ALSO BY JAMES SHAPIRO

A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare: 1599

Oberammergau: The Troubling Story of the World's Most Famous Passion Play

Shakespeare and the Jews

Rival Playwrights: Marlowe, Jonson, Shakespeare

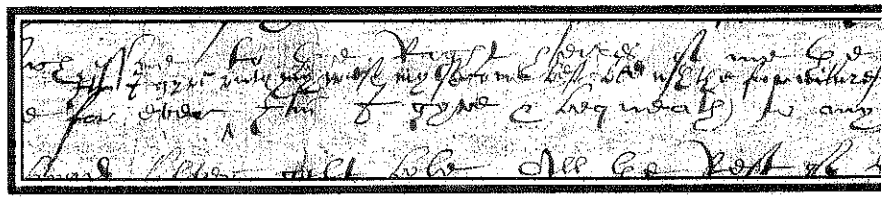
CONTESTED WILL

Who Wrote Shakespeare?

JAMES SHAPIRO

SIMON & SCHUSTER
New York London Toronto Sydney

PROLOGUE



"I gyve vnto my wief my second best bed"

from Shakespeare's will

This is a book about when and why many people began to questi whether William Shakespeare wrote the plays long attributed him, and, if he didn't write them, who did.

There's surprising consensus on the part of both skeptics and c fenders of Shakespeare's authorship about when the controversy fi took root. Whether you get your facts from the *Dictionary of National l ography* or Wikipedia, the earliest documented claim dates back to 17 when James Wilmot, an Oxford-trained scholar who lived a few mi outside of Stratford-upon-Avon, began searching locally for Shal speare's books, papers, or any indication that he had been an author and came up empty-handed. Wilmot gradually came to the conclusi that someone else, most likely Sir Francis Bacon, had written the pla Wilmot never published what he learned and near the end of his l burned all his papers. But before he died he spoke with a fellow searcher, a Quaker from Ipswich named James Corton Cowell, who la shared these findings with members of the Ipswich Philosophic Socie

Cowell did so in a pair of lectures delivered in 1805 that survive i manuscript now located in the University of London's Senate House l brary, in which he confesses to being "a renegade" to the Shakespeare "faith." Cowell was converted by Wilmot's argument that "there is no ing in the writings of Shakespeare that does not argue the long and ea training of the schoolman, the traveler, and the associate of the great a learned. Yet there is nothing in the known life of Shakespeare that sho he had any one of the qualities." Wilmot is credited with being the f to argue, as far back as the late eighteenth century, for an unbridgea rift between the facts of Shakespeare's life and what the plays and poe reveal about their author's education and experience. But both Wilr and Cowell were ahead of their time, for close to a half-century pas before the controversy resurfaced in any serious or sustained way.

Since 1850 or so, thousands of books and articles have been p lished urging that someone other than Shakespeare wrote the plays. first, bibliographers tried to keep count of all the works inspired by controversy. By 1884 the list ran to 255 items; by 1949, it had swelle

over 4,500. Nobody bothered trying to keep a running tally after that, and in an age of blogs, websites, and online forums it's impossible to do justice to how much intellectual energy has been—and continues to be—devoted to the subject. Over time, and for all sorts of reasons, leading artists and intellectuals from all walks of life joined the ranks of the skeptics. I can think of little else that unites Henry James and Malcolm X, Sigmund Freud and Charlie Chaplin, Helen Keller and Orson Welles, or Mark Twain and Sir Derek Jacobi.

It's not easy keeping track of all the candidates promoted as the true author of Shakespeare's plays and poems. The leading contenders nowadays are Edward de Vere (the Earl of Oxford) and Sir Francis Bacon. Christopher Marlowe, Mary Sidney, the Earl of Derby, and the Earl of Rutland have attracted fewer though no less ardent supporters. And more than fifty others have been proposed as well—working alone or collaboratively—including Sir Walter Ralegh, John Donne, Anne Whateley, Robert Cecil, John Florio, Sir Philip Sidney, the Earl of Southampton, Queen Elizabeth, and King James. A complete list is pointless, for it would soon be outdated. During the time I've been working on this book, four more names have been put forward: the poet and courtier Fulke Greville, the Irish rebel William Nugent, the poet Aemelia Lanier (of Jewish descent and thought by some to be the unnamed Dark Lady of the Sonnets), and the Elizabethan diplomat Henry Neville. New candidates will almost surely be proposed in years to come. While the chapters that follow focus on Francis Bacon and the Earl of Oxford—whose candidacies are the best documented and most consequential—it's not because I believe that their claims are necessarily stronger than any of these others. An exhaustive account of all the candidates, including those already advanced and those waiting in the wings, would be both tedious and futile, and for reasons that will soon become clear, Bacon and Oxford can be taken as representative.

Much of what has been written about the authorship of Shakespeare's plays follows the contours of a detective story, which is not all that surprising, since the authorship question and the "whodunit" emerged at the same historical moment. Like all good detective fiction, the Shakespeare mystery can be solved only by determining what evidence is credible, retracing steps, and avoiding false leads. My own account in the pages that follow is no different. I've spent the past twenty-five years researching and teaching Shakespeare's works at Columbia University. For some, that

automatically disqualifies me from writing fairly about the controversy on the grounds that my professional investments are so great that I cannot be objective. There are a few who have gone so far as to hint at a conspiracy at work among Shakespeare professors and institutions, with scholars paid off to suppress information that would undermine Shakespeare's claim. If so, somebody forgot to put my name on the list.

My graduate school experience taught me to be skeptical of unexamined historical claims, even ones that other Shakespeareans took on faith. I had wanted to write my doctoral dissertation on "Shakespeare and the Jews" but was told that since there were no Jews in Shakespeare's England there were no Jewish questions, and I should turn my attention elsewhere. I reluctantly did so, but years later, after a good deal of research, I learned that both claims were false: there was in fact a small community of Jews living in Elizabethan London, and many leading English writers at that time wrestled in their work with questions of Jewish difference (in an effort to better grasp what constituted English identity). That experience, and the book that grew out of it, taught me the value of revisiting truths universally acknowledged.

There yet remains one subject walled off from serious study by Shakespeare scholars: the authorship question. More than one fellow Shakespearean was disheartened to learn that I was committing my energies to it, as if somehow I was wasting my time and talent, or worse, at risk of going over to the dark side. I became increasingly interested in why this subject remains virtually taboo in academic circles, as well as in the consequences of this collective silence. One thing is certain: the decision by professors to all but ignore the authorship question hasn't made it disappear. If anything, more people are drawn to it than ever. And because prominent Shakespeareans—with the notable exceptions of Samuel Schoenbaum, Jonathan Bate, Marjorie Garber, Gary Taylor, Stanley Wells, and Alan Nelson—have all but surrendered the field, general readers curious about the subject typically learn about it through the books and websites of those convinced that Shakespeare could never have written the plays.

This was forcefully brought home not long ago when I met with a group of nine-year-olds at a local elementary school to talk about Shakespeare's poetry. When toward the end of the class I invited questions, a quiet boy on my left raised his hand and said: "My brother told me that Shakespeare really didn't write *Romeo and Juliet*. Is that true?" It was the kind of question I was used to hearing from undergraduate

on the first day of a Shakespeare course or from audience members at popular lectures, but I hadn't expected that doubts about Shakespeare's authorship had filtered down to the fourth grade.

Not long after, at the Bank Street Bookstore, the best children's bookstore in New York City, I ran into a colleague from the history department buying a stack of books for her twelve-year-old daughter. On the top of her pile was a young adult paperback by Elise Broach, *Shakespeare's Secret,* which I learned from those who worked at the store was a popular title. I bought a copy. It's a fascinating and fast-paced detective story about a diamond necklace that once belonged to Queen Elizabeth. The mystery of the necklace is worked out only when another mystery, concerning who wrote Shakespeare's plays, is solved.

The father of the story's young heroine is a Shakespeare scholar at the "Maxwell Elizabethan Documents Collection in Washington, D.C." (whose "vaulted ceilings" and "long, shining wood tables" bear a striking resemblance to those of the Folger Shakespeare Library). He tells his curious daughter that there's "no proof, of course, but there are some intriguing clues" that "Edward de Vere, the seventeenth Earl of Oxford" was "the man who might be Shakespeare." When she asks him why people think Oxford might have written the plays, he explains that Oxford had "the perfect background, really. He was clever, well educated, well traveled," and "events of his life bear a fascinating resemblance to events in Shakespeare's plays." He adds that "most academics still favor Shakespeare," though "over the years, Oxford has emerged as a real possibility." But it doesn't take her long to suspect that Shakespeare wasn't the author after all; by page 45, after learning that Shakespeare "couldn't even spell his own name," she decides: "Okay, so maybe he didn't write the plays."

An unusual twist to the story is the suggestion that Queen Elizabeth and the Earl of Oxford had a clandestine relationship, which explains why Oxford couldn't claim credit for writing the plays falsely attributed to Shakespeare: "If there were some connection between Oxford and Elizabeth that meant the royal name would be besmirched by his ambitions as a playwright." In the end, the secret of the necklace reveals "that Edward de Vere was Elizabeth's son." More surprising still is the hint that the relationship between son and mother didn't end there, for when he came of age, Oxford "might have been her lover" as well.

Elise Broach provides an author's note in which she explains that the "case for Edward de Vere as Shakespeare is compelling," and that

while "there is no proof that Edward de Vere was the son of Elizabeth I there is clear evidence of a connection between them, and the notion that he might have been either her lover or her son continues to be discussed." As for her own views: "As a historian" (who did graduate work in history at Yale) "I don't find the evidence to be complete enough—yet—to topple the man from Stratford from his literary pedestal. But as a novelist, I am more convinced."

I put the book down, relieved that the nine-year-old boy had stuck to Shakespeare's authorship and not asked me about Queen Elizabeth's incestuous love life. The question of how schoolchildren could learn to doubt whether Shakespeare wrote the plays may have been answered, but only to be replaced by more vexing ones: What led a writer as thoughtful and well informed as Elise Broach to arrive at this solution? What underlying assumptions—about concealed identity, Elizabethan literary culture, and especially the autobiographical nature of the plays—enabled such a conception of Shakespeare's authorship to take hold? And when and why had such changes in understanding occurred?

In taking this set of questions as my subject, this book departs from previous ones about the authorship controversy. Earlier books have focused almost exclusively on *what* people have claimed, that is, whether it was Shakespeare or someone else who wrote the plays. The best of these books—and there are a number of excellent ones written both by advocates and by those skeptical of Shakespeare's authorship—set out well-rehearsed arguments for and against Shakespeare and his many rivals. Consulting them, or a handful of online discussion groups such as "The Shakespeare Fellowship" (for a pro-Oxford bias), "The Forest of Arden" (for a pro-Shakespeare one), and "Humanities.Literature.Authors.Shakespeare" (for a glimpse of how nasty things can get), will offer a sense of where the battle lines are currently drawn, but will fail to make clear how we got to where we are now and how it may be possible to move beyond what seems like endless trench warfare.

Shakespeare scholars insist that Christopher Marlowe could not have written plays dated as late as 1614 because he was killed in 1593, and that the Earl of Oxford couldn't have either, because he died in 1604, before *Lear, Macbeth,* and eight or so other plays were written. Marlowe's defenders counter that Marlowe wasn't in fact killed; his assassination was staged and he was secretly hustled off to the Continent, where he wrote the plays now known as Shakespeare's. Oxfordians respond that despite

what orthodox scholars say, nobody knows the dates of many of Shakespeare's late plays, and in any case Oxford could easily have written them before his death. Shakespeareans reply that there is not a shred of documentary evidence linking anyone else to the authorship of the plays; advocates of rival candidates respond that there is plenty of circumstantial evidence—and, moreover, many reasons to doubt Shakespeare's claim. Positions are fixed and debate has proven to be futile or self-serving. The only thing that has changed over time is how best to get one's message across. Until twenty years ago, it was mainly through books and articles; since then the Web has played an increasingly crucial role. Those who would deny Shakespeare's authorship, long excluded from publishing their work in academic journals or through university presses, are now taking advantage of the level playing field provided by the Web, especially such widely consulted and democratic sites as Wikipedia.

My interest, again, is not in what people think—which has been stated again and again in unambiguous terms—so much as why they think it. No doubt my attitude derives from living in a world in which truth is too often seen as relative and in which mainstream media are committed to showing both sides of every story. Groups are locked in opposition, proponents gravitating to their own kind, reinforced in their beliefs by like-minded (and potentially closed-minded) communities. There are those who believe in intelligent design and those who swear by the theory of evolution; there are those who believe that life begins at conception and those who don't. Then there are those whose view of the world is shaped for better or worse by conspiracy, so while most are convinced that astronauts walked on the moon, some believe that this event was staged. More disturbingly, there are those who survived the Holocaust and those who maintain it never happened. I don't believe that truth is relative or that there are always two sides to every story. At the same time, I don't want to draw a naive comparison between the Shakespeare controversy and any of these other issues. I think it's a mistake to do so, except insofar as it too turns on underlying assumptions and notions of evidence that cannot be reconciled. Yet unlike some of these other controversies, I think it's possible to get at why people have come to believe what they believe about Shakespeare's authorship, and it is partly in the hope of doing so that I have written this book.

I should say at this point that I happen to believe that William Shakespeare wrote the plays and poems attributed to him, a view left

unshaken by the years of study I have devoted to this subject (and toward the end of this book I'll explain in some detail why I think so). But I take very seriously the fact that some brilliant writers and thinkers who matter a great deal to me—including Sigmund Freud, Henry James, and Mark Twain—have doubted that Shakespeare wrote the plays. Through their published and unpublished reflections on Shakespeare I've gained a much sharper sense of what is contested and ultimately at stake in the authorship debate. Their work has also helped me unravel a mystery at the heart of the controversy: Why, after two centuries, did so many people start questioning whether Shakespeare wrote the plays?

There's another mystery, often and easily confused with this one, that I cannot solve, though it continues to haunt both Shakespeareans and skeptics alike: What led to the playwright's emergence (whomever one imagines he or she was) as such an extraordinary writer? As for the formative years of William Shakespeare—especially the decade or so between his marriage to Anne Hathaway in the early 1580s and his reappearance in London in the early 1590s, by now an aspiring poet and playwright—they are called the "lost years" for a reason. Was he a lawyer, a butcher, a soldier, or teaching in a Catholic household in Lancashire during those years, as some have surmised? We simply don't know. No less inscrutable is the "contested will" to which the dying Shakespeare affixed his signature in 1616. The surviving three-page document makes no mention of his books or manuscripts. And, notoriously, the only thing that Shakespeare bequeathed in it to his wife, Anne, was a "second best bed." Not only the nature of their marriage but also the kind of man Shakespeare was seems bound up in this bequest. Was he referring, perhaps, to the guest bed or alternatively to the marital bed they had shared? Was he deliberately treating his wife shabbily in the will or did he simply assume that a third of his estate—the "widow's dower"—was automatically her share? We don't know and probably never shall, though such unanswerable questions continue to fuel the mystery surrounding his life and work.

With these challenges in mind, this book first sets out to trace the controversy back to its origins, before considering why many formidable writers came to question Shakespeare's authorship. I quickly discovered that biographers of Freud, Twain, and James weren't keen on looking too deeply into these authors' doubts about Shakespeare. As a result, I encountered something rare in Shakespeare studies: archival material that was unsifted and in some cases unknown. I've also revisited the life and

works of the two most influential figures in the controversy, the allegedly "mad" American woman, Delia Bacon, who first made the case for Francis Bacon, and the schoolmaster J. T. Looney, the first to propose that Edward de Vere, the seventeenth Earl of Oxford, was the true author of the plays. For a debate that largely turns on how one understands the relationship of Shakespeare's life and works, there has been disappointingly little attention devoted to considering how Bacon's and Looney's experiences and worldviews determined the trajectory of their theories of authorship. Scholars on both sides of the debate have overlooked a great deal by taking these two polemicists at their word.

More than any subject I've ever studied, the history of the authorship question is rife with forgeries and deception. I now approach all claims about Shakespeare's identity with caution, taking into account when each discovery was made and how it altered previous biographical assumptions. I've also come to understand that the authorship controversy has turned on a handful of ideas having little directly to do with Shakespeare but profoundly altering how his life and works would be read and interpreted. Some of these ideas came from debates about biblical texts, others from debates about classical ones. Still others had to do with emerging notions of the autobiographical self. As much as those on both sides of the controversy like to imagine themselves as independent thinkers, their views are strongly constrained by a few powerful ideas that took hold in the early nineteenth century.

While Shakespeare was a product of an early modern world, the controversy over the authorship of his works is the creation of a modern one. As a result, there's a danger of reading the past through contemporary eyes—from what Shakespeare's contested will really meant to how writers back then might have drawn upon personal experiences in their works. A secondary aim of this book, then, is to show how Shakespeare is not our contemporary, nor as universal as we might wish him to be. Anachronistic thinking, especially about how we can gain access to writers' lives through their plays and poems, turns out to be as characteristic of supporters of Shakespeare's authorship as it is of skeptics. From this vantage, the long-standing opposition between the two camps is misleading, for they have more in common than either side is willing to concede. These shared if unspoken assumptions may in fact help explain the hostility that defines their relationship today, and I'll suggest that there may be more useful ways of defining sides in this debate. I'll also

argue that Shakespeare scholars, from the late eighteenth century until today, bear a greater responsibility than they acknowledge for both the emergence and the perpetuation of the authorship controversy.

THE EVIDENCE I continued to uncover while researching this book made it hard to imagine how anyone before the 1840s could argue that Shakespeare didn't write the plays. This working assumption couldn't easily be reconciled with the received history of the controversy, one that, as noted earlier, goes back to James Wilmot in 1785, or at least to James Cowell in 1805. Aware of this uncomfortable fact, I held off until the very end of my research on consulting the Cowell manuscript in the Durning-Lawrence Library at Senate House Library in London. Before I called it up I knew as much as others who had read about this unpublished and rarely examined work. It was one of the jewels of a great collection of materials touching on the life and works of Francis Bacon, assembled at great expense by Sir Edwin Durning-Lawrence and, after his death in 1914, by his widow, Edith Jane Durning Smith, who shared his keen interest in the authorship controversy. Upon her death in 1929, the collection was bequeathed to the University of London, and by 1931 the transfer of materials was complete. A year later the leading British scholar Allardyce Nicoll announced in the pages of the *Times Literary Supplement* in an essay titled "The First Baconian" the discovery of Cowell's lectures. It was Nicoll who put the pieces of the puzzle together, relying heavily on a biography written in 1813 by Wilmot's niece, Olivia Wilmot Serres. Serres's account, while not mentioning her uncle's meeting with Cowell or his Shakespeare research, nonetheless confirmed that Wilmot was a serious man of letters, had lived near Stratford, was an admirer of Francis Bacon, and had indeed burned his papers. Nicoll was less successful in tracing James Corton Cowell, concluding that he "seems to have been a Quaker" on the grounds that "he was in all probability closely related to the well-known Orientalist E. B. Cowell, who was born at Ipswich in 1828."

Armed with this information, I turned to the lectures themselves, which made for gripping reading—how Cowell began as a confirmed Shakespearean, how his fortuitous encounter with Wilmot changed all that, how Wilmot anticipated a widely accepted reading of *Love's Labour's Lost* by a century, and perhaps most fascinating of all, how Wilmot uncovered stories of "odd characters living at or near Stratford on the Avon with whom

Shakespeare must have been familiar," including "a certain man of extreme ugliness and tallness who blackmailed the farmers under threat of bewitching their cattle," as well as "a legend of showers of cakes at Shrovetide and stories of men who were rendered cripples by the falling of these cakes." I thought it a shame that Cowell had not taken even better notes.

And then my heart skipped when I came upon the following words: "it is strange that Shakespeare whose best years had been spent in a profitable and literary vocation should return to an obscure village offering no intellectual allurement and take up the very unromantic business of a money lender and dealer in malt." The sentence seemed innocuous enough; scholars and skeptics alike have long drawn attention to these well-known facts about Shakespeare's business dealings. But having long focused more on *when* than on *what* people thought what they did about Shakespeare, I remembered that these details were unknown in 1785, or even in 1805. Records showing that Shakespeare's household stockpiled grain in order to produce malt were not discovered until the early 1840s (and first published in 1844 by John Payne Collier). And it wasn't until 1806 that the Stratford antiquarian R. B. Wheler made public the first of what would turn out to be several documents indicating that Shakespeare had engaged in money lending (in this case, how in 1609 Shakespeare had a Stratford neighbor named John Addenbrooke arrested for failing to repay a small sum). While an unsent letter in which another neighbor asks Shakespeare for a loan had been discovered in the late eighteenth century, the scholar who found it chose not to announce or share his discovery; it remained otherwise unknown until 1821. So Shakespeare's grain hoarding and money lending didn't become biographical commonplaces until the Victorian era.

The word "unromantic" in the same sentence should have tipped me off; though there was a recorded instance of its use before 1800, it wasn't yet in currency at the time Cowell was supposedly writing. Whoever wrote these lectures purporting to be from 1805 had slipped up. I was looking at a forgery, and an unusually clever one at that, which on further examination almost surely dated from the early decades of the twentieth century. That meant the forger was probably still alive—and enjoying a satisfied laugh at the expense of the gulled professor—when Allardyce Nicoll had announced this discovery in the pages of the *TLS*. The forger had brazenly left other hints, not least of all the wish attributed to Cowell that "my material may be used by others regardless whence it came for

it matters little who made the axe so that it cut." And there were a few other false notes, including one pointed out by a letter writer responding to Nicoll's article, that Cowell had gotten his Warwickshire geography wrong. It also turns out that Serres, the author of Nicoll's main corroborative source (the biography of Wilmot) was a forger and fantasist. Much of her biographical account (including the burning of Wilmot's papers) was invented, and she later changed her story, asserting she was actually Wilmot's granddaughter and the illegitimate daughter of King George III. Her case was even discussed in Parliament and it took a trial to expose her fraudulent claim to be of royal descent. So Olivia Serres, at the source of the Cowell forgery, would also prove to be the pattern of a Shakespearean claimant: a writer of high lineage mistaken for someone of humbler origins, whose true identity deserved to be acknowledged.

I've not been able to discover who forged the Cowell manuscript; that mystery will have to be solved by others. His or her motives (or perhaps theirs) cannot fully be known, though it's worth hazarding a guess or two. Greed perhaps figured, for there is a record of payment for the manuscript of the not inconsiderable sum of eight pounds, eight shillings—though this document may have been planted, and we simply don't as yet know when or how the Cowell manuscript became part of the Durning-Lawrence collection. But, given how much time and care went into the forgery, a far likelier motive was the desire on the part of a Baconian to stave off the challenge posed by supporters of the Earl of Oxford, who by the 1920s threatened to surpass Bacon as the more likely author of Shakespeare's works, if in fact he had not done so already. A final motive was that it reassigned the discovery of Francis Bacon's authorship from a "mad" American woman to a true-born Englishman, a quiet, retiring man of letters, an Oxford-educated rector from the heart of England. Wilmot also stood as a surrogate for the actual author of Shakespeare's plays: a well-educated man believed to have written pseudonymously who refused to claim credit for what he wrote and nearly denied posterity knowledge of the truth.

All of the major elements of the authorship controversy come together in the tangled story of Wilmot, Cowell, Serres, and the nameless forger—which serves as both a prologue and a warning. The following pages retrace a path strewn with a great deal more of the same: fabricated documents, embellished lives, concealed identity, pseudonymous authorship, contested evidence, bald-faced deception, and a failure to grasp what could not be imagined.

SHAKESPEARE

The Infant Shakespeare Attended by Nature and the Passions

Ireland

Portrait of a Jacobean man

For a long time after Shakespeare's death in 1616, anyone curious about his life had to depend on unreliable and often contradictory anecdotes, most of them supplied by people who had never met him. No one thought to interview his family, friends, or fellow actors until it was too late to do so, and it wasn't until the late eighteenth century that biographers began combing through documents preserved in Stratford-upon-Avon and London. All this time interest in Shakespeare never abated; it was centered, however, on his plays rather than his personality. Curiosity

about his art was, and still is, easily satisfied: from the closing years of the sixteenth century to this day, his plays could be purchased or seen onstage more readily than those of any other dramatist.

Shakespeare did not live, as we do, in an age of memoir. Few at the time kept diaries or wrote personal essays (only thirty or so English diaries survive from Shakespeare's lifetime, and only a handful are in any sense personal; despite the circulation and then translation of Montaigne's *Essays* in England, the genre attracted few followers and fizzled out by the early seventeenth century, not to be revived in any serious way for a hundred years). Literary biography was still in its infancy; even the word "biography" hadn't yet entered the language and wouldn't until the 1660s. By the time popular interest began to shift from the works themselves to the life of the author, it was difficult to learn much about what Shakespeare was like. Now that those who knew him were no longer alive, the only credible sources of information were letters, literary manuscripts, or official documents, and these either were lost or remained undiscovered.

The first document with Shakespeare's handwriting or signature on it—his will—wasn't recovered until over a century after his death, in 1737. Sixteen years later a young lawyer named Albany Wallis, rummaging through the title deeds of the Fetherstonhaugh family in Surrey, stumbled upon a second document signed by Shakespeare, a mortgage deed for a London property in Blackfriars that the playwright had purchased in 1613. The rare find was given as a gift to David Garrick—star of the eighteenth-century stage and organizer of the first Shakespeare festival—and was subsequently published by the leading Shakespeare scholar and biographer of the day, Edmond Malone. Malone's own efforts to locate Shakespeare's papers were tireless—and disappointing. His greatest find, made in 1793 (though it remained unpublished until 1821), was the undelivered letter mentioned earlier, addressed *to* Shakespeare by his Stratford neighbor Richard Quiney.

A neighbor's request for a substantial loan, a shrewd real-estate investment, and a will in which Shakespeare left his wife a "second best bed" were not what admirers in search of clues that explained Shakespeare's genius had hoped to find. What little else turned up didn't help much either, suggesting that the Shakespeares secretly clung to a suspect faith and were, moreover, social climbers. Shakespeare's father's perhaps spurious Catholic "Testament of Faith" was found hidden in the rafters

of the family home on Henley Street in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1757 though mysteriously lost soon after a transcript was made. And the Shakespeares' request in 1596 for a grant of a coat of arms—bestowing on the Stratford glover and his actor son the status of gentlemen—surfaced in 1778, and was published that year by George Steevens in his edition of Shakespeare's plays. Contemporaries still had high hopes that "a rich assemblage of Shakespeare papers would start forth from some ancient repository, to solve all our doubts." For his part, a frustrated Edmond Malone blamed gentry too lazy to examine their family papers "much information might be procured illustrative of the history of this extraordinary man, if persons possessed of ancient papers would take the trouble to examine them, or permit others to peruse them."

Some feared that Shakespeare's papers had been, or might yet be carelessly destroyed. The collector and engraver Samuel Ireland, touring through Stratford-upon-Avon in 1794 while at work on his *Picturesque Views on the Upper, or Warwickshire Avon,* was urged by a Stratford local to search Clopton House, a mile from town, where the Shakespeare family papers might have been moved. Ireland and his teenage son William-Henry, who had accompanied him, made their way to Clopton House, and in response to their queries were told by the farmer who lived there, a man named Williams, "By God I wish you had arrived a little sooner. Why it isn't a fortnight since I destroyed several baskets-full of letters and papers . . . as to Shakespeare, why there were many bundles with his name wrote upon them. Why it was in this very fireplace I made a roaring bonfire of them." Mrs. Williams was called in and confirmed the report, admonishing her husband: "I told you not to burn the papers, as they might be of consequence." All that Edmond Malone could do when he heard this dispiriting news was complain to the couple's landlord. The unlucky Samuel and William-Henry Ireland went back to London.

They didn't return empty-handed, having purchased an oak chair at Anne Hathaway's cottage. It was said to be the very chair in which Shakespeare had wooed Anne, and it's now in the possession of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. Samuel Ireland added it to his growing collection of English heirlooms that included the cloak of the fourteenth-century theologian John Wyclif, a jacket owned by Oliver Cromwell, and the garter that King James II wore at his coronation. But the great prize of Shakespeare's signature continued to elude him.

It probably didn't help Ireland's mood that his lawyer and rival collector Albany Wallis, who thirty years earlier had discovered Shakespeare's signature on the Blackfriars mortgage deed, had recently regained access to the Fetherstonhaugh papers and located a third document signed by Shakespeare, the conveyance to that Blackfriars transaction.

As the eighteenth century came to a close, the long-lost cache of Shakespeare's papers—not just legal transactions, but more revelatory correspondence, literary manuscripts, and perhaps even commonplace books (in which Elizabethan writers recorded what they saw, heard, and read)—still awaited discovery. And crucial information about the Elizabethan theatrical world, which might have illuminated Shakespeare's professional life, was only fitfully coming to light. A major find in 1766—a copy of *Palladis Tamia,* Francis Meres's account of the Elizabethan literary world published in 1598—confirmed that by then a "honey-tongued Shakespeare" was already prized as the leading English writer of both comedies and tragedies. While the contours of Shakespeare's professional world were slowly becoming visible, his personal life remained obscure. Though unsuccessful in his search for Shakespeare's notebooks, a dogged Edmond Malone did find the record book of one of the Jacobean Masters of the Revels in a trunk that hadn't been opened for over a century. It was a discovery, Malone writes, "so much beyond all calculation or expectation, that I will not despair of finding Shakespeare's pocket-book some time or other."

Despite the belated efforts of eighteenth-century scholars and collectors, no document in Shakespeare's hand had as yet been found that linked him to the plays published under his name or attributed to him by contemporaries. The evidence for his authorship remained slight enough for a foolish character in a play staged in London in 1759—*High Life Below Stairs*—to wonder aloud, "Who wrote Shakespeare?" (When told that it was Ben Jonson, she replies: "Oh no! Shakespeare was written by one Mr. Finis, for I saw his name at the end of the book.") And in 1786 an anonymous allegory called *The Learned Pig* was published, a story that turns on the Pig's various reincarnations, including one in Elizabethan times when the Pig encountered Shakespeare—who then took credit for the animal's work, or so the Pig claims: "He has been fathered with many spurious dramatic pieces: *Hamlet, Othello, As You Like It, The Tempest,* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream,*" of "which I confess myself to be the author." Both of these fictional works joke about authorship,

but do so with a slightly uneasy edge, testifying to the growing divide between Shakespeare's fame and how little was known for sure about the man who wrote the plays.

YOUNG WILLIAM-HENRY IRELAND, eager to please his disappointed father, continued hunting for Shakespeare's papers among the various documents he came across as a law clerk as well as among the wares of "a dealer of old parchments" whose shop he "frequented for weeks." In November 1794 he was invited to dinner by a family friend, at which (to quote Malone's account) William-Henry made the acquaintance of "Mr. H.," a "gentleman of large fortune, who lived chiefly in the country." Their "conversation turning on old papers and autographs, of which the discoverer said he was a collector, the country-gentleman exclaimed, 'If you are for *autographs,* I am your man; come to my chambers any morning, and rummage among my old deeds; you will find enough of them.'" The young man did just that, discovering in a trunk a mortgage deed, written at "the Globe by Thames" and dated 14 July 1610, with the seal and signature of William Shakespeare.

Mr. H., in whose home it was found, preferred to remain anonymous; he made a gift of it to his young visitor, and two weeks later, on 16 December, William-Henry gave his father an early Christmas present. An overjoyed Samuel Ireland took it to the Heralds' Office for authentication, where Francis Webb declared that it bore "not only the signature of his hand, but the stamp of his soul, and the traits of his genius." Webb had difficulty deciphering the seals, so Ireland consulted with the economist Frederick Eden. Eden also confirmed the document's authenticity and explained to the Irelands that Shakespeare's seal contained a quintain—a device used to train knights in handling lances—wittily suited to "Shake-spear."

