

Shakespearean Authorship Trust Conference 2017

“What’s the New News at the New Court?” – Developments in the Authorship Question

Sunday October 29th 2017

The Nancy Knowles Lecture Theatre, Shakespeare’s Globe, London

Schedule for the day:

10.15 Arrival/coffee

10.45 Introduction and reading

11.00 John Casson: A Scientific Approach to the Shakespeare Authorship Question

12.00 Ros Barber: Stylometry: Hard Evidence or Pseudo-Science?

1.00 Lunch

2.15 Actors/reading

2.30 Simon Miles: Francis Bacon and *The Phoenix and the Turtle*

3.30 Tea and cake

4.00 Alexander Waugh: Shakespeare’s Grave Problem, Part 2

5.00 Q & A

5.30 End

This year we are looking at new research for some of the leading authorship candidates.

A Scientific Approach to the Shakespeare Authorship Question

John Casson (in collaborations with John Leigh and David Ewald)

This paper will focus on the authorship as a scientific question. It will look at the scientific method that developed from the ideas of Francis Bacon and explore the relevance of this to the authorship, using Henry Neville as our prime example, comparing and contrasting his claim with that of William Shakspeare from Stratford. Science seeks to enquire into reality through gathering evidence, interrogating and testing that evidence, developing hypotheses, then further testing these ideas until a consensus of many peers develops a theory that explains the evidence. This is not a matter of relying solely on expert opinion. Any theory can be tested by each new generation and shown to be valid. Where new evidence emerges there is a paradigm shift. Considering the different authorship candidates as hypotheses to explain the Shakespeare authorship anomalies, we will examine the evidence and ways of testing it in accord with scientific method. New evidence for Neville’s authorship will be examined in this context.

Stylometry: Hard Evidence or Pseudo-Science? - Ros Barber

In October 2016, the news that Christopher Marlowe was to be credited with co-authorship of the three plays of Shakespeare's Henry VI in the new Oxford Shakespeare made global news. The culmination of the stylometric research of a team of US and UK scholars from several different universities, this news was seen by some as a validation of Marlovian claims, and by others as the end of them, resting as it did on the claim that the teams had successfully distinguished the writing of Shakespeare from that as Marlowe. This follows on from the 1996 work of Elliot and Valenza, which claimed to have used stylometry to rule out all the major Shakespeare claimants: a claim refuted the same year by Donald Foster on the basis of deeply flawed methodology. Has the development of new stylometric methods in the 20 years between these two pieces of research led to greater accuracy? This paper will examine the basis on which Marlowe is being credited with co-authorship of these Shakespeare plays, and whether that rules him out as the possible author of the rest of the canon.

Francis Bacon and *The Phoenix and the Turtle* - Simon Miles

One of the most fascinating Shakespearean puzzles is the poem *The Phoenix and the Turtle*. Described variously as the "greatest poem in the English language", and the "most mysterious" of the works of the Bard, this short masterpiece has remained an enigma since it was written. What is it about? Who is it about? Nobody seems to know for sure. New evidence will be presented for the first time in this presentation which may shed new light on some of these questions. Following a recitation of the poem by the actors, I will discuss how the suggestion of Francis Bacon as the true author of the Shakespeare works leads to some surprising insights and possible breakthrough answers to at least some of the questions surrounding *The Phoenix and the Turtle*.

Shakespeare's Grave Problem Part 2 - Alexander Waugh

Building on the research presented at last year's SAT conference, which revealed how the epitaph of Shakespeare's Stratford Monument hides a riddle and solution telling the reader that Shakespeare was buried, not in the Holy Trinity Church, but alongside Beaumont, Chaucer and Spenser in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey, Alexander Waugh (Chairman of the De Vere Society) now presents Part 2 of his investigation - a newly discovered and stunning corroboration of this theory, ingeniously encrypted into the title and dedication pages of SHAKESPEARES SONNETS (1609). With evidence that will challenge even the most persistent and determined of cipher skeptics, he will demonstrate how the exact church, the exact part of that church and the exact spot within that part of that church, are all ingeniously concealed behind the seemingly innocent facade of these two pages.