evidence by J. Casson and W. D. Rubinstein, 2016, Amberley

Sir Henry Neville Alias William Shakespeare: Authorship Evidence in the History Plays by M. Bradbeer and J. Casson, 2015, McFarland

The Truth Will Out by B. James and W. D. Rubinstein, 2005, Pearson Longman.