Samuel Ireland, along with friends who viewed this deed, hoped that "wherever it was found, there must undoubtedly be all the manuscripts of Shakespeare so long and vainly sought for," and urged William-Henry to return to the gentleman's house and search more thoroughly. William-Henry did so, and further searches produced a treasure trove of papers, including a receipt from Shakespeare to his fellow player John Heminges, Shakespeare's own Protestant "Profession of Faith," an early

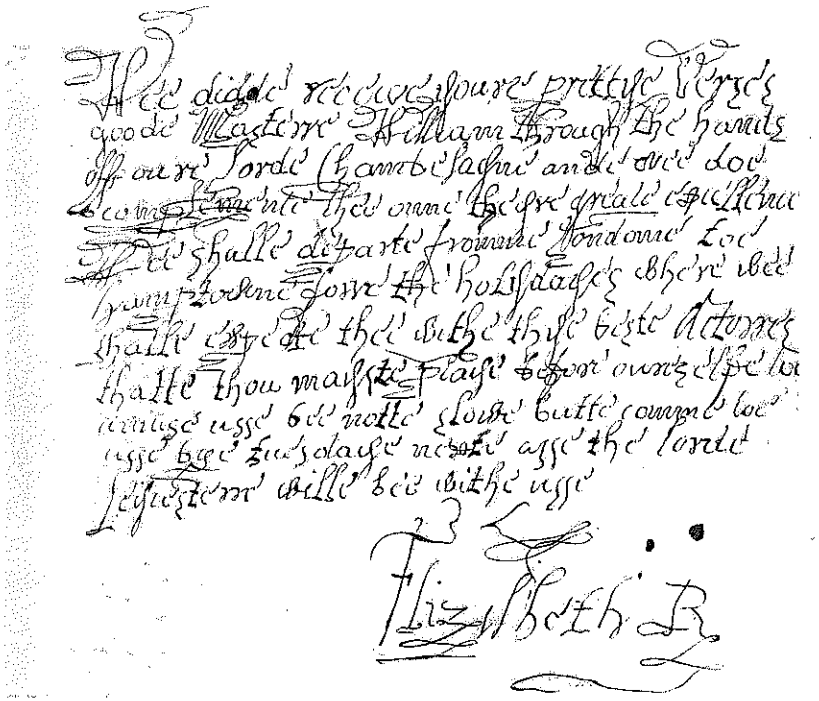
letter from Shakespeare to Anne Hathaway, a receipt for a private performance before the Earl of Leicester in 1590, an amateurish drawing depicting an actor (possibly Shakespeare as Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice*), articles of agreement with the actor John Lowin, a "Deed of Trust" dating from 1611, and Shakespeare's exchange with the Jacobean printer William Holmes over the financial terms governing the publication of one of his plays (in the end, Shakespeare rejected Holmes's ungenerous offer: "I do esteem much my play, having taken much care writing of it.... Therefore I cannot in the least lower my price"). Books with Shakespeare's name and annotations were also discovered, including copies of Thomas Churchyard's *The Worthiness of Wales*, John Carion's Protestant-leaning *Chronicles*, and Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*.

Among the discoveries were a letter to and another from the Earl of Southampton, to whom Shakespeare had dedicated both *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, as well as a note from Queen Elizabeth, signed in her unmistakable hand, thanking Shakespeare for the "pretty verses" he had sent her and informing him, "We shall depart from London to Hampton for the holidays where we shall expect thee with thy best actors that thou mayest play before ourself to amuse us."

Biographies of Shakespeare would have to be updated and revised. As a column in the newspaper *The Oracle* announcing these remarkable finds made clear, this royal letter in particular showed that previous, anecdotal accounts of Shakespeare's start in the theater were "degrading nonsense" and "utterly fictitious." The papers revealed a different aspect, a "new character" of Shakespeare's, one that combined "an acute and penetrating judgment with a disposition amiable and gentle as his genius was transcendent."

London's leading men of letters descended on the Ireland household on Norfolk Street, eager to view and verify these extraordinary papers. Among the first were two men knowledgeable in matters Shakespearean: the literary critic Joseph Warton and the classics scholar Samuel Parr, who were especially impressed by Shakespeare's "Profession of Faith": "our litany abounds with beauties, but here is a man has distanced us all," and they, as well as others, congratulated young William-Henry on having afforded "so much gratification to the literary world."

An even greater discovery emerged in early February 1795, when William-Henry Ireland's further searches turned up a long-lost manu-



Letter from Queen Elizabeth

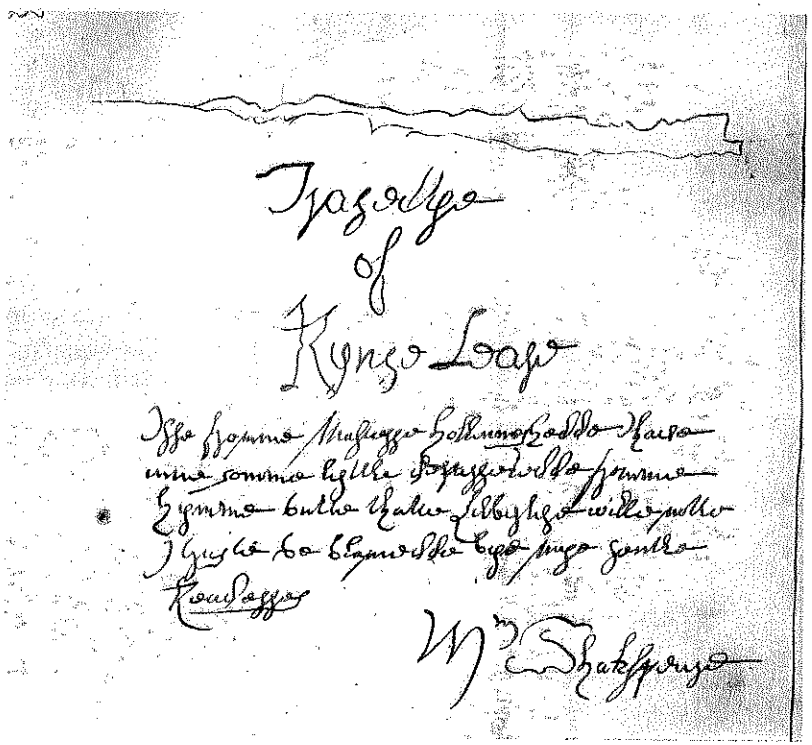
script of *King Lear*. The invaluable find confirmed what editors and critics had suspected: Shakespeare's original had been carelessly treated in the playhouse; the printed editions were littered with actors' cuts, interpolations, and scurrility. By comparing the manuscript (or transcript of its now difficult to decipher secretary hand) with printed versions of Lear's final speeches, critics were able to see the great difference between what Shakespeare had originally written:

What is't thou sayst? Her voice was ever soft
And low, sweet music o'er the rippling stream,
Quality rare and excellent in woman.
O yes, by Heavens, 'twas I killed the slave
That did round thy soft neck the murderous
And damned cord entwine. Did I not, sirrah?

and what the actors had done to these lines, as evident in the butchered version that appeared in the edition of the play printed in 1608:

> *What is't thou sayst? Her voice was ever soft,*
> *Gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman.*
> *I killed the slave that was a-hanging thee.*

The excessive cuts made clear why in his 1611 "Deed of Trust" Shakespeare requested that if his plays "be ever again imprinted," it should be done from his manuscripts and not from the corrupt versions "now printed." No less important for understanding the author's intentions was a note on the first page of the *Lear* manuscript, which underscored that Shakespeare wrote not only for the stage but also, if not primarily, for his "gentle readers."



Manuscript page of *King Lear*

The excitement in London's literary community was justifiably great. James Boswell, famous for his *Life of Johnson,* perused the manuscripts and documents in mid-February, then kissed them, kneeled, and declared, "how happy am I to have lived to the present day of discovery of this glorious treasure. I shall now die in peace." Boswell went to his grave three months later, having lived to see and hold the manuscript of Shakespeare's great tragedy. The playwright and biographer James Boaden recalled his own excitement: "I remember that I beheld the papers with the tremor of purest delight—touched the invaluable relics with reverential respect, and deemed even existence dearer, as it gave me so refined a satisfaction." The press to view the Shakespeare papers was so great that two weeks after Boswell's celebrated visit, Samuel Ireland had to restrict access and even charge an entry fee of two guineas: "Any gentleman, on sending his address in writing, on being introduced by a subscriber, may view the manuscripts at Number 8, Norfolk Street on Monday, Wednesday, and Fridays, between the hours of twelve and three." The Prince of Wales—the future King George IV—invited Samuel Ireland to Carleton House to show him Shakespeare's papers in person. Britain's newspapers and magazines were filled with stories about the discoveries.

Samuel Ireland decided to make transcriptions and even some facsimiles of the papers available in a sumptuous volume, and leading scholars, heralds, dramatists, and men of taste testified to their conviction that "these papers can be no other than the production of Shakespeare himself." The *Miscellaneous Papers* appeared in print right before Christmas 1795, prefaced by a list of more than a hundred prominent subscribers. Contemporaries would have noted, perhaps with a smile, the absence of two names from these lists, the greatest living authorities on Shakespeare's life and work: Edmond Malone and George Steevens. Malone must have been jealous; despite his intense interest in documents in Shakespeare's hand, he had not even deigned to visit the house on Norfolk Street to view the papers. Steevens too had not gone to see them, though his reticence may have been more understandable. While his reputation was built upon editing Shakespeare's plays, it had been sullied by his attempt to defraud the public with a forged letter from the Elizabethan playwright George Peele to Christopher Marlowe, a transcription of which he published in the *Theatrical Review* (Steevens had Peele describe how the actor Edward Alleyn teased Shakespeare

about borrowing his words in the scene in which Hamlet advises the players).

Shortly after the *Miscellaneous Papers* were published, a tantalizing report of new and even more exciting material came to light. William-Henry Ireland informed a committee of twenty-four authorities convened by his father that he had learned of additional finds, including whole or partial manuscripts of *Julius Caesar* and *Richard the Second,* as well as of a hitherto unknown Shakespeare play, *Henry the Second.* A manuscript of another Shakespearean history, *Vortigern*—drawn from Holinshed's *Chronicles,* on the tumultuous life of Vortigern, the fifth-century ruler of the Britons who fell in love with the Saxon princess Rowena—had also been discovered. The script of *Vortigern* appeared promising enough to restage; a four-hundred-line excerpt circulated and negotiations were begun with the managers of Drury Lane and Covent Garden theaters, both of whom were eager to present the long-lost play. A catalogue of books in Shakespeare's own hand had also been found, along with his annotated copies of Chaucer's *Works,* Holinshed's *Chronicles,* and the Bible, a "deed by which he became partner of the Curtain Theatre," two drawings of the Globe, verses to Elizabeth I, Sir Francis Drake, and Walter Ralegh, along with the most tantalizing discovery of all: Shakespeare's "brief account of his life in his own hand."

IT WAS ALL a fraud. William-Henry Ireland would eventually confess to having forged every single document (including the old drawing of a young Jacobean man, reproduced at the beginning of this chapter, that he had purchased on Butcher Row and doctored to resemble Shakespeare). The mysterious "Mr. H." didn't exist. Reports of finding other lost plays or Shakespeare's memoirs were pure fantasy. So too were additional forgeries, including one in which Shakespeare thanks a fellow Elizabethan (coincidentally named William Henry Ireland) for saving him from drowning in the Thames. The remnants of Shakespeare's library, with its forged catalogue listing over a thousand volumes, consisted of rare books that William-Henry found in London's bookstalls and then inscribed with Shakespeare's signature and annotations. To produce authentic-looking documents, he purchased bookbinder's ink

that looked old and faded, then filched paper and ancient seals from his law office. The random choice of a seal displaying a quintain that hinted at Shakespeare's name was a happy accident. When he ran out of paper he obtained more from London booksellers, who sold him blank endpapers torn out of rare books. His rendering of Shakespeare's signature proved convincing because he had traced it from a version that had recently appeared in facsimile in Malone's edition of Shakespeare's works. William-Henry, barely out of his teens, had done it all without an accomplice, and with incredible speed. He had deceived nearly everyone in literary London, including his own father.

His labors sparked what might be called the first Shakespeare authorship controversy, an instructive episode that ought to be better known, for it introduced a set of arguments familiar to anyone acquainted with subsequent disputes over who wrote Shakespeare's plays. Mortified contemporaries should have known better, even as the Irelands themselves should not have fallen for the cock-and-bull story that Mr. and Mrs. Williams of Clopton House—toying with the expectations of tourists hunting for curios—told them about having recently burned Shakespeare's papers. One reason why the *Miscellaneous Papers* succeeded in duping so many is because the collection read like a documentary life, one that refracted the profile of Shakespeare through the expectations of the time. The good husband, loyal subject, devout Protestant, and all-around contemporary man of letters perfectly matched what people hoped to discover about Shakespeare, and established a precedent for future claims about the identity of the author of the plays which would turn out to be no less grounded in fantasy, anachronism and projection.

Ireland's most notorious attempt at passing off his own words as Shakespeare's—the chronicle history of *Vortigern*—was performed on the London stage on 2 April 1795, on the eve of the exposure of the forgeries. It was a disaster. The most humiliating moment for the Irelands may well have been the ten-minute uproar, much of it consisting of raucous laughter, that followed John Philip Kemble's pointed delivery of the unfortunate line "And when this solemn mockery is ended." Had the Irelands held off on seeing it staged and refrained from publishing "Shakespeare's papers," the controversy over the documents' authenticity would likely have gone on for years.

Shakespeare Deified

William-Henry undertook these forgeries not long after the author of *Hamlet* and *Lear* had begun to be regarded as a literary deity, a crucial precondition for this and all subsequent controversies over his identity. Deification also helps explain why Drury Lane had won out over Covent Garden for the right to stage *Vortigern,* given how heavily invested that playhouse had been in promoting a divine Shakespeare. In April 1794, the newly rebuilt Drury Lane had been rededicated as a "monument" to Shakespeare, a "shrine more worthy of his fame we give, / Where unimpaired, his genius still may live." The opening night performance of *Macbeth* concluded with an epilogue spoken by the popular actor Elizabeth Farren, who called for the "Genius of Shakespeare" roaming in the air to spread his "broad wings" over their "new reared stage." As a larger-than-life sculpture of Shakespeare was revealed onstage, Farren proclaimed: "And now the image of our Shakespeare view / And give the Drama's God the honour due." This divine image of Shakespeare was surrounded by a group of his literary creations along with the Muses of Comedy and Tragedy, and the performers onstage burst into song:

Behold this fair goblet, 'twas carved from the tree,
Which, O my sweet Shakespeare, was planted by thee;
As a relic I kiss it, and bow at the shrine,
What comes from thy hand must be ever divine!
All shall yield to the mulberry tree.
Bend to thee,
Blest mulberry,
Matchless was he
Who planted thee,
And thou like him immortal be.

Audience members would have known that the "relic" they were celebrating could be traced back to "Drama's God" himself—a wooden chalice carved from the famed mulberry tree that the playwright had reportedly planted at New Place, the large house he had purchased in Stratford-upon-Avon. It was the closest thing to a literary Holy Grail. The old tree had been cut down in 1756 by the owner of New Place, who had grown tired of all the souvenir hunters disturbing his peace. A savvy

local tradesman named Thomas Sharp saw his chance, bought most c the logs, and spent much of the next half-century enriching himself b selling off countless carvings from it—far more than one tree, no matte how miraculous its origins, could ever produce. No one at Drury Lan that evening objected to a spectacle that a former age would have foun sacrilegious. The great antitheatrical preachers of Elizabethan Englan may have been turning in their graves, but Shakespeare's divinity wa now taken for granted.

The process that had led to his deification was a curious one. In hi own day Shakespeare was typically equated with rivals, both classic and contemporary. Francis Meres likened him to Ovid, and ranked hir with the best of English tragedians and comedians. In his epistle to *Tl White Devil* in 1612, John Webster grouped him with Thomas Dekke and Thomas Heywood as one of England's most prolific playwright notable for their "right happy and copious industry." And when Edmun Howe added a brief account of "our modern, and present excellent poet in the fifth edition of John Stow's *Annales* in 1615, Shakespeare's nam predictably appears along with those of a score of other distinguishe Elizabethan poets and dramatists. Examples could easily be multiplied

It was only posthumously that Shakespeare was finally unyoke from the company of rivals or mortals. This occurred in the prefato verses to the collection of his plays put together by fellow actors Joh Heminges and Henry Condell, who had worked alongside Shakespea for over twenty years. They published the collected plays in 1623 in folio edition (and the decision to publish them in a large and costly foli format, in which the printed sheet of paper was folded only once—th equivalent of the modern "coffee table" book rather than the paperback size and inexpensive quartos or octavos in which plays typically appeare and in which the printed sheet was refolded to produce a considerab smaller page—was itself an indication of his distinction). Before thi only Ben Jonson had published plays in a folio-size volume, and he ha been mocked for presuming to do so. For Jonson, who contributed pair of poems to the First Folio in praise of his rival, Shakespeare "di far outshine" Marlowe, Kyd, and Lyly (though not, presumably, Jonsc himself). But in the same poem, Jonson also recycles a trope he had use so effectively in his "Ode to Cary and Morison," where the heroic dea live on in the heavenly firmament: "But stay, I see thee in the hem sphere, / Advanced and made a constellation there! / Shine forth thc

star of poets." In a similar vein, James Mabbe writes that "We thought thee dead," but like a good actor, Shakespeare has managed to "die, and live." For Leonard Digges, it was the works that would prove immortal: "every line, each verse, / Here shall revive, redeem thee from thy hearse." Ben Jonson writes much the same thing: "Thou art a monument, without a tomb, / And art alive still, while thy book doth live." These are all lovely and probably heartfelt sentiments, but nobody at the time would have mistaken hyperbolic claims about Shakespeare's immortality for anything but a literary device. So too, when in the late seventeenth century, John Dryden spoke of Shakespeare's "sacred name," or "professed to imitate the divine Shakespeare," his words were never meant to be taken literally.

Yet referring to Shakespeare as divine had become so habitual that by 1728 a sharp-eared foreigner like Voltaire couldn't help but notice that Shakespeare "is rarely called anything but 'divine' in England"—to which Arthur Murphy proudly retorted, "With us islanders, Shakespeare is a kind of established religion in poetry." What had begun as a literary trope became a widely shared conviction after David Garrick mounted a Shakespeare festival—a three-day "Jubilee" with all its religious overtones—in Stratford-upon-Avon in September 1769. Garrick, who had risen to fame thanks to Shakespeare, had few rivals as a bardolator. By this time he had appeared in a score of Shakespearean roles and had produced many of the plays. Acknowledged in his day for having done much to revive interest in Shakespeare onstage, he would be buried at the foot of Shakespeare's statue in Westminster Abbey, the words on his tomb declaring that "Shakespeare and Garrick like twin stars shall shine."

Garrick had even built a temple to Shakespeare on his estate in Hampton on the banks of the Thames. The treasures contained within the octagonal shrine drew admirers from Horace Walpole to the King of Denmark: Roubiliac's statue of Shakespeare (now housed in the British Museum, and for which Garrick himself was almost certainly the model), various carvings from the famed mulberry tree, and even some of Shakespeare's personal effects, including "an old leather glove, with pointed fingers and blackened metal embroidery," an old dagger, and a "signet ring with W. S. on it." For detractors like Samuel Foote, the heresy was a bit much: Mr. Garrick had "dedicated a temple to a certain divinity . . . before whose shrine frequent libations are made, and on whose altar the fat of venison, a viand grateful to the deity, is seen often to smoke." Others found nothing strange in this at all.

Even Garrick admitted that the rain-soaked Stratford Jubilee had been a "folly." It set him back two thousand pounds and he never again set foot in Shakespeare's native town. Locals were apparently confused by the Jubilee (including a laborer from Banbury hired to deliver a double-bass viol to the event, who reportedly thought that it was to be used at "the resurrection of Shakespeare"). Stratford's tourist industry as well as the proliferation of Shakespeare festivals around the world can trace their roots back to that extravaganza. The Jubilee, according to Christian Deelman, the best historian of the event, also "marks the point at which Shakespeare stopped being regarded as an increasingly popular and admirable dramatist, and became a god."

By all accounts, its climax was Garrick's recitation of an "Ode to Shakespeare," a shameless appeal to Shakespeare's divinity: " 'Tis he! 'Tis he—that demi-god! / Who Avon's flowery margin trod." In case anyone missed the point, Garrick was happy to repeat it: " 'Tis he! 'Tis he! / The god of our idolatry!" One gushing eyewitness wrote afterward that the audience "was in raptures." Garrick avidly promoted mulberry relics, of which he owned a considerable supply, including the very goblet that reappeared as a prop in the Drury Lane celebration of 1794.

Garrick recouped his Stratford losses four times over by restaging a version of the events at Drury Lane, in a play simply called *The Jubilee*. It was a sensation and ran for a record ninety-two nights. His "Ode" was not only published and circulated widely, but also recited on provincial stages from Canterbury to Birmingham. The Jubilee tapped into larger cultural currents, for no "other topic in the century inspired quite such a surge of stage plays and poems." Word spread quickly beyond England's shores, and two Jubilees were held in Germany, modeled on Garrick's. After Garrick's death, William Cowper celebrated him as "great Shakespeare's priest," underscoring the ways in which the celebration of Shakespeare was now most fittingly described in religious terms:

For Garrick was a worshipper himself;
He drew the liturgy, and framed the rites
And solemn ceremonial of the day,
And called the world to worship on the banks
Of Avon famed in song.

Contemporary painters were quickly drawn to the idea of a divine Shakespeare, and did much to popularize this conceit. In 1777 Henry Fuseli sketched out plans, much talked of but never realized, for a Shakespeare ceiling modeled on that of the Sistine Chapel: even as Michelangelo portrayed the story of Creation, Fuseli would render Shakespeare's creations in his predecessor's style, including characters from *The Tempest, Twelfth Night, Lear,* and *Macbeth.* In his "Ode" Garrick had described how "the Passions" wait upon Shakespeare and "own him for their Lord"; George Romney would capture this image in an exceptional painting—*The Infant Shakespeare, Attended by Nature and the Passions*—completed around 1792, reproduced at the beginning of this chapter. As critics have noted, the infant Shakespeare is cast in a pose familiar from Nativity scenes, while Nature and the Passions substitute for the Magi and the shepherds. Other artists picked up on similar themes, depicting, for example, the poet in clouds of glory in *The Apotheosis of Shakespeare.* By the end of the eighteenth century the idea of a divine Shakespeare had become commonplace. Still, it wasn't as if anyone was paying homage to his image in a house of worship. Another century would pass before that happened.

IT WAS WILLIAM-HENRY Ireland's misfortune to have forged what amounted to divine writ at a time when the first fully fledged Shakespeare experts, most prominent among them Edmond Malone, had appeared on the scene (though the word "expert" itself wouldn't enter the vocabulary for another quarter-century). Malone's exposure of the Ireland forgeries would strike a nerve: who had the expertise to decide such matters? And what knowledge did such experts possess that well-versed amateurs lacked?

Malone did not weigh in until he had his hands on Samuel Ireland's *Miscellaneous Papers* and was able to examine the documents closely. He obtained a copy of the book immediately after its publication in late 1795 and worked without pause for the next three months. At the end of March 1796 he published *An Inquiry into the Authenticity of Certain Miscellaneous Papers and Legal Instruments . . . Attributed to Shakespeare.* It was an overnight bestseller. His verdict was devastating: the documents and manuscripts were second-rate forgeries and the subscribe dupes. The evidence was damning. Malone demonstrated that the spel ing and language of the documents in the possession of the Irelands wer wildly at variance with Elizabethan usage. Words that Ireland attribute to Shakespeare weren't in currency until the eighteenth century (one his most damning examples was the word "upset," originally a nautic term, not employed in the now familiar sense of "distressed" or "trou bled" until two centuries after Shakespeare's day). Malone also showe that the dates affixed to many of Ireland's documents were off the mar Queen Elizabeth's letter addressed to Shakespeare at "the Globe" in th late 1580s, for example, anticipated the building of that playhouse b more than a decade. He also established that surviving autographs the Earl of Southampton looked nothing like the ones that appeared i the Ireland papers.

Malone's *Inquiry* made clear that those who had examined the mar uscript of *Lear* and confirmed its legitimacy had no clue what Elizab than dramatic manuscripts looked like. Only a few other scholars an editors used to handling old papers were in a position to recognize th these playscripts did not in the least resemble the documents Irelan had forged. And they knew this because they had bought, consulted, an borrowed (in Malone's case often refusing to return) as many of the as they could get their hands on. "I am myself," Malone writes in th *Inquiry,* "at this moment surrounded with not less than a hundred deed letters, and miscellaneous papers, directly or indirectly relating to Shak speare."

The handful of dramatic manuscripts that had survived—and fe were extant, since there was no need to keep them once a play w printed—were written in a mix of secretary and italic script (in part distinguish speaking parts from stage directions). Professional drama tists and scribes prepared these documents in a kind of theatrical shor hand, indicating that they were intended for playhouse use rather tha for publication. And, unlike Ireland's manuscript of *Lear,* these scrip typically bore the mark of the censor, since a copy would have to pa through the hands of the Master of the Revels, who had to signify each script his official approval before it could be publicly staged. contrast to the Ireland forgeries, the Elizabethan manuscripts Malo had at hand weren't written on both sides of the page or "trimmed"

"ornamented in any way, but stitched in covers and well embrowned with dust and age." And unlike Ireland's manuscripts, none included line numbers in the margin.

Yet Ireland succeeded by making the language of his forged texts seem sufficiently strange—in a pseudo-Elizabethan way—to pass as genuine. Among his tricks were omitting all punctuation and then spelling words in a way that seemed old-fashioned, doubling as many consonants as possible and adding a terminal "e" whenever possible. The prefatory words to *Lear* are typical: "Iffe fromme masterre Hollinshedde I have inne somme lyttle departedde fromme hymme butte thatte Libbertye will notte I truste be blammedde bye mye gentle Readerres."

One reason why the forgeries struck contemporaries as authentic was that their portrait of Elizabethan literary culture felt so familiar. Like a typical eighteenth-century author, Ireland's Shakespeare accumulated a sizable library, negotiated terms with his publishers, and took great care in disposing of what he had written, for it was his property, to do with as he pleased. He was also a writer on familiar terms with members of the elite, as we see in the forged correspondence with the Earl of Southampton (in which Shakespeare refuses half the money that his "friend" and patron offers) as well as in his exchange with Queen Elizabeth (who attended command performances of his plays at the public playhouses a dozen times "every season," as eighteenth-century royalty might). What neither the Irelands nor those men of letters who testified to the authenticity of the documents understood was that such conventions and behavior were almost unimaginable in Shakespeare's day.

These and other anachronisms underscore how irrevocably the nature of authorship had changed since Elizabethan times (though they have changed comparatively little since then, so that we stand much closer to Ireland's contemporaries than they do to Shakespeare's). It wasn't just authorship that had changed, but the most basic social customs as well: one of Ireland's forgeries, a poem Shakespeare addresses to Queen Elizabeth, describes how "Each titled dame deserts her rolls and tea." Only Malone seems to have been aware that tea, that quintessential English beverage, was as yet unavailable in England in Shakespeare's day.

Many at the time felt that Malone had engaged in overkill. Had his main target been William-Henry Ireland, that accusation would have been justified. Ireland was quite young, for one thing; for another, it was

obvious that he wasn't profiting directly from the forgeries and, at leas at the outset, was motivated by a desperate wish to win a withholding father's approval. Malone, though, had a greater objective than attacking the Irelands, and that was putting in their place amateurs who though they knew enough about Shakespeare to judge such matters and wh on the basis of this authority had declared the forged documents to b authentic. Many chafed at this; a critic in *St. James's Chronicle* spoke fo many when he derided Malone's efforts to dominate Shakespeare schol arship as an act of a "Dictator *perpetuo*." But Malone had made his point the Ireland incident had turned out to be a perfect way to distinguish those who knew enough to pass judgment about Shakespeare's author ship from those who didn't. The most enduring lesson of this episode i that some people will persist in believing what they want to believe—i this case that Shakespeare really was the author of the Ireland docu ments.

As far as Samuel Ireland and his closest supporters were concerne Malone, who had for so long tried and failed to find the lost Shake speare archive, was jealous and delusional, convinced that "everythin that belonged to Shakespeare was his own exclusive property." Othe picked up on this point, wondering how Malone or anyone else kne precisely how Shakespeare wrote: "How are they to be proved not genu ine? From conjecture!" From their perspective, the dispute over the au thorship of these documents had to end in a standoff; each side ha its own story to tell, for "conjecture may be answered and contradicte by conjecture equally as fair and forcible." Samuel Ireland questione Malone's authority in a new book, *An Investigation of Mr. Malone's Clai to the Character of Scholar, or Critic,* concluding that Malone's case " by no means established by that mode of proof which he has adduce and the arguments he has used." Did Malone have "in his possession ar of the original manuscripts of Shakespeare, to show the specific usag of the bard?" Lacking that crucial evidence, "upon what ground does h inference rest?"

Others who remained convinced of the documents' authenticity ra lied to the Irelands' cause. For one contemporary commentator, Franc Webb, the fact that all the documents "reciprocally illustrate and confir each other" surely trumped Malone's objections: "Shakespeare's geniu character, life, and situation connect them all." "After frequent inspe tion and careful perusal of these papers," Webb concludes, "duly weigh

ing their claims to my belief, founded on their own evidence, I am not only fully satisfied of their authenticity: but also . . . that no human wisdom, cunning, art, or deceit, if they could be united, are equal to the task of such an imposture."

Some others hedged their bets: while willing to concede that the *Lear* and *Vortigern* manuscripts were probably forged, they maintained that the contemporary deeds and letters were genuine. The critic and scholar George Chalmers was also convinced that some of these documents could not have been faked, especially the letter from Queen Elizabeth thanking Shakespeare for his "pretty verses." And there were those who still refused to accept William-Henry's confession at face value and hinted darkly at a wider collusion over the authorship of the works—conspiracy theories that implicated Samuel Ireland, Albany Wallis, and even George Steevens.

"Like a Deceived Husband"

The story would take another and unexpected turn. Malone prided himself on exposing those who tried to dupe the literary world. He had even attacked the beloved ninety-one-year-old actor William Macklin for having decades earlier circulated a forged Elizabethan document. Malone felt it his duty to ridicule those so desperate for clues to Shakespeare's personality that they had allowed themselves to be seduced by Ireland's falsehoods. Yet his own desire to imagine what Shakespeare was like proved no less overwhelming. As a scholar he was adept at distinguishing archival fact from biographical fiction; but in accounting for Shakespeare's life he confused the two, and in doing so cleared the way for those following in his footsteps to do the same. While justly celebrated for having resolved one authorship controversy, Malone bears much of the blame for ushering in far more divisive ones.

This occurred not in a bold polemic like the *Inquiry*, but quietly, in his textual annotations, which first appeared in a two-volume 1780 Supplement to Samuel Johnson and George Steevens's 1778 edition of *The Plays of Shakespeare*, and then again in his solo edition of Shakespeare's works in 1790. This 1790 edition broke sharply with long-standing traditions going back to the First Folio of 1623 and continuing up through the great eighteenth-century editions of Rowe, Pope, Theobald, Johnson, Capell, and Steevens. Malone parted company with his predecessors in

two key ways. First, he tried to present the plays chronologically, rathe than as Heminges and Condell had originally arranged them in 1623, b genre, under the headings of Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies, wit no attention to the order in which they were written. Second, he in cluded Shakespeare's poems alongside the plays; his edition was the fir to be called *The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare*. Today these in novations seem unremarkable, but at the time they were unprecedente and would have unforeseen consequences for how Shakespeare's work were read and his life and authorship imagined.

Before the plays could be arranged chronologically, the order of the composition needed to be worked out. Nobody had ever done this an it's unclear when anyone first thought it worth doing. In 1709 Nichol Rowe wondered which was Shakespeare's first play—he couldn't eve hazard a guess—but thought it a mistake to assume that Shakespea necessarily improved over time: "we are not to look for his beginning in his least perfect works." A half-century later, Edward Capell, wh was also curious about how Shakespeare had "commenced a writer f the stage, and in which play," took things a step further, proposing th someone ought to investigate "the order of the rest of them." Capell w well aware of how daunting a task this would be, requiring compreher sive knowledge of everything from versification to the printing histo of the plays and the sources that Shakespeare drew upon. While Cape himself in his *Notes and Various Readings* broke fresh ground in this fiel it would be left to Malone to attempt a full account of the plays' chro nology.

Malone made a fair number of mistakes in his *Attempt to Ascerta the Order in Which the Plays of Shakespeare Were Written* in 1778, datin several plays far too early (his claim that *The Winter's Tale* was written i 1594 was off by nearly twenty years) while placing others too late. B after a decade of additional research he was able to fix some of his mo glaring errors, and his efforts spurred others to improve upon his chro nology. It's next to impossible to arrange plays in their order of com position without seeing a pattern, and the one that Malone believed i superseded the open-minded one offered by Rowe. Citing the autho ity of Pope and Johnson, Malone offered his readers a more comfor ing Enlightenment portrait, one in which an industrious Shakespea steadily "rose from mediocrity to the summit of excellence; from artle and sometimes uninteresting dialogues, to those unparalleled compos

tions, which have rendered him the delight and wonder of successive ages." Malone hastened to add that he wasn't really arguing for "a regular scale of gradual improvement," only that as Shakespeare's "knowledge increased as he became more conversant with the stage and with life, his performances *in general* were written more happily and with greater art."

A few—surprisingly few—lines in Shakespeare's plays refer explicitly to contemporary events, such as the allusion in *Henry the Fifth* to the Earl of Essex's Irish campaign in the spring and summer of 1599, which allowed Malone to date that play with considerable precision. They were so few in number that their absence seems to have been a deliberate choice on Shakespeare's part. But once Malone began sifting the plays for allusions to contemporary events and court intrigue, he found many more of them, or thought he did, reinforcing in a circular fashion his account of the plays' chronology. While his primary aim was a working chronology, his sense of what counted as topical allusions, as well as his interpretation of them, led readers to believe that specific political messages were encoded in the plays.

So, for example, when Malone came upon the comic scene in *Antony and Cleopatra* where the Egyptian queen strikes a servant who brings her news of Antony's remarriage, he recalled reading in Elizabethan chronicles that Queen Elizabeth had once boxed the Earl of Essex on the ear for turning his back on her. Malone decided that Shakespeare may have been attempting in this scene to "censure" Elizabeth—who at that point had been dead for three or four years—"for her unprincely and unfeminine treatment of the amiable Earl of Essex." Why stop there? A few scenes later, when the same servant describes to Cleopatra her rival's features, Malone interprets it as "an evident allusion to Elizabeth's inquiries concerning the person of her rival, Mary Queen of Scots." There's so much wrong about this it's hard to know where to begin. For one thing, it implies that conversations onstage shouldn't be taken at face value; they are really about something else, if only we could connect the dots and identify that something. For another, why Shakespeare, a member of the King's Men, would want to alienate his monarch by introducing into this scene a discussion of how attractive or unattractive James's dead mother, Mary, Queen of Scots, had been is unfathomable, though it didn't give Malone pause.

Reductively identifying topical moments as Malone had, a by-product

of trying to line up the life, works, and times, became an easy and tempting game. Malone's obsession with the Earl of Essex carried over into his interpretation of *Hamlet.* He had read the penitent earl's last words from the scaffold, before Essex was beheaded in 1601 for treason: "send thy blessed angels, which may receive my soul, and convey it to the joys of heaven." The dying man's conventional prayer sounded to Malone sufficiently like Horatio's words spoken over the dying Hamlet: "flights of angels sing thee to thy rest." Malone suspected that *Hamlet* had been staged before Essex was executed, but even that didn't stop him. So eager was he to suggest that "Lord Essex's last words were in our author's thoughts" that Malone supposes that "the words here given to Horatio may have been one of the many additions to the play." Are we then to conclude that *Hamlet* is Shakespeare's secret lament for the defeated earl who, like his play's protagonist, would be king? This is shoddy criticism and bad editing. Moreover, the history that Malone draws upon in making these topical correspondences was limited to chronicles, centered on the court, mostly from the reign of Elizabeth. That's understandable enough: he didn't have access to the kind of gritty social history that is now a bedrock on which our understanding of Shakespeare's drama and culture rests. But it badly skews the plays, turning them into court allegories, in which a Jacobean Shakespeare seems stuck in an Elizabethan past, unable to get out of his mind a slap administered by his queen, in a very different context, many years earlier.

I dwell on this matter at such length because Malone helped institutionalize a methodology that would prove crucial to those who would subsequently deny Shakespeare's authorship of the plays (after all, the argument runs, how would anybody but a court insider know enough to encode all this?). First, however, this approach would influence traditional accounts of the plays, such as George Russell French's *Shakespeareana Genealogica* (1869), which assures us that "nearly all Shakespeare's dramatis personae are intended to have some resemblance to characters in his own day." Such readings turned the plays into something other than comedies, histories, and tragedies: they were now coded works, full of in-jokes and veiled political intrigue for those in the know. And given the great number of characters in Shakespeare's plays and the many things that they say and do, the range of topical and biographical applications was nearly limitless. I don't think that Malone really

thought this through—he was just trying to bolster a shaky chronology and show off his knowledge of Elizabethan culture. But in doing so he carelessly left open a fire door.

The problems with Malone's topical assumptions pale in comparison with those precipitated by his biographical ones. Until Malone had established a working chronology of Shakespeare's plays, no critic or biographer had ever thought to interpret Shakespeare's works through events in his life. About the closest anyone had come to reading the plays biographically was suggesting that Shakespeare had modeled comic characters such as Falstaff and Dogberry on local folk he had known. But such claims were never meant to reveal anything about Shakespeare's character, other than perhaps suggesting that he had a bit of a vindictive streak.

Where earlier eighteenth-century editors such as Nicholas Rowe and Alexander Pope had prefaced the plays with a brief and anecdotal "Life," Malone chose to fuse life and works through extended notes that appeared at the bottom of each page of text. So, for example, when Malone first discovered in the Stratford archives that Shakespeare's son, Hamnet, had died in 1596, he thought it likely that Constance's "pathetic lamentations" about the loss of her son Arthur in *King John* (which Malone dated to this same year) were inspired by Shakespeare's own recent loss. Perhaps they were. Perhaps the play had been written before Shakespeare learned of his son's death. Perhaps he waited until composing *Hamlet* to unpack his heart. Or perhaps Shakespeare had been thinking of something else entirely when he wrote these lines. We'll never know.

Malone's argument presupposed that in writing his plays Shakespeare mined his own emotional life in transparent ways and, for that matter, that Shakespeare responded to life's surprises much as Malone and people in his own immediate circle would have. So for Malone, Shakespeare was not the kind of man who could suffer such a loss without finding an outlet for his grief in his work: "That a man of such sensibility, and of so amiable a disposition, should have lost his only son, who had attained the age of twelve years, without being greatly affected by it, will not be easily credited." There was no corroborating evidence in any case to confirm or refute Shakespeare's amiability (an anachronistic term, not used in this sense until the mid-eighteenth century), how hard the death of his son hit him, and how or even whether he transmuted loss into art. Indeed, there was no effort to consider that even as

literary culture had changed radically since early modern times, so too had a myriad of social customs, religious life, childhood, marriage, family dynamics, and, cumulatively, the experience of inwardness. The greatest anachronism of all was in assuming that people have always experienced the world the same way we ourselves do, that Shakespeare's internal, emotional life was modern.

Malone's decision to include the Sonnets and other poems alongside the plays proved even more consequential. As Margreta de Grazia has eloquently put it, "Malone's pursuit from the externally observed to the inwardly felt or experienced marked more than a new type of consideration: it signaled an important shift in how Shakespeare was read. Shakespeare was cast not as the detached dramatist who observed human nature but as the engaged poet who observed himself." Nowhere was this revised portrait of the artist more apparent than in the notes Malone first appended to the opening lines of Sonnet 93 in 1780, which set the direction of Shakespeare biography—and debates over authorship—on a new and irreversible course.

Sonnet 93 begins with its speaker comparing himself to a familiar type, the cuckolded spouse: "So shall I live, supposing thou art true, / Like a deceived husband." There's nothing especially difficult in the meaning of these opening lines that warrants an explanation; Malone's interest in providing an explanatory note was solely biographical. To this end, he collapses the very real distinction between the elusive persona of the speaker and Shakespeare himself (for we have no idea to what extent Shakespeare is writing out of his own experience or simply imagining a situation involving two fictional characters). By doing so, Malone gives himself license to treat the sonnet as something that gave him direct and unmediated access into Shakespeare's emotional life.

Malone tried to justify his novel approach by explaining that he had come across a manuscript of the biographer William Oldys, who had written that these lines "seem to have been addressed by Shakespeare to his beautiful wife on some suspicion of her infidelity." That's not actually something that Oldys had uncovered in some now lost papers. Oldys's manuscript notes on Shakespeare, now housed in the British Library, are almost all drily factual and bibliographic, except for one stray and gossipy remark that "Shakespeare's poem called 'A Lover's Affection' seems to be written to his beautiful wife under some rumour of inconstancy." Oldys was clearly misled by the title under which Sonnet 93 had

appeared in John Benson's 1640 edition of the Sonnets: "A Lover's Affection though his Love Prove Unconstant." Seizing on this hint, though knowing it's the only one like it in Oldys's notes, Malone wondered whether "in the course of his researches" Oldys had "learned this particular" about Shakespeare's marriage—intimating that there was some archival underpinning here, though it's obvious to even a casual reader of his notes that Oldys couldn't have been less interested in Shakespeare's marriage or inner life. Malone then offers a few scraps of supporting evidence, including that contested will in which Shakespeare had chosen his daughter Susanna as his executor and had further slighted his wife by bequeathing her "only an old piece of furniture." Early biographers were so disturbed by what they interpreted as Shakespeare's graceless decision to leave his widow a "second best bed" that when reprinting the document some silently emended the phrase to "brown best bed."

Malone found further evidence of Shakespeare's jealous resentment of his wife—expressed in the will and confirmed in Sonnet 93—in several of the dramatic works, for "jealousy is the principal hinge of *four* of his plays," especially *Othello,* where "some of the passages are written with such exquisite feeling, as might lead us to suspect that the author had himself been *perplexed* with doubts, though not perhaps in the *extreme.*" A mistaken identification of the Sonnets' author with their speakers, a strained reading of a poem's opening lines, and a fundamental misunderstanding of the conventions of early modern wills that was confirmed, if further confirmation were needed, by what occurred in play after play, added up for Malone to a convincing case.

Knowing that his account crossed a boundary, one that had been strictly observed by every previous editor and critic of Shakespeare's plays, Malone retreated a half-step, admitting that the case was built on "an uncertain foundation" and explaining that all he meant "to say is, that he appears to me to have written more immediately from the heart on the subject of jealousy, than on any other; and it is therefore not improbable he might have felt it." Recognizing that this semi-retraction didn't go quite far enough, he added: "The whole is mere conjecture." But he refused to reword or remove what he had written.

As noted earlier, Malone's annotations appeared in an edition of Shakespeare's *Works* edited by George Steevens. Steevens, an established scholar, had warmly welcomed the younger Malone into the world of Shakespeare editing three years earlier, even as Dr. Johnson had welcomed him; but when he read Malone's note to Sonnet 93, Steevens insisted on adding a rejoinder. He knew and feared where this kind of speculation could lead. It was a very slippery slope, with conjecture piled upon conjecture. He too had consulted Oldys's notes and saw through Malone's ploy, insisting that whether "the wife of our author was beautiful or otherwise was a circumstance beyond the investigation of Oldys. Steevens added that whether "our poet was jealous of this lady is likewise an unwarrantable conjecture." Steevens was especially offended by Malone's reductive view that just because one of Shakespeare's characters experienced something, the poet must have felt it too: "That Shakespeare has written with his utmost power on the subject of jealousy is no proof that he ever felt it." For if this were so, given the nearly limitless range of Shakespeare's characters, it would be possible to claim virtually anything and everything about Shakespeare's own feelings. Because Timon of Athens hates the world, Steevens asked, does it follow that Shakespeare himself "was a cynic or a wretch deserted by his friends? And because Shakespeare so vividly conveys the "vindictive cruelty of Shylock," he added, driving the point home, "are we to suppose he copied from a fiend-like original in his own bosom?"

Steevens was unforgiving. He recognized that Shakespeare scholarship stood at a crossroads, foresaw that once Malone pried open this Pandora's box it could never be shut again. He would not have been surprised to learn that two centuries later a leading scholar would write (and a major university press publish) a book called *Shylock Is Shakespeare* that answered his rhetorical question in the affirmative. Steevens's response to the kind of biographical flights of fancy Malone was both engaged in and inviting could not have been clearer: "As all that is known with any degree of certainty concerning Shakespeare is—that he was born at Stratford upon Avon—married and had children there—went to London, where he commenced actor, and wrote poems and plays—returned to Stratford, made his will, died, and was buried—*I must confess my readiness to combat every unfounded supposition respecting the particular occurrences of his life.*"

Malone, more comfortable criticizing others than being taken to task himself, was stung by Steevens's response. Steevens was clearly threatened by his upstart collaborator and now rival, and the wound opened in this latest exchange would never heal. When Steevens died in 1800, Malone didn't even attend his funeral and continued to harp on

the "incessant malignity and animosity" that Steevens had directed at his annotations years earlier.

An overlong note to Sonnet 93 got longer still when Malone again insisted that the works described what Shakespeare himself had gone through: "Every author who writes on a variety of topics will have sometimes occasion to describe what he has himself felt." He then turned on Steevens for imagining that Shakespeare could have shared Timon's cynicism, let alone "the depravity of a murderer." To argue this "would be to form an idea of him contradicted by the whole tenor of his character." Since Malone knew what Shakespeare's character was like, he had no difficulty identifying which of his dramatic creations embodied it.

The unprofitable game of profiling what could or couldn't be true of Shakespeare's character based on what his characters said or did had begun. So too had the baseless tradition that Shakespeare was unhappily married. Trying to extricate himself from charges that this was idle speculation, Malone further entangled himself in the intricacies of Shakespeare's love life. While willing to concede that "it does not necessarily follow that because he was inattentive to her in his Will, he was therefore jealous of her," Malone didn't believe that Anne Hathaway was good enough for Shakespeare: "He might not have loved her; and perhaps she might not have deserved his affection." Malone was a bachelor when he wrote these words—in fact, he would never marry, though he wanted to (he seems to have wooed far too aggressively, and two years after this edition appeared would write to a woman he had wanted to marry but who had rejected him words that echo his sentiments here: "How, my dear," he complained, "have I deserved that you should treat me with such marked unkindness?"). Malone's biographical note to Sonnet 93 thus introduced yet another centerpiece of modern Shakespearean biography: the tendency to confuse the biographical with the autobiographical, as writers projected onto a largely blank Shakespearean slate their own personalities and preoccupations.

Malone, who had trained as a lawyer, was, unsurprisingly, convinced that Shakespeare too had legal training, and "not merely such as might be acquired by the casual observation of even his all-comprehending mind." Malone even suspected that Shakespeare "was employed, while he yet remained at Stratford, in the office of some country attorney." The evidence? Not anecdotal reports, which claimed that he had been a butcher or a schoolteacher, but rather internal evidence from the plays,

most notably *Hamlet.* Malone was uncomfortable enough with this line of argument to add that Shakespeare "may be proved to have been equally conversant with the terms of divinity or physic." If others could come along and show that Shakespeare knew as much about religion or medicine as he did about the law, Malone concluded, then "what has been stated will certainly not be entitled to any weight."

Underlying his reasoning here was the presumption that Shakespeare could only write about what he had felt or done rather than heard about, read about, borrowed from other writers, or imagined. The floodgates were now open and others would soon urge, based on their own slanted reading of the plays, that Shakespeare must have been a mariner, a soldier, a courtier, a countess, and so on. By assuming that Shakespeare had to have experienced something to write about it with such accuracy and force, Malone also, unwittingly, allowed for the opposite to be true: expertise in the self-revealing works that the scant biographical record couldn't support—his knowledge of falconry for example, or of seamanship, foreign lands, or the ways that the ruling class behaved—should disqualify Shakespeare as the author of the plays.

Yet another precondition for challenging Shakespeare's authorship had now been established, one that would be trotted out more often than all the others combined. From now on, consensus would be impossible, and writing the life of the author of Shakespeare's works a game that anyone with enough ingenuity and conviction could play. When desire outpaced what scholars could turn up, there remained only a few ways forward: forgery, reliance on anecdote, or turning to the works for fresh evidence about the author's life. The impulse to interpret the plays and poems as autobiographical was a direct result of the failure to recover enough facts to allow anyone to write a satisfying cradle-to-grave life of Shakespeare.

Malone's commentary on Sonnet 93 was a defining moment in the history not only of Shakespeare studies but also of literary biography in general. What has emerged in our own time as a dominant form of life writing can trace its lineage back to this extended footnote. While the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had seen a handful of literary biographies, the genre didn't come into its own until the eighteenth century, spurred by an intense interest in life writing, swept along not only by a torrent of biographies and memoirs but also by great collaborative ef-

forts such as the multivolume *Biographia Britannica* of 1747–1766. *Biographia Britannica* marked a conceptual leap forward, recognizing that accurate biographies could act as a check on self-interested memoirs: "the work before us becomes both a supplement and a key, not only to our general histories, but to particular memoirs, so that by comparing the characters of great men, as drawn by particular pens, with their articles in this *Biographical Dictionary*, we see how far they are consistent with, or repugnant to, truth."

William Oldys was one of the principal contributors to the *Biographia Britannica*. He was possessed of a prodigious memory, an obsession with uncovering biographical facts, and a familiarity with the many archives where he might find them. He'd sort his notes into separate parchment bags, one for each biographical subject. His patience and tenacity were rewarded by many biographical discoveries, and he went on to write the lives of more than a score of major figures, including William Caxton, Michael Drayton, Richard Hakluyt, Edward Alleyn, and Aphra Behn. Oldys was content with just the facts and unearthed a great many of them. But facts alone were not enough to breathe life into his subjects. Writers like James Boswell (in his *Life of Johnson*) and Dr. Johnson himself, who relied heavily on the *Biographia Britannica* (which covered a majority of the poets treated in his four-volume *Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets*), understood this, and went on to redefine how lives were written and read.

Yet even Dr. Johnson drew the line at reading individual poems or plays autobiographically. Though deeply interested in writers' lives, he understood well enough that authorial and personal identity were not one and the same, and he refused to collapse the two. In fact, he went out of his way to ridicule those who did so, as he makes clear in his life of James Thomson. Johnson had read that an earlier Thomson biographer (probably Patrick Murdoch) had carelessly "remarked, that an author's life is best read in the works"—and pointed out the folly of such a claim. He recalled how the author Richard Savage (friend to both Thomson and Johnson himself) had once told him "how he heard a lady remarking that she could gather from [Thomson's] works three parts of his character, that he was a *great Lover, a great Swimmer, and rigorously abstinent.*" Savage set the record straight: the lady's reading of *The Seasons* as autobiographical was wrong on all three counts—Thomson was not the kind of devoted lover she imagined, was "never in cold water in his

life," and "indulges himself in all the luxury that comes within his reach.' So much for reading backward from the works.

Johnson was even wary of using letters as evidence, mocking the notion that "nothing is inverted, nothing distorted" in writers' correspondence, and he made little use of them in his biographies. He was no less distrustful of so-called autobiographical poetry, sidestepping the confessional verse of Milton, Otway, Swift, and Pope, saying in reference to the latter that "Poets do not always express their own thoughts," and noting, as an example of this, that for all Pope's "labour in the praise of music,' he was "ignorant of its principles, and insensible of its effects."

With Malone's decision to parse the plays for evidence of what an author thought or felt, literary biography had crossed a Rubicon. Fictional works had become a legitimate source for biographies, and Shakespeare's plays and poems crucial to establishing this new approach. In 1790 Malone had announced that his long-promised life of Shakespeare was well along; he had already "obtained at very different times" a great deal of material, though "it is necessarily dispersed." At "some future time," though, he would "weave the whole into one uniform and connected narrative." He still had faith that Shakespeare's commonplace book or personal correspondence would surface, which would enable him to flesh out the many lost years and mysteries of the life. As late as 1807, five years before his death, Malone was still reassuring friends that only a third of the *Life* "remained to be written," that "all the materials for it are ready," and that he even had three hundred pounds' worth of paper "lying ready at the printing house," to save time when it was ready to be published. It had taken Malone fewer than ninety days to write and publish a four-hundred-page book about the Ireland forgeries. Yet after decades of labor, his *Life of Shakespeare* remained unfinished, a puzzle still lacking most of its largest pieces. Even the works failed to supply the missing evidence. When James Boswell the Younger was given the unenviable task of gathering the disjointed remains and molding them into a *Life* after Malone's death, he saw soon enough that he was faced not with some tidying up of loose ends but with a "chasm."

❧

THOSE WHO WRITE about the history of Shakespeare studies cast Malone as an early hero and Ireland as one of the first villains of the

story. I've been trained to think this way too and it's difficult getting beyond it. It's easy to see why: Malone, much like the scholars who tell his story, spent much of his life surrounded by old books and manuscripts, strained his vision poring over documents in archives, and struggled to complete his life's work on Shakespeare. Ireland cheated, took a shortcut. But in truth, they were in pursuit of the same goal—which may account for the viciousness of Malone's attack on his young rival. Both were committed to rewriting Shakespeare's life: one forged documents; the other forged connections between the life and the works. In retrospect, the damage done by Malone was far greater and long-lasting. He was the first Shakespearean to believe that his hard-earned expertise gave him the right, which he and many scholars have since tried to deny to others, to search Shakespeare's plays for clues to his personal life. By the time that Boswell brought out an updated edition of Malone's *Shakespeare's Plays and Poems* in 1821, it was already "generally admitted that the poet speaks in his own person" in the Sonnets.

Malone had failed in his decades-long quest because every thread leading directly back to Shakespeare's interior life had been severed. Most likely each had been cut for well over a century. Sufficient materials for a comprehensive biography were no longer available. One possibility is that Shakespeare went out of his way to ensure that posterity would find a cold trail. In any case, expectations about what evidence might reasonably have survived were wildly inflated. There may well have been bundles of letters, theatrical documents, and even a commonplace book or two that outlived Shakespeare, but if so they have never been found, and the extinction of the family line by the end of the seventeenth century and the sale and subsequent demolition of Shakespeare's home, New Place, helped ensure their disappearance.

Then again, if one goes through Francis Meres's list of the best English dramatists in 1598 one quickly discovers that commonplace books and early drafts of published plays don't survive for *any* of these popular Elizabethan playwrights. The memorials best befitting Shakespeare's stature and accomplishments were in fact created and preserved by those who honored his legacy: a monument and a gravestone in Stratford's church and, seven years after his death, a lavish collection of his plays, prefaced by commendatory verses and his portrait. At the time, no English playwright had ever been posthumously honored with such a collection. Clearly, this was the way his fellow players thought fitting, and sufficient, to remember Shakespeare.

Shakespeare had no Boswell—but neither did Marlowe, Jonson, Webster, or any other contemporary dramatist. While there had been "Lives," there were not as yet full-length literary biographies. For that reason it's especially unfortunate that one of the earliest efforts in this genre—*The Lives of the Poets, Foreign and Modern*—doesn't survive. It was written (or at least contemplated) by Shakespeare's fellow dramatist Thomas Heywood, and had been mentioned in 1614 and then again in 1635; but it was either left incomplete, lost, or never published.

Assuredly, there had to have been witnesses to Shakespeare's daily life, including boy actors born before the turn of the century who may have lived until the 1670s or 1680s, and who had acted for the King's Men and worked with Shakespeare before he retired from the company around 1614. Immediate family members, had they been interviewed, might also have cast considerable light on his personality. Shakespeare's sister Joan lived until 1646. His elder daughter, Susanna, died in 1649 and his younger one, Judith, was still alive in 1662; a local vicar with an interest in Shakespeare made a note to seek her out and ask her about her father, but she died before this conversation took place. Nobody thought to seek out Shakespeare's granddaughter, Elizabeth, who was eight years old when Shakespeare died; she was the only one of his four grandchildren to live past the age of twenty-one or wed, but she bore no children in her two marriages and the family line ended with her death in 1670.

There were family friends and in-laws too who might have been questioned, including Thomas Combe, to whom Shakespeare bequeathed his sword and who lived until 1657. Stratford neighbor Richard Quiney was alive until 1656. His son, Shakespeare's son-in-law Thomas Quiney, who married Judith, lived until 1663. Both men knew him well. So did Shakespeare's brother-in-law Thomas Hathaway, who could have been questioned until the mid-1650s. Shakespeare's nephew William, his namesake, became a professional actor in London and may have been privy to wonderful theatrical anecdotes; he died in 1639.

One of the most tantalizing and lost connections to Shakespeare's personal life was through his son-in-law John Hall, who married Susanna in 1607. The two men seem to have been close: Hall had traveled with Shakespeare to London and had been appointed by him as

coexecutor of his will. Hall was a prominent physician in Stratford, who kept notes in abbreviated Latin on those he treated. After Hall's death, Dr. James Cooke sought out his widow about Hall's books, and Susanna was willing to sell him some (he called on her at New Place, which she and her husband had inherited). Cooke's interests were medical rather than literary, so he apparently did not ask Susanna about her father or *his* books—and he subsequently published a translation of one of Hall's medical notebooks. Among the patients Hall treated was Shakespeare's fellow playwright, the Warwickshire native Michael Drayton. Unfortunately, Hall's other notebook was lost before its contents could be transcribed or printed, and unless it turns up someday we will never know whether it contained any information about his father-in-law.

There's one more story about Hall and Shakespeare, less well known than it ought to be, though James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps reported it over a century ago. On 22 June 1616, two months after his father-in-law died, John Hall paid a visit to the registry of the Archbishop of Canterbury, located near St. Paul's in London, to prove Shakespeare's will. Among the documents he produced was "an inventory of the testator's household effects"—that is to say, a list of Shakespeare's possessions. Whatever valuable books, manuscripts, or letters Shakespeare owned and was bequeathing to his heirs would have been listed in this inventory rather than in the will itself (which explains, as Jonathan Bate has observed, why the surviving wills of such Elizabethan notables as the leading theologian Richard Hooker and the poet Samuel Daniel fail, like Shakespeare's, to list any books at all). Had the inventory that John Hall brought with him to London survived—or if by some miracle it ever surfaces—it would finally silence those who, misunderstanding the conventions of Elizabethan wills and inventories, continue to insist that Shakespeare of Stratford didn't own any books and was probably illiterate.

By the time those in search of Shakespeare finally made the pilgrimage to Stratford in the mid-seventeenth century, led by Thomas Betterton, John Aubrey, and Thomas Fuller, all that remained were secondhand anecdotes. We've learned from these that Shakespeare had apprenticed as a butcher. That he drank heavily. That he poached deer. That he didn't enjoy carousing and wasn't a company keeper. That he died of a fever after a bout of drinking with Ben Jonson and Michael Drayton. That he died a Catholic.

The eighteenth-century editor Edward Capell was the first to recognize that a biography about Shakespeare's private life—rather than his public and professional one—was a lost cause: "those who alone had it in their power" to record what Shakespeare was like had failed to do so. Further efforts to unravel the mystery of Shakespeare were pointless: "our enquiries about them now must prove vain," and "the occurrences of this most interesting life (we mean, the private ones) are irrevocably lost to us." The search may have been over for Capell, but for others it was just beginning.

"With This Key"

In his own day, and for more than a century and a half after his death, nobody treated Shakespeare's works as autobiographical. But after Malone did so a mad dash was on, and by the 1830s it seemed as if nearly everyone was busy searching for clues to Shakespeare's life in the works. The Sonnets, long ignored, suddenly became popular. Unlike Shakespeare's other major poems—*Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*—the Sonnets had never been reissued during Shakespeare's lifetime, and there are surprisingly few allusions to them following their publication in 1609. In 1640 they were finally reprinted by John Benson, who cropped the prefatory material, changed the gender of pronouns where he saw fit, invented titles, and freely rearranged and combined 146 of the 154 sonnets into 72 or so longer poems, then mingled Shakespeare's poems with those of others falsely attributed to him in the 1612 edition of *The Passionate Pilgrim*. But even these modifications failed to generate much interest in this outdated genre, and while Shakespeare's plays went through four Folios in the course of the seventeenth century, the Sonnets remained largely inaccessible to new generations of readers. When available, it was almost exclusively in Benson's version—a situation that remained unchanged until Malone published them in his Supplement as they had first appeared. If Steevens thought that he could squelch Malone's autobiographical approach by excluding the Sonnets from his next Shakespeare edition in 1793, he was wrong. Still, he tried his best, declaring "the strongest act of Parliament that could be framed, would fail to compel readers into their service." . . . "Had Shakespeare produced no other works than these," Steevens added, "his name would have reached us with as little celebrity as time has conferred on that of Thomas Watson, an older and much more elegant sonneteer."

Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway

German critics were among the first to seize on the potential of Malone's approach. August Wilhelm von Schlegel took the English to task in his Viennese lectures of 1808 for never having "thought of availing themselves of [Shakespeare's] Sonnets for tracing the circumstances and sentiments of the poet" and for failing to recognize that they contained the "confessions of his youthful errors." His equally famous brother Friedrich von Schlegel seconded and extended this view: "It is strange but delightful to scrutinize, in his short effusions, the character

of Shakespeare." Heinrich Heine would confirm that the Sonnets are "authentic records of the circumstances of Shakespeare's life."

William Wordsworth soon spread the word that in the Sonnets, "Shakespeare expresses his own feelings in his own person." He made this point more memorably in his poem "Scorn Not the Sonnet," where he writes, "with this key / Shakespeare unlocked his heart." Wordsworth saw no contradiction between his belief that these Elizabethan poems were thoroughly autobiographical and his admission that he had held off publishing his own autobiographical poem, *The Prelude,* because it was "a thing unprecedented in literary history that a man should talk so much about himself." He had found a Romantic precursor in this newly minted Shakespeare.

Others scrambled aboard. A contributor to *Blackwood's Magazine* confidently claimed in 1818 that the Sonnets are "invaluable, beyond any thing else of Shakespeare's poetry, because they give us little notices, and occasional glimpses of our own kindred feelings, and of some of the most interesting events and situations of his life." A long piece on the Sonnets in *New Monthly Magazine* in 1835—"The Confessions of William Shakespeare"—took things a step further, calling the Sonnets "personal confessions" and breathlessly describing their triangular love plots. Who could resist such voyeuristic pleasures? With the Sonnets, "we seem to stand by the door of the confessional, and listen to the most secret secrets of the heart of Shakespeare."

Word spread to America, where Emerson, in his influential *Representative Men* (1850), wondered: "Who ever read the volume of the Sonnets without finding that the poet had there revealed, under masks that are no masks to the intelligent, the lore of friendship and of love?" By the mid-nineteenth century, the critical heavyweights on both sides of the Atlantic—the Schlegels, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Heine, and Emerson—had all embraced the position first suggested by Malone. According to John Keats's close friend Charles Armitage Brown, author of *Shakespeare's Autobiographical Poems* (1838), the Sonnets were "pure uninterrupted biography." The Bard's life was now an open book.

A handful of dissenters struggled, with little success, to challenge this new consensus. Thomas Campbell complained in 1829 that the Sonnets were "insignificant as an index" to Shakespeare's biography, and rejected the argument that "they unequivocally paint his passions, and the true character of his sentiments." He tried again a few years

later, this time more bluntly: "Shakespeare's Sonnets give us no access to his personal history." His words fell on deaf ears, as did Robert Browning's rebuttal of Wordsworth's "Scorn Not the Sonnet": "*With this same key / Shakespeare unlocked his heart,* once more! / Did Shakespeare? If so, the less Shakespeare he!" By 1856, the battle was all but over. As David Masson put it in that year, "Criticism seems now pretty conclusively to have determined . . . that the Sonnets of Shakespeare are, and can possibly be, nothing else than a poetical record of his own feelings and experience." There was no longer any doubt that the poems "are autobiographic—distinctly, intensely, painfully autobiographic."

Once critics began reading the Sonnets as confessional, they began to turn their attention to the unnamed shadowy figures alluded to in the poems on the assumption that Shakespeare had actual people in mind when the various speakers of the Sonnets complained about dark ladies, young men, and rival poets. George Chalmers, an enemy of Malone and a believer in the Ireland forgeries, got this biographical competition off to a strong start by arguing in 1797 that *all* the Sonnets had been addressed to Queen Elizabeth herself. Countless others soon went about uncovering the identity of the "only begetter" of the Sonnets, the mysterious "W.H."; at least they had initials to go by, and the dedication apparently had a real, if elusive, individual in mind.

Malone himself was among the earliest to hazard a guess as to the identity of that "better spirit" of Sonnet 80, the talented literary rival "to whom even Shakespeare acknowledges himself inferior." Malone concluded that it had to be Edmund Spenser, and to support this claim devoted over a third of his unfinished biography of Shakespeare to the relationship of the two poets. George Chalmers, who could never bring himself to agree with Malone, did so this time. Others weren't so sure, and placed bets on Samuel Daniel, Michael Drayton, George Chapman, Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson, and a host of others. Another insisted that they were all wrong: surely Chaucer was the great rival Shakespeare had in mind.

The lists of Elizabethan Dark Ladies, Young Men, and those with the initials W.H., H.W., W.S., or some similar combination were even longer. The parlor game that began with Malone is still avidly played, with hardly a year going by without another fresh name trotted out. It would take pages to list them all, the equivalent of an Elizabethan census. The most innocent and metaphorical utterances of the fictive

speakers of Shakespeare's poems were interpreted as biographical fac Was Shakespeare syphilitic, as hinted at in Sonnet 144? Did the autho of Sonnet 37 (which speaks of being "made lame by Fortune's deares spite") walk with a limp? Did Shakespeare hate prostituting his talent onstage, as Malone claimed he confessed in Sonnet 111? Who neede to wrestle with the Sonnets' dense language when it was possible t make one's literary reputation unlocking the biographical secrets the contained?

By the mid-nineteenth century, the obsession with autobiographi cal tidbits had all but displaced interest in the aesthetic pleasures of th poems themselves. Wordsworth had famously described the Sonnets a a "key." Coleridge suggested that one of the poems (probably Sonne 20, the most explicitly homoerotic) was a "purposed blind." Emerso spoke of these poems as "masks that are no masks to the intelligent. And following the invention of the telegraph and Morse code, a nev and ominous metaphor was introduced to describe the way in whicl Shakespeare deliberately concealed autobiographical traces: for Rober Willmott, writing in 1858, the "Sonnets are a chapter of autobiography although remaining in cipher till criticism finds the key."

The best contemporary explanation I have come across for thi frenzy of biographical detection—and it is worth quoting at length—i offered by Anna Jameson, in her *Memoirs of the Loves of the Poets,* pub lished in 1829. Jameson was at least honest about her motives, admit ting that it's "natural to feel an intense and insatiable curiosity relative t great men, a curiosity and interest for which nothing can be too minute too personal." Yet the few facts of Shakespeare's life left her hungry fo more: "I felt no gratification, no thankfulness to those whose industry had raked up the very few particulars which can be known. It is too much, and it is not enough: it disappoints us in one point of view—it i superfluous in another: what need to surround with the common-place trivial associations, registers of wills and genealogies, and I know no what." Missing was the only thing that really mattered: that which coul connect us to "a presence and a power . . . diffused through all time and ruling the heart and the fancy with an incontrollable and universa sway!" The desire to feel that presence, experience a sense of intimacy with Shakespeare, was not going to go away simply because not enough facts about his personal life were known. It was easier for critics who shared that desire to make stuff up rather than admit defeat.

Soon enough, what started with the Sonnets migrated to the plays, though the claim that Shakespeare was speaking for himself through his dramatic characters was more difficult to sustain. John Keats was among the first to do this when he wrote that Shakespeare's "days were not more happy than Hamlet's, who is perhaps more like Shakespeare himself in his common everyday life than any other of his characters." It was but a short step from here to Keats's self-identification with both Hamlet and Shakespeare: "Hamlet's heart was full of such misery as mine is when he said to Ophelia, 'Go to a nunnery, go, go!'" Coleridge made the case more simply and directly: "I have a smack of Hamlet myself, if I may say so." Overidentification on the part of Shakespeare's biographers had mutated into an overidentification on the part of his readers.

Critics began identifying moments when Shakespeare accidently slips out of writing in character and into self-revealing autobiography. Coleridge, for example, was sure that this was the case with Capulet's lines in *Romeo and Juliet*:

> *Such comfort as do lusty young men feel*
> *When well appareled April on the heel*
> *Of limping winter treads, even such delight*
> *Among fresh female buds shall you this night*
> *Inherit at my house.*
>
> (1.2.26–30)

"Other passages more happy in illustrating this," he adds, "might be adduced where the poet forgets the character and speaks in his own person." Coleridge was also the first to suggest that Prospero, the great image of artistic authority in the nineteenth century, "seems a portrait of the bard himself"—a claim that would echo, with increasing volume, through the rest of the nineteenth century.

Coleridge was also the first to take the ultimate biographical leap: reading the trajectory of the entire canon of Shakespeare's plays as a story of the poet's psychological development, for as Coleridge himself recognized, he was "inclined to pursue a psychological, rather than a historical, mode of reasoning" (and in doing so, was not only the first to use this new term "psychological" in its modern sense, but also one of the first to engage in psychobiography). In February 1819, Coleridge sketched out before an audience at the Crown and Anchor

Tavern on the Strand his theory of the five eras of Shakespeare's creative life, scrambling the established chronology of the canon to suit this more psychologically compelling biographical narrative. According to Coleridge, Shakespeare began with what we know as the late romances (*Pericles, The Winter's Tale, Cymbeline*) as well as a few of the comedies (*Comedy of Errors, A Midsummer Night's Dream,* and surprisingly, *All's Well*), then worked through the history plays before arriving at his major era, in which he "gives all the graces and facilities of a genius in full possession and habit of power"—and this mixed group includes *The Tempest, As You Like It, The Merchant of Venice,* and *Twelfth Night.* In the end, a triumphant Shakespeare climbs to the "summit," the great run of tragedies, *Lear, Hamlet, Macbeth,* and *Othello.* Following this great climb is the inevitable descent, "when the energies of intellect in the cycle of genius were though in a rich and potentiated form becoming predominant over passion and creative self-modification"—and to this final stage of Shakespeare's career Coleridge consigns *Measure for Measure,* as well as most of the classical and Roman plays: *Timon of Athens, Coriolanus, Julius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra,* and *Troilus and Cressida.*

Others would modify or build upon this model, including Henry Hallam, who in 1837 turned this into a more melodramatic story: "There seems to have been a period of Shakespeare's life when his heart was ill at ease, and ill content with the world or his own conscience." The "memory of hours misspent, the pang of affection misplaced or unrequited . . . sank down into the depths of his great mind" and "seem not only to have inspired . . . the conception of Lear and Timon, but that of one primary character, the censurer of mankind"—a version of Shakespeare's self which is projected through a series of characters, from Jaques in *As You Like It* up through Hamlet, Lear, and Timon.

It wasn't long before an autobiographical canon-within-a-canon had emerged, with a half-dozen works attracting almost all the attention of those wishing to trace the life in the works, from Shakespeare as lover in *Romeo and Juliet* and the Sonnets, to the brooding, depressed, and misunderstood Jaques, Timon, Lear, and especially Hamlet of Shakespeare in the depths, to the triumphant and serene artist, Prospero, whose decision to break his staff and abandon his art prefigures Shakespeare's own retirement to Stratford. It was a great story and would have a long half-life, even if it didn't leave much room for characters or plays that couldn't be shoehorned into this plot, so that *Titus Andronicus, Pericles, The Com-*

edy of Errors, and a couple of dozen others were left largely untouched by biographical speculators. Scholarship had stumbled off course the moment that Malone used Sonnet 93 to introduce conjectural readings of both life and work, and the Romantics who followed in Malone's errant footsteps rapidly and irrevocably transformed how Shakespeare's poems and plays would be read.

ONLY ONE THING could have arrested all of this biographical speculation: admitting that a surprising number of the plays we call Shakespeare's were written collaboratively. For there's no easy way to argue that a coauthored play, especially one in which it's hard to untangle who wrote which part, can be read autobiographically. The problem of collaboration has bedeviled Shakespeare studies for over three hundred years, ever since the editors of the second impression of the Third Folio, published in 1664, added seven plays to the thirty-six included in the First and Second Folios of Shakespeare's collected works: *Pericles, The London Prodigal, The History of Thomas Lord Cromwell, Sir John Oldcastle, The Puritan Widow, A Yorkshire Tragedy,* and *The Tragedy of Locrine.* Though some readers may have believed that these plays didn't feel Shakespearean, there was corroborative evidence for at least some of them on the title pages of quarto editions published during Shakespeare's lifetime.

Things got even messier when editors began to question Shakespeare's authorship of some of the plays that Heminges and Condell had published under his name, and his name only, in 1623. The first to do so was the Restoration dramatist Edward Ravenscroft, who in his 1678 adaptation of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* writes that he had "been told by some anciently conversant with the stage, that it was not originally his, but brought by a private author to be acted, and he only gave some master-touches to one or two of the principal parts or characters." When the poet Alexander Pope brought out a major edition of Shakespeare's plays in 1725, he rejected as spurious all seven of the plays that had been added to the Third and Fourth Folios—and admitted to doubts even about some of the canonical plays: "I should conjecture of some of the others (particularly *Love's Labour's Lost,* even *The Winter's Tale, Comedy of Errors,* and *Titus Andronicus*), that only some characters, single scenes, or perhaps a few particular passages were of his hand." Pope concludes

that these plays long attributed to Shakespeare "were pieces produced by unknown authors"; posterity had assigned these bastard offspring to Shakespeare much "as they give strays to the Lord of the manor."

For a while, at least, the canon continued to shrink. Lewis Theobald questioned the legitimacy of *Henry the Fifth* in 1734. Thomas Hanmer did the same with *Two Gentlemen of Verona* in 1743. Two years later Samuel Johnson deemed *Richard the Second* suspect, and soon after, Richard Farmer rejected *The Taming of the Shrew.* Both *The Second Part of Henry the Sixth* and *The Third Part of Henry the Sixth* were challenged as well, with some, like Capell, excusing them (and *King John*) as "first drafts," while other writers, like Bishop Warburton, urged that they be excluded from the canon. While editors at this time knew from the title pages of a handful of mostly Jacobean plays that some non-Shakespearean drama had been jointly written, the thought never seems to have occurred to them that Shakespeare could have willingly collaborated with other playwrights. Disputed plays, then, were either in or out, Shakespeare's or someone else's.

Malone, like every other editor in his day, was keenly interested in authorship and attribution. He published a dissertation in 1787 on the *Henry the Sixth* plays in which he concluded that the early versions of these plays that survive in quarto—*The Contention* and *The True Tragedy*—were probably written by Robert Greene and George Peele, respectively. Committed to examining the disputed plays in a thorough way, he edited and republished for the first time the seven disputed plays appended to the Third Folio. His objective was to distinguish the counterfeit from the real Shakespeare: "Though nearly a century-and-a-half have elapsed since the death of Shakespeare, it is somewhat extraordinary, that none of his general editors should have attempted to separate his genuine poetical compositions from the spurious performances with which they have been so long intermixed." The works were mixtures, then, not compounds, easily separated into what was Shakespeare's and what was not. Inclusion in the canon should be based on a principle of how much could be deemed Shakespearean. *Pericles* was included, since "if not the whole, at least the greater part of that drama was written by our author," while on similar grounds, *Titus* was definitely out, since Malone didn't believe a single line of it to be Shakespeare's.

Malone stood head and shoulders above his predecessors in his response to the challenge posed by disputed plays—at least until 1790,

the year he published his first solo edition of Shakespeare's works. For in that year, just as he was submitting final pages to the press, the greatest discovery ever made about the Elizabethan stage fell into his hands: the records of Philip Henslowe, owner of the Rose Theatre. Henslowe's *Diary* contained almost everything we now know about the staging of plays in Shakespeare's day: how frequently the repertory changed, how many plays a company bought and performed every year, how much was spent on costumes, even how long it took to write a play. It was an amazing document, and nobody knew it better than Malone, into whose hands it was delivered from Dulwich College, where it had been discovered. The most significant revelation contained within the *Diary* concerned the collaborative nature of Elizabethan playwriting, at least for the rivals of Shakespeare's company, the Admiral's Men, for the overwhelming majority of plays were coauthored by two, three, four, or more playwrights working together.

Malone excitedly turned its pages looking for evidence that might cast light on the disputed plays that had been attributed to Shakespeare—and was delighted to see that his hunch that *Oldcastle* was not by Shakespeare had been right: the Dulwich papers proved that it was "the joint production of four other poets"—Michael Drayton, Anthony Munday, Richard Hathway, and Robert Wilson. Malone was now in sole possession of evidence that could extend to Shakespeare the possibility of joint authorship. But he couldn't bring himself to change his mind about Shakespeare's singularity, free himself from the fantasy that the plays were easily separated mixtures, not compounded on occasion by a pair or more of talented writers working together, one of whom was Shakespeare. Malone even imagined that if a similar "account-book of Mr. Heminge shall be discovered, we shall probably find in it—'Paid to William Shakespeare for mending *Titus Andronicus*.'"

Even when confronted with the overwhelming evidence from Henslowe's *Diary,* Malone couldn't break the habit of seeing plays composed by one playwright, then subsequently mended or repaired by another, and so concludes: "To alter, new-model, and improve the unsuccessful dramas of preceding writers, was I believe, much more common in the time of Shakespeare than is generally supposed." It followed, then, that *Pericles* was "new modeled by our poet" rather than jointly composed. By the same logic, the second and third parts of *Henry the Sixth* are "new-modeled" and "rewritten" by Shakespeare. Malone hastily appended some excerpts from Henslowe's *Diary* as his 1790 edition was at the press. But he had not had a chance to really digest the implications of this find for his understanding of how Shakespeare collaborated, and never seems to have done so.

I have been hard on Malone in these pages, perhaps unduly so. But I find his reluctance to step back and see how Henslowe's *Diary* might have altered his thinking about authorship deeply frustrating. Malone was clearly committed to a vision of Shakespeare as an Enlightenment figure, always working toward improving, perfecting the unsuccessful efforts of others—a Mozart to the Salieris of the theatrical world. But what was truly unforgivable was that Malone made sure that nobody else had a chance to read the *Diary* and offer an alternative account of the stage and of how Shakespeare himself might have written. He not only refused to share the *Diary,* but he wouldn't even return it to Dulwich. Only after his death many years later would his literary executor find these materials among his papers and return them to their rightful owner—minus a number of literary autographs, which Malone had cut out.

A great opportunity was lost. Malone should have known better about collaboration. In fact, he was actively engaged at just this time in an intense collaborative writing project, helping Boswell write and revise his *Life of Johnson,* busily refining the prose, altering the tone, eliminating Scotticisms, and so on, going back and forth on a daily basis, in close company with his needy friend. Yet he somehow couldn't imagine Shakespeare and Thomas Middleton working closely like this on *Timon of Athens,* or Shakespeare actively collaborating with John Fletcher on *Henry the Eighth, Cardenio,* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen.*

The likeliest explanation for Malone's refusal to consider the possibility that Shakespeare worked in similar ways—through "joint production" or "in concert" with other writers, to use his own terms—is that such a view could not be reconciled with his conviction that Shakespeare's works were autobiographical and that Shakespeare himself, if not divine, was at least singular, so much so that a good editor should be able to separate the dross of lesser mortals from Shakespearean gold. By the time Henslowe's *Diary* was finally viewed by others—it was eventually transcribed and published by John Payne Collier in 1845—it was too late. By that point, the notion that Shakespeare was autobiographical, singular, and divine was indelibly imprinted on readers and the-

atergoers. Just how hardened this view became by the mid-nineteenth century is clear when a writer like Henry Tyrrell, in *The Doubtful Plays of Shakespere*, can reject a collaborative ascription on the grounds that "It is not probable that the great Shakespeare, the acknowledged poet of the age, the friend of nobles, and the pet of princes, should have united with a dramatist of third-rate reputation." Joseph C. Hart, one of the earliest to doubt Shakespeare's authorship of the plays, was similarly influenced by the evidence offered in the "old Diary" (which he believed in 1848 to have been "discovered but a few years ago"). Based on his reading of the *Diary*, Hart concluded that some of the plays attributed to Shakespeare must have been collaborative—but that Shakespeare could therefore have had no hand in them. The critical tradition that extends from Malone through Tyrrell and Hart persists to this day, and the conviction that Shakespeare was a solitary writer whose life can therefore be found in his works cannot comfortably accommodate the overwhelming evidence of coauthorship.

Money Lender and Malt Dealer

The hunt for information about Shakespeare's life didn't end with Malone. Others soon followed up on his suggestions about where to look for fresh biographical details—so successfully that in the decades following Malone's death, more new facts about Shakespeare's life were discovered than ever before or since. The first were located in Stratford-upon-Avon by a local antiquarian who had time on his hands and the inexhaustible patience to pore through so many old records. R. B. Wheler was rewarded for his efforts with four significant discoveries. Two concerned complicated and profitable real estate transactions: the unexecuted counterpart of the conveyance of the old Stratford freehold to Shakespeare by William and John Combe in 1602, and a record of Shakespeare's purchase three years later of half a leasehold interest in a parcel of tithes in Stratford for the huge sum of £440 (what an Elizabethan schoolteacher could expect to earn in a lifetime).

Wheler also uncovered a pair of writs, documents mentioned earlier, that cast light on Shakespeare's money lending. In 1609, in pursuit of a comparatively minor debt, Shakespeare had John Addenbrooke, a Stratford neighbor, arrested after failing to repay six pounds and demanded an additional twenty-six shillings in damages. Addenbrooke was released

upon providing a surety. A jury was probably impaneled and a verdict was reached in Shakespeare's favor, since when payment was still not made, a second writ was issued by the Stratford Court of Record—this time against Addenbrooke's surety, Thomas Horneby, a local blacksmith, who was now responsible for both debt and damages. We don't know more than this. Why Shakespeare was so eager to prosecute neighbors over a loan is not known, but it was not the kind of story that pleased his admirers—and coupled with the belated publication of that undelivered letter discovered by Malone decades earlier, in which Richard Quiney asked Shakespeare for a thirty-pound loan, a case was building that Shakespeare cared more about cash than art.

The pressure to find the right biographical materials—documents that reinforced rather than undermined what people wanted to believe about Shakespeare—led to new fakes and forgeries, including, in 1811, Richard Fenton's anonymously published *Tour in Quest of Genealogy*, in which he describes purchasing at an auction in southwest Wales some books and a manuscript that had been in the possession of "an eccentric and mysterious stranger." The purchase turned out to include "a curious journal of Shakespeare, an account of many of his plays, and memoirs of his life by himself." One of Shakespeare's journal entries answered the question that had long puzzled those who wondered how a young man from rural Stratford could have mastered foreign languages and been familiar with leading Italian authors:

> Having an earnest desire to lerne foraine tongues, it was mie goode happ to have in my father's howse an Italian, one Girolamo Albergi, tho he went by the name of Francesco Manzini, a dyer of wool; but he was not what he wished to pass for; he had the breeding of a gentilman, and was a righte sounde scholar. It was he who taught me the little Italian I know, and rubbed up my Latin; we read Bandello's Novells together, from the which I gathered some delicious flowers to stick in mie dramatick poseys.

It may have been taken as a jest by knowing readers at the time—but excerpts were still being republished as fact as late as 1853.

It came as a considerable relief to Shakespeare's admirers when in

the 1830s an ambitious young researcher, John Payne Collier, began publishing pamphlets outlining a series of biographical finds, drawn especially from a new and untapped source: the papers of Sir Thomas Egerton, a well-placed Elizabethan official who had served as solicitor general as well as lord keeper of the great seal to Elizabeth I, and then as lord high chancellor to James I. Collier had become friends with Egerton's descendent Lord Francis Egerton, who then employed him to publish a catalogue of the ancestral holdings. Collier's first pamphlet, *New Facts Regarding the Life of Shakespeare* (1835), offered twenty-one new documents related to Shakespeare's life, nine of them from this collection.

At long last, someone had discovered something having to do with Shakespeare's life in London. Collier's most exciting find was a certificate listing Shakespeare as a shareholder in Burbage's company at the Blackfriars Theatre as early as 1589. The problem of the "lost years" was half-solved—so much for the old canard, beloved even by Samuel Johnson, that Shakespeare had spent the late 1580s holding horses for gentlemen playgoers outside the Theatre. Collier's discoveries also pulled back the veil on Shakespeare's final years in London. By then, another document revealed, Shakespeare's stake in the Blackfriars Theatre had grown to over £1400, a monumental sum. Another great find was a warrant from King James, dated January 1610, appointing Shakespeare and three others to train "a convenient number of children who shall be called the Children of her Majesties Revels" in the art of "playing Tragedies, Comedies &c." As exciting as these documents were, they were also somewhat impersonal. The same could not be said for the letter in an elegant hand, signed H.S.—most likely the Earl of Southampton—asking that Egerton "be good to the poor players of the Blackfriars," and mentioning in passing "two of the chief of the company"—Burbage and Shakespeare—the latter "my especial friend, till of late an actor . . . and writer of some of our best English plays which as your Lordship knoweth were most singularly liked of Queen Elizabeth." The letter also contains a lovely detail: Burbage is praised as "one who fitteth the action to the word and the word to the action most admirably"—clearly echoing *Hamlet.*

Collier worked at a tear, publishing the finds as fast as they came to hand, following up his first pamphlet with *New Particulars Regarding the Works of Shakespeare* in 1836 and three years later with *Further Particulars Regarding Shakespeare and His Works.* The former contained

transcriptions of an eyewitness account of contemporary performances of *Macbeth, Cymbeline,* and *The Winter's Tale* by the famous Elizabethan astrologer and physician Simon Forman. Collier also found a document confirming that *Othello* had been performed before Queen Elizabeth in 1602 (which overturned Malone's late dating of the play), a letter by fellow poet Samuel Daniel indirectly alluding to Shakespeare, and a tax record indicating that Shakespeare resided in Southwark as late as 1609. A workhorse, Collier even found the time to publish Henslowe's papers and *Diary,* discovering an allusion there to "Mr. Shakespeare of the Globe" that Malone had overlooked.

Collier's many discoveries in the 1830s and 1840s provided a counterweight to a documentary base weighted too heavily toward Stratford and financial preoccupations. While Shakespeare's personal life remained a mystery, evidence of his theatrical career, both early and late, as well as evidence of some of his more important relationships with fellow writers and actors, had been greatly enhanced. Almost overnight—and we will soon see why this proved disastrous—these findings found their way into what seemed like an endless stream of popular biographies of Shakespeare. Eager to claim credit, Collier decided to write the great Shakespeare biography of his day. In the early 1840s he offered a preview of this "Life" as part of a planned new edition of Shakespeare's works. This edition included even more recent discoveries made in the Stratford archives, including the notes of the Stratford town clerk, Thomas Greene, on Shakespeare's freehold of unenclosed fields in 1614, as well as the document showing that Shakespeare's household had hoarded malt in 1598, during a period of dearth in Warwickshire.

The 1830s and 1840s were boom years for historical and antiquarian societies committed to researching England's past. The Hakluyt Society began disseminating English travel narratives; the Parker Society religious texts; the Camden Society and Percy Society literary ones. In 1840 Collier, along with twenty or so others, founded a Shakespeare Society dedicated to "the purpose of collecting materials, or of circulating information, by which [Shakespeare] may be thoroughly understood and fully appreciated," drawing on materials "in private hands and among family papers, of the very existence of which the possessors are not at present aware." Three of the leading members were also Collier's rivals as biographers of Shakespeare: Alexander Dyce, Charles Knight, and James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps. All three knew how deeply they were in-

debted to Collier's finds, especially Halliwell-Phillipps, who chose as the frontispiece for his first biography, *The Life of William Shakespeare,* published in 1848, a facsimile of the letter found by Collier in which "H.S." pays tribute to Shakespeare as his "especial friend."

But it wasn't long before these competitors began to question some of Collier's discoveries. To charge someone with forgery was a sensitive business, and it wouldn't be easy proving the case against so prominent a figure. Dyce was the first to do so in print in his *Memoir of Shakespeare* (1832). Knight expressed his skepticism a decade or so later in his *William Shakespere: A Biography* (1843). Halliwell-Phillipps chose to privately publish his *Observations on the Shaksperian Forgeries at Bridgewater House* (1853). For Halliwell-Phillipps, this was an especially delicate matter, as he himself had been accused of tampering with and then reselling manuscripts from Trinity College, Cambridge, in his younger days—and even of stealing and disfiguring one of the two extant copies of the First Quarto of *Hamlet.*

By now the word was out. Collier was an incredibly skilled forger. How much had he faked? Some of his finds, such as Forman's playgoing accounts, were without question genuine. Yet Collier had handled virtually every key document in Stratford as well as London and Dulwich, indeed had gotten to many of them first, making it next to impossible to determine whether he had added materials to otherwise genuine documents (and, in fact, he had). Every Collier discovery had to be suspected—and scholars would spend decades going over every biographical claim he had advanced. As a rule of thumb, the claims that Collier made regarding Shakespeare of Stratford, or Shakespeare's business transactions, were true; those having to do with Blackfriars, or Southampton, or the Globe, or in fact anything to do with Shakespeare's creative life were fabricated, especially all that rubbish about Shakespeare's early affiliation with Blackfriars, yet one more effort to satisfy the bottomless need to provide the evidence, now all but lost, of Shakespeare's early years and professional associations. The rest—and there are many other finds—are genuine. Collier had discovered more documents about Shakespeare than anyone before or since; they just weren't the ones he had hoped to find. Those, he made up.

Collier hadn't left much to discover, and most of the remaining scraps were just what researchers least hoped to find. Joseph Hunter learned that Shakespeare defaulted in 1598 on taxes of thirteen shillings,

four pence, while Halliwell-Phillipps discovered that Shakespeare had taken the apothecary Philip Rogers to court in 1604 for repayment of twenty bushels of malt as well as a small sum. Apparently, Rogers, who had many mouths to feed and was often in debt, had paid back only six shillings on a bill of two pounds.

Much was made of Shakespeare's dealings in malt, revealing how little Victorians understood about daily life in late sixteenth-century Warwickshire. When viewed through a nineteenth-century lens, Shakespeare's financial activities made him appear to be a rapacious businessman. The hoarding of malt is a particularly good example of what's lost when actions are severed from their cultural contexts. For in late sixteenth-century Stratford-upon-Avon, where malting was the town's principal industry, anybody with a bit of spare change and a barn was storing as much grain as possible. Shakespeare's holdings were about average; a dozen men, including the local schoolmaster, had stored more. When local officials protested restrictions made on their hoarding malt, they explained that "our town hath no other special trade, having thereby only time beyond man's memory lived by exercising the same, our houses fitted to no other use, many servants among us hired only to that purpose." Their defense was self-serving, but it was also true. In addition, it's likely that a good many of the local records concerning Shakespeare's business activities in Stratford were actually the affairs of his wife, Anne Hathaway, who would have been responsible (though as her husband, Shakespeare would have been officially involved in cases going to court). This is not to exonerate the Shakespeares for hoarding malt while impoverished Warwickshire neighbors starved. It is to say that biographical information needs to be understood within its immediate context, not through the bias of another cultural moment. If Shakespeare was a "grain merchant," as some now began to call him, what man or woman from the middling classes in Stratford wasn't?

Halliwell-Phillipps, more than any of his predecessors, had a knack for finding uninspiring facts about Shakespeare's business dealings, including an assignment of an interest in a lease of tithes from Ralph Huband to Shakespeare in 1605, records of Shakespeare's involvement in land enclosure in Welcombe in 1614, and a pair of letters by Stratford neighbors that mentioned Shakespeare in connection with other financial dealings. Things hit rock bottom when Halliwell-Phillipps came upon yet another lawsuit, brought by a William Shakespeare in 1600 in

the Court of Queen's Bench against John Clayton; he had lent Clayton seven pounds in May 1592 and now wanted his money back.

Scholars still can't agree whether this was our Shakespeare or another who sued Clayton; whomever it was, it fit the pattern of a tight-fisted Shylock all too well. There would be a few more dramatic discoveries made in the early twentieth century—including information about Shakespeare's life in a Huguenot household on Silver Street in London in the early years of the seventeenth century (a story wonderfully told in Charles Nicholl's *The Lodger Shakespeare*)—but as matters stood in the 1850s, a biography so heavily weighted to financial dealings profoundly influenced how Shakespeare's life was imagined. Halliwell-Phillipps conceded as much in the most influential biography of the age: "it must be admitted that nothing whatever has yet presented itself, which discloses those finer traits of thought and action we are sure must have pervaded the author of *Lear* and *Hamlet* in his communication with the more cultivated of his contemporaries." In the absence of such disclosures, it was best to accept what the evidence does confirm, that Shakespeare was "a prudent man of the world, actively engaged in the promotion of his fortune, and intent on the foundation and preservation to his posterity of the estates he had won by his writings."

Halliwell-Phillipps knew how hard this would be to swallow, how it would "tend to destroy the finely drawn appreciation of Shakespeare's life, which owes its existence to the fiction of later days." But he chose not to emphasize that all we could *expect* to find at this late date were legal records, rather than more personal ones, so that too much weight should not be placed on quite partial evidence. Unlike his fellow biographers, Halliwell-Phillipps wasn't in the least uncomfortable with his portrayal of his subject as preoccupied with money; that was precisely how he himself experienced the world of the professional writer, and it's telling that late in life he compiled a list of ways in which he was just like Shakespeare. Once again, biography and autobiography were not easily untangled.

Halliwell-Phillipps's verdict was that no doubt "can exist in the mind of any impartial critic, that the great dramatist most carefully attended to his worldly interests; and confirmations of this opinion may be produced from numerous early sources." Alexander Dyce put matters even more bluntly in his biography: "from his earliest days" Shakespeare's "grand object" was "the acquisition of a fortune which was to enable him

eventually to settle himself as a gentleman in Stratford." By 1857, when Dyce wrote these words, an unbearable tension had developed between Shakespeare the poet and Shakespeare the businessman; between the London playwright and the Stratford haggler; between Shakespeare as Prospero and Shakespeare as Shylock; between the kind of man revealed in the "autobiographical" poems and plays, and the one revealed in tax, court, and real estate records; between a deified Shakespeare and a depressingly mundane one. Surely he was either one or the other. Less than a century had passed since Dr. Johnson, who would have found the very idea of having to choose between these alternatives ludicrous had said that "No man but a blockhead ever wrote, except for money." The writing life may not have changed much, but assumptions about it certainly had.

A tipping point had been reached; it was only a matter of time before someone would come along and suggest that we were dealing with not one man, but two. An essay called "Who Wrote Shakespeare?" appeared in 1852 in *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*. Surveying the field, its anonymous author acknowledged the obvious: "Is it more difficult to suppose that Shakespeare was not the author of the poetry ascribed to him, than to account for the fact that there is nothing in the recorded or traditionary life of Shakespeare which in any way connects the poet with the man?" The biographical facts reveal only a "cautious calculating man careless of fame and intent only on money-making," while the "unsurpassed brilliancy of the writer throws not one single spark to make noticeable the quiet uniform mediocrity of the man." Nothing connects this Shakespeare to *Hamlet* "except the simple fact of his selling the poems and realizing the proceeds, and their being afterwards published with his name attached." We are left, the anonymous author concludes, with equally unhappy alternatives: either Shakespeare employed a poet who wrote the plays for him, or the plays were miraculously conceived, with Shakespeare resorting to a cave to receive by "divine afflatus the sacred text.

Homer, Jesus, and the Higher Criticism

Back in 1794, even as Londoners were honoring "Drama's God" at Drury Lane, a German scholar at the University of Halle was completing a book that would forever cast doubt on the authorship—even the

existence—of an even greater literary divinity, Homer. The publication of Friedrich August Wolf's *Prolegomena ad Homerum* in 1795 sent shock waves through the world of classical studies and well beyond. Wolf argued that the oral composition of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* could be traced as far back as 950 B.C., well before the Greeks were acquainted with literary writing (though Wolf proved to be wrong about this detail). Close philological analysis showed that these long poems could not have been the unchanged words of an ancient bard, preserved and transmitted orally from generation to generation for four hundred years. It was no longer possible, though, to recover exactly when the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* arrived at their final form or the identity of those involved in their composition and revision. According to Wolf, if there had been a Homer, he was no more than an illiterate and "simple singer of heroic lays." The conventional biography of Homer—accepted almost without question from Herodotus and Aristotle on down through the Renaissance—was suddenly and permanently overthrown. As Emerson put it a half-century later, "from Wolf's attack upon the authenticity of the Homeric poems dates a new epoch of learning." Authorship would never be the same.

Admittedly, there had been rumblings about Homer going back to antiquity, when Josephus had claimed, without citing any evidence, that Homer was illiterate. More widespread skepticism began in earnest in the late seventeenth century, when the French critic François Hédelin attacked the *Iliad*'s bad style, morality, and inconsistencies; citing "ancient reports of Homer's illiteracy," he concluded that "there had never been such a person as Homer, and the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were the patchwork creations of a later and incompetent editor." Giambattista Vico expressed similar doubts in 1730: "Homer was the best poet ever, but he never existed." In England, Robert Wood added that "the Greek alphabet was a late invention," and that Homer's works had only reached their current form because of the "deliberate intervention of learned collectors, after centuries of oral transmission as separate ballads." It was clear what conditions had made the Homeric authorship controversy possible; according to Thomas Blackwell, the Greeks had come "to persuade themselves that a mind so vast could not belong to a man; that so much knowledge could only flow from a heavenly source; and having once firmly settled his Apotheosis in their own minds, they

wanted next that everything about him should appear supernatural an divine."

What set Wolf's book apart—and made it one of the landmar works of modern scholarship—was not his conclusion, already share by others, but the philological and historical method by means of whic he explored how texts were transmitted over time, a method that woul have profound implications for other fields of intellectual inquiry an other revered books and authors. Eighteenth-century readers were nc quite ready to accept the conclusion, as one recent classicist has put i that Homer was no more than "a discursive effect, the function of insti tutional apparatuses and practices that developed over time." Yet thes unnerving postmodern implications of Wolf's work were grasped earl on by critics such as Friedrich Nietzsche, who addressed the probler directly in his inaugural lecture at Basel in 1869, when he asked, regard ing Homer: "has a person been made out of a concept" or "a concept ou of a person?"

Scholars were soon confronted with a troubling set of question (which would be dusted off and asked of Shakespeare a half-centur later). Why were there no surviving contemporary references to so grea a poet as Homer? Was "Homer" a pseudonym? Could authorship be de termined by means of internal evidence and consistency (in other word was there an identifiable style that transcended textual irregularities) What now was the status of other poems long attributed to Home such as *The Battle of the Frogs and Mice* and *The Homeric Hymns*? An why were those with a professional investment in the traditional view c Homeric authorship so resistant to new ways of thinking about thes issues?

Controversial theories of authorship were proposed, including on by the English novelist Samuel Butler, author of *Erewhon* and *The Wa of All Flesh,* and a trained classicist. Butler, arguably the most autobio graphical writer of his day, read the *Odyssey* as a fundamentally autobio graphical poem. The Phaeacian episode convinced him that the poer had to have been written by a young and strong-willed Sicilian woma who drew on her own experience—and he published *The Authoress of th Odyssey* in support of this claim. Butler also saw what the Homeric con troversy meant for Shakespeare: "Who would have thought of attack ing Shakespeare's existence—for if Shakespeare did not write his play

he is no longer Shakespeare—unless men's minds had been unsettled by Wolf's virtual denial of Homer's?" It was not an isolated view. One of Benjamin Disraeli's characters in his 1837 novel *Venetia* had already wondered: "And who is Shakespeare? We know of him as much as we do of Homer. Did he write half the plays attributed to him? Did he ever write a single whole play? I doubt it."

Predictably, Romantic writers drawn to Shakespeare's story were also captivated by Wolf's new theory about Homer. But they had to overlook its focus on collaborative authorship, which undermined their conception of artistic creation as the product of solitary and autonomous genius. Coleridge carefully marked up his copy of Wolf, while "Friedrich Schlegel took it as the model for his own studies in Greek poetry, and his brother August Wilhelm popularized it in his lectures." Thomas de Quincey wrote three essays on the Homeric question for *Blackwood's* in 1841, not long after he wrestled with the problem of Shakespeare's biography, wondering how "such a man's history" could "so soon and so utterly have been obliterated." It's difficult today to register how deeply Wolf's arguments unsettled nineteenth-century readers. One last example must suffice: Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* (1856), where Aurora denounces the work of that "kissing Judas, Wolf." For Aurora, "Wolf's an atheist; / And if the *Iliad* fell out, as he says, / By mere fortuitous concourse of old songs, / Conclude as much too for the universe." When poets hurl around accusations of "atheist" and "kissing Judas," it's clear that far more is threatened by Wolf's method than the authorship of a pair of ancient Greek poems.

The battle over Homer's identity, though no longer the struggle it once was, continues to this day. Classicists now have a better understanding of how oral poetry was transmitted; almost all accept that there was no Homer in the traditional sense that readers for more than two thousand years had imagined. Happily, since nobody was advancing alternative candidates from ancient Greece—what contemporary rival, after all, could even be named?—there wasn't anything to fuel an authorship controversy, and the problem was more or less ignored; the less said, the better. But there are those who still refuse to give up on the traditional story, including E. V. Rieu, who translated the Penguin paperback that introduces so many readers to the *Iliad.* Rieu warns there that "It will astonish people who know nothing of the 'Homeric question' to learn that these splendidly constructed poems, and especially the *Iliad,* have

in the past been picked to pieces" by scholars who argue that "the *Iliad* i the composite product of a number of poets of varying merit." Rieu wi have none of it, reassuring readers that poems with such "consistency i character-drawing" could only have been written by one man.

AS GROUNDBREAKING AS Wolf's book proved to be, his metho wasn't original. It derived, most immediately, not from work done b other classicists but from the latest in biblical scholarship, which ha been an especially rich field of intellectual inquiry since the Reforma tion. Post-Reformation theologians skilled in Semitic languages, familia with a long tradition of Jewish textual scholarship, and attuned to his torical changes, recognized that the Old Testament was a very compli cated text. Over a century or so, close textual analysis, as well as a riche understanding of the transmission of Scripture, called into question th idea that the words in the Bible derived in unadulterated form fron Moses himself. Some of the finest minds of the sixteenth and seven teenth centuries had addressed the historical problems posed by biblica texts and laid the foundations for the radical scholarship that followec Over time, an ever-widening gap opened up between the received under standing of the Bible—especially the books of the Old Testament—an the way that Holy Writ was received by the faithful. Wolf had studie under leading biblical scholars at the University of Göttingen and wa familiar with the pathbreaking and controversial work of German bibli cal criticism, especially Johann Gottfried Eichhorn's *Einleitung ins Alt Testament*, which had begun to appear in 1780. Eichhorn showed hov to reconstruct the history of a text when the original had undergon significant changes over time. The implications for the study of Home were obvious. As Anthony Grafton has shown, Wolf in essence "annexe for classical studies the most sophisticated methods of contemporar Biblical scholarship."

Eichhorn is best remembered today for having coined the tern "Higher Criticism," a phrase that describes how he and others employe historical methods to study the origins, date, composition, and trans mission of the books of the Bible, especially the Old Testament (Lowe Criticism was devoted to textual minutiae). Over time, the Higher Crit ics showed that biblical works were rarely solo-authored. Collabora

tion of various sorts was the norm: while some books of the Bible have come down to us as composite works (with one author's ideas or writings collected in a single volume), others were more deeply collaborative, combining the words of a number of authors in a single scriptural text—including the Five Books of Moses.

Arguing that Genesis wasn't written by Moses was one thing; saying that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John could not have written eyewitness accounts of the life of Jesus was far more subversive. But scholars couldn't avert their eyes forever from the Higher Critical problems raised by the Gospels—and in 1835 David Friedrich Strauss, a young lecturer at the Protestant seminary of Tübingen, took on the New Testament much as Eichhorn had the Old Testament and Wolf had Homer. Strauss's book was an immediate sensation, and its heretical implications ensured that Strauss would never again be employed at a German university or seminary. Copies of *The Life of Jesus* quickly made their way to America as well as to England, where it was translated by the young George Eliot.

Strauss focused his attack on biographical facts. He closely examined ninety evangelical stories—especially those recounting the miracles attributed to Jesus—and relentlessly exposed "the discrepancies, contradictions and mistakes in the Gospel narratives and made the supernatural explanations appear weak and untenable." He further questioned the truth-value of the Gospels by pointing out that accounts of Jesus' life weren't written down until a generation after his death—so were based on secondhand and anecdotal testimony. After reading 1,500 pages of this assault, it was hard for anyone to escape the conclusion that there had been "no incarnation, no supernatural, divine Christ, no miracles, and no resurrection of the dead." For Strauss, the life of Jesus was composed in much the same way that children sitting in a circle pass along and inevitably embellish a story as each one whispers it in the next one's ear. Strauss imagined the earliest stories about Jesus "passing from mouth to mouth, and like a snowball growing by the involuntary addition of one exaggerating feature from this and another from that narrator." It was all, as Strauss put it (in a term that became a byword for his approach), a "myth." Jesus was a remarkable person but he was not divine. Strauss became the most notorious and vilified theologian of his day.

The shock waves of Strauss's work soon threatened that lesser deity

Shakespeare, for his biography too rested precariously on the unstable foundation of posthumous reports and more than a fair share of myths One of the first to recognize the extent to which the Shakespeare authorship question was fueled by the Higher Criticism was H. Bellyse Baildon, editor of the 1912 Arden edition of *Titus Andronicus*. For Baildon, "the fact seems obvious enough, that the skepticism with regard to Shakespeare's authorship of the works at one time universally attributed to him, is part of that general skeptical movement or wave which has landed us first in the so-called 'Higher-Criticism' in matters of religion and finally in Agnosticism itself."

It's surprising that nearly a century passed before scholars such as Charles Laporte (in his fine 2007 essay, "The Bard, the Bible, and the Victorian Shakespeare Question") paid much attention to the connection between *The Life of Jesus* and the life of Shakespeare. The authorship controversy's theological roots also help explain why those debating Shakespeare's claims slid so quickly into the language of apostasy, conversion, orthodoxy, and heresy. Had the impulse to speak of Shakespeare as a literary deity been curbed or repudiated, Shakespeare might not have suffered collateral damage from a controversy that had little to do with him. J. M. Robertson had suspected as much back in 1913, noting that it "is very doubtful whether the Baconian theory would ever have been framed had not the idolatrous Shakespeareans set up a visionary figure of the Master. Broadly speaking, all error is consanguineous Baconians have not invented a new way of being mistaken."

Unfortunately, the conviction that Shakespeare was godlike had by now intensified to the point where his plays could casually be referred to as a "Bible of Humanity" and a "Bible of Genius," and his words juxtaposed with those of Holy Writ to underscore their scriptural force in books such as J. B. Selkirk's *Bible Truths with Shakespearean Parallels* (1862). Nineteenth-century writers in both England and America were even more devout in their worship of Shakespeare than their forebears had been. Thomas Carlyle, in "The Hero as Poet," hails Shakespeare as one of the "Saints of Poetry," while Herman Melville writes in *The Confidence-Man* that "Shakespeare has got to be a kind of deity." Even the unsentimental Matthew Arnold couldn't help himself in his 1844 poem "Shakespeare," where he addresses his object of adoration in lines better suited to Jesus than to an Elizabethan playwright:

And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,
Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honour'd, self-secure,
Didst walk on Earth unguess'd at.—Better so!
All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
All weakness that impairs, all griefs which bow,
Find their sole speech in that victorious brow.

In such a climate, it was only a matter of time before someone would try to do to Shakespeare what Strauss had done to Jesus. The similarities were so striking that by 1854 some—like George Gilfillan—wondered why it hadn't been attempted already: "So deep are the uncertainties surrounding the history of Shakespeare, that I sometimes wonder that the process applied by Strauss to the *Life of Our Saviour* has not been extended to his. *A Life of Shakespeare,* on this worthy model, would be a capital exercise for some aspiring sprig of Straussism!"

Gilfillan didn't know it, but in 1848, twenty-four-year-old Samuel Mosheim Schmucker, a fierce critic of Strauss and his fellow "Modern Infidels," had already published just such a "capital exercise," in which he demonstrated that the "historic doubts regarding Christ" are "equally applicable to Shakespeare": "the former existence of a distinguished man in the *literary* world, may be as easily disproved, as infidels have labored to disprove the existence of an eminent person in the religious world." But Schmucker (who in the course of his brief life would be a prolific biographer and historian as well as a Lutheran pastor) had done so not to extend Strauss's method to Shakespeare but rather to mock and parody it. The result—*Historic Doubts Respecting Shakespeare: Illustrating Infidel Objections Against the Bible*—is almost unknown, but it probably tells us more about the Shakespeare authorship controversy than any other book, though without setting out to. Remarkably, before that controversy even broke out, Schmucker, who never for a moment doubted that Shakespeare was Shakespeare, anticipated and carefully mapped out almost all the arguments subsequently used to question Shakespeare's authorship.

Schmucker wrote *Historic Doubts Respecting Shakespeare* out of a concern that Strauss's ideas were making serious headway in America. He blamed writers, such as Emerson, who were sympathetic to the Higher Criticism for encouraging the "spirit of learned doubt" and for undermining "the simple Christianity which has prevailed here, ever since the

Pilgrim fathers hallowed these Western climes with their presence and their principles." Knowing how difficult it was to confront directly the force of Strauss's claim that the life of Jesus as reported in the Gospels is a tissue of myths, Schmucker figured that he could undermine Strauss's entire approach by asking the same questions of the life of Shakespeare, for "if any one is willing to doubt on their authority, the history and existence of Christ, he must, in order to be consistent, be willing to doubt on the same grounds, the history and existence of Shakespeare."

Schmucker has a great time of it, mostly because it never entered his head that his readers could seriously imagine that Shakespeare wasn't Shakespeare. It gave him the freedom to push his case hard: Where are the contemporary allusions? Why the muddled claims about the stability of the texts and even their authorship? How can we really trust what contemporaries said about him? How could someone be so great and yet there be so little recorded about him? "If so much may be contrived and urged, to mystify the existing records concerning a person who is dead but several centuries, how much more may be contrived by a perverse ingenuity against the existing records respecting an individual [Jesus] who lived and acted in the world nearly two thousand years ago?"

Parodying Strauss's line of attack, Schmucker takes the reader step by step through all the reasons that prove that Shakespeare's authorship is suspect. For starters, there is almost no documentary evidence: "if no such authentic records of Shakespeare were written in his own day, all subsequent histories of him must be without any historical truth or authority. They are founded on supposition." Indeed, the entire biography is implausible: "what disinterested witnesses ever lived, whose testimony was sufficiently strong and undeniable, as to overbalance the extraordinary *improbability* of their story?" What little evidence survives, he argues—stealing one of Strauss's favorite terms—remains *"contradictory."* Biographers of Shakespeare, like those of Jesus, not only dispute the facts of the life, they can't even agree on what their subject accomplished: "They have contended, some for one play, and some for another as genuine. While one critic set up, another pulled down. What one affirmed, another denied."

Schmucker draws a sharp distinction between Shakespeare the man and Shakespeare the poet, in what would soon be a favorite gambit of those who doubted his authorship: "even if we grant the truth of the facts recorded concerning the *man* William Shakespeare, these personal

facts have no weight in proving the history of the supposed *author and poet.*" In fact, "all the incidents of his life as a man are unfavorable to his character as a writer." As for his lack of formal education: "Is it not strange that one individual, so ill prepared by previous education, and other indispensable requisites, should be the sole author of so many works, in all of which it is pretended that such extraordinary merit and rare excellence exist?"

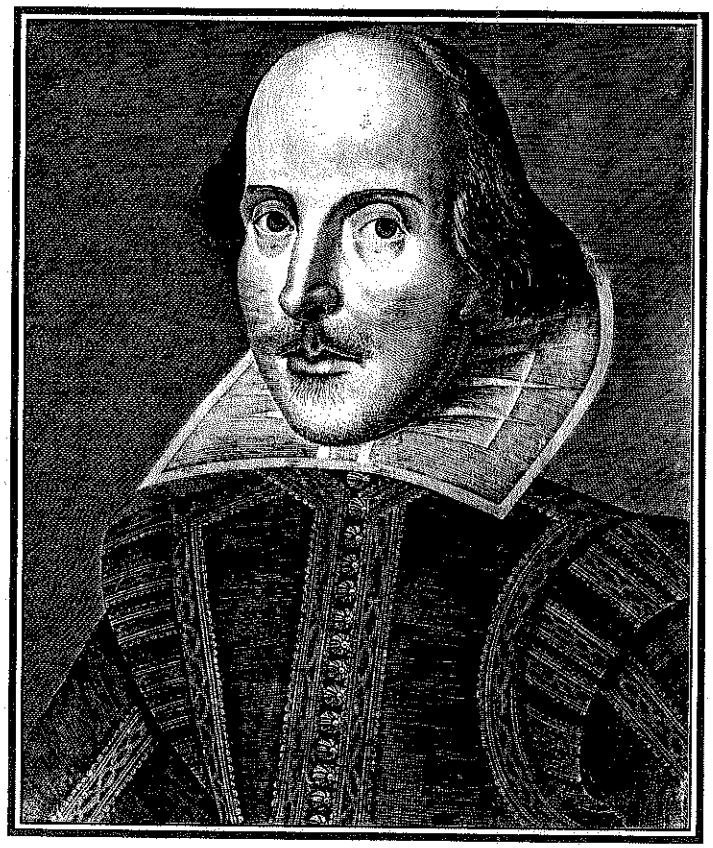
He also anticipates the conspiracy theories later used to explain the elevation of Shakespeare: "British national pride must needs have some great dramatist to uphold the nation's honor. . . . Greatness thus became associated with [Shakespeare's] name. He became, in the progress of time, and from the influence of confirmed prejudice and ignorance and pride, supreme in the literary world," and "his power and his title have become consolidated in the hearts of an interested nation, and of an admiring and credulous world." Shakespeare must have been a fraud, an "imposture which we have proved to be both *possible and natural.*"

He then suggests how the mistaken belief in Shakespeare first took hold, in a Straussian argument that would soon be used by those who seriously denied his authorship of the plays: How "did this error . . . originate?" By taking things for granted and "listening to authority, by giving credence to the assertions of those who were most interested in the delusion." Why was it so "submissively tolerated?" Apathy, ignorance, and an unwillingness to admit error. And "how were these delusions exposed?": "proofs accumulated in power and in amount, as the investigation proceeded, until at the last, the whole truth was shown up to the astonished gaze of men." And after Shakespeare is shown to be an imposter, what then? Will true believers concede the point? Never. As a result, "men will continue to be the willing dupes of a fascinating imposition"—a "melancholy spectacle of simplicity and weakness."

It's an exhilarating performance, the last thing one would expect from a young Pennsylvanian writing in 1847, for whom invoking Shakespeare is merely a means to a larger theological end. After a hundred pages or so of this, Schmucker suddenly worries that readers might get the wrong idea and perhaps not just doubt Shakespeare but in doing so, come to doubt Jesus as well, and so concludes: "If the failure of every attempt to invalidate Shakespeare's history . . . only serves to confirm it; so the failure of every past assault on Christ's extraordinary history much more serves to confirm and establish it, beyond all future peril." Schmucker died at age forty, having lived just long enough to see his farcical arguments taken literally, though he left no account of what he thought of those he would probably have described as Shakespeare infidels.

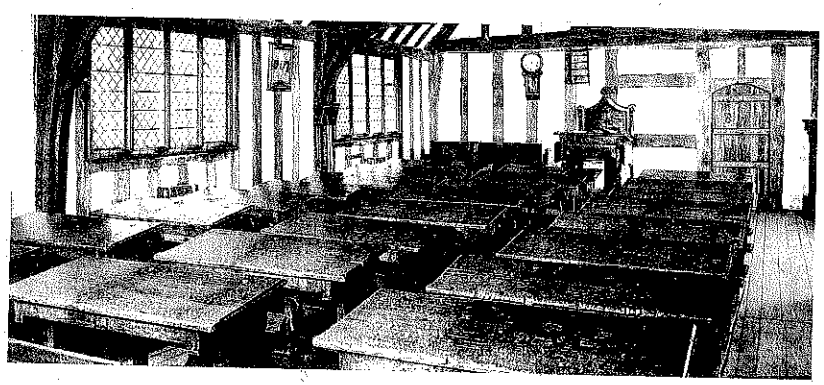
Schmucker had drafted the skeptics' playbook; but in truth, anybody at the time could have, and some were already thinking and writing in similar terms, for every scheme he proposed was lifted from well-worn arguments—familiar enough to parody—about biography, singularity, and literary attribution, issues that had been fiercely contested for over half a century. There's no evidence that any early doubters were influenced by or even knew of Schmucker's strange book. They didn't need to. His book confirms that the competition to identify who was the first to deny that Shakespeare wrote the plays misses the point badly. It's worth adding that those who first sought to topple Shakespeare (though not their successors or their critics) would be painfully aware of the theological source of their arguments—and, as we shall soon see, it's no surprise that the most influential of them turned to the authorship question only after experiencing spiritual crises.

SHAKESPEARE



William Shakespeare

The Evidence for Shakespeare



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It's one thing to explain how claims that others wrote the plays rest on unfounded assumptions; it's another to show that Shakespeare of Stratford really did write them. When asked how I can be so confident that Shakespeare was their author, I point to several kinds of evidence. The first is what early printed texts reveal; the second, what writers who knew Shakespeare said about him. Either of these, to my mind, suffices to confirm his authorship—and the stories they tell corroborate each other. All this is reinforced by additional evidence from the closing years of his career, when he began writing for a new kind of playhouse, in a different style, in active collaboration with other writers.

The sheer number of inexpensive copies of Shakespeare's works that filled London's bookshops after 1594 was staggering and unprecedented. No other poet or playwright came close to seeing seventy or so editions in print—and that's counting only what was published in Shakespeare's lifetime and doesn't include *Othello*, first printed in 1622, or any of the eighteen plays first published in the First Folio a year later. Print runs

were usually restricted to fifteen hundred copies. If cautious publishers printed and sold only a thousand copies of each of these early quartos, it's likely that fifty thousand books bearing Shakespeare's name (for some were published anonymously) circulated during his lifetime—at a time when London's population was only two hundred thousand. As an actor, playwright, and shareholder in the most popular playing company in the land—which performed before as many as three thousand spectators at a time in the large outdoor theaters—he was also one of the most familiar faces in town and at court. If, over the course of the quarter-century in which Shakespeare was acting and writing in London, people began to suspect that the man they knew as Shakespeare was an imposter and not the actor-dramatist whose plays they witnessed and purchased, we would have heard about it.

One of those who recognized Shakespeare and knew him by name was George Buc. Buc was a government servant, historian, book collector, and eventually Master of the Revels—the official to whom Shakespeare's company would submit all playscripts for approval. A familiar acquaintance of the Earl of Oxford, Buc also knew Shakespeare well enough to stop and ask him about the authorship of an old and anonymous play published in 1599, *George a Greene, the Pinner of Wakefield,* a copy of which he had recently obtained. He might have sought out or run into Shakespeare at the Curtain or Globe playhouses, or at a court performance, or perhaps at London's bookstalls, concentrated around St. Paul's and the Royal Exchange, where Shakespeare must have been a familiar sight, browsing through titles—for he could not possibly have owned all the books that echo through his plays. Nobody could or did own that many books, no bibliophile, no aristocrat, not even the Queen of England, with her sumptuous library housed at Whitehall Palace. Shakespeare did his best to help Buc, recalling that the play had been written by a minister, but at this point his memory apparently failed him. The lapse was excusable; it had been many years since *George a Greene* was first staged. But Shakespeare did volunteer an unusual bit of information: the minister had acted in his own play, performing the part of the pinner (someone who impounds stray animals). A grateful Buc wrote down his finding on the quarto's title page, leaving space to insert the author's name later: "Written by . . . . . a minister, who acted the pinner's part in it himself. *Teste* [that is, witnessed by] W. Shakespeare." Buc's flesh-and-blood encounter with a man he knew as both actor and

playwright suggests that once you begin to put Shakespeare back into his own time and place, the notion that he actively conspired to deceive everyone who knew or met him about the true authorship of the works that bore his name seems awfully far-fetched.

Those who question Shakespeare's authorship of the plays never get around to explaining how this alleged conspiracy worked. There's little agreement and even less detail about this conspiracy, despite how much depends on it, so it's not an easy argument to challenge. Some suppose that only Shakespeare and the real author were in the know. At the other extreme are those who believe that it was an open secret, so widely shared that it wasn't worth mentioning. Most doubters also brush off the overwhelming evidence offered by the title pages of these dozens of publications by claiming that "Shakespeare"—or as some would have it, "Shake-speare"—was simply the pseudonym of another writer—that hyphen a dead giveaway.

But such arguments are impossible to reconcile with what we now know about how publishing worked at the time. This was not a world in which a dramatist could secretly arrange with a publisher to bring out a play under an assumed name. In fact, Shakespeare had almost no control over the publication of his plays, because—strange as it may sound today—he didn't own them. They belonged to his playing company, and once sold and entered in the Stationers' Register, ownership passed to the publisher. Modern notions of authorial copyright were a distant dream. Shakespeare certainly had a voice as shareholder, and perhaps a disproportionate one. But if the history of the publication of his plays during his lifetime is any indication, he showed little interest in when or even whether his plays were published and even less in the quality or accuracy of their printing. If he had cared a bit more, or had more say in the matter, we'd be booking seats for performances of such lost Shakespeare plays as *Cardenio* and *Love's Labour's Won.*

Poetry was a different story. Early in his career Shakespeare showed great care in seeing into print his two great narrative poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece,* bestsellers that went through many editions. While his name didn't appear on the title pages of these volumes, dedicatory letters addressed to the Earl of Southampton and signed *"William Shake-speare"* are included in italics in the front matter of both. It's the first time the notorious hyphen appeared in the printed version of his name, a telling sign, for skeptics, of pseudonymous publication. Elizabe-

than compositors, trying to protect valuable type from breaking, would have smiled at that explanation. They knew from experience that Shakespeare's name was a typesetter's nightmare. When setting a "k" followed by a long "s" in italic font—with the name Shakspeare, for example—the two letters could easily collide and the font might snap. The easiest solution was inserting a letter "e," a hyphen, or both; as we'll soon see, compositors settled on different strategies. And as the title pages of the 1608 quarto of *Lear* and the 1609 *Sonnets* indicate, it's a habit that carried over when setting roman font as well.

Shakespeare had been writing plays for five or six years before one of them, *Titus Andronicus,* was finally published in 1594. Its title page advertised the names of the playing companies who had performed it, not who wrote it. This was typical. Even the most celebrated plays by the most popular Elizabethan dramatists appeared anonymously. We have no documentary evidence that Christopher Marlowe wrote *Tamburlaine,* and if not for a casual allusion by Thomas Heywood in the early seventeenth century, Thomas Kyd's name would not be linked to his masterpiece from the late 1580s, *The Spanish Tragedy.* We still don't know who wrote some of the finest plays of the period—including *Mucedorus, Arden of Faversham,* and *Edward the Third.* Still, we are lucky that they have survived at all, for only six hundred or so of the estimated three thousand plays staged between the accession of Queen Elizabeth in 1558 and the closing of the theaters in 1642 were ever printed. A large percentage of those that found their way into print nonetheless remained anonymous, and none of these, so far as anyone knows, were published under an assumed name. It would have been pointless to do so. For a playwright anxious about being identified on the title page of a play—fearing punishment for seditious words or imagining that publishing carried a social stigma—the simplest and obvious course of action was to do nothing: allow the play, like so many others, to reach London's bookstalls without a name attached to it. Nobody would notice and nobody would care.

If an Elizabethan writer insisted on having a pseudonym appear on a title page of a published quarto, and could somehow persuade a publisher to put it there, the worst possible moment to do so was 1598. In that year the Privy Council briefly shut down the public playhouses in the wake of *The Isle of Dogs,* a scandalous play that landed both Ben Jonson and Thomas Nashe, who collaborated on it, in serious trouble. And

if you were going to put someone else's name on a play, nothing could be more foolish than to use a real person's name, especially that of someone highly visible, such as an actor who could easily be hauled in and questioned. The memory of Thomas Kyd's brutal interrogation by the authorities five years earlier would have weighed heavily on anyone who might contemplate serving as a front for another writer. Kyd, who unluckily had shared writing quarters with Marlowe, was put on the rack, tortured, and died within a year or so, but not before telling interrogators hunting down the source of anti-alien propaganda all that they wanted to know about Marlowe and his beliefs.

Yet 1598 turned out to be the very year that two publishers independently decided that Shakespeare's popularity had reached the point where it was profitable to put his name on the title page of his plays. That year, Cuthbert Burby brought out a "newly corrected and augmented" edition of *Love's Labour's Lost* by "W. Shakespere," while Valentine Simmes published second editions of *Richard the Third* and *Richard the Second* (both by "William Shake-speare"). If anyone wanted to signal through a wink and nod that a name was pseudonymous, confirmed by that hyphen, it would have helped to be consistent. Yet Burby and Simmes didn't spell Shakespeare's name the same way, and it wasn't because only one of them had been tipped off about inserting that hyphen. If there really was a conspiracy and "Shake-speare" a pseudonym, a score of publishers who at various times over a quarter-century owned and published Shakespeare's works, and then their various printers and compositors, and then those to whom they sold their rights, would each in turn have had to be let in on the secret—and carry it to the grave. Pseudonymous publication requires both consistency and a degree of control over the printed word; the uneven publication of Shakespeare's plays didn't allow for either. Some plays, such as *Richard the Third* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor,* bore Shakespeare's name from the outset. Others, like *Richard the Second,* first lacked it, then added it. Still others, including *Romeo and Juliet* and *Henry the Fifth,* were never published under Shakespeare's name during his lifetime.

Where his name does appear on the title pages of these early editions, it is variously spelled "Shakspere," "Shake-speare," and "Shakespeare." There's no pattern. Spelling simply wasn't uniform at the time. Shakespeare himself didn't even spell his own name the same way. On his will alone (which bears his signature on each page), he spelled it

"Shakspere" on the first two pages and "Shakspeare" on the last one. As Marlovians and Oxfordians well know, the names of their candidates were also spelled variously at the time. Alan Nelson has pointed out that Oxford spelled a word like "halfpenny" eleven different ways, but this doesn't suggest that de Vere was barely literate, any more than claims about Shakespeare's spelling habits should. The author's name on the first quarto of *Hamlet* is spelled "William Shake-speare"; the second quarto, published a year later, reads "William Shakespeare." Others heard and spelled his name differently, including whoever recorded the Revels Account for performances at Whitehall Palace during the Christmas season of 1604. Listed there alongside the ten plays performed by the King's Men are the names of the "poets which made the plays": "Shaxberd" is written alongside *Measure for Measure, The Comedy of Errors,* and *The Merchant of Venice*—yet another inventive spelling and at the same time powerful evidence ascribing to him the authorship of these plays.

Early editions of Shakespeare's plays contain additional clues about the identity of their author. Playing companies turned over to printers different sorts of manuscripts. Scholars have spent lifetimes poring over the resulting printed texts, reconstructing from the smallest details the lost originals—whether one play or another was printed from "foul papers" (an early modern term for an author's rough draft), "fair copy" (an author's or more likely a scribe's neater transcription of that earlier draft), or "prompt copy" (either foul or fair copy that would have been marked up and used in the playhouse). Plays set from "foul papers" often reveal a great deal about an author's writing habits.

An Elizabethan playwright had to devote a good deal of his attention to mundane concerns: which actors in the playing company were available, how many roles had to be doubled (for there were far more roles than performers in each of his plays), and how to get them onstage and offstage, or from a balcony to the main stage, or through costume changes, on time. All this is vastly more complicated than it seems, and as someone who for much of his career acted in the plays he wrote alongside those for whom he wrote the other parts, Shakespeare had a decided advantage over freelance dramatists.

For most of his professional life, Shakespeare wrote for an unusually stable and prosperous company, named the Chamberlain's Men from their formation in 1594, and after King James came to the throne

in 1603, rechristened the King's Men. Shakespeare knew that every play he wrote had to include significant roles for the half-dozen or so shareholders in the company, actors all, including himself. Other roles would go to hired men, some of whom worked with the company for years, others sporadically. And then, of course, there were the two or three boys who played female roles, since women were not allowed to perform on the Elizabethan stage. These boys were around only until maturity, when their voices and bodies changed; so there was quite a bit of turnover, making life especially difficult for a playwright who had to depend on the capabilities of those working for the company at any given moment. You couldn't write Rosalind's part in *As You Like It* unless you had absolute confidence that the boy who spoke her seven hundred lines, a quarter of the play, could manage it. You couldn't write a part requiring the boy playing Lady Percy in *The First Part of Henry the Fourth* to sing in Welsh unless you knew that the company had a young actor who could handle a tune and was a native of Wales. Whoever wrote these plays had an intimate, firsthand knowledge of everyone in the company, and must have been a shrewd judge of each actor's talents.

There were times when Shakespeare was thinking so intently about the part he was writing for a particular actor that in jotting down the speech headings he mistakenly wrote the actor's name rather than his character's. We know this because compositors passed on some of these slips when typesetting his foul papers. Take, for example, the stage direction in the First Folio edition of that early history play *The Third Part of Henry the Sixth,* which reads: "Enter Sinklo and Humfrey." John Sinklo was a regular hired man for whom Shakespeare wrote lots of skinny-man parts. Shakespeare would slip again and start thinking of Sinklo rather than the character he was playing in the draft that was used to produce the Quarto edition of *The Second Part of Henry the Fourth,* where his stage direction reads: "Enter Sincklo and three or four officers." It's clear that the scene was originally written as a star turn for Sinklo and wouldn't be half as funny or make as much sense without him, for he is brought onstage mostly to be teased about his waistline. The others take turns calling him names: "nut-hook," "starved bloodhound," and, in case we miss the point, "thin thing."

The author of Shakespeare's plays could not have written the great roles of Richard III, Romeo, Hamlet, Othello, and Lear unless he knew

how far he could stretch his leading tragedian, Richard Burbage. Writing parts for the company's star comedian was even tougher. How could anyone but a shareholder in the company know to stop writing comic parts for Will Kemp the moment he quit the company in 1599—and start writing parts in advance of the arrival of his replacement, Robert Armin, whose comic gifts couldn't have been more different? Kemp was another one of those actors Shakespeare kept confusing with his characters—easy enough to do, since Kemp always partly played himself no matter what role Shakespeare had written for him. The 1599 quarto of *Romeo and Juliet* identifies the Nurse's comic sidekick, Peter, first as "The Clown" and then, in an ensuing stage direction, as "Will Kemp." The same sort of slip occurs in the quarto of *Much Ado about Nothing,* where we learn that the comic roles of Dogberry and Verges had been written for Kemp and Richard Cowley.

Rehearsing with a small group of fellow actors every morning, performing that same play with them that afternoon, and meeting regularly after that with shareholders for business decisions and to hear and purchase new plays could not have been stress-free. There are even recorded instances in which Elizabethan actors and playwrights came to blows—but not, so far as we know, members of Shakespeare's company. One reason, perhaps, is that the sharers were all enriched by their enterprise. It wasn't just Shakespeare who became successful enough to seek the status of gentleman or who invested in real estate. By focusing unforgivingly and relentlessly on Shakespeare's accumulation of wealth, Victorian biographers overlooked the extent to which his interest in financial matters was typical of his fellow sharers. And the successful sharers of the Chamberlain's Men, in turn, could only look on in envy at the far vaster fortune accumulated by their rival from the Admiral's Men, Edward Alleyn.

The evidence is of a piece: the surviving texts confirm that whoever wrote the plays had to have been a long-term partner in an all-absorbing theatrical venture. The plays could not have been written by a Christopher Marlowe squirreled away to the Continent or an aristocrat who secretly delivered the plays to the actors. And the plays certainly could not have been written by somebody who, like Edward de Vere, was not alive in March 1613, when, a month or two after the Globe Theatre caught fire during a performance of a "new" play, *Henry the Eighth,* "Mr. Shakespeare" and "Richard Burbage" were each paid forty-four shillings by Thomas Screvin, steward to Francis Manners, sixth Earl of Rutland (the younger brother of the fifth Earl of Rutland, the one believed by some to have written the plays of Shakespeare), for collaborating on an impresa for the earl to use at the court celebrations honoring King James's Accession Day on 24 March. An impresa was a painted and ceremonial pasteboard shield on which an enigmatic saying, usually in Latin, was written. There was considerable pressure on courtiers to come up with something unusually witty, since gossip about one's impresa was sure to follow. Who better than Shakespeare to come up with something imaginative and apt—and the several examples of this courtly art form in *Pericles* were good advertising, confirming that he had a talent for this sort of thing, and that his Latin was strong enough. Burbage, a talented artist, was paid for "painting and making it." Imprese were ephemeral, so we don't know what Shakespeare wrote for Rutland. But Rutland was sufficiently pleased by their work to rehire Burbage three years later, when he was paid four pounds, eighteen shillings on 25 March 1616 "for my lord's shield and for the semblance." This time, Shakespeare wasn't available; he lay dying in Stratford, that very day affixing his signature to the successive pages of his will.

Even if we lacked all other textual evidence of Shakespeare's authorship, there is one incident that ought to persuade even the most hardened skeptic: the special epilogue written for a court performance of *The Second Part of Henry the Fourth,* where Shakespeare speaks for himself as the author of the play. Before it was performed at court, *The Second Part of Henry the Fourth* had been staged for popular audiences at the Curtain Theatre in Shoreditch. There, the play had ended with an epilogue spoken by Will Kemp. Moments before that, Falstaff, played by Kemp, is hauled off to the Fleet Prison and it looks for once as if Falstaff, that great escape artist, will not be able to wriggle out of trouble. But Kemp suddenly dashes back onstage, and a few moments pass before playgoers realize that the play really is over and that Kemp is delivering an epilogue not as Falstaff but more or less as himself:

> *One word more, I beseech you. If you be not too much cloyed with fat meat, our humble author will continue the story, with Sir John in it, and make you merry with fair Kather-*

ine of France, where (for anything I know) Falstaff shall die of a sweat, unless already 'a be killed with your hard opinions. For Oldcastle died martyr, and this is not the man. My tongue is weary; when my legs are too, I will bid you good night.

(Epilogue, 24–32)

Kemp's repeated mention of his legs and dancing signals that a jig—an often raunchy Elizabethan song-and-dance act that followed both comedies and tragedies—was about to commence. Kemp also announces that Shakespeare, "our humble author," promises to "continue the story," so that his admirers can rest assured they'll be seeing Kemp again soon.

But this epilogue wouldn't do at court, where plays didn't end with salacious jigs. So Shakespeare had to write an alternative one appropriate for the command performance at Whitehall Palace, where the queen herself was in attendance. Taking center stage himself, Shakespeare replaces Kemp and delivers his own lines ("what I have to say is of my own making"). It's the closest we ever get in his plays to hearing Shakespeare speak for and as himself. It's a brassy and confident speech, one that may even have caught his fellow players off guard:

First, my fear; then, my curtsy; last my speech. My fear is your displeasure. My curtsy, my duty. And my speech, to beg your pardons. If you look for a good speech now, you undo me. For what I have to say is of my own making. And what indeed (I should say) will (I doubt) prove my own marring. But to the purpose and so to the venture. Be it known to you, as it is very well, I was lately here in the end of a displeasing play, to pray your patience for it, and to promise a better. I meant indeed to pay you with this, which if (like an ill venture) it come unluckily home, I break, and you, my gentle creditors, lose. Here I promised you I would be, and here I commit my body to your mercies. Bate me some, and I will pay you some, and (as most debtors do) promise you infinitely. And so I kneel down before you; but indeed, to pray for the Queen.

(Epilogue, 1–15)

This time around there's no mention of what the next play will be about and no promise that Kemp will return as Falstaff. The apology for Oldcastle in *The First Part of Henry the Fourth* (if that's the "displeasing" if enormously popular play he never quite gets around to naming) is nicely finessed, as Shakespeare offers in compensation the Falstaff play they have just applauded as a way of making amends. Beyond this point, the epilogue's initial acceptance of social deference—all that begging and curtsying, appropriate to someone of Shakespeare's lower social station—gives way to the novel suggestion that playwright and spectators are bound in a partnership, sharers in a venture. If Shakespeare offers himself as merchant adventurer, his plays as treasure, and his audience as investors, then it must needs follow that an "ill venture" which breaks or bankrupts him will prove as costly to his creditors. When Shakespeare describes his courtly audience as "gentle creditors" he means not only that they provide the credit or license to let him write what he wants, but also that they credit or believe in him. Pursuing the implications of this metaphor, he redefines the basis of their understanding: accept his terms, then, and they'll be repaid with plays for a long time to come.

The episode is less well known than it should be, because for the past four centuries it has been effectively buried by generations of editors. In 1600 the Chamberlain's Men handed over a manuscript of *The Second Part of Henry the Fourth* to Andrew Wise and William Aspley to publish. They in turn asked Valentine Simmes to print it—and the title page of this quarto, like the entry in the Stationers' Register that assigned copyright to the publishers, confirms that the play was written "by William Shakespeare." But when passing along the playscript, the company must have inadvertently handed over a copy containing both the Curtain and Whitehall epilogues. The compositor working for Simmes printed them both, one right after the other, resulting in the speaker first kneeling in prayer, then leaping up and resuming his speech. The Folio editors, trying to repair this, made a further hash of it in 1623, moving the kneeling bit to the end, which is how it has been printed ever since, running together two speeches with wildly different purposes. Untangled, they tell a very different story.

It's inconceivable that any of the rival candidates for the authorship of the plays associated with the court—Francis Bacon, the earls of Oxford, Derby, Rutland, Mary Sidney, to name but a few—could possibly have stood upon that stage at Whitehall Palace, publicly assuming the

socially inferior role of player, and spoken these lines. And it is even harder, after reading these powerful and self-confident lines, to imagine the alternative, that the speaker, who claims to have written the play they just saw, was merely a mouthpiece for someone else in the room, and lying to both queen and court.

"Here's Our Fellow Shakespeare"

London's literary community at the turn of the seventeenth century was small and remarkably tight-knit. Authors shared publishers, patrons, and in a few instances even lodgings or writing quarters. They often worked collaboratively. Shakespeare frequently crossed paths with many of them. He cowrote plays with several dramatists, acted in the plays of many others, and would have heard still others pitch their plays to his company's sharers. Even as a lyric poet he didn't work in isolation, sharing his Sonnets, we are told, with his "private friends" and, along with such other "modern writers" as Ben Jonson, George Chapman, and John Marston, contributing poetry to a volume called *Love's Martyr* in 1601.

Then, as now, writers gossiped about one another. Fortunately, a surprising amount of what his fellow writers thought about Shakespeare has survived. Some wrote or spoke directly to one another about him, some chose to share their thoughts with a broader reading public, and some privately jotted down their observations, never expecting them to be read by anyone else. Their comments about him stretch without interruption from his early years in the theater to his death in 1616, and after.

The first notice of Shakespeare appears in a pamphlet, about which much remains unclear, attributed to a university-trained writer named Robert Greene. In 1592, Greene (or possibly his fellow playwright Henry Chettle, who was involved in the volume's posthumous publication) warned established dramatists that "there is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his *Tiger's heart wrapt in a player's hide,* supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you: and being an absolute *Johannes fac totum,* is to his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country." The objection here is not so much to an actor's aspiring to write plays, but to his confidence that he can do so better than they can, that he thinks himself "the only Shake-scene in a country." Worse still, he does so "beautified with our feathers," that

is, shamelessly appropriating the popular styles they had forged. A lot is packed into this attack, a good deal more than we can understand four hundred years later. But we are left with the impression of a veteran writer shrewdly taking the measure of an upstart he doesn't much like, even parodying a line from his recent *True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York* (better known by its Folio title, *The Third Part of Henry the Sixth*), where Shakespeare, showing a fine ear for bombastic blank verse, had written, "O tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide."

The publication of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* in 1593 and *Lucrece* in 1594 elicited far more flattering responses, especially from aspiring poets. Shakespeare is also named for the first time in 1594 in the commendatory verses to *Willobie His Avisa,* which alludes to how "Shakespeare paints poor Lucrece['s] rape." A year later, Cambridge scholar William Covell also praised "Sweet Shakspeare" for "his Lucrecia." The pair of narrative poems soon won Shakespeare other admirers, none more devoted than young Richard Barnfield, whose "A Remembrance of Some English Poets" in 1598 provides the first extended critical appreciation of Shakespeare:

> *And Shakespeare thou, whose honey-flowing vein*
> *(Pleasing the world) thy praises doth obtain.*
> *Whose* Venus, *and whose* Lucrece *(sweet, and chaste)*
> *Thy name in fame's immortal book have placed.*

The rhymes are a bit wooden, but the message is clear: Shakespeare was a writer to be reckoned with.

Even as Barnfield was praising his lyrical gifts, Francis Meres was cementing Shakespeare's reputation as both poet and playwright in *Palladis Tamia* (1598), an invaluable account of what Shakespeare had achieved a decade into his career. Meres, just a year or so younger than Shakespeare, had earned degrees from both Cambridge and Oxford before moving to London by the mid-1590s to make a living as a writer and translator. The most exciting section of *Palladis Tamia* is his "Comparative Discourse of our English Poets," in which Meres touches on eighty English writers. He is surprisingly astute about the great talent at work all around him, and his judgments have stood the test of time. No contemporary writer earned as much praise from Meres as Shakespeare.

Meres likens modern English writers to ancient Roman ones (so that, for instance, "the sweet witty soul of Ovid lives in mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakespeare"). When it came to finding a match for both Plautus and Terence, "the best for comedy and tragedy" among the Roman dramatists, he concludes that only Shakespeare "among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage"—and to underscore his point, Meres lists a dozen of Shakespeare's popular comedies and tragedies. Crushingly, for those who want to believe that the Earl of Oxford and Shakespeare were one and the same writer, Meres names both and distinguishes between them, including both "Edward Earl of Oxford" and Shakespeare in his list of the best writers of comedy (while omitting Oxford from the list of leading tragedians). Meres also ranks Shakespeare among the best of English lyric poets as well as among those who are "the most passionate among us to bewail and bemoan the perplexities of love."

Shakespeare caught the attention of both older and younger generations of writers. Around 1600, the veteran author and controversialist Gabriel Harvey wrote in his copy of Chaucer's *Works* about Shakespeare's growing popularity, as well as the split between what we might call highbrow and lowbrow responses to his works: "The younger sort takes much delight in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis;* but his *Lucrece,* and his *Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark,* have it in them, to please the wiser sort." In another private note, Harvey lists Shakespeare along with his old friend Edmund Spenser "and the rest of our flourishing metricians"—high praise from a university man.

Barnfield was not the only young poet captivated by Shakespeare's style. In 1599, John Weever paid homage to his source of inspiration in a full-length Shakespearean sonnet: "Honey-tongued Shakespeare, when I saw thine issue / I swore Apollo got them and none other." Weever praises both of Shakespeare's narrative poems as well as his plays, which he admits he doesn't know as well ("*Romeo, Richard;* more whose names I know not"). Shakespeare attracted young admirers outside of London too, including the author or authors of the three anonymous *Parnassus* plays performed at St. John's College, Cambridge, between 1599 and 1601. In the second of these often slyly mocking scripts, Shakespeare is made much of. A character named Ingenioso says, "We shall have nothing but pure Shakespeare"—and refers to him again as "Sweet Mr. Shakespeare!"—while another repeats that praise and adds: "I'll have his picture in my study at the court," and concludes, "Let this duncified world esteem of Spenser and Chaucer, I'll worship sweet Mr. Shakespeare."

In the third and final *Parnassus* play, actors impersonating Burbage and Kemp make cameo appearances. After claiming that university-trained playwrights are second-rate, the actor playing Kemp adds: "Why here's our fellow Shakespeare puts them all down, aye, and Ben Jonson too." In this up-to-date reference to the "Poets' War" raging at the time in the London theaters, Kemp also notes "that Ben Jonson is a pestilent fellow, he brought up Horace giving the poets a pill, but our fellow Shakespeare hath given him a purge that made him bewray his credit." For these Cambridge undergraduates, Shakespeare was a living, breathing presence, one whose poetry they knew by heart, whose literary sparring they followed closely, and a copy of whose portrait they could imagine displaying in their rooms.

It wasn't just poets who took note. In 1605, in his *Remaines Concerning Britaine,* the leading historian of the day, William Camden, included Shakespeare among the greatest of contemporary writers: "what a world could I present to you out of Sir Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, Samuel Daniel, Hugh Holland, Ben Jonson, Thomas Campion, Michael Drayton, George Chapman, John Marston, William Shakespeare, and other most pregnant wits of these our times, whom succeeding ages may justly admire." Are we to suppose that as reputable a historian as Camden must have been in on the conspiracy as well—and willing to lie in print? Not long after, a twenty-one-year-old Scot named William Drummond arrived in London. He started reading a lot of Shakespeare that year, especially the sexy stuff: *Romeo and Juliet, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Love's Labour's Lost,* and *Lucrece.* When in 1611 Drummond compiled a list of the books in his library, he included both *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece,* attributing both to "Schaksp." His copy of *Romeo and Juliet* survives and can be found in the Edinburgh University Library; in it, Drummond supplies the author's missing name: "Wil. Sha." As Alan Nelson has shown, Drummond was not the only book-buyer at the time to identify Shakespeare by name. Their ranks include the author of *The Anatomy of Melancholy,* Robert Burton; the chief actor of the Admiral's Men, Edward Alleyn (who purchased a copy of the Sonnets); Richard Stonley, a teller of the exchequer under Queen Elizabeth; the Queen's nephew and godson John Harrington, a major author in his

own right; and Humphrey Dyson, who had extensive connections in the theater world. If there were any place that we might hope to find these well-connected figures reattributing Shakespeare's works to their "true" author, it would surely be in such private documents. But each of these writers put down Shakespeare's name rather than someone else's because each one knew who Shakespeare was and didn't doubt that he had written these works.

It would be surprising if other dramatists had left no record of what they thought of Shakespeare. It is they, after all, who had worked most closely with him, seen his plays, seen him act, and taken his full measure. It wasn't until Shakespeare had nearly retired from the stage that they began to share their views, producing a nice symmetry: even as a veteran playwright like Robert Greene was responsible for Shakespeare's earliest notice, dramatists were prominent among those who would provide some of the last that he would read or hear about. John Webster, whose 1612 play *The White Devil* owes so much to Shakespeare that it often hovers between plagiarism and parody, was happy to acknowledge the debt to "the right happy and copious industry of Master Shake-speare, Master Dekker, and Master Heywood" and to "wish what I write may be read by their light." Michael Drayton, fellow native of Warwickshire and a leading poet and dramatist, may have known Shakespeare longer than most. Born within a year of Shakespeare, Drayton didn't write about him until well after his death, when he praised him warmly:

> *And be it said of thee,*
> *Shakespeare, thou hadst as smooth a comic vein,*
> *Fitting the sock, and in thy natural brain,*
> *As strong conception, and as clear a rage,*
> *As any one that trafficked with the stage.*

Thomas Heywood, who had his hand in over two hundred plays over the course of a very long career, also had high praise for "Mellifluous Shakespeare, whose enchanting Quill / Commanded Mirth or Passion, was but Will."

The youngest rival playwright to write about Shakespeare was Francis Beaumont. An undated letter Beaumont wrote to his friend and mentor Ben Jonson, in verse—from "F.B." to "B.J."—survives and seems

to have been written around 1608. In it, Beaumont alludes to several playwrights, including in passing their mutual rival Shakespeare. The letter was only discovered in 1921 and is less well known than it ought to be:

> *Here I would let slip*
> *(If I had any in me) scholarship,*
> *And from all learning keep these lines as clear*
> *As Shakespeare's best are, which our heirs shall hear*
> *Preachers apt to their auditors to show*
> *How far sometimes a mortal man may go*
> *By the dim light of Nature.*

Beaumont flatters both Jonson and himself by invoking Shakespeare as the great anomaly: an exemplary poet of Nature, one who exemplifies how far a writer can go, lacking sufficient learning and scholarship.

Jonson left the most personal and extensive tributes to Shakespeare. For many, his testimony alone resolves any doubts about Shakespeare's authorship of the plays. Their relationship dates at least as far back as 1598, when Jonson's breakthrough play—*Every Man in His Humour*—was purchased and staged by the Chamberlain's Men. Jonson proudly lists Shakespeare among those who performed in it. While Shakespeare didn't act a year later in the follow-up, *Every Man out of His Humour,* he did have a role in Jonson's Roman tragedy *Sejanus* in 1603. In 1619, three years after Shakespeare's death, Jonson had occasion to speak about his old rival when visiting that other admirer of Shakespeare's work, William Drummond, in Scotland. Drummond kept extensive notes of Jonson's table talk, including his judgment that "Shakespeare wanted art" and his disapproval of his rival's weak grasp of geography in *The Winter's Tale:* "Shakespeare in a play brought in a number of men saying they had suffered shipwrack in Bohemia, where there is no sea near by some hundred miles."

More of Jonson's unguarded comments survive in the notes found after his death, edited and published in 1641 as *Timber, or Discoveries; Made upon Men and Matter.* Jonson here recalls the disagreement he had, decades earlier, with members of Shakespeare's company who thought it praiseworthy that Shakespeare never revised: "I remember, the players

have often mentioned it as an honour to Shakespeare, that in his writing (whatsoever he penned) he never blotted out line. My answer hath been, would he have blotted a thousand. Which they thought a malevolent speech. I had not told posterity this, but for their ignorance, who choose that circumstance to commend their friend by, wherein he most faulted." An old man now, writing long after Shakespeare's death, Jonson wants to set the record straight; he has nothing to lose and there's no point in either holding back unspoken praise or taking secret grievances to the grave. It's as generous as anything Jonson ever wrote, notwithstanding the final qualification: "I loved the man, and do honour his memory (on this side Idolatry) as much as any. He was (indeed) honest, and of an open, and free nature; had an excellent fancy; brave notions, and gentle expressions; wherein he flowed with that facility, that sometime it was necessary he should be stopped."

Jonson concludes with praise and blame mixed in equal measure, once again remembering those old times and the differences in their styles and sensibilities: "His wit was in his own power; would the rule of it had been so too. Many times he fell into those things, could not escape laughter. As when he said in the person of Caesar, one speaking to him: 'Caesar, thou dost me wrong.' He replying: 'Caesar did never wrong but with just cause,' and such like, which were ridiculous. But he redeemed his vices with his virtues. There was ever more in him to be praised, than to be pardoned." I find it difficult to read these recollections and imagine how anyone could believe that Jonson was a double dealer and somehow put up to writing this, his tribute intended to further a conspiracy to delude the world into thinking that Shakespeare had written the plays.

SKEPTICS FREQUENTLY POINT to what they see as the suspiciously long lapse of seven years between Shakespeare's death in 1616 and the belated appearance of the First Folio in 1623. It confirms for them that nobody took any notice of Shakespeare of Stratford's death since he had nothing to do with the authorship of the plays. What they overlook is that just three years after his death a set of Shakespeare's selected plays, ten in all—including tragedies, comedies, and histories—was already for sale in London, issued by a pair of enterprising London publishers,

Thomas Pavier and William Jaggard. These volumes could be purchased individually or as a set, and we know that some discriminating buyers bought all ten and had them bound together as a kind of collected works. It was a legitimate enterprise, since Pavier by this time owned or had obtained the copyright to five of the ten plays, and he and Jaggard may have believed, or persuaded themselves, that the rights to other plays were derelict. By this time a dozen or so different publishers could claim ownership of one or another of the eighteen plays by Shakespeare that had already been published—and before a more ambitious collection could be published, a syndicate would have to be formed that included them all, a time-consuming business. Pavier and Jaggard's collection may well have been intended to whet the appetite for a more comprehensive edition of Shakespeare's works, toward which end Jaggard was already working. Alternatively, it may have spurred members of the King's Men to produce such a volume. In either case, in 1619 the King's Men asked the Lord Chamberlain to order the Stationers' Company to put a stop to the publication of any more of Shakespeare's plays—or as they saw it, their plays. This request may have been intended to block other publishers, for they may already have joined forces with Pavier and Jaggard (and would subsequently use Pavier's quartos and Jaggard's press in producing the 1623 Folio). Shakespeareans are still a bit mystified by the motives behind the Pavier quartos. Whatever led to their publication, it's obvious that surprisingly little time elapsed from news of Shakespeare's death to determined efforts to see his collected plays into print.

In addition to the thirty-six plays, the 1623 Folio contained a woodcut of Shakespeare, dressed in a very expensive doublet. According to Jonson, the portrait was a likeness. He added that it was a shame that the artist couldn't draw Shakespeare's wit as accurately: "could he but have drawn his wit / As well in brass, as he hath hit / His face; the print would then surpass / All, that was ever writ in brass." The Folio also included memorial verses, most famously Jonson's own long poem "To the Memory of My Beloved, The Author Mr. William Shakespeare, and what He Hath Left Us." Hugh Holland, Leonard Digges, and "I.M." (probably James Mabbe) contributed poems as well. In his poem, Jonson links Shakespeare to his place of birth, addressing him as "Sweet Swan of Avon," while Digges explicitly identifies the man who wrote the plays with the one who lies buried in Stratford:

Shakespeare, at length thy pious fellows give
The world thy Works; thy Works, by which, outlive
Thy tomb, thy name must. When that stone is rent,
And Time dissolves thy Stratford monument,
Here we alive shall view thee still.

The monument Digges mentions was already erected by 1623. If he hadn't visited it himself, he may have heard about it from the players, for in 1622, members of the King's Men were paid *not* to perform in Stratford-upon-Avon when passing through Shakespeare's birthplace while touring. They must have known that the Puritan-leaning town had long been inhospitable to players; but they nonetheless paid Stratford-upon-Avon a visit, perhaps to pay their respects at the gravestone and monument of the man who had made their fortune.

AFTER COMPLETING MOST of the research for this chapter, I came across one additional bit of evidence. Had I included every stray comment about Shakespeare made by other writers at the time, this chapter would have swelled to twice its size. But I thought I'd add one more, not only because it shows that evidence confirming Shakespeare's authorship continues to be discovered, but also because it underscores that no matter how many documents turn up, there will always be those who continue to interpret them in light of an unprovable and fantastic hoax.

William Camden's 1590 edition of *Britannia,* written in Latin, contains a brief description of Stratford-upon-Avon. Camden describes (here rendered into English) how the town "owes all of its reputation to its two foster sons, John of Stratford, the Archbishop of Canterbury who built the church, and Hugh Clopton, the magistrate of London who began the stone bridge over the Avon supported by fourteen arches, not without very great expense." There's a copy of this book in the Huntington Library that was owned by Richard Hunt. Hunt, born in 1596, went on to become vicar in Bishop's Ichington, twelve miles or so east of Stratford. In this copy a reader, in all probability Hunt himself, had come across that passage and added, in Latin, next to the words about Stratford's most famous sons: *"et Gulielmo Shakespear Roscio planè nostro"* ("and to William Shakespeare, our very own Roscius"). Roscius was a

widely admired Roman actor who achieved great fame and amassed a considerable fortune before retiring from the stage. To compare someone to Roscius in Shakespeare's day—as Thomas Nashe had praised Edward Alleyn of the Admiral's Men in the 1590s—was to acknowledge that he was a star of the stage.

The marginalia was discovered by Paul Altrocchi. But for Altrocchi, a committed Oxfordian, it served only to confirm, rather than refute, the idea that someone other than Shakespeare had written the plays:

> The annotation, likely written so soon after Shaksper of Stratford's death in 1616, does confirm the remarkable early success of what Oxfordians view as William Cecil's clever but monstrous connivance: forcing the genius Edward de Vere into pseudonymity and promoting the illiterate grain merchant and real estate speculator, William Shaksper of Stratford, into hoaxian prominence as the great poet and playwright, William Shakespeare.

Debating such a conclusion is pointless, given the radically different assumptions governing how this document ought to be read.

Virtually every piece of evidence offered by Shakespeare's fellow writers has been similarly explained away. Skeptics now produce a handy chart, which first appeared in Diana Price's *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography,* that migrates from book to book, and from arguments for one new candidate for the authorship of the plays to another, denying that *any* literary evidence exists for Shakespeare's authorship. It has taken on iconic status—now known simply by the acronym CLPE, "Contemporary Personal Literary Evidence." Price and her followers define authorship in such a way that Shakespeare is always narrowly excluded, if need be on semantic grounds. According to the CLPE, there's no evidence of Shakespeare having had a *direct relationship* with a patron, though he wore the livery of the Lord Chamberlain, served King James both as a King's Man and as a Groom of the Chamber, and directly addressed a patron, the Earl of Southampton, in the letters prefacing both *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece.* Price's CLPE also insists that Shakespeare had no "Notice *at death* as *a writer.*" I'm not sure how those who wrote memorial tributes to him, or paid for or carved his monument, or labored to create the Pavier editions or the First Folio, might feel about that. But

according to the CLPE, time had apparently expired before all these memorial efforts were realized. And though Price knows that Shakespeare was a shareholder and therefore not paid directly for each play by his playing company (and knows about the impresse payment as well), her CLPE assures us that there is no evidence of his "having been paid to write." Readers are invited to make up their own minds.

Jacobean Shakespeare

I was in London on 5 November 2008, Guy Fawkes Day, that time-honored celebration of King James's miraculous escape from a terrorist plot. There had been fireworks exploding in the skies of London all week, a legacy of four hundred years of bonfires and bells, though I wondered how much those setting off these explosives knew about what they were commemorating. I thought I'd pay my own respects to King James more quietly by viewing his portrait at the National Portrait Gallery. I passed through the Tudor galleries, rich in portraits of Elizabeth I and her courtiers, but became confused when I entered the next gallery and couldn't find the familiar images of James and his courtiers where they had long been displayed. I walked around in circles before finally asking a guard to direct me to the Jacobean portraits. He explained that they were temporarily in storage, their place now taken up by portraits of playwrights—"Shakespeare and His Circle." The King's Men without the king felt a bit like *Hamlet* without the prince.

Discouraged, I headed to Foyles, that wonderful bookshop, in search of recent books about King James—also in vain; only one was in stock. I couldn't understand why historians, commercial publishers, and booksellers had largely given up on someone who ruled in England for twenty-two years (after having reigned in Scotland for thirty-six). Adjoining shelves sagged under the weight of books about the Tudors, especially Queen Elizabeth. It was the same everywhere I turned: there was a popular television series on *The Tudors* and any number of lavish films I could rent about Elizabeth—but not one sequel on her royal successor (the very subject, I later learned, of Ronald Hutton's witty essay "Why Don't the Stuarts Get Filmed?").

Shakespeare in Love is one of the most delightful movies ever made about Shakespeare. In one of its best scenes we get to watch Queen Elizabeth, played by Dame Judi Dench, sitting in the galleries at the outdoor playhouse at a performance of *Romeo and Juliet* and telling Shakespeare afterward to come by the palace, "where we will speak some more." Imagine replacing her in this scene with, say, Simon Russell Beale in the role of King James. It wouldn't work. Though almost half of his creative life was spent as a King's Man, Shakespeare has for the longest time been powerfully and irrevocably linked with Queen Elizabeth, so much so that we seem to have forgotten Ben Jonson's evenhanded recollection of how Shakespeare's plays "so did take Eliza, and our James!"

Things have been this way since at least the early eighteenth century, when writers began inventing an intimacy between playwright and queen that had no documentary foundation. In 1702 John Dennis claimed that *The Merry Wives of Windsor* "was written at her command." A few years later, Nicholas Rowe added that Elizabeth "without doubt gave him many gracious marks of her favour." The last time anyone tried to establish a direct connection between Shakespeare and his other monarch was in 1709, when Bernard Lintott wrote that "King James the First was pleased with his own hand to write an amicable letter to Mr. Shakespeare; which letter, though now lost, remained long in the hands of Sir William D'Avenant, as a credible person now living can testify." No such letter has survived and it's unlikely that it ever existed (D'Avenant also bragged that he was Shakespeare's illegitimate son). By the end of the eighteenth century, letters from James to Shakespeare were long forgotten; as the Ireland forgeries confirm, those from Elizabeth now captured the popular imagination. When it has been an article of faith for so long that Shakespeare was an Elizabethan writer, who can blame the Oxfordians for succumbing to the widespread conviction that Shakespeare's plays were the creations of a Tudor playwright and restrict their story almost entirely to life under Elizabeth?

We have also had drummed into us that he was Shakespeare of the Globe—though that playhouse was built only in the closing years of Elizabeth's reign. Long forgotten are the other playing spaces in and around London in which he had built his reputation over the previous decade: the Theatre, the Curtain, Newington Butts, the Rose, Richmond, Whitehall, perhaps a brief stint at the Swan. I'm as blameworthy as the next in this respect, having spent years researching and writing about the construction of the Globe and what was taking place in the closing years

of Elizabeth's reign. The Globe has become an icon, a once-again familiar sight on Bankside in London. I'm not sure if it's an urban legend, but I have heard that dozens of replicas of it have sprouted around the world.

But had you asked anyone on the streets of London in the winter of 1610 where you could go to see Shakespeare's latest play, there would have been only one answer: "Blackfriars." The Blackfriars Theatre means little today to most admirers of Shakespeare; so far as I know, only a single replica of it has ever been erected, in rural Virginia, which attracts both spectators and scholars. The story of the Blackfriars Theatre is also the story of the Jacobean Shakespeare, and of the particular challenges he faced toward the end of his playwriting career. And that, in turn, helps explain why only Shakespeare could have written his late plays that were staged there.

The story dates back to February 1596, when James Burbage purchased a building in the fashionable London precinct of Blackfriars. Burbage's lease on Shakespeare's company's outdoor playhouse in Shoreditch, the Theatre, was about to expire, and his plan was to transfer the company to a permanent playing space. The new site had a lot going for it. For one thing, it was located in the heart of the City, which was much more convenient for London playgoers. For another, it was indoors, so that players could perform in inclement weather, year-round. And because of the site's ecclesiastical origins—it had been a Dominican priory before the dissolution of the monasteries, hence the name—Blackfriars was technically not under the jurisdiction of London's City Fathers, which meant that professional actors, who at the time were relegated to London's suburbs, could perform in the center of town without fear of retribution. Burbage sank a lot of money into turning the building into an intimate playhouse, capable of holding perhaps six hundred spectators in a crammed rectangular playing chamber that was forty-six by sixty-six feet. But he failed to anticipate the stiff resistance to his plans by influential locals, including the company's own patron, the Lord Chamberlain, who did not want a theater in the neighborhood that would attract unruly crowds. The rest of the story is familiar: in 1599 the company moved instead to Southwark and began playing in an outdoor playhouse built out of the timbers of the dismantled Theatre, which they named the Globe.

Many years passed before the dream of inhabiting Blackfriars became a reality for Shakespeare and his fellow players. Soon after the

Globe was up and running, hoping to recoup some of his late father's enormous outlay, Richard Burbage leased the Blackfriars site to Henry Evans, an enterprising scrivener who had been working with various children's companies since the 1580s and who wagered correctly that those living near the Blackfriars stage wouldn't object to a children's company performing there a few times a week. Evans now had a theater but he didn't have enough boy actors, so he brought in Nathaniel Giles, Master of the Children of the Chapel Royal at Windsor, who had the legal authority to abduct potential "choristers," much as sailors were impressed to man the English fleet. By late 1600 the children were thriving at Blackfriars and threatening the dominance of the adult players. Shakespeare was well aware, as he writes in *Hamlet*, that the "public audience" are "turned to private plays, / And to the humor of children."

By 1604, however, following a terrible outbreak of plague that closed the theaters and swept away a sixth of London's population, Evans became "weary and out of liking" with his long-term lease and approached Richard Burbage about canceling it, but they never came to terms. Evans must have been relieved, for his company's fortunes soon improved after a patent was issued placing the company under the patronage of Anna of Denmark, James's Queen. Renamed the Children of the Queen's Revels, the company soon attracted the most talented young dramatists of the day, including John Marston, George Chapman, Thomas Middleton, Francis Beaumont, and John Fletcher. The repertory of the adult companies tended to range over all genres, and included a lot of old crowd-pleasers. The Children of the Queen's Revels, lacking a backlist of old favorites to draw upon, stuck to a more restricted fare, mixing tragicomedies with irreverent satires. Its novel offerings catered to upscale playgoers willing to pay sixpence for the cheapest seat (six times the entry price charged at the Globe) and as high as two shillings, sixpence, for those who wanted a box seat adjoining the stage. Gallants could pay more and sit on stools on the stage itself, to see and be seen, just a few feet from the action.

The adult players kept a close eye on these developments. There was concern that the satiric bent of the dramatic fare at Blackfriars crossed the line and might land all of London's players in trouble—a point made around 1608 by the veteran Thomas Heywood, who warned in his *Apology for Actors* of the new breed of writers who hurl "liberal invectives against all estates," and do so in "the mouths of children, supposing their

juniority to a be a privilege for any railing, be it never so violent." It wasn't long before a string of outrageous plays—including *Eastward Ho, The Isle of Gulls,* and especially a lost play called *The Silver Mine* that mocked the king himself as a foul-mouthed drunk—angered James enough to call for the dissolution of the children's company (the king had reportedly "vowed they should never play more, but should first beg their bread"). Henry Evans, now paying forty pounds a year in rent but forbidden to stage any plays at Blackfriars, decided that it was time to move on, and surrendered his lease to the Burbages in August 1608.

It's at this point that Shakespeare and his fellow King's Men reenter the picture, having tacitly secured the permission that had been denied them a dozen years earlier to perform in this space. Shakespeare, along with Richard Burbage, Henry Condell, Thomas Evans, John Heminges, and William Sly formed a syndicate and became housekeepers in the potentially lucrative indoor playhouse. They chose not to abandon the Globe, however, playing at Blackfriars from October until Easter and outdoors at the Globe during late spring and summer. The first few years of the new venture saw both challenges and setbacks. In contrast to the Globe venture nine years earlier, they were moving into an established playhouse with a regular and demanding clientele who brought certain expectations about the kind of drama they wanted to see. In addition, Blackfriars needed significant renovation. More troublingly, plague now returned with renewed force, and it wasn't until 1610 that the King's Men began performing at Blackfriars on a regular basis.

The King's Men had motives for the move beyond finding a dry place to play in winter. The core of their veteran company was getting on in years and an infusion of fresh blood was badly needed. The attrition of late had been severe. Thomas Pope, one of the founding members of the Chamberlain's Men and a co-owner of the Globe, had died by 1604. We hear no more of Sinklo after that year either. Shakespeare, we can be pretty sure, had stopped acting regularly for the company around this time as well. Augustine Phillips, another member of the original fraternity and a co-owner of the Globe, died in 1605. William Sly died in 1608 soon after signing on to the Blackfriars syndicate. The survivors were aging, and the Jacobean theater—no less for professional playwrights than for actors—was, they knew, a young man's game. That the King's Men were keen on absorbing some of the young talent on display

at Blackfriars is confirmed in a lawsuit in which the Burbages acknowledged as much: "In process of time, the boys growing up to be men, which were Underwood, Field, Ostler, and were taken to strengthen the service, the boys daily wearing out, it was considered that house would be as fit for ourselves, and so purchased the lease remaining from Evans with our money, and placed men players, which were Heminges, Condall, Shakespeare, etc."

Nathan Field, William Ostler, and John Underwood were the pick of the litter—and having reached the age of twenty or so were ready to take on adult roles. All three would soon become sharers in the King's Men (though it took the enterprising Field a few more years before his move became final). This was a full partnership, combining the next generation of star actors with some of London's most beloved and established players. We can see the result in one of the few cast lists from the period to survive. Audiences lucky enough to watch the King's Men perform John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* at Blackfriars saw the parts of Ferdinand, the Cardinal, Antonio, and Delio performed by Burbage, Condell, Ostler, and Underwood, respectively. While no cast lists for individual Shakespeare plays survive, Underwood, Field, and Ostler are listed in the 1623 Folio among those who acted in his plays.

In taking over Blackfriars, the King's Men also took on board playwrights who had made their reputations writing for its coterie audiences. The company could boast that the five leading playwrights in the land—Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Thomas Middleton, John Fletcher, and Francis Beaumont—were now writing for them. Biographical critics like to imagine that some midlife crisis or a longing to reunite with his wife and daughters led Shakespeare to turn to tragicomedy at this time. It's more likely that his turn to romance and tragicomedy in his late and collaborative plays was dictated by the popularity of these kinds of plays at Blackfriars, amounting to a house style.

By 1610, then, Shakespeare was writing for a new group of actors and alongside (as often as not collaboratively) a new generation of playwrights. And he was doing so in a new playing space. He had always written plays that could be converted from one venue to another, expecting that many of the plays first performed at the outdoor amphitheaters would be restaged at various royal palaces, at aristocratic houses, and in touring provincial productions in all kinds of venues. That's one reason

that there are so few props and so little fancy stage business in his plays. But Blackfriars brought a particular set of challenges. Gone are the fight scenes—like the thrilling duel at the end of *Hamlet*. The cramped stage at Blackfriars, crowded with playgoers on stools, couldn't accommodate them (which explains why, for example, a much anticipated fight at the end of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* is only reported, not staged). Another great difference had to do with lighting. While Blackfriars plays were performed in the afternoon, the playhouse windows didn't admit enough light. So performances were illuminated by candlelight. In addition to creating a different mood in the intimate space, the candles needed to be trimmed in the course of a three-hour performance. This was handled at Blackfriars by intermissions between the Acts, a far cry from the situation at the Globe, where action onstage was uninterrupted. By the time he wrote *The Winter's Tale,* with its sudden passage of sixteen years in midplay, Shakespeare had clearly begun to make creative use of these breaks.

Audiences at Blackfriars expected to be entertained during the time it took to trim or replace candles. So when the King's Men took over from the children's company, they wisely acquired the skilled musicians who had accompanied them at Blackfriars. As a result, the plays that Shakespeare was now writing for the company included a great deal more music. Gone, then, from Shakespeare's works from 1610 on are the trumpets and drums of his earlier plays, from *Titus Andronicus* onward, instruments that the actors themselves could easily handle, replaced by far more subtle musical effects. You can hear it in *Cymbeline*'s call for "solemn music," the music that awakens Hermione in *The Winter's Tale,* the "sad and solemn music" in *Henry the Eighth,* the "sudden twang of instrument" in *The Two Noble Kinsmen,* and especially in *The Tempest,* with its repeated calls for "solemn and strange music" and "soft music." Dancing too began to figure regularly in Shakespeare's plays. Only six of his first thirty-three plays incorporated dancing scenes; after the move to Blackfriars, dancing would figure in all of Shakespeare's plays.

Most of these dance sequences revolve around a formal masque, a court-centered art form that drew together dance, music, and the spoken word. Ben Jonson, one of the innovators of this genre, was also the first to introduce elements of the Jacobean court masque onto the Blackfriars

stage in 1605. Shakespeare's first attempt at a masque, written not long after, appeared in *Timon* at the Globe. After the move to Blackfriars they start appearing with surprising regularity, in *Cymbeline, The Tempest, Henry the Eighth,* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen.*

The Jacobean court masques attracted some of the most talented artists in the land. Shakespeare never wrote a masque for court, but as his late works make clear, he had a keen eye for the form, and members of his company were familiar enough with the genre, having been recruited to play the part of antimasquers (enacting a scene of counterpoint and disorder) at court performances after 1609. It wouldn't be long before Shakespeare offered his own version of the antimasque, the comic counterpoint that Caliban and his mates provide after the ordered dance of the Spirits in *The Tempest,* a play aptly described by Stephen Orgel as "the most important Renaissance commentary" on the masque. Playgoers at Blackfriars may have been privileged relative to those at the Globe, but only a small number of playgoers at either theater had the chance to witness the lavish masques performed before King James's court; the masques Shakespeare incorporated into his plays were the next best thing.

THE MOVE TO Blackfriars coincided with and may have accelerated what critics have long characterized as Shakespeare's turn to a distinctive late style—though the reasons for the changes in his verse habits cannot simply be attributed to the new venue or the kinds of plays he was writing. I'm as wary of developmental or evolutionary arguments about style as I am about the life stages of Shakespeare's career, but there's no getting around the evidence offered by the plays themselves after 1608 or so. The change in how he composed blank verse marks a watershed, excluding potential candidates such as Oxford who died long before Shakespeare's style took this turn.

One of the curious things about his late style is that most critics (and I suspect most actors) don't like it much: it's often too difficult, too knotty, and for some too self-indulgent on Shakespeare's part. Here's a brief example from the opening scene of the late play *Henry the Eighth,* where Norfolk defends a seemingly hyperbolic description:

As I belong to worship and affect
In honor honesty, the tract of everything,
Would by a good discourser lose some life
Which action's self was tongue to.

(1.1.39–42)

Even the best Shakespeare editors throw up their hands in despair at passages like this. With patience, the sense of it can be unpacked. Norfolk has taken a very roundabout way of saying, "Look, I'm noble and bound to tell the truth; but no matter how well a skilled reporter can describe something, it would fall short of what those who were there experienced." For Frank Kermode, whose ear for Shakespearean language is as keen as anyone's, the "personification of action" in this passage, as well as "the redundant affirmation of his honour and honesty, the affected 'tract'" are all "typical of the muscle-bound contortions of the late Shakespeare's language." It feels more like prose than like blank verse, an effect in part achieved by abandoning a regular pause or breath at the end of lines.

Russ McDonald, who has treated this subject elegantly in *Shakespeare's Late Style,* runs through all the tricks that make up this new sound, and his account dovetails with Kermode's. Shakespeare's verse is now a lot more clipped and elliptical. It's much tougher to follow because he removes connections between clauses, wreaks havoc with conventional syntax, and keeps interrupting speeches (and lengthening them) with parenthetical thoughts or qualifiers. Metaphors spill over one another, and letters, sounds, words, and phrases reecho. As scholars as long ago as Malone were quick to note, rhyme is all but banished, in its place far more enjambment and lines that have what's called an extrametrical or eleventh unstressed syllable.

Here's another example, from one of the last scenes Shakespeare ever wrote, Arcite's speech to his knights in *The Two Noble Kinsmen,* which contains in abundance almost all of these stylistic innovations:

Thou mighty one, that with thy power hast turned
Green Neptune into purple;
Whose approach in vast field comets prewarn,
Unearthed skulls proclaim; whose breath blows down
The teeming Ceres' foison; who dost pluck

With hand armipotent from forth blue clouds
The masoned turrets that both mak'st and break'st
The stony girths of cities: me thy pupil,
Youngest follower of thy drum, instruct this day
With military skill, that to thy laud
I may advance my streamer and by thee
Be styled lord o'th'day.

(5.1.49–60)

These lines are a nightmare to annotate or even paraphrase. Yet, as with even the knottiest passages from the late plays, playgoers don't seem to object. Shakespeare somehow writes lines that sound pleasing enough to the ear when delivered at full speed in the theater, yet defy easy analysis in the study. "Masoned turrets" is a compressed way of describing who built them. City walls are now "stony girths." "Unearthed" in the sense of excavated had never been used this way before in English literature. Shakespeare's eye drifts toward strange words, such as the one he lifts from Chaucer—"armipotent"—who, in a similar way, had lifted it from his source, Boccaccio. It's hard to disagree with Kermode's conclusion that at this point in his career Shakespeare "is simply defying his audience, not caring to have them as fellows in understanding."

Lytton Strachey noted another change in these late plays: Shakespeare is no longer as interested in "who says what." He's right. There's clearly a shift away from individuated voices in these works. By 1610 or so giving each speaker a distinctive voice seemed to stop mattering so much to Shakespeare, or perhaps other things just mattered more. Anyone who wants to claim that Shakespeare can write in such radically distinct styles simultaneously—that, say, he composed *Henry the Eighth* and *Henry the Fifth* at the same time, or *The Winter's Tale* and *As You Like It*—is to my mind proposing the impossible. Nobody was writing in this often impenetrable style during the Elizabethan years; during the Jacobean period, many would, as admirers of Chapman and Fletcher can attest. It was a period style as much as a personal one.

By March 1613, Shakespeare felt comfortable enough in the Blackfriars neighborhood to purchase lodgings a hundred yards from the indoor theater, though whether he saw this as a long-term residence, an investment, or simply a place to stay in London while commuting from Stratford, we don't know. Whatever his intentions, they probably

changed three months later, when at the end of June disaster struck. The thatch of the Globe caught fire by accident during what several contemporaries tellingly described as a *new* play, *Henry the Eighth,* and the theater quickly burned to the ground. The Globe was rebuilt, this time with tiles rather than the more flammable thatch roofing, but a year would pass before the new structure was finished. In the meantime, Shakespeare would write his last two collaborative plays, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and the now lost *Cardenio,* exclusively for Blackfriars. No playwright who had died in 1604 could have anticipated or responded to these unfolding opportunities and events as Shakespeare did.

WHEN I BEGAN teaching in the early 1980s, I didn't know that three of the plays on my Shakespeare syllabus—*Titus Andronicus, Timon of Athens,* and *Pericles*—were coauthored. I never taught *Henry the Eighth* or *The Two Noble Kinsmen,* so I didn't give much thought to the extent to which they were collaborative efforts as well. Like many other Shakespeareans at the time, I also didn't pay much attention to the largely forgotten attribution studies of the nineteenth century. Serious work in that field had all but died out after the greatest Shakespeare scholar of the twentieth century, E. K. Chambers, had roundly dismissed the enterprise as the work of "disintegrators." The leading authorities on whose judgment in these matters I relied, especially the editors of the authoritative Arden, Oxford, and Cambridge editions of the plays, all agreed with Chambers and firmly rejected the possibility that Shakespeare collaborated in any significant way.

That now seems very long ago. A revolution has since occurred in how Shakespeare professors think about collaboration, largely as a result of the investigations of a new and creative generation of scholars interested in attribution, especially MacDonald Jackson, Ward Elliott, Jonathan Hope, David Lake, and Gary Taylor. Working for the most part independently, they established irrefutable cases for Thomas Middleton's, George Wilkins's, and John Fletcher's contributions to Shakespeare's Jacobean plays, as well as for George Peele's hand in the much earlier *Titus Andronicus.* They did so by painstakingly teasing out the habits, conscious and unconscious, that characterize each writer's style. Some of these researchers focused on versification, others on vocabulary,

still others on the minutest of verbal tics, the kind of thing you would never catch while reading or watching a play, such as the use of auxiliaries, a preference for contractions, and so on. Following their analyses and statistics can be mind-numbing, but there's no denying their conclusions about Shakespeare and his fellow playwrights' stylistic preferences. Look closely enough at each writer's body of work and then turn to their collaborative efforts, and their differences leap out. These studies also reached nearly identical conclusions about which parts of plays were Shakespeare's and which his coauthors'. Building on these findings, Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor's 1986 Oxford edition of Shakespeare's *Works* broke new ground by acknowledging almost all of these collaborations. And in 2002, the scattered insights of various editors and researchers were collected and freshly set forth in *Shakespeare, Co-Author* by Brian Vickers, who took delight in mocking editors who had ignored these studies or continued to insist in defiance of the evidence that Shakespeare had worked alone.

By the time that Vickers's book came out, a few editors had already begun to acknowledge on title pages that a given play was by "Fletcher and Shakespeare" or "Shakespeare and Middleton." But this news has barely begun to trickle out of the academic world. It may take a decade or two before the extent of Shakespeare's collaboration passes from the graduate seminar to the undergraduate lecture, and finally to popular biography, by which time it will be one of those things about Shakespeare that we thought we knew all along. Right now, though, for those who teach the plays and write about his life, it hasn't been easy abandoning old habits of mind. I know that I am not alone in struggling to come to terms with how profoundly it alters one's sense of how Shakespeare wrote, especially toward the end of his career when he coauthored half of his last ten plays. For intermixed with five that he wrote alone, *Antony and Cleopatra, Coriolanus, The Winter's Tale, Cymbeline,* and *The Tempest,* are *Timon of Athens* (written with Thomas Middleton), *Pericles* (written with George Wilkins), and *Henry the Eighth,* the lost *Cardenio,* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (all written with John Fletcher).

I don't want to exaggerate what these attribution studies have achieved. They certainly haven't brought us any closer to unraveling Shakespeare's literary DNA. While we now have a pretty clear sense of which scenes were first drafted by Shakespeare and which by his coauthors—and all of those knotty passages I quoted above were written

by Shakespeare—we are still in the dark about some of the most pressing questions about the nature of each collaborative effort. Did Shakespeare invite others to work together on a play, or did they approach him? Who worked out the plot? Why do these collaborations seem inferior to Shakespeare's solo-authored plays? The new attribution studies also aren't of much help when collaborations became more intensive, when playwrights engaged in give-and-take over a particular passage or simply borrowed from or imitated each other's styles, perhaps unconsciously.

One of the great challenges, then, to anyone interested in the subject is that we know so little about how dramatists at the time worked together. We just know—primarily from Philip Henslowe's accounts of theatrical transactions from 1591 to 1604—that they did, and that in the companies that performed in his playhouses it was the norm, not the exception. But it is risky to extrapolate too much from that evidence how Shakespeare himself worked. And it seems obvious that collaborations during his early years were significantly different from those after 1605 or so, when he seemed to have resumed the practice after a long hiatus (perhaps best explained by the fact that he was no longer acting, so had both mornings and afternoons now free to engage in more sustained collaborations). We don't even have adequate language to describe coauthorship ("collaboration" still carries a whiff of cooperating with the enemy). Writers at the time aren't much help either, even Ben Jonson, a veteran collaborator, who boasts in the preface of his *Volpone* how he wrote the play by himself in only five weeks, "fully penned it / From his own hand, without a coadjutor, / Novice, journeyman, or tutor." While we don't know precisely what each of these terms means, it seems pretty clear that there was a pecking order, based on experience, among writers who worked together.

Only a few other scraps of information have come down to us, such as Nathan Field's letter in 1614 pitching a new play to Henslowe, where he writes that "Daborne and I have spent a great deal of time in conference about this plot, which will make as beneficial a play as hath come these seven years." A richer anecdote was recorded by Thomas Fuller in 1684, who had heard that John Fletcher and one of his fellow authors had met "in a tavern, to contrive the rude draft of a tragedy; Fletcher undertook *to kill the king* therein, whose words being overheard by a listener

(though his loyalty not to be blamed herein), he was accused of high treason." Luckily for Fletcher and his collaborator, the felony charges were dropped after it became clear "that the plot was only against a dramatic and scenical king," and "all wound off in merriment." The story, fictional or not, allows us a fleeting glimpse of what is otherwise almost entirely lost to us—writers working out a plot together. But how, when, and where Shakespeare conferred about the plot and characters of *Pericles, Henry the Eighth, The Two Noble Kinsmen,* or *Timon of Athens* we'll never know.

Attribution studies are good at telling us how evenly the labor was divided as well as what parts of plays each dramatist preferred to write. The evidence suggests that most of Shakespeare's joint efforts were equal, active partnerships. The most evenly split play was *Pericles,* with Wilkins contributing 835 lines and Shakespeare 827. Fletcher was responsible for a slightly larger share of both *Henry the Eighth* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (1,604 lines to Shakespeare's 1,168 in the former; 1,398 to 1,124 in the latter). And Shakespeare was responsible for the lion's share of both *Titus Andronicus* (1,759 to Peele's 759) and *Timon of Athens* (1,418 to Middleton's 897). Though I'm using Vickers's precise figures, these numbers need to be taken as approximations, as the odds are high that collaboration extended further, to the point where two writers may have been responsible for parts of individual speeches, and perhaps, depending on whether one was responsible for smoothing out the final version, even lines.

No less fascinating is the breakdown of who was primarily responsible for which sections. With *Titus Andronicus,* where Shakespeare was the less established writer, Peele wrote the opening third of the play as well as a terrific scene at the beginning of Act 4. Shakespeare handled the rest. The other collaborations are Jacobean, and Shakespeare is in each case the more experienced partner. Wilkins seems to have written the first half of *Pericles,* Shakespeare the second half. *Timon* is more complicated: Shakespeare apparently wrote the opening scene and the closing Act, but much of the rest is shared—with individual scenes at times divided between the two, suggesting that the collaboration with Middleton was unusually close. In *Henry the Eighth,* his first collaboration with Fletcher, Shakespeare again begins the play; Fletcher ends it, but as with Middleton, there's considerable back-and-forth along the

way. And in *The Two Noble Kinsmen,* Shakespeare once again handles the opening and this time gets the last word in as well, along with most of the fifth Act.

Stanley Wells, in *Shakespeare and Co.,* has suggested that Shakespeare's practice here may have been fairly typical, if one of the few scraps of evidence to survive—a lawsuit concerning a collaborative play from 1624, *Keep the Widow Waking,* jointly written by Thomas Dekker, John Webster, John Ford, and William Rowley—can be taken as representative. Dekker gave evidence that he wrote eight pages of the first Act, along with one speech that came much later, and it's clear that he established the plotline for his colleagues to follow. Dekker also testified that he "often" saw the play (or at least part of it) acted, suggesting some sort of a professional obligation on the part of the playwright to be present on days when the play was rehearsed and performed. I suspect that in a decade's time the account of the field as it now stands will sound sketchy and elementary. More scholars are turning their attention to these issues and more sophisticated approaches are being developed; it will take some time, but in due course Shakespeare's editors and biographers will offer a truer portrait of this late, collaborative stage of his career.

If mainstream scholars have been uncomfortable acknowledging the degree to which attribution studies have transformed our understanding of how Shakespeare worked, one can only imagine how those who don't believe he wrote the plays feel. To date they have been almost silent on this question. It's not hard to see why. It's impossible to picture any of their aristocrats or courtiers working as more or less equals with a string of lowly playwrights, especially with Wilkins, who kept an inn and may have run a brothel. For Oxfordians in particular, attribution studies are a nightmare. Their strategy has long been to argue that after de Vere's death in 1604, any unfinished works were touched up or completed by other playwrights. Orthodox Shakespeareans deride this as a "jumble sale" scenario. You'd have to imagine something along the lines of Middleton, Wilkins, and Fletcher coming upon Oxford's estate sale in 1604, finding these unfinished plays for the having, and each making a grab for them, with the dexterous Fletcher making off with three, the others with one each.

The Oxfordian claim that lesser playwrights touched up the works attributed to Shakespeare but written by de Vere by 1604 had until now proved quite difficult to refute. But editors of the collaborative plays have

recently shown that some of these late plays could not have been started by one writer and later finished by another. A representative example appears in Lois Potter's Arden edition of *The Two Noble Kinsmen,* where Potter shows that Fletcher wasn't adequately aware of what Shakespeare was up to in the previous scene. In Act 2, scene 1, Shakespeare has a Jailor's Daughter describe how Palamon and Arcite "discourse of many things, but nothing of their own restraint and disasters" (2.1.40–41). The friends appear on the upper stage at the end of the scene but never exit—and that's where Shakespeare leaves them. Fletcher, independently writing the scene that immediately follows, clearly had only a rough idea of what Shakespeare was busy writing in his assigned section, and has Palamon and Arcite appear on the main stage. And when they start to speak, they contradict what the Jailor's Daughter has just told us in the scene Shakespeare wrote, for the pair act as if they are meeting for the first time since the battle, with Palamon asking, "How do you, noble cousin?" and Arcite replying, "How do you, sir?" (2.2.1–2). Such discrepancies, while no doubt ironed out by the company in production, are still visible in the surviving script—and render highly improbable the argument that Fletcher is completing an old unfinished playscript that fell into his hands. Things were a lot easier in the old days for those who doubted Shakespeare's authorship, when it was still possible to imagine the "real" author having his latest play delivered surreptitiously to the stage door at the Globe.

we read the plays. We can believe that Shakespeare himself thought that poets could give to "airy nothing" a "local habitation and a name." Or we can conclude that this "airy nothing" turns out to be a disguised something that needs to be decoded, and that Shakespeare couldn't imagine "the form of things unknown" without having experienced it firsthand. It's a stark and consequential choice.

Bibliographical Essay

The literature on the Shakespeare authorship controversy is vast. A full accounting, if it were even possible, would multiply the length of this book several times over. What follows, then, is a guide limited to the specific sources I have drawn on in print, manuscript, and electronic form, so that anyone interested can retrace or follow up on my research.

For those seeking an overview of the controversy, there are a number of fine surveys, all of which I have found helpful and reliable: R. C. Churchill, *Shakespeare and His Betters* (London, 1958); H. N. Gibson, *The Shakespeare Claimants* (London, 1962); Warren Hope and Kim R. Holston, *The Shakespeare Controversy* (Jefferson, N.C., 1992); and John F. Michell, *Who Wrote Shakespeare?* (London, 1996). For early bibliographies of the controversy, see W. H. Wyman, *Bibliography of the Bacon-Shakespeare Controversy* (Cincinnati, 1884), and Joseph S. Galland's dissertation, *Digesta Anti-Shakespeareana* (Evanston, Ill., 1949).

Those interested in the strongest arguments in favor of Shakespeare's authorship should consult Irvin Matus, *Shakespeare, in Fact* (New York, 1994), and Scott McCrea, *The Case for Shakespeare* (Westport, Conn., 2005). The best scholarly account remains S. Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives* (Oxford, 1970), extensively revised in 1991. I particularly recommend, and am deeply indebted to, discussions of the authorship controversy that appear in F. E. Halliday, *The Cult of Shakespeare* (London, 1957); Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare's Ghost Writers* (New York, 1987); Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare* (New York, 1989); Harold Love, *Attributing Authorship* (Cambridge, U.K., 2002); and especially Jonathan Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare* (London, 1997). Those seeking a point-by-point defense of Shakespeare's authorship should consult the website of David Kathman and Terry Ross (www.shake

speareauthorship.com). Alan Nelson's much admired website can be accessed at socrates.berkeley.edu/~ahnelson/authorsh.html.

Literature in support of alternative candidates—both print and digital—dwarfs that defending Shakespeare's claim. A few of the titles that I have found most useful are, in chronological order: George Greenwood, *The Shakespeare Problem Restated* (London, 1908); Gilbert Slater, *Seven Shakespeares* (London, 1931); Calvin Hoffman, *The Murder of the Man Who Was "Shakespeare"* (London, 1955); Charlton Ogburn, Jr., *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* (New York, 1984); Richard Whalen, *Shakespeare: Who Was He?* (Westport, Conn., 1994); Joseph Sobran, *Alias Shakespeare* (New York, 1997); Diana Price, *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography* (Westport, Conn., 2001); Mark Anderson, *"Shakespeare" by Another Name* (New York, 2005); Brenda James and William D. Rubenstein, *The Truth Will Out: Unmasking the Real Shakespeare* (New York, 2006); and Brian McClinton, *The Shakespeare Conspiracies* (Belfast, 2007). I'll refer to others as occasion demands. Those in search of a full array of arguments that challenge Shakespeare's claim and bolster those of other candidates have a host of online alternatives to choose from, the best of which include the Shakespearean Authorship Trust (www.shakespeareanauthorshiptrust.org.uk); Sir Francis Bacon's New Advancement of Learning (www.sirbacon.org); the Shakespeare Fellowship (www.shakespearefellowship.org); the Shakespeare Oxford Society (www.shakespeare-oxford.com); the Marlowe-Shakespeare Connection (marlowe-shakespeare.blogspot.com); and the De Vere Society (www.deveresociety.co.uk).

When I refer to specific facts about William Shakespeare's life in these pages, my sources, unless otherwise specified, are E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems,* 2 vols. (Oxford, 1930); S. Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life* (Oxford, 1975); and S. Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: Records and Images* (London, 1981). I have also made extensive use of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* throughout. Unless I'm quoting the exact title of a book or article or need to quote the original spelling for a specific reason I have modernized spelling and punctuation. Quotations from the plays and poems are taken from *The Complete Works of Shakespeare,* ed. David Bevington, updated 4th ed. (New York, 1997).

Prologue

Cowell's lectures, which have never been published, are quoted from the manuscript in the Durning-Lawrence collection housed in Senate House Library, University of London, Durning Lawrence Library, MS 294, *Some Reflections on the Life of William Shakespeare. A Paper Read before the Ipswich Philosophic Society by James Corton Cowell, February 7, 1805 [And a second paper, April 1805].*

I have singled out a few of the many notable skeptics; James, Freud, Keller, and Twain are discussed at length in chapters that follow. For Charlie Chaplin, see his *My Auto-Biography* (New York, 1964), where he writes, "I can hardly think it was the Stratford boy. Whoever wrote them had an aristocratic attitude." Malcolm X relates in *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York, 1965) that "Another hot debate I remember I was in had to do with the identity of Shakespeare. . . . I just got intrigued over the Shakespearean dilemma. The King James translation of the Bible is considered the greatest piece of literature in English. . . . They say that from 1604 to 1611, King James got poets to translate, to write the Bible. Well, if Shakespeare existed, he was then the top poet around. But Shakespeare is nowhere reported connected with the Bible. If he existed, why didn't King James use him?" According to Orson Welles, "I think Oxford wrote Shakespeare. If you don't agree, there are some awfully funny coincidences to explain away" (quoted in Cecil Beaton and Kenneth Tynan, *Persona Grata* [London, 1953]). Sir Derek Jacobi said that he was "99.9 per cent certain" that the actual author of the plays and Sonnets was "Edward de Vere, the Earl of Oxford" (*Evening Standard,* 23 April 2009). For Elise Broach's young adult novel, see *Shakespeare's Secret* (New York, 2005).

For the suggestion that there is a conspiracy at work in the Shakespeare industry, see, for example, Charlton Ogburn, who writes that to "prevent the unthinkable must be the primary concern of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust," and adds that the Trust draws on a handsome budget, and that the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Mellon and Guggenheim foundations contribute to the orthodox Shakespeare cause as well. He also writes: "Of much greater importance, I feel sure, is the professional, economic, and psychological investment in Shakespeare orthodoxy by academicians on both sides of the ocean,"

and he goes on to speak of the "diabolical elements" in the case "which make it exceedingly difficult for such authorities to divest themselves of their ties to him" (Ogburn, *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*).

For the discovery of the Cowell manuscript, see Allardyce Nicoll, "The First Baconian," *Times Literary Supplement,* 25 February 1932. The wonderfully named William Jaggard pointed out in a letter to the *TLS* that Cowell placed Wilmot's residence in "Barton-on-the-Heath," which he describes visiting "six miles north of Stratford-on-Avon" when in fact it is "sixteen miles due south" (3 March 1932). The only previous effort I know of to examine the Cowell manuscript is described in Nathan Baca's report of Daniel Wright's unpublished research on Cowell and his suspicion that the document may be a forgery, in *Shakespeare Matters* 2 (Summer 2003). For more on the Durning-Lawrence collection, see K. E. Attar, "Sir Edward Durning-Lawrence: A Baconian and His Books," *The Library* 5 (September 2004), pp. 294–315; K. E. Attar, "From Private to Public: The Durning-Lawrence Library at the University of London," in *The Private Library,* 5th ser., vol. 10:3 (Autumn 2007), pp. 137–56; and Alexander Gordon, *Memoir of Lady Durning-Lawrence* (privately printed, 1930). The forger (or forgers) clearly incorporated arguments set forth in Sidney Lee, "A New Study of *Love's Labour's Lost,*" *Gentleman's Magazine* (October 1880). For the receipt for the Cowell manuscript, see Senate House Library, University of London, DLL/1/10, which contains a half-sheet, perhaps eight by four inches, on which is written: "Cowell M.S.S. £8 = 8 - 0 Lady Durning-Lawrence holds the Receipts." The half-sheet offers no date or any other information about where it came from, from whom it was purchased, or where these receipts are. There's a hole in the top right corner suggesting that something may have been attached.

For the earliest published claims that Shakespeare lent money or hoarded grain, see R. B. Wheler, *History and Antiquities of Stratford-upon-Avon* (Stratford-upon-Avon, 1806); and vol. 1 of John Payne Collier, *The Works of William Shakespeare* (London, 1844). For the letter from Richard Quiney to Shakespeare, see Alan Stewart, *Shakespeare's Letters* (Oxford, 2008).

For more on Serres, see Olivia Wilmot Serres, *The Life of the Author of the Letters of Junius, the Rev. James Wilmot* (London, 1813); her entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography;* Bram Stoker, *Famous Imposters* (London, 1910); and Mary L. Pendered and Justinian Mallett, *Princess or Pretender? The Strange Story of Olivia Wilmot Serres* (London, 1939).

Shakespeare

Ireland

For facts about Shakespeare (and when specific documents were discovered by scholars) see Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems;* and Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Compact Documentary Life;* as well as his *William Shakespeare: Records and Images.* For an overview of early modern diaries and biographies, see William Matthews, *British Diaries: An Annotated Bibliography of British Diaries Written between 1442 and 1942* (Berkeley, Calif., 1950); and Donald A. Stauffer, *English Biography before 1700* (Cambridge, Mass., 1930). Malone made his plea to search more widely for documents about Shakespeare in *Gentleman's Magazine* 65 (1795). See too Sir James Prior, *Life of Edmond Malone, Editor of Shakespeare* (London, 1860).

The Ireland story has been especially well documented. I have drawn on the following contemporary accounts: Samuel Ireland, *Miscellaneous Papers and Legal Instruments Under the Head and Seal of William Shakspeare* (London, 1796); James Boaden, *A Letter to George Steevens, Esq. Containing a Critical Examination of the Papers of Shakespeare* (London, 1796); Edmond Malone, *An Inquiry into the Authenticity of Certain Miscellaneous Papers and Legal Instruments . . . Attributed to Shakespeare* (London, 1796); Samuel Ireland, *Mr. Ireland's Vindication of His Conduct, Respecting the Publication of the Supposed Shakspeare MSS* (London, 1796); William-Henry Ireland, *An Authentic Account of the Shaksperian Manuscripts* (London, 1796); Francis Webb, *Shakespeare's Manuscripts, in the Possession of Mr. Ireland, Examined* (London, 1796); Samuel Ireland, *An Investigation of Mr. Malone's Claim to the Character of Scholar, or Critic, Being an Examination of His Inquiry into the Authenticity of the Shakspeare Manuscripts, &c., by Samuel Ireland* (London, 1797); George Chalmers, *An Apology for the Believers in the Shakspeare-Papers* (London, 1797); George Chalmers, *A Supplemental Apology for the Believers in the Shakspeare-Papers* (London, 1799); George Chalmers, *An Appendix to the Supplemental Apology for the Believers in the Suppositious Shakspeare-Papers* (London, 1800); William-Henry Ireland, *The Confessions of William-*

Henry Ireland (London, 1805); and William-Henry Ireland, *Vortigern: An Historical Play with an Original Preface* (London, 1832).

I have also drawn on the following modern accounts: Clement M. Ingleby, *The Shakespeare Fabrications* (London, 1859); Bernard Grebanier, *The Great Shakespeare Forgery* (New York, 1965); S. Schoenbaum, "The Ireland Forgeries: An Unpublished Contemporary Account," *Shakespeare and Others* (Washington, D.C., 1985), pp. 144–53; Jeffrey Kahan's excellent *Reforging Shakespeare: The Story of a Theatrical Scandal* (London, 1998); Paul Baines, *The House of Forgery in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Brookfield, Vt., 1999); Patricia Pierce, *The Great Shakespeare Fraud: The Strange, True Story of William-Henry Ireland* (Phoenix Mill, 2004); and Tom Lockwood, "Manuscript, Print and the Authentic Shakespeare: The Ireland Forgeries Again," *Shakespeare Survey* 59 (Cambridge, U.K., 2006), pp. 108–23. Finally, for what the small number of surviving early modern dramatic manuscripts looked like, see William Long, "Precious Few: English Manuscript Playbooks," in *A Companion to Shakespeare,* ed. David Scott Kastan (Oxford, 1999), pp. 414–33, and Grace Ioppolo, *Dramatists and Their Manuscripts in the Age of Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton and Heywood* (London, 2006).

Shakespeare Deified

For the deifying performances at Drury Lane, see Richard Fitzpatrick, *The Occasional Prologue, Written by the Rt. Hon. Major General Fitzpatrick, and Spoken by Mr. Kemble, on Opening the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, with Shakespeare's Macbeth, Monday, April 21st. 1794* (London, 1794). See too vol. 1 of *Biographia Dramatica,* ed. David Erskine Baker, Isaac Reed, and Stephen Jones, 3 vols. (London, 1812), and *The London Stage 1660–1800,* part 5, ed. Charles Beecher Hogan (Carbondale, 1968). On the deification of Shakespeare in general, see Robert Witbeck Babcock, *The Genesis of Shakespeare Idolatry 1766–1799* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1931); Péter Dávidházi, *The Romantic Cult of Shakespeare* (Houndmills, U.K., 1998); Charles Laporte, "The Bard, the Bible, and the Victorian Shakespeare Question," *English Literary History* 74 (2007), pp. 609–28; and Marcia Pointon, "National Identity and the Afterlife of Shakespeare's Portraits," in *Searching for Shakespeare,* ed. Tarnya Cooper (London, 2006). Dryden's remarks about the divine Shakespeare can be found in *Aureng-Zebe* (1676); *The Tempest, or The Enchanted Island* (1670); and *All for Love* (1678). For Voltaire, see Thomas R. Lounsbury, *Shakespeare and Voltaire* (London, 1902). For an account of deifying Shakespeare in the visual arts, see William L. Pressly, *The Artist as Original Genius: Shakespeare's "Fine Frenzy" in Late-Eighteenth-Century British Art* (Newark, N.J., 2007).

The literature on Garrick and the Jubilee is considerable. I have relied on Christian Deelman, *The Great Shakespeare Jubilee* (New York, 1964); Johanne M. Stochholm, *Garrick's Folly: the Shakespeare Jubilee of 1769 at Stratford and Drury Lane* (London, 1964); Martha W. England, *Garrick's Jubilee* (Columbus, Ohio, 1964); Halliday, *Cult of Shakespeare;* and Vanessa Cunningham, *Shakespeare and Garrick* (Cambridge, U.K., 2008); I quote from Samuel Foote, *Letter . . . to the Reverend Author of the Remarks, Critical and Christian* (London, 1760).

For the emergence of the Shakespeare expert, see Simon Jarvis, *Scholars and Gentlemen: Shakespearian Textual Criticism and Representations of Scholarly Labour, 1725–1765* (Oxford, 1995); Peter Seary, *Lewis Theobald and the Editing of Shakespeare* (Oxford, 1990); Marcus Walsh, *Shakespeare, Milton, and Eighteenth-Century Literary Editing* (Cambridge, U.K., 1997); Arthur Sherbo, *The Birth of Shakespeare Studies* (East Lansing, Mich., 1986); Jonathan Bate, *Shakespearean Constitutions: Politics, Theatre, Criticism 1730–1830* (Oxford, 1989); Michael Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet* (Oxford, 1992); and Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare.*

"Like a Deceived Husband"

The best biography of Malone is Peter Martin, *Edmond Malone, Shakespearean Scholar* (Cambridge, U.K., 1995). On Malone's attempts to establish the plays' chronology and topicality, see his "Attempt to Ascertain the Order in Which the Plays of Shakespeare were Written" (London, 1778); his "A Second Appendix to Mr. Malone's Supplement" (London, 1783); and "Mr. Malone's Preface," as quoted in *The Plays of William Shakespeare,* ed. Samuel Johnson and George Steevens, 4th ed. (London, 1793). Margreta de Grazia writes about Malone in *Shakespeare Verbatim: The Reproduction of Authority and the 1790 Apparatus* (Oxford, 1991). William Oldys's manuscript notes, which Malone consulted, can be found in British Library, Add. MSS 22959. For the emendation to "brown best bed," see Malone's account in vol. 1 of the 1793 edition of Johnson and Steevens, where he writes that "Mr Theobald and other modern editors have been more bountiful to Mrs. Shakespeare, having

printed instead of these words, "——my brown best bed, with the furniture." See too Kenneth Gross, *Shylock Is Shakespeare* (Chicago, 2006).

For Heywood's unfinished or lost literary biographies from the early seventeenth century, see vol. 2 of *The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare,* ed. Edmond Malone (London, 1821), where he cites Heywood's note to *Hierarchy of Blessed Angels* (1635) where he is still promising this work more than twenty years after Richard Brathwaite first mentioned in 1614 that his "judicious friend, Master Thomas Heywood, hath taken in hand, by his great industry, to make a general, though summary, description of all the poets." For the rise of literary biography in eighteenth-century England, see, in addition to *Biographia Britannica: Lives of the Most Eminent Persons Who Have Flourished in Great Britain and Ireland,* 7 vols. (London, 1747–1766), Roger Lonsdale's outstanding introduction to his edition of Samuel Johnson, *The Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets,* 4 vols. (Oxford, 2006). On the missing inventory of Shakespeare's will, see J. O. Halliwell-Phillipps, *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare,* 3rd ed. (London, 1883), p. 235ff. The quotation from Capell is from "Mr. Capell's Introduction," in *The Plays of William Shakespeare,* ed. Johnson and Steevens.

"With This Key"

For autobiographical readings of the Sonnets cited here, see *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The Sonnets,* ed. Hyder Edward Rollins, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1944). On Wordsworth in particular, see *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years 1787–1805,* ed. Ernest De Selincourt, rev. Chester L. Shaver (Oxford, 1967). Anna Jameson is quoted from her *The Loves of the Poets,* 2 vols. (London, 1829). For Keats, see *The Letters of John Keats, 1814–21,* ed. Hyder Edward Rollins, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1958). And for Coleridge, see *Specimens of the Table Talk of the Late Samuel Taylor Coleridge,* ed. H. N. Coleridge, 2 vols. (London, 1835); Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lectures 1808–1819 on Literature,* ed. R. A. Foakes, 2 vols. (Princeton, N.J., 1987); and Samuel T. Coleridge, *Shakespearean Criticism,* ed. Thomas Middleton Raysor, 2 vols. (London, 1960). Gary Taylor's account of this autobiographical turn in *Reinventing Shakespeare* is especially helpful. For the backlash against reading Shakespeare's life through his works, see C. J. Sisson, "The Mythical Sorrows of Shakespeare," Annual Shakespeare Lecture of the British Academy, *Proceedings of the British Academy* 20 (1934).

On early responses to collaboration, see Edward Ravenscroft, *Titus Andronicus* (London, 1687). For Theobald, Hanmer, and other editors on plays they deemed collaborative or not by Shakespeare, see Babcock, *The Genesis of Shakespeare Idolatry;* see too Alexander Pope's preface, included in vol. 1 of *The Plays of William Shakespeare,* ed. Johnson and Steevens; Edmond Malone, *A Dissertation on the Three Parts of King Henry VI Tending to Show that Those Plays Were Not Written Originally by Shakspeare* (London, 1787); Henry Tyrrell, *The Doubtful Plays of Shakespere* (London, 1851); and Joseph C. Hart, *The Romance of Yachting* (New York, 1848).

Money Lender and Malt Dealer

On biographical information about Shakespeare that emerged in the nineteenth century, see Schoenbaum, Chambers, and Wheler. On Collier's discoveries, see J. Payne Collier, *Reasons for a New Edition of Shakespeare's Works* (London, 1841); Collier's biographical essay in vol. 1 of his edition of *The Works of William Shakespeare* (London, 1844); and the magisterial study by Arthur Freeman and Janet Ing Freeman, *John Payne Collier: Scholarship and Forgery in the Nineteenth Century,* 2 vols. (New Haven, Conn., 2004). Joseph Hunter published his discovery in vol. 1 of *New Illustrations of the Life, Studies, and Writings of Shakespeare,* 2 vols. (London, 1845). On Halliwell-Phillipps and his discoveries, see Halliwell-Phillipps, "Life of William Shakespeare," in vol. 1 of his *Works of William Shakespeare* (London, 1853). See too Arthur and Janet Ing Freeman, "Did Halliwell Steal and Mutilate the First Quarto of Hamlet?" *The Library* 2.4 (2001), pp. 349–63, as well as D. A. Winstanley, "Halliwell Phillipps and Trinity College Library," *The Library* 5.2 (1948), pp. 250–82. And for a defense of Halliwell-Phillipps, see Marvin Spevack, *James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps: The Life and Works of the Shakespearean Scholar and Bookman* (London, 2001). For the verdicts rendered by Halliwell-Phillipps and Dyce that Shakespeare attended carefully to his financial interests, see Halliwell-Phillipps, "Life of William Shakespeare," in his *Works of William Shakespeare,* and Dyce, "Some Account of the Life of Shakespeare," in his *Works of William Shakespeare* (London, 1857). The essay "Who Wrote Shakespeare?" appeared anonymously in *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* 449 (August 1852), pp. 87–89.

Homer, Jesus, and the Higher Criticism

For a detailed overview of the Homeric authorship question, see J. A. Davison, "The Homeric Question," in *A Companion to Homer,* ed. Alan J. B. Wace and Frank H. Stubbings (London, 1962), pp. 234–65; see too Martin West, "The Invention of Homer," *Classical Quarterly* 49.2 (1999), pp. 364–82. Emerson's assessment of Wolf is quoted from Moncure Daniel Conway, *Emerson at Home and Abroad* (London, 1883). See as well Robert Wood, *Essay on the Original Genius and Writings of Homer* (London, 1775), and Thomas Blackwell, *An Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer* (London, 1735).

For an excellent edition of Wolf, see F. A. Wolf, *Prolegomena to Homer,* translated with introduction and notes by Anthony Grafton, Glenn W. Most, and James E. G. Zetzel (Princeton, N.J., 1985). I am deeply indebted to Anthony Grafton, "Prolegomenon to Friedrich August Wolf," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 44 (1981), pp. 101–29. For responses to Wolf's argument in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see, in addition to Disraeli's novel, Samuel Butler, *The Authoress of the Odyssey* (London, 1897); de Quincey's essays in vol. 13 of *The Works of Thomas de Quincey,* ed. Grevel Lindop and John Whale (London, 2001); Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh,* ed. Margaret Reynolds (New York, 1996, cited in Laporte, "The Bard, the Bible, and the Victorian Shakespeare Question"); and E. V. Rieu's introduction to his translation of the *Iliad* (Harmondsworth, U.K., 1950).

On Strauss and his *Life of Jesus,* see David Freidrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus,* 3 vols. [trans. George Eliot] (London, 1846); Richard S. Cromwell, *David Friedrich Strauss and His Place in Modern Thought* (Fair Lawn, N.J., 1974); and Horton Harris, *David Friedrich Strauss and His Theology* (Cambridge, U.K., 1973). H. Bellyse Baildon discusses the Higher Criticism in the introduction to his edition of *Titus Andronicus* (London, 1904), and Robertson speaks of it in *The Baconian Heresy* (New York, 1913). For Shakespeare as holy writ, see Joss Marsh, *Word Crimes: Blasphemy, Culture, and Literature in Nineteenth-Century England* (Chicago, 1998), and Selkirk, *Bible Truths* (London, 1862). On Carlyle, see Adrian Poole, *Shakespeare and the Victorians* (London, 2004); Arnold is quoted from *Matthew Arnold,* ed. Miriam Allott and Robert H. Super (Oxford, 1986); and George Gilfillan from "Shakespeare—A Lecture" in *A Third Gallery of Portraits* (New York, 1855)—I'm indebted to Laporte for this reference. So far as I know, Gary Taylor, in *Reinventing Shakespeare,* is the only Shakespeare scholar to mention Samuel Mosheim Schmucker and I'm grateful that his work alerted me to *The Errors of Modern Infidelity Illustrated and Refuted* (Philadelphia, 1848), reprinted (unchanged except for the title) as *Historic Doubts Respecting Shakespeare: Illustrating Infidel Objections Against the Bible* (Philadelphia, 1853), from which I have quoted.

Bacon

Delia Bacon

The Beechers' remarks about Delia Bacon are quoted in Martha Bacon, "The Parson and the Bluestocking," in *The Puritan Promenade* (Boston, 1964). The admirer's glowing description was offered by Sarah Edwards Henshaw; see Theodore Bacon, *Delia Bacon: A Biographical Sketch* (Boston, 1888), as well as Henshaw's article (under the pseudonym Sydney E. Holmes) that appeared in the Chicago *Advance,* 26 December 1867. Henshaw is also the source for Bacon's lecturing style, in her "Delia Bacon as a Teacher of Shakespeare" in *Shakespeareana* 5 (February 1888). Bacon's academic range is described in an admiring letter about her lectures that appeared in the *New York Herald* on 21 December 1852. For other facts about her background described here, see the standard biography: Vivian C. Hopkins, *Prodigal Puritan: A Life of Delia Bacon* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959). See too Nina Baym's excellent "Delia Bacon, History's Odd Woman Out," *The New England Quarterly* 69 (1996), pp. 223–49. For more on her association with Tree, see Charles H. Shattuck, *Shakespeare on the American Stage* (Washington, D.C., 1976), and Joy Harriman Reilly's master's essay, "Miss Ellen Tree (1805–1880), Actress and Wife to Charles Kean" (Columbus, Ohio, 1979). Letters are quoted from Hopkins's edition—except for those quoted specifically from Delia Bacon's surviving correspondence and papers that are housed in the Folger Library.

Bacon's remarks about the subject of her play are quoted from her preface to *The Bride of Fort Edward, Founded on an Incident of the Revolution* (New York, 1839). For more on early American women dramatists, see *Plays by Early American Women, 1775–1850,* ed. Amelia Howe Kritzer (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1995), and *The Cambridge Companion to American Women Playwrights,* ed. Brenda Murphy (Cambridge, U.K.,

and quoted above, accessible at shakespeareauthorship.com. See too Tom Veal's online critiques at stromata.tripod.com/id288.htm and stromata .tripod.com/id459.htm. See as well Scott Heller, "In a Centuries-Old Debate, Shakespeare Doubters Point to New Evidence," *The Chronicle of Higher Education,* 4 June 1999, where Alan Nelson is quoted. For Justice Stevens, see Bravin, "Justice Stevens Renders an Opinion," *Wall Street Journal.*

Part of the revival of interest in Marlowe has also been spurred by director Michael Rubbo's documentary *Much Ado About Something,* created in response to seeing the 1989 *Frontline* documentary that had ignored Marlowe's candidacy and focused on Oxford's (www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/muchado/fine). See too, for example, "The Marlowe-Shakespeare Connection" (marlowe-shakespeare.blogspot.com); "Marlowe's Ghost" (marlowesghost.com); The Marlowe Lives! Association (www.marlovian.com); and Peter Farey's home page (www2.prestel .co.uk/rey). See too the introduction to *Hamlet,* by Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare, ed. Alex Jack (Becket, Mass., 2005), and William Honey's privately printed *The Life, Loves, and Achievements of Christopher Marlowe, Alias Shakespeare, vol. 1* (London, 1982). For Jarmusch on Marlowe, see Lynn Hirschberg, "The Last of the Indies," *New York Times,* 31 July 2005.

For Moore's remarks, see Peter Moore, "Recent Developments in the Case for Oxford as Shakespeare," *Ever Reader* 4 (Fall 1996/Winter 1997). And see William Boyle, "Books and Book Reviewers," *Shakespeare Matters* 2 (Fall 2002). For the "Beginner's Guide," see www.shakespeare -oxford.com/?p=35. Shahan's remarks appear in *Shakespeare Matters* (Fall 2007). For the latest tally of those who have signed the "Declaration of Reasonable Doubt," see www.doubtaboutwill.org.

Shakespeare

The Evidence for Shakespeare

For facts about editions of the plays and poems, see Andrew Murphy, *Shakespeare in Print: A History and Chronology of Shakespeare Publishing* (Cambridge, U.K., 2003). For Buc's acquaintance with the Earl of Oxford, see Charles J. Sisson, *Thomas Lodge and Other Elizabethans* (Cambridge, Mass., 1933). My account of Buc's encounter with Shakespeare draws on Alan H. Nelson, "George Buc, William Shakespeare, and the Folger George a Greene," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 49 (1998), pp. 74–83; see too James Shapiro, *A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare: 1599* (London and New York, 2005). For more on typesetting, see Margreta de Grazia and Peter Stallybrass, "The Materiality of the Shakespearean Text," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 44 (1993), pp. 255–83; Randall McLeod, "Spellbound: Typography and the Concept of Old-Spelling Editions," *Renaissance and Reformation,* n.s. 3 (1979), pp. 50–65; and, forthcoming, Adam G. Hooks, "Shakespeare and Narrative of Authorship: Biography, Book History, and the Case of Richard Field." On the origins in the 1870s of the myth that Elizabethan aristocratic poets were averse to publishing their work, see Steven W. May's definitive essay, "Tudor Aristocrats and the Mythical 'Stigma of Print,'" *Renaissance Papers* 10 (1980), pp. 11–18.

The kind of specificity offered by the 1604 performances is highly unusual for court payments, which are usually limited to naming the sharers who came to collect the money owed them (so that, for example, Kemp, Burbage, and Shakespeare are named as those who were paid in 1595 for their company's recent performances at court), as noted in Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems.* For a helpful discussion of what dramatists knew about stagecraft, see Stanley Wells, *Shakespeare and Co.* (London, 2006).

"Here's Our Fellow Shakespeare"

See Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems,* for what other writers at the time said about Shakespeare. For Beaumont and Fletcher, see Aubrey's *Brief Lives,* as quoted in Philip Finkelpearl's entry on Beaumont in the new *Dictionary of National Biography.* And for more on the dating of Beaumont's poem, see Peter R. Moore, "The date of F. B.'s Verse Letter to Ben Jonson," *Notes and Queries* (September 1995), pp. 347–52. For an illuminating discussion of the Pavier quartos, see Sonia Massai, *Shakespeare and the Rise of the Editor* (Cambridge, U.K., 2007). See too John Jowett, *Shakespeare and Text* (Oxford, 2007). I am indebted for the suggestion about why the King's Men visited Stratford to Deelman, *The Great Shakespeare Jubilee.* And for the annotations on the Huntington copy of Camden's *Brittania,* see Paul Altrocchi, "Sleuthing an Enigmatic Latin Annotation," *Shakespeare Matters* 2 (Summer 2003), as well as Alan Nelson's research into Hunt's background, and for his translation too (see web.archive.org/web/20051226113826/socrates

.berkeley.edu/~ahnelson/Roscius.html). And see Diana Price, *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography*.

Jacobean Shakespeare

For the Jacobeans on film, see Ronald Hutton, "Why Don't the Stuarts Get Filmed?" in *Tudors and Stuarts on Film: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (New York, 2009), pp. 246–58. I quote from the script of Marc Norman and Tom Stoppard, *Shakespeare in Love: A Screenplay* (New York, 1998). For more on Elizabeth and Shakespeare, see Helen Hackett, *Shakespeare and Elizabeth: The Meeting of Two Myths* (Princeton, N.J., 2009), as well as Rowe's *Life of Shakespeare*. For King James's letter to Shakespeare, see *A Collection of Poems . . . by Mr. William Shakespeare*, ed. Bernard Lintott (London, 1709). For the boys' companies, the impressing of choristers, and their repertory, see Lucy Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels* (Cambridge, U.K., 2005). For the quotation on the boy players from scene 7 of the 1603 Quarto of *Hamlet*, see *The First Quarto of Hamlet*, ed. Kathleen O. Irace (Cambridge, U.K., 1998). For King James's angry reaction, see the letter from Sir Thomas Lake to Lord Salisbury, 11 March 1608, quoted in Irwin Smith, *Shakespeare's Blackfriars Playhouse* (New York, 1964). For more on Blackfriars, see Gerald Eades Bentley, "Shakespeare and the Blackfriars Theatre," *Shakespeare Survey* 1 (1948), pp. 38–50; Leeds Barroll, "Shakespeare and the Second Blackfriars Theater," *Shakespeare Studies* 33 (2005), pp. 156–70; Gerald Eades Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, vol. 6 (Oxford, 1968); Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespeare Company: 1594–1642* (Cambridge, U.K., 2004); and *Inside Shakespeare: Essays on the Blackfriars Stage*, ed. Paul Menzer (Selinsgrove, Pa., 2006).

For dance in the Blackfriars plays, see, for example, the elaborate satyrs' dance sequence followed by the dance of the shepherds and shepherdesses of *The Winter's Tale*, the morris dance of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, the dance of the celestial spirits in *Henry the Eighth*, and especially, again, *The Tempest*, with its dance of the "Strange Shapes" in Act 3 and dance of reapers and nymphs in Act 4. My discussion of music and dancing in the Blackfriars plays draws on the invaluable work of Irwin Smith. See too Alan Brissenden's excellent overview in his *Shakespeare and the Dance* (London, 1981).

It seems that the entertainment of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* in Act 3 is lifted from the second antimasque of Beaumont's *Masque of the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn*, which had been performed at Whitehall on 20 February 1613 in celebration of the marriage of Princess Elizabeth to the Elector Palatine (see Brissenden, *Shakespeare and the Dance*). James liked it enough to ask to see it again. For the antimasquers of the King's Men, see Richard Proudfoot, "Shakespeare and the New Dramatists of the King's Men, 1606–1613," in *Later Shakespeare*, eds. John Russell Brown and Bernard Harris (London, 1966), pp. 235–61. For antimasque in *The Tempest*, see Stephen Orgel, *The Illusion of Power: Political Theater in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley, Calif., 1975). For Kermode on the knotty language of the late plays, see his *Shakespeare's Language* (London, 2000). See too Russ McDonald, *Shakespeare's Late Style* (Cambridge, U.K., 2006), and McMullan, *Shakespeare and the Idea of Late Writing*.

Strachey's full sentence reads: "He is no longer interested; one often feels, in what happens, or who says what, so long as he can find a place for a faultless lyric, or a new unimagined rhythmical effect, or a grand and mystic speech"; see Strachey, "Shakespeare's Final Period" *The Independent Review* 3 (August 1904). For contemporary accounts of the burning down of the Globe, see, for example, the reports quoted in Gordon McMullan's Arden edition of *Henry the Eighth* (London, 2000).

For Chambers, see his chapter on "The Problem of Authenticity," in *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, as well as his famous British Academy lecture on *The Disintegration of Shakespeare* (Oxford, 1924). And see Ben Jonson, *Volpone*, ed. R. B. Parker (Manchester, U.K., 1983). I quote Field's letter from Brian Vickers, *Shakespeare, Co-Author: An Historical Study of Five Collaborative Plays* (Oxford, 2002). The story of Fletcher's tavern affair is told in vol. 2 of Thomas Fuller, *The History of the Worthies of England* (London, 1662). For a full discussion of the division of labor between Shakespeare and his collaborators, see Vickers, *Shakespeare, Co-Author*. See too Stanley Wells, *Shakespeare and Co.*, and C. J. Sisson, *Lost Plays of Shakespeare's Age* (Cambridge, U.K., 1936). And for a fascinating account of Shakespeare and George Wilkins, see Charles Nicholl, *The Lodger Shakespeare: His Life on Silver Street* (New York, 2008).

Epilogue

For the underlying autobiographical assumptions shared by those who deny Shakespeare's authorship, see, for example, Diana Price,